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Meaningful Relationships: Cruxes of University-Community Partnerships for Sustainable and Happy Engagement

Trae Stewart and Megan Alrutz

Abstract

The authors draw on organizational theory's use of the metaphor as a way of understanding and explaining sustainable university/community-engaged partnerships. Working from the premise that transformative and reciprocal relationships prove essential to pedagogies of engagement, specifically service-learning, this essay argues that pursuing and maintaining meaningful partnerships between universities and communities or organizations in many ways parallels our efforts to sustain healthy romantic relationships. Through a description and analysis of 10 cruxes for sustaining long-term, healthy relationships, the authors offer a model for achieving intentional, ongoing, and systemic campus-community partnerships.

Metaphor as Investigatory Medium

The use of metaphor has a rich history in organizational theory; comparing organizations to machines, organisms, the human body, a jungle, and architecture, among other things, proves commonplace (Cornelissen et al., 2005). In fact, Morgan (2006) argues, "Metaphor is central to the way we read, understand, and shape organizational life" (p. 65). Building on this assertion, it comes as no surprise that "most modern organization theorists have looked to nature to understand organizations and organizational life" (Morgan, 2006, p. 65). Organizations are complex systems, and metaphors allow us to explore organizations in creative ways (Oswick et al., 2002). Each metaphor itself is unique and reflects different worldviews of an organization. They provide insight into the epistemological and ontological foundations from which the creator is approaching the issues (Amernic et al., 2007; Oberlechner & Mayer-Schoenberger, 2002). A metaphor that is commonplace can often be easily identified with, and thus put into practice, by the members of the organization.

In this essay, we engage a primary metaphor to generate accessible and thought-provoking ways of looking at university-community partnerships. In an effort to frame the complexity and chaos that often characterizes university-community partnerships in a novel and user-friendly fashion, we offer the metaphor of personal relationships. This metaphor parallels institutions, namely colleges and universities, and organizations and communities such as schools, neighborhood non-profit centers, and businesses, to individuals seeking to build, or working to maintain, a romantic partnership. We argue that organizations and democratic communities, although composed

of various individuals with diverse cultures and ideologies, are often collectively represented by a "voice of one"—one mission, one philosophy, one leader. Even as we offer this metaphor, we do not assume that deviations from this "one" do not exist. Grahn (2008) suggests that no single metaphor can capture an entity's complete nature/essence: "Different metaphors provide different insights in the target domain, and can constitute and capture the nature of organizational life in different ways, each generating powerful, distinctive but essentially partial kinds of insight" (p. 2-3). And, although we offer the relationship metaphor as widely applicable in its manifestation, culture and experience dictate how each of us sees and approaches relationships, and thus ultimately makes meaning from them and/or the metaphor we present. Bringle and Hatcher (2002) suggest, "there is merit in applying the analogy because [...] awareness of nuances can be made more salient, and recommendations for improved campus-community partnership can be offered" (p. 504). Moreover, Bringle and Hatcher (2002) draw on Torres (2000) and Arriago (2001) to suggest that campus-community partnerships operate as a web of interpersonal relationships that offer "a framework for understanding the give and take, the ups and downs, the fits and starts in a service-learning partnership that are aspects of the growth of any relationship" (p. 513).

As Grisham (2006) maintains that organizational metaphors are culturally bound, we recognize that the following framework may not prove relevant in every context. Nevertheless, we offer our thoughts and experiences in order to catalyze a conversation around building and sustaining university-community partnerships specific to pedagogies of engagement, or models

of teaching and learning that invite students to develop meaningful relationships with their community. To do so, we present a brief review of research on partnerships in community engagement, including best practices and several frameworks for community-engaged partnerships. We transition from these frameworks to propose a new, simpler framework built on the metaphor of dating and personal relationships. Through the lens of 10 cruxes, we demonstrate, metaphorically, how universities and community organizations, because their partnership is mediated through people, can be conceptualized as two individuals working to build and sustain a meaningful relationship.

Partnerships in Service-Learning and Community Engagement

It seems reasonable that if universities want their graduates to acquire ideals and ethics associated with healthy democracies (e.g., honesty, tolerance, generosity, teamwork, consensus, social responsibility), then they must provide students with opportunities to practice and ultimately acquire those dispositions and skills. Pedagogically, this requires instructors to adjust their own professional conduct and transform curricula accordingly (Astin, 1999).

Collaboration, both within and outside of university campus boundaries, is not always common practice, however. Academics often cocoon themselves within their disciplinary texts, jargon, and methods. Historically, the ghettoization of disciplines coincided with a larger separation of the university from the communities in which they are located. Universities frequently frame their outreach into the community as providing a service or charity to those less fortunate, a sort of gift (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; London, 2000). Similarly, community members often see their local university as distinct from the rest of the community (Jacoby, 2003). Ramaley (2000a) explains, “[O]ften partnerships are fragmented by competing interests within the community or on campus or both” (p. 3).

A common result from this mindset is that universities and communities approach their relationships with one another simply as transactions, or a series of one-way transfers of goods. Transactions, by nature, are temporary, instrumental tasks. Transactional relationships (Enos & Morton, 2003) (see Table 1) originate from an understanding that each partner has something that the other needs, and therefore

each party collaborates with the other to exchange these resources within existing structures, work, and personnel. Although devoid of commitment, a successful transactional relationship will satisfy some of the needs of all parties. Within a university-community partnership, this often means that each party simply uses the other to meet an immediate need, and then breaks off the relationship when their needs are exhausted. Although short-term partnerships can address acute needs (Bringle & Hatcher 2002, p. 511), from the community’s perspective, their needs often remain.

In contrast, engaged institutions partner with communities in order to collectively meet both parties’ needs, hopes, and desires. Engaged universities embrace communities as equal partners who work with, not for, universities in a mutual exchange to discover new knowledge and promote and apply learning (Karasik, 1993). This collaborative paradigm redefines universities from curators of knowledge to dialectic partners who must reconsider how they operationalize teaching for the benefit of all (Torres, 2000)—“a successful collaborative process [that] enables a group of people and organizations to combine the complementary knowledge, skills and resources so they can accomplish more together than they can on their own” (Center for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies and Health, 2002, p. 2).

One pedagogy of engagement that has received increased attention over the past decade is service-learning. Service-learning asks students to address a genuine community need through volunteer service that is connected explicitly to the academic curriculum of their academic course through ongoing, structured reflections designed for maximizing a deep understanding of course content, addressing genuine community needs with impact, and developing learners’ sense of civic responsibility.

To illustrate, we consider the disaster from Hurricane Katrina to the Gulf Coast of the United States in 2005. During the coinciding academic semester, a professor is teaching an environmental public policy course. She sees an opportunity for her students to provide assistance to hurricane victims while being able to contextualize how policy and decisions that they are learning about in class affect citizens directly. The class travels to New Orleans. Looking toward rebuilding and recognizing the need for community voices in decision-making, the students conduct a needs analysis by interviewing residents and elected officials of the hurricane-ravaged city about the

most pressing needs after the hurricane. Based on these discussions, they identify that the debris and unsafe structures should be cleared to lessen the possibility for accidents/injuries, stop the growth of mold, and allow for rebuilding more quickly. They identify the areas most in need and hold a community meeting to explain what they intend to do and how they would like to work with residents as partners. Several dozen residents agree to work with the service-learners.

While the university students serve, they learn the human side of environmental policy, something not readily taught through course readings alone. They hear stories of how the debris they are clearing used to reside in living rooms and children's bedrooms. They hear residents' frustrations around the lack of protection from such devastation and the lack of government response. Through individual and group reflection activities, assignments, and course lectures/readings, the students analyze why the hurricane caused such devastation, learn about disaster preparedness, and why the potential for devastation and the response to the problem by the government were not adequately addressed. They are challenged

to reflect on their activities in terms of personal development, content learning, and their sense of civic responsibility, specifically in line with how they can help address community needs through service. In seeking to address potential controllable issues that added to the devastation, the students move beyond a temporary, transactional approach to addressing the problem.

As a culminating project, students prepare a written report and presentation and share the results and suggestions with the residents and elected officials in the form of policy memos. These memos include strengthening levees, better hurricane preparedness education in schools, and better plans to react to a natural disaster, including temporary housing structures and food provisions. Student service-learners are invited to testify before the Louisiana State Legislature about their findings and recommendations, and do so alongside the community residents and partners.

As illustrated in the above example, service-learning cannot solely manifest within the restricted space of a university classroom. Moreover, this pedagogy of engagement relies explicitly on partnerships, and a series of relationships, between

Table 1: Transactional and Transformative Relationship (Enos and Morton, 2003)

Criteria	Transactional	Transformative
Basis of relationship	Exchange-based and utilitarian	Focus on ends beyond utilitarian
End goal	Satisfaction with exchange	Mutual increase in aspirations
Purpose	Satisfaction of immediate needs	Arouses needs to create larger meaning
Roles played by partners	Managers	Leaders
Boundaries	Accepts institutional goals	Examines institutional goals
Support of existing institutional goals	Works within systems to satisfy interests and partners	Transcends self-interests to create larger meaning
Partner identity	Maintains institutional identity	Changes group identity and larger definition of community
Scope of commitment	Limited time, resources, and personnel to specific exchanges	Engages whole institutions and potentially unlimited exchanges

universities and the communities or organizations affected by, and working to address, a particular problem or issue. In service-learning, the notion of a community or an organization is understood broadly. It can refer to micro-communities present on the university campus itself, such as a student organization or club, to local neighborhoods or schools surrounding the institution, to more encompassing conceptualizations on the national or global scale, such as the Red Cross. Typically, universities locate themselves as the hub of their partnerships with community groups (Benson, Harkavy, et al., 2000; Harkavy & Romer, 1999; Pickeral, 2003). Some, however, locate K-12 schools or other community groups in the center (Abt Associates & Brandeis University, 2003; Piñeros-Shields & Bailis, 2006). The fewest number seek an egalitarian partnership structure, so that no individual organization within the partnership is marginalized or given more power. Each of these models points to a need for understanding the dynamics and function of relationships within university campus-community partnerships.

No matter which kind of community or organization participates in a service-learning model with a university, healthy relationships are built on and maintained by shared understanding and reciprocity. This implies that the university decides with, rather than dictates to, its community partners what the learning outcomes should be, what service activities would best achieve those goals, and how to address the needs of the community partner simultaneously. Mattessich and Monsey (1992) further explain the process as requiring “a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship that includes a commitment to: a definition of mutual goals; a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility; mutual authority and accountability for success; and sharing not only responsibilities but also of the rewards” (p. 7). In other words, the paradigm of universities as saviors of resource-, competence-, and knowledge-deficient communities noticeably shifts when a commitment to reciprocity underpins the partnership.

When truly executed, reciprocal partnerships can benefit all parties. Service-learning research has found that strong university-community partnerships can 1) strengthen social capital, 2) provide a means to accomplish a task that is difficult to address alone, 3) ensure service recipients’ voice, 4) enable sharing of resources, skills, funding, and knowledge, and 5) ground higher education institutions in community realities and interests

(Roehlkepartain & Bailis, 2007).

A complementary approach to the egalitarian perspective of reciprocity is one founded on social justice and the disruption of traditional power structures. Under this conceptualization, service-learning and other pedagogies of engagement redefine experiential activities in the community, moving away from notions of charity (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). Service, after all, implies the provider has some type of power of which the recipient is deficient. In contrast to this exploitative lens, justice-based approaches to partnerships, however, envision reciprocity as “an expression of values, service to others, community development and empowerment, which determines the purpose, nature, and process of social educational exchange between learners students and the people they serve” (Stanton, 1990, p. 67).

Moving away from a foundation in transactions, partners in transformative relationships expect some kind of sustained commitment and change. One’s involvement in these relationships is predicated on a willingness to reflect on one’s own practices and approaches to issues. As the name implies, change is central to transformative relationships. However, there is no set timeline to achieve expected changes. The organic nature of transformative relationships often allows for unexpected insight, creativity, excitement, and/or transformation for all involved. Transformative partnerships ultimately have greater impacts because partners are able to combine their resources to address mutually defined problems in more dynamic and comprehensive ways. “When a collaborative process achieves a high level of synergy the partnership is able to think in new and better ways about how it can achieve its goals; carry out more comprehensive integrated intervention; and strengthen its relationship with the broader community,” according to the Center for the Advancement of Collaborative Strategies and Health (2002, p. 2).

Approximating a Model

While the mission and/or goals of most universities include working with the local community, identifying a single model for successful and sustainable university-community partnerships is impossible. After all, every university, community, and organization is unique. Issues involving people, social policies, entrenched histories of inequalities, and funding constraints are complex and multilayered. Research suggests that there is no one-size-fits-all

model (Piñeros-Shields & Bailis, 2007). Settling on a single, normative approach to creating and sustaining successful partnerships is bound to exclude some legitimate element(s). This, in turn, adds to, instead of solving, the problem.

Regardless, and specific to service-learning and other experiential education approaches, several sets of benchmarks and lessons addressing partnerships have been offered. Three of the most often cited examples are outlined in Table 2. While both unique and comparable pieces exist across these examples, each approach considers community-campus partnerships from a similar perspective—large multidimensional institutions, organizations, and communities, layered by bureaucracy and micro-cultures trying to work together. Although in reality this might be true, this perspective tends to overwhelm partnerships before the work has even begun. Concerns over probabilities, rather than an excitement over possibilities, can confound new connections.

As a result, our purpose is to provide an accessible schema on which readers and practitioners can prepare for entering partnerships. The following cruxes aim to encourage increased pre-reflection and intentionality around healthy and sustainable campus-community partnerships in service-learning. In our conceptualization, the onus for building transformational partnerships between campuses and communities falls on individuals who represent larger institutions. Bringle and Hatcher (2002) remind us that self-awareness, communication, and self-disclosure become paramount for individuals when initiating and developing partnerships: “Evaluating and communicating information about the potential rewards and costs” (p. 507) before initiating the campus-community relationship supports the development of ultimately transformational partnerships and associated outcomes.

University-Community Partnerships: 10 Cruxes for Sustainable (and Happy) Engagement

The term crux has several definitions, many of which tap into the complexity of university-community partnerships and relationships at large. Understood as both a “foundation for belief” and a “perplexing difficulty,” cruxes remind us that there are key points in any relationship/partnership where we make choices about how we will participate and if/how we will move forward. This section outlines 10 cruxes, or pivotal points, in a relationship that ultimately present ideas, tensions, and questions worth considering in univer-

sity-community partnerships, specifically within service-learning models.

Crux #1: Putting Yourself on the Market

Personal Relationships. We all have experiences that shape how and why we move through the world and interact with others. Experience tells us that being in a “good place” as a single or unattached person, usually makes it easier to enter into a healthy relationship. Clearly understanding who we are and what we want and need before venturing into a relationship can help us avoid drama and complications down the road. Preparations may include readying ourselves emotionally, physically, financially, and spiritually for what it means to share parts of our lives with someone else. This step may include opening ourselves up to potential opportunities and challenges that scare us and/or highlight our vulnerabilities.

Implications for University-Community Partnerships. A university that finds it difficult to identify and work on its internal challenges will struggle to be a good campus partner. Similarly, a community or organization, regardless of its work, will struggle if its motives and goals for seeking a partnership remain undetermined, constantly in flux, or self-serving. To overcome these barriers, organizations, like individuals, must identify and name the support mechanisms at their disposal. Pulling from Walshok (1999), Bringle & Hatcher (2002) suggest that “campuses, as well as community agencies, must develop infrastructure (e.g., centralized office, policies, procedures, staff) with the capacity to evaluate and respond to unanticipated opportunities for forming partnerships with differing levels of formality, varying projected time frames, and multiple purposes” (p. 506). This step should simultaneously include recognizing those internal and external obstacles that may present themselves when seeking, forming, or attempting to maintain a partnership. What is scary about this new partnership? What does the organization have at stake? What does the university stand to gain? How will pursuing a partnership fit within the mission of the university and the community partner? And, for individual faculty and scholars, how will this partnership support your research and teaching agenda while simultaneously addressing a genuine need in the community?

Crux #2: Building on Existing Relationships

Personal Relationships. Most relationships develop out of existing friendships and from personal connections. People we already know can

Table 2. Commonly Cited Campus-Community Benchmarks

<p>Campus Compact benchmarks for Campus/Community Partnerships (Torres, 2000, pp. 5-7)</p> <p>Stage I: Designing the Partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • founded on a shared vision and clearly articulated values • beneficial to partnering institutions <p>Stage II: Building Collaborative Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • composed of interpersonal relationships based on trust and mutual respect • multidimensional: they involve the participation of multiple sectors that act in service of a complex problem • clearly organized and led with dynamism <p>Stage III: Sustaining Partnerships Over Time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • integrated into the mission and support systems of the partnering institutions • sustained by a partnering process for communication decision-making and the initiation of change • evaluated regularly with a focus on both methods and outcomes 	<p>Community-Campus Partnerships for Health (2001)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners have agreed upon mission, goals, and measurable outcomes for the partnership. • The relationship between partners is characterized by mutual trust and respect, genuineness, and commitment. • The partnership builds upon identified strengths and assets but also addresses areas that need improvement. • The partnership balance of power among partners enables resources among partners to be shared. • There is clear, open, and accessible communication between partners, making it an ongoing priority to listen to each need, to develop a common language, and to validate or clarify terms. • Roles, norms, and processes for the partnership, with input and agreement of all partners. • There is feedback to, among, and from all stakeholders in the partnership with the goal of continuously improving the partnership and outcomes. • Partners share the credit for the partnership's accomplishments. • Partnerships take time to develop and evolve over time. 	<p>Ramaley's (2000b) Lessons Learned from Existing Partnerships (p. 242)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each partner has unique elements shaped by the history, capacity, cultures, missions, expectations, and challenges faced by each participating group or organization. • An ideal partnership matters to the academic strength and goals of the university and to the assets and interests of the community. • There is no such thing as a universal community. It takes time to understand what elements make up a particular community and how people experience membership and community. • Unless the institution as a whole embraces the value and validity of engagement as legitimate scholarly work and provides both moral support and concrete resources to sustain it, engagement will remain individually defined and sporadic. • Important to take time to think about what the University can bring to the partnership. • The good collaboration will continue to evolve as a result of mutual learning. • Some communities are being partnered to the point of exhaustion. • The early rush of enthusiasm can be replaced by fatigue and burnout unless the collaboration begins early on to identify and recruit additional talent to the project for the collaboration. • Like any other important effort, community partnerships must be accompanied by strong commitment to a "culture of evidence."
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help to broaden our social arena, introduce us to someone who shares common interests, or present opportunities to take a relationship to the next level. Certainly, shifting the nature of an existing relationship can get complicated as expectations and commitments change. A strong foundation of open communication and honesty can help manage some of the difficulties inherent in changing relationship dynamics from friendships or casual dating to something with more long-term

goals and implications.

Implications for University-Community Partnerships. Building on current relationships with community organizations can provide exciting opportunities for development and sustained effectiveness. In fact, research in service-learning notes that university-community partnerships that consistently report effective outcomes grew out of existing relationships and developed into work beyond individual projects (Abt Associates &

Brandeis University, 2003; Bailis, 2000; Piñeros-Shields & Bailis, 2007). Further, as an increasing number of tasks are spread across a diminishing number of colleagues, using the web of personal relationships that are available via our own or colleagues' connections can enable opportunities for both efficiency and effectiveness. Like personal relationships, however, all parties will need to adjust if the nature of the relationship changes. Moreover, if and when a partnership develops from a colleague's introduction, added pressures exist to make the partnership work, and the possibility for tension rises if the partnership ends. Clayton et al. (2010) confirm that service-learning and civic engagement relationships can progress or regress in quality throughout the life of a partnership.

Crux #3: Making Quality Face Time

Personal Relationships. Mixed opinions exist on the viability of long-distance and technologically supported relationships. What is usually shared by both sides of the debate is that ongoing, quality face time is necessary to maintain interest and emotional engagement in a relationship. Although texting, email, and talking on the phone serve as acceptable and often low-commitment communication efforts, relationships usually progress and deepen when live, human connections are available. Personal interactions not only allow for more intimate moments, but also for each partner to see how the other lives, and opportunities for how s/he might fit within that structure. Moreover, a willingness to be present within someone's space/place shows that we are interested in who they are and what they care about.

Implications for University-Community Partnerships. Bringle and Hatcher (2002) offer three significant components for building meaningful relationships within campus-community partnerships: frequency of interaction, diversity of interaction, and strength of influence on the other party's behavior, decisions, plans, and goals (p. 509). In addition, the importance of remaining present, both physically and emotionally, can contribute to developing closeness. Electronic communications can provide an expedient way to share information and set up meetings for partnering organizations and their staff. However, these methods of communication can never fully substitute for in-person interactions. Building partnerships requires that people spend time getting to know one another and each other's organization; this kind of dialogue often happens impromptu, in between

agenda items and more formally facilitated conversations. As in the professional world, there are times when academics and their community partners must make time for each other. Meeting prospective community partners on their own turf also can make for a more comfortable, open, and less formal first interaction, and allows the campus partner to gather important information about the context in which future work might take place. In addition to where one meets, it is important to also consider how often the meetings take place and the kinds of interactions you foster; quality does not trump quantity and vice versa.

Crux #4: Naming What You Need and Want

Personal Relationships. To date, no one can read minds. And while guessing games are entertaining at carnivals, individuals connected emotionally to a significant other are less entertained when such tasks present themselves in the relationship. Prioritizing time to "talk" can be difficult and anxiety-provoking in any relationship, but verbalizing what we need and naming what is at stake for us can help both partners get what they want and meet the needs of their partner at the same time. Without this vulnerability, and ability to articulate what you need to feel satisfied, connected, and/or appreciated, relationships remain on a surface level.

Implications for University-Community Partnerships. Universities, or those who represent them, have to be honest about where they are coming from, what they need, and what they can offer: "Hidden agendas and needs can sabotage progress" (Roehlkepartain & Bailis, 2007). In addition to discussing logistics and time lines, both parties need to name their bottom lines, even when it feels risky. Walshok (1999) suggests that these discussions address identity, purpose, procedures, and resources of each party. On which issues are each willing to compromise? What is non-negotiable, and what does each need help with? Take the guessing out of partnerships by making time to build trust and openly work through misunderstandings: "It is important to engage in active efforts for each partner to understand the needs, strengths, goals, limitations, expertise, and self-interests of the other partners, and then design efforts to reflect those things, including clear expectations" (Roehlkepartain & Bailis, 2007).

Crux #5: Actions Speak Louder than Words

Personal Relationships. Taking the time to build trust and talk openly is an important foundation

for any relationship. However, talk only goes so far if it is not backed up by concrete actions and recognizable gestures of love, appreciation, and support. Our actions within a relationship speak volumes about our values and, more specifically, our commitment to our partners. Giving hugs, organizing the kids' schedules, making dinner, and putting the dirty plates in the dishwasher when it is usually the other partner's task says more about commitment to a partnership than words alone can communicate.

Implications for University-Community Partnerships. Community partnerships require an appropriate balance between building trust and taking action: "[I]t is vital to move beyond thinking and planning in order to begin taking concrete actions that demonstrate the benefits of partnership" (Bailis, 2000 as cited in Roehlkepartain & Bailis, 2007). This dance is something that partners negotiate at every stage of a project—coming to the table prepared, but also demonstrating openness to shifting a course of action and adjusting the ways that we actively participate in any given partnership. These gestures of action may be as simple as weekly phone calls, keeping an internally circulated blog specific to the partnership, asking the community partners to co-teach or be a guest speaker at the university, or introducing the possibility for partnering again the following academic term. Exchange theory reveals that maintaining relationship satisfaction is directly tied to outcomes (i.e., rewards minus cost) that exceed partners' minimal expectations (Bingle & Hatcher, 2002; Emerson, 1976). Seeing the results of a university-community partnership, even if the evidence remains formative, contributes to the trust and deepening of the relationship for both parties.

Crux #6: Opposites Attract

Personal Relationships. We seek partners and friends to complement us, not to mirror us. Differences offer exciting places to imagine ourselves anew; they can challenge our sense of identity, and grow our vision and potential. Even as differences in opinion and perspective become difficult or perplexing, consider how contrasting personalities and ideas can energize a relationship and contribute to exciting changes to how we see ourselves and how we engage in the world.

Implications for University-Community Partnerships. Just because the mission, activities, or values of a community partner do not fit precisely within the language of the university, or your own organization, does not mean that they won't be

an exciting partner. Rather, the partnership can focus on new goals that the parties create together and, more specifically, how each party may bring unique qualities that help achieve those goals through collaboration, cooperation, and a pooling of resources. Tavalin (2004) writes,

It's okay that not everyone is aboard with the same dream. ... It helps to be headed in the same direction, though, with overlapping and intersecting goals. Finding those meeting points is what makes for successful collaborations (p. 21).

New ideas and vectors of activity keep our jobs interesting. And, investing in an adventure with a complementary partner may open new ways of looking at old issues, which may ultimately help to solve the issue that brought you together in the first place. As Ebata (1996) noted, universities and communities each have a lot to offer one another.

Crux #7: Managing Baggage

Personal Relationships. If you're an adult, you have baggage. It is precisely these pieces of our life experiences that tend to color how we operate in the future. These might include a crazy family, bad credit, former partners that won't disappear, and so on. Some of us have small, manageable pieces, while others, and with no fault ascribed, possess numerous, overflowing, and unmanageable bags. In a long-term relationship, though, our bags often become open and accessible to a large degree. Pieces tend to spill out when we least expect it and can often startle our significant other if s/he is not prepared. What is important to remember, however, is that everyone carries baggage into the relationship, including ourselves. Knowing how to recognize and negotiate realistic expectations in our own lives and with others is an essential skill to managing baggage.

Implications for University-Community Partnerships. Like people, community organizations come to a partnership with overt and hidden baggage. The organizations with which we partner often struggle with low budgets; the staff wears multiple hats; and daily operations are bound by challenging organizational policies and/or bosses. Compassion, flexibility, and patience become paramount in making these partnerships work amidst everyday challenges. Communicating across these issues as we work to meet each other's needs proves an important tool for faculty and students to practice and learn. Most importantly,

partners in the university-community relationship must remember that perfection does not exist. And trying to hide or diminish our issues will not serve the relationship constructively in the long run. Instead, we should approach issues as they arise with maturity and honesty so that the bumps can be traversed together and with minimal damage.

Crux #8: Addressing Conflict

Personal Relationships. Conflict of varying degrees arises in even the healthiest of relationships. Avoiding conflict only causes more problems over the long term, making it important to develop strategies to keep communication clear, open, and kind—even when things get messy. Addressing problems early on in a direct manner can help two people move through conflict in a way that deepens, rather than damages, the relationship. Constructive discussions of difference can also help avoid “kitchen sinking,” where old conflicts and wounds are transferred to current issues. This power play can erase trust and shift away from a model of reciprocity and equity. Acknowledging and owning what “pushes your buttons” ahead of time is a proactive step toward conflict management.

Implications for University-Community Partnerships. Organizations might consider talking to their university or community partners about how they want to address challenges that arise as a partnership develops. Naming worries and fears about specific conflicts (e.g., decision-making, project timelines, expectations) early in a partnership may help us to be more intentional about how we address conflicts of interest or other potential challenges:

Acknowledging that any particular campus-community partnership may have differences in relative dependency and power is important to managing and nurturing the development of healthy campus-community partnerships (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002, p. 510).

Therefore, we should engage in difficult conversations around ownership, expectations, and responsibilities before we begin a partnership and try to let our partner know if/when conflicts start to arise. Open and understanding communication can help remind partners that we are looking out not just for ourselves, but also for the good of the partnership.

Crux #9: Routine Maintenance

Personal Relationships. Worthwhile relationships require constant care, attention, and maintenance. Prioritizing communication, time to connect (about things beyond work and household responsibilities), and special efforts to strengthen a relationship can make the difference between short and long term, as well as fulfilling and unfulfilling, relationships. Don’t wait for a holiday (or a fight!) to send flowers or make intentional efforts to reconnect with your partner. Reminding your significant other that they are special, reassessing their needs and wants, and demonstrating your appreciation, care, and commitment contributes to trust and can sustain you through challenging times.

Implications for University-Community Partnerships. We should make it a priority to connect with our community partners in ways that prove meaningful to them. Take the time to assess their needs and challenges; send notes and offer other gestures of recognition, thanks, and appreciation. This kind of attention and care to all aspects (personal and professional) of a university-community partnership proves essential to deepening engagement and growing sustainability. Partnerships require hard work, but the payoffs are substantial. Public recognition and celebration of the benefits and outcomes of the partnerships (e.g., through a press release, website feature, award, or community event) reaffirms a commitment to partners and to the value of the shared work (Keener, 1999).

Crux #10: It’s not you; it’s me.

Personal Relationships. Unhealthy, dysfunctional relationships can also prove sustainable. However, not all relationships should transition into long-term commitments. In certain situations, goodbyes can be healthy. So know when to end it. Regardless of whether a romantic relationship ends under the best of circumstances, ramifications and challenges always exist around how to move through, and forward from, the end of the relationship. Friends and families often become intertwined. Property and pets are shared. And custody of children and other legal matters may need to be addressed. Moreover, most of us struggle with concerns over our reputation as a partner and our chances of partnering again in the future. No one wants to be seen as a heartbreaker, player, or user. Being kind, generous, and forthcoming throughout relationship transitions can help to protect you from gossip and bad will, and can support the various entwined parties that may have a vested

interest in the relationship continuing.

Implications for University-Community Partnerships. Relationships that are mutually beneficial and reciprocal add to the development of both the university and the community, and help make partnerships deepen and grow. Finding a strong match for long-term partnerships requires that we work with community partners and explore the potential for helping one another reach desired goals. However, not every partner with whom we work will ultimately fit, and the partnership length is not directly correlated with relationship success or quality (Berscheid et al., 1989). In fact, ongoing partnerships can evidence chronic dependency and/or unhealthy patterns among individuals and/or institutions engaged in a partnership (Strube, 1988).

We must learn how to initiate difficult conversations about letting go if/when a university-community partnership no longer has the potential to support and challenge each party. As in personal relationships, ending a partnership with a community organization does not transpire in a vacuum. Non-profit communities are often small, and news travels fast. Therefore, it is imperative that ending a reciprocal partnership be done sympathetically, tactfully, and with sufficient lead-time for partners dependent on service-learners' skills to find a replacement. At the same time, universities must be intentional about how they are perceived in the community, and what messages they send by bouncing from partner to partner. Similar to individuals, gaining a reputation for a lack of follow-through or for using partners for their own purposes can harm a university's potential for making future partners, as well as its standing in the community at large.

Preparing for the Long Haul: Intentional, Ongoing, and Systemic Partnerships

Morgan (2006) reminds us that the "challenge is to become skilled in the art of using metaphor: to find fresh ways of seeing, understanding, and shaping the situations that we want to organize and manage" (p. 5). The metaphor of a personal, romantic relationship, illustrated through these cruxes, is but one way of looking at and reflecting on the applicability of a particular issue. This analogy provides a framework for transferring knowledge and understanding from our personal experiences into our professional spaces. While the contexts often differ, each set requires that we draw on the mechanics of interpersonal relationships. Reflecting on the above cruxes, themes emerge

around the importance of clear, consistent communication; an ability and willingness to reflect on self, others, and community; an ethic of care; a multilayered perspective; and, an interest in the greater good.

As we work to pursue and maintain university-community partnerships, interpersonal relationships prove essential to community engagement efforts (Brindle & Hatcher, 2002). Paying attention to our own tendencies and inclinations within personal relationships can offer insight into our role in university-community partnerships. Considering the metaphor of a romantic partnership offers us an opportunity to reflect on the kinds of partnerships we are interested in and willing to work toward, and just how we will participate within them. These metaphorical cruxes offer personally relevant ways to consider moving away from transactional relationships and toward more transformative partnerships within university-community partnerships. After all, sustained partnerships can provide beneficial experiences for students, improved community outcomes, and rich learning opportunities (Bailis, 2000).

Thomas Guskey, a scholar in professional development and evaluation in education, suggests that effective work with partners may require a shift in educational structures and culture. He encourages movement away from traditional deficit-based models in which universities attempt to fix problems through one-off projects and activities (Guskey, 2000). Working from an assets-based model, Guskey demonstrates the benefits of programs and partnerships that are "intentional, ongoing, and systemic" (p. 16). Guskey's framework for professional development offers a useful paradigm for achieving transformative relationships in service-learning and other university-community partnership models. Designing intentional goals and outcomes, developing ongoing activities and collaboration, and establishing systemic buy-in requires a willingness of both parties to reflect on their own relationship practices and to imagine new ways of approaching one's work.

Within this framework, Stoecker and Tryon (2009) challenge scholars to think about whose voice gets included in, and how community members are affected by, service-learning engagement. By exploring these issues, they encourage those in higher education who facilitate community engagement projects and partnerships to think about their roles as university faculty, educators, and keepers/producers of knowledge. Although some of the suggestions and questions

embedded in the relationship metaphors above may seem obvious, it is not uncommon to fall into challenging behaviors and patterns within personal, professional, and academic relationships. University-community partnerships are constantly in flux as partners work to negotiate and accommodate a host of contexts and human-factors that are often out of their control. For this reason, transformative partners must remain open to unanticipated developments, disruptions in the status quo, and emergence of new values and expectations at every stage of their partnership (Enos & Morton, 2003). Self-awareness and flexibility around our own behaviors within relationships, such as communication patterns. The ways we express our needs, desires, and appreciation, and how we respond to stress and political pressure, can go a long way in pursuing and maintaining transformative partnerships.

In his model of scholarship–discovery, integration, teaching, and application—Ernest Boyer (1990) presented a unified structure that deepens how scholars accomplish work that meets the real needs of communities. The scholarship of discovery and application do not happen independently of one another. Rather, they grow out of praxis, or the reciprocal and cyclical relationship between theory and practice. University-community partnerships offer rich ground for supporting students in an engaged praxis—in this case, the mining, building, and reflecting on places and spaces of rich possibility in their education and in their lives. In almost every aspect of our lives, we participate in relationship-building, making personal relationships an accessible and potentially illuminating metaphor for thinking about how we prepare for campus-community partnerships. These deceptively simple cruxes may offer a platform for operationalizing a transformative partnership. As we stated at the beginning of this article, every relationship is unique and cannot be reduced to a single framework. Readers, therefore, are encouraged to draw on additional metaphors to both name and illustrate the complexities inherent in partnerships and transformative relationships specific to service-learning.

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