

Leading from the Margins: The Role of Tempered Radicals in Interdisciplinary Curricular Change

Council for the Study of Community Colleges

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The STEM Challenge

Need for reform: To increase persistence in and access to STEM.

Strategy: STEM Career Pathway Bridge Programs
Connect developmental education with STEM pathways to increase access to and successful completion of STEM programs.

Gap: Understanding what faculty-led interdisciplinary change in the community college looks like.

Context: Implementing BioBridge

Bridging underprepared students into community college biotech and life science educational pathways:

- Linked language, math, and science
- Learning community
- Contextualized curriculum
- Credit-bearing entryway into certificate/degree programs

Research question:

What is the nature of faculty leadership in interdisciplinary curricular change in the two-year college setting?

The Tempered Radicals Framework

Tempered Radicals in the Academy (Kezar, Bertram Gallant, & Lester, 2011)

Tempered radicals are faculty employing strategies that *“honor the norms, values and mission of the academy, while simultaneously challenging its enacted practices”* (2011, p.129).

- Raise consciousness, create a vision for change → Dialogue
- Empower others to act → Learning opportunities
- Garner resources → Funding, alignment
- Find opportunities to increase influence → Funding, stakeholders

Change Leadership

1. Top-down Leadership

(Bergquist, 1992, Birnbaum, 1992; Eckel & Kezar, 2003)

- Cognitive complexity – collaboration
- Sensemaking – vision, professional development

2. Convergent Leadership - Bottom-up/Top down

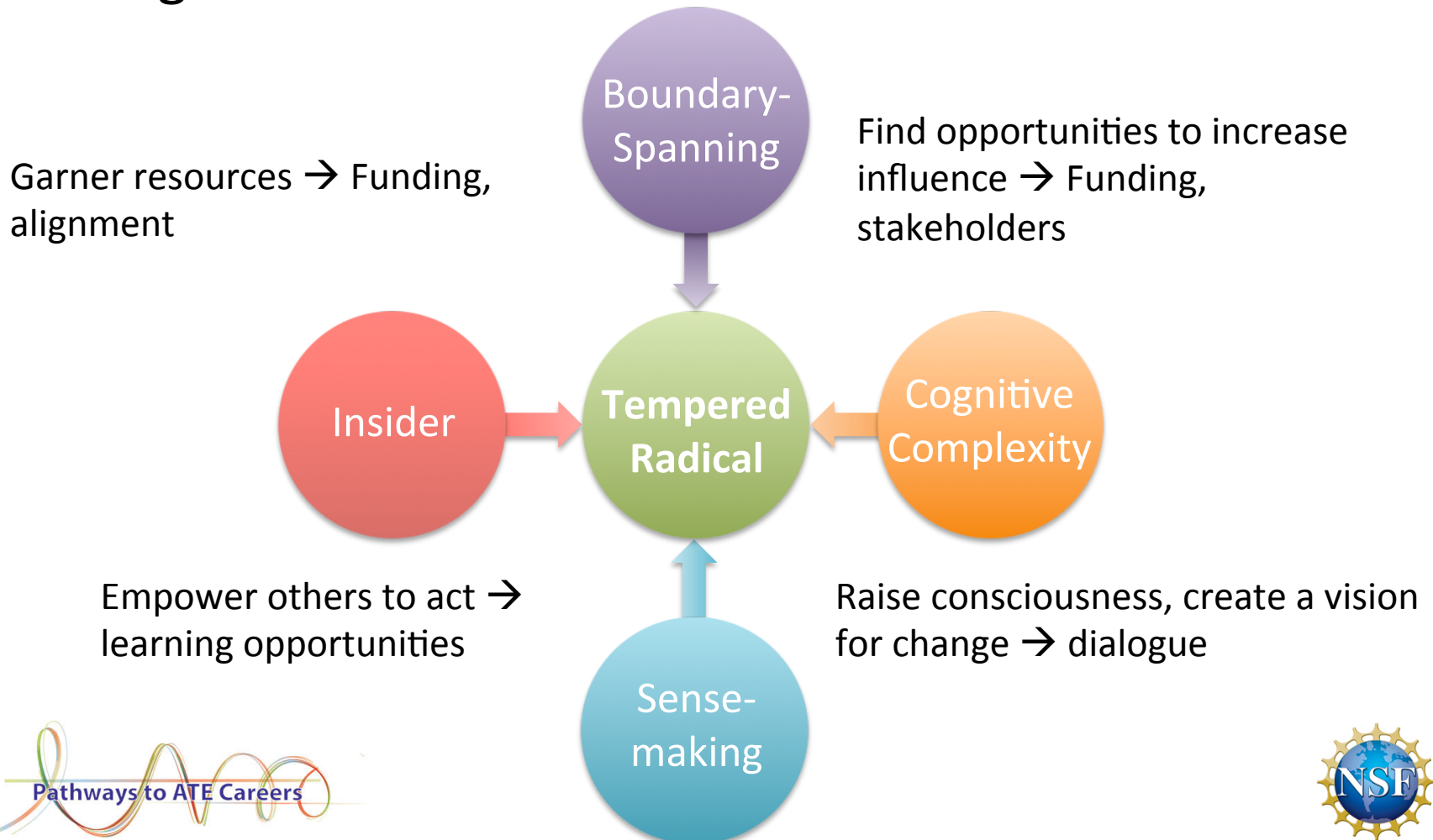
- Opportunistic and attuned to timing
- The importance of translators

Qualitative Methodology

- **Intrinsic Case Studies:** Leadership in the Implementation of BioBridge
- **Case selection:** 4 two-year colleges;
- **Sample and data collection:** Faculty, administration and staff (n=22), participant observation, document review;
- **Data analysis:** Inductive and theoretical coding schemes and collaborative identification of themes (Creswell, 2008);
- **Cross-case analysis:** Sought to identify general themes.

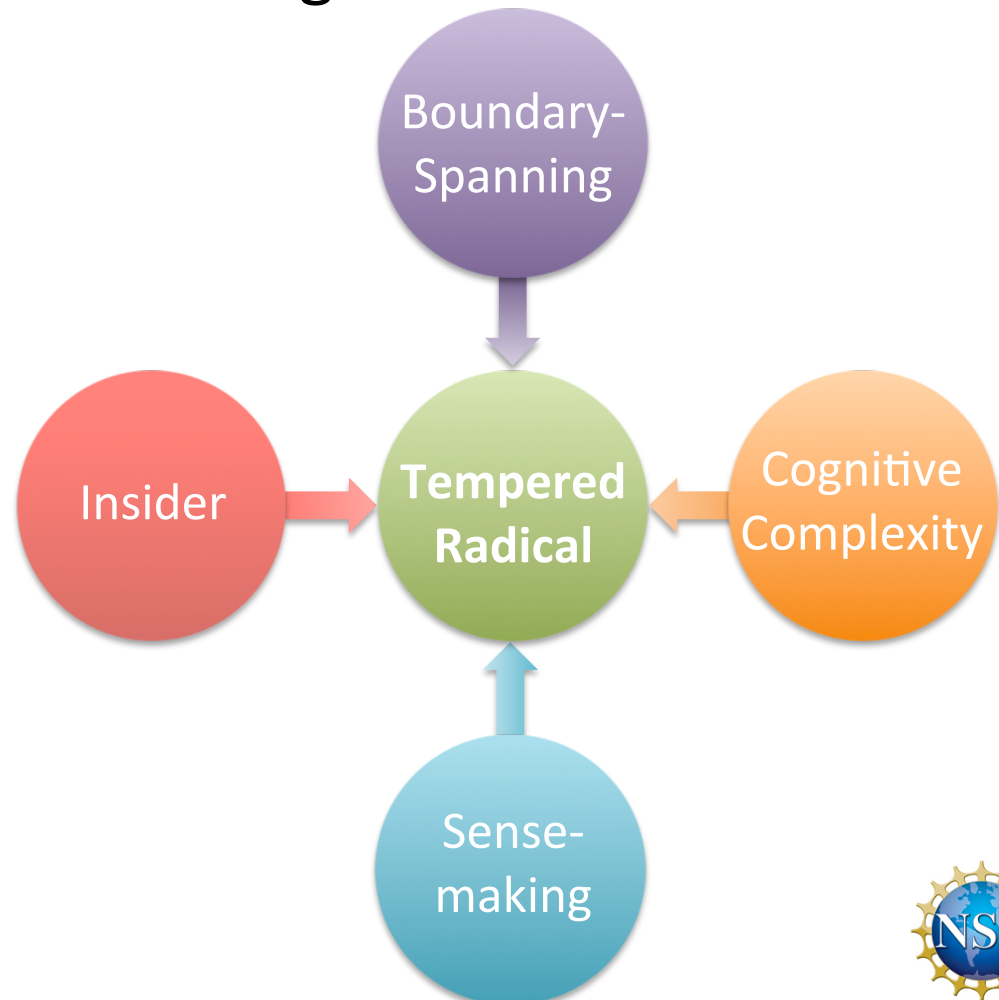
Tempered Radicals as Change Agents

Strategies *and* characteristics matter.



Tempered Radical Extremes

- Southern Tech: The Lone Ranger

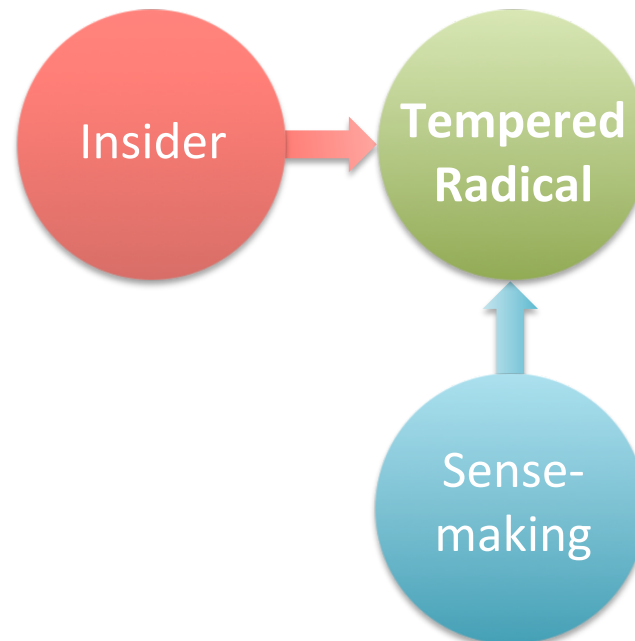


Tempered Radical Extremes

- Southern Tech: The Lone Ranger

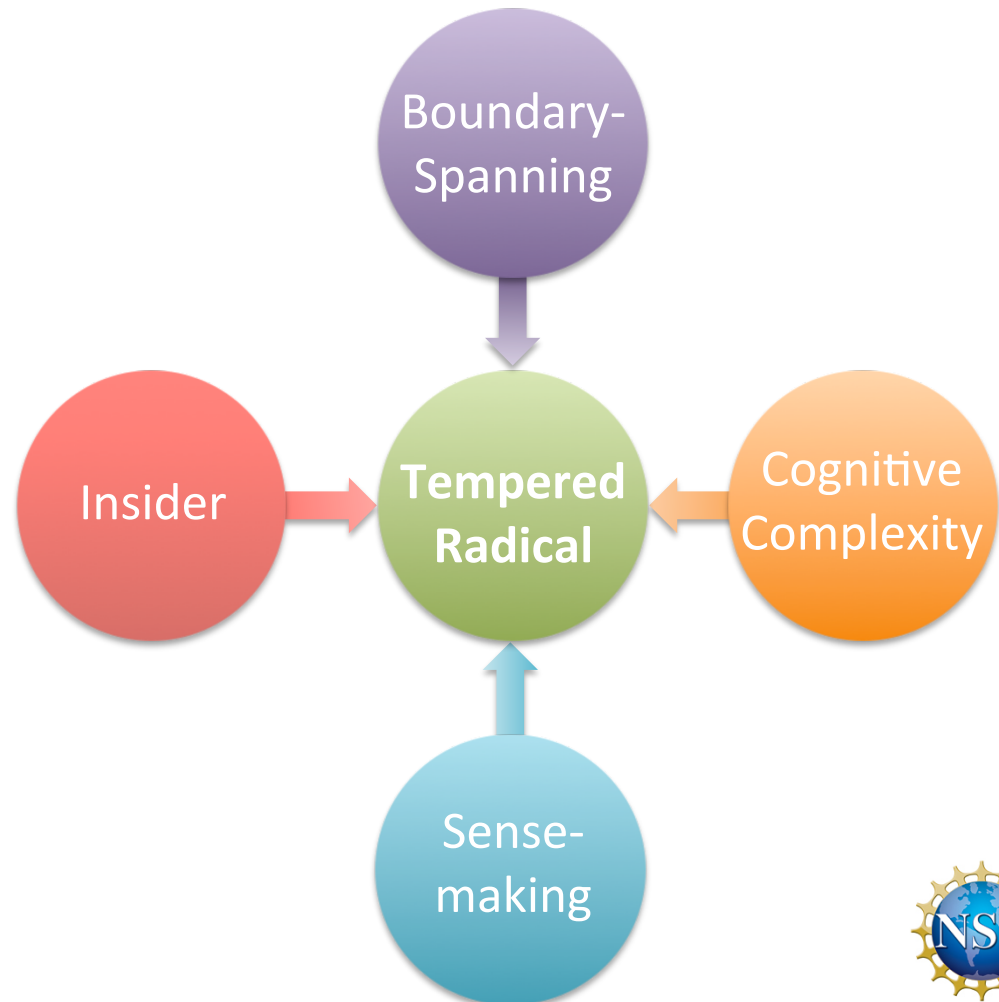
“So that's when I decided to just -- we're going to do it [within] the biotech program.”

-Most Tempered BioBridge Leader



Tempered Radical Extremes

- Midwest CC: The Outsider



Tempered Radical Extremes

- Midwest CC: The Outsider

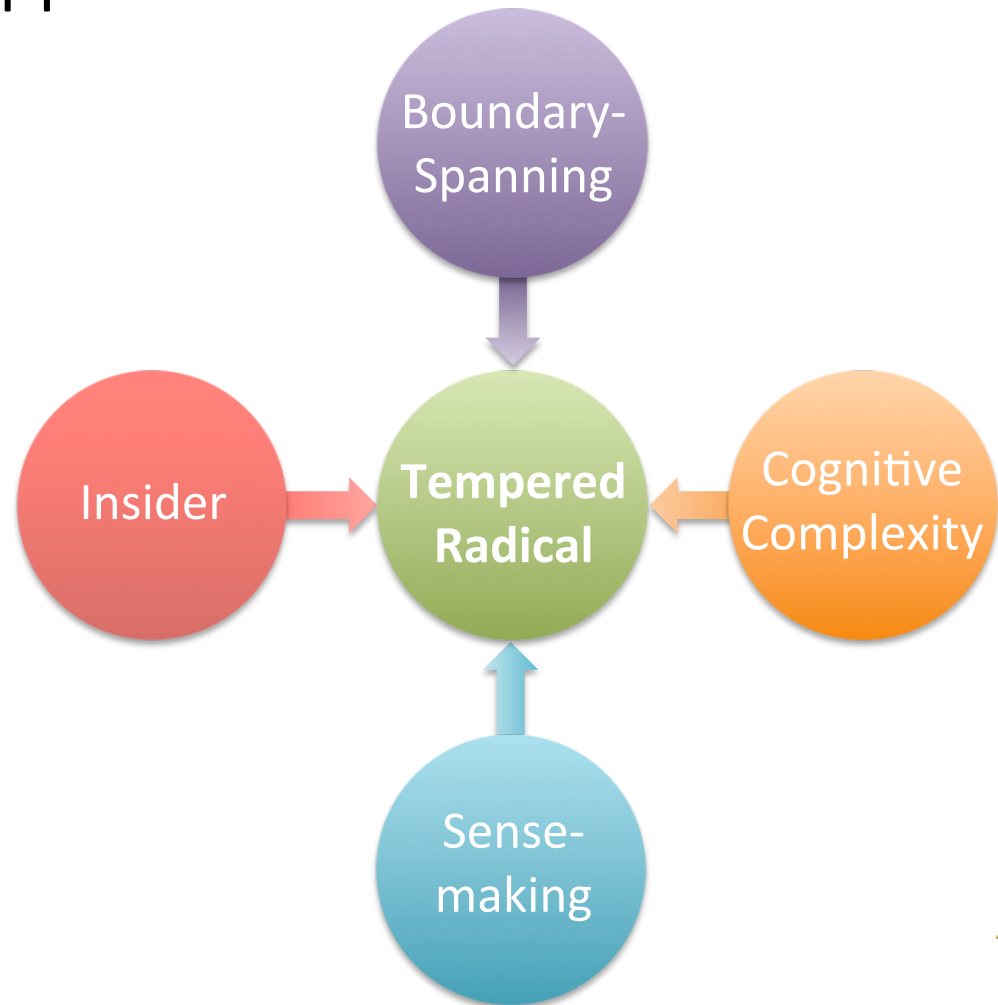
"I was trying to come up with a common schedule--so that this week in Math, you're doing this; this week in Biology, you're doing this; this week in Reading, you're doing this. So I love spreadsheets. So I put together an Excel spreadsheet and everybody has got their block they could fill in so that you can see the important things that are going on . . . And I'm not getting anything back . . . That aggravated me."

- Least Tempered BioBridge Leader

Not So
Tempered
Radical

Moderate Tempered Radical

- Bayview CC: The Opportunist

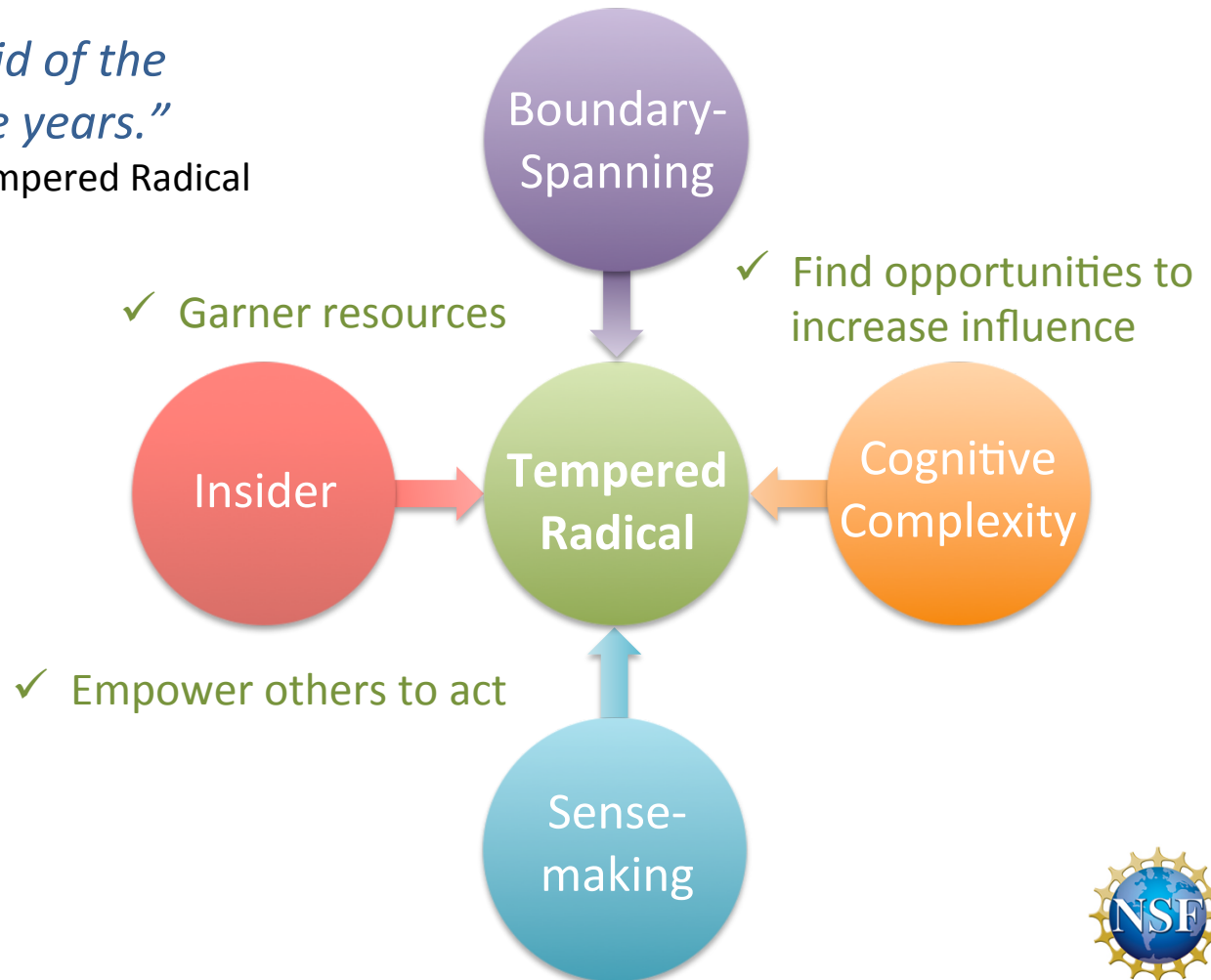


Moderate Tempered Radical

- Bayview CC: The Pathfinder

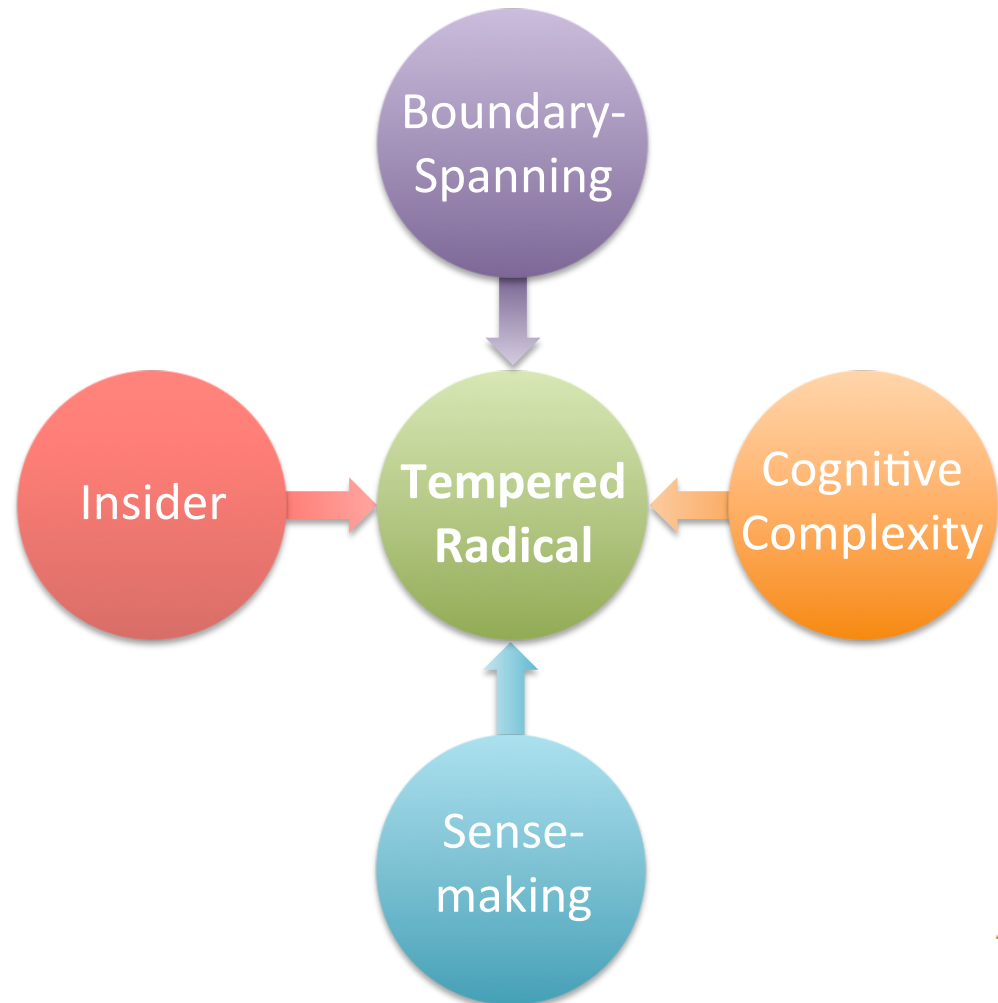
"I've tried hard to get rid of the complications over the years."

- Bayview Tempered Radical



Moderate Tempered Radical

- Rolling Hills CC: The Pathfinder

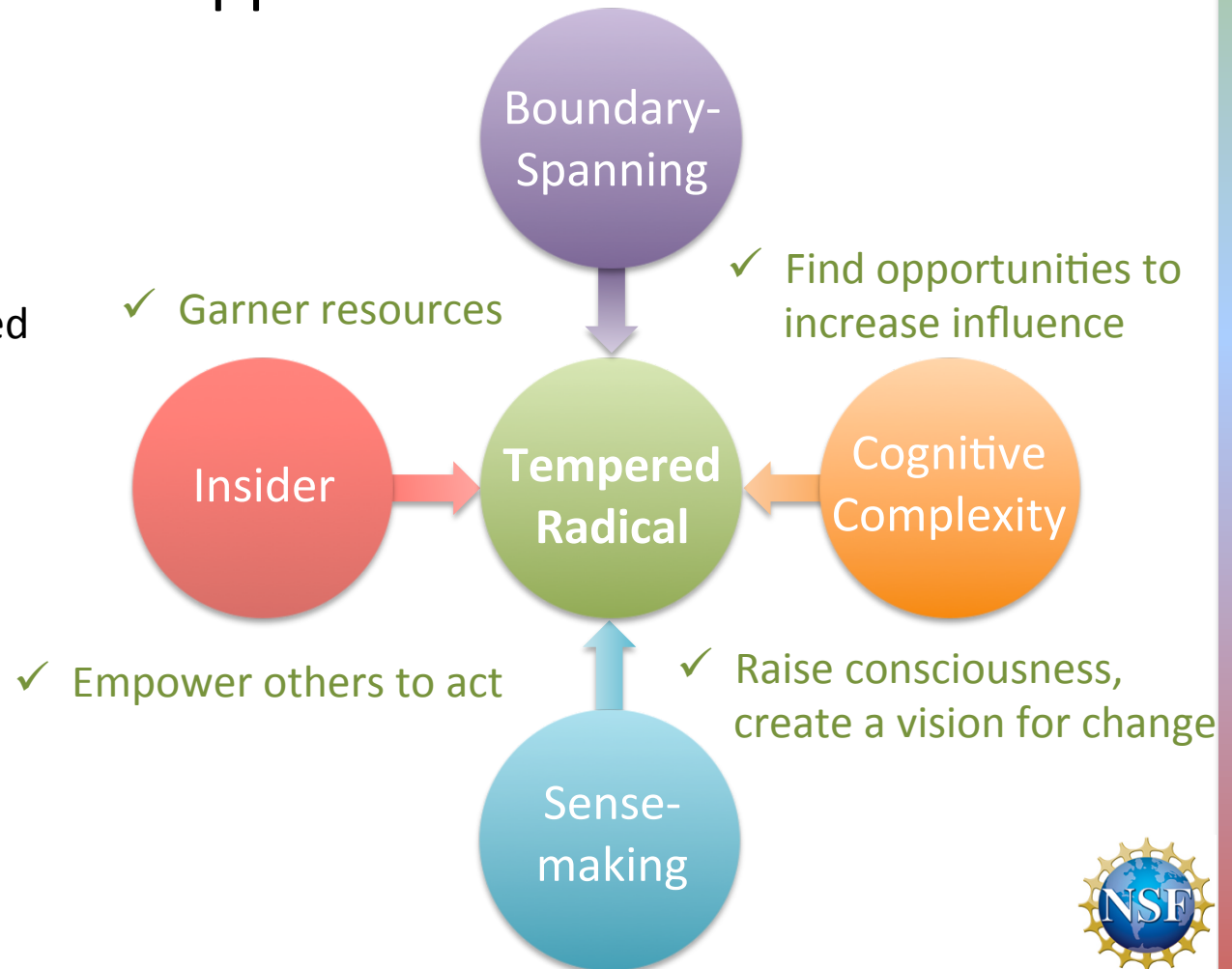


Moderate Tempered Radical

- Rolling Hills CC: The Opportunist

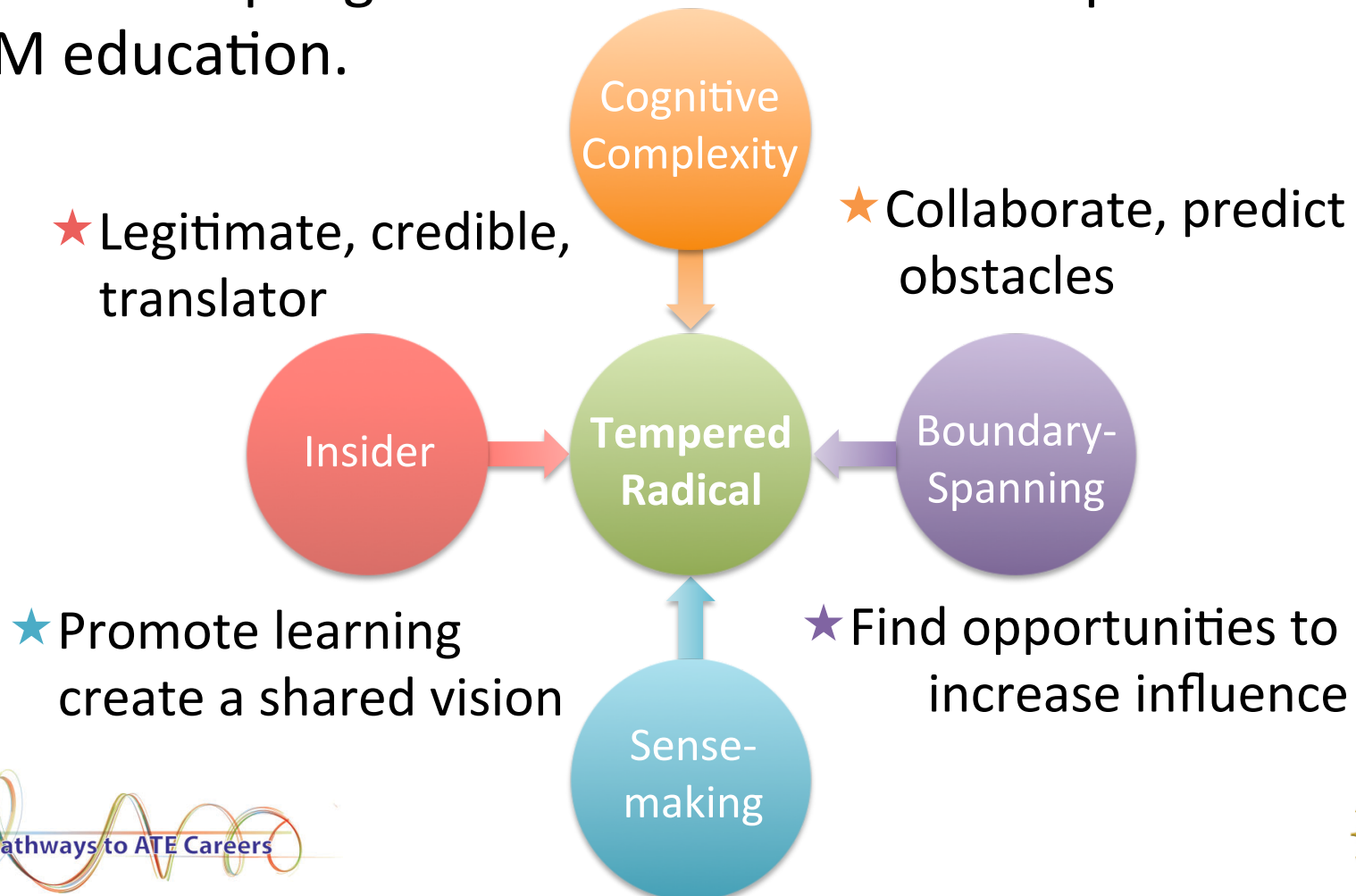
“Our philosophy is that we can do anything we want, we just have to find the workaround.”

- Rolling Hills Tempered Radical



Tempered Radicals as Change Agents

Crucial for rapid grounded reform of Developmental and STEM education.



Future Research

- **Leading from the Middle:** To what extent are faculty administrators are aware of their potential to act as agents of change in their organizations and what facilitates or impedes their realizing that role?
- **Tempered Radicals:** The relationship between convergence and tempered grassroots leadership and the sustainability and spread of their change efforts in their institutions?

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THANK YOU!