Effective Strategies for the Interdisciplinary Teams Within the Alberta Justice and Solicitor General, Training Academy to Strengthen Collaborative Practice

by

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Abstract

At the Alberta Justice and Solicitor General (JSG) Training Academy (TA), interdisciplinary teams, together, are responsible for provision of regulated and adjunct training to provincial law enforcement professionals. Collaboration requires individual reflection, willingness to seek understanding, propensity to let go of historical misconceptions, and clarity of the TA’s role in the JSG ministry. Using action research engagement (Rowe, Graf, Agger-Gupta, Piggot-Irvine, & Harris, 2013, pp. 19–28), this inquiry sought strategies considered most effective to strengthen interdisciplinary collaborative practice. In compliance with all Royal Roads University requirements, one open space technology session and seven interviews allowed for dialogue and planning for change. Four primary themes arose, leading to the following four recommendations: (a) continue to encourage individual development and self-awareness; (b) grow mutual understanding; (c) enhance structures, processes, and practices that propel a learning organization; and (d) clarify the vision that links the TA to becoming a centre of excellence.

Keywords: collaborative practice, learning organization, interdisciplinary teams
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Chapter One: Focus and Framing

Authenticity is to be in alignment with what is going on inside ourselves. Skillful authenticity means gauging the need for professionalism while having the courage to share with others what is needed in the moment to enhance the learning. (Etmanski, Fulton, Nasmyth, & Page, 2014, p. 92)

Since 1983, the Alberta Justice and Solicitor General Training Academy (TA), in collaboration with external stakeholders, has delivered training programs for department staff members within the ministry of Alberta Justice and Solicitor General (JSG), and other agencies employing peace officers (Executive Director of the TA, JSG, personal communication, August 1, 2016). Some of these training programs include the sheriff, corrections and community peace officer induction, mentoring, operational supervisors, and instructor development courses (Executive Director of the TA, JSG, personal communication, August 1, 2016).

The TA is made up of interdisciplinary teams, law enforcement (paramilitary) and business professional staff members (JSG, 2016b; see Appendix A for descriptive organizational chart). Drawing upon their diverse knowledge and expertise, the interdisciplinary teams partner to administer, design, develop, and or deliver evidenced-based training initiatives. They support trainees’ personal, professional and organizational growth, and evaluate and assess course evaluations to determine appropriate facilitation approaches and adjust resources accordingly (JSG, 2016b; see Appendix A for descriptive organizational chart).

In addition to providing peace-officer-related training programs within or through its facilities, the TA is accountable for “establishing peace officer training standards, review and

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1 All personal communications in this report are used with permission.
2 Personal communications from the Executive Director of the TA dated August 1, 2016, reference the internal 2015 TA Annual Report; this format is the convention that the American Psychological Association (2010) supports for unrecoverable data (p. 179).
approval training curriculums and audit of training courses as authorized by the Director of Law Enforcement under the *Peace Officer (Ministerial) Regulation*” (Executive Director of the TA, JSG, personal communication, August 1, 2016). In 2015, the training delivered by the TA resulted in 778 facilitation days and graduation of 384 peace officer and sheriff inductees in the Province of Alberta (Executive Director of the TA, JSG, personal communication, August 1, 2016).

In 2013, while under previous executive leadership, Alberta JSG, Correctional Services Division completed an external evaluation of the training programs delivered at the TA. Although some of the findings in the evaluation were relevant, communication of the outcomes was confusing for the TA staff members, and they felt unsupported by the ministry (J. Pagonis, personal communication, November 23, 2015). As a result of this evaluation of training delivery and design, the training staff felt undervalued. A lack of trust had developed that had seemingly obstructed relationship building and working together across interdisciplinary teams (J. Pagonis & D. Gourley, personal communication, November 23, 2015). In a collaborative culture, Schein (2010) offered that group communication—even basic—and goal setting aid in extinguishing anxiety and misinterpretations while focusing on what matters and learning about each other (pp. 93–94). Respecting the uniqueness of the teams within the TA requires “a sign of caring and support” (Leveson, Joiner, & Bakalis, 2009, p. 389) from the Executive Director and strategic team that demonstrates sincerity and inclusiveness in creating and implementing strategies to strengthen collaborative practice.

Although leadership saw noticeable progress in the teams coming together, I learned that staff still lacked understanding of how the diverse roles contributed and worked together
collaboratively to meet the TA’s mandate (C. Clark, personal communication, November 23, 2015). Accordingly, Senge (2006) regarded organizations as living systems of people working together for a common purpose (p. 271). The Executive Director shared, with the inclusion of differing views and expertise within the TA, the roles and interactions among the teams were more complex (Executive Director of the TA, personal communication, November 23, 2015). In 2012, prior to the increased training demand (discussed further under the Significance of the Inquiry section of this chapter), the training sergeants were responsible for the design and delivery of the training. However, they lacked resources and were struggling to keep up with training demands from JSG (Executive Director of the TA, personal communication, November 23, 2015). I hoped that by creating space for reflection and insight into practice this inquiry would shed light on and support the interdisciplinary teams to define ways to work together more effectively (Stringer, 2014, p. 41) and in parallel with external stakeholders.

Employed with the Government of Alberta since 2000, I currently work within the Human Services (HS) ministry as a provincial delegation trainer. Although the research was completed within a separate ministry from employment, I held a dual role during the process of this inquiry as an employee of the Government of Alberta and the researcher. Throughout the organizational inquiry process, I was responsible to balance both roles simultaneously while recognizing that my association and relationship with colleagues had the potential to influence the nature of the data collected (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014, p. 139). Additionally, as a public servant, I was held to the same Government of Alberta (2016) values of “Respect” (Our Values section, para. 1), “Accountability” (para. 3), “Integrity” (para. 5), and “Excellence” (para. 7). The purpose of the research was to facilitate change through surfacing discrepancies and by exploring
with the staff the current state of the TA, the vision for the future, and why this is significant for the organization to move forward while strengthening hope that change is possible.

Bushe (2010) asserted, as organizations become increasingly diverse, real collaboration requires people to have a willingness to “think about, explore and validate” (p. 265) the truths within the system. Through this inquiry, by unearthing internal awareness of experiences, curiosities of what others perceive, and hopes for the emerging future, a balanced understanding of the TA’s organizational truths surfaced and created clarity to assist in moving forward—evolving (Bushe, 2010, pp. 266–267). This inquiry engaged the interdisciplinary teams of the TA to explore how to strengthen collaborative practice in the development, design, and delivery of emergent training through the following question: What strategies are considered most effective for the interdisciplinary teams in the Alberta JSG, TA to strengthen collaborative practice? I also explored the following subquestions when conducting this inquiry:

1. What are current collaborative practices?
2. How do stakeholders envision collaborative practice for the Training Academy?
3. What are potential barriers to collaborative practice?
4. What strategies and processes can be put into place to build on the vision to strengthen collaborative practice?

Significance of the Inquiry

In speaking with the Executive Director and strategic team, I learned the TA had experienced an increase in staffing and expanded organizational mandate to develop, deliver, and evaluate training curricula for external JSG partners. While maintaining a focus on law enforcement, the mandate increased to also include general professional and leadership training
for all staff of JSG (Executive Director of the TA, personal communication, November 23, 2015). As such, senior leadership identified that strengthening collaborative practice within the interdisciplinary teams in the TA was essential to support the growth and change in the TA. As there are approximately 3,000 peace officers across the Province of Alberta, working in 200 agencies, the TA required suitable resources such as consistent training content, qualified instructors, and effective training delivery to ensure best practice as the TA continues to grow (Executive Director of the TA, JSG, personal communication, August 1, 2016). Further, the increase to the mandate in 2012 included training delivery “to tackle [the training] backlog in other areas of the province” (C. Clark, personal communication, November 23, 2015).

Additionally in 2015, external cross-organizational initiatives with the JSG ministry and partnering agencies (JSG, 2016b; see Appendix A for descriptive organizational chart) resulted in an additional 124 days of training in supplemental courses (Executive Director of the TA, JSG, personal communication, August 1, 2016). The dialogue in this inquiry created “a special environment in which a different kind of relationships among parts” (Jaworski, 2011, p. 111) of the interdisciplinary teams emerged. The benefit of focusing on collaborative practice was that the emergent dialogue did not “require people to agree with each other. Instead, it encourages people to participate in a pool of shared meaning that leads to aligned action” (Jaworski, 2011, p. 111).

In shifting the culture of the organization, the Executive Director and strategic team consciously made the decision to support change initiatives (Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, al., 1993, para. 4). The senior leadership proactively engaged the staff members in creating readiness for the increased training mandate, as opposed to monitoring and implementing a
command-control reaction to potential staff resistance (Armenakis et al., 1993, para. 4). Wheatley (2002) posited that “command-and-control leadership is doomed to fail” (p. 21) as that model is unable to sufficiently create a stable environment in which “people feel secure and safe” (p. 21) to manoeuvre through times of change and doubt. Given the participatory nature of this research, the Executive Director and strategic team saw this inquiry as timely, as the current staff were willing to work together to create solutions in the evolution of the TA (Stringer, 2014, p. 31).

Stakeholders within the TA who were impacted by strengthened collaborative practice include the Curriculum Design Unit, Professional and Leadership Training, Business Services, Peace Officer Training and Standards, and the strategic team (JSG, 2016b; see Appendix A for descriptive organizational chart). External stakeholders included Corporate Human Resources, Government of Alberta, partnering JSG divisions and branches, and JSG trainees, partnering agencies, and the general public. In considering inclusion of internal and external stakeholders in this inquiry, the benefit to casting a wide net in identifying how to strengthen collaborative practice within the TA was “enormous” (Stringer, 2014, p. 32), as diverse perspectives were afforded the opportunity to discover rich solutions to ease interconnected issues rather than typical reactive measures implemented by leadership.

Stakeholders noted potentially significant concerns should further steps not be taken to enhance the working relationship between the diverse teams in the TA. Internally, the “morale in the academy is at risk of not getting better with a lack of vision or sense of team” (D. Gourley, personal communication, November 23, 2015).
[Externally,] if the staff do not work together to create training reflecting adult learning principles vs. command-control facilitation, and is not evidence based, the training will not be effective, resulting in ineffective use of resources, and placing staff, colleagues, inmates, and Albertans at risk. (Executive Director of the TA, personal communication, March 7, 2016)

In addition, as the TA was reliant upon instructors seconded from other divisions (see Appendix B), there was the possibility that the TA may lose the additional staff should there continue to be barriers in the teams working together. It was important for the leadership to clearly communicate the urgent need for change in order to harness the momentum that had already begun; otherwise there was real concern that if the need for change did not make sense, reliance on old habits would undermine change efforts (Kotter, 2012, pp. 37–38).

Organizational Context

When I started to develop this project with Ms. Arnold-Schutta, Executive Director, and her strategic team in June 2015, some of the organizational context was different than it is now. I experienced a genuine commitment from Ms. Arnold-Schutta and her organization to shift the culture of the TA. Torbert (1999) asserted, “In today’s world the capacity to self-transform—while more closely aligning mission, strategy, performance, and outcomes—is arguably the key competence for continuing success in turbulent environments” (p. 199). In 2015, as a new initiative, the TA adopted the motto—“Learn and lead. . . . An invitation to all to answer the call of leadership and embrace continuous learning” (Executive Director of the TA, JSG, personal communication, August 1, 2016). In addition, intentional work with external partners towards “innovative and efficient ways to continue to deliver the quality training required by JSG staff”
TA INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM STRATEGIES

(Executive Director of the TA, JSG, personal communication, August 1, 2016) resulted in dedicated staffing supported by the Correctional Services Division and Public Security Division.

Within the JSG, the TA delivers a large portfolio of Alberta peace officer training programs and initiatives for sheriffs, corrections, communities, and investigators. Specific to peace officer training, the TA identifies the standards required for the training courses in line with the job duties outlined in the Peace Officer Act (2006). According to Section 6 of the Peace Officer (Ministerial) Regulation (2006),

A person proposed by an authorized employer for appointment as a peace officer must

(a) successfully complete a basic level of training . . .
(b) successfully complete any additional training . . . [and]
(c) successfully complete training with respect to the weapons an authorized employer proposes. (para. 1–5)

Inherently, the TA plays a crucial role in working collaboratively with external stakeholders to uphold this provincial regulation. With integration of the Professional and Leadership Training Unit into the TA in 2015, the organization’s mandate expanded to include additional training to participants from business relationships with JSG (J. Pagonis, personal communication, November 23, 2015).

The JSG ministry includes over 7,000 employees (Executive Director of the TA, personal communication, November 23, 2015). As a ministry, the JSG (2016a) services Albertans through overseeing:

The Alberta Crown Prosecution Service . . . [which] prosecutes persons charged with Criminal Code, Youth Criminal Justice, and provincial statute offences, [administering]
three levels of court in the province—the Court of Appeal, the Court of Queen’s Bench and the Provincial Court, [promoting] fair and equitable access to the civil and criminal justice system [through provision of a number of services, and giving] legal services to all government ministries [by providing court representation]. (“Ministry Structure,” para. 1–3)

Organizationally, the TA, referred to as Staff College in the JSG organizational chart is housed in the Corporate Services Division, under Corporate Services Division (JSG, 2016b). The TA consists of four separate staff units and the strategic team, which is formed of each unit’s senior leader and the Executive Director (C. Clark, personal communication, January 21, 2016; see Appendix B for TA organizational chart). This consists of approximately 42 positions including 17 permanent positions funded by the TA, casual staff, and staff seconded to the TA from other divisions within JSG.

The Professional and Leadership Training unit supports stakeholders in the development, delivery, and evaluation of organizational training (JSG, 2016b; see Appendix A for descriptive organizational chart). At the beginning of this inquiry this unit was housed separately from the main campus; as of October 2016, they have merged into the TA physical site. In the Business Services Unit (BSU), operational support is maintained fiscally as is administration of the learning management system (LMS) services (JSG, 2016b). Within the Curriculum Design Unit (CDU), the four curriculum designers, including the team lead, provide quality assurance in that the training programs developed meet the needs of the TA and external stakeholders (JSG, 2016b). To conclude, the Peace Officer Training and Standards Unit, which includes one cohort referred to as the Officer Safety Unit (OSU) by staff members, is the largest unit within the TA.
This unit comprises 19 staff and is responsible for planning and delivering specialized training to recruits and peace officers and maintains the accreditation program and training standards (JSG, 2016b). As a tenet of a bureaucratic philosophy, the procedures within the organization are structured by the Executive Director and strategic team in a way that maximizes the use of personnel and resources in a timely, efficient manner to meet the needs of the organization and stakeholders (Weisbord, 2012, p. 6).

The TA aligns with the JSG’s (2016a) vision, “Alberta leads the most innovative and accessible justice system in Canada and its communities are among the safest and most resilient in the world” (Vision section, para. 1), and its mission of “a fair and safe Alberta” (Mission section, para. 1). In partnership with stakeholders, by operationalizing the organizational mandate, the TA strives to meet training standards through the design and delivery of evidence-based training curricula (JSG, 2016b; see Appendix A for detailed organizational chart).

In this inquiry, envisioning effective strategies to strengthen collaborative practice propelled staff members in the interdisciplinary teams to unearth “shared ‘pictures of the future’ that foster genuine commitment and enrolment rather than compliance” (Senge, 2006, p. 9). An aligned vision and plan for working together fostered results that propel the TA’s mandate in a way that is equitably desirable by all stakeholders (Senge, 2006, p. 218).

**Systems Analysis of the Inquiry**

“Systems thinking shows us that there is no separate ‘other’; that you and the someone else are part of a single system” (Senge, 2006, p. 67). As multiframe thinking allows leaders to look beyond a one-dimensional view of their organizations, seeing the TA through many lenses provided insight in understanding the varied ways to approach organizational issues (Bolman &
Deal, 2013, p. 18). Stated simply, learning new perspectives provided insight into organizational behaviour, and why it occurred (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 21). The improvement of a system relies on mutual understanding, and thorough engagement by all who are in the system (Weisbord, 2012, p. 285). In this inquiry, this systems analysis of the TA (see Figure 1 for internal and external stakeholders impacted by the TA’s mandate) used Bolman and Deal’s (2013) four frames: structural, symbolic, political, and human resources (p. 19).

The structural frame is grounded in how the TA was historically perceived, but also delves deeper to shed light on the consequences social behaviours had on the TA achieving its purpose and goals (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 41). Bolman and Deal asserted, “In a divisionalized organization, the bulk of the work is done in quasi-autonomous units” (p. 80). Comparatively, as led by the Executive Director, the interdisciplinary teams are accountable to design, deliver, and evaluate training programs the TA provides to stakeholders and partnering agencies. As the TA continues to meet its mandate, there is less likelihood that ministry executive leadership will be compelled to intervene in organizational operations. Through evolution with a mandate greater than before and diverse role changes, potential for disequilibrium increases. To balance this notion, while “restructuring is a sensible but high risk move” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 93), success in meeting the organizational training needs lies in purposefully implementing a model that fits for the academy.
Figure 1. Systems view of the internal and external stakeholders impacted by the mandate of the Alberta Justice and Solicitor General Training Academy.\textsuperscript{3}

\textit{Note.} JSG = Justice and Solicitor General.

Through its mandate, the TA provides provincially legislated regulatory training to peace officers and specialized training to sheriff and corrections inductees within the Province of Alberta (Executive Director of the TA, personal communication, November 23, 2015). Supplementary training and support is also provided to partnering agencies, such as Alberta Fish and Wildlife, Alberta Environment and Parks, community agencies, and municipal peace officer

\textsuperscript{3} The mandate of the TA is to promote “excellence through training and continual professional development by establishing training standard and, in partnership with stake-holders, facilitating the delivery of evidence-based curriculum” (C. Clark, personal communication, January 21, 2016; see Appendix A).
programs. In addition, the TA assists provincial ministries that have investigators, such as Service Alberta, Health, HS, Environment and Sustainable Resources, Environment and Parks, Jobs and Skills (J. Pagonis, personal communication, November 23, 2015). As a large portion of the training at the academy influences frontline practice, strengthening collaborative practice in the interdisciplinary teams in the TA was important in ensuring that curriculum is evidence-based and aligns with standards (Executive Director of the TA, personal communication, November 23, 2015). With the TA’s increased staffing complement tasked to meet training demands, from three to five permanent training sergeants plus 10 training instructors and inclusion of four curriculum designers, problems may “crop up if growth (or downsizing) occurs without fine tuning roles and relationships” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 60) in the organization. When structuring the organization, one task of leadership is to consider the dynamics and interplay of roles to establish a collaborative environment that can mobilize the organizational mandate (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 67).

As a final point regarding Bolman and Deal’s (2013) structural frame, the TA was co-located with the majority of business occurring at the Staff College site. The TA acquired the Professional and Leadership Training Unit in April 2015; at the time of writing this report, this unit continues to be physically located separately from the TA. The role of this unit expanded the TA mandate to encompass external stakeholders including the larger Alberta JSG ministry (J. Pagonis, personal communication, November 23, 2015). Between the sites, there were two distinct organizational cultures: paramilitary and business (J. Pagonis, personal communication, November 25, 2015). Given their diversity, opportunity for the physically separated teams to converse, problem solve, and create reliance with each other reinforces their connection (Bolman
Bolman and Deal (2013) asserted, “Changes, whether driven from inside or outside, eventually requires some form of structural adaptation” (p. 93). As this unit acclimates to a new environment, there is a risk of confusion and resistance to change, with the potential that “things get worse before they get better” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 93). The success of this transformation hinges on balancing organizational needs with a carefully thought-out consideration and assessment of potential barriers and structural options.

Bolman and Deal’s (2013) symbolic frame “interprets and illuminates the basic issues of meaning and belief that make symbols so powerful” (p. 247). Further, the symbolic myths in an organization provide an explanation, lend credibility, and help form cohesion and unity among team members (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 249). For example, in 2013, after the JSG external evaluation, the training staff members expressed that they felt unsupported in their role in development and delivery of the training, and, residually, these feelings have made it difficult for the trainers to “align with the curriculum designers” (J. Pagonis, personal communication, November 23, 2015). Shadowed in uncertainty with the increase in curriculum designers, the TA staff members formed assumptions and meaning about each other’s roles as the units began to overlap and communication was impeded (C. Clark, personal communication, November 23, 2015). The staff members were entrenched in the old ways of being (Executive Director of the TA, personal communication, November 23, 2015).

Currently, three staff members employed in the TA in 2013 remain in the academy (J. Pagonis, personal communication, December 21, 2016). Although the majority of the staff employed at the TA in 2013 have left, the organizational culture was shaped from the stories from those who experienced the past, and then regenerated as new staff who on boarded “learn
old ways and eventually become teachers themselves” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 263). In moving forward, carving out time to converse with the staff about “their strengths and their opportunities for growth” (Brown, 2012, p. 197) solidifies the staff members’ commitment to the organization, and the organization’s investment in their future.

The politics of an organization funnels through the political frame, as it weighs out resources and decision making based on necessity and varying interests (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 183). Prior to the Alberta provincial election in May 2015, funding was provided for the TA to acquire and manage an LMS to streamline training enrolment across JSG. The priority for LMS development has been uncertain (C. Arnold-Schutta & C. Clark, personal communication, November 23, 2015). As resources to support the TA in delivering services to external stakeholders waned, not all requests were being met, and this had potential to result in conflict. As Bolman and Deal (2013) noted, “The political frame stresses that the combination of scarce resources, and divergent interests produces conflict as surely as night follows day [and] raises the possibility that lower levels will ignore or subvert management directives” (p. 201).

Over the last 2 years, Ms. Arnold-Schutta was tasked with the TA portfolio and accountable to five separate supervisors—four Executive Directors in Human Resources division and one Assistant Deputy Minister in Corporate Services division (Executive Director of the TA, personal communication, November, 23, 2015). As a result, the staff were unsure where the TA belonged in the larger JSG, and they questioned where they fit in, thus impacting delivery of the organizational mandate (C. Clark, personal communication, November 23, 2015). From Bolman and Deal’s (2013) political frame, as the staff focus their energy on feeling depowered, risk lies in worry that power will be inflicted against them (p. 218). “Organizational change and
effectiveness depend on a manager’s political skills” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 223) in developing an agenda, mapping the political terrain, creating a support network, and negotiating with “both allies and adversaries” (p. 223). As such, collaborative practice extends to working with external stakeholders’ provision of services across the JSG.

Bolman and Deal’s (2013) human resources frame looks at the relational reciprocity between people (e.g., skill, willingness, and ability) and the organization (e.g. internal and external motivators), while paradoxically recognizing the notion that their needs are not always the same (p. 135). In January 2015, the Peace Officer Training and Standards Unit mandate increased to include, in consultation with the Executive Director, progressive discipline for inductees that may result in recruit termination and to encompass stakeholders such as the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees and work sites (Executive Director of the TA, personal communication, November 23, 2015). In addition to design and delivery of training, this unit was also responsible for accreditation and certification of regulatory training and to ensure that training is “being delivered by appropriate trainers in accordance with best instructional practices set out by the Training Academy” (Executive Director of the TA, personal communication, November 23, 2015). The intent of the strategic team was to develop learning cohorts with curriculum designers and training instructors to provide support in delivering the expanded mandate (C. Clark, personal communication, November 23, 2015). Consistent with the human resources frame, investing in development of a staff motivates people to excel while meeting the needs of the staff and organization (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 133).

In identifying strategies that are considered most effective in strengthening collaborative practice within the interdisciplinary teams in the TA, “systems thinking and the action research
cycle play complementary roles . . . as tentative insights are being formed as the story unfolds” (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014, p. 114).

**Overview of the Thesis**

The TA continuously transformed through this research, which made it a bit of a moving target to adequately capture in this document. At best, the chapters hedge and categorize the context of this inquiry. This first chapter provided an overview of the organizational context, significance of the inquiry, and both internal and external systems impacts on the TA as an organization. Chapter 2 explores experienced voices of scholars in the literature review. The inquiry methodology and methods are presented in Chapter 3. In addition, Chapter 3 focuses on potential participants, study conduct, and ethical considerations. Findings from data collection and conclusions are the foundation of Chapter 4. Chapter 4 also identifies the scope and limitations of the inquiry. Finally, Chapter 5 presents the inquiry recommendations, identifies implications of the action items, discusses future study considerations, and summarizes the thesis.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

Chapter 1 provided the significance of this inquiry, organizational context, and systems analysis; in this chapter, I unearth related scholarly literature. I conducted this research to answer the following inquiry question: What strategies are considered most effective for the interdisciplinary teams in the Alberta JSG, TA to strengthen collaborative practice? While I am compelled to integrate academic works related to the inquiry topic, the process of considering and incorporating differing perspectives occurred concurrently as I analyzed the data and identified the conclusions and recommendations (Glesne, 2016, p. 37). For the first topic of this literature review I explored collaborative practice, including (a) the elements of collaborative practice, (b) drivers and barriers in collaborative practice, and (c) strategies to strengthen collaborative practice. The second topic peered into collaborative practice in a learning organization, as I examined (a) the principles of a learning organization, (b) communities of practice in a learning organization, (c) capacity building in interdisciplinary teams, and (d) leading a learning organization.

In this literature review, I clustered bodies of work together from “groups of authors who have been following a similar inquiry path, communities of scholars who have taken a particular stance on an issue, or even disciplinary groups that have formed coherent perspectives or orientations to the topic[s]” (Thorne, 2016, p. 68). As depth in this literature review was derived “by standing on the shoulders of giants” (Newton, as cited in The Quotations Page, 2015, para. 2), I drew upon recent works to compare and contrast modern ideological perspectives.
Collaborative Practice

The intention of collaborative practice is to benefit from the collective synergy of diverse mindsets in realizing transformational change. As a driver in today’s organizations, Senge, Lichtenstein, Kaeufer, Bradbury, and Carroll (2007) asserted, “It is exceedingly difficult to engage a diverse group of partners in successful systemic change” (p. 45). The effect of teams not coming together is increased anxiety, disconnection, and development of silos that impact “work performance on the personal, group and/or team and organisational level” (Cilliers & Greyvenstein, 2012, p. 1). Cilliers and Greyvenstein (2012) surmised, “Silos become a split-in-the-mind, serving as an invisible barrier to contain the collective unconscious team and organisational fantasies and emotions” (p. 1). In reaching change momentum beyond previous insular attitudes, and challenging divergent stories, the TA has capacity to grow new relationships and flourish from shared collective insight to the betterment of the organization. The literature has provided balanced evidence of how collaborative practice may support the TA to achieve its vision.

Elements of collaborative practice. In today’s organizations, collaboration shifts people’s daily practice from working alone to working with likeminded professionals or in cross-sector diverse teams (Thistlethwaite, Jackson, & Moran, 2013, p. 51). Many scholars suggested that teams evolve over time (Thistlethwaite et al., 2013; Tuckman, 1965; Tuckman & Jensen, 2010). Thistlethwaite et al. (2013) likened team evolution to early social interaction in which initially a child’s play parallels others, shifts to social interaction, and develops in to reciprocal interactions and relationships (p. 52).
In his original article, “Developmental Sequence in Small Groups,” Tuckman (1965), asserted that teams may move through four developmental stages—forming, storming, norming, and performing—to test interpersonal interactions as a way of creating team identity (see also Tuckman & Jensen, 2010). As teams spend more time together, Tuckman suggested the depth and breadth of team development may be influenced (p. 397). More recently, Tuckman and Jensen (2010), in consideration of newer collegial research, added a fifth stage focused on the significance of group separation or termination—adjourning (p. 47). Working together is an essential investment by all in the TA; similarly, rituals for team separation are important in team life cycles. Time to celebrate the new connections parallels opportunity to honour and grieve past relationships. Individually, as one becomes conscious of his or her behaviour, Argyris (2002) proposed mindful freedom to choose more than one way to act allows for “unfreezing the old, introducing the new, and freezing the new” (p. 216). Marrying diverse ideas, relationships, and ways to tackle issues is relevant in how organizations will successfully come together to take on issues challenging society (Senge et al., 2007, p. 51).

Multifaceted, dynamic, and evolutionary by nature, “teamwork and collaboration are at the heart of how groups act, behave, think and feel” (Salas, 2013, p. 218). Maccoby (2011) suggested collaborative teams are not solely formed from having a mutual trust and a shared sense of purpose (p. 59). He asserted, “A flexible structure of roles and processes is also required” (Maccoby, 2011, p. 59). Young and Daniel (2003) inferred that trust develops over time, with history and stories attached to positive emotional and trustworthy experiences (p. 142). Conversely, they advised, “[Experience of] early disappointments may lead to a decrease in the relationship-building emotions of trust” and create mistrust (Young & Daniel,
Thus, Lambert, Hogan, Barton-Bellessa, and Jiang (2012) posited, “A lack of trust can be a strain on staff members who feel that others may be not acting in their best interests” (p. 950).

Barczak, Lassk, and Mulki (2010) stated, “With differing goals and perspectives, the potential for misunderstanding [amongst team members] is great” (p. 334). As a remedy, trust is built by addressing communication barriers and creating personal relationships (Young & Daniel, 2003, p. 150). In other words, individual role clarity and mutual understanding enhances shared relationship development. As staff members are able to provide input “into their jobs and the organization” (Lambert, Hogan, Barton-Bellessa, et al., 2012, p. 951), positive relationships develop. Senge (2006) asserted, “when there is a genuine vision” (p. 9), rather than a vision statement, individuals are more likely to take ownership and be more intentional in their personal growth and development. Maccoby (2011) stated, “Shared purpose and trusting relationships alone will not create a collaborative community” (p. 59). Invitations to partake in “decision making allows staff to feel valued and trusted” (Lambert, Hogan, Barton-Bellessa, et al., 2012, p. 951). Incentive to practice collaboratively is inclusive of mutual understanding of purpose and perceived value for achieving the vision (Maccoby, 2011, p. 59). Fluid organizational structures and processes aligned with the complexity of the project at hand are necessary (Maccoby, 2011, p. 59).

Collaboration is not a simple endeavour. Homan and Greer (2013) suggested considerate leadership “helps to counteract subgroup formation, a potentially detrimental group process that needs attention in heterogeneous teams” (p. 119). While complete agreement among team members is not essential in cocreation, Abrahamson and Chase (2015) suggested that it may be
unnecessary for team members to have knowledge of each other’s professions or to align with others’ worldviews (p. 375). Whereas, Barczak et al. (2010) posited that collaborative cultures embrace change by sharing opinions and discussing issues openly with intent to creatively meet organizational objectives (p. 334). In leader-member exchange, Homan and Greer (2013) surmised, “The better the quality of relationship between leader and team members, the better diverse teams have shown to perform, because team members feel accepted and safe” (p. 107). As a result, a collaborative culture in which team creativity yields fresh ideas is an asset in today’s competitive organizations (Barczak et al., 2010, p. 335).

In contrast, “words that are considered as being in opposition to collaboration—coercion, competitive and autonomy” (Thistlethwaite et al., 2013, p. 53) create an interesting juxtaposition in how interdisciplinary teams practice. For example, skill-specific professionals, such as the training sergeants and instructors who require specific experience and skills to do their jobs on the frontline are required to collaborate with other professionals in the TA to meet the needs of the organization (Thistlethwaite et al., 2013, p. 52). A dichotomy emerges between the composition of diverse teams and positive outcomes experienced as a result of considerate leadership (Homan & Greer, 2013, p. 109). Homan and Greer (2013) shared, “on one hand, individuals can see team diversity in terms of subgroups, perceiving a dividing line” (p. 190) that sets that group apart from others, whereas team diversity may also be seen as unique skills and abilities that contribute to the entire group. Abrahamson and Chase (2015) suggested mindfully balancing and preserving the unique professional differences, as opposed to merging into one body of knowledge, is also important in unifying working teams (p. 382).
In parallel with the TA’s diverse teams, Maccoby (2011) suggested that the leaders of individual teams must partner together to develop and implement approaches and ideas for effective project development within a collaborative community (p. 59). Thus, “vision, competence and courage” (Maccoby, 2011, p. 60) are required by leaders to “transform a cumbersome bureaucracy into a flexible collaborative community” (p. 60). Collective vision and shared understanding play a key role in this endeavour (Bohm & Nichol, 2013; Maccoby, 2011; Senge, 2006). Perceived equity among staff is essential as, “favoritism sends a powerful message that all staff members are not equal and valued” (Lambert, Hogan, Barton-Bellessa, et al., 2012, p. 952). Organizational injustice has a direct effect on relationships between staff members and leadership (Lambert, Hogan, Barton-Bellessa, et al., 2012, p. 952). As an element of collaborative practice, “diverse teams require leaders to show more considerate leadership, thereby improving relationship with the team, valuing members’ unique differences, and reducing subgroup formation” (Homan & Greer, 2013, p. 119).

**Drivers and barriers in collaborative practice.** In collaborative practice, “supporting relationship building is not easy, given the competitive culture and transactional relationships typical in organizational life” (Senge et al., 2007, p. 47). As a barrier, Senge et al. (2007) offered that it is rare for groups to engage in authentic dialogue in which they share their vulnerabilities in an open way (p. 47). Abrahamson and Chase (2015) noted that the diversity of the teams is heightened as differences are realized by how individuals communicate specific to their job function (p. 374). Of equal importance, when “the rubber hits the road—when concrete plans are to lay down project objectives and pave systemic and timely project process” (Abrahamson & Chase, 2015, p. 374) teams may acknowledge and let go “of their respective jargon” (p. 374).
That is to say, if members of teams “engage in dialogue, seek partnerships, and try new interdisciplinary tools” (Salas, 2013, p. 219), they have an opportunity to share successes and benefit from understanding the difference from previous experiences. As a benefit, Salas (2013) conveyed that connections may transform into long-term professional partnerships and personal relationships (p. 219). Relationships are forged out of common ground and partnership.

As a driver of collaborative practice, “translating general ideas into specific organizational strategies, practices and objectives takes imagination, courage, persistence, patience and passion” (Senge et al., 2007, p. 47). As discussed in the previous section, if leadership wishes to foster an environment in which people can work effectively and competently, it is important to establish trust (Barczak et al., 2010, p. 335). Barczak et al. (2010) asserted that an absence of trust can impact how staff view their role in completing the task and the task itself (p. 335). In exploring managerial impact on emotional and cognitive trust in employees, Young and Daniel (2003) assessed there to be four factors: “Unequal power, the presence of barriers to relationship formation, the workplace culture—both its distant nature and more specifically the poorly regarded institutional norms of this organization—and the perceived distrust of management” (p. 144). They attributed these factors a “vicious, rather than virtuous, processes of relationship development” (Young & Daniel, 2003, p. 119).

Collaboration as a transaction develops shallow relationships. Thistlethwaite et al. (2013) asserted, “Collaboration can take many forms, with players exhibiting different short-term behaviour based on their long-term goal” (p. 52). In this case, sustained motivation for collaboration is driven only by perceived gains (Thistlethwaite et al., 2013, p. 52).
Counter to this, trusting relationships in collaborative teams enhances team creativity (Barczak et al., 2010, p. 340). As a caution, Thistlethwaite et al. (2013) surmised that it may seem less challenging for one to work within “one’s own professional boundaries, responsibilities and within a culture with which one is at ease” (p. 54). They asserted that this may deter individuals from taking time to explain their positions to other interdisciplinary team members, which may be detrimental to establishing collaborative practices and, consequently, create a potential barriers for group development (p. 54).

In effort to increase growth in practice, “collaboration may be necessary for the evolution of professions and the vibrancy of their scope of practice” (Thistlethwaite et al., 2013, p. 54). As well, Abrahamson and Chase (2015) suggested, in times when diverse groups come together jointly and are unable to mutually come to consensus on a plan, a benefit of collaborative practice is the ability to “reflect together on their respective practices” (p. 386), which provides an opportunity to acknowledge contributions based on individual knowledge and expertise. In taking risks, building relationships explores diversity, asks curious questions, and challenges barriers, while confronting stereotypes in individuals, teams, and organizations (Senge et al., 2007, p. 49). Senge et al. (2007) stated, imperative to collaboration in today’s organizations, this process forges new relationship connections that are “more personal and more systemic than traditional planned change approaches” (p. 49).

**Strategies to strengthen collaborative practice.** Thistlethwaite et al. (2013) suggested collaboration as an antidote to role stagnation and diminished reflective practice (p. 54). Senge et al. (2007) posited, “When effective collaboration is the aim, developing a shared conceptual ‘systems sense’ is even more important” (p. 45). In their article, Senge et al. (2007) identified
defining overall outcomes and having “guidelines for shaping strategies” (p. 46) of equal importance. They stated that there are times when excellent plans create little result, and, similarly, findings from complex issues may not assist in creating action (Senge et al., 2007, p. 47).

As there appears to be a universally inconsistent definition of collaboration, Thistlethwaite et al. (2013) curiously questioned if there is a need for leaders to ask themselves whether collaboration is really that complex (p. 55). They suggested that the lack of clear definition may impede knowing what to do when teams come together (Thistlethwaite et al., 2013, p. 55). Regardless of the ambiguity, a number of scholars asserted that social systems, with their complex projects and networks, will thrive if there is a shared purpose and supporting values (Maccoby, 2011; Senge, 2006; Senge et al., 2007). In addition, Maccoby (2011) suggested a supportive environment is beneficial and serves to motivate staff (p. 59).

Independent of diverse worldviews, Abrahamson and Chase (2015) stressed the importance of designating opportunity for collaboration (p. 382). From the same lens, “committing to reflective conversations and working with mental models” (Senge et al., 2007, p. 47) is a way of building more productive relationships.

From their research on team creativity in collaborative environments, Barczak et al. (2010) noted there is minimal evidence to support the link between awareness of one’s emotions and the development of collaborative culture (p. 341). Although authors have defined emotional intelligence in an individual as possessing the ability to manage one’s own emotions in a thoughtful way (Barczak et al., 2010; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013), “emotional intelligence [in teams] creates trust, both effective and cognitive, among team members”
(Barczak et al., 2010, p. 342), enhances a collaborative culture, and inspires team creativity (p. 341). In positive, passionate, and determined organizations, Goleman et al. (2013) asserted, “The ‘group IQ [intelligence quotient],’ then—the sum of every person’s best talents contributed at full force—depends on the group’s emotional intelligence, as shown in its harmony” (p. 15). While the mood of an organization in itself is not the only performance measure, collaboration requires leadership with awareness of how one’s emotions influence others and impact performance (p. 17).

In building team trust, Young and Daniel (2003) offered that strengthening communication and building interpersonal relationships is required (p. 150). They suggested a good starting point for organizational leaders is to “share what is happening in the organization and better communicate with them” (Young & Daniel, 2003, p. 150). In their study of correctional staff trust, Lambert, Hogan, Barton-Bellessa, et al. (2012) suggested supervisors are central in feedback and direction dissemination (p. 950). These authors surmised, “Trust in supervisors probably allows for greater acceptance of information and suggestions that improve the job abilities of staff” (Lambert, Hogan, Barton-Bellessa, et al., 2012, p. 950). By demonstrating transparent sharing of information, employees are seen to build trust and relationships are strengthened with the leadership; this leads to increased motivation and organizational connection (Young & Daniel, 2003, p. 151).

Negotiating diverse perspectives opens opportunities for productive communication between diverse team members with varying knowledge and expertise in collaborative teams (Abrahamson & Chase, 2015, p. 382). Salas (2013) posited, “We need to engage in a dialogue to learn, not to confront or tear down different thinking or methodologies” (p. 218). Teams need
reciprocal dialogue with intent to listen and learn from each other (Bohm & Nichol, 2013; Salas, 2013; Senge, 2006). If teams are to practice collaboratively, Senge et al. (2007) asserted that individuals may “need to hold back from giving and contributing” (p. 54). It may be the other professionals on the team that can contribute more effectively (Senge et al., 2007, p. 54). Thistlethwaite et al. (2013) offered, “Valuing people irrespective of their background, education and profession is considered to be a key aspect of team working” (p. 53). A team may just be a group of diverse individuals who work with the same population on a daily basis (Thistlethwaite et al., 2013, p. 53). The benefit being that these relationships lead to enduring connections that create richness in the work being done (Salas, 2013, p. 219).

In their study, van Knippenberg, van Ginkel, and Homan (2013) queried whether “espousing a belief in the value of diversity and building a climate may not be enough to reap the performance benefits of diversity” (p. 185). Sustainable collaboration benefits from dialogue that includes elements such as “personal check-ins and basic principles of dialogue and learning” (Senge et al., 2007, p. 49). Based on their observations of a sustainable food lab project, Senge et al. (2007) observed deeply personal, leadership commitment (p. 50). They described witnessing the following:

[An] action learning process consisting of three phases: 1) cosensing in order to develop shared understanding of current and emerging realities; 2) coinspiring in order to share new knowledge and commitment; and 3) cocreating in order to design prototypes and pilot a small number of innovations conceived by the lab team. (Senge et al., 2007, p. 50)

Senge et al. (2007) asserted, “The learnings from action-oriented work done on particular projects suggest the need to take time to gather input from all stakeholders” (p. 50).
Van Knippenberg et al. (2013) emphasized, “There can be no ‘one size fits all’ answer to the question of what would constitute an accurate diversity mindset” (p. 196). Similar to Senge et al. (2007), Van Knippenberg et al. proposed three characteristics to assist in clarifying diverse perspectives: “promotion-focussed rather than prevention-focussed goals, exploration-focused rather than exploitation-focused goals, and team-specific procedural knowledge of diversity as a task-relevant information source” (p. 186). From an appreciative mindset, one can assume “that whatever we want more of already exists, if only in tiny qualities. We begin by believing in and looking for the best in people and organizations” (Bushe, 2010, p. 220). Essentially, the literature suggested a collective, planned, and purposeful route to honouring team diversity, rather than imploring reactive tactics. The former draws out the best in people and breaks down barriers to collaboration.

The basic tools in learning organizations to include systems thinking, establishing a shared vision, working with mental models, and creating dialogue as impetus for collaborative transformational change (Bohm & Nichol, 2013; Senge, 2006; Senge et al., 2007). “It involves disclosure and vulnerability” (Senge et al. 2007, p. 52) that surfaces when real discussions occur, problems are discussed openly, and people grow because they want to. Further, in interdisciplinary teams, sharing the success, challenges, rationales, and new insights with other groups is crucial (Salas, 2013, p. 219). Sharing new knowledge and fostering team transparency benefits all (Salas, 2013; van Knippenberg et al., 2013) in collaboration.

**Collaborative Practice in a Learning Organization**

For the staff at the TA, evolving as a learning organization aligns with its mandate as an educational institution. In his book, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of the Learning*
Organization, Senge (2006) asserted, “Learning organizations are possible because, deep down, we are all learners . . . [and] because not only is it our nature to learn but we love to learn” (p. 4). Through parallel process, learners embrace new practices with potential to influence other individuals’ skills and abilities (Senge, 2006, p. 219). Capabilities for the future of the TA as a learning organization are unfathomable with continued growth (Senge, 2006, p. 4). Schein (2010) acquiesced, “The role of learning-oriented leadership in a turbulent world . . . [is to] become learners themselves, and then be able to recognize and systematically reward behavior based on those assumptions in others” (p. 373).

In this section, by exploring literature I delve into (a) principles of a learning organization, (b) communities of practice as a collaborative exercise in a learning organization, (c) capacity development in interdisciplinary teams, and (d) leading a learning organization. My intent is to compare and contrast scholarly works that mirror learning principles related to the TA’s evolution as a centre of excellence.

Principles of a learning organization. Sustaining a learning organizations requires investment. Senge (1995) stressed, “Developing the capabilities for recognizing our own mental models and for dialogue, for building shared vision, and for systems thinking is a long-term undertaking” (p. 237). He stated that taking stock of the resources at hand, heeds way to understand, in entirety, how to proceed (Senge, 1995, p. 237). In their study of unmet task objectives, Carmeli and Sheaffer (2008) posited, “Organizational learning refers to the extent to which managers and organization members alike employ insights, information, or cues gleaned from previous experiences or external sources to steer current behavior” (p. 471). Their study employed the organizational learning theories of Argyris and Schön (1996) in reference to
double- and single-loop learning; in this instance, error detection represents single-loop learning and a correction process refers to a double-loop response (see also Carmeli & Sheaffer, 2008, p. 417). Argyris (2002) inferred that single-loop learning happens when errors are subconsciously managed, whereas double-loop learning is when errors are “corrected by changing the governing values, and then the action” (p. 206).

The literature offered diverse perspectives on promoting organizational learning. Schein (2010) asserted, in “respect to the dimension of individualism versus groupism, the best prescription is to accept that every system has both elements in it” (p. 373). He suggested, as organizations are comprised of both, respect of the task at hand determines the use of the “one that optimizes individual competition and collaborative teamwork” (Schein, 2010, p. 373). From a differing mindset, Bohm and Nichol (2013) stated that changes need to happen collectively, as individual changes have little impact (p. 46). Senge (2006) presented a similar view and reasoned, “Individual learning, at some level is irrelevant for organizational learning. . . . If teams learn, they become a microcosm for learning through the organization” (p. 219). For the organization, a ripple effect is created in which individual teams influence other team learning (Senge, 2006, p. 218).

“The dimension of the task versus relationship orientation” (Schein, 2010, p. 373) is another undertaking of a learning organization. Berg (2015) asserted, “When alignment was felt through the organization’s support of one’s personal goals, there was a great sense of commitment from the individual” (p. 9). In engagement and motivation, there is a “clear delineation between work and life ambitions” (Berg, 2015, p. 9). An organization cannot make the assumption that learning means the same to each individual, team, culture, and subculture
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(Schein, 2010, p. 373). Consequently, if individuals do not believe in the organization’s vision, they “will not act authentically, and you [the organization] will fail” (Quinn & Thakor, 2014, p. 103).

As an example, in their study of corrections workers in a United States maximum security juvenile institution, Lambert, Barton-Bellessa, and Hogan (2013) concluded, “Support for rehabilitation [of inmates] had a significant positive relationship with organizational citizenship” (p. 966). In other words, “workers who wished to provide rehabilitation to offenders appear to be willing to help their fellow coworkers and ensure compliance of institutional rules” (Lambert et al., 2013, p. 966). For the TA, there is a direct correlation between one’s practice worldview and the consequence this holds, positive or negative, on his or her organizational affiliation and desire to take on additional tasks to meet the needs of others.

Bohm (as cited in Jaworski, 2011) saw individuals as having an empathic ability that is essential in creating change (p. 81). Bohm (as cited in Jaworski, 2011) surmised that, as all individuals are interconnected, if self-inquiry “could be taught and if people could understand it” (p. 81), then new awareness would exist. Bohm and Nichol (2013) offered, “The early Christians had a Greek word, koinonia, the root of which means ‘to participate’—the idea of partaking of the whole and taking part in it; not merely the whole group, but the whole” (p. 47). Senge (2006) offered “three critical dimensions” (p. 218) for team learning: the need to think insightfully about complex issues, the need for innovative, coordinated action, and the role of team members on other teams.

Communities of practice as a collaborative exercise in a learning organization.

Senge (1995) stressed that in designing an environment conducive to learning, a shift is required
The notion of communities of practice (CoPs) is not new; however, today’s businesses require more intentionality, as traditional organizational structures “fail to attract enough participants” (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p. 1). Wenger et al. (2002) reasoned, “Communities, unlike teams and other structures, need to invite the interaction that makes them alive” (p. 1). Similarly, Senge (2006) advised, rather than focusing on skills and abilities, looking at new attitudes and awareness is in line with 21st century thinking (see also Senge, 1995, p. 238). Senge (1995) acknowledged,

To develop people who were intrinsically motivated to learn, able to reflect on their own assumptions, able to learn together, able to objectively assess their own learning, able to think systemically—this would take some major changes in the content and process of education. (p. 238)

Short (1998) indicated that learners may find it difficult to understand and accept that they have an impact on others (p. 85). Without this awareness, a game ensues (Short, 1998, p. 85). Short claimed, “From the inside—out, we all create the impact that others have on us. . . . We judge others by the impact they have on us. We judge ourselves by our intentions” (p. 85). Consequently, Short warned the repercussions are immense for having a lack of self-awareness (p. 85). If identification with the organization is important for the individual, social support as well as coaching and feedback, can enhance organizational well-being (Van Gelderen & Bik, 2016, p. 208).

Neufeld, Fang, and Wan (2013) stated, “Individuals participate in a CoP to learn practical knowledge from one another, and to accomplish shared objectives” (p. 619). Those who participate in CoPs are often challenged by the views of other individuals, as knowledge differs
from original learnings; as a result, this can create debate and new thinking as mutual understanding emerges (Neufeld et al., 2013, p. 624). Wenger et al. (2002) noted the goal of a CoP is to “bring out the community’s own internal direction, character and energy” (p. 2) and identified seven principles for members of CoPs to understand how communities come together (p. 2). Following these principles, CoPs are (a) designed for evolution, (b) open dialogue of inside and outside perspectives, (c) invite different levels of participation, (d) develop both public and private community spaces, (e) focus on value, (f) combine familiarity and excitement, and (g) create a rhythm for the community (Wenger et al., 2002, pp. 2–7). These scholars distinguished that, as communities are unique and likely to evolve with change, “finding the right rhythm at each stage is key to a community’s development” (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 7).

“Mastering the practices of dialogue and discussion” (Senge, 2006, p. 220) is a component of team learning, in that there are two unique ways in which teams communicate. In dialogue, there is a “deep listening and a suspending of one’s own views. By contrast, in discussion, “different views are presented and defended” (Senge, 2006, p. 220). While these two methods may complement each other, Senge (2006) suggested, “Most teams lack the ability to distinguish between the two and to move consciously between them” (p. 220). Dialogue requires intentionality in mindfully listening to others while suspending one’s own judgements (Bohm & Nichol, 2013; Senge, 2006). Sindell and Sindell (2015) suggested, “When confronted with things we aren’t particularly good at, most of us will avoid them” (p. 23). As a third of four principles to unearthing hidden strengths, Sindell and Sindell (2015) offered, “To be good at something, you need to put in the time and effort” (p. 23). By challenging oneself and practicing, an individual can be victorious in developing new communication strategies.
Berg (2015) differentiated between task-driven and socioemotional motivation and engagement (p. 1). In a study of organizational senior managers, Berg (2015) found individuals who are “more task oriented appear to be motivated by the actual goal or milestone, whereas socioemotional individuals appear to focus on the purpose of the activity” (p. 9), or the higher purpose. Quinn and Thakor (2014) asserted, “Higher purpose is the intent, perceived as producing a social benefit over and above the monetary payoff shared by the employer (principal) and employee (agent)” (p. 101).

Quinn and Thakor suggested that pursuing a common vision is intrinsically more rewarding, thus “the work begins to matter for everyone” (p. 101). Comparatively, Berg (2015) asserted that task-driven individuals assessed the intentionality of the goal and its ability to be achieved, whereas the socioemotional group focussed on a more holistic impact of the goal to be achieved (p. 9). As in community corrections, Lambert, Hogan, Cheeseman Dial, Altheimer, and Barton-Bellessa (2012) surmised from their findings that private correctional staff took “pride in performing a dangerous job that protects society” (p. 166). While these authors reported more research is needed to link organizational citizenship and dangerousness of the job, they also referred to Trivers’s (1971) notion of the reciprocal obligation of coworkers to have each other’s back in ensuring safety on the job (p. 166; see also Lambert, Hogan, Cheeseman Dial, et al., 2012). Within a CoP in the TA, intentionally drawing upon diverse motivations engages individuals to realize their worth and acknowledges that all staff are valuable to the organization.

In discussing CoPs, Neufeld et al. (2013) suggested, “Joint enterprise and the sense of community identification it [a CoP] stimulates were found to have the strongest influence on individual learning outcomes” (p. 636). For leadership, development of positive learning
outcomes is linked directly to organizational practices and strategies that support deeper community connection (Neufeld et al., 2013, p. 636). In emergent change, leaders who demonstrate inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized considerations, and idealized influence “are people of integrity” (Quinn & Thakor, 2014, p. 104). Quinn and Thakor (2014) asserted that a reciprocal effect occurs in which the pursuit of higher purpose leads to empowered employees and “the ratio of positive to negative thoughts and feelings may increase” (pp. 104–105).

**Capacity building in interdisciplinary teams.** At the heart of the TA lies a diverse organizational culture that consists of civilian (academics and business professionals) and paramilitary (law enforcement) staff members. In their study, Dick and Metcalfe (2001) compared the influence of management and organizational commitment from civilian and police officer staff members (p. 111). Contrary to beliefs of many law enforcement personnel, Dick and Metcalfe posited that there were few differences between the groups in relation to their commitment in the organization (p. 122). These authors surmised, regardless of role, “there is a ‘universal appeal’ for a work climate that supports employees, treats them fairly, and ensures that employees feel that they make important contributions” (p. 123).

From a theoretical perspective, Van Gelderen and Bik (2016) asserted that employee commitment and willingness to support colleagues within a law enforcement culture increases with strong alignment to the organizational mandate (pp. 208–209). In their study “The Impact of Job Stress, Job Involvement, Job Satisfaction, and Organizational Commitment on Correctional Staff Support of Rehabilitation and Punishment,” Lambert, Hogan, Barton, and Elechi (2009) determined, “Organizational commitment had significant relationship with both
support for rehabilitation and support for treatment [of inmates]” (p. 118). As stated previously, personal connection to the organization increases the likelihood for corrections staff to want to help others (Lambert et al., 2009, p. 118). Similarly, Van Gelderen and Bik (2016) stressed that when law enforcement members personally identify with organizational objectives, one can assume that “they [law enforcement] will do their best to protect the interests, and goals of the organization” (p. 208).

Bohm and Nichol (2013) proposed, “A society is a link of relationships that are set by people in order to work and live together: rules, laws, institutions, and various things” (p. 28). As a process of establishing a coherent society, thoughtful agreement by individuals to engage in relationships begets connection development (Bohn & Nichol, 2013, p. 28). This inspires the creation of new networks, culture formation, and dialogue that precipitates a shared meaning; hence, without appreciation for this sequence of events there is incoherence and no connection (Bohm & Nichol, 2013; Jaworski, 2011; Senge, 2006).

Tabling and suspending assumptions about all past or present experiences with each other enables a coherent group identity to surface and forms the beginning of a new culture (Bohm & Nichol, 2013; Jaworski, 2011; Senge, 2006). While Bohm and Nichol (2013) suggested that shared meaning is the glue that holds society together (p. 29), the same can be assumed about interdisciplinary teams. Senge (2006) stated that similar to groups of athletes or musicians, “outstanding teams in organizations develop the same sort of relationship—an ‘operational trust,’ where each team members remains conscious of other team members” (p. 218). There is a reciprocity between one another that stems from mutual commitment (Senge, 2006, p. 218).
Berg (2015) imparted that understanding the individual reward for attaining an organization’s vision is important (p. 9). While not all groups respond to rewards linked to task accomplishment, for some reward is linked to creating a greater good in society (Berg, 2015, p. 9). In conjunction, “learning from failures is essential not merely for resolving near or complete failures but also for taking advantage of new opportunities” (Carmeli & Sheaffer, 2008, p. 468). For the TA, new knowledge gained from examining barriers in achieving past task success and relationship development heed way to adjust methods accordingly to challenge limiting belief systems about the organization’s capabilities.

**Leading a learning organization.** Leading a learning organization is a complex endeavour. Berg (2015) suggested, for leadership, providing individual resources and support to task-orientated and socioemotional employees increases motivation and engagement in today’s organizations (p. 11). Leaders should, then, step away to allow employees to draw from the resources as they need based on their own personal drive to “achieve their own aspirational purpose or goals in life” (Berg, 2015, p. 11). Similarly, Quinn and Thakor (2014) stated that transformational leaders tap into the heart of what moves employees beyond “technical expertise, authority and transactional power” (p. 103). Carmeli and Sheaffer (2008) suggested, “Leaders behaviors shape followers’ perceptions and behaviors towards a work task because they set a salient example of how to behave” (p. 472).

In their study regarding improving hospital patient safety, Zimmerman et al. (2013) offered, as a distributed leadership method, frontline ownership “focuses on the work being led by the front line, with traditional leadership adopting a more supportive role” (p. 13). To implement this method, leader characteristics may resemble those in resonant leadership.
Fluidly, resonant leaders persevere to go beyond rote organizational processes, reflect on individual and group needs, and can “adjust their style on a dime” (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005; Goleman et al., 2013). Resonant leaders are intentional, influential, and zealous their ability to move people; they are emotionally intelligent (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005; Goleman et al., 2013).

Zimmerman et al. (2013) surmised that frontline problem ownership compels staff members to identify solutions, create strategies, and implement processes to mitigate issues as they arise (p. 8). In contrast, in command-and-control leadership, follower buy-in is imposed by leader-designed strategies that are disconnected from the frontline practices, unacquainted with behavioural nuances, and lack bearing on improved practice (Zimmerman et al., 2013, p. 8).

As an outcome of their study, Zimmerman et al. (2013) asserted that a dichotomy emerged: a traditional view of task completion based on best practices and a curiosity for new learning with possible future implication for modified practices (p. 17). Zimmerman et al. (2013) cautioned, “The risk of starting FLO [frontline ownership] but not fully embracing it is even greater resistance to top-down directives” (p. 18).

A rapidly changing world requires learning leaders to have a steady vision that is flexible to external changes in circumstances (Schein, 2010, p. 374). Schein (2010) stated, “The culture creation leader therefore needs persistence and patience, yet as a learner must be flexible and ready for change” (p. 374). Aligned with Schein (2010), Carmeli and Sheaffer (2008) posited that organizational leaders capable of humbling themselves to learn from past errors are more likely to adapt to new ways of thinking (p. 482).

Referring to an organization as a system, Senge, Hamilton, and Kania (2015) surmised, “Becoming a system leader is not a simple journey” (p. 32). As a recommendation for this vast
responsibility, Senge et al. (2015) suggested six guidelines: (a) learn on the job, (b) balance advocacy and inquiry, (c) engaging people across boundaries, (d) letting go, (e) build one’s own toolkit, and (f) work with other systemic leaders (pp. 32–33). From a follower perspective, Herzberg (1987) asserted a discrepancy between organizational hygiene (i.e., reducing time at work, spiralling wages, sensitivity training, etc.) and motivational factors (i.e., job recognition, advancement, increased responsibility, etc.) related to employee job satisfaction and, conversely, “no job satisfaction” (pp. 8–9).

In a resurgence of his 1968 theory, Herzberg (1987) described that leaders are often tasked with micromanaging subordinates, while time would be well spent mentoring the growth of their staff (p. 13). Quinn and Thakor (2014) suggested, “This problem occurs when a manager (principal) seeks to motivate an employee (agent) to work hard in the best interest of a manager” (p. 100). Hence if a manager cannot compel a staff member to achieve desired tasks, he or she will lean on performance reviews and compensation packages to address the situation (Quinn & Thakor, 2014, p. 101). However, in an authentic conveyance of the organization’s vision by the leader, “employees embracing the higher purpose, are transformed” (Quinn & Thakor, 2014, p. 102); they attain positive self-worth from their efforts and behave like principals. Herzberg (1987) offered that the ability to accommodate this undertaking requires a shift of supervisory job responsibilities (p. 13). He asserted,

If you have employees on a job, use them. If you can’t use them on the job, get rid of them, either via automation or by selecting someone with lesser ability. If you can’t use them and you can’t get rid of them, you will have a motivation problem. (Herzberg, 1987, p. 13)
Quinn and Thakor (2014) posited, as a leader, “if you do not believe in the power of higher purpose, you will not act authentically, and you will fail” (p. 103). In this, they proposed two core reasons to seek organizational higher purpose: (a) purpose and meaning and (b) purpose and emergent change (Quinn & Thakor, 2014, p. 103). The former links directly to employee motivation through positive experiences related to job satisfaction, and the latter to the results of leaders and employees walking an aligned path in achieve organizational purpose (p. 104). Inevitably, the literature spoke to an authentic convergence of leaders and followers as learners. While professional skill and ability are acknowledged, a youthful curiosity keeps ideas fresh and supports organizational transformation during systemic change.

Chapter Summary

The review of pertinent literature on collaborative practice and collaborative practice in a learning organization hedged this research study. This literature review provided an academic foundation to support the validity of this inquiry. In contextualizing this research, some topics raised in the literature discussed individual motivation, organizational vision, mutual and organizational connection, systemic leadership, and problem ownership. For the internal and external stakeholders in the TA, participation in this research is an opportunity to take purposeful risk with potential to strengthen relationships, bring to light the obvious, and delve into new understandings.

Snowden and Boone (2007) asserted, “Most situations and decisions are complex because of some major change. . . . [This] introduces unpredictability and flux” (p. 5). Rather than attempt to predict the outcome, patience is necessary to “allow the path forward to reveal itself” (Snowden & Boone, 2007, p. 5). Chapter 1, I reviewed the organizational context,
significance and systems analysis for this research; this chapter provided a literary framework to support my inquiry. Chapter 3 offers attention to research methodology, methods, and ethical considerations in respect to the inquiry question: What strategies are considered effective for the interdisciplinary teams in the Alberta JSG, TA to strengthen collaborative practice?
Chapter Three: Project Approach

In this research, I applied the action research engagement (ARE) model to answer the main inquiry question: What strategies are considered most effective for the interdisciplinary teams within the Alberta JSG TA to strengthen collaborative practice? The subquestions for this inquiry included:

1. What are current collaborative practices?
2. How do stakeholders envision collaborative practice for the Training Academy?
3. What are potential barriers to collaborative practice?
4. What strategies and processes can be put into place to build on the vision to strengthen collaborative practice?

In this chapter I discuss the methodological approach, potential participants, and specific methods for this inquiry. Further, detailed preliminary study conduct, data analysis, and ethical considerations demonstrated integrity in planning to engage in research involving people.

While the project approach is about data gathering, applying ARE was an opportunity to support participants to share their experiences, provide insight, and generate ideas and momentum for significant organizational change. Rowe, Graf, Agger-Gupta, Piggot-Irvine, and Harris (2013) asserted, “The ARE model is associated with shifting attitudes, perspectives, knowledge and values among people in the organization by enhancing meaningfulness, clarity and commonality of purpose, motivation, and commitment for change” (p. 19).

In Chapter 4 and 5 I present the themes and conclusions as well as potential actionable items derived from the participant narrative to the Project Sponsor, TA staff members, and external stakeholders in a number of engagement sessions. The recommendations in Chapter 5
outline an “organizational change action plan” (Rowe et al., 2013, p. 13) that details the necessity, strategy, and course of action to support the TA’s evolution as a learning organization.

**Methodology**

This research incorporated the fundamental premise of action research (AR) by including all stakeholders who were impacted by this issue to be part of the research (Stringer, 2014, p. 6). As often focus lies only on the immediate situation, “the theoretical foundations of Action Research lie in Gestalt psychology,⁴ which stresses that change can only successfully be achieved by helping individuals to reflect on and gain insights into the totality of their situation” (Burnes, 2009, p. 232).

This research was a leap of faith for the TA, as it challenged the traditional command-and-control structure of the paramilitary organization it serves. As stated in Chapter 1, my role was quite external as a researcher; however, I am internal to the organization as an employee of the Alberta Government working in the Human Services ministry. Coghlan and Brannick (2014) discussed the ethical dilemma in balancing the role as an action researcher, who seeks to look beyond the surface for new organizational insights, and employee, who provides a meaningful contribution to the organization (p. 157). As an important part of the AR process, I continually dialogued with Ms. Arnold-Schutta to mitigate risk of researcher bias in this inquiry. Further, I engaged in three sessions (discussed further in the Study Conduct section of this chapter) with the TA staff members before data collection to present the rationale for the proposed methods and to seek feedback. After data collection, I met separately with Ms. Arnold-Schutta at the

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⁴ The *Merriam-Webster* dictionary defined Gestalt as “something that is made of many parts and yet is somehow more than or different from the combination of its parts” (“Gestalt,” 2015, para. 2).
findings, conclusions, and recommendations stages, and conducted four meetings to discuss the
aforementioned with TA staff members and external stakeholders. My choice of qualitative
methods, inclusive of all members in the organization freely sharing together in a transparent
way regardless of rank, was uncommon, yet foundational in supporting the evolution of the TA
through strengthened collaborative practice.

AR not only looks at the past, but also examines the present and future (Torbert &
Taylor, 2008, p. 239). As a researcher, through single-, double-, and triple-loop learning, I
continuously reflected on first-person voices (intuition), second-person voices of those who are
part of the team at the TA, and third-person voices shaped from the within the TA as an
of cultivating a double- and triple-loop action inquiry capacity in oneself, organizations, and
social science is that, theoretically, only leaders and organizational participants . . . can reliably
help” (p. 199) in changing and understanding the transformation of an organization. As a
researcher, I reflected on my on assumptions about “values, behaviour and assumptions”
(Coghlan & Brannick, 2014, p. 43) that I bring to the table based on my own experiences and
interpretations of those experiences (p. 26). Through continued connection with my Project
Sponsor, strategic team, and stakeholders, I continued to clarify my judgements to ensure

Hence AR, collaborative in nature, supported this inquiry in affording stakeholders the
opportunity to work together to create “resolution[s]” (Stringer, 2014, p. 11) by cyclically
examining the issue through a constant process of observation, reflection, and action (p. 9).
Participation in AR is not just intended to solve a problem, but is a viable resource for creating connections (Stringer, 2014, p. 163).

It is important to note that only the first two phases of AR, identified as the ARE cycle (Rowe et al., 2013, pp. 17–19), were addressed in this inquiry. Rowe et al.’s (2013) ARE model suggests engaging stakeholders in dialogue is a conceptualization of “action” in postmodern social construction terms and that structural action and evaluation of action, more common in traditional definitions of AR (see Stringer, 2014), were not part of this project. These elements will take place in the organization subsequent to this thesis project.

As organizational action and evaluation of actions were beyond the scope of this research, construction of a participatory action plan was a crucial element of this study. Stringer (2014) noted people often make the assumption that “professional analysis provides the best way of envisioning a problem and that all that is needed is to provide a ‘recipe’ or prescription that people can follow” (p. 167). In the case of this research, upon analyzing the data findings prior to formulating conclusions and drawing upon participant recommendations, I met with Ms. Arnold-Schutta and shared preliminary themes. I endeavoured to be transparent in my presentation of the data, while adhering to the Government of Alberta (2016) values (para. 1–7) and my commitment to participants to maintain anonymity as ethical researcher.

Stakeholders came together in this inquiry to develop a collective image that was indicative of the continual evolution of the TA (Weisbord, 2012, p. 266). In this, the tasks and processes that surfaced as effective methods to strengthen collaborative practice required participation from all within the system (Weisbord, 2012, p. 266). This research provided an opportunity for the staff within the TA, as well as relevant external stakeholders, to productively
craft solutions to address how collaborative practice can be strengthened within the TA, while building relationships and creating unity through dialogue (Stringer, 2014, p. 96).

I approached this research from an appreciative mindset (Bushe, 2010, p. 243) to create space to share stories of how collaborative practice is envisioned for the TA. Separate from pure appreciative inquiry, this research asked participants to consider barriers to collaborative practice in the subquestions. Appreciative inquiry “is based on the simple assumption that every organization has something that works well, and those strengths can be the starting point for creating positive change” (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2005, p. 3). In this inquiry, I employed an appreciative stance to support participants to honestly look at the reality of their experiences without “fear of being shamed” (Bushe, 2010, p. 244). The time afforded to listen to others’ stories empowered the disempowered and fostered an understanding of differing worldviews (Glesne, 2016, p. 26). In sharing stories, participants in the inquiry drew from the best in each other’s experiences that sparked an interest in strengthening collaborative practice (Bushe, 2010, p. 243).

I employed a multimethod approach including open space technology (OST) and individual interviews during this research project. Coghlan and Brannick (2014) offered, “A method is not the same as a recipe, which delivers another instance of the same product” (p. 28). As I chose these methods, I considered how information gathered from the OST could inform the individual semistructured interviews. OST aligned with principles of AR as participants became curious about other information related to the issues at hand, and data collection became part of the iterative research process; unlike experimental research in which data collected is aligned with the initial research design (Stringer, 2014, p. 102).
Project Participants

In this research project, collaborative practice impacted all staff within the JSG TA. Internally, approximately 40 staff were employed at the TA during the time of data collection. The TA was comprised of the senior leads (strategic team), 19 peace officer training and standards staff members, six professional and leadership training staff, four curriculum designers, and nine business services staff (see Appendix B for JSG Organizational Chart). I utilized AR to inclusively create opportunity for change within this organization. Stringer (2014) posited, “Active participation is the key to feelings of ownership that motivate people to invest their time and energy to help shape the nature and quality of the acts, activities and behaviours in which they engage” (p. 31).

As I planned with Ms. Arnold-Schutta, Project Sponsor, potential external participants in the research included the JSG Operational Advisory Committee (including the Chief Sheriff and business partners like Fish and Wildlife), the Governance Committee (including assistant deputy ministers across JSG), the former Associate Deputy Minister who oversaw the TA, and former recruits and former TA staff members who had been involved with the academy since April 2015 (Executive Director of the TA, personal communication, April 29, 2016). Although identified as external stakeholders, members of the public were not included in this research. While inclusion of more participants seemed to complicate the research and increased potential for conflict, it was valuable for me to include as many perspectives as possible “that have the potential to alleviate many interconnected problems” (Stringer, 2014, p. 33).

Open space technology. All of the stakeholders described in the previous section were invited to participate in the OST session with the exception of former recruits. In consultation
with the TA staff and leadership, I found it difficult to determine how many recruits to invite to the OST. Additionally, TA leadership noted some logistical concerns for arranging personnel to leave their work sites, as well as concerns that the recruits did not seem to be an appropriate stakeholder group for this research. I decided to exclude this group from the research. On the actual day, 18 participants took part in the OST session.

I considered the undue influence on participants, as internal leadership and external stakeholders, including senior and executive leadership, were invited to be part of this research. It was possible that potential participants may have felt “constrained to follow the wishes of those who have some form of control over them” (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, & Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2014, p. 28). In the invitation for the OST session, I described the potential participant group and invited attendees to attend the session in casual attire. Ms. Arnold-Schutta supported this research with endorsement from the Assistant Deputy Minister within JSG who carries the TA portfolio, as the project has potential implications for the TA, and potentially the larger JSG ministry and other organizations with blended paramilitary and civilian cultures (Executive Director of the TA, personal communication, April 29, 2016). As a researcher, I endeavoured to adhere to the ethical guidelines of the Tri-Council Policy Statement (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2014).

Utilizing an organizationally inclusive large-group method at the onset of this research reinforced to the participants the commitment of the leadership to support change, while focusing change efforts (Burke, 2009, p. 748). AR makes the assumption “that all stakeholders—those whose lives are affected by the problem under study—should be engaged in the process of
investigation” (Stringer, 2014, p. 15). OST provided an opportunity for collective reflective practice and time to generate solutions to strengthen collaboration while improving the culture in the TA (Stringer, 2014, p. 15). “Creating time and space is a uniquely human and humanizing activity. . . . [When] I become me, you become you, and they become they” (Owen, 2008, p. 57), and without this activity the collective is not realized. I further describe the OST approach in the Inquiry Methods section of this chapter.

Interviews. All of the identified potential participants, with the exclusion of former recruits, were invited to take part in the individual semistructured interviews. Semistructured interviews included preestablished open-ended questions, as well as questions drawn from new information gathered during the research process (Glesne, 2016, p. 96). In this case, new themes that emerged from the data collected in the OST also informed the interviews. For the semistructured interviews, I invited 49 participants and a total of seven individuals took part in interviews.

Interviews are a significant method of data gathering in qualitative research, as the interviewer captures vivid descriptions of participants’ views, beliefs, and experiences as they emerge (Roulston, 2011, p. 77). Glesne (2016) asserted that interviews that look for deeper meaning unearth the unseen and help provide understanding for what is already known (p. 97). In this research, I structured the interviews using an appreciative stance, as “the key to sustaining the momentum [of change] is to build an ‘appreciative eye’ into all of the organization’s systems, procedures, and ways of working” (Cooperrider et al., 2005, p. 46). Framed from an appreciative mindset (or eye), I invited the interview participants to talk about what they want
more of in strengthening collaborative practice in the TA on the assumption that they would all be similarly invested (Bushe, 2010, p. 209).

While the voice of all invested stakeholders was important in this research, the use of purposeful sampling informed how interviewees were selected (Stringer, 2014, p. 77). In this research, I selected the first individuals to respond to the email invitation from each of the sections of the TA (the strategic team, Professional and Leadership Training, BSU, CDU, and OSU). In addition, I chose three respondents from the varying external stakeholders. In total, I conducted seven interviews.

The only individual I excluded from the data gathering was the Project Sponsor, whom I precluded due to power-over concerns. No participants chose to withdraw their informed consent. The Project Sponsor, Ms. Arnold-Schutta, has the ability to implement the organizational recommendations internal to the TA. External organizational recommendations were presented to the Operations Committee for consideration prior to finalizing this report.

**Inquiry team.** The inquiry team consisted of three members: (a) Ms. Jennifer Stacey, Calgary, Alberta; (b) Ms. Dani Zubkowski, Wainwright, Alberta; and (c) Ms. Deanna Emberg, Edmonton, Alberta. Ms. Stacey received her parchment for completion of the Master of Arts in Leadership program with Royal Roads University (RRU) in June 2016. I asked Ms. Stacey to assist in this inquiry, as she had recently completed her inquiry project. Ms. Dani Zubkowski was a classmate from my Master of Arts in Leadership cohort. I asked Ms. Zubkowski to be a member of my inquiry team, as she was in close proximity to assist me with the OST session and data analysis. Ms. Deanna Emberg is a work colleague in HS. I asked Ms. Emberg to assist with the OST session and data analysis, as she expressed interest in my research. I ensured all inquiry
team members signed the inquiry team letter of agreement prior to assisting in the research (see Appendix C).

**Inquiry Methods**

This section details the methods and context that were used for data collection as well as the study conduct. I close this section with a discussion of how the data were analyzed.

**Data collection methods.** As previously noted, to gather data for this inquiry I conducted two data collection methods: an OST followed by semistructured interviews. See Table 1 for population and sample information for each of these methods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Sample</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OST</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semistructured Interviews</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*Note. OST=Open Space Technology.*

As detailed in Rowe et al.’s (2013) ARE model and depicted in Figure 2, data collection occurred within the second step of the action inquiry process by engaging stakeholders in dialogue that “generates new data, creates possibility for new understanding of issues and possible solutions” (p. 20). Rowe et al. (2013) asserted, “The use of multiple methods with diverse participant groups creates opportunity to triangulate the different perspectives and findings to derive intersecting or common themes across the different settings” (p. 25). The dialogue among stakeholders has the potential to act as a means of helping create new understandings, which is the necessary first step in organizational change (Bushe, 2015, p. 6).
“Although using multiple data collection methods is the most common form of triangulation” (Glesne, 2016, p. 45), the notion of triangulation also implied using various sources of data, inquirers, and literary perspectives to excavate richer understanding of the situation, recognizing that there are many ways of knowing how to approach an issue. Multiple methods also provided opportunity to validate accurateness of the disclosure of participants, checked researcher interpretation of the data, and asked participants for feedback through “member checking” (Roulston, 2011, p. 79).

Figure 2. The action research engagement cycle.

Note. AR = Action Research; ARE = Action Research Engagement.

From Action Research Engagement, by Rowe, Graf, Agger-Gupta, Piggot-Irvine, & Harris, 2013, ALARA Monograph Series No. 5, p. 20. Copyright 2013 by Rowe et al. Reprinted with permission.
Open space technology. OST is a large-group method of data collection that has the “ability to unite groups of enormous diversity in their education, ethnicity, economics, politics, social positions or all of the above. . . [And] thrives in areas where there is conflict and confusion” (Owen, 2008, p. 9). As a first method of data collection, OST was well suited for this research, as the Project Sponsor (Executive Director) supported potential recommendations to the inquiry being generated by internal and external stakeholders (Owen, 2008, p. 15). Upon receipt of the RRU ethics review, the OST session occurred on July 18, 2016, from 1:00–4:30 p.m. at the Federal Building in Edmonton, Alberta. I was not required to submit an ethics application for the JSG. I invited all 49 participants from the list of potential participants, as mentioned previously, and 18 participants attended this session (see Table 1 for data collection methods). Both Mrs. Zubkowski and Ms. Emberg assisted with the session.

OST complemented the true intent of AR, as it provided time and space for people to come together to examine how they wanted to work together and build a unified vision and plan for their future (Stringer, 2014, p. 15). This method brought together people who normally were not found to be working side by side. In addition, with the inclusion of stakeholders external to the TA, there was increased diversity in the information collected. Comparatively, strengthening collaborative practice will only occur if those relative to the issue are ready to do the work. While some of those who attended the session may not directly work within the TA, the main premise of OST held true: “The right people for an Open Space event are the ones who want to come: voluntary self-selection is the rule” (Owen, 2008, p. 27).

Interviews. According to Glesne (2016), rich interviewing provides researchers with an “opportunity to learn about what . . . [they] cannot see and to explore alternative explanations of
what . . . [they] do see” (p. 97), thereby offering me an impetus for learning “from the unexpected turns in discourse” (p. 97) that occurred. Through reflection, interviews offered a means for participants to share their stories in their own words, in their own way (Stringer, 2014), and provided revelations into some of the dynamics related to the issue being researched (p. 105). Shifting from a deficit-based mindset to an appreciative stance “can create a great deal of disruption, [and] without disruption emergent change is not possible” (Bushe, 2015, p. 8). While possibly unnerving, disrupting patterns of behaviour were potentially motivating and offered a renewing experience to impact organizational change (Bushe, 2015, p. 8).

As the research unfolded, the data collected validated the purpose of this inquiry. While in contrast, as themes emerged, new insights that surfaced challenged this inquiry and the theories initially used as a foundation for this research, including the use of the initial information gathered (Alvesson, 2003, p. 31). Through a reflexive approach to interviewing, I used a less rote question-and-answer method of engagement with participants, and I engaged “multiple layers of meaning in interview work” (Alvesson, 2003, p. 31) by (a) being mindful of how and where the interviews were framed and occur; (b) understanding how the interviewee was connected to the TA, including his or her views and motive for participation; and (c) explicitly explore the language the interviewee used so to clarify inferences.

I invited the same 49 potential participants to partake in the semistructured interviews. As I discuss further in the Study Conduct section that follows, of the potential participant responses I selected seven contributors for this method (see Table 1 for data collection methods).
Study conduct. I commenced the research upon approval of the ethics review from RRU. As a researcher, to my knowledge, I was under no requirement to submit a second ethics review within the JSG.

In preparation for data collection, three separate information sessions occurred with the TA staff. The primary reasons for the sessions were to clarify my role as a researcher and to share the intent of the inquiry to identify strategies that are considered effective in strengthening collaborative practice amongst the TA’s diverse teams. Additionally, in the sessions, I presented information regarding the proposed methods for data collection, inclusion of external stakeholders, as well as the requirement for informed consent from all participants. The Project Sponsor attended the first session only. The second session occurred a month after the first with more representation from the training staff in attendance. I held a third session in June 2016 to field any outstanding questions from the staff members.

In consultation with the Project Sponsor, the inquiry team did not include TA staff members. Separately, I received permission to use an internal Government of Alberta email address to correspond with potential participants. The Project Sponsor, HS Delegation Training Manager, and JSG Director of Information Security granted this permission.

The date of the OST was July 18, 2016. I negotiated time limitations in coordinating the OST session based on reserving a space appropriate for the session, the TA’s training calendar, thesis proposal approval, and RRU ethics approval. I individually emailed the invitations to

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5 As requested, I reviewed the Ministry Information Security Policy and Use of Government of Alberta Internet and Email Policy Supplement, and I completed the Government of Alberta Information Security eCourse (S. Tyson, personal communication, April 13, 2016). I completed all requirements April 15, 2016, and submitted my request to the TA (as requested) on May 2, 2016.
participate in this method, the information letter, and informed consent for the OST to potential participants with less than 2 weeks’ notice (refer to Appendices D, E, and F for the invitation, information letter, and informed consent).

I collected all responses from potential participants. It is interesting to note, almost half of the participants who attended the OST session did not respond to the email invitation. As this was a large-group method with a small amount of facilitation, I tested the method by reviewing the plan for the session ahead of time with my inquiry team. Herman (n.d.) indicated that OST can run with groups from “5 to 2000+ people” (para. 4).

The question posed for the OST was the same as the inquiry question, and was listed on the email invitation, information letter, and information sheet (see Appendices D, E, and F). With the assistance of the inquiry team, I prepared the room with eight areas for conversation that included flipcharts, paper, post-it notes, pens, and markers. I posted an outline of the schedule for the day on easels (see Appendix G). The schedule included time allotted for (a) opening circle, (b) two separate blocks of time with eight sessions in each for dialogue, and (c) closing the circle. Ms. Zubkowski and Mrs. Emberg greeted participants as they arrived, and I maintained the master list of invited participants. I ensured each person who attended was provided with an information sheet regarding details of the OST session (see Appendix H). Commencing the OST session, I invited participants to sit in a circle, provided history of OST, described the schedule for the afternoon, engaged participants to generate a list of issues important to them, and assisted participants in populating the schedule. From there, a foundation was set for participants to attend sessions of individual importance and engage in dialogue. In the
last hour of the afternoon, I invited participants to rejoin the circle and share their experiences if
they felt comfortable to do so.

At the end of the OST, I collected the flip chart, papers, and post-it notes with the topic
that was discussed at each of the individual table sessions. Additionally, I dually recorded the
closing circle. Participants provided written informed consent prior to the starting of the session.
I have retained the copies of these consent forms. I personally transcribed and anonymously
coded the data gathered. The process of analyzing the findings included verbatim transcribing of
the written data from the individual discussions as well as the audio recordings from the closing
circle. I then engaged in a rigorous process of mindfully considered language and imparted “deep
reflection on emergent patterns and meanings of human experience” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 10) in the
data. This included a number of cycles of coding and categorizing that became more refined with
each iteration (Saldaña, 2013, p. 11). As I linked the thoughts and experiences from the
participants, themes quickly emerged. In discussing and sharing these themes with members of
my inquiry team, the analysis of the thematic patterns provided insight as to how to strengthen
collaborative practice in the TA and assisted in informing the second inquiry method—
semistructured interviews (Stringer, 2014, pp. 139–156). From the OST, I enhanced the preset
questions to explore the impact of individual motivation, complacency, and resources on
strengthening collaborative practice in the semistructured interviews.

To derive the study findings, I completed the following tasks: (a) identified themes and
subthemes, (b) pared down the themes into a manageable amount based on relevance to the
research, (c) prioritized themes based upon frequency, and (d) linked themes to literature (Ryan
& Bernard, 2003, p. 85). I spent a considerable amount of time analyzing the data in hopes to
support well-rounded and relevant evidence to develop recommendations for this research (Tracy, 2010, p. 841).

As the information gathered in the OST formed from the discussion, dialogue, and documentation created by the participants, the micronarrative “stories” (Devine, Quinn, & Aguilar, 2014, p. 286) became foundational in explaining the perceptions of the TA so that appropriate responses might be developed as opposed to subjective interpretations. That is, “learning through stories encourages interaction and active listening, building respect, collaboration, mutuality, common ground and healing through understanding” (Devine et al., 2014, p. 286) and helped guide the individual one-to-one interviews.

The interviews started less than a month after the OST, and themes from the OST helped to inform the interview questions (see Appendix I for draft interview questions). All potential participants received an email to partake in the individual semi-structured interviews (see Appendices J, K, and L for the email invitation, information letter, and informed consent). I received a number of responses for participation in the interviews, and I completed seven. I met with each interviewee at a location of his or her choice, and each interview was dually audio recorded. I received informed consent from each interviewee and explained the process for withdrawing from the study, as outlined on the information letter. I did not receive any requests from interviewees to withdraw from the study. I personally transcribed the audio recordings. Again, I anonymously coded the verbatim transcripts and categorized the data (Stringer, 2014, p. 142). To member check the data, I provided participants their transcripts during data analysis “as a way of validating the findings thus far” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 36), thereby creating dialogue to clarify and identify emerging themes from the data. Both sets of data, from the OST and
interviews, were subject to a rigorous cyclical analysis process that looked at how the information gathered (a) refined the focus of the inquiry, (b) gained understanding of the participants’ experience, (c) gained insight into emerging concerns, (d) sought clarification of the participants’ experience by adding information from additional stakeholders and resources (Stringer, 2014, p. 147) to inform the recommendations.

In qualitative research, “researchers tend to talk about the trustworthiness of a research project rather than its validity” (Glesne, 2016, p. 152). According to Glesne (2016), “Trustworthiness is about alertness to the quality and rigor of a study, about what sorts of criteria can be used to assess how well the research was carried out” (p. 53). In this research, I utilized multiple research methods to triangulate the data, which increased the validity of the study (Stringer, 2014, p. 93). Further, the use of OST as a large-group method supported diverse case analysis, as incorporating all viewpoints of stakeholders in the research enhanced the study’s credibility (Stringer, 2014, p. 93). The structure of the OST, by its nature, allowed for participant debriefing through closing the session with a circle and ability to hear “feelings and responses from the participant[s]” (Stringer, 2014, p. 94). In testing the credibility of the analysis of the interview data, member checking provided the interview participants with the ability to look at the analysis of the data and review how information was documented to verify its validity (Saldaña, 2013; Stringer, 2014).

“The words, descriptions, and thoughts produced through research are not inherently meaningful themselves” (Glesne, 2016, p. 211); rather, meaning surfaced “through analysis and interpretation” (p. 211). As a lone researcher, I transparently supported trustworthiness of this research through member checking and involvement with the inquiry team in the analysis and
formulation of recommendations (Saldaña, 2013, p. 36). Maintaining a system that protected the anonymity of participants was essential in validating research trustworthiness (Glesne, 2016, p. 213).

Coghlan and Brannick (2014) offered, “Quality and rigor can be formulated by the quest for authenticity, that is: the struggle to engage in being attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible in confronting the challenges of preunderstanding, role duality and organizational politics” (p. 178). As a researcher, it was important for me to be mindful of the varied ways of knowing, the knowledge brought to the inquiry, and the knowledge that others bring to the project, as this might have created conflict (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014, p. 178). As an external researcher, I forged a relationship formed with the Project Sponsor and the strategic team through my initial exploration of this inquiry topic during the project proposal phase. It was vital for me to consciously reflect on the data analysis to ensure I did not focus on the symptoms of the organization, this enabled me to assure perceived organizational deficits did not become the scapegoat to justify the organizational issue (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014, p. 180).

I categorized the recommendations that emerged from the research into self, mutual, and organizational foci. Recommendations linked to self and mutual foci were, respectively, captured as follows: (a) continue individual development and self-awareness and (b) grow mutual understanding. Within the organizational focus, two overarching recommendations emerged: (a) enhance structures, processes, and practices that foster a learning organization (internal) and (b) clarify the vision that links the TA to becoming a centre of excellence (external). When conducting this research I found many layers to the learning, and the division of the aforementioned acknowledged those recommendations that are individual, relational, within the
Project Sponsor’s (Executive Director) scope of influence from the external organizational recommendations, which are more suited towards the Operations Committee and Governance Committee for consideration.

**Data analysis and validity.** In sorting and analyzing the data received, coding detected “themes, patterns, and processes; to make comparisons; and to build theoretical explanations” (Glesne, 2016, p. 195) as “a progressive process of sorting and defining and sorting” (p. 195) of all the information received in the methods within the research study. In thematically coding of the flip charts, papers, and post-it notes in the OST session, audio transcriptions that were created from the closing circle in the OST, and individual semi-structured interviews, I found it significant that people spoke in “both similar and different ways, presenting different perspectives” (Glesne, 2016, p. 196) regarding the topics being discussed. I transcribed the data using “line-by-line coding” (Glesne, 2016, p. 196). As I cross-referenced the transcribed data with notes I had gathered during the interviews, I was able to contextualize the comments made during data collection (Glesne, 2016, p. 196). By cutting and sorting the data into differing categories based on concepts, “themes, subthemes and metathemes” emerged (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 103). As I analyzed how the data fit together, it was important to not make assumptions about “what was not said or demonstrated in some way” (Glesne, 2016, p. 200).

As noted earlier, I discussed with my Project Sponsor my observations, analysis, and synthesis of the data in this inquiry. I met with TA staff members and external stakeholders in four separates sessions to ensure I adhered to the participatory fundamentals of AR. My process

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6 The term meta in describing themes is “pertaining to or noting an abstract, high-level analysis or commentary, especially one that consciously references something of its own type” (“Meta,” 2016, Adjective section, para. 2).
of sharing the findings, conclusions, and recommendations contributed to an extensive testing process of my research. As Glesne (2016) advised, through my reflection on the learnings, I examined how themes linked together, saw new considerations, and hypothesized how the final report would come together (p. 201).

**Ethical Issues**

As research provides benefit to society, “in order to maximize the benefits of research, researchers must have academic freedom” (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2014, p. 7), including “freedom of inquiry, the right to disseminate the results of that inquiry, freedom to challenge conventional thought, freedom to express one’s opinion about the institution, its administration or the system in which one works, and freedom from institutional censorship” (p. 7). However, “with academic freedom comes . . . the responsibility to ensure that research involving humans meets high scientific and ethical standards that respect and protect participants” (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2014, p. 5)—in essence, researchers must do no harm. As a guiding framework, the *Tri-Council Policy Statement* (TCPS2) provides a “continuing commitment to the people of Canada to promote ethical conduct of research involving humans” (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2014, p. 3). As a researcher, the TCPS2 guided “my behavior” (Glesne, 2015, p. 179), and I was responsible, through reflective practice, to communicate and maintain connection with the participants during the research. Further, this included a commitment to maintain transparency, and accountability as an ethical researcher (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2014, p. 8).

**Respect for persons.** In having respect for persons in research, the TCPS2 identified the “intrinsic value of human beings and the respect and consideration that they are due” (Canadian
Institutes of Health Research et al., 2014, p. 6). As a researcher, it was important for me to be mindful of potential participants’ free will to partake in my research and to provide information that informed participants of how the data gathered would be used, the research purpose, what participation involved, and any potential risks and benefits (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2014, p. 9). This was addressed in the information letters for the OST and individual interviews (see Appendices E and K). All potential participants were able to choose whether they wished to participate or withdraw their informed consent from the research. At the time of this research, no persons at the TA identified as having “developing, impaired or diminished autonomy” (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2014, p. 6).

**Concern for welfare.** The TCPS2 stated, “Welfare consists of the impact on individuals of factors such as their physical, mental and spiritual health, as well as their physical, economic and social circumstances” (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2014, p. 7). In addition, the TCPS2 identified the need to be transparent about the “privacy and control of information about the person. . . . [and maintaining] the free, informed and ongoing consent of the person who was the source of the information” (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2014, p. 9). As such, I ensured all consent forms, email addresses, correspondence, raw data, field notes, and recordings were either password protected on my personal computer or stored in a locked filing cabinet.

While using OST as an initial large-group method of data collection disallowed anonymity, potential participants were made aware of the risks and benefits to participation in the email invitation, information letter, and informed consent (see Appendices D, E, and F). The benefits of this research outweighed the risks, as the OST blended all levels of personnel
associated with the TA (senior leadership, senior management, management, staff, and external business partners) and because this method allowed for all who chose to participate to share their voices regarding the inquiry topic. To further minimize power-over implications, the email invitation and information letter both invited participants to attend the session wearing informal attire (see Appendices D and E). Additionally, the information letter also outlined the role of the facilitator to gently mitigate any escalation during the session. While risk might have existed for some of the participants, Ms. Arnold-Schutta supported this session by inviting all stakeholders to contribute to the level of their comfort (Executive Director of the TA, personal communication, March 4, 2016).

The interviews were confidential in that I was the only one aware of the identities of the interview participants. The email invitation, information letter, and informed consent identified the risks and benefits to participating in the individual one-to-one interviews (see Appendices J, K, and L). Interview participants were able to relinquish their informed consent up to 2 weeks after the interview. After that date, if an interviewee wished to withdraw consent, his or her input would become part of the anonymous data collection. I held no power over participants in this inquiry, as my employment in the Government of Alberta is external to the TA, and I selected those interviewees who responded first from the five teams in the TA and external stakeholder group.

**Justice.** According to the TCPS2, “justice refers to the obligation to treat people fairly and equitably. . . . [By] treating all people with equal respect and concern” (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2014, p. 8). For both inquiry methods, I invited all staff within the TA as well as staff who recently left the TA and partnering stakeholders to participate in the
research. Through the information letters (see Appendices E and K), I advised stakeholders that they, individually, did not stand to lose or gain anything from participating in the research, whereas the TA may gain from the research regardless of whether they chose to participate. The Project Sponsor did not identify any issues with vulnerable persons partaking in the research.

Chapter Summary

This section looked at the AR engagement methodology framed from an appreciative stance and described the rationale for the choice of research methods—OST, and individual interviews. As well, I described the potential participants along with the study conduct and data analysis. I detailed how I addressed a number of ethical considerations. Furthermore, as a researcher, validity of the inquiry outcomes relied on my being open to personal and other perceptions of this research as it progressed. The next chapter discusses the findings from participants and the resultant conclusions harvested from the participant dialogue, as well as scope and limitations of the research.
Chapter Four: Inquiry Project Findings and Conclusions

In this research project, I set forth to answer the primary question: What strategies are considered most effective for the interdisciplinary teams in the Alberta JSG, TA to strengthen collaborative practice? I also used the following subquestions to draw depth in this study:

1. What are current collaborative practices?
2. How do stakeholders envision collaborative practice for the Training Academy?
3. What are potential barriers to collaborative practice?
4. What strategies and processes can be put into place to build on the vision to strengthen collaborative practice?

Through an appreciative lens, the questions I used in the OST and semistructured interviews supported dialogue with the study participants. As a researcher, I cherished the participants’ candour, as it was vital in validating and testing this research.

In this chapter, I identify the emergent themes and subthemes drawn from the data and create linkages to the impact on the participants (self), relationships (mutual), and the organization (Torbert, 1999, p. 189). In the first part of this chapter I capture the voices of the participants from their feedback and stories. From the information gathered, I identified divergent and interconnected themes and subthemes. In the second part of this chapter, I seek to interpret the significance of the findings; in this, I share my voice as a researcher accompanied by scholarly literature. As gifted by hindsight, in the latter part of this chapter, I identify the scope and limitations to this research project.
Study Findings

As “coding is not just labeling, it is linking” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 8), a rigorous cyclical process of reviewing, reflecting, and sifting through the data surfaced similar patterns that, when put together, shapes into themes (p. 8). As I listened to the voices from the participants’ narratives in both methods and transcribed the notes from the audio recordings, I became immersed in a curious journey. The following themes emerged from the data:

1. Individual motivation is linked to organizational higher purpose.

2. Staff value holistic and effective communication.

3. Although staff’s perspectives varied, participants noted the importance of interpersonal connection.

4. Participants highlighted the need to enhance the foundation of the Training Academy.

The findings detail the TA’s past and recent state. The themes drawn from the findings are characterized as individual (self), relational (mutual), and organizational. In this section of the chapter, I validate each theme using verbatim quotes from the data I gathered in the research methods. The OST occurred first and partially informed the semistructured interview questions. I have anonymized the participant feedback from both methods in this section. I identify excerpts from the first method using the participant code OST. I differentiate the semistructured interview participants using the participant codes I-1 through to I-7. Participants offered a number of dissimilar responses to the inquiry question and subquestions. In my mind, the diversity in participants’ responses parallels the richness of varied perspectives, personal reflection, and experiences in the TA. These findings informed the study conclusions (found later in this chapter) and the recommendations presented in Chapter 5.
Theme 1: Individual motivation is linked to organizational higher purpose. From the OST, participants offered that, organizationally, the “TA has huge potential.” In the OST closing circle, one participant shared, “I think one thing that came out [of the OST] for me is that, as individuals, we all have common goals, and we want collaboration.” To flesh this out further, in the semistructured interviews, I invited participants for their response to the question, “What motivates the staff members in the Training Academy to get up and come to work every day?” While I heard from many participants that motivation was personal, individual interpretation of others’ inspiration impacted the way teams worked together. As a result, two subthemes emerged: (a) variance in individual and collective motivation (b) and moving beyond role complacency.

Variance in individual and collective motivation. Individuals’ rationale for working at the TA varied in scope. Overarching, one participant suggested that motivation stemmed from coming to work and doing a good job—regardless of role (I-3). Whether “it’s about adult learning principles, and using evidence, or if it’s the best training based on keeping people safe” (I-3), this participant’s motivation came from offering evidence-based training founded in adult-learning principles. Another interviewee offered, “The fundamental belief is that they [the TA staff members] are absolutely making a difference, and having impact on those that they are delivering the training to, and partners at they working with” (I-7). From a broad-brush stroke, one participant voiced, “Everybody wants to be there for the same reasons” (I-3). On a personal level, one OST member offered,
It’s not about the t-shirts and the pants because you get all these clothes . . . you are an instructor, and everything else it’s not. It’s what you can do when you can influence, and you can impact people on a professional level—that’s everything. (I-1)

The same participant shared his belief that staff members in the TA were satisfied with their jobs and felt valued by the TA (I-1). Curiously, he remarked that he was unsure if the JSG ministry valued the TA the same way (I-1). In Theme 4, I liken this comment to questions participants raised in regards to the ministry vision for the TA and the TA’s ability to meet its organizational mandate. Emphasizing motivation as being personal, an external stakeholder shared, “I have no doubt that a lot of that is based on personal connection they [OSU] have on individuals’ training, and seeing their development, and their understanding, and their growth” (I-7). A curriculum designer observed, “They [instructors and sheriffs] love their jobs so much, with such a breath of fresh air to be at the starting and a positive start to the officers and sheriffs [on the frontline]” (I-5). This participant added that this sentiment was similar for curriculum designers (I-5).

As I continued through data gathering, I became aware of the differences in individuals’ inspirations for working at the TA. One participant reflected that some in the academy believe that motivation is the same for all; however, she retorted, “I don’t think so. I think it is very different” (I-4). She suggested, “You have to understand that, to understand their worldview; that’s how you get them to understand yours, [and] we don’t understand what they are [worldviews] because we don’t communicate very well” (I-4).

A distinction surfaced in participants’ motives—between the personal drive to be a part of the TA and an all-encompassing belief in the TA as a training institution. Comprehensively, a curriculum designer offered,
The TA has an amazing opportunity to impact positive change because everything we do set staff up at the beginning of their positions and their careers to do good things, and the better we do the job our jobs the better they are able to do their jobs, which is very public facing, and has . . . that trickle-down effect, . . . so we expel a really positive vibes, and positive ideas, and good methods of working with inmates, and the public and you know, as cliché it sounds, Alberta benefits. (I-5)

Finally, one participant surmised that, for the training staff, what keeps them up at night is “the big picture item, is that it [training] could potentially help someone save someone’s life or their life [on the frontline]” (I-6).

**Moving beyond role complacency.** As a subtheme, and without much description, the word complacency emerged from feedback in the OST. In line with this, the phrase “push your own boundaries to grow and develop” (OST) was also documented. Different from the action of devising a specific planning strategy for personal and professional development, most interviewees related complacency to stagnation. Participants described it as a lack of lustre in roles with potential to impact others and day-to-day operations of the TA (I-1 to I-5). One participant attached complacency to her observation of individuals feeling disempowered and disadvantaged, taking short cuts, not completing work assignments, and saying, “Screw it” (I-4). Further, she remarked that, for some, the belief was “they don’t care, so I don’t care” (I-4). I requested that interviewees share their thoughts on the antidote to complacency and asked how they recommended the TA move staff members beyond complacency.

I heard divergent individual views on complacent behaviour in the TA. Participant feedback ranged from individuals feeling personal fulfillment in their jobs (I-1) to the outward
message conveyed to recruits training (I-3). One participant shared that the direct message to recruits was “to not become complacent because as soon as you become complacent, you die” (I-3). For different reasons, this same participant suggested that there should never be a period of complacency in the TA, as training is “always growing and evolving” (I-3). This interviewee, observably impacted by her experience, shared a challenge about the power of the social norms on each unit. She offered, “We have a double standard of what’s expected based on teams that becomes very challenging” (I-3). She suggested, as new staff members on boarded, their interest and motivation dissipated: “They just aligned to the social norms over time” (I-3). From her perspective, stories from the frontline regarded the TA as “the place where people go to die” (I-3) at the end of their career. She stated, “I know practice is changing, but it’s still a lot of people who aren’t wanted in the field in the Training Academy” (I-3).

In contrast, a former OSU member shared, “We invested in having the best people do their jobs so . . . that expedited the process and gave all of the staff the confidence that we’re moving forward with the proper model” (I-6). Adding further insight, he shared, “Complacency happens because they [instructors] get comfortable with the syllabus, and the navigational tools . . . for nine weeks their life . . . [and] complacency is not what our officers are being taught” (I-6).

From this, a key finding surfaced of the role between leadership being alert to the needs of the staff members and the staff members realizing that the leadership is trying to help mitigate role complacency (I-4). One interviewee said, “I feel pretty in tune with myself, and I know when I feel unchallenged” (I-5).
Theme 2: Staff value holistic and effective communication. I found participants’ willingness to connect in a real way, share ideas, and create mutual understanding to be evident throughout the data. Participants spoke of honesty and desire to “be willing to have candid conversations” (OST) with each other. As described by one participant in the OST session, “Just sitting down and talking about collaboration led to collaboration.” Further, a participant shared a story of a work-related expertise that a colleague, in a separate unit, would not have benefited from without their opportunity to engage in conversation (OST). I determined that eight factors supported effective communication in the TA: (a) difficult conversations build relationships and require safety, (b) personal engagement has a direct impact on effective communication, (c) individual leadership includes a commitment to walk the talk, (d) conscious self-reflection influences one’s interactions with others, (e) clearly articulated expectations, (f) be flexible and adjust the method, (g) value of insight from other perspectives, and (h) individual commitment and accountability were inconsistent and affected people’s confidence in one another. I discuss each of these subthemes in the sections that follow.

Difficult conversations build relationships and require safety. A majority of participants expressed the importance of respectful and candid conversations. One participant stated, “If you’re continually maintaining a relationship, you can have a difficult conversation where you can just talk about one thing, something, to improve on” (I-2). Further elaborating on individual unconscious incompetence, he suggested, “All of us have things to improve on, but if we don’t know, we don’t know” (I-2). Participants used phrases like “care and candour” (OST; I-2), “crucial conversations” (I-5), and “constructive feedback” (I-2) to describe ways to surface interpersonal challenges. Insightfully, one participant asserted, “The delivery of the message is
important, or even more important, than the message itself” (I-1). While I engaged participants
from an appreciative stance, an interviewee candidly shared an anecdotal explanation of giving
another person constructive feedback: “I heard one person describe it as, ‘no matter, you give a
positive and a negative, and at the end of the day, you still have a crap sandwich’” (I-2).

A former employee emphasized difficult conversations as being especially important
when things did not go well (I-3). Consequently, a positional leader stated, “Somebody isn’t
going to get that information that they need, they make the assumption that somebody else will
get the information, somebody else will approach them with a solution, and they just sit and
wait” (I-4). One participant suggested, “One challenge, perhaps of the TA, is that a lot of the
instructors and sergeants come from not an open, candid environment, [which is] a paramilitary
aspect of working in a centre” (I-5). This same participant added, “A [second challenge] the
leadership team faces is ensuring they [training staff] believe that it’s a safe place to speak out”
(I-5). As a curriculum designer, this participant talked about her own experience in taking the
opportunity to engage in difficult conversations with colleagues at the TA. She stated that she
felt safe, supported, and positively reinforced by leadership for coming forward with her
concerns (I-5).

*Personal engagement has a direct impact on effective communication.* Many
participants expressed their commitment to being personally engaged and supporting open
communication between the staff members and supervisors at the TA. In this subtheme, I heard a
myriad of perspectives. Some perspectives were based on individual approaches to engagement,
such as informal hallway conversations, getting to know people out of work (I-2), and taking
risks to put yourself “out there” (I-3). Participants stressed the importance of leadership to model
engagement with staff members (I-3; I-4; I-6). A positional leaders shared, “[A] manager doesn’t have to have an outcome for what that conversation is when you sit down [with a staff member]. . . . The fact that he made time to sit down and says, ‘How are you?’ is enough” (I-4). I sensed a positive connection from a member of the BSU, who stated, “I think part of the culture [of the TA] is quite open communication. You know, not being part of Officer Safety Unit, I can go to that Director, his door is open all the time” (I-2). Similarly, he said, “With our Executive Director, it’s pretty much that if I am walking by, she will stop and talk to you in the hallway. She actually knows what’s going on in people’s lives” (I-2). On the flipside, I was disheartened when I heard another participant say that regardless of leadership being in tune with their staff, if “the staff itself doesn’t want to change or doesn’t want to try something new, there isn’t much a manager can do” (I-5). Linking back to candid conversations, this participant suggested people needed to be held accountable for their actions (I-5).

**Individual leadership includes a commitment to walk the talk.** In a spin off from engagement, I heard a number of participants talk about transparency in the workplace, and the role of leadership in setting the example for the organizations. Participants were thoughtful and presented diverse observations and experiences. One participant said, “I get it with that position [leadership], but I think that there’s other people that are leading [in the TA] that don’t understand enough, and they don’t walk the walk, and talk the talk” (I-1). As a former employee of the TA, one participant shared her observation about “closed-door conversations” (I-3). She suggested that in the moment, commitments were agreed upon across teams, but after, when the other person went back to his or her office and spoke with colleagues, the behaviour that followed from that person was, “I am not doing that” (I-3). Consequently, she expressed
puzzlement that this behaviour was occurring given that such conduct was not acceptable from training recruits or the operations line (I-3).

A dependence on the leadership to set the tone in the TA was consistent. Linked to role modelling transparency from the strategic team, one participant surmised that there was a need to foster vulnerability and give permission to take risks and make mistakes so that, individually, people could hold themselves accountable (I-4). Interviewees articulated that they observed the strategic team to genuinely care about the staff members (I-2), put forth their beliefs (I-5), and “practice what they preach” (I-5).

Conscious self-reflection influences one’s interactions with others. During the interviews, participants reflected and imparted insight into the role of self in communication, as well as empathy for others in the academy. Simply, an OSU member said,

You really have to stop, and look in the mirror . . . and that has to be a real conscious choice to try, and think of something else besides how it appears, and does it matter, and to weigh it out. (I-1)

A participant who shared with me at the beginning of the interview as having had more negative experiences at the TA than positive stated, “We would vent, and complain, and get frustrated . . . there are lots of times where, probably, I should have taken that initiative to have that conversation. . . . I was just as much a culprit” (I-3). Separately, she stated, “I never asked what a good working team looks like” (I-3). Curiously, a current staff member filled in gaps by offering,

If we don’t have these conversations, if we let things fly, we create our own stories, and our own stories create toxicity. And I think it’s all on us to be upfront, and not to be
passive. We can be upfront in a kind way, in a supportive way (but we’re not), than to breed hostility, and negativity. (I-5)

In speaking about a particular project that was at risk of not being completed, a participant offered that staff members were hesitant to admit to lacking knowledge or information out of fear of losing credibility or being seen as incompetent (I-4). However, she deduced that the opposite of this was true (I-4). Regardless of the role, those who are vulnerable and admit their own faults build credibility (I-4). In this conversation, I inferred from this example that rather than being seen as authentic and accountable, the consequence for an individual for not sharing their challenges and vulnerabilities was that they were seen as being unreliable; and this participant concurred (I-4).

**Clearly articulated expectations.** I present two perspectives in this section. Participants shared these similar, yet different, stories and demonstrated differing views of how expectations are communicated in the TA. Participants recognized that there were times when expectations were clearly articulated and projects came together in a positive way. However, one participant shared, “It was assumed that the same message was being distributed across the board, and maybe it wasn’t” (I-3). This participant talked about experiences seemed opposite of the expectations set out for recruits:

I can recall times, tons of times, for a recruit who is late, or did something . . . they were running laps, but yet it was okay [for training staff] to not show up to a meeting with a colleague, and not tell them where you [they] are going to be. (I-3)

In talking about a recent, separate project that impacted the entire academy, a participant offered a different view. He stated, “I have a high level of trust, and I think what maintains that is that
the work has to get done” (I-2). Further, speaking about the unique atmosphere of the TA, “I think that it is a bit of that paramilitary culture as well, where it is like . . . you don’t make excuses . . . that is what they [OSU] are trying to teach recruits” (I-2).

**Be flexible and adjust the method.** The ability to “be flexible and adjust [the] method” arose from the OST session. A participant offered similar insight in her interview and shared that, as a learning and development organization, the training programs in the TA emerge and evolve (I-3). A participant from the OSU stated, as individuals, staff members in the TA should be agile as well (I-1).

One positional leader valued balancing administrative tasks and inspiring others (I-4). She said, “When you decided to be a manager, you need to put people first. They are most important; . . . they should be the reason you became a manager” (I-4). Similarly, a member of the OSU talked about reciprocity and shared that, although tasks may be linked across teams, these tasks may be prioritized differently amongst team members (I-1). He submitted, individually, it was valuable to be flexible in considering whether the sequence or the completion of the task was more important, while considerate of other team members’ responsibilities (I-1).

**Value of insight from other perspectives.** In discussing their experience in the OST session, one participant offered an observation that the “perspectives people had [during the OST] were different, but they come from the same paths.” A number of participants talked about desiring opportunity to spend time talking to each other—to gain understanding of each other (OST). One curriculum designer stated, “As a result of building stronger relationships with some of the training sergeants, and instructors, they’ve been honest with me, and acknowledged some of their frustration, and confusion” (I-5). This participant went on to say, “I think working well is
to feel equal. I’m not sure they [training staff] feel that” (I-5). From the OST, a participant said, “You could spend a lot of time actually talking, and that kind of stuff. We don’t really have the opportunity to do it because everyone is in their silo working and doing their thing.”

Participants noted receiving an invitation to gain another’s perspective was a valued component of mutual communication:

As a leader, we don’t think of everything, and we have to be open to our team coming to us, and saying, “Can you do this for me?” I think it speaks to the fact that we have a very open and trusting relationship that [someone] can come to me and say, “Hey, I need this from you.” (I-4)

Conversely, a participant stated, from her experience, “I think the expectations were so unclear there [at the TA], that I have no idea what other people thought worked well” (I-3).

*Individual commitment and accountability were inconsistent and affected people’s confidence in one another.* In the closing circle of the OST session, participants expressed curiosity and sought actionable items to strengthening collaborative practice. This subtheme is both individual and mutual in nature. From the data, participants conveyed a shift of mind about the staff members’ commitment to the TA. A participant shared that staff worked well together when “people were committed to a meeting, and they actually showed up. It worked well, in people actually took time to come to whatever the meeting was about, the project, and did the work in the back end” (I-3). Connecting this concept to expectations, she added, “So, I think it’s important to collaboratively, to level working together as team, to establish why we’re there—setting that goal, and holding people accountable to it” (I-3). As an example, a participant described a more recent shift in staff member behaviour: “Nobody would use the Outlook
calendars. Nobody would use their Blackberries, and that’s not a problem anymore. They’ve [OSU] come a long way” (I-5).

I heard from participants that negative experiences in the TA were not lost. Described as a “lack of accountability” (I-3), a participant talked about the way her role as a curriculum designer was impacted role when others (i.e., members of the OSU) would not complete their agreed-upon tasks. She shared that she had lost confidence in her colleagues’ ability to complete their work assignments: “They didn’t do it, and that was kind of the end of it. They just didn’t do it” (I-3). From a leadership perspective, a leader said,

They [staff members] need to be able to say, “I’m not sure. I don’t know. I’m struggling and overwhelmed.” In bringing the right people together to say, “I am beginning to drop the ball”; whether that’s your boss, or whether you’re saying that to the team. (I-4)

Theme 3: Although staff’s perspectives varied, participants noted the importance of interpersonal connection. For the staff members in the TA, connection was multifaceted. In this theme, the focus is on individual and mutual connection. Connection of the TA to the larger JSG ministry is captured within the Theme 4. From the OST session, connection was defined as having a balance between social activities and completion of job duties. Most participants agreed that social connection was important, and talked about the importance of coffee breaks, potlucks, and physical activities to build personal connections. Seven subthemes comprise this category: (a) increase social capital and connection, (b) inclusion, (c) individual and organizational role clarity, (d) trust develops from shared understanding, (e) cultural diversity, (f) a positional leader’s self-awareness sets the tone for how others work together, and (g) connection benefits from reciprocity.
**Increase social capital and connection.** For participants, social capital spoke to commitment. A participant stated, “Once you know who people are, you want to do things to help” (I-1). Once connection is established, people’s willingness to work together goes beyond the role expectations or tasks (I-1). As the Executive Director had been away on leave, the hope for this member of the OSU was that the TA would go back to a having balanced of social capital (I-1). Similarly, another participant expressed, “Making time for others, and getting out of your office, not getting bogged down with being overwhelmed, and having these things to do because it is part of a to-do list” (I-4), are key. She continued, “To connect with people, and work with people, and if you don’t understand what you are supposed to be doing, then . . . it’s even more important that you don’t lock yourself in your office” (I-4).

One external stakeholder participant shared an inquisitive observation about the connection of staff members in the TA. She said,

I don’t know about the connections to one another within the academy, but I do think they, based on what I’ve seen at various graduations and different things like that, . . . [the trainers’] connection to the students is very real, and very genuine. But I don’t know how that translates to the group themselves, and how they interact amongst themselves. (I-7)

**Inclusion.** OST participants noted, “Focus appears to be on corrections, and sheriffs; . . . others are left on the outside looking in.” For one interview participant, this observation rang true, as she perceived the training staff as being more important than other staff members (I-3).

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7 Dictionary.com defined social capital as “the network of social connections that exist between people, and their shared values and norms of behaviour, which enable and encourage mutually advantageous social cooperation” (“Social Capital,” 2016, Noun section, para. 1).
She added that in order to provide the best training curricula, the TA must be viewed as a combination of all units (I-3). She noted, it is vital for members to “acknowledge that I am part of a contribution to the content; not the whole part” (I-3). As dynamics were misaligned, she had “the impression that it might be this bar for one person, and a higher bar for another person. So what works well [in collaborative practice] is different, not surprisingly” (I-3). She believed that the members of each group in the academy had their own set of expectations: “So when this lower end group doesn’t meet the higher group; we get frustrated” (I-3). Unresolved, she added, “but yet again, nobody talked about what does that look like—nobody” (I-3).

On the other hand, an OSU member said,

I think we [OSU] have a presence as a group . . . and that this is something that we can watch for, and we can pay attention to it. And I think, in the beginning that it might be hard for some people . . . to see we are human too. (I-1)

Separately, another curriculum designer offered, “We can learn a lot from them [OSU], just like they can learn from us. We’re good at deconstructing concepts, and things like that but we need each other really . . . [a] curriculum designer cannot exist without instructors” (I-5). Reflecting on the past, a former trainer recalled a time when “working well together was the investment of all of the staff” (I-6). He shared that the group did not allow one person to dictate changes; rather, there was a collaborative investment from all team members” (I-6).

**Individual and organizational role clarity.** For the TA, participants noted two distinctions for role clarity. Internally role clarity linked to personal and professional identity, whereas externally role clarity related to the TA’s role in service of the JSG ministry. A larger portion of the data reflected individual role clarity. With the inclusion of external stakeholders,
dialogue surfaced about the TA’s current ability to meet its operational commitments versus championing external projects.

A leader in the TA shared her observations of challenges that arise when individual role clarity is unclear:

I’ve seen, sometimes, where there’s blocks is where people don’t understand their boundaries. . . . Is this my job or is this their job? And sometimes when you get so caught up in that, you get blocked, and you become paralyzed. You don’t know how to move forward, and I think regardless of where you fall in or on the [organizational] chart, you need to feel like you’re a part of empowered to have these conversations. (I-4)

In reference to the OSU, a participant said, “If you’re going to go back to the field as a sheriff, great, but you are not a sheriff right now [while at the TA]” (I-3). In regards to some of the training staff being on secondments from the field, this participant concluded that it might be confusing for some OSU staff members, as “they lose their appointment, and they don’t have a uniform” (I-3) during their time at the TA. She empathized with this struggle and surmised that it would hard for training staff to lose their identity and be expected to become a business professional (I-3).

As an organization, the TA’s role in the JSG ministry surfaced. An external partner offered,

Role clarity is a big one because I think the projects that I have had the opportunity to be involved in overall were quite successful. . . . I think it is their number of projects that I’m aware of that I think are moving in some direction probably not the same pace as some of the others. (I-7)
This participant queried whether there were competing demands between daily operations and planning for future endeavours, and contemplated how success can be achieved through a clear outline of what is attainable as an organization (I-7). Further to these thoughts about role clarity, three subthemes surfaced in the data: (a) relationships, (b) shared understanding, and (c) the right people in the right roles.

**Relationships.** Differing from connection, interpersonal relationships were valued among participants. Role clarity directly impacted maintaining and developing relationships. From the OST closing circle, one participant suggested, “If I understand my tasks and others’, then maybe we can work more effectively to achieve success.” Another participant shared his experience that the OSU worked well together, as they are “very similar minded people” (I-1). He said that, in the past, with the “us and them mentality with curriculum designers . . . a couple people did not play a positive role” (I-1) between the units. For this interviewee, the success of recent projects with curriculum designers was based on his intention to build relationships: “Life is all about choices . . . I made a conscious choice to embrace the curriculum design unit” (I-1). Another participant stated, “It starts at that just open, trusting relationship, where we make time to get to know each other” (I-4). This participant added, “I think we’ve already started with that; I think we’re doing good with that. We have high engagement scores. So that foundational work is being done. We just need to continue doing it” (I-4).

An interviewee said that administrative staff took on all responsibilities and worked closely with the training sergeants for training cohorts: “They [BSU] really become part of that team for the class; . . . it really breaks down barriers” (I-2). Once again, in reference to another
positive experience on a recent project, this participant said, “They [OSU] really stepped up and really delivered” (I-2).

*Shared understanding includes risk taking, curiosity, and opportunity.* Clarity emerges as dialogue happens. One participant asserted, “I think sometimes, when it goes sideways, it’s [because] people have different interpretations of about where people are coming from, and the intention, and the outcome; . . . we were all out for different agendas” (I-3). This same participant asserted, “But at the end of the day, we were all working for the same core cause which was to create wonderful training and ensure staff are safe” (I-3). Separately, a curriculum designer offered,

I was able to sort of pinpoint which training sergeants were more open to try new things, and I approached one of them and pitched an idea. And she was very open to it, and so we did a mock-up of this mind map activity. And she then invited me to co-facilitate the activity with her class, and it went sideways. It didn’t go at all how we hoped it would. But what I found really great was that afterwards, we were able to sit down and talk about why that was, and she actually pointed out a lot of things that even though it went other then we had planned, she was really glad it went that way. And she found a lot of value in the good and the bad and the activity. (I-5)

In another instance, this same participant talked about a time in the classroom where her and the training staff’s opinions diverged (I-5). She shared that a recruit expressed his confusion to them about a scenario from the training content, and the feedback from the recruit created opportunity for dialogue to gain insight into each other’s views: “We were able to, kind of, clear some air,
and be honest about our perspective, and it was not a pro- or anti-inmate thing. It was a difference in life experiences” (I-5).

More evident of the change occurring in the TA, two interviewees from differing roles showed empathy towards their colleagues’ roles. An OSU member reflected on a project with the CDU and shared,

I remember sitting there saying, “You know that you put about 3 hours into this, if they [curriculum designers] put in anything less than 50 hours each into this—I would be surprised.” I see it, and I get it, what they do, do things differently, but I get what they did, and how it worked. (I-1)

In relation to the administration, he suggested, “There’s another relationship that doesn’t take much to figure out; it’s not hard to work for them [administrative staff]. It just takes being a little proactive, and see what they need” (I-1). Another curriculum designer reflected, “If I was a training sergeant or an instructor I would want to know what it is a curriculum designer is aiming for” (I-5). Participants noted competing ideals tied to appropriate role titles and recognized expertise (I-1; I-3 to I-5). As an example, the same curriculum designer said, “I think our title is very misleading. . . . It gives you a sense that we all we are there to do is create curriculum. And that, honestly, is such tiny part of what we do” (I-5).

In discussing ways to gain understanding, one participant talked about the lunch-and-learn events offered by the OSU (I-2). He described an opportunity that surfaced for the training staff to share a bit of their expertise by offering personal safety mini sessions: “We have people who would like to learn, and it’s just making that connection” (I-2). In this instance, I perceived the participant as offering an invitation to the training staff to share their expertise in self-defence
tactics. While, another participant stated that trainers should adapt to delivering “the how” (I-3) in the classroom and stressed,

There has to be this expectation that when you [OSU] walk in the door that you’re no longer the dictator of what the field does, because you are not in the field anymore. So things might have changed yesterday with the new policy, and you’re not aware of it. So let’s leave that to the curriculum design team to connect with the line, to get the information, and give it to you to teach. (I-3)

Participants in the OST and one interviewee noted clearer and consistent policy and procedures in the TA are seen as necessary. Topics to be reviewed by the strategic team included training coordination, registration, a dress code for paramilitary staff members, and hours of work.

*The right people in the right roles.* This subtheme is complex. Participants shared diverse stories about positional leaders in the TA. They observed that leadership development was crucial in ensuring that the right person is in the right role. One participant stated, “If you’re here to inspire others, you should be able to inspire yourself, and you want people [leaders] who are passionate” (I-3). Another participant shared his observation that, for the most part, he saw supervisors as being happy (I-1). However, if they were not, and with no direct impact on him, he had strategies and boundaries in place to mitigate the situation (I-1). Seemingly, without power to make a difference, one participant asserted, “There were times when I was asked to be a leader with no authority” (I-3). She suggested that it was the responsibility of leaders in the TA to manage the situation and to hold people accountable (I-3). In her experience, at the TA, this was not a common practice (I-3). In two instances, participants asserted that they should not be in a position to tell their colleagues how to do their job (I-3; I-4).
In bringing staff members together for projects, team dynamics were important. A participant offered that it was important to consider which staff members were paired for projects: “I think we overlook that sometimes, and we just expect people to rise above and just meet the goal, when if they can’t talk or get along—good luck” (I-3).

**Trust develops from shared understanding.** Along with relationships and shared understanding, participants noted trust as necessary in strengthening collaboration. Trust and being trustworthy were thematic in the OST. One participant shared, “I think it’s all about that relationship. I think that there’s still mistrust, and uncertainty in terms of roles, and responsibilities. . . . [The] more opportunity we have to understand each other, and have mutual shared understanding, the better” (I-5). A participant in the OST stated, “Building trust with others is necessary to moving forward together,” and the statement, “We won’t try new things if we do not trust each other,” was also noted in the session. One interviewee noted communication is impacted when there is mistrust amongst staff members (I-4).

One participant observed that, within the strategic team, “there’s a lot of trust” (I-3). She suggested, although it is important to trust the staff members, balance between allowing staff to do as they need, and recognizing that perhaps they may go too far out of scope is important (I-3).

In relationship development, a participant stated that personal connections with others “builds trust and rapport” (I-5). She said that, as she has built relationships with others in the TA, her colleagues have approached her with questions or projects (I-5). She added that without shared understanding the connection may not have otherwise happened (I-5).
Cultural diversity. This subtheme encompasses two subtopics: (a) embracing role diversity as a means of moving away from an us-and-them mentality and (b) in a safe environment, staff members can grow. I discuss each of these subtopics in turn.

Embracing role diversity as a means of moving away from an us-and-them mentality. This subtheme acknowledged the divisiveness between the OSU and CDU. Participants candidly shared their perceptions of the other teams, and the stories created from those perceptions. An OSU member said, “The Officer Safety Unit used to be called the Black Shirts, and the Curriculum Design Unit was very small, but . . . it was the us-and-them mentality between the management hallway and the Officer Safety Unit” (I-1). He stated, “The Officer Safety unit, much like law enforcement in general, can make members of the public uncomfortable. You want them there, but at an arm’s length” (I-1). Another participant said, “I think, to a certain extent, some people almost, I don’t want to say they are intimidated, but you know, [are] a little bit shyer about going up and getting involved with the Officer Safety Units” (I-2). A curriculum designer shared her own internal dialogue about approaching the training staff:

I would get so nervous when I go to the sergeant’s office because the door is always closed, and I realize the door is always closed. . . . I don’t know actually why it was closed, because our door was never closed unless were in a meeting, and so it really created this barrier. (I-3)

This participant explained that the story she told herself as she walked away: “I don’t want to interrupt them. I don’t want to bother them” (I-3). She further stated, “It was not conducive to open communication. . . . So a lot of the challenges were just simple frustrations about typical
business, what is expected in a business environment, that might be different in the operational (correctional) environment” (I-3).

This same interviewee described a model the Executive Director introduced for training: “The who, the what, [and] the how . . . the triangle” (I-3). This participant thought that it was a struggle for the training staff (i.e., OSU) to shift the use of their experience from “the what” (I-3), or operations in the centres, to “the how” (I-3), or engagement and tactics. Conversely, curriculum designers were then responsible for “the what” (I-3), and meeting with the operations line to bring the information back for the trainers to use in the classroom. She stated, “It’s really hard for them to give up their identity” (I-3).

Another interviewee noted, “What is sort of interesting, is that, for being a part of government that really has a paramilitary culture, to a certain extent—position, and title is actually less emphasized than I think a lot of other areas” (I-2). Another interviewee asserted, “There is difference in thought processes and jobs from the Curriculum Designers” (I-1). This same participant stated, “Theirs [CDU] is planned, and set up with ways to script everything out, and ours [OSU] is . . . get the fire hose, and put this out—let’s move to the next thing” (I-1). He then suggested, “We [OSU] are not that forgiving of a group” (I-1).

*In a safe environment, staff members can grow.* Embedded within cultural diversity, a safe environment is conducive to growing collaboration practice. One interviewee suggested, “If you get people seeing beyond their daily grind, that, I think helps a lot” (I-1) and creates a good, positive work environment. This participant continued on to state, “Creating an atmosphere that makes a timid person put their hands up and say, ‘I wouldn’t mind trying,’ is also a positive attribute of collaboration” (I-1). In the OST, some queried when collaboration detracted from
completing tasks and work assignments. One participant stated, “Some people work better in isolation. . . . There are a lot of people who are actually introverts, so you . . . put them in an [open] environment, [and] there they will be wilting on the vine” (I-2).

A positional leader’s self-awareness sets the tone for how others work together. As an expectation of leadership, “If it [collaboration] is not supported from the management, then it is not going to take” (I-1). This participant added, “You have to have the right people steering people” (I-1). Consistent with transparency, “You need the right people there [steering], and they are not. Not everybody is the right person that you have right here, right now” (I-1). He clarified that his view was not “out of malice, or anything else” (I-1), but rather “the fact that we all have different skill sets, and we have an impact” (I-1). In regard to a previous leadership, a former OSU staff member offered, “It is having a leader that is giving us the ability to roam. He wasn’t micromanaging us; he was just bring the information and allowing us to grow as a team” (I-6).

Many participants mentioned that the strategic team was proactive in identifying new approaches and were timely in responding to staff (I-2; I-4). From a recent interaction with a staff member, one participant discussed about the importance of a leader’s humility to admit a mistake had been made (I-4). In her current role, she talked about a time when she had forgotten to arrange a process required by one of her staff members (I-4). She recalled apologizing to the other person, and emphasized to me during her interview the importance of empowering people to be present at meetings that impact them (I-4). This participant also shared that her response encouraged her staff member to ask as many questions as needed; as a leader, she was transparent about future processes that impacted this employee (I-4). From a different lens, she added,
If they [supervisors] are hearing something, that if a staff is ever struggling, or is not successful, or having frustration with a certain group that they are working with, to call them on it, and challenge them to have a conversation. (I-4)

As a metaphor about leadership, this same participant asserted,

It’s like magic; it is like an orchestra. [They] try make the really good music, and it takes a strong conductor. But if you have one person that is not playing on time, coming in on cue at the right time, it screws up the whole sound. You know every instrument plays a role, and if you don’t make time to play that role, you are never going to have a good sounding orchestra. (I-4)

In organizations there are times, however, when “everybody thinks they should have a say, they should have a vote, and sometimes there’s a boss who gets to make decisions” (I-2).

**Connection benefits from reciprocity.** Out of respect for the administrators in the BSU, one participant provided a good example of reciprocity in the TA. He shared that it was not difficult to keep the administrative staff up to date on changes with the training (I-1). He went on to acknowledge the BSU for all that they do to make the TA run efficiently (I-1). He cautioned that when small problems clustered together, there was potential for them to grow into bigger issues (I-1). When I asked him why he thought others may be reluctant to step in, he offered that those reactions are “short sighted” (I-1), as perhaps some colleagues did not see this as their job (I-1).

Another participant reflected, “Even . . . under the umbrella of being in the Training Academy . . . [and] all working towards the same goal, everyone had their own initiatives” (I-3). Discouraged, she said, “There was no kind of, ‘You help me, I help you.’ There was just, ‘Do
this for me’; there wasn’t a lot of collective collaboration” (I-3). Another participant expressed confusion and stated that she did not understand why staff members could not show appreciation to each other (I-4).

**Theme 4: Participants highlighted the need to enhance the foundation of the Training Academy.** In the OST session, “growing people is our goal” surfaced as the role of the TA. This final theme includes three subthemes: (a) a clear understanding of the vision aligns with the ability to meet expectations, (b) organizational operations, and (c) a broader mandate. As the first subtheme relates to the vision for the TA as an organization, participants discussed the TA’s organizational mandate, the time and opportunity for individual growth, and scope and resources. Within the TA’s broader mandate, this subtheme included communication with stakeholders. This is a detailed area, and, as discussed in Theme 1, understanding the purpose and plan for the TA was important to all participants.

**A clear understanding of the vision aligns with the ability to meet expectations.** Vision for the TA and the ability to meet current goals resonated with participants. One participant in the OST candidly asserted the need to “be mindful of what we want to achieve.” With clarity of the organizational vision, a participant stated, “If it is generally something you want to do, it is easier to change and grow” (I-2). Another participant queried, “Sometimes words are just that . . . our mandate, our mission statement, ‘Be the center of excellence’—what does that mean? How are we going to get there?” (I-1). Similarly, another participant questioned, “What is the academy trying to achieve? Is it an adult learning institution? Is it paramilitary?” (I-3). Participants were generous in sharing their need to have a clear understanding of the vision for the TA.
One interviewee stated, “Having a vision, having something that goes beyond where you’re at, something you can connect to; I think a part of it is connecting to what people do in their daily routine” (I-2). Another participant shared, “I really don’t know what we were trying to achieve, so it goes back to management as, kind of, a key supporter” (I-3). This same participant continued on to state, “We can’t change ourselves as individuals or as an organization if we don’t have shared meaning, and we can have that once we put it all on the table. And start to figure out, a mutually agreed upon understanding” (I-3).

One participant imparted, “I think that we have to keep going, maintain the path that we are on, but it does take intentionality” (I-2). He added, “I think we have a bit of momentum going, but there is always that risk that, once you have momentum going, and if you stop paddling . . . you come to a stop, and start drifting back” (I-2). This participant cited his version of an old proverb: “If you have these big plans, big ideas, and they’re constantly being shut down—people will get cynical, and sometimes you can lose sight of what’s happening in the immediate” (I-2). Alternately, a participant said, “There will always be some people that don’t believe in the processes of the direction we’re moving in or just don’t understand it” (I-4). An external stakeholder observed,

In keeping when you have people devoted to a particular project, it’s very clear of where it’s going, but things within the day-to-day operations maybe aren’t as necessarily systematic, and the approach, more organic, and has not necessarily been as transparent or is clear in which direction it’s going and how it’s getting there. (I-7)
**Organizational operations.** This subtheme includes three subsections: (a) meeting the organizational mandate, (b) the time and opportunity for individual growth, and (c) scope and resources. I discuss each in turn.

*Meeting the organizational mandate.* OST participants and interviewees provided data that broadly supported this subtheme. For a number of participants, involvement in fatality inquiry reviews from the operations line is a possibility. Mitigation of recruit risk while managing risk to the TA through the delivery of best training practices was on the minds of participants in the OST. Additionally, participants saw themselves as a valuable resource to support ministry hiring practices of new recruits.

In talking about training standards with a former curriculum designer, one participant stated there was no standard accreditation of what is expected in training sessions (I-3). She continued on to state, “The hope . . . would be that as each piece of material is developed, it’s aligned with best practices. . . . [Along with] the due diligence around research of other organizations” (I-3).

Many participants thought that manageable operations were important to the success of the TA. One interviewee said, “I think there is the need to continually be progressive and refreshing in what we’re delivering, but it’s what we’re delivering [that] needs to be narrowed in scope in order to do that well” (I-7). She added,

Maybe that’s the direction that needs to be taken, because you can’t be everything to everybody. . . . It’s hard to be an institution where you’re delivering training, but you’re also trying to be progressive in, and what’s being provided for training. (I-7)
In a separate interview, a participant explained that, with the opening of the new Remand Centre in Edmonton, requirements for officer training have changed (I-6). He suggested that the unpredicted added pressure for training is unsustainable at the physical location of the TA (I-6).

“No one knew how much that would be, but we knew in the past we needed a new training environment as we go forward, and we’re still not looking at it” (I-6). In response to whether others would have the same viewpoint, he said,

I think their views is, they see a graduation, they say they see the pipe band, they see the polished newness of the graduation, and they believe that they are the best officers that are going back to their environment, with the best training because they don’t see the nuances of some of the things that are possibly missed because of time restraints, missed because of investment or missed because of the lack of resources. (I-6)

The time and opportunity for individual growth. As one participant suggested,

“Collaboration takes time” (I-1). He asserted that opportunity for growth and development was “dependent upon time and commitments” (I-1). Another participant offered that, in the TA, “we have the luxury of time. . . . Sometimes we just feel like we don’t, but we really do. . . . So we can take the time we can be more proactive. We can, you know, take a deep breath” (I-4). A participant offered, “I think that [personal development] keeps people invigorated, and refreshed” (I-7). She continued on to state,

I think, like with most things, . . . if you’re locked into that sort of delivery of things all the time, and you’re not growing yourself, that soon those practices become a little bit outdated and antiquated more quickly than probably would like to believe. (I-7)
In supporting leadership development within staff members in the TA, one participant noted there should be confidence that anyone in the training environment could take over leadership in their absence: “I believe that the management needs to be as active as the training sergeants within that training model” (I-6).

Scope and resources. OST and interview participants expressed differing thoughts on the amount and sustainability of resources. Some interviewees saw increased resources infused in the TA with more staff recently hired. This subtheme reflected mutual and organizational impacts on collaboration. As one participant expressed, “Scope [opportunity] is limited by logistics of time, and money” (I-1). Another participant stressed the importance of this area and illustrated the point with a suggestion that the TA close down for a year to become realigned (I-3). While recognizing that this is not possible, she further explained,

Before coming up with solutions to make changes to resources, in a year, accurately assess for resources that are right now. And if you can’t meet them . . . change some practices to fit the resources, not change the resources to fit [the practice]. (I-3)

From her perspective, “resources get sucked into the training, . . . [and it’s] never thought about what can we do to create different practices for long-term sustainment” (I-3).

A number of interviewees agreed that before adding additional resources to the TA, a substantive needs assessment should be done. One participant asserted, “The Training Academy is in an awkward position, in regards to the [physical] environment, because it was never meant to be a training environment. It needs to be a training academy where they have the resources” (I-6). In contrast, another participant posited, “I think now, we’re at a place where we have
enough resources; . . . we’ve got a pool of instructors . . . instead of begging, borrowing, stealing role players . . . randomly through the year” (I-4).

One external stakeholder participant stated that plans created were not always aligned to the resources available, and when resources were unavailable, plans require adjustment (I-7). When the organization is transparent about their resource limitations, it paints a clearer picture of viable deliverables from the TA, thereby enhancing people’s understanding (I-7).

In discussing deliverables and actively engaging stakeholders, one participant discussed cross-training opportunities in which the sheriff, correctional peace officer, and community peace officer trained collaboratively (I-6). He shared that previously stakeholders were involved in the training sessions, as senior management from each of the operational divisions would come watch the classroom scenarios: “We allowed them to come in, and sit, and participate in some of the activities within the classroom or see the class” (I-6).

**A broader mandate.** As I invited a broad spectrum of stakeholders to be part of this research, the OST provided opportunity for the staff at the TA to share ideas with external partners. OST participants’ desire to have proactive dialogue with stakeholders and to be validated was prevalent in the data. In an interview, a participant shared that he had heard from other team members that the reputation of the TA has begun to improve; he was told, “Recruits come out with a much different attitude” (I-2). Both a curriculum designer and an external stakeholder shared their experiences of positive working relationships on some projects (I-3; I-7). It was “very refreshing to see that there was an appetite to look at things differently . . . an opportunity to really delve in, and see what could be done differently” (I-7). This same participant stated,
It seemed to be openly communicative, professional, most certainly on par with where things . . . should be moving, in terms of having a good strong, evidence-based foundation. . . . I can’t think of any instance where it’s been something when there’s been a complete difference of opinion or where there’s been an objection to doing something.

(I-7)

One participant recalled, communication through formal meeting times with external stakeholders and the TA were “staggered” (I-7). She added that information provided by the TA was “probably not very timely and not very often” (I-7). This interviewee suggested, “From a general awareness perspective, [it is] probably be nice to know a little bit more of different things are being worked on” (I-7).

Study Conclusions

The four main themes presented in the previous section have individual, mutual, and organizational change implications. Where developmental and transactional change efforts offer simple solutions, organizational transformation “involves a radical shift” (Rowe et al., 2013, p. 8). Much more than structural upheaval or renewed processes, “transformational changes at the personal and team levels need to occur before outcomes at the systems level can be manifested” (Rowe et al., 2013, p. 8).

In anticipation of chronicling this part of the chapter, I drew upon the themes from participants’ individual thoughts and stories as well as their collective experiences. Like Glesne (2016), I recognized that “meaning is more complex than the definition of words” (p. 221). I carefully considered the language I used, so that my interpretation reflected a clear depiction of
the evidence before me (p. 221). In moving from the noted findings, Glesne asserted, “Conclusions deal with the ‘so whats’” (p. 241).

Curiously, I pondered the first-, second-, and third-person voices (Torbert, 1999; Torbert & Taylor, 2008); the multilayered system influences for strengthening interdisciplinary collaborative practice in the TA. This research provided communicative space for participants to express their “interpersonal needs and the development of social contexts in which these needs are met (and frustrated)” (Wicks & Reason, 2009, p. 248). Forming conclusions from this study required me to provide real-time attention to this process, as the mixing and melding of insights was incredible. In this section, I provide a more refined, deeper deduction into the meaning of the data. Saldaña (2013) suggested the theories that lend reason to why something occurred imply cause and effect and guide an improved way of being (p. 250). Saldaña further asserted, “A theory is not so much a story as it is a proverb” (p. 250)—a brief experiential wisdom told to others for their consideration (Saldaña, 2013, p. 250).

This system is complex. Senge (2006) asserted, “Reality is made up of circles” (p. 73). While everything is linked, people often limit themselves to only seeing what is before them, blinding themselves from new insights. Simple solutions seem to be easy remedies for complex issues, when thoughtful strategy is more relevant. Senge stressed that understanding “complex issues and strategic choices” (p. 74) requires linking actions together as a counter to seeing separateness. Vital for individuals, teams, and organizations is to see beyond the familiar and delve into the “forces that shape change” (Senge, 2006, p. 74). For this trust is required, as every action and inaction has a consequence. To foresee the result of an inaction is equivalent to being near-sighted, as the distant effects from events are not always immediately detectable or hurried.
In a complex system, the ebb and flow of change is linked to cause and effect, as nothing is “ever influenced in one direction” (Senge, 2006, p. 75).

There is a shared responsibility in transformation. One person, one instance alone, is incapable of solely manifesting the change necessary to strengthen collaborative practice in the TA. Individual, mutual, and organizational ownership as well as commitment are prerequisites. As the alternative may be catastrophic, unearthing of the past and demonstrating vulnerability are required to take on problems that were otherwise hidden (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 35).

Based upon the study findings presented in the previous section and on the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, I have derived the following four study conclusions:

1. Motivation begins with self and drives the organization.
2. Clear vision and role clarity are important.
3. Respect, relationship, and connection are basic human needs.
4. In practice, learners form a community.

**Conclusion 1: Motivation begins with self and drives the organization.** Motivation was, and continues to be, a catalyst in the TA achieving its organizational mandate (Berg, 2015; Quinn & Thakor, 2014). Embedded in the findings, participants’ drive for contributing to the mission of the TA was comparable to Berg’s (2015) idea of socioemotional (personal) and task- or goal-oriented motivation (p. 1). As referred to in Chapter 2, Berg conveyed that organizational recognition of “the engagement and motivation of individuals who have a personal purpose or personal goals” (p. 10) has a powerful influence on work completion. As cited in the literature review, in corrections, one’s worldview [punishment versus treatment] has impact on his or her feelings about the job, and ability to strive to achieve tasks beyond one’s role (Lambert, et al.,
Consistent within the findings in this research, participants espoused to a shared understanding of the collective vision and role clarity to support organizational success (Barczak et al., 2010; Berg, 2015; Boyatzis & McKee, 2005; Goleman et al., 2013; Maccoby, 2011; Quinn & Thakor, 2014; Schein, 2010; Senge, 2006).

For the OSU, a deep personal commitment to the protection of brothers and sisters on the frontline was a key motivation in working at the TA (I-6). A former OSU member shared, “What gets them [OSU staff members] out of bed, that is over and above wanting to come in and work with each other. The big picture item is that [they] potentially could help save someone’s life” (I-6). Care and concern for self, colleagues, or citizens have potential to “keep you awake at night” (I-6). Consistent with the literature, in field operations there exists a pride in providing a potentially dangerous service that protects society, and a reciprocity exists among coworkers to ensure the safety of self and others (Lambert, Hogan, Cheeseman Dial, et al., 2012, p. 166). Berg (2015) discussed that motivational maintenance requires support of work–life balance (p. 10). Berg cautioned that it is not necessary for one to see the “greater good or to stretch beyond themselves to be motivated, engaged and aligned with a higher purpose vision” (p. 10). As a researcher, I was awakened to the heartfelt commitment towards work being done at the TA.

From a goal-oriented perspective, a curriculum designer desired support and acknowledgement for her knowledge, time, and energy afforded to promote best-practice training delivery (I-3). In their study, Homan and Greer (2013) posited and concluded, “Considerate leadership (which is characterized by healing relationships, solving conflicts, increasing trust) is especially preferred by, and beneficial for diverse groups” (p. 118).
As mentioned in Chapter 2, preservation of autonomous roles creates a new dynamic for team collaborative development (Thistlethwaite et al., 2013, p. 53). As individuals may assume that it is best to work within their own disciplines, collaborative inaction may “produce professionals which become stagnant” (Thistlethwaite et al., 2013, p. 54). Participants in this study desired mutual understanding, respectful of each other’s differences so that training represents the best knowledge transfer to support the safety of colleagues on the frontline (I-2 to I-5).

As in the literature review, Herzberg (1987) compared what he termed as “hygiene” (p. 6) factors (external motivators) to internal motivation of what “one wants to do” (p. 6). Likening to Argyris’s (2002) discussion on single- and double-loop learning, familiar rote behavioural responses are underpinned by skill actions set prior to one’s involvement an organization (p. 213). For participants, having enough or scarcity of resources was a common, although divergent, factor in the research. As an example, while the OSU complement is now inclusive of regular and seconded positions, participants discussed the historical impact of an inconsistent pool of instructors (I-3; I-4; I-6).

While Herzberg (1987) spoke of hygiene factors as items such as fringe benefits, wage increases, and shorter workdays, he cautioned that their monetary upkeep is costly, short lived, and unable to meet individual demands (p. 13). This same theory can be tested against organizational resources. While resources are necessary, they alone cannot motivate staff members; job enrichment related to personal motivation instils long-lasting change results (Herzberg, 1987, p. 13). Herzberg (1987) discussed the intrinsic value of personal motivators, and suggested:
• The changes should bring the job up to the level of challenge commensurate with the skill that was hired,

• Those who have still more ability eventually will be able to demonstrate it better and win promotion to higher job level jobs,

• The very nature of motivators, as opposed to hygiene factors, is that they have a much longer term effect on employees’ attitudes. (p. 13)

With individual ownership, motivation shifts from being external. A perceived powerlessness to organizational control pivots toward internal ownership, new learning, and personal mastery. Distancing oneself by blaming others or the organization for a personal inability to connect is ineffective (Argyris, 2002, p. 214). With new awareness comes new opportunity for the staff members in the TA to make conscious behaviour changes; this new learning may seem as awkward, but individual responsibility for managing this defensiveness is key (Argyris, 2002, p. 214).

The research indicated that leadership requires the investment of all invested positional leaders and followers. Zimmerman et al. (2013) surmised, “If people cannot take care of a problem, they won’t see a problem” (p. 8). As some colleagues seemed to disengage from their assigned tasks, others in the academy lost hope and felt disempowered to make a difference (I-3). Motivation was enhanced for participants when positional leaders were engaged and supportive (I-1 to I-5). The literature spoke of considerate and resonant leadership founded in understanding, fluidity, and emotional intelligence. Surprisingly, for some participants, a need for leadership to take a stand and set clear operational guidelines was important (OST; I-3; I-4). Referencing women leading organizational project in developing countries, Senge et al. (2007)
asserted, “Motivation for working on sustainability goes beyond business benefits by integrated work, family and self; and the members have developed a sense of purpose, fueled by a desire for their work to benefit others” (p. 47).

**Conclusion 2: Clear vision and role clarity are important.** A consistent message of individual role clarity and organizational vision surfaced in the research. A clear direction and defined roles will have a ripple effect on team connection during the evolution of the TA. The consequence of ambiguity was perpetuated stories and assumptions that were barriers in teams coming together in the past (I-1 to I-4). Senge (2006) suggested, as opposed to seeking out fault in other’s behaviour, “the leverage lies in recognizing defensive routines as joint creations and find out our own role in creating and sustaining them” (p. 249).

In testing one of their study hypotheses, Cilliers and Greyvenstein (2012) revealed “high levels of anxiety created defences which formed invisible barriers in and between subsystems and in the mind” (p. 7). A silo mentality has a crippling effect on team identity, belonging, and relationships, resulting in implications for the whole organization (Cilliers & Greyvenstein, 2012, p. 8). Lambert, Hogan, Barton-Bellessa, et al. (2012) offered, “Trust is built over time and is derived from the perceived fairness and consistency of actions [by supervisors and managers]” (p. 952). To assist in defining roles, a participant talked about relabeling the role of curriculum designer to be more inclusive of the job functions; she proposed that the lack of role clarity was reciprocally confusing for OSU staff members (I-5). As noted it Chapter 2, when individuals are supported to voice their input into their roles and the organization, trust and positive relationships form (Lambert, Hogan, Barton-Bellessa, et al., 2012, p. 951).
While exciting and challenging, the natural evolution of change in the TA melded individual roles and required staff members to share their expertise. Some participants discussed their intentionality in creating connections and mutual understanding with their colleagues (I-1; I-2; I-5). In discussing enhancing organizational communication, Young and Daniel (2003) argued, “Any initiative for building trust need to address issues of communication and personalized relationships” (p. 150). As discussed in the literature, effective communication through dialogue requires an authentic flow of information between TA staff members, a suspension of judgement, and a period of time for new meanings to emerge (Bohm & Nichol, 2013; Jaworski, 2011; Senge, 2006). Young and Daniel (2003) surmised, for leadership, “a starting point might be activity geared towards better information provision to employees about what is happening in the organization and better communication with them” (p. 150).

As a learning organization, participants denoted some internal and external confusion with the scope and limitations of the TA within the JSG ministry (I-1; I-3; I-6; I-7). One participant suggested leadership appeared to be balancing the ambiguity of daily operational demands with the desire to complete external projects (I-7). While some projects were successful, by comparison others lagged (I-7). Maccoby (2011) offered, “In complex collaborative organizations, different types of leaders with complementary competencies—strategic, operational, network—must be able to partner in developing and implementing strategies and visions” (p. 59). Ownership of the vision for the TA requires a joint commitment of invested stakeholders and has bearing on the development and definition of individual roles within the organization. Senge (2006) offered a shared vision incites people to see themselves as contributing to purpose in service of others (p. 193).
Conclusion 3: Respect, relationship, and connection are basic human needs. To appreciate another’s determination requires a personal investment in mutual relationships and curiosity. At the onset of the OST session, participants talked about their desire for opportunities to build connection and relationships. A paradigm surfaced as some participants described the effect colleagues’ behaviours had on their ability to create relationships (I-3; I-4). As discussed in Conclusion 2, challenging the development of stories about others aids in relationship development. Short (1998) stated, “Mutual inquiry is, at its core, a method to learn what is true—about you, about the other person, and about your relationship now” (p. 68). As mentioned in the literature review, Salas (2013) asserted that the development of relationship can lead to enduring relationships at work and beyond (p. 219).

Relationship development starts with oneself. Again, participants talked about being mindful of their role in building and disengaging from working relationships (I-1 to I-5). As mentioned in the literature review, Tuckman (1965) posited a sequence of occurrences in group formation (p. 384; see also Tuckman & Jensen, 2010). Deemed as developmental stages, Tuckman and Jensen (2010) considered: “(1) testing and dependence, (2) intra-group conflict, (3) development of group cohesion, and (4) fundamental role relatedness” (p. 43) as tasks in group development. As it is not unusual for there to be periods of uneasiness during change, as a norm—for some participants in the past—the perceived erosion of relationship impeded the ability to meet job expectations (I-1; I-3; I-4).

Relationship development is not without individual risk, and yet has potential to incubate a sense of belonging. Through this research project it became evident to some participants that relationships have grown and developed (I-1; I-2; I-4; I-5). Some participants still query whether
relationships are more inclined to develop within one’s own area of expertise (I-3; I-7). Homan and Greer (2013) asserted that relationship modelling arises from leader influence (p. 118). A considerate leader was successful in mitigating between role diversity and potential for silo development (Homan & Greer, 2013, p. 118).

In alignment with some participants’ views, leadership in the TA took the time to engage with staff members individually and were active in conveying desired organizational values (I-2; I-5). Alternatively, as suggested by one participant, the consequence for inauthenticity and invulnerability by leadership was lack of trust from others in the TA (I-4). To contrast, this participant suggested that humility and admittance of role incompetency was seen as noble in leadership (I-4). Lambert, Hogan, Barton-Bellessa, et al. (2012) stated, for corrections staff, “Trust can be a barrier against burnout, and a lack of trust can be linked with burnout on the job” (p. 950). Lambert, Hogan, Barton-Bellessa, et al. (2012) further shared the correlation between supervisory trust and a willingness by staff members to accept and implement new systems for job improvement (p. 950). In general, when an individual identifies that their peer demonstrates reliability and competence, he or she is more likely to trust (Barczak et al., 2010, p. 340).

Respect, relationship, and connection to others and from the organization incubeate a sense of belonging. Allied with individual motivation and fuel by purpose, belonging creates safety. Safety binds the ability to share diverse ideas and opinions without need for consensus and with appreciation for each other. As voiced by many participants (I-1 to I-5), “valuing people irrespective of their background, education, and profession is considered to be a key aspect of team working” (Thistlethwaite et al., 2013, p. 53). While there is opportunity for miscommunication, taking risks to share perspectives fosters relationships (Barczak et al., 2010,
p. 150). Task centred, the curriculum designers desired recognition for the time and energy afforded to promote best-practice training delivery (I-3).

**Conclusion 4: In practice, learners form a community.** Working in the TA provides an opportunity for some to unwind from the urgency of frontline operations and develop unharvested skills (I-3; I-5). The participants in this study asserted that they saw themselves imparting their knowledge, experience, and expertise on the design, delivery, and evaluation of operations training (I-1; I-3 to I-6). Participants observed leaders as playing a key role in forging a path to new ideas and experiences in the TA as learning organization (I-1 to I-6). Carmeli and Sheaffer (2008) suggested, “Leader behaviors shape followers’ perceptions and behaviors toward a work task because they set a salient example of how to behave” (p. 472).

For some participants in this research, opportunities to shift practice were missed as leaders were reluctant to address issues (I-3; I-4). From the literature, learning from failures has potential to shed light on how the TA can shift from future changes (Carmeli & Sheaffer, 2008, p. 485). Without a mindful understanding of cause and effect, there can be no intentional shift of skilled past behaviours (Argyris, 2002, p. 214). For the TA, learning from past failures and triumphs goes beyond the surface as leaders are required to interchange single-loop responses and double-loop learnings to reinforce routines and challenge habits (Carmeli & Sheaffer, 2013, p. 471).

Participants suggested that one team in the TA cannot not manage without the other (OST; I-1 to I-7). Each group is reliant upon the other to execute the TA’s mandate. Senge (2006) shared, “The team that became great didn’t start off great—it learned how to produce extraordinary results” (p. 4). “[As] a shift of mind . . . ‘metanoia’ is to grasp the deeper meaning
of ‘learning,’ for learning also involves a fundamental shift of movement of mind” (Senge, 2006, p. 13).

**Scope and Limitations of the Inquiry**

The intent of this study was to focus on all interdisciplinary teams within the TA. In the initial planning, I consulted with the Project Sponsor to discuss internal and external partners with intent to draw richer data. All stakeholder groups were represented except for past recruits. A broad perspective was gained through the diversity of participants in the OST session and semistructured interviews. While not all voices may be captured in this research, I surmise that the findings may resonate with those interested in my inquiry.

The OST session saw 18 participant engage in an afternoon of dialogue and individual reflection. I invited 49 potential participants; in hindsight, I realize the design of the OST is unfamiliar to many. Again, the voices in the OST session broadly represented both those internal to the TA and external partners. In the end, participants expressed gratitude for the time to engage in meaningful conversations. One participant shared that he wished he was able to engage in all the conversations (OST).

I received a number of responses from potential participants to be included in the semistructured interviews and a number of interviews were booked within an hour of me emailing the invitation. Again, in my own reflection, I may have included more interview participants, which may have provided a greater depth of information. Evident to me was the desire for people to share the individual stories and experiences. Perhaps participants found the interviews to be a safer option, as opposed to the nakedness of group discussion.
This research benefited from being supported by a motivated Project Sponsor. Through the development and implementation of this project, Ms. Arnold-Schutta was open to all the possibilities, good and bad, that this study revealed. This research has been a leap of faith and a testament to her desire to strengthen the working relationships amongst the interdisciplinary teams in the TA.

All recommendations in this study, which are presented in the following chapter, come from the voices of participants. The decision of which recommendations to include in this final report came from four separate meetings with the TA Operational Advisory Committee, TA staff members, and the strategic team, including the Executive Director. The recommendations implied individual, mutual, and organizational action. Organizational action included steps internal to the TA within Ms. Arnold-Schutta’s influence and, more broadly, items subject to the JSG ministry executive leadership.

As I have gained as a leader-learner on this journey, my wish is that as others who review this study benefit as well. Change starts with self.

**Chapter Summary**

In this chapter I shared the study findings and conclusions from the OST session and seven semistructured interviews. The findings were captured by four overarching themes that had varying subthemes to expand upon their significance to this study. I saw the findings as reciprocal in nature with each one linked to the other in the system. The findings beget the conclusions in this research. While limited to those who participated in the research, I believe the conclusions chapter provide adequate insight to inform the recommendations in Chapter 5.
Chapter 5 presents the study recommendations, organizational recommendations, implications for future inquiry, and the thesis summary. As recommendations support a plan to strengthen collaborative practice within the TA’s interdisciplinary teams, Kotter (2012) suggested, “Culture change comes at the end of a transformation, not at the beginning” (p. 164). Kotter surmised that changes in culture occur once individual behaviour has shifted, observable benefits of new behaviours emerge, and when individuals see their role in the new changes and sustained performance growth (p. 165). A plan of action for the TA will be an endeavour of many moving parts that will require ongoing calibration.
Chapter Five: Inquiry Implications

This inquiry question for this study was as follows: What strategies are considered most effective for the interdisciplinary teams in the Alberta JSG, TA to strengthen collaborative practice? To enhance the depth of my research, I also explored the following subquestions:

1. What are current collaborative practices?
2. How do stakeholders envision collaborative practice for the Training Academy?
3. What are potential barriers to collaborative practice?
4. What strategies and processes can be put into place to build on the vision to strengthen collaborative practice?

This chapter sews together all of the components of my research inquiry. The organizational context identified in Chapter 1 framed a complex organization with diverse teams, while the literature review of Chapter 2 played a counterpoint, demonstrating both simplicity and complexity in how diverse working teams may be strengthened in a learning organization. Chapter 3 told the story of what took place in this AR engagement inquiry—the overarching methodology, specific methods, data analysis, and ethical considerations that formed the foundation for engaging stakeholders to hear each other and come to some agreements on next steps in addressing the inquiry question and subquestions. This chapter relies on its predecessors and explores individual (self), relational (mutual), and organizational (internal and external) recommendations. Organizational implications for future study are also identified. I close this chapter with an update to how the key stakeholders are moving this AR engagement process forward into action, thus starting the next phases of the AR cycle. The formal research aspect of this project is coming to a close, but the journey for stakeholders is just getting going. The thesis
report, however, needs to account for what has happened to this point. This study is only one 
interpretation, and to suggest that all implications unearthed is unethical (Thorne, 2016, p. 230). 
Thorne (2016) suggested that mindful humility as a researcher is a caveat to recognizing the 
“inherent limits of [my] interpretive descriptive study” (p. 230).

Study Recommendations

Amidst an often divergent and complex participant narrative, I found there to be four 
major themes. These were (a) individual motivation is linked to organizational higher purpose; 
(b) staff value holistic and effective communication; (c) although staff’s perspectives varied, 
participants noted the importance of personal communication; and (d) participants highlighted 
the need to enhance the foundation of the TA. Within these themes were varied subthemes, 
similar and different in significance.

In forming conclusions for this study, I considered the impacts when the emerging 
themes were examined with the lenses of Torbert and Taylors’s (2008) first-, second-, and third-
person research framework (pp. 239–251). While the themes were categorized, it was apparent 
that the study conclusions, presented in the previous chapter, were connected in a nonlinear way, 
with no single one being more important than the others.

The TA has continually evolved through this inquiry process, and some of the 
recommendations formed from the findings and conclusions are already underway. I will report 
on these developments in the context of the recommendations and at the conclusion of this 
chapter. The four recommendations for the TA are as follows:

1. Continue to encourage individual development and self-awareness.

2. Grow mutual understanding.
3. Enhance structures, processes, and practices that propel a learning organization.

4. Clarify the vision that links the TA to becoming a centre of excellence.

**Recommendation 1: Continue to encourage individual development and self-awareness.** From the research findings in Chapter 4, I saw evidence that stakeholders valued self-awareness and taking opportunity for individual development in strengthening collaborative practice. In support of this, Short (1998) asserted, “When you accept the responsibility for creating your own experience, you also take responsibility for how you respond to that experience” (p. 33). The voices of participants paralleled Short’s work, as they proposed five distinct areas for individual action: (a) take ownership of increasing personal development and provide continuous learning opportunities; (b) create opportunities to develop self-awareness and personal reflection through mutual dialogue; (c) express appreciation for support received from colleagues; (d) take personal ownership of job responsibilities and commitments; and (e) initiate candid, open conversations. These five actions will now be explained and described in more detail.

**Take ownership of increasing personal development and provide continuous learning opportunities.** Personal development varies based on individual desire, intent of the learning, and presented opportunity. Herzberg (1987) surmised, “Motivation is based on growth needs” (p. 14). Personal growth is a consequence of motivation and is not a predictable process (Herzberg, 1987, p. 14). Herzberg suggested, in relaying commentary regarding his 1968 motivation-hygiene theory, “the key to job enrichment is nurturing of a client relationship rather than functional or hierarchical relationship” (p. 16). As an individual, continually clarifying what one values and educating oneself on how to see actual present events assists in formation of
personal mastery (Senge, 2006, pp. 132–133). The development of individual personal mastery “does not guarantee organizational learning” (Senge, 2006, p. 129); however, without individual learning there can be no learning organization. For the members of the TA, seeing the larger impact of working well together through the use of evidence-based, adult learning principles has deviated from training processes reliant on command-and-control techniques. As harvested from the data, the result of shifting training strategies to incorporate new learning directly impacted new recruits’ mindset and frontline practice with potential to support frontline operations that keep themselves, recruits, and others safe.

The idea of personal development and continuous learning is broad. Abrahamson and Chase (2015) suggested that mindfully balancing and preserving the unique professional differences, as opposed to merging into one body of knowledge, is also important in collaboration (p. 386). As a learning organization, the TA’s success is strengthened by delving into individuals’ commitment and willingness to learn in a variety of organizational contexts (Senge, 2006, p. 4).

Those who took part in this inquiry put forward recommendations for individuals to reflect on their personal learning journey, generate a list of desired training, and share this with their supervisor or manager to develop a plan of action. A specific example from an interviewee was to use current Government of Alberta performance learning plans as a goal setting tool to enable staff members to map out their learning journey (I-5).

From a systems perspective, as a member of a complex system in continual change, the staff members of the TA may benefit from “learning to recognize types of ‘structures’ that recur again and again” (Senge, 2006, p. 73). Systems thinking fosters a “shift of mind” (Senge, 2006,
that identifies the interrelation between circumstances as opposed to “linear cause-effect chains” (p. 73), and sees the whole album rather than individual pictures. As individuals become more aware of their roles in the system, then they can realize their value as part of a learning organization, and adjust their behaviour accordingly.

*Create opportunities to develop self-awareness and personal reflection through mutual dialogue.* In times when diverse groups in the TA come together and are unable to mutually come to consensus on a plan, a benefit of collaborative practice is the ability to “reflect together on their respective practices” (Abrahamson & Chase, 2015, p. 386) and contributions based on individual knowledge and expertise. By taking risks, building relationships explores diversity, asks curious questions, and challenges barriers, while confronting stereotypes in individuals, teams, and organizations (Senge et al., 2007, p. 49). For the members of the TA, it means stepping out of their comfort zones and taking a leap of faith that others will be willing to listen and share equitably. In this research, self-reflection surfaced as an important task; the effect of one’s decision, or actions had potential bearing on others.

For the TA, participants viewed empathy towards others and mutual trust as key components in attributing to the success of working well together. Abrahamson and Chase (2015) noted the importance of providing opportunity for collaboration across all stakeholder groups (p. 382). “Committing to reflective conversations and working with mental models” (Senge et al., 2007. p. 47) is a way of building more productive relationships. Looking at each interaction as a new experience and being curious about colleagues’ opinions or intentions, as opposed to making assumptions, will assist in shared understanding and personal growth. Suspending one’s own assumptions and biases and taking time to dialogue with others creates a
win-win scenario in which all stakeholders have the opportunity to gain from positive and negative experiences without judgment (Bohm & Nichol, 2013; Jaworski, 2011; Senge, 2006).

Express appreciation for support received from colleagues. The expression of gratitude was a simple but significant tenet in strengthening collaborative practice in the TA. One interviewee talked about the value of timely appreciation, simply saying thank you, when a colleague does something good to help out (I-1). Many interviewees suggested TA continue with its monthly honouring of a staff member or stakeholder with a $10 gift card for going above and beyond their work duties. In an appreciative learning culture, “the successes of the past, evoke images of possible futures, and create a spirit of ongoing inquiry that empowers members to new levels of activity” (Cooperrider et al., 2005, p. 205). Dialogue increases with productive conversations that acknowledges the value of the present and envisions what the future may hold (Cooperrider et al., 2005; Senge, 2006). Through appreciation, an emotional and thoughtful investment shapes a positive outlook towards future endeavours (Cooperrider et al., 2005, p. 205).

Take personal ownership of job responsibilities and commitments. The changes imparted within the TA over the last 3 years have created newness, disequilibrium, and some confusion about role tasks. These, in conjunction with the formation of new relationships, may have driven some individuals to default to skilled, single-loop behaviour to manage the changes. Argyris (2002) surmised, as a part of a defensive response to criticism, individuals may attempt to cover up their conscious incompetence, resulting in a perceived lack of responsibility for their actions (p. 213). With more personal awareness and reflection, individuals can consider their previous undesirable behaviours and make more effective changes (Argyris, 2002, p. 214). As an
example, a couple of interviewees recommended humility as a value for the TA and suggested that one person should not feel like the need to have all the answers—especially when he or she is unsure (I-3; I-4). For participants, timely completion of assigned work assignments was valued; rather than withdraw from or not finish a task, they suggested the TA promote a culture that endorsed risk taking and seeking support from colleagues (I-3; I-4). Zimmerman et al. (2013) noted that knowledge is a useful component when seeking to shift engrained behaviours (p. 12). Hand in hand, “social proof encompassing actual behaviours or observed behaviours of peers is needed to fundamentally change patterns” (Zimmerman et al., 2013, p. 12). Learning through action is essential.

Personal responsibility for completion of job tasks was vital in strengthening working relationships. With increased communication in the TA, the data indicated a shift of practice and increased accountability task completion (I-1; I-2; I-4; I-5). Berg (2015) imparted that understanding the individual reward for attaining an organization’s vision is important (p. 9). While not all groups respond to rewards linked to task accomplishment, for some reward is linked to creating a greater good in society (Berg, 2015, p. 9).

*Initiate candid, open conversations.* Initiating dialogue through care and candour surfaced as a technique already in use in the TA (OST). As a tool suggested by leadership for managing potentially challenging conversation, the intent is to initiate a collegial dialogue with positive feedback, then identification of the area of concern, and finish with additional positive feedback (I-2). Salas (2013) suggested, to “engage in a respectful, open, critical dialogue, . . . [individuals] need to engage in a dialogue to learn, not to confront or tear down different thinking or methodologies” (p. 218). Interviewees shared that when conflict arises and
perceptions seem misaligned, it would be beneficial to address the behaviours in a timely manner (I-1; I-3; I-4). The consequence for not doing so may lead to inaccurate assumptions about others that form a story and are then perceived to be the truth.

An interviewee discussed missed opportunities to seek understanding from colleagues on other teams in two separate instances in which she felt the issues remained unresolved (I-3). The impact of unresolved issues in the TA is not only detrimental internally, but also has potential to become acceptable behaviour and convey an external message to how the TA is viewed. An example shared by a participant was a historic tale that the TA was where frontline staff “went to die” (I-3), in essence to end their careers.

Schein (2010) offered, “As organizations become more multicultural, we will see different systems clashing with each other leading to hurt feelings, offence, impatience, anxiety, and other dysfunctional behaviours until mutual explorations in a cultural island setting produces understanding and new consensus” (p. 110). In building cultural islands, Schein (2013) suggested a leader engage the “team together in an informal environment, away from the work setting, around more personal activities such as a meal or recreational activity” (p. 108). In this, an opportunity exists to “suspend some of the cultural rules pertaining to authority and trust relationships” (Schein, 2013, p. 108). Through this activity, the leader can ask curious questions about hypothetical situations and look for a common ground that all can commit to in a real situation (Schein, 2013, p. 108).

Bohm and Nichol (2013) asserted that individuals need to be aware their thoughts in the same way that they “pay attention to processes taking place outside in the material world” (p. 50). Consciously, “everything depends on thought—if thought goes wrong, we’re going to do
everything wrong” (Bohm & Nichol, 2013, p. 50). Maintaining conscious awareness of how one aligns his or her actions and narrative and a curiosity to challenge unfounded assumptions are prerequisites to open communication.

**Recommendation 2: Grow mutual understanding.** Mutual understanding is the gift that arises from dialogue. Scharmer and Kaufer (2013) suggested that a main barrier in today’s organizations is that complex issues are addressed through regular conversation, and thus predictable solutions are created (p. 175). Scharmer and Kaufer (2013) surmised, “All complex modern systems . . . deal with both individual and collective entities, the latter often through government” (pp. 175–176). They suggested the following to be “the most common types of conversation” (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013, p. 176):

1. unilateral and linear;
2. low on inclusion and transparency; and
3. organized by an intention to serve the well-being of a few. (p. 176)

Scharmer and Kaufer (2013) asserted that the following are the most poignant and significant types of conversation (or dialogue) to ignite future change:

1. multilateral and cyclical;
2. high on inclusion and transparency; and
3. organized by and intention to serve the well-being of all. (p. 76)

Senge (2006) proposed that dialogue allows an individual to see beyond his or her understanding while individually suspending and communicating one’s assumptions freely (p. 223). This allows a team to “explore complex difficult issues from many points of view” (Senge, 2006, p. 224).
The three identified activities in this section are to (a) maintain consistent and equitable communication within the TA, (b) build connections and relationships, and (c) engage in and share responsibility for mutual communication. I provide a deeper discussion in the subsections that follow.

**Maintain consistent and equitable communication within the Training Academy.** In the OST and interviews, effective communication was a key theme (I-1 to I-7). This communication requires not only words but also associated actions (I-1). There is considerable academic insight on communication, the intent of communication, and connection created through communication. From selling an idea, exchanging of ideas, engaging in other viewpoints, and creating empathic understanding of others, communication varies in today’s society (Bohm & Nichol, 2013; Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013; Senge, 2006). More specifically to the team diversity in the TA, communicating through the sharing of ideas and suspending of judgment has potential to align meaning and coordinate effective action without the necessity of mutual agreement (Bohm & Nichol, 2013; Jaworski, 2011; Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013; Senge, 2006). In essence, communicating in an upfront way, effectually by putting all cards on the table and allowing for understanding of each other’s point of view, minimizes assumptions and constructs a collaborative culture.

With the history of divisiveness in the TA, there may be apprehension in entering into difficult conversations. The concern may be that unearthing conflicts or problems will not amount to much, whereas the opposite is true (Bushe, 2010, p. 54). For the TA, as learning conversations emerge from a collective experience by listening to and paraphrasing others’
experiences together, problematic behaviours surface without the need to “define the problem or fix it” (Bushe, 2010, p. 55).

Interviewees talked about clarifying communication structures in the TA (I-3; I-4; I-7). The overarching consensus from participants was that increased opportunity for group and individual communication was valuable (OST, I-1 to I-5), while for some the intent of the recent communication strategies was not always clear (I-1; I-3). For example, more than one interviewee recommended defining the purpose for, frequency of, and relevancy of participants in meetings (I-1; I-3).

Schein (2010) suggested, “To function as a group, the individuals who come together must establish a system of communication and language that permits setting goals and interpreting and managing what is going on” (p. 93). Schein (2010) added that individuals cannot “tolerate too much uncertainty or stimulus overload” (p. 94). Linked to the vision for the TA in Recommendation 5, some interviewees recommended more diverse opportunities to share experiences and engage in dialogue would create more understanding of how individual roles come together to meet the TA’s mandate (OST; I-2; I-4; I-5; I-7).

*Build connections and relationships.* In their research, Young and Daniel (2003) discovered “central to the process of trust building should be organizational initiatives to develop greater personalization between employees and management” (p. 151). From the findings, practical recommendations included taking the time to build relationships outside of the workplace through group coffee breaks, pot-luck lunches, and casual lunches away from the worksite (OST; I-2). In addition, participants suggested initiating casual conversations amongst staff members, as well as between staff members and their supervisors at the worksite (OST,
Participants also welcomed the opportunity to build relationships with external partners (OST).

While roles and functions differ, a cure to silo mentality in the TA is the stimulation of relationships and connectedness (Cilliers & Greyvenstein, 2012, p. 9). Increased personal relationships and effective communication are fundamental to trust formation in organizations (Young & Daniel, 2003, p. 150). With increased quality of design, delivery and evaluation of training programs, and overall job satisfaction, as well as increased opportunity for personal relationship development on an individual and organizational level, there is a likelihood that employee trust may increase (Young & Daniel, 2003, p. 151). Reciprocally, as leadership implement relationship strategies, there is an increased likelihood that this will “make employees more trustworthy in the eyes of management” (Young & Daniel, 2003, p. 151). The staff in the TA may then be more inclined to engage in difficult conversations without fear of repercussion, blame, or not being valued (Young & Daniel, 2003, p. 151).

Engage in and share responsibility for mutual communication. Senge (2006) asserted that “without a shared language for dealing with complexity, team learning is limited” (p. 251). As language is more broadly understood, the functionality of the teams within the TA will effectively increase (Senge, 2006, p. 251). Senge (2006) asserted, “Learning a new language, by definition, means learning how to converse with one another in the language” (p. 252). One participant suggested that the Training Staff are more inclined to make decisions on the spot, whereas curriculum designers apply a more thought-out, researched decision-making process (I-1). When collaborating with other teams in the TA, sharing this insight may assist others.
Developing a collective language within the TA is a complex undertaking and will be best developed through practice (Senge, 2006, p. 251).

In establishing a shared understanding, interviewees talked about creating a safe culture that supports the seeking of guidance when a staff member is unsure or requires support to complete a task. In his book, *Humble Inquiry*, Schein (2013) examined the undercurrents for a leader “when conversations go wrong, when our best advice is ignored, when we get upset with the advice that other give us, when our subordinates fail to tell us things” (p. 7). While the solution to the former may seem easy, Schein (2013) suggested “its implementation is not” (p. 7).

Schein (2013) advised leaders “to do three things: 1) do less telling; 2) learn to do more asking in the particular form of Humble Inquiry; and 3) do a better job of listening and acknowledging” (pp. 7–8). Balancing out the difference between humility and being humiliated is important in determining cultural differences (Schein, 2013, pp. 10–11). Schein (2013) found there to be three kinds of humility: basic, optional, and here-and-now humility (p. 11). The latter, here-and-now humility, is important to understand, as it is how one feels when he or she is “dependent” (Schein, 2013, p. 12) upon another.

Schein (2013) asserted that humble inquiry “derives from an attitude of interest and curiosity [and, is not] . . . leading questions, rhetorical questions, embarrassing questions or statements” (p. 19). One interviewee recognized that roles for some staff have changed and they may not be certain how to do their jobs (I-4). She suggested the importance of checking in on one another if it seems like a colleague is isolating him or herself (I-4). For another participant,
understanding others’ work styles and asking curious questions, rather than making generalized assumptions, were important (I-2).

**Recommendation 3: Enhance structures, processes, and practices that propel a learning organization.** Delgado (2014) suggested, “By definition, an organization never crosses the finish line in its quest to become a learning organization” (p. 17). An organization is, however, able to implement processes and structures that enhance performance, create safety for mutual understanding, embrace creative tension, and generate emergent learning opportunities (Delgado, 2014; Senge, 2006). This recommendation, as deemed by participants holds both tangible and intuitive suggestions to support strengthened collaborative practice in the TA.

This recommendation includes six key points: (a) create policies for operations and strategies for implementation to support a shared understanding of expectations and accountability, (b) implement a thorough orientation process for new employees, (c) review the current organizational structure and determine if existing roles support delivery of the organizational mandate, (d) support staff members to take ownership in working towards the organization’s higher purpose, (e) support personal development and continuous learning, and (f) evaluate hiring practices.

**Create policies for operations and strategies for implementation to support a shared understanding of expectations and accountability.** When developing policies, Dick and Metcalfe (2001) asserted, with the increasing instances of civilians and law enforcement working together, organizations should “consider the similarities among police personnel rather than assume difference in work attitudes and committed behavior” (p. 123). As suggested in this research, stakeholders expressed a desire to have clear practices (OST; I-3). One participant
suggested that structures around daily start and end times and dress code (whether uniforms are worn in the TA) are essential (I-3). This participant further suggested that the TA promote an understanding specific to office doors being open unless there is a meeting (I-3).

As I shared the findings and recommendations at a session with TA staff, I learned that part of the paramilitary culture is for doors to be shut with intention for someone to knock before entering. While some of the processes are important to clarify, mutual understanding is also necessary. Bolman and Deal (2013) suggested, “One structural challenge is how to hold an organization together without holding it back” (p. 72). As such, it is important to consider the balance between a loose structure, in which people do as they wish, as opposed to rigid guidelines that hedges behaviour, stifles creativity, and challenges people to beat the system (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 72).

As discussed in the study conclusions, affording opportunity dialogue is conducive to shared understanding (Bohm & Nichol, 2013; Senge, 2006).

The juxtaposition of vision (what we want) and a clear picture of current reality (where we are relative to what we want) generates what we call “creative tension”: a force to bring them together, caused by a natural tendency to seek resolution. (Senge, 2006, p. 132)

Revamping policies to mirror current practice is a necessary step to align operations. However, anxiety about fairness and equality in the TA will negatively affect the ability of those in the system to attain the organization’s vision. By patiently uncovering opportunities for learning, “an accurate, insightful view of current reality is as important as a clear vision” (Senge, 2006, p. 144).
Implement a thorough orientation process for new employees. Orientation process for new employee in the TA was significant for one participant (I-3). In discussing the findings and recommendations with the Project Sponsor and strategic team, I learned that this process is already underway. Bolman and Deal (2013) suggested many companies “are reluctant to invest in developing human capital. The costs of training are immediate and easy to measure; the benefits are long-term and elusive” (p. 146). Orientation is more than the process of becoming accustomed to organizational procedures. In new group formation, individual orientation is a dual process of understanding the ground rules and interpersonal relationships (Tuckman, 1965, p. 386). This enables a new employee to configure how he or she can adapt to a new setting (Tuckman, 1965, p. 286).

Review the current organizational structure and determine if existing roles support delivery of the organizational mandate. As noted in the conclusions, participants in this research stressed the importance of defining, clarifying, and communicating role expectations (OST; I-3; I-5; I-6). As new roles emerge, participants recommended that staff members and leadership be supported to develop skills to assist them with unfamiliar job responsibilities (I-3; I-4). More specifically, one participant suggested that managers should be in the classroom supporting leadership development of staff (I-6). Further, managers should play an intricate role in the development of recruits (I-6).

As a beginning measure to create mutual and role clarity, one participant suggested having staff members describe their roles in the TA. Bohm and Nichol (2013) suggested, “Society is based on shared meaning, which constitutes the culture. If we don’t share coherent meaning, we do not make much sense of society” (p. 28). However, if all meanings come
together “there is a likelihood that coherence will exist” (Bohm & Nichol, 2013, p. 28). As the TA staff share their knowledge, there is potential for a new inclusive culture to emerge.

Lastly, one participant discussed changing the structure of the CDU and the Professional and Leadership Training Unit by combining the groups under one director that reports to the Executive Director (I-4). Bolman and Deal (2013) offered, “Structural design rarely starts from scratch” (p. 75). The search for potentially more efficient team formations, based in experience and knowledge, creates options for reconfiguration in an organization (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 75).

Support staff members to take ownership in working towards the organization’s higher purpose. Motivation was not only a considerable factor in the finding and conclusions, but also tasks to enrich staff member ambition were essential recommendation by many participants. For example, one participant suggested metrics to be identified that will assist staff members in having shared understanding and marked success in attaining the vision for the TA (I-5). Another participant suggested that a facilitated systems thinking exercise with all TA staff members would assist in seeing the bigger picture for the academy (I-1). A third task was for leadership to inquire into staff members’ individual motivation for completing work assignments. Berg (2015) asserted, “From the individual’s perspective, it has been long identified in the literature that the work one does is significant to a person’s sense of meaning and identity” (p. 2).

In addition to the former, one participant also suggested individual ownership for the TA successfully achieving its mandate (I-4). Zimmerman et al. (2013) stated that frontline ownership has a reciprocal effect, as staff are mindful of issues as they occur and there is potential to increase organizational resilience (p. 10). Further, in the January 2017 all-staff meeting, a
participant proposed that an exercise that links individual motivation to organizational higher purpose be facilitated (I-4). Quinn and Thakor (2014) offered, “The pursuit of a higher purpose generates positive energy in leaders and employees—a sort of off-balance-sheet asset” (p. 102). The pursuit of a higher purpose for individuals who are invested fosters a more satisfying work atmosphere (Quinn & Thakor, 2014, p. 102).

Finally, a participant noted the necessity to support staff members with differing levels of motivation to be able to attain opportunities that best utilize their energy, knowledge, and expertise, because individual success is also vital (I-4). Berg (2015) argued, “By understanding why and what motivates task-oriented vs. socio-emotional people to make decisions, a leader can apply the levers that trigger self-motivation instead of relying on a one size fits all” (p. 11). From there, leaders can support and resource appropriately so that the individual can draw upon and access “the personal drive that comes from achieving their own aspirational purpose or goals in life” (Berg, 2015, p. 11).

Support personal development and continuous learning. Dick (2011) suggested, “Acknowledging that committed employees are more likely to be concerned with improving their own and organizational performance, a way forward would be to develop managerial competencies that facilitate organizational attachment” (p. 571). Individual commitment to the organization is greatly influenced by the way they are managed, as opposed to work demands (Dick, 2011, p. 571). In this recommendation, participants determined a number of strategies to strengthen personal development and continuous learning.

From a practical stance, one participant identified specific opportunities for engagement, such as regular lunch-and-learn sessions, as being beneficial (I-2). Similarly, a participant
identified allowing for opportunities for new growth to minimize complacency (I-6). OST and interview participants suggested an equitable strategy for staff members to shift portfolios that includes cross training and job shadowing (OST; I-6). Some participants discussed having more opportunities for the CDU and OSU to work collaboratively together (I-1; I-3 to I-5).

In doing so, an interviewee noted the potential to create integrated teams to learn about the job functions within the TA (I-5). Similarly, participants recommended the TA embed or cross-over staff into other units (OST; I-5; I-6). As a further step, interviewees suggested the organization create multidisciplinary teams or units that include a sergeant, a trainer, a curriculum designer, and an administrative staff member connected to specific portfolios (I-5; I-6). In doing so, it is important to give time for the teams to integrate and develop respect for what people bring to the table (I-5).

Separately, one participant suggested running simulation exercises in the TA with all the staff (I-6). As another practical measure, he suggested linking training curricula to the associated legislations as well as to policy and procedures (I-6).

*Evaluate hiring practices.* As staff members are on boarded to the TA, assessment of individual suitability was a recommendation from the research. A catalyst for the success of the Central Intelligence Agency mobile and social learning programs was plausibly linked to “implementation of a certification program for adhoc and subject matter experts” (Delgado, 2014, p. 14). Delgado (2014) cited that this program included “workshops on fundamentals of instruction, facilitation skills, course design, training needs assessment and evaluation, assessing student learning, case method teaching, case research and case writing, designing course materials, and classroom management” (p. 14). As a preliminary measure to hiring practices,
planned and purposeful on boarding measures with staff from the field may assist in considering the right fit for the TA staffing complement.

In corrections, organizational citizenship delineates between going above and beyond for others or for the organizational mandate (Lambert et al., 2013, p. 969). Correctional orientation differentiates between inmate rehabilitation versus punishment mindset (Lambert et al., 2013, p. 969). In considering corrections staff, Lambert et al. (2013) posited, “If treatment is the major endeavour of a correctional organization, then during the hiring process and the academy training, the importance of a rehabilitative correctional orientation needs to be emphasized” (p. 969). Linking with external stakeholders to clarify the vision for the TA as it pertains to the desired climate in the field, may be beneficial in determining the desired worldview of new staff hired to design and deliver training.

**Recommendation 4: Clarify the vision that links the Training Academy to becoming a centre of excellence.** The organizational vision for the TA sets the parameters of the work to be done, clarifies the TA’s role in the JSG ministry, and impacts role clarity of staff members in the TA. Interviewees discussed the need to understand the TA’s vision as a centre of excellence (I-1; I-6; OST). One participant discussed that the TA was entrenched in a mandate that was beyond its current ability to resource (I-6). Another interviewee noted that the struggle to meet daily operations impeded some external projects from moving forward (I-7). The TA is unique in that it blends paramilitary (law enforcement) and business (civilian) professionals together to design, develop, and deliver frontline training to corrections, community corrections, and sheriffs in the Province of Alberta. Clarifying the vision is crucial to the evolution of the academy, and it
will take time and collaborative efforts with external partners for this outcome to be enacted upon.

In their study, Dick and Metcalfe (2001) compared the influence of management versus organizational commitment from civilian and police officer perspectives (p. 111). Contrary to beliefs of many law enforcement personnel, Dick and Metcalfe posited that there were few differences between the groups in relation to commitment in the organization (p. 122). They surmised, regardless of role, “there is a ‘universal appeal’ for a work climate that supports employees, treats them fairly, and ensures that employees feel that they make important contributions” (Dick & Metcalfe, 2001, p. 123). From a theoretical perspective, Van Gelderen and Bik (2016) asserted that employee commitment and willingness to support colleagues’ within a law enforcement culture increases with strong alignment to the organizational mandate (pp. 208–209). Van Gelderen and Bik (2015) also stated, when law enforcement identifies with the goals of the organization, the leadership can assume that staff “will do their best to protect the interests, and goals of the organization” (p. 208).

Organizational vision and values are linked. A vision on its own is only one part of the equation (Senge, 2006, p. 208). To avoid cynicism, the vision requires linkage to the “values people live by day by day” (Senge, 2006, p. 208). Senge (2006) argued that in determining the direction of an organization, there are “three critical questions” (p. 208): “What” (p. 208) draws out the espoused vision for an organization, “why” (p. 208) answers the purpose for the organization’s existence beyond employees and stakeholders to the larger societal impact, and “how” (p. 208) identifies the behaviour set out to accomplish the aforementioned. Beyond the day-to-day operations, there was a definite sense from this research that providing the best
training, within the resources available, is essential to keep frontline staff, inmates, and Albertans safe.

The period in between now and the future vision for the TA requires careful consideration. In presenting the study findings and recommendations to the operation committee, some attendees acknowledged that more communication could be shared with the JSG ministry branding of the TA as a centre of excellence. A date for a communication strategy had not been identified at the time this report was written.

The most important part of this journey is not defining the vision, but the process to move towards it while keeping the vision in sight (Senge, 2006, p. 209). Primarily, a visioning process involves developing a future that the group seeks to create, not one that is imposed, as the default will be compliance and not commitment (Senge, 2006, p. 209). In their article regarding frontline ownership in health care systems, Zimmerman et al. (2013) argued, “Buy-in is a sign of trouble because it is likely to decrease the attentiveness or mindfulness of workers, who are encouraged to just follow orders” (p. 8). In defining the vision and seeking an implementation strategy, it is essential to include as many people as are interested so they themselves “own” (Zimmerman et al., 2013, p. 13) the process. From this, strategies can be implemented and reassessed as needed to alleviate concerns of losing momentum or deviating from the participatory visioning process (Zimmerman et al., 2013, p. 13).

**Organizational Implications**

I can best describe this research as a moving target. The TA’s growth and evolution from the initial meetings with the Project Sponsor, Ms. Arnold-Schutta, and the strategic team has been a remarkable experience for me as a learner and a leader. This research benefitted greatly
from the enthusiasm and support of my Project Sponsor (Executive Director), the strategic leadership team, TA staff members, and external stakeholders. The Executive Director, Ms. Arnold-Schutta, demonstrated courage as a leader and seized the opportunity to deeply inquire into ways to enhance the unique working relationships between the business and paramilitary professionals in the TA. This was not without risk, as early in the planning stages the Executive Director and strategic team shared with me that there had been an historical divide between these two groups.

Like peeling away the layers of an onion, it became evident that, in fact, the time was right to support change in the TA. With every conversation that occurred, I saw the system shift. Outside of formal data collection, I have had numerous meetings and conversations with my Project Sponsor and with staff members in groups and individually. Regardless of the difficulty in talking about an experience, I was mindful that the intent of each discourse for the other person was to figure out how to best come together as an organization. Together, the collective message from all those I spoke with was for the TA to provide evidence-based, emergent training facilitated through simulations and adult learning principles for frontline staff—to keep inmates, colleagues and Albertans safe.

At the end of September 2016, I met with Ms. Arnold-Schutta to talk about the information that emerged from the research. I prepared a brief overview of all the findings, and individually reviewed each theme and subtheme with her. I candidly shared the diversity of each theme while preserving the anonymity of interviewees and participants. I wanted to ensure that I was respectfully conveying the message that the participants had entrusted to me. I shared with the Executive Director that, as I reflected on their voices, what emerged was heart led—a love
story. There was not one voice that I encountered that was just putting in their time with me or at their job. I heard a real commitment, regardless of personal experience, to build upon what is working well, to challenge barriers, and to come together as an organization to deliver excellent training programs in the TA.

Later in September 2016, I was invited to present the research findings and recommendations to the Operations Committee, who are external partners to the TA within JSG. This group landed on clarifying the vision of the TA in relation to becoming a center of excellence. I learned that while the name has changed from Staff College to the TA, the branding and promoting of the academy as a centre of excellence needs to be more broadly shared in the ministry. I believe this is pivotal. In creating a psychologically safe organization, Schein (2010) asserted that a primary function of transformational learning involves implementing “a compelling positive vision” (p. 305). Given this, those involved in the change must connect with the need and benefit to immersing themselves in it (Schein, 2010, p. 305). This vision must be communicated clearly by senior management with “clear behavioral terms . . . [of] what ‘the new way of working’ will be” (Schein, 2010, p. 306), and that this new way is not negotiable.

Lambert, Hogan, Barton-Bellessa, et al. (2012) offered, “Although working in the human service field has its unique rewards, it also has its unique problems” (p. 938). The demands and challenges of working with human beings can pave the way to burn out (Lambert, Hogan, Barton-Bellessa, et al., 2012, p. 938). Thematic in this research, trust is a key element to strengthened collaborative practice in the TA. As an inexpensive undertaking, a way to “enhance the work environment” (Lambert, Hogan, Barton-Bellessa, et al., 2012) would be for leadership in the TA “to encourage open and honest communication at all managerial levels” (p. 953). Van
Gelden and Bik (2016) argued, “Affectively committed employees perceive a higher level of supervisor support” (p. 209).

Goldstein and Butler (2010), in their research, considered “the potential of collaborative process with communities of practice to address” (p. 239) multiple challenges in the United States Fire Learning Network. Combining multistakeholder collaboration and CoPs “nurtures expertise, sustains collaborative networks, and amplifies potential for change” (Goldstein & Butler, 2010, p. 244). Goldstein and Butler identified that the “purpose was to increase individual and collective capacity rather than build consensus” (p. 239). In challenging old behaviours, the conclusion of this study was that staff felt empowered to engage in shared understanding respective of individuality, and as a result this produced a new cultures with potential to reform policy and create “autonomous, creative, and inspired work [practices]” (Goldstein & Butler, 2010, p. 247).

In early October 2016 I held two large sessions to meet with TA staff members to share the findings and outcomes. I prepared a two-page outline of the inquiry questions, subquestions, methodology, methods, findings, and recommendations. In both groups, the staff members stated that they were doing all that was listed, and they were not inclined to pick just one thing to work on. They commented that each task within the individual and mutual recommendations were linked. Staff queried if the recommendations seemed too simple and asked if the leadership would support professional growth and development. This curiosity was important to me, as it was markedly different from the initial meetings I encountered at the TA when I experienced few comments or questions. Significantly, one person commented that engaging in difficult
conversations takes courage. While another individual emphasized that it was important to engage in conversations that result in mutual, shared understanding of other presenters.

In talking with the Executive Director and the strategic leadership team in the second meeting, they supported the staff members’ decisions for the individual and mutual recommendations. They decided that all of the internal organizational recommendations were to come forward as a commitment to the evolution of the TA. I believe that the TA leadership is dedicated to shift the culture in the TA, and that relationships will continue to grow beyond this research. Along with a clearly articulated vision, Schein (2010) included seven, additional, concurrent transformational leadership tasks: (a) formal training; (b) involvement of the learner; (c) informal training of relevant family groups and teams; (d) practice fields, coaches, and feedback; (e) positive role models; (f) support groups in which learning problems can be aired and discussed; and (g) systems and structures that are consistent with new ways of thinking and working (pp. 306–307). As systems leaders, “helping people to see the larger system is essential to building a shared understanding of complex problems” (Senge et al., 2015, p. 28). While buy-in and best practices are often the goals of leadership, “importing solutions from elsewhere is often problematic” (Zimmerman et al., 2013, p. 20). Frontline ownership allows for those affected to determine practices that work best for them (Zimmerman et al., 2013, p. 20).

In January 2017, the TA leadership and staff members converge for an all-staff meeting. The Executive Director proposed that a form of reflecting on the progress made in achieving the recommendations should be part of the agenda for this day. As I am external to the TA, I see this as next steps for the TA as being beyond my role as inquiry researcher.
By design, this qualitative research reflected first (individual), second (relational), and third (organizational) person inquiry (Torbert & Taylor, 2008, p. 240). The recommendations mirrored the interconnectedness of this inquiry experience. While earlier I discussed the value of a clear vision to support the TA’s evolution, external motivators alone cannot transform an organization (Torbert & Taylor, 2008, p. 246). There lies an important correlation between individual and organizational motivation. Torbert and Taylor (2008) offered, in individual transformation, there is a period within which individuals master their own environment for short-term gain, preceded by some mastery over their own behaviours and relationships with others that leads to conscious thought processes about those action, and finally, paves way to use the prior experience in new experiences (p. 246). The organization will be impacted only after individuals take risks and create learning opportunities with other colleagues (Torbert & Taylor, 2008, p. 246). This is not an easy task. While many people espouse to change their thoughts and behaviour, many may not recognize how challenging it can be to disrupt their own established habits, and they may default to their established, formative learning patterns (Argyris, 2002; Torbert & Taylor, 2008). 

As opposed to coercive or utilitarian organizations, normative organizations incubate a culture in which individuals are committed to and accept authority from leadership, as the “goals of the organization are basically the same as the individual’s goals” (Schein, 2010, p. 164). While the intent of AR inquiry was to provide voice to and to seek solutions from all who are impacted by the issue (Stringer, 2014, p. 31), this research by design, circumstance, and choice was not inclusive of all voices related to the TA. As collaborative practices shift with the evolution of the TA, it will be important for the leadership to continue to create opportunities for
dialogue with internal and external stakeholders to enable them to reflect and adjust (Bohm & Nichol, 2013; Senge, 2006).

**Implications for Future Inquiry**

In the early planning meetings for this inquiry, a strategic leadership team member suggested that the culture of the TA was an important issue to explore (X. Yang, personal communication, November 12, 2015). The influences on organizational culture vary in the literature. In addition to public service, Dick (2011) noted “affective commitment, internal service performance, and work engagement” as factors in organizational commitment (p. 208). Separately, Lambert et al. (2013) spoke of the duality of organizational citizenship in which individuals may altruistically go out of their way to help others; conversely, compliancy occurs when people may go out of their way to ensure the organizational vision is upheld and resources are adequately used (p. 956). More traditionally, Schein (2010) described culture as “an abstraction” (p. 7). Powerful forces “created in social and organizational situations” (Schein, 2010), in which, if there is limited understanding, “we may become victim to them” (p. 7).

A duality emerged from this research regarding organizational culture. First, internally, I heard about the immediate differences between the professional groups—paramilitary (law enforcement) and business professional (academic). Conversely, I also heard that the shifts in the approach to training based on adult learning principle had a recognizable impact on recruit graduates. My assumption to this point is that increased opportunity to partake in decision making, clearer role structures, and displayed appreciation by leadership for work being done increases staff members’ organizational commitment (Dick, 2011, p. 570). This led me to believe that there is momentum, a cultural shift, and relationship convergence amongst the diverse
teams. With growth in shared understanding and as mental models (assumptions) subside, “mastering team learning will be a critical step in building” (Senge, 2006, p. 217) the academy as a learning organization. An organizational culture is not motionless; rather, it reflects “how we live with one another day to day” (Senge, 2006, p. 285). I believe further inquiry may benefit the TA in looking at how leaders can be conscious to evolving culture in the TA as a learning organization. Although change is not easy to enact or sustain, I have confidence that planned and purposeful efforts can transform the TA “from an agency that trains staff to one that enhances human performance” (Delgado, 2014, p. 23).

Second, I heard that there is a special connection and genuine concern afforded to the training recruits from the training staff at the TA (I-7). The query from an interviewee was whether this sentiment was offered in the same manner on the frontline (I-7). Separately, another interviewee shared that processes taught at the TA were not necessarily consistent with the processes and policies in the separate correctional facilities (I-6). Delgado (2014) suggested, “Correctional organizations face unique and complex challenges including increasingly limited resources, changes in the types and number of inmates, and loss of organizational knowledge and changes in staff characteristics as younger generations replace retiring staff” (p. 15).

As training transfer from the classroom to the frontline range from 10 to 30% (Delgado, 2014, p. 20), understanding how the culture developed in the training programs can be reinforced in the frontline to support retention and enhance the larger organizational culture may be of interest. Delgado (2014) noted, for some adult learners, there may be little motivation, lack of goal setting, or low expectations that disrupt training transfer (p. 21). In the field, supervisors play a key role in staff member motivation (Delgado, 2014; Dick, 2011; Lambert, Hogan,
Barton-Bellessa, et al., 2012). It is important to be mindful that without training transfer “the training itself actually increases cost and lowers productivity” (Delgado, 2014, p. 22).

**Thesis Summary**

In this research inquiry, I embarked on a journey to answer the question: What strategies are considered most effective for the interdisciplinary teams in the Alberta JSG, TA to strengthen collaborative practice? In using OST and semistructured interviews to unearth familiar experiences and new possibilities, opportunity existed for participants to safely share their voices. The research suggested the TA is a complex system that is individually, mutually, and organizationally influenced. The TA has evolved through this project, as every discussion or insight had potential to shift the system.

Collaboration starts with self. Thus, for the TA staff members, collaboration is fuelled by the motivation one possess to meet the organizational mandate, and, in turn, the manner in which he or she experiences mutual relationship and organizational connection. I also found role clarity married with a clear organizational vision to be key factors in this research. As a living plan, subject to future iterations of review and change, the recommendations in this chapter are a final step towards considerations for strengthened collaborative practice in the TA. To recap, the four recommendations, which surfaced from the study findings and conclusion presented in Chapter 4, are as follows:

1. Continue to encourage individual development and self-awareness.
2. Grow mutual understanding.
3. Enhance structures, processes, and practices that propel a learning organization.
4. Clarify the vision that links the TA to becoming a centre of excellence.
As a learning organization, continuing growth in effective communication through dialogue and shared understanding will benefit strengthened collaborative practices in the TA. Through trial and error, a learning culture allows for risk taking and seeks continuous improvement. Implications for future research hold new possibilities to explore the culture in the TA, as well as ways in which training transfer to the frontline may influence a culture shift within the ministry.

As a final thought, I propose that the message from this research is to hold dearly the uniqueness that each individual has to offer. Although it is not a simple task, the transformation from letting go, embracing new learning, sharing stories, and devoting one’s self to a higher purpose is exponentially rewarding.

*Are we deeply committed to creating what we truly want for its own sake? . . . When we see our visions and our dreams in this way, it’s a subtle but most profound shift. And it’s under these circumstances that the “hidden hands” phenomenon begins to occur, and doors open for us that are beyond our imagination [magic].* (Jaworski, 2011, p. 125)
References


Quinn, R. E., & Thakor, A. V. (2014). Imbue the organization with a higher purpose [Electronic version]. In J. E. Dutton & G. M. Spreitzer (Eds.), How to be a positive leader: Small actions, big impact (pp. 100–111). Retrieved from http://www.books24x7.com


Appendix A: Justice and Solicitor General Training Academy Descriptive Organizational Chart

Training Academy
The Training Academy (TA) promotes excellence through training and continual professional development by establishing training standards and, in partnership with stakeholders, facilitating the delivery of evidence-based curriculum.

**Professional & Leadership Training**
Role: To guide, advise and support stakeholders in the development, delivery and evaluation of organizational training.
- Develop collaborative business relationships through consulting and advice.
- Influence current practices to challenge the process to increase business efficiencies.
- Collaborate/partner with other areas of TA and CHR in the design, development and/or delivery of evidence-based T&D solutions.
- Apply and adopt a systems thinking approach to create a path that aligns organizational training & development initiatives with the Ministry’s business direction and desired future.
- Develop best practices through research and interdepartmental learning across organizations (Internal Benchmark).
- Contribute to and champion CHR/GoA T&D initiatives and lend GoA value to cross-GoA teams.
- Conduct needs assessments to identify common training and development (T&D) opportunities and solutions between clients.
- Develop, coordinate and integrate common T&D practices throughout the Ministry.
- Increase evidence-based practices & approaches to T&D.
- Examine the ROI and the Social Return on Investment (SROI) (e.g. impact mapping to increase value of training and development).

**Business Services**
Role: To provide operational oversight over the TA including finance, facilities & fleet management, administration, technology and learning management system services.
- Provide facilities management services: building maintenance, safety, etc.
- Develop & manage an inventory management program.
- Coordinate fleet services for TA.
- Manage and monitor TA budget, financial plans, and facilities requirements for the TA.
- Lead business continuity planning for TA.
- Develop & deliver LMS administrator training.
- Develop comprehensive program administration services to ensure effective training delivery.
- Coordinate fleet services for TA.
- Develop & deliver LMS administrator training.
- Develop & coordinate operational processes to increase services.
- Coordinate fleet services for TA.
- Manage systems to align with business requirements.
- Conduct user acceptance and functional testing.
- Increase the TA’s profile, enhance information sharing & create operational efficiencies by exploring systems such as a dedicated webpage for the TA.
- Increase the TA’s profile, enhance information sharing & create operational efficiencies by exploring systems such as a dedicated webpage for the TA.

**Curriculum Design Unit (CDU)**
Role: To ensure quality training programs are developed, which meet the needs of the Ministry, the Training Academy and/or other stakeholders.
- Create high quality curriculum that complies with adult learning principles.
- Ensure training is appropriate and relevant to stakeholders’ operational needs by using evidence-based methodologies.
- Explore and research new approaches, tools, and technologies that can enhance the efficiency and validity of training.
- Provide support and guidance to trainers and trainers in order to contribute to personal, professional, and organizational growth.
- Contribute to advancement of the learning and development field through community partnerships, collaborative projects, and facilitation of workshops.

**Peace Officer Training & Standards**
Role: To plan and deliver Peace Officer recruit and specialized training & promote quality assurance through program & training standards.
- Develop training instruction, content, and methodology standards to ensure consistency and excellence in numerous internally and externally delivered training programs and initiatives, including for communities & investigators.
- Develop, modify and deliver (in partnership with CDU) complex and highly specialized firearms training programs.
- Provide accreditation & certification oversight, direction, and advice to external & internal stakeholders to ensure that courses required by legislation are being delivered by appropriate trainers and in accordance with best instructional practices as set by the TA.

**Specialized Training, Standards & Accreditation**
- Develop training instruction, content, and methodology standards to ensure consistency and excellence in numerous internally and externally delivered training programs and initiatives, including for communities & investigators.
- Develop, modify and deliver (in partnership with CDU) complex and highly specialized firearms training programs.
- Provide accreditation & certification oversight, direction, and advice to external & internal stakeholders to ensure that courses required by legislation are being delivered by appropriate trainers and in accordance with best instructional practices as set by the TA.

**Facility Management & Operations**
- Provide facilities management services: building maintenance, safety, etc.
- Develop & manage an inventory management program.
- Coordinate fleet services for TA.
- Develop & deliver LMS administrator training.
- Develop & coordinate operational processes to increase services.
- Coordinate fleet services for TA.
- Manage systems to align with business requirements.
- Conduct user acceptance and functional testing.
- Increase the TA’s profile, enhance information sharing & create operational efficiencies by exploring systems such as a dedicated webpage for the TA.

**Finance & Administration**
- Manage and monitor TA budget, financial plans, and facilities requirements for the TA.
- Develop & deliver LMS administrator training.
- Develop & coordinate operational processes to increase services.
- Coordinate fleet services for TA.
- Manage systems to align with business requirements.
- Conduct user acceptance and functional testing.
- Increase the TA’s profile, enhance information sharing & create operational efficiencies by exploring systems such as a dedicated webpage for the TA.

**Systems & Technology**
- Learning Management System (LMS):
  - Implement LMS.
  - Translate business requirements into detailed functional specification.
  - Work with stakeholders to assess divisional LMS needs and to measure LMS effectiveness.
  - Identify potential business benefits of unused or under-used components or features of the system.
  - Develop the TA’s annual report.
- Manage systems to align with business requirements.
- Conduct user acceptance and functional testing.
- Increase the TA’s profile, enhance information sharing & create operational efficiencies by exploring systems such as a dedicated webpage for the TA.

**Note.** CDU = Curriculum Design Unit; CHR = Corporate Human Resources; GoA = Government of Alberta; JSG = Justice and Solicitor General; LMS = Learning Management System; ROI = Return on Investment; SROI = Social Return on Investment; TA = Training Academy; T&D = Training & Development.

Information provided by C. Clark (personal communication, January 21, 2016).
Appendix B: Justice and Solicitor General Training Academy Organizational Chart

Note. JSG = Justice and Solicitor General; L&D = Learning & Development; LMS = Learning Management System.

Based on information provided by C. Clark (personal communication, January 21, 2016).
Appendix C: Inquiry Team Member Letter of Agreement

In partial fulfillment of the requirement for a Master of Arts in Leadership Degree at Royal Roads University, Lisa Ackimenko (the Student) will be conducting an inquiry research study at the Alberta Justice and Solicitor General Training Academy to identify what strategies are considered most effective for the inter-disciplinary teams in the Alberta Justice and Solicitor General Training Academy to strengthen collaborative practice. The Student’s credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by calling Dr. Catherine Etmanski, Director, School of Leadership, at [telephone number] or email [email address].

Inquiry Team Member Role Description

As a volunteer Inquiry Team Member assisting the Student with this project, your role may include one or more of the following: providing advice on the relevance and wording of questions and letters of invitation, supporting the logistics of the data-gathering methods, including observing, assisting, or facilitating with the open space technology session, taking notes or reviewing analysis of data, to assist the Student and the Alberta Justice and Solicitor General Training Academy organizational change process. In the course of this activity, you may be privy to confidential inquiry data.

Confidentiality of Inquiry Data

In compliance with the Royal Roads University Research Ethics Policy, under which this inquiry project is being conducted, all personal identifiers and any other confidential information generated or accessed by the inquiry team advisor will only be used in the performance of the functions of this project, and must not be disclosed to anyone other than persons authorized to receive it, both during the inquiry period and beyond it. Recorded information in all formats is covered by this agreement. Personal identifiers include participant names, contact information, personally identifying turns of phrase or comments, and any other personally identifying information.

Bridging Student’s Potential or Actual Ethical Conflict

Since there will be no real or perceived power-over issues involved with this study, the student will be facilitating the Open Space session and conducting all interviews.

Personal information will be collected, recorded, corrected, accessed, altered, used, disclosed, retained, secured and destroyed as directed by the Student, under direction of the Royal Roads Academic Supervisor.

Inquiry Team Members who are uncertain whether any information they may wish to share about the project they are working on is personal or confidential will verify this with Lisa Ackimenko, the Student.
Statement of Informed Consent:
I have read and understand this agreement.

________________________  ______________________  _____________
Name (Please Print)        Signature             Date
Appendix D: Open Space Technology Email Invitation

Dear [Prospective Participant],

I would like to invite you to be part of a research project that I am conducting. This project is part of the requirement for my Master’s Degree in Arts in Leadership, at Royal Roads University.

The objective of my research project is to inquire into what strategies might be required for the inter-disciplinary teams in the Alberta Justice and Solicitor General (JSG) Training Academy to strengthen collaborative practice.

Your name was chosen as a prospective participant because you are a current or were recently an employee of the JSG Training Academy or you are identified as someone who has involvement with the Training Academy through business partnerships.

This phase of my research project will consist of Open Space Technology and is scheduled to run from 1:00 pm to 4:30 pm on Monday, July 18th, 2016. The session is being held on the 10th floor of the Federal Building (9820 – 107 St NW). Please see the information letter about secure access to the building. Casual and comfortable attire is appropriate for this session.

The attached document contains further information about the study conduct along with a description of open space technology and will enable you to make a fully informed decision on whether or not you wish to participate. Please review this information before responding.

You are not required to participate in this research project. If you do choose to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time during the OST and any data will be used since there will be no identification of participant contributions. Should you attend the session and then choose to withdraw your consent, it will be difficult to maintain your anonymity as this is a large group method of data collection.

Please feel free to contact me at any time should you have additional questions regarding the project and its outcomes.

If you would like to participate in my research project, please contact me at:

Name: Lisa Ackimenko
Email: [email address]
Telephone: [telephone number]

Sincerely,
Lisa

Attachments:
Open Space Technology Information Letter
Open Space Technology Consent Letter
Appendix E: Information Letter for Open Space Technology

Strategies to Strengthen Collaborative Practice
Data Collection Methods Information Letter

My name is Lisa Ackimenko, and this research project is part of the requirement for a Masters of Arts in Leadership at Royal Roads University. My credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by contacting Dr. Catherine Etmanski, Acting Director, School of Leadership Studies: [email address] or [telephone number].

Purpose of the study and sponsoring organization

The purpose of my research project is to identify strategies that might strengthen collaborative practice in the inter-disciplinary teams of the Alberta Justice and Solicitor General (JSG) Training Academy (TA). By using a modified form of action research, Action Research Engagement (Rowe et al., 2013)\(^8\), with a focus on participant engagement as a means of participatory, I hope to create a dialogue where ideas are freely shared and can be mobilized to build upon existing collaborative practices. The project is sponsored by Carol Arnold-Schutta, Executive Director, Alberta Justice and Solicitor General Training Academy.

Your participation and how information will be collected

This method of data collection will consist of one Open Space Technology session. Open Space Technology is a large group data collection where diverse groups of individuals come together to share their voice, look at what is working well, tackle tough issues, and brainstorm solutions and generate strategies for moving forward in their group, community, or organization. This method is directed by participants as those who attend are the ones meant to be there and, although this session is scheduled to last a half-day, the session ends when it ends. The only notes that will be taken during this session are the notes that the participants create on flipcharts, paper, or post-it notes. At the closing report-out round, this part of the session will be dually audio recorded and transcribed as a verbatim transcript of the event. The question to be answered is; what strategies might be required for the inter-disciplinary teams in the Alberta Justice and Solicitor General Training Academy to strengthen collaborative practice?

Given that the Open Space Technology session is open to all current staff at the Training Academy and those staff who recently left the Training Academy, as well as external business partners to the TA, guaranteeing confidentiality during this method is not possible. In the event that a participant is specifically identified in the data collection by being written on a flipchart, piece of paper, or post-it note, prior to releasing the final report, that participant would be contacted for permission.

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Benefits and risks to participation

In participating in this research, you have the opportunity to lend voice to how collaborative practice is perceived within the Training Academy and what strategies are considered to be effective to strengthen collaborative practice in the Training Academy by discussing strengths and barriers to working together as a community of diverse professionals. Along with this, you are able to provide strategies for minimizing challenges and enhancing what is going well in order to strengthen collaboration. Strengthening collaborative practice is multi-faceted as it not only enhances the relationships between colleagues but also positively influences the design, delivery, and evaluation of the training being delivered by the Training Academy. Although there is no specific individual benefit or loss from participating in the research, the Training Academy will benefit from the research whether or not individuals choose to participate.

As all present and former TA staff working at the Academy from April 2015 to present, as well as external business partners, including leadership (except for the Project Sponsor/Executive Director) will be invited to participate in the Open Space Technology session, there is risk in that some may perceive power-over issues based on some participants’ positions or authority in the Training Academy or larger JSG ministry. However, the intent of Open Space Technology is to provide a safe environment where participants can freely and respectfully share their thoughts and feelings about the inquiry question. After the initial welcome and instruction portion of the OST, there will be two break-out sessions where people who are interested in issue raised can come together to identify strategies to strengthen collaborative practice. In the first break-out session, participants who have working relationships or are familiar with each other will be invited to engage in discussion. The second break out session will be more inclusive of the larger group. The intention of this structure is to mitigate any concerns that participants may not feel comfortable speaking freely during the OST.

This session is informal so casual attire is welcome. As a facilitator, it will be my responsibility to gently redirect conversations when uncomfortable conflict seems possible. As Open Space Technology is participant driven, should there be discomfort, a participant may withdraw from the session at any time.

Inquiry team

At present, my inquiry team consists of three members. Jennifer Stacey, Director of Human Resources and Organizational Development, Aspen Family and Community Network Society, Calgary Alberta – Ms. Stacey just received her parchment for completion of the Masters of Arts in Leadership (MAL) program with Royal Road University. Second, Dani Zubkowski, a classmate in the MAL program. Third, Deanna Emberg, colleague in Human Services, Provincial Training and Workforce Development. I will facilitate the Open Space Technology session, with assistance of Ms. Zubkowski and Ms. Emberg. I will collect all the information captured on flip chart, paper, and post-it notes; and collate the data using an anonymous coding system as well as, analyzing the transcripts from the audio recordings from the OST final report-out session. From there I will ask members of the inquiry team to assist by reviewing my analysis of the data.
Real or Perceived Conflict of Interest

Although I am an employee of the Government of Alberta, I work in the ministry of Human Services and have no power over you in any professional capacity as a participant in this research. Through use of my inquiry team, I will ensure that the data analysis is documented and analysed in an objective manner. I disclose this information here so that you can make a fully informed decision on whether or not to participate in this study.

Confidentiality, security of data, and retention period

I will work to protect your privacy throughout this study. All information I collect will be maintained in confidence with hard copies (e.g., consent forms) stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home office. Electronic data (such as transcripts or audio files) will be stored on a password protected computer on my home computer in compliance with Royal Roads University and Government of Alberta ethics research policy. Information will be recorded in hand-written format and, where appropriate, summarized, in anonymous format in the body of the final report. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual unless specific agreement has been obtained beforehand. All documentation will be kept strictly confidential and all raw data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. As per the Government of Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and Records Management Regulations, this information will be housed accordingly.

The use of Open Space Technology as a large group method disallows the ability to maintain participant confidentiality in the data collection process. The structure of the session is intended so that participants are able to participate in a discussion comfortably; however those who attend the session will be aware of others who are in attendance. It is asked of participants to respect the confidential nature of the research by not sharing names or specific comments outside of the group process.

The Federal Building is a secure worksite and requires that security receive a list of all potential participants 72 hours prior to the planned session. Upon arriving to the main floor of the Federal Building, you are required to provide photo identification at the Sheriff station. This will be exchanged for a visitors pass. Once the event is over, return to the Sheriff station and retrieve your identification. Once all personal identification is returned to personal owners, the list of potential participants will be destroyed as a transitory document.

Sharing results

The results of the Open Space Technology session, after anonymous coding and analysis, will inform questions asked in the second method of data collection: semi-structured interviews. The date for the interviews to take place has not yet been scheduled.

In addition to submitting my final report to Royal Roads University in partial fulfillment of a Masters of Arts in Leadership, I will also be sharing my research findings with my Project Sponsor, Ms. Carol Arnold-Schutta, Executive Director of the Alberta Justice and Solicitor General Training Academy. Once the final report is handed off to Ms. Arnold-Schutta, she will
be encouraged to assemble interested internal and external stakeholders to review the findings and make the recommendations happen.

As in the future I may have interest in sharing the findings from this research in a written professional, or scholarly paper, or conference presentation, I am requesting written participants to provide written consent and have included this in the informed consent letter.

Also, this research will be published as a thesis with Royal Road University’s Digital Archive, Pro-Quest, and Library and Archives Canada.

**Procedure for withdrawing from the study**

As participation in this research is voluntary, you may withdraw at any time. At the time you wish to withdrawal from participating in the study, please contact me directly. If you have participated in the Open Space Technology session, it may be difficult to remove your input to the group discussion from the data collection. However, if there is something that identifies you personally, it will be removed, destroyed and not be part of the data analysis.

You are not required to participate in this research project. By replying directly to the e-mail request for participation or attending the Open Space Technology session and signing the in-person consent form, you indicate that you have read and understand the information above and give your free and informed consent to participate in this project.

Please keep a copy of this information letter for your records.
Appendix F: Informed Consent for Open Space Technology

By signing this form, you agree that you are over the age of 18 and have read the information letter for this study. Your signature states that you are giving your voluntary and informed consent to participate in this project.

☐ I commit to respect the confidential nature of the Open Space Technology session by not sharing identifying information about the other participants.

☐ I consent to the closing circle being dually audio recorded.

Name: (Please Print): __________________________________________________

Signed: __________________________________________________________________

Date: ___________________________________________________________________
Appendix G: Open Space Technology Schedule

Schedule
Date: July 18, 2016

1:00 – 1:45 p.m. Welcome and review of OST principles in circle.
- A brief overview of history
- Statement that this is a no frills working session to get things done.
- Inquiry question and sub-questions as the theme of the session.
- The four principles of OST.
- The one law: The law of two feet.
- Schedule breakdown, and topic creation by participants.
- Discussion topics generated by participants.

1:45 – 2:45 p.m. Session one topics for participant lead discussion.
- Two topics combined: (1) broaden the scope/mandate/influence of the TA to include more/all branches/divisions and departments; and, (2) The Ta of the future is a centre of excellence providing instructor training to ensure the needs of JSG & GOA can be met. The Academy is already challenged to provide basic levels of training.
- Effective communication.
- Schedule regular inter-departmental meetings to discuss expectations for collaboration.
- Care and candour.
- New system and policy research & implementation.
- The value of “social connection” to create “social capital” in the workplace.

2:45 – 3:45 p.m. Session two topics for participant lead discussion.
- Encourage and provide information regarding “systems thinking”.
- Streamline business processes to increase efficiencies.
- Frappé Fridays.
- Willingness to try new approaches.

3:45 – 4:30 p.m. End in circle.
- Audio recorded report out from participants.
- Thank you for participants.
Appendix H: Information Sheet for Open Space Technology Session

Open Space Technology

Date: July 18, 2016

Welcome
• Thank you for attending.
• The time together will be meaningful and now is our moment to start.
• Refreshments are available for you during the session.
• Please find a spot in the circle.

Four Principles of Open Space Technology
• Those who come are the right people
• Whatever happens is the only thing that could have
• Whenever it starts is the right time
• When it is over, it’s over

Theme
• Today we are here together to answer the question,

“What strategies are considered most effective for the inter-disciplinary teams in the Alberta Justice and Solicitor General Training Academy to strengthen collaborative practice?”

Process
• Moving from a big group to smaller groups.
• All areas of interest and all ideas are welcome.
• You are invited to contribute at your level of comfort.
• You’re welcome to move from conversation to conversation.

Withdrawal of informed consent
• You are able to withdraw your participation from this session at any time, however, your anonymity can not be guaranteed given that this is a large group activity.
Appendix I: Interview Process and Questions

- Begin the interview by thanking the participant for attending the interview, review the purpose of the individual interview by going over the information letter, ensuring informed consent is still provided by the interviewee. Advise that the interview will last no longer than 60 minutes.
- Discuss with the interviewee that the interview will be dually audio recorded for purpose of data transcription and analysis and that hand written notes will also be taken by the interviewer. A second recorder is used in case one of the recorders stops working.
- Advise the interviewee that they can withdraw their participation in the research up to two weeks after the interview. After that time, the data will become part of the anonymous data gathering. Ensure that consent form is signed by interviewee. Continue with the interview.

Interview questions:

1. In thinking about a time when you were working well (collaborative practice) with other team members at the Training Academy, what did this look like? How did the team work collaboratively with each other?
   a. Thinking about the success of this experience in working with other team members at the Training Academy, for the future, how can these practices be enhanced?

2. From your perspective, what does working well together look like for others at the Training Academy?

3. In thinking about a time when you experienced challenges in working well together with other team members at the Training Academy, what did this look like?
   a. What got in the way of this experience being successful?

4. In your opinion, what ways can working well together be promoted in the Training Academy? Any processes or strategies that you think would be beneficial?
   a. How can these ideas be implemented? Who would be involved?
   b. What are some ideas that you could implement immediately on your own without any new resources?
   c. What is the antidote to becoming complacent? How do we move people beyond complacency?
   d. In your opinion, what drives people to get up and come to work every day?
Appendix J: Interview Email Invitation

Dear [Prospective Participant],

I would like to invite you to be part of a research project that I am conducting. This project is part of the requirement for my Master’s Degree in Arts in Leadership, at Royal Roads University.

The objective of my research project is to inquire into what strategies are considered most effective for the inter-disciplinary teams in the Alberta Justice and Solicitor General (JSG) Training Academy to strengthen collaborative practice.

Your name was chosen as a prospective participant because you are a current or were recently an employee of the JSG Training Academy or you are identified as someone who has involvement with the Training Academy through business partnerships.

This phase of my research project will consist of in person, one-to-one, individual interviews for approximately 60 minutes. In conversation with selected participants, I will arrange for a time, date and location that is convenient—away from the Training Academy worksite. The interviews will be conducted with the first volunteer from: Professional and Leadership Training, Business Services, Curriculum Design, Peace Officer Training and Standards and the Strategic Team. Additionally, 3 interviews will be conducted from volunteers from external stakeholder groups (former recruits, previous Training Academy staff members, and senior leadership).

Attached document contains further information about the study conduct and will enable you to make a fully informed decision on whether or not you wish to participate. Please review this information before responding.

You are not required to participate in this research project and, should you choose to participate, your participation would be entirely voluntary. If you do choose to participate, you are free to withdraw the information you provided in your interview up to two weeks from the interview, the distribution of the final report, which is scheduled for December 23, 2016. If you do not wish to participate, simply do not reply to this request. Your decision to not participate will be held in confidence.

Please feel free to contact me at any time should you have additional questions regarding the project and its outcomes.

If you would like to participate in my research project, please contact me at:

Name: Lisa Ackimenko
Email: [email address]
Telephone: [telephone number]

Sincerely,
Lisa

Attachments: Interview Information Letter
Appendix K: Information Letter for Interviews

Strategies to Strengthen Collaborative Practice
Interview Information Letter

My name is Lisa Ackimenko, and this research project is part of the requirement for a Master of Arts in Leadership at Royal Roads University. My credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by contacting Dr. Catherine Etmanski, Acting Director, School of Leadership Studies: [email address] or [telephone number].

Purpose of the study and sponsoring organization

The purpose of my research project is to identify strategies that might strengthen collaborative practice in the inter-disciplinary teams of the Alberta Justice and Solicitor General Training Academy. By using a modified form of action research, Action Research Engagement (Rowe et al., 2013)\(^9\), with a focus on participant engagement as a means of participatory, I hope to create a dialogue where ideas are freely shared and can be mobilized to build upon existing collaborative practices. The project is sponsored by Carol Arnold-Schutta, Executive Director, Alberta Justice and Solicitor General Training Academy.

Your participation and how information will be collected

The research will consist of 8 semi-structured one-to-one interviews in person and will take approximately 60 minutes each. Each interview will be recorded by two audio recorders with the informed consent of the interviewee. In addition, as the interviewer, I will be taking notes during the interview which will be anonymously coded for data analysis. The audio recordings will also, be transcribed and anonymously coded by me for the purpose of data analysis. The focus of the interview questions will be guided from the data collected in the Open Space Technology session in order to explore how current collaborative practices can be strengthened, barriers to collaborative practice can be reduced, and how these strategies can be implemented within the inter-disciplinary teams in the JSG Training Academy.

Benefits and risks to participation

In participating in this research, you have the opportunity to lend voice to how collaborative practice is perceived by those who are involved in the Training Academy by discussing strengths and barriers to working together as a community of diverse professionals. Along with this, you are able to provide strategies for minimizing challenges and enhancing what is going well in order to strengthen collaboration. Although there is no individual benefit or loss from

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participating in the research, the Training Academy will benefit from the research whether or not individuals choose to participate.

All current and recent TA staff as well as external business partners, including leadership (except for the Project Sponsor/Executive Director) will be invited to participate in the one-to-one interview sessions. Interviewee selection will be based on the first person from each team (Strategic Leadership, Professional and Leadership Training, Business Services, Curriculum Design, Peace Officer Training, and Standards and Strategic Team) in the Training Academy. As each team interviewee is selected, those who responded after will receive an email from me advising that selection was complete. The interviews will be anonymously captured in the data collection and analysis, and all interviews will be conducted away from the Training Academy worksites. Once transcribed, the transcript will be provided to you in order to ensure that it accurately reflects your intention in responding to the interview questions.

Inquiry team

At present, my inquiry team consist myself and three additional members. They are Jennifer Stacey, Director of Human Resources and Organizational Development, Aspen Family and Community Network Society, Calgary Alberta, Dani Zubkowski, a classmate in the MAL program and Deanna Emberg, co-worker/Learning and Development Consultant with Human Services, Provincial Training and Workforce Development. For the semi-structured individual one-to-one interviews, I will be the sole interviewer. Data will be gathered by me via dual audio recording and I will transcribe the interviews and anonymously code the data. I will invite my inquiry team to assist my by reviewing my analysis of the data.

Real or Perceived Conflict of Interest

Although I am an employee of the Government of Alberta, I work in the ministry of Human Services and have no power over you in any professional capacity as a participant in this research. Through use of my inquiry team, I will ensure that the data analysis is documented in an objective manner. I disclose this information here so that you can make a fully informed decision on whether or not to participate in this study.

Confidentiality, security of data, and retention period

I will work to protect your privacy throughout this study. All information I collect will be maintained in confidence with hard copies (e.g., consent forms) stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home office. Electronic data (such as transcripts or audio files) will be stored on a password protected computer on my home computer in compliance with Royal Roads University and Government of Alberta ethics research policy. Information will be recorded in hand-written format and, where appropriate, summarized, in anonymous format in the body of the final report. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual unless specific agreement has been obtained beforehand. All documentation will be kept strictly confidential and all raw data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. As per the Government of Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and Records Management Regulations, this
information will be housed accordingly. Further, information from participants who remove their consent at any time during the study will be destroyed and not used in the data analysis.

Sharing results

The results of the semi-structured, one-to-one, individual interviews, after anonymous coding and analysis, will be documented in the final report and inform the literature review and recommendations from the research. The information from individual interviews will not be used for any other purpose than the information outlined in this document. Any other use of the data will be upon written permission of the individual participant. I have included in the participant informed consent form to use findings from this inquiry in a written professional or scholarly paper, or conference presentation in the informed consent for the semi-structured interviews.

In addition to submitting my final report to Royal Roads University in partial fulfillment for a Masters of Arts in Leadership, I will also be sharing my research findings with my Project Sponsor, Ms. Carol Arnold-Schutta, Executive Director of the Alberta Justice and Solicitor General Training Academy. In preparation for future provision of the final report to Ms. Arnold-Schutta, I discussed some considerations to share the findings with interested stakeholders and make them happen. I will continue to discuss this matter with Ms. Arnold-Schutta upon her return to work at the end of August 2016.

Also, this research will be published as a thesis with Royal Road University’s Digital Archive, Pro-Quest, and Library and Archives Canada.

Procedure for withdrawing from the study

As participation in this research is voluntary, you may withdraw at any time without consequence. As an interviewee, you are able to withdraw from participating in the research up to two weeks past the interview date. After that time, your information will become part of the anonymous data gathering. Should you wish to withdraw from the study during the two-week period after the interview, your information will be removed from the data collection and analysis. All transcripts, physical copies, and audio files will be destroyed at that time as well.

You are not required to participate in this research project. By replying directly to the e-mail request for participation in an individual, one-to-one, interview and signing the attached consent form, you indicate that you have read and understand the information above and give your free and informed consent to participate in this project.

Please keep a copy of this information letter for your records.
Appendix L: Informed Consent for Interview

By signing this form, you agree that you are over the age of 18 and have read the information letter for this study. Your signature states that you are giving your voluntary and informed consent to participate in this project.

☐ I consent to the audio recording of the one-to-one interview.

-OR-

☐ I do NOT consent to audio recording of the one-to-one interview.

Name: (Please Print): __________________________________________________

Signed: ______________________________________________________________

Date: ___________________________________________________________________