# EXAMINING THE DYNAMIC, RELATIONAL INTER-ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING PROCESSES IN A PUBLIC SECTOR MULTI-AGENCY PARTNERSHIP

A Dissertation

by

LATOYA JOLIVETTE MORRIS

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| Chair of Committee, | Michael Beyerlein |
| Committee Members, | Lisa Baumgartner |
| | Beverly Irby |
| | Elizabeth Roumell |
| Head of Department, | Mario S. Torres, Jr. |

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# ABSTRACT

This dissertation study was a qualitative case study about inter-organizational learning in public sector and non-profit multi-agency partnerships. The purpose of the study was to examine the dynamic, relational inter-organizational learning processes of the public sector organizations involved in a multi-agency partnership to address a specific social issue. Qualitative research data was collected from 11 participants actively engaged in a multi-agency, multi-state partnership formulated for the purpose of addressing human trafficking. The data was collected through semi-structured phone interviews.

Although inter-organizational learning is a complex process, it allows organizations to collaborate with each other while observing and learning from each other. According to the literature, inter-organizational learning networks are essential to managing complex social issues, such as human trafficking, however, the research on inter-organizational learning is limited in scope. Therefore, more understanding of the inter-organizational learning processes is needed. This study contributes to the body of knowledge on inter-organizational learning processes in the public sector by providing more understanding of the learning processes of one specific multi-agency partnership. The findings of this study identify necessary components of inter-organizational learning processes and supports some of the themes found in the existing literature. More specifically, the data revealed that continuous communication, having relational opportunities for the team to engage and collaborate, and implementing ways to create and share knowledge are the three essential components of IOL in a multi-agency public-sector partnership.

Based on the findings, a framework for understanding the dynamic, relational inter-organizational learning processes in a public sector multi-agency partnership is also included in this study. The learning components, challenges and barriers to inter-organizational learning and collaboration, and the Dynamic, Relational IOL framework can potentially be applied to other problems of society, specifically multi-faceted, complex societal problems.

Lastly, the study gives HRD practitioners and leaders pertinent information about the barriers and challenges that multi-agency partnerships endure. The findings provide a list of best practices and failures surrounding multi-agency partnership learning and collaboration as described by the HT work group participants.

# DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my dad who used to walk me to the bus stop every morning in kindergarten before you went to work. Despite never graduating high school, you taught me the importance of school and look what you've created! Thank you for your unwavering love and support!

I also dedicate this study to my three sons, Jordan, Kamden, and Carter. Thank you for being patient and understanding throughout the countless hours mommy spent in the "homework room." The bar has been set high for you three, and I cannot wait to see what you all become!

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Thank you to all the HT work group participants who generously dedicated their time to assist me in completing this study.

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# CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES

## Contributors

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# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

The creation of collective knowledge (Holmqvist, 1999; Dyer & Nobeoka, 2000), the development of network rules of interaction (Dyer & Nobeoka, 2000), and the process of acquiring and transferring knowledge (Larsson et al., 1998), three distinctive perspectives that summarize how inter-organizational learning has been defined in the literature (Mariotti, 2012). While a vast amount of research has been conducted on intra-organizational learning, learning that occurs within the organization, comparatively there is little research on inter-organizational learning, learning that takes place outside the boundaries of the different organizations involved (Mariotti, 2012).

Inter-organizational learning is a complex process that allows organizations to collaborate with each other while observing and importing various practices used by participating firms (Mariotti, 2012). It is defined as "the learning that occurs during collaboration between two or more organizations" (Shah, Yasir, & Khan, 2016, p. 37). When organizations collaborate for the purpose of learning, they establish multi- or inter-organizational learning networks (Engeström & Kerosuo, 2007). These network and partnership arrangements serve as "a means of transferring and exchanging knowledge between organizations" (Beeby & Booth, 2000, p. 76). When dealing with social issues that are complex and multifaceted, meaning these issues affect various aspects of society, a diverse approach is necessary. Multifaceted social problems are not limited to one specific area. Because of the complexity of some social issues, a multifarious approach that involves the expertise, knowledge and coordinated attention of multiple people from various agencies is needed to address the assortment of mental health, public health,

socioeconomic and development issues. Such inter-organizational learning networks are not only beneficial, but essential to the management of social problems (Provan & Milward, 2001; White, 2014). However, current research on inter-firm learning processes is "limited in scope" (Mozzato & Bitencourt, 2014, p. 287).

According to Mozzato and Bitencourt (2014), "the process of inter-organizational learning warrants investigation, as its scope of analysis needs widening and deepening" (p. 285). Before inter-organizational learning can be analyzed as a method for managing social problems through capacity building, it needs to be better understood as a multi-level learning process and framework (Mariotti, 2012; Mozzato & Bitencourt, 2014) that can be used to improve the effectiveness and capabilities of organizations, especially when dealing with social issues.

Despite being limited in depth, there has been an increase in the amount of studies conducted inter-organizational learning as opposed to learning within single organizations (Engeström & Kerosuo, 2007). Inter-organizational learning has become more relevant in research as researchers strive to understand the "scenarios" and "processes" involved in the learning style that expands beyond the boundaries of one single organization (Mozzato & Bitencourt, 2014, p. 286).

Studies conducted on inter-organizational learning date back to the 1990's when Larsson, Bengtsson, Henriksson and Sparks (1998) examined collective knowledge within strategic alliances and proposed a "process-oriented conceptual framework of inter-organizational learning" (p. 286). A year later, Holmqvist (1999) published a study on how inter-organizational knowledge can be created among "imaginary organizations" which is defined as "systems of actors that mutually create strategic value through sharing resources and interacting" (Hedberg et

al, 1997, p. 420). There have been several more attempts to understand and contribute to the literature on inter-organizational learning through models and frameworks. For example, Greve (2005) presented a framework for inter-organizational learning based on a "model of heterogeneous diffusion of innovations" to understand how the social structure and location of an organization affects and impacts the learning that takes place (p. 1026).

Later, Hardy, Phillips and Lawrence (2003) conducted a study examining the strategic, knowledge creation, and political effects of inter-organizational collaboration on participating organizations. In 2008, Easterby-Smith, Lyles and Tsang also published an article on inter-organizational where the authors focused on knowledge transfer and introduced a framework for understanding the knowledge transfer process. Several conceptual models of inter-organizational learning have been introduced, but they tend to be "worryingly generalized and common-sensical" (Engeström & Kerosuo, 2007, p. 338).

Mariotti (2012) introduced a conceptual framework for the purpose of advancing theory on inter-organizational learning. While her framework does present inter-organizational learning as a process that is multi-level, relational, and relies heavily on collaboration; knowledge sharing; and learning together, it also requires further development and empirical evidence.

The limited depth and breadth of the present models, conceptual frameworks and research on inter-organizational learning reveals that there is minimal understanding of inter-firm learning relations. As a result of this limitation, opportunities for organizations to benefit from the "exchange of information, resources, trust, and collaborative problem solving across organizational boundaries" (Engeström & Kerosuo, 2007, p. 337) are also restricted. Further research, more development, and a deeper understanding of inter-organizational learning is

necessary because it will allow Human Resource Development (HRD) practitioners to use inter-organizational learning to build capacity and increase the effectiveness of organizations, specifically those who are working to minimize social issues in the United States.

## Problem Statement

Despite becoming a more relevant topic of research, inter-organizational learning has been "poorly investigated" and is still considered a "field in progress" (Mozzato & Bitencourt, 2014, p. 286). Current literature and research available on inter-organizational learning is still viewed as "limited in scope" (Mozzato & Bitencourt, 2014, p. 286). It provides little understanding of the actual learning processes that constitute how knowledge becomes inter-organizational (Mariotti, 2012).

More specifically, current researchers have revealed inter-organizational learning as a process that focuses more on how, at the individual level, organizations can increase their knowledge (Inkpen, 1997) and selectively engage in inter-firm collaboration specifically for the benefit of accessing the specialized knowledge of the participating organization (Lane & Lubatkin, 1998). The common theme among the present research publications on inter-organizational learning tends to focus on the benefits of single actors and overlook the actual process involved in inter-organizational learning. Therefore, more research is needed to examine inter-organizational learning as a "dynamic" (Mozzato & Bitencourt, 2014, p. 285) and "relational" (Mariotti, 2012, p. 220) process, that can be identified in both "structured and unstructured spaces," and has the possibility to "generate learning episodes" (Mozzato & Bitencourt, 2014, p. 285) within those spaces.

In addition, of the limited research published on inter-organizational learning, majority of it focuses on the strategic alliances of profit generating corporations for the purpose of gaining competitive advantage and success (Mariotti, 2012). Few empirical studies have been conducted on inter-organizational learning processes (Larsson, Bengtsson, Henriksson, & Sparks, 1998), and there is little understanding of inter-organizational learning processes in general, but more specifically within the public sector, such as social services and nonprofit organizations.

## Purpose of the Study

The overarching purpose of this case study was to conduct research on inter-organizational learning by examining the dynamic and relational processes that do not take place naturally (White, 2014). More specifically, the purpose of this case study was to understand the learning processes in both structured and unstructured learning spaces in public sector and non-profit organizations engaged in multi-organizational partnerships. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to describe the inter-organizational learning (IOL) experiences of those in engaged in the multi-agency partnership. The qualitative data collected were used to explore the aspects of inter-organizational learning was based on the three distinctive learning processes (learning to collaborate; learning to share knowledge; and learning to create knowledge) of Mariotti's (2012) deutero-learning model, Marsick and Watkin's (1993; 1997; 2003) seven dimensions of a learning organization, which defines the aspects of a learning organization, as well as other components of IOL found during the literature review.

## Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used for this study included Watkins and Marsick's (1993; 1997; 2003) framework of a learning organization and Mariottti's (2012) deutero-learning model

of inter-organizational learning. According to Ameli and Kayes (2011) “different models and levels, from different perspectives, were used to explain inter-organizational learning,” including an individual perspective (Manring, 2007), group (Knight & Pye, 2004), organizational, and some view the inter-organizational level as a separate category (Inkpen, 2005).

While it has been acknowledged that inter-organizational learning (IOL) does take place at another level, outside the organization, for the purpose of this study and due to the complex nature and limited understanding of IOL processes, a learning theory from the organizational perspective was used. In addition, a proposed framework on IOL was integrated as part of the conceptual framework used to examine the learning experiences. In the following sections, each aspect of the conceptual framework is described in detail along with its relevance to this study on understanding IOL processes.

**Watkins and Marsick’s Learning Organization Framework**

Watkins and Marsick’s (1993) learning organization framework is based on the idea that learning is a highly social process that happens at the individual, team or group, and organizational level. They believed that in addition to formal or structured learning, a notable amount of valuable learning takes place informally through socialization (Marsick & Watkins, 2003). To support this type of informal learning, organizations need to foster a “learning climate and culture” (Marsick & Watkins, 2003, p. 134) where learning is “must be captured and embedded in ongoing systems, practices, and structures” (Marsick & Watkins, 2003, p. 133). A learning culture is a “collection of conventions, values, practices, and processes that encourage employees and organizations to develop knowledge and competence” (Nabong, 2015, p. 1).

Organizations that have adapted a learning culture encourage continuous learning and firmly believe that all parts of the system influence each other (Nabong, 2015).

The climate of an organization has the power to influence the behavior of employees (Messarra & El-Kassar, 2013). More specifically, organizational climate is defined as "a set of measurable properties of the work environment, perceived directly or indirectly by people who live and work in this environment and assumed to influence their motivation and behavior" (Litwin & Stringer, 1968, p. 1). Therefore, a learning climate refers to the conditions within the organization that promote knowledge acquisition among its members.

According to Marsick and Watkins (2003), "climate and culture are built by learning and those who learn from their experience, influence the learning of others, and create an environment of expectations that shapes and supports desired results that in turn get measured and rewarded" (p. 137). Climate and culture are interdependent because one directly influences or affects the other. For example, by creating a climate that is conducive and promotes learning, individuals are encouraged to engage in learning which has a direct impact on the culture of the organization.

To support informal learning experiences, Marsick and Watkins developed a framework based on seven dimensions, dispersed among levels of learning that characterize a learning organization (see Figure 1). Each dimension identifies an action imperative that organizations must implement to foster a learning climate and culture.

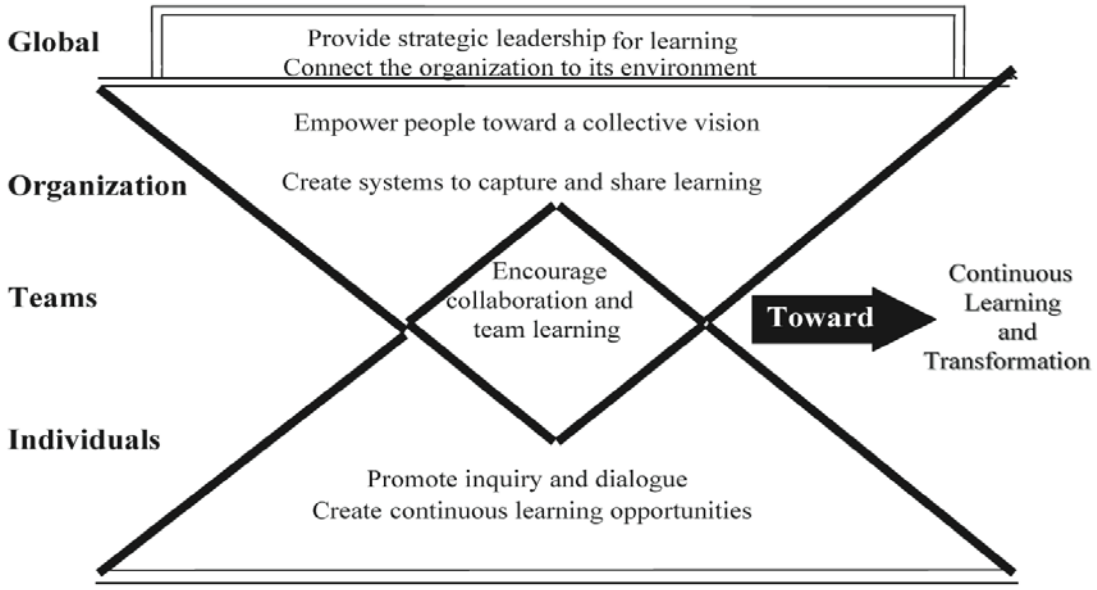


*Figure 1.* Watkins and Marsick's (1993) model of the dimensions of a learning organization. (Used with permission)

The model begins at the bottom which is the individual level of learning. This level includes two dimensions (a) promote inquiry and dialog and (b) create continuous learning opportunities which is similar to social constructivism. Social constructivism is based on the idea learning is a social process and knowledge, meaning, and understanding is created and obtained from our interactions with others and life experiences. Meaningful learning occurs when individuals are engaged in social activities and all understanding and knowledge is socially constructed (Leavy, 2014). Therefore, to facilitate learning among the organization, HRD practitioners must promote social negotiation and interaction by encouraging individuals to ask questions and share their opinions and experiences with others. Inquiry requires questioning that is beneficial to the learning process because it challenges assumptions without attacking others.

Dialogue entails both open minds and open lines of communication (Watkins & Marsick, 1993). In organizations where individuals feel as though they are not allowed to communicate freely or question others, learning is hindered due to limited opportunities for probing, inquisition, and open communication.

There are several ways to foster continuous learning among individual members which include: effectively planning for informal learning, learning how to learn, and providing just-in-time learning opportunities. Because continuous learning is opportunistic, it is important that the person providing the knowledge understands what the knowledge seeker requires to help them "move along the developmental continuum" (Watkins & Marsick, 1993, p. 12). The concept of continuous learning does not only refer to the worker being adaptable to change, but it also requires that the work itself changes. The goal is for the worker to "change, adapt, grow, and eventually take control of work-related decisions" (Watkins & Marsick, 1993, p. 13).

The next level of learning is located at the middle of the model and includes learning at the team and group level. There is only one dimension at this level, and it consists of collaboration and team learning. Through teams, groups and networks, new knowledge is dispersed, and individuals learn how to work collaboratively. Based on the work of Donald Schön (1983), Watkins and Marsick (1993) considered team learning process a cross between thinking and action. They explained that it is important for teams to understand the team learning process and how to progress through the four stages of framing, reframing, integrating perspectives, experimenting, and crossing boundaries (Watkins & Marsick, 1993, p. 99).

The third and final level consists of the organizational level, internal, followed by societal or global relationships outside the organization, including the community. At this level, there are

four dimensions that include: creating systems to capture and share learning, empowering people toward a collective vision, connecting the organization to its environment, and providing strategic leadership for learning. This level represents a shift from individual and team learning to learning at the organizational and societal/global levels.

Within a learning organization, systems that are embedded within the organization and designed to capture and share learning are imperative. Therefore, the first objective is to build organizational capacity within the organization, then establish systems to capture and share learning with others (Watkins & Marsick, 1993). By creating systems to capture the learning the organization is able to preserve the knowledge and endure inconsistencies of the workforce. In addition, learning organizations share their learning with the "widely dispersed workforce" (Watkins & Marsick, 1993, p. 15). It is also important that intrinsic knowledge is captured and preserved for future distribution. Technology is useful to both capturing and sharing learning that takes place informally (Watkins & Marsick, 1993).

Learning organizations establish a collective vision where everyone has an idea of the big picture and members know how to get things accomplished within the organization. Empowering individuals toward a collective vision is a vital aspect of creating a learning organization. It requires "concerted action at many levels of an organization to change deep structures and cultures that prompt people to act as they do" (Watkins & Marsick, 1993, p. 200). In addition, learning organizations have the resources to take action and the organization, as a whole, knows how to influence people (Watkins & Marsick, 1993). Organizations that are less rigid provide more autonomy which allows people to feel empowered to act and remain committed to the vision. Having a "more participatory workplace" provides "both the individual and the

organization more space for learning" (Watkins & Marsick, 1993, p. 17). Autonomy promotes empowerment, and the learning organization is the result of empowerment because "empowered people become motivated to learn" (Watkins & Marsick, 1993, p. 208). If employees feel as though they possess the authority to take action, they are supported and encouraged to learn, and rewarded for their learning, they will be more committed toward the collective vision of the organization (Watkins & Marsick, 1993).

After altering the culture of the organization, learning organizations extend these changes to the community, society and globally to promote interdependent learning. Connecting the organization to its environment creates a link between the organization and the community. It allows workers to recognize the interdependencies between the internal and external environments surrounding the organization, such as the local community, external customers, and the broader industry in which the organization is a part of (Watkins & Marsick, 1993). This imperative also includes balancing work and family life, being responsive to organizational and societal needs, and linking products and services to the quality of work life. It is important for organizations to be aware and informed when it comes to external issues including politics and economics. Learning organizations are family friendly, integrate public services into the workplace, and advocate for organizations to implement supportive policies (Watkins & Marsick, 1993).

Lastly, providing strategic leadership for learning involves "leaders modeling, championing and supporting learning" while "using learning strategically for business results" (Marsick & Watkins, 2003, p. 139). Learning organizations must provide strategic leadership for learning. This dimension requires that there are leaders within the organization that model,

encourage, and facilitate learning initiatives. These leaders also ensure that the learning that takes places is beneficial to the overall objectives of the organization.

Learning organizations do not develop overnight instead they are "grown organically" (Weinberger, 1998, p. 354). This means that organizations must develop naturally, over time. While there is no unified template for fostering a learning organization, Watkins and Marsick's (1993) model and list of action imperatives makes the task of understanding the requirements of a learning organization less cumbersome. As depicted in Figure 1 and explained above, the model provides a guideline for understanding the multi-level structure of a learning organization. In addition, the seven dimensions provide measurable standards for the examining an organization and how its action are aligned with Watkins and Marsick's (1993) framework of a learning organization.

**Mariotti's Deutero-learning Model**

The second part of the conceptual framework used for this study is a model of inter-organizational learning proposed by Mariotti (2012). The model was formulated from a review of the literature and the identification of common themes found on the topic of inter-organizational learning. The purpose of the model is to identify what Mariotti considers the key parts of inter-organizational learning based on the research and findings of other researchers. Though Mariotti does not formally name the proposed framework, in the article she refers to it as a "deutero learning process" (Mariotti, 2012, p. 219).

The phrase "deutero" refers to a process that includes both single and double-loop learning where organizations engage in collaborative inquiry and reflection (Argyris & Schön, 1978). Single-loop and double-loop learning were originally developed by Chris Argyris and

Donald Schön (1978) and based on Argyris' theory of action perspective. Single-loop learning is a form of organizational learning where errors are detected as the result of an unacceptable outcome or result. Eventually, those actions that resulted in the undesired outcomes are corrected, but the framework and context of the organization is not altered. Double-loop learning also involves the detection and correction of errors, but goes one step further to adjust the system, procedure, or assumption(s) within the framework of the organization which caused error. Deutero-learning encompasses both single-and double-loop learning while challenging the organization's framework and context, its history, patterns, attitude and strategies.

According to Mariotti (2012) within the deutero-learning process "network actors learn how to learn together" (p. 219). Deutero-learning, (Argyris & Schön, 1978) or learning II (Bateson, 1973) is the level at which "learning becomes intentional" as the learner focuses on their attention on "reflecting on the process of learning itself by developing strategies for maximizing single loop learning" (Yuthas, Dillard, & Rogers, 2004, p. 238). At this stage, the learner understands the importance of the "context within which the learning takes place, contrasts the current context to other alternatives," and engages in "continual reflection of what is being learned" and the processes involved (Yuthas et al., 2004, p. 238).

There is a substantial amount of ambiguity surrounding deutero-learning (Visser, 2007) which lends to the lack of clarity concerning concepts and meanings. Although a broader selection of literature was reviewed, only key parts were selected for the purpose of this study. The following definitions explain triple-loop, also referred to at deutero-learning, as it relates to this research. According to Snell and Chak (1998), triple-loop learning is defined as "co-inventing collective mindfulness" where "members discover how they and their predecessors

have facilitated or inhibited learning and produce new structures and strategies for learning" (p. 340). Yuthas, Dillard, and Rogers (2004) referred to triple-loop learning as a way to "capture the notion of continual reflection on the learning process, the context within which learning occurs, and the assumptions and values motivating the learning and influencing its outcomes" (p. 239). This resembles the definition of deutero-learning which entails learning about learning by discovering new ways to learn. It helps us understand more about ourselves, how we learn, and our previous actions effect our current situations.

Despite the lack of consensus, there are notable similarities among the various concepts, and it is evident that Bateson's (1973) levels of learning framework serves as the theoretical foundation for triple-loop learning. Deutero-learning is a form of organizational learning that is beneficial to establishing a learning organization. For example, the knowledge development cycle includes knowledge creation, knowledge adoption, knowledge distribution, and knowledge review and revision (Biswas, n.d), which can be beneficial to continual reflection of the learning process as described in the definition of triple-loop learning. Some of these concepts are also present in Mariotti's (2012) deutero-learning framework. Visser (2007) suggests that there are three characteristics of deutero-learning in organizations: (a) the learning is continuous, behavioral-communicative, and largely unconscious; (b) it tends to escape explicit steering and organizing, may occur consciously or unconsciously; (c) the processes don't necessarily lead to organizational or individual improvement (p. 660-661). The first two characteristics refer to the social, collaborative and behavioral components of organizational learning. The third characteristic will be addressed later in this chapter when triple-loop learning will be presented in relation to inter-organizational learning as a process that "occurs only if an organization learns

from its partner's organizational process in specific ways" (Ameli & Kayes, 2011, p. 179), specifically "through learning about their practices, structure, and culture" (Knight & Pye, 2004, p. 380).

After conducting a review of the literature available on inter-organizational learning, Mariotti was able to summarize her findings into three categories based on common themes. She then used them as the base for developing her framework. These "three distinctive perspectives" include: the creation of collective knowledge, the creation of network rules of interaction, and knowledge acquisition (Mariotti, 2012, p. 216) (see figure 2).

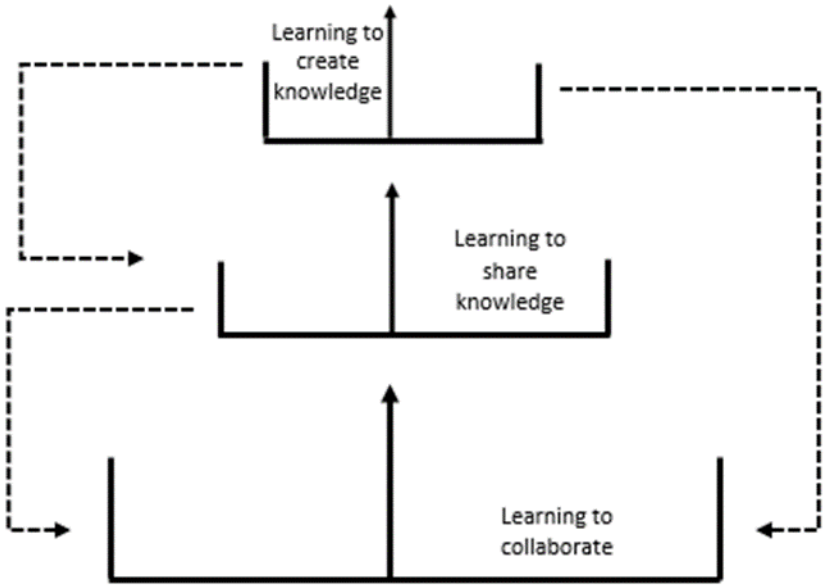


*Figure 2.* Mariotti's (2012) framework for understanding IOL. (Used with permission)

Based on those distinctive perspectives, Mariotti formulated a framework comprised of the main processes that she believed "constitute inter-organizational learning" (Mariotti, 2012, p. 219). The model includes three "aspects of inter-organizational learning" as defined by Mariotti (2016, p. 220). It displays "learning to collaborate" at the bottom with the other two levels stacked directly above it. In her model, there are arrows that demonstrate how the process should move upward from level one to level two and eventually level three. Within the first level, individuals are learning to collaborate with others. This stage is referred to as the act of "learning by interacting" (Lorenzoni & Lipparini, 1999, p. 331). During this stage, organizations create linkages or partnerships with other organizations (Mariotti, 2012). The second level consists of learning to share knowledge. The ability to share knowledge within the learning network is promoted through collaboration while individuals are interacting. This idea supports the learning organization ideas presented by Watkins and Marsick (1993).

Following the process of learning to share knowledge, the final stage is learning to create knowledge, which is promoted through the previous two levels. Knowledge is co-created by pairing up individuals from different organizations with diverse skills to encourage the integration of their ideas and support innovation (Leonard-Barton, 1995; Mariotti, 2012). By sharing knowledge and collaborating, these networks are also able to build shared knowledge or inter-organizational knowledge. There are also arrows on the side on each of the levels to demonstrate a continuous process of collaborating, sharing and creating knowledge.

According to Mariotti, "learning is better conceived as dynamic and relational, embedded in the network of relationships formed by individuals, groups, and organizational actors" and she attempts to reflect this idea in her framework (Mariotti, 2012, p. 220).

While Watkins and Marsick (1993) focused solely on learning organization in their framework, Mariotti's deutero-learning framework narrowed the focus specifically to learning that takes place between organizations, inter-organizational learning. "Theory-building is critical to the continued success" of any discipline, and although Mariotti's framework requires further development and application, it serves to help advance theory on inter-organizational learning (Handfield, 1998, p. 321). Using both Mariotti's (2012) inter-organizational framework and Watkins and Marsick's (1993) framework for the learning organization provided the theoretical support that was required to examine multi-partnership or inter-organizational learning processes.

The two frameworks focused on the process of creating and facilitating a learning organization as well as promoting learning between different organizations. If learning was taking place at the individual, group and organizational levels, it made implementing learning between organizations much more achievable. Also, the six action imperatives of Watkins and Marsick's (1993) learning organization theory provided the guideline for identifying whether an organization was facilitating and providing learning opportunities at all three levels (individual, group, and organization). The conceptual framework for this study was created by this researcher and was an integration of models presented by Watkins and Marsick (1993) and Mariotti (2012) (see Figure 3).

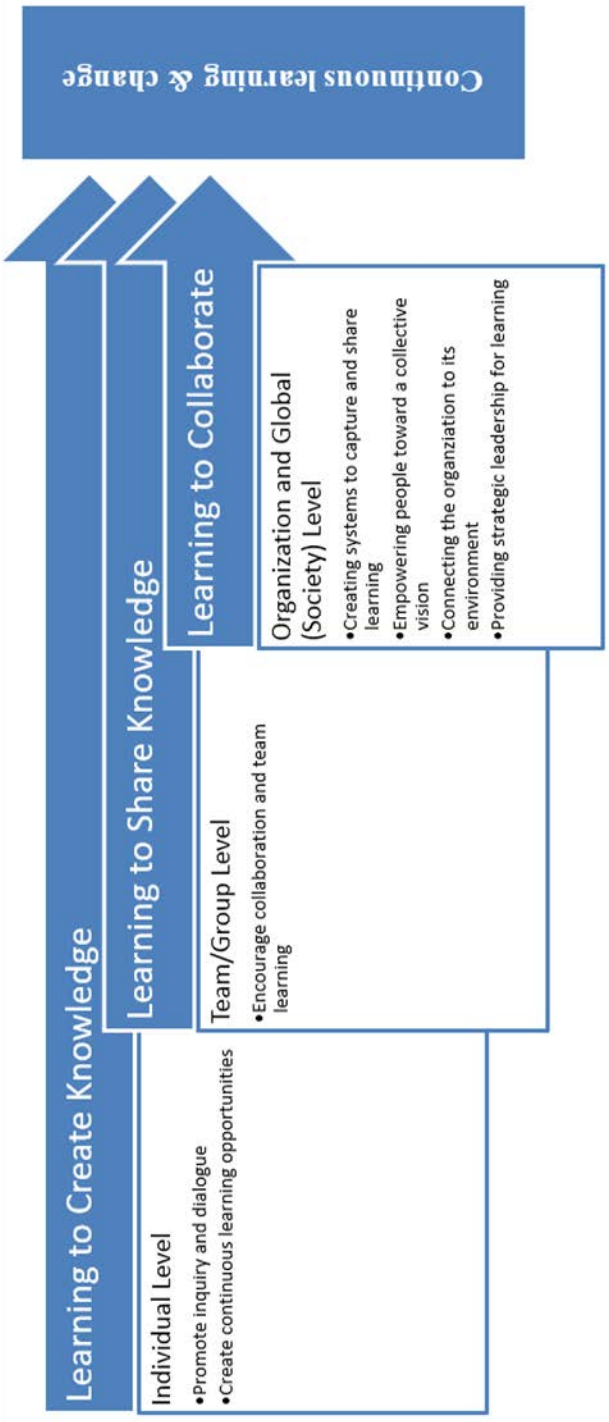


*Figure 3.* Conceptual framework of inter-organizational learning processes.

## Research Question

The following research question guided this study:

What are the perceptions and experiences of individuals engaged in multi-agency partnerships as it relates to the dynamic, relational components of inter-organizational learning in the public and non-profit sector?

This study focused solely on public sector and non-profit organizations due to the limited understanding of shared vision among the public sector (White, 2014) and the need to understand the learning among philanthropic and government agencies who join together to evoke large scale social change (White, 2014).

## Significance of the Study

Engaging in inter-organizational learning allows organizations to share knowledge with one another and potentially alter the capabilities of participating organizations through shared experiences or by evoking innovation (Nembhard, 2008). However, for learning and innovation to be possible, there are certain network requirements for this type of shared learning to occur. Mariotti (2012) describes these network requirements as the "building blocks through which inter-organizational learning occurs" (p. 215). The three building blocks include, learning to collaborate, learning to share knowledge, and learning to create inter-organizational knowledge. To understand each component, it is essential to first understand the concept of inter-organizational learning. By exploring inter-organizational learning processes, this study contributes practical application of a proposed model of the inter-organizational learning process introduced by Mariotti (2012). Also, it could possibly expand on the theoretical research available on inter-organizational learning specifically in the non-profit and public sector.

Examining and understanding inter-organizational learning processes may also provide valuable information to help HRD practitioners improve their organizations' current processes based on these building blocks proposed by Mariotti (2012). "Learning is the main prompting factor for the formation of strategic alliances in today's dynamic market situations," so it is concluded that the learning processes are key to effective inter-organizational learning (Shah, Yasir, & Khan, 2016, p. 39).

Also, understanding more about inter-organizational learning processes could increase the effectiveness of the organizations participating in this study by allowing them to improve their learning relationships and practices. In return, this could help them increase their knowledge capacity, build their capability, and provide better services to clients.

Since the purpose of this study was to examine organizations that provide assistance and services to women engaged in street-level prostitution, learning new information that could improve the effectiveness of these specific programs can subsequently reduce the rate of recidivism for street-level prostitution and implement social change on a larger scale. There are a multitude of issues surrounding street-level prostitution that include, misconduct, exiting barriers, substance abuse and the cost of incarceration. These problems affect the individual, their family, the community and society, thereby making street-level prostitution a significant social-issue that needs to be addressed. According to Matthews, Easton, Young, and Bindel (2014) prostitution recovery, rehabilitation, support and treatment programs can play a monumental role in the exiting process for women in the sex work industry. While research supports the idea that outreach, diversion and rehabilitation programs are influential, the

organizational structure and learning practices of these programs is a vital component of its ability to be effective.

Lastly, this body of research contributes to the empirical content available on inter-organizational learning processes, specifically within the public sector. Majority of the current research studies on inter-organizational learning focuses strictly on firms and businesses that join together in strategic alliances for competitive advantage and success (Mariotti, 2012).

## Definitions

The following terms were used in and are applicable to this study. The definitions are as follows:

**Commercial sex act.** Commercial sex act is any sex act on account of which anything of value (money, drugs, shelter, food, clothes, etc.) is given to or receive by any person (TVPA, 2000).

**Communities of Practice (COPs).** Communities of practice consists of a "collection of people who engage on an ongoing basis in some common endeavor. The emerge in response to some common interest or position and play an important role in forming their members' participation in, and orientation to, the world around them" (Eckert, 2006, p. 1).

**Debt bondage.** Similar to peonage, debt bondage involves a debt that seemingly can never be paid off, forcing the victim into exploitative labor indefinitely (TVPA, 2000).

**Deutero-learning process.** Deutero-learning is also commonly referred to as triple-loop learning. It is a process that includes both single and double-loop learning where organizations engage in collaborative inquiry and reflection (Argyris & Schön, 1978). Within the deutero-learning process "network actors learn how to learn together" (Mariotti, 2012, p. 219).

**Diversion programs.** The term diversion means “diversion from jail or diversion from the legal system” entirely (Wahab, 2006, p. 68). Diversion programs are a way of rehabilitating offenders sometimes using the authority of the courts and providing them with alternative lifestyle options that do not entail breaking the law.

**Human Resources Development (HRD).** Human Resource Development is a discipline that is based on three components which include psychological, economic and systems theories (Swanson R. , 1999). It is “a process of developing and/or unleashing human expertise through organization development and personnel training and development for the purpose of improving performance at the organizational, process and individual/group levels” (Swanson R. , 1999) .HRD includes the following underlying theories: learning (adult learning, organizational learning, and learning organizations); performance improvement; systems theory; economic theory; and psychological theory (Weinberger, 1998, p. 80).

**Human trafficking (HT).** According to the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), the various types of trafficking include commercial sex act, slavery, involuntary servitude, peonage, and debt bondage. (TVPA, 2000).

**Inter-organizational learning (IOL***).* Inter-organizational learning is the learning that occurs during the collaboration of two or more organizations” (Shah et al., 2016, p. 37). IOL has also been interpreted “as a process in which network members act jointly to create collective knowledge” (Mariotti, 2012, p. 217).

**Involuntary servitude.** Involuntary servitude i**s** a scheme, plan or pattern that causes a person to believe that if they do not enter into or continue labor obligation or situation, they will suffer serious harm, abuse, or other negative consequences (TVPA, 2000).

**Learning.** Learning is “a process through which science is created by the change in experience. Learning leads to new intuitions and concepts in human.” It aims to enhance the employee’s knowledge and skills but also development and growth of the organization by building a flexible dynamic learning organization (Saadat & Saadat, 2016, p. 219).

**Learning Organization (LO).** Learning organizations are defined as “organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together” (Senge, 1990, p. 3). A system “that learns continuously and transforms itself” (Marsick & Watkins, 1993, p. 8).

**Multi-agency partnerships**. Multi-agency partnerships are essential for the management of major social problems, but difficult to create. They include various organizations collaborating for the same initiative. They typically “operate as a hub where referrals can be made to a group of practitioners from across a range of statutory and non-statutory services” (Matthews, Easton, Young, & Bindel, 2014, p. 108).

**Peonage.** Peonage is defined as involuntary servitude that is based on a real or alleged indebtedness (TVPA, 2000).

**Problem-solving Justice/Court**. Problem-solving justice is a process that is used by the justice system to address crimes in which rehabilitation would be more beneficial than incarceration. It is commonly used in drug and substance abuse crimes, or in this instance street-level prostitution.

**Prostitute.** A prostitute is “a person who makes it a profession to gratify the lust of various persons of the opposite or same sex” (Ellis, 1936, pp. 225-226). It is a person who

exchanges sex or sexual favors for money, drugs, or other desirable commodities (Dalla, 2000, p. 344).

**Prostitution Recovery Programs (PRPs).** Prostitution recovery programs are non-profit organizations that are sometimes affiliated with religious organizations.

**Prostitution Serving Organizations (PSOs).** Prostitution serving organizations are organizations that are not associated with the government, but they take a hands-on approach to working with and assisting prostitutes.

**Rehabilitation.** Rehabilitation is a process used to help women abandon the "deviant identity" associated with street-level prostitution and to adapt new, non-deviant identity and role in society (Oselin, 2009, p. 379).

**Sex Work.** Sex work is a term used by liberal feminists (Desyllas, 2007) for trading sex for money, materials goods (Dank, et al., 2014). Liberal feminist argue that sex work is a viable employment option if someone should choose sex as a work (Desyllas, 2007).

## Considerations

As with any process, there are certain aspects surrounding the study that are not controllable and therefore should be considered as potential limitations. The following section includes the limitations surrounding this study.

Findings from a case study were based solely on the experiences and perspectives of the participants of this study. The sample population for this study included individuals employed at government agency or a non-profit organization and actively involved in a multi-agency partnership focused on addressing the issues surrounding human trafficking. They were all selected from one of eight states that made up a specific government agency service region in

United States. Since only 11 participants were included in this study, which is a small percentage of individuals, these findings may not be generalizable to all multi-agency partnerships.

In addition, there were limitations to the theories and models used for the conceptual framework of this study. The scope of research on inter-organizational learning processes is limited in scope (Mozzato & Bitencourt, 2014). Mariotti's (2012) deutero-learning model was also limited because it does not include some of the essential processes of inter-organizational learning such as knowledge management and ways to create and enhance inter-organizational trust among partners. In addition, at the time of this study, the model had not been tested in empirical research.

**Boundaries and Assumptions**

Unlike limitations, delimitations are self-imposed boundaries that the research sets for the purpose and scope of the study (Lunenberg & Irby, 2008). This study focused strictly on the experiences and perceptions of individuals engaged in a Human Trafficking (HT) multi-agency partnership (also referred to as a work group). Their perceptions and experiences were used to better understand inter-organizational learning processes in public sector organizations. One boundary includes the use of only employees involved in the work group. The reason for limiting the sample population to the employees involved in the partnership was to narrow the scope of the population. Also, employees engaged in the HT work group had detailed knowledge of the structure, beliefs, and processes taking place throughout the partnership. So, it was assumed that their experiences and perceptions would accurately reflect the activities and processes in the partnership. It was also assumed that the participants would provide honest answers and accurate information. The assumption was made that all participants understood the vocabulary and

concepts used during the interview. In addition, this study was based on the premise that the data collection measures would adequately measure the perceptions of the participants and that the participants would have knowledge and experience with inter-organizational learning processes.

# CHAPTER II

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this narrative literature review was to provide an overview of the literature relevant to this study. Various searches were conducted through Google Scholar and the Texas A&M electronic library database to collect scholarly literature on the topics surrounding this study. Literature was not limited to a specific time frame; however, emphasis was placed on literature published within the last twenty years to ensure a clear reflection of current dynamics and perspectives on the topics of this study.

The literature review is divided into four major sections. In the first section the discipline from which this study was developed, Human Resource Development (HRD), defines the underlying theoretical domains of HRD, and introduces learning from the psychological realm of HRD. An overview of the various definitions, literature, theories and research findings on organizational learning and the learning organization is included in the second section. In addition, critiques surrounding learning organization theory, as well as its importance to the field of HRD is presented. In section three, the idea of addressing social issues, specifically those that are the result of street-level prostitution, through problem solving court, diversion, and rehabilitation initiatives is introduced. It is crucial to understand the structure and purpose of the prostitute serving organizations before examining the inter-organizational learning processes in these organizations. First, a description of each of the four categories of prostitute serving organizations is discussed followed by a section on the multi-agency partnership model which resembles inter-organizational learning. Finally, in the last section, inter-organizational learning

is defined as a dynamic process that constitutes learning. In addition, various components that constitute inter-organizational learning are briefly explained.

## HRD and Underlying Theoretical Domains

As mentioned above, this study was guided by theories from the Human Resource Development (HRD) domain. HRD is a concept that has borrowed from other disciplines; therefore, it is an interdisciplinary field with a vast area of knowledge and practice (Weinberger, 1998). The purpose of this study was to explore the dynamic, relational inter-organizational learning processes in public sector organizations engaged in multi-agency partnerships through an HRD lens. Therefore, it was crucial to this researcher that a clear understanding of the discipline and its underlying theories was established. Typically, the first step to understanding a concept would be to define it, but HRD does not have a universal definition that has been embraced by practitioners and theorists (Roth, 2004). Since its inception, there has been disparity in how HRD is defined and therefore understood (Roth, 2004). As a result, several definitions of HRD will be introduced along with a set of common themes will be identified.

The concept of HRD was first introduced in 1964 by Harbison and Myers who defined it as “the process of increasing the knowledge, the skills, and the capacities of all the people in a society; (Chalofsky, 1992, p. 355). In 1970 Nadler viewed HRD as the product of behavioral change while defining it as “a series of organized activities conducted within a specified time and designed to produce behavioral change” (p. 3). A few years later in 1976, HRD was redefined to focus more on developing human potential for “lifelong learners” as opposed to altering the behavior of the organizational members (Weinberger, 1998, p. 76). Jones (1981) focused on ability expansion and introduced the “systematic aspect by classifying HRD as a

"systematic expansion of people's work-related abilities, focused on the attainment of both organization and personal goals" (Hans, Chae, Han, & Yoon, 2017, p. 299). In 1983, Lincoln and Chalofsky incorporated the adult learning component to the definition by stating it was a discipline that involves the study of how individuals and groups in organizations change through learning (p. 20). Nadler and Wiggs (1986) emphasized the human development component by describing HRD as a "comprehensive learning system for the release of the organization's human potential—a system that includes both vicarious learning experiences and experiential, on-the-job experiences that are keyed to the organization's reasons for survival" (p. 5). Swanson introduced his first definition of HRD in 1987 where he stated, "HRD is a process of improving an organization's performance through the capabilities of its personnel, and includes activities dealing with work design, aptitude, expertise, and motivation" (p. 1).

Watkins (1989) theorized HRD as a field of practice that fosters learning capacity (Hans et al., 2017) and has a theoretical foundation influenced by economics, industrial psychology, adult learning, organizational behavior and management models, and other disciplines. Based on these ideas, Watkins defined it as a "field of study and practice responsible for the fostering of a long-term, work-related learning capacity at the individual, group and organizational level of organizations. As such, it includes, but is not limited to, training, career development and organizational development" (Watkins, 1989, p. 427). For the next two years, Gilley and Effland (1989), Nadler and Nadler (1970), and Smith (1990) introduced definitions for HRD that focused more on personal performance (Hans et al., 2017).

In 1991, there was a shift to organizational achievement and effectiveness when Garavan (1991) and Chalofsky (1992) presented definitions on HRD. A few years later, Weinberger

(1998) used several HRD definitions already established to conceptualize her own definition. She identified HRD as having grounds in psychology with an emphasis on learning, systems, economics, and performance improvement.

Russ-Eft (2000) noted the different views of HRD between the individual and the organization, recognizing that the diverse ways used to define HRD was based on "what the author chooses to emphasize: human, resource, or development" (Roth, 2004, p. 11). Over the years, the definition continued to evolve to incorporate a variety of components and theories. While there are other definitions of HRD, the list of definitions provided was an attempt to depict how the definitions have evolved over time. Furthermore, despite the lack of a unified definition, certain themes remained common in the definitions provided which include learning, effectiveness, performance, and capacity.

Also, based on literature, a list of "key underlying theories associated with HRD" can be comprised and they include: learning (adult learning, organizational learning, and learning organizations); performance improvement; systems theory; economic theory; and psychological theory (Weinberger, 1998, p. 80). Given the range of definitions surrounding HRD, it was necessary that a set definition was provided for the purpose of this study. Therefore, both Harbison and Myers (1964) and Nadler and Wiggs (1986) definition of HRD adequately defined HRD as it relates to the purpose and interests of this study.

HRD was chosen as the discipline from which to base this study because it encompasses key aspects of learning and human development through means that involve sharing, creating, managing and distributing of knowledge at the individual and organizational levels. More specifically, theories from the learning domain of HRD, provided the theoretical framework for

this research on inter-organizational learning processes. Learning organization theories, were pertinent to framing this research on inter-organizational learning systems because they provide the knowledge necessary to understand the complex nature of inter-organizational networks and learning processes. In the next section, I provide an overview of how the learning organization and the process of learning connects to the psychological domain of HRD.

**Learning and the Psychological Domain of HRD**

The learning organization connects individual learning with organizational learning. There are three core foundational theories of HRD, psychology, economics, and systems theory (Swanson & Holton, 2009). Learning is deeply rooted in the psychological domain of HRD, partly because it requires a "shift of mind or a redesigning of our mental models" (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Weinberger, 1998, p. 84).

The three-core foundational psychological theories are: behaviorism, Gestalt psychology and cognitivism. Behaviorism focuses on how external environments affect human behavior and how human behavior is affected by individual performance criteria, reward systems, and goal setting. The Gestalt theory focuses on integrating "parts of the self into the whole person" (Swanson & Holton, 2009, p. 116). It resembles systems theory because it focuses on the holistic view of both the organization and the individual. Cognitivism places emphasis on the individual and how to help humans make meaning of their experiences. It helps to explain how individuals learn and how they make sense of the organizational system (Swanson & Holton, 2009). Learning includes acquiring and developing new knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Buckler, 1998). Throughout this literature review, I explored the literature to present various perspectives and epistemological views of learning. This review also demonstrated how the theories and

perspectives on organizational learning have evolved over the years and now represents a more holistic approach to understanding learning.

## Organizational Learning and the Learning Organization

The terms organizational learning and learning organization are often mistaken as being synonymous and have even been used interchangeably (Watkins & Kim, 2017). However, the two concepts are very different from one another. According to Örtenblad (2013) there are four categories of the learning organizations that include, learning at work, organizational learning, climate for learning; and learning structure. Based on this conceptualization of the learning organization, organizational learning is a process that can be adapted by organizations as a way to become a learning organization (Örtenblad, 2013). Organizational learning focuses on the processes that are going on within an organization (Örtenblad A., 2010), what the organization is doing, and how it is behaving (Watkins & Kim, 2017). "It refers to processes of individual and collective learning – both within and between organizations" (Prange, 1999, p. 23). It "can be understood as individuals' acquisition of knowledge, the storing of this knowledge in the organizational memory, and the use of the knowledge and organizational memory in the daily work" (Örtenblad, 2013, p. 22). Learning organization refers to what is needed or required to change an organization to "behave more effectively" (Watkins & Kim, 2017, p. 4). They "create structures and strategies, which facilitate the learning of all members" (Huysman, 2000, p. 84). There is no denying the fact that the two concepts are closely related. In fact, a learning organization is a specific kind of organizational learning (Easterby-Smith, 1997). Watkins and Kim (2017) described the relationship between the two as the "difference between unintentional behavior in organizations and intentionally identifying and undertaking changes to enhance

organizational capacity" (p. 4). More specifically, these events happen without being orchestrated, while the other behavior requires concerted effort in order for it to take place. In the sections that follow, an overview of the organizational learning and learning organization literature is presented.

**Organizational Learning**

In *A Behavioral Theory of the Firm*, Cyert and March (1963) introduced the concept of organizational learning as a process in which organizations learn by adapting their objectives, behaviors, and routines (adaptive learning systems) to fit their experiences (Huysman, 2000). Following their introduction of organizational learning, other researchers presented varying perceptions of the organizational learning and the overall learning processes.

Over a decade after Cyert and March (1963), March and Olsen (1975) focused on the cognitive limitations of organizational learning, Lewin, Weigelt, & Emery (2004) also presented results showing that learning is full of cognitive hindrances as a result of frequent irrational organizational behavior (Huysman, 2000, p. 135). Argyris and Schön (1978) soon followed with the idea that "actual learning processes in organizations seldom result in positively valued changes" within the organization (Huysman, 2000, p. 135). Argyris and Schön (1996) defined organizational learning as a "processes whereby members of an organization act as learning agents for the organization, responding to changes in the internal and external environments of the organization by detecting and correcting errors" (p. 3). They theorized that "there is no organization learning without individual learning, and that individual learning is a necessary, but insufficient, condition for organizational learning" (Argyris and Schön, 1978, p. 20).

Huber (1991) introduced the information-processing view of organizational learning while Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) approach was more geared towards the product innovation perspective (Crossan, Lane, & White, 1999). Many researchers believed that organizations can only learn through individuals (Mumford, 1994). Cook and Yanow (1993) argued that organizations, as a "collective," learn similar to the way a symphony orchestra learns to play a specific symphony together in a specific way (Örtenblad A., 2005, p. 129). There was also a lack of consensus on how to define learning. Some viewed learning as attaining new knowledge or insight (Lewin, Weigelt, & Emery, 2004) whereas other researchers classified learning as creating new structures (Chandler, 1962) or changes in actions (Cyert & March, 1963).

Given the disparity in how organizational learning is defined, for the purpose of this study, the following ideas demonstrate the perspective guiding this study. "Organizational learning is a continuous process of organizational growth and improvement that (a) is integrated with work activities, (b) invokes the alignment of values, attitudes, and perceptions among organizational members, and (c) uses information or feedback about both processes and outcomes" (Torres, Preskill, & Piotek, 1996, p. 2). Learning within the organization is "nonlinear, open, and constantly evolving to higher level of complexity" (Gilley & Maycunich, 2000, p. 104). This relates to the dynamic, relational aspect of organizational and inter-organizational learning. Also, Preskill and Torres (1999) postulated that organizational learning is "grounded in a social constructivist theory of learning" and suggested that learning "takes place through (a) the collective creation of meaning, (b) action, (c) the development of new knowledge, (d) an improvement in systemic processes, and (e) overcoming tacit assumptions" (p.

49). Several of these components are similar to aspects of Mariotti's (2012) deutero-learning framework and Watkins and Marsick's (Watkins & Marsick, 1993) learning organization model.

**Two distinctive perspectives of organizational learning.** There were two distinct perspectives found in the research written on organizational learning: technical or social (Easterby-Smith & Araujo, 1999). In the following sections, two perspectives are introduced along with detailed descriptions of each perspective.

***Technical view of organizational learning***. Within the technical view, organizational learning is seen as "effective processing, interpretation of, and response to, information both inside and outside of the organization" (Easterby-Smith & Araujo, 1999, p. 3).

Huber's (1991) definition of organizational learning precisely represents the technical view. "An entity learns if, through processing of information, the range of its potential behaviors is changed…an organization learns if any of its units acquires knowledge that it recognizes as potentially useful to the organization" (Huber, 1991, p. 89). In addition to being technical, this definition of organizational learning presents the idea that cognitive processes, learning, affects the behaviors or effectiveness within an organization (Watkins & Kim, 2017).

Argyris and Schön (1978) were major contributors to the technical view of organizational learning, specifically with the single-and double-loop learning (Easterby-Smith & Araujo, 1999). Single-loop learning refers to the "detection and correction of error within a given set of governing variables" (Easterby-Smith & Araujo, 1999, p. 3). It has also been refered to as exploitation (March, 1991). It is the most basic, simplest form of learning in which leaning takes place within the individual or organization's current mindset (Örtenblad, 2013). Single-loop learning does not focus on altering the current structure of the individual or the organizational

system, therefore change is limited (Örtenblad, 2013). The sole purpose of single-loop learning resolve the problem quickly to allow for continous changes and adaptations that will help the organization funtion more efficiently (Easterby-Smith & Araujo, 1999).

On the other hand, double-loop learning, or exploration (March, 1991), focuses on changing the actual variables (Easterby-Smith & Araujo, 1999) or a shift in strategies and consequences (Smith M. , 2013) to improve organization effectiveness. It involves evaluating and questioning the first loop (Örtenblad, 2013). The changes found with double-loop learning are "radical" (Easterby-Smith & Araujo, 1999) and sometime involve "questioning the role of the framing and learning systems" (Smith, 2001). According to Örtenblad (2013), organizational learning implies that an organization must master single-loop learning and have the capacity to double-loop learn in order to adequately evaluate itself. Double-loop learning provides the opportunity for organizations to evaluate, and possibly alter, its mindset accordingly. Because most organizations do not have the capacity to engage in double-loop learning at all times, but do possess the ability to exploit what they are already doing, it is practical for double-loop learning to be executed occasionally (Argyris & Schön, 1978).

The third level presented by Argyris and Schön (1978) is deutero-learning which refers to the process in which the learner learns about himself and his learning processes to improve their learning opportunities (Örtenblad, 2013). Deutero-learning has also been viewed as "higher-order learning in and by organizations" (Visser, 2007, p. 659). Argyris and Schön (1978; 1996) were the first to introduce the concept of deutero-learning to organization science, but they did not formulate it. Gregory Bateson (1973) originally developed deutero-learning as "behavioral adaptations to patterns of conditioning in relationships in organizational contexts" (Visser, 2007,

p. 660). Bateson's view of deutero-learning is more focused on behavioral adaptation to patterns of conditioning at the relationship level within the organization, while Argyris and Schön emphasized the importance of reflection and inquiry in organizational learning (Visser, 2007). The ambiguity surrounding deutero-learning has caused different conceptualizations. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the definition used to explain deutero-learning was aligned with the ideas of Argyris and Schön's, more specifically network actors learn how to learn together (Argyris & Schön, 1996).

***Social view of organizational learning***. The second common theme found in the literature presented on organizational learning classified it as a social process. The social perspective on organizational learning "focuses on the way people make sense of their experiences at work" (Easterby-Smith & Araujo, 1999, p. 4). From this perspective, organizational learning is a process in which learning occurs as the result of social interactions with others in the workplace. It is a collaborative process that involves the joint effort of multiple individuals to make sense of material and data. Such tacit and "embodied forms of learning involve situated practices, observation and emulation of skilled practioners and socialization into a community of practice" (Easterby-Smith & Araujo, 1999, p. 5).

Stemming from the social view of organizational learning, Huysman (2000) defined organizational learning as "the process through which an organization constructs knowledge or reconstructs existing knowledge" (p. 135). According to Huysman (2000), the focus of organizational learning is on creating collective knowledge. This approach is aligned with the social constructivist approach to knowledge development (Gergen, 1994) where organizational learning is viewed as an "institutionalizing process" through which individual knowledge is

translated to organizational knowledge (Huysman, 2000, p. 135-136). Table 1 details a summary of the organizational learning definitions and perspectives found in the literature.

**Table 1.**

*Organizational learning definitions and perspectives*

| Author(s), Year | Definition | Perspectives (d)* |
|---|---|---|
| (Cyert & March, 1963) | First-order adaptation where organizations change their objectives, behaviors, and routines based on their experience | Behavioral |
| (March & Olsen, 1975) | Organizations and its members learn from experience. The emphasis is on the individual (organizational participant) as the problem-solver or decision maker with a direct link between individual and organization, group not referenced | Cognitive, Product innovation |
| (Duncan & Weiss, 1979) | Organizational learning is different than individual learning. It is an organizational process that takes place at the top where the dominant coalition acquires knowledge about action-outcome relationships | Cognitive & Behavioral |
| (Daft & Weick, 1984) | A three-stage process that includes: 1) search and collecting information; 2) interpreting information; and 3) learning by practical use of information | Behavioral (d)-cognitive |
| (Levitt & March, 1988) | Organizations learning by encoding inferences from history into routines that guide behavior. These routines include forms, rules, procedures, conventions, strategies, and technologies | Routine-based, Cognitive (d)-behavioral |
| (Argryris & Schön, 1978, 1996) (Argyris, 1977) | Organizational learning occurs when organizations challenge and transform prior assumptions and beliefs.<br><br>Organizations learn through individuals acting as agents for them; groups/teams and organizations are either facilitators or inhibitors of learning | Cultural, technical/theories of action, Cognitive & Behavioral |
| (Huber, 1991) | The outcome of processes ranging from information acquisition, distribution, and interpretation to organizational memory. | Cognitive (d) affects behavioral, technical |

**Table 1** (continued)

*Organizational learning definitions and perspectives*

| Author(s), Year | Definition | Perspectives (d)* |
|---|---|---|
| (Cook & Yanow, 1993) | The mutual creation of compatible and shared meanings expressed through interactions, language, objects, artifacts where groups transmit values, beliefs, and feelings to other members. Organizational and individuals learning is not the same. | Cultural |
| (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995) | Knowledge creation through processes that involve transforming tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge | Cognitive |
| (Schein, 1996) | Refocuses the organization on culture as the primary means of changing the capacity of the organization to grow; culture fundamentally influences what organizations do | Cultural |
| (Argyris C. , 1999) | Processes where organizational members act as learning agents for the organization while responding to changes in the internal and external environments to detect and correct errors | Technical |
| (Popper & Lipshitz, 1998) | Introduced the concept of organizational mechanisms which are means by which individual learning translated into organizational learning | Cognitive, social, multi-layered, holistic |
| (Huysman, 2000) | An institutionalizing process that focuses on creating collective knowledge; individual knowledge is translated to organizational knowledge. | Social, collective knowledge |
| (Gilley & Maycunich, 2000) | A process that consists of five phases: preparation for learning, information exchange, knowledge acquisition and practice, transfer and integration, accountability and recognition | Multi-layered, social, cognitive |
| (López, Peón, & Ordás, 2005) | A dynamic process of creation, acquisition and integration of knowledge focused on developing resources and capabilities that aid organizational efficiency | Cognitive, social |

* (d) represents dominant perspective

The table represents the trends and shifts surrounding organizational learning that spanned from 1963 to 2005. During this time, there was much debate over organizational learning and whether

it stemmed from a social, behavioral or cognitive (Argote, 2013). The debate surrounding that topic has declined (Easterby-Smith, Crossan, & Nicolini, 2000), and "most researchers agree with defining organizational learning as a change in the organization's knowledge that occurs as a function of experience" (Argote, 2013, p. 31). In terms of this definition, experience is defined as "the number of task performances rather than the number of task completions" because an individual or group can learn from performing a task even if they were not successful in their attempt (Argote, 2013, p. 33). Though organizational learning was initially viewed dominantly from a behavioral perspective (Cyert & March, 1963), over time it developed to include the dynamic, social aspect (López, Peón, & Ordás, 2005) that is based on learning and knowledge gaining experiences within the organization and its' context (Argote, 2013). This was an important topic of interest for this study, as it entailed understanding the dynamic and relational learning experiences that takes place in learning organizations.

**Relationship between individual learning and organizational learning.** Given the close connection and level of dependency between the organization and the individuals that make up the organization, the relationship between individual learning and organizational learning is sometimes unclear. Individuals in the organization may learn, but that learning does not inevitably lead to organizational learning (Easterby-Smith et al., 1999). According to Thompson (1995) the actual organization does not learn, the people within the organization learn. Nonaka (1994) stated that individual learning is a prerequisite for organizational learning; therefore, the learning experiences, perspectives, and opinions of how individual learning influences the organization is vital to organizational learning (Hartley & Allison, 2002)

In addition to individual learning, it is also important to consider the fact that the ability to transfer learning from the individual to the organization depends on the roles of the individuals within the organization (Hartley & Allison, 2002). The process of learning from the experiences of other people and organizations is a major component of organizational learning (Levitt & March, 1988). These processes, collaboration and knowledge transfer, are discussed later, in more detail.

***Isomorphism as learning processes.*** Learning from other organizations, can take place through many types of arrangements that are described by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) as "coercive, mimetic, and normative isomorphisms" (p.149). Isomorphism is a "constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions" (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 149) that can be either institutional or competitive.

Coercive isomorphism, one of the three mechanisms of institutional change, is influenced by politics and the problem of legitimacy. It results from "formal and informal pressures exerted on organizations by other organizations upon which they are dependent on, as well as cultural expectations in the society in which they function" (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 150). Some examples of coercive isomorphism include governmental mandates, "direct and explicit imposition of organizational modes on dependent organizations," and forcing communities to adopt a hierarchical organizational structure to gain support from similarly organized donors (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

Mimetic processes are derived from uncertainty and result in organizations modeling themselves after other organizations. Sometimes the organization being mimicked or modeled

does not know they are being copied nor do they wish to be mimicked. Other times, the modeling may be unintentional, indirectly due to employee transfer, or the result of consulting services (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

The last institutional isomorphism is normative pressures caused by the profession. The two aspects of professionalization include, formal education and achievement of professionals and inter-organizational networks that transcend the boundaries of individual organizations. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) found that the education and background of professionals in the same job position are often identical. Given the commonalities in lived experiences and education, professionals tend to approach problems similarly. Socialization with other organization professionals helps to reinforce these conformities (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) and exchange information through inter-organizational networks, the second aspect of professionalization. Isomorphisms were relevant to this study on the dynamic learning processes involved in inter-organizational learning because it identified different arrangements in which learning can take place.

The perspectives on organizational learning are just as disparate as the definitions. The range includes behavioral, cognitive, cultural, technical and other social perspectives. Despite the variances surrounding organizational learning, it is a "vital source in order to achieve competitive advantage," to adapt to the "plentiful changes and challenges" (Saadat & Saadat, 2016, p. 220). Organizational learning is a "strategic tool" that includes any "methods, mechanisms and processes" that can be used to help an organization "achieve learning" (Saadat & Saadat, 2016, p. 220). Literature on the various definitions of a learning organization and a brief overview of some learning organization theories is presented in the next sections.

## Learning Organization

Organizations that continuously acquire, process, and disseminate knowledge about markets, products, technologies, and business processes are considered learning organizations (Ellinger, Watkins, & Bostrom, 2006). The knowledge they acquire, process, and disseminate is derived from experience, experimentation, and information that comes from a variety of sources surrounding the organization. Some of the common characteristics of learning organizations, based on literature published within the 20th century, include being market oriented, having an entrepreneurial culture, remaining flexible in nature, possessing an organic structure, and using a facilitative leadership style (Ellinger et al., 1999). More recently, some of the important components include rewards for learning; a learning transfer climate; information sharing and management practices; risk taking, promotion, and reinforcement; knowledge management; and resource availability (Sinha, 2016). Throughout the decades, definitions, characteristics, and approaches to the learning organization have changed. In addition, multiple theories and constructs have been presented. Therefore, the next sections are comprised of an overview of facilitative and control leadership styles followed by a brief synopsis of some learning organization frameworks found in current literature.

**Facilitative and control leadership.** The facilitative leadership style is vastly different from the control leadership style commonly found in organizations (Ellinger et al., 1999). This form of leadership allows leaders and managers to take on a developing role where they focus more on facilitating learning as opposed to making commands and controlling workers. According to Watkins and Marsick (1996) “leaders of learning organizations nurture, develop,

and measure the knowledge capital of the organization (Ellinger et al., 1999, p. 106). At the inter-organizational level, leaders may work to enhance and promote network capital, social capital and knowledge flow among the inter-organizational network (Huggins, Johnston, & Thompson, 2012). In addition, facilitative leaders in learning organizations are skilled at encouraging, motivating, and communicating (Ellinger et al., 1999). Many researchers agree that manager and leaders play a significant role in creating learning organizations (Ellinger et al., 1999; Senge, 1990; Watkins & Marsick, 1993), especially when they implement practices that facilitate learning and development.

**Learning Organization Theories and Frameworks**

Learning organization theory "draws heavily from organizational learning" (Easterby-Smith & Araujo, 1999, p. 8). Literature on creating learning organizations is also split between technical and social approaches (Easterby-Smith & Araujo, 1999). The technical view emphasizes specific interventions that are based on measurements such as the learning curve (Easterby-Smith & Araujo, 1999, p. 8), experiment curve, progress curve, or learning by doing (Argote, 2013). According to Easterby-Smith and Araujo (1999) the process "involves taking historical data on production costs" and plotting that data against the cumulative output of a specific product in question (Easterby-Smith & Araujo, 1999, p. 8). The technical view is a method that has been used to measure things such as production time and costs. It is based on the premise that as production increases, cost should decrease (Argote, 2013) thereby creating an "inverse logarithmic relationship between cost and output" (Easterby-Smith & Araujo, 1999, p. 8). From the learning curve perspective, the reduction in cost despite the increase of production are caused by some form of learning processes (Easterby-Smith & Araujo, 1999). More

specifically, “production experience creates knowledge that improves productivity” (Argote, 2013, p. 12). From the technical view of creating a learning organization, the need for future learning is based on the outcome of learning as opposed to the mechanisms and processes (Easterby-Smith & Araujo, 1999). In addition, in a study, Argote, Beckman, and Epple (1990) discovered that the knowledge employees acquire during the production stage, “learning by doing,” depreciated rapidly (p. 149). While the researchers admit that it is difficult to identify precisely why the knowledge depreciated and the results did not provide details as to where the knowledge was embedded before depletion, they suggest that the results support the idea that the location where the learning is embedded could be a factor (Argote, Beckman, & Epple, 1990). This was relevant to this study because it presented the idea that while learning by doing increases productivity, temporarily, the knowledge gained from experience does not necessarily remain. Organizations must find ways to make sure the knowledge is embedded in the right places, be it technology, individuals or the organization (Argote, et al, 1990), to minimize knowledge depreciation.

On the other hand, the social view of the learning organization is described as “the ability of individuals to learn from their experiences and to learn from or with each other in work settings” (Easterby-Smith, et al., 1999, p. 9). Some of the most common views of the learning organization are from the social perspective. The next few sections include learning organization theories for the purpose of providing further understanding of the learning organization.

**Senge’s model.** In 1987, Peter Senge and a few of his colleagues set out to create a form of organizational cultural that promoted continuous change and learning (Fillion, Koffi, & Ekionea, 2015). Their goal was to establish an environment where organizations possess the

capability to generate knowledge and subsequently share that knowledge among others within the organization. Based on these ideas, Senge and his team introduced the concept of the learning organization. They defined learning organizations as a place where "people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together" (Senge, 1990, p. 3).

Because we live in a society where things are continuously changing and growing at a rapid pace, it is important that organizations are "flexible, adaptive, and productive" enough to change just as "rapidly" (Senge, 1990, p. 4). He posits that the process of real learning gets to the core of what it's like to be human, while providing opportunities for transformation through learning, at both the individual and organization level (Senge, 1990, p. 14). Learning organizations cannot simply "survive," through adaptive learning, or "the ability to adapt to a particular situation," but to be effective they must rely on both survival learning and "generative learning, which includes learning that enhances our capacity to create" (Senge, 1990, p. 14).

Senge (1990) also developed a model to serve as guidance for building a learning organization. It consists of five disciplines, systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, and team learning. It is imperative that the five disciplines develop as an "ensemble," so the fifth discipline (systems thinking) "integrates all of the disciplines by fusing them into a coherent body of theory and practice" (Senge, 1990, p.12). Systems thinking integrates all five disciplines together, fusing them as a unified body of theory and practice (Fillion et al., 2015). In relation to learning, specifically triple-loop learning processes, learning practices and experiences are embedded in the organization's system thinking.

All of the disciplines are related to a shift in the mentality of learners to "from seeing parts seeing wholes, from seeing people as helpless reactors to seeing them as active participants in shaping their reality, from reacting to the present to creating the future" (Senge, 1990, p. 69). A good systematic thinker can see four levels operating simultaneously (a) the events, (b) the behavioral schemes, (c) the systems, and (d) the mental models (Senge, Roberts, Ross, Smith, & Kleiner, 1994).

Personal mastery helps us to "continuously clarify and deepen our personal vision to focus on our energies, develop our patience, and see reality objectively" (Senge, 1990). This discipline goes deeper than abilities and skills of an individual. It is an "essential cornerstone of the learning organization---the learning organization's spiritual foundation" (Senge, 1990, p. 7). The "commitment and ability of an organization to learn cannot be greater than that of its member" (Fillion et al., 2015, p. 78) meaning the organization's capacity to become a learning organization is limited by the members' ability to learn. Organizations learn through the individuals they are made of; however, individual learning does not necessarily guarantee organizational learning, though it is impossible to have organizational learning without individual learning (Fillion et al., 2015). In short, personal mastery includes, but is not limited to the willingness and competency to engage in personal growth and learning. It focuses on teaching learners to choose the results and actions that match their destiny (Senge et al., 1994).

Mental models determine how we give meaning to the world as well as how we engage. They include images, hypotheses, and histories that we maintain in our minds regarding ourselves, other people, institutions, and all other aspects of the world in which live in (Senge et al., 1994). Chris Argyris, with over thirty years of experience in organizational learning and

mental models, and Donald Schön (1974) postulate that people do not a have congruent behavior with their theories-in-use, what they do, and their espoused theory, what they preach. Espoused theory pertains to the mental "map" or model an individual has that includes what they believe they will do or think in a certain situation (Cheung, Ramirez, & Susnjar, 2012). Because mental models affect what and how we see things, they can control our actions (Fillion et al., 2015). Theory-in-use refers to the actual behavior or action. In addition, because our mental models differ, two individuals can see the same thing and describe it in two completely different ways based on the variations in their mental models.

The significance of the mental models discipline is to help people enter deep within themselves to tap into their mental models and expose, test, clarify, improve, destruct or replace them, if necessary (Senge, 1990). This is all done to influence change. To be successful, organizations should focus on ways in which they can bring learners together to develop the best mental models to help them deal with any situation at hand (Senge, 1990). The mental models discipline is important to inter-organizational learning processes because a major component of deutero-learning is challenging or altering the mental models and assumptions within the organization.

"The practice of shared vision involves the skills of unearthing shared pictures of the future that foster genuine commitment and enrollment rather than compliance" (Senge, 1990, p. 9). Shared vision is an important part of the learning organization because it is "the capacity to hold a picture of the future we seek to create" (Senge, 1990, p. 9). It strives to "establish a set of principles and guiding practices that lead to actions of all members of the organization as a

group" (Fillion et al., 2015, p. 81). Also, shared vision creates a sense of togetherness, a community bounded together through shared goals and aspirations.

To develop a shared vision, Senge suggested that the following principles are implemented: favor personal visions, transition from personal visions to shared visions, and extend on those shared visions (Senge et al., 1994). In addition, the creation of shared vision is one piece of the whole process which includes establishing the goals, mission, and values of the learning organization.

Team learning contains "processes of aligning and developing the capacities of a team to create the results its members truly desire" (Senge, 1990, p. 236). It begins with "dialogue" which allows for members to "suspend their hypotheses" and eventually "orient them towards a common thought" (Fillion et al., 2015, p. 82). Following this, a "discussion" that provides the opportunity to develop a "set of techniques" and determine how the components "fit together" with the purpose of creating a "deeper understanding of the strengths working between all the team members themselves" should occur (Fillion et al., 2015, p. 82). The most important aspect about team learning is that it is "related to align and develop the ability of a team to create the results that its members really want" (Fillion et al., 2015, p. 82). Also, Senge (1990) stated that team learning is vital simply because teams, not individuals, are the fundamental learning unit of today's organizations. Teams are pertinent to building and growing learning organizations. They are a means to promoting continuous collaboration and working relations that encourage inter-organizational knowledge building and sharing.

To assist the organization with developing and encourage the five goals required of learning organizations, Senge also suggested a few strategies which include focusing on the

following variables within the organization: climate, leadership, management, human resource practices, organization mission, job attitudes, organizational culture, and organizational structure (Swanson & Holton, 2009).

In addition, while laying the foundation for his model of the learning organization, he focused on three levels of work required of organizations striving to be learning organizations (Swanson & Holton, 2009). The first level emphasized the development, production, and marketing of products and services. That organizational task is dependent on the second level of work which includes the designing and development of the systems and processes for production. Lastly, the third task revolves around thinking and interacting (Swanson & Holton, 2009, p. 217). All three of the levels of work depend heavily on each other because "the quality of the organizational thinking and interacting affects the organizational systems and processes, and the production and delivery of products and services" (Swanson & Holton, 2009, p. 217). The idea that one process greatly influences the others positions the way the organization thinks in a pivotal role because of the power it has when it comes to accomplishing goals and performing effectively (Swanson & Holton, 2009).

The major challenge with building a learning organization is the need for sustained effort because, while it is easy to attract people with new ideas, it is difficult to force people to practice the new ideas daily (Fillion et al., 2015). Senge's learning organization theory has been criticized as having recommendations that are "far too abstract" (Garvin, 1993, p. 79) and lacking the guidance for practical action. Örtenblad (2007) believed that the five disciplines that Senge presented are too difficult to understand and therefore often lead to misinterpretation. It has also been stated that Senge's explanation of the learning organization is too vague and offers no real,

concrete evidence to truly evaluate an organization to determine whether it is a learning organization (Örtenblad, 2013). Another criticism is focused on Senge's flat utopic view of the learning organization which is an unrealistic view of organizations because realistically organizations have hierarchies (Örtenblad, 2007). Organizations are not just big systems, yet there are issues surrounding power, hierarchy, class, race, gender, and other social matters present within an organization (Flood, 1999). In addition, Senge's model does not provide a manageable scale to measure the aspects of a learning organization; therefore, this model was not used for the theoretical framework of this study.

**Pedler, Borgoyne, and Boydell's model.** Following Senge, in the United Kingdom, Pedler, Burgoyne, & Boydell (1991) presented their view of the learning organization in which they used the phrase "learning company" (p. 1). The authors chose to deviate from the commonly used phrase "learning organization" and to the "learning company" to create a name that sounds more "convivial," inclusive and unified (Pedler et al., 1991, p. 1). In short, they defined the learning company as, "an organization which facilitates the learning of all its members and continuously transforms itself in order to meet its strategic goals" (Pedler et al., 1991, p. 92). According to their definition, learning and working within the learning organization are "synonymous" (Kim, Egan, & Tolson, 2015, p. 94). This generalization can be challenged based on the idea that there are countless individuals who work in a learning organization but are not actively gaining new knowledge or learning from their duties.

Pedler et al. (1991) included eleven dimensions in their learning organization model. Their concept of the learning company and the dimensions was the result of 15 years of interviews conducted with managers and various work groups from British based organizations.

The purpose of their research was to provide a diagnostic tool to evaluate the entire system based on the 11 characteristics of a learning company to identify areas of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis). The 11 dimensions included, a learning approach to strategy, participative policy making, informating, formative accounting and control, internal exchange, reward flexibility, enabling structures, environmental scanning, inter-company learning, learning climate, and self-development for all members (Pedler et al., 1991). The 11 dimensions displayed the components necessary for an organization to be considered a learning company. If the 11 pieces of the jigsaw puzzle, as depicted by Pedler et al. (1991), are present, the organization can be considered a learning company. They also presented an energy-flow model that demonstrated the "constant energy flows and connections" that must be present between the individuals and the collective groups to bring the learning company "to life" (Pedler et al., 1991, p. 30). The energy-flow model was meant to represent the free flowing ideas and actions of indivual employees who are given opportunities to develop and manage themselves under flexible, organic structures.

Though the learning company concept attempted to encourage continous engagement between organization members to promote learning opportunities and leverage the existing energy, the authors admitted that the overall model was "necessarily incomplete" (Pedler et al., 1991, p. 33). In addition, there was a lack of further research, including validity testing or usage of the research tool in empirical studies. Based on their subtle approach to building a learning organization, the absence of empirical evidence using the model, and overall underdevelopment of the model, the Pedler et al. (1991) model of the learning company was not used for this study.

**Örtenblad's model.** Örtenblad (2013) defined the learning organization as a process that consists of four major components that include: learning at work, organizational learning, climate for learning, and learning structure. He explained that each of the four aspects "complement each other and together make up a complete learning organization" (Örtenblad, 2013, p. 23), but can be adopted separately. These four components are listed and described in Table 2 below which was created by this researcher.

Table 2.

*Components of Örtenblad's (2013) learning organization*

| Component | Descriptions |
|---|---|
| Learning at work | Ways through which an organization facilitates how employees learn while at work |
| Organizational learning | The individuals' acquisition of knowledge and finding ways to management that knowledge so the organization can store and retain it in the organizational memory |
| Climate for learning | Managers facilitating individual employee learning by allowing them to experiment through trial and error and reflect on those processes during work hours; work conditions that encourage and support learning |
| Learning structure | An organizational structure that is flexible, organic, promotes autonomy, is decentralized, empowering, has a non-hierarchical structure, and is continuously learning |

Rather than enforce an "all or nothing" perspective to becoming a learning organization, Örtenblad recommended that organizations adopt aspects of the four components that better suits their abilities and interests. This recommendation supported his emphasis on developing a contingency model of the learning organization. Though it may be ideal to adopt all the components, for various reasons that is not always possible due to limited resources and

capabilities. Therefore, Örtenblad (2013) advised that researchers and practitioners apply a "contingency approach" or a "reasoning that considers practice to be relative to a specific situation on hand" when attempting to build learning organizations (p. 9). This gives organizations the ability to adopt a customized version of the learning organization that is more conducive to their needs.

In terms of defining a learning organization based on the four categories, Örtenblad (2013) explained "to define what is not a learning organization is to state that the absence of all four of them does not correspond to a learning organization" (p. 31). "On the other hand, an organization that has any of those four aspects/types is a learning organization" (Örtenblad, 2013, p. 31). So, an organization is considered a learning organization if it has at least one of the four aspects of Örtenblad's (2013) definition of a learning organization.

When it comes to eliminating certain elements of biasness during implantation, Örtenblad believed that researchers should be involved in the learning organization processes. He postulated that the involvement of researchers would ensure that managers are not adopting practices solely based on their (manager's) individual interests as opposed to the goals and needs of the stakeholders. The term stakeholders refers to "the relevant people or groups who need to be involved in the change program" (Cummings & Worley, 2005, p. 34) Today, organizations consider stakeholders to include "not only employees and managers, but also customers, suppliers and neighbors as having a legitimate stake in the business" or organization (Blantern, Boydell, & Burgoyne, 2013, pp. 314-317). Also, including researchers and HRD practitioners in the learning organization processes would ensure that those implementing the strategies possess the proper knowledge and abilities, which are two common issues found within prospective

learning organizations (Örtenblad, 2013). Lastly, it would also promote a balance between adopting learning organization strategies and properly adapting organization members to those strategies.

Örtenblad's (2013) model was based on the premise that organizations adopt a contingency model, which allows them to customize learning processes to meet their culture, vision, and individual needs. The contingency model is comprised of common themes and recommendations found in learning organization research. The problem with this approach is it doesn't help to definitively identify or prove what is required to become a learning organization. The vagueness and "whichever way the wind blows" approach is not conducive to the purpose of this study, so Örtenblad's (2013) model was not chosen.

**Marquardt model.** Marquardt's (2011) learning organization model was based on five subsystems that include: learning, organization, people, knowledge, and technology. He argued that each of the systems are mandatory for organizations to increase learning. Each of the five subsystems are interrelated and balance one another. If one area, for example technology, is weak, the other four components suffer (Marquardt, 2011), so it is important that each aspect is incorporated efficiently for the organization to fully reap the benefits of the learning organization model. Based on this theory, such interdependency is also an important aspect to consider when examining inter-organizational learning. For example, Kickert, Klijn, and Koppenjan (1997) highlighted the interdependency of inter-organizational networks in the public sector by describing them as "stable patterns of social relations between independent actors which take shape around policy problems and/or policy programs" (p. 6). Networks are entities that "consist of public, quasi-public or private actors who are dependent on each other and, as a consequence

of this dependence, maintain relations with each other" (De Bruijin & Heuvelhof, 1995, p. 163). Therefore, it is beneficial to understand the amount of interdependency along with the detailed characteristics of the members engaged in the inter-organizational network. A way to "clarify the characteristics of these arrangements is to distinguish orientation of member, how the members are organized and what the organization hopes to accomplish" (Mandell & Steelman, 2003, p. 206). Member orientation referred to the question of whether those involved are more committed to the problem or the goal. Organization referred to the strength of linkages among the members in the network and the breadth of their effort. Finally, intended accomplishment focused on the complexity of the problem and the commitment of effort to solving the problems (Mandell & Steelman, 2003, p. 205).

Learning was at the core of the Marquardt (2011) learning organization model. The model has the learning process divided into three levels of learning (a) individual learning which entails changes in skills, knowledge, values, and attitudes that are acquired through self-initiated studying, observations, and technology-based instruction; (b) group or team learning that refers to increases in the knowledge, skills, and competencies of groups; and (c) organizational learning or the enhanced knowledge and productive capability that is established through the dedication to continuous improvement across the entire organization.

There were three different approaches or methods to learning that consisted of: (a) adaptive learning where individuals reflect on past experiences and make modifications for the future; (b) anticipatory learning that involves acquiring knowledge by envisioning the opportunities or outcomes for the future; and (c) action learning which uses activity engagement to promote learning.

To maximize learning overall, Marquardt also identified a set of five skills that help organizations exploit learning. These skills were identical to Senge's (1990, 2006) disciplines and include systems thinking, mental models, personal mastery, self-directed learning, and dialogue. To promote learning in the organizational setting, Marquardt recommended ten strategies for building learning subsystems in which the entire organization adopts those skills for organizational learning.

Organization, the next subsystem, included four dimensions, vision, culture, strategy, and structure. Vision entailed the goals, hopes and future direction of the company. If the company's vision is clear, individuals with continue to evolve, learn, and grow with the organization. Culture included the organizations beliefs, practices, rituals and customs. It is important that culture is adaptable to create the necessary relationships and enhance learning opportunities. The strategy dimensions are related to the action and tactics used to optimize learning in the organization. Lastly, structure included the departments, levels and configurations of the organization. Marquardt (2011) advocated for a flat, less hierarchical structure that is streamlined and unbounded to maximize contact, flow of information and collaboration both inside and outside the organization.

The people subsystem included all the people, managers, leaders, employees, customers, business partners, alliances, vendors and community members that the organization learns through (Marquardt, 2011, p. 26). All of these individuals are a valuable component of the learning organization; therefore, they should all be encouraged and enabled to receive, share and contribute to the learning processes.

Knowledge subsystems included “the acquisition, creation, storage, analysis and data mining, transfer and dissemination, and application and validation of knowledge” (Marquardt, 2011, p. 27). This subsystem manages all of the knowledge that is acquired throughout the organization.

Technology was the last subsystem of the Marquardt (2011) learning organization model. It included “supporting, integrating technological networks and information tools that allow access to and exchange of information and learning” (p. 28). The major aspect of the technology subsystem was the management of organizational knowledge and the enhancement of learning opportunities.

The Marquardt (2011) model resembled various aspects of Örtenblad’s (2013) contingency model, Marsick and Watkin’s (1993) learning organization model and Senge’s (1990) five disciplines. Marquardt’s approach to the learning organization relied heavily on action learning, hence the various practical applications in his book *Building the Learning Organization*. This was a favorable model for practitioners, but empirical research to support these claims made by Marquardt was lacking. Because of the significant gap in the research conducted on Marquardt’s (2011) model, it was not chosen as for this study.

**Watkins and Marsick’s model.** Watkins and Marsick (1993) defined a learning organization as a system “that learns continuously and transforms itself” (p. 8). They suggested that learning is a constant process and results in changes in knowledge, beliefs and behaviors” (Swanson & Holton, 2009, p. 218).

To explain their viewpoint of the learning organization, Watkins and Marsick compared the individuals in a learning organization to sculptors who must learn to think like sculptors and

"see in their mind's eye and shape structures toward those approaches that nurture learning" within the organization (Marsick & Watkins, 1994, p. 353). Similar to Senge (1990) and Örtenblad (2013), Watkins and Marsick believed that the learning structure should be flexible, vertical and designed to promote continuous learning.

Though Senge laid the foundation for the learning organization concept and other researchers have developed theories on the learning organization, the ideas and concepts presented by Watkins and Marsick (1993) are more appropriate for this study.

One major reason Watkins and Marsick's learning organizational theories best suited this study was because of its relevance to the HRD discipline. Marsick and Watkins (1994) proposed an integrative vision for learning organization and the HRD discipline. Their vision revolved around the idea that the learning organization, with all of its complexities, was a "sustainable vision" for the field of human development within organizations (Marsick & Watkins, 1994, p. 359). They believed that HRD offers the theoretical foundation that is required to create a learning organization because it is comprised of training, career development, and organization development principles. However, they also pointed out that HRD departments cannot stand alone, separate from other parts of the organization, while trying to create a culture that "supports people in using new knowledge to make a difference," empowers individuals, encourages collaboration, and promotes open dialogue (Marsick & Watkins, 1994, p. 355). If HRD professionals want to eliminate barriers and help foster a learning organization, they cannot operate independently and secluded from the rest of the organization. Instead, Watkins and Marsick (1992) stated that the HRD department "must be positioned to act strategically throughout the organization" (Marsick & Watkins, 1994, p. 355). This further emphasized the

importance of HRD to process of creating and facilitating learning organization practices. Table 3 includes the key variables of the Watkins and Marsick's (1992) model which are referred to as learning organization action imperatives.

These imperatives are also the basis of Marsick and Watkin's (2003) Dimensions of Learning Questionnaire (DLOQ) learning organization diagnostic tool which has been used in several empirical studies across a variety of organizations and cultures all over the world. Furthermore, (Kim et al., 2015) described the DLOQ as one of the best-known tools primarily used by HRD researchers in approximately 15 countries. Despite the fact that researchers have reportedly experienced difficulty with validity and multi-collinearity when using the DLOQ, it has contributed significantly to framing and assessing HRD related practices as well as research and theory building on the learning organization concept (Kim et al., 2015).

Due to its relevance to the HRD discipline as a learning organization theory, as well as having an explicit learning organization diagnostic tool, Watkins and Marsick's (1993) model was used for this study.

Table 3.

*Imperatives of the Learning Organization*

| Action Imperative | Description |
|---|---|
| Create continuous learning opportunities | Learning is designed into work so that people can learning on the job: opportunities are provided for ongoing education and growth. |
| Promote inquiry and dialog | People gain productive reasoning skills to express their views, and the capacity to listen and inquire into the views of others; the culture supports questioning, feedback and experimentation. |
| Encourage collaboration and team learning | Work is deigned to use groups to access different modes of thinking; groups are expected to learn together and work together; collaboration is valued by the culture and rewarded. |
| Establish systems to capture and share learning | Both high and low technology systems to share learning are created and integrated with work; access is provided, and systems are maintained. |
| Empower people toward a collective vision | People are involved in setting, owning and implementing a joint vision; responsibility is distributed close to decision making to motivate people to learning that for which they are accountable. |
| Connect the organization to its environment | People are helped to see the impact of their work on the entire enterprise; people can scan environment and use information to adjust work practices; organization is linked to community. |
| Leaders model and support learning | Leaders model, champion and support learning; leadership uses learning strategically for business results. |

Marsick, V.J., & Watkins, K.E. (2003). Demonstrating the value of an organization's learning culture: The dimensions of the learning organization questionnaire. *Advances in Developing Human Resources, 5*(2), 132-151. (Reprinted with permission)

## Learning Organization Research

According to Örtenblad (2013) over 332 studies have been published on the learning organization since 1988. A search was conducted with Dr. Daniel Xiao of Texas A&M University through several databases to attempt to duplicate Örtenblad's search of learning organization studies. However, due to uncertainty surrounding the terminology used to conduct the initial search, we were unable to obtain a current number of studies on the learning organization.

Although there are over 300 studies on the learning organization, they have all been defined and conceptualized differently. For that purpose, it was difficult to make any valid comparisons among the various studies conducted on learning organizations (Örtenblad, 2013). In addition to the varying definitions, some of the researchers consider the learning organization merely an idea. They have suggested implementation and adaptation, but failed to consider how certain aspects, such as the culture or industry of an organization, fits into the learning organization concept. These mechanisms must be considered before simply adapting practices that may not fit the organization.

Of the hundreds of studies conducted on the learning organization, most of them focused on private sector companies as opposed to public (Örtenblad et al., 2013). In addition, it was discovered that public sector organizations are not assumed to be able to fully adopt the learning organization idea (Wallace, 1997). Instead, a list of suggestions was recommended to public sector organization to help them become learning organizations:

a. Use computer-assisted learning to enhance accessibility (Brown & Brudney, 2003);
b. Improve the employees' ability to share, disseminate and benefit from the knowledge and experience of others (Brown & Brudney, 2003);
c. Develop the capability of anticipating change (Brown & Brudney, 2003);
d. Look at and try to solve problems from different angles (Yusoff, 2005);
e. Empower the employees (Yusoff, 2005); and
f. See to it that the employees continuously learn (Yusoff, 2005).

This list of recommendations was relevant to this study because it identified a set of actions that have been deemed necessary to help public sector organizations, the population sample for this study, become learning organizations.

The next section includes a brief review of the learning organization criticism found in the literature.

**Critiques of the learning organization**. Although many have studied and presented research on the learning organization, the topic has also had its fair share of criticism. For many years researchers and scholars have debated over how to define the learning organization (Ortenblad, 2013). Many have claimed that the learning organization is just a "fashion" (Furnham, 2004) and too vague to actually be attained or useful (Caldwell, 2012). Some have overlooked the concept of the learning organization as "management duckspeak" which is defined as "nonsensical noises which have nothing to do with business issues and block out useful thoughts" (Glaser S. , 1997, p. 653) Other researchers have questioned whether the learning organization is still relevant to the present time (Örtenblad, 2013).

The learning organization has also been criticized for being "an expression of informal power and control" (Örtenblad, 2013, p. 6). According to Pant (2001) there was not only informal control, but also increased exploitation where workers are pushed to do more and take on more duties without necessarily reaping the benefits of their efforts. Furthermore, Pant suggested that this form of coercion may be eliminated through emancipating and enlightening employees which in turn promotes autonomy (Örtenblad, 2013), empowerment and self-determination, all of which are important aspects to creating a true learning organization and climate for learning. This provides a transition into the next topic which discusses the relevance and importance of the learning organization to the HRD discipline.

**Importance of the learning organization to HRD**. "Learning is a constituent process of HRD and organizational change" (Tseng & McLean, 2008, p. 1). It is a major component of transforming and developing the organization (Gilley & Maycunich, 2000) and learning is mandatory for human resource development to occur (Tseng & McLean, 2008). Both the learning organization and organizational learning concepts promote continuous growth, improvement, learning and development at the individual, team or group, and organizational levels. HRD practitioners are key to facilitating the learning that is required for continuous learning and improved performance within the organization, whereas the HRD discipline provides the theoretical foundation for understanding the learning processes.

Griego, Geroy, and Wright (2000) categorized five HRD domains based on the learning organization that include: training and education, rewards and recognition, information and flow, vision and strategy, and individual team development. The five domains were used as predictor variables of a learning organization and tested among 48 professionals. The results of the study

revealed that those individuals who answered positively, stating that they received both rewards and recognition and training and education while at work were most likely to classify their organization as a learning organization (Griego et al., 2000). These two indicators of a learning organizaion are important to HRD practioners because it provides empirical evidence that rewarding and recognizing the efforts of workers is important to building and maintain a learning organization. Second, the results supported the idea that an environment that promotes learning and knowledge sharing is a clear indicator of a learning organization (Griego et al., 2000). Lastly, the five domains identified can be fundamental to assessing inter-organizational learning.

The first section of this literature review focused on learning organizations and the last section focused specifically on inter-organizational learning and the processes it entails. However, this section of the literature review links the various organizational learning topics discussed to the population that will be used for this study. To understand the learning processes that take place in these organizations, it is important that the structure and purpose of the prostitution serving programs is examined. The next section of this review introduces the concept of problem solving through diversion programs. Second, a brief overview of the organizational structure of four different types of prostitute serving methods commonly used is included. Lastly, the multi-agency partnership model is reviewed in detail, as it closely relates to the inter-organizational learning relationship, a pertinent concept of this study.

**Inter-organizational Problem-solving as a Necessary Solution to Social Problems**

Social problems are defined as “conditions or behaviors that have negative consequences for a large number of people and it is recognized as a condition or behavior that needs to be addressed” (Understanding social problems, 2010). Public sector networks, a group of

"community-based, mostly publicly funded, health, human service, and public service organizations working within a network to provide services effectively," (Provan & Milward, 2001, p. 414) are becoming more prevalent. "Collaborations, partnerships, and networks have evolved as inter-organizational innovations to address multifaceted social and environment problems" (Mandell & Steelman, 2003, p. 198), p. 198). Inter-organizational innovation refers to" inter-organizational arrangement that develop among public, private, and non-profit groups to work together on mutual problems" (Mandell & Steelman, 2003, p. 198). Such inter-organizational innovations are necessary to address the sociological problems associated with street-level prostitution. Therefore, this section of the literature review includes the problems associated with street-level prostitution, introduces the concept of problem-solving justice, and communicates how inter-organizational problem-solving is a means to address the sociological problems caused by street-level prostitution.

**Street-level prostitution as a social problem.** Street-level prostitution is an example of a social problem that affects multiple groups of people in various aspects of life. In 2012, 37, 965 women in the United States of America were arrested for prostitution or commercialized vice (Snyder & Mulako-Wangota, 2015). Most of the women were charged with the criminal offense and consequently served time in jail. The vast majority of the women incarcerated for prostitution in America eventually return to the prostitute profession on average within one year of being released from jail (Mastrorilli, Norton-Hawk, & Usher, 2015). These numbers support the notion that the sole act of jailing a woman for engaging in prostitution with the intent that it will serve as a deterrence is both ineffective and counterproductive (Norton-Hawk, 2001).

Women fail to exit street-level prostitution due to a lack of support and/or resources (Williamson & Folaron, 2003).

In response to the demand for street-level prostitution exit programs, the United States justice system has become increasingly more involved in prostitution role-exiting (Roe-Sepowitz, Hickle, Loubert, & Egan, 2011) through what is known as diversion programs.

**Problem-solving Justice Approach**

The term diversion in this instance refers to "diversion from jail or diversion from the legal system" entirely (Wahab, 2006, p. 168). Diversion programs are a way to rehabilitate offenders by sometimes using the authority of the courts and to provide offenders with an alternative lifestyle options that does not entail breaking the law. At the time of this study, there were approximately 13 states in the United States that had adopted prostitution-exiting programs to help women with the diversion process and that number continues to grow (Wahab, 2006). "While diversion programs have demonstrated effectiveness in reducing recidivism among adults arrested for prostitution, these programs are not feasible for every city" (Roe-Sepowitz, Gallagher, Hickle, Pérez, & Tutelman, 2014, p. 62).

Also, street-level prostitution is more prevalent in some cities and states due to geographic location, neighborhood quality, and areas with high drug usage (Scott & Dedel, 2006). A search revealed controversy surrounding adoption of diversion programs including debate about the efficacy of the programs and how many communities grapple with developing the best response to prostitution. This most likely explains the limited implementation of diversion programs in America. In the next sections, details about how women obtain access to the diversion programs are discussed.

**Accessing a diversion program.** There are two situations in which a female prostitute would have access to a recovery or diversion program. One method is for women to voluntarily seek help from a diversion or recovery program without the justice system intervening. This is considered a voluntary attempt to exit and is commonly caused by the following five factors, hitting rock bottom, experiencing life-threatening events, regaining custody or the desire to become a better mother, changes in the sub-culture of street-level prostitution, or experiencing a spiritual awakening (Dalla, 2006).

If a woman chooses to voluntarily attempt to exit street-level prostitution, she must willingly leave the street life and initiate the recovery process on her own by seeking help of a diversion program. Because "there are many barriers to leaving street-work" it is usually an extensive, multi-level process to exiting (Baker, Dalla, & Williamson, 2010, p. 587). There are three ways in which a street-level prostitute leaves the profession, a) jail, b) a prostitute helping organizations, or c) on their own (Dalla, 2006). While very few actually do leave on their own, those who manage, rely heavily on formal support services (Dalla, 2006, p. 281). Often, these women are presented with the opportunity to enroll in a diversion program upon their arrest.

After being arrested for soliciting sex in the form of prostitution, women receive the option to participate in a recovery program to lower or eliminate jail time. This is considered an involuntary exit from street-level prostitution because had she not been arrested, she probably would not have made the initiative to exit the business. Dalla (2000) studied 43 street-level prostitutes and found that only three of the participants left the streets at their own will. On the other hand, of the same group, one-third of the women were forced to exit prostitution because they were incarcerated at the time. In such situations, women are given the chance to undergo

treatment for their involvement in prostitution or serve their entire sentence in jail (Dalla, 2000). This option is part of an approach used in the criminal justice system referred to as problem-solving justice or problem-solving court (Shdaimah & Wiechelt, 2012).

Problem-solving courts are used to address crimes in which rehabilitation would be more beneficial than incarceration. More specifically, the approach "focuses on solving underlying problems of communities through rehabilitation of offenders in the criminal justice system" (Andraka-Christou, 2017, p. 191). The methods used are considered non-traditional approaches to criminal behavior through "programs designed to change behaviors, often through individualized supervision and support" (Shdaimah & Wiechelt, 2012, p. 157). These methods consist of both punitive and therapeutic approaches to help address the underlying causes that provoke people to break the law in the first place (Castellano, 2011). The concept was designed to suspend or delay punishment and allow offenders to receive treatment to address the cause of their deviant behavior (Leo & Shdaimah, 2012) through methods of diversion.

**Making an impact.** Across the United States, there has been a slow rise in the number of problem-solving courts. At the time of this study, approximately 3,000 problem-solving courts exist in the country to date, with more present internationally (Shdaimah & Bailey-Kloch, 2014). Aligned with diversion programs, these court initiatives focus on identifying and addressing the needs of offenders of specific crimes, specifically prostitution and drug offenses, through means of therapy and rehabilitation. In most cases, the defendants are required to admit guilt for committing or participating in the deviant behavior before they are eligible to receive the resources and help (Leon & Shdaimah, 2012). However, not all programs require participants to

enter a guilty plea unless they are terminated from the program or they successfully complete the program and in that case the charges are subject to be dismissed (Shdaimah & Wiechelt, 2012).

The main goal is for participants agree to undergo treatment, through a diversion or recovery program, and graduate with the ability and desire to be successful without engaging in criminal behavior. These programs help offenders make lifestyle changes, and avoid jail time, if the program is completed successfully. However, if participants do not complete the program, they face the possibility of receiving a longer jail sentence.

Another goal of the problem-solving courts' diversion program is to lower the rate of recidivism. The concept is based on the idea that if people are allowed to correct their habits and behavior without the offense going on their record, they will have a better chance of not committing the offense again due to restrictions on their housing eligibility and employment opportunities (Cnaan, Draine, Frazier, & Sinha, 2008).

Though problem-solving courts seem beneficial, some do not support the concept of diversion. One of the biggest concerns is these therapeutic approaches to justice create a shift in the position of the judge in the United States courtroom. With the traditional approach to justice, the judge remains a neutral party, but in problem-solving court the judge plays a vital role in the recovery and rehabilitation process of offenders. Honorable Judge Cindy Lederman said the following about the problem-solving courts:

> If we accept this challenge, we're no longer the referee or the spectator. We're a participant in the process. We're not just looking at the offense any more. We're looking more and more at the best interests, not just of the defendant, but of the defendant's family and the community as well. (Lane E. , 2003, pp. 956-957)

There are other areas of concern when it comes to the rights and freedoms of women who enter a plea of guilty in order to gain access to diversion programs (O'Hear, 2002). Specifically, when prospective diversion program participants admit guilt before entering the program, public defenders are often concerned about the rights of those defendants. They feel that there is the possibility for more arrests and increased surveillance of offenders as they undergo treatment (Leon & Shdaimah, 2012) if they do not successfully complete the program or abide by the standards. While the concerns of public defenders are valid, if participants successfully complete the program, the charges can be dispelled, null-processed or expunged (Leon & Shdaimah, 2012). Also, if the diversion program proves to be successful for the participants, many people stand to benefit from the process.

Problem-solving courts simply serve as an avenue for women who are seeking to exit street-level prostitution through a diversion program. There are other prostitution recovery initiatives that are available to assist these women as they undergo the role-exiting process. Some of these programs are referred to as prostitution recovery or rehabilitation programs. The next section includes other methods of prostitution recovery and prostitute serving agencies.

**Four Categories of Prostitutes Serving Agencies**

While examining the various forms of services provided by prostitution serving agencies it was discovered that each could be grouped into one of the following four categories: (a) harm minimization plus; (b) women's centered approach; (c) multi-agency partnerships; and (d) a case management approach (Matthews et al., 2014).

**Harm minimization.** The agencies that adapt a harm minimization approach focus on providing services that minimize harm and promote health for women. "Harm reduction

principles are value neutral, pragmatic, and concerned with prioritizing achievable goals" (Matthews et al., 2014, p. 96). This approach is based on the premise that prostitution and drug use will always exist, so rather than working to eliminate the behavior, the focus should be on minimizing the amount of harm surrounding the act (Matthews et al., 2014). The approach involves outreach or drop-in programs where women can report an act of sexual assault, receive free condoms and health related testing, or take a shower and have access to toiletries. The sole purpose of these programs is to assist the women with their needs as they live a life on the streets. These programs typically do not specialize in an exit strategy or theory.

**Women's centered approach.** The women's centered approach is gender specific that consists of centers and programs that provide services to that specific gender. These programs focus on supporting women offenders or those women who are at risk of offending (Matthews et al., 2014). Such programs provide a plethora of services and assistance that range from needle exchange to reduce the risk of needle sharing or the use of dirty needles to assistance with housing and counseling services. They have open door programs that strive to provide long term assistance and support to women who are involved in prostitution and seeking to exit (Matthews et al., 2014).

**Multi-agency partnership model.** Multi-agency partnerships include many community-based support groups who work together to provided services and assistance to various programs. They operate as a hub where referrals for various services and needs are passed along to the programs specializing in those needs (Matthews et al., 2014). Exit programs frequently utilize multi-agency partnerships to help assist with exiting support. They broker out specific needs through a central location or organization to other agencies to deliver the services. To

illustrate, problem-solving courts or any other “diversion scheme” is an example of a central location or hub that communicates with other agencies to help offer prostitute rehabilitation and diversion assistance (Matthews et al., 2014, p. 109).

**Case management approach.** The case management approach has been in existence since the 1970s. It is based on the idea that a case manager provides the patient with professional care service that is reliable, stable, and empathetic; they possess the professional expertise necessary to provide such care; and their defined boundaries include honesty and a client-directed goal orientation (Matthews et al., 2014, p. 115). For example, the Ipswich Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership decided to adopt a case management approach to helping with exit prostitution. The goal of the organization was to create meaningful paths out of street-level prostitution through use of multi-agency support services. The case management approach provides patients with a one-on-one relationship with support people that assist them with determining what support is needed and identifying any gaps present. Regardless of the name or approach of these programs, all of these initiatives have the common goal of providing assistance to those who interested in making meaningful lifestyle changes.

Prostitution recovery, support and treatment programs can play a monumental role in the exiting process for these women (Matthews et al., 2014). Of those four categories, the multi-agency partnership model closely resembles the learning organization structure of interest for this study because of its relation and collaboration with other organizations. The next section examines the multi-agency partnership model in more detail as it relates to prostitution serving organizations.

As mentioned above, the multi-agency partnership model is an organizational network that emerges from a variety of services brokered out from a centralized location by various agencies to those individuals who require those services (Matthews et al., 2015). It includes various organizations collaborating for the same initiative. These models typically "operate as a hub where referrals can be made to a group of practitioners from across a range of statutory and non-statutory services" (Matthews et al., 2014, p. 108). Referrals for various services and needs are passed along to the programs specializing in those needs. When there are well-established multi-agency partnerships, agencies have "information-sharing protocols and service-level agreements with key agencies" allowing them to streamline the process and provide rapid access to support (Matthews et al., 2014, p. 108). A well-established and effective partnership involves collaboration, "promotes innovation," a shared strategic vision among all the partners, and there is a "strong commitment from each partner" ( (Brandstetter, et al., 2006, p. 7).

**Inter-Organizational Problem-solving Approach to Prostitute Diversion**

Because the sociological issues surrounding street-level prostitution are multifaceted, they require coordinated attention from multiple agencies. As Roe-Sepowitz, Gallagher, Hickle, Loubert, and Tutelman (2014) explained, to successfully exit, prostituted and sex trafficked adults must have access to formal support services that address their many complex needs including economic assistance (Dalla, 2006); substance abuse treatment (Jeal & Salisbury, 2004); basic food and shelter needs; and services addressing physical and mental health needs (Hedin & Mansson, 2003). The multi-agency model seems practical to addressing the countless problems that arise from street-level prostitution, specifically with the women, because referrals can be brokered out to simultaneously to address the range of services required. To further

illustrate the range of needs required, “women involved in prostitution are amongst the most victimized group of people in society” (Matthews, 2014, p. 86). The forms of victimization include physical violence, child abuse, sexual abuse, and human trafficking (Matthews, 2015). The multi-agency approach can provide access to the variety of formal support services consecutively or even simultaneously to address everyone’s assortment of needs.

In addition to the crime, violence and victimization of these women, street-level prostitution has significant economic costs. Annually, millions of dollars are spent on prostitution control in America; however, many of the methods used are inadequate and simply endorse what is referred to as a revolving door justice system (Wolf, 2001). As Weitzer (1999) explained, “prostitution control in America involves the commitment of substantial criminal justice resources—with little impact on the sex trade or on collateral problems such as victimization of prostitutes and effects on host communities” (p. 83).

Multi-agency partnerships are considered a “pragmatic solution” that can be used to “develop information-sharing and expertise; assist in the pooling of resources; raise awareness of the needs of the women; act as a signposting and referral agency; identify barriers to women accessing services; and identify gaps in provisions” (Matthews et al, 2014, p. 111). When combined with diversion, the multi-agency model provides street-level prostitutes with services and resources to deter them from the profession and offers an alternative to “punitive and enforcement-focused approaches” (Matthews et al, 2014, p. 111). Reducing the number of women involved in street-level prostitution, minimizes the social problems surrounding the behavior, a strategy commonly uses in networks of health and human agencies (Provan & Milward, 2001, p. 417). However, to increase the effectiveness of the partnerships formed

between these agencies, a deeper understanding of the learning processes and other methods such as collaboration, capacity building (Mathews et al, 2014), and information-sharing systems (Pardo, Creswell, Thompson, & Zhang, 2006) required in these public and non-profit organizations is required.

Multi-agency work has been commonly used in the past to provide various forms of community-based support in areas ranging from mental health problems to identifying and support victims of violence. Since street-level prostitution affects multiple groups of people and the extent of the problems surrounding prostitution presents issues for society overall, the efforts used to address these problems should involve a large-scale approach containing multiple agencies. The Safe Exit Diversion Scheme in London where town officials used well-coordinated partnerships and initiatives to eradicate street-level prostitution is an example of such multi-agency work (Matthews et al., 2014). These types of diversion initiatives provide the women arrested for prostitution offenses with an alternative to court, which includes assessment and meaningful engagement in the support services recommended based on their needs assessment (Matthews et al., 2014). Multi-agency partnerships are popular and frequently used in crime reduction initiatives, including street-level prostitution, but there is little empirical data revealing extreme results like that of Ipswich, where street-level prostitution was eliminated completely.

Although such partnerships are cost effective and practical, there are several problems surrounding the multi-agency partnership approach. Some of these issues include limited resources and support due to local availability, limited knowledge on how to negotiate inter-agency disclosures, and issues with inter-agency communication (Matthews et al., 2014).

Therefore, before effective social change can take place, understanding of the learning required among the organizations joining together to address such a large-scale change is essential (White, 2014).

## Inter-Organizational Learning as an Organizational Learning Type

The four types of organizational learning are, individual learning, group-centered learning, organization-centered learning, and inter-organizational learning (Mariotti, 2012). Of these, the two themes that characterize organizational learning literature are (a) intra-organizational learning -- how formal organizations learn from experience *within* organizations and (b) inter-organizational learning -- how organizations learn from each other through formal collaborations *between* organizations (Holmqvist, 2003). Though intra-organizational learning has been frequently analyzed in organizational learning literature, there has been a growing interest in inter-organizational learning or inter-organizational collaborations (Holmqvist, 2003).

**Inter-organizational learning.** Crossan, Lane, and Djurfeldt (1995) and Easterby-Smith et al. (2008) noticed that much of the organizational learning literature, at that particular time, focused on learning within the organization and little, if any, addressed learning between organizations, or external learning. Suddenly, researchers began focusing on this gap in the literature by exploring external learning. Eventually, the increased amount of literature on groups or pairs of organizations cooperating and working together, provoked the creation of inter-organizational learning as the fourth level of organizational learning (Mariotti, 2012).

Inter-organizational learning takes from organizational learning theory, network theory, and team learning theory. Organizational learning theories emphasize the importance of learning from others (White, 2014); network theories focus on knowledge acquisition of various formats

(Lechner, Frankenberger, & Floyd, 2010); and team learning theories credit external learning for organizational performance (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992). “When these theories combine, they suggest that the process of participants of one organization actively sharing knowledge causes a change in the capacities of another organization either through shared experiences or by stimulating innovation” (White, 2014, p. 279). This process is referred to as inter-organizational learning.

There is limited empirical research available on inter-organizational learning despite the fact that it has the potential for large-scale impact (Larsson et al., 1998). Most of the research available describes the experience of knowledge management firms that have partnered with another organization to gain knowledge and become more innovative, and it is often within the production industry (White, 2014). In addition, the number of empirical studies focused on non-profit initiatives or sectors is also limited (Apostolakis, 2004). However, more research is being conducted on inter-firm relationships as government officials and other administrators begin to realize that cross collaborations, networks and partnerships can be a cost-efficient way to deal with challenging social problems.

Based on two studies conducted, one on evidenced-based care provided by health care providers and another on analysis of the failures of communication between the U.S. intelligence agencies before September 11, 2001, it was revealed that inter-organizational learning does not take place naturally, even in situations where it is imperative (White, 2014). Therefore, inter-organizational learning occurs because of a confrontation and a combination of single formal organizations’ experiences (Holmqvist, 1999). These formal organizations serve as the “building blocks of inter-organizational collaborations” where the two are joined together in “joint learning

cycles" (Holmqvist, 2003, p. 103). The learning of each single organization is the driving force for the learning that takes place in these inter-organizational collaborations (Holmqvist, 2003). Araujo (1998), a proponent of inter-organizational relationships, criticized the topographic view of organizational learning and argued that organizations are not simply containers of knowledge and that knowledge should transcend organizational boundaries. He also stated that instead of attempting to locate knowledge bases and learning inside organizations, the locus of knowing and learning should become the heterogeneous network of social and material relations that are not bounded by a physical organization (Araujo, 1998). Based on this viewpoint, knowledge should be developed (created, adopted, revised, and distributed) in a way that is accessible to all members and organizations engaged in the inter-organizational learning relationship. This perspective supported the theoretical framework for this study which is based on the idea that various organizations can engage in collective learning and collaborate to create and share knowledge amongst each other to address social issues. Inter-organizational as a dynamic learning process is presented in the next section.

**Inter-Organizational Learning as a Dynamic Process**

In 1999, Crossan et al., published an article proposing an organizational framework displaying organizational learning as a dynamic process. They believed that learning occurred over time and across various levels, but these processes make it difficult to "assimilate new learning" while "exploiting" the content that has already been learned (Crossan et al., 1999, p. 532). As a result, they created an analytical model demonstrating the dynamic process of organizational learning (Figure 4).

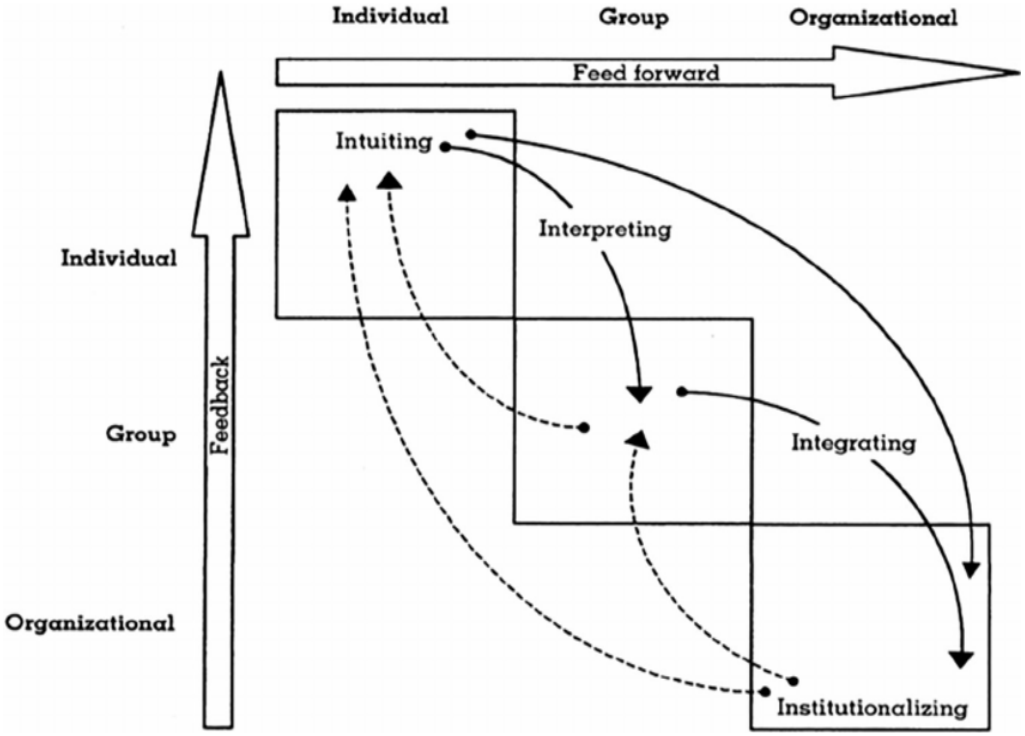


*Figure 4*. Organizational learning as a dynamic process (Crossan, Lane & White, 1999). (Reprinted with permission.)

The authors attempted to demonstrate how the processes, individuals, and levels are linked by both social and psychological processes (Mozzato & Bitencourt, 2014). In the organizational learning model, there are four sub-processes (intuiting, interpreting, integrating, and institutionalizing) that take place across three levels (individual, group, and organizational) (Crossan et al., 1999). Table 4 displays each of the four aspects occur or interact throughout the different levels.

Table 4.

*Three levels of the four sub-processes of organizational learning*

| Level | Process |
|---|---|
| Individual | Intuiting → Interpreting |
| Group | Interpreting → Integrating |
| Organization | Integrating → Institutionalizing |

**Note:** (Crossan, Lane & White, 1999) (Used with permission)

Though feed-forward processes, new ideas and actions flow from the individual to the group to the organization level" (Crossan et al., 1999, p. 532). "At the same time, what has already been learned feeds back from the organization to the group and individual levels, affecting how people act and think" (Crossan et al., 1999, p. 532). During intuiting, individuals preconsiously recognize any essential patterns and/or possibilities in their past experience (Crossan et al., 1999). Interpreting was the process of explaining through words or actions those ideas and intuitions. The next stage included integrating or developing a shared understanding among a group of individuals and using dialogue and joint actions to initiate mutual adjustments (Crossan et al., 1999). The last process was institutionalizing which ensured that routines are established, tasks are defined, and that the learning that has occurred throughout the various levels is embedded in the organization (Crossan et al., 1999). Based on the information presented on the sub-processes of organizational learning, it was difficult to determine whether the authors think the same processes occur between organizations. On the other hand, Mozzato, Bitencourt

and Grzybowski (2015) stated “social and psychological processes permeate such levels,” so it was clear that certain aspects apply to inter-organizational learning processess (p. 99).

As research has shifted away from intra-organizational learning to inter-organizational learning, Holmqvist (2003) argued that the linkage between the intra- and inter-orgnaizational learning cannot be ignored. He also posited on the idea that the two themes (organizational learning within and between organizations) should be “cross-fertilized” to serve as a way of understanding how organizations deal with organizational learning problems that arise while trying to balance exploitation and exploration (Holmqvist, 2003). Mozzato and Bitencourt (2014) decided to build on the model created by Crossan et al. (1999) and create a model depicting the multi-level, dynamic process of inter-organizational learning (Figure 5).

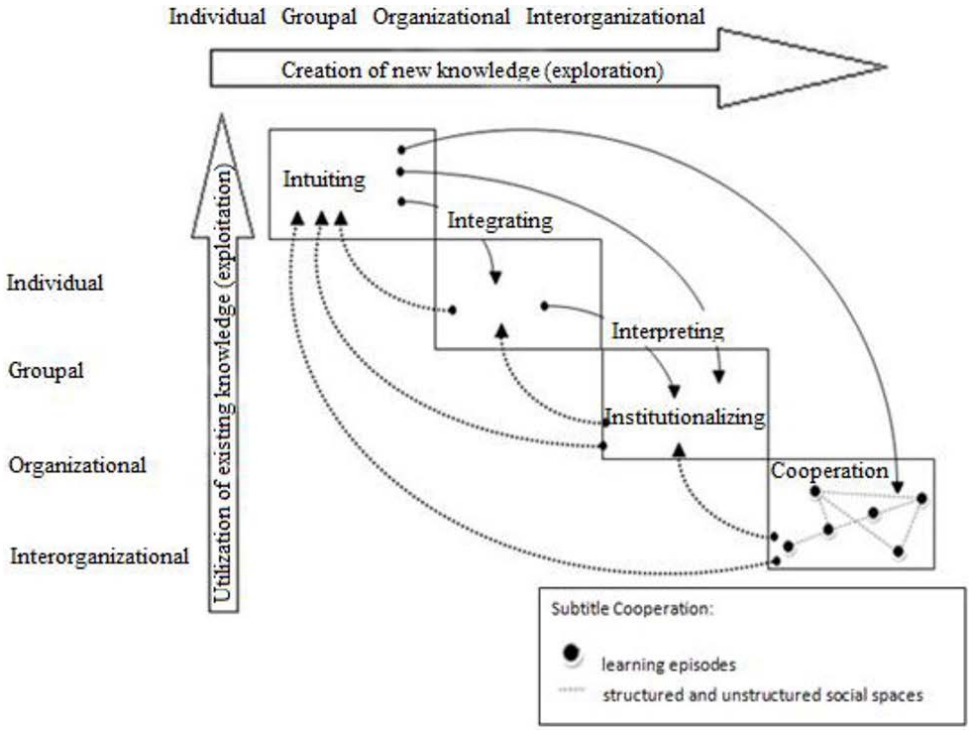


*Figure 5*. IOL as a dynamic process through cooperation. (Mozzato & Bitencourt, 2014).
Note. Adapted from Crossan, M.M., Lane, H.W., & White, R.E. (1999). (Used with permission)

In the modified version, inter-organizational learning is added as the fourth level of learning, following organizational. In addition, a fifth level of interaction, cooperation, is added below the institutionalizing-intuiting interaction. The purpose of adding the fifth process was to demonstrate the relational aspect of inter-organizational learning that can occur in both structured and non-structured social spaces and result in learning episodes (Mozzato & Bitencourt, 2014). Institutionalization was a means for organizations to "leverage" or maximize individual learning through "structures, systems, and procedures" that provide the proper context for interaction among employees (Crossan et al., 1999, p. 529). Therefore, as a result of adding

inter-organizational learning, another aspect of organizational learning, to the model, Mozzato and Bitencourt deemed it necessary to shift integration and interpretation on their model to demonstrate how the five processes interfere. According to their perspective, intuition affects integration that in turn affects interpretation which subsequently interfered with institutionalization. Institutionalization interfered with the cooperative processes and the cooperation affects institutionalizaton (Mozzato, Bitencourt, & Grzybovski, 2015). In short, all five processes move forward and backward, along the learning continuum, constantly interacting and interfering. The model revealed the interconnection and simultaneous movement of the processes. Most importantly, it served as a way to examine those dynamic processes of inter-organizational learning. Table 5 displays the various levels of learning, each process, and the inputs and outputs of each interaction.

The content included in Table 5 shows all four levels and five processes that constitute learning in organizations (Mozzato et al., 2015). The section on inter-organizational learning processes, inputs and outputs was most pertinent to this study. The inter-organizational analysis categories listed in Table 5 are defined in the next few paragraphs.

Table 5.

*Levels, Processes, and the Inputs/Outputs of the Relationship*

| Level | Process | Inputs/Outputs |
|---|---|---|
| Individual | Intuiting | Experiences<br>Images |
| Group | Interpreting<br><br><br><br><br>Integration | Metaphors<br>Language<br>Cognitive maps<br>Dialogue<br><br>Exchanges<br>Mutual adjustments<br>Interactive systems |
| Organizational | Institutionalizing | Routines<br>Diagnostic systems<br>Rules and procedures |
| Inter-organizational | Inter-organizational relationships | Absorptive capacity<br>Culture<br>Trust<br>Interaction<br>Cooperation |

*Note.* Adapted from Crossan et al., 1999
**Source**: Mozzato, A. R., Bitencourt, C. C., & Grzybovski, D. (2015). The Interorganizational Level in the Learning Continuum: Analytic Conceptual Scheme. International Business Review, 8(4), 94-101. (Used with permission)

## Inter-Organizational Analysis Categories

According to Mozzato, Bitencourt, and Grzyboyski (2015) “absorptive capacity, culture/context, trust and interaction may result in cooperation relationships that enable inter-organizational learning” (p. 100). Absorptive capacity is “fundamental to inter-organizational processes” because it “shows cumulative characteristics facilitates the learning of both intra- and inter-organizational learning” (Mozatto et al., 2015, p. 100). Cohen and Levinthal (1990) explained that absorptive capacity is “the ability to recognize, assimilate and apply new external

knowledge" (Mozatto et al., 2015, p. 100). It entailed more than simply attaining information from a partner or competitor. After gaining the information, employees must be able to understand what they obtain *and* know how to convert it to knowledge (Nooteboom, 1999).

Trust "requires the establishment of the adequate balance between competition, cooperation, trust, stability, and dynamism" (Mozatto et al., 2015, p. 100). It "creates openness, interpersonal connection, motivation, and engagement, which enables and facilitates knowledge-sharing" (Lee & Choi, 2013, p. 20). If there is limited trust, employees do not feel comfortable sharing information or ideas (Lee & Choi, 2013), which further limits their willingness to cooperate and engage in learning alliances for fear of being "exploited" (Mozatto et al., 2015, p. 100).

The culture/context category included "characteristic associated with a place or region in which inter-organizational relations take place, and the social rationality that takes into account the capacities and potentialities inherent to each place" (Mozatto et al., 2015, p. 101). Culture was important for inter-organizational learning comprehension and management (Levinson & Asahi, 1995) because organizational culture can "facilitate or hinder organizational change and/or organizational learning" (p. 55). Furthermore, they explained that there are multiple levels of culture that "affect inter-organizational learning in an alliance" and "taken together, those interacting cultures—national, organizational, and occupational—will shape how it identifies, frames, and solves problems" (Levinson & Asahi, 1995, pp. 54-55). Organizations should embed learning, knowledge sharing, and other learning organization values into their culture to enhance their inter-organizational learning opportunities.

The last category was interaction which refers to the "capacity of interlinking various economic agents that maintain inter-organizational relationships" (Mozatto et al., 2015, p. 100). Interactions are an important component of inter-organizational learning, which is based on collaborative relations between different agents (Mozatto et al., 2015) specifically those outside the organization.

The purpose of the four categories as defined by Mozatto et al. (2015) was to provide a construct of learning at the inter-organizational level, provide "new parameters" by which to analyze organizational learning practices, and "challenge organizational studies to widen their scope to understand the contents of relationships" at the inter-organizational level (p. 101). Therefore, the information presented by Mozatto et al. (2015) provided a set of propositions to understand inter-organizational learning processes, the purpose of this study. First, in the following sections, the model for inter-organizational learning in cross-sector partnerships is presented, then the other processes that constitute inter-organizational learning are identified.

**Inter-Organizational Learning Processes in Cross-Sector Partnerships**

"Cross-sector partnerships represent a form of interaction that aims to address social problems by combining the resources and capabilities of multiple organizations with different competencies and access to different resource" (Seitandidi, 2008, p. 52). This concept is similar to what Matthews et al. (2014) referred to as multi-agency partnerships. According to (Seitanidi, 2008) such relationships can influence and promote social innovation by connecting sectors, such as, government, for-profit, and nonprofit organizations, that are normally separated by boundaries. Despite having very different visions, structures, cultures, and expectations, organizations engaged in a cross-sector partnerships have certain commonalities that also

allowed them to “share a certain learning platform” (Ameli & Kayes, 2011, p. 177). All of the organizations are obligated to “respond to their stakeholders,” those in charge of the organization and have the authority to make major decisions, and they “need to learn continuously” to remain competitive in their sector (Ameli & Kayes, 2011, p. 177).

Austin (2000) pointed out that cross-sector partnerships are varied in their design and methods of involvement. Even though partnerships tend to evolve over time, Austin (2000) described the interaction between non-profit and businesses in three stages that include, philanthropic, transactional, and integrative with each stage representing a different type of relationship. Throughout these stages, organizations are involved with one another. The more they engage with each other within the partnerships, the more they, the nonprofit organizations and businesses, can learn from each other (Austin, 2000, p. 178).

Ameli & Kayes (2011) proposed a model based on the idea that inter-organizational learning “moves throughout four principal phases” (p. 178). During phase one, the partners engage to exchange information, get to know one another, and learn more about the different organizational cultures. According to Argyris and Schön (1996), in many situations of collaboation, “cultural and cognitive barriers obsruct the learning process” (Ameli & Kayes, 2011, p. 178). Team learning was beneficial to allowing partners to share their culture, experiences and perspectives as a method to help them find ways to learn together. In phase two, the employees and/or managers “transfer the knowledge” gained from the team, in phase one, back to the organization (Ameli & Kayes, 2011, p. 179). The third phase “consists of sharing what people have learned from the components of the other organizations and experiencing it in their organizations” (Ameli & Kayes, 2011, p. 179). The more the organization resembles a

learning organization and  has embedded learning as an important aspect of their structure and practices, the more it can learn (Ameli & Kayes, 2011). The final phase involved the majority of employees involved in the partnership, sharing knowledge and information with partners. It is at this stage that triple-loop learning, mentioned earlier, “emerges as the interaction between organizational processes increases and learning takes on a new level” (Ameli & Kayes, 2011, p. 179).

The inter-organizational learning model presented by Ameli and Kayes (2011) demonstrated how team learning and understanding differences among cultures and experiences of collaborating organizations is pertinent to the inter-organizational learning process. It also displayed how knowledge and information is shared among members and organizations. However, it did not address the creation of knowledge, knowledge management and other key components that constitute inter-organizational learning. Therefore, the next section other important processes that are necessary to promote inter-organizational learning are identified.

Identifying More Processes that Constitute Inter-Organizational Learning

Based on information found in the literature, it is apparent that certain processes promote inter-organizational learning. While some of these processes have already been mentioned, there are several more that should be included. The following sections include a brief overview of these components.

**Collective learning.** Dixon (1994) designed an action research study to examine whether six museums facing the same environmental and financial constraints could benefit and learn from each other. She based her study on a list of six principles of collective learning that included, a) teams/organizations as the unit of learning; b) organizational assumptions are

limiting (Argyris & Schön, 1978); c) co-inquiry (Freire, 1994); d) collective intelligence (Weisbord, 1992); e) learning occurs over time (Revans, 1982); and f) collaboration and alliances. Through a Learning Forum, she was able to get participants to work with others, exhibit leadership qualities, and use observation and reflection to identify some of the problems they were having. However, once the Learning Forum ended and individuals returned to their daily work routines, the teams were not as successful. They stopped interacting and relying on one another for assistance as they had at the Learning Forum. Based on this study, Dixon (1994) concluded that "learning across organizations is too abstract a goal to be offered to groups" and that "the goal is better identified with a business outcome and learning used as a means to reach that outcome" (Dixon, 1999, p. 128). Despite the less than favorable results of Dixon's research on the Canadian museums, the six principles of collective learning she indicated was be used to help develop a set of themes for examining inter-organizational learning in the public-sector organizations featured in this study.

**Collaboration and Communities of Practice**

Many of the characteristics of organizational learning and a learning organization are applicable and essential for inter-organizational learning to be effective. For example, one of the important aspects of developing a learning organization is dialogue and opportunities for individuals to collaborate to create and share knowledge through methods such as communities of practice. Tseng and McLean (2008) explained that communities of practice are advantageous to organizational learning processes" which would include inter-organizational learning (p. 5). In fact, communities of practice have been labeled as the "social fabric of knowledge" because of

the knowledge and knowing that is “accumulated” through the human communities (Wenger, 2004, p. 1).

Communities of practice (COPs) are “groups of people who share a passion for something that they know how to do, and who interact regularly in order to learn how to do it better” (Wenger, 2004, p. 2). They can also be defined as people, of the same profession, who are interested in sharing knowledge with other individuals from the same profession (Wenger, 2004). COPs are an essential part of knowledge management and knowledge sharing. They create opportunities for employees to join together in a safe environment to produce, develop, and disseminate new knowledge (Steven, et al., 2018). These communities of shared interests also help participants to begin the process of developing shared meaning and aligning visions (Marsick & Watkins, 1994). Lastly, COPs provide a social platform that focuses on knowledge and allows for the management of knowledge to be managed by practitioners, so it is argued that COPS are the “cornerstone of knowledge management” (Wenger, 2004, p. 2).

Learning to collaborate is an essential component to an organization’s ability to survive (Shah et al., 2016). Collaboration is a “cooperative, inter-organizational relationship that is negotiated in an ongoing communicative process, which relies on neither market nor hierarchical mechanisms of control” (Hardy & Phillips, 2003, p. 323). According to a study conducted by Hardy, Phillips and Lawrence (2003), collaborations produce a variety of strategic, knowledge creation, and political effects if (a) those collaborations are embedded and/or involved and (b) the depth and scope of that embeddedness or involvement. For example, “low knowledge creation is the result of both low levels of involvement and embeddedness, whereas high knowledge creation is associated with high levels of involvement and embeddedness. Medium

levels of knowledge creation are the result of high levels of involvement and low, medium, and high levels of embeddedness" (Hardy et al., 2003, p. 340). This demonstrates that knowledge creation requires high levels of involvement.

Cross-sector collaborations are partnerships that involve government, business, nonprofit organizations, communities and/or the public as a whole (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2006). Increasingly, they have been considered a necessary and desirable strategy for dealing with many of the most challenging societal problems (Bryson et al., 2006) such as street-level prostitution. While examining how organizations deal with public problems, (Crosby & Bryson, 2010) found that collaboration lies in the middle of the continuum, between hardly relating to each other at all and entirely merging into a new entity. In addition to being difficult to conduct, cross-sector collaborations are not always successful at tackling social issues, sometimes creating the problem that they were initially sought out to solve (Bryson et al., 2006). Bryson, Crosby and Stone (2006) identified 22 propositions with the intent to display the difficulty involved in cross-sector collaborations and make recommendations to increase the possibility for success. They also explained that while there are major challenges that arise while conducting studies on cross-sector collaborations, such as blending the multiple theoretical and research perspectives (Rethemeyer, 2005), it is important that more studies are conducted to provide practical, research-based guidelines to help policy makers create cross-sector collaborations that are successful at alleviating social problems (Bryson et al., 2006). In addition to cross-collaboration, which also goes beyond the organizational boundary, knowledge management is also necessary to help organizations "extend networks to include business partners and, in turn, improve performance" (Lancini, 2015, p. 117).

**Knowledge Management**

To understand knowledge management, it is important to understand knowledge. Knowledge is "justified personal belief" (King, 2009, p. 3) that can be distinguished as either tacit or explicit. Explicit knowledge exists in the form of words, documents, organized data, computer programs and explicit means. This type of knowledge can be articulated and captured in language-based forms (Hartley & Allison, 2002). Tacit knowledge, unlike explicit, lives within the individual. It is difficult to articulate or write down (King, 2009) because it has "both cognitive and motor elements and forms the basis of individual skills" (Hartley & Allison, 2002, p. 104). Cognitive elements are based on the beliefs and perspectives of how individuals view the world, while motor elements include the actual know-how and skills a person possesses (1994). One major challenge faced by organizations in regards to tacit and explicit knowledge is although both are required, only one, explicit knowledge, is easy to articulate.

Knowledge management (KM) is the "planning, organizing, motivating, and controlling of people, processes and systems in the organization to ensure that its knowledge-related assets are improved and effectively employed" (King, 2009, p. 4). Lancini (2015) took KM a step further by introducing an inter-organization perspective to KM which she referred to as IKM.

She proposed a "conceptual effort to develop the concept of IKM" that includes "six interconnecting elements," a) frequency of exchanges of information and knowledge; b) nature of the exchanged information and knowledge; c) inter-organizational activities supported; d) information technology infrastructure; e) scope and direction of collaborative exchanges; and f) KM processes supported (p. 137). The goal in presenting the inter-organizational perspective of KM was to provide a "guideline for those organizations interested in improving their

collaboration by implementing an IKM project" (Lancini, 2015, p. 126). For the purpose of this research, the IKM perspectives provided insight on ways to measure the inter-organizational knowledge management capacities of organizations collaborating or within a network (Lancini, 2015).

According to Carlsson (2003) existing frameworks and models of organizations as knowledge system revealed that managing knowledge entails "four socially enacted knowledge processes" that include, knowledge creation, knowledge organization and storage/retrieval, knowledge transfer, and knowledge application (p. 196). In the next section, we venture deeper into knowledge creation, sharing and transfer.

**Knowledge creation and knowledge sharing.** Learning to create knowledge is one of the three building blocks found in Mariotti's (2012) framework of inter-organizational learning. Knowledge sharing and knowledge creation go hand in hand. Knowledge creation involves creating new knowledge by continuously transferring, combining, and converting explicit and tacit knowledge through practice, interaction and learning (Nonaka, 1994). According to Cook & Brown (1999) knowledge creation occurs when knowing and knowledge interact. The shift in condition between the possession of knowledge and the act of knowing, which comes from practice, action, and interaction, is the driving force of knowledge creation (Frost, 2010). The ability to continuously create knowledge is an important aspect of being successful in a competitive market (Shah et al., 2016).

As mentioned earlier, collaboration and inter-organizational relationships are a key to knowledge creation. In fact, inter-organizational learning and learning to create knowledge are interdependent (Shah et al., 2016). For example, Hartley and Allison (2002) conducted a study

on the processes of learning in inter-organizational networks within the public sector. In the study, the researchers used Nonaka's (1994) modes of knowledge creation to investigate inter-organizational knowledge stating that knowledge creation is "integral to learning" (Harley & Allison, 2002, p. 104).

Knowledge sharing is another important aspect to knowledge creation. As knowledge is created through the various forms of collaboration, interaction, education and practice, it is also shared and converted (Frost, 2010) from individual knowledge to organizational knowledge. Through knowledge management, organizations can become knowledge-sharing organizations (Torraco, 2000). It is imperative that individuals willingly engage in knowledge-sharing and that they apply what they learn from other individuals (Torraco, 2000).

**Knowledge transfer.** A decade ago, Easterby-Smith, Lyles and Tsang (2008) wrote that the last 20 years of empirical research supported the idea that organizations can significantly improve their knowledge and innovation capabilities by utilizing the skills of other individuals, within or outside the organization, through knowledge transfer. Inter-organizational knowledge transfer requires at least two organizations willing and able to be the donor or recipient of knowledge. For this relationship to work, there are certain factors to consider: the resources and capabilities of both organizations, the nature of the knowledge that is being transferred, and the inter-organizational dynamics (Easterby-Smith, Lyles, & Tsang, 2008). Collective knowledge has a bigger impact than individual knowledge; therefore, knowledge transfer should be encouraged to provide competitive advantage and increased capabilities.

Each of these aspects, collective learning, collaboration, knowledge management (creation, sharing, and transfer) are important aspects of the inter-organizational learning. While

Mariotti's (2012) model included learning to collaborate, learning to share knowledge, and learning to create inter-organizational knowledge in her model, the purpose of this was to provide more detail on the development and management process of knowledge.

# CHAPTER III

# METHODS

The following chapter describes the methodology as it relates to understanding the dynamic, relational inter-organizational learning experiences of leaders involved in a multi-agency partnership learning. The first section I explains my research perspective, reiterates the purpose and lists the research question that will guide this study. In the second section, I provide the research paradigm and overall design of the study. Lastly, I describe the methods used for data collection and data analysis followed by a section on trustworthiness and credibility of this research.

## Researcher's Perspective

A paradigm is a "worldview or framework through which knowledge is filtered" (Leavy, 2017, p. 264). Paradigms, or worldviews, are comprised of ontological and epistemological belief systems. Such worldviews are important for research because they serve as the "lens through which research is conceived and executed" (Leavy, 2017, p. 12). Ontology refers to the nature of reality or existence while epistemology relates to attainment of knowledge, belief systems (Leavy, 2017). The constructivism worldview guided this research.

The philosophical paradigm of constructivism has also been referred to as social constructivism and combined with interpretivism (Mertens, 1998). From the constructivism approach, the epistemological assumption alludes to the idea that "we create our own reality through social interactions, relationships, and experiences" (Spencer, Pryce, & Walsh, 2014, p. 85). More specifically, as humans, our knowledge, meaning, and understanding is created and obtained through our interactions and life experiences. As individuals, we seek understanding

from our daily routines including the environment in which we live and work. Since we all experience different things and our individual "reality is context and socially relative," multiple realities can "exist simultaneously" (Spencer et al., 2014, p. 85). From this perspective, researchers must "look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas" (Creswell, 2003, p. 8), thereby preserving the unique experiences and perspectives of the participants. In addition, research conducted from the social constructivist paradigm includes broad open-ended questions that allow participants to construct their own meaning of a situation (Creswell, 2003).

The social constructivism paradigm best fit the purpose of this research. The subjective nature aligned with the purpose, which involved examining the dynamic and relational learning processes involved in inter-organizational learning. Inter-organizational learning methods can be explored by examining the perspectives and experiences of those involved in the approaches. Social constructivist researchers operate under the epistemological belief that knowledge is not simply found or discovered, yet it is constructed based on the varied, subjective views and meanings individuals attain over the years. The ontological view of social constructivism stands on the idea that one version of reality does not exist, so multiple renditions of a single event will exist within a research setting. As opposed to a preconceived notion, prediction or biasness, researchers must rely on the responses, experiences, and interpretations of the participants thus emphasizing their experiences and perceptions in an effort to gain understanding.

Lastly, social constructivism was founded on the premise that "all of our understandings and knowledge are socially constructed" (Spencer et al., 2014, p. 85). Based on this principle, both learning and inter-organizational learning are social processes that allow individuals, groups

and organizations to collaborate with other organizations to engage in learning processes. Therefore, the reality, knowledge and learning principles of social constructivism supported the researcher's objective and the theoretical framework for this study.

## Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this case study was to examine the dynamic, relational learning experiences in multi-agency partnerships or cross-sector collaborations. More specifically, this study aimed to explore inter-organizational learning processes by understanding the learning experiences and perceptions of individuals engaged in the multi-agency partnership. The following research question guided this study:

What are the perceptions and experiences of individuals engaged in multi-agency partnerships as it relates to the dynamic, relational components of inter-organizational learning in the public and non-profit sector?

## Research Method and Design of the Study

The methodology used for this qualitative study involved a descriptive case study design. In the following sections, qualitative research is defined in detail in addition to the rationale for selecting this design.

**Qualitative research defined.** Qualitative research is "based on the belief that knowledge is constructed by people in an ongoing fashion as they engage in and make meaning of an activity, experience, or phenomenon" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 23). The qualitative paradigm, whose theoretical framework was developed from the following two publications, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Researc*h (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and *Toward a Methodology of Naturalistic Inquiry in Educational Evaluation* (Guba, 1978), is

one of the many methods used by researchers for inquiry and analysis. The philosophical, disciplinary and historical underpinnings of the qualitative paradigm allow for a great deal of flexibility within this research genre (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Therefore, there are discrepancies in how researchers choose to define qualitative research, and it has been considered an "umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world" (Van Maanen, 1979, p. 520)**.**

There are two methods of reasoning, inductive and deductive. Leavy (2014) defined qualitative research as being "characterized by inductive approaches to knowledge building aimed at generating meaning" (p. 9). The paradigm was founded on the importance of subjective involvements, meaning-making experiences and processes that include gaining in-depth understanding from interactions, perceptions and situations (Leavy, 2014). The inductive approach was more aimed at generating a new theory based on the data collected while the deductive approach usually tests an existing theory. Although the inductive approach was commonly found in qualitative reseach (Gabriel, 2013), this study adapted a deductive approach to data collection and anlysis. Due to the limited amount of current research on inter-organizational learning processes in public sector multi-agency partnerships working to address social issues, more information was needed to understand the processes that promote inter-organizational learning in such settings. Therefore, the deductive approach was used to: a) obtain more information and understaning on IOL processes, b) apply existing learning theories and an IOL model that had not been tested, and c) propose ways to enhance the existing IOL model.

**Rationale for use of research design**. The qualitative paradigm was appropriate for this research because of its inquisitive and interpretive nature. This research approach was used to "unpack the meanings people ascribe to activities, situations, events or artifacts" and develop a detailed understanding about certain "dimensions of social life" (Leavy, 2017, p. 9).

In addition, this method allowed the researcher to understand how individuals construct meaning based on their lived experiences and perceptions. In other words, it was an interpretive process that explored how people create and assign meaning to events, situations, and work and life experiences. More specifically, qualitative research examines how the world is interpreted through human experiences (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative methodology adequately addressed the research objectives because subjectivity is permitted, and such biasness is essential when trying to determine whether learning, a highly subjective process, is taking place. In order to gauge understanding of a social process, the understandings and perceptions of those involved in the process was paramount.

Lastly, the inter-organizational learning concept lacked the in-depth exploration and understanding, which was necessary for a conducting quantitative research. Therefore, a qualitative study was beneficial to expanding the knowledge and comprehension of inter-organizational learning processes, in general, but most specifically in the non -profit and public sectors. In the next section, details about the qualitative design method chosen for this study are provided and elaborated.

**Case study design.** There are multiple forms of case studies that are executed in a variety of ways based on the research objective. While the kind of case study may vary, there is a common theme in how it is defined (Yin, 2003). A case study is an "in-depth exploration from

multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution or system in a 'real-life' context. It is research based, inclusive of different methods and is evidence-led" (Simons, 2009, p. 21). The case study design is more than a method to collect data or a "design feature" but instead an "all-encompassing method—covering the logic of design, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis" (Yin, 2003, p. 14). The case study method is a comprehensive strategy to conducting research. During the research phase of the case study, the researcher acts as the investigator to explore the case(s) with a real-world context over a time period using multiple sources of information. At the end of the study, the researcher "reports a case description and case-based themes" (Creswell, 2013, p. 97).

Case study research is "not defined by methodology or method" (Simons, 2014, p. 457). Instead, a case study is defined by "its singularity" and what bounds it as a case (Simons, 2014, p. 457). A case can be bounded by various set boundaries such as job title, location, experience, and affiliation with the diversion initiative. These boundaries are used to set what constitutes a case and bounds it. Defining the boundaries of a case is a necessary step because it helps the researcher narrow the focus and the scope of the data to be collected and most importantly identifies the boundary around the actual system being studied.

In addition, a single case study can be holistic or embedded. A holistic case study consists of on single unit of analysis.With an embedded case study, there are multiple subunits or contexts within one case. Miles & Huberman (1994) defined a case as "a phenomenon of some sort occuring in a bounded context and in effect, your unit of analysis" (p. 25). For this study the single-case was bounded by a regional human trafficking work group located in the United

States. Because there were several participating organizations (subunits) within the work group (holistic case), the embedded single-case study method was most suitable

The purpose of this study stemmed from a descriptive value. A descriptive case study "uses a reference theory or model that directs data collection and case description" (Scholz & Tietje, 2002, p. 12). Using the descriptive method allowed for those experiences to be described based on the real-life context in which it occurred (Yin, 2003). Also, it permitted the researcher to "build rich descriptions of complex circumstances" that may not have been explored or presented in the current literature (Marshall & Rossman, 1998, p. 33).

Inter-organizational learning and developing a learning organization is a complex process. At the time of this study, no empirical research had been published using Mariotti's (2012) framework for examining inter-organizational learning, so the descriptive aspect of the research methodology emphasized the need to create rich descriptions of the inter-organizational learning process in public sector and non-profit organizations.

**Selection of Participants**

There were various steps necessary to select and secure a sample population for a study. The following sections includes details on the processes used to select participants for this study. First, the sampling technique is defined. Next, the case and program are explained. Third, the size of the entire work group collaborative is discussed. Lastly, the recruitment process used to select the participants is outlined.

**Sampling.** Sampling involves choosing a set of individuals or participants on which research is conducted. The purposive sampling technique used for this study. Purposeful or purposive sampling is "based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover,

understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 96). With purposive sampling, the researcher purposefully selects specific participants because they exhibit the qualities or possess the experience or knowledge pertinent to the research study, the central phenomenon. Selecting "information-rich cases yields insight and in-depth understanding" (Patton, 2015, p. 264). The purpose of this study relied heavily on the sample selected, so it was crucial that the proper *cases* were selected to gain in-depth understanding.

Purposive sampling is the most common form of *nonprobalistic* sampling and is typically used in qualitative research (Leavy, 2017). Because purposive sampling revolves around the idea that the researcher seeks out the best cases as a sample for the study to in turn produce the highest quality of data (Leavy, 2017). The process of using purposive sampling is equivalent to a situation where multiple medical experts are used as consultants in the medical profession (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These consultants are purposefully chosen because of their special experience and abilities (Chein, 1981). Therefore, the purposive method of sampling was appropriate to ensure that individuals are recruited as part of the sample size based on their involvement and relation to the bounded case or unit of analysis.

**Definition.** Prostitution and related activities such as, pimping, patronizing or maintaining brothels, fuel the growth of modern-day slavery because it provides a façade for human traffickers to operate (ProCon.org, 2018). In addition, majority of the women in prostitution do not want to be there. Very few individuals seek out or chose it and most are desperate to leave prostitution. In 2003, a study revealed that 89 percent of women in prostitution want to escape (Farley, et al., 2003). Based on the information revealed by Farley et al. (2003), a

multi-agency partnership organized to target and address the issues surrounding human trafficking was used as the case for this study.

A Human Trafficking (hereinafter HT) work group based within one region in the United States was the case for this study. There were a number of different organizations and agencies embedded within that one case. This specific region included organizations and agencies from eight different states. Within each agency or organizations, there were supervisors, program adminstrators, directors and/or managers, staff members, and volunteers. Individuals from all of the agencies and organizations within that region were initially invited to be in the region work group at conception. Those individuals who chose to be a part of the work group subsequently became a part of the human trafficking work group for that region.

The dynamic and relational inter-organizational learning experiences of some of the individuals who opted to participate in the initation of the work group or partnership was the unit of analysis of this study. The sample population criteria included the following: (a) actively involved in the region work group in some capacity; (b) at least one year of full-time work experience with a non-profit or public sector victim servicing organization; and (c) engagement and learning experience with an inter-agency collaboration. The purpose of this criteria was to increase the possibility that participants had experience collaborating and engaging in inter-organizational learning processes.

**Size.** Determining the sample size depends on the questions asked, data gathered, and resources available (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The sample population for this study, for the most part, was limited to individuals actively engaged in a regional human trafficking work group. There were approximately 31 individuals involved in the entire HT work group. Those

individuals all lived in one the eight states within that specific region. The goal was to maximize the amount of information collected, so interviews were conducted until the point of saturation or redundancy is reached. Based on this information, the final sample size consisted of 11 participants. Of the total number of participants, nine were part of the regional work group. The remaining two participants included one service provider and one individual who specialized in implementing and facilitating collaborative efforts for government agencies.

**Recruitment.** The process of identifying and locating participants was initiated with the assistance of two individuals. The first person was a planning, policy, and management consultant with over 40 years of experience with courts, justice, and human service organizations. The initial connection was originated through a Google search which resulted in a series of emails and phone conversations. After multiple phone conversations and brainstorming sessions, I was introduced to the leader and facilitator of the region work group and regional supervisor who served as the gatekeeper. Based on referrals from the gatekeeper, I was able to contact the work group leaders and ask for their participation. A total of four rounds of emails were sent to the 31 participants. Out of all the emails sent, nine individuals agreed to participate in a phone interview. The goal was to have at least one participant from each state in the region to provide a more accurate representation of the entire work group, which was fulfilled.

In addition to the phone conversations and interviews, some of the participants provided material that had been created in the region work group and additional information was obtained online.

**Data collection method.** Data collection involves “asking, watching, and reviewing” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 106). Instrumentation is the method used to collect data. In

qualitative research, different methods are used to collect data including interviews, observations, and document analysis. Since it is important for this study that the perspectives of the participants are captured, interviews were the primary means for data collection.

The data collection portion of the study took place from May to September 2018. All of the interviews took place over the phone due to geographic location and scheduling conflicts. The semi-structured interviews consisted of open-ended questions that were used to gather data. Semi-structured interviews were beneficial because they provided more flexibility and allowed for a mixture of both structured and unstructured interview questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Probing questions were also used to focus on the research topic and objectives (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Participants engaged in a semi-structured interview process where the questions were open ended, yet structured (see Appendix B). The interview questions were formulated around Mariotti's (2012) deutero-learning framework and propositions that constitutes inter-organizational learning, such as collaborating and sharing information and knowledge. Interview questions were intended to capture the essence of the participants' experiences as they related to inter-organizational learning.

The interviews ranged from 35 minutes to 2 hours, based on information provided and the length of the participants' responses. All of the interviews were recorded using a voice recorder and handwritten notes were taken. Following the interviews, recordings were played, and additional notes were taken. Although the participants shared their full names, job description and other personal details, to maintain confidentiality names and other personal identifiable information was limited. The voice recordings were transferred to a password-protected drive. Once the recordings were transcribed, the audio files were deleted.

## Data Analysis

"The processes of data collection and analysis is recursive and dynamic" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 195). There are many uncertainties in the data collection and analysis process that require flexibilty. In addition to being flexible, as the researcher, I made successive attempts, reflected continuously throughout the process, and remained forward-thinking. According to Flick (2014) the process of analyzing data involves "the classification and interpretation of linguistic (or visual) material to make statements about implicit or explicit dimensions and structures of meaning-making in the material and what is represented in it" (p. 5). Data analysis "consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing or otherwise recombining both quantitative and qualitative evidence" to address the research objectives (Yin 2003, p. 109). It is not a linear process but rather a step-by-step process that begins as soon as qualitative data collection is initiated (Merriam, 2009).

According to Marshall and Rossman (1998) "qualitative data and analysis typically go hand in hand to build a coherent interpretation of the data" (p. 151). Data was collected and analyzed simultaneously to allow the researcher to monitor the findings and themes during data collection. This provided the opportunity to adjust questions accordingly and ensure the data collected was responsive to the research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In the beginning initial concepts were used to help guide the research and provide understanding. Later, the data and research influenced the processes and methods used for collection and analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Over the course of time spent collecting data, the data was refined and organized as collected.

In qualitative research, flexibility is essential because there are many different ways to conduct the research. Schram (2006) describes qualitative research as "contested work in progress" meaning it is ever-evolving, especially throughout the data collection and analysis process (p. 5). To address and adapt to ongoing findings an emergent strategy approach was utilized. Interviews were recorded and memos were taken as a data analysis strategy to help organize findings for meaning, identify themes, extract the essence of the interviews, and explain findings. After each interview, I reflected on the responses and memos and made changes to the interview guide to enhance future interviews. In addition, a pilot testing interview was conducted with a member from another partnership which allowed the ability to practice interviewing and test out the questions.

Participants were comfortable and open enough to share their experiences. The following techniques were used to set the tone and help participants feel at ease, (a) introductory questions, (b) promoting a conversational style interview, (c) remaining neutral to the responses and experiences shared, and (d) building and maintaining rapport through interaction and communication before and after the interview.

Throughout the interviews, the open-ended questions evolved to resemble informal conversations between the interviewee and interviewer. Through this, I was able to capture the individual experiences and perspectives of the participants, so the results of this study relied heavily on the statements of the participants. However, often in qualitative research, the researcher must focus on gaining a deep understanding of meaning from the descriptions and experiences given by participants. The participants possessed a deeper understanding and, surprisingly, *did* perceive many of their experiences as a learning process. They were eager to

share their learning experiences which allowed the researcher to accurately identify those experiences using proponents of the conceptual framework. Probing was also used to encourage participants to give detailed descriptions to unveil different unperceived learning experiences.

During the initial stages of the analysis process, open coding was conducted to determine common and unique themes. Once all interviews were conducted, transcribed and open coded, they were sorted into more concrete categories, which is a process known as axial coding. Axial coding is simply the grouping of the open codes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 206). It was used to find commonalities among the open coding categories. The axial coding categories were based strictly on the research question and the purpose of the study. The categories were removed, added, and refined based on the data collected and the literature. Once the data began to reveal constant similarities and interconnections, the coding process came to an end as data saturation was reached.

Crabtree and Miller (1992) developed a continuum of strategies for data analysis. The continuum has one side that is considered the "extreme objectivist end" and another end that "rely heavily on the researcher's intuition and interpretation" (Crabtree & Miller, 1992; Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 151). The extreme objectivist end includes strategies that are very technical, scientific and standardized. The opposite end of the continuum has immersive strategies with are aligned with the data analysis necessary for qualitative research (Marshall & Rossman, 1999) because of the interpretive, subjective nature of the research method. Using the continuum of analysis strategies (Crabtree & Miller, 1992), a set of analytic procedures suggested by Marshall and Rossman (1999), and the data analysis path defined by Creswell (2014), the sequence of events for the data analysis of this study is described in the list below.

1. The data was organized and arranged as an ongoing, continuous process during data collection.
2. The interviews were transcribed with assistance of a professional transcription service, Rev.com.
3. The qualitative data was analyzed using the Atlas TI data analysis software to:
4. Determine themes, categories, and patterns
5. Themes were initially based on aspects of the theory and somewhat evolved as based on patterns and themes
6. Continuous coding was used to identify themes and gauge what has been gained by conducting the study.
7. The findings were collated in a way that supported and described the case, promoted the issues through the theoretical lens and provided detailed understanding of the data. The final themes were based on the conceptual framework and common experiences that were also aligned with IOL components found in the literature.
8. The theoretical lens was continuously reviewed throughout the data analysis process to ensure consistency.
9. The results were written based on the themes and included rich description of participants' perspectives and experiences.

**Validity and Reliability of the Study**

"Validity is the degree to which an instrument measures what it purports to measure" (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 181). It is argued that "validity is never something that can be proved or taken for granted" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 121). It is also "relative" and must be "assessed

in relationship to the purpose and circumstances of the research" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 121). Qualitative research focuses on investigating "people's constructions of reality" and "how they understand the world" around them (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 243). Since everyone has a different perspective and interpretation of reality, there will always be multiple versions of how a phenomenon such as inter-organizational learning, has been experienced (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Also, in qualitative research, human beings are the primary instrument of both data collection and analysis, so the interpretations of the phenomenon are obtained directly from the experiences and realities of the participants. Therefore, the human as the instrument is positioned *closer* to reality than would be the case if another instrument had been used to collect data from study participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). From this perspective, internal validity is a strong aspect in qualitative research; however, it is also important to understand the context of the study and the perspectives of those involved in the phenomenon being studied (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The next section describes how the trustworthiness and credibility of this study was enhanced.

**Trustworthiness and Credibility**

An important concern for all researchers is that the research they produce is valid and reliable. It is also imperative that the results presented are credible. Trustworthiness refers to the "quality of the project, the rigor of the methodology," and whether or not the reader believes that the findings of the study are trustworthy (Leavy, 2017, p. 154). To ensure trustworthiness there must be some form of rigor involved in the process of carrying out the study (Merriam & Tisdell,

2016). The sections below define the actions that were taken to ensure rigor and credibility throughout this study.

An audit trail is a "detailed account of the methods, procedures, and decisions" that were made throughout the inquiry phase (Merriam, 2009, p. 229; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). It provides a log of the process to show others how the researcher obtained their results and the step by step path taken. For this study, an audit trail was used to document how the study was conducted and how the data was analyzed. Additionally, field notes were taken throughout the data collection and analysis process to assist the researcher with contextualizing the information.

During the interviewing process interviews were led in an ethical manner to ensure validity and reliability. All participants were provided a copy of the IRB-approved study material which included details of the study, the consent form (see Appendix B), and a copy of the interview questions (see Appendix A) for review at least one week prior to their scheduled interview. Signed consent forms were submitted from each participant which gave me permission to record their interviews using a voice recorder (see Appendix B). At the beginning and end of each interview, participants were briefed on the study process and the sequence of events following the interview. Reflexive journaling was also used to allow the researcher to modify, eliminate, and/or improve the data collection process as well as track themes and ideas.

Triangulation includes using multiple methods or sources of data to address the same question (Greene, 2007; Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989; Leavy, 2017). There are four types of triangulation that include data triangulation, theoretical triangulation, method triangulation (Denzin, 1978), and investigator triangulation (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Leavy, 2017). For

this study two different theories and two different methods have been selected as the theoretical framework for this study which lends itself to triangulation.

Lastly, rich, thick descriptions, including detailed quotes from the participant interviews were used to ensure trustworthiness. In qualitative research, it is important to guarantee the individual experiences and perspectives of the interviewees were captured through their quotes, so the results of this study relied heavily on statements made by the interviewees.

**Summary**

This chapter presented the proposed research methodology and data collection procedures to conduct this study. A single-case study, qualitative approach was taken to answer the research question. Data was collected from the participants using open-ended, semi-structured interviews. The data analysis procedures were explained in detail.

Lastly, various strategies were included to enhance the validity, reliability, credibility and trustworthiness of the study, as well as provide rigor. In the next chapter, the findings of this study are presented.

# CHAPTER IV

# RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the dynamic, relational experiences in multi-agency partnerships. This descriptive case study includes qualitative data collected through participant interviews. As previously stated in Chapter III, participants of the study were all engaged in a multi-agency partnership that collaborates with each other and various outside organizations to address the multitude of issues surrounding human trafficking and prostitution in America. The Human Trafficking (HT) work group participants engaged in semi-structured interviews where they shared information about their experiences with inter-organizational learning through a multi-agency collaborative.

The results of this study are presented in Chapter IV are guided by the following research question:

> What are the perceptions and experiences of individuals engaged in multi-agency partnerships as it relates to the dynamic, relational components of inter-organizational learning in the public and non-profit sector?

The chapter is divided into several sections and subsections. It begins with an overview of the participants, which includes details about their occupation and current job duties, time served in that position and/or field, brief information about the services their organization provides, and any background information that is pertinent to this research study. Next, the perceptions and experiences of the participants as it relates to the dynamic, relational components of inter-organizational learning is divided into six major sections.

The first five sections include:

1. Why is collaboration important to inter-organizational learning;
2. What improves or enhances inter-organizational learning through collaboration;
3. Understanding the relational aspect of inter-organizational learning;
4. Various challenges surrounding inter-organizational learning and collaboration challenges; and
5. Characteristics of an ideal multi-agency partnership that facilitates inter-organizational learning.

In closing, the last section is a brief overview of the dynamic aspect of inter-organizational learning and how it relates to information gathered from participants.

**Overview of Participants**

For the purpose of this study, qualitative data was gathered through phone interviews due to geographic location and scheduling conflicts. A total of 11 interviews were conducted. Of those 11 interviews, nine involved individuals who either volunteered or were appointed, by a supervisor, to participate in a multi-agency partnership spanning across one specific region in the United States. The remaining two participants included one service provider in the same region and an individual who specialized in implementing and facilitating collaborative efforts for government agencies nationwide. The career path and range of experience varied immensely throughout the individuals interviewed. The length of work experience in their prospective career field ranged from four years to 44 years, while the time in their current position ranged from eight months to 30 years. The level of responsibility varied as well. All the individuals involved

in the region Human Trafficking work group, hereinafter HT work group, participated in a multi-agency partnership in addition to working a full-time job.

Career level, position title, and education also differed among the various participants. Several of the individuals held multiple graduate level degrees. Detailed information about each participant, including the state they represent within the region is displayed in Table 6 below. The HT participants are listed by numerical order in the sequence of which their interview was conducted.

Table 6.

*HT partnership (work group) participant information*

| **Participant** | **Occupation/Role** | **Time employed with organization** | **State** |
|---|---|---|---|
| #1 | Senior level supervisor for HT Prevention Program | < 10 years | Florida |
| #2 | Consultant and Retired Director | >10 years | Nationwide |
| #3 | Senior level supervisor for Government Agency | < 10 years | Florida |
| #4 | Consultant and Advisor for HT Prevention Charity | < 10 years | Kentucky |
| #5 | Senior level supervisor for Government Agency | > 10 years | Tennessee |
| #6 | Senior level supervisor for Government Agency | > 10 years | Mississippi |
| #7 | CEO and Co-founder of HT NPO | > 10 years | Tennessee |
| #8 | Senior level supervisor for Government program | < 10 years | South Carolina |
| #9 | Case Manager at Charitable Organization | < 10 years | Kentucky |
| #10 | Senior level supervisor for Government Agency | > 10 years | Alabama |
| #11 | Senior level supervisor for Government Agency | < 10 years | North Carolina |

As previously mentioned, majority of the participants were involved in a multi-agency partnership formulated across multiple states, within one region. This region is comprised of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Of the individuals involved in the HT work group, one person was interviewed from each of the following states: Alabama, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Florida. There were two participants from both Kentucky and Tennessee. The remaining two interviews included a service provider in Florida and a nationwide consultant for collaborative efforts within the justice field. All participants were selected to participate in this study because they a) lived and/or worked for an organization or agency within this region and b) were a part of the work group in some capacity. Next, a brief synopsis of each participant is provided.

**Participant 1.** The first participant was a senior level supervisor for a prevention program that operates nationwide. The mission of the organization is to end sex trafficking and provide freedom to those that are sexually exploited. The program has physical homes, which serve as location sites for victims, located in four major cities in the U.S. These locations are the central hubs and provide services to victims from all over the nation.

The overall organization is divided into four programs which Participant 1 referred to as "arms": awareness, prevention, outreach, and residential. Each arm provides a multitude of opportunities for the organization to collaborate and form partnerships with other organizations including, law enforcement, small business, social services, residential programs, community groups, churches, legislators and the judicial system. Participant 1 was not formally a part of the HT work group, but her organization does provide direct services to victims in various states

nationally, including Florida. In her interview, she was able to bring to life many of the issues and situations direct service providers endure daily, specifically on the streets with the victims.

**Participant 2.** In addition to cooperating as a participant in this study, Participant 2 played a monumental role in obtaining access to the remainder of the participants in this study. He has approximately 44 years of experience in the justice arena with various organizations including his tenure in a senior-level supervisory role within a government agency collaborative. In addition, he has noteworthy experience as a planning, policy, and management consultant, and he is known for his innovative methods in planning, management, performance measurement, and institutional development for courts, justice and human service agencies of all types. Lastly, he has conducted grant-funded research; provided technical assistance; and taught seminars targeting numerous topics surrounding innovation and systems change, agency and inter-agency planning and management, organizational culture and change management, cross-cultural interaction, and human trafficking, to name a few. With such a diverse background and experience, Participant 2 provided a wide range of knowledge and a unique perspective.

**Participant 3.** Participant 3 worked in Florida, coincidently, a state that passed legislation in 2014 mandating the formation of three different levels of collaborative entities, thereby mandating multi-agency collaboration. The three levels include the state, local, and individual service provision-based levels. As a senior-level supervisor for a state agency, Participant 3 works on a daily basis to addresses human trafficking from a state, legislative, and policy perspective. However, given the Florida state mandated collaborative approach, her daily routine includes working with outside agencies at a variety of levels. In addition to her full-time job, Participant 3 is also a part of the HT work group where she collaborates with other

individuals interested in addressing the issues surrounding human trafficking. She provided experience and the perspective of those individuals who undertake human trafficking from the state level through multi-agency partnerships.

**Participant 4.** Participant 4 worked as a consultant and advisor for a global hotlines organization that assists human trafficking victims and strives to end sex slavery nationwide. At the time of the interview, she had been employed with the organization for approximately eight years. While she has served in various roles with the company, her role at the time included working to build their global hotline consulting program, which essentially scaled the success of the national human trafficking hotline across the globe. The initial goal was to help other countries develop their very own human trafficking hotline or enhance their existing hotline to improve their ability to respond to human trafficking. Participant 4 was a part of the HT work group and her perspective stemmed from answering victim calls and relying, heavily, on other partners to provide services to victims.

**Participant 5.** As a senior-level supervisor for a state agency, Participant 5, at the time, had over a decade of experience working with juvenile services, families, and law enforcement service providers. Most importantly, he possessed insight as a supervisor who was responsible for balancing and maintaining relationships with multiple agencies at once. His experience was valuable to the HT work group, because not only did he provide experience with addressing the issues surrounding adolescence abuse, but he was familiar with responding to problems from a multi-disciplinary approach. Therefore, Participant 5's involvement in the work group introduced another element of diversity among the group.

**Participant 6.** Participant 6 was a senior-level supervisor with a state agency that focused on victim assistance. In addition, at the time of our interview, she was also serving in an additional, unfunded, role in human trafficking. Though she had several job duties, she spent majority of her time training law enforcement officers, judges, prosecutors, court personnel, and medical professionals in several areas including, a) human trafficking; b) domestic violence c); sex crimes; d) drug crimes; and e) mental health issues. With her extensive background in law and experience training others, Participant 6 had a lot of understanding of knowledge sharing and team learning making her role in the HT work group valuable.

**Participant 7.** Participant 7 was the CEO and Co-founder of an NPO (Non-Profit Organization) dedicated to ending human trafficking in Tennessee. The organization, which was developed over 10 years ago, provides prevention, policy, and survivor services to twenty-five counties in the lower east region of Tennessee. One thing that made Participant 7 and his organization unique was their emphasis on being a partner-driven organization that understands collaboration is essential to being effective. As the founder, Participant 7 does a great amount of vision casting, strategic development work, and fundraising on behalf of the organization. His experience and knowledge with partnerships and collaboration made him a great addition to the HT work group.

**Participant 8.** Participant 8 also worked in a government agency in a senior-level position that is focused on violence against women and human trafficking. She had over 20 years of experience, in general, with approximately two years in her current role. Before joining the government agency, she served in another senior level position for an international counter-trafficking NGO (Non-Governmental Organization). Majority of her job duties at the time

consisted of overseeing various efforts, building relationships with other regions, maintaining those partnership, and providing guidance and support to other agencies. Her international experience along with her background in education, social work, advocacy and public health added a different set of skills and knowledge to the HT work group.

**Participant 9.** Participant 9 had worked as a case manager for five years at a human service organization in Kentucky and part of the social-service arm of the local Archdiocese. In her role, she worked with labor and sex trafficking survivors of various ages and genders. Her organization collaborated directly with the attorney general's office (AGO) where a grant had been implemented to allow this particular type of charity to focus on victim services while the AGO addresses the law enforcement aspect of sex and labor trafficking. She was one of the few individuals involved in the HT work group that also had recent experience with victim services, so she offered special knowledge and insight in that realm.

**Participant 10.** This next participant had been in a senior-level administrative position for less than five years at the time of the interview but had worked in the same department for 30 years. In addition, at the time of the interview, he was serving in an interim deputy role. As the interim deputy he was responsible for supervising all of the state's 67 county departments, which ranged from emergency welfare services to disaster and emergency mass care to the learning and employee training of the various careers. Participant 10's deputy role required him to oversee numerous partnerships with external partners with charitable organizations, universities, law enforcement, the attorney general's office and other programs engaged in the multi-disciplinary teams within Alabama. With over three decades of experience, Participant 10 brought a lifetime worth of tacit knowledge that the HT work group benefitted from.

**Participant 11**. Lastly, at the time of the interview, Participant 11 had recently begun a senior level position in the state of North Carolina. With only eight months in her current role, of all the participants, she had the least amount of time served in their present position. However, Participant 11 possessed over 16 years of experience in victim services, which served as the foundation for most of her responses and perceptions. Although currently a director, she provided a lot of details on the issues that direct service providers endure and how they are impacted by their daily job duties. With several other directors in the HT work group, Participant 11 was a bit of an anomaly because of her very recent transition from victim services to leadership, so she spoke on both levels within an organization.

## Perceptions and Experiences of the Participants as it Relates to the Dynamic, Relational Components of Inter-Organizational Learning

In this section, the key findings of this study are presented in categories. First, there is an overview and description of the categories, followed by a detailed analysis of each category.

**Overview of categories.** The categories that were identified during data analysis are presented in this section. Table 7 is included to provide a summary of the categories and what those categories are comprised of.

Based on the perceptions of participants in relation to the components identified during the literature review, the data was divided into six categories. The six categories were comprised of 19 open codes. The six categories, along with the 19 open codes are displayed in Table 7. The six categories are on the left side of table. These categories were formulated based on the data collected. The open codes are included on the right side of the table along with brief descriptions

of each. After open coding, the data was then sorted into one of the six categories as based on how it relates to inter-organizational learning and collaboration.

It is important to note that the data obtained from this study and categories formulated based on the data are closely aligned with the components of IOL as defined by the Watkins and Marsick's (1993) framework and Mariotti's (2012) model of IOL processes. This also supported the components found in the literature on IOL.

Table 7.

*Overview and description of data analysis categories*

| Categories | Description and Components |
|---|---|
| Why is collaboration important to inter-organizational learning? | Evidence that supports the significance or importance of collaborating with other organizations<br>• Benefits of collaborating and forming partnerships<br>• How collaborating and partnering provide opportunities for knowledge transfer |
| What improves or enhances inter-organizational learning through collaboration | Mechanisms that improve, promote or encourage collaboration<br>• Common learning platforms<br>• Continuous communication<br>• Collaboration embedded into culture<br>• Shared purpose/mission/values/expectations<br>• Trust<br>• Ways to create and transfer knowledge |
| Understanding the relational aspect of inter-organizational learning | Evidence of group learning<br>• Interaction/cooperation<br>• Collective learning<br>• Communities of practice<br>• Team learning<br>  o Knowledge sharing |
| Challenges surrounding inter-organizational learning and collaboration | Various issues, challenges, and conflict that interfere with collaboration and partnerships<br>• Barriers<br>• Opportunities for improvement |
| Characteristics of an effective multi-agency partnership that facilitates inter-organizational learning | Ways to improve collaboration<br>• What does the ideal partnership look like?<br>• Recommendations for other partnerships<br>• Wishes and wants for current multi-agency partnership |
| Dynamic aspect of IOL and collaborations | Dynamic learning defined in relation to understanding IOL and collaboration |

Throughout the remainder of this chapter, the different themes present among the perceptions and experiences of participants as they relate to the dynamic, relational components of inter-organizational learning are presented and discussed.

**Why is Collaboration Important to Inter-Organizational Learning?**

Throughout the interviews with participants, many of them cited the reasons why they felt collaboration was important to inter-organizational learning and partnerships. Therefore, the first category details the importance of collaboration that takes place through multi-agency partnerships. This category includes participant perceptions as to why collaboration is necessary to learning and working in a collaborative, as well as, how collaboratives are beneficial to those involved in the collective processes.

***Benefits of collaborating and forming partnerships***. According to research on inter-organizational learning, there is much on how the process benefits single actors and minimal amount of information presented that focuses on the actual processes involved in inter-organizational learning (Inkpen, 1997; Mariotti, 2012). The following information is presented with the intent to not only highlight the benefits of collaborating and forming partnerships, but also use the experiences of participants to focus on the actual processes involved in inter-organizational learning through a collaborative. This information also provides a window into the inner-workings of a multi-agency partnership.

To begin, participants explained how the HT work group provided the platform and purpose for individuals in various parts of the country, working for the same initiative, to come together in a collaborative manner. Participant 5 stated, “The region [work group] really brought other states we were interacting with to the table with the same intention so that we can better

collaborate to address the needs of the kids and families from our perspective, law enforcement's perspective, more facilitate investigation and prosecution." This statement solidifies the significance of collaborating for the same initiative. If there are several groups of people working, in close proximity, to solve or address the same problem, some degree of collaboration seems paramount.

Being that the purpose of the collaborative was to learn together, the ability to share and create knowledge is imperative. When asked about creating knowledge with other organizations, Participant 6 mentioned the vast amount of information available on the topic and how so much more learning needs to take place to be effective. In addition, she explained how knowledge is found within the diverse experiences available through partnership and collaboration:

> We're pushing forward in how we're addressing it [human trafficking], but we're also looking at what other states are doing that's working...I'm a believer that there's no sense in reinventing the wheel. Let's look to other states or other organizations and find out, "What are you doing? Did it work, or what did you try and why didn't it work," and try to learn from maybe mistakes others have made so we don't do the same thing and waste time going in a direction that another state may have tried…

Participant 11 described how participating in inter-organizational collaboration outside the state is beneficial, especially when burn-out and territorialism becomes a barrier to local collaborative efforts.

> It's been really good that we don't have to blaze the trail there and we might be able to start where other people are. I think that that works well, as well as, that you're getting

> outside of...Almost everyone that we talk to on a statewide effort or even regional efforts, multi-county efforts, there is that issue of burnout and some territorialism.

The participant continued to discuss how interacting with members from outside organizations, provides a different group dynamic that promotes learning and provides different perspectives.

> Everybody is having the same things come up that just happen within group dynamics. When you're on these calls you're outside of that from your own network so somewhat you're able to progress a little more...because you're learning from others where all of those group dynamics in your own region and state are removed. You're able to just learn from others what they're doing and what they're seeing and how it works.

Other participants explained how collaboration and partnerships offer more than a variety of experience and perspectives, yet it aids with identifying and addressing the needs surrounding the human trafficking initiative.

> With human trafficking, it's a topic that's going to take everyone to end. We can't just work with social workers or just work with law enforcement or just work with the courts. We all have to work together, and the public has to be a part of that as well. That makes it a massive effort when you talk about collaborating to make a collective impact. (Participant 11)

Participant 1 emphasized how the demand for services requires the assistance of other organizations, "The need is so great. Peoples see this [human trafficking] as a very difficult issue to face, and a lot of our partners, they know they can't do it alone." Whereas, Participant 10 explicitly stated the significance of having inter-organizational partnerships:

> We have varied functions but, I mean we would not be able to functions at all without having exterior partners. We just have different collaborations as far as multi-disciplinary teams and investigative work. It's just a myriad of things we have to do in collaborating with other agencies to make sure that we're successful.

Elaborating on these perspectives, Participant 6 described how, in addition to high demand and limited services, many individuals have other job duties that go beyond human trafficking which makes being able collaborating and sharing the responsibilities more meaningful.

> We've got a whole lot of other issues going on as well. We're not in a situation where trafficking is all I do, and I work with somebody at CPS and trafficking is all they do, then the other people we work with at Fusion, that's all they're doing, or our investigations. It's also everybody's juggling the time they can devote to any particular issue.

More participants expressed the importance of collaboration and how they believed less would be accomplished without the help of partners.

> The center's focal point is collaboration. Their viewpoint would be that it can't be done non-collaboratively. Prosecutors can't do it without law enforcement, law enforcement can't do it without service providers, service [sic] providers can't do it without prosecutors who are prosecuting their clients' cases. We can't do it without education, having prevention efforts, and keeping some of our kids out of an exploitative situation. None of us can do it without healthcare providers. For our cases in particular, but [sic] for the child welfare cases in general, but [sic] for trafficking cases in particular, these kids

have so many needs that cross so many parties. They need counseling services. They need healthcare services. They need just emergency services to address their immediate safety, long-term safety. Law enforcement is typically involved in these cases. It would be an absolute disaster if you tried to do that in a non-collaborative way. (Participant 3)

As she continued, she pivoted from the needs of those victims involved in the individual cases to the needs of the service providers and other agencies involved in the day-to-day activities of the multi-agency partnership.

> We need legislation. We need funding. We need state agencies to come in and develop policy from their agency perspective on how to address this issue. We realize that it really has to be so collaborative or we might as well just be twiddling our thumbs. (Participant 3).

Inter-organizational learning borrows from organizational learning, which emphasizes the importance of learning from others and team learning. Team learning stresses the importance of external learning to obtain organizational performance (Anacona & Caldwell, 1992). These ideas were supported by many of the participants who revealed collaboration was mandatory to their ability to function as an organization. This perspective was also summarized below by Participant 4:

> Our national hotline is our biggest program, so we know that we can't do this work [HT] ourselves. Our role on the national hotline is to take the calls, and triage the calls (sic), and connect the caller to the best resource. And so [sic] we don't respond to any calls in the sense that we don't deploy any of our staff to go in and recover a victim. We don't respond and investigate any of the tips. We're collecting all that information and filtering

it to the best agency, or best group of people, in that locality. So, it is an essential core component of our work to have agencies that we collaborate with all across the country.

Participant 1 provided a specific example of how partnerships having definitive protocols in place improves the effectiveness of the human trafficking initiative:

> People are more likely to get invested when they know that there's help. That's the same with law enforcement. We hear it all the time like, "I'm not going to pick this girl off the street and rescue her out of this situation if I know she's just going to go back to it. I'm probably going to do more harm because of her pimp if I pick her up. If I know she has a bed to go to tonight, I will more likely be able to create an opportunity for safety and a place for hope than if I didn't have a solution."

Later, Participant 8 explained how creating partnerships across state lines provide a means of communication and collaboration that are also beneficial to state and regional efforts:

> In building relationships with our neighbors in the South East, we're able to communicate about either particular cases or about resources available at the other states, or whatever it may be. It just opens up a channel of communication amongst all these people who are leading the efforts in their state.

Collaboration is indeed a crucial component of inter-organizational learning, learning that occurs between two or more organizations (Mariotti, 2012). The participant responses supported what was found in the literature regarding the great influence of collaboration on inter-organizational learning processes. By forming partnerships and collaborating for the purpose of learning, organizations create inter-organizational learning networks (Engeström & Kerosuo,

2007). It is through those networks that knowledge is exchanged and transferred among the partnership members, therefore, inter-organizational learning allows for knowledge transfer.

**How collaboration and partnerships provide opportunities for knowledge transfer**. Knowledge transfer is a process in which organizations can improve their knowledge and innovation capabilities through knowledge transfer (Easterby-Smith, Lyles, & Tsang, 2008). Inter-organizational knowledge transfer requires at least two organizations who are willing and able to be the donor or recipient of knowledge. Collaborating with others fosters and promotes opportunities for knowledge transfer which further highlights another important aspect of collaboration to inter-organizational learning. As previously mentioned, collaborative efforts provide partners with access to a more diverse breadth of knowledge, experience and perspective. Some of the responses from participants regarding knowledge transfer are highlighted in the following sections.

Participant 5 explained how his organization has created methods of collaborating with other organizations, if for no other reason, to transfer knowledge and insight of what not to do:

> We've established the relationship and communication pathways so that people can reach out to other states to draw upon their experiences, or at least to raise an issue, because there are so many things that are challenging the different states that states might say, "This is how we've done it. It may not have gone the way that we've wanted, but here's an idea of at least what not to do."

Participant 11 described how she strives to transfer knowledge beyond her organization while promoting new relationships, "When we learn of a new program, I take the time to go visit and take someone else with me sometimes so that we can start to build that relationship."

Once those relationships are established, knowledge transfer takes place among partners. Participant 1 explained the process of cross-training law enforcement officers:

> For law enforcement it's very specific because what we learned when we first started working with law enforcement is there's a lot of old school people and a lot of people that have been trained up by the world that speak to the issues of prostitution very different than how we speak to them. "These girls want to do it. They're out there because they have drug addictions." It's just a lack of education. What we have learned is not only is it in-service training for law enforcement officers, but it's also the on-boarding piece.

She continued to divulge how knowledge is transferred and shared with law enforcement officers who subsequently take that new knowledge and apply it to their daily duties while patrolling the streets.

> What we've done with Manatee County and Sarasota County, two counties close to us near our headquarters, is when they on-board new police officers, we do a training. We're part of the on-boarding. We train them up. We use the language. These ladies have deeper issues. What you're seeing on the streets are symptoms. They have much deeper-rooted issues and we want to get them help.

Based on Participant 1's approach with the law enforcement on-boarding and training processes, there is evidence of successful knowledge transfer.

> We've seen so much of decrease in the street prostitution we've had because the police officers are bringing them [the women] water. When we do sting operations, we're bringing them [the women] to detox and offering them an opportunity through the

> diversion program to get help instead of going to jail. That education piece has allowed…I can't tell you how many police officers have said, "I didn't know this was deeper. I just thought they were out there because they had addiction issues and couldn't get off the streets." I want to make sure that our teams are trained up to see the deeper pieces.

These statements support what has been said by Easterby-Smith, Lyles and Tsang (2008) who maintained that an organization can significantly improve their knowledge and innovation capabilities by utilizing the skills of other individuals through knowledge transfer. Additionally, collective knowledge, gathered from multiple individuals, has a greater impact that individual knowledge of one person, group, and organization. Lastly, knowledge transfer is also included in Mariotti's (2012) model of inter-organizational learning.

**What Improves or Enhances Inter-Organizational Learning Through Collaboration?**

Because the purpose of this study was to gain a clearer understanding of inter-organizational learning and the multi-level learning processes, it was paramount to identify the characteristics of inter-organizational learning within a multi-agency partnership. The following table displays components that are necessary to facilitate and/or promote inter-organizational learning processes themes as identified by the HT work group participants (see Table 8). The purpose of the table is to summarize the characteristics of IOL within a multi-agency partnership as identified by the participants.

Table 8 is divided into the following themes: (a) communication, (b) collaboration embedded into the culture, (c) having a shared mission, vision, and/or purpose, (d) trust, (e) ways to share and create knowledge, and (f) relational. While each of the themes are discussed in

detail throughout the next sections, the purpose of Table 8 is to display which themes the participants mentioned as major components of IOL and ways to enhance inter-organizational learning in a multi-agency collaborative. The “X” in the box signifies that the participant identified the theme as a necessary component of IOL and involvement in a multi-agency partnership. Majority of the themes were mentioned by each participant except for the culture theme, which was only mentioned by three individuals. A rationale and discussion of these results is included in the sections that follow.

Table 8.

*Components that facilitate IOL based on participant responses*

| Participant | Communication | Culture | Shared mission/ vision/ purpose | Trust | Create & share knowledge | Relational |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | X | | X | X | X | X |
| 2 | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| 3 | X | | X | X | X | X |
| 4 | X | | X | X | X | X |
| 5 | X | X | X | | X | X |
| 6 | X | | | X | X | X |
| 7 | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| 8 | X | | X | X | X | X |
| 9 | X | | X | X | X | X |
| 10 | X | | X | | X | X |
| 11 | X | | | X | X | X |

**Communication.** Based on the responses of the participants, communication is a key component to creating an effective collaborative partnership. Almost all of the participants (N=11) mentioned the importance of communication in multi-agency collaboration and partnerships. Each participant described various means of communicating that they, or their organization, utilizes while collaborating with partners.

The following methods of communication were specifically mentioned by participants as ways to effectively communicate to or with others: email, listservs, community forums, meetings, phone calls, and face-to-face discussions. The sections that follow provide an outline of the significance of communication to collaboration, as well as examples and explanations of the communication methods implemented.

To start, Participant 11 explicitly expressed how, based on their experience, they believe collaboration entails an excessive amount of communication:

> I think collaboration takes a lot of communication and it takes setting aside extra time. When you're collaborating, you don't want to duplicate efforts, you don't want to counteract efforts, so you have to make sure that you're all communicating what's going on.

Another participant stated that with "so many different people, a lot of it has to do with communicating appropriately" (Participant 8). Building on these perspectives and statements from other participants, it is apparent that communication is a vital aspect of collaboration, yet it is also necessary to limit the possibility of repeated efforts and to ensure issues are being addressed by someone within the partnership.

Participant 3 added to this perspective by explaining how multi-agency partnerships and collaborating are made possible through candid conversations at the beginning and all throughout the partnership. She began by telling how her organization approaches collaboration and uses communication to facilitate the multi-agency partnership collaboration beginning early in the process.

> The first few meetings, what we did was really have conversations around what are the strengths and weaknesses in each state, and how can we support each other in addressing

> those strengths and weaknesses. We sit down and have conversations around what the whole region needs, but also shared information with each other on a regular basis that is just helpful for each other. There's state to state conversations that can be had if necessary, but also the global perspective of the entire southeast region.

Furthermore, she expressed how she believes collaboration and communication are imperative to maximizing time and progressing in the right direction, in terms of the partnership.

> If stuff is done in silos, it's just either a waste of time, or takes you in the wrong direction, or is just not beneficial as a whole, I think at any level. Collaboration and conversation are important and makes everybody's job easier. (Participant 3)

More specifically, she continued by expressing how paramount face-to-face communication is to multi-agency partnerships and collaborations in general.

> I think I talked about how important I think in-person meetings are, where if the multi-agency partnership at some point, getting together to just talk to each other, face-to-face, if at all possible, again to have an understanding of who is doing what, and to just start to build those relationships. I also think it's important to get things codified. (Participant 3)

Lastly, Participant 3 said, "I think one of the things that is so important in improving communication is face-to-face meetings." She explained how her organization came to realize and understand the importance of face-to-face communication:

> One of the things we realized would facilitate better relationships is if we had those face-to-face meetings. It increases accountability. If you say something in a room full of people that know your face and have seen your face, and you're saying you're going to

do it, you're more likely to do it than if you just say something on a conference call. It increases accountability, it increases your connection to the folks that you are working with. So, you will want to be accountable and accomplish those things that you said you were going to do for that particular case.

To elaborate further, she provided an example of how her agency has facilitated statewide conversation in an effort to explain how communication is fundamental to collaboration.

> We have helped facilitate statewide conversations between the task forces, so we keep in touch with all the task force leadership and make sure that the task force in Pensacola knows what's going on with the task force in Miami. If they need anything, then we can help. They can communicate with each other because they now know who each other are, but just making sure that we're facilitating communications with all those parties, but also that we're keeping up with everything that's going on. I just have to make sure that I'm always adopting the perspective of one hand can't do anything without the other. You can't inform policy without knowing what's going on at the ground level, and you can't implement anything at the ground level without knowing what's going on at the policy level, so everybody has to be [sic] talking. (Participant 3)

Also mentioning statewide communication, Participant 8 described the methods implemented within her state to promote and facilitate communication:

> Communication outside of and within the larger collaboration of South Carolina [sic], it takes a lot of emails. A lot of phone calls. A lot of visits, like as in meetings. And [sic] a

> lot of visits with people who are developing programs but with law enforcement, with chairs of regional task forces, sub-committees, and it's a lot.

Keeping with this theme, another participant also expressed the impact face-to-face communication has on collaborating within a partnership.

> You can see what that [interaction] would be like in person and be able to go back and forth and they can ask questions. You share something in the meeting, they can ask you a question about how that approach can work. Has it been successful? Has it been difficult? What have the obstacles been? Much like what you're talking about with your questions...How to...[sic] the collaboration of what's successful, what's a real challenge? And [sic] how do you overcome those challenges? (Participant 8)

Several other participants mentioned how communication was key to initiating and getting the multi-agency partnerships up and running. The following few sections include experiences that relate to the initial phases of the partnership and the effect of communication on those processes.

***Communication in the initial phases of the partnership and the effects of that communication.*** Participant 9 gave details of communication as it relates to the initial phases of collaboration that are very similar to the description provided by Participant 3 in the sense that they began the collaborative process by coming together and having a discussion.

> So, when we first established the group [the HT work group] we all identified things that state is doing well versus things that aren't going so well for that state. Where we really have a lot of room to grow, and there was a lot of identification in the same vein across the board.

According to Participant 4, much of the "initial conversation happened over the phone" and email. However, she also pointed out the importance of in-person communication, especially when dealing with the human trafficking incidents:

> But [sic] I think what was really good was for me to travel to those localities and get everyone, corral everyone to the table and hash things out. Obviously, you couldn't get 100% cooperation, but for the agencies it was just as important for them to have this relationship with [organization] because we're sort of the major source of some of the very credible tips that come to them, that they rely on.

She continued by explaining how being present and on-site during the human trafficking meetings and operations also improved communication and collaboration, "a lot of it was being on the ground and convening round tables for everyone to be at the table and talk things through."

Participant 4 also articulated the power of communication when working in a partnership and ensuring everyone in the collaborative group is abreast of changes regarding all involvement.

> We relied a lot on word-of-mouth, trust, just a good working relationship and on my part, it was constantly keeping in touch, checking in, communicating. Communicating whether someone left the protocol. Communicating whether someone wanted to be added to the protocol. So, just making sure that there was constant feedback loop and constant communication loop to enable the trust relationship that we could then carry on into perpetuity.

When asked about the presence of communication in multi-agency partnerships, Participant 2 mentioned, “A lot of commissions are set up so that they meet periodically. There’s a lot of email communication and a lot of personal communication by phone.”

He continued to state, in regard to communication, that it is, “really one of the hardest things, but it’s one of the most critical.”

Despite communication being labeled one of the most challenging aspects, there were several mentions of communicative processes both internally and externally.

> If you’re asking internally as an organization what we do, we definitely are internally connected from email to...we use Voxer, it’s an app. I have leadership trainings. I have weekly meetings with all of my staff individually and then every other week together. We are constantly evolving and talking, but externally I would say that we have monthly meetings, update meetings, partnership meeting to just check up on how things are going and what we can do better and how we’re learning from it (Participant 1).

Participant 10 explained how his organization stays informed and promotes communication by remaining involved and present at all important meetings. He further emphasized the significance of face-to-face interaction.

> We involve ourselves in peoples’ boards. We go to their board meetings and those QA teams are face to face. When we talk to the legislators, we might get an email from a legislator that’s got an issue with a constituent, we will reach out. We will call that legislator and then we will say, “Are you going to be in town? We’d love to meet with you.” Our different counterparts and stakeholders, we have regular meeting with them

> that are face-to-face. Email is a good communication tool, but it is not anything like a face-to-face interaction. You'll never get anything that's positive that you couldn't do better on [sic] with a face-to-face interaction.

The phrase "come to the table" was used by Participant 5, and when asked to explain what that phrase resembled, not in theory but in practice, in terms of communication, he provided the following explanation:

> There's a lot of work that happens prior to getting into the room together. There's making sure that we have an understanding of what are [sic] the most important issues that need to be discussed on that given day. There are so many facets to it that we do want to talk about really. There are a lot of things around how we really prioritize.

This statement from Participant 5 sheds light on the amount of communication necessary for collaboration and multi-agency partnerships to function. With the wide range of issues and the dynamics surrounding the actual partnership, clear, constant communication is critical.

**Culture.** One of Watkins and Marsick's imperatives of a learning organization states, "A learning organization is one that encourages collaboration and team learning" in addition, "collaboration is valued by the culture and rewarded" (p. 355). According to the Mozatto et al. (2015), culture is defined as "characteristics associated with a place or region in which inter-organizational relations take place, and the social rationality that takes into account the capacities and potentialities inherent to each place" (p. 101).

Culture is also "based on shared attitudes, beliefs, customs, and written and unwritten rules that have been developed over time and are considered valid" (Culture, 2019).

Organizational culture includes the “organization’s expectations, experiences, philosophy, as well as the values that guide member behavior, and is expressed in member self-image, inner workings, interactions with the outside world, and future expectations” (OrganizationalCulture, 2019).

Organizational culture is an important component for inter-organizational learning comprehension and management (Levinson & Asahi, 1995), because organizational culture can “facilitate or hinder organizational change and/or organizational learning” (p. 55). Despite being considered by researchers as an important factor of collaboration and multi-agency partnerships, less than half (N=3) of the participants alluded to embedding methods that facilitate collaboration into the culture of the organization.

Although there were only a few participants that mentioned culture when asked about collaborating, their perspectives provide a unique insight into the culture of the organizations involved in multi-agency partnerships. In addition, many of the barriers and challenges, mentioned later in this chapter, that interfere with the collaborative process could very well exist because agencies do not have a culture that fosters a collaborative environment or what’s necessary to effectively participate in a multi-agency partnership. For example, one of the things participants expressed as a barrier to collaboration and partnerships was turn-over. Participant 2 suggested the following to reduce employee turnover, “You just have to institutionalize good practices as part of the routine of work. The way people do their work.” When it came to the issue of dealing with varied cultures, another potential barrier to collaboration, Participant 8 recommended this, “Choose sub-committees at the state level that represent the highest priorities

within their region, ‘cause [sic] regions have different cultures.” In the next few sections, the information provided by participants is presented with the intent to illustrate the culture of collaborative organizations.

Participant 7 explained the culture of his organization as it relates to their goal of being a collaborative entity: “We built it [collaboration] in from day one, into our DNA that we were going to be a collaborative organization. You’re not going to work at [organization] and not be collaborative, both intra- and inter-.” He continued to explain collaboration was ingrained in the soul of the organization from the very beginning and for that reason there’s minimal issues with creating buy-in from other participants:

> Throughout development, we’ve just never had to insist within the organization that everybody buy-in to collaboration. Maybe one of the reasons for that has been its not just that we’ve put such a high value on collaboration, but we’ve set the bar high as to what collaboration is for us.

As he delved deeper into collaboration and the values of his organization, he introduced a perspective that essentially hinted at the key criteria of building a collaborative organization. Specifically, he described how collaboration, partnerships and innovation are major components of what his organization is founded upon. Innovation is especially important in the public sector to achieve public benefit, but it is equally important for inter-organizational learning process because “innovation leadership is critical in creating a shared vision and setting the tone for an organization, inspiring, and enabling execution” (Casebourne, 2014, p. 18).

> Collaboration is one of our three stated values. We exist by and for the overall values of human dignity, collaboration and innovation. Partnerships, we view as a component of the value of collaboration, and we have couched the word partnership and the meaning we attach to it within the larger term of collaboration. Because, [sic] if you're going to be our partner, you're going to have to live up to certain markers that we're going to put on paper. And [sic] you're not going to sign off on, you being as an organization, and not everybody, quite frankly, is going to meet our threshold for partnerships, so we view collaboration as something that can and is done in various ways, including one-offs, but because we're so exacting about collaboration, that could lead to some deeper relationships which we consider partnerships.

As Participant 5 summed, "We have bought into it, it's just part of our culture to collaborate." While having a collaborative culture is beneficial to a multi-agency partnership, having other similarities or common interest also motivates participants to work and learn together. Often, when individuals or groups of people decide to work together, commonalities exist as motivators. As Participant 2 explained, "there has to be something in it for them [the participants], in other words, to really motivate them so that they can provide better service. Obtain better money [sic]." These motivators may include desire to learn continuously, meeting stakeholder obligations, or need to achieve a goal.

According to Ameli and Kayes (2011) these shared interests create common learning platforms, and these common learning platforms serve as motivators to keep participants active in the partnership**.** Individuals from the region HT work group share quite a few common

learning platforms. Participant 8 clarified how having such common platforms with diverse experience has helped the region HT work group be more successful at collaborating:

> As a diverse group I think that that's been...everybody at the table eager to learn from other people. Because they wanna [sic] be successful because they know in turn they're gonna [sic] prevent someone from becoming a victim. Or it's going to help, hopefully restore a survivor's life.

Having some kind of commonality, such as the desire to address the major social problems surrounding HT, motivates stakeholder to remain active and competitive in their sector (Ameli & Kayes, 2011).

**Shared mission/vision/purpose.** Shared vision was frequently found in literature written on learning organizations. In fact, it was one of the five disciplines of a learning organization in the model presented by Senge (1990). Having a shared vision amongst a partnership creates a sense of community and togetherness that "fosters genuine commitment" as opposed to simply participating to comply. Several participants mentioned how those involved in the HT work group committed to the initiative on their own because they wanted to learn how to become more efficient at addressing HT issues. Many of the participants (N=9) also expressed their views on the importance of having a shared vision, mission and purpose with others involved in the HT work group. Some of their perceptions are mentioned in the following section.

Initially, Participant 1 described how, because of the shared mission and purpose, the different organizations are able to address each other's needs through the partnership.

> We definitely feel like we provide a solution for the Attorney General's Office who is seeing this as a huge systems issue. We see this as a solution to the law enforcement officer who sees that cycle of homelessness, detox, prison, and then back again. We see it as a federal solution because we see that sex trafficking is going to surpass drug trafficking revenue probably this year in the United States, and it already has globally. People are getting smarter. Traffickers are getting smarter because they can sell a woman 12 to 40 times in a night where they can only sell one Xanex.

Next, she continued to explicate how her organization's mission and vision appear to be aligned with the mission, vision of the agencies they have partnered with, specifically those of the legislature.

> We definitely feel like we're in alignment. We don't provide all the answers, but we provide a piece of the answer [sic]. Together, I definitely feel like we are able to connect and create opportunities to confront this issue, not just as a home for women, but a legislative piece because we always talk about the return on investment.

Participant 2 added how having a shared sense of purpose is critical to a partnership or collaborative.

> Just absolutely, absolutely have to have a sense of purpose. The best way to do that is clarify what the mission of the collaborative is versus the mission of the organizations that make up the collaborative, and how they align? Where they align?
>
> Honestly, that's the key piece in my mind. 'Cause [sic] what you end up with is all these little individual organizations...well, a collaborative and a partnership that has to be able

> to add value out in the world, that's beyond what they could do as an individual organization. But it also has to create capacity for them to do more. There has to be something in it for them, in other words, to really motivate them so that they can provide better service, obtain better money, be more influential, and so forth…If you don't have a shared sense of mission and are able to show how that aligns with your bigger mission, you can't get off the ground.

Continuing the theme of having a clear, definitive purpose, Participant 3 included the following based on her experience:

> I think understanding your roles and defining purpose and roles within any multi-agency collaboration is important and ultimately helps improve collaboration. I've seen a lot of entities just be put together without a real clear goal, and then you're just having meetings just to meet without actually accomplishing anything. I really think it's important to, even if it's something like an MDT (Multi-Disciplinary Team**)** or a small team is focusing on smaller things, can you come up with some mission, vision, action statements of what the purpose of this entity is, what everybody's role in the entity is, what goals you want to have out of it? I think it really is important to have guiding documentation for what that partnership is going to be doing. I think clarity in having those discussions upfront just makes everything easier. Clarity in pursuit of a goal.

Participant 8 introduced the significance of not only having shared experiences but being able to empathize with others because of that shared experience.

> I can relate to the struggles and the challenges that many people are facing. I also understand what it's like to work with a population directly. How complicated it is? I can speak to these different languages in terms of direct service provision, and I can connect. My background is very varied and it meets the multi-disciplinary approach that we're trying to, that we're doing.

Taking a more pragmatic approach, Participant 10 described how organizations must be aware of the differences that exist among organizations, even if they are working together in a partnership.

> Well, you know different agencies have different responsibilities, so their responsibilities and their mission statements are going to be different. To have those face to face and those [sic] open collaborative relationships, you have to learn how best to meld the different missions to the different agencies.

He continued by giving advice in situations where missions and outcomes do differ:

> So, if you've got different outcomes that you're looking for, you have to reach out to people to see how we can meld it to where we're all getting what we need, but it is not being traumatic on the process as a whole. The one thing you can't do is retreat to the corners like in a boxing match. You have to stay engaged, you can't just, when the bell rings, you can't just retreat to your corner if that bell goes off. You've got to stay in the ring. We do, we run into those circumstances where sometimes the differing agency missions kind of collide, but you've got to keep yourself above the fray and stay on the high road and look at the best interest of all involved.

Other participants also stressed the importance of identifying the purpose and mission of each person involved in the partnership at the beginning. As Senge (1994) suggested, there are steps to developing a shared vision, but the creation of this vision is only one aspect of entire process of the learning organization.

**Trust.** Trust is one of the components that enables inter-organizational learning (Mozzato, Bitencourt, & Grzyboyski, 2008). It "requires the establishment of the adequate balance between competition, cooperation, trust, stability, and dynamism" (Mozatto et al., 2015, p. 100) and "creates openness, interpersonal connection, motivation, and engagement, which enables and facilitates knowledge-sharing" (Lee & Choi, 2003, p. 20). If there is limited trust, employees do not feel comfortable sharing information or ideas (Lee & Choi, 2013), which limits their willingness to cooperate and engage in learning alliances for fear of being "exploited" (Mozatto et al., 2015, p. 100). A large percentage of the participants (N=9) noted the importance of building trust within a collaborative partnership. Their shared experiences are presented in the next few paragraphs.

According to Participant 2, who has helped coordinate several collaborative efforts, trust is one of the three most important, yet most challenging aspects of building and maintaining a collaborative partnership.

> The second big point for us [in reference to collaborating] is building trust. You really have to take the time to get to know people. I knew a lot of the people, but some of them were brand new. So, we divided up the work in a way that we would travel together and work together and get to know each other.

When it comes to providing feedback and advice, it is crucial to adhere to the following, "Communication, honesty, candor. And [sic] you have to trust that the relationship that you've built will withstand the negative feedback as well," Participant 4.

I reference to dealing with the different personalities among the multiple agencies involved in her day-to-day job duties of the anti-trafficking movement, Participant 11 brought up relationship building and ways to prevent mistrust:

> I think its relationship building, which in the anti-trafficking movement, it really is possible. We all see each other all the time, so we all do have the opportunity to build those relationships and learn about each other and how each other is doing. Then, it doesn't come across quite the same when you say, "How are you doing?" or, "I've noticed a few things that I just want to bring up." I can say that I've seen that play out in a couple of situations where I've seen other people say, "It seems like the step you want to take next might leave out some others. Are we shortcutting here if we do that?" We don't want to shortcut because we know that shortcutting is a sign of burnout and results in a lot of mistrust, really.

On the other hand, victims and service recipients also demand a certain aspect of trust. Participant 1 gave background information on how trust is an important part of being a service provider and developing a partnership within the community. She referred to the community and the police officers as the "street level" and gave the following insight:

> You don't just enter an area without consulting with whoever it is that's leading the community. We really feel like that is where we like to start and what we've seen to be

> successful. Police officers want to feel connected to you. If they're going to trust you, they want to know that they can connect with you. You have to have that within an organization. You have to build trust and rapport. They have to know that what you say you're going to do, you do. They want to see the proof of it.

Regarding the remaining levels involved in the collaborative partnership, Participant 1 provided the following:

> We want to make sure that on a state level, on a federal level, that we're connecting as well so that initiatives are being passed down and funding continues to be distributed and we can continue to create and review and revise all the programs that we're doing and make change.

Based on the responses from participants, trust is a crucial piece of any multi-agency collaborative partnerships, but most especially a HT collaborative. Also, it is important to build trust at every layer of the partnership to encourage participation and information sharing. This introduces the last component of this section on improving inter-organizational learning through collaboration which focuses on methods to create, transfer and share knowledge.

**Ways to create and share knowledge.** Based on research presented by Levinson and Asahi (1995) and previously discussed in Chapter 2, it was concluded that organizations should embed learning, knowledge sharing, and other learning organization values into their culture to enhance their inter-organizational learning opportunities. There were several (N=11) mentions of evidence of knowledge sharing or knowledge transferring. Although the two are frequently used interchangeably, for the purpose of this study, knowledge sharing refers to knowledge that is

"constructed in a social context and cannot be separated from the context or individual" (Paulin & Suneson, 2012, p. 87). It is more focused on individual knowledge whereas knowledge transfer is commonly used among groups, departments, organizations, or businesses (Argote & Ingram, 2000). Since the participants of this study were continuously collaborating with several agencies and exchanging information, the majority of their responses were examples of individual knowledge being shared with other organizations for the purpose of improving or enhancing current knowledge. The next few sections are based on participant responses related to creating, transferring, and sharing knowledge among individuals and organizations engaged in the collaborative.

When asked about getting together to collaborate for the purpose of creating new knowledge or sharing existing information, Participant 1 told the following story that she frequently shares with others:

> About, I don't know, three years ago, I was at a training and a gentleman who had been a detective and he had been involved in sex trafficking cases for 20 years looked at all of us and said, "I wish I could call myself an expert, but this field is changing all the time that there's no way that I could ever be an expert in this field and neither will you." I took that in, and I'm like. "He doesn't know what he's talking about," but the more I sat there and listened to him, the more I realized he's true [sic]. These cases, not one case is the same. Not one girl's story is the same. It's constantly changing because its criminal behavior and they're finding new ways to do things. We feel like there can't just be one training a year. We are constantly re-looking at how we do things. We are constantly growing. I tell

> my team all the time from a programming standpoint, if we're not evolving the things that we're learning, we're not growing a best practices program.

She also spoke about situations where survivors share knowledge that completely alters the mindset of partners:

> We have graduate survivors that share their story not because they want to, often times in these awareness dynamics, people that might have been on the fence that this is happening in our community or they might believe that these are things that girls want to do, when they hear their stories, there's a really deep connection, a personal connection because they have a face to put with the topic. I feel like that affects change.

Regarding her methods during the initial phases of collaborating and engagement with individuals, Participant 1 explained her approach to sharing knowledge at the very beginning of the partnership:

> Ideally, we would train them [individuals from various organizations]. We would provide a CSEC class, which is the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. That really gives a face to the picture of sex trafficking. It really helps to show the young women as a girl and as a victim of her circumstances and not a criminal. That is ideally what we want to do. We have a law enforcement training. We have law enforcement liaison that works specifically with the FBI, the United States Attorney's Office, all sorts of law enforcement departments. Ultimately that's our goal.

Not only did Participant 1 outline the introductory training and knowledge sharing that took place as a crucial part of inter-organizational learning, but she highlighted the multiple relationships and roles within a multi-agency partnership.

An environment that not only promotes learning, but also encourages knowledge sharing is classified as a learning organization, which was endorsed by Watkins and Marsick (1993). Learning to share knowledge is also the second level of Mariotti's IOL framework. The following are examples of the ways in which knowledge has been shared throughout the HT work group: (a) "We also developed within the last year, we developed a website for the state taskforce. And [sic] that's been helpful in terms of just sharing information [sic]" (Participant 8); (b) "One of the things that we do as an organization, and this is part of our regular weekly staff meeting, we have a shared learning component" (Participant 7); and (c)

> We put together a small sub-committee under the [Region] work group that focuses on guiding principles for serving trafficking victims, whether adults or minors, or man or female, everything that's a trafficking victim. At a meeting, we're able to identify parties that were interested in doing that and that would be able to provide really good information to that document. (Participant 3).

Knowledge sharing is one important aspect of knowledge creation -- the process of creating new knowledge by continuously transferring, combining, and converting explicit and tacit knowledge through practice, interaction and learning (Nonanka, 1994). It is also one of the building blocks of Mariotti's (2012) inter-organizational learning framework. As knowledge is

created, it should be shared and converted from individual knowledge to organizational knowledge, a process known as knowledge sharing.

To remain successful in a competitive market, such as the HT arena, organizations must learn to continuously create knowledge. Several individuals, including a few from the HT work group, came together to create a resource that outlines guidelines and principles regarding human trafficking. The group of individuals from various organizations throughout region collected and combined all their individual tacit knowledge into a tangible document to share it with other individuals and organizations. The document can also be used be expanded on and further develop by others through the creation of new methods and material.

> We actually compiled and did a document that's actually in the process of being edited, the final edit, and it's called Guiding Principles. And so [sic] we identified different areas that we just went through the group of us from Kentucky, from Florida, and then the rest of the group providing feedback. And then it went to {department name] and got edits [sic] from different working groups there (Participant 9)

While Participant 9 provided a good example of progression toward knowledge creation, when asked about knowledge creation, Participant 7 said the following:

> Yeah, we'll get back to you on that because right now we're trying to figure that out. We want to, and I feel like we are probably beginning to do that, but as far as being able to point an example, and especially something that's really empirical, we're still really early in the process. We can tell you a lot about stuff that doesn't work!

Participant 2 explained how individuals from different agencies, worked together to create a resource to share information and best practices with anyone interested.

> Most of the knowledge development that we did was done collaboratively. We'd have somebody take the lead on it, and then we'd all contribute. That makes a huge difference. We would literally say...Miss A and Miss B are going to write this chapter. We all need to comment on it. And [sic] we all need to go through with them, in advance, what we think should be included in it. And [sic] then, even more so when we put together all this curriculum. We went through pretty detailed curriculum development processes. Where you'd have lots of group meetings going through what the content might be. What the formats should look like. And [sic] then we'd test them all collectively. And [sic] we'd use our various organizations to test them. In other words, because we could test the National Association of Women Judges, we would then modify our general approach based on what went there. Then, that could be used at the National Judicial College. Just a constant, iterative process of working, borrowing from each other, and building a collective knowledge base.

As previously mentioned, some of the HT work group participants collaborated for the purpose of creating a free resource, which was essentially a document with the guideline principles of human trafficking and made it available to anyone interested in the topic. The collaborative guiding principles document is an example of how collaboration facilitated inter-organizational learning, knowledge sharing and the creation of new resources.

In a partnership, knowledge does not necessarily have to be shared or created by service providers, sometimes knowledge is received from victims who are receiving the services. Participant 1 explained how information is obtained from survivors and shared within the partnership.

> If we learn something from a survivor, she leaves and there's something that we can gain as a result of her leaving, we're definitely going to implement that right away. We go to conferences. There're probably six conferences a year that are valuable to us that we go to hear from some of the people in the communities that are growing and learning in the industry and really able to provide us with feedback and updated information.

The information obtained through collaboration and interaction among the participants in the HT work group is then converted from individual and group knowledge to organizational knowledge that is later shared with organizations nationwide. This example of knowledge sharing resembles Frost's (2010) idea that knowledge sharing is an important aspect to knowledge creation. As knowledge is created through the various forms of collaboration, interaction, education and practice, it is also shared and converted (Frost, 2010).

**Understanding the Relational Aspect of Inter-organizational Learning**

Inter-organizational learning is a multi-level, relational process that relies heavily on collaboration, knowledge sharing and learning together (Mariotti, 2012). Collaboration, interaction, cooperation, collective learning, team learning, and communities of practice are all methods that refer to the relational aspect of inter-organizational learning, because they entail interacting with others. Those interactions provide opportunities for networking and relationship

building to exchange information and share knowledge across organizational boundaries. Each participant (N=11) referred to the relational component of inter-organizational learning in some form, collaboration, interaction/cooperation, collective learning, team learning, or communities of practice. An overview of the HT work group participants' responses are included in the pages that follow.

**Collaboration.** An organization's ability to survive depends immensely on their ability to learn to collaborate (Shah et al., 2016). Collaboration and team learning occupy the median level of Watkins and Marsick's model of the dimensions of a learning organization and is a major component of Mariotti's (2012) IOL framework. Furthermore, a well-established and effective partnership is one that involved collaboration, among other things. In the next sections, some of the types of collaboration within the multi-agency partnership are revealed.

Earlier in this chapter, Participant 7 explained how being a collaborative organization was "built into" their organization's DNA from the beginning. Here is an explanation of how Participant 7 believes being relational and forming partnerships with other organizations allowed his organization to first obtain credibility and eventually work together to make a meaningful impact.

> So, we knew, from the beginning, the only way we could make any inroads, get our message out, was to do it through partnerships. We very quickly connected to some organizations that had already been in place for some time, for other purposes, some domestic groups, some folks that worked on sexual assault, so on and so forth, and they realized they were seeing people who were being commercially exploited. So, when we

> came along specializing, if you would, solely in trafficking, they recognized we could add value to the work they were doing, and we recognized where they were concerned, that they were already up and operating, and so they would bring credibility to our efforts. We've been collaborative really from our pre-beginning because that was the only way we knew we could make any difference.

Participant 1 explained that it is beneficial for organizations form partnerships with several agencies in the event that one organization undergoes change that interferes with their ability to remain active in the collaborative.

> We just are super collaborative. I would say that it's not pushing ourselves through the door, but if new leadership comes into play or we get a new law enforcement, we just kind of watch it play out. We continue to do what we know to do. We're not just connected to that one body anymore, so that if they shift a little bit, we can wait through their transition until they're ready to partner again or whatever that is, because we can move our efforts to another organization.

Participant 10 talked about the significance of having partners and maintaining the relationships with those partners:

> It's very difficult to be able to pin down every piece of collaboration that this agency does because we have such a wide array of services that we provide. But [sic] I can tell you one of the biggest things we do to facilitate that [collaboration] is the maintaining of the relationships with different providers and the different stakeholders we have. We try to put forward as many opportunities for our staff and our leadership here to engaged

> with the leadership of the other agencies and entities we deal with. You cannot have a good collaborative network unless you have good relations with our peers in other agencies and entities.

Participants also discussed how they find solace in knowing they are not alone in this fight and they have their collaborative partners available, which further emphasizes the significance of the having those relationships.

> We respond on a multi-disciplinary approach. That means that it's not just one agency that is tasked with solving all issues for all the people that we interact with. We know we're not in it alone, thankfully, and that we do have partners that are working alongside with us. (Participant 5)

To close out this section on collaboration, Participant 4 had the following to say about how other organizations should use the region four collaborative HT work group, "This movement is all about collaboration, learning from one another, and not reinventing the wheel. And, so, [sic] I encourage everyone to use [the regional work group] as an example, or at least a launching pad to do something similar."

**Interaction/cooperation.** Another theme present in the participant interviews was the interaction and/or cooperation piece that was imperative to maintaining the inter-organizational relationships. According to Mozatto, et al. (2015), interaction or cooperation is defined as the "capacity of interlinking various economic agents that maintain inter-organizational relationships" (p.100). The four economic agents consist of families, firms, government, and central banks. Due to the population surrounding the topic, government, families and firms serve

as the central agents relevant to this topic. As revealed in the participant responses below, interaction functioned as the key to creating and maintaining inter-organizational relationships within the partnerships.

Participant 1 described how her organization formed a relationship with both families and the local government which eventually led to participation from local firms.

> When we entered into Chicago, we entered our residential program very quietly. We didn't want the community to know we were there. We needed to make sure that the house was really safe, and we didn't get a lot of push back. But, [sic] what we did do is created awareness opportunities where we said that we were coming. We didn't share where our house was, and we started pulling on the community for support. We've gotten doctors. We've gotten restaurants. We've gotten...Gosh, there's a number...I just feel like everybody and anybody that has a heart has offered us free services for the women we serve. But [sic] the other point of this is that we needed a bigger community partner in terms of how do the women know [sic] [organization name] is there. How do survivors know that we can be there to help them? What we've done, we've partnered with Cook County Corrections Office. They have a human trafficking division. Their prison is, gosh, I think it's the largest single-site prison in the United States. Through just continuing to partner with their human trafficking division, we have created a partnership where we're allowed to go into their jail now and meet with the survivors and let them know who we are. We do a self-esteem curriculum. The Cook County Corrections Office knows that we're there as well. When they have a woman that needs services, they will connect us.

> We actually have an MOU with them, a Memorandum of Understanding, where we provide case management services to them. That is our feeder program to our residential house.

Participant 5 explained how the HT work group provided a means of interaction with different government agencies that enhanced the knowledge and skills his organization and state already possessed.

> Once we [organization] got into human trafficking and really started to understand the issues, all of a sudden, we really realized that we needed a dynamic that we were seeing. We were already addressing it we just didn't name it trafficking. It was one of those that we were already doing a lot of this work we just needed to be more intentional about the work. The region four [HT work group] really brought other states we were interacting with to the table with the same intention, so that we can better collaborate to address the needs.

He also included an example of a simple way to link government agency employees from different states for the benefit of the collaborative and to provide opportunities for information or knowledge sharing.

> They [different states] create a joint training where people can meet their counterparts from the other state, but also it helps to understand even when you pick up the phone, who do you need to reach out to? It may not be a full protocol, but it establishes a more clear [sic] communication structure, so that when a case comes up we know who we're

collaborating with. They know who they're collaborating with. Then we can help facilitate that.

Participant 8 described how, through her ties with the local government, specifically the Attorney General's Office and various human trafficking agencies, she was able to interlink the government with certain firms to provide services to victims and their families.

> We have 10 sub-committees and we're branching out to an 11th. At that time when I arrived here, there were three regional task forces. We now have five, with the sixth launching tomorrow. There's a lot of collaboration in terms of just those efforts. We're providing guidance and oversight at the state level with supporting the community level initiatives and the boots on the ground. Where things are really getting done in terms of education, prevention, and the creation of direct services for victims and survivors. We've been able to engage people in a multi-disciplinary approach. People who are invested in contributing their time because it's all volunteer efforts. Whether it be legal innovations and pro-bono attorneys, a network of pro-bono attorneys around the state, or if it's sexual assault nurse examiners and forensic nurse coordinators. It's the ability to help coordinate all the efforts and engage those and feel pretty passionate about contributing to the end of the human trafficking movement.

Interaction, specifically with others outside the organization, is essential because learning takes place in social settings where individuals exchange dialogue and interact with others (Leavy, 2014). In short, interaction facilitates learning among individuals and organizations, and the shared experiences of the participants support this idea.

**Collective and team learning.** As previously stated, organizational learning refers to processes of individual and collective learning, both inside and between organizations (Prange, 1999). Because of their similarities team learning and collective learning were combined as one theme. Recalling the study conducted by Dixon (1999) among six Canadian museums, the results revealed that learning across organizations is "too abstract a goal to be offered to groups" and that "the goal is better identified with a business outcome" with learning used simply as a way to reach the set outcome (p. 128). While the participants were together at the Learning Forum, they were able to learn as a group, but the collaboration ended once everyone returned home.

Despite the unfavorable outlook of collective learning from Dixon (1999), Watkins and Marsick (1993) encouraged team learning as one of their action imperatives of a learning organization. Marquardt (2011) mentioned team learning under the learning process in his portrayal of the learning organization. Finally, Senge (1990) also advocated for team learning as a way for teams to build and grow a learning organization. In support of the research, some of the participants' experiences with team learning and how they attempt to boost those collaborative learning opportunities are presented below:

> I think about a coalition I was involved in with both international NGOs and local non-profits. Everybody would come together once or twice a year, I think it was twice, and be able to network, but at the same time be able to engage in and learn about new initiatives from different organizations who were involved. And [sic] I think that's a lot of what we try to do at the state taskforce meetings here is have the regional taskforce members stand up and share what's going on in their region. They share what's successful, what events

> are coming up, share resources that are up there that might benefit other regions, and talk about some of the challenges they may have faced. (Participant 8)
>
> We do a lot of work as far as reaching out and doing a lot of inter-agency training, things like that to make sure we keep those relationships going and strong. (Participant 10)
>
> Let's say the council members were all trained together, but as far as the agencies they represent, we're always doing cross-training. If DCF is hosting a training, we will first push it out to our staff, but then we'll also push it out to the folks in the healthcare field, in the clinical field, and the education field so that we're all being trained together. Then, we will also, and all the agencies will also, host targeted training efforts that are really most applicable to those job roles. So, targeted trainings for nurses where some other folks that are affiliated like other healthcare staff, or things like that may attend, but the primary information is going to those folks. It's a mix. There's [sic] targeted training efforts that are important to getting those targeted areas trained, but then there's also cross-training. A lot of the stuff done through our task forces are open to anybody who's coming in. (Participant 3)

The team learning within the HT work group was not similar to the results of the study conducted by Dixon (1999) where the Canadian museum participants stopped interacting and relying on one another for assistance following the Learning Forum and everyone returned to their daily work routines. The HT work group members revealed that even after they've returned to their day-to-day jobs, they frequently contacted each other outside their formal meetings, for advice, perspective, and to simply exchange information. They rely on each other for support in

their day-to-day work routines and credit the leader of the HT work group with keeping everyone collaborating and learning together.

> We have a great working group! We have folks that have worked together for a really long time, just though multi-agency collaboration and learning from one another across the country. And [sic] you've got someone like "Joe" who really is a great leader in the sense that he's committed to corralling all these different people and personalities and making sure that we all stay on target. (Participant 4)

According to Senge (1990), team learning is a vital because teams, not individuals, are the fundamental learning unit of today's organizations. The interaction and collective learning examples provided by the HT work group participants is proof that continuous collaboration and team learning is another crucial component of not only organization learning but also promoting IOL in a multi-agency partnership.

Additionally, as an effective leader, it is most likely that "Joe" served as an insulator for the HT work group, filtering information from executive agency members and stakeholders and shielding them from anything that could interfere with their learning and collaboration as a group.

**Communities of practice.** The community of practice (COPs) refers to a "collection of people who engage on an ongoing basis in some common endeavor" or common practice (Eckert, 2006, p. 683). The community "emerges in response to some common interest or position and which plays an important role in forming their members' participation in, and orientation to, the world around them" (Eckert, 2006, p. 683). In addition to being a way for

members of various organizations to interact with each other, communities of practice (COPs) are an essential aspect of knowledge sharing. The communities provide opportunities for collaboration and a social platform that facilitates knowledge sharing.

The HT work group, which consists of people from different backgrounds that share a passion human trafficking and sexual exploitation in America, is an example of a COP. They are a group of individuals who have joined together to share knowledge with others with the same interests in HT. Through their formal and informal meetings, the HT work group creates a safe space to produce and exchange knowledge (Lee & Choi, 2013). The HT work group participants illustrated how they collaborate as a "community" (the actual term used by the participants) to facilitate learning and share knowledge throughout the multi-agency partnership.

> Essentially, anybody in that community who has a stake in the anti-trafficking initiatives, which really could be anybody, they come together to do more local community-based events. Whether it's training, staffing or cases amongst law enforcement, gap analysis for their community, identifying what their community is, and implementing trainings to address those gaps in their communities. (Participant 3)

> They're community forums essentially. Human trafficking task forces. That's where you have everyone and anyone in the community that is either contributing to the solution and ending sex trafficking or is interested in getting involved. We typically have a monthly meeting where there's a topic and we discuss it, and then help to talk about solutions. That's another way that we stay connected. (Participant 1)

Since these individuals are all invested in the same initiative, it is beneficial for them to develop shared meanings and aligned visions (Marsick & Watkins, 1994), accumulate knowledge and knowing throughout their communities (Wenger, 2004), and assists in knowledge management processes (Wenger, 2004). COPs can also create barriers to implementing any efforts if there isn't enough support from community members as Participant 3 explains:

> The task forces, I would say, are the most buy-in, most effective by community buy-in or the lack thereof. If the community thinks that there's not an issue, or if they think that maybe there is an issue, but it's not a big enough issue in their community, or there's no service providers or anybody to take up the torch and move it forward...the task force and its efforts are only as strong as the people who are participating in them.

Therefore, to limit potential barriers, it is important that these groups not only have common learning platforms, but they also share the same vision, mission, and overall understanding of the COP and the initiative in which they are collaborating. Even though the collaborative strives to minimize barriers, there are several challenges that arise surrounding inter-organizational learning in multi-agency partnerships. In the next section, many of these barriers and challenges are reported.

**Challenges Surrounding Inter-Organizational Learning and Collaboration**

As with anything, there are challenges and barriers that prevent or interfere with the process of inter-organizational learning and collaboration. Throughout the interviews, each participant verbalized the things they saw as barriers or challenges to the collaborative process.

The subsequent paragraphs summarize the major challenges mentioned by the HT work group participants.

Many of the challenges cited by the HT work group overlap with the components that were also considered necessary to facilitate inter-organizational learning as depicted in the research and outlined in Chapter IV. These challenges resemble the components of IOL as outlined by Mariotti's (2012) model, the learning organization imperatives defined by Watkins and Marsick's (1993) framework, the list of challenges surrounding the multi-agency model mentioned by Matthews et al. (2014), as well as other themes found in the literature review.

The major challenges or barriers to IOL and collaboration expressed by the HT work group participants include:

a. confidentially of the victims;
b. funding – minimal which causes organizations to compete;
c. lack of or difficulty with aligning mission, goals, and vision of various organizations;
d. vicarious trauma and burnout;
e. territorialism of service providers;
f. duplication of services within partnership;
g. creating a learning and collaborative culture;
h. communication;
i. limited cooperation and collaboration;
j. balancing learner and participant needs; and
k. capacity building and minimal best practices.

Of the multiple challenges and barriers to inter-organizational learning and collaboration revealed by the HT work group participants, limited funding, which creates competition, and the need for shared mission/goals, vision, and culture were mentioned most frequently. The HT participants also referred to the lack of empirical data and limited best practices available on inter-organizational learning specifically for partnerships like the HT work group partnership, which was a key purpose for conducting this study.

Lastly, it is important to note that all the challenges and barriers mentioned by the HT work group participants were consistent among the entire network despite the differences in states, agencies, experience, and specific job duties. Regardless of the agency or location, members within the learning network, or multi-agency partnership, experienced the same challenges.

**Opportunities for improvement**. In addition to outlining the challenges and barriers surrounding IOL and collaboration, the participants also vocalized the opportunities for improvement, regarding the components that facilitate IOL and collaboration. In their opinion, the HT work group participants believed implementing the following practices can improve or enhance IOL and multi-agency partnerships collaborations processes. These areas focused on compiling data and information to not only share with others but make the collaborations more intentional.

> The data is definitely something that needs to be improved. We need to get stronger in that realm. That's like our commitment this year is we've created this partnership, and we want to get the data so that those collaborations can be more intentional. (Participant 1)

Participant 8 mentioned the need for some formal space where knowledge and information could be shared through technology. She felt as though the resource could serve as a valuable tool to display what other agencies are doing as a way of sharing knowledge.

> If there's a database or a website or an intranet that members of the group could share resources...a tool like that where people are able to share, even put up their annual reports that they draft each year. Or help put some of the direct service providers that they support in their states on there so that if you had any questions...some of those things, just resource sharing. It would be great to develop something where people could outline what their approach is within their state. I just describe what I'm doing here in terms of collaboration and top down or ground up...whichever way you wanna [sic] look at it. We'd love to see how other people have structured it [their model] within their state.

Many participants mentioned not wanting to "recreate the wheel," and having an intranet or database that is accessible to all partners to share best practices and failures would provide a way to potentially limit failures and redundancy. The database would also aid with knowledge management which is another important component to IOL and collaboration.

**Characteristics of an Effective Multi-Agency Partnership That Facilitates IOL**

The characteristic of an effective multi-agency partnership that encourages and facilitates IOL based on the current literature and research was presented in Chapter 3. Each participant was asked to describe the characteristics of an ideal multi-agency collaborative based on their knowledge and experience. Their opinions are outlined in the following paragraphs.

First, Participant 8 emphasized the significance of equality and having all the partners "at the table" working together with clear goals. She also stressed the importance of communication.

> My opinion of an ideal multi-agency partnership or collaboration would be all of the community stakeholders at the table, contributing equally, setting goals, and achieving those goals. And, being able to determine short and long-term goals as a harmonious group. And, maintaining communication and sharing resources and, yeah. I mean, sharing resources. Communication is key. I think knowing what everybody believes are the goals, what they're willing to agree on in terms of a primary goal. I think that is, to me, investing the same amount of energy in achieving those goals. I think that is an ideal collaboration.

Later, Participant 8 gave her perspective on how change is impacted within a multi-agency partnership through collaboration:

> It's an ongoing process. I think it's getting people to understand that it's an ongoing process, and it's interesting because in a collaboration people are very industrious in the cause. Typically, they'll start to understand, with human trafficking, the more you dive into it, the more you understand the complexities of the crime, of the victim, of the survivor, of the needs, and I think people understand that some things take time. Some things can be achieved sooner than later, but there is change and a lot of people don't like change. So, if things are gonna [sic] change, I mean if things aren't changing, then we're not growing. Then, we're not becoming more effective, and we're not providing additional services. We're not educating people, training healthcare providers and

> hospitals and urgent care settings, and we're not addressing all the needs. We're not changing. We're not evolving.

In reference to creating an effective partnership, Participant 7 said the following, "All of us can improve our collaborative orientation. We can all become less selfish, but some of us are just more naturally gifted, oriented, towards creating a collaborative ethos. Those are the people that ought [sic] to lead," such collaborative efforts or multi-agency partnerships such as the region HT work group.

Participant 1 insistently provided the following, "I definitely feel like you need to make sure that you're working not at your small level, that you see the bigger picture, because change always happens at a higher level." This is important, especially with human trafficking where victims are often taken beyond state lines. Also, it is important to working in a collaborative because it forces individuals out of their comfort zone and makes them look at the thing through a broader lens.

In terms of creating the ideal multi-agency partnership, Participant 3 introduced an interesting perspective where he explained how, not only is it important that organizations have a collaborative culture, but he highlighted the importance of each individual living their life by collaborative principles.

> Collaboration is what I live my life by...I don't know how anybody does anything without being collaborative. You're running hamster wheel if you're not collaborating with other partners at any level, within any topic. I don't think that there's anything that

> wouldn't be enhances by collaboration. Everything from neighborhood-based projects to state level policy creation.

Participant 4 emphasized the significance of partnerships and how her agency has it embedded into core principles and legislation.

> So, partnership for us, so I've said it, is essential. There is a role for everyone to play in this movement, and partnership and collaboration is at the core of what we do. I mean, it's in our law. It's in the federal law, the four P's. Partnership is sort of a core tenet of what needs to happen, and not every single agency can do every single thing as it relates to response, or eradication, or disruption [sic]. So, you need to make partnerships to help you get either the victim/survivor to a place where they are achieving or receiving ideal care to help them through the recovery process. Or, [sic] whether you're working toward disbanding a trafficking network or making sure that one type of trafficking is no longer happening or possible or going to bear fruits in your community. So, multi-agency collaboration is essential. It's what drives success because everyone brings in their unique expertise and finds a way to work together towards fulfilling that response to trafficking.

Participant 5 focused on having joint vision and understanding across the collaborative as the key to having an effective multi-agency partnership.

> We have people across the board when it comes to their experience of this [human trafficking], but everybody came to the understanding and willingness to engage and say one state alone cannot address this issue in isolation. What can we do to work together to

collaborate? That in and of itself brought energy to the region group that we've been able to build upon. Fortunately, we've got major players in every state that have given us the leeway to engage in these conversations, and to commit not just to the thought of it, but the effort and energy to seeing this work continued forward.

Lastly, Participant 10 spoke of how all the various organizations active in the multi-agency partnership must ensure they are speaking the same language and looking at the same information because there is a lot of variation among each organization. "Different agencies have different definitions of particular issues and we've got to make sure that we're all looking at the same information or the same data or pulling it the same way to be able to move forward," Participant 10.

Most of what the participants expressed as the characteristics of an ideal multi-agency partnership had already been presented in the literature, models and frameworks of IOL and collaboration. Through the individual interviews, the participants revealed real-life experience to add to the theoretical content presented in Chapter 2.

**Dynamic Aspect of IOL and Collaboration**

Earlier in this chapter, the relational aspect of IOL and collaboration was discussed and encompassed the interactive components of the HT work group. In this section, the dynamic aspect of IOL and collaboration will be addressed. The term dynamic can be interpreted in many ways depending on the context. For the purpose of understanding what facilitates learning across the boundaries that physically separate different organization, it is important to analyze the term "dynamic" in relation to learning, since inter-organizational learning is the ultimate objective.

Therefore, dynamic learning is defined as “learning characterized by constant change, activity, and progress where learning lives, grows, connects and is extended beyond the boundaries of the day, beyond the physical locations, beyond using tools as digital substitutes, and even beyond due dates,” (Bell, 2019). This definition epitomizes everything the participants mentioned as being crucial components of learning with others outside their individual organization. More specifically, having a collaborative culture, maintaining communication, interacting with each other, sharing a similar vision and/or mission, engaging in team learning, and ensuring knowledge is created and shared throughout the partnership promotes dynamic learning opportunities within a partnership. Inter-firm learning and collaboration is a process that requires frequent activity and communication. Because this type of learning extends beyond the boundaries of the organization, city, state and sometimes country, learning and learning processes are not simply passed along. Inter-organizational learning must be grown organically through connections and then harvested and shared with other partners. Most importantly, it is something that must be embedded within each individual that participates in the inter-organizational learning process.

**Conclusion**

This chapter presented a summary of the major findings in terms of the perceptions of individuals involved in a multi-agency partnership and the components that facilitate IOL and collaboration. The data was gathered from 11 participants who all held full-time jobs with agencies, non-profits and other organizations that dealt with human trafficking and sexual

exploitation in some capacity. Many of the participants also participated in a multi-state collaborative also working to eliminate human trafficking known as the HT work group.

Of the various components mentioned by participants as necessary to facilitating IOL and collaboration, the most prevalent were communication, opportunities to engage and work as a team (relational); and ways to create and share knowledge. All 11 participants mentioned these components as important to IOL and collaboration. In addition, having a shared mission, vision and purpose and building trust among the different organizations and stakeholders were also commonly mentioned by participants.

Although many things were mentioned as being beneficial to the collaborative process, there were also several challenges brought up by participants that make it difficult for collaboration or act as barriers to the IOL process. Of that which was mentioned, the major challenges included differences in culture, variances in the mission and/or vision, and lack of or limited funding.

# CHAPTER V

# SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND CONCLUSIONS

## Introduction

In the preceding chapter, the results of the study and data analysis were presented. This chapter entails a summary of the study; discussion of the findings, which also includes a proposed framework; implications for practice; recommendations for further research, and the conclusion.

## Summary of the Study

This chapter begins with the summary of the study which includes the purpose and structure of this research. That section is then followed by a discussion of the key findings.

The purpose of this study was to understand the learning processes that take place in structured and unstructured learning spaces in public sector and non-profit organizations engaged in a multi-agency partnership. A learning organization framework developed by Watkins and Marsick (1993) and a model created by Mariotti (2012) were used to analyze and understand the dynamic, relational components of inter-organizational learning. The sample population of this study encompassed individuals actively engaged in an inter-organizational partnership with other non-profit and/or public sector organizations. A total of 11 individuals, with diverse backgrounds, job titles and years of experience, participated in semi-structured interviews over the phone.

The purpose of the interviews was to address the following research question:

> What are the perceptions and experiences of individuals engaged in multi-agency partnerships as it relates to the dynamic, relational component of inter-organizational learning in the public and non-profit sector?

To answer this research question, participants were asked to share their perceptions and experiences with inter-organizational learning within their affiliated multi-agency partnerships.

After data were collected and transcribed, it was then was coded and categorized into groups. Throughout this process, several themes were identified as key imperatives to collaboration and IOL. The themes include communication; interaction/relational opportunities; ways to create and share knowledge; having a shared mission, vision, and purpose; building trust; and have a collaborative culture. In addition, the following categories were formulated based on the information participants shared.

a. Why collaboration is important to inter-organizational learning;
b. What improves or enhances inter-organizational learning through collaboration;
c. Understanding the relational aspect of inter-organizational learning;
d. Challenges surrounding inter-organizational learning and collaboration; and
e. Characteristics of an effective multi-agency partnership that facilitates inter-organizational learning.

The next section contains a detailed description and discussion of the categories and other findings related to IOL determined in this study.

**Discussion of the Findings**

The purpose of this research was to understand the dynamic, relational components of IOL. This study explored IOL by analyzing the perceptions and experiences of individuals engaged in a multi-agency partnership developed to address a social problem, more specifically human trafficking and prostitution. The participants provided detailed accounts of their experience in multi-agency partnerships. Those details and explanations were organized into a

series of categories. The subsequent sections include explanations of the categories and their relevance to IOL based on the results of this study.

**Why collaboration is important to inter-organizational learning**. Inter-organizational learning is defined as the learning that occurs when two or more organizations collaborate (Shah et al., 2016). Therefore, collaboration can be viewed as the means through which IOL takes place. Mariotti's (2012) framework on IOL describes the process as multi-level, relational and heavily dependent on collaboration. Marsick and Watkins (2003) also emphasizes collaboration in their "Imperatives of a Learning Organization," where their third action imperative suggests that organizations encourage collaboration and team learning. Lastly, well-established and effective partnerships require collaboration to facilitate learning.

Not only is collaboration mandatory for inter-organizational learning processes, but there are benefits that come with collaborating and forming partnerships. These benefits are not limited to single actors, though there is not much research available on that topic (Inkpen, 1997; Mariotti, 2012). Collaboration is important to the IOL process because it provides structured and unstructured learning spaces for several different people to engage, interact, and potentially generate learning episodes (Mozzato & Bitencourt, 2014). As stated by one of the participants, collaboration "brings everyone to the table with the same intention to better collaborate." This form of interaction also provides opportunities for knowledge to be created and shared throughout the partnership for the purpose of becoming effective overall.

Oftentimes members within an organization endure burn-out and territorialism. The collaborative breaks up the monotony because the diversity among the group provides access to different perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds. Introducing new perspectives changes the

group dynamic and allows the partnership to "progress a little more" by offering fresh ideas from new partners. Because social issues, such as HT (human trafficking), are complex and multi-faceted, a multifarious approach is necessary. Collaboration provides the knowledge, expertise and efforts of multiple people across a variety of disciplines and organizations. More specifically, HT issues are very demanding, yet a limited amount of services are available. Through collaboration, the multi-agency partnership shares responsibilities and can accomplish more as a network.

Lastly, collaboration provides opportunities for team learning and communication with other agencies in other states, which is beneficial to HT where victims are often trafficked across state lines and to different jurisdictions. Team learning is made possible through the collaborative networks. Through those same networks, knowledge is transferred between those engaged in the partnership, thereby making collaboration beneficial to knowledge transfer in a multi-agency partnership.

**What improves or enhances inter-organizational learning through collaboration.** Also, through this study, several components were identified that facilitate IOL and enhance collaboration. Many of these mechanisms are consistent with the components of a learning organizations as defined by the Watkins and Marsick (1993) and Mariotti (2012) frameworks for understanding inter-organizational learning. The three major components were: communication, opportunities to engage and work as a team (relational), and ways to create and share knowledge. In addition, participants cited having a shared mission, vision and purpose, and building trust among the different organizations and stakeholders as crucial components of effective collaboration and IOL in multi-agency partnerships. The next section includes a proposed

framework that displays the themes in reference to the inter-organizational learning processes in a multi-agency partnership (Figure 6). Since team work and relational opportunities is included in the themes and therefore a part of the conceptual framework, this section entails a discussion on understanding the relational aspect of inter-organizational learning.

***Proposed IOL model based on findings.*** In this section, a proposed model of IOL based on the findings and describes each aspect of the model. The conceptual framework used for this study included Watkins and Marsick's (1993; 1997; 2003) framework of a learning organization and Mariotti's (2012) deutero-learning model of inter-organizational learning (Figure 3 in Chapter 1). While many of the components mentioned by participants were supported by the research on IOL, a more accurate account of IOL based on the findings of this study are presented in Figure 6.

The Dynamic, Relational IOL Framework, which is depicted in Figure 6, is a proposed model of the IOL processes within a multi-agency partnership created by this researcher based on the findings of this study. The purpose of proposed model is to show how the various components of IOL and collaboration interact throughout three different levels, individual, team, and organizational. The basis of the proposed model follows the framework and components of IOL and learning organizations described by Watkins and Marsick (1993) and Mariotti (2012) but has been altered to depict the information presented by the region HT work group.

The three levels are clearly displayed in Figure 6. A dotted line borders the perimeter of the multi-agency partnership to represent the significance of having a shared purpose, mission and vision among the entire partnership. Between each of the three levels there is a double arrow sign that signifies the need for communication in both directions and between all levels. Within

each level (individual, team/group, and organization/community), which is depicted in columns, there is a set of components that are crucial components at that specific level. Those components facilitate learning to collaborate, learning to share knowledge, and learning to create knowledge together, which is displays at the bottom of each level in Figure 6. Lastly, another dual arrow sign spans across the entire three levels of the partnership. This arrow represents the importance of creating and promoting opportunities for dynamic learning throughout the whole multi-agency partnership.

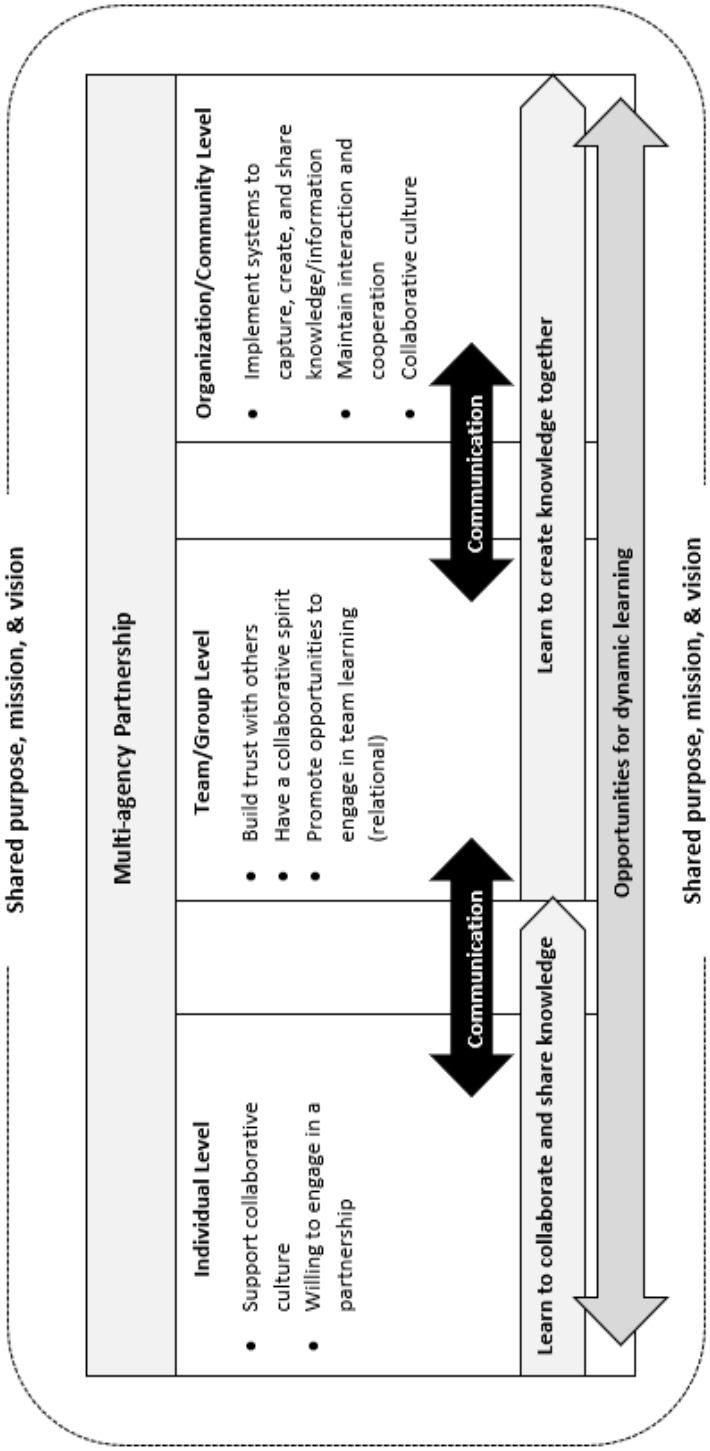


*Figure 6*. The Dynamic, Relational IOL framework.

In accordance with Watkins and Marsick's (1993) model of a learning organization, the IOL processes in multi-agency partnerships is separated into various levels: individual, group/team, and organization/community. These levels were defined by participant responses who referred to the individual, group, and organization or community levels.

At the individual level, two imperatives were identified. It was determined that individuals who participate in a multi-agency partnership, support a collaborative culture and are willing to engage in a partnership. By supporting and engaging in a partnership with other individuals, participants agree to collaborate and share knowledge and information. Social interaction and informal engagement create opportunities for open communication to take place, another crucial component to IOL.

***Communication.*** One issue with the multi-agency partnership approach presented by Matthews et al. (2014) revolved around inter-agency communication. In accordance with the findings of Matthews et al., it was revealed from the data of this study that communication is one of the most vital components of collaboration and IOL. Dialogue, which necessitates open minds and open lines of communication (Watkins & Marsick, 1993), is one of the dimensions at the "individual" level of Watkins and Marsick's (1993) learning organization model. Free and open communication is also mandatory for learning to take place, but in a multi-agency partnership, it is not enough to promote dialogue and communication only at the individual level.

According to Leavy (2014) understanding and knowledge is socially constructed, therefore meaningful learning occurs through socialization and interaction. Without the ability to communicate with others, learning is not possible. In a multi-agency partnership where stakeholders reside in different locations, communication is even more significant. So, a varied

and consistent means of communication is necessary at all levels of the partnership as depicted by the dual arrows labeled “communication” and positioned between the three different levels displayed in Figure 6.

The significance of communication discovered in this study supports the ideas of Watkins and Marsick (1993) and the findings of other research already presented in Chapter 3. Because IOL does not occur naturally (White, 2014), lack of or insufficient communication hinders opportunities for inter-organizational learning. The preferred method of communication among the partnership was face-to-face; however, in-person communication is difficult for various reasons such as physical locations and limited time. So, the HT work group partnership implemented multiple forms of communicating across organizational and state boundaries to facilitate learning and engagement.

***Culture***. Another theme that arouse in this study was the need for a collaborative culture where learning is promoted and encouraged. Of the components revealed in this study, culture was mentioned the least by participants. This could be because the HT work group participants were not consciously aware of the culture in which they were a part of. It is possible that the work group participants unconsciously experienced culture and therefore did not realized the significant role it has on IOL and collaboration. Nevertheless, of the few individuals who mentioned culture as an important component, it was evident, through their responses, that the culture of the organization and the partnership highly influenced the learning that takes place and the effectiveness of the collaborative.

The individuals involved in the HT work group willingly participated in the partnership without additional compensation. Therefore, at some point, intrinsic motivation as well as

empathy for the HT victims encouraged the individuals to join the multi-agency partnership where they engaged in team learning opportunities to create and share knowledge for the purpose of addressing the issues surrounding HT.

The learning organization framework presented by Watkins and Marsick (1993) was based on the idea that learning is a highly social process that occurs at the individual, team and organizational level. A lot of informal learning takes place throughout the HT work group and is the result of a learning climate and culture. According to Nabong (2015), organizations that have a learning culture encourage continuous learning and support the concept that all parts of the system impact each other. When individuals support and believe in collaborative culture, they approach the partnership with the readiness and desire to collaborate and learn with other people. The findings of this study support the idea that individuals must support a culture where collaboration and learning is promoted, and the organization should also develop and maintain a collaborative culture. In addition, the findings also revealed how the culture of an organization influences its members beyond the boundaries of that organization.

***Shared mission, vision and purpose.*** Public sector organizations were targeted in this study because of the limited understanding of shared vision among them (White, 2014). Senge (1990) included shared vision as one of the five disciplines for building a learning organization. Shared vision is an important part of the learning organization because it is the ability to foresee the future that the group seeks to create (Senge, 1990). When a shared vision is present, a sense of togetherness is created among the group where individuals feel as though they are bounded together through shared goals and aspirations (Fillion et al., 2015).

The findings of this study support the literature on the importance of having a shared vision to promote a learning organization and therefore inter-organizational learning. Participants expressed that the purpose and mission of each person should be identified from the start of the partnership. Then, the various missions of the different organizations must be "melded" together to create a shared mission of the partnership with the assistance of their skilled leader facilitating the partnership along the way. In addition, the partnership benefits from having a shared mission, vision and purpose because it increases their effectiveness and their ability to address each other's needs. Most importantly, the shared interests and goals create common learning platforms which motivate participants to remain active and engaged in the partnership (Ameli & Kayes, 2011). In accordance with the research, the results of this study concluded that having a shared sense of purpose as well as a shared mission and vision is critical to a partnership because it fosters genuine commitment rather than compliance (Senge, 1990) among other things. As a result, the proposed IOL framework (Figure 6) outlines the entire multi-agency partnership with "shared purpose, mission, and vision" due to its vital role at all three levels of the partnership.

***Trust.*** Trust "requires the establishment of the adequate balance between competition, cooperation, trust, stability, and dynamism" (Mozatto et al., 2015, p. 100). Trust is listed as one of the processes conducive to building inter-organizational relationships on Mozatto, Bitencourt and Grzybovski's (2015) inter-organizational learning continuum. This learning continuum outlines the processes, inputs, and outputs of IOL.

In a partnership, trust allows participants to have an interpersonal connection, feel motivated and engaged, and it creates a sense of openness among the group (Lee & Choi, 2013). If trust does not exist, participants are less likely to cooperate and freely engage in learning out

of fear. Establishing trust throughout a partnership also enables IOL (Mozatto, Bitencourt & Grzyboyski, 2008). Thus, building trust is found under the team/group level of the proposed model (Figure 6). The research presented by Mozatto, Bitencourt, and Grzyboyski (2015) coincides with the findings of this study where participants categorized building trust as a challenging, yet core component of establishing inter-organizational relationships.

***Ways to share and create knowledge.*** Mariotti's (2012) framework of IOL divided the entire process into three components: learning to create knowledge, learning to share knowledge, and learning to collaborate. Each of the three components included the act of "learning" which highlights the significance of learning in IOL processes. This study supported Mariotti's research, which cited the importance of establishing ways for individuals engaged in the partnership to share knowledge and information. In a multi-agency partnership that is comprised of so many individuals in different geographic locations, knowledge management systems are necessary to distribute information as swiftly as it is obtained. This study also revealed that there are many challenges that unfold throughout the process of attempting to create new knowledge within a partnership. This remains an area that requires more understanding of the processes that facilitate the creation of knowledge within a multi-agency partnership.

For individuals to share knowledge, they must collaborate and interact with others through a learning network that is created through partnerships. Through these networks, which are comprised of different partners with diverse skills, knowledge is co-created (Leonard-Barton, 1995). Similar to Mariotti's (2012) deutero-learning framework that outlined IOL, participants should learn to collaborate and share knowledge at the individual level. The processes at each level of the partnership increases the capability for inter-organizational learning to occur.

Establishing the ability to collaborate and share knowledge at the individual level complements the remaining levels (group and organizational). Furthermore, each of these processes facilitate learning and promote opportunities for participants to create knowledge at the group and organizational level for the purpose of building inter-organizational knowledge (Figure 6).

***Relational opportunities.*** "Learning is better conceived as dynamic and relational, embedded in the network of relationships formed by individuals, groups, and organizational actors, "(Mariotti, 2012, p. 220). Relational and interactive opportunities are central to the collaborative learning process. Through collaboration, interaction/cooperation, team learning and other relational opportunities, participants can do things such as, obtain credibility through the partnership, boost collaborative learning opportunities, and maintain inter-organizational relationships. To support these findings, the model of IOL as a dynamic process through co-operation created by Crossan et al. (1999) included a level of interaction/cooperation.

The purpose of the relational component at the team/group level in the proposed model (Figure 6) is to demonstrate the relational aspect of IOL that takes place in both structured and unstructured social spaces and results in learning episodes (Mozzato & Bitencourt, 2014). Participants frequently mentioned the need to engage and interact with each other to share information and enhance collaboration. Interaction refers to the ability to "interlink various economic agents" in a way "that maintains inter-organizational relationships" (Mozzato et al., 2015, p. 100). Therefore, the capacity to create opportunities for partners to cooperate and interact with one another aids in maintaining IOL relationships. In addition, the more organizations engage with each other, within the partnership, the greater the chances they will learn from one another (Austin, 2000).

At the group level, it is also important that opportunities to engage in team learning are promoted. Team learning is beneficial to multi-agency partnerships because it allows partners to share information about their culture, experiences and perspectives with each other in a manner that facilitates learning among the group (Ameli & Kayes, 2011). At this level, individuals have formed linkages with people from other organizations and they must build trust among their group. The next two sections include a discussion of the various levels of relational opportunities found in Watkins and Marsick's (1993) model and Mariotti's (2012) framework.

Watkins and Marsick's (1993) model of a learning organization began at the individual level of learning. At this level, there are two dimensions that include: 1) promote inquiry and dialog and 2) create continuous learning opportunities. At the team level of learning, groups and networks work together to disperse knowledge while individuals learn to work collaboratively (Watkins & Marsick, 1993). As previously mentioned, learning occurs during interaction and socialization (Leavy, 2014), so engaging in team learning and other relational opportunities promotes continuous learning. Also, as individuals interact with others, they are able to share their views and inquire into the views of others, which promotes inquiry and dialogue (Marsick & Watkins, 2003).

The first level of Mariotti's (2012) deutero-learning framework is where individuals learn to collaborate with others. According to Lorenzoni and Lipparini (1999) this stage is the act of "learning by interacting" (p. 331). At this phase, partnerships are formed with other organizations with the intent to learn and collaborate. This level of interaction refers to the relational component of IOL and is depicted in Figure 6 as the "team/group level" of the partnership.

***Opportunities for dynamic learning.*** Relational and dynamic learning opportunities are situations where partners can collaborate, share ideas, and engage in discussion. The ability to interact with other knowledge seekers through dynamic learning opportunities outside everyone's work environment promotes continuous and meaningful learning through social interaction (Leavy, 2014). While Watkins and Marsick (1993) promoted continuous learning, inquiry, and dialogue at the individual level, dynamic learning is not strictly considered a single level process. More specifically, because dynamic learning is learning characterized by constant change, activity and growth that extends beyond multiple barriers (ShakeUpLearning.com, 2018), it should be promoted among various levels of a partnership. So, the proposed framework (Figure 6) displays dynamic learning as a process that should be facilitated at the individual, team/group and organization/community levels to facilitate IOL.

**Challenges surrounding inter-organizational learning and collaboration.** While examining the IOL processes, challenges and barriers that interfere with collaboration and learning were also revealed. This section briefly discusses the key challenges and barriers to IOL and collaboration as described by participants.

At the individual level, vicarious trauma, burnout, lack of commitment and limited cooperation, and isolation act as barriers that make IOL and collaboration more difficult. When individuals possess or develop these dispositions, it hinders their readiness to actively support a collaborative, communicate with other stakeholders, and actively engage with others in the partnership. Therefore, to minimize these challenges, it is essential that individuals support a collaborative culture and are eager to engage in a partnership for the purpose of that initiative.

In terms of creating a collaborative partnership and learning together, there are more potential barriers at the team/group level than the individual level.

These include:

1. lack of trust among the group members,
2. having limited knowledge within the team,
3. having to balance the needs of the service recipients and the collaborative participants simultaneously, and
4. deciphering the varied word meanings, regulations and other parameters that accompany a multi-agency partnership.

The probability of more challenges is enhanced at team/group level because where the majority of the collaboration and learning takes place. To address the potential barriers at this phase, groups should strive to create a safe learning environment that is comprised of diverse individuals. The participants become more likely to collaborate, communicate, and share ideas through multiple relational opportunities.

The final level of the partnership is the organizational/community level. At this stage of the partnership, the barriers are geared more towards organizational issues and include the following:

1. frequent turnover of employees,
2. the need to maintain the confidentiality of clients, and
3. duplication of services among the partnership.

As with any industry, when there are multiple vendors or organizations providing the same service, companies begin to feel as though they must compete against one another. Once

the idea of competitiveness is rooted, organizations and individuals are more hesitant to participate and work together as one in a collaboration.

Another barrier at this level is limited or scarce funding. Without adequate funding, organizations cannot sustain and all IOL comes to an end. One advantage to inter-organizational collaboration and learning is it provides methods to maximize efforts when funding is limited through partnership and collective efforts.

To conclude, there are potential challenges that pose a threat to IOL over the entire multi-agency partnership. One of which is breakdown in communication that can be a challenge at both the team/group level and organization/community level. For this reason, in the proposed framework, communication is placed between all three levels of the partnership. Differences in the mission and vision of the partnership also make it difficult for partners to establish an effective learning collaborative. To facilitate learning processes, it is imperative that the entire partnership has a shared purpose, mission and vision. The collective vision and mission should be established at the beginning of the partnership to ensure everyone understands the big picture and how to accomplish the goals of the partnership (Watkins & Marsick, 1993).

**Characteristics of an effective multi-agency partnership that facilitates inter-organizational learning.** In this study, collaboration, communication, and shared vision were named, by participants, as the core characteristics of an effective multi-agency partnership. This overlaps with the key components that facilitates IOL also identified in this study (Table 8).

A partnership sustains when the individuals within it share commonalities, such as the same goals or vision. Senge (1990) emphasized the significance of a learning organization having a shared vision. Having a similar vision and mission benefits the formation of the

partnership and aids in getting everyone in the same room for the first time. The HT work group participants expressed how everyone in the partnerships wanted to be successful because they know in turn, they will prevent someone from becoming a victim. That commonality is what motivated everybody in the HT work group to ensure they had a seat "at the table" and were "eager to learn" (Participant 8).

Once the partnership is established based on the shared mission and vision, the partners begin to build trust and establish their own culture within the partnership. Finally, the ongoing relational opportunities facilitate the creation and sharing of knowledge. Learning takes place through collaboration and communication or learning by interacting (Lorenzoni & Lipparini, 1999) and the knowledge is shared with other partners, organizations, and the community. These findings further support majority of the components revealed in Mariotti's (2012) model and Watkins and Marsick's (1993) dimensions of a learning organization.

**Further Discussion**

While a substantial amount of the findings supported the research presented in Chapter 2 on IOL and collaboration, the results of this study exposed a different description of the multi-agency partnership model. The multi-agency HT partnership examined in this study differs from the multi-agency partnership model defined by Matthews et al. (2014) to address the needs of prostitutes. As far as similarities are concerned, both partnership models focus on providing services and seek to reduce or eliminate the issues surrounding a social problem. The two also shared common challenges and barriers, specifically within the multi-agency processes. However, unlike the model presented by Matthews et al. (2014), the HT work group multi-agency partnership does not operate as a hub where referrals, assistance, and access to various

programs are passed along to specific organizations. Instead, the HT work group uses the partnership as a method to collaborate, share information, increase capabilities, and become more effective at addressing and eliminating human trafficking and prostitution.

**Implications for Practice**

As depicted in this study, inter-organizational learning multi-agency partnerships create networks that are beneficial to managing and resolving social issues surrounding human trafficking and prostitution in the U.S. Inter-organizational learning is a complex, multi-level process that requires more understanding of the actual scenarios and processes involved (Mozzato & Bittencourt, 2014). According to Mozzato and Bitencourt (2014), "the process of inter-organizational learning warrants investigation, as its scope of analysis needs widening and deepening" (p. 285). This study adds to the current research on inter-organizational learning as a method for managing social problems, such as human trafficking and prostitution that transcend state boundaries and require a diverse approach.

The data revealed in this study provides more understanding of the learning processes that may take place within inter-organizational multi-agency partnerships that resemble the HT work group or are a part of the public and non-profit sector. While the study on the HT work group slightly widens the scope of analysis of inter-firm learning and provides HRD practitioners with another scenario to analyze inter-organizational learning processes, the findings could have far-reaching implications for several other groups of people based on their mission, purpose, and program design. Persons interested in inter-organizational learning processes for various reasons will find the results of this study useful, so this study will be available through ProQuest

Dissertation and Theses Global. Additionally, this study offers insight to HRD practitioners, managers, supervisors, organization leaders, and other potential stakeholders.

For persons interested in inter-organizational learning processes, this study provides knowledge of the necessary components of creating a multi-agency partnership by examining the multi-agency partnership of one specific work group, case. It gives the perceptions and experiences of a group of individuals engaged in an IOL collaborative where partners established a collective vision and mission, built trust, collaborated for the purpose of fulfilling their mission, and shared knowledge throughout the partnership. The data collected in this study identified components that facilitate inter-organizational learning and collaboration in a multi-agency partnership focused on addressing the social issues surrounding human trafficking in one region of the U.S.

Human Resource Development practitioners, supervisors, and other organization leaders will find the findings of this study beneficial not only for addressing social issues but also for facilitating IOL in any multi-agency partnership or joint venture. While the data was collected from individuals engaged in reducing sex trafficking and prostitution, the findings are not strictly limited to social issues. The details of this study seem to provide evidence of methods and processes that are effective in an ongoing, multi-agency collaborative and adaptable to any objective, initiative, or purpose.

This research project also gives HRD practitioners and leaders pertinent information about the barriers and challenges that multi-agency partnerships endure. The findings provide a list of best practices and failures surrounding multi-agency partnership learning and collaboration as described by the HT work group participants. If leaders and practitioners have

prior knowledge of the components that promote inter-firm learning, they will be more successful at implementing and facilitating those processes within their organization. Furthermore, understanding of the challenges and barriers that hinder inter-organizational learning processes reduces the likelihood of potential failures in multi-agency partnerships. The findings of this study and the proposed IOL framework provide the blueprint for HRD practitioners and organization leaders seeking to implement a multi-agency partnership that implements effective inter-organizational learning processes. Additionally, these findings can also be beneficial to helping HRD practitioners build capacity and increase the effectiveness among public sector organizations working in partnerships to minimize social issues in America.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

As previously mentioned, the goal of this study was to examine the dynamic, relational learning experiences in a multi-agency partnership that was developed to address social problems in the U.S. Participants were interviewed, and the data were collected to address one research question related to the goal of the study. After analyzing the data, significant findings and themes were revealed. Many of the findings of this study support the research and conceptual framework selected for this research. Though the findings are relevant and significant, there are limitations and considerations.

One limitation is the findings of this study represents a small percentage of individuals engaged in a multi-agency partnership. Data were collected from one partnership comprised of individuals from eight different states within one region in America. The results of this study are not generalizable to all states, regions, partnerships, or organizations. The perceptions and experiences of individuals could vary among different partnerships. Additionally, there are other

members within this partnership, so it is possible that their perceptions and experiences vary from that of the participants revealed in this study.

Another limitation is based on the conceptual framework used for the study. Mariotti's (2012) deutero-learning model, along with the research on inter-organizational learning, is limited in scope, and requires more research and understanding (Mozzato & Bitencourt, 2014). Further research should be conducted on the inter-organizational learning processes in multi-agency partnerships. There is a need for more empirical, practical, and applied research on IOL processes in the public sector, specifically with non-profit organizations, state, and government agencies. The proposed conceptual framework (Figure 6) created from the findings of this study is needs to be tested empirically in a larger, more diverse context. This limitation provides an opportunity for future research. It would also be suitable for a follow-up study examining the same partnership and their progression with learning to create shared knowledge. It would be interesting to explore the perceptions and experiences of more stakeholders, including the leader of the HT work group, and attend the in-person meetings and seminars.

An action research study, which is participatory/experiential and reflective research that is focused on solving practical problems that exist in organizations and/or communities (Argyris & Schön, 1991) would also aid the HT work group with their initiative on human trafficking, sexual exploitation and prostitution. This potential study could incorporate various key stakeholders all working together in a partnership to develop possible solutions to the problems and test those solutions.

Another potential follow-up study could be conducted on understanding how the region HT work group, or any multi-agency partnership, develops and maintains a collaborative culture.

It would also be interesting to follow up with Participant 7 of the HT work group to determine whether he has additional knowledge or insight on knowledge creation.

Lastly, through this process, I learned that another region plans to create an HT work group like the one examined in this study. It would be enlightening to witness and document the formation of this partnership from the beginning stages. It would also be interesting to see if the region HT work group can be emulated by applying the findings of this study to other region HT work group partnership.

**Conclusion**

The inter-organizational learning processes present in a multi-agency partnership developed to address social issues, specifically human trafficking and prostitution, were examined in this study. The purpose of this study was to understand the learning processes that take place in structured and unstructured learning spaces in public and non-profit sector organizations engaged an inter-firm partnership. While inter-organizational leaning networks have been found beneficial and essential to the management of social problems (Provan & Milward, 2001; White, 2014), minimal research is present on cross-sector learning processes.

Recently, there has been an increase in the amount of studies conducted on inter-organizational leaning, but more in-depth information is needed to completely understand the "scenarios" and "processes" (Mozzato & Bitencourt, 2014, p. 286) of inter-firm learning.

I conducted a qualitative descriptive case study using a conceptual framework comprised of Watkins and Marsick's (1993; 1997; 2003) framework of a learning organization and Mariotti's (2012) deutero-learning model of inter-organizational learning. A total of 11 individuals engaged in a multi-agency partnership spanning across one U.S. government agency

regional territory were interviewed. The participants work experience in the human trafficking, prostitution, and sex exploitation arena ranged from four to 44 years. Various themes were identified during the analysis phase which revealed key components crucial to facilitating IOL and collaboration among the partnership. Continuous communication, having relational opportunities for the team to engage and collaborate, and implementing ways to create and share knowledge were the top three IOL imperatives discovered. Also, I determined that partnerships should establish a shared mission, vision and purpose; build trust; and have a collaborative culture to cultivate learning throughout the group. The literature suggested that multi-agency partnerships and inter-organizational learning can be a strategic, cost efficient way to deal with complicated social issues (Provan & Milward, 2001; White, 2014). The findings of this study provide a framework for gaining more in-depth understanding of the inter-organizational learning processes as a way to address society's problems. Therefore, this study adds to the literature, knowledge and research on inter-organizational learning processes in the non-profit and public sectors, specifically with organizations focused on addressing social problems such as human trafficking and sex work in the U.S., based on the perceptions and experience of one multi-agency partnership.

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# APPENDIX A

# IRB APPROVAL FORMS

DIVISION OF RESEARCH

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

**APPROVAL OF RESEARCH**
**Using Expedited Procedures**

May 22, 2018

| | |
|---|---|
| Type of Review: | Initial Review Submission Form |
| Title: | Examining the Dynamic Relational Inter-Organizational Learning Processes Among Public Sector Multi-Agency Partnerships |
| Investigator: | Michael Beyerlein |
| IRB ID: | IRB2018-0374D |
| Reference Number: | 076492 |
| Funding: | None |
| Documents Approved: | *IRB Application Version 1.1*<br>*Employee Consent Form Version 1.2*<br>*Recruitment Email Version 1.0*<br>*Questions for IRB Approval 5-16-18 Version 1.1* |
| Special Determinations: | Written consent in accordance with 45 CF 46.117/ 21 CFR 50.27 |
| Risk Level of Study: | Not Greater than Minimal Risk under 45 CFR 46 / 21 CFR 56 |
| Review Category: | Category 6: Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes<br>Category 7: Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies |

Dear Michael Beyerlein:

The IRB approved this research from 05/22/2018 to 05/21/2019 inclusive.

Hello (Participant's name),

My name is Latoya Morris and I am a PhD student in the Educational Human Resource Development department at Texas A&M University. I have progressed through the coursework and the next phase of my degree program requires that I conduct research in the form of a dissertation. For my research, I am interested in exploring inter-organizational learning processes. More specifically, I have decided to examine the learning processes within multi-agency partnerships focused on reducing social problems surrounding street-level prostitution. I am contacting you to ask for your cooperation in this research study.

Regarding the study, I am seeking to interview (over the phone, preferably since I live in College Station, TX) **employees** who provide training to **other employees** affiliated with the prostitute diversion initiatives. The purpose of the interview is to obtain information about the cross-sector learning experiences of those involved in a court-support collaborative partnership. Through these interviews, I plan to examine the inter-organizational learning processes that are present throughout the entire partnership. I am not interested in the clients or any legal information whatsoever. I am solely seeking to understand the learning experiences of employees who train other employees within the partnership and the collaboration that takes place. Since I need a sample population that represents the entire partnership, I would like to interview multiple (2-3) individuals from various organizations within the partnership. The purpose of this study is to examine the learning processes to find ways to improve the effectiveness of the partnership for the benefit of society in general.

Would you be willing to assist me with this task? Also, are you aware of any organization(s) that might be willing to speak with me? I know you are extremely busy and I understand if you are unable to assist me with this task. Thank you for your time, it is greatly appreciated!

Respectfully submitted,

Latoya Morris

IRB NUMBER: IRB2018-0374D
IRB APPROVAL DATE: 05/22/2018

**Interview Protocol and Questions**

**Introduction:**

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. Before we begin, I would like to tell you a little about the purpose of this interview. I am a PhD student at Texas A&M University working on my dissertation which is based on inter-organizational learning processes among multi-agency partnerships.

Inter-organizational learning refers to the partnering of various organizations working together to become more efficient over time through collaboration, knowledge creation and shared learning experiences. Multi-agency partnerships consist of several organizations working together collaboratively to enhance their skills and capacity while learning collectively to address complex problems. Though they can be effective, researchers suggest that such multi-agency partnerships are difficult to develop and sustain. Therefore, the purpose of this interview is to focus on the learning processes that are currently taking place within various multi-agency partnerships to find out the ways members work to enhance the partnership through increased learning and more opportunities for effective collaboration.

To understand the current processes and determine areas of improvement, I will ask approximately 13 questions along with some probing questions. I am solely interested in what you have to say with as must detail as you are willing to share. I estimate that the interview will not exceed one hour. There are no right or wrong answers. Your responses will be kept confidential and personal information will not be shared or released. Your identity will be protected, pseudonym names will be used. You will receive a consent form to review and sign before the interview. You will also be briefed at the beginning and end of the interview about the interview protocol, study process, and what to expect. Are you okay with this process as I have described?

(If yes and after consent form is reviewed and signed)

If you are ready, let's get started!

**Opening Question**

**Q1.** Tell me a little about your role at work, your current job title, and how many years you've worked with _____ (name of organization)

**Probe:** What you do enjoy most about your job here?

**Q2.** How do you work with other agencies?

**Probe:** Tell me about some of these experiences

**Probe:** How has that changed over time?

**Listen for-changes over time, patterns, omissions, challenges, successes**

- Sharing information
- Sharing knowledge
- Cross training
- Cross collaboration

**Q3.** Tell me about your organization's mission and vision.

**Probes:** How does this align with the purpose of the multi-agency partnership?

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Does the multi-agency partnership overall have a mission and vision statement? What do you know about it?

**Q4.** What does the multi-agency partnership look like to you?

**Listen for evidence or lack of evidence regarding-**

- Communication
- Trust
- Collaboration
- Evidence of effectiveness in processes
- How informed do they seem to be? How do they learn what's going on? What is the breadth of their awareness of the multi-agency partnership – narrow, specialization or broad and systemic? Both are important – excellence grown in small parts as well as infrastructure develop overall to enable that.

**Q5.** Please describe the collaboration or engagement you have with individuals from other organizations in the multi-agency partnership

**Listen for-**

- Collaborative efforts
- Shared learning experiences
- Knowledge creation experiences
- Challenges and how they are addressed

**Probe:** Please give me an example of the collaboration or engagement that takes place with individuals from other organizations in the multi-agency partnership.

**Probe:** Please give me an example of a time when collaboration or engagement was beneficial to a specific task or assignment.

**Q6.** What does learning look like within the multi-agency partnership? What enables those learning processes to take place?

**Probes:**

- How do you contribute to the learning processes within the multi-agency partnership?
  - **Listen for**-evidence of learning-based definition given.
- How do you impact change within the multi-agency partnership?
- Have you ever initiated any improvements to current processes within the overall partnership?
  - Tell me about these processes within the multi-agency partnership.

**Q6a.** Formal trainings allow for increased learning opportunities, knowledge sharing and collaboration. Tell me about the training you provide.

**Probe:** Who do you train? How often? Follow up trainings?

**Listen for-**

- Sharing knowledge
- Creating new knowledge
- Transferring knowledge

- Shared learning

**Q7.** What is being done to improve collaboration within the multi-agency partnership?

**Probes:**

- Who is involved in that process?
- What does that consist of?
- How is it working?
- How do you know?

**Q7a.** What are you doing at an individual level to increase collaboration within the multi-agency partnership?

**Probes:**

- How is that working?
- How do you know?

**Q8.** What is being done at the organization level to improve collaboration in your organization?

**Probes:**

- Who is involved in that process?
- What does that consist of?
- How is it working?
- How do you know?

**Q8a.** What are you doing at an individual level to improve collaboration in your organization?

**Probes:**

- What does that consist of?
- How is it working?
- How do you know?

**Q9**. Describe the interaction you have with others within your own organization that relates to learning and to collaboration.

**Probe:** Please give me an example of the interaction that takes place within your own organization

**Listen for-**

- Collaborative efforts
- Shared learning experiences
- Knowledge creation experiences
- Challenges and how they are addressed

**Q9a.** What helps or hurts the interaction and collaboration processes?

**Probe:** How has interaction changed over time?

**Q10.** Please give me an example when efforts to collaborate with others were hindered by something else such as priority of another task or lack of time.

**Q11.** What kind of barriers to collaboration and job performance have you faced in your current position?

**Probe:** How does this effect the multi-agency partnership?

**Listen for-**

- Trust issues
- Collaboration problems
- Frequent turnover
- Lack of leadership

**Q12.** What recommendations do you have for the multi-agency partnership that would enhance inter-organizational learning processes?

**Probe:** Why?

**Follow up:** What recommendations do you have for your organization that would enhance its effectiveness and fulfillment of their mission?

**Probe.** If the inter-agency partnership was working great, what would it look like?

**Q13.** Is there anything you would like to talk about or share that we have not already discussed?

**Closing:** We've reached the end of the interview. I would like to thank you for participating and donating your time. I have enjoyed your stories and appreciate you for sharing your experiences.
Interview Reflection for Researcher:

- Important themes or ideas
- How was this interview different from others? How was it similar?
- How was this leader different from other organization leaders? Same?
- Long quotes or unique statements?
- Anything unexpected surface?
- Strong feeling or emotion present? Overall attitude?
- Rich, thick descriptions?
- Any changes for next interview?

IRB NUMBER: IRB2018-0374D
IRB APPROVAL DATE: 05/22/2018

**APPROVAL**
**MODIFICATION OF PROTOCOL**
Using Expedited Procedures

October 04, 2018

| | |
|---|---|
| Type of Review: | IRB Amendment |
| Title: | Examining the Dynamic Relational Inter-Organizational Learning Processes Among Public Sector Multi-Agency Partnerships |
| Investigator: | Michael Beyerlein |
| IRB ID: | IRB2018-0374D |
| Reference Number: | 083069 |
| Documents Approved: | IRB Amendment Version 1.0; IRB Application Version 1.2; Employee Consent Form Version 1.3 |
| Risk Level of Study: | Not Greater than Minimal Risk under 45 CFR 46 |
| Review Category: | Category 6: Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes<br>Category 7: Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies |

Dear Michael Beyerlein:

On 10/04/2018 the IRB approved the modifications described below:

Add transcription service to study
One revised consent form

Re-consent of current subjects is not required.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Administrative Office at 1-979-458-4067, toll free at 1-855-795-8636.

Sincerely,
IRB Administration

# APPENDIX B

# CONSENT FORM

Date _____

**Dear** (name of individual)

**Title of the Study:** Examining Inter-organizational learning processes among multi-agency partnerships

**Introduction**

- You are being asked to take part in this research study conducted by Latoya Morris, a PhD student at Texas A&M University. The information on this form is to help you decide whether you want to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this consent form. If you decide you do not want to take part in the study, there will be no penalty to you.
- I ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to participate in this study.

**Purpose of study**

- The purpose of the study is to examine learning processes through the experiences and opinions of employees working for organizations within the Prostitute Diversion partnership.
- This research may be published as a dissertation research study.

**Description of the study procedures**

- The phone interview is expected to last approximately 45-60 minutes and will be recoded using a voice recorder.
- If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in an over the phone interview where you will be asked a series of open-ended questions.

**Risks of being involved in this study**

- Attempts will be made to minimize risks as much as possible (refer to confidentiality section for more details). However, if there is a breach in confidentiality, the following is a list of potential risks:
  - Confidentiality- confidential information regarding the participants experiences and perspectives
  - Psychological/emotional- feeling regarding the interview questions that may cause emotional stress
  - Social- embarrassment among peers, the participant's organization, and/or their social group; loss of employment due to participation and/or responses
  - Legal- legal ramifications due to involvement in the study

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**Benefits of being in the study**

- By participating in this study, you are helping to understand learning processes across multiple agencies and determine ways to improve those processes to reduce social problems in your community.

**Confidentiality**

- The records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. Research records will be stored securely using a password protected file. all electronic information will be coded and secured using a password protected file. An audio recording of interviews will be made using an electronic, voice recorder. The recordings will be transcribed and used strictly for this research. Representatives of regulatory agencies such as the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) and entities such as the Texas A&M University Human Subjects Protection Program may access your records to make sure the study is being run correctly and that information is collected properly. Personal information about you will be kept confidential to the extent permitted or required by the law.

**Payments**

- You will not be paid for your participation in this study.

**Right to Refuse or Withdraw**

- Your relationship with the organization in which you are employed may be affected due to your participation in this study. Therefore, the decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. Before you agree to participate, please confirm that your participation is acceptable with your organization.
- You may refuse to take part in the study *at any time* without affecting your relationship with the investigators of this study or Texas A&M University.
- You have the right to refuse to answer any single question, as well as to withdraw completely from the interview at any point during the process; additionally, you have the right to request that the interviewer not use any of your interview material.

**Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns**

- You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact me, Latoya Morris at ljmorris@tamu.edu or by telephone at 919-599-8836. A summary of the results of the study will be sent to you. If you have any other concerns about your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by the investigator, you may contact the research supervisor, Dr. Michael Beyerlein at beyerlein@tamu.edu or Texas A&M University's Institutional Review Board at (979) 458-1467.
- For questions about your rights as a research participant, to provide input regarding research, or if you have any questions, complaints, or concerns about the research, you may call the Texas A&M University Human Research Protection Program office by phone at 1-979-458-4067, toll free at 1-855-795-8636, or by email at irb@tamu.edu.

IRB NUMBER: IRB2018-0374D
IRB APPROVAL DATE: 05/22/2018

**Consent**

- Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep, along with any other printed materials deemed necessary by the study investigators.

Subject's Name (print): _____

Subject's Signature: _____ Date: _____

IRB NUMBER: IRB2018-0374D
IRB APPROVAL DATE: 05/22/2018

APPENDIX C

COPYRIGHT PERMISSIONS

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

Latoya Morris <[redacted]>

**Permission to use Model in Research**

3 messages

**Latoya Morris** <[redacted]> Mon, Mar 26, 2018 at 8:58 AM
To: info@copyright.com, permissions@aom.org

Dear Content Owner:

I am a doctoral student at Texas A&M University majoring in Human Resource Development under the guidance of Dr. Michael Beyerlein.

I am writing this email to request permission to use the model on Organizational Learning as a Dynamic Process published in the article entitled "An Organizational Learning Framework: From Intuition to Institution" (1999) originally published in the *Academy of Management Review,* in my dissertation. I am researching interorganizational learning processes among multi-agency partnerships and the model has been beneficial to attempting to understanding the learning processes involved.

The dissertation will be made available to the public on the Web through Texas A&M University Libraries. In addition, it will be microfilmed by ProQuest Information and Learning Company, and copies of the dissertation with be sold on demand. If it is okay to use this model for my research, please supply a statement granting me permission to use the work. You can email the permission to ljmorris@tamu.edu.

Thank you for your help.

Latoya Morris

**AOM Permission Requests** <permissions@aom.org> Mon, Mar 26, 2018 at 8:58 AM
To: [redacted]

Thank you for submitting your request. Your request will be reviewed within 15 business days.

**Irina Burns**

Managing Editor and Publishing Services Specialist

Academy of Management

P.O. Box 3020

Briarcliff Manor NY 10510-8020

USA

http://aom.org/uploadedImages/Multi-Media/AOMLogo-24.png?n=7934

Dear Latoya,

We are happy to grant you non-exclusive rights to use the model free of charge. Please include the original source of publication and indicate that the model is published with permission by the Academy of Management.

Best wishes,

Irina

**Irina Burns**

Senior Managing Editor and Licensing Services Manager

Academy of Management

P.O. Box 3020

Briarcliff Manor NY 10510-8020

USA

Email: iburns@aom.org

Phone: + 1 (914) 326-1832

Fax: +1 (914) 326-1900



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

**Latoya Morris** [redacted]

**RES: : Contato Site ::] BAR - Brazilian Administration Review**

1 message

**bar@anpad.org.br** <bar@anpad.org.br> Tue, Mar 27, 2018 at 1:14 PM
To: [redacted]

Dear Latoya Morris,

We authorize the use of the figure 2 for academic purposes and wish you good luck on your dissertation.

We request that when using it, please always specify the complete source as it is presented at DOI.

Sincerely,

Salomão Farias
Editor-in-Chief BAR

www.anpad.org.br/bar

## Request for Permission to use DLOQ and model

16 messages

**Latoya M** [redacted]u> Thu, Feb 1, 2018 at 8:38 AM
To: marsick@tc.columbia.edu, kwatkins@uga.edu

February 1, 2018

Dr. Watkins and Dr. Marsick,

I am a doctoral student at Texas A&M University majoring in Human Resource Development under the guidance of Dr. Michael Beyerlein. I am writing this email to request permission to use your DLOQ survey (as an instrument) and model of dimensions of a learning organization in my dissertation. The dissertation will be made available to the public on the Web through Texas A&M University Libraries. In addition, it will be microfilmed by ProQuest Information and Learning Company, and copies of the dissertation with be sold on demand. Please supply a statement granting me permission to use the work. You can email the perm [redacted]edu.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Latoya Morris

---

**Karen Watkins** <kwatkins@uga.edu> Thu, Feb 1, 2018 at 9:42 AM
To: Latoya M [redacted]edu>, "marsick@tc.columbia.edu" <marsick@tc.columbia.edu>

Hi Latoya,

We are delighted to grant permission for you to use the DLOQ in your dissertation study under the conditions outlined in the attached. Please say hello to Dr. Beyerlein!

I look forward to hearing what you learn using the instrument!

Take care,

Karen

Karen E. Watkins, Professor

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

Latoya Morris <ljmorris@tamu.edu>

## Request for Permission to Use IOL Model in Research

3 messages

**Anelise Rebelato Mozzato** <anerebe@upf.br> Wed, Mar 28, 2018 at 8:30 PM
To: [redacted]
Cc: Claudia Cristina Bitencourt <claudiacb@unisinos.br>

Dear Latoya Morris,

We are delighted to know that our model on IOL has been beneficial for your research.
We authorize your use of the model.
Besides, we are at your disposal to discuss the subject, and we would like to have access to your publication.
We believe this communication is enough for what you need.
However, in case you need a formal authorization, please let us know.

Thank you for your interest.
Yours faithfully,
Anelise e Claudia

**Profª. Drª. Anelise Rebelato Mozzato**
Faculdade de Ciências Econômicas, Administrativas e Contábeis.
Professora do PPGAdm- UPF
Universidade de Passo Fundo
(54) 3316-9999 | www.upf.br
Passo Fundo – RS
CV CNPq: http://lattes.cnpq.br/0535042483913737
ORCID: http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3821-746X



Cc: Claudia Cristina Bitencourt <claudiacb@unisinos.br>, Denize Grzybovski <gdenize@upf.br>

Dear Latoya Morris,

We authorize your use of the table as well.
Once again, we appreciate your interest in our research.

Thank you.
Best regards

Anelise, Claudia e Denize

**Profª. Drª. Anelise Rebelato Mozzato**
Faculdade de Ciências Econômicas, Administrativas e Contábeis.
Professora do PPGAdm- UPF
Universidade de Passo Fundo
(54) 3316-9999 | www.upf.br
Passo Fundo – RS
CV CNPq: http://lattes.cnpq.br/0535042483913737
ORCID: http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3821-746X

This Agreement between Texas A&M University -- Latoya Morris ("You") and John Wiley and Sons ("John Wiley and Sons") consists of your license details and the terms and conditions provided by John Wiley and Sons and Copyright Clearance Center.

| | |
|---|---|
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