This project brought together individuals from law enforcement, crisis management, sociology, medicine, psychology, performance poetry, and socially engaged art. This rich palette of collaborators allowed us to build a project that defied definition, setting a stage on which participants could feel like they were welcome to join the table as co-creators. At the same time as this cross-disciplinary collaboration provided such deep resources, it also challenged the designers. These challenges are worth exploring briefly: they relate directly to the journey and the findings of the project as a whole.

The same fixed perspective we saw in the participants is present in everyone, and at several points in this project there was internal skepticism to overcome, either amongst collaborators or within organizations that they represented. When these roadblocks occur, it can stymie a project’s momentum and sometimes can color the outcomes. Part of my job as a Social Practice artist is to attempt to be aware of this and to gently but consistently hold open a space of creativity when obstacles arise that could shut it down. The best way I know to do this is to model the practice of checking your ego at the door, in the service of a greater cause. I’m sure I don’t always succeed, but I do try and try and try again.

As you read the writings throughout this book, you can also read in them the authors’ own “given circumstances.” These are visible in all of our writings, and provide a fascinat-
ing context for understanding the different stakeholders who worked on making this experimental art-in-social-practice project possible. You can see the assumptions that are really “sticky” within the comprehension of what the project’s aims were, even at the end of the project, and you can draw conclusions about how those “sticky” assumptions can color the nature of the cross-disciplinary collaboration.

I think the best case-scenario is when participants contributing to project design can see themselves as equals to the project participants, and as going on a learning and development journey along the way. Barriers to this deep engagement include perceived time constraints, heavy role identification (what is and isn’t my job), status perception, and basic valuing of the impact of the process at the start of the project. And yet there is not likely to be any way to get such a project off the ground without engaging very different kinds of people, with very different expectations as to what the project will be. In other words, a project like this one doesn’t just happen. Flexibility as well as commitment are required on all sides.

Learning from this process should therefore impact people interested in collaborative project design, as well as people interested in Emotional Competence in Policing. Learning to be open, active listeners is a challenge for everyone, particularly when doing so from an “on the job” role. One challenge to everyone reading this book should be a personal one: How can I work with others, using the skill of Compassion as my guiding principle? How can I integrate this tool into the foundations of my professional practice?

This challenge is steep. And it is one that we must model, if others are to join in work of this kind. The following sections discuss the opening expectations, the strategic hopes, and the needed adjustments for several of the project’s key colleagues.