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Reflecting on Researcher/Practice Relationships in Prison Research: A Contact Hypothesis Lens

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Conducting research in the field of criminal justice systems (CJS) often involves cooperative working relationships between researchers from academia and working professionals from prisons and other CJS institutions. This is encouraged by policy makers and research funders insisting on user informed research on the one hand, and research-based practice

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on the other (e.g. Marie Sklodowska Curie Actions-EU Commission, 2019). The assumption is that positive working relationships between these two sectors are beneficial for both parties. There are many recorded benefits of partnerships, between criminal justice organisations (such as police, probation and prisons) and research/university institutions. For the practice partner, these benefits include access to methodological expertise (e.g. evaluation methods) (Drawbridge et al., 2018; Clodfelter et al., 2014; Nilson et al., 2014; Secret et al., 2011; Cunningham, 2008), extra resource or expertise in areas where there is limited capacity (Clodfelter et al., 2014; Nilson et al., 2014; Cunningham, 2008), information which helps improve services and decision making (Nilson et al., 2014) and intellectual stimulation (Cunningham, 2008). There are noted benefits for the academic partner also. The partnerships provide an opportunity for researchers to apply knowledge to real life problems/testing and refining theories in situ (Drawbridge et al., 2018; Clodfelter et al., 2014; Nilson et al., 2014). A better understanding of practice environment for both researchers and students is developed (Kerrison et al., 2019; Clodfelter et al., 2014) and researchers are able to collect data from the field and new and alternative data sources (Nilson et al., 2014). Researchers can hereby also be more in-tune with the needs of the community and society, making research more relevant and of public value (Clodfelter et al., 2014; Nilson et al., 2014). They can disseminate research findings to a broader audience (Nilson et al., 2014) and build a more diverse professional network (Clodfelter et al., 2014).

However, achieving these benefits is challenging. Logistically, challenges lie in limited human resources available in the CJS partner to support the influx of researchers into the institution (Drawbridge et al., 2018) and incompatibility of researchers and practice partners working schedules (Clodfelter et al., 2014). A high turn over of research students and staff entering CJS institutions can disrupt services interfering with their consistency and routine (Cunningham, 2008). There may be an over reliance on the drive and charisma of key gatekeepers and this may eventually threaten the stability and long-term duration of the relationship (Worden et al., 2014).

Communication can be problematic between partners. There may be a lack of clarity of what the research hopes to achieve, a lack of clarity

on roles as to who should do what in the partnership as well as differing expectations about what the research hopes to achieve and time frames in which this can be delivered (Cunningham, 2008; Nilson et al., 2014; Clodfelter et al., 2014; Worden et al., 2014). These communication challenges can be exacerbated by cultural, language and historical differences between the two sectors (Clodfelter et al., 2014; Nilson et al., 2014). Practitioners, for example, report being intimidated by academic knowledge or being put off by dry, complicated, long-winded "academic speak". These differing cultural backgrounds are manifest in differing and competing priorities (Cunningham, 2008; Clodfelter et al., 2014) and different outcomes having different value for each partner (e.g., academic publications have different value in the two sectors—Nilson et al., 2014).

Challenges often come down to a fundamental lack of trust between academic and practice sectors, practice organisations being concerned about the confidentiality of information they provide researchers (Nilson et al., 2014; Kerrison et al., 2019) and fear that researchers won't present the full practice picture (Kerrison et al., 2019). They fear any innovation and departures arising from the research may threaten their local political and historical status quo even costing them their jobs (Drawbridge et al., 2018; Kerrison et al., 2019). At the end of the day, practitioners feel they, and not the researcher, will be held ultimately accountable for any impact of the research on practice both negative and positive (Kerrison et al., 2019). On the other hand, researchers feel frustrated that practice is not always ready to hear the outcome of evaluations and that their research recommendations are not taken up (Drawbridge et al., 2018). A lack of researcher support during the implementation of their own recommendations is often blamed for this (Kerrison et al., 2019).

To overcome these challenges, and promote the many benefits, policy makers and leaders of partnerships require a deeper understanding of the mechanisms underpinning these. Currently, studies of the benefits of partnerships are predominantly in the US context and little is known about the processes in the European context or any theorisation through which these benefits can be managed. Rudes et al. (2014) developed a framework spelling out the five key dimensions with

which to manage CJS–academic partnerships effectively. These dimensions comprise means of negotiating access, having written agreements in place, goal setting, continual and iterative feedback and relationship building. This framework offers clear operational conditions for effective partnerships but offers less on the reasoning behind why these dimensions have an impact. Our chapter addresses this shortfall by exploring the use of the theoretical lens of the contact hypothesis to offer some of the required theorisation. The contact hypothesis provides an analytical framework with which partnerships between CJS and academic partnerships can be explored and better understood. Such an understanding provides the route to developing strategies through which these relations can be optimised in the interest of the subject discipline. It also contributes to the eventual care and management of people in contact with the criminal justice system. We apply our reflections to a typical European academic practice partnership (COLAB) in this field to redress the current North American bias.

The Contact Hypothesis

The contact hypothesis has developed from the seminal writings of Allport (1954) that explored the origins of intergroup prejudice. This proposed that the best way to promote positive intergroup encounters, is to bring the groups together. This contact provides an opportunity to learn about the other group and avoid the ignorance that promotes prejudice. Interactions with another social group may mean individuals revaluate their own norms and knowledge. This is a "process of deprovincialisation" in which members of different groups learn there are different ways of seeing the world (Pettigrew, 1997, p. 141). It is hoped that intergroup friendships will form during intergroup contact. These facilitate empathy and a sense of identification with the outgroup. These may later be transferred to all members of the other group more widely (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

The contact hypothesis proposes, however, that contact alone is not enough for positive intergroup relationships. In fact, forcing two social groups together may potentially threaten the social identity of

each respectively. This can confirm negative outgroup stereotyping. The contact hypothesis instead proposes that a number of conditions must also be present during this contact period if members of each group are to set aside their negative intergroup attitudes. The conditions, elaborated on since those originally proposed by Allport (1954), include that each group in the contact situation should have equal status, experience a cooperative atmosphere during the time of contact, be working together on common goals, have the support of the authorities of their individual institutions (institutional support), be aware of both participating group similarities and differences, have positive expectations of the contact event and that the members of the groups each perceive the representatives of the other group to be typical members of the group they represent. If these conditions are in place, positive stereotypes of other groups can develop, stereotypes that will foster positive intergroup working (Allport, 1954; Barnes et al., 2006; Paluck et al., 2019).

The contact hypothesis has wide appeal for its simplicity and operationability that makes it useful for policy makers (Paluck et al., 2019). It is well tested and used to explain and develop strategies to improve relations between groups of differing ethnicity, religion, culture, gender, age, disability, working groups and sexuality (e.g. Allen, 1986; Addelston, 1995; Beullens, 1997; Callaghan et al., 1997; Schofield & Sagar, 1977; Connolly & Maginn, 1999; Liebkind et al., 2000; Paolini et al., 2004; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Extensive reviews of the contact hypothesis literature (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Paluck et al., 2019) have shown that contact leads to positive intergroup attitude change. Empirical evidence on the impact of each of the conditions taken individually was difficult to establish and for all population groups (at least in the quantitative studies selected in these reviews). However, the conditions tended to interact and generally work best if taken holistically and conditions combined. The reviews propose that the key process in this structured form of contact is that "familiarity breeds liking" (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006, p. 766).

In this chapter we propose that the contact hypothesis has relevance in the field of prison research also: professionals from the criminal justice services (CJS) and researchers from academia are two social groups who make close contact during collaborative research projects. Taking this theoretical lens challenges the assumption that contact alone between the

two sectors is enough for positive relationships to develop. We examine each of the recommended conditions of contact originally described by Allport (1954) and elaborated by others (Barnes et al., 2006), using one illustrative example of a CJS–academic partnership (COLAB) to do so. This leads us to reflect on potential future strategies through which frameworks supporting CJS–academic partnerships might be manipulated. We explore how consciously managing conditions of contact in researcher/professional interactions may promote the cocreation and innovation required of these intersector academic–practice collaborations and as aspired to by popular rhetoric.

An Example of a Typical Criminal Justice/Academic Partnership

COLAB (Horizon 2020 funded COLAB MSCA-RISE project number 734536) is a partnership of European researchers comprising of 7 Universities and 3 CJS practice organisations from Norway, Finland, UK, the Netherlands, Denmark and Switzerland. COLAB research focuses on building effective models of collaboration between mental health and criminal justice services with the intention of impacting on mental illness in the prisoner population and reducing reoffending rates. Researchers in the partnership identified the Change Laboratory Model (CLM) (Engeström, 2011) of workplace transformation as a more effective means of supporting interagency collaborative practice. They proposed this as a means to optimise the effectiveness of mental healthcare provision to offenders through a model that fosters innovation and collaborative processes. The aim of the consortium was to explore the utility of the Change Laboratory Model in the CJS context and to enrich international research cooperation in this field. The work of the consortium is funded by the European Commission Marie Curie Actions (https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/ en/h2020-section/marie-sklodowska-curie-actions). This funding body encourages intersector and international knowledge exchange partnerships that are operationalised through physical reciprocal secondments between academic and practice partner organisations. The refusal of the

EU Commission to allow virtual collaborations during the COVID 19 pandemic, and insistence that physical secondments across sectors and countries continue, is evidence of the importance the EU has placed on the physical contact between these academic and practice groups. The underlying assumption is that putting international researchers and practice professionals in close physical proximity, during these intersector project staff exchanges, will lead to useful knowledge exchange opportunities and enhance research–practice interactions. In the long term, in contact hypothesis speak, a central goal is a breakdown of intergroup stereotyping and negative group interactions. The contact between the different professionals is hoped to alter their respective views of the world in an attempt to seek consistency between participants' old cognitions, and to overcome the cognitive dissonance they encounter when meeting the different perspectives of the partner group members (Festinger, 1997).

The authors of this chapter are four typical COLAB members whose current identity crossed the practice/academic researcher sectorial borders in a variety of different ways. Two of us previously worked in the criminal justice system (social work, law and the police), but now work in researcher roles in the Norwegian and British University environment respectively (Liv and Richard). One is a pure researcher (Sarah) working in the Norwegian and UK university systems concomitantly. Lastly, Caroline, at the time of writing the chapter, was the newly appointed CEO of a participating UK voluntary sector organisation. The organisation is typical of what Abrams and Moreno (2019) define as an organisation predominantly comprising of volunteers that provides non-governmental (or non-profit) services to people in the community in contact with the criminal justice system. She has a Ph.D. in Natural Sciences but draws on her extensive experience in the voluntary sector in the UK in her current position. The authors used the contact hypothesis and the key contact conditions to reflect on the effectiveness of the COLAB partnership/consortium. Table 16.1 lists questions, based on the contact hypothesis, that we used as an aid for our reflection.

We present in this chapter a synthesis of these reflections. We combine the reflections of the four authors with similar reflections in the literature on other CJS–academic partnership working. We applied

Table 16.1   Conditions of contact

- Describe the point of contact between researcher and practice partner?
- Do you perceive the researcher and practice partners to be on an equal footing? Explain. On what dimensions are they equal or not?
- What does a cooperative atmosphere mean to you? Does this exist between partners and how can this be achieved?
- Describe your respective goals? Are any shared?
- Do have the support of your leadership during this interaction? How is this manifested? Is there a culture of collaboration with the other sector embedded in institutional policy/culture? Is working with the other sector seen as important by leaders
- In terms of competences as well as values, how are you similar to your collaborative partner, how different?
- Do you think the partner is typical of people in practice/academia? Explain?
- What are the expectations of the other partner? Would you say you had positive or negative expectation of your partners? Explain

a simple analytical framework to the material searching specifically for the perceived *benefits* of the partnership, the *challenges, conditions of contact* between researcher/professional members and lastly *recommendations*. The latter are potential strategies through which the contact conditions proposed in the contact hypothesis might be optimised in this and other researcher/professional partnerships engaging in research and innovation activity in the criminal justice field.

Perceived Benefits of the Colab Academic–Practice Partnership

From the practice perspective, Caroline, as leader of an English voluntary sector professional partner, reflected positively on the utility of COLAB interactions and her experience as a practice partner working with both UK and Norwegian university researchers. These exchanges had contributed to the *personal development/competence of her staff* . One staff member had even registered for a doctoral programme at one of the partner universities. Interactions with university partners offered insight into the research process and specifically research into interagency working. Staff had improved their ability to cross national and professional cultural boundaries in their own practice, and had become more

outwardly focused in their everyday practice as a result of their secondment experiences in Norwegian universities. The *professional networks* of her staff had increased, participants from this organisation having previously described the relationships between their organisation and the UK university for which Richard and Sarah work (also one of the COLAB partners) as non-existent. They now engaged with researchers from their regional university as well as the wider number of research and practice organisations represented in the COLAB consortium.

There was some reference to the partnership having provided further *resources* to the organisation: students and researcher staff from the local university had volunteered in this third sector organisation, contributed to tenders/bids being developed by the practice organisation and training events run for volunteers. There was, however, little made explicit about tangible instances where the secondments had made a *significant change in the development of current services.*

There were benefits for academic partners also, with a marked improvement in *the understanding of how practice works for both students and researchers:* through COLAB activity, staff at Caroline's voluntary sector organisation now taught on crime and health-related programmes in Richard and Sarah's university. Her staff were also cowriting with researcher colleagues in funding proposals and publications (as illustrated in the current chapter and others in this volume). This had enriched the *validity and public value* of these publications. Sarah reflected, as COLAB coordinator, how researchers working with the practice organisation, had found the shadowing experiences and research studies conducted in this English voluntary sector context had exposed them to the everyday lives of practice professionals and offenders. This leads them to better understand the language of practice and the service user. By actively working with professionals, researchers had gained insight into the challenges facing this sector internationally. Their growing *cultural competencies* served as a platform with which researchers could build their future careers in which their research could be more tightly affiliated with the needs of practice.

The authors reflected on how benefits did not only accrue through intersector interactions but that *intrasector learning* was also important. Researchers had learnt within their sector and across national lines. They

described how they had learnt alternative theoretical and methodological approaches from other international and national researchers. Similarly, professional partners described how they had learnt about strategies in reoffending and offender rehabilitation from other public and third sector organisations in other European contexts.

> *Staff have also enjoyed and benefitted from visiting other researcher and prac-*
> *tice related projects. The success of the project now depends on how well we*
> *imbed our learning into our practice for the future.* (Caroline)

In describing personal development, additional expertise, resources, research validity and being closer to the field, the benefits that members of this European academic practice consortium describe, mirror those reported by US partnerships elsewhere (Clodfelter et al., 2014; Nilson et al., 2014; Drawbridge et al., 2018; Kerrison et al., 2019). But what does appear unique in this European consortium is the development of cultural competences in our members that relates to the international and intersector exchange requirements imposed on the partnership. It was disappointing, however, that there was a lack of apparent impact on service design that had been reported in some of the US partnerships. We discuss later how the conditions of contact proposed in the contact hypothesis may account for some of these outcomes.

Challenging Intergroup Interactions

COLAB interactions were described as challenging and emotive by both researchers and professionals. For Sarah, as a career researcher, the researcher–professional interactions present in COLAB are exciting, stimulating but frustrating experiences. Liv reflects on the emotional challenge of crossing both sector and disciplinary boundaries. She talks of her first meeting with COLAB members as challenging her disciplinary confidence:

Meeting with all involved did not make me more confident. My legal method of research by interpreting the law, court decisions and documents was quite different from sociological method. (Liv)

For Caroline, and other practice partners, they sometimes felt overrun by researchers during COLAB activity, that their voice was not heard sufficiently within the consortiums activity and that research rather than practice agendas predominated.

With a small team …. we have hosted a large number of researchers. Whilst the researchers have been able to undertake their work I do feel that a little more input from us could have been helpful. (Caroline)

They find that COLAB research and the day job can make competing demands. Caroline for example reflects on coming to grips with the requirements of COLAB at the same time as taking on the new role of CEO in the company, managing the requirements of COLAB as well as making the changes to the structure and shape of future delivery of her organisation.

… we fundamentally feel that developing collaborative networks and learning from academia is important for our successful service delivery but are also aware of the demands made upon our resources. (Caroline)

Sarah as coordinator also commented on the competing commitments of all partners in COLAB and how this threatened the project's deliverables. The different levels of autonomy members had within their own institutions were influential here. The high level of autonomy in researcher institutions meant it is easier to engage them and achieve individual agreement to participate in collaborations. However, these participants then ran the danger of becoming overcommitted as a result of this autonomy and were less likely to be held to account if the goals of the collaborations were not met. Practice institutions in contrast were often governed by more standardised procedures through which workload and permissions to engage in external activity are managed. They tended to be less open to this risk of personal overcommitment but having lesser

autonomy, limited their degree of personal involvement depending on the available resource.

Sarah reflected on the relatively short history of the COLAB partnership, three years old at the time of writing, and that members did not know each other previously. She reflects that it takes time for trust to develop between partners, and this is particularly difficult to establish when the partnership is a new one and considering the geographical distances between partners. COLAB met briefly only during short secondment periods (on average a month) and when members met as a full consortium but once a year. She also reflected on issues of perceived accountability of the project. Although, as coordinator she felt this lay with her, she was aware that some of the other COLAB practice members, in facilitating access of researchers to practice sites (such as regional prisons), had mentioned that it was their relationship with these other organisations that was ultimately at stake here. This reflects the experiences of other academic–CJS partnerships where practice professionals believe they will be ultimately held accountable for any intervention recommended or introduced by the university. It is suggested this view can be exacerbated if universities do not stick around for implementation of any recommendation they may have made (Kerrison et al., 2019).

The reflection of COLAB members of the emotional and cultural challenges of crossing both sector and disciplinary boundaries, reflects findings in other studies where the interface of academic CJS cultures proved difficult. Practitioners were reported as intimidated by academic language in these studies for example (Clodfelter et al., 2014; Nilson et al., 2014). However, in our consortium, fellow academics were also intimidated by the language used by other academics, so this is not unique to the academic CJS cultural interface alone.

The logistical challenges mentioned by Drawbridge et al. (2018) and Cunningham (2008) are also relevant in the COLAB situation, the practice organisation feeling overrun by researchers during COLAB activity. Further our experiences in COLAB also reflect what Cunningham (2008) and Clodfelter et al. (2014) find in the US context, where competing demands of the day job impact on both the researcher and practice professionals' ability to focus on the partnership goals. Barriers

to building trust are also reflected in other partnerships internationally (Nilson et al., 2014; Kerrison et al., 2019). The lack of voice of the practice organisation seems particularly relevant in the COLAB situation, however, although this may be related to the lack of shared expectations of the research also described by Nilson et al. (2014).

Examining the Conditions of Academic–Practice Contact

We turn now to a discussion of some of the key contact conditions proposed by the contact hypothesis. We explore how these may or may not be present in the consortium, and others like it and if these could possibly account for the benefits and challenges described.

Equality

One of the key conditions proposed by the contact hypothesis is that all participants should be of equal status when contact is made. This could reduce intergroup animosity engaging all parties in the collaborative work uninhibited by status differentials (Hewstone, 2003). The four COLAB members believed that, at a superficial level, professionals from practice and researchers in the consortium did work on a level playing field, particularly at an interpersonal level. The consortium was described as collegial and horizontal rather than hierarchical in nature. However, manifestations of inequities were demonstrated in other ways. The practice partners described a need to have greater say in consortium activity, feeling they were subjects of research rather than co-designers or participants in an exercise of co-enquiry. Researchers in the partnership felt equally frustrated with this. They were unsure how to free up the communication channels that would allow shared goals to develop and the voice of the practitioner to be more effectively presented in the consortium activity. This was despite researchers seeking input during

the proposal writing phase, during management group meetings, consortium conferences and in the planning and feedback documentation that accompanied each intersector secondment.

The authors reflected that inequality may also have originated from differences in the numbers of practitioners from practice organisations (7 staff in 3 organisations) compared to researchers (23 research staff in 7 research organisation) in the consortium structure.

Each member spoke of their personal competences they brought to the consortium whether this is as a professional or researcher. They describe the distance or lack of overlap between professional and researcher competences at times, and how privileging one over the other may be problematic in achieving equality. The disparities in number and sizes of participating institutions may have inadvertently privileged researcher over practitioner knowledge in this case.

Sarah talks of her intention that the consortium followed a collaborative leadership model (Vanvactor, 2012), one that promoted actively "*ongoing integration of ideas and interdependency among multiple stakeholders throughout*" (Vanvactor, 2012, p. 561). She was aware that a hierarchy of coordinator/leader and management group structure still remained. The researcher perspective of Sarah, as COLAB leader, may have contributed to the dominance of researcher knowledge in the consortium's activity.

Privileging certain knowledge may also be dependent on the context and the activity in which practitioners and researchers engage. In consortium conferences, for example, disparities in theoretical knowledge between practitioners and researchers were made obvious. Disparities in research experience, not only between practitioners and researchers, but also within researcher–researcher interactions, were evident. This meant that researchers and professionals often put their own expertise aside and moved into the identity of learner rather than expert. They then failed to share their own personal expertise with the rest of the consortium. For example, Liv had expertise as a lawyer and social worker in restorative justice methods and negotiation within the criminal justice system and she was key to informing the development of the collaboration CLM models being explored in COLAB. She reported not initially

feeling comfortable sharing this information because she lacked expertise in some of the other theoretical models (Cultural Historical Activity Systems theory—Engeström, 2001, for example) that dominated discussion.

Equality differences were also observed in intraorganisational, as well as interorganisational, interactions: leaders in the organisations often signed up for engagement in COLAB as a prestigious EU grant. Sometimes other staff members were then expected to conduct the detail of work they had not signed up for personally. For example, the research wing of a participating justice ministry was engaged as a professional partner. They then negotiated with individual prisons in the region to open their prisons to researchers. This may mean that, when one person/department in an organisation signs up for a project, this may impact on those who were not engaged in this decision-making. These individuals may hence be less motivated or have less capacity to participate as a result.

Institutional Support

Another key contact condition between CJS professionals and academic research is that the partnership, and its resultant project work, is supported by each institution's leadership. The four COLAB members reflected mostly on the operational level of this intuitional support. They described the permissions given by organisational leaders for participants to go on secondments and engage in research projects. These permissions were granted by trustees and CEOs in the COLAB practice organisations and heads of department, faculty leads and deans in academic institutions. This buy-in signals leaders' confidence and trust in the future of the collaboration and offers it legitimacy as part of staff's everyday working tasks. At a strategic level, Sarah, as coordinator, described achieving institutional support politically by aligning EU, university and practice policy with COLAB objectives when developing the consortium and hereby getting institutions to agree to participate in the original application. She referred specifically to institutional policies promoting researcher–practice partnerships and using the rhetoric

of research-led teaching, user-informed research, evidence-based practice and internationalisation agendas to bring institutional leaders on board.

Cooperative Atmosphere

For people in practice such as Caroline, a cooperative atmosphere is tightly linked to institutional support. It was demonstrated through engagement of her organisation's trustees in COLAB processes, agreeing that staff be interviewed and freed from their work commitments to go on secondment visits. For Liv, a cooperative atmosphere is demonstrated by members' willingness to use time on COLAB activity and work with each other. She describes members being open and willing to help out, explain and reach common understandings. Members did so with a culture of hospitality curiosity, non-defensiveness and honesty about the challenges facing COLAB and what can be realistically achieved within individual and organisational constraints.

For Sarah, establishing a cooperative atmosphere in COLAB is about being consciously respectful of different positions, workframes and other work commitments. Instances of poor communications about when secondments would take place and expectations about what the nature of the secondment activity would be, tested this cooperative atmosphere. Secondment planning and feedback forms were designed to improve these channels of communication, although the use of these tools was not always achieved consistently, suggesting these communication tools were poorly understood and/or designed.

She also described a cooperative atmosphere as one that enabled COLAB members to share their disciplinary knowledge (including field experience) and discuss paradigm differences in a safe, creative space and in an atmosphere of reciprocity and shared responsibility. This was essential for building trust between members that would promote collaborations. Some of the institutional reports she had received from all COLAB partners reflected how researchers sometimes had become frustrated when practice institutions had not allowed access to practice sites or did not engage with research or interventions planned by researchers.

This is probably an indication that the needs of these professional participants were not being met (Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013).

Having Common Goals

Common goal setting is key to building positive relations between academics and prison staff (Rudes et al., 2014; Drawbridge et al., 2018). The premise here is that researcher–practice collaborations will be more productive if the personal goals of individuals participating in the consortium align with each other.

All of the authors in this chapter reflected that, at an abstract level, the COLAB consortium members shared a common goal of wanting to address the problem of reoffending and reintegration of prisoners back into society. For Sarah, however, it was the operationalisation of this goal and the more detailed goal setting that was problematic. She describes issues related to a lack of goal and role clarity within the design and delivery of more specific consortium activities. This was both important and challenging at two time points:

At the *design phase*: she reflects that, despite attempts to engage all partners in goal setting, there was a certain passivity and acceptance of the preliminary goals being set in the research/partnership application proposal. Many participants (academic and practice) took a leap of faith when signing up for the partnership. It later transpired that, in operationalising the goals set by the proposal, the actual substance behind each goal, was unsurprisingly often poorly understood. She felt this had threatened the potential for the project to get off the ground and later the commitment to its delivery by both researcher and practice participants.

Sarah describes how seeking funding for this research consortia had been driven predominantly by the academic partners due to the time and financial pressures to deliver the bid by a set deadline. This constrained how much she as coordinator was able to actively engage with the practice organisations during this time. Hence the immediate relevance of the project to current practice demands was not always immediately obvious to participants. This was especially because of the language in which

the bid had been written that catered for the EU commission reviewer audience.

As coordinator, Sarah also described the difficulty experienced when writing the bid of finding a balance between allowing members to set their own goals versus setting goals for participants to address the wider objectives of the EU commission and the overall project's deliverables. She struggled to fully engage both practice and research partners in the proposal writing process in ways that were not merely tokenistic, whilst simultaneously communicating the overall vision of the project and meeting the funding application deadlines.

These challenges continued into the *implementation and delivery phase* of the project: each member of COLAB had personal goals whether this be to achieve a doctorate, improve their promotion opportunities or improve practice. Individual organisations had individual goals related to their remit: universities had the goal of contributing to the body of knowledge around collaboration in the criminal justice system. Practice organisations, such as Caroline's third sector organisation, aimed to improve their service delivery models. Caroline described her goals in COLAB as allowing staff to learn and reflect on their current practice and imbed best practice from other countries. She describes her organisation as a small team where it is otherwise easy for staff to become overly focused on current delivery in their small area. They seldom find time to research or reflect on best practice. She hoped that working with a range of researchers from different countries would enable staff to adopt a more reflective and informed approach to their practice, looking upwards and outwards for new approaches. She came to the consortium half way through its delivery period and felt unclear if her needs and goals were being addressed explicitly in the group.

Similarly, Liv came to the project a year into its delivery. As she found the restorative justice approaches not to be reflected or apparently compatible with current group activity, she questioned her motivation to be in the group. However, in beginning to cowrite this chapter, her contribution, in terms of understanding of negotiation theory and practice to COLAB goal setting activity, became clearer.

In Sarah's reflections, creating common and commonly understood goals was successful when practitioners and professionals engaged

together during their secondment periods on common projects in which both parties actively participated. Cowriting publication or funding bids, coteaching on training events in practice or university teaching modules and/or disseminating together in various conference venues were typical examples of this. Hereby common goals negotiated by COLAB members became tangible, leading to improved intergroup relations rather than aspired ones. It also worked well when COLAB members were given permission to be flexible in their interpretation and delivery of the original larger project goals, as suited their own personal expertise and interests. Where it did not work well, researchers had come to the practice organisation with preset agendas. Professionals were viewed as gatekeepers to gain access to research data, rather than coparticipants. Although professionals were always highly cooperative in these instances, they often then failed to see the direct benefit of these research projects to their own organisations in the long or short term. It also did not work well if members were frightened to deviate from the original project remit and followed the original protocol regardless of their understanding or expertise. On the other hand, others sometimes found it difficult to adapt their own personal interests to fit within the broader remit of the COLAB project. They continued with these personal goals without linking these directly to the COLAB vision. Sarah describes searching for a mid ground, a balance between motivating the individual and allowing for creativity and exploitation of individual members expertise versus the need for a coherent vision for the partnership.

Identifying Similarities and Appreciating Differences

It is anticipated that the identification of similarities and appreciation of differences between the participating groups fosters both the cohesion within the group required and the dovetailing of key competences for the effective delivery of the project (Hewstone, 2003; Stephan & Stephan, 1984). For COLAB members, common values related to the subject focus area.

> *COLAB participants share the common value of believing rehabilitation of people in contact with the CJS is possible and desirable and that we share a rehabilitation philosophy towards punishment and custody.* (Sarah)

> *I would hope that all partners share core values around supporting individuals in the best way possible and this is certainly my perception of the people I have met to date.* (Caroline)

It was not clear if the consortium had stressed sufficiently the common values related to offender rehabilitation in order for members to feel bonded and have developed feelings of empathy. Cohesion of the group was felt to be strong but many members speculated whether this was due to personal similarities and the development of friendships generated through social informal interactions.

Differences between professional and academic COLAB members lay in their knowledge expertise, although the differences were not always appreciated. Richard talks clearly of the mystification of some of the participants, researchers and professionals alike, when facing some complex researcher theory for the first time. Similarly he talks of many researcher participants who, whilst bringing an outsider perspective, also have little or no professional experience and the resultant limitations this may bring to the field.

> Members…*find themselves out of their comfort zone when trying to make sense of some of the complex research paradigms and theoretical frameworks which the broader COLAB project draws on. Even for some of us with established sociological researcher backgrounds, theoretical frameworks such as 'activity theory' and the 'Change Laboratory model' can be quite challenging, if not downright bewildering!* (Richard)

Richard questioned whether there was an appreciation of knowledge differences between members and a desire to learn from each other or whether differences had led to a group of individuals who, regardless of background, had a pervading fear of being an imposter.

What is described here may demonstrate how a threat to group identity impacts on an individual's intergroup interactions (Branscombe

et al., 1999). These threats may relate to a group's underlying characteristics being misrepresented or undervalued (e.g. lawyers being described as not trustworthy or academics not being in touch with the real world). Another threat is to that of group distinctiveness, where group members may feel their distinctiveness from another group(s) is being undermined. Hean et al. (2006), whilst exploring the stereotypical profiles held by university students of health professionals, identified clear perceived similarities and differences between professions: similarities between midwives and nurses for example and the complementary profiles of nurses and doctors on the other. They questioned, however, if the complementary competences of the doctors and nurses were equally valued. In our experiences of the COLAB consortium, there appeared to be an emphasis on difference between members in terms of their knowledge base. These differences were valued but served to make some members feel insecure, focusing on the competences they lacked, rather than an appreciation of the contribution of all the different expertise that each individual brought to the partnership.

Having Positive Expectations of Researcher–Professional Interactions

Having positive expectations of the outgroup may make it more likely, in a process of self fulfilling prophesy (Hewstone, 2003), that interactions between academics and professionals will be a productive one. Some COLAB members expressed having had few prior expectations of the partnership, however, and that, in fact, initial expectations were exceeded. Caroline, for example, had few expectations as she had not been part of the CEO from its inception, "*inheriting it*" from a previous CEO. She describes her only expectations as being that visitors were polite and professional and that her "*staff would be well looked when visiting other partners and this had in reality exceeded her expectations*".

Others had positive expectations that may have been disappointed and/or unrealistic. Liv had expected greater interaction with other COLAB members. Although she met with them during annual COLAB

events, she had not had as much contact with them as initially anticipated. Overall, closer and more frequent contact between researchers and practice professionals was often less intense than initially intended as staff from the host often needed to prioritise their primary work commitments during an academic's visit. Geographical distances between partners also meant that contact was restricted to the time of the secondment alone.

Sarah had anticipated great contact between members and that they would demonstrate greater autonomy, self directed activity and ownership of their projects. However, members' commitments outside of the consortium activity limited this. There was instead an initial need for more directed leadership as members of this new partnership got to know each other, each other's skills and ways of working, and familiarised themselves with a complex research design. It suggested her initial expectations had been unrealistic or required the project to mature for a period of time before these were realised. Unfulfilled expectations may have come from initially little understanding on both sides of the constraints facing the other organisation (Kerrison et al., 2019).

Individuals Are Seen as Typical of Their Group

Wider stereotypes of a group are changed if the individual of the outgroup with whom one is interacting is seen as typical of that outgroup and not the exception (Hewstone, 2003). Reviews of the contact hypothesis literature conclude that if contact changes a person's attitude to people of the outgroup with whom direct contact was made, attitudes are transferred to other situations and members of the outgroup that participants have not met (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Paluck et al., 2019).

In COLAB, some members are uncomfortable with stereotyping, preferring to see members as individuals rather than an outgroup. Caroline for example states:

I *am not sure what a typical research partner would be. Having been a laboratory researcher, a qualitative and quantitative researcher I have met a myriad of different researchers. I think people are people. If we can come*

together to look at what works best, learn from each other and from service users this has to be a good thing.

For others, they felt they didn't know enough about the individual or the group to make a judgement, as Liv states:

I don't know, I don't know how they were recruited, and I don't know them well as persons. Some do fulfill my idea of stereotypes.

It is hoped that the COLAB experience should foster future collaborations between researcher and professional partners in the future, whether it be the continuation of this particular network or indeed in fostering professional researcher relations with partners yet unknown. But it was difficult from current reflections to determine the degree to which this may be the case, and may indeed be something to consider after the project's completion.

Conclusions and Recommendations

We have reflected here on our personal experiences of the conditions of contact within COLAB as a typical CJS–academic partnership in the European context. In retrospect, we now turn to some recommendations through which these conditions may be optimised in the future. We present these recommendations as a combination of the reflections on our own personal experiences, the recommendations shared in the North American literature on CJS–academic partnerships and intersector partnerships in general.

It should be noted at this junction, the limitations of the recommendations provided: this chapter is a theoretical and reflective commentary, using the contact hypothesis as a tool with which we have been able to make sense of our personal experiences. We cannot claim, however, any empirical evidence proving the contact hypothesis in this context as yet. More empirical evidence is required now to explore whether these have been the experiences of all our COLAB members or, indeed, if these have transferability to other consortia of this kind. We have no objective

measures of the presence or absence of any one of the necessary conditions and we would recommend that, in the future, the outcomes and conditions explored in these reflections are more formally investigated. These investigations could include the measurement of change in attitudes to the *outgroup*, the presence of the conditions explored here, and the casual relationships between these.

We are not alone in this call for greater empirical evidence. Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) and later Paluck et al. (2019) show that in general contact reduces prejudice between clients but there remains limited empirical evidence supporting the impact of the individual conditions proposed by Allport (1954). Both reviews confine the evidence to randomised control trials, something difficult to orchestrate realistically in monitoring the impact of contact conditions in CJS–academic partnerships. More qualitative work is required to unpick the complexity and interrelated nature of these contact conditions and the analysis of our reflections here is the first step in this direction. With the above limitations in mind, we end the chapter with recommendations to improve CJS–academic partnerships as viewed through the contact hypothesis lens.

Recommendations Related to Equality

Every effort should be made to allow both academics and professionals to express freely their different capabilities and build shared values, mutual respect and insight into each other's perspectives. (Vo & Kelemen, 2017). More attention could be given to designing consortia where organisations of similar size are matched where possible and attempts made to recruit equal numbers of practice and researcher organisations. We concur with Aakjær (2013) who, working in prisoner-prison officer collaborations, recommends that the less powerful group should be overrepresented in group interaction so as to balance out the power differentials that may exist. In CJS–academic partnerships, having larger numbers of practice partners may balance the privileging of researcher knowledge that may occur otherwise.

Both professionals and researchers should take joint leadership of the consortium, with both practice professionals and researchers taking key leadership roles in the implementation and decision-making in the project (Cunningham, 2008; Secret et al., 2011; Worden et al., 2014). Even if leadership is nominally distributed, power differentials may hinder this from being operationalised. Virkkunen and Newnham (2013) suggest that the potential power differentials and inequalities between partners are often tacitly accepted. An awareness of how distribution of knowledge between participants is dependent on both the power differentials between members and the personal tools and theories that the leaders of the consortium employ, is therefore necessary. The potential for this imbalance should be made explicit and early in consortium development. It requires the articulation of the needs of all partners and making clear that these have equal priority within the consortium's activities.

Consortia could also explore the tools for building partnerships that might make better sense to practice partners. This could mean that knowledge exchange should not only follow traditional lines of seminar or conference meetings but include also shadowing of a professional's working days, apprenticeship models and study tours of both the researcher and practice setting. This will only be possible if the research goals cater to the priorities of both professional and research organisations and has institutional/managerial buy in.

Recommendations Related to Institutional Support

Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) suggest this is one of the most impactful contact conditions on intergroup attitude change and collaboration. Getting organisational leaders on side is key to the researcher–professional partnership. Institutional support is assured by the marriage of organisational and consortium strategic directions. Leaders should formally recognise engagement in the consortium, through inclusion of the work formally in staff workplans, and formalised memoranda of understanding between organisations (Nilson et al., 2014; Rudes et al.,

2014; Drawbridge et al., 2018). Staff should be encouraged to actively participate in the research, and be rewarded for doing so.

Clodfelter et al. (2014), and Kerrison et al. (2019) suggest that practice organisation may be more likely to buy in if methods such as action research are used that is more solution orientated. In the COLAB, project the Change Laboratory method is such a method but whilst appealing, the resource required to deliver this method remains an impairment to future collaborations. Further, a formalised COLAB consortium agreement was signed between all participating organisations that acted as a lever to assure resources were committed on all sides to the project work. This had only a partial success as other work commitments often had to take priority.

Recommendations for Building a Cooperative Atmosphere

A cooperative atmosphere may be developed through actively identifying the hurdles that block the attainment of researchers and professional goals. Consortium leaders need to remove these to ensure all partners' needs can be met. In other words, it is important to identify the priorities, constraints and costs of the partnership to both partners (Rudes et al., 2014; Drawbridge et al., 2018) and ensure there is minimum disruption to practice services (Secret et al., 2011).

Effective communications channels are also essential for the development of a cooperative atmosphere. Knowledge sharing is key to this process and could be achieved through the use of tools of communication or boundary objects (Star & Greisemer, 1989). These are artefacts or tools that are understood by all members regardless of group and span the barrier between practice professionals and academics. These are tools have meaning in both camps and mediate and facilitate the planning of effective knowledge exchange opportunities. In COLAB, intersector secondment planning forms and other monitoring forms were such tools. However, individual members of consortia need to understand the purpose of these tools and be trained in using these as boundary objects, preferably completing these forms cooperatively.

Building trust and a sense of co-dependence is essential for a cooperative atmosphere. Bringing in a trusted third party (such as a union or communications officer) as a mediator has been suggested. This individual should be able to maintain an ongoing dialogue, maintaining communication through continuous and iterative feedback on emerging and final findings (Secret et al., 2011; Clodfelter et al., 2014; Nilson et al., 2014; Rudes et al., 2014; Worden et al., 2014; Drawbridge et al., 2018; Kerrison et al., 2019). Communication also involves the researcher providing feedback on the progress of their research in a way that provides evidence on the issues in which the partner had shown interest Similarly academics may need to compromise on the nature of their outputs, investing in analyses that will never appear in the form of a journal publication but has utility for the organisation (Worden et al., 2014).

These suggestions are all in keeping with the conditions for the development of a community of practice: "*a group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly*" (Wenger, 2006, p. 1). Ideally, CJS–academic partnerships aspire to becoming such a community of practice. A community of practice not only recognises the need for an open dialogue between CJS and academic partners inside the consortium but a dialogue with those outside of the consortium as well (Wenger et al., 2002; Wenger, 2006). In CJS–academic partnerships, these external bodies could include the wider CJS community such as government ministers or other academic institutions. What Rudes et al. (2014) describe as continuous and iterative communication, Wenger (2006) describes as creating a rhythm for the community and the development of a range of different spaces, both public and private, within the partnership in which different levels of participation can be orchestrated (Wenger, 2006; Clodfelter et al., 2014; Worden et al., 2014). There is a need to combine a feeling of both familiarity/safety within the partnership but combined with excitement and a common spirit of discovery (Wenger, 2006; Secret et al., 2011).

Partnerships should consider also the development of strategic plans in which values and operational details to establish a collaborative atmosphere within the partnership can be explicitly articulated. This goes

beyond the remit of the formalised memoranda of agreement or consortium agreements that focus on legal obligations rather than values. In the COLAB consortium, for example, grant and consortium agreements between partners and between COLAB and the EU, were supplemented with strategic and operational plans that were explicitly structured on community of practice principles (Wenger et al., 2002).

Recommendations for Goal Setting

The contact hypothesis proposes that CJS–academic partnerships should involve researchers and practice professionals collaborating to set common shared goals. This marries with the community of practice perspective (Wenger et al., 2002) that suggests working together on a common activity or goal will improve social learning and collaborative outcomes. Collaborative goal setting and planning is essential and should be done in such a way that the long-and short-term beneficial advantages to all in the partnership are made visible (Secret et al., 2011; Rudes et al., 2014; Nilson et al., 2014; Drawbridge et al., 2018). This ensures all members of the partnership see the personal value of participation (Wenger et al., 2002). Following on from the setting of common goals, members should clarify project roles, commitments, responsibilities and expectations about the deliverables coming from each goal and their intended use (Clodfelter et al., 2014; Nilson et al., 2014; Worden et al., 2014).

There should be some flexibility in the setting of partnership goals, allowing what Wenger et al. (2002) describe as a design for evolution. In other words, the interests of the partnership should change to accommodate both the changing needs of the offender population, prisons and academic members. The partnership should be flexible enough, and in fact welcome, the opportunity to reset or adapt goals as the partnership progresses.

At all points in the project, there is a need to explore how to maximise the engagement of all members in the goal setting process. The COLAB consortium, for example, was horizontal in leadership style, and consortium leadership has little or no formal or managerial authority over its members. This meant all members had an active role to play in

driving the partnership forward. Leaders in each participating institution were engaged at the macro level, setting the broader project vision. Other members were engaged at the level of individual constituent micro projects. Activity at this level was not micro managed by the leaders of the partnership. Individual members cannot, and should not, rely on rigid guidelines from the partnership leadership to guide all their efforts. All members of the consortium have a responsibility to identify and negotiate goals, exploring where individual goals are not aligned with overall partnership ones and realigning these.

Negotiation is defined as "when two or several parties, with partially conflicting interests, try to reach a common decision" (Rognes, 2015, p. 14). Theories that underpin this negotiation process have potential as a useful lens to manage clear common goal setting at the time of proposal writing or when renegotiating project goals (see Table 16.2). The needs of all must be met and their values uncompromised, but negotiation is required around the way of achieving this. For instance, although the research outputs and the enhancement of the service are the respective (and unnegotiable) needs of academic institution and practice organisations, participants may negotiate on the project time lines and working schedules to achieve these (Worden et al., 2014).

Recommendations Related to Appreciation of Similarities and Differences

To appreciate the similarities and differences between groups, the members must first get to know each other's skillsets. Staff in practice could learn to understand and appreciate the basics of research. The consortium leadership could orchestrate some basic training in research methods for them, for example (Clodfelter et al., 2014). Similarly academics could shadow practice professionals and engage in tours of the practice organisation to learn of practice based competences.

Both CJS and academic leaders should emphasise the similarities between the two sectors and the staff within them, especially the common desire to improve the lives of the prison population and staff. This is likely to improve cohesion in the partnership and the cooperative

Table 16.2 Negotiation theory as a means of underpinning goal setting activity

Negotiation theory (Fisher et al., 2012) proposes that different parties need a
  clear perception of their own goals. They need to be able to see these as
  wholly or partially different from the goals of others in the consortium, and
  then to decide whether or not they are willing to negotiate around these.
  If partners are willing to negotiate goals, then negotiation begins with
  members of the consortium conducting a preliminary scoping exercise of
  the needs and goals of potential collaborators. Each individual spells out
  the dream or ideal goal of their activity on the one hand (the so called best
  alternative to negotiated alternative) (Fisher et al., 2012). This is contrasted
  with the bare minimum that they are willing to accept in the negotiation
  (the worst alternative to negotiated alternative—Vindeløv, 2013). This is a
  starting point for negotiating a commonly accepted goal and should be
  done explicitly and early in a consortium's development

After clarification of the stakeholder different goals, a negotiation process
  can begin to arrive at mutually acceptable common or at least compatible
  goals. This can be mediated by an objective facilitator (Rognes, 2015). Sarah
  as COLAB coordinator sometimes took this facilitator/mediator role. Other
  consortia might consider a third more neutral party to mediate this process.
  The type of negotiation strategy undertaken depends on the length of time
  participants have known each other, their knowledge of the other and the
  complexity of the problems for which solutions are being developed
  (Rognes, 2015). The longevity of the researcher-practice partnership, and
  the length which each individual member has been participating, should be
  taken into account when assessing how researcher-professional negotiations
  can be managed

When starting out any negotiation, researchers and professionals present
  their positions or current stand points (what they say is wanted). It is these
  stand points that are to be negotiated. In order to do this, the interests
  and needs that underpin these standpoints should be explored (why they
  want it) (Vindeløv, 2013; Rognes, 2015). Needs (e.g. a need for safety and
  respect) and interests (having an opportunity and space to be heard) are
  closely underpinned by values (e.g. democratic values) (Vindeløv, 2013).
  Values and group identities are hard, and often impossible to negotiate.
  Negotiations between researcher and practice partners should stress either
  where commonly held values lie and/or find ways of safeguarding the
  values of all participants. Promoting offender wellbeing and rehabilitation
  are in the interest of both researcher and professional partners in COLAB
  for example but partners may initially disagree on how they can go about
  achieving this. Researchers for example see building knowledge about
  prisons, securing future research funding and disseminating this knowledge
  as the way of achieving this. Practice partners, on the other hand, focus
  more specifically on their service duties to their vulnerable and complex
  clients, managing and securing limited resources. Exploring the motives
  behind these apparently opposing positions may make it more possible to
  find common ground. The group must question whether it is possible to
  meet the interests of all parties and/or whether there are alternate ways to
  satisfy their needs. The desired end point is for the voice of all parties to be
  heard and the interests of both parties safeguarded

Table 16.2   (continued)

The negotiation process has many dimensions and may raise many issues. Conflict is one such dimension. Conflict, however, is an acceptable part of the negotiation process. Nils Christie (1977) in his iconic article "conflict as property" and the use of restorative justice, suggests that conflict should be owned by the people engaged in the conflict and to allow them to use their personal conflicts as a means of growth. This means the consortium leadership should not try to resolve conflicts themselves for the rest of the group but allow individual professionals and researchers working together to explore their different individual project conflicts and find personal solutions. A criteria for using conflicts in that way is that participants are willing to explore what is in the conflict, why it came up and who is involved. Conflicts over different positions, interests and needs will always exist. The question is how we understand them, and then deal with them.

atmosphere required. Whilst commonalities in professional values are important, so too are personal similarities encouraged through informal social events where partnership members get to know each other not only as researchers and professionals but as people.

However, the different competences academics and professionals bring to the table need to be made explicit also and equally valued without any one set of skills outweighing the other in importance. In COLAB for instance, academic knowledge of formative interventions may have been perceived as more valuable than other competences. This may have impeded knowledge exchange opportunities and cocreation. The COLAB strategic document had attempted to redress this balance by making explicit the differences and similarities in COLAB member knowledge. This was done through cross tabulations of skills versus the organisation that provided these. This showed where expertise in each partner was either supplementary or complementary to those provided by others.

Consortium leaders could also promote an appreciation of difference through developing an atmosphere of interdisciplinary learning rather than of competition. At the end of the day, academics and professionals need to feel their individual competences both set them apart from each other but are equally valued at the same time: that professional and academic knowledge are held in similar esteem.

Recommendations Related to Having Positive Expectations

Researcher/professional partnerships should pay attention to the expectations members have of each other. This may be as much about managing expectations, rather than only promoting positive ones. Positive expectations are likely to bear fruit through processes of self fulfilling prophesy, but expectations also need to be realistic to avoid disappointment and the negative reactions that may result from this. Motivation is important here also. Engaging overcommitted staff to engage in a partnership is unlikely to breed positive expectations and partnership leaders should work on voluntary participation driven by the intrinsic motivations of the individual members. Attention should also be given to how the partnership is generated in the first place. Who has approached who? Has practice approached the university or vice versa? Practice organisations may have more positive expectations if they have approached the university for their support rather than the other way around.

Final Thoughts

The use of the contact hypothesis has enabled us to compare our findings with those in the North American context, showing the common benefits and challenges that CJS–academic partnerships share regardless of national context. The cultural context and the national policy context did not feature explicitly in the discussions of either our consortium or in the literature. The only national differences that came up seemed to relate to the structure of the research partnership: in the US partnerships described, the direction of travel is very much the researchers moving into the realm of the practice professional. In the EU partnership explored here, the direction of travel is reciprocal with researchers being seconded to practice but also the reverse. This funding structure, multinational and multisector in character, means that intercultural dimensions both strengthen and challenge EU partnerships in particular if compared to US partnerships. A more thorough examination of

national partnerships structures, as guided by funding regulations, and the impact on productivity, would be a useful way forward in the field.

The partnership had been beneficial for both academic and practice partners but, perhaps more so for the researcher whose key priorities had been met (research publications new practice sources of data). Those of practice partners (service design) were less met, although unexpected learning had taken place in terms of cultural competence. Perhaps this disparity came from a lack of equity in the consortium when it came to representation and poor common goal setting conditions.

The attitudes of the academic and practice professionals in COLAB towards each other were positive, an outcome perhaps of a good cooperative atmosphere having been established within the partnership. Expectations of each other had not been negative although not necessarily positive at the beginning either. There was instead a more neutral, *a lets see what happens* approach. Friendships however formed across national and sector lines that further promoted a safe and cooperative interaction.

We find that the conditions highlighted in the contact hypothesis (especially related to dimensions such as goal setting and a cooperative atmosphere) dovetailed with those conditions recommended by literature using other alternative lenses (community of practice literature—Wenger, 2006 and the components of practice researcher partnerships, Rudes et al., 2014).

Our analysis suggests that equity in a partnership is more than being considerate of the fact that the voice of all in the consortium should be heard during project interactions. It is more complex and the initial structure of the partnership (in terms of initial attitudes towards the other group and the composition of the partnership) may mediate how equity plays out in the implementation of the collaborative partnership work.

Whilst common goal setting is listed in the contact conditions (Allport, 1954) and in the CJS–academic partnership literature (Secret et al., 2011; Rudes et al., 2014; Nilson et al., 2014; Drawbridge et al., 2018), concrete strategies/tools with which leaders in the partnership may work together to negotiate these common goals are absent. We raise the relevance of negotiation theory as a potential cognitive tool with

which to develop a tangible means of goal setting and recommend that its utility be explored in greater depth in the future.

Paluck et al. (2019) suggest that the contact conditions should be seen as a whole rather than individual conditions to be manipulated in isolation. The building of intersector trust within CJS–academic partnerships is the key and overarching theme that combines the individual conditions together. Partnerships build trust at an interpersonal level through the development of a cooperative atmosphere and at an institutional level through gaining institutional support. Holding positive expectations of future interactions and believing other members have common values and that everyone's voice is heard equally in the partnership also builds this trust. It is this trust that enables the partnership to function and for members to act and be willingly to share their knowledge and time. It is this trust in the individual partnership members that will allow members to participate in CJS–academic partnerships in the future and for the academic–professional partnership to be viewed as a learning opportunity and innovative space (Darsø, 2012).

The analysis suggests that we have a lot still to learn about the optimal individual contact conditions and the configuration of these that are required. More empirical evidence, especially qualitative approaches, is required to explore this, the impact on partnership performance, the degree to which conditions were controlled in the contact and the duration of contact (Paluck et al., 2019). However, our reflections suggest that seeking out this evidence is indeed worthwhile. Articulating our experiences and those of others in terms of the conditions of contact between academics and CJS professionals has helped us propose tangible ways in which the intergroup relationships within these partnerships can be facilitated. The simplicity of the contact hypothesis, and the tangible quality of the conditions of contact, provided a clear way to articulate our experiences and provide explanations and recommendations that made sense to us, and confirmed those elsewhere, on how to improve the intersector relationships within the consortium going forward. Consciously managing conditions of contact in researcher/professional interactions may promote the cocreation and innovation required of these intersector academic–practice collaborations to which we all aspire.

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