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COLLEGE OF CRIMINOLOGY
AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Research Brought to Life.

Translational Criminology: Toward Validated Best Practices

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Presentation Outline

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II. Summary of Prior Literature

III. Problem Formulation

IV. Research Questions

V. Methods

VI. Findings – Barriers

VII. Findings – Facilitators

VIII. Findings – Mechanisms

IX. Recommendations form Interviewees

X. Summary

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Introduction

- Translational criminology is concerned with how knowledge is created through scientific research and then used to inform policy and practice in the criminal justice system

- Historically, criminal justice policy has been largely influenced by ideology, public opinion, moral panics, and media coverage of isolated but powerfully stirring incidents of crime. Perhaps more so than other social policy fields, criminal justice policy and practice has a tendency to be crisis driven and reactionary

- However, over the past two decades there has been growing recognition of the importance of evidence-based criminal justice policy and practice from local, state, and federal government as well as within the academic discipline of criminology

- From this context, former NIJ Director John Laub, recognized in other fields the study of translational research and aspired to apply this field of study to criminology and criminal justice in an effort to better understand the dynamic processes involved in using criminological research to inform criminal justice policy and practice

Summary –
Prior Literature

- **Much of the prior literature is written from the academics' point of view**

- **Focus on barriers to knowledge translation**

  - Research is difficult to interpret/use (Cullen, 2005)

  - Relationships between researchers and practitioners are non-existent (Petersilia, 1991)

  - Leadership is resistant towards research/researchers uninterested in applied research (Uggen & Inderbitzin, 2010)

- **There has even been discussion of whether criminologists should be involved in policy (Blomberg et al., 2013; Tittle, 2004; Wellford, 2009)**

- **Importantly, no explanation of how research is translated from the academic realm to policy and practice settings**

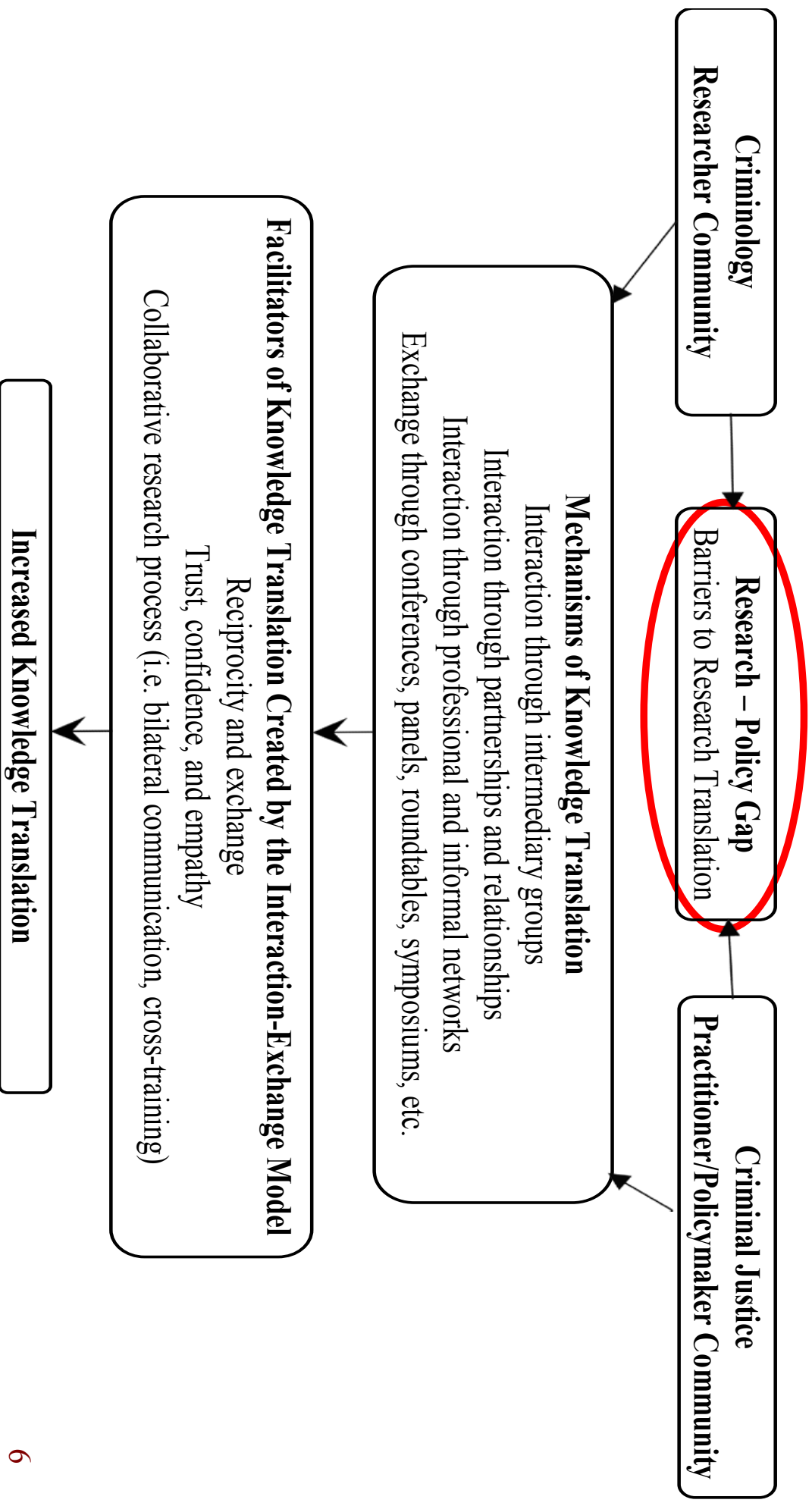- **So, we turned to translational research in other fields**

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Problem Formulation

- **Caplan's "Two-Communities Theory" (1979)**

  - **Researchers and practitioners operate in separate domains with different values, goals, and rewards**

    - Little contact between both groups

    - Theoretical vs. action oriented

    - Scientific method vs. policymaking process

    - Distrust

  - **This division produces a gap between researchers and practitioners and many of the barriers to knowledge translation**

  - **The result is a lack of knowledge translation**

Problem Formulation

◆ **Interaction-Exchange Model (Kothari et al., 2009; Lomas, 1997)**

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┌─────────────────────────┐
│      Criminology        │
│  Researcher Community   │
└─────────────────────────┘
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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│            Research – Policy Gap             │
│      Barriers to Research Translation        │
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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│          Criminal Justice                    │
│  Practitioner/Policymaker Community          │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│            Mechanisms of Knowledge Translation            │
│        Interaction through intermediary groups            │
│     Interaction through partnerships and relationships    │
│    Interaction through professional and informal networks │
│ Exchange through conferences, panels, roundtables,        │
│                 symposiums, etc.                          │
└──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Facilitators of Knowledge Translation Created by the Interaction-        │
│                       Exchange Model                                      │
│                 Reciprocity and exchange                                  │
│               Trust, confidence, and empathy                             │
│ Collaborative research process (i.e. bilateral communication,            │
│                    cross-training)                                        │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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┌──────────────────────────────────┐
│  Increased Knowledge Translation  │
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1. What factors are determined by researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to be the major <u>barriers</u> to the use of research to inform policy and practice in adult and juvenile corrections? And, to what extent, are these barriers explained by the two communities theory?

2. What do respondents cite as the most influential <u>facilitators</u> to knowledge translation? And, how can these facilitators be explained by the interaction-exchange model?

3. What methods or <u>mechanisms</u> are viewed as effective for bridging the knowledge translation gap and increasing the likelihood for research to inform policy and practice?

Methods

◆ **Data was gathered through interviews with academics, policymakers, and practitioners**

• Nationally recognized researchers from across the country

◆ **N=20 (8 – academics, 4 – policymakers; 8 – practitioners)**

• Key correctional decision makers in the state of Florida

◆ **Codes for the project came from an exhaustive review of the literature. Additional codes were identified through notes taken during interviews**

◆ **Debriefed after every interview to discuss themes/codes**

◆ **Interviews were transcribed and then coded in NVIVO 10**

Research Question 1:
Findings – Barriers

Barriers of Knowledge Translation

Frequently Cited Barriers in Interviews

Barrier	Value
Research is Difficult to Use	65
Leadership Unsupportive	57
Ideology/Politics	53
Trained Differently	42
Lack or Poor Relationships	36
Budget/Fiscal Concerns	28
Crisis Driven Event	25
Time Constraints	25
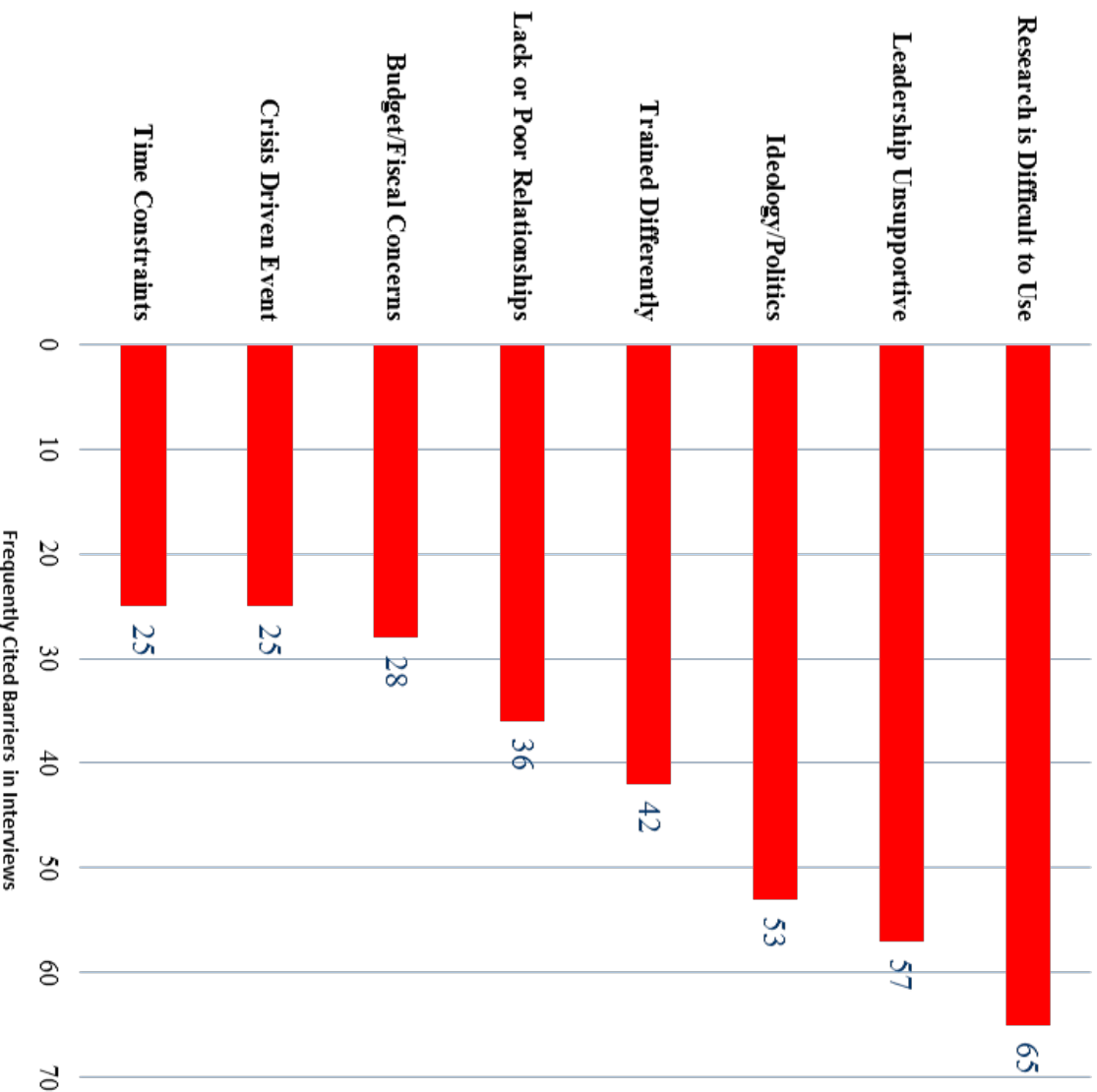
- *Research is Difficult to Use* (65)
  - Vocabulary
  - Evidence that cannot be applied
- *Leadership Unsupportive* (57)
  - Policymakers/practitioners' resistance towards research
  - Academics' disinterest in policy research
- *Ideology/Politics* (53)
  - Different views on what causes crime
  - Tough on crime, fear, moral panics
- *Trained Differently* (42)
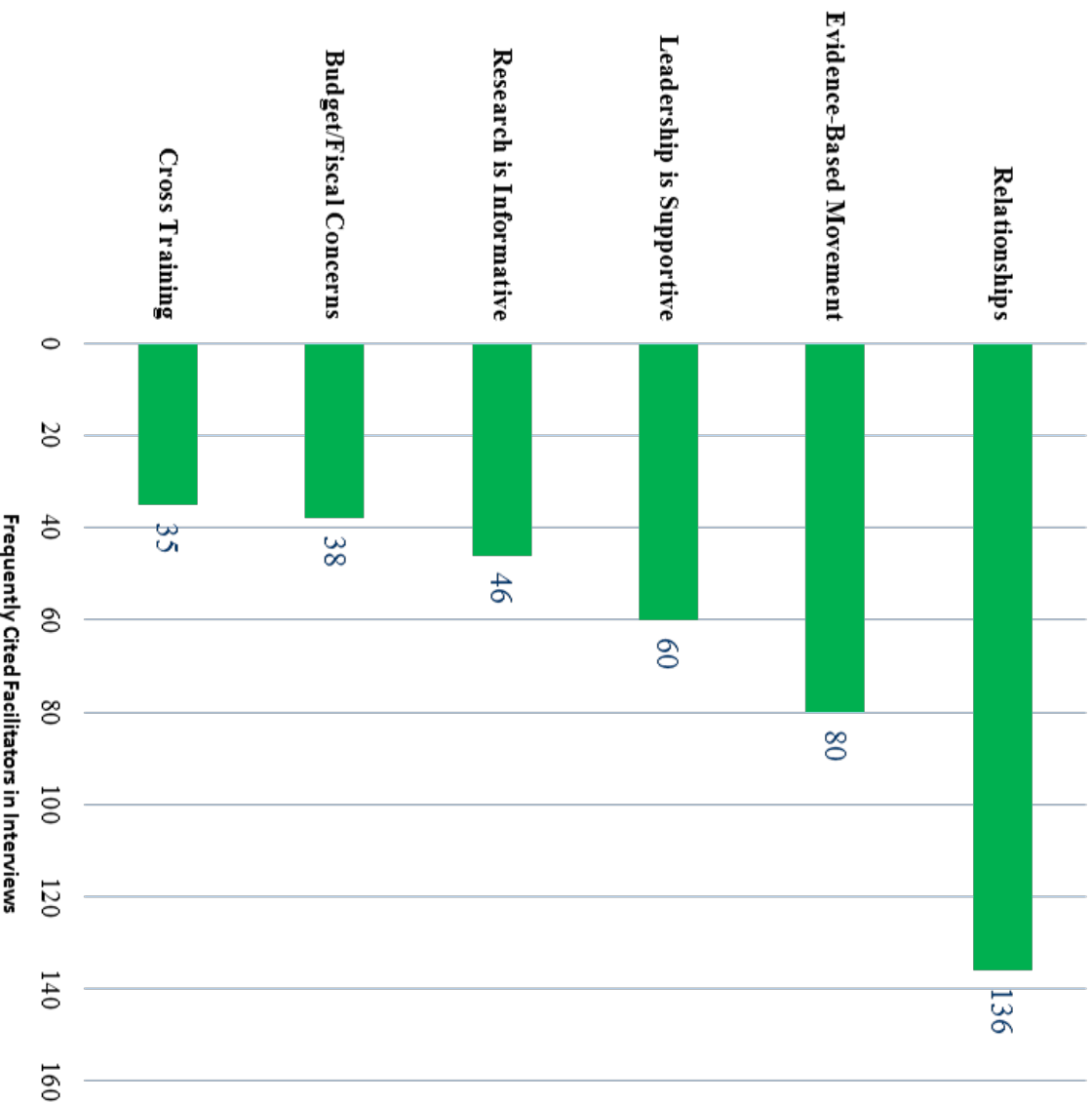 - Scientific method vs. policymaking process

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Research Question 2: Findings – Facilitators
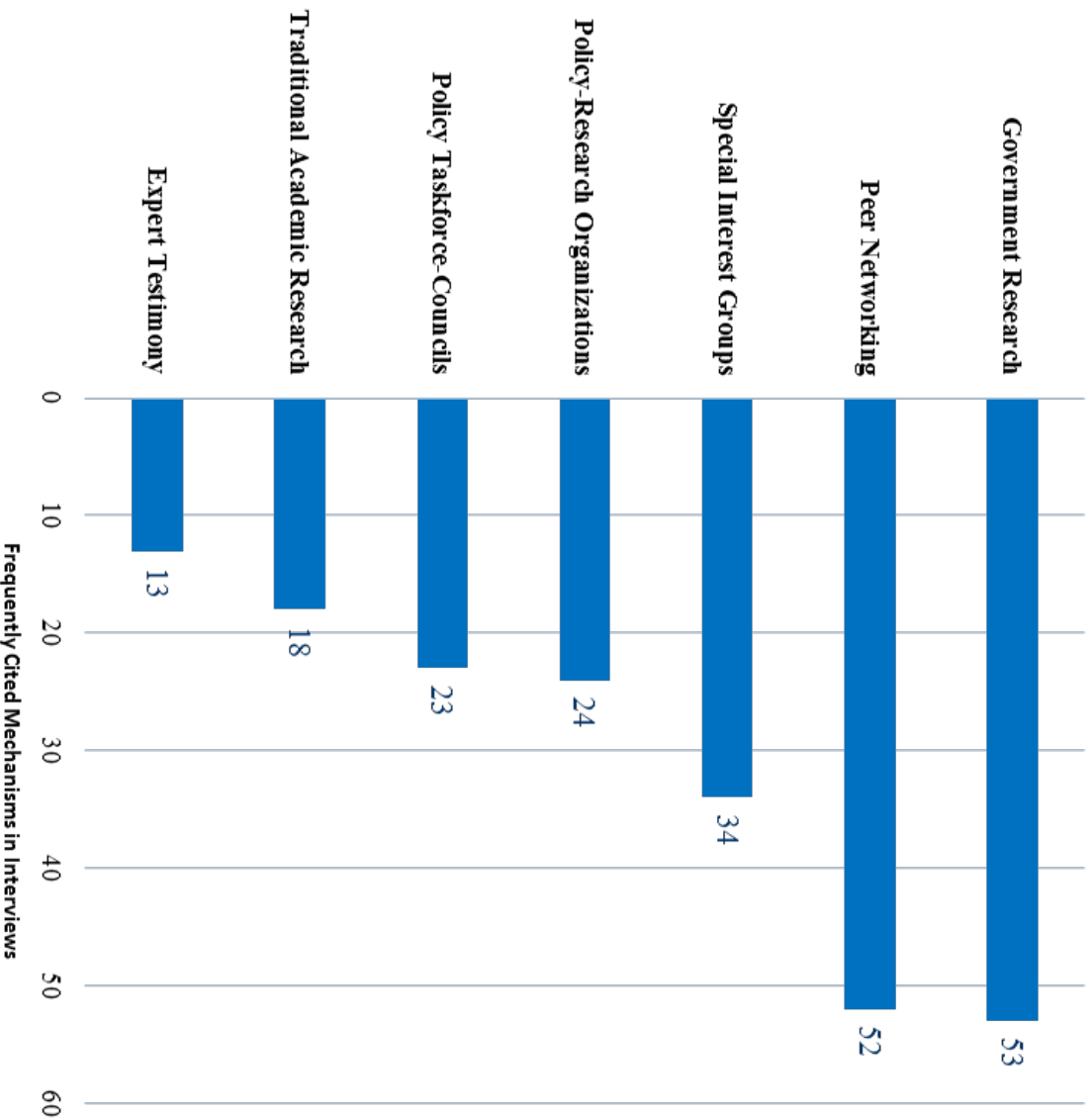
Facilitators of Knowledge Translation

Frequently Cited Facilitators in Interviews

Facilitator	Value
Relationships	136
Evidence-Based Movement	80
Leadership is Supportive	60
Research is Informative	46
Budget/Fiscal Concerns	38
Cross Training	35

◆ *Relationships* (136)
- Formal and informal partnerships
- Breaks down traditional academic and practitioner roles
- Trust, Credibility, and reciprocity

◆ *Evidence-Based Movement* (80)
- Reliance on academics to evaluate current programs or identify best practices

◆ *Leadership is Supportive* (60)
- Agency leadership supports the use of research to drive decision making
- Academic leadership supports policy relevant research

◆ *Research is Informative* (46)
- Research is clear, provides recommendations, cost-effectiveness
- Research addresses practitioners' questions or concerns

Research Question 3: Findings – Mechanisms

Mechanisms of Knowledge Translation

Frequently Cited Mechanisms in Interviews

Mechanism	Value
Government Research	53
Peer Networking	52
Special Interest Groups	34
Policy-Research Organizations	24
Policy Taskforce-Councils	23
Traditional Academic Research	18
Expert Testimony	13

- *Government Research* (53)
  - *Crimesolutions.gov*
  - OJJDP's *Blueprints*
- *Peer Networking* (52)
  - Other state practices
  - Practitioner conferences (e.g. ACA)
- *Special Interest Groups* (34)
  - Southern Poverty Law Center
- *Policy-Research Organizations* (24)
  - RAND
  - Urban Institute

Recommendations from Interviewees

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- Investing in Research – This included hiring more staff for internal agency research as well as investing more regularly in research projects.

- Supporting Researcher-Practitioner Partnerships

- Employing Task Forces - More task forces comprised of researchers, members of criminal justice agencies, and policymakers.

- Increasing Academics' Outreach to Practitioners – Academics should attend practitioner conferences, disseminate their research findings more directly and succinctly to policymakers, and generate policy and practice relevant recommendations.

- Conducting Cross Training of Researchers and Practitioners – Training graduate students to work with policymakers and practitioners and to conduct program evaluations of policies and interventions. Including policy research as a factor in tenure decisions. Encouraging researchers to work in policymaking and practitioner environments.

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Summary

- The two separate communities produces a gap between researchers and practitioners as evidenced by the barriers

- The facilitators produced under the interaction-exchange model may alleviate the gap between researchers and practitioners

- Mechanisms such as government research, peer networking, and intermediary groups may be more successful in transferring empirical evidence from researchers to decision makers than traditional sources of evidence (i.e. academic journals and expert testimony)

- Future research needs to test the two communities theory and interaction-exchange model using different case studies

- Thoughts on the current status of translational criminology

Thank You

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