Bridging the Gap between Research and Practice for Crime Victim Service

December 16, 2015
This National Center for Victims of Crime project is supported by cooperative agreement 2013-VF-GX-K010, awarded by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed those of the project staff and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.
Genesis and Goal

• OVC’s Vision 21 revealed a research to practice gap in victim services, with insufficient data and studies of effective responses.

• OVC funded this effort to help bridge this gap and improve communication/collaboration between practitioners and researchers.

• Ultimate goal: a more effective response to victims, families, and communities harmed by crime and abuse.
Our Plan

- Literature review
- Interviews of experts
- Survey – victim service providers
- Survey - researchers
- “Case studies”
- Stakeholder meeting
Lit Rev

Interviews

Surveys

“Case studies”

Stakeholder meeting

RECOMMENDATIONS
Bridging the Gap
Integrating Crime Victim Services
Research & Practice

Lessons from the Literature

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Project Partners

The National Center for Victims of Crime

URBAN INSTITUTE

ELEVATE THE DEBATE

Justice Research and Statistics Association
Presentation Outline

- Goal & Methods
- Conceptual Model
- Key Barriers
- Promising Strategies
- Comments/Questions
Goal

- Identify key barriers and strategies for bridging the gap between research and practice in victim services

Methods

- Review published reports, briefs, journal articles, working papers, & websites
- Search the Internet, journal databases, project reports, & references cited
Conceptual Model

Funders
(Governmental and/or Private)

Innovation

Research

Practice

EVALUATION
DISSEMINATION
MODIFICATION

INFORMATION SHARING

COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

DIFFUSION ADOPTION IMPLEMENTATION

# Bird’s Eye View

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researchers</th>
<th>Practitioners</th>
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<tr>
<td>Forest</td>
<td>Trees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data driven</td>
<td>Victim/story driven</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competitive academic environment</td>
<td>Collaborative multidisciplinary environment</td>
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<td>Objective approach</td>
<td>Protective approach</td>
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<td>Standard protocols</td>
<td>Individualized services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Want their work to make a difference in people’s lives.</td>
<td>Want their work to make a difference in people’s lives.</td>
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*Reprinted with permission from Faragher (2013)*
Key Barriers

- Limited Resources (funding, time, staff)
  - Effective integration requires extra communication, training, implementation, and evaluation activities

- Cultural Differences
  - Forest vs. tree perspective—both important
  - Researchers value empirical findings, practitioners value examples/experiences

- Organizational Bureaucracies
  - Inefficiencies and resistance to change
Key Barriers (cont.)

- **Evaluation & Dissemination Challenges**
  - Challenges producing and clearly communicating findings that are useful and relevant
  - Limited agreement on and syntheses of evidence-based victim services practices

- **Implementation Challenges**
  - Standardized vs. individualized protocols
  - Requires staff buy-in and training
Strategies for Integration

- Funding Strategies
- Evaluation & Dissemination Strategies
- Implementation Strategies
- Online Resource Centers
- Social Interaction Strategies
- Collaboration Strategies
Funding Strategies

Funding requiring evidence-based practices and encouraging researcher-practitioner partnerships

What’s Promising?
- Streamlining funding for programming efforts with those supporting evaluations
- Flexible definitions of “evidence-based” that include innovations where research is still developing
- Requiring outcome-tracking to improve services not enforce accountability
Evaluation & Dissemination

Strategies for improving the amount, quality, usefulness, and accessibility of research findings

What’s Promising?

- Evaluations focused on “dual-use” outcomes relevant to both practitioners and researchers
- Empowering practitioners with evaluation tools or linking them to research partners (can save time, $)
- Systematic reviews to identify literature gaps & comprehensive research databases in clear, accessible language
- Disseminating research findings in person, by video, or in research-to-practice briefs
Implementation Strategies

Training practitioners to understand and apply research findings

What’s Promising?

- In-person training that is sensitive, appropriate, and backed by “best practice” information
- Active learning techniques (e.g., role-playing) with opportunities for discussion and practice
- Coordinated, multidisciplinary efforts led by state or federal agencies or coalitions
Online Resource Centers

Repositories of practitioner-friendly research findings, training materials, videos and webinars

What’s Promising?

- Resource centers that are comprehensive yet easily accessible, with fair and transparent rating systems
- Resource centers that provide opportunities to connect in person at trainings, conferences, etc.
- Limited end-user data but may be most used by legislators, policymakers, & victim services coalitions
Social Interaction Strategies

Opportunities for practitioners and researchers to connect and interact

What’s Promising?

- In-person meetings that facilitate dialogue between researchers and practitioners can help establish trust and rapport critical to future collaborations
- Online webinars may be another helpful way to connect
Collaboration Strategies

Partnerships of researchers and practitioners working to produce useful, relevant findings for one-time or ongoing evaluations

What’s Promising?

- Successful collaborations involve:
  - Resources and commitment
  - Supportive institutional cultures
  - Shared purpose, mutual respect, trust, & learning
  - Well-defined roles & outcomes
  - Well-anticipated challenges
  - Efficient communication between partners

Sullivan, Khondkaryan, & Fisher (2013); Barton, Nelsestuen, & Mazzeo (2014)
Conclusion

- Research and practice integration requires 2-way information-sharing and collaboration
- Practitioners must be willing to accept the necessary requirements of evaluations
- Researchers must be flexible to accommodate the concerns of practitioners delivering victim services

For more information, contact Jennifer Yahner at jyahner@urban.org
Victim Service Practitioners’ Perspectives on Bridging the Gap between Research & Practice
Introduction

• Urban Institute conducted a survey of victim service providers from a variety of agencies.

• Goal: To understand victim service providers’ perspectives on victim research, particularly the barriers to successful research-and-practice collaboration.
Survey Sampling

- Random sample of 500 victim service providers
  - 450 from NCVC and OVC national databases of VS providers
  - 50 state coalitions
- Extensive efforts to validate contact info
- Launched web survey Sept 2014 with 4 months of email, postcard & phone reminders
- Achieved 67% response rate (N=333)
Survey Topics

- Respondent and agency characteristics
- Research use, barriers, and importance
- Use of online resource centers
- Research and practice collaborations, perceptions of researchers
- Promising steps for integrating research and practice
Sample Characteristics (N=333)

Agency Characteristics
• Covered all 50 states, plus Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands
• Most (86%) belonged to a state coalition & were government-funded (92%)
• One-quarter (28%) were part of a national organization (e.g., MADD)
• Majority (60%) had less than 25 staff

Respondent Characteristics
• Half were executive staff, ¼ were midlevel managers, ¼ were frontline staff
• Educated and experienced
  ▪ 71% had 10+ years working with victims
  ▪ Half had Master’s degree, most had Bachelor’s degrees
Takeaways

1. Resources are needed to support research-and-practice partnerships, including funding, time, and training.

2. Substantive relationships between practitioners and researchers facilitate collaboration success.

3. Interactive activities most effectively facilitate learning about victim research and practitioner-researcher relationships.
Takeaway 1

Resources are needed to support research-and-practice partnerships, including funding, time, and training
Practitioners’ Research Experience & Activities

• Most were aware of research (62%), but less than half (49%) were familiar

• Most common research activities were client tracking
  ▪ Track services provided (73%)
  ▪ Measure client satisfaction (60%)
  ▪ Track client outcomes (54%)

• Few partnerships with external researchers & very few internal research staff

• Most common activities to become familiar with VS research
  ▪ Attend conferences (84%)
  ▪ Attend online training or webinars (78%)
  ▪ Talk to knowledgeable colleagues (74%)
  ▪ Attend in-person trainings (71%)
Type of Research Experience

- Participated in a research study: 47%
- Completed a research course: 42%
- Attended a research presentation: 33%
- Attended a research workshop: 31%
- Other: Conducted research: 7%
- None: 24%
Importance of Funding Support

“A year ago, I attended a 2-day event which brought together researchers & DV practitioners around issues similar to this survey. It was a good idea, but essentially yielded nothing without further resources & support for continued cross-disciplinary collaborations.”
Barriers to Research Use at Your Organization

Insufficient funding to implement new ideas: 59%
Relevant research is not compiled in one place: 54%
Insufficient training to implement new ideas: 51%
Managers do not have time to read research: 44%
Insufficient ongoing support to implement new ideas: 41%
Insufficient time to spend implementing new ideas: 33%
Staff are resistant to changing current service practices: 23%
Managers don't feel capable of evaluating research quality: 21%
Managers unaware of research: 21%
*Facilities are inadequate for implementation of new ideas: 20%
Statistical research is not reported in understandable way: 14%
Research is written in overly complex way: 13%
Staff are suspicious of research-informed ideas: 10%

Less than 10% cited:
*Managers unaware of research
Research findings cannot be adapted to local community
Research findings cannot be adapted to victims we serve
*Leadership is resistant to implementation of new ideas

*Frontline Staff agreed more than Executive Directors
Only 14% of VS providers had experienced an unsuccessful collaboration with a researcher.

### Why Was It Unsuccessful?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Researcher told us how to collect data and was not willing to modify activities</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not receive funding to participate in research</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher had specific RQs and did not ask for input</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher did not spend time learning about our organization</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When we encountered problems, were not sure how to overcome</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never provided info/feedback about our organization</td>
<td>24%</td>
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*Single most important factor*
Takeaway 2

Substantive relationships between practitioners and researchers facilitate collaboration success
Substantive Relationships Needed

• Important factors for successful research-and-practice collaborations are relationship-based
  ▪ Practitioners are part of the decision-making and design process
  ▪ Practitioners feel that researchers listen to them and understand their work
  ▪ Practitioners and researchers create relationships beyond the research task

• Building relationships is dependent on face-to-face interactions
  ▪ Interactive activities are most useful for developing practitioner-researcher relationships
Types of Funding Most Useful to Helping Providers Evaluate Own Programs & Understand Research

- Partner with an external researcher: 48%
- Give existing staff more time to participate in research: 36%
- Hire new staff specifically for research: 35%
- Develop existing staff's research capabilities: 30%
- Other: 2%
Only 14% of VS Providers Experienced an Unsuccessful Collaboration with a Researcher

Why Was It Unsuccessful?

- Researcher told us how to collect data and was not willing to modify activities: 50%
- Did not receive funding to participate in research: 48%
- Researcher had specific RQs and did not ask for input: 45%
- Researcher did not spend time learning about our organization: 43%
- When we encountered problems, were not sure how to overcome: 26%
- Never provided info/feedback about our organization: 24%
Less than half (42%) had experienced a successful collaboration with a researcher

**Why Was It Successful?**

- **78%**
  - Researcher listened to what we wanted to learn

- **74%**
  - We helped determine what info to collect

- **60%**
  - Researcher met and interacted with staff

- **60%**
  - Researcher helped deal with data collection issues

- **59%**
  - Researcher explained how to collect info they needed

- **58%**
  - Researcher provided info/feedback about our program

- **58%**
  - We helped design how to implement data collection

- **54%**
  - Researcher allowed us to read report before publishing

- **34%**
  - Researcher spent time with us doing other activities

- **34%**
  - Researcher collaborated with us to write report

- **29%**
  - We received funding to participate in research process

*Single most important factor*
What negative perceptions does your organization have about working with outside researchers?

- None: 57%
- They don't understand service practices & challenges: 28%
- They don't understand clients needs & characteristics: 18%
- They focus on wrong outcomes: 13%
- They collect data but don't report useful findings: 12%
- They don't listen to practitioners' viewpoints: 12%
- They don't provide adequate safeguards for victims: 11%
- They don't really want to help us: 5%
- They don't respect practitioners expertise: 5%
- Other: 4%
- They can't do anything to help: 1%
Takeaway 3

Interactive activities most effectively facilitate learning about victim research and practitioner-researcher relationships
What do you do regularly to become familiar with victim services research?

- Attend conferences: 84%
- Attend online trainings or webinars: 78%
- Talk to knowledgeable colleagues: 74%
- Attend in-person trainings: 71%
- Review government reports or guidelines: 60%
- Visit specific websites: 60%
- Read newsletters or magazines: 59%
- Conduct general web searches: 54%
- Read journal articles: 47%
- Read research-to-practice briefs: 25%
- Work directly with a researcher: 19%
- None: 2%

NOTE: VS providers in CJ agencies (law, prosecutor, courts) expressed same level of awareness/familiarity with VS research but were about 10% less likely to engage in activities above, compared to non-CJ VS providers.
Which activities provide most useful information re: basic data on victimization in your community?

- Attending conferences: 60%
- Attending in-person trainings: 57%
- Talking to knowledgeable colleagues: 57%
- Reviewing gov't agency reports or guidelines: 57%
- Visiting specific websites: 51%
- Attending online trainings or webinars: 50%
- Conducting general web searches: 48%
- Reading newsletters or magazines: 42%
- Reading journal articles: 33%
- Reading R2P briefs: 17%
Which activities provide most useful information re: research-informed practices in victim services?

- Attending conferences: 63%
- Attending in-person trainings: 54%
- Attending online trainings or webinars: 50%
- Reading journal articles: 47%
- Talking to knowledgeable colleagues: 44%
- Reading R2P briefs: 43%
- Reviewing gov't agency reports or guidelines: 40%
- Visiting specific websites: 38%
- Reading newsletters or magazines: 32%
- Conducting general web searches: 31%
Which strategies are useful for developing relationships with researchers?

- Researchers at professional conferences: 76%
- Funding for R-and-P partnerships: 74%
- Practitioners at research conferences: 66%
- In-person networking meetings: 62%
- Matchmaker database of Rs and Ps: 56%
- Online networking meetings: 50%

Survey responses: Somewhat (dark blue) and A Lot (light blue)
Conclusions

Three takeaways regarding barriers to research-and-practice integration

1. Research-and-practice partnerships cannot occur without appropriate resources
   - Funding
   - Time
   - Training

2. Relationships that demonstrate collaboration and understanding among both parties are important for successful partnerships
   - Practitioners need decision-making and design input
   - Researchers need to build understanding of practitioners’ work

3. Interactive activities facilitate learning about VS research and building practitioner-researcher partnerships
   - Conferences, trainings, and meetings help develop relationships and disseminate relevant research
For More Information

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Bridging the Gap Between Research & Practice in Victim Services: A National Survey of Researchers
Purpose

• To understand the current challenges to developing research-informed practices and practice-informed research in victim services.

• Survey examined researcher perceptions and experiences to identify strategies for facilitating victim-related research.
Methodology

Researchers doing victim-related research:
• Authors of books on victim-related topics
• Primary authors of 2 or more journal articles on victim-related topics
• Recipients of research grants related to victims/victimization
• Members of relevant organizations:
  – ASC Division of Victimology
  – ACJS Victimology Section
  – Homicide Research Working Group
• After removing duplicates, survey was sent to 1,021 researchers
• 257 total responses; 224 valid responses
Researcher Backgrounds

• Respondents were highly educated and experienced
  – 95% held graduate degrees
  – 81% had over 5 years of research/evaluation experience
  – 92% worked on multiple victim research/evaluation projects
Researcher Backgrounds

Respondents worked in:

• Research organizations located across 43 states and DC
• Supportive research infrastructures
  – 95% worked at a university or government agency
  – 85% reported the institution was supportive of applied research
Victim-Related Research Experience

• Respondents worked on victim-related research in multiple areas and utilized different types of data sources.
  – Majority conducted research on domestic violence (64%) and sexual assault (60%)
  – Most commonly used types of data
    • Victim data collected on community samples (e.g. school or campus samples)
    • State or local victimization surveys
Researcher & Practitioner Contact

- Contact is lacking between researchers and practitioners.
  - Over 1/3 of victim researchers reported they did not work directly or closely with practitioners.
  - Less than half became aware of research topics and needs by talking with victim service providers.
  - About half belong to an organization that focuses on victim research (e.g., ASC’s Division of Victimology).
Capacity to Conduct Victim Research

- Work satisfaction in victim services research is either comparable to or greater than in other research areas.
- Over 90% of respondents indicated researchers in victimization/victim services are as, or more, collaborative than researchers in other fields.
Capacity to Conduct Victim Research

• Researchers most frequently indicated their ability to conduct research on victim-related topics is no more or less difficult than other research areas.

• Victim researchers perceive themselves as similar to researchers in other fields in:
  • Qualifications
  • Awareness of key research findings
  • How well they translate research findings
Capacity to Conduct Victim Research

Researchers reported some impediments to successful research collaborations in this field compared to others:

- Less funding for victim research
- Fewer researchers in this area
- Randomized controlled trials are more difficult
Capacity to Conduct Victim Research

• 55% of researchers who expressed an opinion indicated the knowledge base of “what works” in victim services is less than in other research areas.

• 77% of researchers who expressed an opinion thought that it was more difficult to conduct RCTs in victim services.

• 46% thought that the difficulty in conducting RCTs affected the knowledge base to a significant degree (‘4’ or ‘5’ rating on a five-point scale).
Researcher Perceptions of Practitioners

• Researchers believe practitioners:
  – Want to do what’s best for their clients
  – Offer valuable insights for research
  – Can be forceful advocates for research funding

• But researchers also believe practitioners:
  – Fear negative research results
  – Don’t understand research practices and challenges
Research Work Experiences with Victim Service Organizations

- 85% of researchers reported that the manager or staff of the organization used the research findings.
- Most frequently indicated uses were:
  - Training and presentations
  - Changed practices or policies
Research Findings Dissemination

• 85% of researchers indicated the dissemination of research findings to victim organizations is important.

• However, primary methods for dissemination tended to target academic audiences:
  • 74% presented at research conferences
  • 69% submitted articles to peer-reviewed journals
  • 45% presented at practitioner conferences
  • 18% disseminated through victim services publications
Researchers stressed the importance of establishing and maintaining good relationships to ensure research findings are used by practitioners.

70% attributed research-driven changes in victim services to a successful researcher/practitioner collaboration.
Researcher/Practitioner Collaborations

• 60% reported they experienced successful collaborations with practitioners.

• Successful collaborations were most frequently attributed to:
  – Cooperation and support from practitioners
  – Agreement with the research plan
Researcher/Practitioner Collaborations

• 23% of researchers experienced an unsuccessful practitioner collaboration.

• Unsuccessful collaborations were most frequently attributed to:
  – Lack of cooperation and support from practitioners
  – Concerns about research findings affecting funding
Research Problems Experienced

• Fewer than 1/3 of researchers reported problems with practitioners in conducting victim-related research.

• Among those researchers, the most prevalent issues were:
  – Practitioners misinterpreted findings (51%)
  – Being asked to “prove” a program/policy works (42%)
Strategies for Effective Collaborations

• Researchers were given a list of strategies to help build rapport and develop relationships with practitioners. Strategies rated as somewhat or very useful by most researchers included:
  – Funding for research and partnerships (93%)
  – Researchers presenting work at practitioner conferences (88%)
  – Practitioner presence at professional research conferences (76%)
  – Researcher/practitioner matchmaker databases (74%)
  – Biannual networking meetings (68%)
Strategies for Effective Collaborations

- Several also offered suggestions on how to improve researcher and practitioner relationships:
  - Treat practitioners as partners in research rather than objects of a study
  - Present findings so they can be understood
  - Make the research relevant: show practitioners how findings can improve outcomes
Conclusions and Implications

• Researchers believe collaboration with practitioners is beneficial for research and victim service organizations:
  – Practitioners can offer valuable insight and serve as funding advocates
  – Collaboration can produce research-driven changes in victim services

• Researchers and practitioners should forge closer working relationships.
  – Professional conferences with both researchers and practitioners
  – Researcher/practitioner matchmaker databases
  – In-person networking meetings
  – Research and practice partnerships
Questions?