

Research in Brief

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Global Concepts, Local Contexts: A Case Study of International Criminal Justice Policy Transfer in Violence Reduction

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The city of Glasgow, Scotland, has long been plagued by gang-related violence, especially in the east end of the city, which is an area of high social deprivation and related problems. The violent image and reputation of the city goes back generations, leading to commentators and the media labelling Glasgow as the crime capital of Europe.[1] In 2008, faced with the apparent failure to deal with the problems of violence, the police in Glasgow, in partnership with statutory agencies, engaged in a process of policy transfer of the Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence (US CIRV). They formed a multiagency strategy, the Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (Glasgow CIRV), to tackle violence by targeting gangs and gang members both collectively and individually and encourage them to change their lifestyle. Glasgow CIRV operated for a period of three years (June 2008–July 2011) and achieved limited success in reducing violence and weapon carrying offences; however, in contrast to US CIRV, which is still in operation, the project failed to achieve long-term sustainability.

The author performed an in-depth case study of the policy transfer between US CIRV and Glasgow CIRV, using the Dolowitz and Marsh model of policy transfer to provide a theoretical and empirical framework to analyze the processes, mechanisms, and outcomes of the transfer.[2] It should also be noted that the author was the deputy project manager of Glasgow CIRV from its inception in 2008 until his retirement from the police in 2010.

Research Findings

Research shows that Glasgow CIRV engaged in the process of trying to copy the US CIRV model “in its entirety” from the outset and, indeed, copied the US CIRV management structure to provide a clear model for the project in Glasgow.[3] The program’s creators also set out to copy the method of engagement used in US CIRV, the “call-in” sessions in which gang members were compelled, through the leverage of probation and parole powers, to attend a court session to listen to speakers passing messages about the need to stop the violence.[4]

However, following discussions with members of the judiciary, it became clear that due to the differences between U.S. and Scots laws, the proposed use of bail powers to compel gang members to attend similar sessions in Glasgow would not be possible. Therefore, the Glasgow CIRV engaged in a process of emulation, taking elements of US CIRV and adapting them to fit the local context.[5] This led to a significant difference between the two projects, as Glasgow CIRV had to ask gang members to volunteer to attend their court sessions, called “self-referral” sessions, rather than compel them to attend, as had been done in the United States.

A further significant difference between the two projects was the use of a dedicated case manager in Glasgow CIRV who looked at all factors in the engaged person’s background. This involved looking at reasons why they individuals became involved in violence and determining the best way out of their violent lifestyle and their gang and offering a range of services tailored to help. Such services included anger management, drug and alcohol counseling, and employment assistance. Furthermore, Glasgow CIRV also engaged with young, school-aged persons and actively sought ways to prevent young people from becoming involved in gangs and violence from the outset.

Glasgow CIRV, in a similar fashion to US CIRV, used a strong enforcement message to warn gang members of the consequences of continued violence. This message was conveyed at the self-referral

sessions by senior police officers. Glasgow CIRV developed an enforcement matrix to be used following a violent incident.

However, it became apparent that this enforcement threat—that the whole gang would be targeted—was not possible. It was noted that the police in US CIRV had different legal powers from those of the Scottish police: for instance, it became apparent that the Cincinnati, Ohio, Police Department could “hold back” evidence of a crime and act on it later to target the whole gang, then convey that information back at the next call-in session as evidence of a strong enforcement provision.[6] In contrast, the Scottish police were unable to engage in such a practice of holding back evidence of a crime taking place. Scots law determines that the police have a duty to act promptly and report offenders to the procurator fiscal [Scots public prosecutor] as soon as possible if evidence of a crime becomes available.

Lessons Learned and Action Items

The lessons learned by the Glasgow CIRV team and identified in this research can be translated into action items for police chiefs to consider when embarking on such projects.

1. Develop strong partnerships with relevant agencies[end]

Strong partnerships were found to be crucial in the development of Glasgow CIRV, which involved members of various city agencies in the central coordinating team. Close-working relationships enhanced information sharing and broke down barriers to collaboration.

Unfortunately, it became apparent during this research that not all organizations involved were fully engaged in the concept of Glasgow CIRV. For example, one prominent council officer was displeased with the project management team and disavowed belief in the concept of Glasgow CIRV. As a result,

when the original funding period for Glasgow CIRV was ending, there was a lack of political support from the agency to seek further funding opportunities; subsequently, Glasgow CIRV ceased to operate in July 2011.

Therefore, it is vital that strong partnerships are developed to ensure the long-term sustainability of such programs and that all partners be fully committed to and engaged in the success of the initiative.

2. Engage with academic partners from the outset[end]

A further lesson learned from the failure of the Glasgow CIRV is the need to fully engage with academic partners at the outset in order to ensure that a proper and robust evaluation model is in place, as was the case in the US CIRV.[7] Developing such an evaluation model allowed the US CIRV team to develop critical analyses of appropriate data and key indicators, which were designed for production on a regular basis.

Although some research was retrospectively carried out into the efficacy of Glasgow CIRV, it was insufficient to provide a full and rigorous evaluation of the impact of the project in a valid and reliable way, which would have been facilitated by a performance management framework established from the beginning of Glasgow CIRV and greater independent academic support.[8] This failure meant that the Glasgow CIRV team were unable to supply key partners with evidence of the project's success, a gap that had a negative impact on the ability to seek future funding opportunities and ultimately led to the project's termination.

In conclusion, two key contributors to long-term sustainability were identified: (1) strong partnerships with relevant agencies must be developed, and (2) a robust and reliable evaluation model must be built into the project at the outset to provide support and evidence of success or otherwise of any such project.

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Notes:

- [1] "Glasgow Ranked UK's Most Violent Area," BBC News, April 24, 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-22276018>; Alastair H. Leyland, "Homicides Involving Knives and Other Sharp Objects in Scotland, 1981–2003," **[ital.]***Journal of Public Health***[end]** 28, no. 2 (2006): 145–147.
- [2] William Graham, "Global Concepts, Local Contexts: A Case Study of International Criminal Justice Policy Transfer in Violence Reduction" (PhD dissertation, Glasgow Caledonian University, 2016); David Dolowitz and David Marsh, "Who Learns What from Whom? A Review of the Policy Transfer Literature," **[ital.]***Political Studies***[end]** 44, no. 2 (June 1996): 343–357; David Dolowitz and David Marsh, "Learning from Abroad: The Role of Policy Transfer in Contemporary Policy-Making," **[ital.]***Governance***[end]** 13, no. 1 (January 2000): 5–24.
- [3] Interview with Glasgow CIRV Project Manager **[AU: Superintendent Andrew McKay, Strathclyde Police, September 21st 2012: Personal Interview Please provide name, date, and mode of interview (email, phone, in-person, etc.). (DG)]**
- [4] Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence Best Practice Document (University of Cincinnati, 2008).
- [5] Dolowitz and Marsh, "Who Learns What From Whom?"
- [6] Robin Engel et al., **[ital.]** *Implementation of the Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV): Year 1 Report***[end]** (Cincinnati, OH: 2008).
- [7] Ibid.
- [8] Damien John Williams et al., "Addressing Gang-Related Violence in Glasgow: A Preliminary Pragmatic Quasi-experimental Evaluation of the Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV)," **[ital.]***Aggression and Violence Behaviour***[end]** 19, no. 6 (November 2014): 686–691.