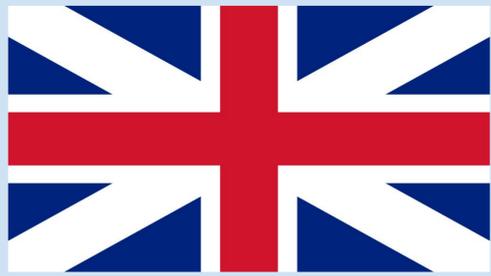


The Perils of Youth Justice and Strategies for the Future: A Comparative Analysis of the US and UK

Tiana Jones

University of Michigan School of Social Work



Location

My project took place in the United Kingdom in London, England. England was the first place in which juvenile courts were established and where many U.S. practices originated.



Community Partners

While in London, I met with four different organizations that are involved in the youth justice field in various ways. Many of these agencies are nonprofits that work directly with offenders and families or practitioners and/or courts. These organizations and agencies are:

- Wipers Youth
- Westminster Youth Offending Team
- Centre for Justice Innovation
- Words of Wisdom for Young People



Connections

Classroom:

I've taken a mini-course and semester long course in juvenile justice while in the MSW program. These courses helped shape my project in that I was able to do research on specific aspects of the juvenile justice system such as disproportionality.

Career:

This project gave me direction into the work that I want to do in my career and specifically in what capacity. It was reaffirming and allowed me to connect with people in the youth justice field who are doing what I ultimately want to do.

Advice

- **Timing is EVERYTHING**- One thing I would definitely change is the time I allowed myself to prepare for the trip and to take the trip. Even if your project is a month or two weeks, allow yourself adequate time to prepare beforehand and to wrap things up afterwards.
- **Do the Touristy Things**- Taking time to explore the country is just as important as the project itself. I think it adds valuable context in understanding the culture and people.
- **Utilize OGA**- The Office of Global Activities offers a lot of valuable resources and information when planning and preparing for your trip. Take advantage of it because it will help!

Project Information

My global independent study was centered around addressing and analyzing effective strategies for juvenile justice reform. My primary goal was to understand how the two systems differentiate in function, demographics, policies, interventions and outcomes.

Key Questions:

- What does involvement in this system look like?
- Is there disproportionality in contact/arrest?
- What are best practices used to divert youth from the system?

Skills Utilized/Developed

In the process of planning and executing my project, I was able to use a variety of social work skills. Much of my project required connecting with people and thinking about big picture reform. The following are examples of skills utilized:

- Conducting Informant/Key Stakeholder Interviews
- Critical Thinking/Analysis
- Active Listening

Outcomes

Using the interviews, organizational resources and information from literary sources such as "Youth Crime and Justice" (Goldson & Muncie), I decided to write a comparative analysis on the two systems with a specific focus on the experiences of youth of color and BAME youth.

As a result of my project, I learned a lot about the history and current state of youth justice in the United Kingdom. I was also able to get connected internationally with youth justice experts that will aid in future research and academic efforts.

Lessons Learned

- Youth of color are disproportionately represented in the youth justice system in both the U.K. and U.S.
- Politics or public response has a significant impact on the direction of the youth justice system in both the U.K. and U.S.
- An integrated approach is an effective practice to equitably addressing the needs of youth.
- The US and UK are both addressing similar issues within the youth justice realm, and both countries have people, organizations and leadership working to address these issues.

Acknowledgments

This project would not have been possible without the support of the Office of Global Activities, my faculty advisor Justin Hodge, and my new London contacts, Carmen Robin-D'Cruz, Charlene Cole, Sammy Obi, and Westminster YOT.