­Example of a Proposal 3

**Title:** An analysis of the Edinburgh Study towards a Whole System Approach for Youth Justice in England.

**Key words:** Youth Justice, Children’s Hearing System, Whole System approach, Youth Offending, Scotland, England.

**Introduction:**

It has been suggested that youth justice in England treats young people who commit crime in the same way as adults who commit crime, Case and Hines (2015) state that holding young people fully accountable encourages disengagement from positive youth justice interventions and leads to no discernible change in behaviour (Case and Hines, 2015). This analysis supports the belief of the Children's Hearing System in Scotland that suggests that punishing young people for behaviour borne out of failures in their own care is ‘simply wrong’ (Action for Children Scotland, 2018: 6). This research seeks to analyse the different youth justice systems in England and Scotland through consideration of the findings and recommendations of the Edinburgh study of youth transitions and crime.

Finding your Way: This is a good brief overview of the project and starts to indicate the knowledge gap and potential aims of the research. Drawing on specific policy here to build the project gives it a clear platform to build on and shows potential for originality.

**Literature review:**

One of the key aims of The Edinburgh Study is to inform policy decisions that affect young people who are at risk of offending. To this end, the key recommendation of the study is the implementation of a programme called Whole System Approach (WSA) (McAra and McVie, 2010).

The WSA has been piloted in Scotland since 2012 and the review of this programme will form a substantial part of the research for this study (Scottish Government, 2015). The evaluation of the WSA suggests that patterns of recorded crime show a distinct fall since its introduction (SCCJR, 2015). It is important to consider other changes that may have influenced this reduction, it is unlikely that the WSA can be solely credited with this development and this research seeks to analyse the reduction further.

In an article entitled ‘key messages from the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and crime’, McAra and McVie (2010) conclude that the Scottish system for youth justice is better equipped to deliver effective justice for young people. This research will consider this statement through examining the systems of youth justice in other countries and evaluate the benefits and drawbacks of the different approaches to determine the accuracy of this claim. One of the key issues identified with the youth justice system in England is the early criminalization of children. This is reflected in a report by The Children’s Commissioner, which states that England has traditionally locked up more young people than any other country in Europe (Children’s Commissioner, 2018). The research will examine this claim and question the assertion put forward in the paper titled ‘Kilbrandon Again?’, that the children hearing system has led to a reduction in offending (Action for Children Scotland, 2018). It is important to analyse this claim in the context of other factors that may have contributed to the perceived success of the system in Scotland. This research will consider the political and socio-economic factors that differentiate the two countries, as well as the practicalities
of making changes to the youth justice system in England.

Finding your Way: This literature review shows why the research is interesting and significant. It provides clarity on the direct work that the research will build upon and clearly signposts gaps in knowledge.

**Aims and objectives:**

This study seeks to analyse The Edinburgh Study, review the implementation of its recommendation of the WSA, compare the system of WSA with the system for youth justice in England and consider whether there is an argument for the introduction of a WSA for England.

Specifically it will consider:

1. What are the key differences between the systems of Youth Justice in Scotland and England?
2. What are the key findings of The Edinburgh Study?
3. What does a Whole System Approach look like and what does it deliver?
4. How could a Whole System Approach be adopted in England?
5. What are the barriers to introducing a Whole System Approach in England?

This is a very large area of study and it is important from the outset to identify its limitations. It seeks only to be a comparative analysis of two youth justice systems through use of policy documents, secondary data, and the evaluation of the implementation of the pilot of research recommendations. However, this research is to be considered in the context of preparatory work for a larger piece of postgraduate study which would involve the collection of primary data in an aim to triangulate the findings of this research. Therefore, a secondary analysis of indirect data in this area that informs future research has been deemed the most useful way of carrying out this project.

Finding your Way: This section is excellent as the overall aim is clearly outlined, with specificity provided via questions. The inclusion of limitations is a nice addition, showing good understanding of the research process. However, the limitations could alternatively be positioned in the methods section. Additionally, scope of the research needs consideration. Avoid setting big tasks you are unable to achieve!

**Method and Methodology:**

As discussed above, this research aims to analyse and compare the differing approaches to youth justice in Scotland and England. It will do this through studying relevant policy documents, third sector reports and briefings, as well as considering appropriate media commentary. From an ontological position of constructivism that suggests policy can only be developed and addressed through social interaction, this research will be inductive, questioning if it is possible to transfer Scottish policy to the English youth justice system via an examination of the way these policies have been experienced in Scotland. An interpretivist stance will inform the meaning derived from this research, seeking to understand how the youth justice system has been experienced and build a theory of how it could be developed for the future (Gray, 2014).

Research will be carried out through secondary data analysis using a content analysis approach. In his book ‘Doing Research in the Real World’ Gray (2014: 515) states that secondary data analysis is increasingly considered a legitimate and valuable way of conducting research. Once all the relevant literature is gathered, it will be examined through an in-depth study of the documents using content analysis (Drisko and Maschi, 2015). Written words will form the basis for the analysis of all the documents with articles
being read to identify themes that help interpret the content and inform the findings
of the research.

Clark tells us that secondary data can be called an ‘unobtrusive measure’ (Clark, 2014: 4).
This is a measure that does not intrude on the person or the location that the data is being gathered in. The benefit of this is that there is no need to consider or mitigate for researcher influence in the process of gathering any primary data. Clark goes on to suggest that there are many good reasons for using indirect data documents for social research, these documents are highly stable as they don’t change over time and they are also considered high in validity as there is no relationship between the researcher and participants (Clark, 2014).

Finding your Way: What makes this section particularly good is the attention to detail and clear outline of the whole data collection process (so from starting data collection to the analysis/write up). The methods are clearly justified, supported by literature and reflect the methodological stance too.

**Ethical considerations:**

Although it is apparent that there are fewer ethical issues to be considered when a research project focuses on secondary and indirect data, it is still important to acknowledge that there are ethical concerns that need to be addressed. Boddy et al. (2014: 16) suggest that a process of ‘contextualisation’ is essential and that it is also important that researchers of secondary data ensure that their use of data acts in accordance with the permission of the original research participants (Boddy et al., 2014). To ensure ethical compliance, this research will undertake a thorough review of the ethics, processes and permissions of the studies it will analyse to promote a thorough understanding of the context in which the research was gathered.

Finding your Way: The discussion here of ethics is good as often when using secondary data or quant data sets students overlook potential ethical issues.