Developing Civically Engaged Citizens in an Introductory

Criminal Justice Course

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Abstract

Criminal justice programs are often considered a training ground for students' future careers; however, that training often lacks a focus on civic engagement. This article highlights an experiential learning project in an introductory criminal justice course that was designed to develop the skills of civically engaged professionals. The project, combining research with service-learning, was implemented in an undergraduate criminology course to demonstrate the ways in which research and theory are necessary for implementing social and political change. Student participants achieved the desired learning outcomes and gained a deeper understanding of their role as change agents. The success of this project suggests that a focus on experiential learning can help criminal justice programs across the United States to develop civically engaged citizens.

Keywords: civic engagement, experiential learning, criminal justice

Learning, as defined by Kolb (1984), "is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (p. 38). This process is symbolized by the objective experiences that occur within one's environment, as well as subjective understanding developed by the individual (Kolb, 1984). Kolb and Kolb (2005) argued that, in the context of higher education, experiential learning, which occurs as one engages in and reflects on experiences, can be achieved by creating educational opportunities for undergraduates that promote learning and growth. This article discusses the specific ways in which service-learning pedagogy and civic engagement theory, facilitated within an undergraduate criminal justice course, created educational experiences combining such learning and growth.

Boostrom (1979) maintained that criminal justice education should prepare graduates to participate "in the development of viable and responsible personal and social goals and methods of achieving valid and ethical ends" (p. 5). In order to achieve such goals, criminal justice graduates must approach their careers from the perspective of change agents rather than simply workers. Boostrom held that the experimental change model was the best approach for promoting "the study of crime and delinquency as they relate to the future development or rational public policy for the control of crime" (p. 6). The experimental change model not only provides students with "technical skills and knowledge" (p. 6), but also inspires them to understand that issues of crime and delinquency are both social and political problems. However, Boostrom questioned whether most criminal justice programs were graduating students who possessed the requisite skills and knowledge, as well as a broad understanding of the social and political nature of crime and justice.

Boostrom's (1979) challenge to foster in students an understanding of the social and political elements of crime and crime control supports Kolb's (1984) theory of experiential learning and also calls for the development of a civically engaged student body. Similarly, in its report *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future,* the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (CLDE) (2012) encouraged educators at all levels—"grade school through graduate school, across all fields of study" (p. v)—to educate civically engaged citizens. Specifically, the task force argued that "a socially cohesive and economically vibrant U.S. democracy . . . require[s] informed, engaged, open-minded, and socially responsible people committed to the common good and practiced in 'doing' democracy" (p. v). An experiential learning project in an introductory criminal justice course could effectively achieve both: a civically engaged student body that understands the social and political elements of crime and crime control.

Historically, criminal justice education has been considered a training ground for future professionals. Fabianic (1978), for instance, described criminal justice programs as places where students gain knowledge about required skills for performing the basic operations of the criminal justice career, often in law enforcement or corrections. Some have argued, however, that "education for the modern workforce should not displace education for citizenship" (CLDE, 2012, p. 9). With Boostrom's (1979) experimental change model and Kolb's (1984) theory of experiential learning in mind, how might criminal justice education evolve beyond merely teaching technical skills and knowledge to bring about effective change through the development of civically engaged citizens?

Criminology—the scientific study of crime, criminals, and criminal behavior—is a core requirement of many criminal justice programs across the United States; however, the content of criminology courses is often abstract, lacking opportunities for students to apply traditional

technical skills in ways that would benefit them on the job. Furthermore, the goals of developing a civically engaged student body seem even more unrealistic. How does one teach undergraduates in an introductory criminology class to "do research" in a manner that will impact the future? How does one incorporate experiences that make criminology relevant to civic engagement? These were questions I sought to answer in my efforts to inspire freshmen to connect course content to their future criminal justice careers, as civically engaged citizens who possessed the tools to bring about effective change in criminal justice policy.

Experiential Learning in an Introductory Criminology Course

The Association for Experiential Education (AEE) (2017) broadly defined experiential learning as a process "in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people's capacity to contribute to their communities." Kolb and Kolb (2005) described it as the process of engaging in active experimentation while making reflective observations and participating in concrete experiences while developing abstract conceptualizations. George, Lim, Lucas, and Meadows (2015) identified four experiential learning opportunities that are valuable in preparing criminal justice students for future careers, including internships, field trips, service-learning, and research projects. The experiential learning project upon which this article focuses incorporated service-learning, and engaged students in research, to prepare students professionally, as well as to develop skills necessary for effective civic engagement.

Burns (1998) identified four components that provide a solid foundation for implementing instructional activities or projects that ensure learning, including preparation, action, reflection, and demonstration/recognition. Briefly, preparation entails assessing the need for the project and identifying the learning outcomes; action facilitates student learning and engagement in the activity; reflection connects the activity to learning objectives; and demonstration/recognition is the process whereby students report the information to others. Specifically, Burns presented these components as characteristic of service-learning; however, adhering to them in the development of any experiential learning project or course will ensure that learning opportunities align directly with course objectives. The following discussion provides more detail about the four components and demonstrates how each aligned with the project as an effective approach to implementing experiential learning in an introductory criminology course.

Preparation

The first component in facilitating a successful experiential learning project—preparation—is likely the most time-consuming. Werner, Voce, Openshaw, and Simons (2002) argued that "positive projects do not occur by accident" (p. 558). What takes place prior to implementation is as crucial to success as the actual project itself. Burns (1998) identified a number of important questions embedded within the preparation component. First, what are the needs of the community? An effective project responds specifically to what the community identifies as a need, rather than what the instructor and/or students believe is necessary. How does that need align with course learning objectives? The knowledge and skills gained from participating in the project must support the course curriculum to ensure learning. How will the course material be conveyed to students in a manner that supports the project? Each of these questions must be addressed in the process of preparing a successful project.

A significant amount of planning went into developing an experiential learning project that would promote understanding among freshmen enrolled in a criminology course regarding the connection between theory and research, and the application of criminal justice policy. I met with criminal justice professionals from law enforcement, community corrections, the courts, and juvenile services in an effort to develop a project that would positively impact the local criminal justice system while meeting a community need. These professionals determined that effective juvenile programming in the immediate judicial district was lacking and suggested that a service-learning activity would provide students an opportunity to bring about effective change in the local and surrounding communities. Thus, a project addressing the future of juvenile programming was developed, one that directly supported Boostrom's (1979) experimental change model and Kolb's (1984) theory of experiential learning by encouraging students to relate their study of criminology to public policy.

In addition to meeting with criminal justice professionals, I conducted an evaluation of juvenile programming. I sought to learn about evidence-based programs across the state that had not, at that time, been implemented in the local judicial district. Through this evaluation, I determined that teen courts had been successfully implemented in multiple judicial districts, including a neighboring district. I then contacted the teen court coordinator in that district to discuss the development of an experiential learning opportunity in the criminology class centering on advancing juvenile programming. The two of us scheduled a time for the class to travel to that location, interview the coordinator, and attend teen court in session. The class would evaluate the teen court program model; design a semi-structured interview and discuss observations in conjunction with learning research methods; reflect on the teen court program, including interview and observations to connect the project to course objectives; and prepare a presentation for local criminal justice professionals. These steps addressed each of Burns' (1998) components for implementing experiential learning projects.

Action

Burns (1998) identified three primary steps within the experiential learning process that encompass action. First, students develop the knowledge and skills presented through course content. Second, they engage in research and problem solving related to understanding the community need. Third, they engage in the experiential learning project. Learning that occurs prior to project implementation guides students in making clear connections between the course material and the project.

The criminology course began as it did any other semester, with students defining criminology, including the connection between criminological research and policy development; identifying trends of crime and criminals; and learning about research, including use of aggregate databases and methods for collecting data. Prior to moving on to criminological theories, students identified how these newly acquired research methods would be utilized as part of the experiential learning project.

The first task in initiating the project involved students conducting research about teen/peer courts, including their history, prevalence, and effectiveness for deterring crime. Students compiled a literature review that established a foundation for moving forward with the project. In addition, they evaluated juvenile justice programming in the judicial district where the university is located. This evaluation was necessary in order to identify the need for incorporating a teen/peer court program; furthermore, the information aided students in

proposing which existing agency would be most appropriate for program implementation. These activities engaged students in Kolb and Kolb's (2005) process of abstract conceptualizations of concrete experiences. Following the program and agency evaluations, students were ready to move forward with the project.

As a result of the initial stage of project development, the interview with the teen/peer court coordinator and the observations of the program in session were already scheduled. Students were tasked with developing a semi-structured interview as well as a plan for initiating the interview. Students spent most of one class session developing interview questions; the remainder of the class period included critically analyzing the draft interview questions in the context of what we wanted to learn about teen courts. This reflection allowed students to revise and re-arrange questions (see Appendix A). In addition to composing the interview questions, students spent an additional class period developing a checklist for the observations, including the physical layout of the room; the demeanors of teens attending court and how they differed from those of teens serving as jurors; the demeanors of professionals versus those of juveniles' parents; decisions of the court; and reactions by the juveniles. Similar to the discussion surrounding the interview, the class analyzed the observation checklist to determine if it was broad enough to elicit solid observations yet specific enough to clearly uncover operations of the court. Students determined that additional observations were important, specifically in relation to cases that would be heard during the teen court session.

The date for the interview and program observation arrived. Students met with the teen/peer court coordinator as scheduled, asking questions on a rotation from the semi-structured interview. As the interview progressed, and student confidence increased, students grew more comfortable asking additional questions that were relevant to the program and critical for developing the proposal. Before the interview ended, the coordinator invited a small group of students to participate in teen/peer court as jurors since several of the jurors would not be able to attend that evening. As a result, the class was divided into two groups: participant observers and detached observers.

The group arrived at the courthouse the evening of the teen/peer court session. Those students who volunteered as jurors—and participant observers—reported directly to the jury chamber, where they were required to sign a confidentiality statement. While in the jury chamber, jurors received information about the first case and were provided a list of sanctions available for disposition of the juvenile. The jurors then entered the courtroom, were seated in the jury box, and were sworn in by the community member representing the judge. Those students serving as detached observers found seating in the galley. Two cases were scheduled for the session, with only one juvenile and family allowed in the courtroom during each case. The juvenile and one family member represented the defense; the other family member (if more than one was present) sat in the front row of the galley. The teen/peer court coordinator represented the prosecution.

The two cases were similar in terms of the delinquent act that had brought the juveniles to the attention of the juvenile justice system: both cases involved the use of alcohol and public intoxication. That, however, is where the similarities ended. During the first case, the young man addressed the court in a respectful manner. He acknowledged his wrongdoing, demonstrated efforts to make better choices, and expressed remorse. The jury ordered fairly lenient sanctions, including apology letters to the police officer who handled the case and to the young man's mother. In addition, the jury ordered six months of informal supervision by the

teen/peer court coordinator. As long as the young man did not reoffend during the six months, his case would be dismissed. The second young man addressed the court in a rude and condescending manner. His body language demonstrated that he was angry (i.e., arms crossed, head down, and eye rolling directed at the community judge and coordinator). The young man's father expressed anger toward law enforcement and the court, emphasizing that "all youth drink," so why should his son get in trouble. The jury ordered a much stricter sentence for this young man, including letters of apology to law enforcement; six months of formal supervision, including regular appointments with the coordinator; six additional months of informal supervision; and a 6:00 p.m. curfew, along with regular surveillance checks to ensure compliance. The cases, namely the differences in orders by the jury, would become a valuable opportunity for reflection for the student participants.

Reflection

Felten, Gilchrist, and Darby (2006) argued that students do not learn solely from experience; reflection that acts a "bridge between conceptual understandings and concrete experiences" (p. 38) must also occur. Hatcher and Bringle (1997) described reflection as the "intentional consideration of an experience in light of particular learning outcomes" (p. 153). According to Eyler (2002), reflection promotes the "development of knowledge, skills, and cognitive capacities necessary for students to deal effectively with the complex social issues that challenge citizens" (p. 517). Likewise, Burns (1998) maintained that continuous reflection is necessary for students to connect action to learning objectives and outcomes, while Kolb and Kolb (2005) emphasized the importance of reflective observation as the subjective learning that occurs through objective active experimentation.

Course objectives. How would a project about teen courts support the learning outcomes of an introductory criminology course? Cress (2011b) argued that "students will have a better understanding of the nature of the course through well-structured learning outcomes and objectives" (p. 47). The course objectives aligned with the desired outcomes of the experiential learning project as follows.

"Identify and discuss potential causes of crime and delinquency in society and society's responses to criminal and delinquent behavior." Through the interview with the teen/peer court coordinator and as a result of hearing case facts and testimony during teen/peer court, students gained a better understanding of issues leading teens to offend. In addition, the coordinator interview and the decision by the official presiding over the teen/peer court hearing highlighted responses to those engaged in delinquency.

"Identify and discuss how societal and legal changes have affected crime causation and how these factors are interconnected throughout history." The course content identified characteristics of crime and criminals, emphasizing a broad range of theories, including early and classical, biological and psychological, sociological mainstream, critical, and integrated. Policies responding to crime associated with each theoretical category demonstrate how societal and legal changes help to enhance the understanding of crime as it evolves and is defined throughout history. Understanding where the teen/peer court aligns as a policy, in conjunction with relevant theories, addressed this objective.

"Develop research skills to respond to issues of crime and delinquency in the community." The course curriculum teaches research methods and focuses on the role that research plays in the development of public policy. Through this specific project, students

learned the difference between interviews versus survey questionnaires, detached versus participant observations, and other methods for collecting data. Specifically, they utilized newly acquired skills to develop semi-structured interview questions, conduct an interview with the teen/peer court coordinator, and observe teen/peer court in session.

"Examine and refine analytical and critical thinking skills regarding the connection between theory and the need for crime control policy." Through guided, structured reflection, students identified how the methods used during the project aligned with material learned during the course. Students also connected theoretical perspectives to those teens who attended teen/peer court. Finally, students had the opportunity to reflect critically on how the intervention program resulted from research and crime control policy.

Guided, structured reflection connected this project to the course learning objectives. Much of the reflection was discussion-based as direct questions were asked during class to stimulate critical thinking and to aid students in making connections between course material and the project. Some reflection led to increased understanding about how the project allowed students to apply the information learned—specifically research methods—to the real world. Further reflection also encouraged students to connect behaviors of the juveniles observed during teen court to specific criminological theories.

In addition to discussion-based reflection, students submitted personal reflection papers throughout the semester, describing how various stages of the project connected to course material. Students submitted a final reflection paper identifying what they took from the project as a whole, including: (1) the importance of the agency to the criminal justice system; (2) student attitudes regarding the agency and the population served; (3) direct correlation between the agency, the population served, and criminology as a broad component of the criminal justice system; (4) student attitudes about providing a service to the criminal justice system; (5) discussion of how the students could build on this experience in the future; and (6) how the project shaped student attitudes regarding a future career in the criminal justice system.

Direct connections to course curriculum, as previously noted, represented a crucial element of the project; however, indirect connections were just as valuable. For instance, students developed and expanded communication, problem-solving, organizational, and leadership skills as they worked as part of a team to develop research methods for conducting the project. Additionally, teamwork was necessary to compile and present the project findings to local criminal justice professionals. Finally, students developed social awareness and skills for becoming informed, civically engaged citizens, as urged in the *Crucible Moment* report (CLDE, 2012). Participation in this experiential learning project prepared students to understand the study of criminology as it relates to "rational public policy for the control of crime" (Boostrom, 1979, p. 6) and, more specifically, to intervening in the lives of nonviolent juvenile offenders.

Demonstration and Recognition

The fourth and final component that is crucial for setting a solid foundation for implementing experiential learning projects is that of demonstration and recognition. Specifically, Burns (1979) posited that learning continues even as students report about their project to others. The exercise of reporting on lessons learned by the group aligns with Kolb and Kolb's (2005) theory of experiential learning, as the process of evaluating objective active experimentation and concrete experiences through reflective observation and abstract conceptualizations. Other scholars have emphasized assessment or evaluation (Cress, 2011a) as

the means for demonstrating learning. This particular project implemented both evaluation and demonstration to ensure that learning occurred.

Evaluation of learning objectives occurred through course exams, written assignments, and a class presentation. Assignments, specific to the class project, included written reflection by way of journal entries as the semester progressed, and a final journal paper that captured the project in its entirety. Students also completed a post-project survey specific to the experiential learning project, responding to questions along a Likert scale.   Evaluation of the assignments and responses to the survey provided opportunities for students to demonstrate that learning had occurred and that they perceived value in the actual project.

Written reflection, as noted in the final written assignment, captured three key themes, including: (1) reinforcement of course curriculum; (2) support for community development and civic engagement; and (3) demonstration of personal growth. The following excerpts from the final reflection assignments indicate that the project reinforced the course curriculum:

- "This project allowed us to put criminology to use. Criminologists engage in research to help develop criminal justice policies . . . looking at what current policies are useful as well as what needs to be changed to be more effective."

- "This project has made learning about the theories and criminology in general much easier because I can see its use in real life."

- "Gaining real life application skills as I researched, attended, and reflected on teen court was something I would not be able to fully grasp or understand if I had not been allowed this out-of-the-classroom experience."

- "I have learned a lot of valuable information about the field of criminology. A majority of my knowledge has come from the service-learning project we completed in and out of class."

The next series of quotations highlight student perspectives regarding community development and civic engagement:

- "Teen courts focus on first time, non-violent offenders. If this experience can prevent juveniles from reoffending, then we've promoted a positive future for the teen, his or her family, and the community as a whole."

- "We have assisted in implementing a program to decrease or deter crime. That makes our communities safer!"

- "This project allowed us to evaluate and recommend a program that has the potential to positively affect society as a whole."

- "Implementing Teen Courts in . . . County would be a positive step in bettering our community . . . and just think, I was a part of that."

The final series of quotations goes beyond what students learned in relation to the course curriculum, with comments describing the personal growth that occurred, specific to teamwork, communication skills, and future career goals:

- "This project has helped me understand teamwork. Being able to work in a team is an important skill, regardless of my future career path."

- "My communications skills have improved and I believe I can now successfully lead a group of individuals to complete an important task."

- "The greatest impact this project has had is on my future as a criminal justice professional. I have developed relationships through networking that would not have otherwise been possible."

- "This project has solidified my future career goals in the criminal justice system."

Student comments reflecting the three themes—course curriculum, civic engagement, and personal growth—support Boostrom's (1979) experimental change model of education, as students engaged the community and the juvenile justice system itself while studying delinquency, in an effort to develop programming or "rational public policy" (p. 6).   In addition, students engaged in Kolb and Kolb's (2005) experiential learning process by making meaning of active experimentation and concrete experiences through reflective observation and abstract conceptualization. What occurred as a result of participation in this project reinforced Kolb's (1984) assertion that "learning transforms experience in both its objective and subjective forms" (p. 38).

The survey conducted at the conclusion of the semester asked students to indicate: (1) their level of satisfaction with the community partner; (2) the relevance of the project to the community served; and (3) to what extent they achieved what they expected from the experiential learning project. Table 1 shows the results of the satisfaction survey.

Project Satisfaction (n = 10)

Survey Item	Survey Response				
	1	2	3	4	5
Satisfaction with community partner	.20	.50	.30	0	0
Relevance of project to community	.60	.20	.20	0	0
Overall satisfaction with project	.20	.50	.30	0	0

Note. 1 = Extremely Agree; 2 = Agree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Disagree; 5 = Extremely Disagree.

Table 1

The findings indicated that none of the students was dissatisfied with the community partner; none questioned the relevance of the project to the community; and none were dissatisfied with the project. Some students did report in the final writing assignment that they would have preferred to have worked with the local agencies in the planning and development stages of the project, which would have made them felt more connected to the project overall. Including students as part of the initial project may have resulted in fewer students reporting neutral/no opinion in regard to project satisfaction afterward.

Additional survey questions asked to what extent the experiential learning project had influenced students' attitudes related to civic engagement, including: (1) enhanced student knowledge of social issues; (2) enhanced student sense of civic engagement; (3) enhanced

student desire to contribute positively to the community; and (4) enhanced student sense of personal values. Table 2 outlines these results.

Development of Civic Engagement (n = 10)

Survey Item	Survey Response				
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Knowledge of social issues	.30	.70	0	0	0
Sense of civic engagement	.20	.40	.30	.10	0
Desire to contribute to community	.60	.30	.10	0	0
Own sense of personal values	.50	.30	.20	0	0

Note. 1 = Extremely Agree; 2 = Agree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Disagree; 5 = Extremely Disagree.

Table 2

The findings indicated that all 10 participants believed the experiential learning project increased their knowledge of social issues related to crime and delinquency. Only one student reported that participating in the project did not increase his or her sense of civic engagement. Increased classroom instruction—that is, educating students about civic engagement—would have likely promoted greater understanding of what civic engagement means, potentially resulting in all students reporting a heightened sense of civic engagement. None of the students indicated that the project did not enhance their desire to contribute to the community. Finally, none of the students indicated that the project did not increase their own sense of personal values.

The final expectation for the experiential learning project was that students work together to compile a presentation for criminal justice professionals and local administrators (i.e., city and county commissioners) to report their findings. The students spent class time working in small groups to compile a PowerPoint presentation that: (1) explained the teen court program and its effectiveness in Kansas judicial districts and across the United States; (2) described the project; (3) detailed the specific experiences of the project, including a report on the interview with the teen/peer court coordinator and observations of the teen court session; (4) made recommendations for incorporating teen court in the local judicial district; and (5) described what students took from the project. The presentation to community and criminal justice officials was scheduled during the final exam. Students dressed for a professional presentation and welcomed officials as they arrived. In addition to working as a team to develop the PowerPoint, students all contributed to the actual presentation by reporting on specific slides. Students ended the presentation by responding to questions from attendees.

Lessons Learned and Implications for Experiential Learning to Develop Civically Engaged Citizens

While the project increased student learning outcomes and developed important skills for lifelong success (e.g., communication, leadership, problem-solving, etc.), the instructor also learned valuable lessons. Freshmen generally require more support, in the form of explanation

and supervision, than upper-division students (i.e., juniors and seniors), and relationships with community partners require different levels of professional "nurturing." The discussion that follows expands on each of the lessons learned.

After completing this project, students clearly understood the connection between the study of teen/peer court and criminology. They were able to articulate how research guides theory and influences public policy; however, prior to engaging with the course material, they could not grasp why they "had to do this project." More explanation at the beginning of the semester highlighting connections to course content would have been appropriate. For instance, though many students may not have understood research methods or theory, all would likely have had gained a general idea about policies by identifying examples of those that affect them on a regular basis. The additional explanation would have been valuable in helping students understand direct connections to course content earlier in the semester.

A greater level of supervision at various stages of the project was also necessary. I learned very quickly that providing step-by-step directions regarding various tasks was important. For instance, developing interview questions became a guided class activity after dividing students into small groups to generate questions proved ineffective. By demonstrating how to develop questions and considering the relevance to the program studied, students were then able to work in small groups to compile lists of questions for consideration by the full group. Similarly, students were provided an outline to guide them in compiling the final presentation for local criminal justice officials after it was determined that they did not understand the expectations outlined with them verbally. Through a combination of increased explanation and greater supervision, the project would have advanced more smoothly throughout the process.

Campus and community partnerships are crucial for successful experiential learning projects, but they do not occur naturally (Werner et al., 2002). Prior to implementing this project, a strong partnership already existed with law enforcement agencies—including the local police department, sheriff's office, and highway patrol. In addition, I had a close working relationship with agency personnel from the juvenile justice authority; however, this relationship was not the same as a university/community partnership. Consequently, when sending the written invitation to juvenile justice staff for the purpose of attending the initial luncheon to formulate a project, more effort was required on my part to be inviting, informative, and supportive. Furthermore, the lack of a working relationship and pre-existing partnership with representatives from the prosecutor's office, as well as county and city commissioners, was problematic. I should have made efforts to develop and nurture those partnerships long before the planning for this particular project began. Specifically, as a funding source for new programs, the commissioners had a vital role as participants in the project. The overall success of the proposal may have ended much differently had those relationships been nurtured earlier.

The teen/peer court proposal was not implemented in the local community. This does not mean that the project was a failure. Instead, students learned much by engaging in each of the activities. Unlike students enrolled in the course during previous semesters, this particular class did not view criminology as an abstract concept that students must suffer through toward earning a criminal justice degree. Rather, they understood clearly the connection between research and policy development, and how various theories guide policy decisions. These outcomes aligned directly with the course objectives. Students also learned about working collaboratively with others to achieve a common goal. Skills that students acquired included critical thinking,

communication, organization, and leadership. Students also had opportunities to network with criminal justice professionals. Each of these outcomes, both formal and informal, had far more value than whether a program proposal was enacted in the community.

Participation in this experiential learning project produced students able to engage the community as change agents. Students studied delinquency in an effort to develop public policy—aligning directly with Boostrom's (1979) experimental change model of education while demonstrating that students can be civically engaged as criminal justice professionals. In addition, the project provided students opportunities to engage in subjective learning through reflective observation and abstract conceptualization through objective active experimentation and concrete experiences, supporting Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). To this end, the experiential learning project represented far more than "workforce training" (CLDE, 2012).

Based on the results of this project, faculty considering experiential learning opportunities for their students should: (1) make concerted efforts to develop strong community partnerships prior to project planning; (2) invite community partners to identify their needs, and to consider how those needs would be met by an experiential learning project; (3) evaluate course objectives to guarantee that the proposed project is reasonable for meeting learning outcomes; (4) develop a strong syllabus to include assignments related directly to the project; (5) create opportunities for guided, structured reflection to ensure students are bridging the learning occurring from the project with the course curriculum; and (6) celebrate student accomplishments.

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Appendix A: Teen Court Coordinator—Interview

1. How are teens selected for participation in teen/peer court?

2. What cases take priority over others? What defines which cases receive attention? Is teen court geared more towards first-time offenders or are there other serious offenses that are handled by the court?

3. Overall, what are the most common cases/charges that you see in teen court?

4. What is the range of consequences the court can select from? What is the most common consequence?

5. Besides these consequences, does the court recommend participation in other programs such as mental health or anger management?

6. How long is a case typically open? What determines when a case closes?

7. When did the county [specific county name omitted] implement this program? What other counties in this judicial district also conduct teen/peer court?

8. Is teen/peer court similar to getting a diversion in juvenile court?

9. What is you jury selection process?

10. What is the process for teens to become a lawyer or judge?

11. How does teen/peer court affect the efficiency of the juvenile justice system?

12. Would you please describe the process for implementing this program in this county [specific county name omitted]?

13. Would you please describe the process for maintaining teen/peer court?

14. Does the program require a large budget, and who/what is the budget authority? If grants are necessary to fund the program, what are they and how easily accessible are they?

15. Does the program collaborate with outside agencies such as schools, or others?

16. How does the public view the program?

17. What type of success has the program seen in keeping juveniles out of the juvenile justice system?

18. What is your role in implementing teen/peer court?

19. Do you believe all judicial districts would benefit from implementing this program? Why or why not?

Appendix B: Teen Court—Observation Checklist

1. Location
   a. Physical layout of the room?
      i. Formal or informal?
2. Participants
   a. Who was involved?
   b. Where were participants in proximity to others?
3. Cases
   a. How many?
   b. Details?
   c. Types of questions asked juveniles?
      i. Who asked questions?
   d. Orders of the court?
4. Family
   a. Did family contribute with questions or information?
5. Juvenile
   a. Appearance?
   b. Language?
   c. Demeanor?
   d. Reaction to orders?
6. Process
   a. Formal or informal?
   b. Chronological order of events?
   c. Participant roles throughout the process?

Author

Tamara J. Lynn holds a Ph.D. in Sociology, with an emphasis in Criminology and Politics, from Kansas State University. She has career experience in corrections and alternative education. As the director of an alternative school, she functioned as the school principal of a collaborative program that included public education, special education services, and community mental health. In addition to school operations, she networked closely with social services and the criminal justice system in responding to needs of the students enrolled in the program. She currently teaches full time as Assistant Professor in the Department of Criminal Justice at Fort Hays State University. Lynn's teaching and service have received awards, including a Provost's Service-Learning Faculty Fellow. As the recipient of research grants, she was instrumental in developing an undergraduate research lab in the department. Her scholarship focuses on service-learning, social control, media framing, and domestic violence.