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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

“HE SEEMS LIKE A GOOD KID”

LESSONS IN INFORMAL SOCIAL CONTROL FROM A
MIDWESTERN PEER COURT PROGRAM

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN SOCIOLOGY

BY

PATRICIA L. MADDOX

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

AUGUST 2014

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I remember the day clearly when I first knew that I wanted to be a sociologist. I was taking a Social Deviance course as an Undergraduate at Stetson University. Dr. Leonard Nance was teaching us about the relativity of deviance and on that day my whole way of thinking about the world began to change. I never really thought to challenge the systems of knowledge that had been ingrained in me. At the end of that course, I decided to change my major and become a teaching sociologist like Dr. Nance. I wanted nothing more than to open the eyes of as many undergraduates as I could through sociology. I thank Dr. Nance and the entire Stetson University sociology department for believing in this first generation college student and pushing me towards graduate school.

It has been many years since leaving Stetson University and many more amazing professors have touched my life since then and helped to make this degree possible. My first theory course with Dr. Lauren Langman opened my eyes to the theoretical scholars of Symbolic Interaction. A group of scholars whom, I never knew much about, but since then worship like religious deities. His course also allowed me to begin to creatively apply theory to some of the subjects that mean the most to me; youth culture. Dr. Talmadge Wright also changed the course of my thinking as well. He not only sat as the chair of my Master's thesis, but also opened the door to my understandings of inequality. It was in his course that I decided to specialize in social deviance with an emphasis in

juvenile delinquency. I was able to explore the early juvenile delinquency movement and how social class inequality framed the movement. Dr. Arthur Lurigio has also added great support throughout the IRB process and of course adding in his knowledge about the criminal justice system. Of course, I also need to thank Dr. Judith Wittner. Dr. Wittner was a supportive reader of my Master's thesis, as well as, for my second special field exam: Race, Class, Gender Theory and Intimate Partner Violence. I can honestly say that by her giving me a pass with distinction on that exam, she gave me the confidence that I needed to complete my degree. At that point of my graduate school career, I was at the point of wanting to give up, but knowing that she thought my work was worthy of a distinction gave me the confidence and drive to push on. I can't thank her enough. Dr. Richard Block also added the early support for my desire to study juveniles. While, he retired early in this process, his wisdom will always stay with me. Lastly, I need to thank Dr. Cassandra Lively. We entered together as a cohort and while she beat me out, our friendship still remains. Her support throughout the years cannot be thanked enough.

There are many friends and family members that I must thank who have helped to make this degree possible. Firstly, I need to thank an amazing supportive group of women that have been a part of my life since pre-school and kindergarten. Maureen LeSerra, Jessica Butler, Meredith Maddry, Kristy Reynolds, Melissa Medina, Emily Mendieta, Cara Schuessler and Valerie Killoran. These women have seen me at my weakest and have supported me every step of the way. Without their love and friendship during the hardest times of my life: high school, I without a doubt wouldn't be where I am at today. These women are all successful women, who have loving families and I am

so grateful for being a part of their lives. The mothering support of Lee Verga, who was taken too soon from my life, will always be remembered.

There is one more group of fabulous women that have supported my growth throughout the years. These women, many of whom, were fellow sociology majors with me at Stetson University have provided the laughter, love, and support throughout this process. My college roommate Elizabeth Rountree has never given up on me. She is more than just a roommate; she has become one of my best friends. Just a simple text here and there lightens my day. Her “wicked” humor has always been a much-needed distraction on the worst of days. I still remember the first time I learned about “jimmies” “grinders” and the all too famous “bubblin’.” My class laughs every semester, when I recount these stories, while teaching culture. There are a couple more special Stetson ladies that continue to touch my life and offer support. Marissa Leardo, Shawn Smith, Megan Conroy, Mercedes Lucas, and Megan Sleasman. Marissa helped me get through some grueling times at Stetson University. There are days still when I am up late writing that I think back to how much of the 12am Doritos and cheap coffee were consumed in the bottom of the LBC, while being serenaded by Dave Matthews Band. Shawn, the care package you sent me my first few weeks in Chicago, did more than you knew it did. Being away from home for the first time, I had a rough time adjusting to Chicago and that care package made me remember that no matter how far away I am I still have people in my life that care about me. The Megan’s, these two women have been a great support system and we all share the added bonus of having an adorable little godson, Sammy Moonsammy-Hill. Lastly, Mercedes Lucas has been an amazing support system over the years. Our great moments back in college with a bottle of wine and recent weddings are

all memories that will never be forgotten. She is one strong woman and I love how our friendship continues to grow. While many of these women live far away, their love and support has never left.

The last couple of years have been a struggle, but one more friend in particular has gone beyond the call of duty to help me succeed. Nailah Moonsammy has been not only a ray of sunshine in my pessimistic world, but also a source of strength. Watching her battle and successfully beat breast cancer as a young mom, showed me how much will and drive succeeding entailed. Even though she was battling breast cancer, she never for a second stopped being a supportive friend. The times I spend with her and her amazing son Sammy are memories that are never forgotten. The amount of sociological conversations that we have had, while walking round Astoria, NY is too many to count. In fact, I believe I verbally wrote my dissertation simply talking to her on our walks and the many phone conversations that we have had. We are never at a loss for conversation and I enjoy each and every one of them. Above all, she helped me to believe in myself, a quality that did not come naturally. Hearing her say that I was “brilliant,” meant the world to me. I can’t thank her enough for the amazing friendship that we have had over the years and I am so glad to have her and Sam in my life.

The University of St. Thomas Sociology and Criminal Justice department also deserves a thank you. They have provided me with a home while living in the twin cities. Great conversations and amazing students have made all of this worth it. I can’t thank them enough.

A couple special friends in the Twin cities area have also supported me with laughter and conversation during this process. Marci Gerulis-Darcy has been a great

support system. Having gone through this herself, she understood my frustrations and joys. Johanna Swalley has also been a great support system. She keeps pushing my thinking deeper and deeper on many sociological topics.

Caribou Coffee in Champlin Park also deserves thanks. I have written my entire dissertation at this coffee shop. It's nice to have a place to go where they know your name.

I would also like to give the greatest thanks to my family. Cancer took my grandparents Harry and Lena Counts, too soon, but their love and life lessons will remain with me forever. My father Billy Ray Maddox and my Mother Constance Maddox deserve a round of applause for bringing me into this world. I still don't think they understand what a sociologist is, but I hope nonetheless that I am making them proud. My sister Michelle Varela deserves way more than a thank you on a piece of paper. She has pushed me to finish and her constant nagging "have you written your chapter," helped keep me on track. We together have beaten many odds and while I still think she is copying me, I know she is a brilliant nursing professor. She is also an amazing mother to three bright girls: Arianna Varela, Alexa Varela, and Lena Varela. I hope to serve as a role model to these girls and show them that they can be whatever they want to be and push them to never give up. They are amazing girls and I am so proud of how smart and worldly they are becoming. Each moment I spend with them reminds me of how much I have to live for.

I of course could not have done any of this without the love and support of my wife, Dr. Shantel Branch-Fleming, MD. There were days that I wanted to quit and she supportively listened and then reminded me what this was all for. She always provides

the bigger pictures that I sometimes fail to see. She has supported me every step of the way throughout this process. From listening to the countless papers that I talked through early in graduate school, to listening to my dissertation proposal and chapters of my dissertation over and over again, she never gave up on me. That's not to say she wasn't critical! In fact, her criticism sometimes was the exact thing that I needed to make my papers, presentations, proposal and chapters even better. Shantel has been my rock and for this I dedicate my study to her. I can't thank her enough for helping me get through this and I hope I have made her proud.

For Shantel

...I noticed the whole time she kinda defended him, like, I kinda get that she's his parent, but, um, she kept saying how he's like a good student and um, made the honor roll, but I don't think that changes anything.

-Leilana High School County Peer Court Juror

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how peer court jurors make meaning out of the sanctioning trials of youth offenders. In particular, it focuses on how peer court jurors understand juvenile delinquency, deterrence and punishment. Data was collected utilizing ethnographic field observation methods while attending a Midwestern County's peer court program between the end of the 2011-2012 school year and the 2012-2013 school year. Thirteen interviews were conducted after the sessions with willing peer court jurors in order to supplement the field work data.

During the peer court sessions the youth jurors tried to understand the nature of the offenses and how to deter future delinquent behaviors. The observations and interview data illustrates how the youth jurors were working together in the deliberation room to give sanctions, which they hoped would provide the informal social control needed to prevent recidivism. Through questioning both offenders and their accompanying parent, we see that these youth were looking to provide sanctions that acted as the missing informal social control agents in the offender's life. When the youth jurors saw the parents of the offender as being lax on the punishment or rules at home, the jurors provided sanctions that would do this for them. Alternatively, when parents of the offender or even the youth themselves were seen as providing adequate punishments the youth jurors went lighter on the sanctioning. Peer jurors also understood some of the reasoning behind youth crime from their own perspective as a teen and drew upon these

experiences when trying to understand the nature of the offense and punishment. Since the jurors are also youth, they understand that some behavior drew from boredom or peer influence and in these cases the youth jurors provide sanctions that fit the missing informal social control in their lives. Sanctions such as curfews, community service, no association with particular peers, mandatory participation in an afterschool activity and attendance in a future peer court session, were all utilized as informal social control agents for offending youth. Lastly, youth jurors understood impression management and had the tough job making sure the self-presentations of the offenders were authentic when deciding upon sanctions. In all, these youth jurors took their roles seriously and really provided a space where the offender was not seen as a delinquent teen, but instead “a good kid,” who like many teenagers, failed to think through their offense or see the consequences involved prior to committing their act or acts.

CHAPTER 1

INFORMAL SOCIAL CONTROL & THE EMERGENCE OF PEER COURT

Emergence of Juvenile Delinquency

“In 2008, law enforcement agencies in the United States made an estimated 2.11 million arrests of persons younger than the age of 18” (OJJDP:2009). Juvenile delinquency isn’t a modern day topic of concern. As early as the 1800’s, definitions of delinquency, how to sanction delinquent acts and how to deter and prevent further delinquency were all topics of concern. The history and power behind juvenile delinquency can be framed around a movement started in 1823 by the Society for the Prevention of Pauperism of New York City. They called for the development of houses of refuge to save children from crime and poverty (Platt 1969 & Joseph 1995). The growing numbers of urban dwellers, all centered in one area, loosened the familial mechanisms of informal social control, putting new strains on the institution of the family. This resulted in a growing number of advocates calling for a new method of formal social control to handle “juvenile delinquents (Binder, Bruce and Geis 2001). Urban dwelling also had an inherent set of problems, one being a large number of impoverished children and families (Binder, Bruce and Geis 2001). The poor were seen as not able to properly raise their children. Many even questioned if the poor could adequately instill proper norms and values in their children, while being impoverished. Families had to work long hours in order to financially support themselves and their

children, leaving many unattended and without supervision. The children invariably misbehaved, and with so many eyes watching them in crowded urban areas, they were more likely to get caught playing pranks, fighting and committing minor petty thefts. The argument can be made that only middle and upper-class women were afforded the luxury of staying home with their children and providing the informal social control needed to deter their children, thus creating a structure of inequality. As we can see, juvenile delinquency emerged as a “child saving” movement, growing out of the discomfort of immigrants and the urban poor (Platt 1969).

Combining the child saving movement with the adoption of adolescence as a life-course stage, created a new power structure that dictated how juveniles should properly behave in society. During the 1940’s and 50’s, a whole new “delinquency scare” emerged as being the corruption of juveniles by the mass media. Binder, Bruce and Geis explain how this came about,

... Wertham, author of [the] 1950’s *Seduction of the Innocent*- not only decried the ubiquity of violence in entertainment directed toward children but argued that such entertainment was leading children to idealize violence-to glamorize it-in ways that contributed to later acts of aggression and even violent crime. (2001:441).

This media driven “delinquency scare” set up a structure of policing youth in accordance to the social and moral norms of the time. No longer were families seen as aware enough to determine whether or not their youth could see a particular movie, instead there was a growing need for the control of the media by higher authorities.

The switch from families having the power to informally control their youths moral and social behaviors to relying on a system that formally policed them opened the doors for status offenses to enter into the list offenses enforced by the juvenile justice

system (Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1994). We begin to see norm violations by delinquents being reported to the courts by family, neighbors and school officials (Chesney-Lind and Shelden 1994). Taking the governance of youth out of the hands of families and placing it into formal institutionalized structures, provided the breeding grounds for gendered, racial and ethnic discriminations, which were legitimized under the law. Michel Foucault explains, “Penality would then appear to be a way of handling illegalities, of laying down the limits of tolerance, of giving free rein to some, of putting pressure on others, of excluding a particular section, of making another useful, of neutralizing certain individuals and of profiting from others” (1995:272). Juvenile delinquency became a way to formally punish the youth, who those in power thought, were going against the norms of society. For example, “Many states allow a juvenile to be taken into custody without a search warrant if the officer believes that the juvenile is a delinquent” (Joseph 1995:72). To give authorities that much subjective power, is to legitimize inequality under the law. The political climate of the 60’s and the outspokenness of the Civil Rights movement pushed race into the forefront of many of these arguments. The inequality surrounding policies to “crack down” on juvenile crime has disproportionately impacted minority youths (Feld 1999). It is simple to understand how inequalities emerge when the law is subjective and can be upheld and abused in many ways depending on who is holding the power.

As youth were continuing to be labeled and sanctioned as delinquent, new arguments began to emerge around the classification of delinquency. These arguments were primarily about which crimes constitute delinquency. Since youth are held to different social and moral standards than adults because of their age, in certain states they

could be monitored and punished when they committed certain offenses. These offenses are called status offenses (Chesney-Lind & Shelden 1992; Schaffner 2006). Status offenses constitute issues such as running away from home and truancy to name a few (Schaffner 2006). The concept of youth being labeled delinquent and sanctioned for status offenses is a well-documented historical occurrence. In the beginning of the “child saving” movement during the 19th century, girls were likely to be labeled a delinquent because they were going against the ‘feminine’ norms of the time. Many families committed their own children because of fear that they would lose their virginity before marriage, especially those families where both parents worked long hours (Knupfer 2001). These girls were given the label of delinquent simply because their behaviors were thought to go against the moral norms of the times. As we see girls were labeled deviant by a separate criterion than boys.

One of the major arguments in more present day literature has centered on adolescent women and why they commit status offenses. Social problems, such as childhood sexual victimization and abuse, can cause many young women to flee from these saturated living environments, pushing them to the streets for survival (Chesney-Lind 1997). Since the 1974 Juvenile Justice and Prevention Act, girls and boys can’t be incarcerated for status offenses, but these offenses still affect the girls already in the system and could possibly place them back into the living situations they were trying to flee (Schaffner 2006). Gender norms, and how they have been societally shaped throughout history, still permeate the thinking about girls and the juvenile justice system today (Schlossman and Wallach 1991). The distinctions separating status offenses and

more serious criminal offenses are an ongoing topic of debate in juvenile justice literature.

Peer Court Programs

Diversion programs such as peer courts (teen courts) have emerged specifically for first time, low-level offenders and emphasize philosophies supporting informal social control as being important delinquency deterrents. The goals behind these programs are to decrease recidivism rates by limiting the amount of contact that juveniles have with the formal juvenile justice system and prevent the harmful stigmatizing effects that come from the label of “delinquent” (Harrison, Maupin and Mays 2001; Dick, Geertsen and Jones 2003). Youth offenders who participate in these peer court programs admit prior guilt for their offense or offenses and come before a group of unknown peers to present their cases to them for sanctioning (Harrison, Maupin and Mays 2001; Dick, Geertsen and Jones 2003). Peer court programs allow youth and community members the ability to be part of the juvenile justice process, further strengthening the conventional norms of the community at large. Youths admit guilt of their crimes and take the necessary steps to repair the harm that they have done to the community. Youth who were once a part of the peer court process as offenders are also allowed the opportunity to become significant players in the teen court process in the future, thus keeping these youth attached to positive peers and the conventional norms of society, while learning more about the criminal justice system (Forgays 2008; Norris, Twill and Kim 2010). It is thought that as teens admit guilt in front of their peers and family members and accept mandated sanctions that they then realize the impact that their crime has had on the community, thus deterring them from future offending (Dick, Geertsen and Jones 2003; Forgays

2008). Peer courts are thought to not only restore the harm that has been done to the community but to also involve members of the larger community in the sanctioning process of the juvenile justice system further strengthening conventional norms of the community at large.

Reintegrative & Disintegrative Shame

The literature on peer courts highlights its restorative justice foundations. Forgays and Demilio explain, "...a restorative justice sentence goes beyond punishment to include reparation and reengagement tasks. Community reparation activities are designed to repair broken trust" (2005:109). Teen courts through their programming work to reintegrate the offender back into the community through the sanctioning process. The ideas here can be related to some of the theoretical works of Erving Goffman. The sanctioning process in itself can allow the community to see the teen offender as having a spoiled identity (Goffman 1963). By sanctioning the teen offender, we are also simultaneously applying the label (delinquent), a stigma of character onto the teen (1963). Through a stigmatic sanctioning process youths prior presentation of self becomes spoiled, leading the youth offender to feel shame for their actions, especially as the youth offender thinks others are viewing them negatively (Goffman 1963). Since peer courts focus primarily on reducing the stigmatizing effects of the sanctioning process, how youth experience this sanctioning process and whether they are reintegratively shamed or disintegratively shamed is important. Braithwaite explains shaming as being "...a tool to allure and inveigle the citizen to attend to the moral claims of the criminal law, to coax and caress compliance, to reason and remonstrate with him [her] over the harmfulness of his [her] conduct" (1989:9). Since youth have already

admitted guilt for their crimes, minimizing further stigmatic shaming during the sanctioning process is important. Braithwaite explains that stigmatization occurs when the offender is labeled and then left outside of his or her community (1989). The youth in these cases are often left to feel isolated, labeled and alone. If youth who attend these peer court programs are seen as delinquent and reputations develop after the proceedings then future delinquent behavior may ensue (Bernburg et al. 2006). Braithwaite further illustrates, "...that the consequence of stigmatization is attraction to criminal subcultures; subcultures supply the outcast offender with the opportunity to reject her [his] rejecters, thereby maintaining a form of self-respect" (1989:14). For these stigmatized youth who because of their earlier offenses have lost the acceptance of their peers, family and community members new forms of social relationships are built and often on the foundations of a delinquent label (Tittle, Bratton and Gertz 2003). A possible reason as to how this occurs comes from the theoretical foundations of Sykes and Matza's "Techniques of Neutralization" (1957). This adaptation to Sutherland's theory of Differential Association views delinquency as being learned, but individuals know that their acts violate conventional norms of society and they, therefore, devise ways to neutralize their behaviors in order to erase the guilt and continue to commit the act (1957). Teens learn the techniques through the association with delinquent peers, while neutralizing the guilt and possible shame of committing these acts. Associating with peers whom belong to criminal subcultures builds the foundation for future delinquency and recidivism; therefore, peer court programs try to minimize the stigmatizing effects of the sanctioning process.

Braithwaite explains the fundamental difference between stigmatic (disintegrative) shaming and reintegrative shaming when he states, “The idea of reintegrative shaming is that disapproval is communicated within a continuum of respect for the offender” (1999:41). Youth are shamed and sanctioned during a process that includes their family, peers and additional members from their community, whom bare the additional responsibility of reintegrating the youth successfully back into the community. Since these members support the youth, they will avoid stigmatic shaming and labeling and, instead, will focus on the ways to positively reintegrate the youth back into conventional society. Allowing youth the opportunity to be a part of conventional society after the sanctioning process allows them the ability to remain bonded to those who are important to them, further pushing the stigmatic label of delinquent away (Braithwaite 1989; Scott and Steinberg 2008). Examining whether youth are reintegratively shamed or disintegratively (stigmatic) shamed in the peer court process, mediates whether youth will face additional problems, such as joining delinquent subcultures and future recidivism, all of which teen peer courts are trying to deter youth from. Ultimately, it comes down to how the youth on the juries view the offending youth and their crime.

Reintegration

One way that the ideology of the teen court process diminishes the stigmatizing effects that could accompany the sanctioning process is by implementing ways to reintegrate offending teens back into the community. Community service as a possible sanction for offending youth has been argued as a positive way to reintegrate youth back into the community. The assumption is that these teens who are given community

service sanctions have a new stake in conformity and less time on their hands to reoffend (Harrison Maupin and Mays 2001). Instead of labeling the teen as delinquent in the traditional juvenile court process and then pushing the labeled youth back into his or her community after sentencing has been complete, peer court ideology punishes the offending teen by attaching the youth to supportive members of the community. Peer courts reintegrate youth back into their community after the court process through mandated sanctions, such as, community service and participation in future peer court sessions as a juror. Upon successful completion of these sanctions, participating youth are left with no prior record of their offense (Dick, Geertsen and Jones 2003). Community service allows the teen to take initiative in his or her punishment, while also strengthening their bonds to the community through working within different community programs (Walgrave 2004). Overall, peer court programming through its reliance on informal social control, serves the major function of working to lower the effects of stigmatization on youth in order to keep them from joining deviant subcultures, thus further decreasing recidivism rates among juveniles. Dirk, Geertsen and Jones in a quantitative study found peer courts to be impactful in preventing future recidivism when compared to other re-arrest vs. re-offense estimates of youth (2003:44).

Gender Differences in Sanctioning

Gender has also been mentioned in a small amount of the literature on peer courts. Researchers are trying to understand if adolescent girls and boys experience the peer court process differently. In particular, they are looking at whether gender plays a role in the labeling process associated with the sanctioning of offending youth. Wilson, Gottfredson and Stickle are looking at how participating as a non-offender in the teen

court process for girls reinforces their conformity to the conventional norms of society.

Positive peers are thought to deter delinquency for girls because of femininity constructions emphasizing social acceptance of conventional norms (2009). Wilson, Gotfredson and Stickle on the other hand explain, “TC [teen court] boys may feel informally labeled by the TC process luring them to internalize the label and feel masculine. The greater sense of labeling by peers may feed TC boys’ egos, increasing feelings of masculinity and future engagement in delinquency, if in fact masculinity is tied to delinquency” (2009:26). In this case, boys are theorized as experiencing the labeling process differently than girls during the teen/peer court sanctioning process. Boys are thought to receive a masculinity boast from their peers, possibly pushing them into recidivating or joining deviant subcultures. While the teen court process is trying to minimize the harmful effects of stigma and the labeling process by bringing in peers that are attached to the conventional norms of society, these authors are theorizing that it could have unintended effects on boys because of the “bad ass” mentality that has been linked to the constructions of masculinity (Anderson 1999). If adolescent boys feel more of an ego boost instead of shame during sanctioning, than the teen court process will be ineffective, and instead might open the doors for these boys to further recidivate. Examining the role that gender plays in the peer court process also adds to the relevance of my study, since it has been largely ignored.

Peer Court Criticisms

Not all of the literature on peer courts has been positive. Andrew Rasmussen (2004) is a critic of the peer court process because of the very utilization of public shame. Rasmussen believes that peer courts could actually be more harmful for youth because of

the self-internalization of public judgment (2004). Rasmussen believes that because youth are sanctioned in a public forum that it could be in fact more stigmatizing for youth than if they were simply being sanctioned in a closed juvenile court. Rasmussen further explains, “In as much as teen court is an airing of a youth’s delinquent activities and family life in front of peers it may be more stigmatizing than programs administered by adults” (2004:629). Rasmussen is touching on how offending teens perceive the peer court process. If teens feel that others are viewing them differently and negatively during the sanctioning process then teens will feel more stigmatized from the process. This goes back to the argument about the importance of having a supportive community during the peer court process. Age has also been a variable that poses further questions in the peer court data. Norris, Twill and Kim found in their study that younger offenders were more likely to reoffend (2010). These authors are illustrating how the process works better for some youth and not for others. Age difference could be explained simply by the fact that younger teens may not understand fully the impact of their crimes. Dick, Geertsen and Jones also highlight how their study found community service to be more problematic and findings pointed to it contributing to recidivism than being theoretically beneficial as a court mandated sanction (2003). A great deal of emphasis in the literature on teen peer courts have been on ways to successfully reintegrate youth back into the community and community service as a mandated sentence has been a large part of teen court programming. If youth aren’t viewing their sentences as just or community service outlets aren’t reintegrating youth back into the community through positive experiences, program outcomes aren’t as good. Unsupportive peers or community members could be contributing to the ineffectiveness of community service sanctions.

Lack of Qualitative Studies

One limitation of the studies evaluating peer courts is that they have primarily been quantitative in nature and few studies have actually looked qualitatively at how teens experience and derive meaning from the peer court process as offenders and non-offenders (Norris, Twill and Kim 2010). This points to the significance of qualitatively observing and interviewing youth and community members as they participate in the teen court process. Understanding how youth experience the teen court and sanctioning processes would expand the depth of understanding, not only, of how the process works but also, whether youth face stigma and labeling during and after this process. We have great studies which show that teen courts do in fact lower recidivism rates (Forgays, 2008; Dick et al., 2003; Minor et al., 1999 and Harrison et al., 2001), but we don't know how youth derive meaning out of these experiences and why they work for some and not for others.

County Peer Court Program

One program in The Midwest with the goal of preventing future adolescent crime and recidivism is County Juvenile Peer Court. According to this organization:

Peer Court sessions are staffed by volunteer attorneys, probation officers, and by high school students who act as jurors, observers, and court bailiffs. Peer Court is held during the week on local high school campuses. Through participation in Peer Court, juveniles accept responsibility for their behavior. In addition to holding juveniles accountable and educating youth about the legal system, the program provides youth who serve as Peer Court Jurors an opportunity to address the problem of juvenile crime in their community and interact with positive adult role models. (County Juvenile Peer Court Pamphlet)

County Peer Court theoretically fits within some of the restorative justice models utilizing the ideas of Sociologist John Braithwaite's theory of reintegrative shaming

(1989). Braithwaite explains, “Crime is best controlled when members of the community are the primary controllers through active participation in shaming offenders, and, having shamed them, through concerted participation in ways of reintegrating the offender back into the community of law abiding citizens” (1989:8). Examining how youth jurors make meaning out of their experiences is the primary goal of this study.

Study Methodology

Non-participant Observation

Fieldwork was completed between the end of the 2011-2012 academic school year and during the entire duration of 2012-2013 academic school year. County Peer Court (name of the program has been changed for confidentiality reasons) held peer court sessions twice a month after school on Thursdays during the academic school year. The high schools in the county (7 participated) were located in a Midwestern suburb and took turns hosting the peer court sessions. Each of the participating high schools roughly held sessions twice throughout the academic year. There were a couple sessions that were rescheduled or cancelled all together because of weather conditions. Each session consisted of the sanctioning trials of three to four youth. Only on one occasion did an entire peer court session consist of just one sanctioning trial. This session in particular was Alex’s session. She was involved with another young woman in a fight on school property. Since the entire session was devoted to her case the format of the court changed as well. Every member of the audience was allowed to ask questions and deliberate on her sanctions. As you can imagine this was particularly disorganized and confusing for all involved. Especially since I counted over 50 youth in the audience that day. I even noted in my field notes that, “The teacher calls for some order and tells the

youth not to talk over one another.” Amidst all of the chaos the youth still worked together to understand the nature of her crime and provided her with sanctions that they believed would be best for her.

The County District Attorney’s office was in charge of selecting the cases for each of the sessions and all offending youth had residences within the county, but were assigned to attend their trials at a different high school than their own. The County District Attorney’s office also approved and provided the support I needed for my research. They mailed notices to the participating offending youth about my presence, and the research being done with ways to contact me for future interviews. Even though the County helped with recruitment, I was still unsuccessful with getting any offending youth or their parents to interview with me. In fact, this study had the original goals of understanding not just how youth jurors make meaning out of their experiences but also how offending youth and their accompanying parent made sense out of peer court. While this study is derived completely out of fieldwork during the sessions and jury member interviews, it is still missing the voices of the offending teens.

Peer court sessions lasted roughly an hour and a half to two hours. It all depended on how many cases were being heard and how long the juries took to deliberate. The county peer court set up their sessions in a consecutive manner, so I was only able to observe 2 to 3 cases per peer court session. I always started my fieldwork with the first case that was called. I also had no prior knowledge of any of the cases or what the juveniles were there for prior to the session beginning. In this way, I was just like the non-offending youth in the audience. As soon as the first case ended, I immediately followed the peer jury into the jury room where I observed and took notes on how the

youth came up with sanctions for their case. During this time period though, I was missing the beginning of the next case. The partially missed case was then discarded from my observational notes. I only observed cases in which I was able to follow it in its entirety, from the questioning session to the jury room. On the whole, I generally missed one case per session. I feel that I was still able to witness the majority of the peer court sessions and I feel that observing cases in their entirety allowed me to have more consistent and reliable data.

All field notes were reconstructed immediately upon the conclusion of the sessions. Names were changed for offending youth and descriptors were left out of my notes. No names were used for the jurors I observed. I did note the perceived race and ethnicity of offenders and youth jurors, as well as perceived biological sex. I was able to write and take notes during the peer court sessions, so while I am confident in my data there is still the chance that I could have missed a context or dialogue scenario. All of my field notes were line by line coded. Upon completion of the latter half of the 2011-2012 academic school year, memos were written after a second pass of the data was completed. This second pass consisted of looking for general themes in the data. Quickly, I began to notice three major themes that were also standing out in the data collected during the 2012-2013 school year: importance of parental punishments, negative peer influence and impression management techniques. These three themes became the heart and soul of my dissertation. A third pass of the data was completed at the end of fieldwork and consisted of providing the descriptive support for these three themes.

Semi-Structured Interviews

At the end of the peer court session, I handed out flyers to both offending youth, their parents and peer jurors involved in the cases that I observed and took observational notes on. This became my method for interview recruitment. I was unsuccessful in generating any offending youth, or their parents, in scheduling or completing interviews with me. Every session I attended, I tried to recruit these individuals. I would hand them recruitment letters and on a few occasions these letters made their way into the garbage can before they even left my sight of view. I can only speculate as to why offending youth or their parents wouldn't interview with me, but I imagine that they simply wanted this process to be over with. For some of the cases I observed their actual offense took place months prior. I, on the other hand, completed 16 interviews with youth who participated as peer jurors during the academic years of my study. Unfortunately, three of the interviews were erased prior to transcription. All of my interviews were conducted with female high school students and varied according to perceived race and ethnicity. Getting youth jurors to interview with me was also particularly hard. On many occasions after the completion of peer court, I would walk around the room picking up discarded recruitment letters that the youth jurors left behind. Also, on a couple occasions, I had a youth contact me for an interview and after successfully completing the interview had one of their peers who had been on the same case (also received a recruitment letter) contact me to schedule an interview. This method helped in generating interviews. I can also honestly say that I scheduled at least five interviews with youth (many of which were with male jurors) who never showed up at our meeting space and after re-contacting wouldn't reschedule. I can only speculate again on why it was so hard to recruit jurors

and I believe it simply comes down to the fact that they are high school students, who for the most part participated in peer court for extra credit for one of their classes.

While these interviews are only supplemental to my field observations of the cases they helped me better understand some of the dynamics that were going on in the peer courtroom and in the jury room. Interviews lasted approximately Twenty-five minutes to forty-five minutes and all of the participants were asked semi-structured questions. For all youth under the age of 18, parental consent forms were signed and youth themselves signed assent forms. All youth over the age of 18 signed their own consent forms. Names were changed for all interview participants and they were given pseudonyms upon transcription and tapes were destroyed. Confidentiality was promised and has been upheld. No jurors have since contacted me to be removed from my study. Though a couple of the youth have since contacted me to see if it was complete so that they could read it.

This study looks at how youth jurors make meaning out of their experiences; view the law, juvenile delinquency, peer court process and ultimately how they view peer court offenders. After all, it is these youth who provide some of the mechanisms of informal social control and they have the power to make the offending youth feel as if they are being stigmatically shamed.

CHAPTER 2

“IT WILL BE FUN. YOU CAN ASK STUPID QUESTIONS”

Walking into the designated peer court auditorium, you immediately hear youth engaging in loud after school conversations while waiting for the sessions to begin. The audience participants, generally, have a half hour between the time school ended and the sessions began to commiserate about the proceedings. In the 7 different school sites, there was a range of 16 to 50 students in attendance as audience members for the peer court sessions. The majority of the peer court audience members were female adolescents. Sahra attended one of these sessions and when interviewed explained, “There weren’t a lot of boys who participated in the peer court, mostly, most of them I guess are not as interested about you know in this kind of stuff...” The racial compositions of the audiences, at all seven of the participating high schools, were primarily Caucasian, with a few minority students at each of the school sites. The youth also seemed to sit together in peer groups and to come in with at least one other member of their friendship group to the sessions.

There were many occasions where I overheard youth talking with one another about what to expect in the upcoming peer court session. On one occasion, I overheard a female audience member explain to a male student on her left, “I am a little nervous for this to begin. How many people get picked to be a juror?” Many of the youth attending the peer court sessions as potential jury members, appeared to be first time participants

and were, therefore, unsure of what to expect. During one of my observations, I noted a group of youth talking amongst themselves and one female student exclaimed while reading the nameplate on the desk set up for the judge, “Judge James B. Brown. Imagine if he came out all gangsta.” Her statement garnered a lot of laughs and seemed to break through the tension that many of the youth harbored as they anxiously waited for the sessions to begin. It also speaks to the lack of diversity in the audience and in the participating County’s neighborhoods. In her interview, Ellen discussed what her expectations were prior to the peer court session: “I don’t know what it was going to be like...he’s not uh my teacher said that it wasn’t going to be like you get to say if they’re guilty or not, or possibly grilling them like you see on TV. But um, he gave us a sheet on what you can ask questions for, what you should expect, what you should wear, stuff like that.” Sahra also explained her expectations prior to attending when she states, “Well I thought it was um going to be really hard and you wouldn’t get a chance to talk, but it was actually very laid back and we got to say whatever, we got to ask whatever questions we wanted and it was better than I thought.” Ellen and Sahra had a bit of prior knowledge from their recruiting teachers about the peer court process but not enough to fully understand what the actual sessions were going to be like. Instead, many of the youth were there because their peers were in attendance and they thought that this would be a fun experience. As one female student in the audience stated, “It will be fun. You can ask stupid questions.” Sahra perfectly explains this further when she states, “I know a lot of my friends wanted to go there and see what a trial court looks like, peer court looks like, and um it’s basically for the fun of it, when all your friends, got you know to do it together, so...” For many of the youth in attendance this was a unique and different

experience that they can share with their friends but didn't quite fully understand in the beginning.

Since these youth didn't have much prior knowledge on the peer court process they usually were confused about the types of offenses that could be sanctioned during peer court. Many of the youth thought that peer court was for more serious offenses than the relatively small offenses that were typical. On one occasion, a Caucasian young man behind me stated, "Oh look at him" as a young African American male adolescent and his father walked past us to take a seat in the back of the auditorium. The Caucasian youth, who was participating as an audience member, had no idea what the youth was there for and because the African American youth was in attendance with his father, he automatically labeled him as the "delinquent." In this situation, the Caucasian youth felt that this African American youth should be singled out and whispered about, based on their own stereotypes and perceptions of what cases would be heard in peer court. For the most part though, the youth in the audience and on the juries were quite respectful of the offenders and their parents. I also noticed some of the youth participating as offenders discussing their confusion about the upcoming session with their parents while awaiting the start of the sessions. One afternoon, I was privy to a conversation between Jaden and his parents. Jaden was attending the sessions as an offender who was caught throwing eggs from a moving vehicle at youth who were riding their bikes. While waiting for the session to begin, he told his parents, "I feel like I am going to laugh." His mom quickly stated, "Just don't." A couple minutes later his mom asked him, "Are you going to do this again?" Jaden answered laughing, "Never going to get caught again." While the majority of the offending youth came in looking anxious and nervous, there

were a few like Jaden, who didn't seem to be taking this very seriously nor seeming to really understand why he was there and being punished in the first place. It was interesting the dichotomy between offenders and parents who took the process seriously and those who didn't, because the majority of the youth in the audience seemed to be taking this seriously, while some of the offending youth and their parents weren't. I will discuss this in chapter 5, when I look at how offending youth use impression management to 'save face' for their offenses and what happens when the youth in the jury see their presentations of self as inauthentic. I also examine the role of the parents in providing punishments to their youth prior to the case being heard in peer court and how this affects juror's sanctions (chapter 3). As you can see from the dialogue between Jaden and his parents, neither of them seemed to accept responsibility for this offense, nor did they really seem to understand the purpose of peer court.

“This is not a real courtroom, I am so confused”

The sessions begin when one of the supporting attorneys made their way to the front of the room and the audience quiets down. All attention becomes focused on the attorney as he (and a few times she) explains the peer court process. There were four different supporting attorneys during my observations who volunteered their time to peer court, two more often than the others. On most session days, Attorney Frank began by asking, “How many of you have been in a courtroom?” Looking around the room you generally see around 15 hands go up. He then, quickly and assertively states, “This is a court of law so conduct yourself like you are in one.” The attorney goes on to explain the differences between adult, juvenile and peer court when he states, “In a juvenile court, there is no jury and the judge is the finder of fact. There will be no findings of guilt here

today. The subjects have already admitted their involvement in the infraction.”

Attorney Frank also explains, “You cannot ask where the youth lives, works or goes to school, but you are free to ask anything else.” Peer court tries to reduce the stigma of the offending youth by ensuring that they are not sanctioned by youth whom they know. He explains the roles of the attorney when he states, “I will not tell you what to recommend as a sentence, my role is to answer any questions that you may have.” He continues to explain the rules and regulations of peer court and when finished, sits down towards the front of the auditorium. At each school, a student volunteers prior to the start of the sessions to be the bailiff. This student comes prepared to school for the day dressed in a white shirt and black pants. As soon as the peer bailiff announces, “All rise,” the youth gladly rise and comply. The judge enters from outside of the auditorium then sits and the youth follow soon after. The judge explains a bit more about the peer court process, sometimes repeating what the attorney had said. While many of the youth know the court is set in an auditorium at their school, the structure of peer court tries to foster an atmosphere that mimicked a formal court setting.

After all of the opening remarks, the youth usually look engaged in the process. Sahra explains how she was viewing the process, when she states, “This isn’t a joke you know, so it’s big stuff. Yeah and we’re gonna make a difference in a kids life and everything, so yeah.” During a few sessions, I noticed youth eating chipotle in the back of the room, or whispering back and forth to their friends, but for the most part, the youth participating as audience members looked interested in the process.

“They get to learn from the experience”

The judge who is a real judge in the county wearing his black robe asks for youth to participate as jurors. On most session days, hands immediately shot up around the room. After 5 to 14 youth were selected for the jury (depends on the size of the audience,) they made their way to their seats in the front of the room and the first case was called. The youth selected as jurors are only allowed to sit in on one sanctioning trial per peer court session. The circumstances of the cases are not reviewed until after the youth jurors have been selected. As in a regular courtroom, the judge asks the jurors if they can render a fair and just sentence and upon agreement are sworn in. The judge further explains the role of the jurors when he states, “You are here to serve as jurors in order to determine a reasonable sentence for the persons charged. They must reasonably complete their sentences within four months.” He also explains that at the completion of the four months of informal probation, the youth offender’s records would be erased. Many of the youth understood the importance of having a clean record. Ellen explains, “...I believe that having no record, if I did something that I regretted deeply, and it was had like, I cried. I would like to be able or try to fix it as best as I could without like a record. At such a young age it’s hard to have a future and have something on your record that everyone looks at.” Jessica also explains, “It’s good for them because they get to learn from the experience and know not to do it again and also good for their parents and the school system because then they don’t have to worry about it being on their record and hindering their um academics.” The judge also explains that the “jurors cannot impose a sentence of jail time or fines but [they] may include anything on the jury worksheet.” The jury worksheet is a list of possible sanctions and is provided to all youth

who participated as jury members. After the offender and his or her parent give a brief statement about the offense, the youth are then freely allowed to ask questions. The judge keeps control and points to youth raising their hands to ask their questions. The youth jurors can ask both offending youth and their accompanying parent questions. For example, one female youth juror asked Alex's mom, "Do you agree with her choice of friends?" In this case, Alex was here because she was fighting with another female adolescent at school. The answers to these questions made their way back to the jury room and helped the jurors fashion a suitable sentence for the offender. In chapter three, I discuss the importance of parents' answers to the juries' questions regarding punishment at home and how it factored into determining suitable sentences.

"Please volunteer to be a juror. It's the fun part of Peer Court."

There are many different reasons why the youth volunteer to participate as jurors. Some of them are required to attend the sessions for a class, while others are there because of their own interests in the juvenile justice process. The attorneys who gave the opening statements also played up the excitement of being a juror. On one occasion, I witnessed Laura an attorney who gave the opening remarks solicit audience participation for the later cases by stating, "Please volunteer to be a juror. It's the fun part of peer court." For the most part, the youth who attended peer court didn't need the attorney to hype up the process; they were there due to a current interest in law and/or criminal justice. Ellen explains why she attended the peer court session, "Uh, because I thought it would be interesting. I was thinking about doing something in law, I don't know what I quite want to do yet, so I'm just doing a bunch of different stuff." Sahra also explained, "Well actually when I grow up, I want to be a lawyer, so I wanted to see what a you

know it looks like, trials and everything, so it was good experience for me.” Jessica too explains, “...I’m taking a criminal justice class in my high school and so our teacher um he told us about this as just an assignment that we needed to complete... what I want to do when I grow up, I wanna be a forensic scientist so participating in court is something that I would be doing if I get a job with that.” It quickly became apparent that the majority of these youth jurors understood the importance of their roles and focused on finding the best sanctions, which they believe would deter future delinquency.

After the question and answer session, the jurors and supporting attorney made their way to a classroom that symbolized the jury room. As soon as the youth entered this closed room they were quickly told to elect a jury foreman. On most days, a hand quickly shot up and on a few others it became a struggle to get someone to volunteer. Once the foreman was elected the youth jurors could talk about their perceptions of the offender and his or her offense. Their job as jurors was too unanimously (often times was more like a majority) come up with no more than four possible sanctions for the offense and were given a jury worksheet filled with suggestions to help them. Sahra explains a bit about the process and its outcome when she states, “...we had about um six people [in the jury] and we all like having, getting feedback from one another, so we really settled on some good you know punishments and stuff.” As she explains, the youth tried to think through the offenders’ crime and how they and their parents answered their questions in order to come up with good sanctions. The supporting attorney helped to keep track of consensus and answered any of the youth’s questions about the punishments listed on the jury worksheet and generally stayed out of their conversations. Depending on the case and the group of peer jurors, they usually took around 5 to 10

minutes to come up with a list of possible sanctions for the offender. Once completed the jurors made their way back to the auditorium and waited for their case to be re-called. When the case was re-called the offender and his or her parent and youth jurors made their ways back to their earlier seats. The judge then asks the foreman to read the sentence and then he approves or modifies the sentence. The offender is asked if he or she understands their sentence and whether they believe it to be fair and just and once they agree the judge dismisses everyone by thanking them for their time. All of the youth in the audience energetically leave the auditorium, some while still discussing the cases.

“I try to put myself in their shoes”

The following chapters highlight some of the ways teens on the jury try to make sense out of juvenile delinquency, informal social control and punishment. For many of the teens, who volunteer to be members of the jury, the struggles to provide sanctions for the offense depend upon perceived informal social control at home and with friends, making their jobs as jurors that much harder (chapters 3 and 4). As we will see, these youth jurors struggle to provide sanctions, which they hope will deter delinquency, when faced with what they perceive to be inadequate socializing agents in the offenders lives. Denise explains how these youth might be attempting to do this, “...I try to put myself in their shoes, and I try to think what they might have been thinking and assess how things might have come about...” The youth jurors also struggle with impression management and how these teens appear as regular teens like themselves. This often provokes extensive discussion in the jury rooms as these youth struggle to come to a consensus over sanctions (chapter 5). Jessica illustrates this when she states, “Some of these kids are straight-A students. They are on the honor roll. They do sports like us. Not

something that you would typically associate with a delinquent.” Ellen explains this dilemma the best when she states, “...we’re teenagers, we do dumb stuff, but trying to look back at what you can take from it next time or have a different experience.” As Ellen states, the ultimate goal for peer jurors is to provide punishments that will teach the offending youth in their words a “lesson.” The offender though isn’t the only adolescent in this process being socialized. The youth, in the audience and in the jury, are also learning important “lessons” about delinquency, informal social control and punishment (chapter 6). Denise explains:

I feel that we can live almost vicariously through them and, like, experience what they experience; you can feel sympathy but also realize that this is, this is the real deal and you need to be responsible for your actions. And what feels right in the moment there, whether it was pulling the girl’s hair or doing donuts in the parking lot, um, you’re gonna have to pay for it eventually.

Adolescents in the room are reminded of society’s norms and the consequences that can come when they are violated. They are left remembering that while they are all teenagers, they are still ultimately responsible for their actions.

CHAPTER 3

“I CAN’T BELIEVE HE DIDN’T GET A PUNISHMENT”

Through socialization we learn the norms of our society. Agents of socialization, such as parents, peers and members of our community, guide us through understanding these norms and have the difficult role of sanctioning us when these norms are violated. Therefore, our families become one of the key players in informally socially controlling our behaviors. Since parents play such an important role, we have seen a great deal of literature about the role that they have in facilitating and preventing delinquent behavior (Hirschi 1969; Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990; Matsueda 1992; Sampson & Laub 1993). Interestingly, parents are often held partially responsible for their child’s behaviors, even if the parents properly socialized them to understand the norms of our society. Parenting styles and punishments for norm violations, also, become scrutinized and judged in our society. Debates over how parents should punish their child are popular in the media and our popular culture, as these punishments, or perceived lack thereof, are thought to impart additional negative repercussions for the parents, child and greater community. Simons et al. found that “Ineffective parenting during late childhood appears to establish a socialization effect that sets in motion a negative trajectory that continues for several years” (2001:77). The harmful effects of a parents’ response, which can be an excessive response to or lack of appropriate response for the offense, to their child’s delinquent behavior can also have lasting effects. For example, Matsueda found that “...youths accurately perceive their parents’ appraisals of them and that the reflected-appraisal

constructs are capturing meaningful elements of self-concept” (1992:1602). Youth not only have to worry about their friends seeing them negatively when they deviate, they, also, worry about how others in their reference group see them; including their parents. These reactions can impact their self-esteem and even drive them further into peer groups saturated with delinquent behavior (Sykes and Matza 1957; Braithwaite 1989).

“I kinda see his mom’s sympathy”

Many of the youth who sit on the juries have realized that parents are important agents of informal social control. In order to understand the role of parenting in the home, many of the youth on the jury asked specific questions to the accompanying parent. Jessica elaborates on the importance of asking questions in deciding on punishments when she explains:

Yeah I wanted to like [know] what punishments she had already received because if we had given them um her punishment that she already gotten that wouldn’t have I don’t think would have helped um and I also wanted to know like if it, if it was mostly her fault then the punishment I feel like would have been more severe, but and it wasn’t her fault I wanted to know that so that the punishment wouldn’t be too harsh on her um and so...

The youth on the jury want to ensure that the sanctions given are fair and just, so they factor parent-determined punishments into their suggested sanctions. Asking parents about their perception of the crime and their response to the offense, allows the jury a better understanding of the offender’s home situations and potential external forces which might not provide the social control necessary to prevent future recidivism. Jessica further explains why these parental questions are important:

Um if the parent’s didn’t punish them, it’s I think it’s a little harder because then you have to figure out, you have a more spectrum a broader spectrum of what the punishment has to be. If it’s curfew, it it’s uh they can’t associate with different people, if it’s um like taking away electronics or something like that. Um if it’s paying uh something um in a

way of community service it's, it's harder to figure out what the boarder lines are um to try to figure out or what we have to do to make sure that they don't do this again. So if their parents haven't...punished them than one, either their parent's don't care or punishment whatever punishment they have tried before doesn't work, so it's something that I take into consideration definitely when I make a choice.

Jessica's words ring true for many of the youth on juries and on many occasions, the youth jurors asked questions to parents and the answers received were discussed and debated in the deliberation room. During one session, I observed the following question and answer take place:

Female Juror to mom:	Was there a punishment at home?
Mom:	No I felt sorry for him. He had a two-day suspension. He sat at home and watched TV.
The next question was:	
Female Juror:	Do you wish that you had never gotten into a fight before?
Kyle:	Never thought about that before.

The youth sitting on the jury commented on these answers as soon as they entered the deliberation room. The peer jury consisted of 6 members and they were trying to understand why Kyle had gotten into a fight with another student, who he believed had stolen his iPod. Sahra was one of these jurors and she explained her feelings about Kyle's mom's statements during questioning, "...She told us that she didn't punish him a lot, so it was like we felt that it was going to be our responsibility, me and the other students, the jury, part of the jury, so we gave him like more, harder you know punishments." I experienced the following dialogue take place immediately upon entering the deliberation room, which supports Sahra's statement:

Female juror 1:	I can't believe he didn't get a punishment.
Male (prior) juror 1:	He was suspended but he got to play video games.
Female juror 2:	I think community service.
Male juror 2:	To be honest, I kinda see his mom's sympathy. Punished for getting his iPod stolen?

Female juror 1: You can sit and talk though.
 Female juror 3: I think mediation would be good. Counseling?
 Female juror 2: He doesn't seem like an angry kid.
 Male (prior) juror 1: What about what I learned from this experience essay.

These youth were really trying to understand the motivations behind the crime that Kyle committed, as well as, fashion appropriate sanctions for his offense. Initially, these youth were dumbfounded by the lack of parental sanctioning at home, but while talking through the crime, they were able to understand the complexity of the offense. In fact, one of the male jurors quickly noticed the lack of parental punishment at home and made it a central focus when deliberating with his peers in the jury room. This particular jury youth was a prior offender and as his own sanction was required to attend and participate in a peer court session. He also suggested a "what I learned from this experience essay," which may have been because he didn't feel the offender was remorseful or had learned a lesson from this experience. Sahra also describes why this was such of a hard decision in the jury room when she recounts Kyle's mom's earlier statements, "...she felt sorry for her kid. She said that a lot of people take advantage of him. So um, she didn't want, she kinda felt sorry for him and she gave him you know easy [punishments]." While some of the youth were upset about the lack of parental punishment, others believed larger issues were going on here. A few minutes later, the jury came back to the question of mediation and whether this should be an appropriate sanction for Kyle's offense. The following dialogue took place between the youth:

Male juror: Mediation do you still wanna do?
 Female juror: I just don't think that I would want to talk to the person who stole my iPod.

As the female juror reminds the group, Kyle was also a victim of a crime and his victimization seems to be overshadowing the fact that he threw the first punch at school. Sahra explains, “Yeah it you know it made us actually feel sorry for him too, but we still believe that he should of you know been punished and the answer to you know if he’s gonna be taken advantage of, he shouldn’t you know fight with other kids. That’s not a solution to the problem.” Sahra understood that violence was not the answer and that Kyle might need help in understanding how to resolve future conflict. These youth as we have seen were seriously thinking through the nature of the offense and trying to give a punishment that they felt fit the nature of the crime.

On another occasion, I witnessed the sanctioning trial for Abdul. He was cited with disorderly conduct after engaging in a fight with another male student over \$2.00 that was owed to him. Abdul’s father, in his opening statement, explained to the jury, “We talked at home and I took his driver’s license. He has also apologized to the student.” During questioning, one female juror asked his father, “Was there punishment at home?” Abdul’s father stated, “No.” Later in the deliberation room, two female jurors debated the inconsistency in the answers. The first female juror explained, “I can’t believe his parent didn’t give him a punishment at home!” Another female juror immediately added, “But he did say in the beginning that he lost his license. I think a counseling session for anger management?” The inconsistency provided here in Abdul’s father’s answers added an element of doubt in the minds of the jury members about whether a punishment at home was really given. Abdul, ultimately, received counseling for anger management, a one page essay on “what he learned from this experience” and had to return as a peer court juror in a future session. The importance of parental

sanctioning in the home was a major factor in the sanctions that were given to the offending youth.

“My parents would still be yelling at me”

Many of the youth use the role of peer juror to provide, what can be considered, harsher sanctions to offending youth when they feel there is a lack of informal social control in the home. On one occasion, the offender Peter was found with a few friends throwing tomatoes at cars from the window of a moving vehicle and was cited with disorderly conduct. Peter’s mom in her opening statement explained, “I know he is remorseful. He was very upset. We didn’t get a phone call like some of the other boys. They called his cell phone and made him promise to tell me. He did and I was very surprised.” While Peter’s mom was giving off the impression that her son was responsible, many of the jurors instead focused on the lack of punishment after the offense. As soon as the jury entered the deliberation room one of the jury members pointed out, ‘His mom gave him two weeks. Not that hard of a punishment. It was really lacking.’ Immediately following, another female juror stated, “You could have broken windows.” These two young women felt that the punishment at home didn’t fit the severity of the offense and brought this into the discussion when choosing sanctions for the offender. Peter ended up with a curfew of 8:00pm on weekdays and 9:30pm on weekends, no association with the other members in the car, 10 hours of community service and he must attend a future peer court session as a juror.

On another occasion, I witnessed a case during which the youth on the jury debated the quality of parenting that the offender was receiving at home, which later factored in the discussion about sanctions. Jerry attended peer court because he fled from

the police while trespassing on private property. He was also in possession of spray paint and stencils. This particular case was interesting because the father of the offender really didn't see his son's offense as warranting sanctioning. Jerry's father in his opening statement to the jury explained, "If he was doing it on a building or store, I would have been upset. It was just an old abandoned piece of concrete. Not the smartest thing. I don't think that he was trying to do anything harmful. It was just expression." The judge immediately asks him, "Are you saying that it's okay to destroy this property?" Jerry's dad answers, "I would have been more upset if it was an actual functioning building and he was decreasing the value with his graffiti." Clearly, we can see that Jerry's dad did not perceive his son's offense as warranting much punishment. Later in the questioning by the jury, Jerry's dad was asked by a male juror, "Did you give any punishment?" Jerry's dad answered, "I yelled and I was upset and I think that I kept him in the rest of the weekend. Not a lot, I don't feel like it was a malicious act. Running was stupid, but um I didn't come down pretty hard." In the jury room, Attorney Frank even comments on Jerry's dad's statements, "Dad didn't seem to have a tight rein on him." The jury gives him the following sanctions: 15 community service hours, and ordered to write an apology letter to the owners of the property and the officers he fled from and maintain a curfew of 9:00pm on school nights and 10:30pm on weekends. One of the male jurors, after deciding on the three sanctions above, raises his hand and asks attorney Frank "Is there a way to make him participate in extracurricular activities?" Attorney Frank answers, "Chess, debate team, dance team. As long as it is something that he can join." All of the youth on the jury vote to add this as a fourth sanction. Jerry's sanctions consisted of ways to bond him to conventional outlets, while decreasing his free time

(Hirschi 1969). The youth jurors decided on a curfew, because they believed he wasn't given one at home. Youth on the jury also understood that when youth have unstructured time or are inactive, delinquency can ensue and they found ways to punish the offender as to decrease this possibility.

“I would want to keep his curfew on weekends set at 11:00pm.”

There were instances during the sessions where the frustration parents felt regarding the jury's questioning of their parenting styles were evident. During these instances, you could tell they were feeling as much on trial for their parenting, as the youth were for their actions. They took the recommended sanctions from the jury as clues that they themselves should have been more in control of their child's behaviors. Carter's case illustrates this perfectly. Carter was arrested for driving while paintballing other vehicles. Carter's dad in his opening statement explained, “We took his car away for two weeks. We were upset and he was upset.” In the jury deliberation room, the youth jurors discussed his punishment at home. One male juror explained, “His parents didn't give a bad punishment.” A female juror immediately responded, “My parents would still be yelling at me.” Later while discussing the need for a curfew sanction, a female juror explains, “Only for 2 weeks!” A male juror immediately replies, “That's nothing, his parents only took his car away for two weeks!” Samantha was a juror for this case and she describes her perceptions of Carter's dad and his lack of punishment when she states:

Like he's trying to fight for his son. Um he obviously trusts his son. I think that personally the punishment he gave his kid wasn't enough for what he did. He broke the law and if I did that I know my car would be taken away for a lot longer than two weeks.

The youth jurors gave sanctions of curfew at 9:00pm for school nights and 10:00pm for weekends for three months only (till the end of the school year). He was also asked to attend a defensive driving school, complete 20 hours of community service and write a letter of apology to the owners of the vehicles that he paint-balled. After the judge read Carter's sentence, he asks both Carter and his father if they thought that the sentence was fair and just. Carter's dad immediately explained to the judge, "Carter is a good kid and this might be difficult. We have already set his curfew an hour under the legal limit. If it is okay with you, I would want to keep his curfew on weekends set at 11:00pm." The judge replied, "It will be a 10:00pm curfew. What you did was dangerous to yourself and to others. You don't know what could have happened. I can tell you that parents worry about their children when they first start driving. They are more likely to get into accidents and hurt themselves for life." Samantha also commented on Carter's dad's reactions in her interview, when she stated:

I mean he says he's strict, but like two weeks of the car away, and like in my opinion like wasn't strict enough. And I feel like your kid did something wrong and he has to like live with the consequences of what he did and I, I just personally don't think the dad should have said anything. It wasn't really his place to be different and like the boy said something, but it's his son like obviously thinks he's a good kid.

From Samantha's statements, we sense that she too, was frustrated with Carter's dad's actions. While she understood that he was sticking up for his son, his request suggested that he didn't see anything wrong with what his son had did. In this situation, you can almost see why Carter didn't seem as if he was taking this process seriously, if his father wasn't either. Clearly, Carter's dad was not happy about giving up his parenting control, nor did he feel as if the curfew was justified for his son's actions. This could transfer

over into Carter not understanding the severity of the offense or “fairness” in the sanction, possibly facilitating an environment for future recidivism.

“He was grounded at home”

On a number of occasions, the parent accompanying the offender explained to the jury that punishments were already given at home. These parents explained to the jury that they had already set clear sanctions as to deter future behavior. T.J. was a young African American male cited with disorderly conduct after fighting with one of his friends over the lyrics of a song. The judge asks T.J.’s father if he had anything to add to T.J.’s explanation of the crime. T.J.’s dad explains, “It’s not worth what they were fighting over (laughs). It was ridiculous and he was grounded at home.” In this case, though, grounding at home was not enough and the father was not perceived as able to provide adequate informal social control. As soon as the jury began to deliberate, one female juror explained, “I think he should have punishments that have to do with his parents. His dad laughed about the fight and he laughed when the judge asked him about whether he follows the rules. I just think the kid needs more rules.” Simply laughing while answering the jury youth’s questions was taken as a sign that T.J.’s dad was not serious, nor capable of enforcing the rules at home. The youth on the jury decided that they needed to take control and provide the structure needed to prevent future delinquency by setting a curfew for weekdays and weekends. When the parental punishment at home wasn’t seen as being enough to punish the offense or seen as enough to keep the youth from doing it again, youth jurors were sure to provide sanctions that resembled these aspects of parental informal social control.

Jury youth also noticed when the offender had parents that provided rules and punishments, but felt like they weren't able to adequately enforce them. The jury then felt it was their responsibility to help the parents enforce sanctions through their recommended sentences. This became evident, while observing a trial where Timothy and his friends ran from the police after being caught going through unattended vehicles past their county's curfew. Timothy's mom in her opening statement to the jury explained, "I didn't know he was sneaking out. The police called me in the middle of the night. I was glad that no one was injured. It was unfortunate that they had to use so many resources to track down the boys. We talked about it when he got home and it won't happen again." Later, during the questioning session, a male juror asked Timothy's mom, "Looking back, do you feel the punishment he got was sufficient given the seriousness of what happened?" She answered, "A lot of other things happened. Typically video games go when he gets in trouble and he also lost these. The phone is the main thing that catches his attention. We had this discussion where there is no way to force him not to sneak out, but I could make it that he can't get back in." As soon as the youth arrived to the jury deliberation room, Timothy's mom's views on punishment made their way into the youth's discussions over sentencing. The following discussion took place:

Female Juror 1:	Obey curfew on school nights. He snuck out past curfew. He needs a family curfew.
Female Juror 2:	What I was thinking, his mom had a good point. She can't stop him from sneaking out, but she can stop him from getting back in. I think that sounds like a good thing to do. What times are appropriate for school nights?
Female Juror 1:	Mine is 8:00pm.

These youth understood that Timothy's mom was having trouble enforcing the curfew, so they decided on sanctions to empower her control over her son. They also drew upon their own parents' use of informal social control when determining the best curfew time. In fact, curfew and attending a future peer court session as a juror were the only two sanctions that he received.

“Mom seems like she's got him on lockdown”

The youth on the juries also noticed when parents provided adequate informal social control at home and as a result, were more lenient on the offending youth when deciding on a sanction. Paul was cited with disorderly conduct after he and three other friends were caught throwing rocks at cars and buses that were driving by. His mom accompanied him and was asked by the judge to add to Paul's recount of the crime. She stated, “Not generally involved in these types of things and his punishment was severe. He was grounded for three months and he was not allowed to get his permit as planned. Generally, he's a good kid.” In the deliberation room, the first thing a female juror said about the case was, “He's not going to hang out after he said 8pm. Mom seems like she's got him on lockdown.” Later a male juror adds to the discussion over possible sanctions, “This is hard. He's not a bad kid. Maybe have him attend a future peer court?” The youth in the jury finally decided on a 1page essay where Paul had to write about “what he learned from this experience” and he had to attend a future peer court session and participate as a juror. Paul's mother was seen as being perfectly capable of ensuring that her child would not engage in these behaviors again.

There were instances where the youth on the jury felt the punishments at home were too severe and, therefore, they had trouble deciding on suitable sanctions. The

youth on the jury understand that the offenders are teenagers too and they try to provide sanctions that they feel are fair and just, while also serving as a clear punishment for the offense or offenses. In order for their sanctions to be fair, they take into account the parent's prior punishments, in order to prevent over punishing for the offense or offenses. Sahra further explains, "We understood what the parents were going through and some parents you know, punished their kids and some people didn't, so we were kinda able to understand what happened...they're not responsible for their kids actions. I mean they can't you know, they weren't there like to tell them oh don't do that." The jury youth understand that accountability doesn't just rest with the parents, they must also look at the level of responsibility that the offender has taken for his or her offense prior to coming to peer court. When punishments at home and youth responsibility both seem to have already significantly sanctioned the offender, the jury youth had trouble understanding their role in the peer court process. David's case in particular, had the jury debating whether or not they needed to provide any sanctions at all. David was cited with exhibition driving and 4th degree felony damage to property. David and a friend were driving on the grass and doing donuts in the school field after a homecoming game. David's dad when asked to give his opening statements and explained, "Well uh he was somewhat challenged or dared to do it. The area that was said to be damaged is an area students are coming on and off of. Wasn't necessarily lack of respect? I don't consider this to be a sign of a lack of respect for the school though." The judge asks David's dad, "How did you feel?" David's dad immediately states, "I was surprised of the area, not that I wasn't upset, just surprised by the said damage. It was a dare situation and I am glad that no damage was done to anyone else or students and that it was limited to the

grassy area.” We clearly see here that David’s dad’s concern fits some of the other parents statements highlighted throughout this chapter. While, he understood that his son committed an offense, he didn’t necessarily agree with the schools perception of the severity of it. What makes this case different is while David’s offense was not seen as significant he was punished sternly unlike the other offenders’ parents who didn’t see the severity of the offense and therefore didn’t punish their youth. A female juror asked David, “Was there a punishment at home, if anything?” David quickly answered, “By next Thursday, my truck was sold that night.” His parents didn’t simply suspend his driving privileges for a period of time they, instead, sold his truck out right. A male juror also asked David, “You paid restitution?” David answers, “I work for a landscape company and I got black dirt and materials from them.” The same male juror asks, “You re-seeded the area? Was this area already un-kept?” David replies, “It used to be an old tennis court that they pulled up and I just put some seed on black dirt.” So not only did he lose his truck, he also took the responsibility to repair and reseed the area that he damaged. David had been punished severely and fully taken responsibility for his crime and many of the youth jurors noticed this.

The youth on the jury had a hard time determining what sanctions to give David. They felt he had already taken full responsibility for his crimes and had been significantly punished. As soon as the youth jurors entered the jury room, the male juror who asked earlier questions about reparations quickly stated, “Is there a minimum sentence?” Frank the attorney seemed taken aback and answered, “I guess no! That is the first time someone has asked me that.” Immediately following a female juror explained, “He drove a donut on poorly cut grass and his parents sold his truck.” Another male juror explains,

“Recommend that he not hang out after an event and return home immediately?” The earlier male juror who asked about the minimum sentence explains, “I don’t think he would do this again.” The youth begin to debate sanctions such as precision driving course, not associating with his accomplice and an essay about not doing this again. The same male juror who is vocal about David already being punished enough interjects and states, “He was already punished. Who doesn’t have one bad idea?” A female juror quickly adds, “Already had to sell his truck and re-did grass.” David is sanctioned by having to write a 1-page essay about “what he learned from this experience.” This was the only sanction given to him. These youth really struggled with how to punish the offender when they felt that he had already been punished enough. In this case, the informal social control was apparent and working effectively to deter David’s delinquent behavior in the future and the youth were sure that he wouldn’t do this again.

We have seen how important parental punishment is for the youth on juries when debating and determining punishments for the offenders. As the youth jurors asked questions, they were doing so with sanctions in mind. They were careful not to over punish the youth for their offenses and they were vigilant as to avoid under punishing them. They took the time to understand the nature of informal social control in the home. After all, they have begun to internalize their own forces of informal social control in their lives. If the youth were not punished prior to peer court, the jury believed that either the parents were too lax in parenting or they didn’t see the offense as serious enough to warrant punishment. For many of the youth on the jury, they felt it was their responsibility to evaluate this prior to deciding on sanctions. When the parents were thought of not seeing the severity of the crime committed, the jury youth really took it as

a sign of future delinquency and tried to overcompensate for this by providing harsher sanctions. It's interesting to see that the majority of the parents accompanying their child through the peer court process, made it a point to explain that their child was still a "good kid," really adding to the overall effectiveness of this restorative justice aspect and decreasing the formation of negative self-esteem.

Many of the youth drew upon their own experiences with informal social control that were upheld by their parents to guide them when trying to understand appropriate sanctions. We saw this in particular, when the youth talked about their own curfews, or what their parents would have done in those situations. They understood that parents bare a major portion of the responsibility to teach their children right from wrong and control their behaviors when they are not in view. They also understood that youth are daring and often times don't think about the repercussions prior to acting. This is where parenting comes into play; these youth jurors believe it is the parent's job to remind and punish these youth when they violate social norms, thus ensuring that they learned valuable lessons for the future. The most interesting aspect emerging from this research though has become clear, youth understand the role that parents play in preventing their children from engaging in delinquent behavior and when they don't take responsibility by punishing them, peer jurors were not afraid to put into place sanctions that provided this parenting for them. After all, these youth jurors are not only teaching themselves about the importance of informal social control, they are teaching the offenders and their parents these lessons.

CHAPTER 4

“HE SHOULDN’T ASSOCIATE WITH THESE KIDS THOUGH”

There has been much debate as to the role that an adolescent’s peers play in contributing to their delinquent behavior in the literature on crime and delinquency (Sutherland 1966; Hirschi 1969; Giordano et al. 1986; Matsueda 1992; Haynie 2002; Worthen 2012; Young and Weerman 2013). Hirschi believed that the relationships that develop between delinquent peers are exaggerated and characterized these relationships as ‘cold and brittle’ (Hirschi 1969; Giordano et al. 1986). Sutherland, on the other hand, talked about the importance of the social learning of delinquency from within one’s own reference group (Sutherland 1966). Leading many scholars to question whether youth become delinquent because delinquent peers surround them. Young and Weerman explain another dimension of peer influence on delinquency when they state, “Adolescents may also adapt their behavior to avoid standing out in comparison to perceived social patterns among their friends or to adhere to false beliefs about what is normative in their group” (2013:338). Peer friendships and peer group acceptance are very important during adolescence and many youth may find themselves participating in delinquent activities because they want to be included in the group (Haynie 2002). These debates have carried on past the academic realm and into our social institutions. We have seen an attempt, from the media and within our school systems, to socially control youth by stigmatizing “delinquents” to prevent normalizing deviance within their peer groups. The hope is that by putting societal focus on labeling these norm violators as “bad kids,”

it will deter the appeal of delinquency for other youth. Questions emerge as to if this logic has trickled down to adolescents and their own understandings of delinquency and whether or not they too have become stigmatizing agents of informal social control in their own communities and peer groups.

On many occasions, I observed peer court youth jurors discussing the importance of the offenders peer group. After asking questions about the offenders peers during the court session, the jurors have weighed the pros and cons of particular sanctions in relation to the assumed negative influence of the offender's peers. During the tomato throwing case for Peter illustrated in Chapter 3, I witnessed the youth really struggle with finding a suitable sanction because the crime was committed in a group amongst friends. The jurors in this case had a particularly tough time coming to a consensus over sanctions because the offender denied full responsibility of their crime stating negative peer influence. The offender felt they were not fully responsible because peer pressure influenced their actions. In these instances, the youth jurors felt that the offenders were not responsible for the initial idea for the delinquent act, but they participated in the delinquent activities because of peer pressure. Jessica discussed the struggle over choosing sanctions in an interview, "...for the people who are pressured I kind of sympathize with them because they have no choice and they are pressured into it." For these youth jurors, the responsibility seemed to lie with the initiator of the delinquent act and not, necessarily, with the youth who participated.

Over a series of four different peer court sessions, a peer group was individually sanctioned for throwing tomatoes from a car at passing moving vehicles. Peter was the second youth to be sanctioned for this crime (I observed one of his peers being

sanctioned a couple weeks prior). When asked by the judge to explain what happened, he stated, “One important thing to know is that this was not my idea. Not that I am saying it was right. We were bored, so we went and bought a sack of tomatoes and threw them at cars. Sounds dumb. My friends were throwing multiple and when I threw one I happened to get caught.” Later, during the questioning by the youth jurors, one juror asked him: “Have you ever been pressured by friends to do drugs or drink alcohol?” He replied laughing, “No.” In the deliberation room, the jury had the following conversation:

Male Juror:	He shouldn't associate with these kids though.
Male Juror 2:	They all made the decision.
Female Juror 1:	His friend didn't make him do it.
Female Juror 2:	He could have walked away.
Male Juror 3:	It's healthy to have a break. They all have this same mentality.
Female Juror 1:	Break is good but to never be able to hang out with friends?
Male Juror 2:	He went to peer court. Could then say to friends that he got away with it and do it again.
Female Juror 3:	They are boys. My cousins have done a lot worse than that with tomatoes. That is a whole 'nother story. I think to not allow him to associate with his friends is harsh.

The youth jurors were struggling with providing a suitable sanction, since this was a group related offense and Peter did not initiate the act. Some of the youth jurors reduced Peter's agency in the crime because of the negative peer influence and felt that the best sanction was restricting association with his friends. A few others felt that Peter himself was an active participator in his offense and deserved full sanctioning. These youth jurors are trying to understand the peer dynamics of the group and whether, there is a lack of informal social control within the group. The group felt that the best punishment for his crime was to restrict access to his peer group. Peter was sentenced to a curfew

(8:00pm school days and 9:30 weekends), no association with peers related to the incident, 10 hours community service and future service as a juror in a peer court trial.

The youth jurors in the tomato throwing case also struggled with preserving the legitimacy of the peer court model. These youth jurors really struggled with individually punishing for a group offense and wanted to make sure that all of the youth involved understood the consequences associated with their crime. From the conversation in the jury room above, the youth jurors understand the importance of providing suitable sanctions for Peter's offense because it may deter future behavior within his peer group. They believed that if his friends realized that he was not punished for this offense then this could be seen as a rational "pass" for future delinquency. Giordano et al. found that "...delinquents were no less likely than others to believe that they have the trust of friends and that these friends 'really care about them and what happens to them'" (1986:1191). If the offenders trust one another to "have their backs," they may think that the other members of the group have their best interests in mind when initiating an act. Since these adolescents did not see their act as an offense, and if any one of the members of this peer group receive little to no punishment for their crime, then what is to keep them from doing it again. Since Peter was not the initiator of the act, it makes sense that the youth jurors want this peer group to learn that what they did was wrong. After all, Female Juror 3 essentially gives a "pass" on this offense because the offender was a boy. This shows the inherent struggle between the youth juror's feelings of legitimacy and the socialized normative gender roles of our society. If socialization teaches boys to be more aggressive and risky in their behaviors, then how are we supposed to sanction them if they are abiding by the norms of our society? These examples show how youth are

attempting to understand the importance of informal social control and gender roles in understanding how they simultaneously play a role in the maintenance of norm adherence and conversely the acceptance of deviance within adolescent peer groups.

“This would be really funny”

Adolescents often exert influence upon one another in peer groups, which can lead to delinquency being normalized. Ideas that are obviously deviant or delinquent are often discarded when alone, but, when in the presence of peers, these ideas can be neutralized (Sykes and Matza 1957). Jessica further explains this phenomenon in her interview:

...they want to fit in and so they don't think about consequences that they may have. They just think that oh well all of my friends are doing it um so I don't want to look like an idiot or I don't want to be the outcast, so I'll go ahead and do it as well which is uh being afraid of not doing it.

The fear of being a social outcast is more damaging than the potential costs of getting caught participating in a delinquent act. The last peer court session that I observed was the most interesting case and illustrates how a peer friendship group influences how youth think about deviant behavior. In this particular case, the youth offender, Taylor, was not thinking about the consequences prior to committing the group act and did not even see his offense as being a crime. Taylor and his friends decided to perform a popular YouTube video stunt of gallon milk containers being thrown into the air, while mimicking slipping at a grocery store. Taylor explains what happened, “Something dumb. The prank was not meant to destroy anything. Easily could have been avoided if I just thought. Now I really think through things.” A male juror later asks, “What were you thinking?” Taylor explains, “That this would be really funny. We saw the videos on YouTube, so we walked to the grocery store and just did it.” Taylor even paid for the

milk prior to throwing it up in the air, showing that when he did pre think out the offense the only consequences he foresaw was with not paying for the item. Later in the deliberation room one of the female jurors suggests that he should “limit access to the friends he was with at the store.” Her voice was quickly dismissed as many of the other jurors in the room were advocating for community service. This sanction of no association with peers is never adopted by the rest of the jurors and instead he gets 10 hours of community service, needs to attend school regularly (there was no evidence in the case to warrant this sanction) and a “why I will never reoffend” essay. The fact that these youth paid for the milk prior to carrying out the stunt really shows how thought out this crime was amongst these peers. After all, you don’t really see any youth getting arrested after performing this stunt and posting it on YouTube. Social media sites become a new way to normalize some of these delinquent acts, as well as, ways to neutralize these behaviors within peer groups.

“I guess that night I was pressured into it”

When examining the role of peer group influence on perceived rates of delinquency, the issue of peer pressure becomes a topic of concern (Giordano et al. 1986; Worthen 2012). For adolescents, peer acceptance is crucial to the maintenance of their developing identities and sometimes this acceptance overshadows the adherence to societal norms. Jessica one of the peer jurors explains,

Um well obviously many of the people, many of the teens there, they are teens, um the defendants there so they are our age and I feel that at this time in our lives we want to fit in to society um so if we see something that our friends say oh it’s alright, it’s alright to do it even if like we don’t think about what the consequence are we’re going to go ahead and do it just so that we can fit in and I think that influence can either have a good

thing or it can have a bad thing which these teens learned um obviously by coming to peer court and going through what they had to go through.

Jessica does a great job explaining the problems with peer pressure during adolescence and also illustrates the need for teens to learn from their mistakes. Since the jurors are teens themselves they often find themselves having a hard time understanding the agency behind the offense(s). Jessica further explains:

...they did the crime and they should, they should pay for it, but others I feel like they weren't trying to do anything wrong. They were just bored or they were trying to have fun. So I am kinda torn between actually being disgusted of what they are doing and sympathizing with them because they're just teens and there my age and they wanna have fun.

Teens are still learning that there are consequences to their actions and for many having fun with peers is what adolescence is all about. If their peers don't have a problem with something, then why should they? Trust and acceptance between friends is particularly important for adolescents and must be maintained for fear of being ostracized. When teens end up in trouble for their actions, they begin to learn that fun and blind acceptance can come with severe consequences.

On many occasions, I witnessed peer court jurors struggling to understand the influence of peer pressure in order to mandate sanction(s) for the offending youth. One case that illustrates this struggle was brought to peer court on a cold winter afternoon. Police found Sherri and her boyfriend in one of the closed surrounding high schools on a summer day after canines were called in to scout the area because of an alarm trigger. Sherri and her now ex-boyfriend was separated for sanctioning and only Sherri was present for peer court on this occasion. Sherri's opening statement was, "I guess that night I was pressured into it. I am a good student. B Average. I do sports: soccer and

track and field.” One of the jurors asked Sherri “Is he [ex-boyfriend] controlling?” and she replied, “To some extent.” Another female juror asked her “Are you still dating?” Sherri replied, “His mom made him break up with me.” The jurors thought back to these questions when trying to think of appropriate sanctions in the deliberation room. The conversation over punishments was as follows:

Male Juror:	“Don’t associate with boyfriend.”
Female Juror 1:	“They already broke up?”
Female Juror 2:	“Doesn’t mean they won’t see each other.”

These youth jurors are struggling with punishing just one of the offenders in a two-person crime. They are also grappling with the offender’s personal agency and how much free-will Sherri had in participating in the crime. It seems they were split upon this matter because of the sanctions they decided upon: 1 page letter of apology to the police and not to associate with the ex-boyfriend. The letter of apology allows Sherri to reflect upon her offense and to take responsibility for it, while also the youth clearly don’t trust her to disassociate with her ex-boyfriend. Later, I interviewed Jessica who was a juror on this case and she explained why she and the jury decided to add the sanction of no future association with her ex-boyfriend. She stated:

...one of the teens um one of the punishments we decided was that they couldn’t associate with their partner um who had helped out in what they had done and um previously they had said that they hadn’t kept um in contact with afterward but once we had given the punishment a lot of us had looked over cause when we were reading it out we just wanted to see what they were thinking and her and the persons eyes widened so you could automatically tell that they were still keeping in contact but it was it was a good fit because they were really, really close and if they are close even though they are they’re a bad influence on the teen who had committed the crime, so.

In this instance, Jessica and her peers used their experience as teenagers when deciding upon a sanction for this offense. They believed it possible that she was still in contact with her ex-boyfriend and that she should stay away from him. Jessica also understood how close significant others can be, especially since Sherri answered earlier during questioning that he was controlling and knew that this unhealthy behavior could lead to future offenses. These jurors placed primary blame with her ex-boyfriend for the crime and did not see the agency that Sherri had in the offense. Normative gender role expectations could be making their way back into this analysis as well. Dominant discourses about femininity point to the socialization of women's submission to men. The youth jurors could be drawing upon their own ideas about femininity construction in seeing her as weaker party in this offense, thus taking her own agency in deciding upon her relationships away by restricting her association with her ex-boyfriend.

Adolescents who were caught shoplifting and were sanctioned in peer court also tended to explain their crimes as being a product of peer pressure. One afternoon in May, Claire was attending peer court to be sanctioned for shoplifting three pairs of earrings. When the judge asked her to explain what happened she stated, "Not normally what I do. I made a mistake and caved in to my friends and I really regret it." Later during questioning one of the jurors asked her, "How did your friends pressure you?" Claire explained, "They started grabbing things and asked me if I wanted to and I caved in." Another female juror later asked her, "Do your friends have a negative effect on you?" Claire quickly replied, "Yes." Claire ended up getting the maximum four sanctions which were: restitution to the store for \$35 dollars to cover the costs of the retrieved items, a one and a half page paper about why she will never reoffend, 13 hours of

community service and a curfew of 10:00pm on school nights and 11:30 on weekends.

The youth jurors never asked her why she chose to cave in. They also didn't try to get to the heart of why Claire felt that she needed to steal these earrings in order to be accepted. She also admitted that her friends were a negative influence over her and no one bothered to ask why she remained friends with them. Claire explained that she was peer pressured so the youth jurors kept her out of social situations where she could be pressured by her friends by imposing a curfew and using her downtime more productively with community service. Limiting the hours that she could socialize is a way to informally control her behaviors. These youth jurors also found more positive ways to attach her back to the community by adding in some hours of community service. Failure by the jurors to get at the heart of why she chooses to hang around these peers could though lead to future recidivism.

“Not easy with girls”

Historically, adolescent females have significantly lower levels of reported delinquency and have often been left out of research (Chesney-Lind 1989). Bartusch and Matsueda explain this gender gap as a result of the differences in ‘reflected appraisals’ on their self-concepts (1996). As young women role take they are simultaneously thinking about how others perceive them, which allows them to modify and socially control their behaviors accordingly. Bartusch and Matsueda explain, “The content of the self—that is, the kind of object formed from the standpoint of generalized others—is critical in determining the direction that social control takes” (1996:148). Some recent research has begun to explore the association between gender roles, friendship groups and rates of delinquency (Giordano et al. 1986; Worthen 2012). One interesting area of this research

is the intensity of young adolescent women's friendship relationships and whether they contribute to delinquency. Giordano et al. further explains, "Females, regardless of their level of involvement in delinquency, are likely to be involved in more intimate relationships" (Giordano et al. 1986:1193). Since these young women are involved in these relationships are they seen as delinquent when engaging in physical fights when these "more intimate relationships" sour? If young women who engage in a physical fight are given positive social status for fighting to "defend themselves," and negative social status for being "weak" if they don't, then the ability to socially control oneself through reflected appraisals are changed. Praise instead of stigma is reflected back from their peers elevating their self-esteem. Denise further explains some of the problems that arise when past close friendships end in conflict when she states:

I feel like it always has to do with something with a boy. Because, I feel that females have- they try and make those emotional connections and then when those connections are broken there's anger there, and then whether the, in this case, the girl after um, is actually involved or just friends, I feel there's always that sense of um, (pause) what do I want to say...there's a sense of, "oh well he's not mine anymore, but, I feel like I still need to, I have this grasp on him," and, I just feel like there's always a boy in the middle of two girls' problems.

For many of these young women, friendships are being ended because of a young man, which harbors much anger. These young women feel betrayed by their ex-close friends and, because of a perceived loss of face, they may even be involved in physical and verbal altercations in order to regain their "lost" social standing. Denise further explains:

I feel that it is because (pause) in the past it's been, you had to be ladylike when you, um, had an issue with something and with the whole revolution of the idea and women, um, feeling that they and I agree women should be equal but I feel like that's when stuff starts to go awry and they need to assert their power over another girl or even another person in general.

It is interesting that Denise brings in history and a discussion about societal gender roles into her thinking about girls fighting. Many of these girls are trying to regain face and elevate their social status, as high school girl fights have become, not an act associated with delinquency but in some cases an act associated with spectacle and positive esteem.

The peer court offenders were mostly male adolescents, but when I did observe young women as offenders it was usually for fighting at school with another young woman they were once close with. One peer court session that highlights a few issues surrounding gender, reflected appraisals and delinquency happened in the winter at one of the larger participating high schools. Alex was cited with disorderly conduct after engaging in a fight at school that escalated after a twitter war and was participating in peer court in order to be sanctioned. This session was unusual in that there was only one case heard that afternoon, so the format changed and everyone present in the audience was allowed to give their input into the sanctioning for her crime. Alex and Vanessa (case explained below) were friends in junior high and then got into a verbal disagreement over a boy. Three years later they are still fighting with one another and both of them found their way into two separate peer court trials for a physical altercation during school. Denise was interviewed after being a part of the jury for Vanessa's case and she explains:

She seemed like, just every other girl that's in high school. Um, sophomore, she was (pause) and, a little bit naive; it was a boy problem, and her best friend- it seemed a lot of that, um, emotional anger, that was coming out, that was what had started it. So, I didn't get any impression that she was a "bad" kid.

Denise explains how adolescents are viewing these issues. Fighting over a significant other was seen as a "girl emotional problem." Denise further explains the differences

between adolescent male and female fights from her perspective when she states, "...I think guys still fight more. But when something like that happens it's a fight and then it's done. But I feel what when girls fight, it's a fight and then there's more; it just, it grows and it manifests into something that's not good until it's finally taken care of." Like some of the above cases it was hard for the participating youth to just focus on Alex's role in the crime. They instead kept focusing on the act as a group act and in particular a girl problem that needs further resolve. For instance, when trying to come to a consensus over sanctions the following conversation took place amongst the youth:

Bailiff:	She needs to resolve the issues.
Female Juror 1:	Been going on for three years now...not gonna stop.
Male Juror 1:	Not easy with girls.
Bailiff:	Shut up
Male Juror 2:	Maybe we sit them down and have them talk with the dean or guidance counselor? That would be number 3.

I found it very interesting that the majority of the audience present at this peer court session seemed to focus more on background and situational contexts leading up to the crime than on the actual disorderly disruption of school, which was her offense. They felt that instead of giving Alex a punishment, they should instead focus on ensuring that these two young women as peers can settle their disputes without future fighting. In fact, the judge had to amend their recommended sanction since they only wanted Alex and the other young woman to attend mediation. The judge added attendance as a juror at a future peer court trial in case the other young woman did not agree or even been sanctioned to mediation. These youth clearly understand that if this issue remains unresolved and these youth still attend the same school, altercations are going to happen again.

The other half of the above case was sanctioned in peer court a few sessions later.

Vanessa received a citation for disorderly conduct after she engaged in the fight with Alex. The judge asked Vanessa to explain what happened and she stated, “She was calling me names. She came up to me and said, “wanna fight? She pushed me and I defended myself. The teacher then pulled us apart. It was the biggest fight of the year. I was suspended for a week.” During the questioning from the jury, a male juror asks her “Any other incident before this that set you apart?” Vanessa replied, “Um well I don’t like her attitude. How she would go for every guy.” Later in the deliberation room one of the male jurors explained, “I think she should have contact [with offender] to converse and discuss.” Another juror explained, “She should write a paper on diffusing situations and find non-violent means to settle altercations.” These jurors too were focused on the situational context of the offense. After all, Vanessa in her opening sentence referred to the fight as, “the fight of the year.” Vanessa clearly sees herself as defending herself from Alex and this makes us wonder if she engaged in the altercation in order to regain social standing. The youth jurors seemed more focused on the twitter bullying and prior arguments than on the actual disorderly disruption at school and wanted to make sure that no future altercations would arise. Denise explains:

I don’t think it ends until other people-outside parties are involved because when inside parties are involved its too, um too biased, they have their friends and then friends get involved, and even though that is an outside party, I think you need someone who is not related at all to the situation to help decide...

The jurors believed that if given a chance to talk it out these two girls could put their differences aside.

The fascination with girls fighting in school perpetrated by the media could also be affecting the reflected appraisals of these young women. If they believe that they will receive more positive social status for physically fighting with their ex-friends than not doing anything at all, then of course, young teenage women will be in trouble for physical fighting and we will see higher rates of female delinquency. On one spring afternoon, a case was presented where a male adolescent was cited with the aiding and abetting of disorderly conduct. He videotaped a fight between two young women at school and uploaded the video to YouTube. On the video he stated, "It would be cool if she pulled the weave out of her head." When asked by the judge to explain what happened Jerome explained, "I have never gotten in a fight before. I didn't know them. I was trying to be funny and make a joke. I probably wouldn't have recorded the video or told my teacher if I knew I was going to be suspended." Jerome thought it would be funny to joke about girls fighting. Denise also illustrates the fascination with girl fighting when she explains:

...there's still that hint of that women should be ladylike and that they shouldn't fight and that girls (pause) that girls don't fight, and when they do it's a huge deal. With, like, whenever you'd hear I don't hear this a bunch, but when girls fight, it's 'oh man, there was this huge fight and it was between two girls' it's, it's uncommon, and so it's, it's almost, um it's a big thing when girls have a fight and when guys fight, it's 'oh did you see that fight at lunch yesterday?' It's, I mean, guy's fight, but it's unusual that girls do.

Denise highlights some of the reasons why Jerome could have rationalized videotaping the fight. In fact, throughout the entire peer court session he seemed to be confused as to why he was even in trouble for this. The judge even asked him, "What do you think you did wrong if anything?" Jerome replied, "Everyone in the lunchroom knew what was

going to happen. Once I started recording, I should have told the teacher.” Jerome still doesn’t seem to understand that what he did wrong in this instance. Later the youth jurors pick up on this when one of the female jurors explain, “I think the essay would teach him what he did wrong.” Later when the jury foreman reads the jury’s sanction she explains, “You are to write a three page essay about what you have learned and what you did wrong. It doesn’t seem like you think you did anything wrong.” Jerome was simply trying to elevate his own social status by videotaping the fight, as he himself explained that he was just trying to be funny.

These youth, both jurors and offenders, are trying to understand the social meanings behind delinquency in the midst of adolescent peer culture. For these adolescents, peer friendships and interactions are the most important in their lives and sometimes these interactions lead them down the wrong path. I believe though that these youth really understand the nature behind peer influence and how easy it is to normalize any act within a group. For many of these cases illustrated above, the youth jurors understood the importance of informal social control and tried to offer sanctions that limited the amount of unsupervised time that these offending youth could spend with their old “delinquent” peer groups. During many of these sessions, the actual offenders were not seen at fault for their actions but instead received a pass from harsh sanctions and labels because they were not the initiators of the act. It was the initiators that were seen as truly being the delinquent in the offense, and many of the youth jurors seemed frustrated that they were not the ones they were sanctioning.

Understanding the nature behind friendships and conflict is also important in understanding adolescent female delinquency. If young women today are receiving more

positive appraisals for physically fighting their friends over young, men then we will continue to see them engage in these behaviors. I wonder though if this is going to be a new dynamic that we are going to see more of as the fascination with females fighting is becoming more and more popular in the media. If these young women are perceived as weak because they aren't standing up for themselves through physical fights then these negative appraisals will affect them greatly. We need to figure out more constructive ways for these young women to handle conflict when their friendships abruptly end. It all comes down to changing the culture of the schools. As fighting becomes an offense in which you can be arrested for, more and more adolescents will find themselves making their ways into the criminal justice system to be punished for these offenses. This may illustrate a need for adolescents to be taught conflict resolution in their curriculum.

Many of the offending youth, and even some of the youth jurors, had trouble seeing the offenders acts as punishable, as many of the offending youth were simply just "trying to have fun" with their friends. The consequences to their actions were not evaluated and it's possible the sanctions for not participating with their friends would have been more severe than what they received for actually participating in the offense. Some of these offending youth felt that their social status would receive a boost after participating in the acts. When thinking about youth crime and the importance of informal social control, we also need to take into account the culture that surrounds adolescents. If some of these acts are seen as likely to incur positive appraisals, then youth will continue to engage in these acts. We really saw this highlighted with Jerome's case. He never fully understood what he did wrong and he said he was just trying to be funny when he posted the video of the two girls fighting on YouTube. Some of these acts

that these youth were punished for could definitely fall into the “hasn’t every kid done something like this” realm and they serve as reminders of how important understanding youth culture is in order to understand how best to keep youth out of trouble.

CHAPTER 5

“HE DOESN’T SEEM LIKE A BAD KID”

Efforts to decrease the long-term stigma that offending youth face during a criminal proceeding, as discussed in Chapter one, are essential to the philosophy behind peer court programs. The goal of these peer court programs is to reduce the “delinquent” labeling of teens, which could, theoretically, reduce future recidivism rates. Involving members of the community, including other teens like themselves, is believed to decrease the negative effects of stigmatic shame and promote an atmosphere of reintegrative shame. Braithwaite explains, “It is not the shame of police or judges or newspapers that is most able to get through to us; it is shame in the eyes of those we respect and trust” (1989:40). Therefore, in order for the peer court philosophy to work, the community members present during the sanctioning trial need to see the teen offender as a regular youth in need of guidance and support and then, find ways to reintegrate them into the community after the trial ends. We have already seen in chapter three and four that jury youth are trying to provide the most appropriate sanction for the offense, in the hopes of providing the informal social control needed to deter future delinquency. Therefore, in order for the jury youth’s sanctions to act as informal social control agents, the jury has the daunting task of not only asking appropriate questions to the offending youth and their parent, but they also take cues from the offender’s and their parent’s presentation of self in order to adequately provide these effective sanctions (Goffman 1959).

Shame is a tricky element and can often create more conflict if used stigmatically.

If shame is given in an atmosphere where the offender is not respected, it can have adverse effects and lead the offending youth down a long road of future crime and delinquency. Since the offending youth is entering the teen court process to be sanctioned by his or her peers they will already feel scrutinized, so they will, naturally, be carefully managing the impressions that they project to the audience and the members on the jury. After all, Goffman warned that, "...in the stigmatized arises the sense of not knowing what the others present are 'totally' thinking about him [or her]" (1963:14). Thus, offending teens are trying to sell a positive image of themselves to the youth in the juries to potentially 'save face' for their offenses. The jury youth have the task of trying to figure out what really happened during the offense and what the offending youth requires as sanctions to deter future delinquency. In order to truly promote an environment filled with respect, the peer court needs to show the offending youth that this process is intended to repair trust and give reparations for the offense in a manner that incorporates fellow peers as audience and juror participants who genuinely care for their wellbeing. The members of the jury through their questions and their sanctions also need to convey that they aren't judging the offending youth, but are instead asking these questions and determining these sanctions because they respect and care about the future wellbeing of the youth offender. In order to begin to understand the shaming process and the peer court process, we need to first see if the youth who participate in peer court as jurors are negatively labeling these teen offenders for their crimes and secondly, whether youth jurors understand the importance of sanctions that reintegrate the youth back into the community.

“He is a typical teenager! \$40.00 that’s expensive!”

The County peer court model as we will see promotes an environment that fosters a “...continuum of respect for the offender” (Braithwaite 1989). The youth in the audience and peer juries, managed to see the majority of the youth offenders as regular teenagers just like themselves. They, also, understood that these youth offenders made wrong choices, which any teenager may have done, but because they were caught they were here in order to receive appropriate sanctions. Youth on the juries also try to understand the typical teenager motives and intents behind the crimes. Jessica illustrates this when she explains, “So definitely with first timers, first time kids who do it I think they are misunderstood and that if given a chance they can do really, really good stuff for our community. Um if they try hard, they can go places and it’s just a set back because they are bored or they don’t have anything to do.” Jessica reminds us that even though they committed an offense with a little guidance they can be productive citizens. When also discussing how the peer court design promotes an atmosphere of respect between the offender and the jury, Sahra explains:

I think the person who’s um you know the person that’s being held accountable for the crime. They would be more comfortable with telling the jury what happened exactly happened since they’re you know peers, so they can understand each other, so they maybe he would trust us more than let’s say a group of adults, cause it might be scary for him to say what he did in front of a group of adults rather than you know us kids.

As Sahra explains, having fellow peers listen to the offender and his or her account of the crime is important because the youth jurors understand what it is like to be a teenager in today’s society. Youth on the juries continuously commented on how the offender didn’t seem like a “bad kid,” which sometimes caused difficulty when it came to consensus over sanctions. These cases were particularly difficult for the youth because they felt that

either, outside peer factors contributed to the offense (chapter four) or felt that these offenses were related to the awkward life stage of adolescence. Ethan's case illustrates this struggle well. Ethan was cited with trespassing and theft of services. He was caught snowboarding at a popular ski resort without paying the admittance fee. He was also asked by the resort to pay a portion (\$27.00) of the admittance fee as restitution. As soon as the judge asks Ethan to give a little information about himself and the offense, he states, "I am an honor roll student. I like to snowboard and it is a pricey sport. I don't usually get into trouble." His mom adds:

What he did was wrong. This is the first time that I heard they wanted \$27.00. He was caught right away. He is a big snowboarder and it was a great winter and he was not able to take advantage of it. The big punishment was that they kicked him out for the entire season...he has a job and is on the honor roll.

During questioning a female juror asks Ethan "What was your punishment at home?" Ethan replies as he looks at his mom, "Grounded a few weeks." Ethan's mom immediately adds, "Probably! I don't remember. He was prevented from the grounds of other ski resorts." Immediately following this dialogue, a female juror asks Ethan, "What were you thinking at the time?" Ethan replies, "I wanted to snowboard and [name of resort omitted] was \$40.00 to get in. That's pretty expensive for a small resort for a few hours." Ethan is using one of the classic techniques of neutralization: the denial of injury (Sykes and Matza 1957). Ethan in his earlier statement is justifying why he committed the offense, for him, the resort simply cost too much for an afternoon of snowboarding. Interestingly enough, the jury youth also felt that Ethan was justified for his offense. Ellen who was a juror on this case explained, "I was thinking um, like, why would you want to do this? Yes, it's expensive to go on a ski lift, but um, yeah kind of petty." In

the deliberation room while debating sanctions, one of the female jurors explained, “I don’t think he did it to hurt anyone.” A male juror quickly adds, “He is a typical teenager! \$40.00 that’s expensive.” We see here that the youth jurors also felt the resort was overpriced and, therefore, not necessarily being harmed in this offense. The jury generally felt he was sorry for his offense and had been effectively sanctioned by losing out on snowboarding that season. Ellen explains, “Uh, he did. It looked like he felt like he, um, was in the wrong and he wanted to repay. Even though, um he like regrets what he did. He feels bad about it and he wants to repay.” She also adds, “...he was like, ‘I couldn’t go for the rest of this, the, next season’ or whatever and he just really felt bad and he wanted to payback.” The youth jurors sympathized with Ethan and generally respected him. He was a typical teenager in their eyes. He was a teenager who snowboards and because of the expense associated, tried to board for free. After all, he snowboarded at this resort many times before and paid for the services, so what’s the harm in trying to board for free? Leilana was also a juror on this case and she explained in a later interview, “...I thought it was pretty common, lots of kids probably do that, but I knew that was wrong...” The jurors went very light on his sanctioning and only asked him to pay the \$27.00 and to attend a future peer court session as a juror. What is also important to notice is that the questions the youth jurors are asking the offender and his or her parent are simple questions to understand the context and intent of the crime and not questions that are judgmental. Hopefully conveying to the offender that they are accounting for their crimes in a respectful forum.

“He’s really dressed up and he does good in school”

The way in which the offender presented him or herself during the questioning portion of the session became important to the jurors later when deciding upon sanctions.

Denise explains:

I do get a certain vibe. I know that sounds really weird, but I get a certain feeling from people who come in and ...they’re dressed really nice it gives me a first impression of who they are and how they hold themselves. When kids come in, in jeans and a tee shirt, I don’t get the feeling that they actually want to be there...how they say things also weighs into the fact that it is very important how you say things, and just being honest. And I feel that some of those people aren’t honest, or they beat around the bush so they can get the lightest punishment that they can.

The offender’s impression management, in some cases sent messages to youth on the juries that the offender’s themselves could control their behaviors and that this was a one-time mistake. The jury determined that there was no need to utilize harsh sanctions in order to deter their future delinquency in these cases. Coming up with a sanction or two was increasingly hard and posed much debate in the deliberation room, simply because peer jurors are using sanctions as informal social control mechanisms. During the jury deliberation for Paul’s case, where he and his friends engaged in throwing rocks at moving vehicles (discussed earlier in Chapter 4), I observed the following dialogue take place between the jury youth in the deliberation room:

Male juror 1:	Should we keep him away from something?
Female juror 1:	Self-confidence class? Individual counseling?
Male juror 2:	Write an apology letter?
Female juror 1:	He threw a rock and it hit a window. 1-page letter of apology.
Female juror 2:	They don’t know the person.
Male juror 2:	Maybe then to the neighborhood?
Male juror 3:	This is hard. He’s not a bad kid. Maybe have him attend a future peer court.

Male juror 1: Maybe an essay- What I have learned from this experience. He's really dressed up and he does good in school.

They had previously asked the youth offender questions about his grades and his after school activities but because of the nature of the offense: peer pressure and random rock throwing at cars, found it hard to fit a sanction to the offense. As we have seen, the youth, for the most part, are looking at sanctioning as being a deterrent to future offending and in this case it seems like the offense was a result of a one-time peer pressure. We can see this by some of their suggestions during deliberation such as self-confidence class and individual counseling. One question that they asked allowed them to better understand the situation that the offender was in on that occasion. During jury questioning, one of the female jury youth asked, "What were you thinking when committing this crime?" and Paul replied, "Enough of the making fun of me." The youth on the jury were attempting to make meaning out of the situation and felt that he was bullied into throwing the rock and, therefore, it was more a lack of self-confidence than an absence of informal social control that presented the opportunity for the offense. They are, also, allowing the impression management of the offender factor into their sentencing decisions. They respected Paul because he had good grades and he was dressed formally for the sanctioning session, all of which helped to present a favorable image to the members on the jury. For these jury youth, a future offense can be deterred if the offender has more self-confidence, thus allowing him to better control his own behaviors because, after all, he was seen as another good kid.

There were also times when the offender presented himself or herself in a manner that conveyed that they indeed got caught up with peers and have fully taken

responsibility for their actions. In these cases the youth jurors used the offender's impression management to help guide their sanctions. We see this illustrated during Pablo's case. Pablo was involved with a group of teens that all decided to throw eggs from their moving vehicle at a group of younger boys on bikes. Pablo explained later in his opening statement:

...we then drove around to see if we had hit them. They started chasing us on their bikes and that's how one of them got the license plate number. We were trying to scare them. I didn't think that I was going to get in trouble. Didn't think that we were going to go down [the hill]. I was scared that we were going to get caught. I have a little brother and he looks up to me and he started crying. My teammates were even disappointed in me and thought that I had better character.

One female juror asked Pablo, "What are your grades like?" Pablo answers, "3.6 GPA."

A male juror immediately asks, "Did you have any consequences with sports?" Pablo explains, "I was hoping to make captain in football and wrestling. One of my teammates told the others and they did not vote for me and I did not get captain." When the youth jurors made their way back into the deliberation room, they drew upon this statement and his impression management skills during questioning. A female juror quickly states to the other youth, "...he's a good kid. His intentions weren't to harm them. He got caught up in the moment." When discussing the need for curfew, one of the male jurors explains, "Is there any exceptions? He gets good grades and he plays sports?" The youth on the jury are drawing upon his character and how he presented himself as accepting responsibility for the offense and already having faced some pretty large consequences found it hard to come up with sanctions. When discussing whether they should require him to write a letter of apology to the victims, one of the female jurors explains, "I don't think he should just be apologizing to the victim. There were others like his family and

team that were affected.” A male juror explains, “Don’t you think he should just apologize to his family in private? As far as the team goes, he already got demoted.” Pablo’s statement about how his younger brother reacted had impact on the jury and he was given a sanction requiring him to verbalize to his family and his teammates his regret for his actions. Above all, the youth on the jury respected Pablo, for being a good student and for being actively involved in sports. These activities helped him “save face” for his offenses. The jury youth also understood that Pablo had taken full responsibility for his offenses and believed that this was a one-time offense and not warranting sanctions that incorporated informal social control mechanisms.

“I am truly sorry for what I did”

There were times when the offending youth and his or her parent acted as a performance team (Goffman 1959). Through their accounts of the offenses, the offender and his or her accompanying parent constructed images of the offender as having fully taken responsibility for his or her offenses. In particular, these performance teams presented the offender as being honest and direct about his or her poor judgment before committing their crimes. As well as, providing the jury and the audience with a set of good qualities inherent in the teen’s character to overshadow the negative. When the offending youth and their parent presented themselves in this manner, the youth on the jury had difficulty determining an appropriate sanction for the offense. One case that illustrates this involved Joey. Joey was cited for fleeing a police officer after being caught breaking the County’s curfew. As soon as the judge asked him to explain a little about what happened that night, Joey immediately stated, “Stupid! I shouldn’t have ran and should have waited to see what he [police officer] was yelling about. It made the

punishment harder.” Joey’s dad immediately adds, “He’s a good kid. B average. He has beat himself up from it. It happened on Nov. 23rd. On thanksgiving, I announced what happened to the family and it made it hard on him.” One of the female jurors asked Joey’s dad, “What punishment did he receive?” Joey’s dad replied, “Not much. He did most of it for me. He walked in-it was great. He knew I didn’t have to say anything. No video games and no outside.” The judge then asks Joey’s dad, “How did you find out?” Joey’s dad replies, “They brought him to the house. Neighbors saw and there was a pretty good audience.” Through their answers to the jury and judge’s questions, Joey and his dad are giving off an image of Joey as being “a good kid” who because he understands his wrongs, has been responsible for his own sanctioning. The youth on the jury, struggle with what sanctions to provide the offender. A couple of the jury members throw out curfew as a possible sanction. One of the female jurors explains, “He was trying to get home. He just didn’t get there in time.” The jury youth end up giving him a curfew of 9:00 pm on school days and 10:00 pm on weekends. He also must write a 1page essay about “what he learned from this experience.” The youth on the jury through Joey and his father’s answers during questioning seemed to understand that Joey had already taken responsibility for his crimes and is genuinely a “good kid.”

Another father-son performance team is illustrated in Mike’s case, which shows that the nature and circumstance behind the crime can overshadow a team’s favorable presented image of the offender. Mike was involved with a group of boys who threw tomatoes out of a moving vehicle at passing cars. As soon as the judge asks Mike to explain to the jury a little bit about himself and what happened that night, he stated, “I am truly sorry for what I did. I have learned my lesson. I am a junior straight A student. I

like to hang out with my friends and play baseball.” The judge asks Mike’s dad to address the audience and jury about his son’s offenses. Mike’s dad explains, “Overall, Mike is a pretty good kid. He made a bad decision and we have worked through some of the consequences.” Both Mike and his dad are selling a favorable image of Mike as being a responsible teen, working through his offenses and feeling remorseful for his actions. A female juror asks Mike, “Why did you do this?” He replied, “We were bored. It was a stupid decision.” As the jury members enter the jury room, they discuss the case. One of the female jury members immediately explains, “I think maybe community service.” The majority of the youth are in agreement and he ends up getting 20 hours of community service and future participation in peer court. Even though he and his father both sold a favorable image of Mike to the audience and the jury, his offense over shadows this because he caused harm to the community. This offense was also pre-thought out and Mike was not pressured into participating, making the context of the crime different from Joey’s case. When discussing additional sanctions after deciding on community service a female juror explains, “He seemed like a nice guy. He was the only one that said he was sorry and felt bad.” A male juror follows, when he explains, “He was the most straight edge.” In this case, the youth embraced the favorable image that Mike and his dad were presenting to the court, but at the same time felt that he needed to, not only provide reparations to the community for his offense, but also be bonded to his community through participating in peer court as a juror. Mike, in the eyes of the youth jury still needed informal social control. Through the questions asked to Mike and his dad and their dialogues in the deliberation room, we continue to see that the youth jurors

are being careful not to judge the teen offenders and are carefully deciding upon the sanctions that they believe will do the most good for the offender.

“She looks sad, like she has been through a lot.”

There were times, though, when the offending youth and/or his or her parent spoiled the impression that they projected and made it difficult for the jury youth to respect the offender. Many of the youth on the juries struggled with this mismanagement of impressions when fashioning suitable sanctions. Holly was attending peer court to be sanctioned for a fight with another young woman, which took place at a local Junior High School. This fight started on Facebook after a group of girls argued over a boy and then escalated when Holly, who attends a different Junior High, showed up unannounced at the other young woman’s school. The fight took multiple school staff members to break up. After the questioning, the jury in the deliberation room begins to question Holly’s presentation of self. One male juror states, “She looks sad, like she has been through a lot.” A female juror immediately replies, “We should give her family counseling, something else is going on.” Another female juror adds, “Attend mediation?” A male juror replies, “We can’t overwhelm her.” Holly ends up garnering a long list of sanctions, which quite possibly might overwhelm her. She is to attend family counseling, attend school on a regular basis, participate as a juror in a future peer court session and disassociate herself from those involved in the fight on Facebook. We also see gender highlighted in this case. As we saw in chapter 4, girls who fight are particularly problematic for the peer jurors when deciding upon sanctions. Because Holly looked sad and withdrawn while attending peer court the jurors grasped for a sanction that could get to the underlying root of her anger- family counseling. Like many of the other girls

throughout this research who were caught fighting and came to peer court, she is to disassociate herself from those who she was fighting with on Facebook, serving as a mechanism of informal social control. In this case, the youth on the jury took nonverbal cues from Holly, while she was answering questions and these cues made their way back into the jury room.

On another occasion, Faith was attending peer court for stealing \$10.72 from a parked car. She received citations for motor vehicle tampering, theft and curfew violations. As the jury was deliberating, they commented on her lack of impression management during the questioning portion of the session. One female juror explained, “She did have an attitude. What about community service?” This statement from the female jury member is a hallmark of reintegrative shaming. The jury member realized that Faith had a bit of an attitude through verbal and nonverbal cues given off when answering questions and instead of just labeling her as delinquent, thought the best punishment would be to provide sanctions that bond her to the community. This juror saw Faith as possibly being defensive and community service could not only help her understand what she did wrong, but also show her that others cared about her wellbeing. Even though the initial offenses were theft involving one victim, this particular jury member understood the need for providing informal social controls that reintegrate the offender back into the larger community. Ultimately, the larger group did not adopt this sanction and Faith ends up with a curfew for 8:00 pm on school nights and 9:00 pm of weekends and attendance at a future peer court session as a juror. Showing again, that providing immediate informal social controls are the main way that the youth jurors are making meaning out of punishment.

“I roll my eyes”

There were times when an eye roll, while answering a question, entered the deliberation room and spoiled the offender's presentation of self. Alec was attending peer court because he was caught after curfew and upon seeing the police fled on foot until he was eventually apprehended. During questioning, one of the jury members asked Alec, “What were you grounded from?” Alec replied, “From friends. I had to stay home.” Alec's dad immediately adds, “He had to do work around the house.” Alec replied while rolling his eyes, “Lots of yard work.” In the deliberation room, the male jury foreman immediately chimes in, “What do you guys think? I thought he was a good kid?” A female juror immediately replies, “He rolled his eyes.” Another female juror adds, “I just think it was his thing. I roll my eyes. It's just what they do.” In this case, the offender, even after having his presentation of self spoiled, was argued as being just another normal teenager that rolls his eyes at having to do yard work for punishment. He ends up with a curfew for 9:00 pm on weekdays and 10:00 pm on weekends, a 1-page essay on “why he should never flee from the police,” and has to participate as a juror in a future peer court case. Here again the youth struggle with providing sanctions when faced with cases that are associated with “typical teenage behavior.” He broke the County's curfew and fled the police because he didn't want to get caught. Having one of the jury member's supporting his eye rolling helped to regain some of Alec's spoiled identity in the jury room. The youth on the jury are also teenagers, who themselves have rolled an eye or two, not to mention many of these youth could have also violated the County's curfew, all decreasing the seriousness of Alec's offense. These youth on the

juries are trying to see the offenders in a respectful light and, as in earlier chapters, are trying to match the offense to appropriate sanctions to deter future delinquency.

“I don’t have anything really to say!”

On just one occasion, I watched the youth struggle with an offender that severely spoiled his identity within the first few minutes of the sanctioning trial. His father tried to repair his son’s spoiled identity, but, for the jury youth, it was too damaged. Carter’s case was illustrated earlier in chapter 3. Carter was caught paintballing moving vehicles, while driving. The judge asked Carter to talk about himself and what happened that day. He immediately replied, “I don’t have anything to say!” Later in an interview Samantha who was a juror on this case explained:

Well I was kinda surprised how the kid just like didn’t seem like he cared at all. Like, like they’re like hey this is your chance like tell us and he was just like I have nothing to say, so I was really surprised at like he didn’t like. If if I was in that situation, I would have been like fought for myself to like make me not be not be guilty, but he just didn’t really seem to care. Like his dad obviously cared but he didn’t and I just think he was stupid in the first place. Like, I don’t know why you would try to drive a car and go around and do that, so I don’t know...

Samantha, like many of the other jurors, was having a hard time understanding if Carter understood the severity of his crime or whether he was taking any responsibility for his offenses. The youth jurors attempted to gauge this when one of the female jurors asked him, “Have you ever been paintballing before?” He replied with a large smirk on his face, “All the time.” When a female juror asked his father what he was thinking when this occurred, he replied, “He has never done anything like this before. He’s a pretty good kid, but we are here for a reason.” In the jury room, the youth see through his father’s repair tactics when a male juror explains, “I don’t think he realizes what he has done. I don’t think he is being honest.” A female juror adds, “He doesn’t feel bad.” We

begin to see that Carter really spoiled his impression by not accounting for his crime. He showed no emotion during the questioning and never took responsibility for his actions.

When asking Samantha how she derived her impression of Carter, she replied:

His body language and like the way he answered the questions like he just didn't really have that much to say. Like especially, I just can't believe when there like you can just like tell them your opinion of what happened and everything and he's like I have nothing to say. And so I just felt like he just didn't really care at all.

His body language and symbolic disregard for the peer court trial completely spoiled his identity and the youth jurors like Samantha found it really hard to respect him at all.

“It could have caused danger to the community”

Understanding the reasoning behind the punishments that teen jurors give offending youth has been essential to this research and to the overall philosophy behind peer court programs. Aside from setting new probationary curfews, sanctions such as community service and participating as a youth juror were two popular punishments given by jury teens. Braithwaite explains, “...shaming controls crime when it is at the same time powerful and bounded by ceremonies to reintegrate the offender back into the community of responsible citizens” (1989:4). While the peer court philosophy had this in mind when adding community service as a listed sanction for youth jurors, I am unsure if the youth jurors understood the reintegrative properties behind this sanction. Sahra, in particular, touched on the reintegrative properties in her interview when she explained:

Well one of the punishments was doing community service and of course he's going to...return to the community back by doing that and maybe it gives him a um like it tells him that we're we care about you, we're going to help you, you know. Us not just the adults, the children will help you, and uh make you a better person.

She was the only youth interviewed, who spoke about how community service could be more than a punishment and actually serve as a way to let the offender know that the community valued them.

Having the offending youth engage in giving back to the community was seen as important for some of the jury youth, especially, when the offenders' crimes either harmed or could have harmed the larger community. Ellen explains, "If they wronged the community, they should help payback the town by doing other things. Whether it would be clean up, or, I don't know what actual actions for the community services are..." Leilana also explains, "I think it's to teach them a lesson and maybe also change them? Who knows? Like community service helps them help other people instead of themselves." We see an example of this in the sanctioning case for Brent. Brent was another member of the tomato-throwing peer group. Each member who participated in this incident was sanctioned during different peer court sessions over a series of weeks. Brent was asked by a female juror what his punishment was at home and he explained, "I don't know the length that I was grounded. I think 2 weeks. I couldn't go anywhere far even after." Brent's dad immediately adds, "He is active in sports. He was able to do that and work, but that was it." As the jury members entered the deliberation room, a female jury member states, "I think something like community service because it could have caused danger to the community. Not sure how many hours." Brent was the driver for his friends who were caught throwing tomatoes at passing vehicles. This female juror understood that there could have been additional harm done to the community and it was fortunate they were caught before it happened. The community service debate continues:

Female Juror 1: What else are we thinking? Community service?
He does do sports and he works.

Female Juror 2: He does have weekends though to do them.
 Female Juror 3: At most 20. He does have four months to complete them.
 Male Juror 1: He plays winter sports though.
 Female Juror 1: Work and every night sports.
 Female Juror 2: Maybe 15-10 hours?
 Female Juror 3: I think 15 is doable, it's basically doing 5 hours a month.

These youth jurors took the information from the earlier questioning portion of the session and incorporated it into their decisions about suitable sanctions. In chapters three and four, we have seen additional examples of this, but what makes this unique is that community service is the sanction that they are discussing. Since the individual owners of the vehicles were unknown to the offender and the jurors, the jury believed the most suitable sanction was community service, since reparations need to be made to the larger community. These jury youth weren't, necessarily, giving Brent community service as a sanction to bond him to the community, but, instead, the community was seen as being the victim, so he has to work to earn back their trust.

We see another incidence of the youth jurors struggling with when and how to use community service in Jaden's case. Jaden and his father were illustrated in chapter 3, but he was here to be punished for throwing eggs at a group of boys riding their bikes. As the jury youth entered the deliberation room, they began to discuss community service as a sanction. The following dialogue took place between the youth:

Female Juror 1: Eggs make a mess. I think he should get community service. Someone else had to clean that up.
 Female Juror 2: I think 5 to 10 hours.
 Female Juror 3: (addressed to Attorney Frank) What are the typical hours?
 Attorney Frank: There are no typical hours. Each case is different. In all of my time doing this I have never seen an egging case.

Male Juror 1:	Do we have to pick this one?
Female Juror 2:	(addressed to Attorney Frank) Is it like picking up garbage off the side of the street or going to a place like [popular nonprofit in the area]?
Attorney Frank:	I would think it would be a liability to have juveniles on the side of the highway. If you pick this sanction, he will report to probations and they will oversee his community service.
Female Juror 3:	I suggest 10-15 hours. People were just sitting there and they got eggs thrown at them.
Female Juror 2:	I didn't write anything down and now I wish that I had but if I remember correctly the eggs didn't directly hit anyone?

None of the youth on the jury could answer female juror number 2's question.

Determining whether there was a direct victim involved became important when discussing appropriate sanctions. We see again, that while the youth jurors were debating whether to give the sanction of community service, they were viewing the sanction as simply a punishment and, not necessarily, as a way to bond him or reintegrate him back into the community. Denise explains how she views community service, "I think that well, if I were given community service, I would use it as um, reflection time. Time to help others and, I don't know exactly what is entailed in community service, but I would use it as, um, giving back to the community that I could've, that I either damaged or hurt someone in the community." As we can see here, the youth on the juries have a hard time understanding community service as a sanction and some of the reintegrative properties behind it. The youth ended up giving Jaden 10 hours of community service in addition to a number of other sanctions listed earlier in chapter 3.

"I don't feel like just because someone has a fault you should judge them"

As we have seen throughout this chapter, the impression that the offender and his or her parent gives off during the peer court session, adds to the many pieces of the

puzzle that jury youth use in order to decide upon sanctions for the offending youth. For the most part, the jury youth understood that the offenders are regular teens like themselves and state over and over again that these youth seemed like “good kids.” The offending youth were seen as typical teenagers that got caught for a behavior that maybe even some of the jury youth have participated in. Many of the youth on the juries and in the audience have been in trouble for something in their lives and simply understanding what you did wrong and taking responsibility for it makes all the difference in how others see you. The jurors generally understood this and Jessica explains:

...for me faults they're like flaws that everyone has, but at the same time they're something that you can learn from. Um everyone has a fault and I feel like even if you have one, you can use it to get better. It doesn't always have to hold you back and so um it's just something to me that I feel um it, it helps you move forward in life and um I don't know, it's just, I don't feel like just because someone has a fault you should judge them on that part.

The ability to understand that you were in the wrong and continue to grow from it was important for the jury youth. These behaviors, presented an image that the offender could successfully deter their own behaviors in the future, changing the nature behind the sanctions. All of which, help to provide the continuum of respect that is needed in order to decrease the negative effects of the shaming process.

The youth on the juries struggled with understanding the reintegrative aspect behind community service. For the most part, they even struggled with understanding what a community service sanction would look like and how it would be implemented. If the youth on the jury do not understand what this sanction is about, how can they truly understand its beneficial properties? In almost of all the cases that community service was given, the “victim” was seen as being the community. It makes sense for the youth

on the jury to assign community service as a sanction for these offenses, but many on the jury missed the important element that community service could also be a way to bond the youth to supportive community members also helping to decrease recidivism. The youth on the juries as we have continuously seen are really trying to provide the most effective sanctions for the offenses, while at the same time struggling with understanding that the offenders are “good kids” like themselves.

CHAPTER 6

“IF HE COULD SHARE HIS STORY IT WOULD DO MORE GOOD”

Peer court programs have the primary purpose of sanctioning youth offenders; but at the same time, they are also providing youth jurors and the larger youth audience members a chance to understand more about the criminal justice system and the after effects of violating norms in our society. As youth on the jury and in the audience observe the sessions, they are being shown that some “typical teenage” behaviors are punishable, which can act as possible deterrents for future behaviors. Braithwaite explains, “Shame not only specifically deters the shamed offender, it also generally deters many others who also wish to avoid shame and who participate in or become aware of the incident of shaming” (1989:81). It is thought that as the youth who attend these sessions watch a fellow peer discuss and be sanctioned for his or her crime, these youth reflect on their own behavior and come to the realization that they do not want to end up in this predicament. This filters into their experiences and allows them to better socially control their own behaviors. The most fascinating aspect behind the peer court philosophy is while the youth on the juries are focused on providing sanctions that in turn, act as informal social control agents for offending youth, they are, at the same time, being socially controlled by the peer court program. Guarino-Ghezzi and Klein explain, “A primary community-focused goal of restorative juvenile justice strategies is to create or re-create community cohesion, including informal social controls and a culture of safety

that encourages residents (victims, witnesses, offenders, and others) to participate in the justice process” (1999:195). Peer court programs are teaching important lessons on crime, punishment, responsibility and accountability to everyone who attends them. These lessons have the potential to act as general deterrents for everyone involved in the process. Understanding how youth who participate as jurors make meaning out of their peer court experiences is significantly important in understanding informal social control. Through understanding youth juror’s perspectives, we can begin to examine whether the County peer court program is in fact providing the lessons needed for non-offending youth to socially control their own behaviors and for them to act as informal social control agents in their own peer groups.

The County peer court program provided the youth in attendance with many opportunities to take with them an understanding of how teenagers, like themselves, are not immune to being punished for their actions and hence, giving them the general understanding that they need to be responsible citizens. There was one case, in particular, where the youth on the jury were so moved by the offender’s account of their crime, that they felt the best sanction for his offense would be to share his story with more youth. Griffin was caught entering a popular amusement park intoxicated while unknowingly giving the attendant his sister’s season pass. During the account of his crime, he told the jury and the audience about how he self-medicated with alcohol and about how since being caught he has come to realize that he had a problem worth getting help for. As soon as the jury youth entered the deliberation room they struggled with making meaning out of it all.

Female Juror 1: Attend counseling?

Female juror 2:	Maybe he could do community service? Maybe just like 8 hours?
Female juror 3:	I would drop the counseling and if he could share his story it would do more good.
Female Juror 1:	So what have we recommended?
Jury Foreman:	We recommend that he volunteer to share his story, what he has done and what he has learned. Speaking to the students would be good.
Female Juror 2:	Minimum of 8 hours? He has to talk in public and tell his story and answer questions.
Lawyer Frank:	I would recommend sessions and not hours.
Female Juror 4:	He should volunteer in a drug alcohol program to tell his story and the consequences, preferably a minimum of 5 sessions.

These youth seem to have been moved by the offenders' story and felt that he would do more good sharing his struggles and the lessons that he has learned with others. Griffin wasn't looked at as a "bad kid" or even a delinquent; instead he was significant enough to receive a sanction that would provide a good teaching lesson for other kids. He was responsible enough to realize that his life was crashing around him and took responsibility to change it. If other youth could understand the dangers of alcohol abuse through his story then he could successfully facilitate a dialogue that deters future delinquency. The peer court process allowed Griffin the opportunity to be reintegrated into the community while giving the youth in the audience the benefits of understanding the dangers of alcohol abuse and hopefully, future youth, who hear his story, will benefit as well.

"Never heard of getting disorderly conduct for a fight in school!"

Youth who attended the County peer court program were not only learning lessons about serious problems like addiction and self-control, but also learning lessons about how everyday "teenage behaviors" could also get them into trouble if they were violations of the law. On several occasions, I witnessed the youth in the jury room

display confusion over the presumed “seriousness” of the offense. Alex’s case was illustrated in more detail earlier in chapter 4. She was cited with disorderly conduct after engaging in a fight on school property with another young woman over a boy. The youth on the jury understood that fighting in school was not permissible, but many seemed not to know that they could be arrested for this behavior. One male juror immediately stated, “Never heard of getting disorderly conduct for a fight in school!” Having youth participate in the peer court process allows them to begin to understand that some of the less serious offenses such as egging, throwing tomatoes, and curfew violations that they see teens engage in (or possibly even engage in themselves) are punishable under the law.

The youth on the juries also had a hard time with curfew sanctions, since many of them did not know the County’s curfew times themselves. During the jury deliberation for Carter’s paintballing while driving case (illustrated in detail in chapters 3 and 5), the jurors were trying to come up with curfew times. One of the female jurors explained, “I really think a curfew of 9:00 pm on weekdays and 10:00 pm on weekends.” A male juror responded, “Isn’t that what it already is?” and the earlier female juror replies back, “No it’s midnight on weekends.” This dialogue was common in the jury room and I heard over and over again the youth jurors ask the participating attorneys to clarify the County’s curfew. The youth jurors could be confused about the specific times because the County’s curfew is split into different age categories with corresponding hourly times. Through these sessions the youth were reminded of the County’s curfew laws and also shown examples of what happens when these laws are violated.

“I was bored!”

Many of the youth on the juries also understood the key behaviors that provide the groundwork for youth to get into trouble, also serving as reminders for their own behaviors. As illustrated in chapter 3 and chapter 4, jury youth understand that lack of parental structure and negative peer influence all could contribute to youth engaging in delinquent behavior. An additional behavior that the youth jurors constantly brought up in the deliberation room was when the offenders, through his or her accounts of their offenses, claimed that they participated in the offense because they were bored. For example, one of the cases involved Ray a young male adolescent, who was caught stealing and opening a neighbor's letter from his mailbox without consent. When asked to explain his crime Ray stated, “I was bored and I went to the mailboxes.” Later in the jury room, one of the female jurors stated, “If he was bored he should have to do something after school. Maybe we could say that?” Another female juror responds, “We can do community service? He needs to be involved. He should have to write an apology letter. That would help him think through it.” Ray is sanctioned to 15 hours of community service, has to write a letter of apology to the victim, must attend school regularly and participate in an after school activity. As we see, the youth on the juries through their conversations, questions and sanctions also understood that positive influences such as after school activities, part time employment and good grades could be important elements that provide the informal social control needed in order to keep youth out of trouble. Jessica further explains why boredom and the lack of positive influences could cause delinquent behavior when she states:

...I know a lot of kids; some kids may not be into sports. I'm not. I know, I'm not um and then other than that there's electronics, but our

parents are always telling us to get out [and] get some fresh air and stuff like that. So I mean it's hard to figure out something to do when there's, when it seems like there is nothing to do in a town and so I think that just to get a thrill, to get adrenaline that's similar to something in sports or something into having fun. People, teens will commit crimes just to get the same experiences.

Jessica seems to think that when youth are inactive they will try to find ways to “have fun” and sometimes this includes breaking the law. We have seen many cases throughout this research where youth have intentionally paint-balled other cars, thrown tomatoes, rocks and eggs, robbed from cars and stores and even recreated a popular YouTube video prank, all out of boredom and the lack of having nothing really to do. Jessica also explains what she learns from these cases and how she incorporates this into her own life:

...I think I can also learn from their experience of what they went through um and see well if something like the one kid who got bored and started throwing tomatoes out of the window. I mean they're bored, I get bored too, but I don't do stuff like that. I just feel like, I can learn from what, what goes on in their mind and why they are doing this, and how they think crazy ideas to do stuff like this.

The youth on the juries and in the audience are learning from these experiences as they listen to the offenders and while also coming up with appropriate sanctions. It makes sense that youth jurors provide sanctions that restricted access to friends, set new curfews and, in some cases, force youth to get involved in an after school activity. They are drawing upon their own lives and simply provided some of the informal social controls that they felt were missing in the offender's lives. Leilana further explains why sanctions such as attending peer court as a future juror are important for offending youth when she states, “I think that maybe then he maybe gets a chance to see what others are, um doing and maybe what their punishments could be if he decided maybe he should do that, or he would want to do that.” As we have also seen from the data provided in chapter 5, jury

youth become particularly confused about sanctions, when offending youth were actively engaged in these positive social outlets, but still found themselves at peer court to be sanctioned for an offense. In some ways, this went directly against their own thinking about informal social control and they had to find what they believed to be the motive behind their offense in order to provide sanctions.

Conclusion

Erving Goffman eloquently stated,

The whole machinery of self-production is cumbersome, of course, and sometimes breaks down, exposing its separate components: back region control; team collusion; audience tact; and so forth. But, well oiled, impressions will flow from it fast enough to put us in the grips of one of our types of reality-the performance will come off and the firm self accorded each performed character will appear to emanate intrinsically from its performer (1959:253).

County Peer Court brought together youth, parents and greater members of the community for the purpose of discussing and implementing juvenile sanctions, all with the hopes of, ultimately, deterring future juvenile crime in their communities. County Peer Court provided a setting, which allowed a unique interactional drama to emerge, where youth and their parents became the focal actors and actresses. Both offending and non-offending youth and their parents had important roles to play in this interactional drama and how they presented themselves throughout the peer court sessions became significantly important for youth jurors when determining appropriate sanctions. When youth and parents managed and mis-managed their impressions, youth jury members saw some of the backstage happenings of the youth offender, allowing them a better opportunity in which to understand the nature behind the offenses. More importantly, through the duration of the peer court session's youth offenders and their parents were

allowed an opportunity to present themselves authentically and receive the help that they needed in order to assist the youth offender in refraining from offending again.

As we have seen, the youth on the jury took their roles seriously and through questioning the offending teen and his or her parent, tried to provide the best group of sanctions to, not only serve as reparations, but also, serve as future informal social control mechanisms. The youth jurors in this study understood that the life stage of adolescence was a complex time for teens and related to their stories of peer pressure, uncertainty of norms and general boredom. Unlike previous criticisms of the peer court model, which raised concerns of over stigmatization (Rasmussen 2004), the jurors in this present study saw the teen offenders as being “a good kid,” and, in a lot of ways, as being no different from themselves. This study begins to provide some of the background information called for from past scholars who have quantitatively studied the effectiveness of peer court models (Norris, Twill and Kim 2010) in that it contributes to our understandings of the workings of the peer court model by learning how youth jurors make meaning out of their experiences. While in this present study it is unknown whether teen offenders felt stigmatically shamed during the process, what though is known and has been illustrated throughout this study, is that youth jurors were not seeing the teen offenders any differently because they committed an offense. In fact, for many of the jurors, the offenses were seen as typical teenage misbehaviors that with a little parental supervision, punishment at home, or activity after school could, in the future, be deterred.

This study found that the impression management by the teen offender and his or her parent became an important tool that helped to convey the message to jurors that the

offenders were just ordinary teenagers who found themselves in a little bit of trouble, all helping to reduce the possibility of being stigmatized by the youth jurors. Lastly, we also see another important finding from this study, lessons in informal social control were not just being taught to youth offenders and their parents, but also to youth jury members and members of the audience. Youth who served on the jury were able to see the criminal justice system at work and were given the opportunity to participate in it. Sahra excitedly explains, “Well I enjoyed the fact that the community is letting us youth you know participate in this kinda stuff. It’s like they’re telling us that you know that we have the potential of doing it, that we’re responsible enough, so it boosted our self-confidence. Yeah it did for me a lot.” Most importantly, these youth both offenders and non-offenders, learn that they can act as informal social control agents for their friends and general peers, all of which help the community deter youth from future crime. Finally, this youth peer court program gives youth a voice in their communities; letting them know that they are valued and respected, which are all-important to youth and should help to keep them out of trouble.

Policy Recommendations

The County peer court program, for the most part, operated effectively. There were a few things that could be changed in order to better fit its philosophy. One of the regular attorneys at times rushed and controlled the jury deliberations. There were three times in particular, when he forced the jury youth to raise their hands and give a suggested sanction and then opened the room to an immediate vote, which stalled all of the amazing discussions (that were observed in other cases during my fieldwork) that could have taken place surrounding the reasoning behind the choice of sanction. This

specific attorney only started to do this towards the end of my fieldwork and thankfully, it was only during three of the cases that I observed. Also, to be more effective the County peer court program needs to better explain to all of the youth in attendance how the community service sanction works, so that they have a better understanding on when and how to use it. The County peer court programs needs to also incorporate more minority voices as jurors and audience members. Lastly, the County peer court program needs to find a way to incorporate more male voices, especially since the majority of the offending teens that I witnessed were male.

Future Research

This study contributes to the small amount of existing literature on peer courts, but it only focuses on how the youth jurors make meaning out of their experiences. As we have seen, it is important to really understand how the jurors are viewing the offender and whether or not a continuum of respect is facilitated during the sessions, but understanding how offending youth make meaning out of these experiences would add greatly to this study. It is my future research goal to gain approval from offenders to be interviewed on their peer court experiences. This would hopefully provide a well-rounded study on shame and the peer court process. While, I do believe that this present study fills many gaps in the literature, especially on how youth jurors understand crime, punishment and informal social control, I understand that it has the potential to be even better with the addition of the offender's voices. More qualitative research needs to be conducted during these peer court sessions in order to really understand their effects on recidivism rates. It would be interesting for researchers to follow up with the jury members and see whether or not the lessons that they learned from peer court stayed with

them throughout adolescence. Lastly, understanding the nature of female fighting in high school is an area that really needs future research. It seemed through my own research that the nature of girls and fighting is changing and in today's high schools girls are called to defend themselves as much as young men are. For these young women fighting becomes a mechanism to "save face," and derive status, as opposed to being signed out and labeled as delinquent. More research needs to be completed on this topic, since the only crimes that I witnessed female adolescents being sanctioned for during peer court was for fighting and stealing.

APPENDIX A
IRB MATERIALS

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Project Title: An Ethnographic Study of a Midwestern Based “Teen Court”

Program Researcher: *Patricia Maddox*

Faculty Sponsor: *Arthur Lurigio, PhD*

You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Patricia Maddox for a dissertation under the supervision of Arthur Lurigio in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Loyola University of Chicago.

You are being asked to participate because you are an adult associated with the County Peer Court. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to consent to participate in the study. The purpose of this research project is to explore how youth experience and perceive the teen court process as both offenders and non-offenders.

If you agree to participate, I will conduct an audio-recorded interview at your home using open-ended questions. Questions will be asked in the areas of your knowledge of peer/teen courts, roles of peer court, perceptions of effectiveness of peer court, justice in program sanctions and lastly beliefs about community reintegration for youth. Interviews will last around an hour. There are no direct benefits for your participation but there are societal benefits of this study, such as being able to better understand what youth learn from the peer court process and the ways in which it keeps youth from committing future crimes. If you begin to feel discomfort or feel as if the topic matter is too sensitive the interview will be ended early. I believe though that there are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.

The information that you share with me will be confidential. I will assign pseudonyms to all participants in the study and no identifying characteristics will be used. I am the only one who will have access to interview transcriptions and tapes. Your real name will not be used in any published reports. All interview transcriptions and audio recordings will be kept in a locked box and erased at the conclusion of the study. Written transcripts will be archived for possible future research.

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to consent to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. Choosing to not participate or withdraw participation will not affect your future relationship with the County Peer Court program.

If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to contact Patricia Maddox at (763) 221-1532 or the faculty sponsor Arthur Lurigio at (773) 508-3503. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Statement of Consent:

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

YOUTH ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Project Title: An Ethnographic Study of a Midwest Based “Teen Court” Program

Researcher: *Patricia Maddox*

Faculty Sponsor: *Arthur Lurigio, PhD*

You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Patricia Maddox for a dissertation under the supervision of Arthur Lurigio in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Loyola University of Chicago.

You are being asked to participate because you participated in a County Peer Court session. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to consent to participate in the study. The purpose of this research project is to explore how youth experience and perceive the teen court process as both offenders and non-offenders.

If you agree to participate, I will conduct an audio-recorded interview at your home using open-ended questions. Questions will be asked in the areas of your knowledge of peer/teen courts, roles of peer court, perceptions of effectiveness of peer court, justice in program sanctions and lastly beliefs about community reintegration for youth. Interviews will last around an hour. There are no direct benefits for your participation but there are societal benefits of this study, such as being able to better understand what youth learn from the peer court process and the ways in which it keeps youth from committing future crimes. If you begin to feel discomfort or feel as if the topic matter is too sensitive the interview will be ended early. I believe though that there are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.

The information that you share with me will be confidential. I will assign pseudonyms to all participants in the study and no identifying characteristics will be used. I am the only one who will have access to interview transcriptions and tapes. Your real name will not be used in any published reports. All interview transcriptions and audio recordings will be kept in a locked box and erased at the conclusion of the study. Written transcripts will be archived for possible future research.

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. Also, even though your parents have given consent you can choose to not participate or withdraw from the study at any time. Choosing to not participate or withdraw participation will not affect your future relationship with the County Peer Court program.

If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to contact Patricia Maddox at (763) 221-1532 or the faculty sponsor Arthur Lurigio at (773) 508-3503. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Statement of Assent:

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

PARENTAL CONSENT FOR YOUTH TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Project Title: An Ethnographic Study of a Midwestern based Teen Court Program

Researcher: *Patricia Maddox*

Faculty Sponsor: *Arthur Lurigio, PhD*

Your child is being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Patricia Maddox for a dissertation under the supervision of Arthur Lurigio in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Loyola University of Chicago.

Your child is being asked to participate because they were a participant in one of the County Peer Court sessions. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to consent for your child to participate in the study. The purpose of this research project is to explore how youth experience and perceive the teen court process as both offenders and non-offenders.

If you agree to allow your child to participate, I will conduct an audio-recorded interview at your home with him or her using open-ended questions. Questions will be asked in the areas of knowledge of peer/teen courts, roles of peer court, perceptions of effectiveness of peer court, justice in program sanctions and lastly beliefs about community reintegration for youth. Interviews will last around an hour. There are no direct benefits for your child's participation but there are societal benefits of this study such as being able to better understand what youth learn from the peer court process and the ways in which it keeps youth from committing future crimes. If your child were to begin to feel discomfort or feel as if the topic matter is too sensitive the interview will be ended early. I believe though that there are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research for your child beyond those experienced in everyday life.

The information that your child shares with me will be confidential. I will assign pseudonyms to all participants in the study and no identifying characteristics will be used. I am the only one who will have access to interview transcriptions and tapes. Your child's real name will not be used in any published reports. All interview transcriptions and audio recordings will be kept in a locked box and erased at the conclusion of the study. Written transcripts will be archived for possible future research.

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want your child to be in this study, you do not have to consent to their participation. Even if you decide to allow your child to participate, they are free to not answer any questions or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. Choosing to not allow your child to participate or withdrawing participation will not affect your child's future relationship with the County Peer Court program.

If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to contact Patricia Maddox at (763) 221-1532 or the faculty sponsor Arthur Lurigio at (773) 508-3503. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Statement of Consent:

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Parent Signature

Date

Youth's Printed Name

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date



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Seeking Volunteers for an Interview About Your Experience with Peer Court

Are you interested in talking about your peer court experiences? My name is Patricia Maddox and I am a doctoral student at Loyola University-Chicago. I am currently researching the Peer Court program in the County. I'm asking for volunteers who would agree to be interviewed about their recent experience with Peer Court. I will contact you to schedule an interview (should take about an hour or so). I will be asking questions about: your knowledge of peer/teen courts, roles of peer court, perceptions of effectiveness of peer court, justice in program sanctions and lastly beliefs about community reintegration for youth. Anyone under the age of 18 will need parental consent to be interviewed. The benefits of this study is to better understand what youth gain from their participation in the peer court process and the ways in which it keeps youth from committing future crimes.

If you are interested in voluntarily participating in an interview please contact me at

Pmaddox@luc.edu

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Non-offending Youth

1. Can you tell me how you came to participate in the teen court process (Background)?
 - a. How long have you been participating?
2. What is your role in the teen court process (Role)?
 - a. Do you enjoy it?
3. How do you view adolescents who find themselves as offenders in the TC process (Perceptions)?
 - a. Rumors?
 - b. Exclusion?
4. Why do you think other teens participate in TC as jurors (Perceptions)?
 - a. Gender?
4. Is the TC process fair and just for both the offender and the community (Justice)?
 - a. Do you think the punishments fit the crime?
5. How do you come to decide what punishment is right for offending teens?
 - a. Have you ever not been in agreement with your other sentencing peers?
6. What are your views on community service as a mandated sentence (Reintegration)?

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VITA

Patricia Lee Maddox earned her B.A. in Sociology in 2001 from Stetson University in Deland, Florida. She earned her M.A. in Sociology from Loyola University Chicago, Illinois in 2003 with a concentration in women and gender studies. In August of 2014, she earned her Ph.D. in Sociology from Loyola University Chicago, Illinois.