AN EXPLORATION OF HOW WOMEN PROBATION AND PAROLE OFFICERS LEARN TO NEGOTIATE POWER AND INTEREST IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

A Dissertation in
Adult Education
by
Barbara Eileen Varner

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

May 2010
The dissertation of Barbara E. Varner was reviewed and approved* by the following:

Elizabeth J. Tisdell  
Professor of Education  
Dissertation Advisor  
Chair of Committee

Irene Baird  
Affiliate Assistant Professor of Education

Heather Stuckey  
Affiliate Assistant Professor of Education

Holly Angelique  
Associate Professor of Community Psychology

Gary Kuhne  
Associate Professor of Education  
In Charge of Graduate Program in Adult Education

* Signatures are on file in Graduate School
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to explore the ways women probation and parole officers learn to negotiate power and interests in the criminal justice system. The women are considered officers of the courts and work within the constraints of the court system. The framework that informed this study was a critical feminist lens on the literature on negotiating power and interest within the fields of adult education and criminal justice. Critical feminist theory makes visible the gendered experiences of all women within patriarchal systems as they attempt to challenge systems of power.

The women in this study are situated within the constraints of the criminal justice system that is embedded within historical traditions that have been created and dominated by the system of patriarchy and other relations of power that affect human needs and interests.

This study made use of a narrative research methodology. The primary means of data collection was in-depth, semi-structured, narrative interviews with eight women probation and parole officers. Data were analyzed following the principles of narrative inquiry. The narratives provided rich, detailed stories filled with life experiences about the ways the women learned to negotiate within the criminal justice system.

A cross analysis of the narratives revealed three significant themes. The first notes how the women focused on the clients, and emphasized their caring and connectedness in negotiating for them, even though this also meant being tough when necessary. The second emphasized the importance of the community, and negotiating power and interest by networking and building relationships. The third highlights the fact that they de-emphasize gender in their focus, at the same time that they recognize patriarchal gender dynamics at play in the workplace. Thus they appear to try to reduce
the salience of gender in what they say, though it is interesting that they emphasize skills and abilities often associated with women (caring, connectedness, relationship-building as networking) in negotiating power and interest.

The conclusion examines what the study contributes to critical feminist theory, the field of adult education, and criminal justice education. It also offers suggestions for further research.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................................................... ix

PART I: CHAPTERS 1-3

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION .................................................................. 1

Background of Study .............................................................................. 3

Criminal Justice and Women Learning to Negotiate Power .............. 5

Women in Criminal Justice .............................................................. 6

Women Learning to Negotiate Power ............................................. 8

Statement of the Problem ................................................................... 9

Purpose and Research Questions ......................................................... 11

Theoretical Framework ..................................................................... 11

Methodology Overview .................................................................... 12

Significance of Study ....................................................................... 14

Assumptions ..................................................................................... 16

Limitations ....................................................................................... 17

Definitions ....................................................................................... 18

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW .................................................... 21

Introduction ..................................................................................... 21

Theoretical Framework ..................................................................... 21

Negotiating Power and Interest: A Program Planning Model ...... 22

Feminist Theory within a Criminal Justice Context ..................... 26

Critical Feminist Theory and Research ....................................... 35

Professional Women in Criminal Justice .................................... 40
Chapter 4: ELLEN ... *It just feels like home* .................................................. 79
  *Photo–bird* ................................................................. 84

Chapter 5: LEE...*Connections and communication* ................................. 96

Chapter 6: KIM...*Short term pleasures and long term consequences* ....... 104

Chapter 7: NIAYA...*I’m here to plant seeds* .............................................. 117

Chapter 8: LAKEEM...*Be prepared for all walks of life* ........................ 128

Chapter 9: ALPHA...*Many hats, many roles* ............................................... 136

Chapter 10: CHLOE...*It’s not like Groundhog Day* .............................. 143

Chapter 11: KYLIE...*Network junkie* ...................................................... 152

PART III:

CHAPTER 12 CONCLUSIONS................................................................. 164

  Emerging Themes Across Narratives ..................................................... 164
  Caring and Connectedness with Clients and Community.................. 165
    Developing long term relationships ............................................... 166
    Being tough when necessary ....................................................... 169
    Sharing accomplishments and rewarding successes ...................... 170
  Relational Modes of Negotiating Power and Interests .................. 172
    Networking ........................................................................... 173
    Building relationships with community resources ................... 174
    Communication skills ............................................................ 177
  Acknowledging Gender But Reducing Its Salience ...................... 179
    Gender dynamics with clients ............................................... 181
    Gender dynamics in the system ............................................. 182
    Gender and role models ....................................................... 184
Implications for Theory, Practice, and Future Research…………………...186

Implications for Theory……………………………………………….. 186

Implications for Adult Education Practice……………………………..192

Implications for Criminal Justice Education…………………………...194

Suggestions for Future Research……………………………………….197

Final Reflections…………………………………………………………… 198

REFERENCES…………………………………………………………………...200
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As I reach the end of this long journey, I remember the mix of anxiety and excitement that I felt at the beginning of the program. The road ahead seemed so long and at times almost impossible to finish, but here I am, near the end. I couldn’t have reached this point without the help and encouragement of many people along the way.

Thank you Libby for offering a gentle hand along the way and for never giving up on me. You have inspired me to complete this journey. You helped me look inward to find my passion and to connect my learning to life. Thank you Heather for always being available just to listen, for sharing my world of colors and helping me find my purple. And thank you Holly and Irene for serving on my committee. To Irene, I thank you for sharing your time and thoughts with me. You know the path I walk and share my desire to hear the silent voices. I thank Danielle for her kind words of encouragement and guidance, and Ed for his constant smile and assistance along the way. And, I thank Patricia for her patience and gentle words of support.

I thank my family for your constant love and support over the years. I love you all and can’t thank you enough for always being there for me. Many life events have occurred since I began this journey. I’ve experienced the birth of my third grandchild and the passing of both of my parents. Because of life events I found it necessary to step away from the program for several years eventually finding my way back. I am fortunate to consider myself part of cohort 2001 and 2004 and thank them all for sharing the experience with me.

For the women who participated in this study: Ellen, Kylie, LaKeem, Kim, Niaya, Lee, Chloe, and Alpha, I thank you for your time and for sharing your experiences. Your
compassion for your job and your willingness to go above and beyond for your clients is inspiring. My hope is that other women will read your story and decide to follow in your footsteps.
PART I
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Adult education is a multidisciplinary field. It centers on educating adults and the experiences of adult learners in many contexts, encompassing what adults learn in formal education settings, and what they learn from life and work experiences. Criminal justice is a particular area of work and learning that is interdisciplinary, drawing from sociology, psychology, law, public policy, and other related fields to help explain, control and correct criminal behavior (Senna & Siegel, 1993). Controlling and monitoring those who commit crimes is a monumental task involving law enforcement agencies, the courts, and correctional institutions. One link in the chain of crime control is the probation and parole officers who are sworn to serve at the direction of the courts. The parole/probation officer’s primary duty is to supervise adult and juvenile criminal offenders in the community and provide ongoing progress reports to the courts in regard to compliance or violations of court mandated rules and expectations. Probation and parole officers are adult learners in the sense that they are continually learning and developing as professionals in practice and they have an educational role with those they serve.

In 2004, there were approximately 93,000 probation/parole officers in the United States and the numbers are expected to greatly increase by the year 2014 (U.S. Dept of Labor, 2007). Those numbers include women who have chosen careers in the field of criminal justice, a field that has historically been dominated by men (Scarborough & Collins, 2002; Mossman, 2006; Belknap, 1996). Why do women choose the field of criminal justice and enter the world of law enforcement, law, corrections, probation and parole? One way of answering this question is to
turn the spotlight on these unique women, to see and hear them as individuals, and ask what they have learned from their experiences within the system of law enforcement.

As noted above, the field of adult education has a long history of appreciation for the life experiences of the adult learner. Within adult education the feminist lens centers on gender and focuses in particular on women’s learning and their unique experiences (Flannery & Hayes, 2001). Further, threaded throughout the wider world of feminist theory is the notion that women are multidimensional, with similarities and differences in resources and power that intersect with race, class, sexual orientation, and ability status. The critical feminist lens recognizes that women are situated within systems of power, privilege, and oppression (Chesney-Lind, 2006; Collins, 1991; Garcia, 2003; hooks, 1984, 1994; Hudson, 2006; Johnson-Bailey, 2001; Merriam, Cafferella, & Baumgartner, 2007). The focus of this study is on women who work within the criminal justice system; which has its own system of power, privilege, and oppression.

In their discussion of women working in historically male dominated careers, including criminal justice, Parsons and Jesilow (2001) note that women often face an uphill struggle, challenging misconceptions of who they should be as women, how they should act, and are constantly being measured against men. Further, other authors note that women describe feelings of exclusion, of being invisible, often overlooked for promotion or advancement (Belknap, 1996; Bender, 1988; Scarborough & Collins, 2002; Lord & Peek, 2004). My own experience as a female probation officer over the last fifteen years affirms these authors’ insights. I too have experienced times when the uphill climb seemed insurmountable, when as a woman it would have been easier to walk away. Fortunately, over the years I have learned ways of negotiating my own interests and continue to find great satisfaction in the job that I do and the people I am able to help.
However, these are my experiences as a probation officer, not necessarily the experiences of other women who have also chosen careers in criminal justice. But my own experiences and the literature on women in criminal justice made me ask the questions: What is it about law enforcement that attracts women, and how do they manage to find meaning for themselves within the constraints of male dominance? Further, how do women learn to negotiate and survive within the constraints placed upon them by a system that often oppresses and seems to attempt to silence them, systems found not only in the workplace but within society (Flannery & Hayes, 2001; Johnson-Bailey, 2001; Maher, 1987)?

This chapter provides an overview of a qualitative study that explored why women choose careers as probation and parole officers and the ways they have learned to negotiate power and interests within the criminal justice system to get things done. The chapter includes a background to the study, a purpose statement, the theoretical framework that directs the study, an overview of the research methodology, an identification of the significance of the study, and the assumptions and limitations of the study.

Background of the Study

Crime is everywhere: it is represented on T.V., in the movies and in newspaper headlines. It is present in our neighborhoods, leaving few people untouched by the images, the pain, inconvenience or cost that it can create. People who fight crime and protect the community are viewed as the front line of defense when the public feels threatened or needs assistance. What would our lives be like if we didn’t have the safety and security of knowing that when we dial 911, someone will respond to our cry for help?

When a crime has been committed and the defendant is apprehended, the wheels of justice begin to turn and the world of the criminal justice system unfolds and goes into action.
Defendants come into contact with probation/parole officers in several different ways. One way is after the court releases (paroles) the adult defendants from prison and assigns them to a parole officer. The second is when the court suspends the period of incarceration and places the defendant directly on probation supervision. The third option is when the offender is a juvenile (generally between the ages of ten and eighteen), and is assigned to a juvenile probation officer (Senna & Siegel, 1993).

Both adult and juvenile offenders are required to follow strict rules of behavior at home, work, school and community, to pay restitution to the victim and to engage in rehabilitative activities to prevent further criminal behavior such as: maintaining employment and/or attending school, community service, drug and alcohol treatment, and mental health counseling (Senna & Siegel, 1993). It is the probation/parole officer’s job to monitor and assess the defendants compliance with the court mandated rules and conditions of supervision (Petersilia, 1997).

Probation/parole officers have multiple roles to play, from arresting the offender for violating court ordered rules of behavior to the role of an advocate dealing with social systems helping the offender to become a law biding citizen (Bell, 1957). Probation and parole officers are sandwiched between the courts they serve and the communities they are charged with protecting by providing close supervision of offenders. Quite a challenge for anyone, but much more for women considering that probation and parole as well as other careers in criminal justice have been traditionally dominated by men (Chesney-Lind, 2006; Scarborough & Collins, 2002). However, as the cited authors note, women throughout the criminal justice system have learned to negotiate power and interest in order to survive.

There have been some studies of women in criminal justice in the areas of law, policing, and corrections (Martin & Jurik, 1996; Mossman, 2006; Price & Sokoloff, 2004; Williams &
Robinson, 2004). Additionally, there have been several studies focused specifically on probation/parole officers and job related stress (Norvell, Hills & Murrin, 1993; Wells & Colbert, 2006; Whitehead, 1986). However, there are no studies found that consider the personal career experiences of women probation/parole officers from their own point of view using their words to tell their story. This study was about how women probation/parole officers have learned to negotiate power and interest within the criminal justice system. Before explaining the study in depth, however, and in order to ground the study, I’ll provide a brief overview of women and criminal justice in relation to learning to deal with power relations.

Criminal Justice and Women Learning to Negotiate Power

The study of criminal justice has been defined as the use of scientific methods to understand the administration, procedures, and policies of government agencies charged with enforcing the law, adjudicating criminals, correcting criminal behavior, and analyzing how the systems are influenced by law and society (Senna & Siegel, 1993). The field of criminal justice is also involved in analyzing and processing the policies of the justice system based on theories and writings of criminologists who attempt to explain the nature and extent of criminal behavior (Menkel-Meadow & Diamond, 1991). There are numerous theories of crime that encompass social, economic, psychological, biological and personal problems. Additionally, there are ongoing questions as to the causations of crime that includes, but is not limited to: the issue of freewill, social and individual influences, gender issues, and whether crime can be controlled through the use of punishment and/or rehabilitation (Senna & Siegel, 1993).

For most citizens, the vocational choices in the field of criminal justice are not the most desirable, nor the most profitable. Professionals are exposed to violent offenders, often work for non-profit government agencies and work long hours (Parsons & Jesilow, 2001). Women
choosing careers in criminal justice not only have to deal with undesirable working conditions; many also experience feelings of being seen as less than men who dominate positions of authority and power (Daly & Chesney-Lind, 1988; Parsons & Jesilow, 2001). Descriptors used by some women in the field include feelings of being invisible, not being taken seriously, tolerated, ignored, harassed, discriminated, opinion disregarded, hurt, embarrassed, unsafe, a minority, and alone (Martin & Jurik, 1996; Smith, 1999).

Women in Criminal Justice

The number of women choosing careers in the field of criminal justice has continually increased over the last two hundred years since the onset when women were officially assigned to supervise and monitor fallen women and less fortunate sisters (Price & Sokoloff, 2004). In spite of the roadblocks and difficult working conditions that many women faced, the number of women choosing criminal justice in academia and as their career continues to increase (Parsons & Jesilow, 2001; Smith, 1999). Research suggests that women in criminal justice careers are motivated by the desire to help others, to make a difference for women (including themselves), financial security, and a lifelong interest in law enforcement (Bender, 1988; Scarborough & Collins, 2002).

One group of law enforcement officers is the police who are sworn to protect and defend. In 2000, women comprised 13% of all sworn officers in the U.S. (National Center for Women and Policing, 2001b). Women’s roles in policing have evolved from matrons to protectors and specialists working exclusively with women, children and homeless, to slow integration into the mainstream (Belknap, 1996; Miller, 1998).

In the related field of law, it was not until 1920, 51 years after women first became lawyers in the United States that women were permitted to practice law before the courts in
every state (Fineman, in Martin & Jurik, 1996). Women in law have often experienced feelings of being invisible (Belknap, 1996; Bender, 1988; Mossman, 2006) similar to women in other careers in the field of criminal justice. Women working in the male dominant, patriarchal criminal justice system still struggle to be treated as equals (Chesney-Lind, 2006; Scarborough & Collins, 2002).

Belknap (1996) provides some insight on women’s employment in the criminal justice system. She suggests that inclusion of women in a male dominated system does not simply mean allowing them to be police officers, lawyers, or correctional officers; rather it means being treated as equally under the law and within the community. Equal treatment under the law has been an issue of legislation as well as one for the women who take the oath of office as attorneys and judges. For example, the highest court in our country has seen only three women sitting on the bench making decisions for all citizens of the U.S. In 2007, Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg was quoted as saying that she and former Justice Sandra Day O’Connor (the first woman appointed to the court), may have been divided on a lot of important questions but shared the experience of growing up female and had certain sensitivities that their male colleagues lacked.

The courts have legislated laws such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that prohibits discrimination in hiring, promotion, discharge, pay, fringe benefits, job training, classification, referral, and other aspects of employment, based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin. Despite the fact that the Equal Pay Act of 1963 prohibits sex discrimination in payment of wages to women and men performing substantially equal work, many women still deal with different treatment within the criminal justice system.
Women Learning to Negotiate Power

In spite of the obstacles for women working in the criminal justice system, their presence indicates they obviously have learned to negotiate power and interest to some degree. Understanding women probation and parole officers overall experiences within the system, and how they have done so far was the focus of this study, as the literature in criminal justice does not address this. There are scholars within adult education whose work lends some insight both into how people negotiate power and interest in general (Cervero and Wilson, 1994), and those that consider how women in particular learn to negotiate power and interests (Bierma, 1997; English, 2006b). Even though Cervero and Wilson’s (1994), work is not about women in particular, it can inform this study considering that negotiating power is a social activity that occurs among people working within institutional settings. Key to the process is being able to identify the stakeholders, the people in the organization who hold a vested interest in the organization. There are many different strategies used to negotiate power, some of which are covert, such as: flying under the radar, avoiding people, or appealing to more powerful stakeholders on behalf of less powerful ones (Mabry, 2000). One important skill is being able to talk and understand the political language of all the people within the organization at both ends of the power spectrum and to be aware that inequalities exist within all relationships (Forester, 1989). These cited authors suggest that one finds ways of surviving in an organization by learning to negotiate power.

The work of several feminist scholars within adult education also lends insight to this particularly in relation to gender (English, 2006; Hayes & Flannery 2001; Johnson-Bailey, 2001; Tisdell, 1995). Hayes and Flannery (2001) and Tisdell (1995) discuss different ways that women negotiate power and interest in multiple contexts, from a theoretical perspective by drawing on
different aspects of feminist theory and relating it to adult education. Adult education within the constraints of a system of power, specifically incarcerated women in the prison system is the focus of studies by Baird (1999) and Kilgore (2001) who suggest that learning can lead to empowerment when it occurs within an environment that encourages dialogue and reflection. From a data based research perspective, Johnson-Bailey (2001) found in her narrative study of black women returning to academia that the women learned to survive within systems of power and oppression through the use of silence, negotiation of interests, or by displaying resistance. In a different context, Bierema’s (1997) found in her study of executive women’s learning and development within the context of corporate culture that even though the women felt resistance within systems of power, they learned to negotiate their interests by becoming experts and working their way into positions of power. Similarly, women in policing find ways of surviving within a male dominated system by learning to walk the walk, and talk the talk of the men (Parsons & Jesilow, 2001); others felt that they were accepted by their male colleagues after “getting into several fights to prove themselves” (p.131). While these scholars offer insight into gender in general, this study is specifically related to women’s learning in the field of probation and parole.

Statement of the Problem

In spite of the roadblocks and difficult working conditions that many women face, the number of women choosing criminal justice in academia and as their career continues to increase. Unfortunately, sexual stereotyping, even though prohibited by law, still occurs within criminal justice systems. Women in criminal justice, whether in policing, law, corrections, and probation/parole have had a difficult time assimilating into the male dominated arena. Even though women are able to do the same job as their male colleagues, they often have to deal with
preferential hiring and treatment that involves assignments to certain jobs that are considered safer for them (Lord & Peak, 2005; Parsons & Jesilow, 2001; Scarborough & Collins, 2002).

Despite different treatment women still choose careers as probation/parole officers paralleling careers in policing, law and corrections. But who are these women, and what are their experiences? There is a void in the literature about women probation/parole officers. There are some studies that look at probation/parole officers as a group, exploring role conflict, lack of adequate technology, bureaucratic constraints, job dissatisfaction, training needs, role socialization, and job burnout. However, none were directed to the experiences specifically of women negotiating power and interests (Norvell, et al., 1993; Wells & Colbert; 2006; Whitehead, 1986). How women probation/parole officers learn to negotiate and find success within the constraints of the system is a research question that needed to be considered.

Women choosing careers as probation/parole officers deal with some of the same marginalizing issues as other women in law enforcement. However, there are few studies that focus on this unique group of women who are sworn to duty as officers of the courts, balancing their professional role between enforcement and rehabilitation. The little research that exists on women probation/parole officers focuses on gender issues, about stress on probation officers questioning whether there is a gender difference between men and women probation officers (Norvell, et al., 1993; Whitehead, 1986; Wells & Colbert, 2006). The findings suggest that that there is no difference between genders in relation to job burnout, job satisfaction, and role conflict. However, Wells & Colbert (2006) suggest that women in probation experience less job-related stress than their male counterparts could be related to the supervisory and management positions that men dominate as compared to women. The findings are not surprising when considering the dominance of men in power positions throughout the criminal justice system.
Additionally, women probation officers were found to be more supportive than men of a human service, rehabilitative approach to their job. Whitehead (1986) suggests that research interest in women probation officers and parole officers is minimal compared to studies about female offenders, law enforcement, lawyers, and correction officers. Considering that Whitehead’s study was conducted over twenty years ago and that in 2004 there were over 93,000 probation/parole officers in the U.S. (Dept. of Labor Statistics, 2006) and numbers are projected to continue to increase, one would assume that more research would have been undertaken to explore the world of this unique group of people.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this narrative research study was to explore why women choose careers as probation and parole officers and how they learned to negotiate power and interest in the criminal justice system. Providing the opportunity to tell their story is important for women probation and parole officers and for the related fields of policing, law, and corrections and for the future workers sitting in the classroom.

The specific research questions that guided this narrative inquiry of these probation and parole officers include the following:

1. Why do women choose careers as probation and parole officers?

2. How do women probation/parole officers negotiate interests with and for the people who hold the power and the multiple stakeholders and further, how did they learn those skills?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that informed this study was a critical feminist lens on the literature on learning to negotiate power and interests within the field of adult education and
criminal justice. Feminism in general places women at the center of the consideration; critical feminism centers the interlocking systems of race, ethnicity, class, gender, power and sexuality and suggests that they have a profound influence on one’s construction of self (hooks, 1990; Qin, 2004). Critical feminist theory centers on a sense of agency created by challenging power relations resulting in shifting positionalities and voice based on individual experiences and socially constructed knowledge (Collins 1991; hooks 1994). Critical feminist theory challenges systems of power and strives for social justice and democracy by revealing the tensions that are created by those who oppress and the persons who are oppressed (Chesney-Lind, 2006; Collins, 1991; Garcia, 2003; hooks, 1984, 1994; Howell, et al., 2002; Hudson, 2006; Johnson-Bailey, 2001; Price & Sokoloff, 2004).

Learning how to negotiate interests within systems of power is an activity done by real people in complex organizations that are embedded with historical traditions, relationships of power, human needs and interests (Cervero & Wilson, 1994). Women probation and parole officers work within the constraints of the patriarchal court system, a system that has historically been dominated by men.

Overview of Design and Methodology

Qualitative research is based on the assumption that reality is constructed by individuals as they interact with their social world and the meaning they attribute to their experiences (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). Choosing qualitative inquiry as a methodology allows the researcher to get close enough to the people and context to glean a deep, rich, personal understanding of what is going on, to look at what actually takes place, and what people actually say based on their personal perceptions. In qualitative research human beings are the instruments of inquiry, real people living in a natural world interacting with others creating their own
meaning (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). This qualitative study used a narrative inquiry approach that attempted to hear the stories of women probation/parole officers and explored how they learned to negotiate the systems of powers within the criminal justice system. Narrative inquiry is one method of qualitative research that individualizes the subject’s experience by asking them to tell a story, allowing feelings, beliefs, and personal perceptions to emerge (Elliot, 2005; Johnson-Bailey, 2001; Riessmann, 1993). Further, by situating their stories within the context of the systems of power, the narrative method of inquiry gave special meaning to the feminine side of the human experience, to the emotional, intuition and relationships in human experiences, creating deeper understanding of one’s history and creating possibilities (Witherell & Nodding, 1991).

Given that the purpose of this study was to explore a phenomenon through the personal experiences of the persons involved, as in most forms of qualitative research, it was necessary to select a purposeful sample that will lead to a deeper, richer, understanding of a phenomenon that is unique to a particular subject matter (Patton, 2002). The participant selection for this study was limited to women probation/parole officers who have been working in the field of criminal justice for at least five years and probation and parole at least 2 years. The deliberate selection was necessary to understand the unique experiences of this group of women situated within the context of their careers as probation/parole officers.

The primary data collection method for this narrative inquiry was in-depth interviews that attempted to answer the question of the study: how do women probation/parole officers learn to negotiate power and interest in the criminal justice system. The interview questions were semi-structured, one-on-one interviews, an open ended approach that allowed the respondent to answer in their own words, to use their own terminology, to retell and reconstruct their
experiences (Patton, 2002). Employing an in-depth narrative approach to data collection required openness and trust between the participant and researcher. This approach asked the listener to hear the stories, encouraging and guiding the teller to define, retell, and relive their personal experiences by asking, “what was it like for you?” Asking the question opened the door for the receivers to share a narrative, a story from their personal experience, providing meaning and belonging to their life, creating a tapestry rich with threads of time, place, and character, attaching their history to the listener’s memories (Witherell & Noddings, 1991). Further, story telling can be an avenue for the storytellers to see themselves across different categories such as culture, gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual identity (Elliot, 2005). Importantly, for this study narrative inquiry explored the ways women probation/parole officers construct their own history and learn to negotiate the patriarchal criminal justice system. An additional source of data collection included an artifact from one of the participants.

The study used a narrative analysis method of data analysis in order to present the narratives (Riessman, 1993). An additional method of data analysis of looking for themes and commonalities was also employed to offer a summary analysis (Patton, 2002) and to provide a deeper theoretical understanding of a phenomenon (Babbie, 2001).

Significance of the Study

The study is significant on several domains: the field of adult education, criminal justice, probation and parole, and on a personal level. First, the study is significant for the field of adult education. A critical feminist theoretical framework guides the study and challenges the context of where learning takes place, whether it is within society, culture, and/or institutions and asks the question of whose interests are being served, and who holds the power to make decisions (Hart, 1992; hooks, 1994; Tisdell, 1995). It is through this lens that dominance and oppressions
are revealed and also where the challenge to the same arises, striving for democratic and equal practice for women. Centering on women in probation and parole, hearing their personal narratives about how they negotiate systems of oppression within the patriarchal court system is one avenue of challenging male-dominated status quo both inside and outside the criminal justice classroom.

For the field of criminal justice, a field that is dominated by quantitative research, using narrative qualitative inquiry creates a different approach that allows the personal experiences of a group of women probation and parole officers to be heard and validated (Norvell, et al., 1993; Wells & Colbert, 2006; Whitehead, 1986). Even though qualitative research cannot be generalized to the larger population, the study is important to the field of criminal justice, an area of study that leads to careers in policing, corrections, probation/parole, and law that have historically been considered a man’s world, unwelcoming to women (Martin & Jurik, 1996; Price & Sokoloff, 2004; Williams & Robinson, 2004). Women in criminal justice may experience feelings of lesser than, excluded or unheard compared to men who dominate positions of authority and power. Descriptors used by some women in the field include feelings of being invisible, not taken seriously, harassed, discriminated, less than, and powerless (Chesney-Lind, 2006; Price & Sokoloff, 2004; Smith, 1999). Many contemporary women look for equality within the field of criminal justice and reject the historical constraints placed on them by the patriarchal system (Belknap, 1999).

During the 1960’s, feminist criminology centered on women, girls, and issues of victimization that may lead them into criminal behavior. Historically, victimization of women and girls was being met with silence within the criminal justice system. Discrimination of women in the workplace and academia raised the concerns and attracted the attention of
feminists who called for new policies to address and guarantee change for unheard women and girls (Belknap, 1996; Chesney-Lind, 1989; Connell, 2002) Feminist criminology argue that while women throughout the world form their identities within patriarchal systems, they do so in different ways due to race, social class, power, ethnicity, sexuality and cultures (Chesney-Lind, 2006; Collins, 1991; Garcia, 2003; hooks, 1984, 1994; Hudson, 2006). Hearing the personal narratives of professional women in the field of probation and parole and hearing how they manage to negotiate the patriarchal court system will create a sense of connectedness for other women in the field as well as in related careers of policing, corrections, and law.

This study is significant to me both personally and professionally; as a probation officer and as a woman who has experienced times when my gender was at play and the job felt like an uphill struggle. This study explored whether other women probation and parole officers have similar or different experiences and if so, how have they learned to negotiate interests within the criminal justice system?

Assumptions and Limitations of the Study

There are both assumptions and limitations of any study; and this one is no exception.

Assumptions

The particular assumptions of this study include:

1. Women, individually and collectively, are subject to marginalization and exclusion within systems of power.
2. Social inequity found within systems stems from power-based relationships.
3. Women learn to negotiate power and interests within patriarchal male-dominated systems.
4. The participants in this study were women who negotiate their gender position within the context of their career as a probation/parole officers and the patriarchal court system.
5. Using narrative inquiry allowed the women’s voice and experiences to be heard and validated.

6. Women and others who have been marginalized and oppressed share a sense of understanding with each other. It is assumed that the participants were willing to express their understanding verbally.

7. There is a gender difference between men and women probation and parole officers.

**Limitations**

The study has both strengths and limitations. The particular limitations of this study include:

1. The study was limited to women probation and parole officers in the Mid-Atlantic states.
2. The study was limited to women who have worked in the field of criminal justice for at least five years and have been probation or parole officers for at least two years.
3. The study cannot be used to make generalizations about other women probation and parole officers or other women who work in the field of criminal justice.

In spite of these limitations, the study makes an important contribution to what we know about women working within the criminal justice system.

**Chapter Summary**

This first chapter outlined the background of the study that includes an overview of the theoretical framework, the purpose of the research, a statement of the problem to be explored, and the research questions that guided the study. Further, the significance of the study and a list of definitions, assumptions, and limitations are included. Chapter 2 presents a summary and analysis of the related literature. Chapter 3 specifies the explanation and rationale for the particular methodology selection that guided the research. Part II of the study includes chapters
that encompass the narratives of the eight women who participated in this study.

Part III, Chapter 12, explains the major themes and findings and offers implications for theory, practice, and future research.

**Definition of Terms**

To provide an understanding and clarity to the study, it is important to define terms relative to the criminal justice system and to adult education.

1. **Criminal Justice** is an area of knowledge devoted to controlling crime through the scientific administration of police, court, and correctional agencies. It is an inter disciplinary field making use of the knowledge bases of sociology, psychology, law, public policy, and other related fields. According to Senna and Siegel (1993), criminal justice is the scientific method of understanding the administration, procedures, and policies of government agencies charged with enforcing the law, adjudicating crime, and correcting criminal conduct. Furthermore, criminal justice involves an analysis as to how these institutions influence human behavior and how they are influenced by law and society. Additionally, the field is involved in processing the policies of the justice system based on theories and writings of criminologist who attempt to explain the nature and extent of criminal behavior. The numerous theories of crime encompass social, economic, psychological, biological and personal problems. There are ongoing questions as to the causations of crime that include but not limited to: the issue of freewill as compared to out of one’s control, social and individual influences, gender issues, and whether crime can be controlled through the use of punishment and/or rehabilitation.

2. **Feminism** is the advocacy of women’s rights on the ground of equality of the sexes. Feminism places gender at the center of the consideration and ask what it is to be a woman, what are women’s experiences, and recognizes that to be women is to be gendered; that is to be the
product of a social and cultural belief system and practice about being women, not simply biological factors (Hayes & Flannery, 2001).

3. **Critical feminism** centers on the interlocking systems of race, ethnicity, class, gender, power and sexuality striving for social justice and democracy within systems of power (hooks, 1984; Howell, et al., 2002; Qin, 2004). In this study, critical feminism relates to the women probation/parole officers who work within the constraints of the patriarchal criminal justice system.

4. **Feminist criminology** is a sociological notion of gender regimes and the production of girls’ and women’s behaviors with the assumption that society and social life are patterned on the basis of gender and that there is a gendered order where men hold more power than women (Chesney-Lind, 2006). Theories of feminist criminology center on women and girl’s marginalization and victimization and include both the criminal offenders and the workers within the field of criminal justice. Theories of feminist criminology evolved in the 1960s with the Women’s and Civil Rights Movement and the passing of the Equal Rights Amendment.

6. **Learning** is a process where behavior changes are a result of experiences, where one gains knowledge, wisdom, instruction, and information (Oxford, 1997).

7. **Negotiate** means to find a way through in order to reach an agreement with others (Oxford, 1997).

8. **Parole** is the early release of a prisoner from imprisonment subject to conditions set by a parole board and under the supervision of a parole officer.

9. **Patriarchy** is a male dominated, sex/gendered system in which men dominate women and what is considered masculine is more valued than what is considered feminine (Chesney-Lind, 2006; Senna & Segal, 1993).
10. *Probation* is a sentence entailing the conditional release of an offender into the community under supervision of the court by a probation officer subject to certain conditions for a specified time (Senna & Segal, 1993).

11. *Power* is the capacity to act within a particular social relationship (Cervero & Wilson, 1994).
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to explore how women probation and parole officers learn to negotiate power and interest within the criminal justice system. This particular chapter focuses on several bodies of literature that are relevant to this study. This literature review is divided into three major sections. To set the context of the study, I will begin by discussing the theoretical framework of the study as grounded in critical feminism in light of a brief overview of the field of criminal justice. Given that this study is about women probation and parole officers, the second section of this literature review will provide discussion of women in the criminal justice profession. Because I conducted the study partly to contribute to the knowledge base of women in the criminal justice profession, and to aid in the education of criminal justice professionals, the third part of the literature review will focus on criminal justice education as adult education.

Theoretical Framework

A Critical Feminist Theory of Criminal Justice

The theoretical framework of this study is a critical feminist lens on negotiating power and interests within the field criminal justice and adult education. As discussed in chapter one, the mission of the criminal justice system is to hold criminals accountable for their actions and to do everything possible to rectify the damage done to the victims of crime. This study is about women probation and parole officers and their experiences within the criminal justice system.

Probation and parole officers are considered agents of the courts and are assigned the duty of supervising criminal offenders, both adult and juveniles in the community with the hope of rehabilitating them to the point that they won’t re-offend in the future. The difference between probation and parole is that probation is a court ordered time of supervision prior to and in lieu of
incarceration, whereas parole is a court ordered period of supervision following release from prison (Senna & Segal, 1993). Once the defendant is court ordered to serve a period of probation or parole, it becomes the task of the officer to create an individualized contract with the defendant that specifically outlines the rules and conditions of their supervision period. Conditions may include: restitution payment, employment, schooling, drug and alcohol counseling, mental health counseling and specialized offender treatment. One of the primary tasks of an officer is to monitor the defendant to assure that they are compliant with the supervision plan and to provide status reports to the court. To that extent, the probation and parole officers, to some degree function as program planners, and do so as women in a male dominated profession. A critical feminist lens along with Cervero and Wilson’s (1994) program planning model in adult education guides the study. Thus, I will first explain Cervero and Wilson’s model and then put a feminist perspective on it particularly from a criminal justice lens. Next I will discuss feminist theory within a criminal justice context, and then explain critical feminist theory.

*Negotiating Power and Interest: A Program Planning Model*

While it might not seem that this study is about program planning, Cervero and Wilson’s (1994) program planning models informs the study, in that they discuss how planners negotiate power and interest as they plan and implement educational programs for adults. Thus, they situate planning as an activity within systems of power and interest. Cervero and Wilson (1994) identify negotiating interests as a social activity in which people negotiate personal and organizational ideas out of their own interests. Further, they suggest that power relationships exist in all human interactions and that people act based partly on their particular agenda and interests. Being able to achieve one’s goals within the constraints of particular social contexts
can influence and be influenced by a person’s sense of agency, a working knowledge of the formal and embedded rules of the games. Planning, determining, and implementing a course of action, in any situation, including the criminal justice system, is done by real people in complex organizations that are embedded with historical traditions, relationships of power, human needs and interests. Within the complex system there is a multitude of stakeholders who have some level of vested interests, some similar, others different. Key to the process of negotiating within systems of power is to be familiar with the language of the organizations, to be able to talk the talk and walk the walk (Bierema, 1997; Parsons & Jesilow, 2001).

Forester (1989) deals with power relations in program planning from a critical perspective and suggests that people design programs for people in an effort to solve problems. He argues that a planner must recognize that they do not work on a neutral stage, that program planning is a political and ideological endeavor and be able to work within the constraints of the political and social arena striving for democracy, emancipation, individual freedom and social justice. This viewpoint emphasizes a formal and informal power that exists within the political and societal structures. The inequities that are inherently present in any environment should be identified and understood by the planner. The planner should be politically attuned to the powers that be, the haves and have nots within the organizational structure. Being able to talk the political language knowing who likely has the authority, and who lacks the authority within the system gives the planner the ability to adapt their planning strategies within the power structure.

Forester (1989) directs the program planner to identify and challenge the inequities within the structural forces, the dominant ideologies and interests of social, cultural, and political institutions (Cervero & Wilson, 1994) that privilege and give voice to some as opposed to others in the planning process. Cervero and Wilson recognize that program planning takes place within
a social system that’s affected by the gender, race, class, and other power relational dynamics of the larger culture, and discuss program planning in general; they do not specifically identify women or discuss a feminist perspective.

However, there are some writers within adult education that discuss different ways that women have negotiated power and interest in multiple contexts from a conceptual perspective by drawing on different aspects of feminist theory (English, 2006a; Hayes & Flannery, 2000; Tisdell, 1995, 1998). Hayes and Flannery (2000) discuss how women come to know and learn, and offer specific suggestions for how to plan and implement programs for women learning. Tisdell (1998) highlights how a feminist pedagogy approach can attend to women’s needs in the curriculum and in the classroom, taking into account the multiple ways women construct knowledge, as well as issues of voice, authority, and the positionality of different groups of women. English (2006a) also discusses women within the context of teaching practices and suggests that where there is teaching and learning there is power and resistance. She suggests that one method of negotiating power is to openly discuss it within the context of the classroom environment, looking specifically at gender issues and seeing how learners may use silence and self-discipline as a method of control over others.

There are also feminist research studies that highlight how women negotiate power and interest, though they aren’t specifically discussed as program planning studies, though they could be situated this way. However, Bracken (in press) does discuss program planning in a feminist community-based organization and offers suggestions for practice. English (2006b) does a feminist poststructural analysis revealing how power, authority, negotiation, and conflict operate and identifies different learning strategies that women use to either comply or resist within those systems. Bierma (1997) in her study of executive women in the business world found that some
women may use silence as a method to negotiate within systems of power. The women in her study spoke of being afraid to speak up, to disagree, to question authority, fearing if they did they would be rejected in the male-dominated culture of the organization. Instead of offering open resistance, the women learned to adapt to the rules of the game and develop their skills and expertise within the constraints of the patriarchal system. Johnson-Bailey (2001), in her study of Black women returning to higher education informed by black feminist thought, also notes that sometimes women use silence along with other forms of negotiation to deal with systems of power based both on race and gender. In essence, they decided when to remain silent, and when to speak, or to use another form of resistance to deal with such structures of power.

Bracken (in press) discussed feminist program planning in the context of a Latin American organization suggesting that social change can only occur when the strategy of the planning shifts from the stakeholder’s analysis to the interests of the people. Others from the field of adult education have considered feminist theory in other contexts to plan and implement programs for women within the system of criminal justice. Baird (1999), for example, discusses feminist theory and adult education within the context of women within the prison system. Drawing on theoretical perspectives that center on issues of powerlessness, oppression, and marginalization, she suggests that women behind bars can engage in the learning process and find their own voice by reflecting on the experiences and through dialogue with other women thus liberating themselves from pathways of thinking beyond the physical bars that constrain them. Kilgore (2001) similarly explores the learning experiences of incarcerated women situating them at the lower end of the hierarchal prison system, a system intentionally designed to strip the inmates of power and human agency and one that encourages unemotional behavior, unquestioning compliance with rules and distrust among subordinates. She suggests that the
women’s experiences in prison may be a reflection of the marginalization, isolation, lack of power and trust they felt when they were outside the walls. Kilgore challenges the traditional cognitive prison educational practice suggesting that women in prison need a learning environment that encourages them to express their feeling, to develop a sense of empathy, connectedness, and group empowerment that is missing in the isolated world of the prison and perhaps their lives on the outside.

Clearly, based on these and other studies from a feminist lens within the field of adult education, there is a body of feminist work that can be conceptualized as related to program planning. However, there isn’t a specific feminist model of program planning, though Cervero and Wilson (1994) do discuss negotiating power and interest among different groups and constituents, and argue that power relationships and interests are never static and are continually shifting between people within a social context. Women probation and parole officers have somehow learned to negotiate their own interests within systems of power. Key to negotiating within systems is to identify those who have, or who lack power, and to be able to clarify the goals, values, expectations, and the interests of members within a social system. Feminist theory provides a lens that centers on the concerns of women in a larger context and on the gender dynamics that informs the experiences of the women of this study who have chosen careers as probation/parole officers.

_Feminist Theory within a Criminal Justice Context_

Within the field of criminal justice, feminist theory within the context of the feminist criminology perspective centers on three separate issues. First, there is an interest in the well-being of women offenders, prisoners, victims and survivors, and the workers in the criminal justice system. Secondly, there is a focus on gender in explaining individual and institutional
behaviors related to crime and crime control. The last issue is the understanding that in virtually
every society on the globe today, gender relations are socially constructed (not simply a natural
factor) placing women in subordinate status as compared to men (Klein, 1997). Thus to outline
the theoretical framework of this study, I begin by discussing some feminist and critical feminist
theories and then to consider how they relate to criminal justice.

An overview of feminist theory. While there are many feminist theories, feminism in
general advocates for women’s rights on the ground of equality of the sexes. It centers on women
and asks what it is to be a woman, what are women’s experiences, recognizing that to be women
is to be gendered; that is to be a product of social and cultural belief systems, not simply based
on biological factors (Flannery & Hayes, 2000). Further, feminist theory offers a framework that
allows women to think their own thoughts about oppression and offer solutions for its
elimination (Tong, 1998).

There are many theories of feminism, some that look at the individual woman within their
own world (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986). Others focus on women and or
groups of women within societal structures that silence, constrain, and marginalize such as
Marxist feminism, radical feminism, socialist feminism, or standpoint feminisms that highlight
where a particular group of women such as Black women or Latina women “stand” relative to
within the focus of the microscope centering on the individual woman or broadening to include
the world the woman/women live in, their functioning within their world, and the structural
systems that influence and define their roles.

The liberal feminist theory focuses on women within systems of oppression and
inequality. Liberal feminism gained momentum in the U.S. in the 1960’s with concerns over
inequality and lack of economic opportunities for women. Central to the women’s movement was the need to change the laws to make the workplace more equitable and to raise the consciousness of women, to open their eyes to the oppression they were under brought about by the patriarchal social structures (Tong, 1998). Feminist theory within the context of criminal justice similarly flourished in the 1960s with the Women’s and Civil Rights Movement, and the passing of the Equal Rights Amendment that guaranteed “equality under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex”.

In 1986, Belenky, et al. writings through a humanistic, psychological feminist framework, a view that sees the construction of knowledge occurring on an individual basis within the individual’s control (Merriam, Cafferella & Baumgartner, 2001 ), to “begin a story of women’s development of self, voice, and mind” (p.1). However, in 1996, Belenky, et al. heard and responded to the criticism levied against their theory as one of essentialism, a method of grouping all women under one umbrella, suggesting that all women’s unique ways of knowing and learning are based simply on being female. The criticism came from other feminists, collectively here called “critical feminists” who highlight the importance of power relations, particularly from feminists concerned with social structures of race, class, sexual orientation, as well as gender, the unheard women, who live as do all women within the structure of white male dominance (Collins, 1991; hooks 1989; Hurtado, 1996; Sheared, 1994). Hooks (1984) notes that the central tenet of modern feminist, that “all women are oppressed’ implies that all women share a common lot, that factors such as class, race, religion, and sex do not create a diversity of experience that determine the extent to which sexism will be an oppressive force in the lives of individual women (p.5).
In contrast to the individual focus, the structural feminist theory situates women within social structures and institutions that oppress, silence, constrain, and marginalize women such as Marxist feminism and radical feminism (Belknap, 1996; Collins, 1991; hooks, 1984, 1989, 1994; Tisdell, 1993, 1998). Some writers such as Tisdell (1995) suggest that socialist feminists would argue that capitalism and patriarchy are two interrelated systems that oppress women. Other writers consider structural constraints and claim that it is impossible for women (and others) to achieve true freedom in a class–based society where the wealth is produced by the powerless and controlled by the few powerful (Tong, 1998).

Postmodern and poststructural feminism situates women in relation to power and resistance to fixed categories and universal concepts and questions the existence of any one truth, including women’s oppression. Drawing from poststructuralists such as Foucault, (1980) and feminist theorists, a poststructural feminist lens that considers the interconnection of the issues of power, knowledge, and discourse, Tisdell (1998) discusses postmodern and poststructural feminist theory related to adult education. She notes four key concepts central to feminist poststructural thought: the influence of power relations; problematizing the notion of a single “truth”; the deconstruction of categories and binary opposites; the notion that identity is constantly shifting and that one’s positionality (race, gender, class) affects one’s view of the world. St Pierre (2000) similarly discusses issues of power and resistance framed in poststructural feminist theory situating women within educational settings suggesting that women can free themselves from positions of subordination by deconstructing and reconstructing their own truth through the use of language, discourse, and multiple ways of knowing and being. English (2006) similarly draws from Foucauldian poststructural theory in
her study of women in nonprofit organizations uncovering the tensions that are created by power and methods women use to resist and negotiate within systems.

Because poststructural and postmodern feminist theories emphasize the deconstruction of categories, some feminist writers are concerned that too much emphasis on deconstruction of a category such as “women” or “Black” or “Latina” that has so affected the reality of women’s lives, could lead to disempowerment. Thus, such feminists identify more as cultural feminists. A cultural feminist lens discusses power inequities within patriarchal systems and center on cultural considerations and argues that culture plays a significant role in the marginalization of women and others. Cultural feminist theory emphasizes self in-relation (Qin, 2004) and views patriarchal power as shaping the differences between men’s and women’s self; however, the cultural aspect in their theory is as essential as gender. An argument has been made that cultural feminist groups view women of one culture as collective and not individual, mirroring the problems with the feminist lens that groups all women as one, thus excluding others (Collins, 1991; hooks, 1984; Kim, 2002). From a critical feminist perspective, culture is never neutral but critical and influenced by power within the larger social structure. Further, cultural feminist claims of the gendered experience for all women have been challenged by critical feminists who argue that while women throughout the world form their identities within patriarchal systems, they do so in different ways due to race, social class, power, ethnicity, sexuality and within local cultures at particular historical moments (Chesney-Lind, 2006; Collins, 1991; Garcia, 2003; hooks, 1984, 1994; Hudson, 2006).

Feminist perspectives on criminal justice. These same feminist theories also inform the field of criminal justice. Feminist theory in criminal justice began as a concern by professional women within the field who needed a theoretical framework to help explain women and girls’
victimization and pathways into criminalized behavior. Historically, victimization of women and girls was being met with silence within the criminal justice system. Discrimination of women in the workplace and academia raised the concerns and attracted the attention of feminists who called for new policies to address and guarantee change for unheard women and girls (Chesney-Lind, 1989). Additionally, more women and girls were committing crimes and being thrown into a penal system that was lacking in theory and research specific to gendered issues. Noting that gender is such a strong predictor of offending, failing to center women’s plight and concerns made them feel invisible and unheard (Belknap, 1996).

Within the field of criminal justice feminist theory is centered within the context of power relations and marginalization paralleling the critical feminist lens (Barak, Flavin, & Leighton, 2001; Bender, 1988; Chesney-Lind, 2006; Collins, 1991; Hudson, 2006). Hudson (2006) suggests that oppression and equality are central to understanding feminist viewpoint in relation to race, gender and justice within the context of a white man’s world. Central to the theory is the voices of women on both sides of the law, the women and girls who committed crime, and the professional women who deal with similar issues of discrimination and exclusion within the patriarchal criminal justice system (Klein, 1997).

Rather than the earlier approach of crime theorization that added women and stirred (Chesney-Lind, 1989), the perimeter broadened and recognized that although society and social life are patterned on the basis of gender, there is also a gender order, that is complex and shifting and where men hold more power than women (Connell, 2002). To understand the interface between patriarchal control and criminal justice practices in the U.S., the analysis must center on the race/gender/punishment nexus (Chesney-Lind, 2006; Potter, 2006).
Burgess-Proctor (2006) emphasizes that feminist theories of crime do not refer to a unitary theory; rather there are multiple perspectives that fall under the rubric of feminism, each of which involves different assumptions about the source of gender inequality and women’s oppression (Barak, Flavin, & Leighton, 2001; Chesney-Lind, 1989; Daly & Stubbs, 2006; Price & Sokoloff, 2003). Similar to those theoretical perspectives discussed above in the overview of feminist theory section, Burgess-Proctor posits five perspectives; liberal feminism, radical feminism, Marxist feminism, socialist feminism, and postmodern feminism to help define the perimeters of feminist theory and its connection to criminal justice. Since these were discussed above, I’ll primarily discuss their relationship to criminal justice.

First, liberal feminism regards gender role socialization as the primary source of women’s oppression. Men’s social roles (e.g., competitive and aggressive) are afforded more social status and power than women’s roles (e.g., nurturing and passive). Liberal feminists emphasize political, social, legal, and economic equality between women and men. Within criminology, liberal feminists note that women offend at a lower rate than men because their social roles create fewer opportunities to engage in deviance. However, the traditional social roles assigned to men and women are no longer as clearly defined as before making this less of a deciding factor than previously assumed.

Second, radical feminism identifies patriarchy, or male dominance, as the root cause of women’s oppression. Women experience discrimination because their social relations and social interactions are shaped by male power and privilege. Within criminology, radical feminism focuses on the manifestations of patriarchy in crimes against women, such as domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment, and pornography, and identifies that women’s offending often is preceded by victimization, typically at the hands of men (Britton, 2000). However, male
dominance should not be considered the sole cause of women’s oppression and criminalization. There are other factors to consider such as a woman’s freewill to resist oppression and personal choice to engage in crime.

Third, Marxist feminism attributes women’s oppression to their subordinate class status within capitalist societies. The capitalist mode of production separates and gives favor to class and gender ultimately disadvantaging women because they occupy the working class instead of the ruling class. Within criminology, Marxist feminists theorize that women’s subordinate class status may compel them to commit crime as a means of supporting themselves economically. However, the gap between men and women’s earning and status is beginning to close making this less of a factor and only one of many issues that may lead a woman to become involved in, or resist criminal behavior.

Fourth, socialist feminism combines radical and Marxist perspectives to conclude that women’s oppression is a result of sex and class-based inequalities. Class and gender are basis for power and privilege and work together to create a structured society. Socialist feminists call for an examination of the ways in which gender relations are shaped by class and vice versa. Within criminology, socialist feminists center the cause of crime within the context of a gender and class based system of power (Britton, 2000; Chesney-Lind, 2006; Messerschmidt, 1993; Minow, 1988).

The last theory is postmodern feminism theory that departs from the other feminist perspectives by questioning the existence of any one truth, including women’s oppression. Postmodern theory rejects fixed categories and universal concepts in favor of multiple truths, and as such explores the effects of discourse and symbolic representation on claims about knowledge. Within criminology, postmodern feminists question the social construction of
concepts such as crime, justice, and deviance and challenge accepted criminological truths.

Burgess-Proctor (2006) and Potter (1988) note the addition of the black feminist and critical race feminist theory as two additional lenses that add depth and amplify the voice and experiences of black women and women of color within the field of criminal justice. The aforementioned theories of feminist criminology define the perimeters and identify some causal factors that may lead women to engage in criminal behavior. However, women do have the choice to resist oppression and to find other ways of dealing with adversity that doesn’t necessarily have to involve criminal behavior.

There are clearly overlaps to these various theoretical frameworks of feminist theory; each theory centers on women and asks, what it is to be a woman, what are women’s experiences, recognizing that to be women is to be gendered and a product of social and cultural belief systems that are affected by social structures. Some frames focus more on women’s experiences using the gendered individual as a unit of analysis whereas other frames focus more on power relations and/or social structures as the unit of analysis. Nevertheless, there doesn’t appear to be discussions of feminist theories that use community as the unit of analysis. There are studies that consider different feminist theories from community psychology (Angelique & Culley, 2000; Bond, Belenky & Weinstock, 2000; Hamby, 2000) and other fields that focus on challenging structural power relations that may have implications for community development, but the specific focus on community and feminism is somewhat elusive. Many women of color have also considered the interconnections of feminism and community (Collin, 1991; Dillard, 2000; Anzulda, 1990; Hurtado, 1996) and more often discuss collective issues and the uniqueness of their experiences that intersects gender and race. But still the notion of feminist theory in relation
to community is still undertheorized, though potentially such theorizing could have implications for the field of criminal justice.

In light of the above discussion for this particular study, a critical feminist lens which is actually a combination of these feminist perspectives that deal with power issues as opposed to those that focus more on psychological differences between men and women, offered a venue for the women probation and parole officers to help uncover the tensions that are created by working within the constraints of the patriarchal court system. Through the telling of their experiences within the system, the women were asked to consider how they had survived by learning to negotiate the systems of power and oppression. The next section will discuss the theoretical framework of this study.

*Critical Feminist Theory and Research*

While there are many types of feminism that could inform and guide this study (Belenky, et. al, 1996; Belknap, 1996; Collins, 1991; hooks, 1984, 1989, 1990; Tisdell, 1993, 1996), this study is grounded in a critical feminist lens which is a combination of those feminist perspectives that deal with power relations, including aspects of cultural feminism, Marxist and socialist feminism, and postmodern/poststructural feminisms (Howell, Carter, & Schied 2002; Price & Sokoloff, 2004). Critical feminism means working towards social justice and democracy while challenging systems of power and centers the interlocking systems of race, ethnicity, class, gender, power and sexuality and suggests that they have a profound influence on one’s construction of self (hooks, 1990; Qin, 2004; Tisdell,1993). Critical feminism attempts to make visible the gendered experiences for all women who argue that while women throughout the world form their identities within patriarchal systems, they do so in different ways due to race, social class, power, ethnicity, sexuality and within local cultures at particular historical moments.
While there are aspects of poststructural theory that inform this study, the focus isn’t so much on deconstruction of categories but rather on women in their role as probation and parole officers within the criminal justice system and to consider how they learn to negotiate interest within the system of power.

As the feminist lens broadens and blends with other critical theoretical perspectives on education, the microscope begins to focus on class and power within structural systems. Blending these theories means challenging the centrality of the male and/or white worldview and attempting to build on the elements of those that are most productive for advancing women’s interests from many cultural backgrounds (Brookfield, 2005; Collins, 1991; Kim, 2001). Drawing on hooks (1990) and Collins (1991), writings of critical feminist theory that center on a sense of agency that is created by challenging power relations, resulting in shifting positionalities and voice based on individual experiences and socially constructed knowledge. A critical feminist lens uncovers the tensions that are created by those who oppress and the persons who are oppressed who strive for social justice and democracy by challenging systems of power (Howell, et al., 2002; Price & Sokoloff, 2004).

According to Kim (2001) racial injustices can be informed by the inclusion of critical race theory within the context of critical feminism. Kim notes that critical race theory brings race and racism into play and suggests that the current cultural construction of reality must be challenged. Kim views the development of the intersectionality of different identities as essential and a means of exploring the lives of women of color. Separating race from gender or from any other part of who a woman is, in essence removes an integral part of her existence and fails to appreciate the reality of what it means to be a woman.
Critical feminist theory is oriented toward understanding the dynamics of gender relations within issues of marginalization associated with race, class, sexual orientation, language and the practice and politics of the educational systems. Hayes and Flannery (2000) examine women’s learning from a critical feminist perspective and note that women may have more power in some areas and less power in other areas all at the same time. For example, within the workplace women often experience power in positions such as health care and/or mental health counseling services. However, within their own cultural and home life, they may be more submissive and subservient to males. Hayes and Flannery also challenge the idea of generalization within adult learning and look to find better ways of understanding the uniqueness of individual learners considering the historical, societal, economic and political influences on gender, race and class experience interlocking systems of oppression.

Further, critical feminism centers the interlocking systems of race, ethnicity, class, gender, power and sexuality and suggests that they have a profound influence on one’s construction of self (hooks, 1984; Qin, 2004). From a critical feminist lens, culture is a complex combination of critical cultural elements (i.e. race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality) and shared values, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and language, that are forged, reproduced and contested within relations of power that constrain one’s self (Guy, 1999; Qin, 2004). Women in criminal justice work within systems of power and are constrained by a male dominate subculture that has traditional dictated what law enforcement persons should look and act like, situating women in a lesser than as compared to role (Scarborough & Collins, 2002). The next section will draw from a critical feminist lens and situate women within the criminal justice system.

*Critical feminist theory in criminal justice.* There are a number of writers informed by critical feminist influences in the field of criminology. Burgess-Proctor (2006) for example, is
informed by this perspective and has a multi-racial framework that recognizes intersecting inequalities, relative to gender, crime and justice and its connection to crime. She suggests that changing the system needs to start at the highest level with those who write and translate the law. In the field of law, and in discussing the development of feminist perspectives in law, Menkel-Meadow and Diamond (1991) blend a feminist and legal perspective, highlighting how women law professors and law students were questioning the silencing of women regarding women’s issues in law school curriculum and classroom. They began asking the questions typical of feminist thinkers; who was writing the research they were to embrace, why were they studying particular subjects, whose voice was speaking, and whose voice was not being heard within the context of the “mainstream white masculinistic science of law” (Menkel-Meadow, Diamond, 1991, p.233).

A critical feminist legal theory looks at the narrative in the law and the literature wanting to hear the silenced women’s voices. Women’s studies in law were an initiative organized in 1969 during a national conference to focus on the legal issues affecting women that were omitted from legal education (Frazier & Hunt, 1998). In the 1970s, law schools began to offer women in the law courses that were specific to women’s interests such as criminal law, family law and employment law. The law began to consider the role of marginalized individuals and groups in the construction of legal knowledge after being challenged with conventional lawsuits and demands for equal rights (Bender, 1988).

Furthermore, within the legal arena, there have been attempts to create balance and equality through the implementation of alternative dispute resolutions such as mediation that have resulted in more creative resolutions to legal problems (Daly & Stubbs, 2006; Frazier & Hunt, 1998). Women in law have added narrative to their field, a format that allows the
historical experiences of victims to be heard and considered within the legal arena, creating new claims and redefining of legal remedies in cases such as sexual harassment, rape, divorce and family law reform, domestic violence, reproductive rights and welfare issues (Bender, 1988). Twenty years later, women still struggle with the sameness approach to fair treatment under the law, an approach that groups women as one unit and compares them to men (Burgess-Proctor, 2006). Burgess-Proctor further argues that the dominance perspective that emphasizes power issues also groups women as one unit, failing to see the multiple dimensions of the person.

Women in law have challenged the polarized argument of one side versus the other, the either “win or lose” approach, believing it to be counter productive and doesn’t allow for a person’s story to be heard (Bender, 1988). Additionally, legal truth can be learned from many sources not just law books and rules, but also human experiences. Further, law has been challenged to include the stories of those who have been oppressed or ignored by conventional legal doctrine and reasoning (Chesney-Lind, 2006; Daly & Stubbs, 2006).

Despite the systems of oppression and marginalization, women continue to enter the fields of criminal justice (Dept. of Labor Statistics, 2006), choosing to become police officers, lawyers, judges at all levels of government, corrections officers, and probation and parole officers. These women are empowered by a changing system of community involvement that allows them to help others, or to be attorneys fighting to change laws that will treat women and minorities as equals (Daly & Stubbs, 2006; Frazier &Hunt, 1998; Meadow & Diamond, 1991) that hear the unique voices of individual women within the systems of law and law enforcement. The threads that are woven between all the systems and theory are that women want to make a difference; they desire to help others and find strength in connecting with other women. They believe they
can be a voice that speaks for change, for not only themselves but other women in the trenches (Britton, 2000; Chesney-Lind, 2006; Messerschmidt, 1993; Minow, 1988).

In conclusion, the feminist theoretical framework discussed above provides a lens that considers women as central to the discussion, from the individual woman to women as part of a system. The overview of feminist theory provided a glimpse into the framework within the criminal justice system that is central to this study. The concluding section provided a rationale for selecting a critical feminist lens to guide this study along with a discussion of some of the studies that have been done in the area of adult education. The next section will focus on professional women who have chosen careers in the field of criminal justice.

Professional Women in Criminal Justice

In this section, the microscope will focus on the fields of policing, law, and corrections, the three most popular career choices of women in the field of criminal justice (Smith, 1999). The section will conclude with an overview of the minimal amount of research on probation and parole officers, especially women officers and provide the rationale for this study.

Women in Policing

In the 1970’s, female police officers were warned that “they often may be the only women among men and thus may be pinched, patted, or played with. Therefore, they should not wear excessive makeup, suggestive clothing or use abrasive language” (Garcia, 2003, p. 334). Policewomen were not to replace men but to aid and assist them quietly and unassumingly (Garcia, 2003; Miller, 1998). Women in policing and other non traditional male roles have found themselves in a catch twenty-two situation balancing their perceived gender role with that of their professional position (Britton, 1997). According to Miller, for some women in policing, any behavior that appears tied to femininity, weakness, or subjectivity, or expressed care beyond
superficial niceties is trivialized or dismissed as too emotional for proper policing, and used as a method to exclude women (Miller, 1998). Women’s roles in policing have evolved from matrons, protectors and specialists working exclusively with women, children and homeless, to slow integration into the mainstream police force (Belknap, 1996; Miller, 1998; Scarborough & Collins, 2002).

However, with the attempt to integrate into the male dominant world of policing, women may still be met with feelings of being on the outside, not included, even invisible (Miller, 1998). Using an exclusive model, Baunach and Rafter (1982) posit four distinct problem areas for women professionals in male-dominated, crime-processing jobs. The first is protectional treatment where a woman is protected from dealing with male or female violent offenders, the alleged real world of policing. Interesting, this type of paternal protection applies predominately to white female officers, not black females. A second problem area is that token women often face higher expectations than their male colleagues and often feel the pressure to represent all women by their actions, continually having to prove that they are capable of doing the job (Norvell, Hills, & Murrin 1993; Parsons & Jesilow, 2003).

Third, women lack access to the good old boys network, the damned-if-you-do, damned-if-you-don’t dilemma of fraternizing with male colleagues. Garcia (2003) notes that if women do socialize with their male co-workers, they may be perceived as having sex with them, which often results in negative consequences for the woman, but not for the man. Another problematic area is sex stereotyping in job assignments. Women lawyers, prison workers and police officers have historically been assigned lighter, nurturing duties, such as cases involving juveniles, women and children. Excluding women from certain types of difficult and dangerous positions
allows different titles and higher pay levels for the men than women, opening the door for a subtle type of discrimination (Belknap, 1996).

The philosophy of policing has changed over the years. The new focus of policing is community policing, an ethic of care model that is a social-worker driven method of policing that emphasizes cooperation, peacemaking, empathy, informal interactions with the public, all characteristically considered a women’s policing styles (Garcia, 2003; Miller, 1998). In 2003, Sims, Scarborough, and Ahmad conducted a study of police officers in Little Rock Arkansas that examined the connection between positive attitudes and acceptance of women and values associated with the community policing model as compared to the traditional policing model. The results of the study revealed that with that particular group of officers there was an overwhelming acceptance of the community policing model.

Requiring all police officers, of any gender to take on traditional feminine characteristic on the job has raised questions about what doing gender means in the world of policing. Garcia (2003) and Miller (1998) suggest that historically all work has been gendered. In policing, a male police officer’s role was traditionally law enforcement; a woman police officer’s was one of crime prevention through moral guidance and compassion (Flynn in Rafter & Stanko, 1982). Doing gender according to Martin and Jurik (1996) is an interactive social process through which the assumptions about power, sexuality and role expectations shape reaction to men and women. Doing gender goes far beyond the social identity of being a man or a woman, but rather involves the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions, attitudes and activities appropriate to ones sexual category (Parsons & Jesilow, 2003; West & Zimmerman, 1987, p.127). Doing gender focuses on the difference of how people are treated in an organization, the privileges or lack of the same awarded to males as compared to female (Miller,
1998). To reveal the differences, one must redefine the world through the lens of the oppressed (women) Garcia (2003).

Policing and other careers in the field of criminal justice are viewed as masculine organization with the assumption that there are “socially gender perceptual interactional and micro-political activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine natures” (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p.126). Messerschmidt (1993) suggests that even when both men and women officers work together their actions remain gendered. Further, fighting crime is man’s work the “Clint Eastwood” model (p.175), where men take control and women are excluded. With team policing the male partner traditionally drives the squad car, dictates the activities and conducts interviews, whereas the female officers tend to play supportive roles, recording responses and doing paperwork (Parsons & Jesilow, 2003).

Identifying different characteristics as belonging to one gender or another often perpetuates the dominance of men and the oppression of women. The images of women in the field of criminal justice and in society at large as the weaker sex and the male as the one in charge has been perpetuated and reinforced by cultural norms and any attempt at change has been met with resistance. Doing gender, (following the socially assigned roles of one’s gender) denies individual agency to define what it means to be an equal within a social and cultural context such as policing and law (Butler, 1999). Butler argues that doing gender is an “improvisation within the context of social norms and constraint” (p.1) and is associated with maintaining the status quo. Failing to challenge the status quo means accepting ones’ positionality as defined by outside forces rather than an internal, individual awareness.

Miller (1998) suggests that policing should be transformed to honor the values of care, connection, empathy (the female voice) within the paramilitary masculine police organization.
Miller suggests that community policing needs to be integrated into the masculine world of policing, that the feminine virtues associated with women’s work need to be reconstructed and masculinized through descriptive phrases such as creating power and saving a neighborhood. However, any policy must be supported by the chief (historically male) who sits at the top of the policing hierarchy. Without this reshaping and masculinizing the position of community police officer, the neighborhood officer will continue to be seen as “the pansy police” (Miller, p.166).

Garcia (2003) notes that doing gender does not only occur within the world of policing but also in every other occupation where women are perceived as delicate, emotional supporters and nurturers. If a woman is too feminine in her professional role she is criticized for not being suitable, not tough enough for the job (Belknap, 1996). The conflict of gender roles is the result of women engaging in a traditional male occupation, the ultimate rejection of doing gender (Miller, 1998). Interesting, women in law enforcement have been found to be as capable as male officers when dealing with violent or angry members of the public (Norvell et al., 1993; Whitehead, 1986). In 2001, Parsons and Jesilow conducted a study of women in law enforcement. Their findings suggest that there needs to be changes in the male dominate image that society holds of law enforcement perpetuated by the media, a shift in the value system from overemphasis on law enforcement to one of problem solving and communication and the recruiting of persons who accept that image. However, performance measures and funding are still based on arrest statistics considered crime control, ingraining the image of warlike behaviors and compliance to that image a measure of success, demanding that women either conform or face resistance (Parsons & Jesilow, 2001; Scarborough & Collins, 2002). However, one important factor that is threaded throughout current studies is the increase in the number of women entering the field and an increase in the number of women in positions of authority (Lord & Peak, 2004).
Resistance to change was not ended simply by allowing women to be police officers, lawyers or correctional officers, it was the need to be treated equally under the law and within the community at large (Belknap, 1996). Equal treatment under the law has been an issue of legislation as well as one for the women who take the oath of office as attorneys and judges.

*Women in Law*

The highest court in our country has only seen three women sitting on the bench making decisions for all citizens of the U.S. On February 25, 2007, Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg was quoted as saying that she and former Justice Sandra Day O’Connor (the first woman appointed to the court), “may have been divided on a lot of important questions but notes that they share the experience of growing up women and had certain sensitivities that their male colleagues lacked” (Boston Globe, p.1).

Women in law have come a long way since they were barred from both law school and state bar associations in the mid-1800s. In 1869 Iowa became the first state to admit a woman to the bar (Martin & Jurik, 1996). In 1872, Myra Bradwell was denied admission by the Illinois State Supreme Court and appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court claiming her right under the Equal Protection Clause of the 4th Amendment had been violated. The Court denied her appeal stating,

“A woman has no legal existence separate from her husband; a married woman is incapable without her husband’s consent in making contracts which shall be binding on her or him. Unmarried women are exceptions to the general rule of marriage”, Bradwell vs. Illinois, 1972 (in Martin & Jurik, 1996, p 137).

It was not until 1920, 51 years after women first became lawyers in the United States that women were permitted to practice law before the courts in every state
Leading law schools, firms and law associates have been known to exclude women entirely or relegate them to subordinate roles. In many law classrooms, the female point of view was welcomed only on special ladies days or on special issues such as domestic issues or sexual relations (Rhode, 1988). Some of the resistance rested on a woman’s presumed intellectual incapacity and emotional instability and were less likely and adapt at thinking like a lawyer (Rhode). Women in law have felt different and invisible (Belknap, 1996; Bender, 1988) the same as women in other careers in the field of criminal justice. Men created the political and legal system and dominate the highest positions in the Court.

In the 1960s, a group of women in New York organized a Women in the Law conference to explore issues of special concern to women in family law, criminal law, discrimination law, reproductive rights and constitutional law (Bender, 1988). Bender, a professor of law questioned the standard reasonable man language used in a negligence law. It was originally believed that the reasonable man standard was being used as a gender neutral word. Bender challenged this language stating that man is not generic except to other men. She asks if men would regard a “prudent women” (p.22) standard as an appropriate measure for them. The legal institutions changed the language to “reasonable person” believing that somehow that neutralized and made the system politically correct (p.22). Bender suggests that change does not necessarily mean all inclusive when that measure is used by male judges, lawyers or law professors. As noted above, Menkel-Meadow and Diamond (1998) since then have discussed issues for women in the law from a critical perspective.

In the year 2001, women, for the first time comprised more than half the population of new law students; nevertheless Schafran (as cited by Price & Sokoloff, 2003) suggests the
stereotypical lawyer is still usually white and male. Attorneys who are women of color face more problems with credibility than the white women attorneys. Writing in 1998, Frazier & Hunt, suggest that when women of color appear in court for depositions, they are often assumed by judges, court personnel and other lawyers to be secretaries, clerks, court reporters, defendants, the defendant’s mother, relative or a social worker. This is likely still the case 10 years later. Even when multi-cultural women successfully establish their identity as attorneys they often find that the judges, lawyers and court personnel challenge their credibility, assume they are incompetent and treat them with disrespect (Belknap, 1996; Kane, 2004; Schafran in Price & Sokoloff, 2003). In fact, women of color encounter more than barriers of gender and race. The legal community uses the term intersectionality to describe the way that race and gender creates an identity that crosses the full spectrum of the law from victims to offenders to the women attorneys, judges and court workers (Shafran, in Price & Sokoloff, 2003).

Women in Corrections

The first woman hired as a jail matron was in 1822 and in 1832 the first woman was hired as a prison guard (Belknap, 1996). The first women working in the crime processing system were white, predominately social reformist from wealthy homes who volunteered their time to help the less fortunate women who went astray (Martin & Jurik, 1996). During the 1960s and 1970s, the Civil Rights and Women’s Movements began to sow the seeds of change for women correctional workers.

However, even with equal employment laws, many women have been denied positions in corrections noting that corrections are considered a man’s job (Belknap, 1996). Women inmates and prison matrons were often considered second class citizens in a correctional system planned around the demands of men’s prisons (Raftner, in Martin & Jurik, 1996). Women began entering
prisons as officers about the same time that prisons began hiring men of color. Like men of color, women of all race and ethnicities confronted overt and covert hostilities and exclusion from male co-workers and supervisors (Martin & Jurik, 1996). Unfortunately women correctional officers still face an uphill battle for equal treatment and are considered less qualified than men and exposed to adverse conditions (Lawrence & Mahan, 1998; Lutze & Murphy, 1999).

Hemmens, Stohr, Schoeler, and Miller (2002) discuss the hostile environment that many women correctional officers are exposed to and suggest that it will continue unless the correctional institutions actively recruit and make every effort to retain them. Belknap (1996) argues that women in corrections have faced issues of paternalistic protectionism, sexual harassment and refusal of their right to work in men’s prisons. Some women who have managed to survive and maintain professionals careers in the field of corrections identified several skills that have been effective for them; strategic planning, communication skills within all levels of authority, and decision making (Connelly et al. 2005).

*Women in Probation and Parole*

As noted in chapter one, there is relatively little literature specifically about women in probation and parole; hence the need for this study. After an exhaustive search in Proquest, National Criminal Justice Reference Center (NCJRC), Social Science abstracts and the internet, using the search words; women/female/officers/ criminal justice/ professionals/ probation/parole, what I found was numerous articles about women as victims of crime, types of offenders, prisons, prisoners, types of probation and parole, and juvenile offenders, but scare amount of data-based research specific to the experiences of women professionals in criminal justice, especially probation and parole officers. There was one interesting study of female wardens that sought to determine whether the historical inclusion of women in corrections had carried over to
the present and had retained its reformist nature and whether the job of warden had become more
gender neutral (Kim et al. 2003). The results indicate that the differences between the male and
female wardens were few and that those that did exist provided support for the caring and
retention of women’s roles in corrections as reformers. Several studies explored the issue of
stress on probation officers (Norvell, et al., 1993; Wells & Colbert; 2006; Whitehead, 1986)
questioning whether there is a gender difference between men and women probation officers.

The findings suggest that that there is no difference between genders in relation to job
burnout, job satisfaction, and role conflict, however, women in probation experienced less job
related stress than their male counterparts, noting the higher level of stress that men experience
could be related to the supervisory and management positions that men dominate as compared to
women. The findings are not surprising when considering the overwhelming number of men in
power positions throughout the criminal justice system. Considering that in 2004 there were over
93,000 probation/parole officers in the U.S. (Dept. of Labor Statistics, 2006) and numbers are
projected to continue to increase, one would assume that more research would have been
undertaken to explore the world of this unique group of people. Women who choose careers in
probation and parole are routinely required to have at least an undergraduate degree in social
work, criminal justice, or in a related field; some jobs may even require a master’s degree (Dept.
of Labor Statistics, 2006). It seems germane at this point to touch on the women who sit in the
criminal justice classrooms and to consider whether their voice is being heard within academia.
Hopefully this study will inform and provide support for women who are considering careers in
the field of criminal justice as well as women who are presently employed in the field, women
who some how have found ways to survive by negotiating power within systems of oppression.
Furthermore, this study is grounded in research from the field of adult education, a field that
strives to hear the voice and the experiences of others, in this particular study, the other is women probation and parole officers learning within patriarchal systems of oppression. The final section will briefly discuss criminal justice as adult education.

Criminal Justice Education as Adult Education

This study is grounded both in the fields of adult education and criminal justice. It assumes that criminal justice education is a form of adult education. Adult education has been defined by Knowles (1980) as the process of adults learning in myriad contexts. Merriam and Brockett (1997) define adult education as activities intentionally designed for the purpose of bringing about learning among those whose age, social role, or self perception defines them as adults. As noted above, a critical feminist perspective will guide this study situating the women probation and parole officers within systems of power, specifically the criminal justice system. This study was undertaken both to contribute to the knowledge base of women professionals in criminal justice, and also to better educate criminal justice professionals studying in higher education settings. Thus it is important here to provide a brief overview of criminal justice education, and the relationship of the study to the criminal justice education context.

Criminal Justice Education: An Overview

Criminal justice education is concerned with educating adults about the systems of law, crime control, corrections and prevention. This study is about adult women who have chosen careers in the field of criminal justice as probation and parole. Further the study considers the women to be adult learners, learning in the context of negotiating within systems of power. Learning to negotiate within systems of power is often discussed in the field of adult education; criminal justice educators to some degree are teaching students to negotiate power and interest to
advocate on behalf of their clients, and to determine the best course of action for the client as well as society as a whole. This is partly how this study connects to criminal justice.

Criminal justice education was created in the early 1900’s in the United States for the purpose of increasing efficiency of law enforcement officers by providing job skills training and to consider practical solutions of crime control (Southerland et al. 2007; Williams & Robinson, 2004). The field of study has evolved over the past hundred years from one of strictly law enforcement skills development to one that encompasses corrections, the court system, problem identification, and solutions for crime prevention and control (Williams & Robinson, 2004). However, educators in the field challenge the traditional ideologies and practice and question the hidden agenda of the criminal justice discipline suggesting that the traditional philosophy of reacting to crime rather than finding ways to prevent it is not working and may actually precipitate the cycle of criminal behavior (Cameron, 2002; Williams & Robinson, 2004).

Threaded throughout the systems of criminal justice is the concept of social justice, an approach that identifies the lesser than in society and calls for equal treatment under the law, for the victims of crime as well as the offenders. Equal treatment under the law has been an issue for women both as professional and offenders. Thus it’s importance to consider how the field of criminal justice education is addressing women’s and other minority’s issues.

**Gender and Race in Criminal Justice Education**

There is some effort to deal with issues related to gender and race in criminal justice education. To broaden the field of study to attend to these issues, Cameron (2002) suggests a pedagogical model that encourages criminal justice students to become agents of change thus creating a critical consciousness, shifting the curriculum from an individualized psychological crime control model to a preventative sociological model that addresses the root precipitators of
crime such as poverty and lack of resources for the disenfranchised. Sims (2006), a criminal justice educator brings sociological issues into the classroom by encouraging her students to perform community services hours for non profit organizations, to interact with the people who are caught within the systems of criminal justice and society; the homeless, victims of domestic violence, abuse and neglect and the prison system. Flavin (2001) challenges the traditional criminal justice curriculum suggesting that the traditional text pays minimal attention to women and fails to consider the importance of gender and feminisms’ contribution to the field arguing that when women and marginalized groups are ignored, devalued, or misrepresented the field suffers as well as society at large. Canon and Dirks-Linhorst (2006) similarly challenge the traditional criminal justice text suggesting that an inclusive curriculum that brings awareness to marginalizing issues such as race, gender, and sexual identity could reduce potential bias for the student in the classroom and in their careers as the law enforcement professionals within the community. Other scholars challenge the system of criminal justice education in relation to race suggesting that the discipline excludes writings of renowned African Americans scholars such as W.E.B. Dubois, a major contributors to sociology and criminal justice/criminology, rather the field grounds theory and policy within the writings of white men (Gabbidon, 1996). Gabbidon suggests that to be more inclusive of all minorities the criminal justice curriculum should include multicultural readings within the traditional offerings, to bring them together rather than separate from the traditional teachings. Considering race a marginalizing factor within criminal justice education Gabbidon (2002) conducted a study to examine the role that race and course content play in the teaching evaluation scores of a black criminologist currently teaching at a predominately white institution. Writing as a Black criminologist and educator, he compared his teaching evaluation scores from similar courses taught both at a predominantly white university
and a historically black institution. The findings of the study suggest that while race may play a role in the evaluation process, the nature of the course may offer a stronger explanation of lower scores on a race related criminal justice course than other criminal justice courses.

Others have focused on women as minorities in the field of criminal justice considering the criminal justice curriculum and its inclusion or exclusion of courses specific to women’s issues. Fox (in Smith, 1999) argues that offering gender specific courses in the criminal justice curriculum and including scholarly writings of women in the field will be one method of creating inclusion and diversity in what has historically been a white man’s field.

Smith (1999) conducted a study to explore the status of women specific courses within criminal justice baccalaureate curriculums. The findings suggested that specific courses on women were absent from more than half of the criminal justice and criminology programs in the U.S. Almost half of the programs did not offer women in criminal justice course due to a shortage of faculty members with expertise in the subject area. Others said their program was too small to include such a course. Of the courses taught, Fox (in Smith, 1999) attributes the emergence of courses on women and criminal justice to the number of women earning doctorates in the social sciences who are qualified to teach the courses. The gender specific courses offered were generally taught by women and attracted large numbers of women students. Fox suggests that offering gender specific courses may be one way to legitimize women in criminal justice and help to remove the “chill” for women students in the classroom creating a more welcoming environment for women.

It is important to note that Smith’s (1999) study is nearly ten years old; one could assume that the findings may not be totally reflective of the current status of women’s courses in criminal justice given the greater attention to these issues in more recent years. Canon and Dirks-
Lindhorst (2006) study adds some insight here. They conducted a study of criminal justice
courses identified in the American Society of Criminology listings to determine the number of
criminal justice undergraduate degree courses that include gay and lesbian issues comparing
them to the offerings specific to race and gender. A total of 188 out of 490 programs responded
to the survey. The findings showed that in criminal justice departments 60 (69.8%) offered
women’s courses and 22 (32.8%) were offered in non-criminal justice curriculums such as
women’s studies and sociology. Interesting, only 14 (16.3%) of the criminal justice departments
reported formal discussion of gay and lesbian issues in required criminal justice courses and 15
(22.4%) in the non-criminal justice departments. However, 98 (52.1%) of criminal justice
women's courses include this content, suggesting that gay and lesbian issues may be considered
closer in nature to women's issues when related to the criminal justice system (Canon & Dirks-
Lindhorst). The study suggests that there is perhaps more attention to gender issues than in the
late 1990’s, but limited attention to issues related to sexual orientation.

**Pedagogical Issues in Criminal Justice Education**

There is a scattering of literature within criminal justice that considers pedagogical issues
and alternative methods of teaching and learning strategies that may create more inclusive and
diversified learning within the core curriculum (Birzer, 2004; Ferguson & Musheno, 2000;
justice could be informed by adult educations’ learning theory of andragogy, an approach that
could foster a more effective teaching-learning interaction and one that will encourage
competencies that are desirable in criminal justice professionals; problem solving strategies,
critical thinking and reflective learning.
Criminal justice education could also be informed and more inclusive of women and people of color if it took clues from theories of feminist pedagogy that center on issues of marginalization within systems of power such as hooks (1994) who views oppression as the absence of choices, and suggests a model of engaged pedagogy that incorporates aspects of feminist pedagogy and critical pedagogy that attempts to engage learners not only with content but with each other in a way that helps them get at issues of authority and positionality. Similar thoughts are found within feminist theory in criminal justice that considers society and social life as patterned on the basis of gender, having a gendered order where men hold more power than women (Connell, 2002) and where what men do is considered the preferred model of behavior as compared to women (Scarborough & Collins, 2002).

Other educators in criminal justice noting inclusive gaps in the curriculum of issues of gender, race, class, and sexual identity and offer curricular solutions and some pedagogical guidance to rectify the problem (Canon, Dirks-Lindhorst, 2006; Gabbidon, 1996; Lewis-Home, 2004; Williams, 2004). Educators such as Nielson and Stambaugh (1998) situate diversity learning within the structure of core courses using a multicultural pedagogy to engage and develop dialogue between the students and educators, to think out of the box, to use their lived experiences as foundations for learning, to see themselves across categories (hooks, 1994) not only as students but as members of society and as future criminal justice professionals.

Nickoli and Hendricks (2003) suggest pop culture could enhance learning and stimulate critical thinking by taking forms of entertainment that the students are already familiar with and using them to explore the distortions, misinformation and stereotyping of people within law enforcement, images that students will encounter in their future careers. Ferguson and Musheno (2000) similarly use an alternative teaching strategy of narrative writing within the criminal
justice core curriculum encouraging their students to think in different ways. Choosing different roles on both sides of the law and considering how media defines those positions within society, the students begin by using narrative writing to create imaginary stories about their interactions with each other, then switching roles they have the opportunity to view their experience from a different point of view and level of perceived or experienced power and authority.

Other educators (Cannon & Dirks-Linhorst, 2006; Lewis-Homes, 2004; Williams, 2004) suggest that courses that center on issues of gender, race, and sexual identity within criminal justice could reach a broader population if they were cross listed in related fields such as sociology, women’s studies or Queer Theory curriculums. Lewis-Homes (2004) centers her course on the role of gender within society in relation to criminality and social response to crime. She places emphasis on feminist analysis that considers social relationships as defined by gendered hierarchies challenging her students to consider cultural diversity in light of their own positionality and that of the clients they will interact with as professionals within communities.

Criminal justice education was originally designed for strictly law enforcement training, a world of black and white, right and wrong with decisions being made based on crime control statistics. However, the field is shifting to a more sociological perspective largely through the influence of women and people of color in the criminal justice education field. The communities the students will eventually work in are becoming more diverse, stratified and transient creating multiple sociological issues that require law enforcement professionals that are sensitive to their own bias and empathetic to the public they serve (Canon & Dirks-Linhorst 2006).

Chapter Summary

Given that this study is about women probation and parole officers, this chapter discussed the theoretical framework of the study as grounded in critical feminism in light of a brief overview
of the field of criminal justice. The second section of this literature review provided a discussion of women in the criminal justice profession. Because I am conducting the study partly to contribute to the knowledge base of women in the criminal justice profession, and to aid in the education of criminal justice professionals, the third part of the literature review focused on criminal justice education as adult education. This serves as a lead in to the next chapter which deals with how the study will be conducted.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore why women choose careers as probation and parole officers and how they learned to negotiate power and interest in the criminal justice system. The research questions that guided the study were:

1. Why did the women choose careers as probation and parole officers?
2. How did the women probation/parole officers negotiate with the people who hold the power and navigate the interest of multiple stakeholders and further, how did they learn those skills?

This chapter describes the methodology that guided this study. Further, it provides a rationale for the use of narrative inquiry within a qualitative research paradigm in an effort to understand the personal experiences of the participants of the study.

Overview of Qualitative Research

There are various methods of discovery in research, different paths of inquiry each striving to find out why, to gather insight into a phenomenon. Approaching the fork in the road of research procedures, a decision needs to be made about what approach is most appropriate for the study, quantitative or qualitative, and then to determine what methods within that approach are most appropriate.

As noted in chapter one, and given that this study seeks to understand these women probation and parole officers personal perspectives and experiences, a qualitative approach was deemed the most appropriate for the study. As Merriam & Caffarella (1999) note, the purpose of qualitative research is to understand how people make meaning of a particular phenomenon.

Qualitative approaches allow the researcher to get close enough to the people and context to glean a deep, rich, personal understanding of what is going on, to look at what actually takes
place, and what people actually say based on their personal perceptions. The data collection methods in qualitative research are typically interviews, observations in the natural environment of the participant, and/or the use of documents or artifacts relevant to the participants’ context. Given that interviews, observations, and analysis of documents or artifacts are typically conducted by the researcher, Patton (2002) suggests that the researcher her or himself is the research instrument in qualitative inquiry. Unlike quantitative research where the researcher is distant, in qualitative research it is important that the researcher develop enough of a relationship with the participants to be able to really hear and understand what they are saying. Further, situating the research within context is central to qualitative inquiry and is considered a frame of reference for the participants, placing their experiences within and among others (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Qualitative research methodology seeks to describe the meaning of participants experiences for those who frequently are marginalized or oppressed, allowing them to construct and reconstruct their identity as they tell and retell the stories of their lives (Elliot, 2005; Marshall & Rossman). Women probation and parole officers work within the patriarchal court system, a system that may oppress and silence women (Chesney-Lind, 2006). Qualitative research is a method of study that will allow women probation and parole officers the opportunity to explore their own experiences and the realities of their individual lives within social contexts (Merriam, 2002). Given that the intent of this study was to explore the experiences of women probation and parole officers and to hear how they’ve learned to negotiate power and interest and survive within the constraints of the patriarchal criminal justice system, a particular social context, it is an appropriate method of study. Their stories are important not only for this study but for other women probation/parole officers (including myself), and to sisters in other
fields of law enforcement, It is my hope that women who read the stories and find meaning and commonality with them might thread their own experiences into the quilt of sisterhood. I choose the path of qualitative inquiry feeling a passion within my being that I can be an instrument to share the stories of these very special women, to hear and validate their experiences.

Narrative Inquiry

This is a narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is one method of qualitative research that begins with individual experiences expressed in lived and told stories, a method that allows the teller or participants to use her own words, allowing feelings, beliefs, and personal perceptions to emerge (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Rossiter & Clark, 2007). Elliot (2005) suggests that there are three key features of narratives: a) the story has a sequence of events, b) the story is meaningful, and c) the storied events are inherently social in that they are produced for a specific audience. As tellers relive and retell their story claiming identities and constructing lives, the interested receiver may connect to and relive their own story each moving on in different ways (Elliot, 2005; Riessmann, 1993).

Patton (2003) offers two central questions that guide narrative inquiry, “What does the narrative or story reveal about the person and the world from which it came, and how can this narrative be interpreted to understand and illuminate the life and culture that created it?”(p.133). This study will attempt to hear the stories of female probation/parole officers, to explore how they define and negotiate the systems of power within the court system. Further, by situating their stories within the context of the systems of power, the narrative method of inquiry will help to reveal women’s perspectives on their experiences, including their emotional, intuitive and relational experiences creating deeper understanding of the women probation/parole officers’ history (Witherell & Nodding, 1991).
Narrative inquiry assumes that people construct their reality through the telling of their story, situating their experience in time and place creating a rich tapestry attaching their history to the listener’s memories (Witherell & Noddings, 1991, p.1). The researcher is in the role of the listener, allowing the tellers to retell and relive their story, giving them full voice to interpret in their own way. Narrative inquiry gives power to the voice of the story teller, allowing her or him to explore issues of social identity (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Creating a personal narrative is defined as story telling, recalling events, spoken or written accounts, connecting them in order of their happening (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). By constructing and reconstructing stories of our lives, without knowing their outcome, we revisit the plot as new events are added (McAdams, Josselson & Lieblich, 2001). Giving voice and shape to the experiences of one’s life through diaries, journals, and storytelling, means putting words to unspoken thoughts. Narratives (personal experiences) that are meaningful to the teller and the listener are a universal function of all cultures as a mode of thought and knowledge among co-members of a group (Hymes, 1996). Further, narratives of one’s life experiences can be used as an avenue for the storyteller to see themselves across different categories such as culture, gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual identity (Neumann & Peterson, 1997; Rossiter & Clark, 2007). Being able to see themselves as individual women, not as one of a group compared to the dominant men might be empowering for the women in this study. The process of allowing the women to retell and reframe their experiences in their own voices may lead to new insights. Some may question the dominant patriarchal voice as a result. For others the experience of telling their stories may be just that and nothing more. What is important is that they were given the opportunity to share their experiences in their own words from their own perspective.
Narratives have many purposes and contexts, and sometimes are written or told. Rossiter (1999), writing from a developmental perspective, suggests that narrative is a tool that can help people to become experts of their own development. By situating their histories within culture, time, place, and, families, they interpret their experiences based on their values, reflecting and considering what came before and empowering them to consider the rest of the story, perhaps creating change that may lead to retelling their story and questioning the roles society has dictated for them (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Other writers from an historical viewpoint consider narrative writing as a means of understanding what came before as told by those who lived it, or heard the stories from their ancestors comparing it to the present culture (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Others writing through a feminist lens consider narrative writing as a way of giving voice to women and others whose stories have not been heard, or have been marginalized or ignored (Johnson-Bailey, 2001). While these women won’t be writing their stories, but rather will be telling their stories, they will nevertheless be giving voice to their experience. Women probation/parole officers work within the patriarchal court system, a sex/gendered system in which men typically dominate and what is considered masculine is typically more valued than what is considered feminine (Chesney-Lind, 2006; Senna & Segal, 1993). The intent of this study was to provide an opportunity for the women’s voices to be heard and valued for their interpretation of their experiences.

Johnson-Bailey (2001) from a black feminist perspective also did a narrative study of black women helping to give voice to the lived stories of women of color who, despite feelings of exclusion and marginalization, somehow managed to succeed in academia. Adding her own story to other women’s stories and finding similarities enriched Johnson-Bailey’s understanding of herself as she tried to resolve the question of whether she was the only one who felt the way
she did. Her study provided a counternarrative to the dominant story of white students in higher education. In a similar way, this study seeks to give voice to women probation and parole officers, providing a counternarrative to the dominant narrative of the criminal justice perspectives. Because understanding the researcher’s experience relative to the topic is important in narrative forms of research, the next section focuses on my own background related to the topic, and the stance I’ll take as a researcher doing narrative research.

Background and Position of the Researcher

Who am I, what is my background, what makes me who I am today and how will my own story affect or be present in the research process? This is a decision every qualitative researcher must make prior to the start of a study. The dictionary describes background as part of the scenery, distant, but also as one’s experiences. I believe we all have distant scenery, a history, a life path that led us to today, a story to tell. But stories fall on deaf ears unless someone is willing to listen and to hear. In this section, first, I’ll discuss my own background related to the topic; second, I’ll discuss what stance I took as a researcher in light of my background and the theoretical framework of this study.

Researcher Background

My academic life began at a later age than most college students. I enrolled in higher education at the same time my oldest child entered college. Due to life constraints, I could only attend part time and was given the label of non-traditional student. I chose the field of social science wanting to help others, believing I had something to contribute to society beyond my small community. Working as a caseworker in the field of child protective services opened my eyes to the pain of abuse, to the others in the world and forced me to see how systems of alleged help can actually marginalize and create barriers that are difficult to overcome. As a social
worker, I was one of many women. Moving on to the field of probation and parole, I was one of four women among twenty plus males. I quickly learned that the female voice was seldom heard and that our presence was part of legal requirements and due to the growing population of female offenders. However, there were times in my career when it was necessary for my voice and others to be raised and concerns to be considered and addressed. I was able to find ways of negotiating within my system for myself, for other women and for those coming into the field.

My career as a probation officer began over fifteen years ago and in that time I have watched more and more women officers join the ranks. Despite the growing population of women in the field, the dominant voice of authority within the court systems is still white and male. Women in the field of criminal justice, from the highest courts to the workers on the front line have challenged the traditional systems of oppression, crusading to create laws for equality, striving to be heard by adding narratives, the voices of individual unique women to the traditional system that groups one as part of many (Chesney-Lind, 2006; Daly & Stubbs, 2006; Frazier & Hunt, 1998; Potter, 2006). My desire for this research was to create an opportunity for my sister officers to tell their story, to look within themselves and to share their history and to be heard. Sisters that work within a system that is designed to hold offenders accountable and to assure that victim’s voices are heard and validated within the court system. I believe it is important to hear and appreciate the stories of the women who serve the courts, who daily put their safety on the line and who survive within the shadow of the patriarchal court system.

My Stance as a Researcher

I began my role as a researcher with a deep awareness of my own personal experiences as a women probation officer working within the constraints of a system of power. Throughout my career I have felt different levels of power and have learned my own ways of negotiating around
and through them. I am aware of the bias I brought to this study and the assumptions of the theoretical framework that situates women in positions of marginalization. However, over the last ten years I am aware of a change from within the system and unsure where it is coming from; perhaps it’s the greater number of women in the field or the mandated sensitivity training. Whatever it is there has been a change for the better, at least from my perspective. I can see how a woman new to the system would see things totally different than I or other women with varying levels of experience.

To guard against my bias entering into the interviews I began by explaining that the study is about the experiences of women who have chosen to be probation/parole officers, noting that there is minimal literature about probation/parole as practice and even less about women in the field. I mentioned that as probation/parole officers, they are in positions that have some authority and power just by their role as officers of the courts and in that role have the power to arrest and detain. Alternatively, as officers of the court, they are under the direct authority of the courts, balancing that with the voice of the public they serve and among the colleagues they work for and with. The women were asked to discuss how they have learned to negotiate on behalf of themselves and their clients and to identify the tools they use to get the job done. They were asked to discuss times they enjoyed and times when it has been difficult and frustrating.

I had a wide network of women probation/parole officers from which to choose, and much in common with many of them. However, each woman within the same context (myself included) had a unique sense about their experience and how they create meaning from it. What’s important to me is that their stories, their perception of reality were heard in their own words.
Through the telling, hearing, and then reflection on the stories we learned from each other. I came away with a shift in my personal perspectives and a deeper sense of who we are as women foremost, but as women who chose a career in the male dominated field of probation/parole and have somehow found ways to survive. Personally the study gave me the opportunity to highlight some very special dedicated women who face situations in the community that for many would be considered dangerous and impossible to manage. While I am not a study participant in the sense that my own narrative is not included among the participants in the study, I offer aspects of it here to explain how my own experience informed the study, and how my own story is present to some degree alongside the narratives.

Participant Selection Procedure

Qualitative research focuses on exploring the particular in depth, and makes use of a relatively small purposeful sample that will yield in-depth understanding (Patton, 2002). One cannot study the universe, everything, everybody, every event all the time (Marshall & Rossman, 2006), rather a researcher must select samples of sights, events, people and context to study. Purposeful sampling is a method of selection that leads to a deeper, richer, understanding of a phenomenon that is unique to a particular participant matter (Patton, 2002). As a research method, qualitative narrative inquiry uses purposeful sampling, allowing the rich experiences of the participants to unfold, creating a personal tapestry of their history. For this study, the participant selection was limited to female probation/parole officers. The deliberate selection was necessary to understand the unique experiences of this group of women situated within the context of their careers as probation/parole officers. I have access to a list of probation and parole officers from numerous geographical locations; thus I know who the available members of the population are. Each woman was contacted individually, face to face, to assure that the
participants understand that their participation was strictly voluntary and does not impact their employment. Further, each participant was provided with an informed consent form that explains the intent, purpose and format of the study.

The women in this study were selected based on the following criteria:

1. The women in this study worked in the field of criminal justice for at least five years and have been probation or parole offices for at least two years.
2. The women in this study currently work as probation or parole officers and are considered officers of the courts.
3. The women probation/parole officers maintain and monitor juvenile or adult criminal offenders in the community.
4. The women are employed in a probation/parole office in Mid Atlantic states.
5. The women all have undergraduate degrees in criminal justice or related field.

Initially, there were nine participants in the study. One woman chose to drop out of the study after the initial interview offering no explanation for her decision. However during the interview she was very concerned about the administration in her office finding out about her participation in the study. After offering assurances that her identity was protected and all material was kept completely confidential, she still appeared quite anxious. She still opted not to be a participant in the study.

Prior to the start of the data collection, I reviewed and obtained signatures on the informed consent form. The participants were informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they had the right to refuse to answer any questions and could withdraw from the study at any time. Additionally, the participants were informed that all conversation and information they
provided was completely confidential. Each of the participants was asked to select a pseudonym to protect their identity.

**Ethical Issues and Informed Consent**

Social research takes place within a social context; therefore researchers must take into account ethical and political considerations and the consequences of inquiry (Babbie, 2001). Two central issues that must be attended to when conducting research: a) the participants voluntarily agree to be part of the study without fear of harm or obligation, b) the participants will never be injured regardless of whether they volunteer. The ethical norms of voluntary participation are outlined in the consent form in compliance with The Pennsylvania State University Office of Regulatory Compliance. Each participant was given a copy of the University Certified Informed Consent Form. This form provides study participants with full disclosure of the study, proposed use of the data for a doctoral dissertation, awareness of their rights to participate, assurance of the confidentiality of the data, as well as assurances that no harm or damage would result to the participants as a result of the interview. Each participant was asked to sign the document prior to beginning the interview process. A copy of the completed document was mailed to each participant, with the original maintained as part of the documentation process, in accordance with University policy.

**Data Collection Procedures and Methods**

Qualitative researchers typically rely on three methods of gathering information; a) being an observer or participant-observer in the setting; b) interviewing in depth; and c) analyzing documents and materials (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The guiding question for the researcher is which method will yield the greatest understanding of the phenomenon.
The primary means of data collection in narrative inquiry are obviously narrative interviews. As Merriam (1998) notes, an interview is a conversation with a purpose. According to Baker (2000), interviewing methods are characterized by the following attributes: a) they tend to be open-ended and are usually semi structured and allow the researcher to let the conversation flow naturally, asking follow up questions where necessary, b) they often rely on follow up interviews if needed in order to follow up on a particular issue, clarify concepts or check the reliability of data. In-depth interviewing, purposeful conversation, is based on the assumption that the participant’s perspective on a phenomenon should unfold through dialogue uncovering their experiences, revisiting and reframing according their own reference points (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). During a semi structured interview, the uniqueness of the person, and the telling and hearing of one’s personal life experiences is central. In depth, semi-structured, one on one interviews allows the participants to spin off in their own direction, giving meaning to their experiences in their own words not one based on presupposed responses (Patton, 2003).

For this study, the primary method of data collection was in-depth, semi-structured, one-on-one narrative interviews. This open ended approach allowed participants to respond in their own words, to use their own terminology, to retell and reconstruct their experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Patton, 2002). The guiding questions served only as beginning point to encourage the women to talk about their experiences in the criminal justice system in general and how they have learned to manage and negotiate within a patriarchal system. As the women’s stories unfolded I found a deeper, richer, sense of what their experiences meant to them through
their eyes. Throughout the inquiry, I tape recorded and transcribed the interviews and continually recorded my thoughts and impressions in a journal immediately following the interviews.

It is important in qualitative research for the researcher to approach the research without predetermined categories and assumptions allowing the participants story to unfold (Patton, 2002). To appreciate this unique role in inquiry, it is imperative that the researcher attempts to create an atmosphere of trust and one that attempts to guard against bias. An atmosphere of trust can be achieved through open, honest dialogue between researcher and participant regarding the perimeters and purpose of the study without the researcher inserting so much of her story that it leads the participant down a particular path. The researcher as the primary instrument of inquiry is able to consider the entire phenomenon rather than partial, can immediately collect data, and adjust the dialogue as the story unfolds. To guard against interjecting my personal bias I diligently compiled two sets of notes, one with descriptive comments and the other my personal reactions. I engaged a neutral person to review my notes and question my comments and perceptions bringing to my attention any bias that may surface as the study unfolds. Using data from different sources such as multiple participants and artifacts brings more than one source of information into the study and can guard against personal bias being interjected (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

The methodology permitted face-to-face contact with respondents allowing an opportunity to explore topics in depth and to experience their affective as well as cognitive responses. Furthermore, face to face in-depth interviews allowing the interviewer to clarify questions can increase the likelihood of useful responses. Qualitative inquiry is primarily an inductive research strategy and is often used where there is little knowledge about a problem, or lack of theory that explains the phenomenon (Merriam & Simpson, 2000, p.99). Given that little knowledge about
women probation and parole officers’ experiences in the workplace, it is an appropriate methodology for use in this study. Because I was interested in hearing the women’s stories in depth, and because narrative inquiry as a form of qualitative research attempts to keep the story intact, narrative inquiry as discussed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Rossiter and Clark (2007) was used for this study.

The women were encouraged to tell their stories in their own way, rather than to answer the above questions in a particular order. Further, follow up questions were asked that were pertinent to their particular story. Each of the participants selected the location of the interview to assure that they were comfortable. The length of the interviews ranged from ninety minutes to two hours. For several of the women it was more convenient to divide the interviews into two one hour sessions. The interviews consisted of semi-structured, open-ended questions allowing the participants to determine the direction of the conversation as their story unfolded.

Each interview was recorded using a digital audio recorder. I chose not to take notes during the interview wanting my full attention to be with the story teller. I recorded notes and my own reflections following each interview. One of the participants provided a picture as a means of explaining her experiences.

*Documents, Artifacts, and Metaphors*

In addition to narrative interviews, documents, artifacts and metaphors can be important sources of data in qualitative research (Merriam, 2002). There are several types of documents including those for personal use, others produced for official use, and popular culture that is produced for entertainment and information (Taylor & Bogdan 1998). Artifacts such as keepsakes, heirlooms, letters, diaries, poems, and pictures can play an important role in helping one understand and define their history (Rossiter & Clark, 2007). Asking participants to come up
with metaphors can be an additional source of data in narrative studies. They can sometimes help
tellers give definition or help to explain experiences by linking a new event to something that is
symbolic. Further, metaphors can put words and deeper understanding to a complex system or
concept connecting the reader through a shared or symbolic understanding (Patton, 2002;
Rossiter & Clark, 2007). The participants were asked to create a metaphor or image of what it
feels like to be a woman probation/parole officer and to describe an experience in their career
when they felt empowered.

Data Analysis Procedures

According to Patton (2002), data analysis seeks to grasp and elucidate the meaning,
structure, and essence of the lived experience of a phenomenon for a person or groups of people
(p.482). An analysis of data will produce descriptions and inferences about the phenomenon
being studied, leading to conclusions pertaining to the original concern or problem (Merriam &
Simpson, 2000, p.11). Central to data analysis in narrative inquiry is an appreciation of how the
participants make sense of their experiences and events and to describe them in dense, detailed
and within context (Elliot, 2005).

Marshall & Rossman (2006) suggests that for effective data analysis the researcher
should become immersed in the data continuously writing notes and organizing the information
by coding the data and offering interpretations generating patterns and themes and looking for
alternative understandings ending by writing the final report. Others suggest that qualitative data
analysis is a search for broad statements about relationships across categories transforming data
into findings with the final destination unique for each inquiry (Patton, 2002). Further the aim of
data analysis is to discover patterns by looking for themes, chunking together similar words,
characters, time and space within the data providing manageable data to make sense of and build
upon leading to a theoretical understanding of a phenomenon (Babbie, 2001; Merriam & Simpson, 2000). Further, by simultaneously collecting and analyzing data, one can constantly compare, adding questions as themes emerge and evolve (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

Riessman (1993) suggests that narrative analysis is unique in that it requires the researcher to consider the entire product as one intact piece rather than simply content or evidence of prior theory requiring tedious listening, reading, and rereading of transcription to clarify to become immersed in the text. She further suggests that one begins by looking inward in the text to begin encoding the form of talk expanding outward looking for underlying propositions asking why the teller developed the story in this particular manner and what may have been taken for granted by the teller and the listener based on their relationship considering issues of culture, social, institutions discourse and power concerns that may be underlying both by the telling and within the interpretation. Others agree that narrative analysis considers the text as one intact piece and analysis involves hours spent reading and rereading field text to construct a chronological order to the data (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Further the data should be coded looking for places, scenes, plots, and tensions broadening to story lines that interweave and interconnect, constantly comparing, rereading and gleaning information.

The data analysis for this study involved tedious reading and rereading. As the researcher, I was ever mindful to consider the entirety of each story and the context of the teller. The interviews provided a vast amount of detailed information rich with stories and memories. Narrative analysis was employed as an effective technique to decipher and organize the data and to figure out the best way to present the story that would make sense to the reader, while keeping it in tact as much as possible (Reissman, 1993). But to add another level of analysis, I also immersed myself in the data writing notes and organizing the data through color coding and then
searching for patterns and themes, because I thought that a thematic analysis would, in the end, be able to offer a summary of the study’s finding. Several patterns became evident from the data: roles the women play in their jobs, different levels of gender awareness, and negotiation purpose and techniques. The themes were further refined after comparisons were made and connections were established. In the final chapter I discuss the significant findings from this study and relate them to the literature that guided this study.

**Dependability Issues**

The basic question addressed by the concept of trustworthiness, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 290) is; “how can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?” The trustworthiness of a study can be enhanced through the following indicators; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

**Credibility**

Credibility refers to the belief that the inquiry is being conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the participant are appropriately identified and described and the results of the data are from the perspective of the participant rather than the thoughts of the researcher (Patton, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 2006) and asks whether the findings can be confirmed by others (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Most importantly, are the results believable to the participant in the study, the person who told the story in the first place? One method I used to develop credibility is through the shared work experiences and the colleague relationship I have with the participants. The sense of commonality assisted in building trust and understanding for the participants. For this study, I conducted semi-structured interviews using narrative inquiry, a method that directs the researcher to be in the role of listener, giving the story teller the
opportunity to tell and retell their experiences within context in an effort to capture and describe reality through the eyes of the teller (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The next step in assuring credibility is to take the data and begin the process of looking for themes from different angles, and rival explanations (Patton, 2002) rather than funneling the data to fit into preconceived assumptions and causalities. Another step to assure credibility is to declare the researcher’s theoretical orientation at the onset, for myself, it is critical feminism, I looked at women within the context of the patriarchal court system. However, the women may not feel oppressed or see themselves differently from their male colleagues. It was important at the onset to explain that the study was being conducted because of the gap in the literature about probation and parole in general but specifically women probation/parole officers. Further, I opened the discussion about the power they are assigned just by the nature of their job as officers of the courts and law enforcement. Perhaps some decided to become officers because of the authority and power that comes with the title and position. Being open to all viewpoints helped guard against my bias. It was important that as a researcher, I appreciate naturalistic, qualitative research for the depth and richness it gives to inquiry.

**Triangulation**

Triangulation is another strategy to promote credibility by looking at a situation from different angles using multiple data sources (interviews, documents, peer review) for the purpose of understanding of a phenomena and to inconsistencies in the findings (Patton, 2002). For this study there was multiple participants and member checking with the participants when they were asked to review their transcripts for accuracy as well as the general analysis of findings to see if they think their story or data that applies to them was accurately portrayed. Additionally, each of the women offered a metaphor to describe their unique experience.
Dependability

Dependability refers to the ability of the outcome of the study to be consistent if the research is done again with the same or similar participants in similar context. Within qualitative research there is an assumption that the social world is always changing. Merriam (2002) suggests that dependability can be enhanced by describing the changing contexts and altering the research design as new findings are uncovered. To enhance dependability I used overlapping methods such as interviews, observations, and detailed journal entries throughout the interviewing process representing a triangulation method effect along with member checking by the participants to help assure accuracy of the findings.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results may be applicable in other contexts or with other respondents using similar questions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In qualitative research transferability is the responsibility of the person doing the generalizing to another setting. Transferability can be enhanced by returning to the theoretical framework that established the perimeters and assumptions of the study (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Marshal & Rossman, 2006). Thick and rich description providing detailed data within the context of this study and provided the necessary information that will allow the reader to determine whether the findings of the study can be applied or “transferred” to a similar setting.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the findings can be confirmed by another and if they make sense to someone else, and are not based on the biases, motivations, interests, and perspectives of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To enhance confirmability, I used detailed record keeping, an audit trail, and rich, descriptive field notes that were continuously
maintained throughout the study so that conclusions and interpretations could be traced to the original source to support the study (Lincoln & Guba).

Summary

This chapter provides a review of the purpose of the study, the statement of the problem and the research questions. This was followed by an overview of qualitative research and a rational for selecting a narrative inquiry methodology. The chapter also provides background information about the researcher, the role the researcher took in the study and the importance of the study to the researcher and for others. The chapter describes the participant selection criteria, research data collection, and analysis methods. The chapter concludes with ethical concerns related to confidentiality of participants and strategies to insure the trustworthiness of the study.
PART II

INTRODUCTION TO THE NARRATIVES

In Part I of this dissertation (chapters 1-3) the purpose of the study, the background literature and the methodology of the study were discussed. Because this is a narrative study, Part II will present the eight narratives of the participants as separate chapters (chapters 4-11).

As a reminder, the purpose of this study was to explore the way women who are probation and parole officers learn to negotiate power and interest within the criminal justice system. In this narrative inquiry, the experience of the women using their own language and voice creates a unique opportunity to step into their world and to hear them tell of how and why they decided to follow this particular career path. The participants were women working in the Mid Atlantic region of the country involved in the field of criminal justice for at least five years and probation and parole at least 2 years. The group of participants included three women of color and five white women. The age of the participants ranged from 28 to 47 and their years of experience in probation and parole as officers ranged from five years to 23 years.

The critical feminist perspective guides this study and considers class and power within structural systems, challenging the centrality of the male and/or white worldview attempting to build on the elements of those that are most productive for advancing women’s interests from many cultural backgrounds (Brookfield, 2005; Collins, 1991; Kim, 2001).

As a probation and parole officer, I consider myself an insider rather than just an observer in this study and found that to be beneficial in developing a rapport with the participants. Several of the participants commented that this was the first time anyone had shown interest in their experiences in the field. Indeed as the reader will see, many of their stories are interesting and fascinating. Now I turn to the narratives of these eight women (Chapters 4-11).
CHAPTER 4

ELLEN

*It just feels like home to me*

Ellen is a white woman in her late twenties and has been in the field of probation and parole for over four years.

*Background*

Ellen did not major in criminal justice in college, rather she earned a degree in psychology and then discovered that “there wasn’t a whole lot for someone with a bachelor’s in psychology.” Taking the first job that came her way she found herself working as a case manager at a program in the field of corrections. As she progressed in her career she had opportunities to interact with professionals in probation and parole. One of those persons was a woman in an administrative position who encouraged her to apply for a job.

*She and I had a very good working relationship. She taught me a lot about my job before I was even in probation. One day I was on the phone with a line probation officer who asked why I wasn’t applying for a job. At that point they preferred a master’s degree and three years’ experience. I think at the time I had my bachelors and only like two and a half years experience, so I tacked on some volunteering I had done at the Domestic Violence shelter and got the job. It was who I knew.*

*Joys and Frustration*

Ellen identifies her interactions with people as one thing she really enjoys about her job.

*I really enjoy interacting with my people. It’s a really good combination and balance between ass kicking and helping people. So you get a really good combination, a good balance. There have been some really rewarding experiences, because if they*
want to be helped, they’ll be helped; and if they don’t, they won’t. I had a girl who I still keep in contact with; she still calls me a lot and sends me cards at holidays.

When she came out of prison I remembered how bad she was when she was being supervised by another officer. I basically typed up a heading on her violation report before she got out. She had mental health issues, a hard cocaine habit, got out and had relapse issues. I got her into counseling and had her mental health meds taken care of. No one really knew that she’d been having hallucinations. She was living in a really bad situation.

I was able to help get her out of that situation and, against my own predictions, she did so well. That was such a rewarding experience. She keeps in contact with me and is one of those that actually say that you made a difference, that’s really rewarding. I gave her a letter of recommendation and she got a job working in the mental health field, so that was awesome. She’s in her 40's so it was a big change for her. We still keep in touch; I had coffee with her a couple of weeks ago.

Thus Ellen centers primarily on the way that she has helped people and the rewarding aspects of her job. Ellen also described some of the frustrations she has experienced in her position centering on bureaucracy and required policies, though she doesn’t see these as gender related.

We have a lot of drugs, a lot of guns, a lot of clients with mental health issues, dangerous offenders, sex offenders, and the internet porn industry that has boosted our numbers tremendously. There’s an old conservative way of looking at things, which isn’t lining up with the reality of the line officer’s situation anymore.

For instance, one of the most frustrating things is that I carry a weapon, but I’m not
allowed to arrest my own people without the assistance of another law enforcement agency. So I can draw a gun on someone, but I can’t restrain them, not that I would really want to, but still. The point is, it’s very backwards. We just this year got a search policy. It used to be in plain view only. And that search policy has actually tightened the reins on us because now that we have a search policy, we need to go through all these hoops in order to get a search together. At the same time, unless I go through those hoops, I can’t do anything unless it’s in strictly plain view. Before I could always say, “Can you open that?” do a kind of consent search.

I can’t do a consent search anymore without getting prior approval on it and the whole search team comes in. So I have a guy who has an alcohol restriction, and I’m not allowed to ask him to open his refrigerator. I can’t enforce my own conditions essentially, so that’s very frustrating. I don’t often find that my gender makes me frustrated; it’s just a frustrating thing, a frustrating job. I don’t see my gender as adding too terribly to the stress.

Ellen then went on to briefly touch on some of the ways she has negotiated interests for herself and her clients.

**Negotiating Power and Interest**

Ellen discussed the difficulties of work within the system to negotiate power and interest for herself and her clients. She navigates through the system with determination and persistence switching directions as needed to get the help her client needed. She identified the importance of developing a working relationship with community resources and strives to change the focus of her office from processing cases to being involved in finding solutions with and for the client.

Ellen discussed one difficult case where she negotiated the interests of her client through a
One experience was very difficult and somewhat successful. I was pretty new and had a case with this guy who had essentially every disease known to man. His insides were pretty much liquefying and pouring out of him. It got to the point where the county jail didn’t want to keep him anymore pending his sentencing because he was so near death, he was so hard to care for and he had so many different things wrong with him. It was one of those where we were all kind of waiting for him to die. In fact, I don’t even know why he was prosecuted. It was one of those situations where he had basically brokered a drug deal for heroin and his cost was one of the bundles for himself because he’s an addict. The man was dying. It didn’t make sense to me. He was dying; the county was screaming so my supervisor said, “help me get him out of here.”

The judge didn’t want him to be released because if he went out and did something in the meantime, we would be held liable. So my chief and I spent pretty much an entire day trying to call hospices to find out where we could take this guy, and his defense attorney was just a jackass,( sorry). He really was. He was kind of expressing concern but not doing anything. And that was very difficult because it’s difficult to get someone emergency placement in hospice. It’s just hard. We had so many HIV organizations and Catholic organizations working with us. Everyone was trying, but no one could get him into a facility. And we’re trying to send him to another prison but they would have to airlift him which is ten grand for a guy that’s going to die in a week.

Eventually, we were able to badger a local hospital into taking him in. And he was delusional so I had to go down and convince him to stay and convince the emergency room docs to let him stay. Then he got kicked out for stealing and I had to convince them
to take him again. In a week he was dead. That was a weird sort of navigation because I was all for letting him out. The court would not let him out until we found a place for him. I wear many hats, law enforcement, helper, and advocate.

Our office is very stuck in the 9 to 5 mentality, which is not good probation work. We should work more with the agencies in the communities. Some offices do this very well, in some there’s very little. Before I started working with my agency there was very little cooperation among law enforcement and with law enforcement agencies. We were very standoffish, we still are primarily. I’m trying very hard to change that but it’s a very, very slow process. I think the probation office should be more of a mentality of “we’re here to provide good supervision” versus “we’re here to do paper work and 9 to 5” and concentrate on proving that we did our job versus doing our job. That would be a major overhaul.

Ellen selected a picture that she believes describes what it means to be a probation and parole officer and how she negotiates power and interest.

I have a picture that is a little bit like women in probation, but generally I think it’s pretty good for probation in general. It’s a painting of a seagull standing in front of a pretty nasty looking sea and he’s got this tiny pair of boots on and he’s just looking, “what the hell am I getting into?” That pretty much describes probation for me. I think it looks like the seagull is ill outfitted for the entire experience. The water is obviously the people, the system, everything and the seagull is pretty much wearing rain boots to an ocean. I thought that was a pretty good metaphor for probation work. He just looks like he’s going do it. That look is the look of shock.
The artist, I’ve seen other paintings of his, he tends to give the impression of clothing, and so he uses the feathers as clothing. The power is all external to the bird; it’s the sea, it’s the sky, its forces beyond the bird’s control. And you know what they say about undertows and about animals in the ocean; the ones who survive are the ones that kind of go with it, they don’t fight it. This is just a good picture for me. The power is all outside of the bird. The bird does have the power over what his next choice is. He can stay on the post, he can go up in the sky, he can crash down into the water, but he’s going do it.

He’s just going to jump. He’s just diving right in. That’s what he’s chosen to do.

Ellen describes times when she felt like the bird in the picture.

Generally, it happens when my supervisor is bringing me another new file to open for
the month, about the seventh file for the month, and your caseload keeps jumping. That’s the look that you get, it says, “I don’t remember the names of people that I just met.”

Ellen discussed some the ways she has found to get things done for her clients. She views her role as an advocate for her clients and does whatever she can to work within the system to negotiate for her client. However, she feels caught in the quagmire of the bureaucracy and sees a conflict with what the system is suppose to do and the realities of what it actually does. Like the bird facing a rough sea that it has no control over, she too has to face a challenging uncontrollable system. Like the bird she has the power to make choices. For Ellen the choice is to stay, to negotiate her own and her client’s interests through perseverance and persistence.

*A Philosophy of Gender*

Ellen had a lot to say about gender issues in her workplace that indicates a certain philosophy of gender and how gender operates. There are some significant themes that came out about her views on gender: (1) diversity in how women deal with gender; (2) competition among women; (3) gender as it intersects with age and marital status.

*Diversity in how women deal with gender*

Ellen says that she learned the skills of negotiating her way through the system by experience and watching other people and seeing how they do it. But she also highlights primarily the way other women do it, and do so in different ways;

*It’s not something where I necessarily ever talked to other women in the field. I do have friends in the field that I’ve talked with, but it’s mostly just sharing our experiences. You just get thrown into it and you either sink or swim. Again, going back to the picture of the bird. That’s really what it is. I see different women handling it different ways. There is a woman that I work with who is very sensitive to criticism and one of those...*
people that takes criticism as a personal attack, so she seems to reel from one personal/professional crisis to another. I mean, she’s a decent officer, but she just can’t handle that.

In general, in law enforcement, there’s a surprising amount of tender egos, which shocks me because we’re so brutal to each other that you would think that you’d get a thick skin. I’ve seen her deal with her clients very, very well, but when it comes to criticism, she views criticism as personal. I think she takes that to heart more, so I think she has a harder time existing as a woman in the system. I’ve seen other women who do a better job because they’ve got good physical skills, they’re more in shape, they have awesome firearms skills, they’re on the tactical teams and stuff like that, they seem to do better. I think part of how they cope is by immersing themselves in that.

I recognize it doesn’t matter how many times I shoot at the range, I’ll always be an average shot. I’m never going to be in the high percentage, but that’s cool for me. I’ve seen other women where that’s what they focus on, going in and being an ace shot, into tactical stuff and the tactical units. I think it’s a self-esteem thing, a personal competency thing that helps you just get through because you know you’re as good as the guys. But on the other hand, it’s letting the guys know that you’re as good as them. For as much as men in the field say that they understand, there are men who are bad shots, or men who are more touchy/feely than tactical. Everyone will say that they recognize that, but on a different, unconscious level. Maybe it’s conscious and they’re just saying something differently, but they are not surprised when they see a woman who is not into tactical.

While Ellen highlights what other women do, there’s only one reference in the above discussion to the fact that she is an average shot. That says something about how she actually
deals with gender dynamics. She expresses frustration with some women colleagues who feel the need to compete with men on the firing range in an effort to prove themselves equal and able to do the job. She sees their insecurities as a sign of low self esteem suggesting that the best way for women to be successful in the field is to develop the skills you need to the job and do it well. She also sees gender dynamics at play with the lower expectations that her male colleagues have for women who are not expertly skilled with fire arms.

*Competition among women.* Ellen in discussing her thoughts on gender highlights competition among women:

> Another problem that I have noticed is competition among women. I think the women who have made it jealously guard their status. When I first came on board as a probation officer I already knew some of the officers beforehand. One of the female officers, very friendlyish made a comment about; what kind of wardrobe are you going to wear, like what I was wearing wasn’t appropriate. She actually said some of the clerks get a little hoochy, kind of.

> I was pretty much jeans and a t-shirt in the field, and a suit so that was a little insulting. And then she pointed out one of the guys I knew and another one she had introduced me to, and said, “they’re mine.” I think it’s the work hubby type of thing, only it’s more so because there’s so fewer women that men. We do have a special relationship with the guys. But there’s a sense that you’re in or not in a clique, like high school.

> I think there is competition. The girls are very jealous of newcomers coming in on their turf, and maybe because they view their position as their turf and the men as their turf. And I think in some cases we are our own worst enemies because we should embrace helping each other along. I think sometimes we don’t do that very well. Part of
it’s just probably a chick thing. And I think part of it’s because there are those of us who have worked hard to get there. I don’t think that’s necessarily a gender thing. You form relationships and quid pro quo and but I really think it’s just a sense of territory.

Our office is really messed up right now, so the dynamics have changed a lot in the past few years. It’s still very high school, you want to sit at the cool kids’ table; its like high school never goes away. I think we like to pretend that we grew up from high school, but we just disguise it a little bit better. I think you’ll find that anywhere. I don’t see any of the guys getting possessive over any of the girls the way that the girls do over the guys. I don’t see that at all, at least in the work setting. I went to a conference once where a guy that I had gone to academy with met a guy from my area and they were peeing all over me trying to decide who got to me, who was my better buddy or something. That was a weird thing. But in the office, I don’t see the men being possessive of a woman the way the women are territorial over them.

Ellen’s discussion indicates a sense that the way women are socialized is evident in how many women act in high school that is still at play in the workplace. Her impatience with some of her women colleagues comes from the frustration she feels when she sees them displaying girlish traits that contradict what she considers to be desirable traits befitting an officer. Women competing for male attention/approval is perhaps part of the consciousness of patriarchy.

Gender as it intersects with age and marital status. Ellen discussed some other complexities of gender in the field and how women need to negotiate gender differences. She identified marital status and age as two issues that have made her feel disconnected with her colleagues.

I haven’t had too many negative experiences being a woman in the field. And most of
the people in my organization are not the ones that I felt it from. It’s the offenders
occasionally, having to really establish my authority with them and outside agencies
where they don’t work with women a lot. Little comments made like when I was getting
fitted for my vest. Or when I walked into a courthouse and a pretty well known figure in
the courthouse, who used to be in probation, met me and one of the first things he said to
me was that; women didn’t used to be that pretty when he was working in probation. I
don’t care so much because they don’t mean it, you know that they don’t mean it to be
insulting, so I told him I was working on raising the bar on that. And he didn’t mean it
any particular way, and that is what I generally get the sense of; guys never mean to cast
aspersions on you because you’re a female, but they’ll make comments that let you know
that underneath it all it’s working in there.

Ellen then went on to discuss and explain the difference she feels as a single woman in the
field:

Being a single woman actually seems to play more into it because I feel like I’m
sometimes at odds with women who have families and children because I have much
more freedom than they do, and sometimes I get, I definitely get a sense sometimes that
I’m resented. I do a lot of weird field hours and I flex my schedule a lot. But other people
can’t because they have to be home for kids or whatever. That would be probably more of
what I get, the resentment from people who have families, that would be primary.

Ellen also discussed the ways her gender intersects with her age that can be an advantage
in negotiating power and interests while at other times it was a hindrance.

Sometimes being a woman works in my advantage and I fully admit it, and I fully
admit to ruthlessly taking advantage of it when it does. I know that there is a judge that I
can get more from because I’m a woman. I know that he likes me and I’ll play it up. I’ll
do the chipper smile. I’ll do the, “I’m just a young thing,” kind of thing because it gets
me what I want and I’m always right, of course, so it’s only in the interest of justice.

In some instances, we use our gender. If I can call up another agency in the courts or
another low enforcement officer and I can flirt my way into getting something that I
couldn’t have gotten otherwise, I’ll do it. But, again and again, I keep coming back to
the fact that doing my job and that’s really the best thing, and I think how most of the
women that I know do it. They just do the job. There’s a new young female probation
officer who is resentment in the office because she is so young. She reminds me very
much of myself because I was young, and she’s ambitious and I think she’s very, very
good at what she does, and I’ve told her the same thing. Just keep doing your job.

A lot of times gender works in my female offenders behalf because people don’t want
to take a mother away from her kids, no matter how bad she’s messing up. At the latest
revocation hearing I had, I took this person, a mother into revocation and its very
frustrating, as a woman to see that happen, because she’s not taking care of her kids. If
she were taking care of her kids instead of sleeping with drug dealers, she wouldn’t be in
the revocation hearing. And I was really uncertain about getting the revocation because
I had lost a couple revocations this past year that I didn’t really think that I should have,
not that it’s winning or losing, but I felt some people should have gone to jail that didn’t
go to jail.

And this particular judge is sometimes known for being more of a social work type,
and I knew she was going to come in and cry and sob about her babies because this is the
first time she’s ever been to jail. She’s been violating for eighteen months and I’ve been
buying the whole song and story, too, which is why it took eighteen months to get her here, but before, right before the revocation hearing the judge met with me and we kind of talked over a couple of things and I definitely got the sense that he was going my way. In the end the higher grade violations were let go in response to the person taking responsibility for the technical violations, and the judge gave a lower sentence than I had asked for, but he still gave her imprisonment.

In other ways, there’s another judge who I think has it out for men and it’s a woman. This guy beat his girlfriend and I took him in because he got like a harassment citation out of it and it’s hard to revoke sometimes on citations, so I gave him halfway house time. He showed up at the halfway house drunk. I thought, “This will get me a revocation.” Nope. I tried twice to revoke this guy. Because of the DUI she asked me to get him more halfway house time, and I begged the halfway house to take him back. He goes in, calls his case manager “a bugging bitch,” (excuse my language), try to revoke him again, and she lets him off without even electronic monitoring. This was twice after she asked me my opinion, once in open court, “What do you think?” I say, “This is what I think. He’s not amenable to supervision. He needs time.” So it works both ways.

In discussing how her age and gender at times can be a hindrance on the job, she explained:

The major thing is a combination of gender and age for me. I look younger than I am and to a certain degree it’s working within the system, getting people to see you as someone that they actually respect and that, again, goes back to just doing your job and doing it well. With offenders and offenders’ families, they don’t even try it, but when you’re supervising someone you have to correct them the first time, like an old white guy in his sixties, and the first time he calls you “yes, dear,” you have to correct that. And
it’s not something that they try, they’re not trying to demean you, most of them aren’t. A couple of them just are doing power games to see what they can do. For some of them, it just slips out, if I were a guy, he wouldn’t be calling me “dear.” For the most part, I think the major issue for me is getting that initial seat of power with the offenders.

I can think of another time when my gender came into play. In my entire office, I am the only supervision officer ever to be specifically instructed not to see a specific offender alone. And the instruction started out that I couldn't see him without a male officer present. Someone had the good sense to change that direction to "another officer." How’s that for gender at work?

Ellen is very aware of gender dynamics in her field and how they can work for and against women to get things done in the system. She is also aware that at times she feels a disconnect with other women in her field. This disconnect may come from her different life situation or her intolerance for signs of weakness and immature behavior that emphasize the perceived weakness of women as compared to men that has a history in the field of law enforcement.

**Pop Culture and Metaphors**

Ellen’s discussion of popular culture and her use of metaphors revealed a bit more about her thoughts of gender as an upbeat younger woman in the workplace-the bird explained above is one such place. She selected the “crazy chick from Wedding Singers” using the word insane to describe her:

*Out of this world compared to the rest of her family, which is very similar to how I feel sometimes in the probation office. I swear they all have sticks jammed way up far. That’s such a bizarre comedy and not necessarily the greatest metaphor for my experience, but just that I’m insane like that too. And it’s difficult not to be in that*
environment. It’s difficult to be different in that environment. But crazy and happy. It’s where I’m good.

She also used other metaphors to describe her experiences in the field; “it just feels like home” and “a sous chef”. She also selected and described a picture, the seagull wearing the rain boots facing a rough sea as discussed earlier, and ended by saying:

*It just feels like home to me. Just feels like a good fit for me. I’m originally from the county I work in. I go out into the field, or I talk to cops and interact with them and I interact with my people, and that feels like home to me. It feels good. I would rather be out than doing the office stuff, that’s like an awkward Thanksgiving where nobody wants to talk to your drunk uncle kind of a thing. That’s what the office is. You just go in there and everybody’s really polite to each other and occasionally you have a good time off in your little side parties, but when everyone comes together, there’s all these little tensions and stuff. Yes, you got to go to the office and, unfortunately, I have to be in the office more than the field. But when I’m actually doing my job in the field, I feel more at home with my people in the ghetto of the city than I do at drunk uncle Murray’s, and I like talking to law enforcement; unfortunately going back to bureaucracy on that issue because they can’t come along with me so a lot of times I’m out alone. But that’s where I feel at home. It just feels like home to me. I feel happy. I feel like I’m doing what I’m meant to be doing, and I feel like the people I interact with that we mesh.*

In discussing how her experience is like being a sous chef she explained;

*You are like a sous chef because you’re kind of everybody’s bitch. You’re handling a gazillion tasks at one time, more than any one person should have to, and when it goes wrong, it’s your fault because you’re the one who was supposed to handle the*
operational end of things. And you’re getting your orders from someone with grand ideas who will take the credit and none of the blame.

Ellen chose several metaphors to describe her experiences as a woman in the field. She is aware of her gender but doesn’t see it as a barrier or an asset to doing her job. She discussed how she is able to rise above the immature behavior she often sees in the office and says she feels most at home in the field engaging with clients and other law enforcement officers.

**Recommendations to Women Entering the Field.**

Ellen’s recommendations for women entering the field, more or less echoes her philosophy of gender as highlighted above:

*I think the best thing you can do is just do your job and do it well and have a good sense of humor about it because I think that nothing hurts us more than women who get too excited about minor slights, that’s not the way to win our place. Bra burning is not going to win our place. It’s going in there, doing your job, doing it well, not complaining, and I think it’s going to be a long time before we’re fully assimilated, but, and it might sound not very feminist of me, but just do your job and just let things slide sometimes. Don’t be a doormat, obviously. Stand up for yourself if it’s the extremes of sexual harassment or anything like. But if it’s a joke here or there, give it back as good as you get it. That’s the best way to win our place in law enforcement.*

**Closing Reflections**

Ellen chose the field of probation and parole while attending college. She has found the experience to be a positive one and one that is always a challenge. She finds satisfaction in negotiating for and with her clients and seeing them make positive changes in their lives. She also learned many ways to negotiate within the constraints of the system, at times using her
gender as a tool to get what she wants and what she needs for her clients. At other times her gender has worked against her. She prides herself on being capable of doing what is expected of her position and expects the same of her female colleagues. Her frustration surfaces when she sees women in her field displaying traditional helpless roles showing signs of weakness and feeling the need to constantly prove themselves capable of doing the job. Ellen is aware that as a woman she is less represented in her system but believes the best way for women to prove themselves equally capable of doing the job is not by drawing attention to themselves but by doing the job the best they can.
CHAPTER 5

LEE

Connections and communication

Lee is a white woman in her late thirties who has been in the field of probation and parole for over 17 years.

Background

Lee was drawn to the field of criminal justice after taking a Criminal Justice course in college. In her junior year she was able to obtain an internship in probation and parole and decided that's where she wanted to start her career.

Joys and Frustrations

Lee explained that one of the things she enjoys the most about her job is working with people. She explained that she enjoys:

Helping them get their lives back on track or improving their lives. I’ve had so many different experiences over the years. Just people get off probation or parole and then down the road, coming back just to stop in to visit and thank me for helping them get their lives together. That is rewarding in itself. Also, working in drug treatment court, we have people that graduate from the program, which is a very intensive program. When they stand up on graduation day, completing the program successfully, and mentioning my name of how I played a part in their recovery, that’s a good feeling and it makes the job worthwhile.

Lee reflected on the pride she feels when she sees her clients making positive changes in their lives. She further explains how she enjoys playing different roles to get the job done:

I like the role of being able to help clients get on track and get their life together. I
also like to be out on the street getting information on someone who needs to be picked up and then taking part in that apprehension. For example, being the on-call officer, I got a phone call from a mother whose son is actively using. He also had three warrants. She was concerned for her son being on the streets, not knowing what he was doing to get the drugs, but knew that he was using drugs. I received information about where he might be and was able to coordinate with the sheriff’s department to pick him up this morning which probably was the best thing for him. I liked coordinating where the person was and getting there. It kind of makes everything, all the bad stuff that you go through, or the stressful times of the job, worthwhile.

Lee used the metaphor “sweet smell of success” to describe the satisfaction and joy she finds in her job:

When you see somebody succeed and stay out of our system it makes the job worthwhile. Helping one person or twenty people, just seeing that one person and knowing that they’re still doing well, that’s satisfying. I have people that have stopped in to see me after they’ve been off supervision. And another thing, I didn’t think about this before, but those pictures out there are of little children, children whose parents I supervise, or have supervised who were addicts. I tell the clients; that is my board of reasons of why they should stay clean. I never take the pictures down. Sometimes they stop by and I’ve even had people send me updated pictures. I get Christmas cards from old clients, “I’m still doing good.” That kind of stuff, that’s where the sweet smell of success comes. I enjoy what I do.

Lee discussed the pleasure she feels when she looks at the wall of children’s pictures that she has in her office. The children belong to former and present clients and serve as a reminder
to her clients to remain drug free. As in all jobs the pleasures are mixed with frustrations. Lee discussed lack of support from the courts in regard to POs recommendations for the clients, and salary as things that are frustrating to her.

> I believe that the probation officer probably knows the client better than any other person, better than a judge, sometimes better than the treatment providers. And the clients look to their probation officer as a person that is on their side, not against them, and they open up and you find out a lot of things and can hopefully lead them the right way. And then the recommendation isn’t agreed upon by a judge or others. That can be discouraging because people do put a lot of time and effort into working with their clients. We take the steps to help that person and work with them before ever going to that level. So, I think that’s discouraging.

> I guess salary isn’t where I would like it to be. This isn’t just a 9 to 5 job and our efforts do go unrecognized at times and that’s kind of discouraging.

This summarizes Lee’s background and highlights some of the joys and frustrations she has experienced in her career. In her narrative she does discuss how she has found ways to negotiate interests for her clients and for herself.

**Negotiating Power and Interest: Developing Relationships within the Community**

Lee discussed some of the ways she builds relationships within the community. She had developed a sense of partnership with various community programs and uses those connections to negotiate interests for her clients.

*Building relationships.* Lee says that communication is key to building relationships.

> I think that keeping lines of communication open is the key and having good rapport with other agencies. I’m lucky right now when it comes to the area I’m in because we
meet once a week with different people, the treatment providers and the judges and attorneys and we have a meeting every week where everyone voices their opinion and everybody is heard, which that’s probably the only area in this department where you have that luxury.

I’ve been exposed to a lot of different things. I’ve been able to meet people in the community and have relationships with police departments and with the sheriff’s department as well as nonprofit organizations. I’ve just met so many nice people and have a good relationship with them which has helped. For example, I have a client living in a jurisdiction of a police department and they have a problem and they know that I’m the probation officer. They may call me and something could be worked out ahead of time before something else happens. I’ve also helped apprehend people that have been on the run and a lot of that is based on my relationships. I’m kind of proud of that. I work a lot with the sheriff’s department and I’m probably one of the only females that does that. It’s knowing people in the community and their trust in me, and willingness to help me out is key.

And I guess I’ve developed that because I treat people with respect and I treat them the same way that I would want to be treated, even though it could have been somebody that I had supervised in the past and I may have even incarcerated them. I’ve never had a bad reputation as being someone that was unfair and didn’t care. I’m good at remembering faces and names and that has been key to helping apprehend wanted persons.

Lee has connected with many different programs in her community and shares mutual interests with them. Often the engagement with these services has required that she work non-traditional hours.
Connecting in the community after hours. Lee says that her job isn’t 9 to 5 and has found that clients respond well when they see her in non traditional settings:

I have a work cell phone and I monitor a few house arrest clients and that’s a 24 hour job. I’m not burned out from this field yet, I guess. It helps by getting involved with other things. I’ve been working with the sheriff’s department and the police departments. It’s just something different and people in the community know who I am. Usually, we’re looking for people that are on supervision anyway when I’m out with the sheriff’s department. I can look and see who they’re looking for and tell them if I know them or know if they’re on supervision. And I’m easy to get along with and I keep in communication with clients.

I was invited to an AA picnic yesterday. I stopped by with my son and there were clients there who knew me as a PO and I had a couple people say, “What are you doing here?” I said, “Well, I was invited just like you were, can’t I come to a picnic? Just because I’m a PO doesn’t mean I can’t come to the same picnic you’re at, right?” And they’re like, “Well, yeah, I guess you’re right.” That’s the first time I ever did that and I thought, well, why not? It was nice. I didn’t stay the whole day but I did make an appearance, and the people that had invited me were glad to see that I was there.

Lee developed her own unique ways of making connections in the community. She has developed relationships with numerous organizations and has earned their respect. She prides herself on being able to remember people's name which creates a sense of caring and sincerity. Building on those relationships she is able to interchange services to get things done for her own interests, her clients, and her associates. She is able to negotiate with her clients by treating them fairly and with respect, a difficult task at times when incarceration is found to be necessary.
Gender Issues

Reflecting on her experience as a woman in the field, Lee says that gender has not played a major role. However, she does identify some gender issues identified by some male clients towards female POs:

*I’ve had a lot of good relationships and it hasn’t really been as difficult for me, I think because I play an active part in a lot of different areas in our department and outside of our department. But I think that clients looking at a female in probation and parole sometimes think, well, they can be easily walked on or taken advantage of. I do believe that, especially if the female has an all-male caseload. But I’ve been lucky because I really haven’t had anything like that happen to me, but I know that it happens.*

Lee doesn’t see gender as an issue in her daily work but does discuss some discrepancies within the court system. Discussing experiences where gender issues were at play in the court system, Lee said:

*In the courts I’ve noticed that there aren’t as many women on the bench and most of the attorneys that I’ve come into contact with are males, to me that’s too big. We just have to deal with that, we don’t really have a choice in the matter. And you can tell when a male client is before the courts and a female is before the courts as far as how they are sentenced. I believe for women, the courts take into consideration that they have a lot more things going on in their life such as; children since they usually have them, being a single parent, and Children and Youth involvement.*

Lee has an awareness of the inequities within the court system but believes that is an area she has no control over; however, in her own world she has proven herself to be on an equal playing field with the people she associates with both in the office and in the community. She is
quite capable of doing her job as an officer in the field and is well respected for the help she provides to other services that include both men and women.

Lee touched on some demeaning attitudes from male clients towards female officers who believe that the women officers are easier to manipulate than their male counterparts, but those are not her experiences. She does, however, show an awareness of gender issues in her choice of a woman to identify with. She chose a woman from pop culture, Norma Rae, who Lee called a “take charge kind of person”:

When Norma started the union for the women in the factory and everybody was afraid to speak up to the boss, and she kind of took charge and kept on going and I think, at one point, they might have even terminated her, if I remember right, but she fought for women’s rights and won. Independent, stood up for her beliefs, and fought for them, didn’t back down, just not giving up. She voiced her opinion no matter what someone else might think. I don’t really back down if I believe in something at work and with life in general.

Lee identified several similar characteristics in Norma Rae that she sees in herself: standing up for herself, being independent and believing in what you do. She shows a gendered tone to her voice and a sense of fairness and equality for women including herself. She advised new women coming into the field to do the same and to use their voice to stand up for themselves and for the clients they serve.

Words of Wisdom for Women Entering the Field

Lee offers some recommendations and words of wisdom for women coming into the field.

Well, my best advice would be to have them test it out, do an internship. That sold me.
I interned in community service and that exposed me to all different caseloads, going out with people that specialized in other areas besides community service, even the juvenile system. So then when I interviewed, there was a community service position open and I stayed for 12 years. That got boring to me after 12 years because I didn't do a lot of field work. Also, it’s not always a rewarding position. But if you have it in your heart to want to help people, then it's worth it in the end, and don’t give up because you have a voice. You have to express it and speak up.

Lee advises women to look for an internship in the field and to use their voice to speak for the best interest of their clients.

Closing Reflections

Lee chose the field of probation and parole while she was attending college. She advocates internships as a way of opening doors for new hires. Developing a close working relationship with community agencies, earning respect and establishing herself as a resource are some of the ways that Lee is able to negotiate systems and get things done for herself and her clients. She takes great pride in the successes of her clients and continually advocates for them. Despite some of the frustrations she has experienced, she finds the job rewarding and meaningful. Lee doesn’t see her gender as playing a significant part in her daily experiences; however she notes some inequities in the court system for professional woman and clients. She has a deep sense of fairness and views her role as one of advocate and voice for the people and community she serves.
CHAPTER 6

KIM

*Short-term pleasures equal long-term consequences*

Kim is an African American woman in her late thirties who has been in the field of probation and parole for over five years.

*Background*

Kim’s interest in criminal justice began in elementary school. She narrowed her interest to the field of probation on the advice of her older brother:

*I got interested in the field of criminal justice when I was in the fifth or sixth grade. I always told myself I wanted to be a police officer. In college I kept trying to decide what I would major in, all I knew is I did not want a boring job. I have an older brother who majored in criminal justice and he shared a lot of information with me about the different classes he was taking and how he really enjoyed it. So at that moment, it clicked, I knew that I was going to major in criminal justice and sociology.*

*I chose probation because my brother was a juvenile probation officer. I thought about adult probation but I didn’t want that. I have too many friends and associates that are on probation and I didn’t want them thinking they can just do whatever and I would cut them breaks.*

*There was a time I said, “I’m going to leave, I’m going to leave.” My brother had transferred to the feds. and told me to apply because they were looking for minorities and women. I had several interviews but I truly thank God that I didn’t get the jobs, I really do, because I just enjoy working with kids, and I really didn’t feel like dealing with the adults.*
Kim has a long history of working with children, both as a volunteer and in other professional positions:

I’ve worked with kids all my life. Even when I would come home in the summer time; I always worked at the boys and girls club with the kids. I worked at a local residential home for female girls and as a part-time director at the Y, in a mentoring program working with teenage mothers.

Now I’m at Big Brothers/Big Sisters part-time and have been a Match Support Specialist part time for five years. So I just work with kids all year round. I hear a lot of friends and associates that don’t have anything good to say about their job, they’re going to work and they don’t want to be there. I can honestly say I love coming to work and there is never a boring moment. Never.

Kim chose the field of criminal justice as a young teen eventually narrowing her interest to probation after seeing her brother’s success in the field. She has a long history of working with children and said she loves what she does. She shared some of the joys and frustrations she has experience in her job.

Joys and Frustrations

It is obvious from Kim’s story that for the most part she really enjoys her job. While reflecting on times that she enjoyed her job the most, Kim said that making one person happy, or seeing a change in one person is one of the favorite parts of her job. She draws her strength from her faith and her family:

I’m like somebody that wears a lot of hats. I’m a probation officer at 8:10, at 8:20 I’m throwing on the mommy’s talk hat, 8:30 I’m throwing on a social worker’s hat. I would say my experience is just like a parent wearing 50 million hats all day long. At
times, I just don’t know what to feel like. You’re a PO, you’re not a mental health worker, and they’re asking you for help so I give them a number to call to get more information.

Helping kids gives me the energy and the boost to go another five years. I have a lot of pictures of different clients that I’ve had, maybe like ten or twelve years ago, and they still come in and they visit just to drop by to say hi. They let me know if they’re married, some of them have kids, and they’ll bring the kids in and let me know what they’re doing. Several of them had mentioned to me, “if you would not have guided me in the right direction, I truly don’t think I’d be where I’m at.” I always share with them that I think my motivation comes from being a Christian and just wanting to see people go to another level. I don’t ever really come out and talk about my religion, but I have a little posting on the front of my desk that talks about love. And I use a saying; short-term pleasures equal long-term consequences everywhere I go.

My mom always told us to make the right choices. You know right from wrong, you know what you want to do, go for it. I just encourage my clients and tell them you can definitely make it, it’s not where you’re from; it’s what you do with what you have. A lot of kids are so used to doing the wrong thing. I know it might be bad at home, but you have to be willing to help yourself. You have to go to school; you have to get that education. Education is the key

Kim shared some of the joys she has found in her job. She draws on her faith and the lessons she learned from her parents to encourage and guide the juveniles she works with. She is willing to play many roles to get the job done; however there are two positions in her office that she feels would not suit her personality. When asked what she didn’t like Kim said she didn’t
want to be an institutional officer or a supervisor:

One position that would not interest me is an institutional officer because you don’t really have hands-on who and usually see their kids maybe once every other month. That doesn’t really interest me and I would never choose to go for a supervisor position because I don’t want to be in the office all day and be bored. Right now we’re so flexible. I’d rather continue to just be a line P.O. where I can go out and see my clients, whether it be at school, whether it be at work, sunny days like this, we meet in the park. I love it, I love it.

This highlights some of the reasons Kim continues to work in the field. She is satisfied in her role as community based officer and enjoys the daily interactions with her clients. In her narrative she went on to discuss how she negotiates for her clients and for herself.

*Negotiating Power and Interests*

Kim discussed some of the ways she is able to negotiate power and interests for herself and her clients. She does so primarily by networking in the community. She also discussed times when she has dealt with difficult cases and the various approaches she has used to get work through difficult issues.

*Networking in the community.* Kim says that being familiar with resources in her community and networking are ways she is able to negotiate within the system she works in and get things done for her clients.

If some of the agencies can’t help me out, they can always give me a contact person for another agency. And, I do a lot of community service with different programs. Every year, we run a Christian basketball team, it’s like a Christian Boys Club and Girls Club Center. And all the kids that live in the city that are on probation, you can definitely
catch them there. If they’re AWOL, if they know they’re not supposed to be out, if they’re violating, they just hate to see me. I act like I don’t even know, “How are you? Okay.” And then, “Well, are you going to tell on me? I say yes I am, I’m going to share this with your PO tomorrow because you know better.

Right now, I’m looking for a house in the city because I enjoy living in the city. However, I think every kid that I have in this city hates that I have them because we constantly see each other and they’re trying to hide. We can be at the shopping mall or anywhere and I’ll just call them out. “Hey, how are you doing, don’t act like you don’t see me.” I know it’s Saturday or Sunday. And a lot of them do just come up to me. “Hi, Miss Kim, how are you?” It’s just good for me to be able to have that type of rapport with them on the job and off the job.

Thus, one way Kim is able to negotiate power and interest is because she has good networking skills and has built connections with the community in the overall context of her life. She also has found many ways of dealing with difficult cases.

Multiple strategies for getting things done. Kim discussed some of her difficult cases and the ways she was able to negotiate her interests and those of her clients by trying to get the clients engaged in what is going to help them. She told the following story:

I think about one issue with one girl. I think I was the seventh P.O. She just came out of a long-term placement a month before. She was abiding by curfew, she just wasn’t doing anything she was supposed to be doing, and she got mad because so I put her on the AWOL list. Well, she found out she was on the AWOL list and calls into the office and asks, “Why am I on the AWOL list?” And I said, I couldn’t find you and it hasn’t even been a month. “Well, I don’t understand, you’re a B-I-T-C-H,” and she hangs up
the phone. I hung up the phone and I said to myself, Thank you, Jesus. I’m glad I’m in here and this didn’t happen outside somewhere because I think I would have said something that I probably would have regretted.

I brought this right out in front of the judge in court and the judge just went off on her. She was crying. She said, “Well, I didn’t mean it, I’m just so sorry.” She was upset because her mother ran off with her 17 years old and the boyfriend.

The girl had a lot of low self-esteem about herself because she was a cute, but a heavy girl. She weighed maybe 300 pounds. She kept complaining about the weight. I told her you can lose this weight if you want to, and I’ll be willing to do this with you. I’ll have you come in at least three times a week and we can go for a walk for an hour. She thought I was crazy. “Why would you want to walk with me? You’re my PO.” I told her that I’ll do anything that’s going to make you happy and keep you on the right track. I don’t have any problem doing it and I could take some pounds off too. Anything that I can do to encourage their self-esteem, I will definitely do so.

In the above case, Kim tried to engage her client to consider the ways she could improve her self esteem by trying to partner with her to engage in exercise to lose weight. She takes steps to find people resources and then encourages them to take action in their own lives. She talks about another case where she assisted her young client to get into a shelter:

I had another girl that had two kids and her home life wasn’t good at all. The mom was dying of AIDS, the father was incarcerated. She was 15 when she had her first baby. She ended up having two babies, and then the boyfriend went to jail because he was abusing her. I helped her get into a women’s abuse shelter and now she’s doing really good. She’s in college. She said, “It’s going to take me forever.” I told her to thank God
that you got this far. Let it take forever. I don’t care if it takes you nine or eight years.”

Kim discussed some of the tools she has found useful in negotiating interests with her clients: the courts as the enforcing agency, relatives that can be a resource for a child, and her own compassion and concern for sensitive matters as well as being tough when the situation calls for it. She always encourages her clients to make positive changes and is energized by the progress and positive changes she has witnessed:

"Right now I’m dealing with a girl. She was so angry when she first came to us. Two other probation officers had her and they talked about her behavior and attitude. She was only at the school for a month when she punched another kid in the face and broke his nose because he laughed at her. They moved her to an alternative school and she did the same thing. I think with her there was no talking, if you made fun of her or laughed at her, she didn’t back talk she would just get in your face.

One day she was really angry and called me a B-I-T-C-H, I just can’t even believe that this girl called me this. So I explained to her that I can act crazy like you if I need to get I’ll get crazy. I said I’m not like one of the other POs that are just going to take your bull crap. I can honestly say from that point, just raising my tone and kind of being nasty like her, I have not had not one problem with her ever since and it’s been almost two years.

She was really angry because she had four sisters and she’s the only one that the mother gave up. She had been allegedly molested by two uncles, and the grandparents knew but didn’t want to tell because it was their sons, that’s why they moved her.

She’s doing really well now, is in college and had a baby last week. I thank God for her grandparents who are really willing to help her if she’s willing to help herself. She’s no
longer on my caseload; we went out a couple times for dinner and did different things, but she was a hard nut to crack. I think different situations like that make a big difference to me, and that’s why I continue to stay.

Kim further discussed how she is able to create a sense of connectedness with her clients because she lives in the same city and has an awareness of the problems they may face which gives more of a sense of how she might negotiate power and interest on their behalf, or with them directly in trying to see to their own interests:

When I meet with clients for pre-courts or investigations I always use the saying; short-term pleasures equal long-term consequences. I ask them; do you went to sell this bag of marijuana, cocaine, crack, or whatever, and it takes you, what, about ten minutes? You don’t realize the consequences afterwards, you have to go to court, you’re going to be on probation, and you have court-ordered services that you have to complete. And I always encourage them to think before you make these decisions.

I always share with them that I was raised here in the city. My mom and dad explained to us, “You can be anything you want to be, I don’t care where you live.” We all live here in the city, there are five of us and each one of us graduated from college and we’re all in the same field of criminal justice. You don’t think that I can really sympathize with you, but I can. They say, “You don’t know what you’re talking about, I live in the city. I don’t live out there in the suburbs,” and I tell them I don’t live in the suburbs either.

Kim spoke of how her connection and concern for her clients doesn’t end when they leave the juvenile system and enter the adult system. She cares deeply for the clients she has dealt with over the years and feels frustration with the bad choices they made and the
consequences they have to face:

_The kids, to me, can be rehabilitated. You can work with them. And if they don’t take advantage of the services that you’re giving them, it’s pretty much on them. So when they get older and end up in jail there’s nothing I can do. I have kids, well, they’re not kids anymore, they’re 18 and 19 years old and they’re in prison, and they’ll write me and they’ll want me to come see them. I try to see them every so often, but it’s just so sad because they’re 18 and 19 years old, they still have a mind of a 15 or 14 year old and they are crying._

_I had one kid who’s doing life now. He committed a murder when he was 17 a week before he was supposed to get off probation with me. He was going with a girl and the mother did not approve of him, and they got into an argument and he told the mother, “You know, I will get you.” The woman ended up strangled with an extension cord._

_This kid was so skinny, he had to weigh maybe 100 pounds, but he might have been like 5'9", 5'10". He denied he did anything. I went into the prison two weeks later; I didn’t even know it was him. They had beaten him up so bad; he had three scars on his head. And he looked like he had lost at least 20 pounds, which I’m sure he didn’t, but to me it looked like he lost that much weight. I just wanted to cry, but I just couldn’t cry. I just felt so bad. That story just sticks out to me._

Kim reflected on the sadness and pain she feels for her former clients who made some terrible choices and now have to suffer the consequences. She feels a sense of loss for the young men who she knew as adolescents and for the grim future they now face.

_Dealing with Gender_

While Kim didn’t feel that gender was a huge issue in the workplace, she did discuss
gender issues in regard to two primary areas: male clients’ attitudes; and the gender imbalance in the workplace.

Male clients’ attitudes. Kim shared that as a woman in her field she has found that some male clients treat her differently as compared to her male colleagues. She discussed how she doesn’t believe gender is not an issue with her and her ability to supervise all her clients, male or female, and does not tolerate her clients’ potentially dismissive attitude towards her as a woman. She spoke of one experience where she was able to get the courts attention to address a young man’s dismissive attitude towards her.

I do think it is different when a male juvenile sees that he has a female juvenile probation officer. Being in the field as a woman, I see a lot of males who think, “Oh, this is gonna be a piece of cake, we got a female PO, we don’t have to do this, we don’t have to do that.” For example, I just got a kid two weeks ago who told his mother: “Oh, she’s not going to be worried about me. She’s a female.” Well, I didn’t have him very long when he got new charges. So now he has to go before the judge. So I shared with the judge about him and this female attitude that he has when it comes to female POs.

Kim’s discussion doesn’t delve deeply into gender issues but does show some awareness of gender dynamics with some of her male clients who view a woman PO as easier to manipulate and less enforcement oriented as male POs.

She discussed ways she has learned to manage difficult cases and to hold all her clients equally responsible to follow the rules. Reflecting on the experiences she had with several of the adolescent females, it was evident that she was sincerely concerned for their welfare and tried to find solutions to their problems.

Gender imbalance in the workplace. Kim discussed the imbalance of women as
compared to men in the courts and within the management in her office. Contrarily, the female POs outnumber the men in the office which creates its own problems:

We have so many women in our office. But it’s funny because we only have one female judge out of maybe 10 to 15 judges. We have a couple of District Justices that are women. We do have problems when it comes to drug testing because a lot of our males are based at the schools. We even brought that up in one of our main meetings asking them to hire two guys full time.

My supervisor is one of two females and we have about six male supervisors. I’ve had all male supervisors up until about four years ago. I’ve never had a problem with any of them. As long as my stuff is completed, they give me excellent evaluations, and it just passes right on to the next supervisor.

Kim doesn’t offer an in-depth discussion about gender issues or identifies any discrimination issues. However, she shows an awareness of gender and how it is evident in the levels of power within her system.

Recommendations for Women Entering the Field

Kim advises women entering the field of probation and parole to not take things too seriously:

Don’t take everything so seriously. You might have parents yelling and screaming and going on at you, but you just can’t take it seriously. We used to have female POs that would go home crying, and they would ask me, “How do you do this.” And my thing is treat people the way you want to be treated. You give them respect, you get respect. As POs you will also get a lot of information that you might need when you give them respect. Like I said, I’ve never, out of all my years had anyone disrespect me, other than
two girls calling me the B….word, and they apologized, but other than that, I really don’t have a problem.

Kim highlights two key things for women coming into the field: never take things seriously and treat people with the same respect you expect from them. She maintains a positive attitude through her strong faith, and identifies with a woman, Christian television evangelist, Joyce Myers. She admires her for her strong faith and positive attitude.

I just love her because she’s so down to earth and she can always be herself. She’s not trying to pretend and be somebody else, and I truly do believe that about myself. I’m not going to do things just because other people are doing it, and especially if I think it’s wrong. Joyce Meyers always has a positive voice and she just breaks things down so simple. Different things that we would take to the extremes, you know, she just breaks it down, and just like people would say, “The Bible was easy. We just make it so hard and complicated. It’s just simple. Follow the Bible.” You know, she just so down to earth.

Closing Reflections

Kim chose the field of probation and parole because of her brother’s advice and his own positive experience in the field. As a woman of color she does not seem to see issues of discrimination within the system. She does, however, identify some inequities within her agency related to the dominance of male supervisors and within the court system. She also has experienced times where as a woman her adolescent male clients expected her to be easier on them and not hold them as accountable as her male colleagues. Kim was very clear in her role as an officer and that her expectations for the males are the same as for the females.

Kim has developed unique ways of caring for her clients by negotiating with them through the act of listening and hearing their concerns and empowering them to develop their own
solutions to their problems. She sees her strength coming from her faith in God and is willing to share her beliefs with whomever she meets. She lives her belief by maintaining a positive attitude and chooses to live in the same communities with her clients connecting with them every chance she has.
CHAPTER 7

NIAYA

I’m just here to plant a seed.

Niaya is a Hispanic woman in her early thirties who has been in the field of probation and parole for nine years.

Background

Niaya’s interest in the field of criminal justice and probation and parole began at a very young age:

When I was in the third grade I thought I would be a lawyer. I think from the age of five, my dad who was a deputy sheriff would come home and sometimes talk about the juveniles he had seen in court and the offenses that they would commit and it always amazed me that it was actually kids committing crimes. For a long time I thought it was only adults that committed crimes. And I was fascinated by the stories that he would tell. I think, first I wanted to defend them because I thought they were being ill treated just by the stories that he would tell. I think the stories were a little exaggerated, but I think it was an effort to keep us, my siblings and me out of trouble.

After that, I was like, “Yeah, I’m going to defend them because people are out to get them,” and then you mature and you grow and you have an understanding. In high school, I took some criminal justice classes and that just opened up everything. They had a series, one was just a general criminal justice class, and there was one where they talked about juvenile delinquency. The teacher at that time had once been a police officer. And then I did my undergraduate work in sociology and got an internship at a day treatment center that the probation office used. It so happened that when I worked at
the day treatment center, I got to work with kids and built relationships with a lot of
probation officers and I thought, “That’s my job.”

Joys and Frustrations

While reflecting on what she likes best about her job as a probation officer, Niaya told
the following story which highlights times when her job has been particularly rewarding:

I think what I love the most is the relationships you build with not just the juvenile,
with the siblings and the parents. I think building a relationship with the juvenile, you
automatically build a relationship with the siblings, and it’s always a great deterrent to
not get the siblings involved with the system, so they can kind of learn from the sibling
that’s involved with us.

In particular, I’ve had a juvenile girl from the age of 12, she’s now 16. I guess it’s
two-fold. You can tell she hasn’t been doing what she needs to do; but on the flip side,
I’ve seen gradual progress. I’ve seen her take responsibility. I’ve seen her make
mistakes and kind of grow from the mistakes and make better choices. And,
consequently, I’ve built a relationship not only with mom, but with the siblings, that I’ve
almost part of the family. I’ve been invited to graduations; those kind of things so I’m
almost part of their family. And now, unfortunately or fortunately, she’s now a mother
and I’ve seen a distinct change in her sense of responsibility and taking control and
making decisions now that not just affect her, but her child.

I’ve had another young lady who was 12 and in the middle school for a simple
assault. She loved to fight, loved to fight, serious attitude, and I would just say, “I think
you need a hug today,” and would hug her. People would be like, ‘You’re crossing the
line,” those kind of things. At 16 she ended up calling me, “I’m pregnant.” I helped her
through that. She was off probation by this time. I helped her through that situation. She
ended up coming back for a false ID. By this time she was a mom. She got through the
probation thing, got through some parenting classes, and then she graduated from high
school. Then she applied for a nursing program, finished the nursing program and now is
a nurse. She’ll call me; actually I saw her maybe three months ago. She was at a nail
salon getting a pedicure and we were talking about when she was younger and her
behavior. Those are the most powerful stories.

As in any job there are rules and regulations that have to be followed. For Niaya some of
those requirements are the things that she likes least about her job with making arrests being one
of them:

Arresting, I hate the whole arrest thing, I don’t like arresting kids. I definitely hate
that. I hate the urine testing. The most frustrating part, I guess, and what I don’t like is
the aspect of almost punishing the kid. As much as we think its rehabilitation, it’s almost
a punishment. The arrest, putting them through detention, I think that’s the worst part,
that’s difficult for anybody. And telling the parent, “We’re taking your kid out of your
home.” I think those are the most difficult things that I typically don’t like to deal with,
but it’s all a part of the job.

This summarizes Niaya’s background and offered a glimpse of some of the experiences
she has had as a probation officer. In her narrative she goes on to discuss the different ways she
learned to negotiate her own interests and those of her clients.

Negotiating Power and Interests: Building Relationships

Niaya discussed issues regarding power and interests and techniques she has developed to
maneuver through the system to get things done. She reflects on times when gender issues
surfaced and she had to deal with the complexities of gender dynamics. She also discussed some imbalance in her office related to gender, race, and culture.

**Building relationships.** Niaya says that she has a long history with many of the community agencies having grown up in the community and attending the local schools. She is able to negotiate power and interests for her clients by drawing on her cultural and social capital that she has as a member of the community. Within the court system she feels respected and heard and is able to advocate and negotiate for what she feels is in the client’s best interest:

*I’m a school-based probation officer, located in the middle school. I went to that middle school. When I first started years ago, many of the teachers that I had were still there, so that made the job with the school a whole lot easier because they already knew who I was, and then I could relate to the kids because I came here, I know what you went through, I live in your community, I know. With my supervisor, he really values my judgment. He respects my ideas, he respects what I do, how I do it, and always says, “Niaya, what is in your gut” and allows us to go on our gut feeling sometimes, which is powerful in itself.

In our agency, the judges are awesome. They’re very open minded. They say, “What does your gut say about this family and this kid? And it’s not difficult to get them to agree with us, and they always make it very clear that the probation officer is the expert on the case. And that’s powerful. And they always make it very clear that we are the experts on the case; we deal with the kids day in and day out, and so we know what’s going on and what they need.

And experiences when I’ve m not in agreement with the court, I will call the judge myself and say: can we talk about this kid, and can I brief you about this case? This is
what our office is considering for the kid, I’m not necessarily in agreement with it, but this is where we’re at. And the majority of the times, the judges know when we’re not in agreement. He can read it on us; he can read it on the way we write to the court. He can tell a mile away that we’re not in agreement and will call us into his chambers and ask us. It’s been very open with the court. It’s been that way since I’ve been here. But that hasn’t always been the case for the office. In the past they had judges who were very stern, very quick, not necessarily respecting probation. But since I’ve been here, we’ve had great judges that are open in that manner.

Niaya discussed how she is able to use the long term relationships she has established in the community to negotiate on behalf of her clients. She feels respected in the agency and within the courts and is able to argue for what she sees is in the best interest of her clients.

Dealing with the complexities of gender. Niaya discussed why she believes there are more women than men in her agency and the gender issues that she has dealt with her clients and her colleagues:

Every time we turn around, we’re like, “Hire more men, please.” I think part of it’s the pay, and I don’t know if most men have the patience to deal with the juvenile attitude and mentality. Where the adult system is black and white, ours is very gray. I don’t think there’s a hierarchy in our system, at least in our office, where women are less than they can be compared to men as probation officers. Not the case at all. I think most of the men in our office know that the women are tougher than them, not physically but in the sense of being up front, direct and to the point with the juveniles. I think there’s an understanding that there are just good POs and there are bad POs.

I think the greatest issue dealing with juveniles is that we have more young boys on
our cases than we do girls, and I think for the boys that I deal with, they don’t respect women. They don’t have good relationships with their moms and they don’t have many relationships with women that are positive. And then you have a strong woman coming in and confronting them on their behaviors, their attitudes, and it’s like whoa. I think that’s the issue we have with power with most boys, not necessarily the girls. Just with boys, who are not used to a strong woman standing up to them and saying, “No, it’s not going to be this way, this is the way I want it.” I think that’s the greatest issue that we find as far as power.

Yesterday I was dealing with a juvenile and I said; don’t make the ugly come out in me, because after doing this for nine years, and two years in another agency; screaming and hollering doesn’t work, at least for me and how I deal with kids. But yesterday, it’s to the point where I have to get face to face, like literally get two inches away from a kid’s face to say; enough is enough, I mean business, this is what we’re going to do, this is what I expect, this is how I want you to do it. Usually it takes a kid about a good six months. I think often they think that kindness is weakness, and so they cross the line. So, yesterday I had a kid that crossed the line, so I said; you know what, I’ve done it nice, I’ve done it the way I think you would have gotten it, but today this ends. And I said; it’s my way or no way at this point. And usually when I get there they already know I’m done. They know when I said; don’t have Miss Ugly Niaya come out, because if that comes out, we’re going to have problems. As I said earlier about the kids, I think that with some kids, this whole woman thing is an issue.

Niaya spoke about a few of her more difficult cases involving juvenile offenders and how she learned to negotiate with them to get things done. She believes some of the dismissive
attitude she gets from the males is a general disrespect for females, especially women that have an authoritative role in their life.

She noted a need for more male juvenile POs in her office and suggests that the deficiency is due to men in the field of criminal justice choosing higher paying jobs in other law enforcement positions. And for the men who are POs, in general they would rather with adult offenders rather than deal with the adolescent behaviors of the juveniles.

Niaya further expanded her discussion of gender and its intersection with race and culture in her workplace and the community. She suggested that not only is there a need for more male POs but for more men of color:

*In our office, we have one Hispanic and one African-American male. When we start looking at our population, we’re probably about 70% black, maybe 20% Latino, and the rest white or Asian, so our clientele is not seeing that black or Latino men are successful. Women role models, they see it, because we have more women of color in our office, but we don’t have that many girl clients.*

*I always stay in touch with what my kids are going through because I still live in the city, and I think that makes it more real for me. I live in the city, I work in the city, but I don’t necessarily have their experiences. But because I stay connected, not saying that you have to live in the city to be connected, but realize that you could have been that juvenile.*

In essence, Niaya discussed the disrespect she has felt from some of her juvenile male clients and offers her rationale for that behavior. She believes the disrespect and dismissive attitude she has felt from some of the male juveniles comes from the poor relationships they have with their mothers that transfers to women in roles of authority in general. Niaya is very clear
that the best way to negotiate with this type of client is to use very clear and concise communication reinforced with the authority she has as an officer. Niaya further discussed some changes she would like to see in her office that would be more sensitive to race and culture issues and reflective of the local population. She also spoke about the connection she is able to make with her young clients because she grew up in and continues to live in the same community where they live.

Niaya doesn’t discuss issues related to discrimination and believes that she is heard and validated by those in authority, especially within the court system. Her choice of characters she identified with from pop culture indicates to some degree how she as a woman negotiates power and interest as a criminal justice worker. She chose a character from the TV reality show, 48 Hours:

*There is a woman detective; I think she’s from Memphis, Tennessee. They go to different police departments, and they’re all detectives, and they get called to murders. Apparently, in police work, the first 48 hours are the most crucial parts to get evidence. I think the detective’s name is Sergeant Scott. On the show she brings in a person of interest in a crime. She’s very nice to them, she wants to understand their background and what are they thinking, like a mom. And then they start playing games with her and trying to use her and it gets to the point where she says; enough, I already worked with you, give me details. And she’s very direct, very confronting,*

*I see myself just like her. She uses what she can to get to them and at the end, once she’s direct and firm, they give it up and then she comes back and she hugs them and says, “You did the right thing. You’re on the right track.” I kind of see myself like that.*

Niaya refers to Sergeant Scott as a nice understanding person, like a mom to her clients.
However, when the client refuses to cooperate she responds with an authoritative demeanor similar to the method Niaya uses to negotiate with her clients. She also identified with the maternal instincts of caring and compassion and willingness to help in any way she can. While she doesn’t discuss this as gendered, this sense of nurturing “like a mom” and being tough when it’s called for appears to be a feminine and effective way for her to negotiate and operate in the workplace.

*Recommendations for Women Entering the Field*

Niaya uses the metaphor of planting seeds and a roller coaster ride to explain her experiences and offers some words of wisdom for women just coming into the field.

*You can’t save the world, you learn that early on. I think it’s important that you come with that kind of mentality. And you don’t want to come in and be like; he can’t, she can’t be saved. And I think as a probation officer your job is to plant a seed, that’s all you can do. Someone else is going to have to water it, someone else is going to have to prune it, and you can only plant the seed. And come in with the mentality that you can plant a seed and that you’re not going to be able to change the world. You can only plant that seed and believe and hope that somebody else will take it and nourish it and water it and give it sunlight. That’s what I’ve learned. I’m just here to plant a seed.*

*You need to understand that your perception of the world is not everyone’s perception. Coming from an Hispanic background, my parents were born in Puerto Rico, but raised here in the states, so there are some norms that we’ve had traditionally; normal is going to school, doing well, getting an education, because that’s what was told to me. Whereas, for some of our kids that we deal with, normal is; no one goes to school and no one works. I think most of them are just looking for a stable attachment in their*
life, and for most of them the reality is there is none. So, when they come in with us, it’s stable, it’s consistent. And as much as kids don’t like consistency and stability or being disciplined, they actually do love it.

And then you have a probation officer coming in and saying; now you have to go to school, now you have to do this. But for years, normal is; no one works and no one goes to school, that’s what we do, this is how we live. Come with a mentality that you can only plant the seed. You’re not going to be able to change all family dynamics. Can you assist the family in changing, absolutely. But keep an open mind. You’re not going to be able to change every aspect of a family or a juvenile. It’s not going to happen. And you’ll get easily frustrated and burnt out if you come in with that kind of attitude or a mentality that; I’m going to supervise this kid and it’s going to be perfect. It’s not going to happen. And don’t you feel you need to change their perspective of the world. You can’t assume that our perspective is the correct perspective either. There are perspectives from your world and my world that we can put together to make a perspective for you, and I think that’s so important.

At times it feels like a roller coaster. It’s up and it’s down. I have some really great stories, and I have some really bad stories. I have really good days, and I have really bad days with kids. But all in all, for people that like roller coasters, they’re really fun. So I enjoy them and I learn from the bad and keep on going.

Niaya closed her discussion by saying, “I’m just glad that you are doing this study”.

Closing Reflections

Niaya chose the field of juvenile probation at a very young age wanting to help juvenile offenders make changes in their behaviors and learn from their mistakes. She sees herself as a
surrogate mother for some of her clients and uses that role as one of the ways she is able to negotiate her interests and those of her clients. She sincerely cares about her clients and holds them responsible for their actions and is quick to shift gears into an authoritative role to negotiate what she wants from them. Another way she is able to negotiate for the interests of her clients is to draw on her social and cultural equity and her deep commitment to her community.

In regard to gender issues, Niaya doesn’t see or feel discrimination in her job. Perhaps it’s because she works in an agency that is predominately women and includes women of color. She does see gender dynamics at play in the demeaning attitude she gets from some of her male juvenile clients. She sees it as a lack of respect for women in general and uses her authority as an officer to negotiate her interests and those of her clients. She feels that she is respected as a woman by those in authority, especially within the courts. However she sees a gap in her office believing that more men of color are needed to reflect the population of the community she works in and to act as role models.
LaKeem is an African American woman in her late thirties who has been in the field of probation and parole for over twelve years.

Background

LaKeem developed an interest in probation after finding little satisfaction as a family therapist:

_I actually was working at a detention center and I knew a probation officer that worked for the local juvenile probation agency. I was a youth care worker at the detention center and she was there with a client for a detention hearing and she told me that there were some openings. At the time, I did apply, but I wasn’t too enthused at the beginning because I was actually working as a family therapist. I had worked there for like two years and decided that I was no longer interested because in that type of field, the families are voluntarily given services, so it’s up to them whether they want it or not. And then I just felt like I wasn’t getting anywhere. Families didn’t want the services, they didn’t have to participate, it was very difficult, so I decided when there was another opening that I would apply for probation and I ended up getting it. The bottom line is, you have a lot more power to make changes within youth’s lives._

LaKeem chose the field of probation after initially working as a family therapist. She became frustrated by the resistance she felt from her clients and their lack of progress. She decided that perhaps probation was a field where she could actually help youths change their lives thanks to the courts mandate for offenders to participate in rehabilitative services.
Joys and Frustrations

LaKeem says that the most enjoyable experiences she has as a probation officer is when she is working with kids:

* A lot of times these kids do not have any type of influence in the home or any type of encouragement to do their best in life, so it’s just nice to be able to be like a mentor or a role model to a kid. Of course, you enjoy working with the easier cases where kids are being compliant. You have your difficult cases, but what ends up happening is you have those difficult cases and they may not appreciate you at the beginning, because they think you’re just being too hard on them, they think they need a break. But then in the end, once they get the treatment that they needed and they come to the realization that they need to take responsibility for their actions, then they might come back to you later and say, “Thank you, I appreciate you taking the time to get me the help that I needed.” I work with so many different cases.

* Adult probation is more punitive, and the juvenile system is more treatment oriented, trying to get a child rehabilitated to get them to make changes. I believe that the adult system already feels like, “Okay, there’s really no room for a change because this is how you are.” That’s why I like the juvenile system because you do have room to help somebody change their life if they want it. I think more or less in the juvenile probation offices, there is a lot more women, but I believe in the detention centers where I worked at there was more males, so I think it just depends on, I guess, what type of work environment that you’re in, but, our office has a lot of women. I’m not sure why, I really can’t pinpoint it.

As in all jobs there are some things that may be difficult and frustrating. LaKeem says
that one thing she doesn’t like about her job is a lack of support.

_When you don’t feel like you’re getting the support that you need from administration you may feel as though you’re doing your job to the best of your ability and you’re going above and beyond for some of the families you work for, and a lot of times, you don’t get recognized for it. Any kind of recognition for it, and that sometimes can be difficult if it’s not pointed out, “Hey, you’re doing a good job.” But that was at the beginning that I would look for that, but now I don’t even look for it anymore. As long as I’m hearing it from families, that’s all that matters to me._

LaKeem deals with the frustration of the job by spending more time focusing on the benefits such as affirmation from the families. She goes on to discuss others ways she has learned to negotiate power and interests.

_Negotiating Power and Interests_

LaKeem negotiates power and interest with her clients in two primary ways: (1) by building relationships within systems of power and authority to get things done, and (2) by drawing on her assertiveness skills.

_Establishing relationships._ LaKeem says that making connections in the community is one of the ways she is able to make positive changes for her community and her clients. She takes pride in the relationships she has developed and sees hope for positive change for her community as well as her clients, particularly in her involvement in the “Disproportionate Minority Contact Committee” where she has met a lot of people and developed relationships with them that has facilitated her work;

_I’ve learned a lot over the years, and it keeps you going. I mean, there’s never a dull moment. I like a client that’s honest and that’s willing to work on their issues. I think_
there's room for improvement in our field. I mean especially for me right now, I'm on a Disproportionate Minority Contact Committee. It’s called DMC. I just feel that juvenile probation, well the criminal justice system as a whole, needs to work with more minorities, trying to keep them out of incarceration, and also out of placement facilities because there’s a higher percentage of African-Americans that are locked up and other races, so I think they need to figure out a better way of dealing with that situation.

I think they need to look at the whole picture, with the individual person, to see exactly what’s going on and their whole family situation that may have affected why they’ve made the wrong decisions that they’ve made in their life. And come up with a better solution than locking up and throwing away the key, because that’s not solving anything. On the committee there are judges, state leaders, there is state police troopers, and police officers. There’s actually a state-wide initiative right now. And there’s a supervisor at our office that’s involved and a lot of juveniles involved in a forum that’s coming up called the Youth Law Enforcement Forum. I believe it’s called that. And there’s a lot of police officers that are there just trying to help youth know how to communicate with police officers when they’re stopped so that they don’t panic and get themselves in more trouble. Just teaching them how to be more cooperative because if you’re stopped by the police, just answer their questions. It can make your experience a little better.

LaKeem has developed her own unique ways of getting things done in the community and with her clients. Central to what she does is a desire to do something good for not only her clients but the community at large. To that end she has chosen to sit on community action committees that have the power to make changes. She indicated an awareness of race
issues and identified the disproportionate numbers of offenders that are African American in the corrections system. She deals with issues in the workplace by being assertive.

*Drawing on her assertiveness skills.* In considering how she negotiates power and interests with her clients and administration, LaKeem emphasized the importance of being direct and using assertiveness skills:

*I feel like I’m very assertive, direct, and normally that type of attitude can help you get what you need to get. I’m not really one to beat around the bush, so that helps me a lot. In my office, my supervisor says that, he always writes on my evaluation that I have a no-nonsense way about myself, so in some ways it can get you what you want; in some ways it could cause barriers, too, because sometimes people get defensive depending on how you approach them. I might be too strong sometimes on how I approach people, so sometimes it can be a hindrance; but at other times, when I need to be firm, it helps. Sometimes when I’m bringing things out in the open about a family, putting maybe the real issue that’s going on with the family out on the table, they don’t want to deal with it. They get defensive because you’re really pulling out the truth, but sometimes the truth hurts, so they don’t want to accept it. So sometimes that can backfire because I’m just not one to beat around the bush. “I’m here to help you. I’m here to help save your child’s life, and I don’t really have time for games,” so if I have to bring it out in the open, I just bring it out. In the courts, we have two male judges, it’s pretty matter-of-fact, like they want to know straightforward what’s going on, so, I have never had any problems.

However there are times when it seems like a battle that will never end. I mean, you’ll always have somebody that’s getting in trouble, and sometimes you get the support
of the office, but then there are times that you may want to make a decision about a particular case that you’re working on, that maybe the child needs to go to some type of placement, and you may not get that support that you need. So sometimes it can be an uphill battle. I just basically go in there with all my ducks in order and just basically let them know, “This is why I think that this child needs it.” And then I just tell them everything that’s going on, just to try to convince my supervisor to make the decision that I want, but it doesn’t always happen. I’ve had the same supervisor for twelve years, so at the beginning, I’m not going to say it was rough at the beginning with me and his personality, we clashed a lot, but I’m used to his style now and he’s used to mine, so I pretty much know what he’s going to say, and he pretty much knows how I’m going to respond now, so we don’t get into too many conflicts anymore.

LaKeem uses her assertive manner to negotiate for what she sees is in the best interest of the client. She is able to confront issues with her clients and within their families by drawing on her therapeutic background and is willing to argue her case with her supervisor and the courts. She may not always win but she is willing to fight for what she thinks will help the juvenile.

She also reflected on some gender issues that she has experienced in her job and the important role she plays as a woman of color.

Reflections on Gender Issues

In her discussion of gender issues in the workplace, LaKeem discussed the intersection of gender with race, in that she is both African American and a woman, and it’s of course impossible to separate one from the other. She also emphasized the importance of being a role model and making a difference to people:

I make a major difference, especially being an African-American woman. I would
say it’s not common in the community that I’m from that you have an African-American woman that’s educated and that works in a professional career-oriented position, so I think that’s a bit of a difference, and actually sometimes when I go into the office and I see families sitting there, sometimes I see a look of surprise that they see, “Oh, wow, there’s an African-American woman. I wonder what she is? Is she a secretary, or is she a probation officer.” And when they find out I’m a probation officer, they’re kind of like, “Oh, okay, good. Maybe she can relate better to me because she may understand my circumstances,” especially if it’s an African-American family. The juveniles you serve, say “Maybe I can do that, too.”

LaKeem sees herself as a role model for other women and clients of color. She prides herself on her accomplishments and identifies with her own role model, a black female judge, Judge Constance Motley:

I did a term paper on Judge Constance Motley. She’s deceased now. I think she died in 2005. She actually was a lawyer in the Civil Rights Movement and was pretty determined. She actually worked her way up to being a Federal judge by the time she was done with her career. Lyndon Johnson, President Lyndon Johnson actually appointed her to that. So I just liked her determination, and I feel like that’s how I am. I’m very determined, try to be focused. For instance, I earned my master’s degree, I graduate May 1st, and that was a journey in itself.

Just as Judge Motley has been a role model for her, she feels the need to be a role model for the young women with whom she works

Words of Wisdom for Women Entering the Field

In considering advice to women coming into the field LaKeem doesn’t focus on either
race or gender, but rather the notion of respect:

*I would just tell them that you’ve got to be prepared for all walks of life, and you have to be ready to work with a diverse population of people because if you’re not used to working with different types of people, it’s going to be difficult for you to get through your job, and you’ve got to actually keep your own, you can’t make judgment on people. You get to know them as people and respect them the way that you want to be respected. Even though I say I have that no-nonsense attitude, when I’m doing my job, I am very respectful. I want to treat people the way that I want to be treated, and that’s with respect. And as long as you respect people and treat them with manners, it’s kind of like customer service, not that you’re going to let them walk all over you, but as long as you have some type of charisma about yourself you can get along pretty well.*

*Closing Reflections*

LaKeem chose the field of probation and parole after feeling frustration as a family therapist. She chose to work in the juvenile system seeing it as a way to help rehabilitate young offenders and deter them from future criminal activity. To that end she had found that networking, communication and assertive skills are important tools that she uses when negotiating her own interests and those of her clients. She finds her job rewarding and believes she has been an instrument of change for many of her clients. Working in an office that is comprised of mostly women, including women of color, LaKeem didn’t discuss issues related to discrimination to any great degree and believes that she is respected both in her office and within the court system and emphasizes the importance of respect. However, she does discuss the intersection of race and gender in her job as an officer and believes she is a role model for other women of color and her clients.
CHAPTER 9

ALPHA

Many hats and many roles.

Alpha is white woman in her early forties who has been in the field of probation and parole for over twenty years.

Background

Alpha chose the field of criminal justice in college and began her career as a probation officer over twenty years. Her number one reason for choosing the field is that she enjoys working with people believing that she can help in some way and have a positive affect on them. She also likes the flexibility of the job and the variety saying that she is never bored. Over the years, Alpha has found it helpful and often necessary to vary the roles she plays, to wear many hats over the years to accomplish her job. More specifically, in exploring the metaphor of “many hats” she stated:

I picture a shelf with many hats on it, including; a police officer hat, a nurse’s hat, a therapist’s hat (that is if a therapist has a hat), different hats that you change according to the situation or the person you’re dealing with. A coach’s hat would probably be a bright color, maybe orange or red, just because it’s more upbeat, to motivate someone, to spark some energy in them, or maybe some hope that there is something positive that could happen if they put the energy into it. The police hat is black. I think a yellow hat for the times where I’m listening. Yellow, to me, is a comforting color, warm and understanding. And I think of green for when I’m doing a job search or coaching in that particular area. At times, I feel like a mother because some of the women I’ve worked with are very, very, young, so I would describe that hat as maybe blue. I’d rather wear
the working with someone hat, educating, motivating, and giving them one more opportunity. And I’d rather wear the counselor, the nurse, or the mother hat. I get more satisfaction out of that rather than that of enforcement.

I ran into an ex-client of mine the other day and she hasn’t been in the system for ten years or more, is working, going to school and getting a degree, and I just thought wow. And I’m sure there are more people out there as a result of being on supervision who have positive changes in their life. I don’t know. Maybe they made a mistake and just happened to be in our system, but I do think that we affect people in a positive way. Sometimes you can’t see it, but I truly believe that they’re out there and maybe that’s what it is all about.

The thing Alpha likes least about the job is the negativity that can arise from the clients who, “don’t want to better themselves, to watch them go through the court system, through jail and recommit offenses, and continue the cycle; it can consume you if you’re not careful.”

According to Alpha, the field of probation and parole can be physically challenging and unpleasant, not a glamorous job, and not a field you would choose for the pay. She advises that to be successful a woman needs to, “earn respect because you are the weaker person, a physical aspect that is definitely a factor.”

Negotiating Power and Interests

In analyzing how Alpha negotiates power and interest, it is apparent that she emphasized the importance of communication and building networks. She indicated some awareness of gender issues, but her analysis of these dynamics was somewhat limited.

Communication is absolutely key to the way that Alpha negotiates power and interest. She talked of special projects she has been involved in since she began her career that center on
women’s issues and are designed to empower and deter women from criminal behavior by providing support and resources within the community. She identifies communication as the key to getting things done, enabling her to negotiate within systems and to network with other agencies. Alpha constantly references “we” as a united group of people working together to get things done rather than as an individual:

_I love the folks that I work with, my coworkers and my boss. There’s camaraderie and whether you like each other or not, we will protect each other, and there’s some comfort in that. The can be very frustrating, but I know it really well. I’m comfortable at this job. I know what I’m doing, and I feel comfortable that if somebody asks me a question, I can, for the most part, can give them a pretty educated answer to it. So that might be part of it, too. Kind of come in to sort of a comfort zone._

Alpha clearly has a good sense of networking and communication, and has a good sense of “we-ness” as the way to accomplish her goals.

_A Limited Analysis of Gender_

Discussing gender issues within her system, Alpha could identify times within the court system when the respect for women in general was lacking, but as a whole, she doesn’t feel it is a major issue; she has an awareness of it, but her analysis of gender was somewhat limited. This is apparent in the following narrative fragment:

_One time there was an issue with one particular judge dealing with a female offender. Female offenders are always looked at like, I don’t know, collateral, and the issues were serious and the judge just did not, I mean, she needed to be held accountable at this point, and I guess he just did not feel a female should go to jail, and he had no respect for female probation officers, it was obvious. It was very obvious because you could see it in_
the way he treated public defenders or whoever the female was in the professional position.

Alpha is clear about her role as an officer of the court holding her clients equally accountable for their actions regardless of their gender. However, within the court system she has experienced and witnessed demeaning, dismissing attitudes towards all women of all status.

Alpha discussed gender differences when dealing with clients describing her experience as “exhausting” especially working with female offenders. She identifies some unique characteristics that she sees women possessing that are different from men she has worked with:

Although I love working with women, don’t get me wrong, but it takes probably ten times as much energy to deal with females as it does males. I think because we’re very complex, emotional, we’re caretakers. There are just a lot of different things involved with females that males just don’t let show. And women, we just put it all out there, so we have a lot to deal with.

Advice to Women Coming into the Field.

Alpha emphasizes the need for women to be patient, flexible, and in a caregiver role, traits that often see as feminist traits. This is evident in her comments regarding women coming into the field:

Don’t take things personally and keep an open mind and that you can learn a lot about yourself in the process that can benefit you when you deal with others. Learn from your experiences, I think that’s how we grow in this field. You’re not going to know everything. It takes a long time. I would say you’re a rookie for the first three years in this business, at least, until you get a base. I just think it’s a growing experience, and every year you just learn more, and the better you become at recognizing your own shortcomings or needs and issues, the better you can help others. And sometimes you can
be very passionate about it and put a lot of energy into it, and no matter what you do, that individual is not going to do it.

So in order to save yourself from burn out you have to learn to kind of distance yourself from becoming that involved. And I don’t want to say you’re just processing people but, to some extent, you have to be able to have a happy medium where you do that and know which cases to put some energy into and which ones that, you know, no matter what you do, it’s not going to, at that moment in time, it may not change it. Sometimes I could use a little more patience. That’s always helpful. And not to be judgmental because it’s very easy to become judgmental. I don’t think I was initially, but you can become very judgmental. And keep in mind that this is a small portion of our population that we deal with. It’s not quite that bad.

I guess it’s in your blood sort of. I think the folks that come into this field and stay in this field, whether you’re male or female, there is a certain love for the job. I’ve had other jobs, and actually in the middle of the twenty years I’ve been here, I went and did two very different types of work, and I just thought I really like being a probation officer. The hours sometimes can be long but they’re somewhat flexible. There’s variety in it. You’re working with different kinds of people, all ages, and all ethnic backgrounds. It’s just – it doesn’t pay well, but it’s somehow fulfilling in other ways. It has to be or otherwise I would have been out of here. That’s what I keep telling myself.

Alpha does discuss discrimination briefly within the context of the courts where she sees women being treated differently because of their gender. However, she doesn’t identify gender issues as problematic for her. She has been in the field for many years and seems to accept the inequities within the courts as something that is disturbing but not much she can do anything
about. However, in her day to day world she strives to treat everyone equally with respect.

There is a hint of gender analysis in the character she chose to identify with from pop culture. She chose the character of Mariska Hargitay in the role of Olivia on Law and Order to identify with:

- She *makes you look at your own issues, and I think she’s a strong female who works in a predominantly male world whose street tough but I think takes care of herself. But, you know, personal issues can affect your professional performance, and vice versa, and I just think she’s a neat character. She’s passionate, she’s tough when she needs to be tough, and burns out, comes back, burns out, comes back, you know. And she’s, I think, loyal to her partner. I think probation officers are pretty loyal to each other, even if they don’t like each other. When it gets right down to it, we’re pretty loyal.*

She refers to Olivia as a strong woman whom she admires, but doesn’t really deal much with gender beyond this.

*Closing Reflections*

Alpha chose the field of probation and parole while attending college. She has spent many years developing her relationships with her clients and networking within the community. From those relationships she has been able to get things done, to navigate and negotiate through the system. It is quite evident that she cares for her clients and is willing to play whatever role is necessary to make a connection with them. She takes pride in her ability to make a difference in their live. Alpha doesn’t see gender as a major factor in her experiences but is aware that it can be an issue in some circumstances within the criminal justice system. Perhaps she may not identify gender as a major issue because she has worked in the patriarchal system for over twenty years and has learned to accept and compartmentalize the few inequities she sees as status quo
and feels there is little can be done to change it. In her own day to day life she chooses to maintain a positive attitude and has the same expectations of all her clients regardless of their gender.
CHAPTER 10

CHLOE

It’s not like Groundhog Day.

Chloe is a white woman in her late forties who has been in the field of probation and parole for over twenty-five years.

Background

Chloe entered college as a business major and eventually switched to the field of criminal justice:

I actually was a business major when I went to school. In high school I had difficulty with math and science, so I was struggling in the business field with some math subjects, and a girl I went to high school with told me that I needed to get into the human relation, human services or sciences, she says, because then you don’t have to take any science or math courses, and I was like, “That sounds great.” I had always been interested in crime and law as far as reading. I just loved reading those kinds of books, so I kind of fell into it. It just so happens that the school I went to was known for being a very good criminology school. So that’s how I ended up in the field.

Joys and Frustrations

Chloe expressed mixed feelings when reflecting on what she enjoys the most and least about her job. She discusses highs and lows over the years and says the clients “lack of success due to recidivism” as one of the things she least likes about her job.

I don’t know if this is something that you should enjoy the most because it’s kind of sad, but just that every day is totally different than the next. I mean, it’s just unbelievable the stories you hear. It makes you appreciate where you’ve come from. It’s really sad
and I guess that part of me is trying to change that, although we’re not getting very far. Well, I’ve been handling a certain caseload since ‘94, however long that’s been, and I really don’t deal with the clients like I used to. I use to have a caseload of primarily men for like eleven years. I had a few women. Now we have a unit that is strictly for the female offenders. When I supervised a caseload, I had one girl who I remember to this day and always will, I won’t name any names other than to say that she was a prostitute with a drug problem, which pretty much goes hand in hand. But she was a likable person. I mean, she used to go on and on about stuff and she was in and out of jail due to drugs, and after a period of time, admitted to me how she got into the prostitution because of being abused as a child. I mean, it was just very sad. Never did get off the drugs and then ended up eventually dying from AIDS. It’s a sad story, but I just knew underneath all that drugging and everything, there was a good person that wanted to come out but just was too far gone. And I remember her, she knew everybody when she came in here just from being on probation for so long. So she’s really the one person that I think about and feel for and wish I could have done more for.

It is pretty much is a thankless job, it really is, and yet the few people that do make it, it’s wonderful. I’ve even had some people from years ago that have come back and credit me for them turning around. I have a guy that I had back when I had a caseload and he’s now at a local rescue mission in a managerial position. He tells people that I’m the one that got him where he is today, which is not true. I was a support system. Thus, while Chloe finds her job emotionally demanding and hears many sad stories, she focuses on the ways that it’s rewarding, which keeps her going.

Chloe describes herself as a “chameleon” in explaining her role as a probation and parole
officer, and then went on to explain how:

You're a social worker, you're a drug/alcohol counselor, and you're law enforcement. I see myself more in the role of a social worker. If I can feel the client really opening up to me and then telling me, “Thank you for listening, I don’t have anybody that listens to me”, I think that’s bright and cheery.

Negotiating Power and Interests

Chloe says that she has struggled at times and found it difficult to negotiate for what she wants and for what her clients’ need. Reflecting on some of the difficulties she told the following stories:

I don’t have a problem well, I shouldn’t say that. The courts aggravate you because you don’t always get what you want when you go to court or take somebody in for a violation. That’s one of the reasons why I got away from supervising a caseload. I did all that I could prior to taking that person back to court. I gave them more chances than you should have, and you hope that by going to court the judge would follow through with your recommendation rather than giving the person another chance and another chance after that. It just used to be so frustrating to me.

I can remember a case where I took the client back to court many times, I don’t remember what for, but I do remember appearing before a judge several times with this individual. I also had to go to his house because the judge directed me to because of transportation issues. In court the judge said, “if it wasn’t for your pretty little wife in the back of the courtroom, you’d be going to jail today.” And then to have to meet that client again after I got my hands slapped by the judge, it was difficult. I remember him very well.
Chloe discussed the frustrations she felt after seeing her client continually violate the court mandated conditions of supervision and then when brought before the courts, the judge treated it as a minor infraction and allowed the client to go home. She believed her authority was being comprised by the court. She had already made allowance for the client who continued to violate the rules which resulted in the court appearance. The court ignored her recommendation in front of the client feeling like a “slap of the hand”, an affront to her judgment and authority. However, she still had to supervise the client knowing that her voice would fall on deaf ears in the court. She chose to change positions in the office to avoid similar situations.

Chloe discussed forms of power at work within the system though she does not discuss or identify gender issues as playing a role in the experiences. She discusses power in the following situations: employees taking advantage of the system, power over the clients, and internal struggle with the power that comes with the position and within the hierarchy.

*Taking advantage of the system.* Chloe says there are times when coworkers have manipulated the system to their advantage:

> As far as the powers to be here, there needs to be a little more delegating. I’m just speaking for my county; I don’t know if it’s across the board with county probation officers, but there’s not a whole lot of accountability. One of the perks of this job is that we have comp time, which means if you work over you can take off at a later time or whatever. But I just see in here; it’s not necessarily the new people; it’s people that have been here for a long time, they get away with stuff that they shouldn’t. You go to supervisors and they say their hands are tied because the people that are above them won’t do anything about it. It leaves a bad name for the probation department.

> I don’t know if it’s because I’m older, but just within the last couple years, I’m
becoming intolerant of it. I’m soon to be retired, so it wouldn’t behoove me to go anywhere else, but I pretty much keep to myself anymore. But I have to say that I do appreciate this job for the flexibility and I also appreciate that I’m able to go home and put work aside.

*Power over the client.* Chloe identifies the power and authority officers have over their clients:

> There is power in our job and I see this role extending beyond the work place. We kind of have the power over clients’ freedom. We also have the authority to, I don’t want to say make threats, but we don’t have to be real diplomatic like people in private industry do. You get an upset client in private industry, and you have to kowtow and suck up and try to make it all good; whereas in our profession, pretty much what we say goes. We’re willing to listen to what the client says, but bottom line, it’s what we need them to do or what they have to do in order not to go to jail. We just threaten with pseudo power; but ultimately it’s the judge that has the power, we are the ones that represent that power. I like that very much.

> I find in the real world, not that this isn’t the real world; I just assume the power that I have in the office should extend outside my job, and it doesn’t always go my way. So I tend to get frustrated pretty easily, but I have to understand that I don’t have the power out there that I have here.

Chloe discussed the power she wields over clients and the conflict she has with that sense of power away from the job.

*Internal power struggle and within the hierarchy.* Chloe discussed other times when she felt conflicted with the power within the hierarchy and her personality.
Our director has power. I’m having some internal strife presently because what I want isn’t happening. It’s the power struggle within the hierarchy. It’s a power struggle with the judges too. Despite what we present to them or tell them about a client, they can side the other way; “I’m going to give this person another chance,” even though we’ve given them all the chances we could. We actually want the judges to back us and say, “she’s done this, this, and this to help you, and you haven’t helped yourself or done what you’re supposed to do therefore; we’re going to go with what she recommends.” But it doesn’t always happen that way and that was one of the reasons I got out of having a regular caseload because that was just so frustrating to me. The clients have the power to do the right thing, whether or not they do, that’s totally up to them. I try to guide them in the right direction, but ultimately it has to come from them.

Being straightforward with clients and wearing our heart on our sleeve and tell them what we really think can be effective. Whereas, with the powers that be in here I tend to over-react, I guess. I consider myself to be a pretty shy, introverted person, so a different side of me comes out with my clients as compared to the outside world. I’m tough only because I’m the type A personality and things have to be done, but I try to be a nice person to get that job done. I don’t think you’re doing a client any favor if you’re allow them to manipulate the system and let them get off with a dirty urine. In the long run it’s not helping them at all.

Chloe discussed issues of power coming from many sources: internally in the agency, from the courts, and her personal power as an officer. She discussed the frustration that comes from many years of trying to negotiate her interests and those of her clients.
Limited Analysis of Gender

Chloe did indicate some sense of gender dynamics, but overall her analysis of gender was limited. She does discuss her height as one physical trait that has helped her in her career:

_I’m very tall and I’m not sure that I would have gone in this field if I was five foot because I probably would have been intimidated by the clientele. I find a lot are intimidated by me because of my height. You get the guys that want to call you “hon,” trying to be friendlier than they should be. I’m not hesitant to call them on the carpet about that. I think having that so-called power helps women; it kind of gives us a one up. I have power in my height as a woman as I mentioned. It’s not so much that I feel it, it’s just the feedback that I get from other people that they’re intimidated by me because I’m so tall. Okay, well, that kind of gives me a sense of power._

Chloe discussed her gender as related to her tall physical presence and the intimidation factor that she believes she carries as compared to shorter women. She discussed power that comes from being an officer but nothing specifically related to gender. Her choice of Marissa on _Law and Order_ in the special victims unit and the reason for her choice as someone she relates to indicates some degree of how she views herself as a woman from a gendered perspective:

_They send her in to talk to the victims because you need to be sympathetic to what they’ve been through. You know women have a more nurturing role and supportive role especially with that type of victim than I think men do. I don’t have a problem delving into what my clients do or have done. There was a client that I’ll never forget, the one that came in here and would just kind of pour her heart out to me and then ended up dying of AIDS. She was on for prostitution for years and had a bad childhood. That’s probably why she became a prostitute, and then the drugs._
I don’t have a problem with asking very personal questions. And not just with my clients because I think they really want you to try to kind of dig deep, to get to the root, and have somebody to talk to. I also hear other people outside of my job say “Just have Chloe ask her. She’ll ask her.” But I don’t see myself like that outside of the work place, and yet others do.

Chloe refers to Olivia as having more sympathetic, nurturing, and supportive womanly characteristics as compared to men. She further discusses her own ability to confront delicate issues and to help her clients find solutions to their problems rather than just glazing over them.

*Words of Wisdom for Women Entering the Field of Probation and Parole.*

Chloe highlighted the fact that working in probation and parole is different all the time. In particular, she explains:

*It’s not like Groundhog Day. It’s the opposite of that. Every day brings a new challenge, a new situation, a new scenario, a new problem. Some days are better than others. If you’re getting in the field because you think you can make a difference, you really can’t. The numbers are overwhelming, the caseloads are horrendous, and paper work is just unbelievable. If you could have a caseload of 10 or 15 people, you could actually work with them and give them some time but unfortunately that’s not the case.*

*I think everybody needs to take a vacation once a year because the longer you’re in this job, if you don’t take vacations, things become mundane, nothing affects you. Vacation makes you more energized and helps you finally do the stuff that you’ve been putting off and putting to the side. You want to get things done and it just lifts your spirits to actually do it. And obviously being successful with clients is nice and will obviously make you feel good. Like I said, everybody needs to take a break to get you back on track*
and to get things going in the right direction again, because this job can be pretty depressing. Being able to take time away from the job and eventual retirement is what keeps me going.

Closing Reflections

Chloe has been in the field of probation/parole for many years and takes pride in the relationships she has developed with her clients and the success some her clients have experienced. Despite her frustration with the hierarchy of the system, she has found ways to deal with stress and negotiate and advocate for her clients. She briefly discussed gender issues, first by discussing her physical height as being an asset that has enhanced her position of authority.

Secondly, she identified with a woman detective on T.V. who displayed womanly characteristics of sympathy and compassion. She believes that caring about her clients and allowing them to tell their story to get to the core of their problems is a way of negotiating interests with her client. Perhaps gender is not a central issue to her because she feels equal to her male colleagues and draws her sense of power from her physical stature and presence. Furthermore, she has been in the field for many years and has learned that taking time for herself away from the job is a way of negotiating her own interests.
CHAPTER 11

KYLIE

Network junkie

Kylie is a white woman in her mid thirties and has worked in probation and parole for over nine years.

Background

Kylie explained how she became interested in the field of criminal justice from her return to school after being a stay-at-home- mom, and in light of meeting a probation officer.

“When I started my undergrad, I was very interested in law, so I wasn’t sure if I wanted to go that track. I was interested in the criminal justice field, as well. I was raised in a small town where basically the mentality was you finish your high school career and you get married and you have children and you’re a stay-at-home mom. So I had children very young and went through that whole process.

Within two years I quickly decided that wasn’t for me, that I needed to have a career and so from there went on to then do my undergrad. I had an acquaintance that had a few run-ins due to some drinking issues and that was my first exposure to even knowing what a probation officer was or what they did. I found that to be very intriguing. While this officer was visiting my friend, I was asking questions about how do you get into this, what is it that you do, and he had some good information. So I started looking into some of the local schools to see what they offered along those lines. What I found was a one-year criminal justice certificate or a two-year degree. There was not a four-year degree at that time in criminal justice, at least in the universities that were around me. If you wanted to pursue criminal justice in a four-year degree, you had to take sociology and
then there were criminology classes. But, they fell under the sociology major, and so I had started out thinking in the short term that this is going to be a one or a two-year thing for me and that would be enough; that I could go on and do what I want to do. I quickly realized that that wasn’t going to cut it.

During my first semester, I took a criminal law course and that really convinced me that this was the field that I wanted to be in but, at the same time, it also convinced me that one year wasn’t going to be enough for me. I really was enjoying school, being a student, I wanted to learn more. I became a sociology major within the first semester, and I found it to be a very well-rounded curriculum and really enjoyed that. So that’s how I got into the field.

I knew right away when I started this process with my education that my goal was to be a probation officer. It wasn’t an easy task in the area that I lived in because there wasn’t a very big department and so there weren’t very many job opportunities. I knew, going in, that it was probably something that I would end up having to transfer out of the area. I actually had an opportunity while I was still in college and was doing a couple part-time jobs.

One of my part-time jobs was working with adolescent substance abusers in a residential facility. That exposed me more to juveniles seeing them going through the juvenile justice system and how they arrived at rehab and those kinds of things. So that fed it a little bit more. And then an opportunity arose to intern with the local department. I took advantage of that, and struck up a friendship with someone within the department that kind of took me under their wing. Then when a project opportunity came up and they needed to hire someone for a position, I was hired. I didn’t work it as a probation officer,
but in a different venue with the court working with juveniles for a few years. In the meantime I put in resumes at other departments across the state, in counties where I was willing to move to and that I was somewhat familiar with. I was contacted by one of those counties and asked to come work there, and quickly took the opportunity.

Kylie discussed her first exposure to the field of probation and parole and her desire to follow that path. She explained how she worked her way through the system to get the position that she wanted. As in all jobs, there are highs and lows. In her discussion, Kylie reflected on some of her joys and frustrations in the field.

*Joys and Frustrations*

While reflecting on one of the times when she enjoyed her work the most, Kylie told the following story which highlights when her job was particularly rewarding:

*I was with a family that I had been working with for only a few short months, but things were so intense with this family that in a couple of months I had more contact with that family than I probably have had with many cases over a six-month period. There were some episodes with this kid needing to go to crisis and multiple issues with mental health problems that were going on home. Not to mention the fact that this juvenile and his father both had learning disabilities, and the mother was deceased and there wasn’t really an understanding of how the system works or nobody really explaining to them how they arrived where they were with probation and what it was. There was an aunt who was kind of an advocate for the family to make sure that legally they understood some of what was going on, to give you some background on this whole family dynamic.*

*I sat down with the family before I left the department and explained to them that I was going to be leaving and I was sorry for that and had requested a particular PO to*
work with them that I thought would understand a little bit of where this kid was coming from and not just be out to nail him when he did something wrong. Obviously, he needed to be held accountable, but I didn’t want somebody who wasn’t going to not inquire as to why some of these things were going on knowing that the kid had mental health issues. The family was very glad that I respected them enough to tell them this without just leaving and dropping the ball. They said, “We’re really going to miss you.” Well, who tells their PO that they’re going to miss them, but we had been through a good bit with taking this kid to crisis and trying to understand some of the issues that were going on with him and really talk to me. When it looked like he was having probation violations, on the surface, someone would say, “he violated electronic monitoring, so he needs to be detained, that’s pretty obvious.” Well, with this kid, you had to probe a little deeper, and the problem was there was a lot of friction in the home between he and dad. He had trouble expressing his emotions appropriately, and the way that he was able to calm himself down, which was a better way than being confrontive and combative, he would leave and go walk around for awhile. He was just removing himself from the situation. He wasn’t violating to go hang out with kids at a party, which is a big difference than taking a walk around the block for a half hour to cool down so you don’t do something you’re going to regret.

I think that it takes a lot of understanding to probe a little bit deeper and make sure you know what you’re dealing with. It was really rewarding to work with that family, and even though we hadn’t accomplished as much at that point as I would have liked to when I had left the case, I felt comfortable with who I passed it on to that they would be able to pick up where I left off. But it was just one of those feelings where you feel like there’s a
family that’s really trying because that family certainly was.

Kylie finds her work quite rewarding as evident from the previous story. She discussed her experience as a probation/parole officer:

It has been a positive experience for me. I really enjoy working with the families and the juveniles. When I go to court, there is a sense of pride that I’ve researched as much as I could and I was making the best possible recommendation for that family.

Like any job, there is a down side. Paperwork is what Kylie likes the least about being a probation officer as she explained:

I don’t like paperwork. I think that’s probably a common theme for most PO’s, at least that I know. You get into the field because you want to work with clients and families, and you find that very little of your time can be devoted to that because there’s so much paperwork involved, and we’re regulated by various systems, so you have to try to find a balance. Even with a caseload of 30-40 people, it’s very difficult to manage a caseload like that, and you wouldn’t think to see those people maybe once or twice during the month, or depending on the level of supervision that they were on, that that would be very difficult, but it is, and it is because there’s so much paperwork involved.

This sums up Kylie’s background and identifies some of the positive as well as negative experiences she has had in her career. She does go on to discuss how she is able to negotiate for her clients as well as herself.

Negotiating Power and Interest: Building Relationships

Kylie discussed ways she uses to negotiate power and interest for herself and her clients. Mostly she deals with this by networking and building relationships to get things done and manage within systems.
Networking. Networking was one of her key negotiating strategies. She explains why by saying:

The key is having those networking capabilities that you know who to call and you have a good working relationship with them and where you can get what you need for your clients. As far as navigating through some of the systems, I think that that’s something that comes with time being a PO. I really think that’s key because if you don’t establish that or if you’re fairly new to the field and you don’t know where to go for resources, I think it’s a little more frustrating, a little more difficult to tap into those.

I was always a networking junkie, I guess, and got to know as many people in different systems as I could, or at least who the contacts were in those so that I knew who to go to when I needed something in particular. However, there was a problem when staff turnover was high and you were constantly dealing with someone new, and they might not know so much of what’s going on. I guess it really just varied from agency to agency or from school to school. You might have a good working relationship with one school district, but not with another. Key is organization.

Building relationships. Kylie then went on more specifically to discuss the importance of building relationships with the court system:

Working within the court system I think that I am fortunate to work in a county where most of the arms of the court work together as advocates for the juvenile. They are interested in the kid’s best interest. And usually, we have good working relationships with the district attorney’s office and the public defender, and our judges are very approachable if there were certain special issues that came up or something like that. Usually, that works very well to have those relationships. Even when a public defender
would be in opposition to our recommendation, they still understood why we were recommending what we were, but they had the duty of representing their client and they were good at that. So I think there was a mutual respect between the parties that, “Well, we understand your position, but please respect ours.”

Dealing with the Complexities of Gender. Kylie says that there have been times in her career when her gender was in play. When she acknowledged the complexity of the subject and of gender dynamics, at times in her discussion she appeared to be harder on women. This is evident in her story below:

*I think this is on multiple levels. I think that in some regards your coworkers, particularly male, don’t really feel comfortable going on arrests with you and having you back them up because of your gender. I would get very upset with females in my department who would play into that role and didn’t want to do arrests, weren’t serious about using equipment even though they were properly trained, wouldn’t take the equipment with them. They played a helpless role. And the ones who wanted males, they wanted the biggest males they could find to go out with them. What is that saying about the females in the office who really want some equality and want to be respected in this, we weren’t stupid about it. If we had a particularly large male client and we needed to arrest, it wasn’t like we were going to take three female officers and go out there and try to handle this person ourselves.

The bottom line is there’s a stereotype, maybe that’s subsided some, but I believe when I started there was really a stereotype that you couldn’t be a PO if you were a female because you had to be this big strong person that could take down a client. So they were looking more from a law enforcement perspective than they were a social work
perspective and not seeing that that’s all females are good for because that’s not true.

Let’s face it, females are built smaller, so you do have to, a certain extent, rely on the de-
escalation skills to talk clients down, but I think that’s regardless of whether you’re male
or female. You should be practicing those things anyway. And I think that affects the
way your clients then view you, also, because they think, “Well, this person should be
bigger than me and they should be stronger.”

But Kylie has a more nuanced view on dealing with the complexities of gender in the
field, and how women need to negotiate gender differences. This is evident in her comments
below:

When you are female, then you have to rely more on your position of authority. I
think where a lot of females that I worked with got frustrated was they felt these
frustrations of the stereotypes, and on top of that got frustrated if they couldn’t get a
client to do what it was that they wanted them to do. You have to learn not to take that
personally, and you have to be able to understand that you’re laying out choices for
people. You’re giving them the tools to make good decisions, and they can take your
advice, they can take the tools you’ve given them and use them, or they don’t. If you’re
giving them the information and they don’t follow through, that’s not a reflection on you,
you’re not going to be the one that’s suffering the consequences of that, they are. And
that is what I try to portray to my clients. “Look, I’m telling you what it is I think you
need to do and if you don’t do it, there are what the consequences are, and you’re the one
ultimately that’s going to be facing the judge and explaining why you didn’t do this, or
your parents, or the school, whoever’s involved.”

Kylie in essence explained that women need to deal with their positions in a somewhat
different way, partly because of their size differences with men, and with their situations by using their clear communication and negotiating skills. Both her frustration and her negotiation skills are evident in the following story:

*I would say that, at times, it has been frustrating for me, but I would tactfully sometimes verbalize my thoughts if I felt like someone was discriminating against me for being a female. I don’t take to that very kindly. One time I was going out on a spur-of-the-moment arrest that happened within the office, and it was myself and two other officers that were supposed to go out to pick up this male, and I was perfectly capable of doing it. I was one of our arrest instructors, so I was very safety oriented, and the supervisor of the day went to one of the other officers that was going on this arrest and suggested that they take another male rather than take me out on this. I went and talked to him and I said, “Do you feel that I’m not capable of doing my job because it’s really important for me to know this.

I am one of our safety instructors and what kind of message are you sending to the rest of the staff, especially the ones that are involved in this and know what’s going on, that I’m not capable to go out and do that? How does that affect my credibility as being an instructor?” And he apologized and everything, but it was just probably one of many examples where I thought I was discriminated against for being a woman.

I think that along with my size, because I’m very petite, gave a lot of males especially the impression that I probably shouldn’t have been an instructor because how am I really going to take down some big person. I don’t think that that went over real well. I know that the females really appreciated having a female to work with, and it was refreshing for them to see that size didn’t always matter, or being a female didn’t matter, that they
would see in demonstrations that I was perfectly capable of being in control of someone because it’s more about getting someone’s momentum, falling in a certain direction, than it is size.

Kylie discussed situations where she felt her gender was an issue for some of the men she works with. She explained how she was able to confront the dismissive and demeaning attitude she felt and prove that she is quite capable of doing the job she was hired to do. She sees herself as a role model for other women in her office. She offered some advice to women coming into the field.

Recommendations for Women Entering the Field

Kylie offers some words of wisdom for women entering the field and believes there is a need for more women as she explains;

I would say to definitely pursue it. I think there needs to be good representation in the field, although I feel that it’s been balanced out really well, at least in juvenile. I’m not sure about adult. Basically, if you really want to be in this field, take it seriously and want to be a probation officer on all levels, understanding that there are multi duties to this job, and you shouldn’t be afraid to handle certain aspects of the job. You should be prepared to deal with anything because something could happen unintentionally and you need to be prepared to deal with it.

I’m not sure if this affects why there are more women coming into the field, but I think it affects why more males are going out of the field. A lot of males come into probation wanting to be police officers and when they realize that this contains knowing things about the law, about the mental health system, about the education system, and just wearing so many different hats. If they are very community protection oriented, they
quickly learn that the job’s not for them and they leave to become police officers. I don’t recall ever having a time when a female left our department to be a police officer. They might have left to do other things, guidance counselors, or various other duties, but sometimes when male officers leave, that’s the direction that they head. Prior to really using the balanced and restorative justice approach, we were very community protection oriented.

I think a lot of people didn’t come into this field intentionally. They didn’t go to school thinking that this is what they wanted to do, but they quickly learned when they’re in criminal justice courses in college that is one of the opportunities available to them. And because a lot of chiefs or deputy chiefs from various probation departments work as adjunct professors, sometimes they have a lead-in to, “Well, you should apply here. You do a good job in the class, you would probably be good in this field.” So I think there’s probably a little bit of coaching that goes on there, and knowing somebody when you apply that knows your work and what kind of conscientious person you are.

Closing Reflections

Kylie purposely chose the field of probation and parole prior to entering college. Throughout her career she has developed ways of negotiating not only her own interests but also the interests of her clients. By networking within the community and the courts, Kylie has found ways to get things done, to get needed services for her clients and to also establish credibility with her peers. During her discussion it became evident that Kylie is very aware of gender issues within her field. In some ways she appears to be impatient and hard on women colleagues who have chosen to work in the field, are trained to do difficult tasks such as making arrests, and say they want to be treated equally; but when put to the task they fall into a helpless role and depend
on the men to do the job. She has worked hard to prove that she is capable of doing the job the same as her male colleagues and expects the same from other women in the field. Kylie prides herself on being able to communicate and negotiate with her male colleagues to assure that she is treated as an equal. She takes pride in her work and her expertise in the skills that are necessary to do the job and she gives as well as expects mutual respect from her clients as well as her colleagues. Connecting with and developing a relationship with her clients is one of the reasons she stays in the field. It is quite evident that Kayla sees her role as an advocate who truly cares about her clients and appreciates the importance of her role within their lives.
PART III

CHAPTER 12

CONCLUSIONS

The third and final section of this study, and this final chapter identifies the significant findings and themes from the narratives and ties them to the literature of adult education, criminal justice education and critical feminist theory in light of this study’s purpose: to explore the ways women who are probation and parole officers learn to negotiate power and interest within the criminal justice system. In the first section, themes, themes across all the narratives are discussed in light of the literature, whereas in the second section implications for theory, practice and future research are considered. Finally, the chapter ends with some personal reflections on the journey of the study.

Emerging Themes Across the Narratives

As a preface to considering the common threads across the narratives, some contextual remarks on the lives of probation and parole officers are in order. Probation and parole officers recognize that quite often the people who commit crimes are looked upon by society as the “others”, the ones who need to be locked up and out of sight. For probation and parole officers, those who commit crimes are the center of their work experiences. Authorized as officers of the court, probation and parole officers are the eyes and ears of the courts, providing levels of supervision that will assist the clients to become rehabilitated and accountable for their criminal behavior possibly deterring them from future criminal behavior (Petersilia, 1997; Senna & Siegel, 1993). For the women in this study the job is not just a paycheck, it’s a sincere desire to help the client to move beyond the situations that got them into trouble in the first place, to end the cycle.
The women who shared their stories in the previous chapters chose the job of probation/parole officer for various reasons: some from exposure to the job while working in community programs: others through association with officers in their personal life, and others while attending college. What ever avenues led the women into the field, they all have found aspects of the job that were rewarding.

The women officers are charged with overseeing criminal offenders and take their role very seriously, however, the human side and compassion for the life experiences of their clients is evident throughout their stories. The stories tell of the pain and joy they have witnessed and shared with clients, and of trying to offer help at any time and at any place. Further, there was a sense of connection with others in their field and a willingness to share their knowledge and experiences.

Three significant areas emerged from the narratives of the women. The first area was the caring and connectedness that the women have for their clients as revealed throughout their stories. The next major area involved the ways the women found to negotiate power and interest for their clients. The stories tell of the perseverance of the women who found ways to navigate within the constraints of the systems, how they learned the ropes and became seasoned veterans knowing that persistence and perseverance eventually paid off. Finally, the women were aware of but did not emphasized their gender in the field. The women appeared to place their gender secondary to being officers quite capable of doing the job they were hired to do. Each of these three themes is discussed further below.

**Caring and Connectedness with Clients and the Community**

The women in this study expressed a deep sense of caring about the welfare of their clients and were willing to go above and beyond their duties as officers to empower them to
make positive changes in their lives. This is not particularly surprising. The traditional view of law enforcement is certainly not one of caring and concern. However, the field of policing, parallel to probation and parole, is shifting to a more community type policing model that emphasizes an ethic of care, a more social-worker driven method of cooperation, peacemaking, empathy, and informal interactions with the public, all characteristically considered women’s policing styles (Garcia, 2003; Miller, 1998). Parsons and Jesilow (2001) echo the need for the field of law enforcement to change from overemphasis on law enforcement to one of problem solving and communication and connection with the community they serve.

The women in this study found ways of creating their own community probation and parole by blending their role as law enforcement with what is often seen as the feminine traits of caring and compassion for their clients (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982). The women discussed several ways they use to show their concern for the welfare of their clients such as, developing long term relationships: by being tough when necessary, and sharing in their accomplishments and rewarding them for their successes.

**Developing long-term relationships.** The women spoke of long term relationships with their clients that extended long after they completed their time of supervision. A few spoke about having coffee and going to dinner with their clients just to keep in touch after they were off supervision. They are kept in the loop when babies are born and about other life experiences. Others chose to live in the same neighborhoods as their clients, creating a life-long relationship. For example:

Lee discussed her long term relationships with former clients and noted:

*I have people that stop in to see me after they’ve been off supervision. I even get Christmas cards from old clients saying, “I’m still doing good.”* (Chapter 5)
Similarly, Ellen spoke of how her relationship and caring for her client extended beyond her official duties;

*I gave her a letter of recommendation and she’s actually got a job working in the mental health field. We still keep in touch; I had coffee with her a couple of weeks ago.*

(Chapter 4)

Interestingly, the three women of color, Niaya, LaKeem and Kim all spoke of the connections they were able to make with their client and the cultural and social equity that drew from because they lived in the same general neighborhoods and communities and had similar experiences. They were part of the same world, they shopped at the same stores and in Niaya’s case, attended the same schools. This gave these women of color an edge in dealing with their clients. Niaya explained:

*When I first started years ago, many of the teachers that I had were still there, so that made the job with the school a whole lot easier because they already knew who I was, and then I could relate to the kids because I came here, I know what you went through, I live in your community, I know.* (Chapter 7)

Some of the women spoke of long term relationships not only with their client but also with the family. Kylie spoke of a family with whom that she had developed a close relationship and was able to use her professional role to advocate for their son. When it was necessary to transfer the case to another officer she was told by the family that they were going to miss her, quite a rare comment for a probation officer. As Kylie says;

*Well, who tells their PO that they’re going to miss them? It was really rewarding to work with that family. It was just one of those feelings where you feel like there’s a family that’s really trying.* (Chapter 11)
Niaya spoke of how the relationships with the client and the parents can seem to have a positive effect on the client’s siblings as well:

The relationship you build is not just the juvenile but with the siblings and the parents. I think it’s always a great deterrent to use to not get the siblings involved with the system, they can kind of learn from the sibling that’s involved with us. I think that is what I love the most. (Chapter 7).

The relationships the women have made with their clients show that they are willing to do whatever is necessary, not only to do the job, but also empathize with the life situations of their clients. Some have also developed creative methods of engaging difficult clients and moving them beyond negative behaviors. During the telling of their stories, they described various hats they wear, and roles they play to get their job done. Some of those roles are more maternal and caring, such as mother, nurse, and coach. Others are more therapeutic such as social worker and therapist. Chloe said at times she felt like a “chameleon”, describing her changing roles. Another necessary role is law enforcement, a role that none of the women highlighted as their favorite role. The overall consensus is the role of a caring, supportive advocate at the top of their lists, as Lee (Chapter 5) explains “Being able to help clients get on track and get their life together kind of makes everything, all the bad stuff that you go through, or the stressful times of the job, worthwhile.” Similarly, Alpha (Chapter 9) noted “I like being a coach to motivate someone, to spark some energy in them, or maybe some hope that there is something positive that could happen if they put the energy into it.”

Unfortunately, there are times when rules are broken by the client and the women have to take on the role of being tough, an enforcer of consequences in an effort to rehabilitate the offenders to the point that they won’t re-offend in the future (Petersilia, 1997; Senna & Segal,
Being prepared to enforce consequences is paramount to a probation/parole officer’s job and one that can not be treated lightly. They are under the direction of the courts and have to answer to the courts regarding the client’s non-compliance.

**Being tough when necessary.** The women discussed techniques they used when they had to deal with clients who had violated their conditions of supervision and appeared to be heading in the wrong direction. As difficult as it may have been at times, the underlying purpose for getting tough was to avoid deeper involvement in the system. The women are able to look at the consequences that may face their clients because of poor decisions. By focusing on the concept of rehabilitation they are able to show empathy for their client by doing what is in their best interest rather than letting them continue in a downward path. All of the women had no hesitation with being direct and addressing the violation issues with their clients. They were also willing to follow through with avenues of sanctions such as: prison/detention, a court appearance, tougher supervision, and verbal confrontation to name a few. Kim explains her experience with a young girl who was verbally offensive towards her:

*I can act crazy like you if I need to get I’ll get crazy. I’m not like one of the other POs that’s just going to take your bull crap. It’s not going to happen. And I can honestly say from that point, just raising my tone and kind of being nasty like her, I have not had not one problem with her ever since. (Chapter 6)*

Niaya also used verbal confrontation to get a juvenile’s attention:

*Yesterday, I got face to face, literally two inches away from a kid’s face to say, enough is enough. I mean business. This is what we’re going to do, this is what I expect. This is how I want you to do it. You know what, I’ve done it nice, I’ve done it the way I think you would have gotten it, but today this ends It’s my way or no way at this point.*
They know when I said, don’t have Miss Ugly Niaya come out, ’cause if that comes out, we’re going to have problems. (Chapter 7)

As evident from the stories, the women took their role as officers of the court seriously and were willing to do what had to be done to help rehabilitate their clients. Another technique the women used to care and connect with their clients was by sharing their accomplishments and rewarding their success.

Sharing accomplishments and rewarding successes. In their stories the women expressed a sense of pride and accomplishment when they have helped those who had committed a crime to learn from their mistakes. They tell of stories where clients came back to thank them for helping them, just to keep in touch. Some develop such close relationships that they feel like part of the family and are included in family celebrations. They believe that they make a difference not only for those they supervise but also for society at large.

There is a sense that the women have a sociological viewpoint of their client’s criminal behavior rather than a criminal mindset and believe that with their help they can hopefully change their life situations. This viewpoint is reflective of the socialist feminists’ perspective from the field of criminology, as discussed in Chapter 2 that centers on the cause of crime within systems of oppression and gender and class-based systems of power (Britton, 2000; Chesney-Lind, 2006; Messerschmidt, 1993; Minow, 1988).

The pride the women feel when a client is successful is more than an accolade for progress; it’s a maternal instinct of sincerely caring about the welfare and future of their clients. Attached to the maternal instinct is the belief that if their client succeeds then they have done something right, and if they don’t, it’s a shared failure. Alpha, Lee, and Ellen discussed the pride they feel for some of the achievements they have experienced with their clients:
I ran into an ex-client of mine the other day, she hasn’t been in the system for ten years or more, is working, going to school and getting a degree, and I just thought wow. And I’m sure there are more people out there that as a result of being on supervision have positive changes in their life. Maybe they made a mistake and just happened to be in our system, but I do think that we affect people in a positive way. Sometimes you can’t see it, but I truly believe that they’re out there and maybe that’s what it is all about.

Alpha (Chapter 9)

Ellen had a similar experience with a client who she was able to help move beyond the criminal justice system:

I still keep in contact with a former client; she still calls me a lot and sends me cards at holidays. I got her into counseling and got her mental health meds taken care of. She actually got a job working in the mental health field, so that was awesome. (Chapter 4)

Chloe also discussed a client who says that she contributed to his success.

I had a guy on my caseload that’s now at a local rescue mission in some managerial position, who tells people that I’m the one that got him where he is today, which is not true. I was a support system. (Chapter 10)

Similarly, Lee also discussed a few clients that gave her credited for turning them around:

In drug treatment court, we have people that graduate from the program and when they stand up on graduation day, completing the program successfully, and mentioning my name of how much I played a part in their recovery, that’s a good feeling and it kind of makes the job worthwhile. Where I helped one person or twenty people, just seeing that one person and knowing that they’re still doing well, that’s satisfying. (Chapter 5)

As evident from the stories, these women care about the welfare of their clients and are
able to connect with them on many levels. Their official role is to monitor compliance and progress; however as women, they feel that responsibility on a deeper personal relationship level (Belenky et al., 1986). They take pride in the accomplishments of the clients and discouraged when their best efforts to assist the client fails. It is evident they are able to shift gears, to play many roles to help their clients make positive changes in their lives. Another way the women are able to get things done is by negotiating interests for and with their clients.

*Relational Modes of Negotiating Power and Interest*

Being able to maneuver through the maize of systems and the bureaucracy of the criminal justice system can be a difficult task for anyone. Just as Cervero and Wilson (1994) suggest, there are many stakeholders that one must consider when negotiating power and interest. In criminal justice some of these include the courts, the client, the family, and the affected public. For probation and parole officers negotiating among these stakeholders as well as the criminal justice system as a whole is a necessary requirement. The goal of the officer is to be the end of the cycle, to rehabilitate clients to the point where they not longer engage in criminal activities, quite an overwhelming task at times. Many eyes are on them and many vested parties are interested in their progress: the courts, administration, the victims, the schools, the family, and the community at large to name a few.

As discussed in Chapter 2, within complex systems there is a multitude of stakeholders who have some level of vested interests, some similar, others different. Key to the process of negotiating within systems of power is to be familiar with the language of the organizations, to be able to talk the talk and walk the walk (Bierema, 1997; Parsons & Jesilow, 2001).

The stories tell of ways the women have learned to navigate through the system for and with their clients, to talk the talk and walk the walk in an effort to help rehabilitate them.
Through time and experience the women have learned ways of dealing with adversity and
resistance from both their clients and the system they work in. The women identified several
methods they found effective to get things done. It is interesting to note however, that they
discussed relational modes of negotiating power and interest, through: networking, building
relationships with community resources, and communication skills.

*Networking.* Described in great detail by all the women is the necessity of officers to
develop a network of resources in the community. Developing a network takes time and
persistence but priceless when a client is in crisis. Quite often the best an officer can do is put out
fires when their case loads are heavy. The stories revealed the various roles the women find
themselves in and the difficulties they have trying to deal with a multitude of issues that the
client may have, such as: drug and alcohol problems, mental health concerns, family issues,
abuse and other personal issues. Being able to pick up the phone and quickly get specific
services for the client is often time consuming but invaluable. Kylie describes herself as a
“network junkie” and prides herself on constantly adding to her list. She discusses the problems
that may result if a network hasn’t been developed:

> *Communication and networking comes with time being a PO because if you don’t
> establish that or if you’re fairly new to the field and you don’t know where to go for
> resources, I think it’s a little more frustrating, a little more difficult to tap into those.*

(Chapter 11)

Lee, Kim, and LaKeem discuss the network of resources they have established by serving
on committees, volunteering, and working part time in various programs. Having inside
knowledge of a program is invaluable to an officer. Lee describes how she is able to network
within her system:
Keeping open lines of communication is the key and having good rapport with other agencies. I’m lucky right now because I meet once a week with different people, the treatment providers and the judges and attorneys. (Chapter 5)

Networking is a major tool for the women in this study. They rely on service providers to partner with them and negotiate the interests of their clients. Just as important are the relationships they build within the communities. Just as in many of the studies of negotiating power and interest conducted by using the Cervero and Wilson (1994) model as a theoretical framework (Watkins & Tisdell, 2006; Yang & Cervero, 2001) networking was key to not only negotiating within the criminal justice system, but on behalf of their clients overall.

Building relationships with community resources. Building relationships in the community is another way the women negotiate interests for their clients. Clearly the women all agree that the community the clients live in has an enormous influence on their daily lives and their behaviors. The family structure, the schools, the friends, and the neighborhood all play an important part in influencing the client’s ability to move beyond criminal behavior and end the cycle. To that end, the women discussed ways they are able to build relationships within the community.

The women of color (Niaya, LaKeem and Kim) also highlighted the cultural and social equity that they have in their communities. They all have chosen to live in the same city as their clients and are familiar with the problems in the community. One woman, Niaya attended the same school she works in. For some juveniles, seeing their probation officer all the time can be quite concerning. However, Kim considers it a useful tool and a way of meeting them on their own turf. She discussed her experience with a few of her clients:

*I think every kid that I have in this city hates that I have them because we constantly*
see each other and they’re trying to hide. We can be at the shopping mall or anywhere and I’ll just call them out. “Hey, how are you doing, don’t act like you don’t see me.” I know it’s Saturday or Sunday. And a lot of them do come up to me. “Hi, Miss Kim, how are you?” It’s just good for me to be able to have that type of rapport with them on the job and off the job. (Chapter 6)

All three women have a sense of community and can connect with their clients on a deeper level and are very willing to share their own experiences with the client. Discussing her history at a local school and how that gave her an advantage when negotiating interests for her clients Niaya said:

“I’m a school-based probation officer, located in the middle school. I went to that middle school. When I first started years ago, many of the teachers that I had were still there, so that made the job with the school a whole lot easier because they already knew who I was, and then I could relate to the kids because I came here, I know what you went through, I live in your community, I know.(Chapter 7)

Feminist authors of color note that communities of color tend to be collectivist in their orientation (Collins, 1991). While all women emphasized the importance of community, the women of color emphasized it more.

The emphasis on connections to the community of all the women in the study was emphasized in a myriad of additional ways. LaKeem and Lee have similar experiences of sitting on community action committees that included various levels of power within the system and the community at large. Using those relationships, the women are able to voice their concerns for their clients and the community and partner with the committee members to be part of the solution. La Keem gave a very specific example of this in relation to a community committee she
is a member of in advocating for minorities:

*The committee is a disproportionate minority committee comprised of judges, state leaders, state police troopers, and police officers. The criminal justice system as a whole, needs to work with more minorities, trying to keep them out of incarceration, and also out of placement facilities because there’s a higher percentage of African-Americans that are locked up and other races, they are trying to figure out a better way of dealing with that situation.* (Chapter 8)

Lee also discussed her own involvement with a committee, and why such involvement is an important part of being able to negotiate on behalf of clients:

*We meet once a week with different people, the treatment providers and the judges and attorneys and we have a meeting every week where everyone voices their opinion and everybody is heard.* (Chapter 5)

It is apparent that the women in this study have various levels of history in the field. However, it didn’t take long for them to develop an understanding of the embedded rules of the games. For the women winning the game meant that clients had learned from their mistakes and positive changes are evident within the clients and their environment. For other vested parties, the win occurs when the client meets all the obligations of the court ordered conditions and criminal behavior ceases. To assist in that process, some women discussed the relationships they have built with communities as well as with families to negotiate the interests of the clients.

Developing a relationship with a family can often be difficult but quite necessary when dealing with juvenile offenders as Kylie, Niaya, LaKeem, and Kim discussed. Without parental support it is often an uphill battle to facilitate real change and to negotiate interests with and for the client. For some of the women it was necessary to function in the role of a substitute mother,
someone who could offer support and be a role model as Niaya explains when referring to some juvenile clients:

*I think most of them are just looking for a stable attachment in their life, and most of them, the reality is there is none, and when they come in with us, it’s stable, it’s consistent.* (Chapter 7)

Working closely with the family will often facilitate change Kylie provided an example;

*There was a family that I had been working with for only a few short months, but things were so intense with this family that in a couple of months I had more contact with that family than I probably have had with many cases over a six-month period. The juvenile and his father both had learning disabilities, and the mother was deceased so there wasn’t really an understanding of how the system works or what probation was.* (Chapter 11)

As discussed in Chapter 2, identifying and negotiating interests is a social activity in which people negotiate personal and organizational ideas out of their own interests. Further, power relationships exist in all human interactions and people act based partly on their particular agenda and interests. Being able to achieve one’s goals within the constraints of particular social contexts can influence and be influenced by a person’s sense of agency, a working knowledge of the formal and embedded rules of the games Cervero and Wilson (1994).

*Communication skills.* Being clear about rules and expectations is a necessary skill for probation and parole officers to be able to negotiate power and interest with their clients. One of the most important roles they have is to make the rules and conditions of the courts very clear and concise. Failing to do so could result in misunderstandings and the possibility of violations. The women discussed how they use their communications skills to negotiate with the client as to
how they plan to make positive changes and the services they may require to make that happen.

Chloe, Niaya, LaKeem and Kim discussed how important it is to be straight forward with their clients to get their point across. As Chloe explains:

*Be straightforward with clients, I don’t think you’re doing a client any favor if you’re allow them to manipulate the system and let them get off with a dirty urine. In the long run it’s not helping them at all.* (Chapter 10)

Kim had a similar experience with a young lady she was supervising:

*One day she was really angry and called me a B-I-T-C-H. I explained to her that I can act crazy like you if I need to get I’ll get crazy. I’m not like one of the other POs that are just going to take your bull crap. I can honestly say from that point, just raising my tone and kind of being nasty like her, I have not had not one problem with her ever since and it’s been almost two years.* (Chapter 6)

Ellen, Chloe, Niaya, and Kim discussed times when they have used their communication skills in court to negotiate interests for their clients. Chloe discussed her feeling of frustration after she communicated with the court about a client’s violations and the need for incarceration only to have the judge send the client home. Lee and Ellen also spoke of the frustration they have experienced in court after they used communication skills to negotiate on behalf of their clients only to have the courts ignore it. Ellen discussed one her experiences in court:

*I tried twice to revoke this guy. Because it was a DUI she asked me to get him more halfway house time. He goes in, calls his case manager “a bugging bitch,” (excuse my language), I try to revoke him again, and she lets him off without even electronic monitoring. Twice the judge asked me my opinion, once in open court, I said, he’s not amenable to supervision, he needs to do time.* (Chapter 4)
The women’s stories reveal how they use various techniques to negotiate interests for their clients. The methods of using networking, building relationships in the community and communication were all discussed. The women were able to work within the constraints of the various systems and power relations to solve problems by building on their relationships with organization and by learning how to talk the talk and walk the walk (Bierema, 1997; Parsons & Jesilow, 2001; Forester, 1989) to get things done. The thread that is woven through all the avenues of negotiation is the need for the women’s voice to be heard. Using their voice to speak for and with the client is a skill all the women have refined. But it is indeed interesting to note that they chose relational modes of negotiating power and interest. Many feminist researchers over the years such as Gilligan (1982) and Belenky et al. (1986) have noted that this ethic of care and emphasis on relationship is a hallmark of women’s learning, so perhaps it is not surprising that these modes would be so prominent in getting things done and in being heard and a voice for their clients. As women in a field historically dominated by men, being heard can be difficult at times.

*Acknowledging Gender But Reducing Its Salience*

The women in this study discussed an awareness of gender but did not place an emphasis on it. It almost seemed that they needed to reduce the salience of the gendered workplace by playing it down, at the same time that they generally used forms of negotiation that are positively associated with women, such as negotiating through relationships, and doing it more often for others, such as their clients, than for themselves. Consciously, they seem to see gender as secondary to the role as officer of the court.

All of the women in this study considered themselves capable of doing the job they were hired to do. They were officers of the courts and expected to uphold the same directives of the
courts as their male colleagues. None of the women felt they should be given preferential treatment because of their gender, and as others have discussed, there was awareness that at times gender came into play but it was not something that they emphasized (Norvell, Hills, & Murrin 1993; Parsons & Jesilow, 2003). Gender issues surfaced more in their dealing with clients and within the system. As discussed in Chapter 2, critical feminist theory guided this study and attempts to make visible the gendered experiences for all women who argue that while women throughout the world form their identities within patriarchal systems (Britton, 2000; Chesney-Lind, 2006; Messerschmidt, 1993; Minow, 1988).

The women in this study have different life experiences, different cultures and identifies outside of the job. However, what they share is a professional role that situates them within the constraints of a patriarchal system, a hierarchical maze of power and politics. Maneuvering through and getting the job done is what these women do routinely. They did identify several different areas where gender was at play in their job: gender dynamics with the client, gender dynamics in the system, and gender and role models. Several of the women discussed physical differences as a factor that may play out in the job. Physical differences and role expectations have historically been used as rational for exclusion of women in traditional male positions such as law enforcement (Martin and Jurik, 1996). Others spoke of the attitudes towards women in roles of authority, while others discussed the embedded attitude of women as less than in law enforcement.

Despite some of the attitudes and difficult situations the women had experienced, the overriding consensus is that when negative issues have surfaced the women felt quite competent to handle the situations, particularly in the ways that they have learned to negotiate power and interest. One of the areas where gender issues came into play was with the clients.
Gender dynamics with clients. Kim, Lee, and Niaya discussed the attitude they have witnessed from male clients who assumed that women officers would be easier on them than the men. Lee used the words “easily walked on or taken advantage of”. Kim discussed comments she has heard coming from adolescent males:

"This is going to be a piece of cake, we got a female PO, we don’t have to do this, and we don’t have to do that.” I just got a kid two weeks ago who told his mother: “Oh, she’s not going to be worried about me. She’s a female. (Chapter 6)

Several of the women discussed situations where their male colleagues addressed them by using words such as “dear” and “hon”, words as Ellen explains would not be use with male officers. She discussed how she handled the situation:

"You have to correct that. And it’s not something that they try, they’re not trying to demean you, most of them aren’t. A couple of them just are doing power games to see what they can do. Some of them, it just slips out, if I were a guy, he wouldn’t be calling me “dear.” For the most part, I think the major issue for me is getting that initial seat of power with the offenders. (Chapter 4)

Chloe also discussed times when male clients have called her “hon”. She was quick to address the issue:

"You get the guys that want to call you “Hon,” trying to be more friendly than they should be. I’m not hesitant to call them on the carpet about that. (Chapter 10)

Alpha also discussed the need for women in the field to earn the respect of their clients because of physical differences as she explained:

"To be successful a woman needs to, earn respect because you are the weaker person, a physical aspect that is definitely a factor. (Chapter 9)
Alpha, Niaya and Kim experienced times when gender was at play in their role as surrogate mothers to some of their clients. Kim describes how at times she had to “throw on the mommy’s talk hat” and Alpha explained:

*I feel like a mother at times because some of the women I’ve worked with are very, very, young.* (Chapter 9)

Dealing with clients can be difficult at times and takes a variety of skills to get the job done. The women discussed different ways they have learned to confront difficult issues such as attitudes from male clients who cross boundaries and different expectations because of their gender. Similarly, other women in law enforcement roles such as policing and other non traditional male roles have found themselves in a catch twenty-two situation balancing their perceived gender role with that of their professional position (Britton, 1997). The women discussed how they were able to quickly shift gears to an authoritative role with clear expectations of respect from the client.

**Gender dynamics in the system.** As discussed, the women in this study believe as women they are as capable of doing the job as their male colleagues. However, for some of the women there have been times where their ability to do their job was questioned by some colleagues. Both Ellen and Kylie discussed situations where their ability as women in the field was questioned by a male supervisor. For Kylie, her gender was used by male colleagues as a rationale for non inclusion in an arrest situation. She described how she handled the situation:

*One time I was going out on a spur-of-the-moment arrest that happened within the office. It was myself and two other officers that were supposed to go out to pick up this male. I was perfectly capable of doing it; I was one of our arrest instructors. The supervisor of the day went to one of the other officers that was going on this arrest and*
suggested that they take another male rather than take me. I talked to him and said, “Do you feel that I’m not capable of doing my job because it’s really important for me to know this.” He apologized and everything, but it was just probably one of many examples where I thought I was discriminated against. (Chapter 11)

Ellen also described a specific situation where gender dynamics were at play in her office:

_I can think of a time when my gender came into play. In my entire office, I am the only supervision officer ever to be specifically instructed not to see a specific offender alone. And the instruction started out being that I couldn't see him without a male officer present, before someone had the good sense to change that direction to "another officer." How’s that for gender at work? (Chapter 4)_

Both Kylie and Ellen discussed their frustration with some of their female colleagues who play a helpless role and relinquish some of their duties, such as making arrests, to the men in the office. Additionally, Ellen described the frustration she felt when she saw some of the women displaying high school, girlish behaviors by competing for male approval, traits she believes contradict desirable behaviors of an officer. Both women believe that they don’t need to constantly prove themselves; they are confident in their ability to do all aspects of the job.

Unfortunately this attitude of having to prove themselves is evident in the field of policing a system that is parallel to probation and parole and similarly historically male dominated. As discussed in Chapter 2, Baunach and Rafter (1982) identified several distinct problem areas for women professionals in male-dominated, crime-processing jobs. The first was protectional treatment where a woman was protected from dealing with male or female violent offenders, the alleged real world of policing. A second problem area was that women often faced higher expectations than their male colleagues and often felt the pressure to represent all women
by their actions, continually having to prove that they were capable of doing the job (Norvell, Hills, & Murrin 1993; Parsons & Jesilow, 2003).

Several of the women did not feel that gender played a role in their experiences and believed that they were on equal grounds with their male counterparts (Norvell et al., 1993; Whitehead, 1986). For a majority of the women the discrepancies in the system were most evident in the imbalance in women on the bench and within the court system. Contrarily, Kim and Niaya work in offices that are comprised predominately of women and discussed the need for male officers, as Niaya discussed:

*In our office, we have one Hispanic and one African-American male. When we start looking at our population, we’re probably about 70% Black, maybe 20% Latino, and the rest white or Asian, so our clientele is not seeing that Black or Latino men are successful.*

(Chapter 7)

Women in parallel fields of criminal justice have had similar experiences where their gender was at play and in every other occupation where women are perceived as delicate, emotional supporters and nurturers (Garcia, 2003). Feeling like they had to prove themselves worthy and capable to do the job was not evident in the stories of the women. They all were very strong in their belief that they could do the job or they wouldn’t be doing it.

*Gender and role models.* Kim, LaKeem and Niaya discussed the gap they saw in their office related to gender. Kim identified the lack of men in her office while Niaya discussed the need for more men of color who could act as role models for the diverse population of clients. Similarly, LaKeem discussed a need for more women role models and African American women in particular in the field.

*I think I make a major difference, especially being an African-American woman.*
would say it’s not common in the community that I’m from that you have an African-American woman that’s educated and that works in a professional career-oriented position. Sometimes when I go into the office and I see families sitting there, sometimes I see a look of surprise that they see, “Oh, wow, there’s an African-American woman. I wonder what she is. Is she a secretary, or is she a probation officer. And when they find out I’m a probation officer, they’re kind of like, “Oh, okay, good. Maybe she can relate better to me because she may understand my circumstances,” especially if it’s an African-American family. The juveniles you serve, say “Maybe I can do that, too.””

(Chapter 8)

For several of the women their gender became an issue when they were called on to do traditional law enforcement procedures such as making an arrest, for others gender became an issue in the response they received from male clients. As Parsons and Jesilow (2001) suggest, women often face an uphill struggle, challenging misconceptions of who they should be as women, how they should act, and are constantly being measured against men and still struggle to be treated as equals (Belknap, 1996; Chesney-Lind, 2006; Scarborough & Collins, 2002). Significant is that gender was only a problem for the males towards the women rather than an internal concern expressed by the women. Also interesting is that there was no mention of female clients having an issue with the gender of the women and their ability to do the job. The women believed they could do the job equal to their male counterparts. Several of the women expressed frustration towards their female colleagues who took on a helpless role and relinquished difficult roles to the men viewing that behavior as not living up to the expectations of an officer.

Several of the women noted gaps in the number of women in power positions such as administration and on the bench. Others discussed gaps in the number of men and women of
color needed to act as role models for their clients. As mentioned there were times when gender
issues surfaced, however none of the women emphasized gender as a determining factor in their
decision to choose the field of probation and parole or in their ability to do the job.

Implications for Theory, Practice, and Future Research

There are some implications of the finding for the theory and practice of a feminist
approach to criminal justice as adult education, and for further approaches to research.

*Implications for Theory*

The theoretical framework of this study is a critical feminist lens informed by Cervero and
Wilson’s (1994) program planning model from adult education. As discussed in chapter one, the
mission of the criminal justice system is to hold criminals accountable for their actions and to do
everything possible to rectify the damage done to the victims of crime. One of the roles of
probation and parole officers is to develop an individualized contract with the client that outlines
the conditions of supervisions and to monitor their compliance. To that extent, the women
probation and parole officers in this study to some degree, function as program planners, and do
so as women in a male dominated profession.

The women in this study work within the court system as officers of the court and are
directed to negotiate the interests of the courts. Many parties have vested interest in what they
do: the court, the victims of crime, the client, administration, and the community. Balancing all
parties’ interest can be quite an enormous task. Furthermore, the women work within the
constraints of a patriarchal system that has historically been dominated by men. Critical feminist
theory identifies a sense of agency that is created by challenging power relations based on
individual experiences and socially-constructed knowledge (Collins, 1991; hooks, 1990) and
uncovers the tensions that are created by those who oppress and the persons who are oppressed,
who strive for social justice and democracy by challenging systems of power (Howell, et al., 2002; Price & Sokoloff, 2004).

The study revealed a greater recognition of the connections to the community in feminist theory. While a lot of feminist theory in Adult Education focuses on pedagogy, or connections and relationships, as well as examining power relations, there doesn’t seem to be so much emphasis on the connections to community. Again, there was a theme of community with the women of color especially, similar to the notion of community policing that emphasizes an ethic of care model that is a social-worker driven method of policing that highlights cooperation, peacemaking, empathy, informal interactions with the public, all characteristically considered a women’s policing styles (Garcia, 2003; Miller, 1998).

Just as many feminist theorists have discussed (Belenky et al., 1986), these women participants in probation and parole do emphasize connection and relationship in getting their job done. Nevertheless, they are reluctant to take on a gendered lens, maybe doing so doesn’t appear to them that it will serve their interest. However, in justice work, gender is considered a fundamental feature of life and makes a difference in practically every social context (Martin & Jurik, 1996). How these women in justice work attempted to balance between taking personal responsibility and not using gender as a reason to be coddled, but not denying it either has been discussed to some degree in criminal justice. Cockburn (1991) and Martin and Jurik (1996) argue that women in justice roles are often caught in one-dimensional roles of sameness, difference, and dominance: sameness in the sense of being seen as the same as other women displaying feminine behaviors (nurturing to clients); difference preferring that they not be treated as women, or as passive victims of masculine dominance. Rather than following any preconceived role, Anleu (1992) suggests that women in criminal justice need to be viewed as more than one
dimensional; they are rather individuals with intersecting dimensions of gender, race-ethnic, cultural and situational differences and must determine when difference is relevant so they can be both the same and different across situations.

It is interesting to consider the gender dynamics at play and the level of awareness and emphasis (or lack thereof) the women in this study placed on gender. Some were keenly aware of gender issues while others didn’t see gender at all. Whatever the level of awareness, none of the women placed an emphasis on gender; rather, they took on the role of officers first and overlooked gender when on the job. Gender issues were more significant to the men they worked with and the male clients they supervise. The women gave voice to their resistance and took steps to assert their role as officers when they felt gender was at play and interfering with their ability to do their job. But they tended to emphasize their work on behalf of their clients, which is fairly typical of women: to emphasize others over the self (Gilligan, 1982). Anleu’s (1992) consideration of the sameness/differentness issues may offer insight as to why they chose to pay little attention to gender, at the same time that in some respects they act out gendered ways of being, in their emphasis on connection, caring, and relationship.

Feminist theorists has long called for the voice of women to be heard and validated (Collins, 1991; hooks, 1984; Kim, 2002; Tong, 1998). This study gives voice to these women probation and parole officers, though they have no problem claiming their voices. They do however recognize to some extent, the constraints of a patriarchal system that many in criminal justice have discussed (Anleu, 1992; Cockburn, 1991; Martin & Jurik, 1996) though these women tend not to focus on these constraints, and seem to guard against a one dimensional look that focuses too exclusively on gender. Martin and Jurik (1996) considering gender in the justice workplace as shifting and an ongoing social production interwoven with race and class and not
fixed attribute of individuals. Further the notion of “doing gender” (West & Zimmerman, 1987) refers to the situated accomplishment of gender differences that are neither fixed for life or settled beforehand and shift based on social structures and interactions that emerge over time. It is interesting to note that the women in this study were clearly able to see gender issues externally when they interacted with their clients and were very quick to call them on it. However, on a personal level they chose to place their gender secondary and their role as an officer first. Perhaps this is a form of internal oppression in the face of patriarchy, or perhaps by not identifying gender as primary to their job they are attempting to lessen the salience of gender in their workplace. The same may be said for the male officer who chooses not to display more traditional feminist behaviors of caring and concern for his clients in the office and around his colleagues rather he takes on the role of law enforcement, a traditional masculine role.

Dispelling a one-dimensional view of women has been an argument for a feminist model in program planning (Bracken, in press; Hanby, 2000) within the adult education literature as well. Bracken’s study of Latin American women uncovered the power and interests embedded within a feminist organization. She argues that for the organization to truly serve the interests of the women, they needed to include them at the planning table, to hear their individual voice telling their own stories within the context of their culture and community. This is significant for feminist theory development in considering how women negotiate power and interest. There were specific ways the women in this study learned to challenge power structures and negotiate within the system. A key point is that the focus of their negotiations was primarily for the clients: by caring and making connections with the clients, the families, and the communities they live in. They demonstrated their sense of caring by being willing to change the roles they played to assist the client, such as: coach, therapist, and a feminine role as a surrogate mother. A sense of
caring was also demonstrated by the compassion they displayed for their clients and their life experiences and situations.

There has been some discussion that being sensitive to the needs of clients could be considering coddling, displaying maternal behaviors, of not being tough enough on criminals, not holding them accountable for their crimes (Parsons & Jesilow, 2001). The purpose of the criminal justice system is to right the wrongs of society striving for justice and equality. The system also calls for offenders to be rehabilitated and reintegrated into society if possible. To that end the system has seen shifts in some fields such as the community policing model as discussed previously that encourages more feminist behaviors of caring and personal interactions with the community. One might also wonder if those who would accuse women of coddling, might just see men as doing their jobs of rehabilitation.

Another method of negotiating with their clients was demonstrating pride and rewarding the client’s accomplishments. Networking and developing relationships with community programs was another way women made connections and negotiated interests for their clients. One of the women drew on her social and cultural equity in the community to be familiar with the language of the organizations and was able to talk the talk and walk the walk (Bierema, 1997; Parsons & Jesilow, 2001). Cervero and Wilson’s (1994) model of program planning identifies planning as an activity within systems of power and interest and negotiating as a social activity where people negotiate personal and organizational ideas out of their own interests and particular agenda. Cervero and Wilson don’t discuss gender in program planning, however as suggested above, Bracken (in press) and Bond et al. (2000) offer suggestions for a feminist model of planning which can also draw on the many feminists such as Gilligan (1982) and
Belenky et al. (1986) who highlight caring, along with those that draw attention to issues of community and collectivity (Collins, 1991; Dillard, 2000).

It is significant that an unstudied group of women were given the opportunity to be heard, allowing them to tell their stories, making visible their own form of identity within a patriarchal systems and doing so in different ways due to race, social class, power, ethnicity, sexuality and within local cultures at particular historical moments (Chesney-Lind, 2006; Collins, 1991; Garcia, 2003; hooks, 1984, 1994; Hudson, 2006; Johnson-Bailey, 2001). Important to feminist theory is the way the women formed their identities within the system. The women found their voice and challenged the status quo on behalf of themselves and their clients for the purpose of social justice, each in her own unique way. All the women were aware of gender to some degree; however, none considered it an important factor to accomplishing their job. They all displayed a sense of internal power and agency and believed that they were able to negotiate their clients’ interests within the system. Further the women displayed an appreciation for the individual uniqueness and life situations of their clients.

An interesting finding was the deep sense of community that the women of color spoke of, a sense of neighborhood that “we’re all in this together, blending job with life”. The women of color chose to live in the same community as their clients; one had a passion for community action for the betterment of all. This interesting finding does in no way infer a global statement about all women of color, it rather reveals an important part of who these women are as individuals and what they see as important to their experience. This propensity of women of color to focus on the community has been highlighted by many feminists (Collins, 1991; hooks, 1984, 1989, 1994; Hurtado, 1996). Overall though, the study revealed a greater recognition of the connection to the community. While a lot of feminist theory in Adult Education focuses on
pedagogy, or connections and relationships as well examining power relations of course, there
doesn’t seem to be so much emphasis on the connections to the community. Feminists of color
(Collins, 1991; Dillard, 2000; Hurtado, 2003) have discussed the notion of community and
collectivity to some extent, but still the connection to the community is somewhat under-
developed in feminist theory overall. Feminist theorizing on community could have implications
for the field of criminal justice. Such theorizing could build on the notion of community policing
that emphasizes an ethic of caring model. Use of this model results in a social-work driven
method of policing that emphasizes cooperation, peacemaking, empathy, informal interactions
with the public, all characteristically considered women’s policing style (Garcia, 2003; Miller,
1998). Nevertheless, the model needs more attention to the notion of community.

Uncovering the constraints that are ever present in the life of an officer and seeing them
as something that women were able to negotiate through and be successful will provide a sense
of connectedness to other women who may be struggling with the same issues. Challenging
systems of power was accomplished in many different ways by the women; however, the
underlying purpose was to treat the clients fairly and to advocate for their best interest (Howell,
et al., 2002; Price & Sokoloff, 2004). Significant for theory is the women’s ability to work within
the constraints of the political and social arena in an effort to solve problems striving for
democracy, emancipation, individual freedom and social justice (Forester, 1989).

Implications for Adult Education Practice

There are several practical implications for adult education that can be gleaned from this
study. The first is the use of narratives to discuss life experiences. Adult learners come to
learning with their own histories and life experiences, they all have narratives to tell and share.
The women in this study are learners themselves, within the context of their daily interactions
with their clients and within systems. They learn from past experiences just as others will learn for hearing their stories. Most significant is that this particular group of women within a system of patriarchy were given the opportunity to be heard, telling their stories in their own words. There are several feminist frameworks within adult education that underscore the significance of hearing women’s voices, some as individuals within their own world (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986), while others situate women within systems of power (English, 2006a; Hayes & Flannery, 2000; Tisdell, 1995, 1998). Finding ways of negotiating within systems of power is what the women in this study have learned to do. Negotiating interests for themselves or for others is an important part of the women’s experience and one that other women can relate to create a sense of community with one another knowing that you’re not alone.

For the women in this study the sense of caring and connectedness was evident throughout. Significant was that the women predominately negotiated for the client rather than for themselves. Their sense of fairness and doing what was in the clients best interest overshadowed the law enforcement role that is ever present in their job. The women discussed the pride they felt for the accomplishments of their clients and many spoke of the maternal feelings they had for some of their clients.

Noteworthy is that the women in this study share some similarities with women who are serving time behind bars, women who have been or may be their clients someday. Both groups of women are within systems of power and patriarchy and share the need to have their voices heard and validated. Baird (1999) and Kilgore (2001) discuss feminist theory and adult education within the context of the prison system. For practice it would be interesting to have the
women in prison hear and discuss the stories of the women probation and parole officers in this study, to have women connecting on both sides of the wall.

Another important aspect of this study that is important to adult education is the ways the women in this study have learned to negotiate interests within systems of patriarchy and bureaucracy. For program planning, the study situates the planners, the officers within the context of an organization that is laden with patriarchal and political interests. The women in the study have successfully found ways of negotiating their interests and those of their clients.

*Implications for Criminal Justice Education*

Criminal justice education centers on educating adults about the systems of law, crime control, corrections and prevention. This study considers the women to be adult learners, learning in the context of negotiating within systems of power. Learning to negotiate within systems of power is often discussed in the field of adult education and to some degree in criminal justice education. The field of criminal justice is laden with systems of power and interest: the courts, law enforcement, corrections, and probation and parole. Educators in the field are teaching students to manage within those systems, to negotiate power and interest for many: the victims, the courts, the community and the offenders for the betterment of society as a whole.

There are a number of practical implications that can drawn from this study. This study focused on women in the field of probation and parole and discussed practical ways the women have found to negotiate within the bureaucratic system of the courts and the communities they work in, techniques very useful to new workers entering the field. Further, the women in this study, as all criminal justice organizations are embedded within the social structure of society. Consideration of a more sociological lens within the criminal justice curriculum has been called
for by many in the field (Cameron, 2002; Sims, 2006). As suggested by Canon and Dirks-Linhorst (2006), the communities the students will eventually work in are becoming more diverse, stratified and transient creating multiple sociological issues that require law enforcement professionals who are sensitive to their own bias and empathetic to the public they serve. Further, Cameron (2002) suggests a pedagogical model that encourages criminal justice students to become agents of change thus creating a critical consciousness, shifting the curriculum from an individualized psychological crime control model to a preventative sociological model.

Another implication for practice is the inclusion of women’s voice and narrative to field, a field that has historically been patriarchal in nature. Bringing a feminist lens to the field allows women’s voices to be heard and creating a more inclusive curriculum to marginalizing issues of not only gender, but also race and sexual identity (Canon & Dirks-Linhorst, 2006; Flavin, 2001; Lewis-Home, 2004; Williams, 2004). Creating more inclusive curriculum allows other voices of marginalized groups to be heard. To that end, Gabbidon (1996, 2002) suggests that to be more inclusive of all minorities, the criminal justice curriculum should include multicultural readings within the traditional offerings, to bring them together rather than separate from the traditional teachings.

Furthermore, this study can inform the field by offering an alternative method of learning through narratives. Reading narratives and allowing students to write their own stories encourages the students to think in different ways seeing their experience from a different point of view and level of perceived or experienced power and authority Ferguson and Musheno (2000).

Educators in the field of criminal justice need to think beyond the traditional law enforcement mentality. Crime is not committed in a vacuum nor are solutions found in a
vacuum. It involves real people with real problems in systems that are often impossible to negotiate through. Sharing stories, walking in someone else’s shoe and seeing the world through a colored lens rather than through the black and white lens of a microscope allows the student, the future representative of the system as well as the educator, to appreciate differences rather than placing blame.

Consideration should be given to other forms of narratives and creative expression. Baird (1999) within the context of a women’s prison engages her students to read and listen to poetry and writings of women and women of color allowing the student to align themselves with similar race, class and experience. Gleaned from the experience is the opportunity to define themselves in their own voice through discussion and writings. Defining one’s self is the focus of Sheared’s (2002) polyrhythmic realities technique that attempts to encourage African American students to feel more connected to classroom learning by allowing them to reflect on the literature of narratives for the purpose of critically examining the language related to race, gender, and class and consider shared history validating their stories of life experiences. Gabbidon (1996) echoes that criminal justice curriculum could more inclusive of all minorities if they included multicultural readings within the traditional offerings, to bring them together rather than separate from the traditional teachings.

Stuckey (2009) suggests learning through creative expression using shapes, imagery, metaphors and songs to inspire the learner to make meaning from their experiences. She encourages discussion among the learners connecting their experiences with others, finding similarities and differences creating further meaning. Tisdell (2003) also suggests that using symbols, images, art work, and music to guide the student to move forward to reclaim their
identity by creating a deeper awareness of who they are as individuals as a way to create further meaning.

Suggestions for Future Research

Reflecting on my journey and reading and rereading the narrative of the eight women brought me full circle to the reason I began this study in the first place. The literature about probation and parole officers is sparse. There are vast amounts of literature on types of probation and parole and methodology to help deter crime. However, who we are as people and what we do in our daily lives is missing hence the purpose of this study. Personally, the need for women’s voice to be heard was critical to me but there is a need to hear the stories of the men who serve as well. Perhaps their stories will identify the same methods of negotiating interests as the women. Possibly drawing attention to gender issues may raise their awareness of the dynamics at play with the women officers they work with. The notion of community and relationships within the community and important part they play for workers in the field of criminal justice is another subject that needs further research. Consideration for study is the sense of community identified by the women of color and how they may be different or similar for white women.

Just as there is a gap in the literature about the narrative experiences of women probation and parole officers, there is also a void in the literature of the narratives of other women such as policing, corrections, and law. For the student and the educator, there is no better learning tool than the voices of those who serve the community and do their job day in and day out. There are other avenues of research that could be explored to center on the field of probation and parole. Quantitative studies could examine various techniques used by the officers to engage the client, to network within the community to determine what works most effectively. Other studies using quantitative methods could determine the rational men and women have for entering the field,
skills they find most useful, tools they use in their job and ways of improving the work. Results of the study could be important for administrator in their program planning and recruiting of new officers. Any method of research chosen to explore this unique group of people who play an integral role in the system is important in itself because it will help to fill in the gap in the literature as this study attempted to do.

Final Reflections

Stepping back and reflecting on this journey, I remember the different paths I traveled trying to narrow the focus of this study. During my first adult education class I knew my interest was in women’s issues. After that, my wandering took me in many directions but I never lost the desire to hear women’s voices. What is amazing to me is that I came full circle and realized that I only had to look in the mirror and within my own world to find women who were not being heard, including myself. Turning the spotlight on the women in the study also meant turning inward to go deep within my soul to see if I could accomplish this feat. The journey has been life changing. I have learned so much about myself spiritually and as a woman connecting learning to life and being given the opportunity to tell my own story and to have someone listen.

I use the color purple as a metaphor for my life’s journey, a color that represents passion and an inner sense of peace and contentment. The time I shared with these women felt purple and timeless, as if I was taking in their essence and putting it to words speaking for them and for myself. I find myself reflecting on this experience in my work and am more aware of the role I play as a women and the shared pride I feel with my clients when they succeed.

As an educator in criminal justice, I take from this study a renewed sense of purpose to find new ways of hearing the voice of all my students. My journey has given me the opportunity to look within myself and reflect on why I continue to do what I do. There is no clear answer to
the question, only to say that within my being I believe I make a difference. Since completing this study I’ve had the opportunity to sit back and reflect on the entirety of my own journey. Coming from the field of criminal justice, a predominately black and white world with very clear boundaries and expectations often contradictory to my feminist, sociological view of the world to the vast spectrum of the Adult Ed. program was empowering and felt like coming home. I became aware that there were other women in my field who were trying to make a difference, to be heard and who appreciated the context of not only our lives but those of our clients. Before, I didn’t seem to have a place to put my energy and my voice, to be heard for the sake of change and justice. The Adult Education program added a spectrum of color to my world, allowing me to give voice to and validate my own experiences and those of other women and the opportunity to learn not only about who I am as a woman, but also as a learner, an educator, and an officer. It also has provided a platform upon which I can stand and advocate for myself and for other women in the field and for those yet to come.

Many shades and depths of color have been added to my life’s rainbow; often my purple has been elusive and difficult to find, but it’s always there. Some shades have been dark, others brilliant. Some push me to another level, others draw me in. But all are part of who I am and will become--searching for my purple. Amen.
REFERENCES


Belenky, M., Clinchy, B., Goldberger, N., & Tarule, J. (1986). *Women’s ways of knowing:*


Hudson, B. (2006). Beyond white man’s justice race, gender, and justice in late


Kim, L. (2002). “I was so busy fighting racism that I didn’t even know I was being oppressed as a woman!”: Challenges, changes, and empowerment in teaching about women of color. *National Women’s Studies Association, 13* (2) 99-109.


Watkins, B, Tisdell, E. (2006). Negotiating the labyrinth from margin to center: adult Degree program administrators as program planners within higher education institutions *Adult Education Quarterly,* 56 (2), 134-159.


Vitae- Barbara E. Varner

**Education**-

A.A. Degree- Social Science- Harrisburg Area Community College- 1990

B.S. Degree- Criminal Justice- Penn State University- 1994

M.S. Degree- Administration of Justice Shippensburg University- 1998

D. Ed. Candidate Penn State

**Occupation/Experience**-

Probation/Parole officer – Cumberland County- 1995-present

Children and Youth Caseworker- Cumberland County- 1989-1995

DUI Safe Driving School Instructor- 1996-present

Court Reporting Network evaluator- 1996-present


**Skills and qualifications**-

Academic achievement, training, and over twenty plus years of professional experience in the fields of Social Work, Criminal Justice and Drug and Alcohol Issues. Experience as a college level adjunct instructor in the classroom and on line instruction.