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Article

Keeping It in the Family: Intersectionality and ‘Class A’ Drug Dealing by Females in the West of Scotland

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Abstract: Post-industrial urban landscapes connected with neo-liberalism may provide novel opportunities for the emancipation of working-class women who were traditionally, like women of other social classes, largely subjugated to men socially and economically in the period of collective male-led unionization and manufacturing. Based on qualitative data, our interpretative study locates itself in an international field of criminality and illuminates the criminal practices of women connected with the criminal world of illicit drugs. Our contribution extends this field of scholarship into the culture of the West of Scotland. We identify through an intersectional sensibility of ‘doing femininity’ on the street and the nexus of a familial domicile, the ways in which women’s agency remains restricted, contrary to an emancipation argument. We conclude that their ‘liberation’ is negatively truncated for two reasons: firstly, criminality necessarily distorts freedoms and secondly, subtle ties with an overarching violent masculinity were retained.

Keywords: intersectionality; female; drugs; crime; masculinity; Glasgow

1. Introduction

We argue in this article that to be successful as high-level dealers in Class-A drugs women dealers in the West of Scotland, some of whom are mothers, adopt ‘masculinizing’ practices of the self, whilst retaining their positionality within a gendered order of masculine hegemony. This (partial) female agency contrasts with a more passive gendered subjectivity prescribed by the drug mule cultural sub-type pervading wider perception of a submissive female criminality in this drug trading field where women are at risk from coercive males operating within a global trading nexus [1] (p. 37). Female drug dealers nevertheless develop strategies, as this article explores, to annex to themselves agency in their criminogenic encounters with a violently masculinized world [2]. Violence is imbricated with illicit drug trading [3]. Post-industrial decline, which typifies the west of Scotland is associated with greater risk taking in Glasgow and increased mortality rates in the West of Scotland [4,5]. Illicit drug taking is associated with the significant levels of deprivation that are found in Glasgow which the British government’s neo-liberal welfare support culture aggravates. Law and Mooney argue fiscal support for welfare has been reduced by the government and the devolved Scottish state aims to attract mobile investment through a low-tax regime and other capital-friendly incentives, lowering relative wage costs and creating less regulation around labour force rights to favour private capital [6]. Neo-liberalism takes the form of a corporate capitalism whose elites lower wages and cut welfare programmes [7]. Through the withdrawal of the collective welfare state and the privileging of capitalist

markets as regulators of employment inequalities inevitably deepen. In the UK childcare has become a major for-profit industry, but it is only available to families on relatively high annual salaries leaving those living on a meagre income unable to access this support. Severe penalties exist around access to state welfare support whereby if these prescriptive and complex rules are not obeyed the benefits of those deemed to have transgressed are swiftly removed leaving many even more vulnerable.

In Scotland, levels of problematic drug use and drugs crime are estimated to be among the highest in the world [8] (p. 17), [9]. Police Scotland believe that there are around 300 organised criminal groups (OCGs) involved in drug supply, which makes up 65% of overall organised crime figures [9]. The main Class A drugs seized by Police Scotland 2016–2017 were: heroin (54.1 kg), cocaine (120.3 kg) and crack cocaine (5.2 kg). Most seizures took place in the street, and in and around Glasgow: most drug possession offenders were young men [10]. The Scottish Criminal Justice Survey 2014–2015 found that 27% of crime was associated with male violence [11]. The weight of this traditional administrative criminological approach to the enumeration of recorded crime is likely to be one factor interfering with the development of a more critical criminology that recognises the neglected field of female criminal agency [12].

Women's roles in drug culture have been polarised between two deceptively opposite positions—on the one hand, the overt romanticism and glamorisation that occurs in the on-screen portrayals of 'tough' female 'kingpins', such as Griselda Blanco Resrepo in the 2018 bio-pic *Cocaine Grandmother*; and on the other, the predominance of the female drug mule within popular televised narratives, which play upon the portrayal of female criminal entrepreneurs' involvement as the result of their victimisation and subjugation through male violence.¹ Drugs receiving the most coverage in the British press are cannabis, cocaine, heroin and ecstasy with impact on family and relations as one of the noted adversities [13]. On 30 January 2009 the Daily Mail headline "Scourge of Ladette Thugs" piece described a 14-year-old girl, allegedly the daughter of heroin addicts, and herself a drug user filming, on her mobile phone, the violent murder in London of a vulnerable man by her male friends. The coupling of femininity and masculinity in the contexts of drugs and violence recurs in this article.

This paper avoids both extremes, romanticism and victimhood: instead it offers a contemporary narrative analysis of qualitative data to elicit the voices of street-level female drug dealers domiciled within Scotland's 'vibrant' west of Scotland's illicit drug economy. By exploring the intersectionality between being female and 'doing crime' in a male dominated arena, we purchase a more nuanced understanding of the complex role and motivations of females working in Scotland's illicit drug economy, which could ultimately result in more effective policy making. Mistakenly, the Scottish Government's (2015) Serious Organised Crime Strategy (SSOCS)—an integral element of the government's 'war on drugs'—reflects widely held assumptions that street-level illicit drug activity is predominantly part of 'male culture'.

Limited systematic policy attention has been directed towards understanding female criminality in this field and yet there is empirical evidence documenting the roles females play in this clandestine economy. Moreover, the limited discussion that exists around female participation has largely been underpinned by the trope of a victim narrative. This article seeks to problematize this widespread perception and develop an alternative interpretation which suggests that female participation in Scotland's street drug economy is intrinsically tied to expression of a form of aspirational agency, whilst at the same time being bounded by increasingly gendered marginalisation, exacerbated by inequalities provoked by neo-liberalism. The article begins with a review of the international literature on the role of women within the illegal drug trade more generally. This context situates our article's contribution within wider scholarly findings and debates. The article will then proceed to outline the research methods, before presenting the findings of our empirical contribution to knowledge.

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/sep/04/godmother-cocaine-shot-dead-colombia>; <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Griselda-Blanco>.

These findings are conveyed under three thematic headings generated through a process of narrative data analysis.

2. Literature Review

Women and the Drug Trade

Although there has been a growing body of work on the illicit drugs trade, research on the role of females within this is sparse, especially in a Scottish context. Broadly speaking, however, it is possible to categorise the existing literature into two gender-orientated thematic areas. One category views woman as subordinate to men, while the other scholarly grouping examines the 'exception to the rule' and focuses upon those who have adopted tough masculine personas to 'fit in' to a male dominated sphere of activity [2].

Considering the former first, early studies typically perceived of the role of women in the illicit drug economy as one of subordination to men. The female role was typically portrayed as one of victimization and on the periphery of criminal activities. Women were seen as lacking the physical stature, aggressive demeanour, emotional control and ability to adhere to criminal codes of silence that are required for a leading role within the drugs economy [14]. As such, rather than being active agents, their passive femininity frame was retained, and their role was reduced to one of subordinate relations with powerful men by virtue of their female gender. 'Backing out' or removing oneself from such a situation was virtually impossible such as the effectiveness of the coercive methods [1].

Considering the latter, more recent contributions have challenged such stereotypical views and, instead, offered alternative perspectives on the role that female dealers played in the illicit drugs economy. Denton and O'Malley [15] and Denton [16] argue that females are by no means mere victims: they can, and do, play proactive roles in the facilitation of drugs in local markets². As active players in the illicit drugs market, this literature views females as rejecting or hiding their extrovert femininity and instead, adopting masculine traits in the pursuit of being 'tough'. However, and contrary to the tendency to reduce gendered participation to economic and related strain [17], it should not be assumed that women perceived incongruity between 'being a woman' and dealing illicit drugs as a life-style. Nor should it be assumed that women necessarily feel threatened or uncomfortable with 'doing crime' in what appears to be *de facto* a male domain. By 'doing crime', female participants have been found to gain a sense of accomplishment. Participation seemingly allowed the participants to temporally step outside of culturally gendered binaries that appeared as hegemonically masculine [18]. This is in part facilitated by the deployment of a series of strategies, which enable a partial masculinization that allowed them to be 'seen as one of the lads' [2].

Yet given that the drug economy is by no means a unified and homogeneous industry (nor is there homogeneity in the socio-economic and political arena in which drugs are distributed), the way female drug dealers 'operate' is context dependent [2,14,15]. That putative context dependency requires further explanation in order to theorise female activity in drug trade crime more fully. The gap in our knowledge is arguably reflective of criminological obsessiveness on masculinity and crime. We explore women's criminal 'emancipation'; their sense of achievement and esteem, themes that are recognised by some researchers: Fagan [19] stressed the ties between drug selling and income production which enabled materially expressive life-styles for cocaine female dealers in New York in the late 1980s. Connell [20] (pp. 132–33) argues more negatively claiming that 'the street' is a social milieu for intimidating women and a "zone of occupation by men". Others coin the term 'perilous masculinity', a non-essentialising notion of "street manhood" to denote men involved in this criminality [21].

² Note, females are still located out with the higher echelons of illicit drug economies.

The relative paucity of a nuanced gendered reading of the illicit drugs market can be traced back to an apparent gender gap in offending patterns, coupled with the overwhelmingly male bias in incarceration statistics, that has in turn resulted in an over-emphasis within criminological research's foregrounding of cultural representations of a normative hegemonic hierarchically dominant masculinity and its associations with male violence [22]. This has resulted in what we consider to be a detrimental gap in research on gendered offending. During the 1970s, feminist criminologists critiqued what they perceived to be male oriented research which, they argued, failed to adequately account for the factors which shaped female offending, an issue that is still unresolved; Burman and Batchelor [23] argue that this has substantially affected the development of research and policy on female criminality.

Contextualising the sphere of drug-dealing proper, Hutton [24] argues that the gendered drug economy functions as a gendered subculture underpinned by a hyper-masculine spectacle. Within a hyper-masculine, neo-liberalised economy, it is perhaps unsurprising that research has equally tended to characterise female participation as peripheral, passive and subordinate, as in the Victorian social order women's lives were restricted to the domestic sphere. However, more recent studies have since sought to present a more critical analysis to the traditional perspectives developed by male criminologists about other men where women were marginalised. Indeed, a body of evidence—dating from the 1920s, through to the 1970s—can now be presented to suggest that masculine hegemony has not prevented women from being key actors in the drugs trade. Rather, women have played key roles in the international drugs trade (most notably in Mexico) as bosses, money launderers and couriers [25]. Nonetheless, when women operate in these 'hard' neo-liberal drug economies, their position is often precarious and secondary to men. International ethnographic studies by Maher and Daly [26] in New York City discovered that women are accommodated into a highly stratified crack cocaine drug trade by their female gender. Their roles are subordinate in what these authors argue is a world bounded by institutional sexism. The trading networks "new opportunities" are consumed by men; women they claim, do not experience emancipation from traditional household duties. Moreover, women in these New York neighbourhoods were judged as less "strong" than drug involved men. Women, to support their own safety, conveyed the image of hardness, but sellers continued to be mainly men for a role judged to require stereotypic masculine qualities.

Denton and O'Malley offer a different analysis of women's position in criminal drug dealing in Australia arguing it is not a narrowing process, but is instead work where their capabilities, as women, are highlighted [27]. Property offences are integrated into the work of these women with stolen property and its income generation capacity facilitating gifts, rewards, excitement, status and esteem. Through in-depth interviews conducted in Australian prisons and beyond they found the property dimension of this criminality provided resources that enriched social ties and bartering options. Fleetwood [1], using qualitative methods, sought to understand the positionality of women from a range of countries imprisoned in Ecuador, investigating whether their gender impacted how they were included in illegal work connected with international drug-mule activity. Narrative data analysis identified that coercive violence and choice informed their pathways into cocaine trading. Fleetwood [1] described women's diversity of roles that included being mules, recruiters, package handlers, 'cover' for men, and wholesalers. A number of these women were motivated by seeking a better life for their children, themselves and partners. Gendered norms were boundaries within which these women constructed their own criminal participation, but it was argued this labour disenfranchised them by reducing the scope of a wider agency.

Fiandaca found that Mafia women also remain subjugated to traditionalist patriarchy [28]. Fiandaca identifies two principal typologies that characterise female participation in drug dealing: those who are educated, but unemployed, who turn to criminality for economic reasons, and those who enter the illegal drugs economy out of greed or to maintain a socio-economic status [28] (p. 5). Moreover, it has been suggested that a notable percentage of women who commit crime are mothers, but as Yule et al. argue, we know little about how that role or its gendering structures affects, shapes and structures their criminality [29]. As parenthood is still a real material constraint upon

female participation in wider 'legal' society, we would expect it to impact on how their criminality is expressed. Indeed, as Girshick suggests, if legal means to secure income are blocked by pressing familial responsibility, criminal activity becomes, in this world, legitimated, especially if intimate partners are absent, unwilling or unable to contribute [30].

3. The Current Study

Methods

The data presented in this study was gathered between 2012 and 2016, as part of a larger study exploring gang organisation as a means for gang business. As part of the study, in-depth interviews with thirty-five offenders involved in organised crime and five practitioners were held. Of these interviews, two were focus group interviews ($n = 4$ & 5). Participant criteria was set as having been involved in group offending, prior involvement in activities that Police Scotland term as 'serious organised crime' and being over sixteen years of age. Interviews lasted for up to sixty minutes. Narrative data analysis was deployed to understand the data reported below. Narrative analysis is an umbrella term for a range of approaches to qualitative data [31]. Interviews were subjected to close reading by each author to identify the underlying meaning of the embedded narratives and their thematic focus identified. Our findings focus upon exploring narrative accounts nuanced towards an intersectional analytic. The latter viewpoint resonates with the complexity of the participants' lives and the multifaceted identity commitments of women. These narratives are clustered under the rubrics: 'Keeping it in the family'; 'Managing market domination'; and 'Females doing the business'.

Of this sample group, all were male except one offender and one practitioner. Interviewees were accessed via the practitioners attached to key outreach programmes in the West of Scotland. Recognising the gendered nature of the sample, a small follow up study was done to better address the gender gap. The same criteria were used and between 2016 and 2017 a further seven participants were interviewed, all female. As part of the follow-up study, one focus group was held, in which three females were interviewed. In total, therefore, forty-seven participants were interviewed, including nine females whose narratives inform this paper. All interviewees were indigenous and mainly white and raised in working-class communities in the West of Scotland. The names used below are pseudonyms. The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and the protocol was approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of the West of Scotland.

4. Findings

4.1. Keeping It in the Family

Local drug markets are fluid and fragmentary. Traditionally, women do the emotional labour to sustain family and kinship networks. Under this thematic rubric we enter an intimate micro-sociological world of family disharmony from which criminal drug dealing emerges. That disharmonious situation resonates with the empirical studies described in the literature review and affects pathways into criminality. Gest's concept [32] of the "post-traumatic" city captures how working-class lives and communities are being devastated by neo-liberalism [33,34]. Illegal drug use and dealing flourish in these socially destructive situations in which the poor are penalised.

Miller [18] found female gender offered a disguise within a masculine drug world, concealing its shadow from police authorities. By intersecting with the normative status of motherhood concealment of illegal trading by drug dealing females is facilitated.

In demonstrating the importance of the female role in the family unit in the West of Scotland context, Jennifer, the oldest sibling with brothers explained;

'I look[ed] after the boys (referring to her younger brothers) [growing up] ... fell on me to [raise] them. [our] mum was there but couldn't do all the practical things [be]cause of her illness so I had to do everything for them ... was hard, but they respect me for it.' —(Jennifer)

Jennifer's 'doing gender' intersects with the contexts of family and social class. Her age within her family nexus contributed to her trajectory towards drug trading. Her mother's poor health compelled her to adopt a care role, becoming a 'mother' by dint of family difficulties. Her life was cultivated in this single-parent family. She learned about the male gender through her performance of normative femininity helping to socialise her male siblings. Jennifer's authority and confidence at handling male behaviour flourished, but given the consuming nature of family support her exclusion from networking opportunities outside the home no doubt impacted her criminogenic transition to an illegal economy of drug labour:

'The boys do what I tell them ... I've done a lot for them. Suppose I do cast that up at times ... [but] everything I do is for ... the good of the family. They know that So, they do as they are told (laughs).' —Jennifer

She is ambivalent about her situation: on the one hand it thwarted her and yet on the other hand she is incentivised by being enabled to support "the good" of her family. As observed in the literature review female drug mules were recruited through intimate partner ties and desires to grow better family lives, factors that resulted in them learning the drug trade. Eventually, Jennifer exploited her gendered caring status to determine when her family should pursue drug deals. In 'doing gender', she became the family's economic and social protector. As a parallel narrative Karen found herself growing up through a socially difficult family structure, whereby kinship and sexual ties informed her transition into illegal drugs. In the next extract Karen's experience as a sister being brought into "the fold" by males is apparent. Her gender intersects with sibling ties and the regard they evoke in a context of economic deprivation. Her expressions of a gendered performance validate the argument of Jody Miller [18] about the importance of recognising complexity and intersectionality to understanding social action:

'I had always sold [diazepam] It's no[t] money you can live off, [but] it helps After I had kids, I just wanted the best for them. Was pure struggling No like their dad was providing, he's a pure loser man My oldest brother he was a [drug] dealer. I [learned from him] My brother had contacts [and] hooked me up That[s] how I got into this My [siblings] seen me doing well, because I would be like buying them stuff, they were like "thanks sis, by the way how'd you get the money for that" [with the more success I had] I just brought them into the fold.' —Karen

In a similar vein, Jennifer's gendered femininity also connects with sibling ties, but its context is also nuanced towards the importance of serendipitous kinship ties within the family. Her induction to the trade identifies, illustrated in the next extract, her ties to a masculine uncle-type family 'mentor', whose significant presence as supporter offered them a questionable protection from the painful effects of neo-liberal welfare cuts:

'[uncle] got [me] into this line of He was well known in the scheme³ I had always looked after my [siblings], but after changes in benefits (referring to recent welfare cuts) we literally were finding it hard to put a roof over our head [uncle] helped us out Initially, we just [stored] whatever, but after a while you get to know the game. [I] fell into [drug dealing] [but] needed help I started getting [oldest male siblings] to help out I don't have a [driving] license, [he does] after that, it becomes like a family operation.' —Jennifer

Jennifer recruits her male siblings, and through the 'uncle' other ties are forged to the masculinized world of criminal dealing which, she suggests, she drifted towards [35]. Her status as a normative

³ A term used in Glasgow to refer to local housing estates which are associated with welfare support systems, and class exclusion.

female would have elicited certain types of heterosexual support from men. As a 'family business' that she leads, this resonates with a mothering role in terms of her nurturing the participation of others. Her cultivation as a female carer takes place in a context of expertise development in drug trading. Her lack of a driving license impedes the delivery of deals and impacts her personal safety, but she enhances her personal safety by deploying her "oldest male sibling". Jennifer's criminal strategy straddles the private ('feminine') domestic sphere and the 'public sphere' of criminal males. One role for women in Fleetwood's study [1] was to offer 'cover' for men by accompanying them in the public sphere.

While Karen and Jennifer entered drug dealing networks via family and broader kinship ties, other females enter through intimate tie relationships they experienced with long-term boyfriends and husbands. Sophie discusses her role in a high-profile OCG which she was introduced into through her fiancé, Ron, whose cultural capital as the owner of mobile ice-cream service was suitable 'cover' or front for this clandestine criminal behaviour:

'[Ron's]uncle [Andrew] own[ed] [ice-cream] vans. [After Andrew's death] Ron got them. [Ron] already knew the [suppliers] from Glasgow [be]cause [Andrew]. [It was arranged] for [Ron] to keep doing the runs. Some work[ers] [dealt] from the vans but [their main purpose was money laundering] ... I [was in charge of] finance ... [before progressing] to cook[ing].' —Sophie

Selling ice-cream connected with money-laundering, a requirement of drug-trading outcomes. Money from deals had to be 'washed' to avoid the detection of the source of this wealth being discovered. Kimberly likewise was initially brought into supply networks through a long-term relationship with an intimate partner who in steps 'introduced' his work into her life. She explains her 'induction process' through Steve as follows:

'When dating I didn't know [Steve] was selling [heroin] ... [when] I found out, he stopped hiding it from me and just [brought drugs] into the house [openly] ... [after] we split ... [I] had bills and [a child], so ... [Steve's supplier visited] me and said if I [wanted] would [I continue] to hold [drugs] ... [he] paid me £100 every week at first [but] also [bought expensive goods] Just [progressed] from there.' —Kimberly

Monetary reward linked Kimberly, as an associate, into crime. It gave her a capacity to express herself in material ways reinforcing a criminal life style. As Kimberly states, her initial role in supply networks was comparatively minor, she received a wage and other goods. However, these seemingly subordinate roles and the material rewards they facilitate may nevertheless deepen a criminogenic dependency upon the male and push them even more deeply into this criminal world.

The parallels of Scottish trading narratives with Italian mafia women and their family are striking, suggestive of an international dimension of gendered oppression combined with illicit female expressive agency. Siebert describes the way that routine activities (shopping and collecting children from school) of mafia mothers affords them the secrecy to do drug business [36]. Their closely monitored husbands do not have this female normative 'cover' to hide behind. Their brothers were "boss" on the outside, but in the private domestic area female siblings kept their traditional status. This hierarchy reminds us of the "institutional sexism" uncovered by Maher and Daly in New York neighbourhoods [26]. Ingrasci identified how the drug dealing mafia families coincided with the natural family [37]. In the Calabrian mafia, for example, the core unit is the blood family: one mother had the nickname "Mummy Heroin", as she distributed drug merchandise to her sons. Faced with risk, the focus on the next narrative, female drug traffickers, are concealed in another nuanced way. Beneath the gendered identity of a being a "simple housewife" criminal advantage was created.

4.2. Managing Market Domination

While Hutton [24] acknowledges that females are more than capable of entering and maintaining participation in the masculine dominated sphere of drug dealing, others argue the female criminal presence must be organised with circumspection. Hutton, for instance, attributes this need for vigilance

to the drug dealer's femininity. Masculine traits premised upon physicality and aggressiveness are forms of street capital presented to the world by male dealers [26]. It is argued the drug involved female must perform "off stage" the position of puppet master or *Keyser Söze*⁴ due to the fact she lacks the physical prowess and musculature to challenge male dealers, partners, or even customers in a physically threatening and credible manner. Despite this theorisation hiding behind the constructed violent veneer of the male dealer, Jennifer and Karen embraced their positions as head of their respective SOCGs (Serious and Organized Criminal Gangs) making few efforts to conceal positions of criminal dealing leadership other than from law enforcement agencies. Karen argues her femininity causes others to construct vulnerability around her, even imputing the presence of a godfather type figure supporting her from the shadows. Jennifer's network is pragmatic with the "uncle" only supplying drug merchandise whilst she manages a family neighbour force of brothers with whom she divides her profits:

'I am my own boss . . . I pay my [suppliers] like everyone else, [but] I sell to my own [clientele] . . . I [pay] my [siblings], their mates, [other workers], but the rest is [mine].' —Jennifer

Whilst Jennifer clearly discounts male dependency it is men rather than other females who support her drug trading from a shadow world. To avoid victimization Jennifer openly states to her respective clientele that she manages the control, flow, and supply of drugs which the SOCGs sell. When questioned about the potential dangers a female may face Sam defends her position through reasoned comparisons:

'If [a would-be attacker] is going to rob a dealer, then they are going to rob a dealer. Doesn't matter if they are male or female . . . If you (referring to the researcher) were going to rob a drug-dealer you would make sure you are all tooled up⁵, and [attack] when they are [unsuspecting] . . . I would agree that women would be more vulnerable to like a sex attacker, but that's [be]cause the women has something the guy wants. It's no[t] like that with drug-dealing . . . [both male and female] dealers have what the attacker wants.' —Sam

Her account may reflect a neutralisation process whereby she suppresses the risk to her person by framing the likelihood of her being a victim as statistically no different from a male, and yet the dealer status will not, she assumes, disguise femininity. She overlooks the possibility that both her drugs and gendered vulnerability may enhance victimisation. The dealer status may not necessarily obliterate her gender. Sam seems to believe, perhaps mistakenly, that gender is given little consideration for the motivations of would-be attackers who she estimates are exclusively seeking to rob drugs and money from dealers. Sam attributes this to the fact that what the robber seeks to gain only the commodities of drugs or finances. Such a view is supported by Leah, who when in the house, experienced a break-in by males looking for goods:

'They broke into [the house] but that [was] because James (Leah's supplier and partner) was holding a few Kilo of coke . . . [they] never touched me . . . [they just] stole the [drugs], some money as well, and left.' —Leah

However, this incident is one episode of robbery in one domestic context. In other robberies her presence may not be ignored. As Sam suggests, when an attacker is committing a sexual offence then the female is likely to be at greater risk of victimization than the male. Sam's argument highlights

⁴ Keyser Söze was a fictitious character in the 1995 film 'Usual Suspects'. Kevin spacey is a criminal who plays the buffoon, while in fact controlling the criminal underworld form behind the scenes in the guise of invented criminal mastermind Keizer Soze, who in fact does not actually exist.

⁵ Toolled up is a Glaswegian term for pre-arming oneself for violent confrontation to ensure the odds are stacked heavily in favour of the individual in question.

her assumption that the decisive factor which increases risk of victimization is opportunity and preparedness to conduct assault. For example, agreeing to sell drugs to unknown individuals, alone, or in unknown locations, or carrying large sums of money are all factors which increase the likelihood of being victimized. Sam therefore believes that the risk of victimization is dependent upon the business strategy deployed by dealers, rather than the gender of the dealer. Jennifer's narrative expressed below depicts a world of limited social capital. As well as judging her relations through trust and social capital her business decision-making acknowledges unscrupulous customers and that leads to her carefulness about distributing drugs without immediate payment:

'Anyone can get attacked... it happens to [male drug dealers] all the time. It's just one of them risks [involved with] doing this type of [work] You need to be on your guard . . . No[t] even [in regard to robbery], but steal[ing] as well [sometimes customers] will maybe ask for tick, or run up [large debts], [and] no[t] pay I set limits on tick bills Regardless, [of potential profits] I only work with people [I know, or] other [trusted friends] can vouch for.' —Jennifer

Risks of assault and robbery are not exclusive to female drug dealers. The evidence in this section presents us with constructions of a criminal social world that is arguably mythological in the sense that there may be a disconnect between participants' discourse and what in fact occurs. Whilst the research participants are knowledgeable about it through direct experience it is arguable their framing reassures them that gender is unlikely to influence whether or not an attack on a street drug dealer takes place. These narratives may underestimate the palpable presence of masculinity in female criminal dealing with which personal safety is associated. James was in the house that was burgled. Male mates form part of the dealing business. Earlier, Steve introduced Kimberly into this world. It was an uncle who had the ice-cream van. Females are doing business, but from within a masculinized normativity, a phenomenon found in the international studies reviewed.

4.3. Females Doing the Business

In choosing business strategies these research participants argued females had advantages over rival male dealers. Ironically, their confident and contestable self-appraisals are attributed to an absence of hyper-masculine street capital. Karen proposed those at the lower market levels of drug supply were hyper-masculine, inclined to reassert their masculinity less through the practices of drug supply than by conjuring their trading as a lifestyle boosting their symbolic capital of conspicuous consumption and its community prestige. Karen discusses this issue in relation her frequently incarcerated older brother whose violence ("bravado") rather than the trading technicalities of drugs was the factor causing his criminal demise:

'I learn[ed] how to deal from [my older brother, but] also learned what not to do. He [is always] in and out of [prison] . . . [mostly] for fighting wi' people about drugs . . . he is too bravado [for] this line of work Most guys are... I don't have that problem being a woman [I don't] get side-tracked into some guy, [bravado], bull shit, who is the toughest For me it is just business.' —Karen

Her brother's conflictual relationship to the drug deals conflated with masculine presentations of the self. Karen argues those were unnecessary distractions from doing business. She overlooks that foregrounding violence capital may have been a necessary 'job requirement' in the case of male dealers. Drug dealing therefore connects differently to male and female identities and associated customer relations. As a female, Karen's trading was not handicapped by a need for public status recognition. Violence would provoke unwanted attention in the community leading into feuding which might intensify the danger of drug dealing. Pamela draws attention to negative and future retributive consequences of governance through violence:

'[violence] do[esn't] do [anyone] good [Recalling a previous incident] I went with [male gangland enforcer - Paul] to [identify] this cunt that owed money, nothing [much], a few hundred . . . Anyways, [Paul] stab[s] fuck out this dude. It was brutal, anyhoos (anyways) What ends up happen but? [The victim] comes back, about fucking two years [later], and does [Paul] in. Ended up tit of tat. Whole load a shit [Results in] both of them getting [imprisonment]. —Pamela

Pamela described assaults as provoking a gang-land battle, arrests and imprisonment. Female dealers neglected how their distinctive 'softer' capital intersected with other normative and protective dimensions of femininity that are not available to men who are expected to be independently credible. A hyper-masculinity form of managing deals and securing cash flow amongst male drug-dealers hindered them from forming business partnerships with the females in our sample to whom they were concerned about being subordinate. Jennifer explained:

'My brother's [male friends do] some work for [me] but I can see they aren't happy when [I] ask them "do this". They look at me like "you're a woman" I don't have that problem with [my younger brothers] But their pals, [I do]. They do what I ask because they know it is going to benefit them but I can't say "fucking get that done now". Remember, they are young boys, and most aren't [use to] women tell[ing] them [what] to do.' —Jennifer

Command and control functions remained masculinized. Jennifer discovered resistance to her attempts to instruct other males. Even males who are younger are already practicing their grasp of the gender order by not respecting her authority on the grounds of her femininity. In the street women dealers' lives intersect less directly with violent incidents than do those of male dealers. The agency of these women is interwoven with a male world of brothers' friends, gangland enforcers and older male siblings. Their management of market domination for female dealers is mediated in a variety of circumstances through the presence of males whose status, age and roles vary. The micro-sociology of these relationalities and constructions of local realities must be contextualised in the wider sociology of post-industrial decline and neo-liberalism affecting Scotland. The wider economic and sociological context of the focus of this paper is adumbrated in the first two paragraphs of the Conclusion.

5. Conclusions

Post-industrial decline is often cited as one of the reasons behind the poor health profile of communities in the West of Scotland, as noted in earlier citations. Mortality trends are significantly more adverse there compared with other European regions over the past 30 years which are also characterised by high levels of poverty [4]. The greater relative economic deprivation in this densely populated region of Scotland has traditionally been proposed to explain its poor health outcomes compared with similar profiles in English cities. The higher magnitude of inequalities in the West of Scotland region, whilst it may be more intense than that found in certain English cities such as Manchester and Liverpool, is, Walsh et al. [4] (p. 63) argue, insufficient to account for its deprivation. Other explanatory variables that can illuminate this conundrum include elevated levels of risk-taking amongst Glaswegian residents [5,38].

Risk-taking is an inescapable aspect of criminal behaviour, and as the findings described illustrated, it is demonstrably ever-present in street-level illicit drug dealing. Risk refers in this context to becoming the victim of violent assault and being detected by the police. In more clandestine forms risk is intrinsic to the coercive control that emerged in our recognition of potential grooming behaviour and in the international literature reviewed. Life-styles associated with illicit drugs and the consumption of excessive amounts of other toxins such as alcohol may help to explain the elevated mortality statistics impacted the West of Scotland [38]. Social environments impact individual preferences through imitation and learning by recourse to modelling behaviours. Role models were available for those in our study in their immediate, often wider family environments [5]. It is estimated by Walsh et al. [4] that 50% of the excess mortality for those aged under 65 in Glasgow is due to high levels of drug and alcohol consumption which foregrounds

the fact that there are social models available to women in this very constraining environment who engage with high risk behaviours connected with drugs.

The agency of these and other women in this environment of post-industrial decline is inevitably affected negatively by the shrinkage of employment opportunities. That source of the thwarting of their ambitions classically impacts the individual's pathways into crime which can offer resources that they cannot access through, they believe, legal opportunities such as those afforded by employment. As we have discovered women do encounter 'opportunities' in these communities but the nature of the emancipation they gain through them is health-threatening and likely to result in their incarceration or early death. The pervasive presence in our data and that of the literature reviewed is of an intimidating male presence. That presence is interconnected with the existence of wider patterns of gender abuse in Scotland cited earlier: the official statistics for domestic violence involving assault by male partners on women in this region are significant and the high incarceration rates for men [39] arguably illustrates a cultural of subjugation that will erode opportunities for women's agency.

Finally, a limitation of our methodology and the data it generated lies in a lacuna of methodological triangulation. The narratives of women drug dealers on the street in the West of Scotland intersect with a back story of domestic abuse which some are likely to have experienced, a possibility which did not surface in our data. Attributions of violence, in this article lean towards men who threaten or give provisional protection. Other studies of female criminality report that women were as likely as men to commit serious assault and battery offence; Visseaux et al. [12] identified female violence in France as a growing trend. Coupled with that offending they discovered more traditional female offending patterns that included fraud and economic crime. Denton and O'Malley also found that property crime and drug dealing in Australia were associated [27]. Although, therefore, the females in our sample eschewed admitting to violence that narrative may itself represent their preferred cultural script that their gender, unlike men's normatively, prohibits the expression of this particular voice. The absence of the use of violent scripts in their narratives cannot be taken as reliable evidence that in their drug-dealing they do not venture out into this 'man's world'.

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