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Keeping it in the family

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Published in:
Societies

DOI:
[10.3390/soc9010022](https://doi.org/10.3390/soc9010022)

Published: 19/03/2019

Document Version
Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication on the UWS Academic Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Holligan, C., McLean, R., Irvine, A., & Brick, C. (2019). Keeping it in the family: intersectionality and 'class A' drug dealing by females in the West of Scotland. *Societies*, 9(1), [22]. <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc9010022>

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1 Article

2 **Keeping it in the family: Intersectionality and ‘Class A’ drug dealing by females in the**
3 **West of Scotland**

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9 Received: date; Accepted: date; Published: date

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

22 **Keywords:** Intersectionality, female, drugs, crime, masculinity, Glasgow

23

24

25 INTRODUCTION

26 We argue in this article that to be successful as high-level dealers in Class-A drugs women
27 dealers in the West of Scotland, some of whom are mothers, adopt ‘masculinizing’ practices
28 of the self, whilst retaining their positionality within a gendered order of masculine
29 hegemony. This (partial) female agency contrasts with a more passive gendered subjectivity
30 prescribed by the drug mule cultural sub-type pervading wider perception of a submissive
31 female criminality in this drug trading field where women are at risk from coercive males
32 operating within a global trading nexus (Fleetwood, 2009: 37). Female drug dealers
33 nevertheless develop strategies, as this article explores, to annex to themselves agency in
34 their criminogenic encounters with a violently masculinized world (Grundetgern and
35 Sandberg, 2012). Violence is imbricated with illicit drug trading (Pearson and Hobbs, 2000).
36 Post-industrial decline, which typifies the west of Scotland is associated with greater risk
37 taking in Glasgow and increased mortality rates in the West of Scotland (Walsh, et al, 2009;
38 Bisin et al, 2001). Illicit drug taking is associated with the significant levels of deprivation
39 that are found in Glasgow which the British government’s neo-liberal welfare support
40 culture aggravates. Law and Mooney (2012) argue fiscal support for welfare has been
41 reduced by the government and the devolved Scottish state aims to attract mobile

42 investment through a low-tax regime and other capital-friendly incentives, lowering relative
43 wage costs and creating less regulation around labour force rights to favour private capital.
44 Neo-liberalism takes the form of a corporate capitalism whose elites lower wages and cut
45 welfare programmes (Eschle and Maigushca, 2014). Through the withdrawal of the
46 collective welfare state and the privileging of capitalist markets as regulators of
47 employment inequalities inevitably deepen. In the UK childcare has become a major for-
48 profit industry, but it is only available to families on relatively high annual salaries leaving
49 those living on a meagre income unable to access this support. Severe penalties exist
50 around access to state welfare support whereby if these prescriptive and complex rules are
51 not obeyed the benefits of those deemed to have transgressed are swiftly removed leaving
52 many even more vulnerable.

53 In Scotland, levels of problematic drug use and drugs crime are estimated to be among the
54 highest in the world (McCarron, 2014: 17; Scottish Government, 2015). Police Scotland
55 believe that there are around 300 organised criminal groups (OCGs) involved in drug supply,
56 which makes up 65% of overall organised crime figures (Scottish Government, 2015). The
57 main Class A drugs seized by Police Scotland 2016-17 were: heroin (54.1 kilograms), cocaine
58 (120.3 kilograms) and crack cocaine (5.2 kilograms). Most seizures took place in the street,
59 and in and around Glasgow: most drug possession offenders were young men (Scottish
60 Government, 2017a). The Scottish Criminal Justice Survey 2014-15 found that 27% of crime
61 was associated with male violence (Scottish Government, 2017b). The weight of this
62 traditional administrative criminological approach to the enumeration of recorded crime is
63 likely to be one factor interfering with the development of a more critical criminology that
64 recognises the neglected field of female criminal agency (Visseaux et al, 2012).

65 Women's roles in drug culture have been polarised between two deceptively opposite
66 positions – on the one hand, the overt romanticism and glamorisation that occurs in the on-
67 screen portrayals of 'tough' female 'kingpins', such as Griselda Blanco Resreparto in the
68 2018 bio-pic *Cocaine Grandmother*; and on the other, the predominance of the female drug
69 mule within popular televised narratives, which play upon the portrayal of female criminal
70 entrepreneurs' involvement as the result of their victimisation and subjugation through
71 male violence.¹ Drugs receiving the most coverage in the British press are cannabis,
72 cocaine, heroin and ecstasy with impact on family and relations as one of the noted
73 adversities (UKDPC, 2010). On 30 January 2009 the Daily Mail headline "Scourge of Ladette
74 Thugs" piece described a 14-year-old girl, allegedly the daughter of heroin addicts, and
75 herself a drug user filming, on her mobile phone, the violent murder in London of a
76 vulnerable man by her male friends. The coupling of femininity and masculinity in the
77 contexts of drugs and violence recurs in this article.

78 This paper avoids both extremes, romanticism and victimhood: instead it offers a
79 contemporary narrative analysis of qualitative data to elicit the voices of street-level female
80 drug dealers domiciled within Scotland's 'vibrant' west of Scotland's illicit drug economy.
81 By exploring the intersectionality between being female and 'doing crime' in a male
82 dominated arena, we purchase a more nuanced understanding of the complex role and
83 motivations of females working in Scotland's illicit drug economy, which could ultimately
84 result in more effective policy making. Mistakenly, the Scottish Government's (2015)

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

85 Serious Organised Crime Strategy (SSOCS) - an integral element of the government's 'war
86 on drugs' - reflects widely held assumptions that street-level illicit drug activity is
87 predominantly part of 'male culture'.
88

89 Limited systematic policy attention has been directed towards understanding female
90 criminality in this field and yet there is empirical evidence documenting the roles females
91 play in this clandestine economy. Moreover, the limited discussion that exists around
92 female participation has largely been underpinned by the trope of a victim narrative. This
93 article seeks to problematize this widespread perception and develop an alternative
94 interpretation which suggests that female participation in Scotland's street drug economy
95 is intrinsically tied to expression of a form of aspirational agency, whilst at the same time
96 being bounded by increasingly gendered marginalisation, exacerbated by inequalities
97 provoked by neo-liberalism. The article begins with a review of the international literature
98 on the role of women within the illegal drug trade more generally. This context situates our
99 article's contribution within wider scholarly findings and debates. The article will then
100 proceed to outline the research methods, before presenting the findings of our empirical
101 contribution to knowledge. These findings are conveyed under three thematic headings
102 generated through a process of narrative data analysis.
103

104 **LITERATURE REVIEW**

105 **Women and the Drug Trade**

106 Although there has been a growing body of work on the illicit drugs trade, research on the
107 role of females within this is sparse, especially in a Scottish context. Broadly speaking,
108 however, it is possible to categorise the existing literature into two gender-orientated
109 thematic areas. One category views woman as subordinate to men, while the other
110 scholarly grouping examines the 'exception to the rule' and focuses upon those who have
111 adopted tough masculine personas to 'fit in' to a male dominated sphere of activity
112 (Grundetjern and Sandberg, 2012).

113 Considering the former first, early studies typically perceived of the role of women in the
114 illicit drug economy as one of subordination to men. The female role was typically portrayed
115 as one of victimization and on the periphery of criminal activities. Women were seen as
116 lacking the physical stature, aggressive demeanour, emotional control and ability to adhere
117 to criminal codes of silence that are required for a leading role within the drugs economy
118 (Grundetjern, 2015). As such, rather than being active agents, their passive femininity frame
119 was retained, and their role was reduced to one of subordinate relations with powerful men
120 by virtue of their female gender. 'Backing out' or removing oneself from such a situation
121 was virtually impossible such as the effectiveness of the coercive methods (Fleetwood,
122 2009).

123 Considering the latter, more recent contributions have challenged such stereotypical views
124 and, instead, offered alternative perspectives on the role that female dealers played in the
125 illicit drugs economy. Denton and O'Malley (1999) and Denton (2001) argue that females
126 are by no means mere victims: they can, and do, play proactive roles in the facilitation of

127 drugs in local markets². As active players in the illicit drugs market, this literature views
128 females as rejecting or hiding their extrovert femininity and instead, adopting masculine
129 traits in the pursuit of being 'tough'. However, and contrary to the tendency to reduce
130 gendered participation to economic and related strain (Agnew, 2013), it should not be
131 assumed that women perceived incongruity between 'being a woman' and dealing illicit
132 drugs as a life-style. Nor should it be assumed that women necessarily feel threatened or
133 uncomfortable with 'doing crime' in what appears to be *de facto* a male domain. By 'doing
134 crime', female participants have been found to gain a sense of accomplishment.
135 Participation seemingly allowed the participants to temporally step outside of culturally
136 gendered binaries that appeared as hegemonically masculine (Miller, 2002). This is in part
137 facilitated by the deployment of a series of strategies, which enable a partial masculinization
138 that allowed them to be 'seen as one of the lads' (Grundetjern and Sandberg, 2012).

139 Yet given that the drug economy is by no means a unified and homogeneous industry (nor
140 is there homogeneity in the socio-economic and political arena in which drugs are
141 distributed), the way female drug dealers 'operate' is context dependent (Denton and
142 O'Malley, 1999; Grundetjern and Sandberg, 2012; Grundetjern, 2015). That putative
143 context dependency requires further explanation in order to theorise female activity in drug
144 trade crime more fully. The gap in our knowledge is arguably reflective of criminological
145 obsessiveness on masculinity and crime. We explore women's criminal 'emancipation'; their
146 sense of achievement and esteem, themes that are recognised by some researchers: Fagan
147 (1994) stressed the ties between drug selling and income production which enabled
148 materially expressive life-styles for cocaine female dealers in New York in the late 1980s.
149 Connell (1987: 132-33) argues more negatively claiming that 'the street' is a social milieu
150 for intimidating women and a "zone of occupation by men". Others coin the term 'perilous
151 masculinity', a non-essentialising notion of "street manhood" to denote men involved in
152 this criminality (Lobo de la Tera, 2016).

153 The relative paucity of a nuanced gendered reading of the illicit drugs market can be traced
154 back to an apparent gender gap in offending patterns, coupled with the overwhelmingly
155 male bias in incarceration statistics, that has in turn resulted in an over-emphasis within
156 criminological research's foregrounding of cultural representations of a normative
157 hegemonic hierarchically dominant masculinity and its associations with male violence
158 (Donaldson, 1993). This has resulted in what we consider to be a detrimental gap in research
159 on gendered offending. During the 1970s, feminist criminologists critiqued what they
160 perceived to be male oriented research which, they argued, failed to adequately account
161 for the factors which shaped female offending, an issue that is still unresolved; Burman and
162 Batchelor (2009) argue that this has substantially affected the development of research and
163 policy on female criminality.

164 Contextualising the sphere of drug-dealing proper, Hutton (2005) argues that the gendered
165 drug economy functions as a gendered subculture underpinned by a hyper-masculine
166 spectacle. Within a hyper-masculine, neo-liberalised economy, it is perhaps unsurprising
167 that research has equally tended to characterise female participation as peripheral, passive
168 and subordinate, as in the Victorian social order women's lives were restricted to the
169 domestic sphere. However, more recent studies have since sought to present a more critical
170 analysis to the traditional perspectives developed by male criminologists about other men

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

171 where women were marginalised. Indeed, a body of evidence – dating from the 1920s,
172 through to the 1970s – can now be presented to suggest that masculine hegemony has not
173 prevented women from being key actors in the drugs trade. Rather, women have played
174 key roles in the international drugs trade (most notably in Mexico) as bosses, money
175 launderers and couriers (Carey, 2014). Nonetheless, when women operate in these ‘hard’
176 neo-liberal drug economies, their position is often precarious and secondary to men.
177 International ethnographic studies by Maher and Daly (1996) in New York City discovered
178 that women are accommodated into a highly stratified crack cocaine drug trade by their
179 female gender. Their roles are subordinate in what these authors argue is a world bounded
180 by institutional sexism. The trading networks “new opportunities” are consumed by men;
181 women they claim, do not experience emancipation from traditional household duties.
182 Moreover, women in these New York neighbourhoods were judged as less “strong” than
183 drug involved men. Women, to support their own safety, conveyed the image of hardness,
184 but sellers continued to be mainly men for a role judged to require stereotypic masculine
185 qualities.

186 Denton and O’Malley (2001) offer a different analysis of women’s position in criminal drug
187 dealing in Australia arguing it is not a narrowing process, but is instead work where their
188 capabilities, as women, are highlighted. Property offences are integrated into the work of
189 these women with stolen property and its income generation capacity facilitating gifts,
190 rewards, excitement, status and esteem. Through in-depth interviews conducted in
191 Australian prisons and beyond they found the property dimension of this criminality
192 provided resources that enriched social ties and bartering options. Fleetwood (2009), using
193 qualitative methods, sought to understand the positionality of women from a range of
194 countries imprisoned in Ecuador, investigating whether their gender impacted how they
195 were included in illegal work connected with international drug-mule activity. Narrative
196 data analysis identified that coercive violence and choice informed their pathways into
197 cocaine trading. Fleetwood (2009) described women’s diversity of roles that included being
198 mules, recruiters, package handlers, ‘cover’ for men, and wholesalers. A number of these
199 women were motivated by seeking a better life for their children, themselves and partners.
200 Gendered norms were boundaries within which these women constructed their own
201 criminal participation, but it was argued this labour disenfranchised them by reducing the
202 scope of a wider agency.

203 Fiandaca (2007) found that Mafia women also remain subjugated to traditionalist
204 patriarchy. Fiandaca (2007:5) identifies two principal typologies that characterise female
205 participation in drug dealing: those who are educated, but unemployed, who turn to
206 criminality for economic reasons, and those who enter the illegal drugs economy out of
207 greed or to maintain a socio-economic status. Moreover, it has been suggested that a
208 notable percentage of women who commit crime are mothers, but as Yule et al (2014)
209 argue, we know little about how that role or its gendering structures affects, shapes and
210 structures their criminality. As parenthood is still a real material constraint upon female
211 participation in wider ‘legal’ society, we would expect it to impact on how their criminality
212 is expressed. Indeed, as Girshick (1999) suggests, if legal means to secure income are
213 blocked by pressing familial responsibility, criminal activity becomes, in this world,
214 legitimated, especially if intimate partners are absent, unwilling or unable to contribute
215 (Girshick, 1999).

216

217

218

219 **THE CURRENT STUDY**

220 **Methods**

221 The data presented in this study was gathered between 2012 and 2016, as part of a larger
222 study exploring gang organisation as a means for gang business. As part of the study, in-
223 depth interviews with thirty-five offenders involved in organised crime and five
224 practitioners were held. Of these interviews, two were focus group interviews (n=4 & 5).
225 Participant criteria was set as having been involved in group offending, prior involvement
226 in activities that Police Scotland term as ‘serious organised crime’ and being over sixteen
227 years of age. Interviews lasted for up to sixty minutes. Narrative data analysis was deployed
228 to understand the data reported below. Narrative analysis is an umbrella term for a range
229 of approaches to qualitative data (Reissman,1993). Interviews were subjected to close
230 reading by each author to identify the underlying meaning of the embedded narratives and
231 their thematic focus identified. Our findings focus upon exploring narrative accounts
232 nuanced towards an intersectional analytic. The latter viewpoint resonates with the
233 complexity of the participants’ lives and the multifaceted identity commitments of women.
234 These narratives are clustered under the rubrics: ‘Keeping it in the family’; ‘Managing
235 market domination’; and ‘Females doing the business’.

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

247 **FINDINGS**

248 **Keeping it in the family**

249 Local drug markets are fluid and fragmentary. Traditionally, women do the emotional labour
250 to sustain family and kinship networks. Under this thematic rubric we enter an intimate
251 micro-sociological world of family disharmony from which criminal drug dealing emerges.
252 That disharmonious situation resonates with the empirical studies described in the
253 literature review and affects pathways into criminality. Gest’s (2017) concept of the “post-
254 traumatic” city captures how working-class lives and communities are being devastated by
255 neo-liberalism (Carrington and Hogg, 2013; Wacquant, 2001). Illegal drug use and dealing
256 flourish in these socially destructive situations in which the poor are penalised.

257 Miller (2002) found female gender offered a disguise within a masculine drug world,
 258 concealing its shadow from police authorities. By intersecting with the normative status of
 259 motherhood concealment of illegal trading by drug dealing females is facilitated. ‘

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

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

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

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

278 She is ambivalent about her situation: on the one hand it thwarted her and yet on the other
 279 hand she is incentivised by being enabled to support “the good” of her family. As observed
 280 in the literature review female drug mules were recruited through intimate partner ties and
 281 desires to grow better family lives, factors that resulted in them learning the drug trade.
 282 Eventually, Jennifer exploited her gendered caring status to determine when her family
 283 should pursue drug deals. In ‘doing gender’, she became the family’s economic and social
 284 protector. As a parallel narrative Karen found herself growing up through a socially difficult
 285 family structure, whereby kinship and sexual ties informed her transition into illegal drugs.
 286 In the next extract Karen’s experience as a sister being brought into “the fold” by males is
 287 apparent. Her gender intersects with sibling ties and the regard they evoke in a context of
 288 economic deprivation. Her expressions of a gendered performance validate the argument
 289 of Jody Miller (2002) about the importance of recognising complexity and intersectionality
 290 to understanding social action:

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

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

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

311 Jennifer recruits her male siblings, and through the 'uncle' other ties are forged to the
 312 masculinized world of criminal dealing which, she suggests, she drifted towards (Metcalf
 313 and Thomas, 2014). Her status as a normative female would have elicited certain types of
 314 heterosexual support from men. As a 'family business' that she leads, this resonates with a
 315 mothering role in terms of her nurturing the participation of others. Her cultivation as a
 316 female carer takes place in a context of expertise development in drug trading. Her lack of
 317 a driving license impedes the delivery of deals and impacts her personal safety, but she
 318 enhances her personal safety by deploying her "oldest male sibling". Jennifer's criminal
 319 strategy straddles the private ('feminine') domestic sphere and the 'public sphere' of
 320 criminal males. One role for women in Fleetwood's (2009) study was to offer 'cover' for
 321 men by accompanying them in the public sphere.

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

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

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

337 *'When dating I didn't know [Steve] was selling [heroin]... [when] I found out, he*
 338 *stopped hiding it from me and just [brought drugs] into the house [openly]...[after]*

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

339 *we split... [I] had bills and [a child], so... [Steve's supplier visited] me and said if I*
 340 *[wanted] would [I continue] to hold [drugs]... [he] paid me £100 every week at first*
 341 *[but] also [bought expensive goods] Just [progressed] from there.'* – Kimberly

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

348 The parallels of Scottish trading narratives with Italian mafia women and their family are
 349 striking, suggestive of an international dimension of gendered oppression combined with
 350 illicit female expressive agency. Siebert (2003) describes the way that routine activities
 351 (shopping and collecting children from school) of mafia mothers affords them the secrecy
 352 to do drug business. Their closely monitored husbands do not have this female normative
 353 'cover' to hide behind. Their brothers were "boss" on the outside, but in the private
 354 domestic area female siblings kept their traditional status. This hierarchy reminds us of the
 355 "institutional sexism" uncovered by Maher and Daly (1996) in New York neighbourhoods.
 356 Ingrasci (2007) identified how the drug dealing mafia families coincided with the natural
 357 family. In the Calabrian mafia, for example, the core unit is the blood family: one mother
 358 had the nickname "Mummy Heroin", as she distributed drug merchandise to her sons.
 359 Faced with risk, the focus on the next narrative, female drug traffickers, are concealed in
 360 another nuanced way. Beneath the gendered identity of a being a "simple housewife"
 361 criminal advantage was created.

362 **Managing market domination**

363 While Hutton (2005) acknowledges that females are more than capable of entering and
 364 maintaining participation in the masculine dominated sphere of drug dealing, others argue
 365 the female criminal presence must be organised with circumspection. Hutton, for instance,
 366 attributes this need for vigilance to the drug dealer's femininity. Masculine traits premised
 367 upon physicality and aggressiveness are forms of street capital presented to the world by
 368 male dealers (Maher and Daly, 1996). It is argued the drug involved female must perform
 369 "off stage" the position of puppet master or *Keyser Söze*⁴ due to the fact she lacks the
 370 physical prowess and musculature to challenge male dealers, partners, or even customers
 371 in a physically threatening and credible manner. Despite this theorisation hiding behind the
 372 constructed violent veneer of the male dealer, Jennifer and Karen embraced their positions
 373 as head of their respective SOCGs making few efforts to conceal positions of criminal dealing
 374 leadership other than from law enforcement agencies. Karen argues her femininity causes
 375 others to construct vulnerability around her, even imputing the presence of a godfather
 376 type figure supporting her from the shadows. Jennifer's network is pragmatic with the
 377 "uncle" only supplying drug merchandise whilst she manages a family neighbour force of
 378 brothers with whom she divides her profits:

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.

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

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

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

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

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

407 However, this incident is one episode of robbery in one domestic context. In other robberies
 408 her presence may not be ignored. As Sam suggests, when an attacker is committing a sexual
 409 offence then the female is likely to be at greater risk of victimization than the male. Sam's
 410 argument highlights her assumption that the decisive factor which increases risk of
 411 victimization is opportunity and preparedness to conduct assault. For example, agreeing to
 412 sell drugs to unknown individuals, alone, or in unknown locations, or carrying large sums of
 413 money are all factors which increase the likelihood of being victimized. Sam therefore
 414 believes that the risk of victimization is dependent upon the business strategy deployed by
 415 dealers, rather than the gender of the dealer. Jennifer's narrative expressed below depicts
 416 a world of limited social capital. As well as judging her relations through trust and social
 417 capital her business decision-making acknowledges unscrupulous customers and that leads
 418 to her carefulness about distributing drugs without immediate payment:

⁵ Tooled 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.

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

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

436 **Females doing the business**

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

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

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

460 *'[violence] do[esn't] do [anyone] good.... [Recalling a previous incident] I went with*
 461 *[male gangland enforcer - Paul] to [identify] this cunt that owed money, nothing*
 462 *[much], a few hundred... Anyways, [Paul] stab[s] fuck out this dude. It was brutal,*

463 *anyhoos (anyways).... What ends up happen but? [The victim] comes back, about*
464 *fucking two years [later], and does [Paul] in. Ended up tit of tat. Whole load a shit....*
465 *[Results in] both of them getting [imprisonment]. – Pamela*

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

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

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

491 **CONCLUSION**

492 Post-industrial decline is often cited as one of the reasons behind the poor health profile of
493 communities in the West of Scotland, as noted in earlier citations. Mortality trends are
494 significantly more adverse there compared with other European regions over the past 30
495 years which are also characterised by high levels of poverty (Walsh et al, 2009). The greater
496 relative economic deprivation in this densely populated region of Scotland has traditionally
497 been proposed to explain its poor health outcomes compared with similar profiles in English
498 cities. The higher magnitude of inequalities in the West of Scotland region, whilst it may be
499 more intense than that found in certain English cities such as Manchester and Liverpool, is,
500 Walsh et al (2009: 63) argue, insufficient to account for its deprivation. Other explanatory
501 variables that can illuminate this conundrum include elevated levels of risk-taking amongst
502 Glaswegian residents (Van der Pol et al, 2015; Bisen and Verdier, 2001).

503 Risk-taking is an inescapable aspect of criminal behaviour, and as the findings described
504 illustrated, it is demonstrably ever-present in street-level illicit drug dealing. Risk refers in
505 this context to becoming the victim of violent assault and being detected by the police. In
506 more clandestine forms risk is intrinsic to the coercive control that emerged in our

507 recognition of potential grooming behaviour and in the international literature reviewed.
508 Life-styles associated with illicit drugs and the consumption of excessive amounts of other
509 toxins such as alcohol may help to explain the elevated mortality statistics impacted the
510 West of Scotland (Van der Pol et al, 2015). Social environments impact individual
511 preferences through imitation and learning by recourse to modelling behaviours. Role
512 models were available for those in our study in their immediate, often wider family
513 environments (Bisin and Verdier, 2001). It is estimated by Walsh et al (2009) that 50% of
514 the excess mortality for those aged under 65 in Glasgow is due to high levels of drug and
515 alcohol consumption which foregrounds the fact that there are social models available to
516 women in this very constraining environment who engage with high risk behaviours
517 connected with drugs.

518 The agency of these and other women in this environment of post-industrial decline is
519 inevitably affected negatively by the shrinkage of employment opportunities. That source
520 of the thwarting of their ambitions classically impacts the individual's pathways into crime
521 which can offer resources that they cannot access through, they believe, legal opportunities
522 such as those afforded by employment. As we have discovered women do encounter
523 'opportunities' in these communities but the nature of the emancipation they gain through
524 them is health-threatening and likely to result in their incarceration or early death. The
525 pervasive presence in our data and that of the literature reviewed is of an intimidating male
526 presence. That presence is interconnected with the existence of wider patterns of gender
527 abuse in Scotland cited earlier: the official statistics for domestic violence involving assault
528 by male partners on women in this region are significant and the high incarceration rates
529 for men (Houchin,2005) arguably illustrates a cultural of subjugation that will erode
530 opportunities for women's agency.

531 Finally, a limitation of our methodology and the data it generated lies in a lacuna of
532 methodological triangulation. The narratives of women drug dealers on the street in the
533 West of Scotland intersect with a back story of domestic abuse which some are likely to
534 have experienced, a possibility which did not surface in our data. Attributions of violence,
535 in this article lean towards men who threaten or give provisional protection. Other studies
536 of female criminality report that women were as likely as men to commit serious assault
537 and battery offence; Visseaux et al (2012) identified female violence in France as a growing
538 trend. Coupled with that offending they discovered more traditional female offending
539 patterns that included fraud and economic crime. Denton and O'Malley (2001) also found
540 that property crime and drug dealing in Australia were associated. Although, therefore, the
541 females in our sample eschewed admitting to violence that narrative may itself represent
542 their preferred cultural script that their gender, unlike men's normatively, prohibits the
543 expression of this particular voice. The absence of the use of violent scripts in their
544 narratives cannot be taken as reliable evidence that in their drug-dealing they do not
545 venture out into this 'man's world'.

546 **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

547 We are grateful to the supportive comments received from the Journal's reviewers. Their
548 constructive advice improved considerably our article.

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