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Savvy Sellers: Dealing Drugs, Doing Gender, and Doing Difference

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Abstract

We present findings from two exploratory studies of San Francisco Bay Area women involved in illicit drug sales who saw both advantages and disadvantages to being women in traditionally male-dominated drug economies. We interviewed 160 sellers of street drugs and 50 sellers of prescription drugs during 2006-2009. Women perceived gender as a cover and managed their vulnerabilities by performing gendered actions and at times going against traditional gender expectations to protect themselves in harsh drug markets. The intersecting factors of race and type of drug sold played a crucial role, revealing the complex nature of women's social location in their drug-selling worlds. Study limitations are noted.

Keywords

gender; drug markets; drug dealing; intersectionality theory; women and drug use; street drugs; prescription drugs

Introduction

Women's presence in the American illicit drug market appears to be growing more prominent in the second decade of the 21st century. Women now play central roles in U.S. drug economies, both as purchasers of drugs and as participants in sales (Anderson, 2005;

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Ludwick, M.D., S. Murphy & P. Sales: Vendedoras Sabias: Vendiendo Drogas, Haciendo el Género, Haciendo Diferencias
Presentamos resultados de dos estudios exploratorios de mujeres que venden drogas ilícitas. Percibían ventajas y desventajas de ser mujer en mercados tradicionalmente dominados por hombres. Entrevistamos a 160 vendedoras de drogas callejeras y 50 vendedoras de drogas recetadas. Percibían el género como protección y manejaban sus vulnerabilidades mediante la realización de acciones de género. Otras veces se comportaban en contra de las expectativas de género tradicionales para protegerse en los duros mercados de drogas. La intersección de raza y tipo de droga desempeñaron un papel crucial, revelando la compleja naturaleza de la ubicación social de mujeres en mercados de drogas.

Ludwick, M.D. S. Murphy & P. Sales: Les vendeuses habiles: le trafic de drogues, la identité sexuelle et la différence
Nous présentons les résultats de deux études d'exploration sur les femmes de San Francisco et banlieues impliquées dans la vente de médicaments illicites qui ont vu les avantages et les inconvénients d'être des femmes dans le marché de drogues traditionnellement détenu par la gente masculine. Nous avons interviewé 160 vendeuses de drogues illicites et 50 autres de médicaments prescrits. Les femmes perçoivent leur identité sexuelle comme une couverture et gèrent leurs vulnérabilités en réalisant des actions d'ordre masculin allant parfois à l'encontre des attentes traditionnelles du genre pour se protéger dans les marchés de drogues dures. Les facteurs interactifs de race et type de drogue vendue a joué un rôle crucial révélant la nature complexe de la position sociale des femmes dans leurs mondes respectifs de vente de la drogue.

Griffin & Rodriguez, 2011). Furthermore, criminal offense statistics reveal a growing population of women in U.S. prisons (West & Sabol, 2009; Casey-Acevedo et al., 2002). According to the Institute on Women and Criminal Justice, the number of women in prison grew by 757 percent between 1977 and 2004—almost twice the rate of that for men (Frost, Greene, & Pranis, 2009). Some scholars believe that this dramatic increase of incarcerated women, particularly African American and Latina women, is directly related to America's War on Drugs (Alexander, 2010; Greene, 2002; Small, 2001). In 2005, women in state prisons were more likely than men to be serving time for drug offenses (Harrison & Beck, 2006). While women may be more entrenched in the illicit drug world than in years past, women are still seen as being less conspicuous drug sellers since men are more likely to fit the drug dealer stereotype.

Hutton's (2005; 2006) ethnographic research on gender, drug dealing, and risk highlights the hegemonic masculinity of the drug-dealing social world. While women drug dealers certainly contend with gendered power relations, they can still “play the game.” One of Hutton's female participants employed male runners and kept a low profile to ensure that she was protected from harm by competitors and from police detection. Hutton asserts that the more visible the female drug dealer, the more she is at risk. In fact, she argues that female drug dealers face the double dangers of police suspicion and threats or aggression from men in the drug world. Our participants painted a similar picture of drug markets, but they also revealed the ways in which they used their gender both to their advantage and to go against prescribed gender behaviors.

In the 1990s, research on women drug dealers also indicated women had agency in a male-dominated drug economy. According to Jacobs and Miller (1998), women crack sellers engaged in various methods to avoid arrest which included being less conspicuous in their approach than men, dressing so as to not attract police attention (either dressing “lady-like” or dressing down to fit in with the other residents), and “staging performances” where the setting allowed for concealment. Jacobs and Miller found that the majority of the female crack sellers in their sample were never arrested for dealing. During multiple ride-alongs with drug police, they observed that the police rarely stopped women on the streets for suspicion of drug dealing. Maher and Daly's (1996) study revealed that police officers overlooked women as dealers and instead focused on arresting males. Our participants discussed similar situations in which they felt being women rendered them “invisible” to police.

Past research does not show a great deal of disparity between the treatment of men and women in the courts regarding drug offenses (Harper, Harper, and Stockdale, 2002). Saulters-Tubbs' (1993) study of 140 narcotic offenders, half men and half women, showed no significant differences between genders in charges or sentencing. Female offenders were only slightly more likely than males to be sentenced to prison, yet the majority of women were only charged with possession of drugs and not sales or trafficking. While our research did not focus on sentencing disparities between men and women drug offenders, the women in our studies who had the most contact with the police felt that women sellers were treated in a particularly brutal manner.

Race further complicated women drug dealers' perceived level of jeopardy. In line with the astronomical rise in the rate of minority women in prison since the inception of the War on Drugs, African-American and Latina women were more likely to go to prison for drug offenses than their white peers (Small, 2001). Research indicates that female offenders and defendants experience differential treatment based on race (Bush-Baskette, 1998). African-American women are more than three times as likely as white women to be incarcerated, and Hispanic women are 69 percent more likely (ACLU, 2011). Both our white participants and the women of color we interviewed noted how race combined with gender influenced the degree to which they were suspected as drug dealers.

Beyond criminal risk perceptions, women drug dealers may face increased vulnerability to violence and robbery, particularly when selling specific drugs in more public settings (Hutton, 2005). Our participants cited the threat of street violence and robbery as second only to arrest, yet they had very little personal experience with violence when selling. Maher (1997) found that women dealers sometimes put on a tough 'gangsta bitch' persona as a survival strategy, which was echoed by some of our women participants.

This paper explores the intersecting, multidimensional factors of gender, race, and type of drug sold to reveal the complex nature of women's social locations in their drug-selling worlds.

- Is the perception of women as *under-the-radar* drug distributors still accurate?
- Do women see themselves as being invisible offenders, at just as much risk for arrest as male sellers, or subject to even greater risk than their male counterparts?
- How do these women manage their drug dealing, both in regards to avoiding arrest and remaining safe in a potentially violent social world?

We attempted to answer these questions, along with other lines of inquiry, as we spoke with San Francisco Bay Area women involved in illicit drug sales. We interviewed women sellers of street drugs (e.g., marijuana, crack, heroin) and women sellers of prescription drugs. They relayed their opinions about police detection, safety issues, and the ways in which their gender shaped their experiences. Women sellers perceived gender to be one of several factors, along with race and type of drug sold, that intersected and contributed to their perceptions about and management of their drug sales. We explore in-depth women's perceptions of gender as both an advantage and a disadvantage. We discuss how some deviated from gender norms as a protective strategy while others struck a balance as savvy sellers, and how gender protected them from police detection. Next we discuss race and type of drug sold as intersecting factors. Finally, we present a case study illustrating how the intersection of gender, race, and drug type shaped one woman's experiences in the contemporary, urban US illicit drug market.

The Women Sellers Study and the Women Prescription Sellers Study

From 2006-2009 we conducted an exploratory study of 160 women drug sellers in the San Francisco Bay Area, which we named the Women Sellers Study (WSS)¹. We interviewed women sellers from four drug groups: marijuana, heroin, stimulants, and club drugs.

Participants had to have sold five or more times in the six months preceding the interview. Utilizing both digitally recorded in-depth interviews and semi-structured questionnaires, our investigation focused on the following domains: sellers' history of drug use and sales, sellers' lifestyle issues, marketplace characteristics (including pricing, quality, control, levels and settings of sales), customers' demographics, buyer and seller relationships, comparisons between types of drugs sold, criminal justice encounters, and from the sellers' perspectives, the role of gendered experiences on all of the above.

While conducting interviews, we discovered that a quarter of the women we interviewed also sold prescription drugs and that the prescription drug market afforded women sellers different experiences than street drug markets. Prescription drugs were not as stigmatized as street drugs, were safer to transport, and for those in possession of a prescription, prescription drug sales afforded a large profit margin. After discovering the unique experiences of prescription drug sellers, we sought additional funding to conduct an in-depth investigation of prescription drug sales. We conducted the Women Prescription Seller Study (WPS)² from 2009 to 2011. It included 50 women and a comparison group of 50 men who sold prescription drugs (opioids, CNS depressants, and stimulants). Areas of inquiry included motivations to sell prescription drugs, sources for prescription drugs, differences between those who sell prescription drugs only and those who sell other drugs as well, perceptions of risk, and gender differences on the above topics.

We recruited qualified individuals using snowball or chain referral sampling (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981; Watters & Biernacki, 1989). Key informants or community consultants within networks of illicit drug users, which also included drug sellers, provided the initial links to the chain of potential study subjects. Ethnographers have found that the use of key informants is an essential technique for gaining access to hard-to-reach populations (Spradley, 1979). Building rapport with women sellers was a process that required time and effort. Key informants were essential to this process as they vouched for the authenticity of the researcher and her commitment to respectful treatment and confidentiality. Interviewees then referred other women sellers, setting in motion snowball or chain referral sampling until the two samples were complete.

Our Participants

Demographic characteristics of each sample are listed in the following table:

		WSS (N = 160)	WPS (N = 50)
AGE	Range	18 -59	18-63
	Median	29	32
RACE/ETHNICITY	Caucasian	58 (36%)	18 (38%)
	African American	42 (26%)	17 (34%)

¹National Institute on Drug Abuse (R01DA018159)

²National Institute on Drug Abuse (R01 DA018159-04A1)

		WSS (N = 160)	WPS (N = 50)
	Mixed Ethnicity	38 (24%)	5 (10%)
	Latina	14 (9%)	3 (6%)
	Asian	6 (4%)	3 (6%)
	Pacific Islander	1 (.6%)	2 (4%)
	Native American	1 (.6%)	1 (2%)
MARITAL STATUS	Single	84 (52.5%)	25 (50%)
	Married/living with partner	48 (30.0%)	13 (26%)
	Divorced/separated	23 (14.4%)	9 (18%)
	Widowed	4 (2.5%)	1 (2%)
	Engaged to be married	1 (0.6%)	1 (2%)
	Refused	0 (0%)	1 (2%)
PARENTAL STATUS	Had children	84 (52.5%)	26 (52%)
	Had children under 18	68 (42.5%)	17 (34%)
	Children living with them	46 (28.8%)	9 (18%)
	Range number of children	1 - 10	1-13
	Median number of children	2	2
HOUSING	House/Apartment/Condo	119 (74%)	36 (72%)
	Homeless	37 (23%)	8 (16%)
	Dorm	0 (0%)	2 (4%)
	Institutional facility	3 (2%)	2 (4%)
	Warehouse	1 (.6%)	1 (2%)
	Friend's house	0 (0%)	1 (2%)
EDUCATION	Current full-time student	19 (12%)	11 (22%)
	Current part-time student	22 (14%)	9 (18%)
	Less than high school	36 (22%)	9 (18%)
	High school diploma	37 (23%)	5 (10%)
	Some college	58 (36%)	26 (52%)
	Bachelor's degree	13 (8%)	7 (14%)
	Some graduate school	4 (2.5%)	1 (2%)
	Master's degree	2 (1%)	2 (4%)
	Vocational/Technical	4 (2.5%)	0 (0%)
EMPLOYMENT	Full-time	43 (27%)	12 (24%)
	Part-time	31 (19%)	13 (26%)
	Range monthly income	\$170 - \$10,000	\$300 - \$5,600
	Median monthly income	\$1,500	\$960
OTHER INCOME	Government assistance	84 (53%)	29 (58%)
	Secondary jobs	25 (16%)	10 (20%)
	Family support	20 (12.5%)	9 (18%)
	Illicit activities	7 (4%)	3 (6%)

		WSS (N = 160)	WPS (N = 50)
	Unemployment insurance	6 (4%)	3 (6%)
	Personal property sales	8 (5%)	3 (6%)
	Scholarships/financial aid	5 (3%)	2 (4%)
	Retirement	0 (0%)	1 (2%)
	Panhandling	4 (2.5%)	0 (0%)
	Investment income	1 (.6%)	0 (0%)
TOP 5 DRUGS SOLD PAST 12 MONTHS	Marijuana	45 (28%)	--
	Methamphetamine	27 (17%)	--
	Heroin	24 (15%)	--
	Crack Cocaine	20 (12.5%)	--
	Prescription Drugs	18 (11%)	--
	Vicodin	--	29 (58%)
	Oxycodone	--	18 (36%)
	Valium, Codeine	--	11 (22%) each
	Klonopin, Xanax	--	7 (14%) each
	Adderall	--	5 (10%)
ANNUAL DRUG SALES INCOME	Range drug sale income	\$600 - \$402,000	\$75 - \$168,000
	Median drug sale income	\$12,200	\$4,760
TOTAL ANNUAL INCOME	Range tot. annual income	\$1,200-\$597,600	\$2,095-179,400
	Median tot. annual income	\$25,527	\$14,056

* WSS study focused on marijuana, stimulants, opiates, and CNS depressants while the WPS study focused on prescription drugs, thus these data are not comparable among the two studies

Analysis

For purposes of this paper, we focused on the women's narratives from WSS and WPS. We analyzed the in-depth interview portion primarily through open coding and refining our codes as we aimed to answer the question "what is going on here?" We then conducted searches of coded segments of text using NVivo 8, a qualitative data managing and analysis software program. After running searches of the thematic codes of GENDER (mentions of women-specific versus men-specific experiences around drug sales), RISK PERCEPTION & MANAGEMENT (discussions of the risks they perceive in the drug world and how they manage them), CRIMJUST CONTACT (any encounters with police or criminal justice authorities), SETTING (where they sold drugs and related circumstances) and SALES PRACTICES (amounts sold and how often, rules for customers, typical sales routines, etc.), we made special note of interview quotes that appeared to be representative of common themes discussed as well as those that best articulated contrasting viewpoints. We also used SPSS to generate descriptive statistics regarding the sample's demographics and drug sales to further characterize our sample.

Theoretical Approach

The varied experiences of women drug dealers in male-dominated markets can be better understood through intersectionality theory, taking into consideration variations in types of women and their experiences of oppression and power (Browne and Misra, 2007; Bryant and Hoon, 2006; Crenshaw, 1991; Dill and Zambrana, 2009; McCall 2007). While common ground among women drug dealers can be construed as women living and dealing in oppressive male-dominated societies, there are other factors that complicate gender (Denton, 2001; Maher, 1997). Virginia Olesen (2003:343), discussing standpoint research and new ways of looking at women's constructed knowledge, explains "the concept of essentialized, universalized woman disappeared in the lens of standpoint thinking to reappear as a situated woman with experiences and knowledge specific to her in the material division of labor and the racial stratification system." Women drug dealers, who represent a heterogeneous population, bring multiple perspectives to the interview mediated by their social location; thus, intersectionality theory is an appropriate lens to afford a better understanding of individual experiences that transcend commonalities based on traits like gender. A woman drug dealer's awareness, understandings, decision-making processes, her experiences and interactions within a given drug market are in large part determined by her social location and how various elements that socially locate her intersect with her gender, resulting in individualized experiences. But we also need to understand some of the macro and mesosocial processes that locate a woman drug dealer. For example, the type of drug they sell may also yield different experiences as different drugs carry different levels of stigma and social and criminal justice consequences. Furthermore, not all women drug dealers performed gender in the same way. The differences and similarities within and between our samples of women "street drug" dealers and prescription drug dealers revealed the complexities of gendered performances. Our participants recognized gender along with race and type of drug sold as some of the more salient factors contributing to their perceptions of risk and risk management.

Gender shaped our participants' perceptions of drug dealing work. According to West and Zimmerman (1987), "doing gender" consists of performing everyday interactions in accordance with what is socially appropriate for an individual's sex category. Women who used their gender as cover during drug sales can be seen as "doing gender" in a very distinct way from traditional notions of "doing gender." Some women "did gender" by making the most of what are considered to be feminine traits, like flirting with suppliers or dressing up to appear inconspicuous and not like the stereotypical drug dealer. But these women were "doing gender" while deviating from gender norms by engaging in what is considered to be a traditionally masculine line of work and committing criminal acts. Other women fully deviated from traditional gender roles by both dealing and behaving in more masculine ways as "one of the guys." Some women made conscious choices to both do gender as well as to deviate from normative behaviors, increasing their agency—or, for the purposes of this paper, power through self-determination—in a tumultuous social world.

For our interviewees, race intersected with gender to shape risk perceptions. Race was perceived as operating, more or less, as a protection against police detection. West and Fenstermaker (1995) call this "doing difference," as race and class intersect with gender in

distinctive social milieus. The type of drug sold was also an important intersecting factor as different drugs carried different levels of stigma and some were associated with social class (for example, crack vs. powder cocaine). Each of our drug-dealing participants' narratives exemplified the ways in which gender, race, and type of drug sold contextualized various interactions and situated women drug dealers.

In this analysis, we utilize intersectionality theory to demonstrate how the concept of “doing gender,” race, and type of drug sold intersected to create multidimensional perspectives of women drug sellers and their understandings and management of their everyday lives. Descriptions of these intersecting factors arose during interviews most often when participants discussed the advantages and disadvantages of being women in typically male-dominated drug markets. They acknowledged the hazards of violating conventional gender norms by being women who dealt drugs and discussed ways in which they attempted to reconcile competing gender identities; some used normative gender identities to their advantage. These discussions included race and type of drug sold as additional layers of both danger and protection for women dealers.

Findings

Gendered Advantages and Disadvantages in Drug Markets

Interestingly, participants from both studies, those who had sold “street drugs” and those who had sold prescription drugs, had very similar perceptions regarding the advantages and disadvantages of being women drug dealers. Many women in our samples were strategic players in the drug market who saw their gender as being an advantage in the underground drug economy, particularly regarding utilizing their femininity to remain inconspicuous as sellers. Like Jacobs and Miller's (1998) female crack sellers, some of our participants talked about dressing to blend in, dressing in a more feminine manner, and not looking like a “typical drug dealer.” In essence, they found agency in their gender and believed they could “do gender” to manage their drug selling.

When asked what she believed were the advantages and disadvantages of being a woman who sells drugs, Noelle³, a 26-year-old African American and Creole marijuana seller, discussed how the police perceived her.

The advantages are cops don't be on you as much as they do the guys. Not hard, and it's also too how you carry yourself, how you look out there on the streets. Like you can have a cap on your head, baggy clothes and look like you sell weed or you can look like you're going to work, look like you're going to school.

We asked the same question of Pamela, a 52-year-old Asian and Native American woman who sold heroin. She believed being a woman seller was more advantageous when it came to police detection.

I think it's an advantage. I mean, because like I said, just bein' discreet...the way you carry yourself...if you're out lookin' kinda rough and you're in a neighborhood

³Pseudonyms were assigned to each interviewee we quoted to protect their anonymity. Please see pseudonyms and demographics table on page 36.

where police patrols the neighborhood and then they know what's goin' on and they probably never seen me before over there, then they're gonna...think somethin', but I mean like if you're just...bein' discreet...keepin' yourself lookin' nice and to the point to where you won't look like you have nothin' on you, then...you will get away with it. You'll be fine...it's more of an advantage for the woman.

Vanessa, a 29-year-old Latina prescription pill dealer, explained how she was able to buy large quantities of pills in Mexico and then cross the U.S. border with minimal problems. She said that border patrol was spread too thin because of the heavy traffic across the border. Border patrol engaged in profiling to try and catch drug smugglers, so they were usually looking for men. Vanessa used her gender to her advantage by flirting with the guards. She saw that the people being stopped and searched were predominantly male. She believed she simply was not a target for such searches.

Taylor, a 31-year-old white methamphetamine dealer, felt it depended on the woman. Some kept low profiles while others called attention to themselves.

Um, I don't know. It depends upon the female. Because...some females can blend in really well. I can blend into a crowd quicker than shit. I learned how to. But there's others that just really stand out, and if you stand out, you know, it's not gonna help.

This perception of women dealers as less conspicuous than men extended to customers, who some women felt preferred to deal with them than with men. Renee told us:

A lot of my clients like the fact that I'm a woman because it's slick. They don't know if I'm coming up meeting you around the corner from your job. You won't know. It's just like you're coming to say hi to your friend 'cause I'm a woman. People are more aware of guys, especially guys who wear baggy clothes and stuff like that. You would never think I sell drugs. I think women have a big advantage against men when it comes to selling drugs because you don't think drugs and women. When you see a woman, you think prostitution. You're not thinking, this little girl is selling drugs.

Some women worked as runners for male dealers. Andie felt that male dealers preferred female runners precisely because they were better able to deal under the radar.

I mean it's not that much of a problem and a lot of times...I do think it's easier to get better hook-ups as a girl, especially if it's a girl dealer...because I think guys who sell a lot of drugs like to have girls sell for them because it's easier...we're definitely below the radar for the most part.

The majority of the interviewees reported that one of the main disadvantages of being in the drug market was their lack of strength and physical prowess compared to their male counterparts. They felt they could be overpowered by men if a dangerous situation were to arise, such as robbery or a bad transaction with a supplier or customer. Some participants made up for their lack of physical strength by working their gender performance to their advantage, but most still recognized that vulnerability for violence was problematic for a woman seller. For Tina, the possibility of a physical assault was ever present:

I thank the lord that I've never been in this situation, but if there would ever be a confrontation I wouldn't be physically strong enough to be able to protect myself. And I gots [sic] the muscle but you know I don't know kung fu. [laughs] Or karate or any of that. So I gots [sic] some muscles but you know I can throw some punches but that ain't gon [sic] save my ass.

As a method to protect themselves from such vulnerabilities, some women sellers deviated from gender norms by adopting intimidating personas.

Deviating from Gender Norms: Tough Girls

A few participants talked about creating an intimidating reputation for themselves and thereby circumventing danger by deviating from normative gender performances. These women presented the stereotypical tough drug dealer persona. One Native American woman reflected on how she used her physical appearance to help her get better deals when she was younger, but as she grew older and stayed in the drug game, she realized the need to create an intimidating reputation for herself. This tough front allowed her some protection against threats of violence.

Taylor took on more masculine qualities as a seller and felt she was perceived as “one of the guys” by men in the drug market.

INT: So, in your personal experience has being a woman been an advantage or a disadvantage?

Taylor: Well, it's kinda [sic] weird for me 'cause...most of the people I know don't look at me as just a- they don't look at me as female. They look at me as...I'm just one of the brothers. I've got straight, like, bro status.

Avery reported being very calculated in her dealings with customers, conveying confidence and toughness in the way she spoke so as not to appear vulnerable.

I feel intimidated a lot...I have to act a lot tougher than I could really back up, which isn't like shit talking or anything. It's just being really confident and telling them, “What did you just say to me? You can't treat me like this.” It's not like, you know, getting ghetto with it...you have to like really communicate and don't start talking ghetto or they'll just fall right into it. It's so weird.

While some women hid their vulnerability behind traditionally more masculine behaviors, others in our samples exercised agency through situational gender performances. These women were particularly thoughtful in their dealings and recognized that various factors came into play depending on what they were trying to accomplish.

Striking a Balance: Savvy Women Sellers

This select group of female participants expressed how they used their gender to their advantage when it counted and also adopted a tougher stance in circumstances that called for more masculine performances. For example, Dasha, a 19-year-old woman of mixed race, knew how to play the game both ways. She flirted with her supplier and occasionally slept

with him because he would give her better deals, but she also belonged to a gang and behaved in traditionally masculine ways to protect herself while selling crack on the street.

Dasha: People who sell crack, you gotta be grimy. You gotta be real grimy. That's on a whole other level than selling powder or pills of something... you gotta be meaner. You gotta be more shady towards people.

INT: And do you feel that you try to do that?

Dasha: I try to. Of course you got to. You know you have to put on your gangsta face.

INT: Otherwise what will happen if you don't?

Dasha: You gon' [sic] get played, you gon' [sic] get robbed, lost your money. You know dope fiends, they get over on you.

Jules, a 40-year-old Pacific Islander woman who sold OxyContin and other opioids, engaged in an expected gender performance by styling herself in a ladylike manner, but she had also built a reputation on the street as someone not to be "messed" with.

INT: Have you ever been ripped off?

Jules: No. I know too many people, too many people know me.

INT: Okay well that's good so you got a little bit of a reputation or something?

Jules: Yeah I mean yeah I do because um, I don't fight women, I don't fight women.

INT: But you've kicked someone's ass.

Jules: Yeah I mean I be walkin' down the street and I'll be like this normal person, but I'll get into it and you know that's why (unclear) tell me don't let the look fool you. Alright 'cause it's gonna get ugly.

INT: You're looking all lady like with her earrings and long hair but watch out, man.

Jules: For real, never judge a book by its cover.

Beatrice, a 20-year-old Latina, played up her feminine side when encountering police but stood her ground when interacting with customers to protect herself.

...that's one of the only good things about being a girl like I just like would shove 'em in my bra, like what are the cops gonna do, search me? I would just shove 'em in my bra and they would pull me over and be like, oh! Play the innocent girl. As long as I wasn't in the car full of like gangster looking people, they like left me alone, but that's when like I said with social crew around it, it was...really like messing you up. And that's when I started to get like really paranoid. I'm like you guys are so stupid, you're so messed up all the time that you guys are gonna kill this for me... so don't come around my house, I'm not gonna drive you in my car to your buddy's place to drop you off. I was like, either I'll bring it to you, not at your house but somewhere that I choose or you don't get any.

For most of our participants, the most worrisome outcome was getting arrested and going to prison for drug sales. If women drug dealers, particularly mothers, are arrested, they lose a major source of income and face the potential of having their children taken away from them. Therefore, the most crucial gender performances occurred as ways to avoid arrest.

Visibility & Police Detection

According to our study participants, gender played a role in decreasing women's visibility as drug dealers. They told us ways in which they either used their gender to protect themselves or if they felt that their gendered appearance was intrinsically protective. This perception was of primary importance when calculating their vulnerability for police suspicion and arrest. Their gendered appearance became an asset when they felt that they were hidden from view, even if they were selling in public settings. In other words, they didn't look the part of a typical drug dealer.

Tina: I'm the least suspicious person that they would be selling. 'Cause I don't think I carry myself like that. You would never know.

Some interviewees explained that being a woman dealer was an advantage because they were less likely to be stopped and questioned by police.

Reggie: 'Cause...the basic thing is the police are more out to stop men than they are women because they don't feel like the women are selling as much as men are.

In fact, the police were more likely to think a woman in a seedy location was vulnerable to potential victimization rather than dealing drugs.

Patty: Like I said, there's only male cops, so everybody would pass me all their rocks. I'm the one holding all the shit. So, if the cops pull over, it was like, "Are you okay?" They worried about me being okay, if I'm gonna be raped or something. So, they're talking like, "Are you okay? Are these guys bothering you?" "I'm fine, officer. Everything's all good." And I'm like shitting bricks because I've got fucking like thousands of rocks on me where I will go to jail for years, years...because they're male cops. They don't know when I'm sitting across the street on the stairs holding my rocks. They don't know. There's a lot of male cops. So, I think it's easier for a woman to get away with selling drugs than it is for a man. They don't think women do it.

Teresa believed her status as a mother helped protect her from police detection. On occasion she would have her children with her during a drug sale. She said, "Oh, we have our families so [police] really won't trip off us."

Mara explained that it was easier for women to change the way they look than men, making it easier for women to deal under the radar. She described herself as a "chameleon," able to change her appearance to blend in:

Um, the advantages of being a woman, for me, I can move more easily through a crowd. Most of the guys have got tattoos and all kind of shit. You've got to get into the game and they're labeled. They have tattoos from here to here. And for me, I'm more chameleon ...being a woman, you're more chameleon because you can make

yourself look any way you want to look. From wearing your hair down to wearing your hair up to looking like you belong on the back of a BMX or a limo.

Even in the event of an encounter with law enforcement, being a woman was an advantage because of gender-specific rules for on the street searches.

Steph: The advantage is that we can sneak it up inside of us, easy, quick, and the majority of police that's patrolling the area, they will walk up to you and pat you down, they're men. They can pat you to a certain extent. They're really not supposed to pat you, but most of them do...if I see a police come to turn to me I won't have to try to run and stick it up inside of me. I can just put it in my breast or under my titties [sic] in my bra or somethin' 'cause they can't pat me down. You know what I'm sayin'? That's the thing that's the most advantageous of being a woman. If you know how to dress and act, they won't suspect you, but if they see you enough, they'll know that you're doin' somethin'.

Some women we interviewed did not take any special steps to use their gender as cover. Celia, a 21-year-old Latina seller, discussed how her gender as well as the way she presented herself protected her from police suspicion without her making a conscious effort to do so. She talked about hanging out with Latina gang members who were selling drugs on the street corner, and a police officer threw the girl next to her on the ground to search her. They paid no attention to Celia, which was a great surprise to her. She came to the conclusion that it was because she wasn't dressed like a gangster and presented herself like a "normal" girl.

Some participants relayed their experiences working with or for male sellers. These women indicated that the men they worked with had them hold the drugs or make the exchanges because women were perceived as less likely to be suspected of sales by police. They also talked about the belief that female officers had to search women and most of the police on the beat were men, so having to get a female officer would be an added hassle.

INT: So, when you came here was it easy for you to get started right away, like, selling again?

Hannah: Um, well, yeah because I'm a girl. Right away I met a male drug dealer that was my age and I was kind of attracted to him. So, we formed a relationship, which was what caused me to break up with my boyfriend from my hometown. And then I started- I didn't actually sell with him. I would just hold the products for him, so that he wouldn't, you know- because if he- you know how it works with the cops. They have to get a woman to search a woman. So, otherwise they couldn't search me.

Alternately, Piper believed that her gender made her stand out more when selling on the street. She felt she was at a disadvantage as a woman in drug markets.

But um, like, I can't just blend in like everybody else, like any other guy selling drugs. I think the cops definitely know who I am. And um, people think that they can take advantage of women more easily. And a lot of people think you're stupid and you don't know what you're doing. You couldn't possibly ever have been at a high level or be at a high level because you're a woman.

Seventeen percent of women from WSS and 17 percent of women from WPS had been arrested for drug sales. Since they had the most experience with drug-related criminal justice encounters and were aware of the risk, we found their input to be particularly valuable. Shay discussed her negative experiences with the police, both what she had gone through personally as well as witnessed on the streets.

They are so mean to women, it's like they hate on- I mean, you know, they say, come here. So I cooperated because I'm not supposed to give you a reason to put your hands on me . . . but they don't like women. I see 'em body slam 'em. They do women so bad.

This woman's experience speaks to the “Evil Woman” hypothesis (Sarri, 1983; Visser, 1983), which presumes that women are potentially receiving harsher treatment for deviating from social expectations of gender-appropriate behavior. According to Visser, “women who deviate from these expectations by displaying aggressiveness, toughness and low status, and committing violent crimes, may not receive the benefit of chivalrous treatment, and in fact may be treated more harshly than males.” We heard similar stories from many women who sold drugs in public settings and who had either witnessed or experienced themselves the particularly harsh treatment of women by law enforcement.

Joy, a 28-year-old Asian American woman, had not encountered any police in her drug selling career, but thought if she was arrested for selling drugs, her punishment would be even harsher than a male seller's for going against prescribed gender roles.

Joy: I mean, I hate to say the disadvantage is just the fact of even getting caught. And I don't know, but I would think that because I am a woman I would probably get a much harsher sentence than a man.

INT: You think so?

Joy: I really do.

INT: Do you know of any other women who have gotten arrested for anything like that?

Joy: I mean, I do. And comparatively speaking, my female friends versus my male friends who have been picked up for drugs, but then also just other kind of random acquaintances, I've always noticed that women get a much harsher sentence.

INT: Why do you think that is?

Joy: Honestly, I think part of it is just like a reverse discrimination because women aren't expected to do this. Women are eventually expected to be mothers and that kind of jazz. And, you know, to see some potential mother or a mother doing this and it could be affecting their children, I think that's a really big part of it. And then I think the other part too is that I see a lot more men as judges than I do women, and that's where I think some of that thought is. You know? Oh wait, this is a woman. She should be at home with her children. She should be working on her career. Women in general, especially with a woman judge, she'd be like, okay, I'm not selling drugs, I'm here being a judge, I went to school, I don't understand why

you can't do it. I could be wrong. I don't know, but I just have that kind of feeling...I mean, some women see it as a job. I see this as a part time gig, but you know, that's just how I see it. I've seen how maybe a father who's doing drugs will get a much, much lighter sentence than like a mother who's doing drugs.

The women in our samples who had been involved in San Francisco's drug markets for several years reflected on the increased presence of women selling in public. They felt women dealers were a rarity when they began selling drugs, particularly those who sold in public settings. At time of interview, participants noted a significant female presence in neighborhoods known for drug sales, such as San Francisco's Tenderloin, Mission, and Haight-Ashbury districts. What was once a male-dominated street economy had evolved into a more diverse market, including both men and women in the same roles, from marketing their drug sales to passersby to employing runners to handle smaller sales. These participants were in agreement that women's increased involvement in drug sales coincided with increased police awareness.

As these women sellers observed the increased involvement of women in the street drug market, the issue of race arose as important with regards to their degree of visibility. Within the context of gender as both a vulnerability and a protective factor, race added yet another layer of complexity.

Race as an Intersecting Factor

Reggie, a 42-year-old white woman who sold her personal prescriptions, had several years of experience selling on the street and lived in a neighborhood known for drug sales. When asked about how being a woman influenced how the police treated her, she talked about the increase in women's presence in the drug market and how race played a pivotal role.

Reggie: Yeah, years ago I think it was an asset, but now with so many girls getting busted and so many girls- the female population is just on the rise, and in terms of crime I think now it's a handicap. But race has a lot to do with it, too.

INT: Okay, okay. How so?

Reggie: Uh, well, it depends on where you are and what color you are. You know what I'm saying? Now living in the Tenderloin, I am a white lady and it doesn't matter if I had a nun's habit on and I walked around the streets at night. The police are going to look at me and they're going to think no matter what, she's a prostitute. Because she's white, she's walking around here and she's by herself. I don't care if I was dressed like a nun. I don't care if the Pope was escorting me. They're going to go ahead and just stereotype that. If you're a young black male and you're walking the Tenderloin, you're automatically [selling] rock. You know what I mean? I mean so you really have to battle that shit, how are they gonna [sic] perceive me shit.

White and Asian participants offered the observations that their racial appearance served as an added benefit. Rowan, a young white woman, talked about how both her race and her gender gave her a considerable advantage in the drug world.

A female? Yeah, no, there is definitely [an advantage], except for sometimes it sucks. Like, okay so it's me and my ex-boyfriend and his cousin. We did donuts and

the cops were behind us so everyone throws the dope at me, you know like I'm in the backseat and I just get all the dope like because the cops are there. So I'm like stuffing everybody's shit, but then like usually I don't get searched 'cause I'm like a little white girl too, so you know? But it is a huge advantage to being a white female. Like being a white female is the biggest advantage in the line of work that I have. Because people don't mess with me, people trust me more and I'm left alone like a lot more.

When asked about the advantages of being a woman drug seller, Claire, a 23-year-old woman of mixed race who sold Adderall, OxyContin, and Valium, compared herself to the conventional appearance of a white female TV character who sold marijuana.

Claire: I don't look like I sell drugs. At least I don't think I look like I sell drugs, so I don't feel like I've ever- like I've got stopped by the cops for drinking in public and they didn't even search my purse and I totally had a lot of things on me that I feel like-they gave me a ticket but they didn't like do anything else, so... yeah, I think that I look just like a nice little white girl, so no one's gonna really think I'm selling weed. And usually I get that oh, you look like Nancy from *Weeds*.

Lucy felt confident as a young, white woman that she could get away with faking symptoms to obtain prescription drugs to sell. When asked why she didn't think doctors suspected her of lying, she answered with the following:

Why? I'm a young female. Most young white females, I mean I can't say that because of the type of person I am, but oh what the hell, most young white females aren't really into the whole prescription drugs for my experience, for me selling pills...they're mostly into cocaine and things like that. So it's like you look at me and then you see my weight you think, oh okay maybe my back hurts or I'm havin' problems with my knees or you know somethin' like that.

A few of our Asian American female participants also felt safer due to their race. This perception may be related to the notion of the "model minority," wherein Asian Americans are thought to be higher achieving and more conventional than other ethnic minorities (Wong et al., 1998). Cam, a Vietnamese participant, believed this stereotype to be protective, along with the fact that she came from a good family, excelled in school, and didn't have a record. Bella remarked on how her appearance facilitated her ability to stay "hidden" in a neighborhood known for drug sales.

'Cause the majority of females that are selling down in the Tenderloin are African American, and I would look like the square Filipino girl with glasses. [laughs] I used to kinda look hella innocent. So it could just look to the police like we just comin' from a club. Like I live here and I'm just kickin' it around the neighborhood or whatever. So, I don't really look the part that would be sellin'.

A 20-year-old, white interviewee, Ruby, sold cocaine and Ecstasy. She spoke about her encounters with police and her belief that if she were African American or Latina, she might have been arrested.

Ruby: Like I've had them approach me a couple times and I'd be like, I don't know what you're talking, I'm waiting for somebody, you know?

INT: Did you have stuff on you?

Ruby: Yeah.

INT: Were you scared?

Ruby: Yeah, I was scared but, you know, sometimes bein' white though it does help and like doin' it and I see races (unclear), but if you say that and they look at you and look at your skin color, they'd be like, okay, maybe she's telling the truth, you know.

INT: What if you were a black girl?

Ruby: I think if I was, well, I think it just depends on your attitude and the way that you talk to them. So um, but I definitely, definitely think if you're African American or Latino, you have a bigger chance of being arrested.

As implied by the aforementioned interviewee, race was a factor in a criminal justice context. Joy, who spoke of expecting harsher treatment if she were to get arrested for sales, also felt the increased risk of not being born in the United States. She managed this risk by selling in small amounts.

INT: So, do you know- what do you know about the legal penalties for selling cocaine?

Joy: Um, generally I know that I mean it's a Schedule I drug, so it's totally illegal. Um, for me, I was not born here, so I also know that if I commit any felonies Class E or above, or Class C and above, any time I do afterwards I may also be kicked out of this country.

INT: So, are you not an American citizen?

Joy: I am an American citizen, but I'm only naturalized.

INT: Oh, so I didn't know that. So, if you're not born here, then...

Joy: You can be an American citizen because I mean I gave up- I have full citizenship. But the thing is that- it's not always the case, but if you're convicted of a felony of a Class C or higher after you do your time, the United States can ask you to leave. And after you leave, you are not allowed back into this country for 20 plus years, sometimes never. The thing is I have family here. I have friends here. I want to see my family members at some time. I mean, God forbid something happened and I need to come and see an aunt or something, I will not be allowed to come back into the country. And, I mean, that's not always the case, but I can't take that big a risk.

INT: Yeah. Are you worried at all about getting in trouble?

Joy: No 'cause I feel that the amount I'm selling is not a Class C or higher.

While Joy felt that the small amount of cocaine she was selling precluded her from encountering too much trouble, some women noted that particular drugs carried greater stigma and added to their overall risk calculation as sellers.

Drug Type as an Intersecting Factor

Griffin and Rodriguez's (2011) examination of gender differences regarding drug acquisition among arrestees exposed drug type as an intersecting factor. Different drugs resulted in different types of behaviors. We found a parallel in terms of the risks perceived by our crack-selling participants and those who sold OxyContin on the street. They believed their particular drug market to be more violent than other drug markets and therefore felt exposed to increased danger when selling in areas known for crack and OxyContin sales.

Nia, a 23-year-old white woman who sold speed in the past but only sold marijuana at the time of the interview, felt that selling “harder” or addictive drugs meant dealing with certain types of customers who were more desperate to get their drugs.

Well for one thing like selling crack or speed or heroin, it's a completely different ballgame because the people that want to buy those kind of drugs are more often than not like they desperately want them. And sometimes they'll...do anything and everything to get it, you know? And the fact that I'm a girl puts a sign on my forehead that says, “Rob me.” But like selling hard drugs, it's so totally different because customers are completely different. Like they're hardcore drug addicts and all they want is to get their drug and they never have enough like what I'm asking for as far as the money goes. They always want you know, they want it for less.

Jules, the previously quoted savvy seller who sold prescription opioids, had also sold crack in the past and talked about the hazards of selling in a neighborhood with a reputation for crack and OC sales.

INT: Are there advantages or disadvantages of being a woman selling pills?

Jules: I would say there is [disadvantages] ‘cause the guys out there that sell they don't give a fuck about you. They don't and then if they got to put their hands on you, they would ‘cause you're still a customer. Say for instance I'm talkin’ to him but you normally go to this person and get it, but I'm havin’ a conversation with you, you know. They'll come over there and snatch you, what the fuck you doin’ tryin’ to take my customer and woo-woo (sic), and if you say somethin’ you know, what's up bitch before I beat your ass. I don't really mingle with them people. I just do what I do and – ‘cause before I used to just hang out there. It's cool, you know. I'm not gonna like sit out there and smoke crack, but you don't know who is who anymore.

Whether it was aggression from desperate customers, threats from other dealers, or further exposing oneself to police suspicion, selling particular drugs created additional challenges for the women sellers we interviewed. Interviewees like Jules managed those challenges by avoiding certain people and being discreet. Other interviewees noted the various factors that intersected to help them manage their drug sales.

The Intersection of Gender, Race, and Drug Type: A Case Study

Cam, a 24-year-old Vietnamese woman, provided an exemplary case for the ways in which gender, race, class, and type of drug sold intersected to form her perceptions of risk and her strategies to manage risk. She started out selling marijuana at age 15 to friends, which was

followed by Ecstasy as it gained in popularity among her social circle. By age 23, her boyfriend's friend introduced her to methamphetamine sales. She sold small amounts for him to his customers, and she soon branched out to selling to her own friends. At time of interview, she sold marijuana primarily.

Cam believed the combination of her race, gender, class, and overall looks allowed her some protection as a seller, which led her to initiate drug sales.

I had been looking for a second job and I decided to get into that only because I would be- I think to them I was just an ideal candidate because I just don't fit the profile and unfortunately for me, as a seller, it's better if you don't fit the profile because they don't suspect you and they would never- nobody would ever assume or- that would be the last thing they think of. Considering, you know, I come a good family and I get good grades, I would never be a drug dealer.

She also described her source for buying drugs, a well-educated Asian male, and how neither he nor she fit the profile of the typical drug dealer due to their race.

He's 26 and he's Chinese. And, like me, you would never suspect him at all. He was a, you know, A student graduated from [East Bay high school]. Um, and I think that's the funny thing about us specifically. I don't think a lot of drug dealers are Asian [whispered]. I don't know, I mean, maybe in our group, but then, you know, you would expect them to be straight A students, I think. You would expect them to come from such good families.

This participant also perceived little risk as far as selling in public settings due to her overall image not fitting the stereotypical drug dealer. This perception compelled her to manage risk by treating her sales in a very casual manner as to not draw attention to herself.

I'll go to Safeway, okay, eat lunch with me. We'll eat lunch and I'll give you pot. I mean, that is a disadvantage, but I think it goes back to the profile because I'm a girl and I really don't look like a drug dealer so I don't think I would get suspected. I'm sitting there, I'm giving you Tylenol. I'm sorry, but if a cop walked by he would never ever even think of that. And I think that goes back to your gender and your image.

Cam relayed the surprised reactions that both she and her friend encountered when people discovered that they were sellers. The fact that they were women and successful in other aspects of their life provided the perfect cover, and they used these perceptions to their advantage.

They don't believe it, they're like, "What, you don't even do drugs?" and I'm like, "I know. It doesn't mean that just because it's in front of me I have to do it." But they just switch gears and they're like, "Oh my god. What? Out of all people it would be you? You who was so obsessed with school and so driven to work? You're selling drugs? Like, why?" And I'm like, "Whatever, it's easy." And I think it's easy because I really- and I'm like- it's the same thing. Me and my best friend and I are like, "We're girls and we do so well in real life that no one would ever suspect us."

And so it's just- they're mentality changes. They're like, "Ooh. You're so scary."
And I'm like, "whatever, it's not even like that. It's so casual."

INT: You're a businesswoman.

Cam: But I think I make it casual. It's because I'm all about making the money.
And, to me, it's extra money and I'm pretty careful for me and my best friend, you
know. I mean there are drug dealers who use it and are scary people but we don't
consider ourselves that.

But Cam also perceived her gender as working against her in the eyes of her male suppliers.
They didn't trust her with larger quantities of meth.

He would just give it to me to distribute to his customers. I wasn't getting it from
the dealer anymore because I was dealing with meth and, like to them, they felt
like, since I was a girl I shouldn't be getting so much quantity. So every time I did
go get some, it would just be in the quantity that the customer already requested.

Since Cam sold marijuana primarily, she believed that her chances of being arrested or
encountering violence were minimal. She also worked two legitimate retail jobs, which
allowed her to better hide her drug sales from others, particularly since she lived with her
family. She spoke about the importance of respecting her parents who emigrated from
Vietnam and wanted a better life for her. When she bought them gifts with the extra money
she earned from drug sales, she told them it was from a bonus at work, which they always
believed. She easily maintained a conventional identity, which was an essential method of
protecting herself, but she understood that a number of factors—some more salient than
others depending on the situation—contributed to her ability to manage her sales and safety
in drug dealing worlds.

Discussion

Women drug dealers from both of our samples noted an increase in women's presence in the
drug market. As drug sellers, these women were involved in both "doing gender" and "doing
difference." The vast majority of our participants felt that selling drugs was a means to an
end – they were doing what they had to do to get by and not living a glamorous lifestyle.
The money was fast and easy, but they were well aware of the dangers involved. Some felt
their gender mediated their chances of being suspected of selling drugs, while others felt it
was a further hindrance. Most of our women sellers were actively "doing gender" in their
daily interactions, but they were deviating from traditional gender performances when it
came to their chosen sources of income—drug sales.

Our study participants fell into three general categories associated with gender performances
in drug markets. Some women played up their femininity in order to hide themselves from
police detection, believing that women generally were not suspected of being drug dealers.
Another group of women deviated from gender norms by displaying more traditionally
masculine traits to protect themselves from male threats. The final group of women engaged
in both doing gender and adopting more traditionally masculine presentations when

necessary; these women were especially savvy and had experience selling multiple drugs or selling in more challenging settings.

Our participants' narratives revealed the complex layers of their participation in drug markets that extended beyond gender, shaping their risk perceptions and management. The intersecting factors of race and drug type repeatedly came up in interviews, particularly when asked about police detection. Some of the Asian American women believed that their race served as an added advantage in that they were not perceived to be drug dealers. Others, particularly African Americans, felt their race was a further hindrance, coupled with their status as women going against traditional gender norms. Here, the belief that criminal justice authorities would view them as "evil women" created an increased perception of vulnerability, which led these participants to take additional precautions when selling. Class, conventional associations, and sales settings deserve further attention as potential intersecting factors in future research. We imagine there are a number of intersecting factors that could emerge, depending on the social location of the women studied, and future studies should be open to such emergent factors.

There were some additional limitations to both of our studies with regards to this paper. One major limitation was the lack of in-depth questions asked in interviews regarding women's experiences with arrest and imprisonment in terms of gendered perceptions. We suggest that future investigators explore women drug sellers' experiences with the criminal justice system to further examine all of the ways in which gender, along with race and other intersecting factors, play a part in drug markets. An additional limitation of this analysis is the lack of a complete male comparison group since WSS did not include male participants. Still, it was interesting to find that both women who sold "street drugs" and those who sold prescription drugs held many of the same beliefs about gender and drug selling.

Ultimately, women drug sellers often viewed themselves in unique positions when confronting the dangers of their trade. Beyond gender's perceived intrinsic benefits and drawbacks, some women sellers wielded their gender like a protective weapon—in essence, performing purposeful gendered actions—to maintain safety and security in harsh social worlds. Our women participants also made note of intersecting factors that contributed to their risk perception and management, reflecting particularly on race and type of drug sold as influencing their experiences of safety. Intersectionality as a theoretical framework brought light to the complex nature of women's social locations in drug-selling worlds, wherein some factors held stronger influences than others depending on the situation and none of these factors were mutually exclusive.

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Biography

Micheline D. Ludwick, BA, a Research Associate at the Institute for Scientific Analysis' Center for Substance Abuse Studies in San Francisco, California, has worked on various National Institute of Health grants that focused on drug users and health care, needle exchange, and young adult heroin users. Ms. Ludwick has published first-authored articles in the *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs* and *Contemporary Drug Problems*.

Sheigla Murphy, PhD, Director, Center for Substance Abuse Studies at the Institute for Scientific Analysis, is a medical sociologist who has been researching various types of illicit drug use, sales and treatment in the San Francisco Bay Area for more than thirty years. She is the coauthor of *Cocaine Changes: The Experience of Using and Quitting*, Temple University Press, 1991 and *Pregnant Women on Drugs: Combating Stereotypes and Stigma* was published by Rutgers University Press in February 1999 (with coauthor Marsha Rosenbaum).

Paloma Sales, PhD is a medical sociologist at the Institute for Scientific Analysis with over 15 years of experience working on qualitative research projects with hard-to-reach populations. She has studied women and drug use, pregnancy and violence, needle exchange and distribution, drug users' engagement in health and social services, ecstasy use and sales, and nonmedical prescription drug use and sales. Dr. Sales has published peer-reviewed articles in *Journal of Drug Issues*, *International Journal of Social Justice*, *International Journal of Drug Policy*, and *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs*.

Glossary

Intersectionality theory

Sociologist Patricia Hill Collins (2000 : 18) defines intersectionality as “particular forms of intersecting oppressions, for example, intersections of race and gender, or of sexuality and nation.” She goes on to say: “intersectional paradigms remind us that oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type, and that oppressions work together in producing injustice.

Standpoint research

Standpoint theory “claims that all knowledge attempts are socially situated and that some of those objective social locations are better than others for knowledge projects” (Harding, 1993:56).

Gendered performances

“Doing gender” consists of performing everyday interactions in accordance with what is socially appropriate for an individual's sex category. In some instances, women sellers staged performances by purposively presenting themselves as more masculine or androgynous in their appearance and manner to blend into a mostly male environment.

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Savvy Sellers Pseudonyms/Demographics

Interview #	Pseudonym	Age	Race	Drugs Sold
062WSS	Noelle	26	African American & Creole	Marijuana
024WSS	Pamela	52	Asian & Native American	Heroin
003WSS	Vanessa	29	Latina	Valium, Soma, Xanax
010WSS	Taylor	31	White	Speed, Marijuana
023WSS	Renee	22	Latina	Marijuana
030WSS	Andie	25	White & Pacific Islander	Marijuana, Heroin
004WSS	Tina	41	African American	Methamphetamine, Marijuana, Ecstasy
069WPS	Jules	40	Pacific Islander	OxyContin, Klonopin, Percocet
006WSS	Lulu	38	White & Latina	Crack
148WSS	Teresa	24	Latina	Methamphetamine
012WSS	Mara	42	White	Methamphetamine
021WSS	Stephanie	38	African American	Crack
074WPS	Celia	21	Latina	Adderall, Vicodin, Valium
028WSS	Hannah	21	White	Heroin
002WSS	Piper	24	White & Native American	Marijuana, Heroin, Cocaine, Speed
073WSS	Shay	44	African American	Vicodin, Oxycodone
006WPS	Reggie	43	White	Vicodin, Seraquil
121WSS	Dasha	19	Mixed	Cocaine, Ecstasy
005WPS	Beatrice	20	Latina	Codeine 4, Valium, OxyContin
001WPS	Rowan	22	White	Norco, Xanax, OxyContin, Codeine
045WPS	Claire	23	Mixed	Adderall, OxyContin, Valium, Vicodin
124WSS	Cam	24	Vietnamese	Marijuana, Speed
115WSS	Bella	18	Filipina	Crack
133WSS	Joy	28	Asian	Cocaine, Marijuana
078WPS	Lucy	23	White	Vicodin, Codeine 3
013WSS	Nia	23	White	Marijuana
031WSS	Avery	23	White	Heroin, Crack
152WSS	Ruby	20	White	Cocaine, Ecstasy