

MODULE 15

GENDER AND
ORGANIZED CRIME

EDUCATION FOR JUSTICE
UNIVERSITY MODULE SERIES

Organized Crime

Module 15

GENDER AND ORGANIZED CRIME



UNITED NATIONS
Vienna, 2019

This Module is a resource for lecturers.

Developed under the Education for Justice (E4J) initiative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), a component of the Global Programme for the Implementation of the Doha Declaration, this Module forms part of the E4J University Module Series on Organized Crime and is accompanied by a Teaching Guide. The full range of E4J materials includes university modules on integrity and ethics, crime prevention and criminal justice, anti-corruption, trafficking in persons / smuggling of migrants, firearms, cybercrime, wildlife, forest and fisheries crime, counter-terrorism as well as organized crime.

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Introduction

What comes to your mind when you see the topic “Gender and Organized Crime”? Stories of young, beautiful, exotic women who are the blind, submissive lovers of equally exotic but dangerous male bosses of organized criminal groups? Images of foreign, frail, innocent girls taken advantage of by transnational male criminals operating in the shadows? Men who lead, even from behind bars, complex trafficking networks worldwide? Savvy, conniving women who ‘take over’ what is depicted as a predominantly male underworld?

Leaning on and simultaneously nourishing society’s collective fascination with organized crime, television and online series, movies, books and even scholarly literature worldwide have offered many representations of the men – and women – involved in this illicit, yet very profitable business. Walk into any bookstore around the world and it is likely that you will find a variety of books claiming to tell the ‘true story’ of drug dealers or transnational youth gangs; videos and television series abound with the feats of the male members of organized criminal groups and terrorist organizations colluding with anyone from drug dealers to human traffickers. Women tend not to be represented as often, but when they do, they are typically relegated to supporting roles, wilful yet blind appendixes to their male counterparts, at times *femme fatales* and generally not truly autonomous. When they are depicted in positions of leadership, it is generally to showcase what happened to them because of going against gender

roles. Take for example the case of Sandra Avila Beltran, known in Mexican law enforcement circles as *The Queen of the Pacific*, who was running a successful cocaine enterprise and eventually ended up in a US prison. Or of Sister Ping, whose profitable career smuggling migrants out of China came to an end following the tragic death by suffocation of a group whose smuggling she coordinated.

Critical criminology and gender scholars have warned us: none of these representations is neutral or apolitical. Stories and narratives of crime communicate specific messages concerning gender. These messages concerning what men and women do, should do or should not do, are reproduced by all of us in the context of our lives. These messages are present in what we consume through the media, but also in our day to day lives and interactions with others. These messages may only partially or superficially discuss the experiences, challenges and perspectives, but rather focus on stereotypes that may be assumed as reflecting realities. Think for example of how people tend to automatically associate crimes like drug trafficking or terrorism to men from specific nationalities, or of how women are the first ones to come to mind when one mentions human trafficking. Not only is it a matter of mentioning men and/or women, but of how they are then represented: as violent, greedy, resourceful men or as naïve, young, migrant women.

Are the ways men and women are represented in crime true, or even valid? How do people's own notions of gender shape the way they understand organized crime? Why is it that ideas concerning race and class are also such a common part of organized crime representations? In short: why should we care about gender when discussing crime, and particularly organized crime?

This Module answers these questions. It relies on theoretical concepts, examples drawn from empirical research and case studies to show the ways people experience and respond to crime depending on their gender. It also shows how gender and the way gender is performed and understood shape criminal justice system outcomes. In other words, men and women have different experiences. It should therefore not come as a surprise that these differences are also present in the way men and women experience the criminal justice system.

The Module introduces basic gender concepts to the study of organized crime. Using case studies and examples drawn from empirical research, the Module highlights the importance of having a gender perspective when exploring crime, criminalization and the administration of justice processes (for additional information, see Module 13 on Gender Dimension in Smuggling of Migrants and Trafficking in Persons of the University Module Series on Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants; Module 10 on Gender in the Criminal Justice System of the University Module Series on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice; and [Module 9](#) on Gender Dimensions of Ethics of the University Module Series on Integrity and Ethics). This Module builds on existing academic theory and integrates the research produced for and

presented during an International Academic Conference on “Gender and Organized Crime”, organized by UNODC’s Education for Justice (E4J) initiative and the Migration Policy Centre of the European University Institute, in July 2018 in Florence, Italy.

Glossary

Cisgender: A term used to refer to individuals whose sense of their gender aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Classism: A prejudice against people belonging to a social class.

Femininity: Pattern of social behaviour that is associated with ideals about how women and girls should behave and their position within gender relations.

Feminization of poverty: Set of phenomena that refer to a widening gap between women and men caught in the cycle of poverty. Around the world, women suffer more from severe poverty than men, and female poverty has a more marked tendency to increase, largely because of the rise in the number of female-headed households.

Gender: Term used to describe the roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society at a given time considers appropriate for men and women. In addition to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, “gender” also refers to the relations between women and men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes.

Gender blindness: The failure to recognize that the roles and responsibilities of men and boys and women and girls are given to them in and against specific social, cultural, economic and political contexts and backgrounds. Projects, programmes, policies and attitudes that are gender blind do not take into account these different roles and diverse needs, maintain the status quo and will not help transform the unequal structure of gender relations.

Gender discrimination: Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex/gender/sexual orientation (as the grounds of discrimination relevant to this Module) which has, for any individual, or any group of individuals, the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field [United Nations, 1979. ‘Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women’. Article 1].

Gender equality: term that refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the

diversity of different groups of women and men. Equality between women and men is seen as both a human rights issue and a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable, people-centred development.

Gender neutral, gender sensitive, gender transformative: These terms describe approaches that do not consider gender and do not affect norms, roles and relations (*gender neutral*); consider and address gender norms, roles and access to resources only in so far as needed to reach project goals (*gender sensitive*); consider gender central and transform unequal gender relations to promote shared power, control of resources, decision-making, and support for women's empowerment (*gender transformative*).

Gender norms: Ideas about how men and women should be and act. These are the standards and expectations to which gender identity generally conforms, within a range that defines a particular society, culture and community at that point in time.

Intersectionality: A concept often used in critical theories to describe the fact that individuals may be subjected to multiple and compounding forms of discrimination, related to various specificities of identity or circumstance. These forms of discrimination can be based on: race/ethnicity, indigenous or minority status, sex, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion or other belief, political opinion, national origin, health status, urban/rural location or geographical remoteness, etc.). These categories are interconnected and cannot be examined separately from one another.

LGBTI: An acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons. In certain contexts, 'intersex' – persons born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that does not seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male – is not included (LGBT); in others, Q is added to represent 'queer' /'questioning' (LGBTQ); or the symbol '+' is added to denote other persons of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity (such as asexual, pansexual and so forth).

Masculinity: Pattern of social behaviour that is associated with ideals about how men and boys should behave and their position within gender relations.

Racism: A prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against someone of a different race/ethnicity based on the belief that one's own race/ethnicity is superior.

Sex: Either of the two main categories (male and female) into which humans and most other living things are divided based on their reproductive functions.

Sexism: Prejudice, stereotyping, or discriminating, typically against women, based on sex.

Sexual orientation: Term that refers to a person's sexual or romantic attraction towards other people. This is not to be confused with same sex attraction (i.e. gay or lesbian sexual orientation). Heterosexuals (those attracted to persons of a different sex to themselves) have a heterosexual sexual orientation. Sex characteristics and gender identity do not determine sexual orientation.

Stereotype: A widely held, but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a person/group or thing.

Stigma: A mark of disgrace associated with a circumstance, quality, or person.

Social construction: Meanings, notions and connotations that do not exist objectively or inherently, but because of human interaction.

Transgender: ‘An umbrella term used to describe people with a wide range of identities - including transsexual people, cross-dressers (sometimes referred to as “transvestites”), people who identify as third gender, and others whose appearance and characteristics are gender atypical and whose sense of their own gender is different to the sex that they were assigned at birth. Trans women identify as women but were classified as males when they were born. Trans men identify as men but were classified female when they were born’ (UNFE, n/a).

Many of the definitions in this glossary are based on those contained in the “Gender Equality Glossary of the Training Centre of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women”.

Topics covered

- Organized crime
- Gender
- Intersectionality
- Stereotypes

Learning Outcomes

- Explain the differences between gender and sex
- Understand and use basic conceptual/theoretical tools concerning gender (e.g. gender, sex, intersectionality)
- Understand the implications and importance of bringing gender into the study of organized crime, criminalization and criminal justice administration

Key Issues

Why should we discuss gender in organized crime research?

The Perspective of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

“Gender matters in criminal justice and security matters. Crimes have profoundly different impacts on women and men. They face different risks and are thus victimized in different ways. For example, more young men are recruited into organized criminal groups; more women are at risk of violence in their home by someone that is known to them. In efforts to prevent crime or reduce risks, women and men act differently. There is growing evidence that understanding gender relations, identities and inequalities can help improve rule of law technical assistance. The criminal justice system provides different experiences for women and men. Often assumptions are made based on stereotypical perceptions of women’s and men’s roles. Men are often seen as perpetrators of violence and women as passive victims. Women and men often highlight different concerns and bring different perspectives, experiences and solutions to the issues. Understanding these differences and inequalities can help identify needs, target assistance and ensure that all needs are met.”

Why does gender matter in the study of organized crime? Discussing gender is ultimately part of a larger project towards equality and justice that involves us all. Bringing gender into organized crime debates is key to identifying needs, patterns and trends, to crafting solutions, and to targeting assistance in ways that is meaningful and cognizant of both women and men’s experiences. Without understanding gender aspects in organized crime there is a risk that we do not fully comprehend what drives it and how to build the comprehensive response necessary to combat it. But how can we do it? And do we need to do it?

The answer is simple: gender belongs in the classroom because the human experience is shaped by gender. Gender is part of what people see in us, how we see others and how we act. Therefore, gender is also part of the experiences of the men and women who participate in organized crime. Learning and knowing how gender shapes their interactions with the law is fundamental in any kind of criminal justice analysis.

Some claim that there is no need to bring gender discussions to the table, as we should try to be gender neutral in our assessments, or in other words, we should avoid “seeing” gender (see also definition in *glossary*). Nonetheless, gender is not something we are blind to. To claim we do not see gender (or that we do not care about race or class for that matter) implies

underestimating our own, often unconscious biases and the experiences faced by other people - most importantly, the inequalities that impact them (for a discussion on gender discrimination and implicit bias, see [Module 9](#) on Gender Dimensions of Ethics of the E4J University Module Series on Integrity and Ethics). Gender dimensions should therefore be considered as essential to research and criminological analysis, and not merely a separate or stand-alone part of organized crime research or scholarship. Each one of us also has their own experiences with gender. The way we relate to the people and the practices we research are also the result of the ways we ourselves see gender. Social scientists now accept that “our background and position affect what [we] choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and communication of conclusions” (Malterud, 2001: 483-484).

We also bring gender to the classroom as it is part of each one of our pedagogical choices. We select materials that contain specific messages about gender and share them with others, who may or may not share our experiences, beliefs and perceptions. An important component of bringing gender analysis into organized crime debates therefore involves unpacking our own views on gender and supporting others as they do the same. It is not simple. Most of us have spent the majority of our lives understanding gender as something we are born with, not something we learn. Furthermore, gender debates have often been simplistically constructed as a women’s issue, when men are also gendered and are therefore an essential part of the conversation.

What is sex? What is gender? What is intersectionality? Why should we care?

In their ground-breaking article “Doing Gender” published in 1987, West and Zimmerman wrote:

“Gender is the range of mental and behavioural characteristics pertaining to, and differentiating between and across, masculinity and femininity. In Western societies, the accepted cultural perspective on gender views women and men as naturally and unequivocally defined categories of being with distinctive psychological and behavioural propensities that can be predicted from their reproductive function. (...) The structural arrangements of a society are presumed to be responsive to these differences. (...) gender is used to structure distinct domains of social experience” (128).

What West and Zimmerman argued back then along with many other gender scholars who have followed since, is that people are not born with a specific gender that is in line with their sex. Sex refers to the anatomical and physiological characteristics which differentiate between men and women. Gender is instead learned and performed through social interactions.

Expressions like ‘be a man’ or ‘act lady-like’ reveal the social construction (see definition in *glossary*) of gender. Men and women are expected to abide to specific yet gendered social practices and expectations. Gender is “a socially organized achievement” (West and Zimmerman, 1987: 129). We expect and demand boys to show “manly” traits, or for girls to dress or act “like ladies.” Not doing so has social implications.

In line with these views, the United Nations consider “gender” as referring to “the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context-, culture- and time-specific as well as changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. In most societies, there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities” (UN OSAGI, 2001).

Gender and criminology scholars have also identified that these gendered expectations may lead people to participate or engage in certain behaviours – for men, for example, to act violently or tough; for women, to take on roles as care-takers. In general, gender is simply seen as a natural, inherent or unquestionable fact that is also rooted in our biology. Many societies take the differences between men and women for granted and see them as constants that do not change or evolve. Some societies, however, have different approaches to gender, further demonstrating its socially constructed nature. Some Native people in North America, for example, have used the term “Two Spirit” to acknowledge the existence of multiple gender identities and expressions. The term does not refer to a specific definition of gender or sexual orientation (see definition in *glossary*). It is instead an umbrella term that brings together the specific names, roles and traditions Native people have for their own *two-spirit* people. For the Navajo people, for example, *two-spirit* men and women carry both a [male and female spirit within them](#) and are blessed by their Creator to see life through the eyes of both – they are the perfect embodiment of two genders in one person (Enos, 2017). In other communities, gender fluidity is completely tolerated, if not celebrated and gender equality is considered part of the standard social norms. For instance, in the small indigenous territory of Guna Yala - an archipelago off Panama’s eastern coast also known as San Blas -, boys may choose to become *Omeggid*, literally ‘like a woman’, where they act and work like other females in the community. This ‘third gender’ is a completely normal phenomenon on the islands, and while female transitions to male are extremely rare, they are equally accepted (Gerulaityte, 2018). Similarly, in the Istmo de Tehuantepec region in Mexico’s southern state of Oaxaca, three genders exist: female, male and *muxes*. A *muxe* is any person who was born a man but doesn’t act masculine and they are not only respected but also an important part of the community. This third classification has been acknowledged and celebrated since pre-Hispanic times and some legends narrate that they fell out from the pocket of Vicente Ferrer, the patron saint of

Juchitán de Zaragoza (a small town in this region that celebrate the “Vela de Las Intrepidas” - Vigil of the Intrepids -, the annual celebration of *muxes* each November), as he passed through town, which, according to locals, means they were born under a lucky star (Synowiec, 2018).

Why do we mention these examples? Some scholars have argued that to understand men and women’s experiences and impact on society we must move from focusing on [sexual] difference to focusing on relations, on the claim that “gender is after all, a matter of the social relations within which individuals and groups act (...) (Connell, 2004: 11). To put it informally, gender is not a mere natural, inborn trait, but rather one that is learned and performed. Furthermore, the ways we perform gender can also be connected to our personal experiences as people who have endured long standing, multiple, intersectional forms of discrimination.

Kimberly Crenshaw, an African American legal scholar, coined the term “intersectionality” in her seminal article "Mapping the margins: intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color" (1989) to theorize the ways in which individuals may be subjected to multiple and compounding forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, xenophobia, classism, etc.) that are interconnected. According to Crenshaw, these cannot be examined separately from one another (for more in-depth reading on intersectionality, see [Module 9](#) on Gender Dimensions of Ethics of the E4J University Module Series on Integrity and Ethics). Since the term allows to combine different, intersecting experiences, it is an important and often used concept in criminology. Intersectionality allows us to focus on the areas in which multiple, intersecting forms of inequality affect people who have historically been disadvantaged and allows to bring into the discussion on crime their experiences and perspectives (Castiello Jones, Misra, McCurley, 2013). Crenshaw conceived the term aware of the need, articulated by other African American women, “to think and talk about race through a lens that looks at gender, or think and talk about feminism through a lens that looks at race” (Adewunmi, 2014). In other words, intersectionality describes the overlapping and interconnecting social identities that often affect and inform how we move within society (being female and poor and migrant; being male, foreign and disabled, etc.). Intersecting identities are not mutually exclusive, but rather work together to construct how one is perceived in society. Crenshaw proposed that our identities need to be considered simultaneously so to reflect and analyse how power hierarchies shape our experiences (Cooper, 2016).

Why talk about intersectionality in a Module on gender and organized crime? Around the world, the number of men and women in detention for their involvement in drug trafficking activities has increased exponentially ([UNODC \(c\), 2018](#)). This phenomenon, however, cannot be explained only by looking at the gender of those incarcerated. In many countries, men and women from indigenous communities or ethnic minorities are overrepresented in the detention system. But many of them are from countries that endured colonial traditions that created social hierarchies and contributed to making those communities more vulnerable.

Intersectionality brings forth the role gender, ethnicity/race and other factors play in people's dealings in front of the law. It also shows us how the stereotypes we often construct regarding men and women, who also are from other races, nationalities or who are part of other social and/or economic class, have an impact and shape their encounters with the law. For example, using intersectionality we can provide improved explanations of the increasing number of women serving time in prison, including for low-level drug dealing offences. Some criminologists, and most media coverage, attribute the trend to women's relationships with men. Intersectionality allows us to provide a more nuanced explanation. Women are less likely than men to be able to afford fines or to pay the surety required for bail, as generally speaking, women earn less than men and have unequal access to educational and/or employment opportunities. Consequently, they may also be less likely to be eligible for consideration for non-custodial sanctions and measures if their economic and social vulnerability are assessed as risk factors (UNODC (c), 2018). While this is clearly a generalization, the same trends hold true also for women in organized criminal groups.

Women in organized criminal groups, however, tend not only to be poorer or less educated. They are also more likely to be immigrant, indigenous, disabled, and elderly (WOLA et al, 2013). Furthermore, organized criminal markets tend to be highly gendered - that is, roles and tasks tend to be assigned primarily along gender lines. This also translates into most positions of power or control being held by men. Women are more likely to perform some of the lowest paid, riskier and peripheral tasks in organized crime. This often means that they are more visible to the police and therefore more likely to be detained. Furthermore, excluded from the circles of power, women are also less likely to have knowledge or intelligence that would allow them to negotiate lesser sentences or less strict terms (WOLA et al, 2013).

It is important to remember that intersectionality is not only about gender. It is about how multiple systems interlock to create and perpetuate inequality. For example, many indigenous, aboriginal or native people charged with crimes may be unable to communicate in languages different than their own; this may limit their ability to get a fair trial. Unprecedented numbers of people are moving as migrants, at times becoming entangled in criminal activities as a way to survive. The inaccessibility to quality interpreters or to justice mechanisms that recognize these structural challenges people face translate into a lack of access to justice (WOLA et al, 2013). In sum, intersectionality can help us see how men as well as women are impacted by multiple and layered forms of discrimination; it helps us provide more nuanced understandings of the reasons and contexts behind crime. Not considering these multiple factors and layered forms of discrimination exacerbates people's vulnerabilities.

Why do we know so little about gender in organized crime?

Perhaps you are wondering: why have I not heard about gender and organized crime before? One answer is that organized crime is clandestine, hidden and must remain that way to succeed. Criminal actors consistently seek to protect their activities from detection by law enforcement, but also from competitors or any other actors who could uncover or dismantle them (see [Module 5](#) on this issue). These factors have resulted in researchers having limited access or ability to conduct empirical work on organized crime and to fully understand the role of gender in organized crime.

Having this in mind it should not come as a surprise that empirical, evidence-based research on organized crime is limited. The overrepresentation of male researchers in organized crime research in many countries has also shaped the agenda. For example, most studies on organized crime focus on the experiences of men, and tend to explore their roles as leaders, heads or bosses (think of the many reports on El Chapo, Pablo Escobar, Toto Riina, Al Capone or the numerous mobsters of the past). Work on the experiences of men performing tasks considered of lesser importance or seen as less charismatic or visible are much less common, as are women's experiences. If present, women are depicted primarily in function of their relationships with men – in other words, primarily as their romantic interests (see Sanchez, 2016). Ethnographies that explore women's experiences and perspectives from a different angle are quite limited. Furthermore, perceptions of criminal activities and spaces as dangerous may also limit the access granted to women researchers to study criminal practices, on the grounds that their integrity or safety may be at stake. Fears over the potential risks female scholars may face, however, also restrict women's participation in and perspectives on organized crime scholarship, which in many countries continues to be characteristically a male dominated field.

There is also of course, the role played by the media in the way we think about gender. The general public enjoys the stories of organized crime, even though they often provide stereotypical assumptions concerning the people who participate in criminal markets. While many of these movies, television shows, or documentaries are certainly entertaining, it is also important to be aware of the messages that are conveyed by these representations and to find ways to engage with them critically.

Political contexts and funding also play a role in the topics that become studied, and in the ways these are included in policy and practice. A useful example is gang research, which is largely based on data collected by the criminal justice systems, and in particular, law enforcement investigations. For law enforcement, gangs constitute serious security threats and top enforcement priorities. Agencies worldwide use significant human and financial

resources to identify, target and eradicate gang activity. Much of this effort has been focused on their identification, the documentation of forms of inter-gang violence, and on the development of initiatives aimed to control and dismantle them. Over the years, the gang phenomenon has been primarily understood as male and investigated as such. In the face of the overwhelming violence often characterizing the world of gangs, it is all too easy to overlook the women who are also stranded in this unsafe, unstable environment, even though around the world women also participate within and do form their own gangs (Miller, 2001). Combined, these factors have led to women's experiences with and within gangs and their experiences with the criminal justice system to be understudied.

Gender and organized crime

Bringing gender into the study of organized crime means more than just talking about how men engage in some crimes or roles while women engage in others. It also means understanding how gender itself is organized and performed by people and the implications thereof. As the examples in this Module show, racism, sexism, classism (see definitions in *glossary*) and other long-standing forms of discrimination shape people's interactions with one another and the law. The use of an intersectional, gender-based approach allows to provide more nuanced explanations of the participation of men and women in crime, and the ways their roles are often connected to the long-standing, structural conditions they face. People do not become involved in crime just because of their gender or because of their place of birth or class. As discussed earlier, bringing intersectionality to the analysis of crime can help further unpack the reasons behind criminality, and how men and women are impacted differently by enforcement and control.

A useful approach in the study of organized crime is one that considers the gendered dynamics of organized crime as well as how gender is operationalized in the organization and structure of organized criminal groups. In this context, the different experiences of men and women within the realm of organized crime deserve closer attention.

Drivers of recruitment and gender roles in organized criminal groups

If it is true that organized crime is often a men's business and much of what is known has been written by men and about men, it is equally true that better awareness is needed regarding the construction of masculinity and how that affects men's participation in organized crime. Masculinity - the set of attributes, behaviours, and roles associated with boys and men – is another social construction, which describes the qualities and attributes regarded as a characteristic of men. The traditional unhealthy masculinity ideology is sometimes also called

toxic masculinity. Toxic masculinity includes, for example, suppressing emotions or masking distress, maintaining an appearance of hardness and violence as an indicator of power. Toxic masculinity emphasizes dominance, strength and sexual prowess.

Much like for women, men's decisions and behaviours are also profoundly shaped by rigid social and cultural expectations. Broadening the discussion about how gender norms affect both women and men helps us to better understand the complex ways that these norms and power relations burden our society, and to more effectively engage men and boys in reflections about inequalities and change. Men represent the overwhelming percentage of perpetrators of violent crimes and the reason for this phenomenon is complex and cannot be explained by hormones or inherent gender-linked characteristics. The reason might lie instead in a complex and layered construction of toxic masculinity, encompassing the importance placed on physical strength and aggression, which can result in partaking in criminal behaviour.

For instance, the work of Robert Henry (2015) (see the case study "Performing Masculinity: Indigenous Street Gangs" in the exercise section) has shown how indigenous street gangs do reproduce a notion of the ideal gang member: a tough, independent, emotionless and powerful man. However, men are not simply born with those traits. Henry's work shows that those behaviours are not a mere consequence of being a man but are instead the reflection of high levels of violence and trauma, also rooted in the colonial experience of Native Canadians. Gang members do engage in hyper-violent activities. Yet, his research indicates, these actions are mechanisms developed to protect themselves from further victimization.

While a focus on masculinity and crime has been an ongoing feature of popular culture and the topic has received a great deal of academic attention (see, for instance, Messerschmidt and Tomsen, 2016), not the same can be said about the gendered aspects of women's participation in criminal activities and in organized crime. Women's involvement in organized criminal groups can take many forms. For years, their role was narrated as that of mothers, sisters, wives or lovers of members or leaders of organized criminal groups, often forced into a life of crime because of their proximity with the men in their milieu. It is only in recent times that their involvement in organized illicit activity has been recognized – and studied – in its own right. There is a growing number of examples of - or, perhaps, growing attention paid to - women holding various positions in organized criminal groups, including organizers, leaders, traffickers, recruiters and other participants in criminal organizations, such as lawyers, messengers and accountants (see e.g. Arsovska and Begun, 2014; Sanchez, 2016).

While limited, research on women in organized criminal groups reveals the unique dynamics they face. A study conducted by the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime and based on more than 30 interviews with young girls and women, who participated in gangs in Cape Town, South Africa, show that women and girls tend to be excluded from leadership positions. It also identifies the prevalence of sex and sexual violence in their interactions with

other gang members and with the criminal justice system. Furthermore, it shows that while they are not at the forefront of “gang wars,” women and girls are often the ones who face their consequences - for example, incarceration, family separation, deprivation of their parental rights, etc. (Shaw and Skywalker, 2017). This study also sheds some light on the factors that drive women to join an organized criminal group. These findings are not necessarily representative of wider female involvement in organized crime. Nonetheless, they provide very relevant elements for reflection.

Drivers of recruitment of women into organized crime: Women in gangs in Cape Town, South Africa

The interviews conducted with girls and women who participated in gangs in Cape Town, South Africa (Shaw and Skywalker, 2017) revealed several factors that can be understood as drivers of women’s recruitment into organized crime:

1) Feeling of belonging and family

Many of the females interviewed noted that they joined the gang scene because it provided them with a sense of belonging that they felt was missing from their often violent and dysfunctional biological family life. Being part of these gang families also provided the women with security, such as protection, and resources (e.g., money, clothes, and jewellery). Many of these females joined the gangs through romantic relationships with male gang members.

2) Protection

A common reason for joining the gangs mentioned by the women was that the gangs offered them protection. Being part of the gang “families” provided them with security in an often-dangerous environment, in which women were particularly vulnerable to sexual and domestic violence. However, many women noted that they were still subject to such violence from within the gang (e.g. their partners who were gang members).

3) Resources

The gangs also offered these women resources they would otherwise be unable to afford or access, such as jewellery, cars, and clothing. Access to these goods was often through the women’s boyfriends and gang bosses.

4) “The path of least resistance”

Some women reported that joining a gang was easier than resisting - it was the path of least resistance. Joining the gang also provided them with “immediate rewards” as a result.

5) Under- and unemployment in the licit economy

Several of the women noted that the gangs offered more exciting opportunities with larger rewards compared to the jobs available to them in the licit economy. The few ordinary employment opportunities the women found, often in the retail sector, were described as “boring and poorly paid”.

6) *Substance abuse*

According to some women interviewed, they saw joining gangs as one of the only options left to them because of their struggle with substance abuse. Their addictions made it difficult to find steady and licit employment and made them particularly vulnerable to violence. Gangs offered not only protection (to a certain extent), but access to substances as well.

The use of a gender lens allows us to see that the experiences of women in organized crime are not limited to being the romantic interests of men, and that men are not merely the heads of criminal organizations. Many women and men, including many of whom are indigenous, migrant, or low-income, often opt to engage in criminalized activities to support themselves and/or their families amid a structural lack of opportunities like employment or education. Many women convicted for their participation in organized crime have long histories of emotional, physical and sexual abuse, in addition to having endured harassment and discrimination. Young men also tend to describe experiences of physical abuse, lack of employment and educational options, criminalization as a result of their class, race and gender (UNICEF 2017). Around the world young men are those most likely to experience violence and, as numbers show, they account for the vast majority of homicides globally, with almost half of all homicide victims aged 15-29 and slightly less than a third aged 30-44 (UNODC, 2013). At the time of the 2013 UNODC Global Study on Homicides, the homicide rate for male victims aged 15-29 in South America and Central America was more than four times the global average rate for that age group, likely because of the higher levels of homicide related to organized crime in those regions. At the same time, women and girls accounted for 21% of all the homicide victims, almost half of which were killed by their intimate partners or family members. As these data highlight, intimate partner/family-related homicide disproportionately affects women (UNODC, 2013).

This pattern of violence and discrimination was identified by another study focusing on women in gangs in a different part of the world, the so-called Northern Triangle in Central America, comprising El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. This research, which also results from a series of interviews with gang members conducted over three years, highlights that there are multiple economic, social and personal factors to be considered in the decision to join a gang, but often their common backdrop - for men and women alike - is a context of social inequality, sexual violence, child abuse, unemployment and easy access to drugs and firearms, generally combined with an upbringing in gangs-ridden neighbours ([Interpeace](#), 2013).

Men and women rituals of initiation into gangs (MS-13 and Barrio 18) in Central America

For their ritual of initiation – known as “chequeo” in some Central American gangs like Barrio 18 and Mara Salvatrucha MS-13 – men are asked to endure a beating by gang members, the duration of which varies and depends on the gang one wishes to join (for instance, the procedure would last 13 seconds if one were to join MS-13 and 18 for Barrio 18). Women, on the other hand, are given two options: the first one is the beating, while the second one is to sustain sexual relations with multiple gang members for an equal amount of time. Nonetheless, as gang members report, choosing the second option would result in an immediate loss of respect, as enduring a beating shows strength, honour and courage, thus reproducing a model of masculinity that is extremely important for the group. Those women who opt for the sexual abuse will never be truly considered full members of the gang. A third way to join the gang is by proximity, or in other words, when the woman is the girlfriend or wife of the gang member. In such case, and if the member is important enough in the group, the woman would not have to endure either ritual of initiation. These women are treated respectfully by the rest of the gang, although they are expected to tolerate frequent infidelity and if they reciprocate the practice, their punishment can be death.

Source: Interpeace, 2013

As these empirical studies show, women in gangs are often destined to cover that role of caretakers that is typical of patriarchal societies: they look after the children as well as the sick and wounded, cook for the group, take care of the needs of their man and stay loyal to him. At the same time, organized criminal groups learned to take advantage of the lack of attention law enforcement and rival gangs used to pay to women and started using them as arms and drugs traffickers, spies and messengers. Their roles as messengers is particularly relevant when the leader of the group is a fugitive or put behind bars. In some countries, organized crime-related offences carry with them a particularly strict regime of detention, which limits visiting rights to family members and spouses (see, for instance [Article 41-bis of the Italian Prison Administration Act](#), a security regime for persons convicted for particularly serious crimes, such as mafia-related crimes or terrorism, which aims to ensure that they cannot keep contact with the criminal network they belong to. See also Panama’s [Executive Decree No. 72 of 2018](#), which created “Centres of Preventive Detention for Persons Deprived of their Liberty Qualified as Extreme Dangerous” in connection with organized crime offences: the first one of these centres was created in Punta Coco, an island off the Panamanian shore, declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of Justice of the country and [reopened in February 2019](#)). In such cases, women become their proxies and their role can range from simple message delivering to handling the day-to-day operations of the group and, in some cases, they become the ad-interim leaders of the group. At times, they manage to keep this position even when the man is released from prison. Women from different parts of the world have been known to run successful organized criminal groups. For some of them, crime is part of

their family business - not seldom, for generations. Others come in contact with it because of their personal experiences and the choices in their life. The boxes that follow recount only few of their stories.

Women as leaders of organized criminal groups: Raffaella D'Alterio

Raffaella D'Alterio (see also the exercise section of [Module 6](#)) was the daughter of a *Camorra* boss (one of the Mafia-type organized criminal groups having their base in and around Naples) and later got married to one. She took over the leadership of the group when her husband, Nicola Pianese, was arrested in 2002 and after his release, they started a bloody feud over control of the criminal organization. Allegedly, the family war ended when Raffaella arranged to have her husband killed. She remained the leader of the group until 2012, when the Italian Carabinieri arrested her together with other 65 members of the group and confiscated property valued over \$10 million. The court brought over 70 criminal counts against them, including of criminal association, extortion, drug trafficking and illicit arms possession.

Source: Di Meo, 2012

Women as leaders of organized criminal groups: Sister Ping

Cheng Chui Ping, also known as Sister Ping, ran a successful human smuggling operation between Hong Kong and New York City from 1984 until 2000.

To the authorities, Ping was the “mother of all snakeheads,” a ruthless businesswoman who smuggled what is believed to be thousands of Chinese people into the United States. US Prosecutors said her smuggling ring amassed millions in profits in the two decades she operated, taking advantage of the desperation of migrants. Furthermore, prosecutors said, for those who made the trip safely but could not pay, Ping sent vicious gangs to abduct and beat, torture or rape them until they paid off their debts.

When the “Golden Venture,” a rusty freight ship loaded with 300 immigrants, ran aground off the coast of New York in 1993, 10 people died. The accident was traced to Sister Ping, who became the enduring symbol of migrant smuggling. Her case also helped popularize the term snakehead, from the Chinese translation for human-smuggler.

Source: United States Attorney Southern District of New York, 2006

Women as leaders of organized criminal groups: Sandra Ávila Beltrán

Sandra Ávila Beltrán is a Mexican woman known for her involvement in the trafficking of cocaine from Colombia through Mexico to the United States. Arrested in 2007 after several years of activity, she was charged for her involvement in a conspiracy to commit drug trafficking and sentenced to 10 years in prison. By 2012, after serving a few years of her sentence in Mexico, she was extradited to the United States, where she also faced charges for drug trafficking. In 2013, she was deported from the United States and sent back to Mexico to face additional charges for money laundering. She was finally released in 2015.

Ávila Beltrán gained notoriety given her leadership role. Known as “La Reina del Pacifico” – the Queen of the Pacific – she was believed to run a successful cocaine trafficking operation in cooperation with Colombian nationals through Mexico. Money laundering charges were also filed against her.

There are two aspects important to consider in Ávila Beltrán’s criminal experience. One, the fact that she occupied a position of power in a predominantly male business. Men are more likely than women to perform leadership activities in drug trafficking. Yet Ávila Beltrán benefited from her own family’s lengthy history in drug trafficking, and her multiple connections to establish a successful and long-lasting operation along Mexico’s western coast. Second, her role as a mother. She could have remained successful and perhaps undetected by the authorities hadn’t it been for the kidnapping of her son, presumably by rivals. Fearing a negative outcome, Avila Beltran contacted the authorities following the disappearance and her inability to come up with the ransom that the kidnappers demanded. While Ávila Beltrán’s son was released in a few days, the authorities became suspicious of her and the reasons behind the kidnapping, leading to her becoming the target of a long-term investigation into her drug trafficking activities that culminated with her arrest.

For a video of Ávila Beltrán reflecting on her life after prison, watch this [video published by The Guardian](#).

Source: BBC, 2015

Motherhood has historically played a decisive part in defining the role and career of women involved in mafia-type criminal groups. Typically, the woman has the pivotal role of custodian of the mafia-cultural code as well as the task of transmitting those values to her children and encouraging them to avenge the family when need be (Ingrascì, 2007). In addition, they have also covered two passive roles that are of undiscussed importance for the economy of the organized criminal group: that of defenders of their man’s reputation as well as bargaining chips for the establishment of new alliances through arranged marriages. Traditionally, mafia women were completely dedicated to family and represented the archetype of obedient wives and exemplary mothers. To discuss the effective engagement of women in mafia-like criminal

organizations, it is necessary to recognize the “institutional” barriers they had to face to join the group. The active membership of women in these criminal associations has developed unevenly across different groups as some, such as *La Cosa Nostra* in Sicily, have a more rigid honour code, which did not allow women to cover roles of relevance in the organization. Concurrently with the societal emancipation of women and the tightening of the legislative system against organized crime in many States, the mafias opened their ranks to women who today are found to be covering multiple roles, even some of fundamental importance and recognized to bring value for these groups, such as financial managers of the organizations (Ingrasci, 2007).

The examples highlighted in this section point to the fact that in different types of organized criminal groups across the world women are assuming more prominent positions. At the same time, these organizations often maintain patriarchal structures and are built on traditional masculine values. Women need to adapt to succeed and often their fate remains connected with that of the man in their life. Concurrently, as they are believed to be less suspicious in the eyes of authorities, they are often doing a lot of the “dirty work” of the organization (e.g. moving drugs, transporting arms, gathering intelligence on rival gangs), therefore taking many of the risks. Lacking knowledge of the intelligence or insider information on the groups or people they work with also translates into them being unable to negotiate reduced sentences during their criminal processes, in jurisdictions where mitigation in exchange for cooperation is possible (Malinowska and Rychkova, 2015). This phenomenon contributes to the rising female incarceration rates across the world.

In recent years, the number of women and girls in prison worldwide has increased by some 53% since about 2000, a rise that cannot be explained in terms of global population growth (global population rose by 21% between mid-2000 and mid-2016) (Walmsley, 2016). Worldwide, more than 700,000 women are held in penitentiary institutions, either as pre-trial detainees or sentenced prisoners. Many of these women come from marginalized and disadvantaged backgrounds and are often characterized by histories of violence, physical and sexual abuse (van den Bergh, Brenda J., Gatherer, Alex, Fraser, Andrew and Moller, Lars, 2011). Disadvantaged ethnic minorities, foreign nationals and indigenous people constitute a larger proportion of the female prison population relative to their proportion within the general community, often due to the specific problems these vulnerable groups face in society (van den Bergh, Brenda J., Gatherer, Alex, Fraser, Andrew and Moller, Lars, 2011).

For a more detailed analysis of the topic of gender in the criminal justice system, see Module 10 on Gender in the Criminal Justice System of the E4J University Module Series on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

Gender and different types of organized crime

Organized crime takes many forms and manifestations. What are the gender dimensions and considerations when it comes to some of the most commonly discussed forms of organized crime: drug trafficking, smuggling of migrants, and trafficking in persons? Can some of the lesser explored forms and manifestations of organized crime, such as trafficking in wildlife, cybercrime and trafficking in cultural property, have a gender dimension? In the following we consider how the use of a gender lens may help us better understand the gendered experiences of the men and women who are charged with these offences.

Trafficking in persons

Trafficking in persons is primarily represented as a crime affecting women – specifically, young, foreign women. There is also a tendency to equate trafficking in persons with sex trafficking. A quick online search of the term will reveal thousands of webpages, movies, videos, books, and a vast body of official, grey and academic literature outlining examples of sexual exploitation endured by women and young girls.

And yet, as both informed consumers of information and organized crime enthusiasts we must be critical of these characterizations. First, we must identify how they characterize gender. Trafficking in persons does not only impact women. Furthermore, it involves a vast range of forms of exploitation, not only sexual exploitation. Many victims of trafficking are men working in industries other than sex, like agriculture or construction (Zhang, 2012). Recent data points to the fact that more than half of the victims of trafficking for forced labour are men, while most of the detected victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation are females (UNODC (a), 2018). As for other forms of exploitation, trafficking for the removal of organs remains very limited in terms of numbers of detected victims. About 100 victims of trafficking for organ removal were detected and reported to UNODC during the 2014-2017 period. All of them were adults and two-thirds of them were men. While most of the victims detected globally are trafficked for sexual exploitation, this pattern is not consistent across all regions. Trafficking for forced labour is the most commonly detected form in sub-Saharan Africa and in the Middle East, while in Central Asia and South Asia, trafficking for forced labour and sexual exploitation are near-equally detected. An intersectional approach can guide us into uncovering how men and women encounter and deal with exploitative labour conditions, the kinds of labour that are more likely to lead to exploitation (UNODC (a), 2018).

Engaging critically with representations of crime can also help us see how they frame or stereotype men and women from other parts of the world. For example, there is an abundant number of reports on the cases involving women from the Global South who are victims of sex trafficking. While sex trafficking does impact men and women, stereotypes concerning women

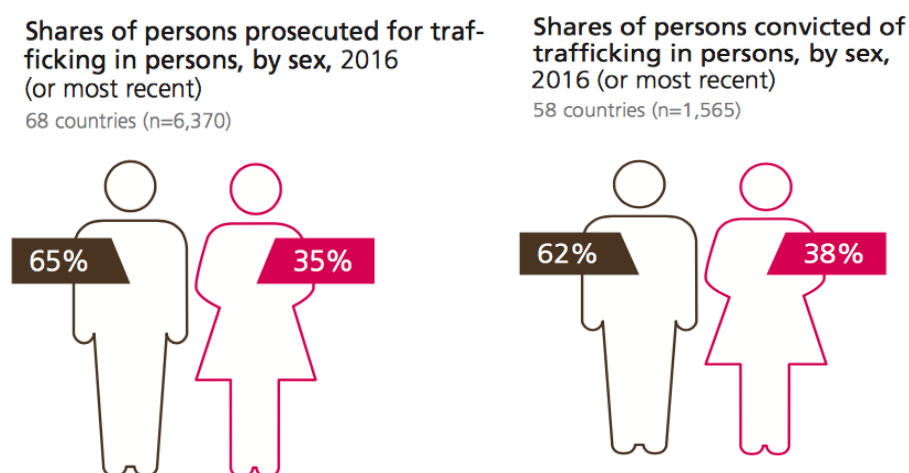
often depict them as sexually unrepressed and/or overtly sensual. They may also be characterized as naïve, unable to make their own decisions, or easy to trick. Nigerian women, for example, have often been the subject of reports and documentaries on sex trafficking in a way that portrays them as gullible, ignorant women who are under the control of their captors, who have cast spells on them, (juju), resulting in the women being terrified of escaping situations of exploitation or abuse.

The experience of Nigerian women involved in sex work

Sine Plambech, a Danish researcher, has conducted extensive research among migrant women from Nigeria, documenting their experiences of migration and sex work. Plambech's work demonstrates that debt, family pressures, limited employment and educational opportunities, combined with the personal desire to travel to other destinations and/or countries rather than witchcraft, are behind Nigerian women's decisions to enter and remain in sex work (EASO, 2015).

Official figures also support the need to debunk stereotypes on the role of women in organized crime. An analysis of the sex of those reported to have been investigated or arrested, prosecuted, and/or convicted of trafficking in persons shows that most traffickers continue to be males. Nonetheless, in 2016, over 35 per cent of those prosecuted for trafficking in persons (of a total 6,370 people) and 38% of those convicted (of a total 1,565 people) were females.

Figure 15.1. Trafficking in persons, profile of offenders



Source: *UNODC (a), 2018*

According to available data on crime, female involvement in trafficking in persons is higher than for other types of crime (UNODC (a), 2018). Indeed, according to the United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems (2006-2009), the average

share of reported female offenders for all types of crime is around twelve per cent (of convictions) (as cited in the UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, 2012).

For an in-depth analysis of the topic of trafficking in persons and gender, see Module 13 on Gender Dimension in Smuggling of Migrants and Trafficking in Persons of the E4J University Module Series on Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants.

Smuggling of Migrants

In contemporary narratives of migration, smugglers occupy a special place. They are often portrayed as black African, Muslim or Latin American men who exploit migrants' vulnerability. Media characterizations often singlehandedly blame them for the deaths and disappearances of migrants in transit, or for sexually assaulting women.

It is true that the majority of those prosecuted for migrant smuggling are men. In the United States, and according to figures from the US Sentencing Commission, men constitute about 70 percent of those convicted at the federal level for smuggling (US Sentencing Commission, 2017). This number alone, however, suggests the rest of those who are convicted – or approximately 30 percent – are women. A closer look at these figures also shows that most of those who are convicted for the crime are residents of the US-Mexico border area, where communities tend to have some of the highest levels of poverty in the United States.

When we disaggregate official data in terms of gender and place of residence we can obtain a richer picture of who the people behind smuggling are and the challenges they may face. Victoria Stone-Cadena and Soledad Alvarez-Velasco (2018), for example, have found that indigenous Quichua people from Ecuador are often among those working as smuggling facilitators. Their participation in the market is derived from a long history of migration: because of discrimination, many indigenous people were not allowed access to markets where they could sell and/or trade their goods; furthermore, they also had limited rights to the land. This increasingly led them to opt for migrating abroad – primarily to the United States – and in the process to become acquainted with smuggling routes and mechanisms.

Not only do we see in Ecuador a market where indigenous people – rather than transnational organized networks – facilitate and/or coordinate smuggling activities. We also find that smuggling is quite gendered: tasks are divided primarily along traditional gender lines. Women provide room and board for migrants in transit and care for those who become injured or sick during their journeys, while men guide groups across remote or isolated areas, watch over migrants and drive them across checkpoints (Sanchez 2016). Research conducted by DHIA – a human rights organization in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico (2017) –, by the International Organization for Migration in Alexandria, Egypt (2015), and by Antje Missbach and Wayne Palmer in Indonesia (2016), have also identified how adolescent men are quite active in smuggling

markets. While many of these young men become involved in the facilitation of smuggling to pay off their own migrant journeys, for many others participation in smuggling is a way to fulfil gender roles that they have not been able to exert, given the lack of occupational and educational options in their communities (Sanchez, 2018). Many of these young children report their participation in smuggling allows them to provide for their families financially and to be recognized as heads of the household and in the process, they gain access to social roles reserved primarily for men.

This division of tasks along gender roles also results in the fact that women are more likely to be convicted of smuggling friends and family members. Data from [UNODC's SHERLOC knowledge management portal](#) indicates smuggling cases with network-like operations are less common when compared against small-scale, individual efforts to facilitate the smuggling of migrants. While men are more likely to be involved in the first, women most often facilitate the smuggling of small numbers of migrants, including their own children and/or family members (Sanchez, 2018). In this context, it has to be remembered that the Smuggling of Migrants Protocol - one of the three Protocols supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the principal legally-binding instrument in this field – clearly identifies as a constituting element of the crime of migrant smuggling the obtaining, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit (see UNODC, 2017). As the Interpretative Note to this definition states, the reference to “a financial and other material benefit” was included “in order to emphasize that the intention was to include the activities of organized criminal groups acting for profit, but to exclude the activities of those who provided support to migrants for humanitarian reasons or based on close family ties. It was not the intention of the Protocol to criminalize the activities of family members or support groups such as religious or non-governmental organizations” (UNODC, 2006). Nonetheless, some States around the world have not included the “financial or other material benefit” element in their national legislation and prosecute men and women for smuggling also in those cases. In such circumstances, women can be charged with smuggling for providing room and board for their children, husbands or partners, or for assisting people with whom they have long-standing relationships leave countries afflicted by conflict or violence.

There is no statistical analysis on smuggling of the same extent than what we can access on trafficking in persons. Nonetheless, UNODC published in 2018 the first Global Study on Migrant Smuggling, which presents some estimates of the global number of migrant smuggled and offers some limited disaggregation of data by sex and age. The study shows that most smuggled migrants are relatively young men. That is not to say that women and children are not smuggled or do not engage in smuggling. On some routes, notably in parts of South-East Asia, women comprise large shares of smuggled migrants. Many smuggling flows also include some unaccompanied or separated children, who might be particularly vulnerable to deception and abuse by smugglers and others. Unaccompanied or separated children have been particularly detected along the Mediterranean routes to Europe and the land routes towards North

America (UNODC (b), 2018). For an in-depth analysis of the topic of smuggling of migrants and gender, see Module 13 on Gender Dimension in Smuggling of Migrants and Trafficking in Persons of the E4J University Module Series on Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants.

Drug Trafficking

“When most people picture the illicit drug trade—the traffickers, the gangs, the kingpins—they picture a world comprised of men. But drugs and drug-related crime affect women uniquely. Understanding how women fit into this dynamic is crucial to getting drug policy right,” state Kasia Malinowska and Olga Rychkova in their study on the impact of drug policy on women (2015).

The narrative on drug trafficking tends to focus on the stories of high-profile drug traffickers and/or dealers. Indeed, some of those high-profile traffickers are women. Simultaneously, it is important to note that the economy of drug trafficking does not merely depend on the group’s leadership. It in fact relies on vast amounts of physical labour, which is often performed by women and children. In some cases, women participate in the market having few other employment options in their communities.

The experience of “cocaleras” in Colombia

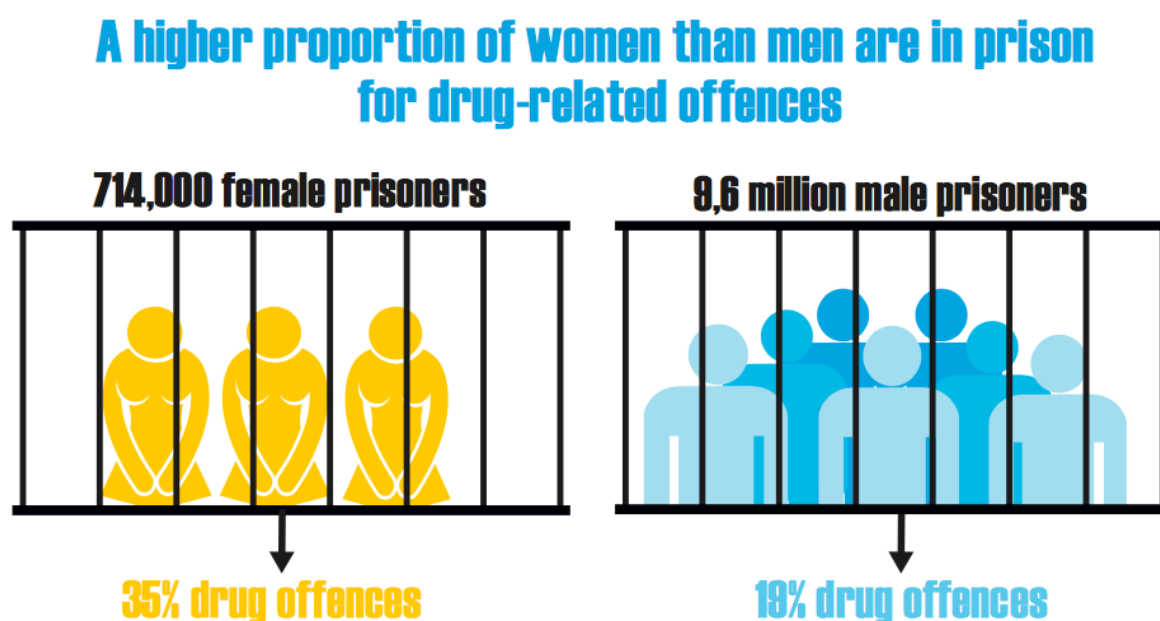
For instance, DeJusticia, a think tank in Colombia, has been working with “cocaleras” (i.e. women who pick coca leaves from which cocaine is extracted), to document their experiences. DeJusticia’s research (2018) has shown that women’s income from coca picking is among the lowest in the country, often not even surpassing the minimum wage. And yet, the women often invest in the construction of schools, fixing of rural roads, or securing water for their communities. Because of the war in Colombia, and the pervasiveness of sexism, the women also face discrimination and harassment. Many of them have been victims of interpersonal violence, sexual assault and other forms of gendered violence. These are topics that are not generally discussed in the way we talk about organized crime. To know more about the experience of “cocaleras”, see the case study “The Place that Female Coca Growers Deserve” in the exercise section.

Around the world, the number of women becoming imprisoned because of their participation in drug trafficking is increasing. While we often glamorize or romanticize women’s experiences in drug trafficking and tend to explain their involvement because of romantic relationships with men, the reasons to enter and remain in drug trafficking are quite complex. Not only are women more likely than men to have limited access to employment and educational opportunities. They are also more often among those facing financial precarity, in what we call the feminization of poverty (see definition in *glossary*). Furthermore, as we have seen earlier,

the roles women most often perform tend to be low paying, high risk tasks that often make them also vulnerable to detection by law enforcement and in turn, to entering the criminal justice system.

As a result, while the absolute number of men in detention for drug trafficking is high, the proportion of people in prison for drug trafficking related convictions is higher among women. The data from the UNODC 2018 World Drug Report highlights these trends (see Figure 15.2).

Figure 15.2. Men and women in prison for drug-related offences



Source: UNODC, 2018

Female incarceration in the Americas for drug-related offences

A report from the Organization of American States points to the fact that women in the Americas are being incarcerated for drug-related offences in alarming numbers, with the highest incarceration rates anywhere, along with Asia. While the number of men incarcerated is greater, incarceration of women is growing at a faster pace. In Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, and Peru, more than 60 percent of women prisoners are behind bars for drug-related offences (OAS, 2016).

None of this is to suggest that the experiences of men do not matter, or that they do not involve risks for being involved in organized crime. As we have seen, men – particularly young people and adolescents from low-income sectors – tend to be among those that are disproportionately impacted by violence related to organized crime. They also tend to be the main target of state actions against crime, like policing and surveillance.

Analysing the death and disappearance of young men in Argentina

The work of Natalia Bermudez (2016) has shown how crime control efforts have impacted young men from working class sectors across Argentina. Each one of the deaths and disappearances of young working-class men involved in drug trafficking that Bermudez documented was indeed tied to their involvement in organized crime. Yet the violence that led to their deaths was not merely connected to fights among rival groups or organizations, but also to police responses. Many of the young men in her study had been killed by police forces. As Bermudez's work shows, policing and security also tend to have gendered implications. In sum, policing and criminalization often deepen the violence and segregation that affect the most economically impoverished sectors of society, where women and children are overrepresented. As Guerra states in his work on the involvement of young men on the US-Mexico border in drug trafficking, these impoverished communities have become organized crime's disposable actors (Guerra, 2015).

Wildlife Trafficking

Despite anecdotal evidence that the roles of actors in the wildlife trade are highly gender differentiated, there appears to be very little attention paid to gender in research, policy and programming in relation to this crime. In particular, the gender of those who produce, trade and consume trafficked goods is hardly ever mentioned in the discussions on how to tackle the crime. A notable exception is Pamela McElwee's work (2012), which focused on the gender dimensions of wildlife crime in Vietnam and points at gender-based, social traditions and/or expectations that often prevent women from becoming involved in wildlife trafficking. According to McElwee, women - because of tradition or gendered roles - are often prevented from hunting or collecting specific animals or plants, unable to be away from their households for long periods of time, limiting their roles in wildlife trafficking, but creating spaces for men. McElwee also points out that religious beliefs may prevent women from being in contact with specific kinds of flora or fauna, and that some activities may be perceived as too dangerous for women to be part of and are therefore performed by men only. These observations, although relevant to understand interactions and dynamics in certain contexts, would hardly explain the entirety of the phenomenon. There are in fact various cases in which women have been charged with or found guilty of illegal wildlife trade. The most notable example is perhaps that of the "Ivory Queen".

The “Ivory Queen”

Yang Feng Glan (a.k.a. the “Ivory Queen”), an elderly Chinese woman, may not be most people's idea of the head of an ivory trafficking ring. Nonetheless, Tanzanian authorities arrested and charged her with leading one of Africa's biggest ivory smuggling rings, responsible for trafficking the tusks of more than 350 elephants worth 13 billion shillings (\$5.6 million), illegally leaving Tanzania for Asia. Tanzania's National and Transnational Serious Crimes Investigation Unit tracked her for more than a year, and she was arrested after a high-speed car chase in October 2015. She was charged with crimes spanning between 2000 and 2014 (BBC, 2016). In February 2019, a Tanzanian trial court found Yang Feng Glan guilty and sentenced her to 15 years in prison. She was convicted on the same charges as two other individuals thought to be key to the smuggling ring; all three defendants have lodged an appeal against the ruling (Tremblay, 2019).

For a report of the story of the “Ivory Queen”, watch [this video by ITV News Correspondent John Ray](#).

Another under-studied element of this form of illicit trade is its consumers. Women and men might purchase (illicit) wildlife products for different reasons. For instance, male consumers might believe that specific goods can improve their social reputation and prestige or enhance their sexual prowess (e.g. tiger bone in China) (Torres Cruz and McElwee, 2012). Some women might buy certain products because they are believed to improve both the quality and quantity of breastmilk in lactating mothers (e.g. pangolins scales). Both women and men might buy illicit wildlife products because of their alleged medicinal properties (e.g. rhino horn is believed to be especially efficacious for rheumatism), their religious significance (e.g. ivory in some cultures) or the status associated with a purchase (e.g. rhino horn is expensive, can be hard to find and it is considered a valuable gift by some) (USAID, 2017).

Counter-trafficking efforts that do not acknowledge gender dimensions, or that do not incorporate them into the understanding and development of strategies to fight the illegal trade are likely to fail. Most reporting on wildlife trafficking focuses on documenting the extent of trafficking and/or its economic value, but not the underlying reasons creating the demand for the goods or their social and cultural value. For more information on wildlife crime, see the E4J [University Module Series on Wildlife, Forest and Fisheries Crime](#).

Cybercrime

Technology, and the proliferation of Internet-based technologies and services has led to the emergence of new forms of crime. It is not uncommon to hear about people being scammed online, of hackers breaking through complex security systems, or of online sexual exploitation of children. Many trafficking and smuggling activities are also carried out online generating

deep concern among the authorities. The cyberspace also hosted various forms of gender-based cybercrimes (e.g., image-based sexual abuse and sextortion), which are analysed in Module 12 of the E4J University Module Series on Cybercrime.

There are several challenges to countering cybercrime, one being the very fact that it encompasses a vast range of criminal activities and actors, who by operating online are better able to conceal their identity (UNODC, 2017). Our knowledge concerning the people behind cybercrime and their gender is for this matter limited and often the results are mixed (see, for instance, Module 11 of the E4J University Module Series on Cybercrime regarding gender in digital piracy). Despite its ubiquity in our everyday lives, cybercrime research is still scant, furthering our inability to understand how it really operates and its reach.

Despite some exceptions, women have not been at the core of most ethnographic and/or other forms of empirical research in the field. Those exceptions generally highlight that cybercrime is predominantly conducted by males (Hutchings, 2016). The scarcity of reliable data has not stopped the media from imagining the world of cybercriminals. Women tend to be characterized as beautiful, but socially-awkward computer experts, working in isolation, hidden in a world dominated by men, and attempting to counter the more radical and damaging forms of online crime (Potter 2016; Yver 2016; Rousseau 2017).

A not so-exciting explanation concerning the limitations on studies exploring the roles of women in cybercrime involves the fact that around the world, women are underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and math related occupations (OUS/EA, 2017; Microsoft, 2018). As we have seen with other crimes, the lack of visibility of women in cybercrime may also be the result of patriarchal values that permeate all levels of society, including science and technology. The invisibility of women in cybercrime may not be merely the result of them being hidden, peripheral or rare, but rather the outcome of the gendered beliefs that have long kept women out of fields traditionally perceived as male. The lack of women in the field is also correlated to the fact that they are often the target of discrimination, sexual harassment and hostile work environments. Gender is perceived “more of an impediment than an advantage to career success” (Funk and Parker 2018).

Having this in mind, it should not come as a surprise that the available research on cybercrime captures primarily the experiences of men. Back, Soor and La Prade (2018) summarize the motivations of hackers as described in some of the ethnographic literature on cybercrime: the desire to show destructive behaviour to release their anger towards other online users or organizations, to show off their expertise in cyberspace and gain exposure, political goals, personal satisfaction and monetary gain. Cybercrime may in this sense allow men in cybercrime to fulfil ‘gendered social hierarchies and expectations, but also [to] reproduce and reinforce them’ (Miller and Lopez, 2015). For more information on cybercrime, see the [E4J University Module Series on Cybercrime](#).

Trafficking in cultural property

Despite the proliferation of international treaties and their increased endorsement by States, as well as reports suggesting that the illicit trade in cultural property has escalated, rather than diminished (see UN General Assembly Resolution 68/186 (2013); UN Security Council Resolutions 2199 (2015) and 2347 (2017)), empirical research and quality data in the field is scant.

It should not come as a surprise that considering this, research on the gendered dimensions of trafficking of cultural property is virtually non-existent. Yet some scholars have established connections between violent conflicts in trafficking-prone areas and the role of women in protecting the remains of the collective culture (de Vido, 2015). The damage and loss caused by armed conflict, however, are also followed by efforts from surviving or remaining residents to make a living. Research does indicate that the global escalation of this form of organized crime is tied to the breakdown of state-sponsored forms of security, the absence of which fosters the emergence of actors that may seek to benefit financially or in-kind from the sale of material heritage as a survival mechanism (Yates and Mackenzie, 2018). Some of the steps connected to this form of trafficking, however, do not have to be linked to organized crime. Instead, individual decisions that are entrepreneurial in nature and driven by need seems to be behind a significant portion of the trade (Yates, Mackenzie and Smith, 2017; Brodie, 2017).

Conclusions

For most of us, the phrase “gender and organized crime” is evocative of a limited series of social constructs and famous characters. In this Module, we have aimed to look beyond these often-stereotypical constructions, to provide a more nuanced characterization of why taking a closer look at gender in the study of organized crime matters. Gender is an important factor in the way people deal with the authorities and the law – and how these define and affect them.

Interlocking systems of power and inequality impact people differently. Gender, race and class come together to constitute not only the ways we learn to think about each other, but also shape the ways criminal justice systems around the world perceive and punish organized crime. When we talk about organized crime and gender we are therefore not merely talking about the roles that women play in the “business” or women as the romantic interests of drug dealers. Using a gender lens allows us to see how most criminal markets are highly gendered, with women occupying some leadership positions but, most often, covering peripheral or supporting roles. These roles, however, have increasingly become among the most criminalized. Women often lack the social and financial capital that may allow them to obtain more lenient sentences. This, among other factors, has led to more women becoming incarcerated for minor offences in many regions around the world.

This Module is an effort to shed light on these issues in the classroom. It seeks to enhance students' understanding of organized crime and gender, the need to better study the ways in which gender becomes implicated in criminal justice administration, and to provide tools to help lecturers support exchange and interaction on this issue. The Module also aims to get lecturers and students to share their stories, experiences and lessons learned across national borders to better understand the gendered nature of crime and organized crime in particular, and in turn, address the implications on the lives of people everywhere and the potential of crime prevention.

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Exercises and Case Studies

Pre-Class Survey

Answer the following questions:

1. From your perspective and experiences, what is gender?
2. How is it different from sex?
3. Provide at least one example of how gender and crime are represented in your country's media, political, social and/or law enforcement discourses. What genders are represented, and how?
4. Do you think that women's styles of leadership and enforcement differ from men? If so, how?
5. What are women's roles in crime and organized crime in particular? Which elements shape these roles?

In-class Activity: Ice-Breaker

The Power Walk Exercise

To help students understand the idea of (gender) privilege, and to make them aware of their own privilege, lecturers can ask the students to do the "privilege walk" shown in this short [four-minute video clip](#). To avoid causing discomfort and embarrassment to the students, it is recommended to use the role-play method and assign fake identities to the students (e.g. male lawyer, female police officer). Sample statements for the exercise are widely available on the Internet (see, e.g., [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#)). The UN Women Training Centre, in its [Compendium of Good Practices in Training for Gender Equality](#) (p. 64), calls this exercise the "Patriarchy and the Power Walk", and provides the following guidance:

- Each trainee "steps into the shoes" of another person, e.g. a single mother, a blind man, etc.
- Statements are read aloud. If these apply to them, they step forward. If not, they do not move.
- In the end, participants visually see how much power, access to resources, and opportunities some individuals in society have compared to others.

- Based on this, they discuss how power and privilege is relative to a person's gender, socio-economic position, ethnicity, and other cross-cutting issues. This is followed by a discussion of the "Patriarchal Paradox", i.e. how men are also disadvantaged by the system of patriarchy.

Statements suggested by UN Women for this exercise include:

- I have access to and can read newspapers regularly
- I eat at least two nutritious meals a day
- I would get legal representation if I am arrested
- I would be confident if I had to speak directly to a magistrate/judicial officer
- I am not in danger of being sexually harassed or abused
- I have a regular income or means of supporting myself
- I can speak in meetings of my extended family
- I would not be treated violently or roughly if I am arrested
- I can afford and access appropriate healthcare
- I can question spending of community funds
- I can name some of the laws in the country
- Someone would immediately be told if I was arrested
- I have leftover money at the end of the week that I can spend on myself
- I can travel anywhere I like without assistance or permission
- I do not feel threatened in the workplace by any issues of my identity
- I do not feel socially uncomfortable in most situations to voice my opinions
- I can do what I like in my home without fear

Identities suggested by UN Women include: male lawyer with private firm, ten-year-old street boy, grandmother taking care of orphans, unemployed single mother, male storekeeper, female police officer, blind elderly man, male school teacher, female member of parliament, migrant ethnic minority, male literate factory worker, etc. These suggested identities and statements were used by UN Women in its Gender Mainstreaming Course, Bangkok, October 2017.

Lecturer guidelines

If it is difficult to conduct this activity due to time constraints and space limitations, lecturers can show the students the video clip. The Singapore version of the clip is available [here](#). Note that this exercise will lead to a discussion that goes beyond gender.

In-class Exercises and Case Studies

In-class Exercise: Drunktown's Finest

[Drunktown's Finest](#), a film from Indigenous filmmaker Sidney Freeland – a transgender Navajo woman – explores the lives of three young people trying to leave Gallup, a city in the Navajo reservation (a US government-established territory for indigenous peoples). Freeland has stated the title of the movie came from a report in American media that referred to Gallup, her hometown, as “a drunk town,” and from her ensuing desire to tell a story from Indigenous people’s own perspectives.

The movie follows the lives of Sick Boy, Felixia and Nozhoni, as they try to make sense of their lives in and out of Gallup. While many young Indigenous people opt to move out of the reservation into larger cities, their ability to pursue viable options may continue to be limited because of factors like discrimination, lack of occupational training or education, or their perception as uneducated, violent, alcoholic, etc. Racist perceptions of Indigenous people, combined with notions tied to gender further limit paths for youth, leading some to engage in risk-prone or illicit activities that may also be criminalized, like drug trafficking or sex work. Empirical research in gender and race has shown that in the US non-white men and women are more likely to be perceived and labelled as criminals. This **stigma** is furthered not just for the occupational choices they make, but also because of their ethnicity and gender. An approach that recognizes how perceptions connected to gender become compounded with race and class and create barriers that limit the acceptance and integration of specific groups of people (a concept called **intersectionality**), is central when talking about crime, and particularly when discussing the administration of justice. In the United States, for example, disproportional numbers of ethnic minorities are incarcerated – this means that the number of people of non-white origin in detention facilities exceeds those of white people, who are the majority of those in society. Intersectionality helps us see how different systems (race, class, gender) become interlocked, creating inequality.

Discussion questions

- a) In *Drunktown's Finest*, Felixia is a transgender Navajo woman who relies on sex work to support herself. How do understandings of gender and sex impact Felixia’s ability to participate in social activities and to be recognized as a woman?
- b) Watch [this short clip](#) and reflect on these questions: How does Felixia “do gender”? And how is that performance evaluated and by whom?
- c) Using an intersectionality-informed lens, where do the challenges Felixia faces come from?

Adapted from:

IMDB (2014). *Drunktown's Finest*. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3091286/>; Variety (2014). *Sundance Film Review: 'Drunktown's Finest'*. 29 January 2014. <https://variety.com/2014/film/festivals/sundance-film-review-drunktowns-finest-1201076639/>; Vogue (2015). Why You Should See *Drunktown's Finest* This Weekend. February 19, 2015. <https://www.vogue.com/article/drunktowns-finest-sydney-freeland>

In-class Exercise: Who is represented in organized crime research and how?

Select a series of resources (books, articles, movies, etc.) on the topic of organized crime that you typically use/would use in class. Assign students into groups and have them discuss the following questions (this is also a useful exercise to evaluate your own materials and to enlist students in helping each other identify materials that reject/support biased or uninformed perspectives and in turn ensure gender inequality is not perpetuated).

- a) What is the topic of the book/article/movie/etc.? What is its focus? Does it represent/discuss a specific gender? Can students relate to the material from their experiences, interests and identities?
- b) Who is/are the author/s? How does he/she/them relate to the topic, and why? (In this section, it would also be important to include researchers and authors from your own country and who write in your language and/or that of your students).
- c) What kind of experiences are represented, and how? Is it possible for students to identify with them? How are genders represented in these experiences? Are there any stereotypes concerning the experiences of the people being represented?
- d) Do you have resources from foreign and local researchers? How are criminal activities represented and by whom?
- e) Does a specific gender play a diminished role or is it absent altogether? Is the absence explained? Does the language imply gender limitations or expectations? (For example, Spanish often uses masculine, gendered nouns for both men *and* women). Some languages have a “neutral” article and/or pronoun, for example. Are these being used to reduce the use of terms that makes specific groups of people invisible?
- f) If you identify problematic materials, how can you fix them? What are the solutions suggested by the people in your group?

Activity adapted from:

Rutgers Center for American Women and Politics: *Gender Lens*. New Jersey: Rutgers University. <http://tag.rutgers.edu/teaching-toolbox/gender-lens/>; Vicerectorado de Empleo y Acción Social de la Universidad Politécnica de Valencia (2013). *Buenas Prácticas para una Comunicación no Sexista*. Valencia: Universidad Politécnica de Valencia. <https://www.upv.es/noticias-upv/documentos/5779a.pdf>; Consejo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes del Gobierno de Chile (2016) *Guía del Lenguaje Inclusivo de Género*. Santiago:

Consejo Nacional de la Cultural y las Artes. <http://www.cultura.gob.cl/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/guia-lenguaje-inclusivo-genero.pdf>.

In-class Exercise: Why more Māori women and girls are being jailed in New Zealand?

Dr Tracey McIntosh is an Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Auckland. As a Maori woman, she has researched the experience of young Maori girls and women in prisons. She has done extensive research on the incarceration of both male and female prisoners (particularly of indigenous peoples), and the influence of colonialisms on social welfare and criminal justice system on Māori men and women, particularly those who have become imprisoned.

“The British annexed Aotearoa/New Zealand in 1840. Through this process, the Māori, as the Indigenous people of that country, lost their sovereignty through the imposition of and application of new policies, including law and unfamiliar legal and social codes brought by the British.” McIntosh’s states. “Throughout history, and abusive state policies have informed and constructed the life pathway of Māori gang members, a culturally and socially-submerged population.”

In *Indigenous Insider Knowledge and Prison Identity*, McIntosh explains how if incarceration was simply a Maori issue “one would expect to see Maori prisoners coming from all socio-economic categories and reflecting the broader Maori population. Yet the Maori prison population overwhelmingly comes from communities that live under conditions of scarcity and deprivation (...). Attention should be concentrated on whether the proportion of Māori who are young, male, unmarried, unemployed, uneducated, in substandard housing, is reflected in the apprehension statistics. Rates of recorded offending, and hence imprisonment, are well known to depend on a range of social development factors, yet these are often ignored.” Furthermore, the Maori experience of prison is gendered,” and while statistics are scant on women, “to fully understand the inter-generational aspects of prison life in New Zealand it is thereby critical to likewise understand the experiences of Maori women.”

Discussion questions:

- a) Why are more Maori women being incarcerated in New Zealand?
- b) What is needed concerning the social needs of young New Zealanders as a mechanism to reduce prison populations?

See: McIntosh, Tracey and Stan Coster (2017) “Indigenous Insider Knowledge and Prison Identity.” *Counterfutures*, 3(68-98). Aotearoa. Also:

<https://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/ninetoon/audio/201751611/why-more-nz-women,-particularly-maori-are-being-jailed>

Case Study: Performing Masculinity: Indigenous Street Gangs

Colonization has been known to limit the participation of Indigenous peoples in many western societies, forcing some Indigenous men to search out paths to gain power, respect, and economic capital to survive. Robert Henry is a Métis indigenous man from Prince Albert, Canada and is an Assistant Professor at the University of Calgary. He argues that socio-political histories and ideologies that are shaped by colonization have led to the creation and proliferation of urban Indigenous street gangs.

Henry's work examines the histories of former male indigenous street gang-members in Canada. He has studied the men's relationships with their parents, siblings, family, peers, and social institutions to get a better understanding of their linkages to street gangs. Henry has identified how the street gang epitomize the notion of the ideal "man" - tough, independent, emotionless, and powerful. Yet an analysis of the men's narratives and the photographs they take of themselves and their contexts reveal male gang members' notions of masculinity are deeply impacted by violence and trauma. It was through violent and traumatic experiences that the men would create a kind of "mask" that would help them engage in hyper-violent behaviours, yet simultaneously protect them from further victimization.

Why should we focus on men when we talk about gender? Few political or scholarly resources are devoted to indigenous men's issues – even though they are also (although differently) impacted by the imposition of offender roles and identities. More native researchers are developing work that addresses the ongoing negative effects of colonialism on women, children, and men in Indigenous communities and explores how the performance of positive and healthful masculinities can restore balance.

Discussion questions:

- a) What are the implications of performing gender for Native youth?
- b) Why are Native people's voices important in the discussion on crime?
- c) What are the challenges faced by Native youth?

Adapted from:

Innes, Alexander and Kim Anderson, (eds.) "Indigenous men and masculinities: legacies, identities, regeneration". *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 83(3) 2017. 242-244.

Case Study: Teenage mafiosi in Naples

Roberto Saviano is an Italian journalist, book author and expert of organized crime, who has lived under protection for years because of the threats he received from the mafia. Best known for his internationally best-selling book [Gomorrah](#) (as well as the movie and TV series that were based on it), he recently (2016) published a book describing a new breed of gang, the *Piranhas*, groups of teenage boys who divide their time between social media and patrolling the streets armed with pistols and AK-47s, terrorizing the locals to let them know they mean business. A real-life phenomenon, the *Piranhas* are no “baby gang”, but a real enterprise of young criminals who did not come up through the *Camorra*, Naples’s dominant organized criminal group. Many of them are ruthless teenagers who look for status and recognition in a life of crime.

[The Piranhas](#) (loosely translated from the Italian “La Paranza dei Bambini”, literally “The Fishing Trawler of Children”, suggesting the tiny fish who are attracted to a bright light by night-time nets meant for bigger fish) tell the story of a gang led by a clever but cold-hearted high school student, Nicolas Fiorillo. Son of middle-class parents, Nicola is obsessed by manifestations of wealth and luxury and concentrates all his adolescent attention on joining the ranks of the privileged who can drink champagne on plush sofas and dance all night on expensive restaurant’s sea terraces. Steeped in the mythology of the *Camorra*, what Nicolas most wants is power over others. In the book’s only scene where Nicola is at school, the boy impresses his teacher with a reading of Machiavelli’s famous assertion that a prince should aim at inspiring fear rather than love. Very soon, he is transforming his friends into a gang of dealers and thugs. He plans an ascent to godfather status and executes his plans through intimidation, thefts, random shootings from racing scooters and cold-blooded executions. The novel was brought to the big screen in the homonymous film that won the Silver Bear Best Script Award at the 69th Berlinale (Berlin Film Festival).

Discussion questions:

- a) Does gender play a part in the decision of these teenagers to become criminals?
- b) How does “toxic masculinity” contribute to define such violent behaviour? What other factors should be considered to explain their choice?

Adapted from:

Parks, Tim (2018). *The Piranhas by Roberto Saviano review – teenage mafiosi in Naples*. The Guardian, 28 September 2018.

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/sep/28/piranhas-roberto-saviano-review-gomorrah-camorra>; and Fisher, Ian (2018). *In ‘The Piranhas,’ the Chronicler of Italy’s*

Mobsters Tries His Hand at Fiction. For a Change?. The New York Times, 30 August 2018.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/30/books/roberto-saviano-piranhas-italy-gomorrah-naples-camorra.html>

Case Study: Who are Kazakhstan's drug traffickers?

The following paragraph by Martha Olcott and Natalia Udalova describes the landscape of Kazakhstan's drug trafficking:

“The profile of a typical drug trafficker has also changed, further exacerbating the work of law enforcement groups. Most of those now involved in the operation have no prior convictions. Women are playing a more important role in the business. Since 1996 their share has increased from 3 percent to 12.2 percent in Kazakhstan; women constituted 35 percent of those convicted of drug crimes in 1998 in Tajikistan and 12.4 percent in Kyrgyzstan. Women usually accept less pay for their courier services. In case of arrest they are less likely to give up their suppliers because of a stronger desire to protect their families, and they are more likely to get shorter sentences due to the courts' general leniency toward women, particularly toward those with children.”

Discussion questions:

- a) What are women convicted of most often in your country?
- b) What are their figures, and how do they compare with those of men?
- c) How would you use an intersectional frame to explain their contexts?

See: Olcott, Martha and Natalia Udalova. Drug trafficking on the Great Silk Road: the security environment in Central Asia. Working paper. Carnegie Endowment, 2000.

Case Study: White Slavery – the origins of the anti-trafficking movement

“The foundation of modern anti-trafficking legislation in England was created between 1885 and 1912 through a series of legal interventions. The dominant white slavery discourse at the turn of nineteenth century was largely constructed around the juxtaposition of dangerous, foreign men [against] innocent, white women. The narratives toyed with details of innocence and ruin of the victim, coupled with the demonization of foreign men. Anxieties about race, nationality, and immigration underpinned much of the debate on trafficking. Indeed, the racially neutral term 'traffic' only replaced 'white slavery' in international law in 1921 at the League of Nations International Convention to Combat the Traffic in Women and Children.

In England, the campaigns against white slavery culminated when in 1885 tens of thousands of people demanded that white slavery be outlawed and the age of consent for girls be raised. The first adopted measure was the Criminal Law Amendment Act (CLAA) which was significant for it created a specific definition of trafficked girl – the involuntary prostitute. It made it an offence to procure “any girl or woman under twenty-one years of age, not being a common prostitute, or of known immoral character, to have unlawful carnal connexion.”

By including the words “not being a common prostitute, or of known immoral character”, the section excluded from the law not only those working in prostitution but also any women considered promiscuous or not respectable. Therefore, if a woman was already living in a brothel, she could not be classified as trafficked, reinforcing the division between ‘prostitutes’ and victims. In several ways, then, CLAA created a distinction between virtuous white young virginal women who embodied social purity, and the “common and immoral prostitute.”

Anti-white slavery associations held campaigns that resulted in the Agreement for the Suppression of the ‘White Slave Traffic’ of 1904 and the International Convention for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic in 1910. These agreements included measures to tackle procurement and traffic, but their focus was strongly on border control. They allowed charitable organisations, such as the International Bureau, to be responsible for the enforcement of border control and to establish port patrols. The International Bureau had national committees responsible for port control operations across the world which patrolled railway stations and ports, where they greeted girls suspected of being white slaves – or indeed foreign prostitutes – and then reported back on their progress. The national committees [also] provided funds and campaigned for the repatriation of foreign prostitutes. These domestic laws, together with the international white slavery agreements, created complex powers of surveillance and repatriation over foreign women suspected of prostitution.”

Discussion questions:

- a) How was a victim of trafficking defined?
- b) Who counted as a victim of trafficking? Who were the ones who deserved and earned protection in this context?

Adapted from:

Laura Lammasniemi (2017) *White slavery: the origins of the anti-trafficking movement*. 16 November 2017, Beyond Trafficking and Slavery.

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/beyondslavery/laura-lammasniemi/white-slavery-origins-of-anti-trafficking-movement>

Case Study: Latina Gang-Affiliated Mothers in the United States

Public interest on violence against women has increased worldwide. The United States is one of many countries that have spent vast financial resources addressing this critical social issue, which feminist criminologists have called a “war on girls.” Yet studies on the violence experienced by Latinas (that is, women in the United States who can trace their origin to countries across Latin America), and most specifically, by gang-involved Latina mothers, are scant.

Gangs (possibly a type of an organized criminal group) and violence are the subject of contentious debates in the United States. Yet, these are based on largely speculative data, even though sociologists and criminologists have been researching these groups for almost a century. There is work on the labelling and marginalization of gang members, on how to reduce international gang violence, and how to craft comprehensive gang control. Together, this research has influenced the development of interventions, laws and policies seeking to end gangs and their activities - including violence. However, most US research on gangs has focused on men, even though national data shows women comprise about one third of known gang members. Furthermore, research on female gang members heavily focuses on physical and sexual violence perpetrated by their male partners or other gang members.

The research of [Katherine Maldonado](#), a Latina doctoral Student from South-Central Los Angeles (a community historically identified as having one of the largest number of gangs in the United States) argues that the focus on interpersonal violence in the study of gangs limits our understanding of their activities. Furthermore, Maldonado shows violence is not bound by the period of gang-involvement. Instead, it follows gang-involved women throughout their lives: “structural and institutional violence creates a context of violence that cannot be reduced to violent individuals [but is instead] embedded in the broader social order, gender inequality, the perpetuation of violence, impunity, and women’s diminished rights” (Menjívar and Walsh, 2017).

Violence against Latina women in South Central Los Angeles also involves direct and indirect interactions with the criminal justice and child welfare systems, which create forms of structural violence that shape women’s lives and those of their families. Maldonado’s work, relying on life history interviews conducted among gang-affiliated Latina mothers, explores the substantive significance of gang membership in the grand scheme of women’s lives vis-à-vis the interplay of gang involvement, violence, motherhood and legal and social relations, along with women’s responses to structural violence through strategic forms of resistance.

Adapted from:

Menjívar, Cecilia, and Shannon Drysdale Walsh (2017). "The architecture of femicide: the state, inequalities, and everyday gender violence in Honduras." *Latin American research review* 52, no. 2; Maldonado, Katherine (forthcoming). *Gang-affiliated Latina mothers resisting violence*. *Crime and Delinquency*.

Case Study: “Tricked and Trapped: Human Trafficking in the Middle East”

The report “[Tricked and Trapped: Human Trafficking in the Middle East](#)” by the International Labour Organization (ILO), was based on more than 650 interviews conducted over a two-year period in Jordan, Lebanon, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) about how the workers are ‘tricked and trapped’ into forced labour and sexual exploitation, and the constraints that prevent them from leaving those countries. The report points to deficits in labour law coverage that “reinforce underlying vulnerabilities of migrant workers” as well as significant gaps in national legislation that “restrict the ability of migrant workers to organize, to terminate their employment contracts and to change employers.” The authors noted that the lack of inspection procedures maintains the “isolation of domestic workers in private homes” and heightens their vulnerability to exploitation, while in male-dominated sectors, such as construction, manufacturing, seafaring and agricultural sectors, workers are routinely deceived with respect to living and working conditions, the type of work to be performed, or even the existence of a job at all.

The Middle East hosts millions of migrant workers, who in some cases exceed the number of national workers substantially. In Qatar, for example, 94 per cent of workers are migrants, while in Saudi Arabia that figure is over 50 per cent, according to the ILO. Meanwhile, in Jordan and Lebanon migrants also make up a significant part of the workforce, particularly in the construction and domestic work sectors. Those industries are particularly susceptible to abuse due to the **kafala** or sponsorship system: most migrant workers need to be sponsored by their in-country employers for visa and legal status, a system the ILO calls “inherently problematic” because it connects a worker to a single employer who virtually controls his ability to become employed, creating an unequal power dynamic between the employer and the worker (all employees in construction in this specific case were men).

“Labour migration in this part of the world is unique in terms of its sheer scale and its exponential growth in recent years,” Beate Andrees, Head of ILO’s Special Action Programme to Combat Forced Labour, said at the start of a two-day conference on the topic in Amman, Jordan. “The challenge is how to put in place safeguards in both origin and destination countries to prevent the exploitation and abuse of these workers,” Ms. Andrees told the more than 100 participants from a dozen Arab countries.

See: UN News: Migrant workers in the Middle East often exploited, UN reports at human trafficking conference. 9 April 2013. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2013/04/436622-migrant-workers-middle-east-often-exploited-un-reports-human-trafficking>; and Nasri, Alix and Helene Harroff-Tavel. Tricked and Trapped: Human Trafficking in the Middle East. 9 April 2013. International Labour Organization. http://www.ilo.org/beirut/publications/WCMS_211214/lang--en/index.htm

Case Study: Nigerian Women and Juju

Sine Plambech, a Danish researcher who has worked extensively with Nigerian women working in the European sex trade, has written extensively about Juju. Plambech's work has shown that while indeed juju is 'a popular term for various forms of "traditional" medicine and black magic' (197) too much emphasis has been placed on its coercive and enslaving role (EASO 2015). This is problematic, because it often relies on sensationalistic stories and a victimizing approach, in which women (most specifically, Nigerian women) appear deprived from any agency or free will. Such an approach may overlook situations in which women choose to engage in sex work, or fails to identify the reasons why women may ultimately opt to leave Nigeria (family demands, intimate partner violence, their own desire to travel, study, work, etc.). In most of Europe, the narratives concerning "[terms like] 'voodoo,' 'slave trade' and 'organized crime' are appealing to the public, as these [often] recreate Western clichés concerning African women as primitive or prone to believe in witchcraft, rather than presenting a nuanced understanding of women's decisions to migrate and/or the levels of understanding they have about their journeys.

One of Plambech's interviewees, Becky, knew before she left Nigeria that she would have to work in the sex trade to pay back her journey to Europe. At a point she helped the woman who recruited her recruit other women. Every time, Becky told the women she recruited what their job would be once they reached Europe; there were no threats or coercion. A report on sex trafficking from EASO states: "*Juju* may not always be experienced by victims (...) as a tool of intimidation and control. *Rather it is a 'secondary' form of coercion, experienced by those who have already entered situations of trafficking. It only becomes a threat once the woman is in a situation of exploitation*" (2015: 200). Furthermore, Plambech reminds us that not all women use the term when describing their experiences in the sex trade, nor consider themselves under spells or curses. Often family expectations, financial demands to pay smuggling or travel fees for other friends and relatives, and the personal wish to improve one's live outcomes may drive migrants to pursue sex work to reach another country. In other words, claims that organized crime relies on juju to bring down or break the spirits of women fail to identify the wider dynamics of women's migration, and may ultimately reinforce stereotypes of Nigerian women, rather than providing detailed understandings of their experiences.

Adapted from:

Finish Immigration Service (2015). *EASO Country of Origin Information Report. Nigeria Sex Trafficking on Women*. Brussels: EASO. <http://www.sineplambech.com/beckys-journey/>

Case Study: The Place that Female Coca Growers Deserve

Multiple researchers have argued that the nation's drug policy responses to the increase of coca cultivation in Colombia have involved problematic approaches and consequences. The work of the [DeJusticia](#) has identified how Colombians of peasant origin tend to be in prison disproportionately, amid the growth in forced crop eradication efforts.

Literature has highlighted the close relationship between drug policy and inequity, poverty and violence (see e.g. the Equality Trust, 2007; O'Gorman, 2016); but the gendered impacts of these issues have yet to be researched in depth. DeJusticia has worked for many years examining the ways drug policy has affected women. In particular, it has focused on documenting the experiences of the women who grow coca in the region of Putumayo.

Using intersectionality-informed perspectives, DeJusticia's work explores the implications of rural life, gender, armed conflict and illegality on the lives of coca-growing women in the Putumayo region. Here, the ways in which late colonization, non-state armed actors, violence, poverty and a precarious state presence converge have been studied for decades. However, the roles of women who grow coca plants, known locally as "Cocaleras", have not been part of research initiatives. Ignoring women's perspectives hides experiences that are key to understand how social inequality and poverty operate through policies like the "war on drugs" and impact women

Peasant women are involved in the coca economy working as crop workers, caring for and feeding the plants, harvesting, processing and trading coca leaf and its derivatives. Throughout their lives, women perform these roles at different times and circumstances, depending on the economic need. DeJusticia's researchers relied on a participatory research method known as social cartography. Through this, the cocaleras worked in groups drawing maps of their region. They mapped their daily routines, their community meeting spaces, their relationship with the coca plants, their family dynamics, their definition of State, and their relationship with armed actors, both legal and illegal. The maps along with the group conversations that arose from the drawings exposed the contexts of violence, poverty, inequality, and State abandonment that the women and their families face. Similarly, there was vast recognition of how coca harvesting has brought opportunities for social mobility for women and promoted collective solidarity for communities to build their own territories.

The cocaleras life's trajectories have developed in family units in which the burden of home care falls onto them. At the same time, they actively participate in the productive work of the farm. Educated to be caregivers, they quickly become also providers for their families. Likewise, cocaleras participate actively in social organizations in the region, either as leaders or as activists.

Adapted from:

DeJusticia 2018. *Drug Policy and Gender: the impacts of cultivating coca for peasant women in Putumayo, Colombia*. Cruz, Luis and Margarita Martinez Osorio. *The Place that female coca growers deserve*. <https://www.dejusticia.org/en/column/el-lugar-que-merecen-las-mujeres-cocaleras/>

On the relationship between drug policy and inequity, see also: The Equality Trust (2007). *Drug Abuse*. <https://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/drug-abuse>; and O’Gorman, A. (2016).

Outcomes: Drug harms, Policy harms, Poverty and Inequality. Clondalkin, Drug and Alcohol Task Force Final Report. The University of the West of Scotland, 2016.

https://www.citywide.ie/download/pdf/cdatf_outcome_report_drug_harms.pdf

Case Study: One woman’s career fighting wildlife crime

Read this [article](#) posted on the website of the African Wildlife Foundation. Explain the roles of women in the fight against wildlife trafficking. How are women’s roles described? What are the characteristics and language that is used to define women’s roles in this specific form of trafficking, and why are women relevant to the way the practice is described and/or depicted? What assumptions about women are reproduced? What would be a practical solution for the language and the practices concerning gender in fighting wildlife crime?

Source: Hannah Wilber (2017). *One Woman’s Career Fighting Wildlife Crime*. African Wildlife Foundation. 21 March 2017. <https://www.awf.org/blog/one-womans-career-fighting-wildlife-crime>

Recommended class structure:

- Introduce concept of gender and sex and relevant examples - 20 mins
- Introduce concept of intersectionality – 15 minutes (examples are essential)
- Through a gender lens, discuss the different roles women can play in organized crime and why they play those particular roles - 30 minutes
- Introduce politics of researching organized crime and gender - 30 minutes
 - Why do people study organized crime?
 - What do we think about organized crime? Discuss through a gender lens.
- Discuss specific examples consisting on/drawing from: - 60 minutes
 - Women’s roles in (different) organized criminal groups
 - Drug trafficking/human trafficking/migrant smuggling
 - Wildlife crime/cybercrime/trafficking in cultural property
- Wrap up

Core Reading

- Bautista, Ana J, Luis F. Cruz, Margarita Martinez Osorio, Isabel Pereira, Lucia Ramirez Bolivar (2018). *Voces desde el cocal: mujeres que construyen territorio*. DeJusticia: Colombia. 4 July 2018. <https://www.dejusticia.org/publication/voces-desde-el-cocal-mujeres-que-construyen-territorio/>
- Burgess-Proctor, A. (2006). *Intersections of race, class, gender, and crime: Future Directions for Feminist Criminology*. *Feminist Criminology*, 1, 27-47
https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Amanda_Burgess-Proctor/publication/249786225_Intersections_of_Race_Class_Gender_and_Crime/links/0f31753ade07edacd5000000/Intersections-of-Race-Class-Gender-and-Crime.pdf?origin=publication_detail
- Crenshaw, Kimberly (1991). *Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color*. *Stanford Law Review*. 41 (1241-129)8.
<https://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/mapping-margins.pdf>
- Miller, Jody (2001). *One of the guys: Girls, gangs, and gender*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2018). *Global Study on Smuggling of Migrants*. Vienna: UNODC. http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glosom/GLOSOM_2018_web_small.pdf
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2018). *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*. Vienna: UNODC. http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2018/GLOTiP_2018_BOOK_web_small.pdf
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2018). *World Drug Report 2018*. UNODC: Vienna 2018. <http://www.unodc.org/wdr2018/index.html>

Advanced Reading

Gender and drug trafficking

- Bourgois, Philippe (1996). "In search of masculinity: violence, respect and sexuality among Puerto Rican crack dealers in East Harlem." *The British Journal of Criminology* 36, no. 3: 412-427.
- Bourgois, Philippe (2003). *In search of respect: Selling crack in El Barrio*. Cambridge University Press: New York.
- Carey, Elaine (2014). *Women drug traffickers: mules, bosses and organized crime*. University of New Mexico Press: Santa Fe.

- De Justicia (2018). *Drug Policy and Gender: the impacts of cultivating coca for peasant women in Putumayo, Colombia*. Cruz, Luis and Margarita Martinez Osorio. *The Place that female coca growers deserve*. <https://www.dejusticia.org/en/column/el-lugar-que-merecen-las-mujeres-cocaleras/>
- Estévez, Ariadna (2017). "La violencia contra las mujeres y la crisis de derechos humanos: de la narcoguerra a las guerras necropolíticas." *Revista interdisciplinaria de estudios de género de El Colegio de México* 3, no. 6: 69-100
- Fleetwood, Jennifer (2014). *Drug mules: women in the international cocaine trade*. Palgrave MacMillan: London.
- Equis Justicia para las Mujeres (2018). *Políticas de drogas, género y encarcelamiento en Mexico: una guía para políticas públicas incluyentes*. Mexico City: Mexico, 2018. http://equis.org.mx/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Guía_Drogas.pdf.
- Guerra, Santiago Ivan (2015). "La Chota y Los Mafiosos: Mexican American casualties of the border drug war." *Latino Studies* 13, no. 2: 227-244.
- Hübschle, Annette (2014). "Of bogus hunters, queenpins and mules: the varied roles of women in transnational organized crime in Southern Africa." *Trends in organized crime* 17, no. 1-2: 31-51.
- Muehlmann, Shaylih (2018). "The Gender of the War on Drugs." *Annual Review of Anthropology*. Vol. 47:315-330.
- Núñez Noriega, Guillermo, and Claudia Esthela Espinoza Cid (2017). "El narcotráfico como dispositivo de poder sexo-genérico: crimen organizado, masculinidad y teoría queer." *Revista interdisciplinaria de estudios de género de El Colegio de México* 3, no. 5: 90-128.
- Padovani, Natália Corazza (2016). "Plotting prisons, flows and affections: Brazilian female prisoners between the transnational drug trade and sex markets in Barcelona." *Criminology & Criminal Justice* 16, no. 3: 366-385.
- Padovani, Natália Corazza (2017). "Trafficking Of Women In Prisons Entrances Or Security And Gender Devices In The Production Of "Dangerous Classes"." *Cadernos Pagu* 51 (in Portuguese).
- Urquiza-Haas, Nayeli (2017). "Vulnerability Discourses and Drug Mule Work: Legal Approaches in Sentencing and Non-Prosecution/Non-Punishment Norms." *The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice* 56, no. 3: 309-325.
- Van San, Marion, and Elga Sikkens (2017). "Families, Lovers, and Friends: Women, Social Networks, and Transnational Cocaine Smuggling from Curaçao and Peru." *The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice* 56, no. 3: 343-357.
- Washington Office for Latin America (WOLA) (2017). *The Stories of Women in Prison for Drug Related Crimes*. Video Series. Washington DC. <https://womenanddrugs.wola.org/videos/>
- Washington Office for Latin America (WOLA), IDPC, DeJusticia, CIM, Organizacion de Estados Americanos (2013). *Women, Drug Policies and Incarceration: A guide for Policy reform*

in Latin America and the Caribbean. WOLA: Washington DC.

<http://www.oas.org/en/cim/docs/womendrugsincarceration-en.pdf>

Zaitch, Damián (2002). *Trafficking cocaine: Colombian drug entrepreneurs in the Netherlands*. Vol. 1. Springer Science and Business Media.

Women's roles in (organized) crime

Ali, Badr-el-Din (1997). "Female criminality in modern Egypt: A general outlook." *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice* 21, no. 2: 267-285.

Arsovska, Jana and Felia Allum (2014), eds. Special Issue: Women and Transnational Organized Crime. *Trends in Organized Crime*. Vol. 17, 1-2.

Arsovska, Jana, and Popy Begum (2014). "From West Africa to the Balkans: exploring women's roles in transnational organized crime." *Trends in organized crime* 17, no. 1-2: 89-109.

Fiandaca, Giovanni (2007). ed. *Women and the mafia: Female roles in organized crime structures*. Vol. 5. Springer Science & Business Media.

Kleemans, Edward R., Edwin W. Kruisbergen, and Ruud F. Kouwenberg (2014). "Women, brokerage and transnational organized crime. Empirical results from the Dutch Organized Crime Monitor." *Trends in organized crime* 17, no. 1-2: 16-30.

Lima Malvido María de la Luz (2004). *Criminalidad Femenina. Teorías y reacción social*. Editorial Porrúa: 2004.

Pizzini-Gambetta, Valeria (2014). "Organized crime: the gender constraints of illegal markets." *The Oxford handbook of gender, sex, and crime*: 448-467.

Shen, Anqi (2016). "Female Membership in the Black-Society Style Criminal Organizations: Evidence From a Female Prison in China." *Feminist Criminology* 11, no. 1: 69-90.

Shen, Anqi, and Simon Winlow (2014). "Women and crime in contemporary China: A review essay." *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice* 38, no. 4: 327-342.

Siegel, Dina (2014). "Women in transnational organized crime." *Trends in organized crime* 17, no. 1-2: 52-65.

Zhang, Sheldon X., and Ko-lin Chin (2008). "Snakeheads, mules, and protective umbrellas: A review of current research on Chinese organized crime." *Crime, Law and Social Change* 50, no. 3: 177-195.

Women and trafficking in persons

Agustin, Laura (2007). *Sex in the Margins: migration, labour markets and the rescue industry*. London: Zed Books.

Brennan, Denise (2014). *Life Interrupted: trafficking and forced labor in the United States*. Duke University Press.

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Student Assessments

Assessment no. 1: What is organized crime and who is behind it?

Write a short (500) word essay that sums up your answers to the following questions.

1. When you think of organized crime what are the main ideas that come to your mind? Do you think of any specific crimes? Provide as many details as you can.
2. Look at the answers you provided. Were any of them tied to gender?
3. How did you come to learn about the crime? (In other words, what is the source of your perceptions and/or knowledge?)
4. Are there any differences in the way men and women engage and/or are impacted by organized criminal activity? Why? Provide examples.

Assessment 2: Two Spirit Traditions

“Traditionally, many Native cultures acknowledged and accepted greater variation in how individuals expressed gender identification, in contrast with the (...) strict binary (male/female) conceptualization. There are many modern constructions of Native masculinity and femininity today that reject variations in the binary gender roles that have been adopted over time.

Traditionally, Two Spirit people [the term broadly used in reference to the Native, indigenous belief that there are individuals that perfectly embody male and female spirits within] were revered as gifted and spiritual individuals who performed highly respected spiritual, medical and economic roles. They were ceremonial leaders; they performed the duties of shamans, priests who acted as advisors in conflict resolution, and as medical doctors; they were caretakers and teachers of children; and they served vital economic roles through cultivation, cooking, and weaving. Today, those who identify as Two Spirit see themselves as living in harmony with traditional Native values and beliefs, yet often face discrimination and encounter homophobia within their communities [...].”

“The Diné (Navajo, i.e. one of the Native American tribes) language [identifies] more than two genders; in addition to having words for men and women the Diné used to name biological men who identified with female gender roles and women who identified with male gender roles *nadleehi*. A biologically male *nadleehi* might express his gender identification by dressing as a woman, or wearing the clothes of men and women, and/or participating in typically female social roles, such as weaving and cooking. Such lives that reflect the merging(s) and overlapping(s) of expressions and experiences of gender demonstrate an acceptance of life as

being an ongoing process rather than a set of definite and distinct divisions, in line with Diné traditions.

Two Spirit text adapted from: Sheppard, Maia and J.B. Mayo (2013). The Social Construction of Gender and Sexuality: learning from Two-Spirit Traditions. *The Social Studies* 104(6): 259-270.

Write a 500-word essay on your own cultural tradition; how is gender defined within? What are the perceptions tied to gender? What are the consequences tied to not fitting in/not fulfilling specific gender roles?

Assessment 3: What are the perceptions tied to gender we bring into the classroom and to the study of crime?

You can implement each one of these activities separately, in groups or as an essay assignment.

1. Ask students to bring to class several examples of media representations concerning organized crime specific to your country and/or region - bring your own! Break them into categories, as many may be the same. How did the show/series/movie/magazine/book, etc. represent gender/s? Select one character. How do he/she/they perform gender? Does it conform or not to social constructions and/or expectations concerning gender? Why and/or how are these important to the story?
2. Select a case involving a form of organized crime prosecuted in your country (you can consult [UNODC's SHERLOC Case Law Database](#) for that purpose). Read the overview as well as the documents that accompany the case if available. How is gender represented in the case? How is it performed and assessed? By whom? What are the words the court uses to describe the actions of men and women? How are they different/similar? Why?
3. Select a well-known, non-fictional character from the criminal justice system in your country (a prosecutor, a judge, a police officer, etc.) What are the qualities or flaws that are most often cited regarding him/her/them? Which ones have to do with gender?
4. Many organized crime lecturers have professional backgrounds in law enforcement. Draw from your expertise and use an example of a case in which the way your understandings of gender guided a specific investigation. How did you refer to men and/or women? What were the gender aspects that were important to you? Did you see them at the time? Looking back at your decision, would you do anything differently? Give this example to your students and discuss it with them in class.

Additional Teaching Tools

In drafting this Module, every effort was made to identify resources written by diverse scholars, by women working in academia, and by organizations aiming to raise concerns on the gendered consequences of organized crime. This does not justify the absence of scholarship from some countries/regions, and we do acknowledge that more and diverse experiences could be included to enrich the content of the material. We encourage lecturers to contact the [Education for Justice \(E4J\) initiative](#) to submit cases and literature that are relevant to the topic of gender and organized crime in countries not mentioned in this Module, with a view to promote the work of other authors that also deserve to be recognized and known globally.

The [UNODC SHERLOC](#) (Sharing Electronic Resources and Laws On Crime) knowledge management portal was developed by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to facilitate the dissemination of information regarding the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its three Protocols.

[Beyond Trafficking and Slavery](#) has put together an eight-volume series aimed at providing an empirically-based framework to understand human trafficking. It contains perspectives from organizations, practitioners and individuals from around the world working to better understand labour practices that thrive on global inequality and economic systems. *Beyond Trafficking and Slavery 2018. Short Course. Vol. I-VIII.*

[CENCOS](#) (Centro Nacional de Comunicación Social) is a media organization which has as its goal to showcase the experiences faced by people whose stories are not typically showcased on mass media. Their reporting has focused on cases involving gender-based discrimination, the forced disappearances of activists, and corruption. Their coverage on the impact of drug trafficking policy in the form of gender-based discrimination includes a video of Kenya Cuevas, a renowned activist in Mexico City who spent time in prison for a drug trafficking offence.

The criminalization of human smuggling and its impact on women. A policy brief from the [Migrant Smuggling Observatory of the Migration Policy Centre](#) summarizes the ways the criminalization of migration impacts women and their families.

[New Directions on Research on Human Trafficking](#) is a special issue of The American Academy of Political and Social Science. It contains articles from authors who provide new empirical insights into sex trafficking, sex work, labour trafficking, and the impact of migration regimes on the emergence of these crimes in Cambodia, Bangladesh, Argentina, West Africa, Eastern Europe, and the United States.

[The Human Smugglers Roundtable](#), editions I and II, compiles a series of frequently asked questions about human smuggling. Scholars, practitioners and activists from around the world, drawing from their expertise and knowledge, provide answers and context to one of the most pressing forms of contemporary organized crime.

[The International Drug Policy Consortium](#) groups organizations from around the world seeking to promote an open and objective debate on drug policy.

[The Marshall Project](#) is an independent news organization. It posts stories by and on people in detention in the United States, with the hope of creating awareness about the lives and experiences of those within the criminal justice system.

[The Open Society Foundation](#) prepared the report “[The Impact of Drug Policy on Women](#).” As the incarceration levels of women for drug trafficking outpace those of men, research and data that reveal the gender implications of drug trafficking criminalization are needed. This report provides a summary of how drug laws and policies pose a burden on women around the world.

Why are so many First Nations, Inuit and Metis Women and Girls Criminalized? [This handout](#) from the Native Women’s Association of Canada gives some background on the growing numbers of women and girls of indigenous origin who are entering the criminal justice system in Canada.

WOLA (*Washington Office on Latin America*) put together a [photo essay](#) to showcase the experiences of women serving reduced sentences for having admitted their involvement in the drug market. Their stories were chosen because they are representative of the profiles often seen in women incarcerated across the hemisphere.

[Women Speak Out: understanding women who inject drugs in Indonesia](#) is a report by the Indonesian Drug User Networks developed to better understand the experiences of women who inject drugs and to inform evidence-based responses that can mitigate the impacts of drug use and HIV and AIDS.

Videos and Documentaries

[Barrio de Paz](#): how do women organize in Ecuador to prevent gang-related violence? This documentary from Global Oneness Project tells the story of Nelsa and her activism in the streets of Guayaquil on behalf of gang-affiliated youth. Available from Global Oneness Project website: [\[Duration: 17min.\]](#)

[Becky’s Story](#): A documentary film by Sine Plambech on the life of Becky, a 26-year-old Nigerian woman who wants to go to Europe. She already tried twice. The first time she was stopped

with fake documents at the airport in Nigeria by immigration authorities. This made her decide to begin a deadly journey through the Sahara Desert hoping to embark on a migration boat bound for Italy. The film is about migration, sex work and human trafficking seen from the perspective of Becky. Through interviews with Becky and sequences of everyday life, we can sense the feelings of limbo and immobility that permeate her life.

[Duration: 24min.]

[*Devil's Freedom*](#) is a documentary from Everardo Gonzalez, a Mexican filmmaker, that presents a new perspective on organized crime-related violence in Mexico. It showcases the testimonies of people (victims and perpetrators of violence) who appear on camera wearing special masks with openings for their eyes and mouth – large enough to preserve their anonymity, but without concealing their individuality. Traumatic experiences are discussed by the victims or their relatives, but also by those who committed kidnappings, murders and torture. The film does not seek to explain the violence, only to share the experiences of those who have suffered it.

[*EQUIS: Justicia para las Mujeres*](#) is a feminist think-tank that seeks to develop policy to counter gender-based discrimination and gender-based violence in Latin America. In coordination with the Washington Office for Latin America, Equis has released a series of publications related to the war on drugs and the impact of drug trafficking criminalization on women, including those who are of indigenous origin. Their website also includes a [series of short documentaries](#) on the experiences of women in detention for drug trafficking and drug trafficking related offenses.

El Velador (The Watchman) is a documentary by Mexican filmmaker Natalia Almada, on the everyday life of a man who works at Jardines del Humaya, a cemetery in Mexico's northern state of Sinaloa. For decades, Sinaloa has dealt with drug trafficking related violence. The leading cause of death for young males in the state is homicide, and points at the dynamics of drug trafficking in Mexico as a whole. Classroom clip [available online](#).

[Duration: 27min.]

Paola Ovalle is a Mexican researcher who has explored the community and individual responses to organized crime-related violence on the US-Mexico border. Her website includes videos showcasing the efforts carried out by families to celebrate the lives of their loved ones, often victims of still unresolved forced disappearances and kidnappings. The [videos](#) are in Spanish with subtitles in English.

[What were you wearing?](#) - Tracey Ullman's Show: Season 2 Episode 6 Preview - BBC One. A video that challenges the pervasive culture that blames survivors of crime.

[Duration: 1.54min]



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