

Mule Tales: An Exploration of Motives among Female Drug Smugglers

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Abstract

This study is an exploration of motives among female drug smugglers held under custodial control in a Caribbean prison. This exploratory study provided some insight into why women engaged in the risk associated with smuggling drugs. While past research has primarily focused on the economic hardships women tried to address by engaging in drug smuggling, other research has emphasized the glorification of drug culture in some communities, past victimization and abuse, and the need to improve one's status. This research revealed some additional reasons that are not typically examined in extant research. In particular, some women rather than making a rational choice to smuggle drugs, were simply tricked or bamboozled into schemes to smuggle and that in many instances, women became involved in smuggling because of their desire to please or help a male figure in their lives.

Keywords: drug smugglers; female; inmates; prison

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Academic research, reports from newspapers, blogs, and newsletter websites cite a myriad of motivations for women engaging in drug trafficking. For example, in a blog discussing the findings of Howard Campbell's 2008 research of female traffickers along the Mexico and United States border, Lorenz (2008) reported that some women cited empowerment and adventure as their motivations. Conversely, women in Zambia engaged in the illegal activity for economic reasons as cited by the Chief Editor of the Lusaka Times (Siulapwa, 2010). In contrast, Olsen (2009) reported Mexican drug lords using younger women of higher class statuses for transporting drugs because they were in new cars, with stylish clothing, and could pose as shoppers heading over the border. Interestingly, Muslim women in Dammam, Saudi Arabia are also becoming involved in drug trafficking; however, many have been tricked or trapped by family members or husbands into engaging in the criminal activity (Muslim Women News, n.d.).

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has identified drug trafficking, 'the cultivation, manufacture, distribution and sale of substances which are subject to drug prohibition laws', as a global issue (UNODC, 2015). In addition, the World Drug Report of 2015 revealed that since 2010 drug trafficking, and the violence and devastation that often accompanies the crime, has become a major social problem worldwide, which is specifically true for females (UNODC, 2015). More specifically, reports of incidents of women being arrested for trafficking drugs has risen in countries such as India, China, Nigeria, and Zambia. For example, in India, Delhi criminal justice agencies reported a rise of approximately 15 percent from 2005 to 2006 in female offenders arrested for drug trafficking, and Punjab police in Malwa

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reported a 12 percent increase in arrests of women during the first five months of 2012

(MyNation Foundation – News, 2007; Tandon, 2012). Likewise, courts in China’s provincial capital of Guangdong reported that women represented a substantial portion of the 250 plus individuals prosecuted for drug trafficking, with a trend showing that female offenders are ‘local women who help their foreign boyfriends smuggle drugs into the Chinese mainland’ (Caixiong, 2012). Beijing court officials also reported that from 2007 to 2009, the number of drug cases prosecuted were over 4,600, the number of ‘foreign offenders involved in drug trafficking’ had risen, as well the number of female offenders rising from 9 percent to 30 percent during a period of two years (eChinacities.com, 2010). Moreover, Beijing officials reported that many of those arrested in their country were from ‘developing or under-developed countries’ (Yin, 2011). Correspondingly, in Zambia, the Public Relations Officer for the Drug Enforcement Commission in Lusaka, stated that four women had been arrested within seven days at their international airport and he was ‘saddened with the emerging trend of drug trafficking as it is degrading to the dignity of women in our society’ (Lusaka Times, 2012).

As with many other countries, drug trafficking in the Caribbean island nation of Trinidad and Tobago has increased exponentially, with cocaine being brought into the country. As a result, this increase has caused a dramatic rise in violence, resulting in the nation being referred to as a *narcostate* (Townsend, 2010). Considered as the most prosperous and wealthy of the Caribbean nations, Trinidad and Tobago has also become a ‘major trans-shipment point for cocaine’ (BBC News, 2012). Reports of cocaine as merely transited through Trinidad and Tobago is not always the case and officials note that other drugs and often weapons remain in the

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country and feed the increase in violence (Townsend, 2010). Likewise, the close proximity to the coast of South America, only seven miles, has also made Trinidad and Tobago an 'ideal staging post in the shipment of cocaine to the US and European markets' (Davis, 2011). Thus, the trafficking of cocaine, which has 'clogged the courts' of the national criminal justice system, has established Trinidad and Tobago as a major country of concern for drug trafficking among female offenders (BBC News, 2012).

The purpose of this study is to examine why women decided to become involved in drug trafficking. Previous research revealed that drug trafficking is conducted by people on the fringes of society, those of low socioeconomic status, those desiring to improve their self-worth because of past victimization or childhood abuses, and by those who are criminally inclined or have anti-social behaviors. This study addressed the central research question of why women, under the custodial care at a prison located in the Caribbean, became involved in drug trafficking. Given recent history, which has shown a significant increase in women involved in trafficking of drugs, exploring this overlooked dimension provides significance to the field of inquiry.

Survey of Literature

A review of the literature regarding drug trafficking among women revealed pertinent information on factors contributing to the involvement of some women in the illegal activity. Specifically, available research identifies several themes associated with female participation in drug trafficking. These factors include: economic gain, the pop-culture and folklore associated with drug trafficking, childhood experiences, past victimization, or abuse, and empowerment/status issues.

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Economic Gain

In an examination of economic crimes that women become involved in, Davies (2003) argued that women, 'are victims who are pushed and driven into crime to escape from poverty, abuse, and hardship' (p. 290). Likewise, according to Olmo (1990), the necessity for economic stability was a lesser obtainable status for women than for men, thus women in Latin American societies 'developed survival strategies' becoming involved in drug crimes such as trafficking (p. 43). The author further stated that economic hardships in these societies resulted in 'more opportunities for illegal employment than for legal work', and in order to leave the lower economic statuses, women would often work in the drug industry, occupying lower-level positions that paid very small amounts in comparison to the profits accrued by drug dealers (Olmo, 1990, p. 43). In their study, Adler and Adler (1983) concluded that 'successful operators can earn upwards of a half million dollars per year,' making economic gain appear to be one of the major reasons for participation in drug trafficking (p. 195).

However, Adler and Adler (1983) noted that only the higher-level members of drug trafficking operations, due to their ability to run their businesses and secure their operations, maintained a tight-knit community and frequently held a lifestyle that included 'lavish spending' (p. 197). For low-level traffickers, such as women who were members of the *crew* and experienced a relationship with the dealer or sponsor, similar to 'benign paternalism', their positions provided less economic gain compared to high-level members, such as the dealer (Adler & Adler, 1983, p. 200). In a later ethnographic study of drug traffickers in the southwestern United States, Adler (1993) noted that for women who were struggling to support

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their families as heads of households, working as couriers provided a means of supporting their children, regardless of the risk. Similarly, Fleetwood (2010), in an examination of motivations of Latin American women participating in drug trafficking, found that many of those female offenders interviewed described financial concerns and supporting families as their primary reasons for becoming engaged in the criminal activity. Specifically, these women reported that their involvement in drug trafficking as *mules* reflected their need of ‘providing for their family. In addition, smuggling was a response to a pending crisis such as debts’, or was seen as an ‘opportunity to gain some improvement in the living conditions of themselves and their family’ (Fleetwood, 2010, p. 6).

According to Campbell (2008), the impact of the drug world and subsequent trafficking performed by women enhanced the status of women in society. Campbell (2008) found that among the countless motivations reported by women to traffic in drugs, most begin their occupations as ‘a desperate economic measure’ (p. 259). Moreover, Campbell (2008) noted that the women who participated as mules could ‘earn more money...and perhaps use that wealth to move up in the social structure and consolidate a stronger position in their households’ (p. 260). Similarly, Geiger (2006), who studied female offenders in the Neve Tirza Women’s Prison in Israel, stated that the women ‘struggled against intolerable socioeconomic deprivation,’ using the economic gain of drug trafficking to improve their statuses (p. 582). Findings from Fleetwood (2010), who investigated the economic motives of female offenders incarcerated for their involvement in drug trafficking in Ecuador, unearthed a myriad of economic reasons. Specifically, reasons included: redecorating their houses, funding drug habits, financial

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independence, providing for children's futures, and financing relatives' operations. Financial hardships, such as debts and emergencies that were oftentimes linked with other motivations and 'connective motives: for the benefit of themselves and those surrounding them', also created the need for economic gain and prompted engagement in drug trafficking (Fleetwood, 2010, p. 136).

Griffith (1997), in addressing the economic gain provided by drug trafficking in the Caribbean, revealed that 'employment, income regeneration, and revenue enhancement' emerged as the predominant benefits of drug trafficking. In addition, Griffith (1997) noted that the 'relative economic deprivation and poverty in the region' justified engagement in drug trafficking for many, specifically those who utilized drug trafficking as a source of primary and supplemental incomes (p. 182). In stark contrast to the reasons female offenders become involved in drug trafficking in order to support families or raise their standards of living, Decker and Chapman (2008) added the dimension of economic gain, specifically the maintenance of 'a party lifestyle, acting in concert with friends and relatives', as an important reason for women becoming involved in drug trafficking, for nowhere else could an individual, particularly a woman, make the amount of money in such a short timeframe (Decker & Chapman, 2008).

Pop-Culture and Folklore and Drug Trafficking

Available research suggests that the glamorization, sensationalization, and glorification of drug trafficking in the border regions between Mexico and the United States influence involvement in the enterprise of drug trafficking. Campbell (2005) revealed, in a study of drug trafficking folklore, the importance of pop-culture in the drug community. In particular, contrary to the negative ideal espoused by President George W. Bush that drugs were an 'unmitigated

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evil', stories told in social gatherings served to lessen the evil of commonplace drug dealers and traffickers and promote them as 'people who are simply trying to make a living' (Campbell, 2005, p. 328). Likewise, Edberg (2001) revealed the popularity of the 'traditional narrative music genre called the *corridor*' and the manner in which the pop-culture of drug trafficking is romanticized. According to Edberg (2001), the traditions and histories of the *narco-corridos* promote the drug traffickers as 'social bandits or heroes,' and their '*celebretization*' served to galvanize or solidify a lifestyle to economic success (p. 259). Additionally, Campbell (2005) explained that because the areas on the border, both within Mexico and the United States, are the 'most impoverished', citizens residing in that region on either side of the border view drug trafficking as a 'practical, quick way poor people can increase their incomes' (p. 327). For example, 'by allowing a drug courier to store a duffel bag in one's apartment overnight can net \$200', making the business of drug trafficking seem lucrative and risk-free (Campbell, 2005, p. 327).

Also, the Campbell (2005) study revealed the 'pervasiveness of drug-trafficking stories, and the strong popularity of *narcocorridos*, indicates the degree to which narcotics' trafficking is accepted by the general public' (p. 327). Edberg (2001) also revealed the commonplace acceptance of drug trafficking by the population in the region and that 'growing drug-related plants (opium poppies, marijuana) has for a long time been closely integrated into the life of many rural villages' (p. 261). Campbell (2005) also discussed the multitudes of people involved in drug trafficking on the Mexico-United States border as being 'thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands' and that customs inspectors on the border call it the '*culture on the border*' (p. 327).

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Similarly, Edberg (2001) also referred to the drug trafficking on the border region as the ‘tapestry of community’ (p. 262). Particularly, Edberg (2001), while interviewing youth on both sides of the Mexico and United States border, found that the lifestyle of the drug trafficker was a reality, with youth describing it as ‘*how it is*’ (p. 262).

This salient reality, according to Edberg (2001), was explained by on-stage performers, who shared their songs and stories or *corridor* ‘about something that happened in their town or area’, specifically the triumphs over law enforcement of the drug traffickers (p. 262). As a common theme of *narco-corrido*, these stories ‘immortalize’ and idealize the drug trafficker (Edberg, 2001, p. 262). Also, Edberg (2001) revealed a spiritual side to the *narco-corridos*, for example, in one border town, a member of the drug trade was honored as a saint with a shrine that people often visited and would ‘leave momentos or flowers’ (p. 264).

Childhood Experiences, Past Victimization, or Abuse

Geiger (2006) reported a number of female offenders who engaged in drug trafficking referred to a ‘childhood filled with emotional, physical, and/or sexual abuse’ and attributed their criminal activity as a means to overcome negative life-long effects (p. 586). Li and MacKenzie (2003), in research conducted on probationers in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States, found that ‘antisocial tendencies formed early in life continue to be reinforced throughout adolescence and early adulthood’ (p. 280). Thus, regardless of the form of abuse, a traumatic childhood is likely to serve as a mitigating factor in ones’ involvement in drug trafficking and other crimes. Similarly, Evans, Forsyth and Gauthier (2002), conducting a study of the life histories of ten female crack addicts in treatment in small southern towns in the United States,

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found that ‘childhood sexual abuse’ was a prevalent experience as half of the women reported they had suffered through this specific type of abuse (p. 492). As well, Evans et al. (2002) reported that many of the respondents in their study also suffered childhood neglect due to parental drug abuse.

In another study, Garcia (2007), performing an exploratory study on upper-level drug traffickers who had served time and had either Latin American or Mexican ancestry, revealed that numerous respondents had come from large families where ‘love towards them was rarely expressed by their parents, resulting in feelings of alienation and lack of self-worth’ (Garcia, 2007, p. 91). Also, Geiger (2006) found that female offenders often participated in drug crimes and prostitution due to their victimization as adults. More specifically, findings indicated that many of the female offenders had survived an ‘abusive and oppressive family’ (Geiger, 2006, p. 586); females who had been oppressed, abused, and impoverished, used ‘engagement in crime, drugs, and prostitution, often represent the last expression of resistance’ (Geiger, 2006, p. 591) available in order to ‘negotiate a positive identity’ (Geiger, 2006, p. 592).

McCartan and Gunnison (2009), interviewing female offenders housed in a correctional facility in the southwestern region of the United States, revealed that women with prior sexual abuse were more likely to participate in unhealthy relationships that lead to criminal activity. According to the authors, women who experienced prior sexual abuse had lower ‘self-images as well as a difficulty in staying employed’, which could have contributed to their involvement in drug trafficking (McCartan & Gunnison, 2009, p. 1463). In 2010, Fleetwood argued victimization and abuse of women becoming involved in drug trafficking also came in the form

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of manipulation and trickery. In particular, findings from Fleetwood (2010) revealed that respondents were ‘manipulated’ by boyfriends or family members and were often victimized by threat and coercion into drug trafficking (p. 7).

Empowerment/Status

Widom’s (1979) study of female offenders at a correctional facility in northeastern United States revealed that they frequently suffered from feelings of ‘low self-esteem and/or powerlessness’ (p. 366). The author further argued that lower socioeconomic status can possibly create the same sense of a lack of power, and women, who participate in the drug trafficking economy, if successful, can build that feeling of power or empowerment (Widom, 1979). Campbell (2005) also spoke to the empowerment achieved through drug trafficking and suggested that even though the empowerment may only be temporary, successful trafficking activity can make a sizeable amount of money which often builds self-esteem or a sense of power. In a later study, Campbell (2008) also reasoned that as women gained status in drug organizations they would feel a ‘degree of power’ rather than victimization (p. 260). Likewise, Edberg (2001) concluded that *narco-corridos*, pop-culture type songs and stories that elevate the prestige of the drug trafficker, could provide ‘power and status’ to females engaged in drug trafficking (p. 272). Fleetwood (2010) also argued that many women involved in drug trafficking achieved status and empowerment and considered the endeavor to provide ‘fringe benefits’, such as traveling abroad, ‘excitement and a free holiday’ (p. 8). As well, Adler (1993) added that successful drug traffickers had positive self-images and ‘feelings of power’ (p. 99). However, the role of a female drug trafficker has a darker side, particularly the associated stigmatization of

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being a trafficker and being 'labeled dirty' by those within mainstream society serves to further diminish empowerment for a woman (Campbell, 2005, p. 326).

Methods

This research is an exploratory, qualitative research study designed to examine drug trafficking among female offenders. The data for this research study is taken from a larger study designed to explore motivations for drug trafficking among female offenders and to develop a profile of those incarcerated at the Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service (TTPS). The total population of approximately 120 female offenders under the custodial care of TTPS and of those female offenders, a total of 65 females, including the 13 female offenders further interviewed, volunteered to participate in the initial study. The female offenders included those previously convicted (N=45) and those awaiting judgment (N =20).

Purposive, then stratified sampling was used to explore drug trafficking among female offenders in the Caribbean. First, the TTPS compiled a list of female offenders (remanded and convicted) incarcerated for drug trafficking. Afterwards, the female supervisor at the Women's Prison gathered the offenders together and provided an overview of the research project and asked for volunteers to participate in the study. In explaining the confidential nature of study, potential participants were advised their names would not be used during the interview process; as such they would be given a pseudonym. A total of 13 females were selected for the study to take part in the semi-structured interview process. Of the females who were remanded or convicted of drug smuggling, 22 of the convicted females volunteered to participate in the research study. The officer in charge utilized a systematic sampling technique, selecting every

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other female to be a part of the study. A total of 13 females were selected for the study to take part in the semi-structured interview process. Overall, the questionnaire inquired into the specifics of the drug trafficking experience of each participant, the origination and destination points of the drug, the method of recruitment, if the participant had been previously involved in criminal activity and/or drug offenses, their reasons for engaging in trafficking, if childhood experiences were influential in their decision to participate in drug trafficking, and any other thoughts or feelings that might arise from their incarceration for drug trafficking. The semi-structured interviews were adapted from an assessment tool used by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP, 2008).

Data collected from the 13 female offenders incarcerated for drug trafficking is explored through the four questions guiding this research. These questions include: ‘How were you recruited for this role?’; ‘Why did you decide to get involved in drug trafficking?’; ‘Did you join in with friends, were family members or relatives involved in the activity, or did you initiate it on your own?’; and ‘Can you describe for me how you think your childhood experience influenced you into getting involved with drug trafficking?’

Analysis of the transcripts used for the in-depth interviews revealed certain themes were present in the stories of those female offenders incarcerated for trafficking in drugs. The process of open coding was utilized and is defined as ‘data are broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, and compared for similarities and differences’ (Babbie, 2010, p. 401). Themes were coded to reflect elements such as how the females became involved into drug trafficking.

Findings

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The sample consists of 13 female offenders who were under the custodial control of the Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service (TTPS). Of the 13 female offenders, approximately 31% identified themselves as African/Black or being of mixed race/ethnicity while approximately 15% identified themselves as Caucasian/White. For the remaining female offenders, approximately 8% identified themselves as Asian, Guyanese, and Jamaican. The ages of respondents ranged from 18 to older than 55, with an average age of 32. Approximately 23% of respondents reported Canada as their country of origin while approximately 15% reported England, the United States, and Jamaica as their countries of origin. The remaining 8% reported Trinidad and Tobago, Malaysia, Saint Vincent/Grenadines, and Guyana as their countries of origin. The majority of female offenders (31%) had never been married, approximately 23% were divorced or involved in a common-law marriage, approximately 15% were married, and approximately 8% were separated. The majority of female offenders (69%) completed secondary or tertiary educational levels while approximately 15% had a primary education or participated in higher education at the university level (See Table 1).

Table 1

Characteristics of Female Offenders Incarcerated for Drug Trafficking

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>Percentages</u>	<u>Interview Participants (N=13)</u>
Country of Origin		
Trinidad and Tobago	7.7	1
Canada	23.1	3
United States	15.4	2
Malaysia	7.7	1
England	15.4	2
Jamaica	15.4	2
St. Vincent/Grenadines	7.7	1
Brazil	0.0	0
Guyana	7.7	1

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Ethnicity/Origin

African/Black	30.8	4
Caucasian/White	15.4	2
Asian	7.7	1
E. Indian/Indian	0.0	0
Guyanese	7.7	1
Jamaican	7.7	1
Portuguese	0.0	0
Mixed	30.8	4

Age

17 or Younger	0.0	0
18-24	30.8	4
25-34	30.8	4
35-44	30.8	4
45-54	0.0	0
55 and older	7.7	1

Average Age

	32	
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Marital Status

Married	15.4	2
Widowed	0.0	0
Divorced	23.1	3
Separated	7.7	1
Never Married	30.8	4
Common-Law	23.1	3
Other	0.0	0

Education

Primary	15.4	2
Secondary	53.8	7
Tertiary	15.4	2
University	15.4	2

Thematic Coding

Based on the data collected, themes emerged specific to each question asked in the semi-structured interviews. A summary of the themes are depicted in Table 2. Key to this paper, is the question ‘*why did you become involved in drug smuggling?*’ As illustrated in Table 2,

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Table 2

Theme Summaries

<u>Why did you decide to get involved in drug smuggling?</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>
Bamboozled	7
Earn Extra Money	4
Not Her Decision	1
Protect Her Daughter's Father	1

Table 3

'Why did you decide to get involved in drug smuggling?'

Name:	Answer:
Sheree	I never wanna be much of a part of it.
Agatha	...I don't do things like that! I am NOT bringing drugs into the country
Lana	I felt indebted to him ya know he helped me all those months
Amy	He was a good friend...but then I don't even know how my suitcase got broken because I never used my suitcase
Daloris	...it was like a money ting...cause I didn't want they money to do a business.
Innaya	I did not know; because actually I was following my friend going vacation.
Jacquie	I needed the money, single mom TING
Norma	Noo! He neva explain, no...they come and take me off de plane say they find something in de suitcase so I was so shock...
Thelma	Well basically when I did come here it was like 'I need you to take something back for me'...well, I had no choice so.
Angela	...umm so I just got caught up I said I need...And I said ooo ok a little bit of extra money 6000 pounds...that's fine everything go paid for holiday and spending money...so I took the offer
Mariah	...I'm not new to trafficking...I wasn't willing to let my baby's father sacrifice his life
Shanay	...nice guy and everything... when he told me about the drugs I told him it was ok... Yeah and I was ok with it.
Lisa	...it's just paper.' I said cool...agreed to it...sounds fine, fully paid vacation... it was at the point where I mean I was kinda feeling like it was something I had to do.

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four themes emerged which included *bamboozled*, *earn extra money*, *not her decision*, and *protect her daughter's father*. Table 3 provides a brief summary of the females account as to why they decided to get involved in drug smuggling.

Bamboozled

Slightly more than half of the female offenders stated they did not make the decision to become involved, but were duped, into trafficking by the co-conspirator who used underhanded methods to lure their involvement in drug trafficking. For example, to earn extra money, Lisa agreed to carry items for her friend called *profiles*; items she thought were legal. However, once she discovered the profiles were illegal, she agreed to transport the illegal documents to earn the money. Lisa explained that even though it was an opportunity to make extra money by transporting illegal items, she was tricked into trafficking drugs. Lisa described her decision-making experience as,

Four of us interested in making money...Cause I told her right off the bat I'm not interested in anything that has to do with trafficking. I'm not interested in anything that has to do with drugs. I'm not doing nothing like that...it's just paper.' I said cool...agreed to it...sounds fine, fully paid vacation...

Lisa also expressed she decided to traffic the drugs because once she arrived in Trinidad and met with the contact with the *profiles*, she felt somewhat threatened and said,

...and I was like you know it was at the point where I mean I was kinda feeling like it

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was something I had to do. I was here...I was here and the flights were already booked.

And the guy that was here was kinda watching over me and stuff like that too. So I was kinda feeling like it was something I had to do. And plus I knew they knew where my family lived and I figured that they'd be really angry if they...if they knew that I had went back home after spending all the money they'd already spent and didn't get what they were look for.

Shanay was also tricked into drug trafficking by someone she met and had been corresponding with for two years as well as trusted because she thought he was concerned for her welfare. She described the circumstances as she and the previous boyfriend had not been living together because he had become violent and was stalking her. Shanay said she had taken out an order of protection against him, and that because of the situation, attempted suicide. Because she wanted to get away, Shanay accepted the friend's offer of an all-expense paid trip to visit with him in Trinidad. They had planned to travel on to Malta for her to meet his family and celebrate a family-member's wedding, but after arriving in Trinidad, Shanay discovered her friend would not be leaving with her because of a death in his family. Just before it was time for her to leave, he brought a gift basket for her to deliver to the wedding party, and then explained there were drugs in the gift. Although Shanay believed this to be a trip to meet her friend's family, when she was confronted with the truth about trafficking the drugs, she decided to go ahead and take the trip and the drugs to further please her friend. Shanay explained,

And we had discussed our relationship and we had discussed and made plans to build our relationship to be stronger so that's when you know I was telling you how he wanted me

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to meet him his family, and so forth and everything and when he bought me the gift package which the drug was in that...when he had explained it to me, I told him it was ok...when he told me about the drugs...Yeah and I was ok with it...And I decided ok no problem, it's money involved it's a free vacation it's a good guy and ya know and I wanna change my future and the money would help me to make a new start and things like that so I agreed to it.

In another case, Innaya, a very young woman who had never traveled before, accepted the offer presented by a close friend of her family. This was an older woman who offered to take her on vacation. Innaya was very excited to be going outside her own country but soon discovered it would not be much of a vacation. Innaya explained that while they were in Venezuela where they stayed about a week, the friend took her to various places that she described as, 'REALLY rough with the graffiti all over the place...I was like WOW I want to go back [home].' While her friend remained in Venezuela, she sent Innaya on to Trinidad alone. Innaya was very concerned because she could not speak English and she was afraid. The friend told her to find a cab and to give the driver the address she had been provided; luckily Innaya found a very caring and older man that helped her as much as possible during the time she was alone in Trinidad. After more than a week by herself, the friend finally arrived in Trinidad and they left for London. The two took British Airways and when they arrived in London, Innaya's problems began. Innaya gave the details of the experience by saying,

Remember because I took this opportunity ya know but my friend know my mom...we take British Airways right we went to England the Immigration let her go and stopped

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me...more than ten times they scanned my luggage, even myself too...they haven't see a drugs yet but they want to send me in prison...so I ask why you want to send me in jail? [they said] 'because you don't have a ticket, if you stay outside which part who you going to stay with?'...immigration officers asked me so they will charge me a illegal in here...but they didn't charge me yet because I was begging I was crying...so the security agent was feeling REAL sorry for me they carry me to cureub right in this place in here cureub right which is the place is like a house but it locked me from outside...after five or six days I got my ticket to go back my country...I was HAPPY I pack up all my stuff and things and my luggage...so from here I have to fly to Tobago...my ticket I was asking the immigration and like the immigration said you have to fly from Frankfurt Germany you will go back to Malaysia...but before that I get a phone call from my friend right...so she said, yeah, you don't have to worry ya know. I want to let you know something and when I tell you this thing [she said] 'please do not panic', I say what you talkin' about? [laugh] I don't feel panicked right now, I just ready to go home...so she say there's something important in that luggage, right. She say when you reach in the airport in Malaysia somebody will pick you up...So what happened now she say...DA DA...da da in my language in English means drugs. I was like drugs [smile]...I was like YEAH RIGHT, I think this is JOKE!...So I was like YEAH ok, she may be pulling my leg...after I take the call two police officers came and say they want to carry me in luggage area and check my luggage and stuff like that, but I just COOL even though I knew that my friend was calling me and tell me something I was like normal because I

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knew there's no way to find the drugs in there because I been in ABOUT more than like 10 tests when I was in England and same luggage and there is scan, computer ALL, all they do...so they carry me going the baggage area, before they loading the luggage...going inside like a room like this and after that they opened and emptied the luggage right, cut ALL stuff, they touch in the lining you know they try to turn like uh the inner lining the luggage it was like a hard...so they cut the luggage, well I saw when they cut a cupboard like brown color cupboard. And when they open the cupboard inside there it's like a substance, white substance, ya know like a powder or something. I KNOW so stupid I think it was like a flour or something, it's like a normal thing so I just normal but remember she was telling me about cocaine, I never saw how the cocaine looks like.

YES, I study, but I never pay attention about drugs before...

A trusted friend who made arrangements for her to travel to Suriname and bring back a suitcase of clothes also tricked Norma. A Jamaican friend of Norma's friend paid for the six-day vacation and she expected payment upon return of the suitcase. Norma explained that not having enough money was her problem and because she had witnessed other people transporting goods, she thought this was an opportunity to make some much-needed money. Norma described how the connection was made between her friend and his Jamaican friend stating,

...he has a friend. Very believed in Jamaica. But since I come in Suriname when they tell me like such and such a person but he have a friend live in Jamaica that is a friend. Give me d, buy the ticket for me I say alright...give me a trip into Suriname and I going to bring a suitcase with some clothes right.

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According to Norma, she was never told that she would be transporting drugs, and expressed that she decided to bring the suitcase back because she wanted to use the money to finish building her house. She explained that when she arrived in Trinidad, she was shocked when she was removed from the plane and said,

[she was told]...I find cocaine in your suitcase. Me say me miss, she say yes...so I was

so shock. I lift my head and say O my God, why me lord? I start to cry...same time

Another case was that of Amy, who was offered a vacation to get away from her problems at home by a man she described as being a good and trusted friend. Amy, who said she was not a 'goody two shoes,' explained that initially, she and her friend were supposed to go to Trinidad together, but he did not go because of his sick daughter. Because her friend did not accompany her to Trinidad, he arranged for his acquaintances to pick her up at the airport and took her to a guest house. Additionally, if she needed to go somewhere, arrangements were made for her to call her family friend and he would contact the people in Trinidad to pick her up and take her wherever she needed to go. Amy said she was miserable in Trinidad and said, 'cause the whole time I was here I'll I did was cry cry cry cry cry' and she tried to change her ticket to leave early, but it was too expensive. She decided she would remain the extra two days and when she was ready to leave Trinidad, she found her suitcase was broken. Her friend arranged to have a new piece of luggage bought for her from the mall, although she believed the original suitcase was not broken when she arrived, she explained,

Of course, because like I said I'm not a goody two shoes...I grew up around a lot of

things and I have sold drugs but I wouldn't risk my freedom to do something stupid when

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there's many drugs where I live...I like never heard of him trafficking like really. So I never really knew what trafficking was 'til now...but here the actual suitcase that was caught wasn't the actual suitcase I brought with me. So like my suitcase was broken and under the assumption that my suitcase was brought from the mall, because it was in a bag while I was at the mall. Whenever I switched my things from my broken suitcase into the new suitcase so umm pretty sure that that was basically set up...so it was already in a suitcase it was brand new, it came out of the bag and the mall...

Thelma explained she believed she had no choice but to traffic drugs. Moreover, she commented that she met the gentleman on Facebook and they had been *chatting* for about a year. Thelma expressed a belief that she knew the gentleman, had spoken to him over the phone, and generally felt comfortable with him. Thelma described her internet friend as being nice and friendly towards her until it was time for her to leave. Two days before her scheduled departure date, Thelma could not find her passport and had to change her airline ticket. But after her flight had been changed, her Facebook friend told her he did, in fact, find her passport in his friend's taxi. Then once the friend told her she would be trafficking drugs, she commented that she 'realized he probably took my passport...to delay my flight...' Thelma explained that after he told her about the drugs, she began to feel threatened and felt she had no choice but to agree to traffic the drugs. Thelma elaborated,

...Well basically when I did come here it was like 'I need you to take something back for me' I was like what it is? So I was like already here and he started to get violent [5:09 inaudible] pellets...after he told me I wasn't allowed to go anywhere; I didn't come out

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the house from that like two days before...I said, I'm scared to do this kind of thing...he's like 'no it'll be alright' ting ting ting but anyway, 'you don't have a choice'...but what happened is like when he would leave and give me the stuff to swallow, because I only had 28...I couldn't swallow anymore...after he took me to the airport and thing, and he's like 'don't do anything stupid, because I have friends in high places' and stuff... Basically, but I had a choice, if I had went to somebody at the airport, I had a choice there. So basically, half my fault.

Agatha, a businesswoman, was duped by an unscrupulous business acquaintance that had offered her a management position in his company. In order to get her to come to Trinidad, he paid all her expenses and told her she would be checking the area for viability of their specific business. During the time she spent in Trinidad, Agatha took care of business functions but noted what she termed 'red flags' that troubled her. Agatha couldn't understand how her business acquaintance could afford to pay all her expenses based upon the fact she might take the position he offered. When she questioned him, he told her he could afford it all if she took something back with her when she left. This is when Agatha discovered she had been set up to transport drugs; and expressed she would not be involved in anything illegal, and especially drugs because she had her grandchildren to consider. She said,

...I don't do things like that! I said I have grandchildren I am NOT bringing drugs into the country because I don't want my grandchildren getting a hold of drugs.

Agatha then informed the business acquaintance that she wasn't even sure she wanted to be a part of his seamstress endeavor in Trinidad, but because he kept begging her to accept the

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original agreement, she finally agreed. In turn, Agatha made him agree that she would not traffic any drugs and he was required to promise her to never ask, force, or trick her into drug trafficking. Agatha thought she could trust in their agreement and left to return to Canada with the intentions of making the final decision. However, Agatha was apprehended at the airport and charged with possession of cocaine.

Joining her brother on vacation, Lana's brother used her feelings of indebtedness towards him to trick her into drug trafficking. Lana previously had a good job working as a toll service supervisor when she began to have difficulties with the cervical discs in her neck. After missing several months of work she discovered she would not be able to return to work because of her physical ailments. These physical difficulties were followed by other problems such as issues with her car, and through it all, her brother helped with her finances. When she was able, Lana began to work in the family business and was taking business management classes through the on-line university of Everest Institute. When her brother suggested she go on the trip to Guyana, Lana thought it would be a good idea and would give her the opportunity to visit with family and learn something about foreign markets. Lana was unaware this was a trip arranged to traffic drugs back to the United States. Because she felt obligated to her brother, when she finally found out about the drugs, Lana made the decision to traffic drugs for her brother and explained,

...Friday when he calls and he's like um get ready I'm coming ta pick you up. And I'm like huh?!... and he picks me up it was like maybe eleven twelve o'clock at night and we go back to the hotel and he starts explainin stuff to me and I'm like O MY GOD...and um it was ya know likeisay I felt indebted to him [brother] ya know he helped me all

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those months...

Earn Extra Money

Three of the female offenders made the decision to become involved in drug trafficking because they needed to earn extra money. For instance, Daloris, who had previously owned a business and lived in Trinidad, wanted to open another business and needed the extra money for that effort. Daloris also spoke about her lifestyle, and how she went to a party in Jamaica and when asked if she would traffic drugs by someone she met at the party, she didn't hesitate to accept the offer. She explained,

...yeah well [smiles] I gotta tell u I'm a party girl, ok. So I go and meet this guy and he h'ask me to do it. He didn't force me, nor do anything I jus' give'em the h'answer. Umm, I know say it was like a money ting. Yeah it was like a money ting I was trying to make for MYSELF and so that's the reason why I do it. My fault, nobody dey didn't force me ta do it, just get the opportunity and I said yes, 'cause I didn't want they money to do a business.

Daloris explained that had she not gotten caught, she considered drug trafficking more and said she would do it, 'maybe do it two more times...until I achieve what I have.'

Angela, along with her fiancé, decided to traffic in drugs to earn extra money and take a holiday. They planned to get their finances in order, buy property and a luxury car, and had their efforts to traffic the drugs been successful, they wanted to start their own drug trafficking business in Tobago. Angela responded,

...umm so I just got caught up I said I need, I'm actually a manager for a call center, so

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and they said oh wow because you're a manager it would look good if you and your fiancé go on holiday. And I said ooo ok a little bit of extra money 6000 pounds [inaudible 4:45] that's fine everything go paid for holiday and spending money and et cetera so I took the offer.

Jacquie, who had a daughter, was unemployed and having problems with the lady she lived with who wanted more money. Even though she had taken the daughter's father to court, the child support she was awarded was minimal. Jacquie and her daughter were living with someone in St. Vincent and they wanted her to pay more money. So she was ready to get out and conveyed that desperation by wanting to leave to join her friend in England who had previously enlisted in the navy. But Jacquie needed the money to get to England and money to live on until she passed the test and was able to join the English navy. After trying several avenues to get the money she needed, a friend she had trafficked for before happened to call her and Jacquie stated,

I don't know, I needed the money, single mom TING. To me I think I needed the money...I was gonna join the Navy, well when I go England I need money to spend, I need to put her in Daycare if I was gonna go courses [take classes] and ting. I need to put her in daycare and stuff like that. So...it was my fault because, I made a choice...so that's why I told you I feel I needed the money.

Not Her Decision

One of the females in the study stated that she did not make the decision to become involved in drug trafficking. Sheree had previously been involved in drug related crimes including trafficking with four arrests and three convictions. Sheree knew what was going on in

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her home with the drugs, but insisted she neither invited it nor did she try to prevent it. She said she knew exactly what they were going to do with it but didn't ask questions because she didn't want to be a part of it. But her association with her common-law husband and his friends made her a part of it. However, this time Sheree then told the story of the guys who involved her common-law husband and subsequently involved her in the drug trafficking,

...the guys who lived close by and my husband, not my husband my common-law husband he deal with them I guess. So, they get it from different people I guess, they get it from...Venezuela, if deh...you know whoever they hire they always have people to get the stuff down [and] they get rid of it here...like people, different people they give it out to and they...whoever they give it out to I can't say, and some people they give it to leave the country with it or they give it to have it done here...

Sheree explained that she had just returned from a trip to the *States*, buying for her clothing store and she was arrested by the local law enforcement. Expressing it was not her decision to traffic drugs and was more the fault of her common-law husband because he was involved with drug dealers, Sheree explained what happened and said,

...Yes, and every time I come back here I'm in this mess because every time I talk to you, you out of this I come back whoever hook you up wit it in the space of time I'm not there...I'm in this mess.

Protect Her Daughter's Father

Mariah based her decision to traffic drugs to ensure her daughter's father was protected. The child's father had previously been involved with drug dealers and had failed to deliver the

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money he supposedly earned for the sale of 40 pounds of marijuana in Saint Marteen. Mariah explained that when she and her daughter went to visit him, the encounter with the drug dealers took place. She had made arrangements with the drug dealers to be met by someone to pick up the drugs once she arrived back in Canada to even the score for her daughter's father. Mariah also explained that she would never have trafficked for anyone else if it weren't for her daughter's father and she described the situation,

Because I have, I'm not new to trafficking...I've done a lot of trafficking since I was younger and I have a lot of connections EVERYWHERE...So, I told them that if I fix it to traffic for them to get back their money if they'll rest the issues. They said yes...Umm hmm, those people are willing to do anything for their little 40 pounds of weed...and I wasn't willing to let my baby's father sacrifice his life.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine why female offenders decided to traffic drugs. This was a first conviction for drug trafficking for 12 of the females; however, well over half experienced a prior history of drug-related criminal activity. Responses of the female offenders garnered stories that entailed being exploited and tricked into drug trafficking or being manipulated and lured into deciding to become involved in the activity.

Previous research addressed recruitment strategies that include manipulation, coercive tactics, and using the deprivation suffered by many females in society (Fleetwood, 2010). Additionally, prior research has shown disempowerment due to gender, socioeconomics, or marginalization, is also used as a recruitment technique (Joseph, 2006). Similarly, previous

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research stipulated that female offenders take part in drug trafficking for the purposes of economic gain; however, in the current study, there were only three that participated because of economic gain. As such, these findings differ from previous research (Adler & Adler, 1983; Olmo, 1990; Adler, 1993; Griffith, 1997; Davies, 2003; Campbell, 2005; Geiger, 2006, Campbell, 2008; Fleetwood, 2010). Having a sense of empowerment and building self-esteem was also reported in prior studies; however, these factors were not documented in this study (Widom, 1979; Adler, 1993; Edberg, 2001; Campbell, 2005; Fleetwood, 2010). The last parallel between past research and the current study was the effect of childhood experiences, including family instability and abuse (Evans et al., 2002; Li & MacKenzie, 2003; Geiger, 2006; Garcia, 2007; McGarten & Gunnison, 2009; Fleetwood, 2010).

In the current study, the theoretical perspective of Maslow's theory of human motivation was substantiated. Maslow's (1943) theory places human motivational needs in a hierarchy, beginning with the need for basic life-supporting functions such as food and drink. The remainder of these needs, safety, security, love, self-esteem, and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943; Huitt, 2007) were all represented in the interviews with the 13 female offenders incarcerated for drug trafficking in the Caribbean. Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of human needs states that as the physiological requirements to sustain basic life are met, various other needs will arise and take over the consciousness of an individual. One such need is the need for safety, such as having enough money to meet rudimentary family essentials. For marginalized females, participation in crime in order to satisfy the need for safety and security is often the outcome. Additionally, socialization of females in patriarchal societies, historically and culturally, has

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been that of looking to a man as a leader and protector (Siegel, 2008; Akers & Sellers, 2009).

Maslow (1943) also speaks of this facet of socialization in the hierarchal element of the safety need and states that females, in order to feel safe and secure, may look for a *protector*; someone she can trust to help her through her difficult time (Maslow, 1943). Therefore, in explaining why some female offenders fell prey to a *protector*, someone who is stronger and on whom they can depend and believe is serving in that role, as well as examining the socialization of females and striving to meet the safety need, will give a clearer picture of the decision making processes. Examples of that exploitation and manipulation, most often perpetrated by males, follow in the stories of many of the 13 female offenders.

Past research has shown that marginalized or disempowered females will turn to drug trafficking as a means to counter unemployment and subsequent poverty (Adler & Adler, 1983; Olmo, 1990; Adler, 1993; Huling, 1995; Griffith, 1997; Davies, 2003; Geiger, 2006; Joseph, 2006; Campbell, 2008; Fleetwood, 2009). As well, in the theory of human motivation, Maslow (1943) spoke to the all-important need to keep oneself safe or to break free of chronic circumstances, and theorizes that female offenders turn to whatever means necessary to fill that safety need. Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs also addresses self-esteem as 'respect from others' (p. 10). Agatha was exploited and tricked into drug trafficking by a business acquaintance; Lana was manipulated by her brother because of her feelings of indebtedness toward him; but Angela willingly accepted the offer to traffic drugs. The common thread among the three female offenders was their need to please, especially a male figure. For example, Agatha wanted to gain the respect of her business acquaintance by not letting him down.

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Similarly, Lana, who was appreciative of all the help her brother had provided, didn't want to let him down. Angela, because of her position as a manager in her job, wanted the 'respect from others' (Maslow, 1943, p. 10), and a sense of empowerment, and thought she could achieve her needs by owning a home and a luxury car. All three females trafficked drugs, either unknowingly or knowingly, because of their need to build their self-efficacy.

This exploratory study provided some insight into why women engaged in the risk associated with smuggling drugs. While past research has primarily focused on the economic hardships women tried to address by engaging in drug smuggling, other research has emphasized the glorification of drug culture in some communities, past victimization and abuse, and the need to improve one's status. This research revealed some additional reasons that are not typically examined in extant research. In particular, some women rather than making a rational choice to smuggle drugs, were simply tricked or bamboozled into schemes to smuggle. In addition, this study revealed that in many instances, women became involved in smuggling because of their desire to please or help a male figure in their lives. These findings suggest gender dynamics may be a salient factor associated with female involvement in drug smuggling. Given this underlying theme, we argue that more research in this area is warranted. In addition, these preliminary findings also suggest a need to examine gender issues in policies and programs that are designed to address the problem of drug smuggling among women.

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