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# **Women Godfathers of Organised Crime: As Presented by Twenty-Three Auto/Biographies**

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# Abstract

This thesis is guided by a grounded theoretical framework and explores the experiences presented in the auto/biographical accounts of women who have occupied management positions in illicit businesses and organised criminal networks. This project brings attention to a previously under-researched phenomenon within criminological research: the role of women as perpetrators within organised crime and not only as victims. It highlights that the current conceptualisation of organised crime as a “male” business is incorrect. The findings of this project demonstrate that women have occupied controlling positions for at least 150 years, across various countries and industries, and that similarities can be identified in their illicit career pathways.

A narrative analysis is conducted of women's criminal career pathways in illicit business. Consideration is given to social and political factors impacting their entrance into an illicit industry and the complex process of patriarchal bargaining taking place once they have become active in organised criminal behaviours. A commonality between the women's social position, specifically their corresponding levels of social, cultural and economic capital, and the illicit industry they initially participated in was identified. Furthermore, their reliance on gatekeepers to facilitate entrance into an illicit business and their succession within family businesses during times of crisis is discussed. This leads onto consideration of the push and pull factors experienced by the women, because of legislation and policy changes. An examination of women's experiences of abuse and utilisation of violence is conducted to produce a new theoretical model of women's criminal career pathways in organised crime. This considers the business strategies of sex and violence utilised by the women, in conjunction with their reliance on neutralisation techniques to rationalise their illicit business activities, allowing for their continued involvement in organised criminal activities.

Overall, this research highlights the complex processes undertaken by women to achieve leadership positions within organised criminal networks and illicit business. The thesis contributes to criminological knowledge about women's involvement in organised crime and the literature on gender and crime more broadly, through the

analysis of the representations of women's pathways through illicit business and organised criminal networks.

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# CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

Women have traditionally been under-researched in criminology, and, more specifically, their roles in key positions within organised crime. This research project was inspired by Siegel (2014), who purports that evidence clearly highlights the involvement of women in key positions of criminal organisations throughout history and is critical of the lack of focus this has garnered from academia. This study aims to rectify this by moving forward our understanding of women who have sought empowerment through participation in illicit business activities. To gain a meaningful insight into women's involvement in illicit business the researcher of this study deems it necessary to compare phenomena across different contexts, such as by crime type and socio-political environment.

Agnew (2006) highlighted that women's stories are often overlooked in criminological research. Therefore, this project utilises auto/biographical texts as the data offers a window into the social lives of women who have held management positions within organised crime. This project involved the examination of a hard to reach sample, causing the researcher to utilise an innovative method of using documents to reconstruct history to undertake a life course analysis. This is a method more commonly seen within cultural studies, which was appropriated for the purpose of this research. The method used was not problematic, as the researcher adopted the approach stated by Bertaux and Kohli (1984) of assessing life course using biography to understand social lives. Beyond this, there were practical considerations in adopting a research strategy such as access, geography and cos

This chapter situates the thesis by providing an overview of the phenomena to be studied in this research project, and addresses why it is an area worthy of study. The research objectives will be outlined and corresponding questions that guided the collection and analysis of data will be stated. The chapter will finish with a thesis outline to offer the reader an overview of the structure of this doctoral thesis and to safeguard transparency from the outset.

## 1.1. Situating the Research

There is a consensus that within criminological research women have been underrepresented (Hughes, 2005, p. 5), with the field of study being accused of androcentricity (Baro & Eigenberg, 1993; Chesney-Lind, 1989; Daly & Chesney-Lind, 1988; Eigenberg & Baro, 1992; Heidensohn, 1987; Morris & Gelsthorpe, 1991), in that there is a disproportionate focus within the research solely on men (Hannon & Dufour, 1998). Women are consistently rendered invisible and excluded as subjects of inquiry (Garrison, McClelland, Dambrot, & Casey, 1992). Research into crime and offenders has become removed from the key players – the offenders themselves (Hedderman, Gunby, & Shelton, 2011, p. 16) – this project seeks to participate in rectifying this. Hannon and Dufour (1998) highlighted the still common practice of researchers to legitimise their all-male samples with comments such as, “crime is still overwhelmingly a man’s vice” (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994, p. 245).

Turner and Kelly (2009) have observed that there is a “peculiar absence of a gendered perspective in the discourse on organized crime generally” (p. 186). Organised crime is not fundamentally different from other forms of criminal behaviour; based on the assumption that offenders are exploiting opportunities characterised by a lucrative target, in the absence of sufficient protection (Cohen & Felson 1979; Felson 2011). This research will focus primarily on organised crime, which includes predatory crimes as well as the provision of illicit goods and services, where women have been identified as both visible and active within illicit business (Zhang, Chin, & Miller, 2007). There is evidence internationally that women are occupying managerial roles within a diverse range of criminal organisations; although their involvement is statistically low, indications are that it is rising (Beare, 2010).

The importance of the present study lies in the need for an increased understanding of the roles and experiences of women within illicit business. This need stems in part from the conventional account of illicit business, which tells us that the volume of illicit transnational activity has been growing over the past few decades (Andreas, 2011, p. 406). Criminal organisations are becoming increasingly networked (Siegel, 2014), in terms of their influence as well as their structure. They have honed their ability to corrupt

and challenge state institutions, resulting in them becoming “a more insidious threat than their outwardly brutal ancestors” (Bunker & Sullivan, 1998, p. 56). There is a need to recognise that organised crime has the cumulative effect of destabilising both nations and economies (Bunker & Sullivan 1998), making it a viable threat to most jurisdictions, including New Zealand. The serious omission of an investigation into women organised criminals has “contributed to actively creating and maintaining these false, stereotypical representations” (Principato 2007, p. 285), namely that they are predominantly victims or passive participants within such organisations.

According to Bunker and Sullivan (1998), members of criminal organisations are no longer identifiable as ‘usual suspects’. To date the organised crime offender has been a severely under researched subject (Aniskiewicz, 2012), especially women. As stated by Fiandaca (2007), the female organised crime offender has been the subject of very little research giving upcoming research a “fascinating, pioneering character, although one fraught with understandable difficulties, such as establishing current data” (Fiandaca, 2007, p.1). There is a need for a study to originate from the experiences of women, as awareness needs to be raised of the ‘feminine’ role as an essential aspect for understanding the socio-criminal phenomenon of organised crime, which may shift the strategies for combatting it (Principato, 2007). To increase understandings of the organised crime phenomena more comprehensive research needs to be conducted and a comparative aspect applied (von Lampe, 2012). Therefore, this study aims to identify commonalities and differences within the auto/biographical accounts of women in illicit business to improve the foundations on which future research is based.

There is a perception that women’s criminality is increasing and that women are committing more serious offences (Islam, Banarjee & Khatun, 2014). However, the growing incarceration of women can also be because of the increased attention given to women offenders by the criminal justice system, indicating that women may be more likely to be prosecuted nowadays. Either way, as women offenders are the fastest growing segment of the criminal justice system, with their rates of incarceration increasing beyond men (Ferraro, Hartley & Marquet, 2004), there is no reason to believe that this could not also be true among illicit businesses. The perception of an increase in women’s criminality represents important and growing social problems (Javdani, 2013), and means

that it is becoming increasingly necessary to develop and advance women-focused theories of crime (Bloom & Pasko 2004; Kruttschnitt, 2007). The fact that there are few women criminals becomes abnormal and therefore needs to be explained (Principato, et al., 2001), ideally with interactions of researchers from across a range of disciplines. As stated by Dino (2007), perhaps criminologists continuing lack of interest in women's deviancy is motivated by its perceived lack of political importance. The evidence suggests that women are having a rapidly growing role within illicit business (Principato, 2007). Giving women agency to speak for themselves, to tell their own stories, and analysing their narratives will help to fill a gap in our current knowledge.

## 1.2. Research Objectives

The research project brings to the fore the voices of women who have occupied positions of control within illicit business, through the examination of auto/biographical accounts. It is fundamental to our understanding of organised criminal networks to see how over time women's roles have been constructed, especially in terms of visibility (Dino, 2007). Alach (2012) noted that "organised crime does not exist independently of its observers; it is academics, law enforcement personnel, and politicians that give it shape" (p.492), therefore we must examine how women within powerful positions have represented their experiences.

The three dominant themes to be addressed within the research are gender, illicit business, criminal careers and the interplay of these topics, to determine the social reality which can be addressed from the data. A consideration of the similarities and differences between women within illicit business allows for the opportunity to demystify simplistic myths and widespread common clichés (Steffensmeier & Allan 2004, p. 120). These broader themes were the impetus for producing a set of refined questions building on existing literature and filling gaps in our knowledge. The research explores empirically the experience of women operating within illicit business. The main purpose of this project is to move forward theoretical understandings of women's pathways into and through a career in illicit business. Thus, the researcher has employed a framework consistent with grounded theory to allow for a fresh perspective to be presented on existing knowledge (Goulding, 2002).

The research objectives which form the basis for the doctoral study are:

- 1. To evaluate factors impacting women's entry into an organised criminal network or illicit business, as represented in auto/biographical texts.**

Fulfilment of this objective will increase the understanding of causal factors, which are currently unknown in the literature. Analysis can be conducted as to whether broader understandings of women's criminality within the literature can be applied to women within illicit business, or whether their criminal behaviour warrants specific

theoretical understandings. Understanding factors which impact women's entry into management positions in illicit business or large criminal networks will fill a gap in the existing literature.

Key research questions which will aid completion of this research objective are:

- What factors guide women's entry into illicit business?
- Do women's early life experiences impact their pathway into criminality or dictate the industries they enter?
- Is a gatekeeper required to facilitate entry into illicit business?

**2. To identify and analyse the emerging themes contained within the auto/biographies of women who have occupied controlling positions within illicit business.**

Conducting a thematic analysis of the narratives of women who have participated in illicit businesses allows the lived experiences and perception of women to be noted. Auto/biographies of women offer a previously under utilised source of data, which contextualizes their experiences and offers stories from across a social and historical spectrum. In conducting feminist research, it is important to center discussion on the women's representations to conduct meaningful research, which will offer new, previously unexplored perspectives of women's criminality. Applying a combination of thematic analysis and narrative method allows for flexibility in the qualitative design to identify shared experiences and variances which seeks to improve the current limited state of knowledge, while ensuring the richness of the research outputs from a complex data set.

Key research questions which will aid completion of this research objective are:

- Which themes can be identified across the auto/biographical accounts?
- What are the commonalities and variances expressed in the experiences of the women operating within illicit business?
- What strategies are adopted by women to secure a controlling position within illicit business?

### **3. To consider commonalities and differences in career pathways of women operating within illicit business.**

Identification of the commonalities and differences in experiences expressed in the data allows for an in-depth analysis of women's career pathways to be undertaken. Consideration can be given to whether the women's experiences are shared across geographical locations and industries, and whether these commonalities are experienced across different points throughout history.

Key research questions which will aid completion of this research objective are:

- What factors impact a woman's career trajectory in illicit business?
- Where can women within illicit business be located in terms of normative gender roles, and how do women within illicit business reflect upon their own expectations and uses of gender?
- Can a common pathway through a career in illicit business be identified?

This project will allow for an opportunity to examine the representations of the strategies adopted by women to conduct illicit businesses. Examining the theme of power and symbolic domination exercised by women is difficult, as there is a scarcity of available sources and a lack of literature on the subject (Principato, 2007), beyond this it paves the way for further research to be conducted with a focus on women's voices.

## 1.3. Thesis Outline

In overview, this chapter has introduced the focus of this research project – to investigate representations of the experiences of women participating in management position in illicit business and the research questions have been outlined. An outline is now presented of the chapters included in the rest of this thesis, with a brief overview of each to help guide the reader.

**Chapter Two** will highlight the theoretical underpinnings of the research project and summarise the existing state of knowledge within sociological and criminological research. It begins with a review of the existing literature on gender and crime which is relevant to directing this study. The central aspect of this chapter, and the foundation of this thesis, is the academic perspectives applied to the women participating in illicit business. Specifically, consideration will be given to existing research which seeks to address (1) issues in defining organised crime and illicit business to offer the rationale for the definition selected in the context of this study, (2) gendered role expectations within criminal activities to set the groundwork for this project, (3) the existence of criminal careers, explicitly literature relating to women's career progression within illicit business, and (4) the use of techniques of neutralisation by criminals, to overcome moral boundaries and justify their deviant acts. Throughout this chapter gaps within the research will be identified, and the opportunities for this project to contribute to the literature will be stated.

**Chapter Three** introduces the empirical framework of this research project, with an explanation of the methodological approach utilised. This chapter has been divided into five sections to aid in ensuring the transparency of the research process. Firstly, this chapter sets out the philosophical framework of grounded theory that guided the research process. Secondly, the analytic strategy used by the researcher is outlined, which incorporates: (1) grounded theory, (2) thematic analysis, and (3) narrative method. Thirdly, the value of auto/biographical research is discussed. Fourthly, the operational aspects of the methodological approach are highlighted to outline the step by step process undertaken by the researcher including the sampling strategy, data coding and data

analysis. Fifthly, the chapter will conclude with a discussion of the ethical considerations and limitations relevant to this research project.

**Chapters Four and Five** present the findings of this research project. Throughout these chapters, as prescribed by the overriding grounded theoretical model guiding this project, the relevance of the findings to existing literature is presented and analysed. Salisbury and Van Voorhis (2009) identified pathways when investigating women's incarceration. These were: a childhood victimisation pathway, a relational pathway and a social and human capital pathway. Their findings will guide the discussion across these chapters, to identify the career trajectories of women in illicit business as contained within their auto/biographical accounts. Although these chapters are presented individually the discussions presented are interlinked and will include consideration of: (1) the women's circumstances prior to their entry into illicit business and the factors influencing the illicit industry entered, (2) the women's reframing of violent experiences to enhance their careers, the process of patriarchal bargaining undertaken to derive benefits and the techniques of neutralisation utilised. Each of the discussion chapters will highlight the key contributions the research makes to the existing knowledge on women's involvement in illicit business.

**Chapter Six** concludes the thesis with an overview of the key discussion points and relates these findings back to the research questions which were set out in the introductory chapter. This chapter finishes with a reflection of the researcher on the research process, the contributions this project has made to filling gaps in existing knowledge, limitations of the study and offers suggestions for expanding the research in the future.

## CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review and Theoretical Underpinnings

As outlined in the previous chapter, this chapter sets out the theoretical underpinnings of the research project. Because the study is guided by a grounded theory framework, the researcher attempted to enter the field without preconceived notions, prior bias or assumptions. A limited literature review was initially conducted to situate the research and to identify limitations in the existing knowledge base, regarding women's participation in illicit business. A further, in-depth literature review was conducted after formalisation of the data collection, coding and analysis had occurred. Therefore, relevant literature is consulted, comparisons made and the contributions to existing knowledge are noted throughout the discussion chapters of this thesis (see chapters four and five). This approach was adopted as Glaser and Strauss (1967) recognised this to be the best approach to limiting the impact of preconceived notions and researcher bias.

Consequently, this chapter will provide a review of the concepts important to this study. To address the research questions, it is necessary to begin by setting out the definition of illicit business/organised crime that will be applied throughout. There is a lack of synthesis in the literature regarding terms, and therefore a description of the rationale used for selecting an appropriate definition for this research has been given to ensure there is clarity from the outset. This discussion utilises the work of Albanese (2000), Sergi and Lavorgna (2014), and von Lampe (2012; 2006) to select an appropriate definition to address the research objectives. To avoid confusion the term *illicit business* will be used throughout the thesis and, for the purpose of this study, is considered to be synonymous with the principles of organised crime identified below. However, terms are used interchangeably when citing other research findings or academic perspectives.

There are three dominant themes within the criminological literature that have an obvious bearing on this study: 1) gender and crime, 2) women's positions within illicit business and, 3) criminal careers. The identification of these themes guided the preliminary literature review, and provided the theoretical underpinnings for this research, allowing the researcher to identify limitations in current scholarly work that this project could seek to address.

Therefore, the section titled Criminal Capital (see section 2.2.) will review current perspectives on gender and crime more broadly by looking at the work of key theorists, such as Steffensmeier (1986), Chesney-Lind (2007; 1989; 2006; see also Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004), and Daly (1988) to highlight gendered expectations of criminal activity and the fluidity of the concept of gender. This provides a foundation for examining contemporary research on the roles that women have been acknowledged to occupy within illicit business. Utilising the work of Steffensmeier (1986) and Schwartz and Roche (2013), this chapter explores the arguments put forward in the literature that women do not have sufficient criminal capital to participate in illicit business. This requires consideration of social expectations of gender as well as the perceptions of gendered roles within illicit business.

Next, the literature surrounding women in control of illicit business and their career progression will be addressed to narrow the focus and identify the theoretical underpinnings of the research. This chapter will highlight the argument that there is a need for recognition of similarities in the operation of licit and illicit business. An overview of existing perspectives on women's criminal careers (see section 2.3), particularly pathways into crime, will be set out, with reference to the work of Salisbury and Van Voorhis (2009). Literature will be discussed that focuses on women in both licit and illicit business; this will be presented across three subsections. Consideration is given to current understandings of the role of women in non-traditional occupations and male-dominated work environments more broadly, before narrowing the focus to women's career progression within illicit business.

Finally, an overview of the Sykes and Matza's (1957) neutralisation theory will be presented, in conjunction with subsequent empirical studies which have applied their techniques of neutralisation, to understand processes undertaken by individuals to overcome moral boundaries or minimise guilt (see section 2.4). Throughout, areas will be identified where this research can seek to contribute to the current academic knowledge or move forward existing perspectives.

## **2.1. The Illicit Business of Organised Crime: A Working Definition**

To ensure clarity from the outset this section will outline the working definition of illicit business being used to guide this research project. It will begin with an overview of the issues identified by scholars in selecting an explanation of a phenomena which is constantly in flux, where a suitable definition is contingent on the user and their purpose. Discussion will then move on to consider overriding elements associated with illicit business and organised crime to identify key factors for consideration in this research.

Organised crime is conceptualised differently across geographic locations and agencies, as definitions are applied to accommodate their own mandates (Albanese, Das, & Verma, 2003). Scholars (such as: Cornish & Clarke, 2002; Hagan, 2006; Levi, 2007) note that organised crime can be understood either in terms of the organisation of illicit business or in terms of the organisation of criminals. This study adopts the perspective that the organisation of illicit business is central to the concept of organised crime, accepting the standpoint of Albin (1971) that “criminal groups are dynamic entities, not static ones. As such, they change with the nature of the criminal acts they commit” (p.49). There is a lack of consensus among criminal justice professionals, scholars and policy makers as to the meaning of the term ‘organised crime’, but it is often used interchangeably with the term ‘illicit business’. Therefore, the terms organised crime and illicit business are used synonymously to aid discussion throughout this thesis.

According to von Lampe (2012), the importance of examining individuals is apparent when understanding that illicit business is becoming more about partnerships and small enterprises, with “two or three core members and ephemeral employer-employee relations, on the one hand, and market-based transactions between independent actors, on the other” (von Lampe, 2012, p. 183; see also: Bruinsma & Bernasco, 2004; Decker & Townsend Chapman, 2008; Junninen, 2006; Leman & Janssens, 2008; Natarajan, 2006). A limitation of this research is the lack of an agreed upon definition of organised crime and illicit business, and the lack of existing empirical studies conducted on both organised crime and illicit business. The definition applied to organised crime alters according to its purpose, the agency applying it and geographic location.

To determine which women should be included in this research project it is necessary to determine the definition of organised crime which will be applied throughout the study. It was possible for the researcher to find more than 200 definitions, which had been utilised across academic disciplines and by various public and private institutions. These had to be synthesised to uncover an appropriate definition which would allow for the research questions in this project to be addressed. The following section considers the commonalities which run across definitions regardless of who it has been produced by and for which application.

The literature indicates that there is no generally accepted definition of organised crime (Abadinsky, 2010). However, there is agreement among scholars that organised crime functions as a continuing enterprise, rather than a one-off meeting of individuals to carry out an illegal act (Albanese, 2000), which is driven by an overarching desire to make financial profits through illegal activities (Ortmeier, 2013, p. 43; Newton, 2011, p. 2; Finckenauer, 2005, pp. 81-82). Among criminologists a consensus has emerged that organised crime must involve a number of individuals motivated for the purpose of economic enrichment (Desroches, 2007, p. 831). This, for example, eliminates the inclusion of groups of young men who steal cars for the purpose of joyriding. In short, the term organised crime has often been misused by police agencies who have tried to criminalise certain member of social groups through the application of an “organised crime” label, this has led to confusion in the concept of illicit business/ organised crime. Therefore, to retain any meaning of the terms organised crime and illicit business, these concepts should be used in circumscribed ways. It is important to note that although organised crime involves two or more individuals in close social interaction it remains non-religious or revolutionary in its ideology (Abadinsky, 2010), a key point which often differentiates organised crime from terrorist groups.

Beyond involving two or more individuals, the term ‘organised’ highlights the need for criminals to be operating as an organisation (Cressey, 1969, p. 72; Siegel & Nelen, 2017). The idea of an organisation carries the suggestion of a criminal structure (Morselli, 2009), which would include coordination and levels of management (Andersen & Taylor, 2007, p. 186; Anderson, p. 250). There is a need for a division of labour (Cressey, 1969, p. 319), alongside the coordination of tasks according to rules. Beyond this, is the need to preserve the organisation against both internal and external threats (Conklin, 2007, p. 73).

Dobovsek (2008) described the organisational structure of organised crime as a criminal enterprise, consisting of individuals with a criminal career or vocation. However, the organisation should be seen to have limited or exclusive membership (Abadinsky, 2010).

Traditionally, organised crime was presumed to be hierarchical in structure. However, recent research has suggested that a vertical hierarchy with lifelong, familial commitments may no longer be necessary, as more ephemeral and non-hierarchical relationships within organised crime are emerging (Godson, 2003). When discussing the structure or management within organised crime, Chow (2003) highlighted the overall organisational structure as being under the direction of an individual or a group of individuals operating within a managerial capacity. The internal structure of an organised crime group will vary according to the illegal activity which it undertakes. For example, a group distributing illegal drugs will be structured differently to a group involved in human trafficking for sex (Beirne & Messerschmidt, 2011). It has been noted that the organisational structures of organised crime groups have changed across time. It is no longer presumed to operate only locally, “like legitimate business, organized crime has gone international” (Ryan, 1995, p. 1).

Organised crime operates and is successful because of its ability to supply illicit goods and/or services in accordance with demand (Beirne & Messerschmidt, 2011, ). From a market-based approach it is a rational response (Demeleitner, 1994) to public demands (Hagan, 2010). The specific structure of an organised crime group will reflect the cultural and social stipulations of the societies in which it is generated (Schulte-Bockholt, 2001, pp. 238-239). Some have described organised crime as appearing as a “parallel society” (Bossard, 1990, pp. 110-111), highlighting the importance of an appreciation of varying social opportunity structures where illicit business has been identified. This applicability of Bossard’s (1990) observation is considered in chapter four (section 4.1), where an evaluation is conducted of the impact social structures have on the women’s opportunities when entering illicit business.

Organised crime is deemed to be monopolistic in its approach to business (Abadinsky, 2010; Albanese, 2000) and self-perpetuating (Grennan & Britz, 2006). Black, et al. (2000) defined organised crime as involving the “methodical perpetration of offences that, each separately or collectively, have a considerable impact, for reasons of profit or

power” (p. 3). Conklin (2007; Vito & Maahs, 2012) differentiated organised crime from other forms of structured criminal activity because of its complexity and durability being more akin to the characteristics of a formal (legal) organisation, operating as an illicit business. This continuity of the criminal organisation over time is important (Gilbert, 2007). Individuals must participate in illicit business activities on more than a one-off occasion and their participation may exist across crimes, such as initially participating in drugs trafficking and subsequently utilising a legitimate business to launder money. These groups have a varying capacity to commit harm, be it economic, physical, psychological or societal harm (Finckenauer & Voronin, 2001).

Analysis of criminological and legal literature indicates that the overriding perspective is that illicit business operates as an opportunistic economic agent which will adapt where necessary to respond to political and economic conditions to prosper (Galeotti, 2004). Consideration of the impact of political conditions on the women’s illicit business strategies is highlighted in chapter four (section.4.2). Illicit business’s core characteristics are identified by Andreas and Wallman (2009) as being “unauthorised by the sending and/or receiving jurisdiction and [operated] via mechanisms designed to evade detection and apprehension” (p. 225). Therefore, for the purpose of this research project, women will be deemed to have been a member of an organised crime group/illicit business and have satisfied the inclusion criteria where:

- There are two or more members;
- There is a continuation of criminal activity, to supply illicit goods or services in response to a demand from the public;
- The criminal organisation is operating for economic gain with a monopolistic agenda;
- There is no overriding religious, political or revolutionary ideology driving the groups’ criminal activities

Beyond this, Von Lampe (2012, p. 182) described research into illicit business traditionally being grouped into five themes: (1) research into specific organised crime offenders, (2) the modus operandi and logistics of profit-oriented illicit business, (3) the organisation of individuals involved in illicit activities, (4) the role of established groups in the commission and control of illicit business (such as the Italian Mafia or the Chinese

Triads), and (5) the geography of illicit business. This research will be focused on von Lampe's first theme, with a focus primarily on women conducting illicit business, however, the other themes will arise throughout as supplementary points for consideration.

With a working definition of illicit business identified, the following sections can consider current interpretations of the relationship between gender and crime more broadly, before narrowing the focus to theoretical understandings of gender and illicit business. An overview of the current literature relating to women's interactions with illicit business and the appearance of a female criminal career is highlighted to demonstrate the theoretical underpinnings which initially guided the study and aided in the formulation of the research objectives.

## **2.2. Criminal Capital: Gendered Role Expectations**

This section will begin with a critical review of the current state of knowledge which directly impacts this study. This requires consideration of traditional perspectives of women's criminality, as well as contemporary work, before narrowing the focus to research dealing with illicit business as a subset of the literature on gender and crime. Within criminological research there has been limited focus on women's criminality, and the development of theory has tended to stem from male dominated research (Daly & Chesney-Lind, 1988), both in terms of the researcher and participants. The involvement of women in deviant and criminal acts is at odds with societal norms ascribed to women. Overriding is the view that women are obliged to play a nurturing role, where social relations are central, and that their beauty and moral virtue is paramount (Steffensmeier, Schwartz, & Roche, 2013). Therefore, women traditionally have been deemed to lack the requisite qualities to be of use to criminal organisations (Steffensmeier & Terry, 1986). Scholars have noted that women are "socialized to an ethic of care" (Steffensmeier, Schwartz, & Roche 2013, p.452; see also England, 2005; Gilligan, 1982), resulting in the presumption that women have less 'criminal capital'. This gendered approach to enquiry has resulted in there being a lack of research focusing on illicit businesswomen, let alone their pathways or characteristics.

In response to this, questions to be considered throughout are whether, in the context of organised crime, women have the criminal capital to be successful and what this entails, and whether gender is a tool which can be utilised by women to secure a position and progress within organised crime. To allow the research to address these questions, the current state of knowledge must be considered. Therefore, this section will consider gender and crime: the construction of gender within industrial society, the fluidity of gender and the impact that the marginalisation of women has had on the understanding of criminality.

The traditional assumption is that normative notions of femininity are incompatible with criminal behaviour (Berrington & Honkatukia, 2002; Willemsen & van Schie, 1989). Reviews of the gender differences of women criminals in relation to men having only more recently been conducted by feminist criminologists (Belknap, 2007; Chesney-Lind, 1986; Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004; Chesney-Lind & Sheldon, 2004). Early

criminological theory has been accused of placing women within a conferred status as either a wife or mother, viewing them as the moral guardians of the home (Daly & Chesney-Lind, 1988). Historically, the socially accepted role of a women was to be submissive and secondary to men (Adler, 1975), leading to the association of criminality with masculinity. This resulted in women who have committed a criminal offence being vilified and labelled as doubly deviant (Wilczynski, 1991; Bradley & Walters, 2011). Women are labelled as such for not only having broken the law, but also having “transgressed the norms and expectations associated with appropriate feminine behaviour” (Berrington & Honkatukia, 2002, p. 50). However, the dominant myth that women offenders are biologically suspect, or pathological, if they commit crime has been deemed to be false by contemporary feminist theorists (Carlen, 1985).

Key issues to be examined in this research project are where women within illicit business can be located, according to normative gender roles. And, how they have reflected upon their own experiences and uses of stereotyped gender norms. For example, how do women negotiate notions of gender throughout their criminal involvement? In conjunction with this, an analysis of the mechanisms utilised to justify their illicit acts will be considered with reference to the appearance of rationalisations or neutralisations throughout the data. To query whether the women in this study are adhering to gendered norms and how they utilise feminine or masculine traits it is necessary to unpack the understanding of the fluidity of gender and the impact that social expectations have on our current perceptions of women’s criminality. Therefore, the following section will discuss the theoretical positions of Chesney-Lind (1986), Daly (1988), West and Zimmerman (1987) and Steffensmeier (1986; 2013) because of their perspectives being influential in the direction that this project took.

### **2.2.1. The Social Expectations and Fluidity of Gender**

Across the sociological literature, gender is considered to be learned through socialisation (Carter, 2014; Coltrane, 2000), with biologically determinist viewpoints generally being rejected (Wilson, 2000). Carter (2014) utilises identity theory to investigate why gender identities are perpetuated within society. Identity theory (Stryker & Burke, 2000), identity control theory (Burke & Stets, 2009) and social identity theory (Stets & Burke, 2000)

offer theoretical frameworks that can be used to examine the sociological facets of gender and gender socialisation. Identity in this context refers to “parts of a self-composed meaning that persons attach to the multiple roles they typically play in highly differentiated contemporary societies” (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 284). These theories identify the self as reflexive, in that through a process of self-categorisation and identification an individual can form their identity (Stets & Burke, 2000). Utilisation of these frameworks will allow for an examination to be conducted of how the participants in this research negotiated their own gendered identities, to facilitate an illicit career. Furthermore, consideration can be given to the women’s construction of a social identity within illicit business, how this impacts progression and shapes rationalisation strategies, an area of focus currently lacking in the existing literature. Social Identity refers to being at one with a specific group, being the same as other members and seeing things from a shared perspective (Stets & Burke, 2000). Although Carter (2014), acknowledges that aspects of social identity theory are in their infancy, the application of these theories to women and illicit business can contribute to making them more robust.

The social construct of gender has seen women and men being placed into unequal positions in terms of their roles within society (Anderson, 2005). This becomes increasingly important when we consider the treatment of women within criminological research, as processes have been identified to disproportionately impact women and girls (Javdani, 2013; Javdani, Sadeh, & Verona, 2011). Effectively, criminal justice systems deal with women and their crimes in relation to the level of deviation from expected gender roles. For example, according to Wilczynski (1991) if a woman has perpetrated a violent crime, the criminal justice system may judge her actions alongside whether she is perceived to have lived her life according to social expectation, whether for instance she has been a good wife or a good mother. This is supported by Carlen’s (1983) study on women’s imprisonment, which concluded that ‘good’ mothers would be treated with more leniency than those deemed to be ‘bad’ mothers.

Normative gender role expectations influence legal and social opinions of what is deemed to be ‘appropriate’ behaviour for women (Armstrong, 1999; Broverman, et al., 1972; Chesney-Lind, 1999; Grabe, et al., 2006; Naylor, 2001; Willemsen & van Schie, 1989), and the punishment they receive (Roberts, 1993). Depictions of men and women along with the behaviours they should portray have been governed almost exclusively by males,

more specifically by white, privileged men (Daly & Chesney-Lind, 1988). The development of what are considered to be acceptable gender roles and norms within society impact on social expectations of men and women's behaviour (Sjoberg & Gentry, 2007). Gender norms associated with women (i.e. those considered to comprise feminine norms) include characteristics of non-violence, innocence and that of the nurturing mother.

This has led to the necessity that women "do gender" (West & Zimmerman, 1987; see also Butler, 1993). West and Zimmerman's (1987) work on gender has been credited with moving forward feminist theory, by cementing a move away from static gender-role and biological-determinist models (Jurik & Siemsen, 2009), arguing that gender is something we do, not something we are. Therefore, as stated by Deutsch (2007), gender must continually be reconstructed as social normative conceptions of men and women alter. This conclusion assumes that people act with an acute awareness that they will be judged by society per their adherence to appropriate masculine and feminine behaviour. "Doing Gender" by West and Zimmerman (1987) emphasised the dynamic nature of gender. The way in which women 'do gender' has been empirically studied in various contexts since West and Zimmerman's (1987) initial research.

Following on from this, Connell (2005) observed that the way we discuss masculinities and femininities depends on social context. This includes George's (2005, p. 342) analysis that women within sport must discover "intricate and nuanced ways ... [to] do gender", by improving their strength and fitness without their appearance becoming 'masculine'. And, Pini's (2005) study of women who became agricultural leaders in Australia, which found that females had to enact aspects of conventional masculinity by doing the "dirty work" and evidencing they could perform mechanical tasks on machinery, whilst also asserting a "nurturing, communicative, and empathetic" (p.82) type of leadership. Gerstel and Sarkisian (2006) argue that these gender behaviours and perceptions of gender stem from the different social locations that men and women occupy.

Although gender norms affect all members of society, Viki, Massey and Masser (2005) emphasise that women criminals may suffer particularly severe consequences when they are deemed to have deviated from these ascribed gender roles. The focus on a women's

betrayal of societal gender norm expectations has resulted in a failure to appreciate other explanations for their offending (Barnett, 2006). Therefore, research with a clear focus on the experiences of women within illicit business is necessary to minimise the danger of offenders being treated according to misleading gendered stereotypes. To achieve this, it is important to consult women's voices, to acknowledge their representations and consider the explanations they offer for their own offending.

Gender practices are “institutionalized and widely recognized, but also... dynamic emergent, local, variable, and shifting” (Martin, 2003, p. 351; see also, Butler, 1993, p.1990). Research suggests that constructions and the practice of femininity can be altered by individual experiences, for example victimisation (Connell, 2002). A feminist pathway perspective proposes a framework for understanding the impact of a patriarchal culture on gendered involvement in crime. Although this pathway is shaped by gender and offers an explanation of how gender matters as it relates to crime, we do not know how women construct gender along this route (Carr & Hanks, 2013).

Schippers (2007) introduced the idea of pariah femininities, as

“the quality content of hegemonic masculinity enacted by women-desire for the feminine object (lesbian), authority (bitch), being physically violent ('bad-ass girl'), taking charge and not being compliant (bitch, but also 'cock-teaser' and slut), they are necessary and compulsively constructed as feminine when enacted by women; they are not masculine” (Schippers, 2007, p. 95).

Pariah femininities are illustrated by actions which disrupt or contest hegemonic masculinity, and its position at the top of the gender hierarchy. The term 'hegemonic masculinity', most often associated with the work of Connell (1982; 1983; 1987), focuses on how particular groups of men inhabit positions of power, and the processes they undertake to legitimatise and reproduce social relationships that secure their dominance (Carrigan, Connell, & Lee, 1985). This is achieved through the presentation of norms associated with 'maleness'. Sexton (as cited in Donaldson, 1993, p.644) suggested that “male norms stress values such as courage, inner direction, certain forms of aggression, autonomy, mastery, technological skills, group solidarity, adventure and considerable amounts of toughness in mind and body”.

A consideration of the auto/biographical accounts of illicit businesswomen will allow for an appreciation of how women experience and place their own femininity throughout their lifetime. Observations of female gang members demonstrate large shifts in traditional gender roles (Valdez, 2007). Klein and Kress (1976) believed that women will remain submissive within society, but that crime would increase as the traditional role of women begins to change. However, when women commit serious offences they are still considered to have acted in opposition to feminine ideals (Sjoberg & Gentry, 2007). For example, when women have acted violently, especially against children, social outrage is abundant as they have failed to fulfil society's maternal expectations of them (Barnett, 2006).

Social norms can become more powerful than legally imposed expectations, as they inform individuals how to behave and how to respond to others who deviate (Baker, 2008). Empirical studies have found that the responses of the criminal justice system vary according to the gender of the offender (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004; Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004; Javdani, Sadeh & Verona, 2011). Whether women fall into a patriarchal stereotype of femininity or not effects the treatment that they receive at many stages within the criminal justice system, not only policing or the courts (Mallicoat, 2007). Walby (1990) defined patriarchy as "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women"(p.20), and where men are valued more highly (Belknap, 2007). Within patriarchal society, it is a combination of institutional, societal and cultural processes which impact criminality, and gender inequality which results in variations in offending (Adler, 1975; Gaardner & Belknap, 2002; Heimer & De Coster, 1999; Katz, 2000; Lynch, 1996; Messerschmidt, 1993; Maher et al. 2006; Miller, 2008; Miller & Mullins, 2006; White, 2009). However, the impact that patriarchy has on women's criminality is often overlooked in criminological research (Parker & Reckdenwald, 2008; Yllo, 1983, 1984; Yllo & Straus, 1984). This project will assess how the sample negotiated gendered expectations within environments governed by patriarchal principles.

Women offenders are challenging society's understandings of masculine stereotypes. As stated by Daly and Chesney-Lind (1998, p.499) "masculinity and men are not only defined as not feminine, but also as superior to femininity and to women". There is a fine

line between what is seen to be worthy of praise and normal masculine behaviour, and recognising behaviour as illegal or wrong. For example, risk-taking and little regard for social conventions are often attributes admired in men, conversely femininity and criminality are seen to be opposing terms (Steffensmeier, Schwartz, & Roche, 2013). The following section will consider the existing state of knowledge on women who have control of illicit businesses and how the literature views gender within this context.

Research which has focused on male participants sees women as lacking the prerequisites for success within criminal networks (Maher 1997; Mullins & Wright 2003). This is an important aspect of the current research project as previous research focusing on criminal careers has enabled the advancement of knowledge about the sequence of events and progression through criminal activity (Farrington, 1992). It would be beneficial to also improve the state of knowledge on the roles of women within organised crime, to fill gaps in the existing knowledge. This section will review current literature addressing criminal careers and more specifically the criminal careers of individuals within organised crime. Consideration will be given to entry, career progression and management styles.

### **2.2.2. Gender in the Context of Illicit Business**

It has been suggested that a denial of women's involvement in organised crime by criminologists may arise as much from "ignorance and misinformation as a deliberate, ideological resistance" (Flavin 2001, p. 273). Although contemporary criminologists have challenged the biased portrayals of women's offending within the media and law (Morrissey, 2003), this has not necessarily been extended to studies of women in organised criminal networks or illicit business. Existing literature has identified that women are visible in criminal activity at all levels, and that they can use the masculine traits, such as aggression, to their advantage. Some authors, such as Campbell (2008) and Carlen (1982), have suggested that women organised criminals have been able to utilise normative aspects of both femininity and masculinity in their lives. The tendency for women occupying managerial positions within illicit business to act with increased aggression in comparison to male counterparts has been explained in relation to female subjects existing within a specifically violent context - a context that requires coldness and indifference as an inherent part of their structured professional criminal activities (Siebert, 1996). Therefore, it is argued that women must violate gender norms and

embrace violence in order to succeed. Women ‘queen pins’, for example, contradict the stereotypes of women in the drug trade. Campbell (2008) documented ‘The Blond’ (or ‘La Guera’, a woman who was a high-level drug trafficker in Juarez, Mexico) as being responsible for numerous public drug executions.

Similarly, women in the Italian Mafia who have assumed managerial positions are “characterised by powerful, self-confident, enterprising personalities, as well as a heightened awareness of the culture of violence” (Fiandaca, 2007, p.3). The testimony of Rita Di Giovine (a woman involved with the Ndrangheta, an Italian organised crime group) who turned state witness, portrayed Mafia women as “strong, active women, violent, and frequently cruel specifically toward other women” (Siebert, 2007, p. 41). Within organised crime, the threat of violence has been found to underlie the power of individuals (Mieczkowski, 1994). This questions normative gender stereotypes, as the literature suggests that women are involved in organised criminal activities, and that within these organisations they hold powerful positions, where they perpetrate acts of violence. The use of violence by women within illicit business across industries and time is largely absent from the literature, an omission this project seeks to address.

Evidence exists that women have learned to overcome the labels which are routinely used to define them in criminal networks by men of being untrustworthy, and physically and emotionally weak (Lauderback, Hansen, & Waldorf, 1992; Maher & Daly, 1996; Miller, 1998). Spitzer, et al. (2003) posited that women can engage in the operations of organised crime without conflicting with their gendered “cultural role fulfilment” (p. 282), or being accused of maternal deprivation as described by Belknap (2007, p.26; see also: Campana, 2016). Women have been identified as visible, active and willing participants within organised crime, having been identified as acting as independent contractors, not only as subordinates who were following instructions from men (Boyd, 1989; Zhang, Chin, & Miller, 2007). Zhang, Chin and Miller (2007) found that women’s ability to interpret personal actions through the lens of gender appropriate behaviour meant that they were beneficial to organised criminals groups, more specifically to human smuggling networks. This supports the argument that as leaders within illicit business, women are able to adopt strategies to succeed which may be more readily associated with traits of masculinity, such as assertiveness or aggression (van Koppen, De Poot, & Blokland, 2010).

Like research on women and crime more broadly, literature on women within organised crime often identifies women as victims (Beare, 2010). Further, women's involvement in illicit business is generally linked to their own victimisation by organised criminal networks, such as identifying women who traffic other women as being former prostitutes themselves (Kallinger, 2007; Lo Iacono, 2014; Turner & Kelly, 2009). Block (1977) stated that organised crime is neither ethnically nor sexually segregated. The roles women are taking in organised crime is moving beyond traditional stereotypes (such as women as victims), they are able to adopt stylised *capo* roles or macho postures to their own ends as women (Campbell, 2008). It has been suggested that the success of women within organised crime can to an extent be attributed to their ability to play on preconceptions about the "weaker sex", allowing women to take advantage of gendered stereotypes surrounding crime (Longrigg, 2004), and the gendered assumption made by their male colleagues. In Pearson's (1997) study of women's aggression she concluded that they have more at their disposal than the clichéd roles of violence, associated as a masculine trait, they have sex, cunning, duplicity and social consensus (Longrigg, 2004). According to Campbell (2008), woman organised criminals have been able to successfully utilise normative aspects of femininity and masculinity in their lives. In such cases, we are likely to see "the women as the real power centre and the men as soldiers, mediators, and managers who [obey] the women's orders" (Saviano, 2007, p. 144). Therefore, the study will consider how the women included in this study use violence, as well as other strategies implemented to access and maintain control within illicit business, to contribute to this existing body of literature.

In relation to women in managerial positions within illicit business it will be interesting to determine whether they are reinforcing patriarchy, how they rationalise their roles within the organisation and if they represent their actions as being in accordance with the gendered expectations of wider society. As constructions of femininity change and vary over time (Carr & Hanks, 2013), the journey that women have travelled in illicit business, in utilising masculine and feminine traits, may offer an insight into reasons for their success. This can be determined through analysing the ways in which femininity is presented and negotiated throughout the women's personal accounts. A narrative analysis of women's accounts offers an opportunity to explore the use of gender roles in illicit business, which has lacked previous exploration. This project seeks to examine the participants 'criminal capital', and how this was represented in their narratives. To

establish this, it is necessary to consider the women's representations of their own identities, whether this conforms to normative gendered expectations or challenges traditional notions of the value of masculine and feminine traits within crime and business. Therefore, the next section will examine the criminal careers of women as it is presented within the existing academic literature.

## 2.3. Criminal Careers

Blumstein, et al. (1986) provided a conceptual framework which focused on explaining the longitudinal sequence of offending through the life course of an individual.

Researchers have focused on patterns which occur in criminal activity and career paths for a long time. This approach can be seen in the early work of Von Scheel (1890) which identified that “ideal criminal statistics...would follow carefully the evolution of criminal tendencies in a given population” (p. 191). It has been shown that there is a lack of research on women in crime (see section 2.2) and more specifically, there is a paucity of research on women’s criminal careers, with a number of authors questioning whether the term ‘criminal career’ can be applied to women at all (Warren & Rosenbaum, 1986, p. 393). The research gap in investigating the criminality of women, often characterised as the “invisibility doctrine” (Baro & Eigenberg, 1993; Belknap, 2007), is especially pronounced in the research into women’s criminal careers. It has been found that women are far less likely to engage in career criminality than men (Dean, Brame, & Piquero, 1996; Wolfgang, Figlio, & Sellin, 1972), which may explain why they have been largely excluded from prior research on illicit businesses.

This is an important aspect of the current research project as previous research focusing on criminal careers has enabled the advancement of knowledge about the sequence of events and progression through criminal activity (Farrington, 1992). It would be beneficial to also improve the state of knowledge on the roles and the industries in which women operate illicitly, as this will fill a gap in the existing research. This section will review current literature addressing criminal careers and more specifically the criminal careers of individuals within organised crime and illicit business. Consideration will be given to entry, career progression and management styles.

Research conducted on women’s pathways into delinquency, without a specific focus on illicit business, concentrate on “victimization, role entrapment, economic marginality, and survival needs” (Steffensmeier & Allan, 1996, p. 470). Such factors are considered to be key drivers into women’s criminality. Beyond this, a criminogenic influence which markedly impacts women is their close relationship with others involved in crime (Brown & Bloom, 2009; Miller & Mullins, 2009; Morash, 2006). Findings have supported the argument that social bonds markedly affect women’s entrance to criminality, much more

so than their male equivalents (Agnew, 2005; Benda, Harm, & Toombs, 2005; Daigle, Cullen, & Wright, 2007; Hartman, et al., 2009; Haynie, Steffensmeier, & Bell, 2007). A key example would be to consider romantic relationships, where the influence of a criminal intimate partner has been seen to have a greater impact on women and their likelihood of becoming involved in criminal activities (Benda, Harm, & Toombs 2005; Simons, et al., 2002). This research will investigate pathways to women's entry into illicit business. Consideration will be given to whether this is in agreement with existing literature on women's entry to criminality more broadly, and whether or not an intimate partner or familial connection has acted as a gatekeeper.

Salisbury and Van Voorhis (2009) identified criminal pathways when investigating women's incarceration. Three such pathways were elucidated in their account: a childhood victimisation pathway, a relational pathway and a social and human capital pathway. Although it has been widely argued that street or blue-collar crime is rooted in poverty, despair and a breakdown of social institutions, Firestone (1993) concluded that the memoirs of male organised criminals suggested that the routes into organised crime, among Italian-Americans, are more cultural than socio-economic. Firestone (1993) identified three sociological theories of crime as potentially explaining male entry; these were Merton's (1968) strain theory, Sutherland and Cressey's (1974) differential association or cultural deviance theory and Hirschi's (1971) social control theory.

Merton (1968) developed strain theory on the basis that there is a disconnect between socially approved means to success and legitimate cultural goals. He argued that society is constructed in such a way that it encourages deviant behaviour, because of social pressures to achieve unobtainable goals. Agnew (2012) expanded on this, arguing that emotions are a key motivator for deviant activity, based on strain being experienced by individuals because of an inability to reach their goals. Against this, Sutherland and Cressey (1974) proposed that deviance is learned through interaction with others, and is essentially based on a process of cultural transmission of values, rationalisations and motives. Thirdly, Hirschi's (1971) social control theory views deviant behaviour as emerging because of the weakening of social constraints.

Although strain theory has proved to be an obvious choice in explaining the connection between organised crime and migrant communities (Bovenkerk, 1998), Firestone (1993)

concluded that the evidence presented in the memoirs of male organised criminals suggested that cultural deviance theory offered the best explanation for the social roots of organised crime. Beyond this, the memoirs also illustrate, in accordance with differential association theory, that male aspirations of joining organised criminal groups and the associated values are concretised in the form of particular role models (Firestone 1993), or that they are drawn in through family ties. For example, Talese (1971) stated when writing the memoir of Bill Bonnano (son of Joe Bonnano, leader of the American-Italian Mafia Bonnano family) that he felt “too close, too involved...[and too]... influenced by certain values of the old country [Italy]” (p. 52) to break away from the life-style he was born into. Such an account suggests that individuals and activities associated with organised crime do not exist in a vacuum (Van De Bunt, Siegel, & Zaitch, 2014). Consistent with this line of inquiry, this research project considers whether the women were impacted by family ties and social roots. This will allow the researcher to identify whether the findings, based on women’s experiences, support Firestone’s (1993) conclusions on organised criminal activities which are based on male participants.

### **2.3.1. Women in Non-Traditional Occupations**

Bagilhole (2002) states that as women continue to enter male-dominated or non-traditional occupations, it becomes an increasingly important topic for research. Therefore, this section presents an overview of relevant theoretical perspectives applied in the literature to women occupying management positions within male-dominated professions. Consideration is given to the scholarship of Le Feuvre (2009), Reskin and Roos (1990) and Bagilhole (2002), to assess current perspectives of the processes undertaken by women to secure high-level management positions within non-traditional occupations. For the purposes of this discussion, the term ‘feminisation process’ has been utilised in a purely descriptive sense, referring to “the entry of women into those occupational groups from which they were previously excluded” (Le Feuvre, 2009, p. 10). This section will summarise some of the interpretive frameworks which have been developed to examine this empirical phenomenon. This will allow for consideration of whether these frameworks can be applied to women who have occupied the upper echelons of illicit businesses.

Le Feuvre (2009) presented four perspectives when investigating women's involvement in occupations which are traditionally occupied by men to try to understand the mechanisms impacted their pathways. The first perspective, which is arguably the most widely adopted, is termed by Le Feuvre (2009) as the 'patriarchal approach'. This approach views limitations of women's entrance into male-dominated labour markets as demonstrating the unlimited capacity of masculine domination to continually reappear in differing formats (Pateman, 1989). Some authors argue that women only gain access to higher positions within professional environments when the labour opportunity has become less attractive to men (Reskin & Roos, 1990), such as where there has been a decrease in wages or the status of a profession. In the literature, this process is referred to as a form of 'deprofessionalisation' (Lane, Potton, & Littek, 2002). Furthermore, Bourdieu (2001) argues that women are always placed within subordinate positions when entering male dominated professions. This area of literature views women to be impacted by internal exclusionary practices that prevent them from accessing upper strata within professions or from entering the most prestigious occupations. This allows men to maintain a monopoly over symbolic power structures (Le Feuvre, 2009). Thomas (1996) argues that restrictive practices in labour markets seek to guarantee that women's entry is blocked. As men construct the criteria for professional excellence, such as recognition and reward practices, women are systematically disadvantaged.

The second perspective comes from the body of literature which reasons that women can gain access to male-dominated work environments on the basis of presenting favourable social attributes. Le Feuvre (2009) refers to this the 'feminitude approach'. This scholarship tends to assume that women's career trajectories are negatively impacted by their domestic responsibilities, and primary responsibilities as carers (Le Feuvre, 2009). However, Currie, Harris and Thiele (2000) stated that women can take advantage of their "difference", and create their own niches within workplaces to succeed.

This is similar to the third perspective, which is based on authors who have adopted the term 'inverted socialisation' or a 'third sex' perspective (Le Feuvre, 2009). This literature concentrates on the degree to which women within male-dominated professions are gendered toward a masculine persona. This allows women to present favourable masculine attributes, and to adapt to practices which have been defined as the model for success in a professional, male-dominated work environment, a system which has been

secured by generations of guidelines and regulations adjudicated by men. This perspective argues that the feminisation process has only minor impact on the work environment, because of conditions of entry being reliant on women's reproduction of the existing masculine norms, regardless of these being discriminatory towards women, and some men (Knights & Kerfoot, 2008). Therefore, although the hierarchical principles within male-dominated organisations remain, the presence of women results in only minor destabilisation. But, to maintain acceptance within this atmosphere women are expected to remain single and/or childless (Le Feuvre, 2009). Crompton and Harris (1998) state that these women, often labelled as 'surrogate men', receive criticism from both male and female colleagues for their perceived lack of femininity.

The fourth perspective, is based on West and Zimmerman's (1987) 'doing gender'. Based on constructivist perspectives, this model considers the increased entrance of women into male-dominated work places to be because of a "transformation of the macro-level gender contract" (Le Feuvre, 2009, p. 13). In other words, women are able to enter occupations where principles of the gendered system have already been weakened, and possibilities exist to 'do' or 'un-do' gender (Butler, 2005; Connell, 2002; Lorber, 2000). Per this perspective, the possibility for success is dictated by men and women's need to combine professional careers with domestic obligations (Le Feuvre, 2009). Proponents of this perspective highlight the importance of recognition of the common experiences by different genders, and an understanding that "social actors develop practices that are neither 'male' or 'female' in essence" (Le Feuvre, 2009, p. 14).

Le Feuvre (2009) highlights the considerable debate which has surrounded women's increasing access to higher level positions within legitimate labour markets. Although, notable research has been conducted by Siegel (2014; Siegel & De Blank, 2010) on women's positions within the illicit sex industry, predominantly within the Netherlands and Russia, women's progression to upper echelons within the illicit labour market has received limited attention to date. Research conducted on women in traditionally male-dominated occupations has found that women often refer to more than one of Le Feuvre's (2009) interpretative frameworks. This led Le Feuvre (2009) to conclude that there is no overriding rationale to women's entry into male dominated work spaces. Therefore, the researcher agrees with Acker (1990) that to understand precise mechanisms it is important

to consider cross-national similarities and differences in the gendering of illicit businesses.

### **2.3.2. Women in Management Positions in Male-Dominated Work Environments**

Lorber (1994) states that, within modern industrial societies, all workplaces are either gender-segregated or dominated by one gender. This follows from Acker's (1992, p. 251) assertion that there are no "pure", gender-free, economic, social or cultural processes, and gender is always implicated". Beyond this, Le Feuvre (2009) and Kandiyoti (1988) considered whether women sustain or resist the gendered order in male-dominated workplaces. This project is concerned with women's representations of their experiences of upper management positions within illicit business. Therefore, the following overview focuses on literature reporting on women's management in roles traditionally viewed as masculine.

Billing and Alvesson (2000) suggest that because management is dominated by men, particularly within higher levels, concepts around leadership are constructed mostly in masculine terms. Bagilhole (2002) expressed that good managers are perceived to be those with masculine characteristics, namely that they are competitive, strategic and aggressive. These characteristics, she argues, are conventionally considered to be undesirable in women. Beyond this, Wajcman (1996, p. 261) argues that women are "socialised into feminine patterns of behaviour which are ill-suited to the managerial role". Contrary to this, it is evident within the literature that women do possess the qualities and skills required to be successful managers (Bagilhole, 2002; Davidson & Cooper, 1992).

Kandiyoti (1988) theorises that women must undertake a complex negotiating process to secure their success within male-dominated environments that allow them to derive benefit without destabilising overriding patriarchal controls. This is in line with the work of Bagilhole (2002, p. 51), who concludes that

“the transformation of organisations is not achieved necessarily by more women in management. Predominant values and ideas in society embraced

by both men and women are firmly anchored in the material operations of capitalism and the market economy, and the dominance of instrumental rationality” (Bagilhole, 2002, p.51).

She argues that conducting systematic comparative analyses of women’s strategies and coping mechanisms allows for a more grounded understanding of patriarchal systems.

Kandiyoti (1988) refers to the process of implementing strategies to derive benefit within male dominated systems, undertaken by women, as ‘patriarchal bargaining’. The term patriarchal bargaining refers to the decision to accept gender rules, which traditionally disadvantage women, in exchange for a personal benefit -while leaving the system itself intact. It is an individual strategy designed to manipulate the patriarchal system to derive an advantage, without threatening its continuing dominance. It is unclear within the literature how women who hold controlling positions within illicit business negotiate gender roles in gaining and performing senior roles. Therefore, analysis of the auto/biographies will examine the bargaining process undertaken by women, within patriarchal environments. This will allow for an investigation of whether women adhere to the “rules of the game” to maximise their security and optimise their options within illicit business. This research will examine whether women within illicit business adopt similar strategies as those in licit business, such as engaging in a process of patriarchal bargaining (see chapter five).

Steffensmeier, Schwartz and Roche (2013) identified parallels between licit and illicit careers for women. The ‘typical’ offender, according to traditional criminological research, does not match these characteristics of being poor, non-white and unemployed (Beare, 2010). The literature suggests that women within organised crime face the same inequalities within the criminal workplace as they do in legal employment. Steffensmeier (1983) identified what he called the ‘institutional sexism of the underworld’. He used this term to describe the issues that women faced within organised crime in terms of recruitment, accessibility of a career path, opportunities for mentoring, skills development and rewards (Steffensmeier & Allan, 1996), and noted that these were the same issues as those faced by women in legitimate business. Steffensmeier (1983) states that this structural inequality is the reason for the limited participation of women in illicit business. This theory has been supported by the conclusions drawn from research conducted on a

variety of organised criminal enterprises, including drug trafficking, weapons smuggling and human trafficking (Mullins & Wright, 2003; Maher, 1997; Resindiz, 2001; Zhang, Chin, & Miller, 2007). However, Cohen and Huffman (2007) have identified women within business as being either a change agent or a cog in the machine; this project will allow for consideration of whether the same can be said of their roles within illicit business.

Bovenkerk highlighted that the traits of criminal leaders correspond to those who are successful legal entrepreneurs (cited in Van Koppen et al., 2010), and these are often viewed to be in accordance with traits associated with masculinity. To date little attention has been paid to whether there is such a thing as a woman's 'criminal career' pattern within organised crime. A clearer understanding of the specific behaviours displayed by women in illicit business is needed, particularly: the nature of their criminal roles, circumstances which have led to their offending, their motivations and the vocabulary they use to justify their crimes (Steffensmeier & Allan, 2004). It is necessary to determine the circumstances surrounding women's entry into organised criminal networks and illicit businesses, and how their careers have progressed to allow them to adopt managerial positions. The importance of investigating women's higher-level positions within illicit business is supported by the statement of Reskin and Padavic that "research into women entering non-traditional occupations is very important as it challenges the ideology of inherent difference that justifies male dominance" (1988, as cited in Bagilhole, 2002, p.55-56).

### **2.3.3. Women's Career Progression in Illicit Business**

The membership of girls and women in gangs has been acknowledged for a long time (Thrasher, 1947), but the extent of their participation is very much up for debate (Steffensmeier & Allan, 1996). Earlier studies, which were based on information gathered from male members of criminal organisations, suggested that women played secondary roles. This has been contradicted by more recent studies which have found that women play considerably more varied roles than previous stereotypes would lead us to believe (Steffensmeier and Allan, 1996). Where scholars have focused on active participation of women in organised crime they have found them to be operating at various levels within the criminal organisation's structure, ranging from lower to higher level managerial roles,

and in some cases, acting as independent contractors (Zhang , Chin, & Miller, 2007). Evidence of women holding higher level positions within criminal organisations is documented as early as 1904 (Pizzini-Gambetta, 2008). This confirms that high-level women perpetrators are not a new occurrence, that they have been instrumental in the success of organised criminal enterprises for at least the last century. However, to date there has been limited investigation into the elements which impacted women's career progression within illicit businesses.

The literature suggests that the criminal careers of women are not terminated until a conscious effort is made by the individual to escape or leave their criminalistic lifestyle. Although research into the trends and patterns of women's criminal careers is limited (Baskin & Sommers, 1993; Felson, 2006), there is an accepted empirical regularity within criminological research that the involvement in street or blue-collar crime reduces with age (Pezzin, 1995). Piquero, Tibbetts and Blankenship (2005) found that what influences an individual's decision-making process can vary over time, and per their social setting. It has been suggested that to progress a criminal career, offenders may need to overcome the fear associated with committing a crime. This could include the use of drugs or alcohol, reliance on co-offenders or implementing cognitive tricks (Hochstetler & Copes, 2003). This could involve, for example, a thrill seeker focusing on the adrenaline released after committing a crime, or an apprehensive offender ignoring potential negative consequences. This often involves individuals using risk management strategies (Cherbonneau & Copes, 2006), in conjunction with neutralisation techniques (Sykes & Matza, 1957). Cherbonneau and Copes (2006) found that, to continue with a successful criminal career, individuals must adopt a strategy to control their emotions, or not participate in crimes which would require increased confidence levels. When investigating criminal careers, Hochstetler and Copes (2003) found that those with a successful career path were not hindered by fear, as it was found to have little impact on their decision making process. The overcoming of fear, could be because of their increased experience over time and subsequent higher skill levels.

Research conducted on the management styles of women has found them to be more risk averse and less willing than men to strategically implement aggressive strategies (Byrnes, Miller, & Schafer, 1999; O'Fallon & Butterfield, 2005). Within work and business enterprises women are seen to adopt a different approach to male counterparts, in that

they opt to conduct business with “a sense of connectedness and [bring] a more ethical perspective to the workplace” (Steffensmeier, Schwartz and Roche, 2013, p.452; see also. Beutel & Marini, 1995; Kodinsky, et al., 2010; Loe, Ferrell, & Mansfield, 2000), by placing a larger priority on people rather than profits (Jaffee & Hyde, 2000; Lesch 2011; O’Fallon & Butterfield 2005). It has not been investigated whether women bring the same attributes to their management of illicit businesses. This project will allow for an opportunity to examine the representations of the strategies adopted by women to conduct illegal business, and whether they adopt the same strategies as women in licit business.

McNeil and Chapman (2005) highlight the importance of personal accounts of crime as they detail “the attractions of a life of crime, the dynamics of masculinity at its heart, the role of violence, and the importance of reputation, even within instrumental networks of criminal entrepreneurs” (p.153). Steffensmeier and Allan (1996) found that, throughout their criminal careers, women are substantially less likely to commit violent offences, and that, if they do have violent careers, they will begin and peak earlier than men. Women are also less likely to repeat violent offences and more likely to desist from conducting further violence. An examination of the personal accounts of women will allow for an analysis of the types and justifications used for violence, as well as whether or not they are utilising techniques of neutralisation to rationalise their deviance from the expected (gender) norms within society (Sykes & Matza, 1957).

## **2.4. Neutralisation Theory: An Explanation for the Deviation from Social Norms**

According to Chatzidakis, Hibbert and Smith (2007; see also Copes, 2003; Minor, 1981), neutralisation theory is one of the most recognisable and frequently cited theories in the sociology of deviance. Neutralisation techniques can be employed by individuals to avoid self-blame and alleviate feelings of guilt (Topalli, Higgins, & Copes, 2014), thus allowing them to 'drift' between deviant and functional behaviour (Piquero, Tibbetts, & Blankenship, 2005). From a theoretical standpoint, the techniques of neutralisation allow women to deviate from societal norms, while being able to rationalise such deviations as necessary to remain committed to societal norms and values. Consequently, Sykes and Matza's (1957) neutralisation theory offers a lens with which to analyse women's deviant behaviour within organised criminal networks.

There is established literature that uses neutralisation theory to understand women's strategies to overcome moral boundaries (see: Vieraritis, Piquero, Piquero, Tibbetts & Blankenship, 2012; Klenowski, Copes and Mullins, 2011), particularly their need to separate their private and professional identities (Johnston & Hodge, 2014). The researcher was particularly interested in examining whether these findings could also be applied to women within organised crime. Neutralisation theory offers an opportunity to look at 'logical' or 'rational' choices as a lens to examine the samples internal psychological processes. Alternative macro structural theories may not have allowed for this, for example, Marxist theory focuses on social controls and economic factors and Strain theories examine social compulsion and innovations due to blocked access. These approaches do not allow for a subjective dimension to be considered, instead they look to mechanical structural drivers to offer an explanation for criminal behaviour.

The women in this study appeared to be in paradoxical role conflict situations, between following social norms (especially around familial roles and obligations) and operating illicit businesses. A mechanism was needed to analyse this process of managing their different public and private identities, neutralisation a psycho-social theory allows for this focus on facilitation. Therefore, due to the complexity of the women's positions it was decided by the researcher that neutralisation theory was the most appropriate theory to apply.

Sykes and Matza's (1957, p.667-669) neutralisation theory identified five techniques of neutralisation that could be used by individuals to rationalise their deviant acts: 1) denial of responsibility, 2) denial of victim, 3) denial of injury, 4) condemnation of the condemners, and the 5) appeal to higher loyalties. The identification of these techniques has been supported by subsequent empirical studies (Rogers & Buffalo, 1974; Minor, 1981). Although Sykes and Matza (1957) originally applied their theory to delinquent youths, it has since been applied to a diverse range of behaviours considered to be deviant, such as students cheating (LaBeff, Clark, Haines, & Diekhoff, 1990), deer poaching (Eliason & Dodder, 1999), topless dancing (Thompson & Harred, 1992), and strategies used by hired assassins (Levi, 1981). However, to date, the applicability of their neutralisation techniques to explain the acts of women who occupy controlling positions within illicit businesses has not been explored.

Each of Sykes and Matza's (1957) techniques of neutralisation will be outlined in chapter five, so that their applicability to the women in this project can be analysed (see section 5.3). These five techniques have been selected as a point of focus, as they are the most widely employed within the literature (Harris & Daunt, 2011). Sykes and Matza (1957, p.669) used the phrase "I didn't mean it" to illustrate the techniques of denial of responsibility. This technique is used when individuals attempt to negate their own accountability by rationalising that they had no alternative course of action.

Denial of injury, according to Sykes and Matza (1957), sees individuals expressing that their actions have not caused any harm or that the harm is negligible. Therefore, the fact that their behaviour may contravene the law is not of consequence. This is neatly summarised by Heltsley and Calhoun (2003, p. 84), who explained this technique in terms of the rationale that "if another person is not seen as being injured, then the culprit cannot be seen as a victimiser".

Denial of victim, as a technique of neutralisation, often presents as a "form of rightful retaliation or punishment" (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p.668). An example of this can be seen with the expression that "they had it coming" (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p.669). This definitional reversal deflects blame on to the victim, by suggesting that they are responsible for their own victimisation. Whereby, according to Heltsley and Calhoun

(2003, p.84), the victim is juxtaposed as the deviant, allowing them to take an “almost heroic stance against the wrongs committed by others”.

Condemnation of the condemners involves the individual diverting focus from themselves to someone else. This occurs when “the delinquent shifts the focus of attention from his own deviant acts to the ... behaviour of those who disapprove of his violations” (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 668). This shifts focus away from the individual, and places it with the accuser through claims that the “conformist world” is “corrupt, fallible, or hypocritical” (Alvarez, 1997, p. 152) to validate their own behaviour. For example, Cromwell and Thurman (2003) identified that the police are often labelled as corrupt in the application of this technique.

An appeal to higher loyalties is demonstrated where individuals display a disregard for social expectations that are governed by dominant society and instead favour beneficial outcomes for a deviant subculture, or friends and family (McGregor, 2008). According to McGregor (2008) utilisation of this technique can result in accusations from mainstream society that an individual has misplaced loyalties. However, Alvarez (1997) highlights that the utilisation of this technique means that offenders are not necessarily motivated by selfish reasons, but by an affiliation or loyalty to a group, such as family. Sykes and Matza (1957) summarise that the appeal to higher loyalties is not about a rejection of social norms, but the prioritisation of other norms that are seen to be more pressing or involve a higher loyalty. This is in line with the view of Katz (1993, p.38) that “at any one time, each of us has a number of different values... at any one time these values are arranged in a definite order”. Therefore, individuals will participate in deviant behaviour when it adheres to the requirements of a higher loyalty at that time.

A key element of neutralisation theory is that individuals have acknowledged that an act is considered deviant by wider normative society (De Young, 1988). However, they seek to mitigate their own culpability by neutralising their actions. Eliason and Dodder (1999, p. 236) describe neutralisation as a “cognitive dissonance reduction strategy”, whereby individuals are free to engage in deviant behaviours without damaging their own concept of self. Therefore, techniques of neutralisation are verbal accounts used by individuals to rationalise their deviation from normative behaviour (Copelton, 2007). Social actors present accounts that neutralise their behaviour, with Scott and Lyman (1968, p. 59)

highlighting that “every account is a manifestation of the underlying negotiation of identities”.

Cromwell and Thurman (2003) presented empirical evidence to suggest that multiple neutralisation techniques can be used at the same time to overcome moral boundaries and disperse guilt. Hirschi (1969) questioned whether neutralisation occurs before or after deviance, and there is a divergence in the literature on the temporal nature of the techniques (Harris & Daunt, 2011). Sykes and Matza (1957), in theorising the original five techniques of neutralisation, envisaged them preceding deviant behaviour. This view was supported in subsequent studies (see Minor, 1981; Pogrebin, Poole, & Martinez, 1992). However, Vitell and Grove (1987) argued that neutralisations could be applied before or after participating in deviant acts. This distinction was further examined by Fritsche (2005), who differentiated between neutralisations which occur before an act takes place, and rationalisations which happen after perpetrating deviant behaviour. It was noted by Cromwell and Thurman (2003) that “the temporal distinction between each technique of neutralisation is not absolute” (cited in Harris & Daunt, 2011, p. 838), therefore what is used as a neutralisation in one instance may be used at another time as a rationalisation after an act is committed.

Mitchell and Dodder (1983) and Ingram and Hinduja (2008) suggested that individuals are more likely to employ neutralisation techniques when engaging in minor forms of deviant behaviour, such as petty theft, in comparison to more severe deviance, such as violence. However, as stated by Heinonen (2015, p. 271), “attitudes and values that are favourable to the use of violence make resorting to violence easy in situations which there seems to be a ‘justifiable’ reason for it”. Agnew (1994), concluded that techniques of neutralisation are a crucial component in the use of violence. Therefore, in this research project it will be evaluated whether the women relied on techniques of neutralisation to justify their violent acts.

Neutralisation theory provides a framework to evaluate how “people might avoid making, or justify continuing to make ... decisions with unethical, immoral, or amoral overtones” (McGregor, 2008, p. 274). Maruna and Copes (2005) state that neutralisation techniques are a tool used by offenders to enable them to engage in persistent criminal activity. In summary, techniques of neutralisation offer a mechanism to identify and categorise the

discursive themes used to overcome internal opposition (Alvarez, 1997). Therefore, Sykes and Matza's (1957) techniques may provide a basis on which to study the motive and justifications employed by women participating in illicit businesses, an area previously unexplored in the literature.

## 2.5. Summary

This chapter has outlined gaps in the research, the importance of addressing them, and issues from scholarship which could potentially explain women's involvement in top positions in criminal organisations, which has guided this research project. In accordance with the perspectives of Glaser and Strauss (1967) only a preliminary review of the literature was undertaken before the data collection, coding and analysis was undertaken, in order to prevent researcher bias from impacting these stages. Further in-depth reflections on the theory will be presented in the discussion chapters. Thus, relevant literature is relied upon throughout the discussion chapters of the thesis (see chapters four and five) to contextualise the findings.

This literature review has focused on three key areas of interest in the context of this research project. These include gender and crime, illicit business, and criminal careers. It has highlighted key scholarship which has influenced the selection and direction of this research, as well as acknowledging omissions in the current research which this project intends to rectify. Discussion has taken place of the evolution that has occurred in criminological research on gender and crime, which considered the enduring stereotypes associated with women's criminality. More specifically, gender role expectations, such as obligations to family, and the potential to utilise both masculine and feminine traits by women in the commission of a successful career within illicit business were highlighted. The fluidity of the term 'gender' was acknowledged and the impact that industrial society has on social understanding of both masculinity and femininity, along with the impact this has on academic interpretations. In identifying the terms to be used throughout this research project it has been important to offer a clear understanding of the definitions which will be applied in the context of this study. This chapter has specified the meaning of key terms, such as 'organised crime', 'illicit business' and 'criminal career', within the context of this study, to clarify and focus the investigation.

The next chapter deals with the methodological approach selected to address the research questions, and to filling gaps in existing knowledge which were identified in this chapter. The research process will be documented with clarification of the rationale for conducting a narrative analysis of auto/biographies within a grounded theoretical framework.

Furthermore, the process of data coding and analysis will be outlined, with consideration of ethical issues and limitations associated with the study.

## **CHAPTER THREE: Methodological Approach**

This chapter discusses the rationale for adopting the methodological approach used in this research project, considering both the theoretical and philosophical positions that guided the study. The research design was created to allow for the investigation of representations of women's experiences as perpetrators within illicit business, by consulting the information presented in auto/biographical accounts to address the research questions which have been set out in the previous chapter (see chapter one).

The research involves the narrative analysis of 27 auto/biographies, detailing the experiences of 23 women within illicit business, guided by a grounded theory framework. Operating as a qualitative research method, an interactive grounded theoretical approach assumes that the researcher is capable of interpreting data, meaning and relationships (Patton, 2002). A focus on auto/biographical accounts was selected in response to the perspective of von Lampe (2012), that the personal meaning and experiences of individual offenders are severely under-researched. This remains the case, despite the argument that an investigation into personal characteristics could help in uncovering explanations of key aspects of illicit business, such as the emergence and structures of criminal networks (Morselli, 2009; Robins, 2009).

This chapter will offer transparency of the research process, allowing the researcher to illustrate the quality of this study (Riessman, 2008). The analytic strategy combined thematic analysis and narrative method, from a grounded theoretical perspective, to enhance the research project (see section 3.2). The philosophical framework will be introduced (see section 3.1), before setting out the operational definition used in the thesis for "narrative" and the implications this had for the research. The chapter will then reflect on the operational aspects of the approach used and detail the steps undertaken by the researcher to address the research questions (see section 3.4). A clear outline of the sampling strategy will be presented and the simultaneous process of data coding and analysis operationalising a grounded theoretical framework is documented for the reader. This chapter will conclude with an appreciation of the ethical considerations and limitations associated with this research project (see section 3.5), and the steps taken by the researcher to mitigate them.

### **3.1. Philosophical Framework: Grounded Theory**

To investigate structural factors impacting women's pathways into management positions in illicit business and the subsequent negotiation of patriarchal bargains, the research project adopted a grounded theory approach. Grounded theory is often championed as a methodology that aids researchers in understanding social processes (Lal, Suto, & Ungar, 2012, p. 5), and is often coupled with thematic analysis and narrative method because of the inherent benefit of a synthesised approach to qualitative analysis.

Grounded theory evolved from the initial work of Glaser and Strauss (1967) in response to the emerging criticism of structuralist and functionalist theories, which were deductive by nature, and guiding research within social science. They sought to prove that qualitative approaches to research were “capable, with the right methodological strategies, of generating credible, reliable, and useful theory” (Emmel, 2013, p. 11), which led them to develop a model of constant comparison throughout the research process. Grounded theory seeks to conceptualise information contained within empirical research rather than approaching data with a hypothesis which would verify or develop a pre-existing body of theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). A grounded theoretical approach can be applied to any data, however it is more suited and most commonly utilised in qualitative studies (Glaser, 2001; 2003; 2005), especially those dealing with large quantities of data.

Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 32) suggested a ‘theory of process’, allowing for the systematic construction of theory by beginning with the analysis of data. This allows for the emergence of concepts or categories to be noted throughout the coding of data. It is the relationship between discovered categories which has the potential to lead to the formulation of new theory. This, in conjunction with the aims of this project to conduct feminist research on an under-researched phenomenon was persuasive to the researcher, resulting in the adoption of a grounded theoretical basis for this project. Grounded theory requires the researcher to begin with data collection, to start the first level of abstraction which is to openly or substantively code the data without prior assumptions of what will be discovered. This is a process which requires the researcher to move through the data to conceptualise it, compare it and constantly modify the coding where needed. Open coding is followed by axial coding, which was defined by Strauss and Corbin (1990) as a procedure which allows for connections between categories to be established, and theory

to be developed from the data. This allows the researcher to begin applying a theoretical model to the data. Coding is aided through the process of 'memoing'. Glaser (1999) describes memoing as being the core to grounded theory methodology. Memos are an important tool to use throughout, as they allow the researcher to keep track of their responses to the data and they become useful when later trying to draw comparison between categories to aid in the generation of theory. Memoing is not restricted by conventional rules of writing; it should be an opportunity to record the researcher's ideas and thereby create a bank of information to draw upon without being constrained by rules of grammar or style (Glaser, 1999). Memos can be sorted at a later date, to help fit fractured data back together. This is an essential process enabling the formulation of theory through the formation of strong connections between concepts.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) moved grounded theory on from the initial work of Glaser and Strauss, published in 1967, with an appreciation that no one can begin as a blank slate. There was an acceptance that initial observations or concepts can be beneficial in the planning of research, to select a sample in accordance with the main research questions, an understanding which will have been gained from literature and existing research alongside experience. Furthermore, Strauss and Corbin (1990) viewed these general considerations as enabling the researcher to select an appropriate methodological plan or form of data to draw their sample from. However, it is important to emphasise that Strauss and Corbin (1990) remained supportive of the need to approach early research with openness, to provide the researcher with the most opportunity to gain a valuable insight into their chosen phenomena.

Combining grounded theory with other complementary methodological approaches is reasonable when considering the perspective of Charmaz (2008) that "grounded theory has evolved into a constellation of methods rather than an orthodox unitary approach" (p. 161). A pragmatic rationale for combining complementary methodologies is to produce research which can be translated into practical domains (Seaton, 2005). In defence of utilising both grounded theory and narrative method, Lalo, Suto and Ungar (2012) emphasised that "combining the two approaches creates possibilities for developing a richer understanding of the phenomenon under study and making findings accessible to a wider range of audiences" (p. 16). There are several examples of research successfully combining grounded theory and narrative method (see Bailey & Jackson, 2005; Cohn, et al., 2009; Drew, 2005; Floersch, Longhofer, Kranke, & Townsend, 2010).

The focus of analytical procedures in grounded theory is to identify relationships between concepts and themes across the narratives through a process of constant comparative analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Combining grounded theory and narrative method enriches the understanding of core categories which emerge in a grounded theory analysis (Bailey & Jackson, 2005; Drew, 2005; Floersch, Longhofer, Kranke, & Townsend, 2010). Grounded theory is criticised for causing the fragmentations of texts, resulting in the loss of participants' stories. This concern, however, can be alleviated by using narrative methods to compensate and keep stories intact (Cohn, et al., 2009; Drew, 2007; Herrera, Dahlblom, Dahlgren, & Kullgren, 2006). As seen in Charmaz (2006), researchers increasingly combine a philosophical underpinning of grounded theory with the methods of narrative method and thematic analysis. Furthermore, the researcher's approach is supported by the proposal of Riessman (2009) that the combination of approaches can lead to unique contributions to knowledge.

## 3.2. Data Collection and Analytic Strategies

This section outlines the theoretical framework which informed the data collection and analysis for this research project. Therefore, an overview of the three strategies used will be set out below. This project is qualitative in nature focusing on ‘meaning making’, allowing for flexibility in the research, permitting the researcher to follow the leads that emerge from the data (Charmaz, 2006). Although qualitative research receives criticism for its interpretive nature (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005), it can instead be argued that this is where its value lies. The goals of qualitative research are that of awareness, enlightenment and insight (Shank, 2002, p. 11). This approach has been adopted as it allows the researcher to conduct a systematic enquiry and to interpret the meaning individuals have applied to certain phenomena (Shank, 2002). It will facilitate the capture of perspectives ‘from the inside’ (Miles & Huberman, 1994), allowing multiple interpretations to be taken into consideration offering an analysis of implicit meanings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

There are many options available for analysing auto/biographical data, the approach deemed to be the most suitable depends on the researcher’s epistemological perspective and the research questions being addressed (Merrill & West, 2009). The framework for the analytical strategy for this research project is similar to the approach used by Floersch, Kranke and Townsend (2010) in their case study of adolescent psychotropic treatments. A hybrid approach to qualitative analysis was utilised in this research project to produce a multidimensional view: combining (1) Thematic Analysis –allowed for the identification of patterns within the data set; (2) Grounded Theory –aided the researcher in relating and connecting patterns; and, (3) Narrative Method –added temporality and plot allowing the researcher to view the representation of stories as a whole. The use of a grounded theoretical framework combined with thematic analysis and narrative method allowed for the development of a robust conceptual framework for understanding the experiences of women within illicit business.

Morse (2009) highlighted that in utilising a grounded theoretical framework, adaption is necessary to meet the needs of the research at hand. The lack of research on the phenomena of women in illicit business has been highlighted in chapter one, further emphasising the need highlighted by Siegel (2014) to focus on issues surrounding organised crime from a number of perspectives. Combining thematic analysis and

narrative method under a framework of grounded theory ensures there are no gaps in the collection and analysis of data, furthermore, the negative impact of pre-existing assumptions from the researcher are less likely to occur.

Thematic analysis is commonly used as an analytical framework (Riessman, 2008). Because of the flexibility of this approach it is often utilised within the social sciences (Braun & Clark, 2006). Braun and Clark (2006) defined a theme as a "...patterned response or meaning within the data set" (p. 82). The significance of themes, as stated by Patton (2002, p. 467), is in their 'substantive significance', meaning that the researcher is focused on the consistency of the appearance of themes across the study and not on the frequency that they occur. Thematic analysis allows for data to be classified according to both similarities and differences (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This is particularly relevant to this project, as the researcher is conducting an investigation into the commonalities and difference in the auto/biographies, as well as observing and analysing outliers in the sample. The process involves coding, categorisation and the noting of patterns. Coding on a thematic basis allows the researcher to identify meaning in large amounts of text. The data can then be visualised using different display techniques, such as quotations, and tabulating similarities and differences (Yin, 2010). This aids the researcher in identifying key points of focus to inform the process of narrative method.

Narrative method has been utilised as a research tool by varying academic disciplines and can be applied alongside numerous theoretical perspectives (Plummer, 2001).

Criminologists and sociologists have successfully used narratives as a source of data to explore criminal behaviour alongside causal factors, confirming its potential as a viable option for this project. Narrative method is based on the theoretical understanding that "telling a story about oneself involves telling a story about choice and action, which have integrally moral and ethical dimensions" (Rice & Ezzy, 1999, p. 126). This form of inquiry allows the researcher to investigate the narratives within their wider context (Byrne-Armstrong, 2001).

Narrative method was viewed by Webster and Mertova (2007, p. 13) as having "valuable potential for research". The conceptual term 'narrative' is contested across academic disciplines (Riessman, 2008; Herman, 2007), but it is often understood to be synonymous with the notion of a 'story' (Cohen, 2015). Presser (2009) states that "narrative is simply a concept whose study to date has assimilated a rich array of insights into human

existence and human enterprise across the academy” (p. 193). The researcher relies on the perspective that narratives consist of temporally ordered statements which depict someone’s experiences (Labov & Waltzky, 1967), and that analysis of them allows researchers to conduct a systematic study of how individuals have experienced the world (Kvernbekk, 2013; Riessman, 1993). In the context of this project, it is the world of illicit business which is being examined –more specifically the social and structural factors impacting women’s involvement with illicit business, the patriarchal bargains and strategies undertaken to secure success, and the neutralisations or rationalisations relied on to justify or mitigate illicit behaviours.

The researcher agrees with the position of feminist scholars who have emphasised the importance of giving voice to women who have previously been silenced. Notably, Smith (1987), Ramazanoglu and Holland (2000, pp. 60-61), and Naples (2003) have stated that “good” feminist research is, and should be, firmly grounded in the details of women’s experience. Therefore, the narrative method of auto/biography has been championed by feminists because it puts the women’s voices centre stage (Willemse, 2014). As highlighted by Smith and Watson (1998), “autobiography has been employed by many women writers to write themselves into history” (p. 5). The appreciation of the ability of the narrative technique to support women’s agency was instrumental in the researcher’s selection of this methodological approach, as it allows for the examination of the diversity of women’s experiences (Riessman, 1993, p. 8; Cotterill & Letherby, 1993, p. 73). This is based on the view that the narrative form allows both commonalities and differences of lived realities to be examined (Gergen, 2001, p. 73). The intention of this project is to examine information put forward within auto/biographical texts to expand the limited knowledge we possess of women’s involvement in illicit business. The researcher does not intend to discover or present an all-encompassing ‘truth’ to be applied to understand all women’s criminal activities. In line with the views of Hibberd (2005), the analysis seeks to uncover women’s individual ‘truths’ that are offered to the reader of auto/biographical accounts.

The presentation of narratives are impacted by the social structures and power relations which influence individual experiences, and as a result narratives are constructed according to discursive conventions at the time of their production. The narratives of the women involved in illicit business illustrate the production of a coherent self (Holstein & Jefferson, 2000), to make sure that their stories appeal to a wide range of audiences. As

stated by Riessman (2008), the researcher must be aware that the teller of stories is also a performer and that their performance is guided by “an editor who constantly monitors, manages, modifies, and revises the emergent story” (Gubrium & Holstein, 1998, p. 170). Therefore, the researcher must be mindful throughout the process of analysis of the tendency highlighted by McAdams (2011, pp. 106-107), for the deliberate inclusion of sensationalist language and emphasis to tell a ‘good story’. The researcher acknowledges that narratives are produced with the intention of being heard, whether the audience is real (narratives being produced for a social science researcher) or an imagined audience (auto/biographies produced for an intended audience but without the specific individual reader being identified).

This research project uses written and published narratives as a data source which have been created for an imagined audience, but not specifically for research purposes or with the intention of facilitating further academic research. The stories, told by the individual women (or by their ghost writer or biographer), have not been shaped by the research questions or influenced by the researcher. It is crucial to emphasise that they offer a valuable source of information which has not been guided by the researcher. However, there is an appreciation by the researcher of the position of poststructuralists, such as Gubrium and Holstein (2009), that narratives themselves create ‘reality’ and that therefore “reality” is subjectively constructed by the stories that are told. Taking this under consideration the researcher has approached the analysis of the data with the statement of Andrews (2007) in mind, that “we are always rewriting our pasts in light of new circumstances in the present. Certain events which once seemed crucial to who we are later appear devoid of significance, while other experiences are recalled with a new-found importance” (p. 125). Consequently, auto/ biographies allow for the exploration of subjective experiences of marginalised groups, such as women, through the ability to honour lived experiences. For this reason, Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) have confirmed the value of narratives as a “source of important knowledge and understanding” (p. 42).

The researcher has adopted the stance of Denzin (1997) that narratives should be framed as authentic subjective expressions, and that although the narratives of the women in illicit business allow for the voice of a marginalised group to be investigated it is the researcher who puts forward the analytical argument (Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, 2008). This inevitably has implications for the claims which are able to be made on the basis of narrative data, and the traditional expectations of generalisability, validity and reliability

in research. The researcher approaches narrative method from the social constructivist perspective that “narratives sit at the intersection of history, biography and society” (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005, p. 132). Despite the impact the researcher has in framing the analytical argument, valid conclusions can be drawn based on the social constructionist perspective of narrative method –that individual stories offer an insight into the social world, its structures and processes and are not intended to represent ‘truth’. Therefore, similarities as well as differences identified in the auto/biographies of women involved in illicit business allow the researcher to theorise commonalities across lived experiences.

To conclude, the study of personal narratives is a type of case-centred research (Mishler, 2000), allowing for the illumination of the intersection of biography, history and society (Riessman, 2013). Narrative method makes use of stories, such as: autobiographies, biographies, family stories, and life experience as a unit of analysis to seek an understanding of the way that individuals use narratives to create meaning (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), and is therefore a useful tool in transferring or sharing knowledge, which must also deal with issues of constructed and perceived memory. The life stories of women offenders have been identified by scholars, such as Morash (2006), Salisbury and Van Voorhis (2009), and Simpson, Yahner and Dugan (2008), as a particularly valuable source of information on the disadvantages and societal conditions encountered by women. The narrative technique has been chosen by the researcher because of its suitability as a tool to discover the social experiences of ‘silenced women’, in a significant and meaningful way (Geiger, 1986; Cotterill & Letherby, 1993, p. 73).

As seen in Charmaz (2006), researchers increasingly utilise a grounded theoretical underpinning combined with the method of narrative method and thematic analysis. Furthermore, Riessman (2009) has proposed that combining approaches can lead to unique contributions to knowledge. According to Hallberg (2006), undertaking a constant comparative approach is key in generating theory that emerges from the data. This required the researcher to set aside preconceived theoretical ideas about women’s participation in illicit business, and women engaged in criminal activity more broadly. Because of the subject being an under-researched phenomenon, the researcher does not want to be governed by a closed method which would hinder the discovery or analysis of the women’s experiences. A key aim of this research project is to give voice to women who have previously been ‘silenced’. Thus, it would be contradictory to approach the research within an existing framework. It was important, through the utilisation of

thematic analysis, grounded theory, and narrative method to allow the data to evolve without restriction to identify the interactions between categories without being constrained by preconceived notions of where women should fall.

### **3.3. The Value of Auto/biographical Research**

The argument presented in the following chapters is based on an analysis of auto/biographies of women who have held controlling positions within illicit businesses. Stone (1982) described autobiography as the “activity of explaining oneself by telling one’s story” (p. 10). More specifically to the project at hand, Smith (1987) asserted that auto/biographies allow women the opportunity to respond to and challenge the fictitious creation of “women” and gender ideologies which surround them in patriarchal culture through scripting their own narratives. Often these primary source materials can be more revealing to the researcher than the author may have initially intended them to be (Cordes, 1987). From the perspective of feminist standpoint epistemology, it is women’s experientially based accounts which offer us the best hope of obtaining richly textured and nuanced information, needed to produce accurate portrayals of women’s lives (Harding, 2004). It is the information that the women have chosen to give, which has been produced for an audience without the researcher influencing the stories they have told, allowing for the women’s social reality to be captured.

It is important to note at this stage, that the thesis is analysing and discussing the presentations of women in organised crime in English within a creative non-fiction genre. It must be acknowledged that the data represents the interpretations of the writer, who at times was a ghost writer and/or a male author, and the impact this has on the telling of the women’s stories. The auto/biographical texts were constructed for commercial publication targeting the public, not specifically for an academic audience. However, most studies of illicit business and organised crime rely at least in part and often exclusively on publicly accessible information (von Lampe, 2012, p. 182; 2006; Schloenhardt, Beime, & Corsbie, 2009), such as information contained within auto/biographical accounts. Berg (2007) concludes that auto/biographies can be extremely useful, as the information they contain is not simply a subjective view, but also reflects “the social contours at a given time, the prevailing or competing ideological orientations of a group, or the self-reflections about one’s activities in various roles” (p. 254).

Stories generated by offenders are often overlooked as a potential source of data (Agnew, 2006). The questioning of whether criminologists can rely on data provided by criminals is an ongoing issue, which extends to the scepticism surrounding the use of narratives as reliable sources (Polletta, 2006). It is inevitable that stories will be tailored by the teller

according to the circumstances that are being shared (Presser, 2004; Cooke & Powell, 2006), and this is an issue which all qualitative data faces (Holloway & Jefferson, 2000). Furthermore, as stated by Pool (1957) when discussing survey research, quantitative data is also influenced by a research setting as “the social milieu in which communication takes place modifies not only what a person dares to say but even what he thinks he chooses to say” (p. 192).

When considering the use of autobiographical accounts, Harre (1993, cited in McNeil and Chapman 2005) emphasises that memory is “constructed from the past which must be revived before it can be described” (p. 152). However, most criminologists acknowledge that narratives offer an interpretation of events, rather than an overriding truth, and that it is the representation of “truth” rather than a perceived social reality or an external truth which is consequential. It is not necessary “to treat the stories that promote offending behaviour as real or true to recognize their role” (Presser, 2009, p. 190). Therefore, when using auto/biography it is important to appreciate “the impact and constraints of temporality and memory on people’s accounts of their lives, alongside the realization that representations of reality and reality itself cannot always be prised apart” (Goodey, 2000, p. 482). It is important to note that this research project has adopted the position that personal narratives articulate ‘truths’ rather than ‘the truth’ (Riessman, 2013, p. 181; see also: The Personal Narrative Group, 1989). It is inevitable that narratives will selectively draw upon an individuals lived experiences, but that narratives are still tied to “reality” (from a realist perspective) or the creation of a ‘reality’ (from a poststructuralist perspective) (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009). The same criticism can be applied to data obtained through interviews, as participants censor the information relayed to the researcher and frame their responses per their environment.

Goodey (2000) has claimed that “criminology, as a social science discipline, has never embraced the idea of research that is based on the study of the individual” (p. 473), but there are exceptions. Carlen’s (1985) book *Criminal Women: Some Autobiographical Accounts* embraces a biographical method to explore women’s criminality and argues for the validity of autobiographical accounts. Carlen’s project sought to highlight the complexity and diversity of the lives of women offenders. Similar methods were employed by Jaget (1980) and Campbell (1984) in using partial biographical accounts of the female criminal’s life. Carlen suggested that “there can be no one theory of women’s crime because there can be no such thing as a typical criminal woman –either in theory or

in practice” (1985, p. 10). In allowing women to “tell it like it is” through detailed personal accounts, scholars have gained an insight into the world of female criminality often neglected by academia (Goodey, 2000, p. 477).

Feminists have increasingly used reflexive personal accounts of themselves (Harding & Hintikka, 1983; Brah, 1996), though in-depth research into auto/biographical accounts has not been as enthusiastically adopted (Goodey, 2000, p. 478). The information they contain is not simply a subjective view, they also “reflect the social contours at a given time, the prevailing or competing ideological orientations of a group, or the self-reflections about one’s activities in various roles” (Berg, 2007, p. 254). The positive contribution that autobiography and biography have made to our understanding of crime and deviance was highlighted by Hobbs (2000). He noted that because of the scarcity of studies on organised crime or available data we are, to an extent, reliant on auto/biographies to gain an insight into individual involvement and experiences of this form of criminal activity.

Furthermore, the perception that “crime does seem to be a male preserve” (Macionis & Plummer, 2008, p. 571), is reflected in the limited number of female criminal auto/biographical accounts in comparison to males (Killengrey, 2009, p. 10). Inevitably, this will impact the potential sample size for this research project to the auto/biographies of women that have been published for consumption of a mainstream audience. It is not unusual for the voices and accounts of criminals to be discounted or ignored by the official discourse of criminal justice professionals, politicians and the media (Burton & Carlen, 1979). Auto/biographical accounts have the potential to challenge both the generalising and normalising effects of an ideological official discourse (Morgan, 2000, p. 127). Personal accounts of crime allow for the process leading to criminal action and the action itself to be captured in a more enlightening and fundamentally more “real” way (Allport, 1942). Morgan’s (1999) research identified the biographies of prisoners as useful, in that they can “represent some of the most extended narratives and analysis of a particular social experience” (p. 337).

Auto/biographies are texts which contain a direct and critical understanding of the discourses and social practices impacting criminals, which can and should be analysed (Morgan, 1999). Traditional criminological theories have been supported by descriptions in various memoirs of male members of the Italian Mafia (Firestone, 1993). Furthermore,

Hobbs (2000, cited in McNeil and Chapman 2005, p. 153) values the use of auto/biographical texts in both criminological and sociological research, highlighting the importance of personal accounts of crime as they detail “the attractions of a life of crime, the dynamics of masculinity at its heart, the role of violence, and the importance of reputation, even within instrumental networks of criminal entrepreneurs” (p. 153). These key themes highlighted by Hobbs were identified in the auto/biographies utilised in this study and will be discussed in detail in chapters four and five.

Auto/biographies published on women in illicit business represent a potentially useful source of data, which have received limited systematic investigation from scholars. By allowing women to ‘speak for themselves’, the approach increases the likelihood that the data offers valid and meaningful representations of the attitude, perceptions and experiences of women participating in illicit business. It is advantageous to analyse auto/biographies, as the available data on female organised criminals is limited. It offers a primary source for information and “autobiographies offer a solid measure of data for the research process” (Berg, 2007, p. 254). (1992) (p. 210) experiences, accompanied by attitudes, ambitions and values (Jakubczak, 1995, p. 159) (Goodey, 2000).

The researcher agrees with Killengrey (2009, p. 23) that the reading of personal accounts allows academics to gain a valuable insight into criminal experiences, while remaining somewhat detached from the subject. The biographies in this project were written either in conjunction with or with permission from the female subject. Where a biography was written without correspondence with the subject the authors sought to justify the validity of their books. For example, *Strange Trade* was written by Professor Asale Angel-Ajani PhD, an international expert on women and organised crime, who wrote the book after conducting interviews with Pauline Zeno and Mary Johnson in Rebibbia Prison, Italy. *Snakehead*, by Patrick Keefe, is the biography of Cheng Chui Ping, and was “based on over three hundred interviews conducted between 2005 and 2008 with FBI agents, police officers, immigration investigators, attorneys, White House officials, Golden Venture passengers, Chinatown residents and community leaders, and individuals who have worked in the snakehead trade” (Keefe, 2009, A Note on Sources, n.p.). He also accessed information on Cheng Chui Ping through court transcripts, internal government documents and records of wire taps. Patrick Keefe asserts that “No dialogue or scenes are invented” (Keefe, 2009, A Note on Sources, n.p.). *Baby Thief*, by Barbara Bisantz Raymond, includes a comprehensive breakdown of where data was obtained in support of

statements made throughout the biography. This includes information gathered from personal and phone interviews, government documents and newspaper articles. The researcher was aware of problems associated with using biographical data which had not been approved or produced in conjunction with the subject. Therefore, the data from these biographical accounts was approached with caution.

Berg (2007) offers a concise summary of the benefits of using auto/biographical data stating that:

“all in all, autobiography, whether offered as a full and lengthy unfolding of one’s life or as snippets of discourse in prefaces and appendices, can be extremely useful. This information offers more than simply a single individual’s subjective view on matters. An autobiography can reflect the social contours of a given time, the prevailing or competing ideological orientations of a group, or the self-reflections about one’s activities in various roles. In short, autobiographies offer a solid measure of data for the research process” (Berg, 2007, p.254).

In the context of this research project the auto/biographies are used as the object of analysis, to investigate and examine meaning which can be gained.

## **3.4 Operational Aspects of the Methodology**

The following section will outline the practical application of the methodological approach. There are numerous approaches which can be adopted in the analysis of auto/biographical data, the selection of an appropriate method should be guided by the research questions and the researcher's epistemological perspective (Merrill & West 2009). As stated in the proceeding section, this project was framed by grounded theory which resulted in a symbiotic process of data coding and analysis to examine the phenomena of women managing illicit businesses. The following section will outline the operational procedures followed by the researcher throughout the project, documenting the sampling strategy utilised, and the process of data coding and analysis undertaken.

### **3.4.1. Sampling Strategy**

A qualitative approach is useful in studying an area where there is currently a lack of theory or where existing theory does not adequately explain the phenomena being researched (Merriam, 1998). Qualitative studies usually use smaller samples than quantitative studies (Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2003). Qualitative data offers higher validity compared to quantitative studies and provides a better understanding of individuals and their environments (Berrios & Lucca, 2006). This study used qualitative methods, as the research is concerned with meaning and not in making generalised hypothesised statements (Crouch & McKenzie 2006). A search was conducted to establish which auto/biographies would be available, and given the small numbers published, it was evident that there would be enough time to analyse them all.

Sampling can be purposeful, in terms of deliberately selecting individuals to study, as this offers the opportunity to search for differences, but it was necessary that the researcher had an "open and questioning mind" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 184), to have the best chance to generate new theory from the gathered data. In considering the sample to be used for this research project, in accordance with grounded theory, it is necessary to decide on the scale of the generality that the researcher seeks to achieve, which is influenced by the research questions. This project utilised purposive sampling, as the intention was to investigate a specific group, that group being women who have had management experiences within illicit business. Purposefully selecting the individuals to

include gave the researcher the greatest opportunity of addressing the research questions (Creswell 2014), and to generate theory about women managing illicit business. The number of individuals within this group is limited, although this allows the researcher to focus on the richness of the data, rather than purely on the quantity.

To identify the relevant sample, the researcher undertook a preliminary examination of available data sources. The researcher had to be aware of controlled vocabularies used by databases and shared subject headings used throughout librarianship, such as the *Sears List of Subject Headings* and *The Library of Congress Subject Headings*. The advantage of using controlled vocabularies when using databases to source the auto/biographies is the consistency and the retrieval of precise results using this method (MacDonald & Priest MacDonald, 2001, p. 446). This meant that controlled vocabulary terms had to be identified by the researcher before beginning searches of online databases. To confirm that all potential auto/biographical sources relevant to this research project had been identified the researcher then carried out searches using ‘natural language’. This involved using keyword searches, as well as synonyms of the controlled vocabularies previously used. The researcher was acutely aware that internet search engines, online databases and indexing programs alter their parameters for searching dissimilar record fields –meaning that results may be less precise when using this approach than using controlled vocabulary.

The use of online databases over print indexes is beneficial for its ability to search for two or more concepts simultaneously using Boolean searching (a system of algebraic notation to allow for multiple searches simultaneously), which uses logical operators. Logical operators can be used to “exclude or combine search terms, to narrow or broaden –reduce or increase –the number of records retrieved” (MacDonald & Priest MacDonald, 2001, p. 447). Therefore, features of the databases being used by the researcher and the relevant search techniques had to be considered and taken into account when developing the sampling strategy for this research project. The researcher concluded that the best strategy in this instance was to begin with single terms, then multiple terms and then to include Boolean operators. This effectively meant that the researcher moved from broad to narrow in searching for the appropriate sample. This search method was repeated over a 12-month period, to check the findings of the initial search.

It is worth noting that the researcher was limited by language restrictions, which meant that only auto/biographies which had been published in English could be included because of the issue of reliable translation. To determine which auto/biographies would be included it was necessary to begin by identifying what auto/biographies relating to the chosen phenomena had been published. A search strategy was developed by identifying the key concepts on the topic, for each key concept a list of synonyms was created. Table 3.1 presents an example of some of the synonyms used throughout the search process.

*Table 3.1: Examples of Key Concepts and Synonyms used to Identify Sample*

<b>Key Concept</b>	<b>Synonym</b>
Female	Woman
	Women
	Girl
	Lady
	Matriarch
	Mother
Leader	Leadership
	Management
	Manager
	Boss
	Queenpin
	Godmother
Organised Crime	Black Market
	Illicit Business
	Mob
	Mafia

When searches were conducted a combination of terms were used, beyond the examples supplied in Table 3.1. For example, when searching for matches with the key concept ‘organised crime’, specific illicit business activities were also used to narrow the search, such as drug trafficking, drug dealing and drug smuggling, or human trafficking, human smuggling and sex trafficking. It was important to vary search terms to guard against only

returning results targeting mafia groups. For this reason, broader terms were also used, such as ‘brokers’ and ‘criminal networks’. Furthermore, searches were conducted using colloquialisms or terminology specific to the illicit economy, examples included the terms ‘Snakehead’ (referring to Chinese people smugglers), ‘Goombah’ (term used within the United States of America, to describe a senior member of a criminal organisation of Italian descent), and Capo (refers to a leader within the mafia, an abbreviation of *caporegime* or *capodecina*).

Boolean operators were also used to join key concepts in search engines using “AND”, and synonyms with “OR”. Boolean logic was advantageous to the researcher as it allowed her to communicate specific relationships to be identified between key words when searching databases. The tables below offer examples of some of the Boolean operators and concepts used to identify the sample.

*Table 3.2: Examples of Boolean Operators Used to Identify Sample*

<b>AND</b>		<b>AND</b>
<b>Concept One</b>	<b>Concept Two</b>	<b>Concept Three</b>
Female	Leader	Organised Crime
<b>OR</b>	<b>OR</b>	<b>OR</b>
Woman	Boss	Organized Crime
<b>OR</b>	<b>OR</b>	<b>OR</b>
Lady	Manager	Illicit Business

The search could be further extended using truncation symbols (to retrieve matches with variant endings), wildcard symbols (to retrieve variant spelling) and phrase searching (to keep search terms together). The tables below offer examples of the truncations and wildcard symbols that were used to identify the sample for this research project.

Table 3.3: An Example of Truncation Symbols Used to Identify Sample

<b>Truncation Symbol</b> (symbol varied depending on search engine)	<b>Retrieve</b> (for example)
Fem*	Female Females Feminine Femininity

Table 3.4: An Example of Wildcard Symbols Used to Identify Sample

<b>Wildcard Symbol</b> (symbol varied depending on search engine)	<b>Retrieve</b> (for example)
Organi?ed crime	Organised crime  Organized crime

Searches were carried out across numerous sources, including national libraries, online book retailers and online publishers. This search was not restricted by year of publication or who they had been published by or in what medium. Initially the research utilised popular search engines, such as Google, Yahoo, Bing, DuckDuckGo and The Internet Archive. The search was then narrowed to search for library holdings worldwide using WorldCat which integrates global library collections and includes collections from 72,000 libraries across 170 countries. To double check library searches the researcher also conducted searches on domestic library databases independently, such as the British Library and the National Library of Australia. Finally, the researcher searched through online book retailers (such as the Book Depository, Amazon and Barnes & Noble) and online publishers (such as Lulu, AuthorHouse and Xlibris).

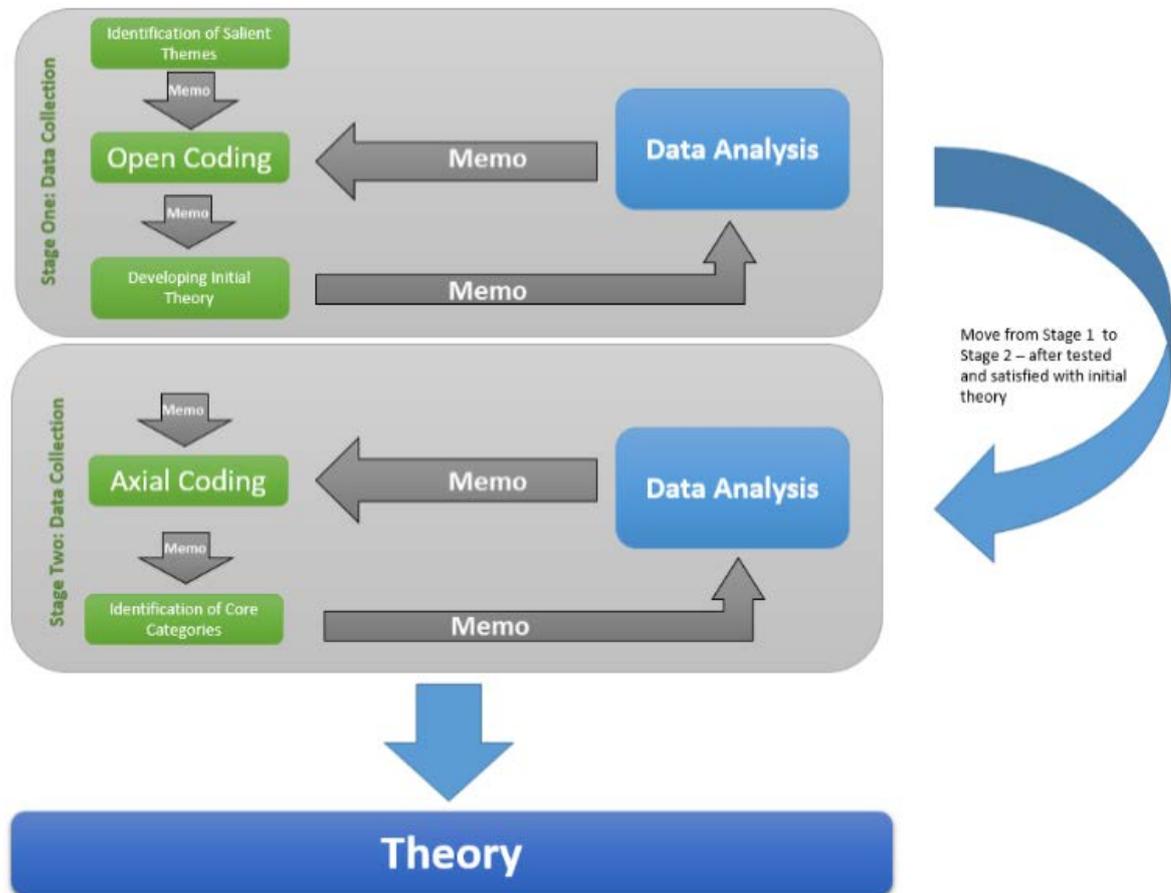
In total 27 auto/biographies were identified by the researcher for inclusion in this study, relating to the experiences of 23 different women in management positions in illicit business. A full list of the auto/biographies can be seen in Table A.1. in the Appendix. The table documents the women whose experiences within illicit business will be examined in this research project, while Tables A.2 and A.3 respectively note whether the narratives were autobiographical (n=10) or biographical (n=14). Once the sample had

been identified and their suitability checked against the criteria for inclusion (stated in chapter two, section 2.1) the researcher could begin data coding and analysis. The constant comparative approach to data coding and analysis undertaken by the researcher is outlined in the section to follow. To ensure transparency of the research process, the steps taken throughout collection, coding and analysis are documented with visual representations of the methods to ensure clarity.

### **3.4.2. Data Coding and Analysis**

In accordance with a grounded theoretical approach, data coding and analysis occurred simultaneously (Glaser and Strauss 1967). The auto/biographies were analysed within their social, cultural and historical context. They were deconstructed to extract what Grbich (1999) describes as “powerful discourses, hierarchies, presupposition, deliberate omissions and polar opposites” (p. 52). It was useful to begin by consulting the data through different lenses, by “playing with the data” (Yin 2009, p. 129), to discover different meanings and to gain a deeper understanding of the data. To organise the data, analytical tools such as NVivo and Excel were utilised by the researcher alongside close readings of the text unaided by technology. It was necessary to conduct analysis using a selection of analytical tools to identify points of interest within the auto/biographies and to allow for the coding and categorisation process to be undertaken.

Data coding and analysis incorporated thematic analysis, grounded theory and narrative method, with each stage having distinctive purposes. In the first and second analytic stages the researcher integrated thematic analysis and grounded theory, this involved both inter-and intra-comparison of the data (auto/biographies). The third analytic stage involved linking dimensions identified using grounded theory analysis to build an overarching story of the women’s experiences in management of illicit business, this allowed for an examination of commonalities and differences. The diagram below illustrates the constant comparative method undertaken during data coding and analysis.



*Figure 3.1: Visual Representation of Process of Data Coding and Analysis*

This initial stage of data coding and analysis utilised principles of thematic analysis to identify salient themes. To achieve this, it was necessary for the researcher to focus on data reduction as “a form of analysis that sharpens, sorts, focuses, discards, and organizes data in such a way that ‘final’ conclusions can be drawn and verified” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 11). The researcher used NVivo to assist with thematic analysis of the data, but mainly as a tool of data management. Three phases were carried out during data reduction: (1) Reading of the autobiographies, (2) highlighting sections of interest, (3) identifying initial themes.

Firstly, in line with grounded theory the auto/biographies were revisited throughout the coding of data and subsequent analysis. However, in accordance with the position of Ryan and Bernard (2003) that the researcher should “get a feel for the text by handling [the] data multiple times” (p. 165), each of the auto/biographies were read a minimum of twice, as suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (2007), before any themes were highlighted, coding took place or memoing began. Secondly, the researcher acted on the

recommendation of Ryan and Bernard (2003) by “pawing through texts and marking them up with different coloured highlighter pens” (p. 11). The researcher reviewed the research questions to aid with theme reduction and to identify themes which related to similar concepts. Thirdly, the researcher took the highlighted areas of text and broke the data into smaller sections or themes. Once this initial identification of potential themes had been achieved the researcher subsequently read all the auto/biographies again in full to compare, contrast and check for missing information that had not been detected in the first process of theme identification.

To identify salient themes, the researcher used Bernard’s (2000; see also: Attard & Coulson, 2012) ocular scan method, as he argues that this is the best way to initially identify potential themes and patterns within qualitative data. Adopting this approach allowed the researcher to gain an appreciation of the entire narrative and reading the auto/biographies multiple times before starting analysis allowed the researcher to identify and have more time to evaluate the data while preventing precipitous conclusions. The initial themes identified guided the remaining steps of coding and analysis. The second level of theme detection resulted in the identification of ‘codes’, allowing for stage two of the analytic process to begin. The researcher applied systematic coding procedures to ensure reliability. This involved following the suggestions of Aronson (1994), by conducting inter- and intra-comparisons of units of text from the auto/biographies and sorting them into categories of umbrella and subthemes.

To constantly review the data, in accordance with the guidelines of grounded theory put forward by Glaser and Strauss (1967), the researcher displayed the highlighted sections of the auto/biographies together. Miles and Huberman (1994) highlighted the importance of data display in aiding the researcher to make sense of the data, organise it and arrange concepts. The researcher found displaying highlighted data helped to prevent data overload during the process of analysis and to gain conceptual coherence. The themes and highlighted text could then be ordered, allowing for similarities and differences in the auto/biographies to be explored and clustered together using ‘theme maps’ (Gibbs, 2002), to create ‘codes’. In addition, as suggested by Patton (2002), direct quotations were selected that could offer supportive meaning to the data’s interpretation.

The analysis stage of this project involved an intertwined process of data analysis, collecting and writing of the thesis. Data analysis in grounded theory involves specific

procedures and requires: data coding (open and axial), memo writing and theoretical sampling to test initial theory. Strauss (1987) emphasised that these procedures should be used as guidelines for the researcher and not to apply grounded theory processes too rigidly, as this could hinder the analytic process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Data coding encourages the researcher to move away from an empirical level and to begin by fracturing the data. This allows the researcher to identify events, statements and observations which can later be conceptually grouped together. In this study the researcher began with open coding. During open coding the data was broken down into discrete parts so that comparisons could be made across the auto/biographies. This allowed the researcher to follow the advice of Strauss and Corbin (1998) in grouping together abstract concepts which were conceptually similar into 'categories'. Throughout this process the researcher reflected on the three questions that Glaser (1978) stated should guide open coding: What is this data a study of? What category does this incident indicate? What is actually happening in the data? It was important that the researcher constantly reviewed these questions while initially undertaking open coding to ensure that the codes fit the data, rather than the data being forced to fit into the codes.

Once open coding had been completed the researcher could test initial theory by consulting the data and then move on to axial coding. This involved piecing the fractured data back together again by establishing links to form categories and subcategories. Code maps were used to move from open coding to axial coding which aided in early concept development. In axial coding, structural parts were linked together, and the basic social process began to be revealed (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). A new code map was created to indicate relationships between codes, involving the consolidation of a number of previous code maps. A code list was created, and colour coded by the researcher to ensure that there was consistency throughout data coding and analysis across the auto/biographies. Each code had an accompanying memo, which identified how the code was defined and used.

This allowed the researcher to begin memo writing, a process involving reflective note taking to help a simultaneous process of data coding and analysis. Memo writing assists in guiding the analysis (Bowen, 2005). It aids the researcher in avoiding gathering only superficial data, allowing the researcher to be reflexive in their approach. Throughout the process of 'memoing' the researcher was able to review each code and consider which

ones were no longer relevant to the data. The use of memos was crucial throughout data coding and analysis. Memos consisted of notes that were written during and immediately after initial consultation with the data as a means of documenting the impressions of the researcher. These offered a vital bank of ideas, which could be revisited by the researcher to map out emerging theory.

Below is an extract from a memo kept specifically on Judith Moran that was used during the initial reading of her autobiography to take notes and to organise the researcher's thoughts before conducting a second reading and beginning to identify salient themes.

Figure 3.2: Extract from First Read Memo on Judith Moran

**JUDITH MORAN**

Moran Crime Family  
Melbourne, Australia  
Time Frame = 1980s-2000s

Autobiography x2

Children = Boys  
Involved in Illicit Business  
'Fiercely protective'

Link to:  
Griselda Blanco  
Kathy Pettingill

Childhood → Low education → Dancing  
Mother → Violence → Partners  
Deaths → Revenge → Prison

**NOTES:** Struggling to gain control of life, surrounded by violence, afraid of men in her life, acting as the mediator to 'keep the peace', capable of extreme violence herself. Focus on appearance and possessions – stemming from poverty in childhood? Drugs and gambling are central – criminal family/ connections Importance of family/ relationships Craves power and control – stemming from abusive relationships with husband (Lewis) and mother Negative relationship with mother BUT positive relationship with father

**Themes:**

- > Drugs
- > **Violence** – Domestic
- > Anger
- > **Control**
- > Marriage into crime/ relationships
- > Children – sons
- > Poverty
- > Low education
- > **Fatherhood**
- > Appearance
- > Money
- > Jail
- > Death
- > Revenge

**Quotes**

Wants to set the story straight "No one who write these stories has ever taken the time to sit down with me and find out who I really am" (Moran, 2005, p. ix)

"Judith, it's better for someone to have their wallet lifted than have his home broken into and trashed...to make someone the victim of the lesser of two evils. But I bought into it...wanted my world to be perfect for just a little longer" (Moran, 2005, p. 49)

"although it was illegal to make a living from the SP, we were legitimate taxpayers for all that time" (Moran, 2005, p. 74)

Telling her story – "Because those people deserve to be exposed" (Moran, 2005, p. xi)

"All will be dealt with... I had to let Jason and Mark know that their deaths would not go unpunished" (Moran, 2005, p. 192) – Both her sons murdered

"working class" (Moran, 2005, p. 3)

"The thought of a baby just complicated matters" (Moran, 2005, p. 31)

Lewis Moran (never married, but long term partner) – "first of many times to come that Lewis put me in hospital" (Moran, 2005, p. 60)

"He did some shocking, evil things go me...he was turning me into someone I didn't like" (Moran, 2005, p. 123)

"Dad also became involved in illegal gambling...and Dad never got caught" (Moran, 2005, p. 3)

Father – "always wonderful to me" (Moran, 2005, p. 12)

"to be a matriarch is to be a strong woman who truly cares for her family" (Moran, 2005, p. 234)

Mum was violent too, after husband beat Judith – "John was black and blue for a few days after that little visit" (Moran, 2005, p. 33)

"I'm not proud of some of the things I did to his girlfriend" (Moran, 2005, p. 123)

"You tell him to ring me or I'll chop him up into little pieces" (Moran, 2005, p. 251)

FIRST READ MEMO

As the research process progressed the researcher began to narrow the focus of the memos to consider and analyse specific extracts from the data. An example of microanalysis from the memo of Jemeker Thompson is presented in Table 3.5 to offer an illustration the memoing process.

Table 3.5: Example of Microanalysis from Memo of Jemeker Thompson

Extract from Memo	Microanalysis
<p>Jemeker opted to be caught by the FBI to attend her son’s graduation –emphasis of capture being a choice of hers and on her own terms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflicting roles of motherhood and work</li> <li>• Autonomy –control is important, even in being captured (control is an overriding theme throughout narrative)</li> <li>• Link to –Marisa Lankester and Marisa Merico</li> <li>• Contrast to –Griselda Blanco</li> </ul>

Memoing was useful to the researcher as it encouraged her to move from the empirical data to a conceptual level. It aided with the notation of any patterns that were identified throughout coding and analysis allowing the researcher to group together categories of ‘information that can go together’. Notetaking and a constant review of memos supported the building of conceptual coherence and consistency.

A validity assessment of the final data set was undertaken in three stages: 1) double-checking that codes relating to quotations were consistently applied across all auto/biographies; 2) double-checking that codes were grouped appropriately under thematic categories; and, 3) double-checking that themes had been grouped correctly under the axial codes. To ensure that the analysis of the data was in line with grounded theory technique, the researcher checked to make sure that emergent themes could be correlated and then used to develop a conceptual framework to understand the experiences of women within illicit business. For example, the table 3.7 demonstrates the use of an across-case pattern comparison that was used to help the researcher to identify relevant categories.

Table 3.6: Extract of a Case Pattern Comparison

Categories	Subcategories	Subjects			
		Jemeker	Griselda	Marisa Lankester	Georgia
Childhood	High Level of Education			✓	✓
	Nuclear Family			✓	
	Poverty	✓	✓		
	“Happy Childhood”			✓	
	Support Networks	✓	✓	✓	
	Importance of Friendships	✓	✓	✓	✓

Hutchinson (1988, p. 139) notes that “Comparative analysis forces the researcher to ‘tease out’ the emerging category by searching for its structure, temporality, cause, context, dimensions, consequences and its relationship to other categories”. A grounded theoretical framework requires the research to consider broader understandings of relative issues impacting the phenomenon being studied. In the context of this research project, the final stage of coding and analysis (narrative method) ensured that consideration was given to the temporality and plot of the auto/biographies.

Although these stories give the women a voice, it is the researcher that will make the analytic argument (Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, 2008). The narrative researcher begins from a position of curious not knowing (Etherington & Bridges, 2011), making it important to consider each narrative on its own terms, as a form of knowledge in its own right (Polkinghorne, 1995; Harvey & Chavis, 2006). The findings of the data coding and analysis will be presented across two discussion chapters (see chapters four and five).

Before presenting the discussion of the findings, the ethical considerations and limitations of the project are set out for the reader. The main concerns for the researcher were issues of consent and anonymity. Therefore, the next section highlights the researcher’s agreement with Sixsmith and Murray (2001) that consent is the cornerstone of ethical principles in social science research. But, that within organised crime research, Siegel and de Wildt’s (2016) assertion that consent is not always possible in combination with this

project relying on publicly accessible documents the researcher concluded that the need for specific consent to analyse the auto/biographies was not necessary.

Furthermore, the rationale behind the decision not to anonymise the sample will be stated. This was predominantly based on the knowledge value gained, the reliability and validity of the research findings, and the intention that this research project be a platform for future projects that focus on the research of clandestine groups.

## **3.5. Ethical Considerations and Limitations**

When conducting social research, it is important to consider potential ethical issues which may arise, and limitations of the methods used. Therefore, this section will review the ethical considerations evident within this research project, and the limitations associated with the selected method. The discussion will highlight ethical factors that the researcher was aware of throughout the research process and outline the justifications for the approach taken. Two core ethical considerations were identified as needing to be addressed. Primarily, the participants consent had not been obtained to use their narratives for this research project. Secondly, the potential for the researcher to cause harm to some of the participants through the interpretation of the representations put forward in their auto/biographical accounts will be discussed.

The second part of this section will acknowledge additional limitations of the research method, and outline the measures taken to minimise the risks associated with these factors. This will involve consideration of the limitations of conducting research on organised crime more broadly, the reliance on secondary sources, and the alternative methodological approach of interviewing, which could have been taken.

### **3.5.1. Ethical Considerations**

Duvell, Triandafyllidou and Vollmer (2010) recognised that all research, qualitative or quantitative, primary or secondary, is faced with ethical challenges. The term ethics refers to a set of principles which governs the researcher's conduct (Wolfgang, 1981). There is an expectation that contemporary social research operates within a framework of ethical protections, put in place to safeguard the integrity of research practices; a key principle associated with this is consent (Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton Nicholls, & Ormston, 2014). Sixsmith and Murray (2001) state that consent is an "important cornerstone of ethical principles in social research, to ensure that any participants in the research have given their fully informed consent" (p.425). There is widespread agreement that informed consent from participants should be obtained when conducting research (Rebers, Aaronson, van Leeuwen, & Schmidt, 2016). However, Siegel and de Wildt (2016) argue that in practice, when researching women in organised crime and, more specifically, human trafficking, the expectation of gaining informed consent is not always viable.

Primary research, on organised crime and illicit business, is faced with considerable methodological challenges including problems of access, representativeness of samples, and low response rates (Easton & Matthews, 2016). The challenge of accessing participants was a key reason for the researcher deciding to utilise auto/biographies, rather than conducting interviews. In deciding to use auto/biographies as a data source for this project, the researcher did not ask permission from the women to use their stories for research purposes. The decision not to seek consent from the participants was based primarily on issues of access and the practicality of using narratives which had already been published for use by the public.

Access to participants is often problematic when researching sensitive topics (Wyatt, 2011), such as illicit business or organised criminals (Lambrechts, 2014), which results in methodological and technical challenges (Lee & Renzetti, 1990). There are general issues associated with accessing and obtaining consent from criminal participants, and increased difficulties associated with organised criminals. Furthermore, there were practical issues with attempting to obtain consent from the participants, such as the inability to trace them, some of the sample are currently incarcerated (n=4) and others are dead (n=10). Obtaining consent from participants who are a part of a hidden population was impractical, due to geographical, financial and temporal restrictions –the impact of these restrictions on methodological choice was acknowledged by Brannen (1992) and Callender (1996). Watters and Biernacki (1989) described ‘hidden populations’ as groups of people who inhabit spaces outside of mainstream society, often involved in clandestine activities such as illicit business (Singer, 1999). Because of the illegal nature of their activities, individuals often remain concealed making it difficult to contact or conduct research centred on hidden populations. Singer (1999) identified four categories of hidden groups: highly accessible, semi-hidden, hidden, and invisible in terms of research accessibility (p.130). The invisibility of women who hold, or have held, controlling positions within illicit business was considered by the researcher to be high, because of the illegality, concealment and stigmatisation of their actions (Horning & Paladino, 2016).

The analysis of secondary data when investigating sensitive topics or hard-to-reach populations is being used more frequently in qualitative research projects (Fielding & Fielding, 2000). The question of whether documentary data, such as auto/biographies, can be used for research without consent being obtained prior to use is a contentious issue

(Sixsmith & Murray, 2001). It has been argued that once information is in the public domain it should be available for research purposes without consent (see Finn & Lavitt, 1994; Garton, 1997; Reid, 1996). The researcher, in this instance, has taken the stance that, “if the data is freely available on the internet, books or other public forum, permission for further use and analysis is implied” (Tripathy, 2013, p. 1478). In support of this, when using online posts as secondary data, Kitchen (2002) argues that once stories are made public they should be open to academic analysis without the necessity of ethical review.

However, in opting to use the auto/biographical accounts of women within illicit business without consent, the researcher had to consider the ethical implications of analysing secondary data without direct consultation with the participants. This leads to the second ethical consideration, which relates to ethics in analysis, as responsible research extends beyond the stage of data collection (Duvell, Triandafyllidou, & Vollmer, 2010). The researcher’s ability to impose their own perspectives during the analysis of the data is an important ethical factor to be considered, as there is still the possibility to inflict epistemological violence on the participants (Teo, 2010).

Borland (1991), in discussing the use of oral narratives, stated that a personal narrative is a fundamental means used by people to comprehend and present a ‘self’ to an audience. If the researcher is not considerate of this, they risk undermining the individual’s construction of their ‘self’. This is also important in the project at hand, as any analysis of narrative accounts involves a high degree of subjectivity (King & Horrocks, 2010). Analysis is always a “fundamentally subjective, interpretive process” (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003, p. 415). But, the analytical approach, through the combination of complementary approaches in grounded theory, thematic analysis and narrative method allowed the researcher to acknowledge their subjectivity throughout data coding, which is not accommodated for within grounded theory alone (Charmaz, 2003).

In utilising auto/biographies as a data source it is important that the researcher “avoids misstatements, misinterpretations, or fraudulent analysis” (Lichtman 2013, p.55). These issues were considered when determining the appropriate methods for this research project and revisited throughout the data coding and analysis. The researcher considered Foucault’s warning when using the narratives of others, “to be alert to the danger that their explanations and diagnoses, when disseminated, could lead to further subjugation”

(cited in Hunter, 2010, p. 45). Per Easton and Matthews' (2016) feminist research tries to embrace subjectivity and recognises that the production of knowledge is situated, and so it does not try to eliminate bias. Harraway (1991) describes this as being 'conscious partiality', instead of trying to detach or adopting a value-free approach to data analysis.

To minimise the potential for causing harm to the participants through wrongly interpreting their representations, the researcher received feedback on their analysis of the data from supervisors, academic peers, and experts in research on organised crime and illicit business when presenting at international conferences. Essentially, the researcher agrees with the perspective of Siegel and de Wildt (2016, p.3), that "ethical research can only be based on the researcher's interpretation of correct and honest behaviour and ethical regulations should not be allowed to restrict scientific research".

### **3.5.2. Limitations of the Research Method**

This section will outline limitations of the research method. Key limitations that will be presented are the reliance on secondary rather than primary sources, that the narratives were not produced for research purposes, the reliability and validity of the data. Finally, the rationale is presented for selecting auto/biographies instead of conducting interviews.

A key limitation of the study is the difficulty in collecting accurate detailed information on organised crime, and particularly on women, especially in terms of gaining direct contact (Dino, Milia, Milito, & Oliveri, 2007). Law enforcement tends to have a near monopoly over information concerning illicit business which can make it difficult to separate agency hyperbole from reality (Caiden & Alexander, 1985; Reuter, 1983; Wilkins & Cresswell, 2003). Other potential sources of information, such as trial transcripts, judges sentencing comment and prison interviews have been collected within a legal setting or a framework utilised by law enforcement to suit their needs or agenda. Gathering concrete data on the topic of women who have held controlling positions in organised criminal networks and illicit businesses is problematic; this is due to the low visibility of the subject (Pizzini-Gambetta, 2008, p. 349).

Social scientists often question having contact with criminals directly, because of concerns for safety (Sluka, 1990; Farrell & Hamm, 1998) or concerns of being considered "one of them" (Sutherland & Cressey, 1960, p. 69). Hamm and Ferrell (1998) stated that risk is inherent for researchers investigating crime and deviance, and members of

organised crime groups are potentially dangerous to approach for study (Anderson, 1979; Goldstein, 1989; Payne, 1997; Wilkins & Cresswell, 2003;). Criminologists have emphasised the personal risks involved in conducting research on illicit businesses; this includes ethical issues with gaining access, establishing trust, and removing yourself safely from the field (Chambliss, 1978; Ianni, 1974; Siegel, 2016; Zaitch, 2002).

A further challenge of researching organised crime is that it operates in 'closed' and 'guarded' social spaces (Brunovski & Surtees, 2010; Lazaros, 2007). Therefore, it is common practice in studying illegal groups to make the most of the information that is available. Because information is scarce it is necessary to use a miscellany of qualitative sources to fill in gaps left by the silence of the judiciary and statistical data (Fiandaca, 2007; Ingrassi, 2007; Pizzini-Gambetta, 2008). This means that "scholars of women and organised crime need more than others to rely on biographical accounts as sources, given the scanty alternatives" (Pizzini-Gambetta, 2007, p. 92). Pizzini-Gambetta (2007) state that you can profit from the examination of auto/biographies, if you are aware of the biases that shape the narrative.

Secondary data is defined by Cowton (1998, p. 424) as "data collected by others, not specifically for the research project at hand". The original data (auto/biographies) were not compiled for academic research purposes or to answer the present research questions. Hakim (1982) argued that the reliance on secondary sources can be advantageous to the development of theory, as it allows the researcher to focus on theoretical aims and substantive issues rather than "the practical and methodological issues of collecting new data" (p.16). However, the representativeness of the sample is a significant limitation of the research. The sample consists of 23 women's representations of their experiences within illicit business. Due to the sample consisting of women who have published an auto/biography the sample may not reflect the experiences of women who have not documented their careers within illicit business. However, Albanese (2000; 1995) suggests that research based on a limited sample can still be useful in gaining valuable insights into organised crime phenomena.

In using auto/biographies as a data source it must be acknowledged that there are limitations similar to those associated with the use of ethnographic writings, in terms of the status of descriptions vis-a-vis the events they purport to describe (Harrison & Lyon, 1993, p. 102). It is inevitable that the women's auto/biographies are influenced by the

individuals' social and cultural narratives, which impacts the 'stories' that they choose to tell. Scholars have argued that personal accounts from criminals should not be trusted. According to Liebling's discussion, Becker strongly opposes this view by arguing that they are no more or less reliable than information gained from 'official' sources:

“Accusations of bias are disproportionality directed at those who study or privilege offenders. This is unjustified, he argues, because officials lie. They do this because they are responsible and things are seldom as they ought to be. Institutions are flawed, and therefore officials develop ways of denying and explaining away failure. Accounts by offenders may expose these lies and are therefore discredited” (Becker, 1963; cited in Liebling, 2001, p. 473).

This was supported by Cohen and Taylor (1972) and Scraton, Sim and Skidmore (1991), who described the hidden and explicit resistance to research based primarily on personal accounts of criminals. An argument can be made that this leads to an ethical dilemma of whose story or 'version of events' should be believed. Allport (1942, p. 3) explained that although personal accounts may exaggerate or misconstrue events, this does not negate the insight it allows us into a criminal's state of mind, their 'truth' or social reality. Therefore, the utilisation of auto/biographies depicting the experiences of women within illicit business offers access to information which may otherwise be unobtainable.

Despite the advantages of the analysis of autobiographies and biographies which have been discussed above, there are methodological shortcomings in this approach. Therefore, there must be an awareness of the selection issues and potential biases that often arise in auto/biographies. Shipman (1997, p. 49) has argued that due to the “self-justifying” nature of autobiographical accounts, information gained from such sources is inherently unreliable. Allport (1942) agrees that personal accounts of criminality have a tendency to present egotistical heroes, but contends that this does not necessarily preclude their useful application as a research tool. He states that:

“A person is a self-regarding focus of value. What we want to know is what life does look like from this focus of value. Every self regards itself as sacred, and a document produced on precisely this point of view is exactly what we desire” (Allport, 1942, p. 126).

With this in mind, the researcher was aware that social structures in which the authors were positioned would impact the presentation of the narratives. This is based on the reasoning of Zussman (2000), who stated that as individual agency is reduced by social structures, so too are the presentation of social actor's narratives. However, Boyle (1977) states that it is unfair to tarnish all autobiographies with the same brush, as personal accounts of criminality are nothing to do with a 'popularity contest'. In support of this, Foster (1990) argues that there are a number of personal accounts written by professional criminals which "offer insights into the more serious end of the offending spectrum" (p. 1), allowing access to valuable information that we otherwise may not have. It is inevitable with personal accounts that information may be inconsistent, embellished or glossed over (Frazier, 1978, p. 131). Therefore, it is important in conducting analysis that the researcher be careful in identifying questionable material and to bear this in mind when interpreting the case (Frazier, 1976, pp. 232-236). In addition, Denzin (1970, p.256) argues that the validity and reliability of personal documents is at least as satisfactory as data obtained through questionnaires

Beyond this, the rationale will be presented for why the researcher did not conduct primary research on women who have occupied controlling positions within illicit business. Easton and Matthews (2016, p. 11; see also Brennan, 2005) state that "Primary research [on organised crime] faces considerable methodological challenges. Particularly in relation to problems of access, which affect the representativeness of samples, low response rates, and the reliance on proxy indicators or secondary information about actual cases rather than detailed testimony".

When using secondary data, the researcher is unable to exercise control over the data generated (Cowton, 1998). The researcher could have conducted interviews with some of the participants. This would have given more control over the information gathered, thus potentially increasing the validity of the data collected. Di Nicola (2013) highlighted how complex the process is for accessing illicit business offenders, stating that the majority of research focuses on interviewing victims of organised criminals, law enforcement or other experts. However, narrative research and the use of interviews can result in the generation of information which is not relevant to the study at hand. Utilising a narrative method is time consuming, as assessing the relevance of information requires a careful and purposeful approach. These challenges were further impacted by the limitations imposed by the geographical, financial and temporal constraints already discussed. As stated by

Andrews (2007), the researcher must remain focused on the research questions not necessarily the elements that are highlighted as important, in this instance by the author of the auto/biography.

The approach adopted for this study, allowed the researcher to utilise data on illicit business women that was already in the public domain. Conducting an analysis using auto/biographical texts allowed for comparative research to be conducted in a number of contexts, including geographically, over time and cross-culturally. The auto/biographies offered a valuable source of information on 23 different women from a range of different contexts. It would not have been possible to conduct a historical comparative analysis of the impact of social structures on the women's lives had interviewing been prioritised. This is because 10 of the women were deceased, and the complexity of conducting interviews with the women alive who span six different countries, coupled with concerns of anonymity. The women in this study had already written or had their experiences documented. Using secondary data allowed the researcher to conduct analysis of a sample currently underrepresented within criminological research, whilst operating within time and financial constraints imposed by a fixed doctoral programme.

To conclude, the researcher agrees with the perspective of Siegel and de Wildt (2016, p. 3) that "ethical protocols should not be equated with absolute, watertight measures". The use of auto/biographies, in this instance, ensures replicability of the findings and therefore, greater transparency of research procedures. Therefore, this study offers a pragmatic approach to the data available on women participating in illicit business.

### **3.6. Summary**

This chapter has outlined the methodological approach used in this project on women's participation in illicit business. The epistemological and theoretical perspectives which have guided this research project have been discussed, as has the rationale for utilising auto/biographies as a secondary data source. This chapter also contained a detailed overview of the operational aspects of the methodology and how the sample was selected. This was followed by a discussion of how the data was collected and dealt with during analysis.

It was important to adopt an approach synonymous with grounded theory because of it making "its greatest contribution in areas which little research has been done" (Lawrence & Tar, 2013, p. 35). The paucity of research on women's participation in illicit business means that relevant concepts of this phenomenon have not yet been identified. The researcher utilised elements of thematic analysis and narrative method within the framework of grounded theory for its ability to generate theory that can be used as a precursor for further investigation into women in illicit business and other related phenomenon.

In accordance with the analytical processes that have been discussed in this chapter, the following two chapters (that is, chapters four and five) present the findings of this research project; they are presented as separate but intersecting discussions. The first chapter considers the women's pathways into an illicit business, with consideration of their social positions prior to entry and commonalities identified in the illicit industries they entered. This leads on to an examination of the impact of gatekeepers on the women's entrance to organised criminal activities, their familial obligations causing them to take control of an illicit business in a time of crisis and the push and pull factors into organised crime that they experienced because of changes in legislation and policy. The second chapter presents an overview of the strategies undertaken by the women to secure and maintain their controlling positions once they have entered a career within illicit business. The use of sex and violence is discussed, within a framework of patriarchal bargaining, with consideration of the women's shared history and reframing of abuse. The discussion finishes with an overview of the women's utilisation of neutralisation techniques to facilitate their illicit careers.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: Structural Conditions and Pathways into Management Positions in Illicit Business**

This is the first chapter, of two, which will discuss the findings of the research project. Each chapter focuses on a different element of the women's experiences of illicit business. This chapter will discuss their pathways into illicit business, the second will focus on the experiences of the women once they have entered an illicit industry – specifically their strategies used to facilitate an illicit career. Throughout the discussion chapters, in line with the grounded theory framework guiding this project, the relevance of the findings and the contribution to existing literature will be highlighted.

Consideration of the social structures influencing the women's pathways into illicit business was guided by the observations of van de Bunt, Siegel and Zaitch (2014), who described organised crime as being a social phenomenon which does not operate within a vacuum. Therefore, the appreciation and analysis of the impact of social structures evident in the auto/biographies of women in illicit business offers a useful insight which can guide future investigations into women participants in organised crime and the trajectories of women's illicit careers. When analysing the data the researcher adopted the position of Frias (2010), that social structures are dynamic and do not determine the individuals' behaviour, but instead “constitute a repertoire of rules and resources upon which actors draw” (p.543). Although the representations in the auto/biographies at times reflect on different cultural settings, unfortunately there was not enough information contained within the data to analyse this as a part of the current project. Hence, the discussion considers the social positioning of the women, to identify the social, cultural and economic capital available to them, per the roles and resources which are determined by their social classifications.

An overriding theme throughout this chapter is the social stratification evident in the sample and the role that these boundaries play on pathways into illicit careers. The weight of social structures over individuals was emphasised by the theorist Bourdieu (1977; see also Durkheim, 1982; Marx & Engels, 1978), who noted that they can be both constraining and enabling. This perspective was evident in the analysis of the auto/biographies, and Bourdieu's (1984; 1985) model of cultural stratification was utilised to analyse the 'capital' possessed by the women and the 'social closure' Murphy

(1988) stated this implicitly imposes. This allows for a connection to be drawn between the women's class classifications and the illicit industry subsequently entered.

The following discussion will be broken down into three sections, addressing factors influencing women's entrance into an illicit career. This will begin with an objective discussion of their class classifications and the social, cultural and economic capital associated with these positions. It will then consider the impact of external political factors on the route undertaken to entry into an illicit industry. This will involve reflection on the women's historical context, such as the social position of women at the time, the impact of government policies and the introduction of laws which limited or aided their decision-making processes. The final section will assess the impact of familial obligations and the reliance on gatekeepers by the women to access an illicit business. Ultimately, the chapter demonstrates that the women's social position and connections profoundly shape the types of illicit business that women are likely to enter.

## **4.1. The Relationship between Social Positions and Entry to Illicit Markets**

This discussion presents the rationale used in categorising the women's social positions, and the illicit markets present in the study. This allows for an analysis of the interplay between the women's possession of varying forms of capital and the illicit businesses they enter. The section has been divided into three parts. Firstly, the categories used to divide the women between three social positions are outlined. This section includes definitions of each category and the forms of capital associated with each. Secondly, the illicit activities which were identified within the data are placed into three overarching illicit market categories. These subsections form the foundation for the final discussion, which presents the relationship identified between the women's social position and their entry into a specific illicit industry.

### **4.1.1. Categorising Social Positions**

An appreciation of the structural positions of the women during their childhoods and prior to their careers in organised crime, allows for an understanding of how their entry and the development of their careers has been guided. The women experienced early life in several geographical locations, including Columbia, China, United States of America, Australia and the United Kingdom. This study is limited through the requirement that selected autobiographies and biographies be available in English, therefore many of the narratives analysed are centred on structural experiences within the USA, the United Kingdom and Australia (n=18). Although the narratives discussed the childhood experiences of the women, giving reference to their familial situation, friendships, and their positive and negative enduring memories, commonalities were identified in the socioeconomic positions of the women allowing for them to be categorised into three divergent positions within the social hierarchy. Silva (2015) has stated that "divisions of social class, based on ranking, hierarchies and inequalities are found nearly everywhere" (p. 373). This study evidences that illicit business is not an exception.

Bourdieu's (1977) theory of social class can serve as a foundation for the establishment of operational categories for this study, as he emphasised that the route to understanding social class needs to move beyond determinations based exclusively on socioeconomic position and, instead, acknowledge the interplay of various forms of 'capital'. Social,

cultural and economic capital factor into the women's status and power discrepancies and provides a lens to analyse the women's pathways. Ashley and Epsom (2013) emphasised that "the forms of capital are not equally available to all people on birth, and their acquisition partly depends on material factors" (p. 223). Therefore, the discussion focuses on the women's location within the social hierarchy prior to their entry into an illicit business and the impact this had on the illicit industry they participated in.

To identify patterns within the data, it was necessary to construct suitable categories. This discussion begins with an explanation of the development of social categories. This was a necessary first step, as the social classes of the women (n=23) do not map to standard class categories contained within the literature. Classifications of 'middle' and 'working' class, for example, are not sufficient as they are too vague, with normative sociological distinctions of class being limited as they do not allow for consideration of deviant or illegal elements.

The class construction was identified with consideration of the women's social, economic and educational opportunities. Beyond this the relevance of the social, cultural and economic capital they possessed was crucial in identifying the class category in which they were placed. Bourdieu (1986) described social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (p. 248). The premise of social capital is that it enhances the likelihood of instrumental returns, such as good jobs with higher earnings (Lin, 2000). Quite distinct, cultural capital refers to a "toolkit of habits, skills and styles" (Swidler, 1986, p. 273; see also 2001; 2008) that the women may draw upon, in that they have the capacity to perform in acceptable ways among their peers (Gouldner, 1979). Economic capital is inclusive of "income, wealth, financial inheritances and monetary assets" (Ashley & Empson, 2013, p. 222). Bourdieu (1977; 1984; 1985; 1986) and Sayer's (2005) ideas around capital and individuals pathways being objectively impacted by class influenced the researcher and their theories of social class acted as a foundation to establish operational categories. It was determined that the women possess varying levels of the aforementioned forms of capital which impacted the illicit markets entered. On this basis, the three categories used to identify the women's position within the social hierarchy are labelled as 'bourgeois', 'nouveau riche' and 'self-made'.

It is important to briefly define these categories. Women categorised as bourgeois (n= 3) share characteristics with those belonging to the Weberian understanding of ‘middle class’, benefitting from higher levels of education, a secure economic background and cultural capital (Weber, 1978). The women within this category received high levels of education, had access to professional career opportunities and held a high level of respect or status within their communities. These women experienced childhoods within stable homes with educated parents in professional careers, with access to luxury commodities and viewing themselves to have been ‘privileged’. For example, Georgia Tann is placed within this category because she received a university education, graduating in 1913 and passing the legal bar, which enabled her to enter a professional career within social work. Georgia benefitted from both economic security and cultural capital secured by her father’s position as a judge in the Mississippi Second Chancery District Court, as well as being a war hero and respected figure within the community, possessing wealth and influence. Thus, Georgia’s position within the social hierarchy gave her direct access to elite professions, such as politicians, legislators and celebrities.

The nouveau riche category (n=5) is juxtaposed with the bourgeois. Although both groups experience wealth and status, the women in the latter group are newer to economic freedom and lack the ‘cultural sophistication’ to interact with ease at higher levels within the social structure. Their wealth, status and positions of power within the social structure has been achieved through illicit means –often by the behaviour, perceived as deviant or illegal, of their immediate families. For example, Marisa Merico, as the daughter of Emilio Di Giovine –the boss of the Ndrangheta (a criminal organisation originating from Calabria, a region in southern Italy) at the time, had economic stability and was afforded status within the social structure as a direct result of others’ deviance. However, because of this social position having been obtained through her father’s Mafia activities and criminal associations she lacked the cultural capital afforded to the women who had economic security and social positions through legitimate means. Most of the women (n=3) within this category were from a criminal or Mafia family and entered the family business or had familial ties to an organised crime group. The remaining women married into a criminal organisation (n=2).

The self-made women (n=15) within the sample are those who are classified as being from a lower socioeconomic status, with either no education or only basic schooling. Their position within the social hierarchy meant they had no inherent privilege from

status or power within the community to direct their illegal activities and generally lacked financial security. An extreme case within this category is demonstrated by Cheng Chui Ping. Her biography describes her as having suffered “unimaginable hardship” (Keefe, 2009, Chapter 2, n.p). She nearly starved to death as a child during a time of extreme widespread poverty in the Fujian province of China after market destabilisation in the 1950s, resulting in her having no access to education or financial security. Women within this category satisfy elements of the conventional understanding of ‘working class’; this is based on the representation that their main goal is one of economic survival. Bospinar (2010, p. 525) identified this as a key characteristic of the working class, with everyday life strategies concentrating on coping with economic constraints, with limited opportunities and access to only low paid and insecure jobs. Therefore, economic stability, status and social capital are gained through their own criminal activities.

Table 4.1 illustrates the key differences between each class classification used to categorise the women, by highlighting the corresponding possession of capital. Social capital is achieved where the women had status and power among others in the same category, their influence however does not necessarily extend to those within a higher or lower social position. Cultural capital is obtained when the women are trusted by other members of a social class and can utilise conventions within the class to their advantage, such as accepted forms of communication, adhering to behavioural expectations and an appreciation of customs. Economic capital is realised where the women are not adversely impacted by financial instability. Each form of capital should be viewed as a resource which the women may or may not be able to draw upon.

*Table 4. 1: Class Classifications and Corresponding Capital*

	<b>Social Capital</b>	<b>Cultural Capital</b>	<b>Economic Capital</b>
<b>Bourgeois</b>	✓	✓	✓
<b>Nouveau Riche</b>	✓	✗	✓
<b>Self-Made</b>	✗	✓	✗

The women categorised as bourgeois (n=3) possessed the most capital, having social, cultural and economically favourable positions within society. Next are the nouveau riche (n=5) who have social and economic capital, but do not have access to cultural capital.

The absence of cultural capital is linked to their relatively new acquisition of status and wealth. The women most deprived of capital in the sample are those categorised as self-made (n=15), as their lives prior to a career in illicit business evidences the possession of no social or economic capital. However, the self-made woman can utilise forms of cultural capital associated with their own immediate social environments. For example, the women in this category could access criminal networks and customers who occupied the same position within the social hierarchy, an opportunity that may not have been accessible to the women categorised in a higher social position. These benefits occur because of similarities between the supplier (the women) and the customer, with homology facilitating the development of reputational capital because of inherent levels of trust within class categories (Hanlon, 2004).

#### **4.1.2. Categorising Illicit Markets**

An understanding of the women's class classifications allowed for comparisons to be drawn both within and between categories in relation to the impact of social positioning on access to illicit industries. The ability to access or make use of a network takes place within a structural context which restricts an individual's opportunities and ability to act (Chua, 2013, p. 603). In line with the findings of McPherson and Smith-Lovin (1987; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001; Kaufman, 2010), the women in this study found themselves entering situations and criminal careers where they were surrounded disproportionately by others like themselves –from the same position within the social hierarchy. The women's pathways reflect Bourdieu's conclusions of the functioning of the habitus –that social structures result in being confined to a “sense of one's place”, as well as a “sense of other people's place” (1984, p. 471; 1985, p. 728).

The data confirms that the women were drawn to the “pulling power” of their social environment –supporting the results of Kleemans and De Poot (2008), and the impact of their social ties on their career and industry choices (Albini, 1971; Chambliss, 1978; Finckenauer & Waring, 1998; Zhang & Chin, 2002; Morselli, 2005; Natarajan, 2006), explaining why the women in this study progress within a particular form or category of illicit business. These categories of criminal activity are better understood if constructed from the data, which saw a separation into three distinct markets within the illegal economy: illicit commodities, illicit services and multidimensional organised criminal

markets. The following three tables (Tables 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4) illustrate the division of activities into illicit market categories.

*Table 4.2: Illicit Commodity Markets (n=12)*

<b>Illicit Commodity Markets</b>	
Drugs (n=6)	Griselda Blanco (Cocaine)
	Indra Sena (Cocaine)
	Jemeker Thompson (Marijuana and Cocaine)
	Thelma Wright (Cocaine)
	Mary Johnson
	Pauline Zeno
Sex Trade (n=4)	Kay
	May Duignan
	Tilly Devine
	Kate Leigh
Alcohol (n=1)	Gertrude Lythgoe
Miscellaneous (n=1)	Jane Lee

To be placed within the illicit commodity market (n=12), the primary illicit activity conducted by the woman or criminal organisation must involve the distribution of a tangible product that satisfies a want or a need and which can be exchanged for remuneration. Commodities are products that must be manufactured, transported, marketed and sold. They can be used once or repeatedly. Illicit commodities dealt with by the women included: drugs (see Griselda Blanco; Jemeker Thompson; Thelma Wright), alcohol during prohibition in the USA (see Gertrude Lythgoe) and sex (see Tilly Devine; Kate Leigh; May Duignan). The women involved in the sex trade (n=4) were classified as dealing in commodities, as they are exchanging their bodies or those of others as a tangible product for remuneration.

Table 4.3: *Illicit Service Markets (n=4)*

<b>Illicit Service Markets</b>	
Gambling (n=1)	Marisa Lankester
Banking (n=1)	Stephanie St. Clair
Human Smuggling/ Trafficking (n=2)	Cheng Chui Ping
	Georgia Tann

The key difference between the categories of illicit commodities and services is based on the tangibility of what the women are primarily dealing in. A service is an intangible process that does not have a physical dimension that is heterogeneous in nature and can be exchanged for remuneration. Activities within this category (n=4) include: human smuggling (see Cheng Chui Ping), gambling (see Marissa Lankester), and banking (see Stephanie St. Clair). Georgia Tann’s primary activity was problematic to categorise, as she was providing a tangible product in the children she was supplying to her clients. However, the value to her clients was in using her professional services to create ‘legal’ possession of the children through adoptions. Therefore, because the main source of her business success was her ability to provide the service of ‘plausible deniability’ to her wealthy and influential clients, her illicit business, has been categorised as service-based.

Table 4.4: *Multi-Dimensional Illicit Markets (n=7)*

<b>Multi-Dimensional Illicit Markets</b>	
Italian-American Mafia (USA)	Andrea Giovino
Italian-American Mafia (USA)	Arlyne Brickman
Camorra (Italy)	Carina Cunzolo
Moran Family (Australia)	Judith Moran
Pettingill Family (Australia)	Kathy Pettingill
Ngrangheta (Italy)	Marisa Merico
Italian-American Mafia (USA)	Virginia Hill

The term ‘multi-dimensional illicit markets’ (n=7) refers to instances where the criminal organisation was already established when the women entered and was not restricted to

one mode of income. Most of the women (n=5) were involved with a traditional Mafia-style organisation. The women identified a 'Mafia' which they associated themselves with, such as the Ndrangheta (see Marisa Merico), the Camorra (see Carina Cunzolo) or the Cosa Nostra (see Andrea Giovino), and entered with a controlling interest and knowledge of the business, rather than with their ability to directly supply a good or offer a service. These organisations were involved in numerous illegal activities including both commodities and services: extortion, kidnapping, weapons and drugs trafficking. The other two women in this category are Kath Pettingill and Judith Moran, who were matriarchs of key Australian crime families, operating similarly to the traditional hierarchical structures of the Italian-American crime families or Mafias. This category fits within the description of types of organised crime which bring specific sectors or territories under their control through corruption, violence and infiltration of the elite; offering 'regulation' or 'protection', with the intention of dominating a geographical location and making money being the primary objectives. This is in contrast to the previous two categories, which seek to provide specific commodities or services to derive a position of power, status and wealth through their ability to provide for pre-existing societal needs (Van De Bunt, Siegel, & Zaitch, 2014).

### 4.1.3. The Impact of Social Position on the Illicit Market

#### Entered

This discussion analyses the relationship between the women’s social position and the illicit market they entered. The table below presents an overview of the distribution of the women per their position within the social hierarchy and the illegal activity they primarily engaged in, which lead to their success in a controlling position within illicit business.

*Table 4.5: Relationship between Class Classification and Illicit Industry Entered*

	Multi- Dimensional	Illicit Commodities	Illicit Services	TOTAL
<b>Bourgeois</b>			3	3
<b>Nouveau Riche</b>	5			5
<b>Self-Made</b>	2	12	1	15
<b>TOTAL</b>	7	12	4	<b>23</b>

This table indicates that the women’s structural position is indicative of the illegal market that will be entered. It is evident that the social embeddedness of the women determines the form that their organised criminal activity will take, in agreement with the conclusions drawn by Van De Bunt, Siegel and Zaitch (2014). Like joining a legitimate profession, the narratives highlight that entry into a criminal career or organisation can be just as dependent on ‘who you know, not what you know’. This supports the findings of Kleemans, Kruisbergen and Kouwenberg (2014), who noted that one of the distinct features of organised crime is the greater importance of social relations.

In accordance with the position of Bourdieu (1984) and Wright (1997), the women in this study experience differences because of the number of resources they can access, reproducing inequalities in opportunities between the three categories as they occupy different market positions. Most of the women from a lower socioeconomic background who were categorised as ‘self-made’ entered a market which dealt in commodities (n=12). These women often had direct access to the industry entered from a ‘street level’. Their position within the social hierarchy influenced accessibility to the market. All the women who worked in providing commodities to a pre-existing market started at a lower

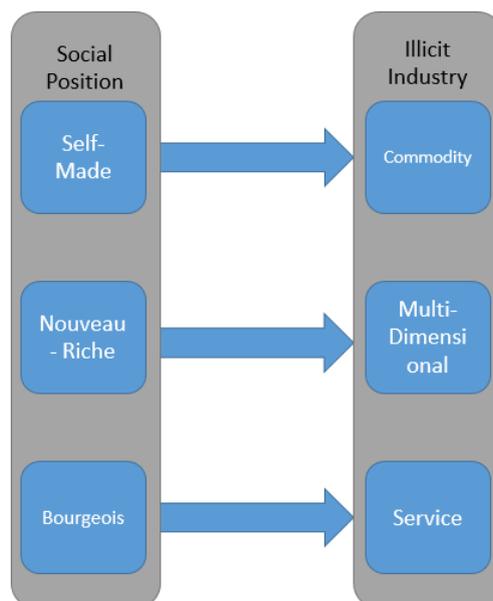
level within the organisation, usually in an auxiliary role, and later progressed or diversified to achieve a managerial position. The relevance of familial and obligatory relationships in facilitating entrance into a career in illicit business will be discussed below (see section 4.3).

An exception occurs in situations where the woman's journey into illicit business began with their own organisation or where they created the demand within their geographical location –acting as entrepreneurs to overcome structural boundaries (n=4). For example, Griselda Blanco is credited with pioneering the cocaine industry between Columbia and the USA, and was aided by the instability of the Columbian state (see discussion in section 4.2.). These women benefitted as entrepreneurs by having a perception of autonomy from the outset, in that they had no superiors within the organisation to manage them. This meant that the initial stages of their career could be dedicated to expanding their market share instead of securing a controlling position.

In contrast, the women who were resource rich, possessing social, cultural and economic capital, were more likely to enter an illegal market offering a service (n=3). Categorised as 'bourgeois', these women had received educations allowing them the foundation to offer a professional skilled service, which was not as readily accessible to the self-made woman. This confirms the position of Beck (1992), that individuals who are "sheltered from the 'nasty and brutish' hardships of everyday life" (Aakvaag, 2015, p. 351) are provided with an increased opportunity to detect, cultivate and express intellectual, social and organisational powers. The women had a form of social capital that allowed them direct access to clients with advanced positions in the social hierarchy and who were seeking illicit services. Social capital allows participants to act more effectively in pursuing shared objectives (Putnam, 1995, p. 664), due to an assumed basis of trust and cooperation amongst members of a social category (Cattell, 2004). The outlier in this category is Cheng Chui Ping who was categorised as self-made but operated an illicit business, smuggling humans into the USA and offering illicit banking services to predominantly Chinese clients. Cheng Chui Ping was aided by the political and social environment in the USA and China from 1984-2000, resulting in her possession of cultural capital outweighing the disadvantages of lacking social and economic capital. The influence of state legislations and political environments on pathways to illicit business and subsequent careers are discussed in more detail below (see Section 4.2.).

Furthermore, the status of the bourgeois, and abundance of capital, allowed the women access to different markets with diverse social networks that could facilitate entry to service industries. Marissa Lankester is a good example of this dynamic. She was introduced by a friend (a fellow racing driver) to an already successfully established, illegal gambling operation, as she was educated and ‘respectable’. Likewise, Georgia Tann, who moved in affluent social circles because of her father’s position as a family court judge, could capitalise on upper class social networks where she had inherited acceptance. Her acceptance is based on her familial associations, and therefore she had not had to earn her position within the social hierarchy or seek to establish beneficial social connections. In these instances, social and cultural capital operates as a gateway to access either a luxury product, service or client base. Women who had economic capital could be entrepreneurial in their approach to entering criminal careers as they could facilitate the launch of their own businesses without reliance on a male beneficiary –an avenue into illicit business that was not available to the self-made woman. The reliance on male gatekeepers is discussed in the concluding section of this chapter (see section 4.3).

The data suggests that women’s positions within the social hierarchy, their class classifications and accompanying capital, guide their entry into a specific illicit industry. This relationship is illustrated in Figure 4.1.



*Figure 4.1: Class Classification as a Predictor of Illicit Industry Entered*

However, analysis of the women's pathways, as represented in the auto/biographical accounts, suggests that this pathway can be refracted by the political environment. The women's entrance into an illicit business varies according to the resources they possess, which is dictated by their class classification; but political activities can either aid or block their entrance to an illicit market. An understanding of the impact of political and state decisions reveals changes which encourage an increased involvement in illicit business and allows a potential avenue to mitigate women's involvement in criminal activities of this nature. Hence, the interaction of these factors will now be considered.

## **4.2. Government Legislation and Policy Influences on Illicit Business Entry**

When analysing the autobiographical accounts, in comparison to the biographies, consideration of the wider context or influences on the sequences of events within the women's careers are dealt with and portrayed differently. As is to be expected, the autobiographies, as first-hand accounts of lived stories, tended to focus on the individual's experiences or perceptions, with little active consideration of wider social or political factors. In contrast, the biographical texts often placed the women's stories within a wider context. There was more overt contextualisation by the authors of the biographical accounts, in the sense that they were not operating within a vacuum (see van de Bunt, Siegel, & Zaitch, 2014). Therefore, more consideration is given to the influence and achievements of the women being impacted by social and political changes that occurred within their wider environments. For example, Keefe (2009, Chapter 3) notes in his discussion of Cheng Chui Ping's increasing success that her human smuggling business benefitted from advantageous changes in the USA's immigration policies at the time. Beyond this, political factors were instrumental in her success, as demand for her smuggling and banking services rapidly increased after the Tiananmen Square Massacre in June 1989, when the USA government offered refuge to Chinese students.

### **4.2.1. The Political-Criminal Nexus**

This section will consider the impact of state and political processes on the women's pathways into illicit business and diversions into different illicit markets. The themes and interactions of a political-criminal nexus and of law enforcement, as a part of state apparatus, were evident in the data and will be highlighted throughout these sections. This will include discussions of the impact of prohibition-based legislative changes, restrictions on labour opportunities because of gender divisions in the workforce and social attitudes toward ethnic minorities. The women's pathways are impacted by political developments and legal frameworks. This fits with Packers (1968) 'crime tariff' theory, which states that "when we make it illegal to traffic in commodities for which there is an elastic demand, the effect is to secure a kind of monopoly profit to the entrepreneur who is willing to break the law" (p. 279). Demleitner (1994) is critical of policy makers, stating that they "tend to have only a limited knowledge of the illegal

market. Their decisions and policies reflect the hold myths have over imagination” (p. 613). Prohibition regimes tend to encourage an increase in illicit business activities, as in practice they tend to limit the supply of a good but do not reduce the demand, which results in an inevitable increase in price (Williams & Godson, 2002).

Stephanie St. Clair’s business diversification was a direct result of the enactment of the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment in 1919, which took effect in 1920, prohibiting the manufacture, sale and distribution of alcoholic beverages in the USA. Prohibition was also instrumental in the illicit business successes of Gertrude Lythgoe, who moved alcohol through the Bahamas. Regulations and policy relating to the consumption of alcohol was equally as useful to the women operating illicit businesses in Australia. Kate Leigh’s success was achieved after the Liquor Act of 1916 and Liquor Licensing Act of 1927 were enacted by the New South Wales parliament to legislate for the closure of drinking establishments at 6pm. For Kate Leigh, law changes in 1955 allowing hotels to serve alcohol until 10pm later contributed to the decline in her business. Furthermore, gendered perspectives of the legislature enshrined in the New South Wales Vagrancy Act of 1905 prohibited men from running brothels, but not women –an advantage that Tilly Devine willingly capitalised on. This evidences the duality of the impact of legislation and state fluctuations, as it can both aid and hinder illicit economies. Furthermore, both women were also able to exploit an illicit market created after cocaine was criminalised under the Dangerous Drugs Amendment Act of 1927 in Australia.

Beyond this, illicit business is facilitated by cultural and sub-cultural factors, which can be advantageous to the self-made woman whose main capital resource (discussed above, see section 4.1) is culturally located. Adopting the cultural model perspective of Paoli (1997), it is evident that supplier-consumer relations, family and kinship, the suspicion of outsiders and informal exchange networks, serve to benefit the self-made woman. For example, Chinese organised crime groups are developed with strong cultural underpinnings and the notions of *guanxi* (reciprocal obligations to family) remaining dominant, as they provide a basis for trust and facilitate illicit activities (Cordell Hart, 1995). The same benefit was identified in the narratives of the women operating within diaspora communities.

Changes in the global political environment can result in fractionalised communities, which benefit the establishment of illicit business. Diaspora communities can become a

hub within which illicit business can operate. Chinese diaspora saw mass movements to the USA in the 1980s and 1990s, facilitating Cheng Chui Ping's human smuggling and illicit banking business. Ethnic loyalties are exploited by illicit businesses when "immigrant groups are alienated rather than integrated into their adopted society" (Williams & Godson, 2002, p. 331). This is confirmed by the narrative of Stephanie St. Clair who provided illicit financial services that were denied to black migrants in Harlem in the 1930s. Beyond this, Cheng Chui Ping's narrative highlights the exploitation of individuals who occupy a low status or suffer from poor conditions who decide that the risks associated with assisting smuggling operations or other illicit activities are outweighed by rewards which are not readily available to them through the licit economy. Immigration changes after the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 allowed Chinese students who were already living in the USA the opportunity to stay. This did not stem the flow of Chinese migrants; it encouraged migrants to seek the services of 'Snakeheads' (that is, members of Chinese criminal networks that facilitate the smuggling of people, such as Cheng Chui Ping), who could circumvent policy changes using false documents to claim residency under new rules. These findings offer support to the applicability of Merton's (1968; 1938) strain theory, to those engaging in organised criminal activities. As the women's narratives from diaspora communities suggest, their illicit business activities may have been a reaction to limited licit opportunities to fulfil their goals.

The women operating within an ethnically based criminal network (n=9) are provided with additional security, as these networks are harder to penetrate because of inbuilt defence mechanisms provided by language and culture (Williams & Godson, 2002). Similarly, diaspora in Australia during the second half of the 20th century resulted in an environment fuelling the development of criminal families (such as the Moran and Pettingill crime families) drawn together through ethnic and displaced networks. Although most migrants are law abiding citizens, it has been concluded that similarly to the Sicilian diaspora aiding the establishment of Mafia-like organised crime in the USA at the end of the 19th century, the same process occurred in Australia during the second half of the 20th century (Williams & Godson, 2002). This is a result of immigrant groups becoming marginalised, and living in 'cultural ghettos' which "provide some of the personnel for international organized crime" (William & Godson, 2002, p. 331). The importance of social networks was highlighted by Ianni (as cited by Block, 1979), when investigating African-American and Puerto Rican criminal organisations in New York.

This supports the analysis of Stephanie St. Clair's biography, where it was identified that she relied on ethnic connections with the black community in Harlem, New York during the 1930s. She also provided jobs within her illicit gambling and finance businesses to black migrants who had limited labour opportunities within the licit economy, because of legally sanctioned race segregation (Stewart, 2014).

Therefore, the importance of trust and bonding mechanisms form the basis for criminal organisations. The importance of trust, and bonds of friendship were a theme that was identified across the narratives, and has been identified in the literature as the cornerstone of Italian Mafias (referring to the importance of '*omerta*' or 'silence before the law', see Schneider, 1998) and traditional Chinese organised crime (Chin, 1990). Representations of the importance of trust are illustrated below in the summaries from the data.

Griselda Blanco, when she was starting her illicit drug business, relied on a friend from the same town to travel with her to carry cocaine, and later trusted her to travel by herself. As shown here - "[Griselda Blanco] flew to Bolivia with a female friend and bought her first \$500 worth of unrefined cocaine. The second time she sent the friend to Bolivia alone to pick up twice as much" (Smith, 2013, n.p.).

Kay (pseudonym) describes that her survival within an organised criminal network was being able to identify who she could trust, and this was often reliant on people being known to her or a part of the same demographic. Kay was from, and mainly operated within, the Glasgow slums during the 1980s and 1990s. In her biography, McKay states that "[Kay] was a past master at judging people's body language for trustworthiness" (2002, Chapter: The Talkative Insomniac, n.p.).

Marisa Lankester was promoted within an illegal gambling organisation when a colleague was sent to prison, and others had been identified as stealing from the business. Establishing bonds with leaders of the illicit business, and proving her trust, led to Marisa Lankester being given the role of Chief Financial Officer of the offshore gambling operation being run from the Dominican Republic (see Lankester, 2014, Chapter 14).

An extreme example of the importance of loyalty is evidenced in the narrative of Marisa Merico who states that "[she is] loyal literally to death" (Merico, 2010, p.304). Although

this may represent a sensational use of language to engage the reader in her autobiography, this does not detract from the underlying commonality across the accounts of the importance of trust and loyalty to the women. The concept of trust and loyalty will be discussed in more detail in chapter five (section 5.3) and related to the women’s utilisation of Sykes and Matza’s (1957) ‘appeal to higher loyalties’ technique of neutralisation.

The data evidences that personal exchange relationships are more important than the rule of law. The women from marginalised communities experienced barriers to legitimate work, and this is often coupled with gendered perceptions of appropriate work for women. The economic pressure experienced by the self-made woman is exacerbated by a limitation on labour opportunities (confirming the position of Bospinar, 2010), especially for those within ethnic minorities who could only access lower paid jobs. In contrast, Georgia Tann experienced a restriction on her labour opportunities because she was unable to pursue a career in law, as it was deemed an unsuitable career choice for a woman in the early and mid-20th century. Table 4.6 illustrates the number of women (n=8) who expressed motivation to enter illicit business because of limited alternative labour opportunities, and the industry they were directed to.

*Table 4.6: Entrance into Illicit Business because of Limited Alternative Labour Opportunities*

		Illicit Industry Entered			TOTAL
		Commodity	Service	Multi-Dimensional	
Social Position	Self-Made	5	1	0	6
	Nouveau-Riche	0	0	0	0
	Bourgeois	0	2	0	2
TOTAL		5	3	0	8

The difficulty in finding desired employment is one of the push factors into entering illicit business that was identified by Ducheneaut (1997). The push factor of experiencing barriers to entry into the legal labour market was disproportionately experienced by the self-made women. The women categorised in this social position did not have an equal opportunity for employment. Legitimate work for the self-made woman tended to be within informal and secondary sectors of the economy where opportunities for

progression are lacking. The bourgeois women who were directed into illicit business because of restrictions on work experienced this as a result of gendered views of appropriate work at the time, which limited their labour opportunities. The women were also experiencing pull factors of intrinsic rewards, which were recognised by Orhan and Scott (2011), when investigating licit businesses, as including a desire for independence, self-fulfilment and power. The pull factors experienced by the women in this study are set out in Table 4.7 below, and evidences the similarity of motivating factors experienced by women across licit and illicit business.

*Table 4.7: Pull Factors Guiding Women's Entry into Illicit Business*

		Pull factor		
		Independence	Self-Fulfilment	Power
Social Position	Self-Made	11	13	9
	Nouveau-Riche	1	2	5
	Bourgeois	2	2	1
	TOTAL	14	17	19

Most of the women in this study evidenced the impact of pull factors (n=19), with some women drawn to illicit business for the intrinsic rewards of independence, self-fulfilment and power. The data evidences that the women were impacted by external factors creating barriers to these intrinsic rewards within legitimate careers and so sought them within illicit business. This supports Merton's (1968) strain theory, as although the women's means alter, their goals remain the same. The women took advantage of opportunities to derive benefit and sought alternative avenues for work. This was often contingent on exploiting areas within the political environment that were favourable or where a political-criminal nexus could be identified to help them overcome barriers.

For example, Thoumi (1995) argued that Colombia became a central hub for the cocaine trade because of weaknesses of the state, with a polarised political system, allowing drug traffickers to benefit from a competitive edge over their Peruvian and Bolivian competitors. During the 1980s and 1990s the state of Columbia's low levels of legitimacy

and effectiveness meant that illicit drugs markets, such as Griselda Blanco's, could operate with relative impunity. Illicit businesses can capitalise on a political-criminal nexus. The term 'political-criminal nexus', for this discussion, is related to the productive relationship between political and criminal spheres, implying a link for mutual benefit. This includes political decisions which encourage the establishment of illicit enterprises, promotes or supports their business activities, and the existence of beneficial relationships with corrupt public officials. This nexus benefited numerous women, particularly where they operated with a 'political umbrella'.

Tian Hongjie (2001) expressed concerns about illicit businesses benefiting from '*baohusang*' (meaning, a political umbrella) in China –this is where government officials provide protection to illicit business activities. This is a result of a political-criminal nexus and is evidenced in the narratives where the women have developed collaborative relationships with individuals in positions of authority (n= 17). For example, Georgia Tann was protected by wealthy influential clients and close professional relationships with members of the judiciary and officials operating children's homes who could retrospectively legalise her illegal adoption practices. This supports literature which reasons that the continual growth of illicit business, in general, is largely a result of political and criminal agendas coinciding or reinforcing each other's controlling positions (Chin & Godson, 2006).

Government complicity is also demonstrated in the narrative of Cheng Chui Ping. She grew up in the Fujian Province of China, an area known to be a central hub for Snakeheads and human traffickers, and later operated a part of her illicit business from Fuzhou, a major city in the Fujian Province. After the Golden Venture incident of 1993 in New York, where a large number of Cheng Chui Ping's clients were killed en route from China to the USA, the Chinese government arrested lower recruiters to prevent unwanted attention from international organisations (Zhang & Chin, 2002), but it did not focus on larger scale business owners as it "did not regard them as underworld figures" (Chin & Godson, 2006, p. 13). The lack of response by the Chinese government to restrict Cheng Chui Ping's illicit business was further aided by the USA imposing punitive regulations which hindered the exchange of currency for her clients. This allowed Cheng Chui Ping to establish an illicit international banking system to cater for her clients' financial needs in both the USA and China.

Stephanie St. Clair also offered illegal financial services in response to a growing need among black migrants in the USA. Black people were not accepted by most banks in the early 20th century and so they were unable to invest legally. Stephanie St. Clair offered illegal policy banking to allow black individuals to invest their money in Harlem, New York. She used her underground profits to fund race politics, and was known to pay for advertisements in local newspapers advising the black community of their legal rights, advocating for voting rights and highlighting incidences of police brutality. These findings are consistent with Gallagher’s (2007) observation that women in patriarchal environments seek to improve their economic status and their position within the workforce, to do this “they bargain, negotiate, and actively manage their gendered identity and relationships” (p.243). Analysis of the women’s process of patriarchal bargaining and the management of their gender identities will be discussed in chapter five (see section 5.1). The following discussion focuses on economic independence as an crucial factor that was demonstrated across the auto/biographies (n=16), as illustrated in Table 4.8 below, which is consistent with the observations of Morgan and Joe (1997) that women entering the illicit economy are motivated by ideas of economic stability in an attempt to gain control over their lives.

*Table 4.8: Economic Independence Influencing Involvement in Illicit Business*

		Illicit Industry Entered			TOTAL
		Commodity	Service	Multi-Dimensional	
Social Position	Self-Made	12	1	0	14
	Nouveau-Riche	0	0	1	1
	Bourgeois	0	1	0	1
TOTAL		12	2	1	16

A decline in economic conditions provides both incentives and pressures for illicit business, through both the necessities of survival and possibilities of advancement within new economic environments (Williams & Godson, 2002). The women could select to operate businesses within the most politically convenient locations, where they could benefit from legal and regulatory frameworks. Williams and Godson (2002) highlighted

that criminal organisations constantly seek the most lucrative geographic markets and use this to explain the increase in transnational operations. This process is evident in the women's accounts. Marisa Lankester, for example, was participating in an illegal gambling operation that relocated to the Dominican Republic to exploit differential laws and regulations, while being able to remain in proximity to the USA.

Furthermore, illicit businesses seek to protect their profits in the same way that licit businesses try to minimise their tax liabilities, resulting in the use of offshore financial centres and bank secrecy jurisdictions (Williams & Godson, 2002). Geographical or jurisdictional relocation by illicit businesses are not considered to be unusual. As stated by Williams, "criminal enterprises are risk management entities par excellence" (cited in Williams and Godson, 2002, p.336). For Marisa Lankester (2014), the relocation of the business from the USA to the Dominican Republic was part of a risk management strategy. The illicit gambling organisation where Marisa Lankester was Chief Financial Officer relocated to the Dominican Republic to take advantage of more favourable local laws and corrupted law enforcement (Lankester, 2014), while still having access to clientele in the USA.

Risk management practices in response to legal and policy changes are documented throughout the auto/biographies. An example is Jemeker Thompson (2010), who attempted to secure immunity through mitigating the risk of profit seizures through the diversion of funds (money laundering) into lower risk business environments. These tactics tend to be in response to aggressive law enforcement strategies. Therefore, illicit businesses may seek to minimise 'law enforcement risk', and one of the ways to achieve this is through corruption (Kugler, Verdier, & Zenou, 2005). Below are two examples taken from the data to demonstrate the situations where the women sought to minimise the risk posed by law enforcement through corrupting government and legal officials. The examples have been selected as they illustrate that risk management practices were necessary for the women, regardless of their social position, the industry entered, or the point in history where they were engaging in criminal activities.

Griselda Blanco was operating between Columbia and the USA, during the 1970s and 1980s. She was categorised as 'self-made' and entered an illicit commodity industry dealing in cocaine. To minimise her risk of detection she sought to secure

protection by “employing a full-time document forger and [had] paid connections in Columbian and Venezuelan consulates” (Smith, 2013, n.p.).

Georgia Tann’s biography presents multiple accusations of corruption of legal and government officials to protect her illicit business. She was categorised as “bourgeois” and entered an illicit service market in the 1920s. Examples of corruption, to manage her risk, included paying lawyers and working with judges, with claims that the “collusion between Georgia and Camille Kelly [a juvenile court judge]” (Raymond, 2007, Chapter 9, n.p.) allowed her to continue providing children to customers, as her connections with the judiciary meant that children could be forcibly removed from their legal guardians. Furthermore, Georgia benefitted from having an influential client base, consisting of celebrities, lawyers and judges. This is emphasised in the statement from her biography claiming that “when she was angered by proposed adoption reform legislation, they [her customers] flooded Nashville with polite, stern telegrams” (Raymond, 2007, Chapter 1, n.p.). Beyond this, when Georgia was at risk of her illicit activities being exposed, her social connections and clients “quickly passed a law retroactively legalizing all her illegal placements” (Raymond, 2007, Chapter 2, n.p.).

These are examples of how the women in the sample, and their illicit businesses, benefitted from the political-criminal nexus, an area of investigation currently absent from the literature. This will be discussed in more detail in relation to the women neutralising their own illicit activities, to overcome moral boundaries, with reference to Sykes and Matza’s (1957) condemnation of the condemners’ technique in chapter five (see section 5.3).

The discussion illustrates the involvement that the wider political environment or legislative changes can have on the pathways into illicit business for the women in this study. The previous section (see section 4.1.) identified the relationship between the women’s social position and the illicit industry they entered. This section has noted that, although there appears to be a predetermined pathway for the self-made women to the illicit commodity market, the nouveau riche to a multi-dimensional illicit market, and the bourgeois towards an illicit service market, this operates within a political context, which can impact their decisions and refract their pathways. This analysis highlights that not

only capital plays a strong role, but political context requires consideration as it can provide both push and pull factors for women into illicit business. The women in this study benefitted from weaknesses in the state, as well as the implementation of restrictive laws or policies. Linked with this, and the impact of the political-crime nexus on the women's illicit careers, is their interactions with law enforcement.

#### **4.2.2. Law Enforcement: Perceptions of Women in Crime**

Researchers have highlighted that women's success within the illicit economy can be explored by viewing their use of "'feminine' attributes, such as communication skills, family resources and being less conspicuous than their male counterparts" (Dunlap & Johnson, 1997; Jacobs & Miller, 1998; Maher & Hudson, 2007, p. 807; Morgan & Joe, 1996). The ability to be less conspicuous is discussed below in relation to interactions between the sample women and law enforcement. The use of other feminine attributes, of communication skills and family resources, were highlighted by Maher and Hudson (2007) as being beneficial, are discussed below (see section 4.3 and chapter five). The following discussion will consider the benefit derived from the women's invisibility to law enforcement and the disproportionate treatment they receive once they become visible. This relates to the criminological literature surrounding gender and crime, and specifically ideas of double deviance experienced by criminal women (as highlighted in chapter two), which provides the theoretical underpinnings for this discussion.

Early research on the experiences of women within the illicit economy highlighted a benefit of being less visible to law enforcement (Adler, 1985; Dunlap, Johnson, & Maher, 1997; Jacobs & Miller, 1998; Mieczkowski, 1994), and therefore subject to less scrutiny. This is supported by Griselda Blanco's narrative, especially when discussing the unwillingness of police officers and high-level law enforcement to acknowledge that an international illegal drug business could be run by a woman during the 1970s and 1980s:

“Operation Banshee...because it involved so many women – was often a cause for embarrassment among male agents pursuing them. With Griselda, especially, it was difficult for some of them to convince their superiors that she was a big deal” (Smith, 2013, n.p.).

This quote from Griselda Blanco’s biography highlights the traditional mentality of law enforcement, which has resulted in women within illicit business being subject to fewer police controls. This perspective of law enforcement is similar to the view put forward by Messerschmitt (1986) that the gendered perspective of the power differentials between men and women led to a belief that women could only partake in powerless forms of crime, such as prostitution and child neglect. This perspective of law enforcement during the 1980s is not surprising, as according to Arsovska and Allum (2014), the presence and role of women in criminal organisations at that time was either ignored or dismissed.

This is consistent with the conclusions of Ingrasci’s (2007) research examining the role of women in the Ndrangheta, that there is an “innate impunity for women, as until recently it was difficult for society, and therefore investigative bodies, to consider women as criminals” (p.51). During a police raid on their illegal gambling operation, Marisa Lankester documents the response to her presence from police offices as such: “What’re you? The office bitch? You fuck them all, correct?...Do they pay you to crawl under the desk and give ‘em head?” (Lankester, 2014, Chapter 4, n.p.).

The law casts women outside the field of vision because the experiences, expectations and values it was set up to represent are based on masculine perceptions. Laws were established to deal with the threat of male criminality (Smart, 1977); thereby allowing many women to avoid detection. Despite many of the women’s exits from illicit business being a direct result of interactions with the criminal justice system (n=13), it also facilitated their progression through the organisation.

In the narrative of Marissa Lankester (2014), for example, the speed of her career progression is increased by the incarceration of a male colleague, allowing her to fulfil the role of Chief Financial Officer in his absence. An investigator discussing Cheng Chui Ping stated that “She’s just a little old woman...You wouldn’t look at her twice on the street” (Keefe, 2009, Chapter 18, n.p.). This quote is a rather clear illustration of the preconceived notions concerning what a leader within organised crime ‘should’ look like.

In so far as such notions effectively govern law enforcement, women may be able to evade detection.

An example of the impact of double deviance (discussed in chapter two, see Heidensohn, 1985; Smart, 1977) is expressed in Griselda Blanco's biography; when describing a judge's reaction to her illicit business activities and the inclusion of her sons as lieutenants. She appears to be on trial for both the crimes she has committed and her perceived crimes against femininity, demonstrated in the following quote:

“[the] judge appeared to be more disgusted with Griselda than with them [her sons]. It seems almost uncanny to me to believe that a woman could take three young men that left her womb and do what you have done” (Smith, 2013, n.p.).

Their negative experiences of law enforcement caused the women to rationalise their criminal activities through Sykes and Matza's (1957) condemnation of the condemner's neutralisation technique. A commonality throughout the data is the women negating the rights of others to pass judgment on their criminal activities. This is particularly evident when discussing interactions with the criminal justice system. Discussion of the women's utilisation of the condemnation of the condemner technique is presented in chapter five (see section 5.3).

The negative interactions experienced by the sample of law enforcement and public officials links back to the discussion of the impacts of a political-crime nexus. The assertions of van de Bunt, Siegel and Zaitch (2014), which suggest that organised criminal activities must be considered within their wider political framework, are supported by the narratives of the women. Their pathways into and through illicit business are impacted by their interactions with external institutional frameworks. The auto/biographical accounts illustrate that political and social factors can both aid and hinder progression.

### 4.3. The Family Business and a Reliance on Gatekeepers

Representations of the impact of family on the women is highlighted across the narrative accounts, but the theme appears consistently in relation to principles of succession and the appearance of gatekeepers that facilitate the women's entry or progression. The theme of succession was identified in the accounts of the women who entered a pre-existing illicit family business (n=6), or those who viewed themselves as holding the position of matriarch (n=2). Coltrane's (2000) description of family has been utilised to aid this discussion. His definition refers to family as any primary group of people who share obligatory relationships. This has been used instead of a legal conception, which is restrictive and traditionally defines family as a married couple with children (the nuclear family). In the literature, the term 'family business' is defined in multiple ways. For this discussion the understanding of Rosenblatt, et al. (1985) has been utilised, which includes businesses where most of the ownership and management is controlled by the family. The term 'succession' has been taken from Sharma et al. (2001) as the transition of leadership from one family member to another, either within the nuclear or extended family.

The data in this study suggests that, similarly to licit business, succession by a woman often occurs in response to crises, such as death, ill health or monetary problems (see also Haberman & Danes, 2007). In these instances, motherhood or family more broadly were causal in the women's entrance into an illicit business, which then facilitated their careers. For example, Carina Cunzolo's experiences of the impact of succession were twofold. First, her father's death led to her becoming a 'black widow' –as Russell (2012) notes of this role, "you'll become the *paterfamilias* –the patriarch" (Chapter 3, n.p.). Black widow in this context refers to a woman being educated and given the responsibilities traditionally given to men within Italy in the first half of the 20th century prior to WWII, and assuming a male persona within the family. This later resulted in her marrying the head of the Camorra (Italian Mafia-style crime syndicate) to secure her family's position within the illicit economy. Second, when her husband became incapacitated because of ill health, and unable to manage the organisation, she stepped in through a sense of duty and to protect her family interests.

Another example is offered in the narrative of Marisa Merico, who was the daughter of the boss (Emilio DiGiovine) of the Ndrangheta (Italian Mafia-style crime syndicate). She took over control of the organisation when her father went to prison. Her level of control

is expressed in this statement: “I was in charge of [the organisation]...My voice was my dad's voice. I was running the organisation through him” (Merico, 2010, p. 210).

These examples demonstrate the impact of family obligation, and the expectation that these women put the needs of the family and the family business before their own. Research on the impact on daughters of taking over a family business is limited (Vera & Dean, 2005), but Dumas (1989; 1998) noted that there is a role conflict that occurs with women not being considered a viable successor by non-family member employees. This too was experienced by the women in this study on entering a family business in response to crisis, and a negotiation had to be undertaken to secure support of other business members.

The theme of succession was frequently coupled with a rationalisation process undertaken by the women of appealing to higher loyalties. This evidences that the women were utilising Sykes and Matza's (1957) neutralisation techniques, which are beneficial as they allow the women to become “immune from the demands of conformity made by the dominant social order” (Sykes & Matza, 1957, p. 665). For more discussion see chapter five, section 5.3. To facilitate the prioritisation of familial obligation over societal norms, by joining the illicit family business, the women can maintain a positive self-image using these techniques (McGovern, 2010). This process is evident across the data, with the women consistently viewing themselves as ‘business women’ and their criminal title as incidental. These findings are supportive of the research conducted by Siegel and De Blank (2010), on women in organised crime, which concluded that women within human trafficking networks justify their actions through notions of loyalty. Where loyalty to family prevails, the women accept succession into the illicit business and utilise this technique of neutralisation to qualify their actions as ‘acceptable’ or ‘right’ given their unique circumstance. This provides support to the conclusions of Hartman, et al. (2009), Haynie, Steffensmeier and Bell (2007) and, Benda, Harm and Toombs (2005), who emphasised the impact of social bonds on women's entrance to criminality.

Analysis of the impact on close relationships and familial ties to illicit business appear to support the conclusions of Steffensmeier, Schwartz and Roche (2013) that relationships are instrumental in accessing a criminal underworld. Although the literature has identified men as being important “sponsors, protectors, and gatekeepers within drug markets, particularly at higher level” (Maher & Hudson, 2007, p. 816), this research notes that men

were gatekeepers in all the illicit markets entered by the sample. The influence of personal and familial relationships was identified across the narratives, and is illustrated in Table 4.9.

*Table 4.9: Succession, Personal Relationships and Industry Entered*

<b>Influences on Entry</b>	<b>Illicit Industry Entered</b>			<b>Total</b>
	Commodity	Service	Multi - Dimensional	
Succession	1	0	5	6
Personal Relationships	7	2	2	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>17</b>

Table 4.9 evidences that, for entrance into a multi-dimensional illicit market, it was essential for the women to have a direct connection to the industry. The auto/biographies documented the accounts of seven women who entered a multi-dimensional industry; the Table illustrates that they all needed a male family member or a close relationship with a male who could facilitate entry. This may be because of the multi-dimensional illicit market entered being a patriarchal family business, which had been led by a male prior to the female securing control –with a father or husband transferring the controlling interest to a daughter or wife, as a result of death or incapacitation. Haberman and Danes’ (2007) finding that women within licit businesses often take control in response to crises, may also be applicable to women securing managerial positions in illicit business. In entering a service market, however, only half of the women required a male gatekeeper to secure entry. Two thirds of the women entering a commodity market did so through a male gatekeeper. The following table indicates that the need for a gatekeeper is greater for the women categorised as ‘self-made’.

Table 4.10: Impact of Social Position on Need for a Gatekeeper

Influences on Entry	Social Position			Total
	Self-Made	Nouveau-Riche	Bourgeois	
Succession	1	5	0	6
Personal Relationships	10	0	1	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>17</b>

The table illustrates that for the bourgeois a facilitator is least likely to be needed and therefore an appeal to higher loyalties is not utilised to justify their actions (see chapter five, section 5.3). The women in this category (as discussed in section 4.1.) possess the highest level of capital, and so are not reliant on others to supply social connections or economic support. The self-made women in the study often relied on a male acquaintance to secure their entry into a commodity-based market, particularly into an illicit drug business (n=7). All the women categorised as nouveau-riche (n=5) entered a multi-dimensional illicit market and as stated above were succeeding in the family business. This section discussed the reliance that women have on gatekeepers in entering illicit business. This was evident in the narratives of the women who succeeded within the family business, as they were obliged to fulfil familial expectations and prioritise the needs of the family over their own.

## 4.4. Summary

The relationship identified between the social classes of the women and the illicit industries they entered is aligned with the findings of Sayer (2005), that life chances are objectively impacted by class positions. Although the class categories cannot be mapped directly to illicit industries, Table 4.5 identified the relationship whereby relatively “privileged” individuals (bourgeois) are more likely to gain access to illicit service industries. This is a result of having received higher levels of education, thereby allowing them to obtain the requisite professional skills, coupled with their social networks and cultural capital resources. The disadvantages experienced by the self-made women because of a lack of social and economic capital, results in them lacking the necessary social networks to enter illicit service industries requiring professional white collar skills or knowledge. This reflects the findings of Alvesson (2001), Hanlon (2004) and Empson (2001) who concluded, in investigating licit business that within professional occupations there is always a restrictive impact of “othering” which excludes individuals perceived to be from a lower social position. Instead, these women struggle to move beyond their immediate social circles and are drawn to an illicit commodity-based industry, where they have direct access to their client base.

Although this chapter identified that the possession of varying degrees of capital provides resources to the women which facilitate entry into illicit business in a predictable direction, it also found that this pathway can be refracted by the external environment. Political factors impact the trajectory of the women, as the varying forms of capital discussed in the previous section (section 4.1.) constitute an asset which can be leveraged for material gain if the external political environment is favourable. The women who were positioned with strong social networks, within their respective positions in the social hierarchy, find themselves in a more secure position to take advantage of new opportunities arising from legal and political changes. Therefore, the paucity or abundance of social, cultural and economic capital cannot be understood independently of the broader political and legal environment. Illicit business must be reactive to political, economic and social developments to thrive (Demleitner, 1994).

The narratives highlight the key role that family plays in the women’s admittance to an illicit industry. This varied between women who succeeded within a family business, taking control in response to crises, and those whose entry was facilitated by a male

gatekeeper. It was noted that data suggested that for the self-made women the support of a gatekeeper was more crucial than for the bourgeois or nouveau riche. This may have been because of their lack of social or economic capital, resulting in their increased reliance on cultural connections. This supports the argument of Steffensmeier, Schwartz and Roche (2013), that relationships can be essential for entry into illicit businesses or networks.

This chapter has identified the pathways into illicit business followed by the women. Connections were identified in the data between the social positions occupied by the women and the nature of the criminal organisation that would be entered. To aid discussion and conduct meaningful analysis of these pathways it was necessary to construct suitable categories of class classifications and illicit industries grounded in the data. This first discussion chapter has laid the groundwork to consider the career trajectories of women within illicit business from across a socioeconomic and historic spectrum. Therefore, the next chapter will consider the commonalities noted throughout the auto/biographies of business strategies adopted by the women throughout their illicit careers, with a focus on the use of violence and negotiations of gendered stereotypes. This will require an overview of their shared experiences of abuse and the utilisation of negative life experiences to derive advantages in male-dominated working environments. Furthermore, consideration will be given to the presentation of neutralisation techniques across the data, used by the sample to overcome moral boundaries which facilitated their criminal careers after entry.

# CHAPTER FIVE: Becoming an Illicit Business

## Woman

The findings of chapter four support Sayer's (2005) assertion that pathways are objectively impacted by class. The impact of social structures and political conditions on the women in this study were identified, confirming the conclusions of Chesney-Lind and Pasko (2004) that women's crime is "deeply affected by women's place" (p. 95).

Commonalities were identified in the structural positions of the women and the illicit industry they subsequently entered. This was broken down into three social categories: Bourgeois, Nouveau Riche, and Self-Made for a comparison to be made between whether the industry entered was centred on providing commodities, services or if it had multi-dimensional characteristics. This required a discussion to be conducted on the relevance of social, economic and cultural capital, and the impact that the state and legislation had in dictating women's pathways into illicit business.

The previous chapter, through the lens of structural inequality, reviewed the locations of the women which impacted their general life chances and the sector of illicit industry entered. It considered the impact of family obligations and the necessity for a gatekeeper to facilitate the women's entry. This chapter investigates whether the women's involvement in organised crime is consistent with the arguments of radical feminism, which contextualises women's offending as being a result of oppression caused by patriarchal society (Gelsthorpe, 2010; Weiler, 1988).

An analysis is presented of the women's pathways to becoming 'good' business women, after they have entered an illicit industry. Commonalities are identified across the narrative accounts in terms of the necessity to engage in a complex process of patriarchal bargaining, the shared experiences and subsequent appropriation of violence, and the utilisation of neutralisation techniques to overcome moral boundaries. As such, the findings will be presented across three corresponding sections, which examine the evidence that the women in this study have adopted strategies to negotiate the gendered social order which systematically disadvantages them based on gendered assumptions inherent within patriarchal society. This has allowed them to gain the best advantage while still appearing to leave the patriarchal system unchallenged.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine factors which shaped the specific contours of the women's participation in illicit business activities, and how they negotiate a criminal career once entering it. As stated by Martin and Barnard (2013), women who work within male-dominated occupations face different challenges than those in either a gender-balanced or woman-dominated working environment. This discussion will analyse how the participants overcame challenges within male-dominated illicit businesses. This chapter addresses the third research question by considering the commonalities and differences in the career pathways of the women occupying management positions within illicit business.

The framework of patriarchal bargaining will be utilised, as it has been useful in research conducted on women within licit labour markets (Jorgenson, 2002; Kandiyoti, 1991; Mills, Franzway, Gill, & Sharp, 2014), but has not yet been applied to investigations into women's involvement in illicit labour markets. Kandiyoti (1988; 1991) introduced the term "patriarchal bargain" to explain processes undertaken by women to derive benefit from a system which is inherently oppressive to them, while not altering the dominant patriarchal social order. More specifically, Kandiyoti discussed the need for women to operate according to the "rules of the game" to "maximize security and optimize life choices" (1988, p. 274). The adoption of such strategies is evident in the narratives of the women in this study. Introducing the patriarchal bargaining framework into the context of gender and organised crime gives an opportunity to increase our understanding of the mechanisms utilised by women in illicit business to secure success.

To conduct meaningful analysis of the data, it is necessary to apply Kandiyoti's (1991) theory of patriarchal bargaining in conjunction with the theoretical perspectives of Connell (1987) and West and Zimmerman (1987) on 'doing gender'. The following discussion seeks to expand the existing knowledge of women's participation in illicit business through approaching the data with the understanding that the concept of gender is complementarity based. Criminology has consistently defined crime through the prism of gender (Klein, 1995). However, this discussion will make the important shift away from theories centred on monolithic sex roles. The women in this study are seen to have negotiated elements traditionally considered to be defined as either masculine or feminine to enter and progress through illicit business, using complicated mechanisms to carry out a process of patriarchal bargaining.

Gender in this section is conceptualised as a social structure according to the perspectives of Risman (1998; 2003; 2004), in that it represents an ongoing personal process which is a “routine, methodical, and recurring accomplishment” (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 126). This allows for discussion of the embedded nature of gender in the data at an individual, interactional and institutional level. Gender norms are treated as restraints on behaviour, but the women in this study demonstrate the utilisation of gendered expectations to derive benefit. In this case, normative gender order was reconstituted through organisation rituals, where the women acknowledge their membership of the gendered order. Like the findings of Gherardi and Poggio (2001), when the women did a ‘dance’ of adjustment, a compromise with men played out allowing them access and progression within illicit business.

Feminist discourse has seen the emergence of an increased acceptance of the gendered nature of social structures and social processes (Acker, 1990). This study allows for an appreciation that illicit business does not operate independently of these influences, and thus the women in this study are subject to participation in the same ‘patriarchal game’. Therefore, it is necessary to consider these influential causal mechanisms, as the women in this study present a resistance to gender norms that becomes implicitly understood as a rational strategy to make the most of what Kandiyoti (1991) refers to as the ‘rules of the game’.

Following this discussion, there will be an overview of the violence experienced by the women in the sample (n=18), both before and after they have entered illicit business activities. This offers the opportunity to consider whether Chesney-Lind’s (2006) contention that women’s criminality can be explained by their victimisation and abuse could be applied specifically to women participating in illicit business. Although the presence of abuse appeared across the data, the focus of this discussion is on the women’s narratives highlighting the reframing of abuse throughout their participation in illicit business. This reframing of abuse allowed the women in this study to utilise both violence and sex as a resource to establish themselves within a male-dominated working environment.

The concluding section of this chapter will consider the relevance of Sykes and Matza’s (1957) neutralisation theory to the participants. The analysis of the narratives will consider whether neutralisations were presented once the women had entered an illicit

career and not necessarily undertaken as a precursor to entry to the illicit economy. Throughout this section consideration will be given to the coping mechanisms adopted by the women to overcome boundaries imposed by the awareness of the criminality or wrongfulness associated with their illicit business activities. Essentially, the chapter seeks to demonstrate that commonalities are expressed in the pathways women undertake through their illicit careers. It will be evidenced that they must engage in a complex process of negotiating gendered expectations within a patriarchal society to continue a career within any illicit business market, regardless of their social positions.

## 5.1. A Business Strategy of Patriarchal Bargaining

Research focusing on women occupying positions within male-dominated labour markets more generally is evident in the literature (Gremmen & Benschop, 2009; Leijon, Hensing, & Alexanderson, 2004; Morgan & Martin, 2006; Reskin & McBrier, 2000). However, there is a paucity of comprehensive investigations into women working within male-dominated illicit business. The following examination considers whether Sasson-Levy's (2003) view, based on research on women within the military, that women can contest hegemonic femininity by incorporating bravery, strength, success and sexual freedom into female gender identities within male-dominated work places, is evidenced in the narratives of women in illicit business. This will involve the presentation of discussions centring on the women's negotiation of gendered norms within a male-dominated work environment, adhering to expectations present within patriarchal spaces to derive benefit and secure a career within an illicit business. This will allow for an analysis of the women's appropriation of violence as a business strategy (see section 5.2.), and the emergence of neutralisation techniques evidenced in the narratives to facilitate the overcoming of moral boundaries (see section 5.3.).

It was Bovenkerk (1998) who first attempted to describe the personality of prominent organised crime figures. The traits of criminal leaders have been highlighted as corresponding to those of successful licit entrepreneurs (Van Koppen & De Poot, 2010), and these are often associated with hegemonic masculinity. However, the findings of this research project suggest that to participate in illicit business the women had to carefully negotiate gendered expectations and engage in a nuanced bargaining process. A key characteristic identified by Denton (2001), which is evident across the narratives, is women's ability to diversify, allowing them the capacity to adopt multiple roles. The management of gender by the women in this study will be examined with a key focus on the use and negotiation of traditional hegemonic masculinity and femininity.

The term hegemonic masculinity is often understood to refer to the "configuration of gender practices which ... guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (Connell, 2005, p.77). The term is often viewed to represent physical and mental strength, a competitive spirit, heterosexuality, middle class 'whiteness' and aggression (Howson, 2006). However, most notably it is related to the characteristic of 'physical toughness' (Donaldson, 1992), and the presence of strong men

being valued in male-dominated work environments. This may be why women have historically been excluded from investigations of managers within illicit business, as they are not seen to represent the masculine ideal associated with organised criminal activities. This section seeks to identify whether elements of hegemonic masculinity could be embodied by the women in this study to achieve success and the contradictions this may involve.

### **5.1.1. Contextual Assimilation and Adopting a ‘Surrogate Maleness’**

Prior research on women in male-dominated occupations has identified that they are often required to prove their hegemonic masculinity to gain acceptance from colleagues by acting like ‘men’ (Watts, 2007; Franzway, Sharp, Mills, & Gill, 2009; Hobbs, Hadfield, Lister, & Winslow, 2003). Cockburn (1991), in her discussion on women in management, confirmed that when women are in competition with men to secure dominant roles within an organisation they have a tendency to adapt to their culture. This was emphasised in Jemeker Thompson’s (2010) autobiographical account when discussing the need to adapt to a masculine culture to progress within her criminal career.

“I took speech classes ... to develop proper English skills. I hired a trainer and started working out to be in the best shape... I had crafted an entirely new image” (Thompson-Hairston, 2010, Chapter: The Game is Changing, n.p.).

The selected quote refers to the course of action taken by Jemeker Thompson, to allow her to diversify her illicit business activities, to secure a leadership position for herself within the drugs market. Likewise, Virginia Hill’s progression within the criminal underworld was reliant on her male acquaintances’ acceptance of her in to the “inner circle of the outfit” (Edmonds, 1993, p.40). She too had to adapt to cultural expectations within the illicit economy. “[Virginia] adapted to Hispanic culture, learned ... Spanish... worked her way into the inner circle of the rich and influential” (Edmonds, 1993, p.41).

The data evidences the importance of adhering to expected norms within the workplace, so as not to challenge established cultures within the illicit industries entered and risk rejection from male colleagues. This supports the argument that Le Feuvre’s (1999)

conceptualisation of feminisation is useful when considering the experiences of the participants in entering a male-dominated work environment. This takes a four-pronged approach to understanding whether women sustain or resist a gendered order within a hegemonically male workplace (see chapter two). Table 5.1. illustrates that most of the women in the sample adopted Le Feuvre’s (1999) third prong when entering into an illicit industry, by adopting a ‘surrogate maleness’ to facilitate their access to a position of power.

*Table 5:1: Adoption of Surrogate Maleness to Secure Power*

		Illicit Industry Entered			TOTAL
		Commodity	Service	Multi-Dimensional	
Social Position	Self-Made	12	1	1	14
	Nouveau-Riche	0	0	0	0
	Bourgeois	0	3	0	3
TOTAL		12	4	1	17

This table highlights that most of the women (n=17) within this study adopted hegemonically masculine traits to gain acceptance and secure a powerful position within illicit business. Representations throughout the data highlight that the women felt accepted in to a male-dominated work environment by embodying a working class hegemonic masculinity, which is in line with the position of Donaldson (1992) and Gray (1987). Smith’s (2013) assertions that for women to be successful in male-dominated labour markets, they must be mentally tough to put up with the guys and that they must have their wits about them is illustrated throughout the data. Jemeker Thompson acknowledges in her autobiography the need to present a hegemonically masculine persona. Her awareness is illustrated in her discussion of the strategy she used to secure future business within the illicit drugs market. “Looking for opportunities to get it done, the first one was clear: toughen up my game” (Thompson-Hairston, 2010, Chapter: Get in where you fit in, n.p.). Marissa Lankester expresses the importance of mental strength, and it being beneficial to her success within illicit gambling. “I was tougher than any of these jokers knew, and more capable” (Lankester, 2014, Chapter One, n.p.).

In examples where the women did not view themselves to have a hegemonic male 'toughness' or strength, they knew the importance of presenting one to prevent their position from becoming compromised. Andrea Giovino commented: "Crying was a sign of weakness; I presented a pretty tough exterior, and crying was something I just never did. Suffer in silence" (Giovino, 2004, p.31).

The importance of presenting a tough façade is evident across the narrative accounts, confirming that the conclusions of Day, Gough and McFadden (2003), which suggest that within a male working-class culture it is "certainly more desirable to be hard" (p.150). This is highlighted in the narrative of Judith Moran, (2005) who discusses her displays of strength and violence repeatedly; to maintain her position of control, she presented the image of a 'hard matriarch'. For example, she documents in her autobiography having warned an associate not to challenge her by stating, "You tell him to ring me or I'll chop him into little pieces" (p.251).

According to the findings of Rickett and Roman (2013), when investigating women occupying male workplaces, this evidences reinforcement of the perception that she can protect herself and is not restricted by idealised heterosexual femininity. This presentation of aggression highlights the importance placed on having a 'surrogate maleness' (Le Feuvre, 1999). Within illicit business this allows for the women's biological gender to become less of a focal point and facilitates their progression within a male-dominated criminal organisation.

An outlier, in this instance, is Georgia Tann who, although she adopted masculine traits, did not operate within a male-dominated illicit business. She created a criminal organisation consisting almost entirely of women. As stated by Raymond (2007, Chapter One, n.p.), "all employees except the gardener and a chauffeur were women, a former resident described the Home as a 'Kingdom run by women'". The home referred to in the quote is the children's home that was one of the bases of operation for Georgia Tann's illicit business, which offered services to wealthy clients who wanted to purchase children. Her criminal activities are summarised by the following extract:

"[She] stole adoptees identities... falsified adoptees birth certificates, sealing their true documents and issuing them false certificates... Georgia had arranged over five thousand adoptions between 1924 and 1950, many

involving children she kidnapped” (Raymond, 2007, Chapter: Prologue, n.p.).

The women who did not discuss the presentation of overtly masculine behaviour were those who had been categorised in the previous chapter (see chapter four) as *nouveauroiche* (n= 5) or had entered a multi-dimensional industry (n=6). This may be because these women experienced a pathway into organised crime through familial connections or succession, which offered them more security and protection within their professional roles. Regardless, Smith (2013) highlighted that women working within male-dominated environments may displace gender norms simply by being there. Two explicit examples of the women presenting male identities, in varying degrees, could be identified in the accounts of Carina Cunzolo (Russell, 2012) and Marissa Lankester (2014). Both women presented a male appearance to emphasise ‘masculinity’ and gain acceptance into illicit business.

Within the sample, Carina Cunzolo is an outlier, in terms of being the only women to present herself as a man, rather than only adopting stereotypically hegemonic male attributes. This approach was undertaken to perform her husband’s duties and run the family business, Carina's husband Russo, the ‘Prince of Naples’ and head of the Camorra (an Italian Mafia crime syndicate, which represents one of the largest criminal organisations in Italy), suffered severe mental health issues after their home was bombed during WWII. Fearing for the safety of her family and needing to continue to maintain control over the business, Carina persuaded her husband’s brothers and close associates that she was in the best position to take control and secure their business interests. To achieve this, she pretended that her husband was still in control and issuing orders. She could operate in his place, as she had been privy to confidential information during his leadership and actively involved in the fiscal management and logistics of the business.

Marissa Lankester, on the other hand, initially avoided overt displays of femininity and wore gender neutral clothing to facilitate acceptance within the organisation. At the request of her male boss, who felt the presence of an overtly feminine colleague would serve only to distract the men within the illegal gambling headquarters and make her vulnerable, she dressed similarly to her male colleagues. To minimise hostility towards her (as the only woman working directly with illegal gambling activities of the organisation) she wore “[a] baggy sweatshirt, jeans, and sneakers” and “tucked [her] long

blonde hair under a baseball cap” (Lankester, 2014, Chapter 1, n.p.). However, once she had secured her position within the organisation and been promoted to management she reverted to her preferred ‘feminine’ appearance and “welcomed the excuse to dress like a woman again” (Lankester, 2014, Chapter 3, n.p.). This is not a suggestion that all the women in this study identify as men or necessarily desire to be ‘one of the men’, in fact, the women wishing to be considered as ‘one of the boys’ appear to be in the minority (see Thompson- Hairston, 2010), and appeared to be adapting to benefit from the ‘comradeship of men’ (Eastman & Schrock, 2008).

This agrees with the findings of Wajcman’s (1999) study of women managers in high-technology, multinational firms based in the United Kingdom. She concluded that when women within management are required to act like men, they often do. Identity theory posits that individuals have many different selves (Carter, 2014). In the context of this study this requires the willingness of the women to identify with necessary elements of a masculine identity, so as not to challenge inherent patriarchal controls. However, the reality is that although women in illicit business enter as ‘conceptual men’, they also negotiate this in conjunction with feminine subjectivities.

### **5.1.2. Adhering to the Feminine Ideals of Patriarchal Institutions**

A contradiction is present when the narratives highlight the women’s hegemonic femininity and its importance to them, as well as their positions of power within illicit business. This conflict was noted by Butler (1993) and Braundy (2005), who identified that most women within male-dominated work environments discuss being both masculine and feminine. This is overtly evidenced by Raymond (2007), in the biographical account of Georgia Tann:

“Georgia played on social expectation of her being feminine and caring for children, a tactic that would have been unavailable to men, balancing masculine and feminine traits to succeed” (Raymond, 2007, Chapter Eight, n.p.).

This supports Le Feuvre’s (1999) definition of ‘feminitude feminization’, which highlights the value of feminine traits to success within male-dominated work

environments. This is further highlighted by Andrea Giovino, who acknowledged the benefit of utilising both masculine and feminine traits.

“I was still one of the boys in a lot of ways, but I’d also been transformed into a woman... [the] best of both worlds- the street-tough wiles of the guys and the feminine charm of the women” (Giovino, 2004, p.60).

This is a commonality identified across the women’s accounts, and the necessity to balance normative gendered behaviour supports current findings within the literature. Smith (2013), for example, found paradoxically within her study on women within licit male-dominated professions, for participant Maria, that “being accepted as one of the boys relied on the fact that despite being able to do what men could, Maria was ultimately still a woman” (p. 866). These findings also confirm those of Williams’ (1989), when examining women in the military, that women doing masculine work do not necessarily have to deny being feminine. As expressed by Marissa Merico, however, this can cause a conflict between a personal and professional self. “I have a split personality. I can be a bit devious in that way; I’ve had to be to survive” (Merico, 2010, p.215). Beyond the sensationalist language used for effect in this autobiographical account, the quote evidences the dichotomy experienced by the women in the sample when negotiating their gendered identities within the illicit economy.

This confirms the suggestion made by Maher and Hudson (2007), that women’s integration of ‘feminine’ attributes could be advantageous when trying to secure a position within the illicit economy. The necessity to ‘do gender’ (as represented by West and Zimmerman, 1987, see chapter two) highlights the inherent institutional sexism of the underworld noted by Steffensmeier and Terry (1986). Liberal assumptions that women, upon entering a male-dominated occupation, are treated the same as men results in the necessity for women to “manage gender” to integrate with organisational cultures and structures.

The narratives highlight that instead of being constrained by gender norms surrounding femininity the women utilised them. Their femininity is a valuable resource. For Griselda Blanco, it is stated in her account that a softer appearance meant that “if you had not known her history... you could never have guessed [that she was leading an international drug smuggling operation]” (Smith, 2013, n.p.). The decision of the women to embrace gendered stereotypes also offered an element of security. Griselda Blanco derived benefit

from portraying herself according to feminine ideals of patriarchal society. For example, an advantage of presenting a feminine persona was that during the 1980s “no professional hitman would take a job on a woman” (Smith, 2013, n.p.), adding a layer of protection against assassination attempts as no men wanted to be seen to kill a woman. This supports findings of studies which have described the capitalisation of gender stereotypes by women within the illicit drug economy and the implementations of “risk management strategies such as contextual assimilation” (Maher & Hudson, 2007, p. 819), by presenting themselves favourably and adapting to gendered expectations.

Like the findings of Smith (2013), in her investigation of women participating in the hegemonically masculine construction industry, that while their “bodies are in the ‘wrong’ place ... this does not necessarily mean that their processes and practices at work rupture normativity” (p.862). The women in this study “considered appearances important” (Raymond, 2007, Chapter 1, n.p.). For example, Stephanie St. Clair was “always immaculate and elegantly dressed... her appearance was a physical manifestation of her agency” (Stewart, 2014, p. 40).

As stated by Rickett and Roman (2013) overt displays of femininity, such as painting their nails or Marissa Lankester wearing her hair down, is depicted as disempowering in the context of a hegemonically masculine work environment. However, the analysis of the data suggests that within illicit business a “post-feminist masquerade” (McRobbie, 2007, p. 722) of utilising fashion and beauty markers allows the women to mask their rivalry with men in the organisation, so as not to present themselves as competing directly with them for controlling positions.

As stated by Robinson (1991):

“The masquerade, in flaunting femininity, holds it at a distance. Womanliness is a mask which can be worn or removed. The masquerade’s resistance to patriarchal positioning would therefore lie in its denial of the production of femininity as closeness, as a presence-to-itself, as precisely, imagistic” (Robinson, 1991, p.119).

Sullivan (2003) identifies ‘masquerade’ as a tool which allows women to conduct a performance consistent with socially gendered expectations, which does not question hegemonic notions of identity. To assume a feminine role deliberately, reasons Irigaray (1985), is an attempt by women to “recover her exploitation by discourse, without

allowing herself to simply be reduced to it” (p. 76). Examination of the findings of this study highlight that rather than being one dimensional individuals who can be characterised by traditional gendered understandings of masculine or feminine traits, women in illicit business operate within overlapping contextual environments which requires a fluid approach to behavioural gender norms. The women in this study appear predominantly to be drawing on other discourses, or constructing other femininities, in consistently viewing themselves as “different” from the others (both men and women) within illicit business.

The conclusions are not consistent with the statements in Carlen’s (1985) work, as she describes the common perception that crime is the prerogative of men or that it represents a “manifestation of a lack of femininity” (p.8). This analysis views the women’s participation in criminal activities as nuanced, demonstrating a calculated interplay of gendered roles to succeed. Patriarchal bargaining undertaken by the women in this study does not result in a need to sacrifice femininity. It allows benefit to be derived from the utilisation of both masculine and feminine traits without challenging the patriarchal order. This has been demonstrated as evident across the narratives by examples presented throughout this discussion. The women’s ‘gender project’ (Connell, 2015) is not consistent, as they constantly have to balance normative ideals of masculinity and femininity with labour processes in order to derive benefit –demonstrating a complex process of patriarchal bargaining. This allowed the women to maintain their positions within a sometimes-hostile workplace, through a negotiation of the gendered politics within the illicit industry they entered.

Although existing literature has recognised that ‘surrogate maleness’(Le Feuvre, 1999) or the presentation of women as ‘conceptual men’ has been viewed to threaten men (Braundy, 2005; Cockburn, 1991), confirming the findings of Smith (2013), the narratives examined in this study evidence that this threat, when observed within an organised criminal setting, may be subverted through the balance of a representation of masculine traits to gain acceptance with displays of femininity. Risk management strategies utilised by the women included contextual assimilation, by capitalising on gendered stereotypes. While operating within the illicit economy the women were ‘doing gender’ (see West & Zimmerman, 1987, p.125, as discussed in chapter two), reinterpreting and renegotiating their positions within the context of their business interests.

To successfully assimilate within a violent or male-dominated environment, women are required to distance themselves from preconceived notions, which presume that they will adhere to a feminine trait of nurturing. Wajcman (1999) found no support for the assumption that women in management carry out a more caring or humane approach to the job. This is particularly relevant when considering the use of violence by the women in this study, and will be discussed in more detail below (see section 5.2.). A commonality in the data is women's exposure to abuse throughout their lives. An examination of the impact of abuse on the women's careers is presented to gain an understanding of the reframing of their abuse, which often allows the women to utilise both sex and violence as a resource to facilitate their own careers within illicit business.

## 5.2. Histories and Appropriation of Violence

This section presents an analysis of the women's shared histories of abuse and their appropriation of violence upon entering illicit business. This will contribute to the current literature that examines the impact of abuse on women's criminal behaviour, through the examination of the interaction between abuse and the utilisation of violence by women within illicit business. The relationship between childhood abuse and participation in violent criminal activities is consistently empirically documented throughout criminological literature (Makarios, 2007). Studies on victimisation have found that child abuse and neglect are strong predictors of offending in women (Hubbard & Pratt, 2002; English, Widom, & Brandford, 2001), with feminist scholars identifying childhood abuse as a turning point in girls' lives which puts them on a pathway towards criminality (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004). Although the relationship between abuse and violence is supported by empirical evidence, to date there is a paucity of consideration of whether this is evident in women's involvement in violent illicit business activities.

Shaffer and Ruback (2002) identified that experiences of childhood abuse increase the likelihood of violence among offenders. This relationship has been consistently noted as a causal factor in women's delinquency (English, Widom, & Brandford, 2001; Makarios, 2007). The findings of this study provide support for feminist literature, indicating that there is a connection between women occupying managerial roles within illicit businesses and experiences of abuse and highlighting that Belknap and Holsinger's (1998; 2006) identification of a pathway from childhood abuse into criminality may also be visible in the career trajectories of women within illicit business. Therefore, evidence will be presented that women within illicit business can adopt violent strategies, traditionally associated with hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Skeggs (1997) argues that this allows women to assert a powerful feminine identity. This analysis will seek to support Day, Gough and McFadden's (2003; as cited in Rickett & Roman, 2013) attempts to deconstruct the myth of the non-aggressive woman.

The data suggests that women's involvement in illicit business is more dialectic than women being simply victims. Therefore, the following discussion will explore the themes of abuse, violence and sex evident across the auto/biographical accounts. Consideration is given to the positive reframing of abuse experienced by the women to derive beneficial consequences and the impact this has on the expression of their need to maintain or gain

control. The use of violence and sexuality by the women as a strategy in illicit business is observed. Comparisons will be drawn between Hobbs, et al.'s (2003) study of women utilising violence in the licit workplace and the findings of this study.

### **5.2.1. Surrounded by Violence**

The majority of the women (n=18) experienced varying degrees of abuse, this is in agreement with the findings of research conducted by Gelsthorpe (2007), McIvor (2007) and Lidell and Martinovic (2013), which demonstrated that women engaging in criminal activities are predominantly victims of abuse. A commonality in the data is the reframing of experiences of sexual, physical and psychological abuse by the women (n=18), both prior to and throughout their involvement in illicit business. Negative stimuli in the context of this discussion refers to the women's motivation derived from shared negative experiences of abuse to produce an advantageous situation for themselves, through attaining successful outcomes within organised crime. Empirical evidence, within existing literature, supports the link between child abuse and adolescent and adult criminal behaviour (English, Widom, & Brandford, 2002; Jung, et al., 2015; Klika, Herrenkohl, & Lee, 2013). The narratives expressly document experiences of abuse throughout childhood, prior to involvement (n=16) in organised criminal activities. Abuse experienced by the women occurred as sexual (n=8), physical (n=12) and psychological (n=8), with some women experiencing combinations of these three forms of abuse. This is in line with the observations of Chesney-Lind and Pasko (2004), that women offenders report high rates of childhood victimisation. Extracts from the narratives will be used throughout this section to illustrate expressions of the abuse experienced by the women as presented within their auto/biographies.

For the following discussion, sexual abuse refers to unwanted sexual acts perpetrated against the women in this study (n=8). This includes on-going abuse and rape. This includes the experience of ongoing sexual abuse throughout childhood, as documented in the narrative of Kay who was sexually abused by her grandmother, which is coupled with the psychological abuse of being blamed for her own victimisation. The following quote describes one of Kay's experiences of sexual abuse:

“Grandmother was speaking in that voice reserved just for her and the special words would follow –the words nobody else ever heard from her grandmother... remember, it was all your fault. It’s always your fault” (McKay, 2002, Chapter Five: Farewell The Hanging Tree, n.p.).

Less systematic forms of sexual assaults and rape are also documented, as illustrated in the narrative account of Arlyne Brickman who was “twelve when she lost her virginity” (Carpenter, 1992, p. 42) to her cousin and was sexually abused again at the age of 14 (Carpenter, 1992, p. 49). The ability to gain control through participating in illicit business is conducive with the findings of Marrow and Smith (1995), who found that adult women who were sexually abused as children stress the importance of maintaining or gaining control.

The experience of violence perpetrated by close family members was a commonality in the data, with physical abuse (such as being punched, kicked or beaten with weapons) experienced by most the women in this study throughout their lifetime, including during their participation in illicit business (n=20). Physical abuse in this context is separated from sexual abuse, and includes violent acts which are not directly linked to unwanted sexual acts. For most of the women, experiences of physical abuse were a common aspect of their lives from childhood (n=12). For Virginia Hill, this was administered by her father who “viciously beat his children and his wife” (Edmonds, 1993, p. 7), while Andrea Giovino was a victim of physical abuse perpetrated by her mother (Giovino, 2004, p. 49). Family violence, especially child abuse, was identified to be a major risk factor for violent crime by Farrington (1991). The representations in the data of experiences of abuse throughout childhood and the women’s subsequent violent acts support Chesney-Lind and Shelden’s (1998) argument that women and girls in abusive households develop tactics for self-preservation, which can result in becoming perpetrators of violence themselves.

Psychological abuse is another form of violence experienced by many of the women (n=8). Marissa Lankester, for example, documents her experiences of psychological abuse in the home as a child, stating in her autobiography that “at home I was constantly criticized and critiqued by my mother” (Lankester, 2014, Chapter 10, n.p.). Marissa Lankester’s experience of abuse perpetrated by a woman is not isolated among the narratives. A commonality highlighted throughout the research was the experience of

negative relationships with women role models (n=16), which contributed to the process of disempowerment experienced by the women. Another example of abuse perpetrated by a mother is highlighted in the following extract from the account of Carina Cunzolo:

“...still yanking me by my hair...holding the belt by the opposite end from the buckle, Mama swung it at me. I cried out in pain as the metal buckle hit me in the genitals” (Russell, 20102, n.p.).

The quotes illustrate the various forms of abuse experienced by the women in this study. According to the research of Gil (1990) and Herman (1997), abused children “learn that the world is a dangerous place and have difficulty in establishing trust, autonomy, and initiative, which often results in major obstacles to adapting to adult life” (Laakso & Drevdahl, 2006, p. 86). Physical violence being perpetrated by other women in the samples’ lives is expressed throughout the data (n=11), as shown in Judith Moran’s statement that “John was black and blue for a few days after that little visit” (Moran, 2005, p.33). Here she is referring to her mother having been physically violent also; the quote is discussing her mother having beaten up Judith’s husband after discovering he had been abusing her. Throughout their involvement in illicit business, the narratives document continued experiences of abuse (n=20), which is experienced in private and public with some of the women experiencing both. In this context ‘private’ refers to domestic abuse, whereas ‘public’ refers to incidences which occurred in connection to the workplace. The following discussion will consider how the women who were victims of violence negotiated this and implemented violence as a strategy in illicit business.

### **5.2.2. The Need to Gain Control**

The women’s accounts contradict the normative guidelines surrounding women’s use of violence. The narratives highlight that violence is an option for control that the women were comfortable with, and that the majority had interacted with different forms of violence for most of their lives, especially as victims of violence (n=20). This appears to result in their attitude toward violence becoming dismissive, as illustrated in the narrative of Kathy Pettingill where it is stated that, “there’s nothing special about fighting”, and an acceptance that, “it’s just something you sometimes have to do” (cited in Tame, 1996, p. 55).

For Jemeker Thompson, she was surrounded by and encouraged to use violence throughout her childhood, as illustrated in the following extracts. When living with her grandmother as a child, Jemeker was introduced to violence, both administered by her grandmother, evidenced by the statement that “as soon as she hit me she had my attention” (Thompson-Hairston, 2010, Chapter: Muh’dear, n.p.) -and through her encouragement that disagreements be solved with fights. The following quote is Jemeker Thompson describing a fight with a family member, when she was a child, on the instruction of her grandmother:

“...when I threw it dead to his jaw, something inside just took over. I hit Michael and he hit the ground. Before he could get up. I had my knees in his chest and my fists all over his face” (Thompson-Hairston, 2010, Chapter: Muh’dear, n.p.).

Similarly, Andrea Giovino documents in her autobiographical account that she had learnt from an early age to resolve conflicts through violence, which impacted her willingness to utilise violence once entering organised criminal activities. “I’d learned that kicking somebody’s ass was the way to resolve conflicts, so that was the mentality I reverted to” (Giovino, 2004, p.71).

The use of violence is expressed within the narratives as producing feelings of power and control through the domination of others. This is in line with Swan’s (2010; Babcock, Millers, & Siard, 2003) findings that key motivators for women who proactively use violence are control and retribution. Examples of retribution being a causal factor in engaging with violence is evident throughout the data and illustrated in the following statement. Judith Moran expresses her desire for retribution and control leading to her acts of violence against rivals within the illicit economy, which stemmed from the murder of both of her sons. She stated in her autobiography that, “All will be dealt with... I had to let Jason and Mark know that their deaths would not go unpunished” (Moran, 2005, p.192).

Control was discussed as a motivating factor for the majority women in this study (n=16), as displayed in Table 5.2 below.

*Table 5.2: Control as a Motivator for Participation in Illicit Business*

		Illicit Industry Entered			TOTAL
		Commodity	Service	Multi-Dimensional	
Social Position	Self-Made	9	0	0	9
	Nouveau-Riche	0	0	6	6
	Bourgeois	0	1	0	1
TOTAL		9	1	6	16

The table demonstrates that the motivation of control was expressed across the sample (n=16), regardless of social position or the illicit industry that was entered. It is worth noting here that a disproportionately high number of the sample were categorised as self-made (n=15), and a small number were identified as bourgeois (n=3). Furthermore, a “beneficial consequence of abuse”, as highlighted by Himelein and McElrath (1996), is women being able to learn from these experiences and utilise them as an asset, specifically, in refusing to bow to pressures for conformity and engaging in higher levels of self-protective behaviour (Himelein & McElrath, 1996). Blok (1974) and Volkov (1999), in discussing the Italian Mafia and Russian Mafiya, labelled the organisations as entrepreneurs of violence. The account of Carina Cunzolo summarises this experience stating that the “ruthless justice of [her] action filled [her] with power” (Russell, 2012, Chapter 27, n.p.). Where the women did not utilise physical violence themselves, they hired others to conduct violence on their behalf, or their actions were responsible for multiple deaths. A key example is set out in the biography of Cheng Chui Ping, where she hired ‘thugs’ to carry out her actions, and many died during the transportation section of her human smuggling empire (see Keefe, 2009).

This section highlights the findings in the data which question contemporary conceptions about femininity and masculinity, which have erroneously impacted researchers’ comprehension of the illicit business/organised crime conundrum (Smith, 2009).

Assumptions of the prevalence of gendered behaviour among those involved in illicit

business has restricted the potential to correctly identify and quantify women operating within illicit networks (Jones, 2014). Jones (2014) argues that this has been driven by a broader presumption that women are victims of violent crime and that men are the habitual perpetrators. It is this ‘female victim-male culprit’ reasoning that has stifled organised crime focused research, despite the widely accepted belief of Pearson (1998), that women are capable of violence and aggression.

### **5.2.3. The Utilisation of Violence and Sex as a Tool**

The narratives highlight the women’s willingness to use violence as a tool to secure their position within the illicit organisation. Stephanie St. Clair was noted as willing to “go toe-to-toe with any man or woman insolent enough to insult her breeding and character” (Stewart, 2014, p. 127). Although women who act violently are rejected in mainstream society for deviating from their assigned gender role, they can profit from its use in the underworld. The following quotes and discussion present examples of the portrayals of violence perpetrated by the women evident within the data, with an awareness that sensationalist language may have been used for dramatic effect this does not negate their underlying engagement with violence. Carina Cunzolo is documented to have killed three men with claims that she “felt no sorrow and no remorse” (Russell, 2012, Chapter 32, n.p.). Furthermore, she killed her brother by slitting his throat after discovering he had planned to betray her, as evidenced in the statement that she “drew [her] blade across his throat” (Russell, 2012, Chapter 36, n.p.).

Griselda Blanco’s utilisation of violence is demonstrated in the following statement:

“...during the 1970s and early 1980s, Griselda Blanco and her organization had bombed a house, carried out a double murder with machine guns in a crowded shopping mall, had a man stabbed with a bayonet at the airport, and bled, dismembered, or tortured other victims” (Smith, 2013, n.p.).

For Griselda Blanco, the utilisation of violence was described as an opportunity to distinguish herself with “extreme brutality” (Smith, 2013, n.p.).

These extracts debunk the myth that crime is inherently linked to ‘maleness’ and ‘masculinity’ and supports the observations of Zimmerman (2013), who reasoned that a

narrow and flawed conception of femininity has led to inefficient understandings of the human trafficking phenomena. This study suggests that the same misunderstandings are being replicated across illicit businesses more broadly. Existing research acknowledges that women are capable of leading human trafficking rings. Cheng Chui Ping is consistently recognised for perpetrating acts of cruelty and being responsible for inhumane treatment while running a “criminal empire worth millions” (Jones, 2014, p. 159). The data reflects the assertions of Jones (2014) that women can utilise false perceptions of femininity as an additional business strategy, through their presentation of conforming to normative guidelines established around ideals of femininity in a patriarchal society, while also perpetrating hegemonically male acts of violence.

This research challenges binary categories familiar within the criminological literature of women as either ‘victim’ or ‘villain’ (Featherstone, 1996), or as ‘Madonna’ or ‘whore’ (Welldon, 1988). The sections of the women’s narratives which describe work highlight the pleasure or enjoyment they experienced being a part of an illicit business (n=19). However, similarly to the findings of other studies on women’s experiences within male-dominated organisations, the pleasure from work was coupled with harassment and discrimination (Braid, 2012; Braundy, 2015; Smith, 2013). According to the perspectives of Damaske (2011) and Mathur-Helm (2006), this can be retained in male-dominated occupations because of men possessing more definitional power to enforce discriminatory ideologies coupled with their increased access to resources, which support men’s career progression above women. According to this perspective it is not unusual that the women in this study struggle between their different selves as they occupy various positions within the social structure. Carter (2014) states that role identities are based on differentiated expectations for behaviour, and these are often gendered.

A key intention of this discussion is to consider Maher and Hudson’s (2007) view that discourses of women’s involvement in the illicit drug economy are dominated by images of passivity and powerlessness. Existing feminist research on the construction of violence within work purports that women within violent workspaces do not passively accept violence, but that they manage it by manipulating and controlling situations where violence is dominant (Rickett & Roman, 2013; Rickett, 2010). Hobbs, O’Brien and Westmarland (2007) examined the experiences of women attempting the ‘doing of gender’ in the potentially violent occupation of door supervision (security roles within the night time economy), and found that women can draw on their own exposure to violence

to succeed within violent environments. Their conclusions built on the findings of Denton and O'Malley's (1999) study of women drug dealers in Melbourne. They highlighted the minimal importance of ruthlessness and violence for women participating in the illicit drug market, but stated that their actions are still well within their repertoires of action.

Winlow and Hall (2006) state that violence is a key element of working-class masculinity that can be used as a personal resource. As previously discussed, the women in this study must engage in a complex system of patriarchal bargaining, often resulting in the presentation of themselves as 'conceptual or surrogate men' (see section 5.1.). This includes embracing elements of hegemonic masculinity such as violence. Analysis of the data identified that most of the women in this study can be considered to come from a 'working-class' background (n=20). In the previous chapter, these women were further categorised as either nouveau riche or self-made to aid the discussion. The use of violence documented in the narratives evidences what is referred to by Lovell (2000) as 'gender crossing' by women in the military, similar to the findings of Hobbs, et al. (2003) in investigating the use of violence by women door supervisors, in that the women can integrate with the masculine habitus required within organised crime of utilising violence, aided by a shared class culture of violence.

It appears from the data that the women in this study are able to draw on what Hobbs, et al. (2003) refer to (when researching violence in the night time economy) as their experiential knowledge of violence and violent culture, to work as 'violent experts' within illicit business. In agreement with the perspectives of Day, Gough and McFadden (2003), the women's ability to use violence as a resource can be seen to extend from cultural capital accessed through their class position. Furthermore, the women in this study can use violence as a resource (traditionally associated with hegemonic masculinity, see Connell and Messerschmitt, 2005) to assert a powerful feminine identity, referred to by Rickett and Roman (2013) as a 'hard matriarch'. According to Rickett and Roman (2013), this ability to be violent disrupts binding ideals around women at work, especially the expectations that successful women at work should represent the 'accoutrements of femininity'.

The analysis demonstrates a nuanced and dynamic relationship with violence taking place throughout the narratives. Violence contributed to a process of disempowerment experienced by the women throughout their lives, while also acting as a motivator for the

women to seek control and power, and can be utilised as a resource. This finding confirms the arguments of Chong (2006), that women can conform to conservative norms through a conscious decision to negotiate gender relations, rather than through submissiveness. Furthermore, in accordance with the findings of Miller (1986), some of the women (n=10) recount a reframing of abuse, allowing them to use sex to secure resources. In the case of Jemeker Thompson, it was viewed as necessary to access a new supply chain (to progress from dealing in marijuana to cocaine), as illustrated here:

“Pay to play, Jemeker, I thought... You gotta take one for the team if you want to come up... He ain't asking you to give up your goods. It's just oral ... That's how I justified it” (Thompson-Hairston, 2010, Chapter: The cost of doing business, n.p.).

Denton's (2001) results, when investigating successful women drug dealers, found that women adopted a subordinate position and utilised their sexuality in conducting negotiations with male suppliers. The quote above offers support for these findings, as it highlights that some of the women in the sample used sex to derive benefit, particularly in securing a more favourable outcome during a business transaction.

Moreover, Marisa Lankester viewed multiple rapes -perpetrated by a man who occupied a high-level position within law enforcement -in exchange for protection, as ensuring longevity within the illegal gambling business and to prevent others from harming her (see Lankester, 2014, pp. 29-30). The rationale put forward that the women had opted for the “lesser of two evils” was common among the narratives. A key illustration is seen in the biographical account of Virginia Hill.

“Hill always believed she would never be killed or maimed, and anything less than that, such as a rape or beating, was part of doing business with the organization” (Edmonds, 1993, p41).

The narratives noted the women's awareness of utilising sex as a tool to secure resources occurring at various stages. For example, Virginia Hill re-categorised sex as a resource from childhood. “Even as a young girl, sex to Virginia was nothing more than a means to achieving her goals –money and notoriety” (Edmonds, 1993, p. 9).

However, it was more commonly expressed across the narratives that the women viewed sex and their bodies as an asset after experiencing violence. This is demonstrated in

Andrea Giovino's statements concerning a shift in her mind-set after experiencing a violent sexual assault. "I learned that I did have power over men. I learned that the allure of my body could offset a lot of the other things" (Giovino, 2004, p. 56).

The literature refers to sex as a feminine resource (Baumeister & Vohs, 2004). The use of this resource, as displayed in the auto/biographies, was assessed through the lens of social exchange theory (Cook et al., 2013), which presumes that all social interactions are based on an exchange system where both parties give and receive something in return. The data suggests that the women view sex as a resource that they can exchange to further their illicit business interests, either in return for commodities that they can then sell or for protection services.

Experiences of sexual violence led to the utilisation of sex as a strategy, as clearly demonstrated in Jemeker Thompson's narrative. "[My] strategy was to play him with sex the way that he'd played [me]" (Thompson-Hairston, 2010, Chapter: Business Before Pleasure, n.p.). Although several of the women consider themselves to have utilised sex, the only perpetrator of sexual violence in the sample was Georgia Tann. The biography states that she was not a victim of abuse, either before or during her career in organised crime. However,

"She had molested some of the little girls in her care and placed some children with paedophiles... some were starved, beaten with hoes and razor strops, hung from hooks, and raped" (Raymond, 2007, Prologue, n.p.).

The findings support the empirical research that places women who work within violent male-dominated environments as typifying ideas of toughness, power, control and violent potential (Monaghan, 2002; Hobbs, O'Brien, & Westmarland, 2007). This conflicts with the perspective that women are victims and peacekeepers, which presents femininity in terms of pacification and vulnerability (Walklate, 2004). The analysis of the theme of violence indicates that the women can adapt to the requirements of a masculine habitus, exhibiting behaviour that is required of those involved in a violent male-dominated environment, evidencing what Lovell (2000) describes as 'gender positioning'. The women could draw on their own experiences of abuse, as experiential knowledge of violence and violent cultures (Hobbs et al., 2003). Therefore, the centrality of masculine violence within the habitus of illicit business contradicts normative conceptions of

femininity and undermines traditional perceptions of women's relationships with violence and control (Braithwaite & Daly, 1994). Similar to the findings of Hobbs, et al. (2007, p. 34) the "women exhibit a form of practical consciousness, which includes masculine associated aspects relating to violence, while succeeding in remaining socially coded as feminine". The women's participation in illicit business sees them portrayed as "symbolic men" (Davis-Floyd, 1992), as a result of their roles violating normative conventions of femininity through "replicating male excesses", in their utilisation of sex and violence (see Klein, 1993, p. 179).

Building on this, the following section considers tactics implemented by the women in this study to mitigate their responsibility for their violent actions. According to Brush and Bird (2002), "women and men manage their enterprises in different ways, they use different strategies and organizational structures" (p.42), causing the women in this study to employ mechanisms, emerging from limited possibilities to succeed. Existing research states that within organisations, women are expected to demonstrate more strengths and fewer faults than their male counterparts (Lahtinen & Wilson, 1994). Furthermore, Copes and Cherbonneau (2006) adopted the theoretical standpoint that individuals employ tactics to control both perceptions of themselves and their own responses, thereby increasing their confidence levels.

### **5.3. Strategies to Overcome Moral Boundaries**

This section seeks to identify factors influencing the women's career pathways once they have entered an illicit industry, using neutralisation theory. The previous sections have presented discussions on the women's negotiation of normative gender ideals to derive benefit within the illicit economy through a process of patriarchal bargaining (see section 5.1), and their shared experiences and appropriation of violence (see section 5.2). This section offers an overview of the strategies implemented by the women, to continue a career within an illicit business when faced with having to overcome moral boundaries. Analysis of the data highlighted the appearance of rationalisation strategies after their point of entry and not as a facilitator for entrance, with neutralisation techniques being implemented by the women at various stages throughout their careers. This is intertwined within the narrative accounts with intellectual techniques undertaken by the women to facilitate their progress.

Sociological and criminological literature present different conceptual frameworks for analysing the processes undertaken by individuals participating in deviant behaviour (Hewitt & Hall, 1973). This discussion uses neutralisation theory as a theoretical framework to analyse women's continued involvement in illicit business activities. Using Sykes and Matza's (1957) neutralisation theory as a foundation, this section presents an analysis of the presence of neutralisation techniques utilised by the women during their criminal career. It is evident from the data that rationalisations can be used by the women to justify their criminal acts, and thereby circumvent the injunctions against them (Megargee, 1997). As evidenced in the account of Arlyne Brickman, to continue to operate at an elevated level within the organisation, the women "devised an elaborate scheme of rationalizations" (Carpenter, 1992, p. 16). They do not label themselves or their actions as having been criminal or "wrong", instead they view themselves as having facilitated their careers through necessary and justifiable means (see Edmonds, 1993, p.3; 86).

It is important to consider techniques that may be employed to loosen constraints that would normally limit criminal behaviour (Kieffer & Sloan, 2009), especially in this area given the lack of focus on women in illicit business. Table 5.3 illustrates the use of Sykes and Matza's (1957) neutralisation techniques by the participants during their illicit business activities, as documented in their auto/biographies. These were utilised at

various stages by all the women (n=23) to facilitate their careers, where it was necessary for them to negate their own culpability.

*Table 5.3: Neutralisation Techniques utilised by Participants*

<b>Neutralisation Technique</b>	<b>Participants</b>
Denial of Responsibility	18
Appeal to Higher Loyalties	17
Condemnation of the Condemners	16
Denial of Victim	11
Denial of Injury	6

There was little difference in the utilisation of neutralisation techniques across the participants. The appearance of neutralisations within the narratives did not alter per socioeconomic position or illicit industry. However, the findings presented in the table demonstrate that the women were least likely to use the denial of injury technique (n=6). The denial of injury is presented whereby the participant views the harm caused to be of little significance or where they do not view any harm to have been caused by their illicit activities (Sykes & Matza, 1957). The use of this strategy was most apparent in the narratives where the women had entered a service industry (n=3), where no direct harm was identified (Cromwell & Thurman, 2003).

### **5.3.1. Denial of Victims**

Judith Moran, who was categorised for the purposes of the discussion in chapter four as having entered a multi-dimensional illicit market, justified her involvement in illicit services through a denial of injury stating that, “although it was illegal to make a living from the SP, we were legitimate taxpayers for all that time” (Moran, 2005, p.74).

‘SP’ refers to illegal bookmaking. In this instance, Judith Moran was operating an illegal gambling business. She neutralised her criminal actions by justifying or mitigating the significance of her illicit income, because she had also been paying taxes. Judith Moran argued that having fulfilled her legal requirements to pay tax on her legitimate income, her deviant behaviour was outweighed.

Furthermore, she rationalises her action or inaction, by weighing up higher levels of harm that could have been caused had she followed different courses of action, seeking to emphasise that she had made morally superior decisions. Her narratives (both autobiographical accounts) highlight her awareness that her illicit activities are ‘wrong’, but she overcomes these moral objections by mitigating the injury being caused to a victim. This is demonstrated, for example, in the following statement:

“It’s better for someone to have their wallet lifted than have his home broken into and trashed... to make someone the victim of the lesser of two evils. But I bought into it... wanted my world to be perfect for just a little longer” (Moran, 2005, p. 49) .

On the other hand, Georgia Tann was an outlier, in using a denial of injury/victim neutralisation as she never acknowledged that what she was doing was wrong. As shown in the statement from her biography that:

“Georgia would argue, and would seem to believe, that poor people were incapable of proper parenting. Their children needed rescue... [she] considered poverty the worst possible condition” (Raymond, 2007, Chapter 6, n.p.).

This denial of injury allows Georgia Tann to reinforce her view that her illicit activities did not cause harm, instead viewing herself as a ‘rescuer’. It appears that she utilises this technique in an analogous way as those perpetrating wildlife crimes in Nurse’s (2011) study. He identified that “denial of injury reinforces the offender view that their activities cause no harm while also confirming the view of animals as a commodity rather than as sentient beings suffering as a result of the individual’s actions” (p.44). Throughout Georgia Tann’s account, it is evident that she views the children she is stealing, abusing or arranging illegal adoptions for, as commodities. This allows her to deny the consequences of her actions, as shown in the following quote where she seeks to justify her actions by shifting blame to professionals that facilitated her illicit business: “...she admitted no part in baby selling, blaming instead doctors, lawyers and private individuals [who] are arranging adoptions without a license to do so”. (Raymond, 2007, Chapter 9, n.p.)

The appearance of a denial of victim or injury strategy is often hard to identify across the narrative accounts. However, there were representations of the women having constructed

their victims as having been threatening or dangerous, and therefore deserving of harm. This is like Ugelviks' (2012) findings, based on research conducted in a Norwegian prison, that women construct themselves as moral subjects in relation to their victims. A clear example of this is seen in Carina Cunzolo's narrative where she justifies the killing of someone she perceives to be a deserving victim. "[He] was an evil man and deserved to die. And I had held the power to kill him" (Russell, 2012, Chapter 27, n.p.).

Utilisation of the denial of victim technique, to neutralise their actions, allows the women to mitigate their own culpability, as demonstrated in this quote taken from Virginia Hill's biography. "[Virginia] saw herself as the victim, never as the aggressor, always as the abused, never as the abuser" (Edmonds, 1993, p. 169).

Beyond this, the women utilise Sykes and Matza's (1957) 'denial of victim' technique of neutralisation to justify their own uses of violence. This technique allows the women to transfer blame onto a victim for what has transpired. The women's narratives offer multiple illustrations of Jacob's (2000) rationalisation through viewing their acts as 'righteous retribution'. A key example of this is demonstrated through the extreme use of violence by Carina Cunzolo (when killing a man), which is then neutralised through the suggestion that he "was an evil man and deserved to die" (Russell, 2012, Chapter 27).

### **5.3.2. A Need for Revenge**

Marisa Merico expressly referred to motivations of revenge to justify her violent acts stating that "honour must always be respected, [and] family revenged" (Merico, 2010, p. 220). This method of justification is in line with the conclusions of Henning, Jones and Holdford's (2005), when examining women perpetrators of domestic violence, that significant emphasis is placed on "minimization, denial, and external attributions related to the offense" (p.137). In partaking in violent acts, the women seek to mitigate their culpability and overcome moral boundaries by justifying their acts as retaliation upon deserving victims. This is the same process undertaken by women shoplifters, as identified by Cromwell and Thurman (2003).

The importance of loyalty or "honour" in illicit business was expressed throughout the data (n=18). The expression of the importance of loyalty among the participants, maybe viewed negatively by wider society, because of their loyalty being to a subculture

perceived to be deviant. However, sociological research has highlighted that within the work place “loyalty, or devoted allegiance to colleagues, has been regarded as an attribute of utmost importance” (Heck , 1992, p. 254). However, the women would overcome this moral boundary by utilising justifications of retaliation or an appeal to higher loyalties.

The same neutralisation technique was also used by the participants in the study that later became informants or ‘turned in’ their colleagues and rivals. Stephanie St. Clair would routinely rely on the police to eliminate rivals. She “supplied local authorities with information” (Stewart, 2014, p. 103) that would cause the police to either investigate or arrest opponents and removed them as her competitors in the illicit banking market. In this instance, Stephanie St. Clair was motivated by self-interest, rather than principled reasons, a commonality that was identified across the sample who became informants (n=4).

In instances where the women sought revenge, some would appeal to law enforcement to enact it on their behalf (n=4). Key examples in the data include Cheng Chui Ping who gave information to law enforcement to secure the capture of her rivals (see Keefe, 2009, Chapter 6). Similarly, this is evidenced in the narrative of Arlyne Brickman who “for reasons of fear, revenge and power... turned informant” (Carpenter, 1992, p. 11). In this example, she justified betraying her moral imperative to be loyal and turned to law enforcement when she believed that others had breached a “code of honour” (see Carpenter, 1992, p. 147). Furthermore, she reasoned that she could provide information that would protect her illicit business interests by causing the police to focus on her creditors (see Carpenter, 1992, p.149). Some of the women explain that the publishing of their autobiographical accounts was motivated by revenge (n=3). For example, Judith Moran states that she is telling her story “because those people deserve to be exposed” (Moran, 2005, p.xi), when describing individuals she believes have betrayed her or committed worse crimes than her. This allows them to elevate their own feelings of guilt, by presenting justifications for their involvement in organised criminal activities.

### 5.3.3. Neutralisation Processes

The women can redefine their identities, as demonstrated in the previous quotes, by presenting themselves as moral citizens through the use of neutralisations (Weisman, 2009). It is evident from the narratives that the women draw on Sykes and Matza's (1957) techniques of neutralisation to rationalise their use of violence and coercive force. They often invoke techniques of neutralisation to relieve the tension between their personal moral objections, particularly to physical violence, with the requirement of their position within illicit business to do so. Their utilisation of neutralisation techniques allowed the women to differentiate between their work-related identity and their core sense of self. This is consistent with the findings of Johnston and Hodge (2014; see also Johnston & Kilty, 2016), who identified the need to separate a private and professional identity for security workers who may need to engage with violence in a work capacity.

Attempts to overcome this moral dichotomy resulted in the denial of responsibility (n=18), condemnation of the condemners (n=16) and an appeal to higher loyalties (n=17) techniques being implemented most frequently across the data. Vieraitis, et al. (2012) suggested that, because of women's historical position within patriarchal society, their behaviour is more restricted than men's and therefore their justifications for deviant behaviour are likely to be restricted too. They also find that women are most likely to utilise denial of responsibility and appealing to higher loyalties to neutralise their deviant acts (Vieraitis et al. 2012).

The denial of responsibility occurs when an individual presents their criminal behaviour as being out of their control (Sykes & Matza, 1957). Stadler and Benson (2012) reason that this technique is often utilised in response to naivety, growing up within a disadvantaged community or being a victim of circumstance. A commonality identified across the accounts was the women's attempt to move their criminal acts outside their sphere of responsibility, by highlighting elements which were outside their control, or otherwise incidental. Andrea Giovino, for example, denied her responsibility by perceiving herself as a victim. "I had multiple opportunities to get myself out of the cycle of poverty and criminality... I saw myself as a victim... I never held myself accountable" (Giovino, 2004, p. 12). Similarly, as mentioned above, this is seen in relation to Virginia

Hill who viewed “herself as the victim, never as the aggressor, always as the abused, never as the abuser” (Edmonds, 1993, p. 169).

A further commonality expressed by the participants is describing their illegal activities as being their ‘job’ (n=9). This is illustrated neatly in Jemeker Thompson’s account where she is seen to consistently refer to herself as a business woman, negating the fact that she was managing an illicit business. “In my mind, I was just a good business woman” (Thompson-Hairston, 2010, Chapter: Talking For Free, n.p.). A similar justification was identified in Cheng Chui Ping’s narrative, where it is highlighted that she describes herself as “a businesswoman, [and] would maintain throughout the [legal] trials, was all she had ever been” (Keefe, 2009, Chapter 18, n.p.).

These illustrations of the women’s denial of responsibility fit with Sykes and Matza’s (1957, p.666) analogy of the reality of utilising a denial of responsibility technique, as an individual seeing themselves as a “billiard ball”, in that they are propelled into new situations, and the illicit nature of their actions becomes subsidiary to the reasons behind their courses of action. As seen in Virginia Hill’s account, where she is described as a, “woman who said she was just ‘doing her job’ and ‘helping her friends’” (Edmonds, 1993, p. 4). Furthermore, a sense of responsibility could be mitigated when rationalising that they were conducting illicit businesses for the ‘right’ reasons, as demonstrated in the statement by Jemeker Thompson that, “In my mind, I’d done a lot of wrong for the right reason” (Thompson-Hairston, 2010, Chapter: Set Free, n.p.).

The participants demonstrate what Scott and Lyman (1968) described as a neutralising excuse, where “one admits that the act in question is bad, wrong, or inappropriate but denies full responsibility” (p.47). In utilising this approach, the women could maintain that although their illicit behaviour was regrettable, it was unavoidable, and an obligation resulting from their employment. It is evident from the data that the women are aware that what they have done is considered to be ‘wrong’ by normative society. As Copelton (2007) argued, that when wrongdoers admit that their actions are wrong they are acknowledging the legitimacy of normative social guidelines.

Vieraitis, et al. (2012) found, when investigating corporate crime, that women were more likely to utilise the denial of responsibility and the condemnation of the condemners’ technique. They argue that these findings confirm that justifications presented in women’s narratives reflect feminine roles as caretakers (Copes & Vieraitis, 2012; Klenowski,

Copes, & Mullins, 2011). The appearance of the condemnation of the condemners (n=16) in the data is most notable when the women discuss their encounters with the criminal justice system. This neutralisation sees the women viewing the 'system' as being corrupt, which assists them in overcoming moral boundaries, a process confirmed in Cromwell and Thurman's (2003) study, as being a process where individuals condemn others for judging their behaviour when they are themselves engaging in deviant behaviour.

This technique was most commonly identified in the participant's stories when they were presenting experiences with law enforcement, by highlighting the hypocrisy of others. A key illustration of this is taken from Marisa Lankester's narrative; the following quotes relate to her interactions with the police on three separate occasions. The first example discusses her interactions with police during a raid on the headquarters of an illegal gambling business. She views the police as being shocked to find a woman working for the organisation, and undermining her in suggesting she was only present to perform sexual acts, with police officers stating: "What're you? The office bitch?... You fuck them all, correct?... Do they pay you to crawl under the desk and give 'em head?" (Lankester, 2014, Chapter 4, n.p.). Furthermore, she claims on this occasion that the police put cocaine in her hand to falsely arrest her. Her utilisation of condemnation of the condemners in this instance is highlighted by her statement that, "after seeing the way the police behaved today, I had no illusions about who the real bad guys were" (Lankester, 2014, Chapter 4, n.p.).

Accusations against law enforcement for 'framing' the women was noted in multiple narratives (n=6). Another example can be seen in the account of Stephanie St. Clair, as she "maintained that the police were guilty of improper conduct, unlawful entry and attempts to frame her" (Stewart, 2014, p. 95). The second example, refers to treatment Marisa Lankester received after being arrested for the second time. She states that she was, "stripped and subjected to a humiliating body search" (Lankester, 2014, Chapter 8, n.p.). Thirdly, Marisa Lankester documents her victimisation by a high-ranking police officer, named Hernandez, who raped her multiple times over a number of months in return for receiving a "high level of protection" (see Lankester, 2014, Chapters 29 & 30, n.p.).

According to Stadler and Benson (2012), individuals will shift focus from their own illicit activities by calling into question the integrity of their accusers and this is reflected within

the participants' representations. Another element of the criminal justice system where the women seek to neutralise their perceived deviant behaviour is during their trials. Jemeker Thompson believes that the system is corrupt and intimates that she did not receive a fair trial, stating that, "[She] was DISGUSTED ... that jury, which hadn't included ANY of my peers" (Thompson-Hairston, 2010, Chapter: Set Free, n.p.). The narratives demonstrate, that within illicit business, the women can utilise the condemnation of the condemner neutralisation technique to transgress normative behaviour and social boundaries.

### **5.3.4. The Family is More Important**

An appeal to higher loyalties, as stated by Sykes and Matza (1957), involves individuals participating in criminal activities for the benefit of someone else rather than themselves. The use of this neutralisation typically refers to the prioritisation given to the needs or wants of family members or friends, over obligations to wider society or the legality of a chosen course of action. Vaughan (2002) argues that an appeal to higher loyalties could also take place where a person feels obliged to prioritise beneficial outcomes to a company or organisation, over other moral obligations. Beyond this, Gilligan (1982) argued that women are more constrained by moral evaluations of behaviour than men, as they have an overriding obligation to avoid harming others, because of their moral imperative being "an injunction to care" (p.100). This was confirmed by the data -as the following examples illustrate, the women referred to family obligations as being a higher loyalty mostly in relation to their children (n=14). For Arlyne Brickman this is highlighted in the perception that, "her most elaborate rationalizations, however, still centred on Leslie [her daughter]" (Carpenter, 1992, p. 171).

However, Jemeker Thompson also referred to the children of those who worked for her as being more important to her than observing the law. According to Colperton (2007), an appeal to higher loyalties allows individuals to deviate from dominant cultural norms to uphold conflicting subcultural ones. It is evident in the women's narratives that they prioritise their subcultural relationships over mainstream cultural norms. This is evidenced in the following quote from Jemeker Thompson, describing her appeal to the higher loyalty she felt for her 'employee' Reggie and the welfare of his children, as a justification for her not ending her illicit drugs business:

“I knew in my heart that selling drugs was wrong. I knew my business was illegal. But looking at Reggie, I realized he had kids to feed. All of our workers had kids to feed. No matter how much money I had, other people were counting on me” (Thompson-Hairston, 2010, Chapter: Hibernation, n.p.).

These findings agree with Klenowski, Copes and Mullins (2011), who found that criminal women tended to refer to their role as a nurturer or carer within the family, arguing that “rationalisations are shaped by constructions of masculinities and femininities and adherence to gender roles” (as cited in Vieraitis, et al. 2012, p.481). Carina Cunzolo’s account epitomises this. Her quote highlights her appealing to higher loyalties to justify taking control of her husband’s illicit business after he became incapacitated.

“I wasn’t about to leave my fate, and my family’s, to someone who wasn’t up to the task... I was the only one capable of becoming their savior... I needed to take full power, piece by piece... but I knew these men”  
(Russell, 2012, Chapter 24, n.p.).

Whereas, Cheng Chui Ping appealed to her own sense of duty to care for her family and secure them access to the United States of America. Despite being aware that she was breaking the law by operating a human smuggling business from China to the USA, she neutralised her actions by not identifying as a criminal, as seen in this statement, where it is claimed that she,

“may have known that she was breaking the law. But she did not think of herself as a criminal... they don’t see it as a criminal enterprise, but almost as a duty to try to get family members in” (Keefe, 2009, Chapter Five, n.p.).

This provides support for Ussher’s (2004) argument that women are positioned as nurturers of others, resulting in them neutralising their perceived deviant behaviours through ‘self-renunciation’, because of being morally dichotomised between socially gendered expectations of what makes them ‘good’ or ‘bad’. Like Klenowski’s (2008) findings, it appears that the participants engage in a conscious process of rationalisation when committing illegal acts, while understanding that they are deviant. The findings of this analysis support the arguments of Maruna and Copes (2005), that individuals learn justifications to enable them to deviate from normative values, while undertaking a

process of rationalising their behaviour either prior to or following their illegal acts. The success of their neutralisation techniques in allowing them to continue their illicit activities, despite awareness of their illegality and encountering moral obstacles, is neatly summarised by Jemeker Thompspon. “In my mind, I’d done a lot of wrong for the right reason” (Thompson-Hairston, 2010, Chapter: Set Free, n.p.). The success of the neutralisations used by the women is highlighted by the statement of Marisa Lankester, who presents that she “had no moral issue with what we were doing” (Lankester, 2014, Chapter Four, n.p.).

This illustrates that the sample utilises neutralisation techniques to overcome moral boundaries and, similar to the findings of Dodder and Hughes (1993) in their investigation of delinquent youths, the women “do not reject prevailing moral principles, but accept them while simultaneously finding excuses or temporary justifications for behaviour which runs counter to these values” (p.65). The findings presented evidence that the participants utilise mechanisms to allow them to overcome moral boundaries and deal with subsequent guilt. This discussion has confirmed that Sykes and Matza’s (1957) neutralisation theory can help in conceptualising how women within illicit business continue to operate at an elevated level.

## 5.4. Summary

The findings and discussion illustrate the use of an adaptive strategy among women in illicit business. This reflects the summations of Jorgenson (2002), when investigating licit professions, that women “measure success in male terms and attempt to assimilate by disqualifying their femininity and by matching male styles of behaviour” (pp. 351-352). However, for the participants in this study, the disqualification of their femininity is not absolute. It was concluded that, in agreement with the findings of Derne (1994), women can effectively use sex and docility as a tool to improve their situation. However, while the use of such tactics may help women to achieve specific goals, the use of sex as a tool also reproduces tight boundaries constructed by normalised gender roles rather than offering to challenge or alter them. This discussion confirms the standpoint, that in the context of the illicit economy, the women ‘doing gender’ may create and reproduce inequalities (see West & Zimmerman, 1987).

The sample of women appear to have succumbed to the patriarchal bargain. To derive individual success, it was necessary for the women to accommodate the rules of patriarchal society through the acceptance of gender roles which traditionally disadvantage women, and which inevitably upholds patriarchal norms. The women have not necessarily altered pathways for those who follow them, in entering male-dominated illicit business; they will still be faced with deciding whether to make patriarchal bargains to succeed. This chapter has contributed to the literature on the experiences of women within illicit business using the patriarchal bargain framework, which highlights issues of gendered inequalities in illicit workplaces as similar to those experienced in licit organisations.

The discussion highlighted the dialectic experience the women had with violence, which was not as simple as women being only ‘victims’. Evidence was presented of the commonality of victimisation across the data. This included psychological, physical and sexual violence both prior to and after entering the illicit economy. Furthermore, the women appropriated violence as a business strategy to achieve success within a violent workplace. The findings provide support for the work of Hobbs, et al. (2003) and Lovell (2000), and demonstrate that women within illicit business can integrate with the masculine habitus of organised crime through the utilisation of violence.

This examination of the women's illicit careers concluded that their progression is contingent on a complex rationalisation process. Sykes and Matza's (1957) neutralisation theory was applied as a framework to analyse how the women negotiated moral dichotomies. It was noted that neutralisations emerge in the data once the women were inside an illicit business, rather than to facilitate entry –that is, after the women had encountered moral boundaries that needed to be overcome. This discussion supports the findings of Denton and O'Malley (1999), that within illicit business “women may occupy leadership roles, work independently outside of a penumbra of male protection, and experience the same range of successes and failures as do their male counterparts” (p.514; see also: Morgan & Joe, 1996; Mieczkowski, 1994; Taylor, 1993; Waldorf, Reinerman, & Murphy, 1991). However, it is evident from the sample that the use of neutralisations are often necessary to facilitate the women's illicit careers.

The next chapter will conclude the thesis, and highlight the implications of the study on the current state of knowledge and explore the possibilities for future research. An overview of the key findings of this research project and the contribution these make to the existing literature on women and crime and women in organised crime, more specifically, is presented.

## **CHAPTER SIX: Conclusions and Implications**

The intention of this research project was to examine the accounts of women who have held controlling positions within illicit business. Three research objectives were set out in the introductory chapter of this thesis (see chapter one). These were 1) to evaluate the factors impacting women's entry into an organised criminal network or illicit business, 2) to identify and analyse emerging themes from women's auto/biographies, and 3) to compare the commonalities and differences in the women's illicit career pathways. Analysis of these findings, guided by the research objectives, uncovered interrelated resources, strategies and considerations to allow for the terrain of women within illicit business to be examined.

In this concluding chapter, the core findings and implications of this research project will be restated. The key contributions that this project makes to the existing state of knowledge will be highlighted, and areas of the literature that are complemented or queried by this study will be acknowledged. This allows for a discussion of the limitations of the project and suggestions for future research to be presented.

## 6.1. Summary of the Findings and Discussion

An aim of the thesis was to evaluate the factors that impacted the women's entry into an illicit business. This objective was addressed in the first discussion chapter (see chapter four), where comparisons were drawn between the women's social positions (pre-entry) and the illicit industry they initially entered. Analysis of the auto/biographies demonstrated the relationship between social positions and the illicit industries that women entered. The social stratification within the sample demonstrates that women could enter illicit business from varying positions within the social hierarchy, and that their opportunities were impacted by structural inequalities. The women were categorised as bourgeois (n=3), nouveau riche (n=5) and self-made (n=15). The discussion highlighted the importance that the possession of varying forms of capital had on facilitating the women's entry into a specific illicit marketplace. It was identified that the women could utilise three different forms of capital as a resource when entering an illicit market. The most capital was held by the bourgeois who could draw on social, cultural and economic capital. It was found that these women, therefore, were most likely to access an illicit service market. Second, the nouveau riche were seen to have combinations of social and economic capital, which allowed them entry into an illicit multi-dimensional market. The class classification with the lowest level of available capital was the self-made woman, who held only cultural capital, and tended to enter an illicit commodity market. This was identified through an analysis of the resources available to each participant per their objective social classifications. These findings are in line with the conventional understanding, emphasised by Silva (2015), that hierarchical structures and inequalities can be identified everywhere.

Although the findings are consistent with previous research, which states that social structures influence women's pathways into illicit business (van de Bunt, Siegel, & Zaitch, 2014), analysis of the participant's narratives suggested that it may be possible to predict which pathway into illicit industry a woman will enter, according to the capital she possesses, and that entry is possible from across the social spectrum. However, the current sample is limited, and further research would need to be conducted to verify this. The representativeness and validity of the findings could be questioned, because of the data documenting the experiences of only 23 women, who have had their journey through illicit business published in auto/biographies.

However, Kleemans and De Poot's (2008) assertion that individuals are drawn to illicit businesses operating within their own social environments, was also evident in the women's narratives. Furthermore, this confirms McPherson and Smith-Lovin's (1987) argument that women will enter situations and criminal endeavours where they are surrounded disproportionately by others from the same social position. This agrees with Bourdieu's (1977) suggestion of the weight that social structures have over individuals and their life choices, as he notes that these could be both enabling and constraining.

Furthermore, it was identified that Firestone's (1993) conclusions, drawn from research based on male participants, were also reflected in the narrative accounts of the women. These were that participation in illicit business is heavily reliant on social relations (see also Kleemans, Kruisbergen, & Kouwenberg, 2014) and that this impacts the form that their criminal activity will take, adding support to Van De Bunt, Siegel and Zaitch's perspective (2014) when they examined the social embeddedness of crime. Although Maher and Hudson (2007) had identified the importance of male gatekeepers in the illicit drug market, this research expands on this through the identification of their findings' applicability across the illicit markets identified in the study.

The importance of both gatekeepers and family succession, for women entering an illicit business or organised criminal network, was noted in chapter four. Thus, it was suggested that Miller and Mullins' (2009) and Brown and Bloom's (2009) statements that women's close relationships can have criminogenic influences on them may also be applicable to the women in the sample. This supports the widely-held position within the literature that social bonds markedly affect women's entrance into criminality (see Hartman et al., 2009; Agnew, 2005; Benda, Harm, & Toombs, 2005; Daigle, Cullen, & Wright, 2007; Haynie, Steffensmeier, & Bell, 2007).

One of the themes to emerge from the analysis of women's auto/biographies was the experience of structural and cultural strain throughout their stories. This allowed for the application of Merton's (1968) strain theory in discussing the women's frustrations experienced through restrictions placed on their accessibility to the licit labour market (see chapter four). This adds support to the literature which argues that a desire to find employment can be a push factor for individuals when entering illicit business (Ducheneaut, 1997). Furthermore, the findings, in discussing the women's experiences in diaspora communities, highlighted the relevance of Bovenkerk's (1998) contention that

strain experienced by migrant communities can lead to involvement with organised criminal networks or illicit business. The women in the sample from diaspora communities, for example, experienced limited access to licit labour opportunities and sought to achieve their goals via illicit means. Beyond this, state-mandated segregation meant that some of the women could establish illicit businesses in response to the strain experienced within their communities as a result of not being able to access specific licit services, such as banking and investment opportunities.

A key factor impacting the women's career trajectory was presented in the first discussion chapter (see chapter four), when reviewing the impact of the state and legislative changes on the women's illicit careers. This established a connection between social structures, illicit marketplaces and the interaction of external environmental factors on women's criminal careers. Analysis of the impact of government legislation and policy changes on the women was highlighted. The discussion in chapter four highlighted the impact of these external factors and found that the women's illicit careers could be both enabling and constraining. For example, prohibition in the USA increased the illicit business opportunities of Gertrude Lythgoe and state sanctioned discrimination against black people in the USA meant that Stephanie St. Clair could supply financial services that were denied to parts of the community in New York during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, regulation and policy changes in Australia, for example, negatively impacted the illicit business opportunities for Kate Leigh and Tilly Devine when changes in licensing and opening hours of hotels and bars were enacted.

The second discussion chapter (see chapter five) focused on the women's experiences after entering an illicit industry. The discussion centred upon the strategies utilised by the women to secure a career once within illicit business. It found that they undertook a complex process of patriarchal bargaining to derive benefit while operating within the guidelines of patriarchal institutions. This highlighted that the women in illicit business must adhere to the same processes of 'doing gender' as other women, acknowledging the application of Connell's (1987) and West and Zimmerman's (1987) theoretical perspectives on gender: namely, that to be successful, women must conform to the 'rules of the game', and work alongside the framework enforced by a patriarchal system. The findings noted that Kandiyoti's (1988) conclusions, based on women within licit business, could be applied to those in illicit businesses too. Kandiyoti (1988) had identified, when investigating women's experiences in male-dominated licit careers, that women must

participate in a complex process of patriarchal bargaining to derive benefit and in doing so, they do not challenge the dominant patriarchal system. This highlights the need for women within both licit and illicit workplaces to “do gender”.

Discussion of the impact of women’s early life experiences on their pathway into illicit business, was centred on the theme of violence which was identified across the narratives (see chapter five). The findings were aligned with the perspectives of Gelsthorpe (2007), McIvor (2007) and Lidell and Martinovic (2013), which found that women engaging in criminal activities are predominantly victims of abuse. This offers additional support for empirical evidence within the existing literature which draws links between experiences of child abuse and deviant adult behaviour (see Jung, et al., 2015).

The findings evidence that women within illicit business can diversify their strategies, utilising both sex and violence, after reframing their own negative experiences of abuse to derive advantage. The women’s shared experiences of abuse throughout their lives is in line with the work of Jung, et al. (2015), that early life exposure to violence may facilitate a criminal pathway in adulthood. The argument was made that women within illicit business can derive beneficial consequences from their negative experiences of abuse. The recognition of women’s victimisation is prevalent among the criminological literature more broadly (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004; Chesney-Lind, 2006), and throughout the research on organised crime and illicit business more specifically (Beare, 2010). However, the findings note that, although the women considered themselves to have been victimised, their experiences appeared to be dialectic.

These findings are broadly in line with those of Himelein and McElrath’s (1996), who noted the resilience of victims of childhood sexual abuse and their reliance on cognitive coping mechanisms to reframe their negative experiences. In considering the strategies used by the sample to continue their involvement in illicit activities the research investigated whether the women implemented cognitive tricks such as using neutralisation techniques, as described by Hochstetler and Copes (2003). A commonality was noted in the utilisation of neutralisation techniques to overcome moral boundaries. It was concluded that the women were most likely to rely on Sykes and Matza’s (1957) denial of responsibility, condemnation of the condemners and an appeal to higher loyalties. This supports the applicability of Vieraitis, et al. (2012), and Cromwell and Thurman’s (2003) argument that multiple neutralisations can be used at the same time.

Furthermore, this discussion highlighted that the women identified a need to separate their private and personal identities when engaging in violent acts. This was comparable to Johnston and Hodge's (2014) and Johnston and Kitty's (2016) findings when researching women in violent licit work environments.

The discussion presented in the second research chapter (see chapter five), sought to answer the research question about the strategies adopted by the women to secure a controlling position within illicit business. A number of themes were found to be relevant, for example, similarities were identified between the literature based on women's experiences within licit managerial roles and the participants. This confirms the views of Steffensmeier, Schwartz and Roche (2013), that women can occupy both licit and illicit roles within organisations. This emphasises that Beare (2010) was correct in her suggestion that a comparison between the attributes necessary for success in licit business may correspond to those held by individuals in illicit business, such as those which instil confidence and trust. Many similarities were noted in the discussion, including that the women in this study could take control during times of crisis, an observation already noted in the literature by Haberman and Danes (2007) when considering women taking over control of licit businesses. In the context of this study, times of crisis tended to occur when a family member or partner who had held the controlling position within the illicit business died or became incapacitated, through incarceration or illness rendering them no longer able to maintain their dominant role.

Another theme identified, was the expression of traits traditionally associated with hegemonic masculinity, such as aggression, independence and assertiveness, to achieve acceptance among colleagues. The appearance of this theme, consistently across the narratives, is in line with the findings of prior research conducted by Hobbs, Hadfield, Lister and Winslow (2003) on women working with the licit night time economy – another male-dominated occupation. The analysis of this theme highlighted that the participants were capable of adaption to a masculine habitus, an ability that Cockburn (1991) identified as being crucial to women's success in management more broadly.

The use of traits traditionally viewed to be hegemonically masculine could be as useful to the women in the study as they are to men, and did not prohibit the integration of feminine attributes. This supports the research of Maher and Hudson (2007), who found that it can be advantageous to women in the illicit drugs market to utilise a combination

of attributes, which are traditionally associated with masculinity and femininity. It also demonstrates that Maher and Hudson's (2007) findings, when investigating the illicit drugs market, may also be applicable to other illicit markets such as the illicit commodity market more broadly, illicit service markets and multi-dimensional illicit markets. Furthermore, this evidences the applicability of Wajcman's (1999) conclusions that women within licit management roles do not demonstrate a more caring or humane approach to work, as the narratives evidenced a strategic use of sex and violence by the sample when establishing a career within the illicit workplace.

The relevance of gender norms was highlighted throughout the discussion, with the theme of negotiating normative gender expectations recurring across the data. Especially in relation to statement by Steffensmeier and Terry's (1986) that women are generally perceived to lack the prerequisites to be of use to a criminal organisation. The discussion in this thesis suggest that the women's experiences within illicit business and organised criminal networks, do not support the argument that women do not possess the skills and attributes necessary to be useful to the progression of criminal organisations. The findings contradict the traditional assumption within the literature, highlighted by Berrington and Honkatukia (2002), that notions of femininity are incompatible with criminal behaviour. Instead the discussion was more in line with George's (2005) analysis of women in sport, as a commonality noted was the nuanced way in which women could 'do gender'. This adds support to the literature which is focused specifically on women within organised crime, which often contradicts perceptions of women and crime more broadly. The findings, for example, highlight similarities with the results from Campbell (2008) and van Koppen, De Poot and Blokland (2010), which identified the utilisation of normative aspects of both femininity and masculinity as a strategy to success.

A further example was the expression that the participants of this study were not restricted by notions of idealised heterosexual femininity. This again suggests the applicability of the literature on women within licit business to this phenomenon, specifically the work of Rickett and Roman (2013). The findings demonstrated that the women may have presented a 'surrogate maleness', as defined by Le Feuvre (1999), however, it is not clear from the analysis whether the statement by Braundy (2005) and Cockburn (1991) that male colleagues are threatened by this strategy is supported.

The auto/biographical accounts of the women support Bespinar's (2010) conclusions that

“women’s work-related strategies do not question or change the existing patriarchal value system. Rather, they are developed to play the patriarchal game per its own rules by opening up some room for change” (Bespinar, 2010, p.530).

The narratives expressed an acceptance of violence as a necessary and useful tool to progress through the criminal underworld, as the data presented stereotypical displays of masculine dominance coupled with complex rationalisation processes.

The women utilised neutralisation techniques, as a rationalisation process, to overcome moral boundaries and continue their involvement with organised criminal activities. In chapter five it was identified that the women predominantly relied on three of Sykes and Matza’s (1957) techniques of neutralisations. These were the denial of responsibility, condemnation of the condemners and an appeal to higher loyalties. The identification of the participants’ reliance on these techniques supports the existing literature which suggests that the use of neutralisations is gendered (see Ugelvik, 2012; Vierietis, et al. 2012; Wiesman, 2009).

## **6.2. Key Contribution to the Knowledge**

The motivation for this research was to gain a better understanding of women's pathways into and through controlling positions in illicit business. The analysis of the auto/biographies was guided by the research objectives and questions that these established (see chapter one). Furthermore, gaps in the existing literature were identified in the literature review (see chapter two), which directed the project. In particular, it was noted that women are often absent from the research conducted on organised crime and illicit business. Accordingly, this section will state the key contributions the findings and subsequent discussion have made to the existing state of knowledge. Some of the minor contributions of the study have been omitted. However, these have been discussed throughout the discussion chapters of the thesis (see chapters four and five).

Predominantly, the literature views femininity and criminality as opposing terms (Steffensmeier, Schwartz, & Roche, 2013). This study offers evidence that in the context of women in illicit business this may not be entirely correct. It was evidenced that the women could draw on traditional concepts of masculinity and femininity to derive benefit. This conflicts with existing literature that suggests femininity has no place in organised criminal activities. However, the findings indicated that for the participants it was necessary to engage in complex strategies of patriarchal bargaining, and the utilisation of neutralisation techniques to continue successfully within illicit business. Therefore, this research has confirmed the validity of applying neutralisation theory as a lens to assess women's involvement in illicit business.

A key contribution of this research is its challenge of the binary categories which are familiar within the criminological literature on women in crime, such as distinctions between 'victim' and 'villain' (Featherstone, 1996). The researcher sought to help in debunking the myth that women are not occupying high-level positions within organised criminal networks and illicit business. This was attempted through highlighting commonalities identified across the narratives of the utilisation of traits traditionally associated with masculinity, such as violence. Furthermore, these findings offer support to Day, Gough and McFadden's (2003; as cited in Rickett & Roman, 2013) attempts to deconstruct the myth of the non-aggressive woman, by evidencing the dialectic nature of their involvement in illicit business. This demonstrates that women within illicit business

may be able to integrate with the masculine habitus of organised crime through the utilisation of violence.

Contributions are made to the field of feminist criminology, as this project argues that women are not homogenous, and the study allowed for the nuances among the representations of women in management positions in organised crime to be investigated. It would be interesting, in a future project, to see if the findings based on the representations of women in this study can be generalised to men. This research has expanded the possibilities for the use of secondary data sources in feminist research, especially in allowing for considerations to be given to a historical spectrum of women's experiences that would not be available with primary sources.

This research has contributed to the scholarship focusing on women who are in non-traditional or male-dominated occupations. It was identified that women within illicit business, similar to those in other violent occupations, are attempting to 'do gender', and can draw on their own experiences of violence to succeed in a violent 'masculine' world. This adds support to the empirical research conducted by Hobbs, O'Brien and Westmarland (2007), which found that women working in male environments can typify normative ideas of power and control.

Beyond this, the findings suggest that the sample could derive benefit from the utilisation of both hegemonically masculine and feminine traits. This discussion (see chapter five) disagrees with the arguments of Rickett and Roman (2013), that overt displays of femininity are disempowering within a male-dominated workplace. The analysis of the data suggests that the women's experiences are more in line with McRobbie's (2007) position, which is that women can benefit from using a masquerade approach. The discussion provides some support to Sullivan's (2003) argument, that masquerade is a tool woman can use to perform per socially gendered expectations of femininity, while also exhibiting masculine traits, such as aggression, competitiveness and violence.

Prior research which has focused on male participants, viewed women as lacking the prerequisites for success within criminal networks (Maher 1997; Mullins & Wright 2003). This project has highlighted numerous examples from the participants' auto/biographies which document their reports of success, creating a foundation on which future research can build. Another key contribution of this project is the demonstration of the applicability of the literature on women's management in licit business, such as

Kandiyoti's (1988) work on patriarchal bargaining or Bagilhole's (2002) research on women within male-dominated occupations, to those operating within illicit markets. This demonstrates that a different lens, away from the criminological literature, could present a useful resource for gaining a more in-depth understanding of women's career pathways within illicit business. This reinforces Van Koppen and De Poot's (2010) argument that traits of criminal leaders may correspond to those of legitimate entrepreneurs.

This project adds support to McNeil and Chapman's (2005) argument that personal accounts are an important source of information for criminological research. The utilisation of women's auto/biographies to examine women's experiences of managing an illicit business has not previously been explored. Therefore, the selected methodology adds support to the argument that secondary sources can present a valuable resource for researching a hidden population, especially within organised criminal networks and illicit business (von Lampe, 2012). Specifically, this project has highlighted strategies implemented by the women to succeed in illicit business. Discussion of themes of sex and violence evidenced the applicability of Derne's (1994) reports that women can effectively use sex as a tool to improve their situation, creating a foundation to further examine the strategies used by women to succeed in high levels of management in illicit business.

### **6.3. Limitations of the Research**

This study was primarily concerned with conducting research on a previously under-investigated population. Despite this project being carefully planned, the researcher was aware of the limitations of the project. Thus, both methodological and researcher limitations are discussed below. There were features of the chosen research method which may have negatively impacted the validity of the findings. Conducting research on organised crime has been identified in the literature as methodologically problematic (von Lampe, 2012) because of issues of access (see chapter three). Although the researcher decided to conduct research on secondary sources to mitigate issues associated with restrictions imposed by time and resources, this meant the research was based on a limited data set. Therefore, the sample represents a highly selective group of women who have held a controlling position within illicit business and written an auto/biography published in English. The lack of available data satisfying the research projects inclusion criteria may have limited the scope of the analysis and impacts the generalisability of the findings. Therefore, the utility of the findings as a result of the selected methodology is limited. It is important to note here that the purpose of the selected approach, as highlighted in chapter two, was to view the narratives as producing meaningful stories based on the women's experiences which could offer an insight into their individual "truths", rather than seeking to identify an overriding "truth".

However, there has been limited prior research on the phenomena of women actively participating in organised crime, which meant that there was a lack of resources to draw upon to guide the research. The chosen method made it possible for the researcher to focus on identifying themes and categories among the data, which lead to the discovery of significant relationships between the participants' experiences. This may not have been possible, within the temporal constraints of the doctoral research, had the researcher had to spend time gathering primary sources, for example, through conducting interviews.

Another methodological limitation was the studies reliance on 'self-reported' data. The use of pre-existing data is limiting, in that it can be difficult to independently verify the information that is being represented in auto/biographical accounts. There may have been more control over the information generated if interviewing had been used. However, all personal narratives have the potential to be impacted by bias, such as selective memory, attribution or exaggeration. The researcher was conscious of this throughout the analysis

stages and was cautious of the sensationalist language used at times for what appeared to be dramatic effect. The researcher took the position that some level of bias within auto/biographical accounts was inevitable, and therefore, focused on analysing the women's representations and not seeking an absolute "truth".

Methodologically, this study provides an empirical example of the contributions that an unobtrusive grounded study can make using data derived from auto/biographies, thus, expanding the possibilities of utilising secondary data, within a grounded theory framework, to study the phenomena of illicit business and organised criminal networks. This approach is beneficial because of the complexity associated with gathering information on inherently secretive and closed groups. By means of a final reflection on the research method selected, it is evident that knowledge can be gained from analysing secondary data sources, particularly when researching hard-to-reach groups and when operating within the financial and time constraints of a doctoral programme. Furthermore, despite the limitations identified, the approach allowed for new insights to be gained from across a socioeconomic and historical spectrum that may not have been possible using primary data sources.

The researcher experienced limitations when constructing the research design and implementing the analysis. The data collection was restricted because of the reliance on secondary sources. Furthermore, all research procedures and analysis were conducted by the researcher alone, this leaves significant room for the data analysis to be influenced by researcher bias. However, auto/biographies offered a rich source of data to examine women's individual experiences of organised criminal networks and illicit business involvement. The grounded theory approach adopted in this study allowed the researcher to constructively work with such biases, rather than pretending that they were not present.

Although the researcher initially sought to conduct interviews with women who have controlled illicit businesses, this was not viable because of issues of access, time and resources. This has been discussed in more detail in the methodology chapter (see chapter three), where the ethical considerations were also noted. A key concern identified was that the researcher did not seek consent from the participants to use their auto/biographies for this study. The decision not to obtain consent was based some of the women having already died (and their consent being unobtainable) and on the understanding that the

women's stories had been published in the public domain, and therefore, further consent was not necessary.

## 6.4. Suggestions for Future Research

This section offers some suggestions for future research. Given the paucity of qualitative examinations of women within illicit business, this study has highlighted that it would be beneficial to also improve the state of knowledge on the roles held by women and the illicit industries they operate in, as this will fill a gap in the existing research. This research has supported the statement of Bagilhole (2002) that, as women continue to enter male-dominated or non-traditional occupations, it becomes an increasingly important topic for research. The need to investigate women's experiences within these roles is also relevant to women within illicit occupations.

This project has contributed to the knowledge of women's pathways into and through illicit business careers. However, as noted above, this was restricted by a decision to use only secondary sources as a data set. The use of published auto/biographical accounts meant that the participants were either dead, incarcerated, previously convicted for their illicit activities and released or remained anonymous. This meant that the analysis was based on historical accounts of women's experiences within illicit business, as all participants have either died or expressed that they are no longer involved in illicit business or organised criminal networks. It would be beneficial to also conduct research on women currently controlling organised criminal networks or illicit businesses, to compare the findings with contemporary examples. This was a research avenue that the researcher was unable to follow during this project because of geographical, financial and temporal restrictions. Therefore, the findings could be tested in a different context, through adopting a different research strategy in future.

A key contribution of the research identified was the utilisation of normative gender roles by women within illicit business to derive benefit, and the complex process of patriarchal bargaining undertaken. This could be built upon in future research projects by conducting more in-depth analysis of women within specific illicit business sectors and drawing comparisons in their strategies for success. There is a paucity of qualitative examination of women perpetrators in illicit business. These findings have highlighted the need to conduct further research on women and crime that is grounded in their own experiences.

A finding that was unanticipated was the commonality of negative relationships with female role models expressed by the participants. Although this was briefly mentioned in chapter five when discussing the women's shared histories and appropriation of violence,

it was beyond the scope of this project to discuss this issue in detail. It was not possible to address all the research questions set out in the introductory chapter in detail, given the limitations expressed above. Notably, beyond the women's shared experiences of abuse, an in-depth examination of the women's early life experiences was not conducted. This was because of the auto/biographical accounts often focusing on adult experiences in and around the illicit business activities. This could be achieved in future research by gathering primary sources, or utilising other secondary source materials such as diaries, case studies or life histories.

As a final reflection on this study, this research has confirmed that women have appeared as managers within a multitude of illicit markets for more than 100 years. It identifies commonalities in their experiences both prior to involvement in an organised criminal network and throughout their pathways through illicit business. This enquiry aims to support a shift in criminological thought, one that moves away from an androcentric approach to research, and to encourage an inclusive method to investigate organised crime.

## Appendix

Table A.1: Sample (Auto/biographies n= 27, Women n =23)

Subject	Author	Year	Title	Place: Publisher
Blanco, Griselda	Smitten, R.	1990	<i>The Godmother: The True Story of the Hunt for the Most Bloodthirsty Female Criminal in Our Time</i>	New York, NY: Pocket
Blanco, Griselda	Smith, J. E.	2013	<i>Cocaine Cowgirl: The Outrageous Life and Mysterious Death of Griselda Blanco, the Godmother of Medellin</i>	New York, NY: Byliner Inc.
Brickman, Arlyne	Carpenter, T.	2014	<i>Mobgirl: A Woman's Life in the Underworld</i>	New York, NY: Simon and Schuster
Cunzolo, Carina	Russell, R.	2012	<i>Don Carina: WWII Mafia Heroine</i>	New York, NY: Bettie Youngs Books Publishers
Devine, Tilly	Writer, L.	2009	<i>Razor: Tilly Devine, Kate Leigh and the Razor Gangs</i>	Sydney, AUS: Macmillan Australia
Duignan, May	Nelson, H. J.	1928	<i>Chicago May, Her Story: A human document by 'The Queen of Crooks'</i>	London, UK: Macaulay Company
Duignan, May	Sharpe, M.	1929	<i>Chicago May: Her Story</i>	London, UK: Sampson Low Marsten
Duignan, May	Nuala O'Faolain	2006	<i>Chicago May: Her Story</i>	New York, NY: Riverhead
Giovino, Andrea	Giovino, A. & Brozek, G.	2004	<i>Divorced from the Mob: My Journey from Organized Crime to Independent Woman</i>	New York, NY: Carroll and Graff
Hill, Virginia	Edmonds, A.	1933	<i>Bugsy's Baby: The Secret Life of Mob Queen Virginia Hill</i>	New York, NY: Birch Lane
Johnson, Mary	Angel, Ajani, A.	2010	<i>Strange Trade: The Story of Two Women Who Risked Everything in the International Drug Trade</i>	Berkeley, CA: Seal Press

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Place: Publisher</b>
Kay (pseudonym)	McKay, R.	2012	<i>Armed Candy: A True-Life Story of Organised Crime</i>	Edinburgh, Scotland: Mainstream Digital
Lankester, Marisa	Lankester, M.	2014	<i>Dangerous Odds: My Secret Life Inside an Illegal Billion Dollar Sports Betting Operation</i>	Stans, Switzerland: Cappuccino Books Publishing
Lee, Jane	Lee, J. & Jarvis, D.	2012	<i>Gypsy Jane</i>	London, UK: John Blake
Leigh, Kate	Writer, L.	2009	<i>Razor: Tilly Devine, Kate Leigh and the Razor Gangs</i>	Sydney, AUS: Macmillan Australia
Lythgoe, Gertrude	Lythgoe, G.	2006	<i>The Bahama Queen: The Autobiography of Gertrude 'Cleo' Lythgoe</i>	Mystic, CT: Flat Hammock Press
Merico, Marisa	Merico, M.	2010	<i>Mafia Princess</i>	New York, NY: Harper Collins
Moran, Judith	Moran, J.	2005	<i>Judith Moran: My Story</i>	New York, NY: Random House Australia
Moran, Judith	Moran, J.	2008	<i>My Story: The Heartbreaking Human Story Behind Melbourne's Gangland War</i>	New York, NY: Random House Australia
Pettingill, Kathy	Tame, A.	1996	<i>The Matriarch: The Kathy Pettingill story</i>	Sydney, AUS: Macmillan Australia
Ping, Cheng Chui	Keefe, P. R.	2009	<i>The Snakehead: An Epic Tale of the Chinatown Underworld and the American Dream</i>	New York, NY: Anchor
Sena, Indra	Sena, I.	2012	<i>Closet Full of Coke: A Diary of a Teenage Drug Queen</i>	North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform
St. Clair, Stephanie	Stewart, S.	2014	<i>The World of Stephanie St. Clair</i>	New York, NY: Peter Lang Inc.
Tann, Georgia	Raymond, B. B.	2009	<i>The Baby Thief: The Untold Story of Georgia Tann, the Baby Seller Who Corrupted Adoption</i>	Boston, MA: De Capo Press
Thompson, Jemeker	Thompson, J. & Ritz, D.	2010	<i>Queen Pin: A Memoir</i>	New York, NY: Grand Central Publishing

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Place: Publisher</b>
Wright, Thelma	Wright, T. & Alease, C.	2011	<i>With Eyes from Both Sides: Living My Life In and Out of the Game</i>	North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform
Zeno, Pauline (pseudonym)	Angel, Ajani, A.	2010	<i>Strange Trade: The Story of Two Women Who Risked Everything in the International Drug Trade</i>	Berkeley, CA: Seal Press

*Table A.2: Autobiographies (n=11, women = 10)*

Andrea Giovino
Gertrude Lythgoe
Indra Sena
Jane Lee
Jemeker Thompson
Judith Moran (x2)
Marisa Lankester
Marisa Merico
May Duignan
Thelma Wright

*Table A.3: Biographies (n=16, women n=14)*

Arlyne Brickman
Carina Cunzolo
Cheng Chui Ping
Georgia Tann
Griselda Blanco (x2)
Kate Leigh
Kathy Pettingill
Kay (pseudonym)
Mary Johnson
May Duignan (x2)
Pauline, Zeno (pseudonym)
Stephanie St. Clair
Tilly Devine
Virginia Hill

Table A.4: Summaries of Participants

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Participation (Approx)</b>	<b>Primary Illicit Business</b>	<b>Primary Country of Operation</b>	<b>Additional Information</b>
Andrea Giovino	1980s-1990s	Multi-dimensional: Italian-American Mafia	USA	Andrea was introduced to the criminal underworld by her mother, who ran an illegal gambling operation, and encouraged her to marry into the Italian- American Mafia. She had four children, and relationships with multiple known ‘mobsters’. She was indicted in September 1992 as a co-conspirator in an illegal drugs network. Andrea decided to become a cooperative witness against the Bonanno Family, in exchange she was given a \$75,000 settlement and relocated by the USA government.
Arlyne Brickman	1960s-1980s	Multi-dimensional: Italian-American Mafia	USA	Arlyne became involved with Italian organised crime figures as a teenager. She decided to end her illicit business involvement after being gang raped and realising that her male partners would not protect her because she was a female Jew. This resulted in her becoming an FBI informant after her daughter’s life was threatened.
Carina Cunzolo	1940s	Multi-dimensional: Camorra	Italy	After her father died Carina assumed responsibility for the family, and began to learn about their illicit business. She was later forced to marry into the Camorra by her mother, to secure the position of her family in the criminal underworld. She decided to impersonate her husband, after he was traumatised during WWII, and protected her husband’s illicit business interests. Carina made a calculated exit strategy from the illicit business, to be reunited with her children and ensure their safety.
Cheng Chui Ping	1980s-2000s	Service: Human Smuggling and Financial Services	China/ USA	Cheng Chui was born in Northern Fujian province, China to a poor farming family. Her father left for the USA when she was 15 and worked as a dishwasher for 13 years to send money home to their family. When he was deported to China in 1977 he began a business smuggling people. She then began her own, much more successful, human smuggling business and offered illicit financial services. Cheng Chui was betrayed by her family and died in prison.

Georgia Tann	1920s-1950s	Service: Human Trafficking	USA	Georgia, aka Beulah George Tann, trafficked children (using pressure tactics and threats of legal action) from birth parents (mostly single mothers or removing children from unwed mothers at birth and telling them that the children had died) and inmates in mental institutions to sell to wealthy customers. Most children were used on child labour farms or given to abusive families, predominantly within New York and California. Georgia was never convicted for her illicit business activities.
Gertrude Lythgoe	1920s-1930s	Commodity: Alcohol	USA	Gertrude was orphaned as a child when her mother died and her father could not care for her. She initially began work as a stenographer in New York and California before beginning to work for a London liquor exporter. With the passing of prohibition in 1920, she seized the opportunity to supply liquor to the USA via the Bahamas, running a successful illicit business.
Griselda Blanco	1970s-1980s	Commodity: Drugs	Colombia/ USA	Griselda was the leader of the Medellin cartel in Columbia. She is estimated to be responsible for up to 200 murders and her illicit cocaine business is believed to have had a turnover of approximated \$80,000 per month. She was arrested on February 20 1985, and sentenced to more than a decade in prison where she continued to run her illicit business. After her release in 2004 she was deported to Colombia and claimed to have left the criminal underworld. She was, however, assassinated in 2012.
Indra Sena	1980's	Commodity: Drugs	USA	Indra dealt cocaine, and operated an illicit business in the USA on a relatively small scale. She followed a strict honour code, but decided to exit from organised criminal activities after her sister had died as a result of her illicit business activities and Indra had spent a brief period in jail
Jane Lee	1980s-1990s	Commodity: Miscellaneous (Armed Robbery)	UK	Jane's childhood was spent in a poor industrial area, and she refers to it as "happy go lucky". She had a violent career, collaborating with numerous other offenders. The majority of her illegal activities involved armed bank robbery.

Jemeker Thompson	1980s	Commodity: Drugs	USA	Jemeker began dealing in marijuana before starting her own illicit business supplying cocaine. She later moved into the crack-cocaine market because it was more lucrative. Jemeker later invested in a hair business, selling to celebrities, as a way to launder money. Jemeker was on the run for two years, but allowed herself to be captured by the FBI at the 6 <sup>th</sup> grade graduation ceremony for her son. This led to her being convicted on charges relating to drug trafficking and she was sentenced to 15 years in prison. She was released in 2005, after serving 13 years and is now an evangelical minister.
Judith Moran	1980s-2000s	Multi-dimensional: Moran Family	Australia	Judith Moran was the matriarch of the Moran crime family of Melbourne, Australia. She married John Cole (killed in 1982), and her first son, Mark Moran (born Cole), was murdered in 2000. She began a violent relationship with Lewis Moran, and had a second son, Jason Moran, who was murdered in 2003. Judith was convicted of the murder of Des Moran in June 2009, and sentenced to 26 years in jail on August 10, 2011 (to serve a minimum of 21 years).
Kate Leigh	1920s-1940s	Commodity: Sex Trade	Australia	Kate, aka Catherine Mary Josephine Leigh, experienced childhood neglect, which led to her involvement in prostitution in Sydney, Australia. She later became a madam, running her own brothels, and had illicit businesses dealing mainly in alcohol and cocaine. She benefitted from protection provided by a network of male gangster associates. She was charged on 107 occasions and sent to prison 13 times for various other organised criminal activities. She was one of the wealthiest women in Sydney throughout the 1930s and 1940s, but was bankrupt in 1954 after being fined for unpaid income tax.
Kathy Pettingill	1960s-1990s	Multi-dimensional: Pettingill Family	Australia	Kathy Pettingill was the matriarch of the Pettingill family in Melbourne, Australia. She was initially a prostitute, but progressed to running brothels as a madam and helped to run her son's illicit drug business. She had 10 children (Dennis, Peter, Victor, Jamie and Trevor grew up to be some of Melbourne's most infamous criminals), and was in a series of abusive relationships. She was convicted for drug trafficking offences.

Kay (pseudonym)	1990s	Commodity: Sex Trade	UK	Kay was sexually abused by her grandmother and misled into becoming a prostitute by her mother, who initially acted as her pimp. She later became a high-class call girl, which led to her introduction to the underworld in Glasgow, Scotland. She carried out a number of contract killings, but left when her partner was murdered.
Marisa Lankester	1980s-1990s	Service: Financial	USA	Born 1963 in Rome and raised in New York, Marisa grew up privileged in New York and spent time in Vancouver, Canada during her post graduate years. She was the Chief Financial Officer for Ron Sacco's illegal gambling operation in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. In 1992 this operation was turning over \$100 million (US), which was considered to be the largest illegal sports betting operation in US history. She left the illicit business in 1994, remarried and moved to Switzerland.
Marisa Merico	1980s-1990s	Multi-dimensional: Ndrangheta	Italy	Marisa Merico was the daughter of Emilio DiGiovine, and was excluded from the criminal underworld in her early childhood by her mother, but entered the illicit business fully when her father was incarcerated. She exited from her criminal career after being arrested and having spent time in prison. Marisa decided to prioritise her children and now lives in the UK working as a hairdresser.
Mary Johnson	1990s	Commodity: Drugs	Multi-national (Africa, Europe, Asia)	Mary was a Liberian drug courier, who was displaced during the war with her family. She struggled to support the family despite her college education and turned to illicit opportunities within the drug trade. She operated in Africa, Europe and Asia before being imprisoned in Italy.

May Duignan	1890s-1910s	Commodity: Sex Trade	Multi-national (USA, Britain and France)	May, aka May Churchill Sharpe, although born Irish, became notorious in the USA, Britain and France. She began her illicit activities as a prostitute and later expanded her business interests, with the assistance of numerous underworld figures who she had relationships with. However, May began to operate her illicit business on a larger scale after meeting Eddie Guerin (a lover). These schemes spread across four continents and in nine countries. May was convicted of murder and sentenced to 15 years in prison (released in 1917).
Pauline, Zeno (Pseudonym)	1990s	Commodity: Drugs	Multi-national (Africa, Europe, Asia)	Pauline, originally from Uganda, operated an international drug cartel. She was known for intimidating others within the illicit economy through acts of violence. She was imprisoned in Italy.
Stephanie St. Clair	1920s	Service: Financial	USA	Stephanie ran numerous criminal enterprises in Harlem, New York. She began her illicit business by selling controlled drugs with the help of a boyfriend. After her partner tried to strangle her she began her own operation. She employed men and bribed cops to start a numbers game (lottery) in Harlem, New York. She was involved in illegal investing, gambling and lottery. Stephanie lived a lavish lifestyle in the 1920s, earning approximately \$20,000 a year. But she spent 10 years in prison for, in 1938, shooting her husband, who was trying to open a business with his mistress. She died wealthy.
Thelma Wright	1980s	Commodity: Drugs	USA	Thelma trafficked cocaine and heroin between Los Angeles and Philadelphia. Her husband had been one of the top heroin wholesalers in Philadelphia with connection to Black Mafia. She took over the family business after her husband was murdered, and is estimated to have been making profits in excess of \$400,000 a month. She left a life of crime in 1991, after nearly being killed in a 'shoot out'.
Tilly Devine	1920s-1950s	Commodity: Sex Trade	Australia	Tilly, aka Matilda Mary Twiss, began her career in prostitution as a teenager in London, but later relocated to Australia where she operated as a madam in Sydney, owning a range of successful brothels. She was also known to be involved in the Razor Gangs. She was convicted on 204 occasions for her illicit business activities.

Virginia Hill	1950s-1960s	Multi-dimensional: Italian-American Mafia	USA	Virginia's entrance into organised crime was facilitated by Joseph Epstein (a bookmaker and gambler). Initially she was used to pass messages to mobsters, but progressed into illicit business once securing the trust of her male colleagues. She was linked to numerous crime families through relationships (including, the Genovese and Costello crime families). Virginia 'escaped' the criminal underworld by committing suicide.
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