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"Damn, Yo—Who's That Girl?"

An Ethnographic Analysis of Masculinity in Drug Robberies

Randol Contreras
California State University, Fullerton

Previous street crime research has shown that female robbers manipulate their sexuality to secure male victims. Also, the larger ethnographic drug market literature has shown how male criminals construct masculinity through the sexual and economic manipulation of women. However, both accounts miss how male criminals manipulate the masculinity of other men to victimize them. This article fills that gap, showing how male drug robbers play on the masculinity of male dealers to bait them into a robbery. Through The Girl, a female accomplice, male drug robbers lure male dealers, believing that men demonstrate masculinity through sexual relations with women. Apart from this, male drug robbers construct their own masculinity through The Girl, who is often manipulated and exploited through sexist stereotypes and practices. This research is based on ethnographic field data collected on a group of Dominican drug robbers in a South Bronx neighborhood.

Keywords: *masculinity; drugs; robbery; gender; ethnography*

On a drizzling, summer day, a young Dominican woman walks down Broadway in Washington Heights. The neighborhood is in *Quisqueya* land, a northern section of Manhattan with the largest concentration of Dominicans in the United States. It once supported a satiated drug market, a drug bazaar that featured drug sellers congregating on corners, on sidewalks, on stoops, competing desperately, dangerously, for the attention of drug consumers from all over New York City and nearby New Jersey. Still, like many other New York City neighborhoods, community backlash, crack's cyclical downturn, changing demographics, and police intervention, all reduced outdoor drug activities (Karmen 2000). A smaller market emerged, one dominated by less flash and arrogance; a furtive market involving patience and caution.

And Melissa from the Bronx, an attractive caramel-colored eighteen-year-old, with thick thighs, wide hips, large buttocks, a tiny waist—a body like a dense guitar that strums the imaginations of men with Dominican cultural tastes—is a part of the neighborhood drug market today. She walks toward a Dominican man, a drug dealer, hanging in front of a stoop with a friend. He looks to be in his forties; an old timer—a man too ancient for her tastes. But she continues toward him, reaches him, stops, asks: *Do you know where I can get some good weed?*

Melissa is The Girl.[1]

In illegal drug markets, dealers suffer from a peculiar apprehension; they worry about not only police, but also drug robbers (Bourgois 2003; Jacobs 1999, 2000). Haunted by images of being tied, interrogated, tortured, and faced with a harsh financial loss, drug dealers are cautious—extremely cautious—about their drug supplies and cash: paranoid, they triple-lock doors, repeatedly sneak peaks through curtained windows, and ponder the "true" identities of door knockers and ringers, passing pedestrians, and drivers. But rarely do they ponder the identity of The Girl who, in distress, knocks on the door, and asks for help; The Girl who flashes a smile in the street, slows her walk for an invitation; The Girl who they consider as easy sex—an easy "in and out"—that poses no threat to their drugs and cash.

But they should.

Drug robbers interpret this naiveté as a biological and social weakness in male dealers: it is natural, they reason, for men to want to mate with attractive women; it is men—all men—they reason, who compete in a masculinity contest, where they create male status through conquering women sexually. Many drug robberies, then, depend on The Girl, on how she contributes to this Cat and Mouse game—on how she plays on the masculinity of male dealers, seducing and luring them into a drug robbery, into getting them taken for their drugs and cash.

This article addresses how male drug robbers play on the masculinity of male dealers to victimize them. It builds on Miller's (1998) gender analysis in robberies, which showed how female robbers sometimes seduced men into victimization. Most of the other crime literature touches on masculinity, but often with an emphasis on how the economy or culture, in both their macro and micro senses, affect the masculinity of male criminals (Anderson 1990, 1999; Bourgois 1996; Bourgois 2003; Jacobs 2000; Jacobs and Wright 1999; Messerschmidt 1993; Shover and Honaker 1992; Wright and Decker 1994). In other words, the focus is on how labor shifts, street culture, or patriarchal beliefs shape, rightfully so, masculinity. However, the male manipulation of masculinity, especially in relation to

securing a victim, is often missing. Thus, I will show how drug robbers use The Girl—a female accomplice that acts like an easy sex mark—to ensnare male dealers working on one dimension of masculinity: a visible, hyper sex drive (Connell 1995).

Another issue this article addresses is how drug robbers also construct their own manhood through drug robberies. I will show how male robbers create and reproduce their masculinity specifically through The Girl, who is often short-changed and manipulated. Male drug robbers often see themselves as smart, rational, and violent; female criminals, as unintelligent, emotional, and weak. Through these traditional sexist stereotypes, male drug robbers both justify their mistreatment of The Girl and construct their masculinity.

The analysis is based on fieldwork in a South Bronx neighborhood that occurred between 1999 and 2001, and then ongoing from 2005. Here, I studied the inner workings of Dominican drug robbers, who organize to rob drug dealers storing large quantities of heroin, cocaine, marijuana, and cash. Through observations and conversations with these men, I learned how they used The Girl to secure a male dealing victim and how they constructed their masculinity against her. But before providing the field accounts and analysis, I will do the following: first, discuss masculinity specifically within the ethnographic drug market literature; second, discuss masculinity within the larger masculinity and street crime literature; and third, provide the backdrop and methodology for the research. In the end, I provide a brief summary, which I then extend to other field observations and future research suggestions.

Masculinity and Drug Dealers

During the 1980s and 1990s several drug market ethnographers described masculinity within a turbulent crack market, relating it to recreation and sex, gender and power, violence and crime (Anderson 1990, 1999; Bourgois 2003; Williams 1989). Although not using the term, these ethnographers addressed how a changing economy, poverty, drugs, and violence shaped how men perceived masculinity.

For instance, Anderson (1999) described the "Code of the Street," a set of informal rules that governed deteriorating Philadelphia neighborhoods, the ones with a burgeoning drug market run by young, minority men with no respectable place in a new service economy. According to the code, "respect" was at manhood's core—an accidental bump, a slight stare, a disagreement

with a friend or stranger, could all launch violence to set right a perceived wrong. Black men—young and old, middle-class and poor—had to be prepared to deal violence, to show a masculinity that prevented street predators from attacking their manhood.

Williams (1989) described drug dealing's American Dream for young, Dominican men. In half-empty apartments, these young men ran a capitalist enterprise, with a corporate-like organization—they weighed and packed cocaine, cooked and vialed up crack, and sold these drugs to clients across the city. They also behaved like "men": they earned "crazy" money to buy flashy jewelry and "fresh" clothes. They sniffed cocaine and partied nightly with young women, or with a whole crowd. They displayed cool in the late night, late morning After Hours, those cocaine clubs for all night binging and grand appearances, for being a man in the drug world. Despite a drug world setting, though, these men showed a masculinity that reflected the traditional manhood of young men: drinking alcohol, consuming drugs, having sex, purchasing material status symbols, and creating a space for respect.

Bourgois (2003) described masculinity as resistance to a global world: a resistance resulting from being poor and having little work; from losing traditional manhood, where men provided for families and asserted household control. Masculinity, then, was a conflict between traditional notions of Puerto Rican manhood and the growing service economy undermining it. The masculinity conflict, however, was taken to the street, where the attractive underground economy called for violence to settle scores, all night drug use to feel good, and crime to earn money. In this world of selling crack, of sniffing coke and dope, of gunshots, of sidewalks littered with syringes and empty crack vials, being a man meant embracing drugs, crime, and violence.

However, within these ethnographies, male dealers also sought women for sex and a good time (Williams 1989); other times, women sought dealers for money and drugs (Bourgois 2003; Williams 1989). Both instances depict how men used their dealer status to attract women. Still, a closer look shows that male dealers also used women as objects for status gain. For instance, Anderson (1999) described how young black street men often pursued women as bodies to conquer, as notches on a belt that boosted not only male egos, but also their status as men.[2] Bourgois (2003) also described a younger generation of male dealers, who bragged about *cachetiando*—about getting over on women, about living in their homes for free and manipulating their emotions for uncommitted sex and money.[3]

However, drug market scholars often miss how masculinity's sexual component can punish men. In a major contribution to gender analysis in

robberies, Miller (1998b) described how men can become robbery victims when viewing women as sex objects. To victimize men, female robbers sometimes displayed a pronounced sexual interest, one that suggested immediate fruition in a car, a parking lot, a motel, or at the target's home. Also, since men generally viewed women as vulnerable, noncriminal, and sexual, they dropped their guard (and their pants) and got seduced into a robbery (see Mullins and Wright 2003; Wright and Decker 1997). So, doing masculinity with women—wanting them sexually in daily encounters—can lead male dealers to a big surprise: a violent drug robbery. This drug robbery research will show that, like women, men can also use masculinity to victimize other males.

Crime and Masculinity

Using Miller's work on gender and street robberies as a springboard, I analyzed drug robberies through "masculinity," the way people create the male identity, or accomplish being a "man" (Messerschmidt 1993). According to masculinity researchers, people alter or reproduce masculinity on defining a social scene or interaction (Connell 1995; Messerschmidt 1993). In other words, people define a "man" according to specific situations (a family discussion; the workplace; claiming an empty seat on a bus). Also, people often reproduce gender divisions while constructing masculinity, recreating differences between men, women, and nonheterosexuals. Yet, in these reproductions, men can alter masculinity and provide new definitions of being a man: fur coats, braided hair, pink clothing, manicured nails, thinned eyebrows—all can be defined as manly or "girly," all depending on the time, the place, the social sphere.[4] However, "hegemonic masculinity"— an overarching ideal of heterosexuality, male competitiveness, male mastery, and male hypersexuality—pervades most Western societies (Connell 1995). This general masculine image, more often than not, underpins the male identity and reproduces male dominance in different contexts.

Masculinity, then, can also be shaped by the economic and social resources held by groups or individuals. For instance, Totten (2003) finds that poor male adolescents define masculinity through social class, a lens through which wealthier men are put down, picked apart, and portrayed as weak for living a life where money is no problem, where labor is not "hard." For poor men, toughness, violence, and living a gritty, unpredictable life is the true test of manliness. Under these conditions, real men rise to the occasion, proving physical courage, strength, and resiliency.

Unlike wealthy men, who do masculinity through purchasing luxury—a fabulous house, a late model car—poor men rely on violence to distinguish themselves from women and homosexuals. They simply have no stable, high-paying job to do otherwise.

However, masculinity construction is more complicated, especially among street criminals. Numerous studies on street criminals—in particular, street robbers and burglars—have shown that men pursue autonomy, self-sufficiency, and action through crime to distinguish them from subordinated men and women (Collison 1996; Jacobs 2000; Jacobs and Wright 1999; Shover and Honaker 1992; Wright and Decker 1994). However, achieving this overarching street masculinity occurs in situated action, during particular situations where criminal peers have congregated: at a bar, a party, on a street corner, in a car, while doing drugs, drinking heavily, or simply passing time (Copes and Hochstetler 2003). Often, a criminal peer, who needs crime partners, purposely plays on the masculinity of friends and acquaintances to force them into a crime. For instance, if a male peer is unsure about committing an unlawful act, then he is emasculated and made womanly: he's a "girl"; he "ain't got balls"; he's a "pussy." To avoid such labels, and to construct their gender as men, male peers often go along with the crime (Copes and Hochstetler 2003).

In this article, I will show that like street criminals wanting compliance from male peers and like female robbers using sexuality as weapon, drug robbers *invoke* masculinity through The Girl to victimize male dealers. Touching on Miller, I will show that male drug robbers understand street masculinity, understand situational masculinity construction, and understand how male drug dealers want to avoid emasculating labels.

Furthermore, I will show that within drug robberies—its organization—male members construct their masculinity against The Girl. Previous research on gender roles in gangs has shown how male gang members exert masculinity through sexists stereotypes and sexual objectification (Laidler and Hunt 2001; Miller and Brunson 2000). In particular, Miller (1998a) showed how male gang members devalued female members because of their mostly nonviolent roles. Male members then used this to dominate, humiliate, and objectify female members, which sometimes resulted in gendered sexual and physical violence. Therefore, Miller showed how in mix-gendered gangs, men often perceived women as less equal and victimized them through sexist lens. The male drug robbers in this study also used traditional sexist stereotypes to both justify their demeaning treatment of The Girl and establish their manly images. In the end, male drug robbers wanted and created a masculinity akin not only to street masculinity, but

also "hegemonic" masculinity: they wanted to subordinate women, make men superior, and be seen as "men."

Background and Method

During the 1980s, changes in drug market consumption introduced a new era, when the media reported a new drug, a diabolical agent, which caused those afflicted to disregard their utmost obligations. To attain this drug, the media informed us, addicted men and women dropped work, neglected children, truncated their values, visions, and self-worth (Beckett 1997; Reinarman and Levine 1997). This era, we learned—the panics, the policies, the people—belonged to Crack.

It was the Columbian dealers who had introduced crack to the United States drug market, a baking soda and water and powder cocaine concoction that, after smoking, produced a short, intense high—so strong, that it converted casual experimenters into habitual users, recreational cocaine and marijuana users into chronic "crack heads" (Bourgois 2003; Furst et al. 1999; Hamid 1990; Williams 1989, 1992). Soon, free-base parlors, street-level drug markets, and crack-houses proliferated as crackheads succumbed to "missions," the infamous crack binges that lasted days, sometimes weeks, and sometimes forever (Williams 1989, 1992). The strong demand for crack, the seemingly unlimited supply of cocaine, and the cheap startup costs of a crack enterprise, all created a lucrative and competitive market, a Godsend to some distressed inner city men, who experienced joblessness, had little access to well-paying jobs, and barely lived above the poverty line (Anderson 1990; Wilson 1987; Kasarda 1992; Williams and Kornblum 1985).

Violence soared as the crack-market sprouted into numerous competing, and sophisticated selling organizations (Curtis 1998; Johnson, Golub, and Dunlap 2000). To settle conflicts within and outside their organizations—like a worker stealing products, or a rival organization encroaching on its borders—crack dealers used violence: vicious "beatdowns," stabbings, and shootings, which became commonplace to the volatile crack market (Curtis 1998; Goldstein et al. 1997; Maher and Curtis 1993; Maher and Daly 1996).

Then it all stopped. Crack markets, after reaching a peak in the late 1980s, contracted. The 1990s then became the decade of the great crime decline. In cities across the United States, crime dropped dramatically, with the most dramatic drop occurring in New York City (Tonry 2004; Karmen 2000; Blumstein and Wallman 2000). To scholars and public officials, the New York City crime decline was statistically visible: the robbery and

homicide rates had plummeted, the latter, to levels not recorded in three decades; to the general public, the city streets felt safer: street drug sales and the notorious squeegee men had disappeared (the latter, wiped off the face of the planet).

Despite the crime decline debates—debates between tougher policing and penal policies, changing demographics and community outlooks, and the cyclical nature of large-scale drug consumption (Bratton 1998; Kelling and Bratton 1998; Furst et al. 1999; Hamid 1992; Karmen 2000; Silverman 1999)—drug dealing has not disappeared. It simply changed: drug dealers no longer congregate in alleyways and street corners, but in insulated apartments and houses. Anonymous hand-to-hand sales, brand name shouts, and car flagging—all public shows of fearlessness, of indifference to the residents and police—were replaced by beepers, cell phones, bikes, and a small customer base. Drug dealing, to a large degree, has become private.

But a private drug market—an indoor market that caters to familiar faces and reduces anonymous contacts—is small. Many drug dealers who were once a part of the roaring crack market, a roller coaster ride of money, women, and luxury, are superfluous in this new drug market world, one with few spaces to profit. To some drug dealers, exiting a drug market that has rewarded them, that has absorbed their prime years, makes little sense. As a result, drug dealers who want to stay in the drug game have created a new, violent niche, torturous work that, ethnographically, has rarely been researched: the organized robberies of drug dealers.[5] Known on the streets as "stickup kids," some former drug dealers organize to rob drug dealers storing large quantities of heroin, cocaine, marijuana, and cash. The victims—drug dealers—are tortured into compliance, forced into revealing the hidden drugs and money. To gain access to the dealer, drug robbers often use The Girl.

Between 1999 and 2001, and later, from 2005 till the present, I conducted fieldwork in a South Bronx neighborhood, a few blocks north of Yankee Stadium. In this neighborhood—an area with fine, but fading, art-deco buildings, a growing Spanish-speaking immigrant population, declining crime rates, high poverty and low education (Office of the Bronx District Attorney (OBDA) 2006; New York City Department of City Planning (NYCDP) 2004, 2006; New York City Police Department (NYPD) 2006)—I hung out with drug robbers, who were former crack-cocaine dealers. Some of these men had profited greatly, had lived lavishly, and had lost it all during crack's rise and fall. Also, as a resident who was born and raised in the South Bronx and has lived in this neighborhood for the last twenty-five years, I had watched, and continue to watch, their maturation: from

inspired teenagers searching for the American Dream, to drug dealers attaining its modified version, to drug robbers attempting to recapture the good ol' days, the glory years.

Throughout the years, I had occasionally hung out with these men, but my "official" research did not begin until I discovered that most of them had become serious drug robbers. And as difficult as it may seem, entering this research was simple: I was vouched for by my friend Gus, who I had known since our preschool years; who had a reputation for being "crazy" and violent; who had been in and out prison frequently; and who had earned the respect and fear of other neighborhood residents. Furthermore, I had often hung out with some of the other drug robbers as a teenager. This made my presence feel normal as I observed them, and conducted life history, semi-structured, and informal interviews. In other words, I fit easily into the research setting: I looked like them, dressed like them, talked like them, spent money with them, laughed at their jokes, drank their liquor, and listened to them voice their views on a range of topics and concerns.

Primarily, I conducted fieldwork, three to four days a week, four to eight hours a day, on the everyday lives of six main study participants. Most were Dominican first and second generation males, in their mid-twenties to early thirties, and former crack-cocaine dealers. The number of respondents grew quickly, however, as participants introduced me to family, girlfriends, and neighborhood friends. In total, I interviewed, formally and informally, twenty-seven participants. Although ethnography is notable for its participatory element—hence, the term "participant observation"—*I did not participate in any illegal activities.* My participation was limited to hanging out on the streets, in restaurants, family gatherings, local bars, social clubs, strip clubs, rooftops, and walks and drives throughout the Bronx—all legal activities. I gathered data on criminal activity through extended interviews and conversations. Mostly, I observed and recorded patterns of street activities, employment pursuits, and interactions between family, friends, and neighborhood residents.

While discovering the ways of drug robbery—its roles, its stages, its variations—I came upon The Girl, a role often used in robbing drug dealers. When retelling drug robbery stories through causal conversations, or opened-ended interviews, drug robbers described The Girl as pivotal; without her, most drug robberies failed miserably, especially when attempting to access a drug-dealing victim. Also, from listening to accounts of male drug robbers, I discovered masculinity's role in drug robberies. Below, I provide ethnographic accounts and conversations with male drug robbers, and The Girl, that show how they reinforce, reconstruct, and reproduce masculinity.[6]

Playing on the Masculinity of Drug Dealers

Drug robberies consist of stages: Pick a Target. Access the Target. Torture the Target. Get the Drugs and Cash. Split the Profits. *Adios.* The Girl is essential for getting to the target, the second stage in a drug robbery. Capturing a drug dealer, however, requires stealth; dealers are often cautious about the people they encounter daily—the "thug lookin'" guy glancing at them as they walk past in the street; the clean-shaven stranger meeting their eye as they scurry in and out of elevators; the mail deliverer; the Con Ed meter reader; the Jehovah's Witness who wishes to discuss the true meaning of happiness, the gospel of Jesus, of God, the oncoming Armageddon. But coming across an attractive girl, sometimes any girl, and catching her eye, in the street or through a peephole, takes a different meaning. A girl means potential sex, a romp in the bedroom, in an alley or a rooftop; sex means potentially bragging about it later, demonstrating masculinity and manliness; manliness means potentially gaining admiration, earning respect—all of it means potentially raising status, a rise of rank in the drug world, in the world of men. And as Melissa (who I introduced in the introduction), approached the dealer, smiling, she worked under these assumptions: the drug dealer could not afford to miss an opportunity to have sex with her, he could not afford to pass up added distinction among his peers.

After some small talk, and serious flirting, Melissa persuaded the dealer to a later date that evening. For the date, Melissa and the dealer remained in Washington Heights, going to a small social club around his neighborhood. Inside, Melissa tried to get the dealer drunk, ordering Hennessy cognac, insisting that he drink the same.

Melissa told me: "I was like, 'if that's what I'm gonna drink, you gonna drink that too. Fuck that. If I'm gonna get fucked up, you gonna get fucked up too.' So for every drink that I drank, he had two drinks." Perhaps because of masculine pride, the dealer gave in to her drinking demands, which now included drinking shots of rum. "I'll be like, yo, *'Papi, bébete un chin de 'to.*' [Papi, drink a little of this]. *Y yo me tiro ensima del* [and I'll throw myself on him], and he'll drink."

After a few rounds of liquor, they started dancing *merengue.* The dealer took this opportunity to get close to Melissa. He pressed his body against her. In her ear, he whispered: "I want to get to know you. I like you a lot. I'm glad we getting to know each other more." As a former underground stripper, Melissa was accustomed to rubbing her body against men, giving them lap dances and close-ups of her body. So when he pressed his body against her, and whispered in her ear, Melissa did not feel too uncomfortable.

But then he pressed his lips on hers—"and I *kissed* him," Melissa says, disgustedly. However, she was so "fucked up" from drinking heavily, Melissa did not care then. "He was kissing me and I was like, 'Yeah,' I was kissing him too." I asked Melissa if she felt uncomfortable with people watching them. "Well, I was feeling nice and I wasn't really paying attention to anybody around me like that. But thinking about it now . . . now I have a problem with it. I feel disgusting!"

So, it was an evening of heavy drinking and kissing, slow dancing, and sensuous whispers; of later regret, of shame—but a fleeting regret and shame, for the thought of earning money had erased any regret on Melissa's part.

At about five o'clock in the morning, Melissa asked the dealer to take her home, in the Bronx, offering him to stay the night. A cab drove them to her apartment—which really wasn't hers—they went up in the elevator, reached the door, opened it . . .

Boom—he got bagged.

One summer afternoon, Pablo and Tukee, both Dominican drug robbers, explained to me how drug dealers often relax around women, setting aside their business interests.

> "All niggas think about is pussy, bro," Pablo explained. "Look, man, I heard some place that men, they think about sex about every eight seconds or something like that, bro. You know what's every eight seconds, bro? I think that's almost like a thousand fucking times every hour! Trust me, Ran, niggas will open the door to get some pussy. And then to say that they fucked some bitch they just met, and that the bitch was a dime [a ten] at that, forget it, bro, they gonna open that door. [Pretending to a be a lucky dude] '*Oye, loco, si tu 'biera vi'to la chamaca que yo se lo metí, tu me llama el campeón. Yo soy el campeón, Ha-ha-ha.*' [If you would've seen the girl that I had sex with, you would call me the champion. I am the champion.] Trust me, they gonna open that door. Yo, how many men you know gonna turn down a fly-ass bitch, a bitch that's a dime, bro, a bitch that got a super fat ass? How many niggas? Man, I don't give a fuck who you are. If you see a fly-ass bitch, you gonna try to fuck her."
>
> "Bitches be making niggas do a lotta shit," added Tukee. "They make niggas talk about shit they have, all the shit they moving—'Look, baby, I got this, this, and that over here, in my house, in my man's house, you know what I'm saying?' They talk about all that shit . . . shit they have in they house or shit that they gonna get, like how much dough they rolling with, all type of shit, B."
>
> "Bitches even make niggas talk about shit they don't got," joked Pablo.
>
> "For real, B, ha-ha-ha," Tukee said, laughing. "Niggas be moving only two ounces [of cocaine] a week, and they be like, 'Yo, you know what I'm saying, I be moving two kilos, three kilos a week . . . '"

> "'I'm moving ten kilos, twenty kilos, Ha-ha-ha!'" Pablo added, while laughing hysterically. "They be some broke ass niggas talking shit when they not supposed to. Especially to some stupid bitch they just met. That's why them dumb niggas get bagged."

As for The Girl, Pablo said:

> "All she gotta do is say something like, 'Excuse me, I got a leak coming downstairs and I think it's coming from up here.' Then it's over, bro. They gonna open that door wanting to get that ass."

I pretended to be skeptical, telling Pablo that it seemed too easy: an attractive woman knocks on a door, says that she lives in the apartment downstairs and there's a leak coming down—that will make a drug dealer stashing a lot of drugs and cash open the door?

> "Look, man," Pablo said, exasperated, "that shit works, bro. For real, man. Yo, one time we had this fucking bitch knock on a door, bro, and that's what she said. All she said was that there was like a leak or a lot of water or something going down into her apartment, where she lives downstairs. Randy, believe it or not, niggas opened the door, bro. And right there, boom, we just went in. Yo, Ran, man, believe me it works, bro."[7]

To Pablo and Tukee, male dealers reveal too much around women, exaggerating their drug status and earnings. The desire for sex and admiration is so powerful that dealers create a precarious situation, which makes them potential drug robbery targets. The more they reveal to women, they believe, the higher their sex appeal. The more they reveal to women, however, the more likely they are to get "bagged."

The Logic: as Melissa's example shows, when drug robbers set up a dealer, they sometimes have The Girl approach them in the street, an area where the dealer is around male friends or co-workers. For The Girl, this makes it easier to approach him, to bait him—his "boys" are watching. This strategy is a clever play on notions of masculinity upheld by most men, especially in the criminal world. Men often portray themselves as strong, aggressive, and virile (Bourgois 2003), which means not spurning an attractive woman, a "dime," while around other men. Doing so may make them appear effeminate, worsen criminal social networking or job possibilities, and attract criminal predators searching for victims to strong-arm, bang-up, and "punk." So descriptive, colorful decorations—"this nigga's [an] ass," "he ain't nothin'

but a chump," "he's a bitch-ass nigga"—are earned in and out of criminal activities (Copes and Hochstetler 2003; Mullins 2004). Therefore, rejecting a woman's advances, rejecting her obvious flirting and attention—technically, an action unrelated to business sense or courage in the drug market—can be used to mark a person's identity: "he's pussy." However, if he welcomes a woman's advances, well, now he's the "motha fuckin' man," "a player,"—someone who has opportunities searching for him.

The Marijuana Line: when a woman buys marijuana from a street peddler, it often leads to sexualized readings of her character. Her boldness (she doesn't need a male to accompany her) can lead dealers to call her "a freak," a "hoe" [whore], or as Pablo saw it, "she's a whole lot of fun"; Tukee, "that bitch is open" [to anything]; and Gus, "easy pussy"—in other words, she is perceived to have no sexual inhibitions. Stickup kids, then, understand this—they understand themselves enough to guess how a dealer would sexualize a simple request from a female—"You know where I could find some good weed?" If the request extends to an invitation ("You want to smoke with me?")—Jackpot. However, the triumph—the certainty of easy sex ("she's getting high, so she's gonna give it up, son," Tukee tells me)—is short-lived if the dealer is a robbery target. The true Jackpot, then, was struck by The Girl and the robbery crew.

Reproducing Masculinity in Drug Robberies

> "Afterwards, I was like, 'Arrggh!'" Melissa said, breaking into a laugh. "I kissed a *viejo* [old man] in my lips and all that. Arghhh!" Sensing her disgust, I asked if she would do it again.
>
> "Yeah, " Melissa said, smiling.
>
> "Why?" I asked, surprised.
>
> "Why not? For the money. It's easy and fast." We laughed.

To Melissa, the money was fast and easy; drug robberies could be done over and over again, nonstop, continuing the cash flow, uninterrupted.[8] However, I knew something she was clueless to: she could not play The Girl forever; the men did not respect her and trivialized her role; and after a big score, the crew would lie to her, cheat her, and pay her little. So, while The Girl was busy outfoxing potential drug robbery victims, drug crew members were outfoxing her out of pay. For instance, Pablo admitted that after using a Girl to enter an apartment, he lied to her about the score.

> "I don't tell them what's really involved," Pablo said, with a slick grin. "I let them think something else. I'll gas them, I'll lie to them. You understand? Like, for example, one time I said, 'My girlfriend is in there with this guy and, you know, I just want to beat him up.' And the girl just went and I didn't even have to pay her. And the door opened."
>
> "And she just left?" I asked, incredulously.
>
> "And she just left," Pablo said, "and let us do what we had to do. You see, there's a lot of little tricks you can use."

Pablo had deceived her: although the crew had found several ounces of cocaine and heroin, Pablo never revealed his true intentions for getting into the apartment. So, he never paid her.

Negro, another drug robber, admitted that he had also short-changed a female crew member.

> "I remember that one time we had a *muchacha* [girl] outside waiting for a guy that we were going to rob. He was supposed to come out of a building where he had an apartment with drugs—because he sold cocaine—and she was supposed to tell us that he left the building. She was supposed to call us. The guy left the building, she called us, we went after him on foot. In a backpack, like the ones kids use for school, he had almost six hundred grams. We told her that we found forty grams, that we made a mistake, that we got him on the wrong day. We gave her a hundred dollars. If we would have told her that we got the six hundred [grams], we would have to give her almost a thousand dollars. Imagine that, giving her a thousand dollars for just telling us that he came out of the building. You're crazy if you think that we going to give her a thousand dollars. I'll put that one thousand to better use, Ha-ha-ha."[9]
>
> I asked him about why he did not want to pay her in full.
>
> "*Imaginate,* if you don't have to pay someone . . . if you could tell somebody that you only found a thousand dollars, and you found ten thousand, you would do it. Anybody would do it. Any of these *tigueres* [guys] would do it. Even you would do it."
>
> I asked Negro if he did it because she was a female.
>
> "Look, I'll do it to whoever, whoever. But a woman is easier, she doesn't know anything about this business. You tell her anything and she'll believe it . . . because a woman is like that. Women are *boba* [stupid]. They're like children. They believe anything you say."
>
> What if she doesn't believe you, I asked, and she finds out that you lied?
>
> "I don't care if she knows. What can she do to me? I'll just keep telling her that she doesn't know what she's talking about. What can she do to me?"

Gus, another drug robber, explained in more detail how The Girl is manipulated and short-changed.

"Like a lot times," Gus informed, "The Girls would want like an equal cut of what we did. We were like, 'Nah, all you did was knock on a door. It's just a thousand dollars, just for that.' But without her knocking on the door, we would'a never got into the apartment."

"Can you think of an example?"

"One time we took like our boy's girl—he was locked up and his girl needed the money—so we took her. But she knew a lot about, you know, stickups from him. But she was like, 'Yo, I want an equal cut of what ya' got from that apartment. Fuck paying me a thousand dollars. I want a cut.' So it happens. But it doesn't happen unless it's that, unless The Girl really knows about what's going on. A lot of times, you know, The Girls would be happy with whatever—two hundred dollars, five hundred dollars—they'll be happy with whatever."

"Did you ever end up giving your boy's girl an equal cut?"

"N-a-a-a-w."

"How much did you give her?"

"We ended up getting like four or five hundred grams of crack. We gave her like forty—like a thousand dollars."

"And that was less than everyone else?"

"Of course."

"How much do you give [The Girl], in general, for drug robberies, knocking on a door?"

"If everything goes the way it's supposed to, we give them a thousand dollars, regardless what we got. Unless, you know, we didn't get enough to pay them. It happens sometimes. Sometimes you go somewhere and you don't find nothing. Or you don't find the right amount. It happens. But we try to make it seem like their role isn't that important—'Naw, you just knocking, you not doing anything, you not risking anything.' Try to make it seem like it's not that important. But it is."

"Suppose it was a guy knockin' on the door," I asked, "would you pay him as much if he was part of the crew?"

"Yeah, you right," Gus answered. "Yeah, if he would've asked for an equal cut. I guess women they don't—not all women—but most women don't question that. They don't question that their role isn't that important. But a man would think, 'Hold on. I knock on the door—without me, they can't get in.' A woman, it's not in her character like to question that. Like they would go by like what we would tell them—'Yo, go knock on the door'—they not even gonna see, or whatever, that it's important. But a man, he would question that."

"So what is it about women that . . ."

"I mean, it's just not natural for men to look at women as equals. That's basically it. It's natural for that."

"So why aren't they looked at as equal?"

"They're women. It just goes back to how we were brought up to look at women, whatever, you know."

"So how are women? Like what is it about women that makes them less than men?"

"It's just how society looks at things. Like let's say you go somewhere to fix your car or whatever, you see a man mechanic and a woman mechanic. You automatically go to the man. The woman could be better qualified, but it's just how it is."

"So why do you think women don't take another role in drug robberies?"

"They can't fit in another role. That's about all they can do. They could meet the guy somewhere; go somewhere where we could get him; they could knock on the door, get them to open the door—that's about it. They can't really do anything else."

"How about in the drug robbery where the guy's ear was cut off, did you ever pay The Girl?"

"Yeah."

"Did she get an equal cut?"

"Naw, she got five hundred dollars. Everybody else got . . . we had cut the dope and the coke . . . but that's all she got. Five hundred."

"She didn't complain about that?"

"Naw. Like I said, unless a Girl knows how important she actually is, they won't question."

"Did she actually know how much was found?"

"Yeah. Well, I don't think she actually understood like how much it was worth."

Pablo also gave a similar account, but did not want to concede the importance of The Girl:

"They just don't get the same cut," Pablo said, explaining how The Girl is paid.

"Why not?"

"Because they just never do. 'Cause all they do is just open doors. You know what I mean?"

"Well, how about if I argue that without them you couldn't have done it?" I asked.

Pablo paused; he was in deep thought. Then: "There's always a way, man."

"But from what you've told me, this is the easiest way," I said.

"They never get the same cut, though, Ran," Pablo answered, avoiding an admission that The Girl is important. "To be honest with you," Pablo continued, "they never get the same cut that the dudes do. The dudes always get more than The Girls. The girls get like chump change compared to the men."

"So, why do you think that is?"

"Maybe because the chick might be down with one of the guys who's doing it. Usually it's like that. Usually you don't go, 'Let me go pick this chick . . . Hey, you want to go do this?' It's usually somebody that's messing with somebody, or going out with somebody, you know what I mean? But she's never gonna get the same cut because the dudes ain't gonna respect her like that. They feel like she's not . . . she's not . . . equal or something like that."

"But what if a guy could open the door, you think he'll get a better cut than her?

"Probably, because the guy would argue more. The female, if she knows her man, or whoever she's messing with, is doing it, she's getting the cut anyway, so she's getting something. So, I guess they feel that it's alright. But it's never that the girl gets fifty-fifty or whatever, whatever."

"So, you're saying if the boyfriend is getting a cut, that's her cut too."

"Yeah. She's gonna get something, but it's not like . . . for example, for argument sake, let's say there's a thousand dollars. There's two dudes and one chick. She's never gonna get three hundred and thirty-three dollars. She might get a hundred or a hundred and fifty, and it's a wrap. Like the woman is always down, you know what I mean. They use the women, put it like that. The women are used."

"Why?"

"Because that's the way it is. I don't know, I can't explain it, man. I can't break it down to you, but that's just the way it is. I guess because they're females and they're not gonna argue with you. I don't know. I don't know what it is."

Male drug robbers, the accounts show, believe that women are weak, unintelligent, and unaware of their worth. Because of this, they believe that men can convince The Girl that knocking on a door and getting a male dealer to open up, that spending a night out receiving fondles from strangers, that standing on a corner looking casual while surveying the scene, all are insignificant. Even if The Girl understands her role and worth, duping her causes no caution, no concern. Like their criminal counterparts in other settings (Mullins, Wright, and Jacobs 2004), and even male regulars in the mainstream (Anderson and Umberson 2001; Hollander 2001), these men often see women as harmless, as wielding laughable violence. In contrast, male drug robbers present men as rational criminals, who understand that securing a dealer is a robbery's most valuable act. Like the beginning scene in a drama, opening the door sets the robbery in motion, into a sequence of events ending in an applaudable outcome: a lot of money and drugs. So, they believe that any duplicity or double-dealing—like being lied to, like being paid nothing—is harder to do with men.

However, these male representations reinforce, reproduce, and reconstruct masculinity. Like in most masculinities, men are defined as powerful and competent, violent and bold; women, as weak and inept. Even when men see a possible truth, that The Girl is integral to their work, they become purposely obstinate and dense, declining to examine the situation under a different lamp, scope, or angle. Like a corporate CEO confronted with Marxist pamphlets, male drug robbers refuse to see an alternative logic, an alternative relation between men and The Girl. They want—or need—to see the sex setup as natural. A lot of money and masculinity are at stake.

I asked Gus about why women appeared relatively unconcerned with their share, why sometimes even girlfriends risked a lot despite getting little in return. I asked this because, like in other stories I had heard, and like what Pablo had just described, women drug market participants often become the girlfriends of male partners. And Gus and Melissa—like Gus and the mother of one of his children—had started seeing each other intimately.

> "You told me some of your girlfriends used to transport drugs for you," I stated.
>
> "Right."
>
> "How did that happen?"
>
> "A lot of times they were willing to do it," Gus responded. "That's the difference between men and women. Women want to make themselves feel needed. So they would do stuff just to show you, or prove to you, like they worth it. A lot of times a girl would do it for free to show you that, like, you would need her for something, so she could feel needed. Like Melissa, like if I told her to go do something for me, like go knock on a door, or whatever, she would—for free. I wouldn't have to pay her at all. She would do it just because I asked her to do it. That's the difference between men and women. Women deal with a lot more emotion, more than men."
>
> "Do you think that's a weakness?"
>
> "Of course."
>
> "Why?"
>
> "I mean, I wouldn't take a risk of spending whatever amount of years in jail just to prove to somebody that I'm worth it, or that I'm needed, that you need me."

On this point, Pablo agreed, but added another emotional distinction between men and women.

> "For example," Pablo explained, "let's say you're with a chick, and you kill somebody, right. You hide him in your yard. You happen to smack this bitch

one time or twice or whatever, or get into a fight with the bitch. That bitch is gonna be real quick to say, 'Yo, there's somebody dead back there.'"

"But what is it about her that would make her say that?" I asked.

"Because, yo, that's just the way they are," Pablo answered, as though it were logical. "It's alright when you're fucking them, it's all good and gravy, bro. But the minute you do something to them, bro, it's a wrap. Feel me? It's a wrap . . . Women are the type of people that just think about the moment; they don't think about the consequences or whatever. Like if they in love, you know what I'm saying, if they in love forget it, bro. Those bitches is crazy. They'll do anything. And I mean anything."

According to Pablo and Gus, women are intrinsically caring and insecure, inclinations that compel them to do anything for love and appreciation. Therefore, they perceive women as foolish accomplices, who are willing to transport illegal drugs or guns, a mule-like labor that reaps small rewards, and who are willing to lure a drug dealer into a robbery, a torturous event that can be fatal. So, women take risks not for money, but for love, ignoring the potential consequences of becoming an accomplice (such as physical harm or death, arrest and imprisonment, losing children, acquiring stigmas, ruining life chances for future job and school success).

This logic implies that men are smart, cool, and rational; that men are more likely to weigh crime risks and rewards. In other words, they perceive men as having a natural, rational leaning, an innate understanding that there is more in it for them than love—there is cold, hard cash. Women, on the other hand, are portrayed as warm, soft—unable to separate emotions from action. However, this sexist logic glosses over how women can sincerely assist in crime for financial reasons: earning a thousand dollars, or even its half, in a day, is much more than one or two weeks of legitimate pay for marginal women, the ones at the labor market's periphery, the ones likely to work at low-skilled, low-waged jobs (Edin and Lein 1997).

The sexist reasoning extends to how women can, in an emotional snap of the fingers, become vengeful and betray confidences. Like the stereotypical scorned woman undermining her lover vehemently, for a real or imagined wrong, Pablo characterizes women as vicious, as having a bottomless pit of revenge. This implies that men, unlike women, will be less inclined to "snitch" or "rat" on crime partners or friends, to reveal the whereabouts of illegal drugs, weapons, cash—or a buried corpse. Although Pablo is clearly exaggerating this male code of silence—most drug robbers I met do not follow this code (Rosenfeld, Jacobs, and Wright 2003; Topalli 2005)—this is a moment where he creates the masculine and feminine distinction, where men, not women, are reliable, trustworthy, and emotionally stable.

Summary and Conclusion

In the drug world, male dealers construct masculinity through bragging and acting *loco,* without thinking, *sin mente*—drinking too much beer and liquor in crowded clubs, in empty parks, in lamp lit streets; smoking too many big, fat cigars of slammin' weed, "blunts" that lift them high into the sky, and into glorious gloom; making fast money through selling stale dope, selling soap flakes as honest-to-God coke; and striking back at wrongdoers with guns, knives, and fists for being treated like kids, like women, like punks—*unlike* "grown" men. Male dealers construct an image of toughness, of violence, of having *bolas,* or balls, an image that projects masculinity, of being a man, of being *hombre.*

Still, masculinity is a many-sided construction, entailing more than drugs, crime, and violence. Male dealers also construct masculinities through women. An often-heard phrase, "pussy is pussy, bro," instructs that a "real" man does not care about a woman; he must not care about whether she makes him laugh, lifts his hopes, or offers him a better life. Instead, a man must bracket her humanity and manipulate her into sex. Then he moves on. Attaining this goal of pulling in sex from many women demands that men appear thoughtless and cold. To appear otherwise—warm and caring, committed and sensitive—is catastrophic: You're a "bitch." A "pussy." A gay, *maricon.*"

You are a "girl."

However, male dealers want to be perceived as masculine, not "pussy." If they demonstrate femininity, then, like a completed film scene, it's a wrap: now they have created images as "bitches" and "punks," unmanly images recorded by peers, the film reels of the street. And it will require several new takes and scenes—violent, dominating, and sexual ones—to edit the current image. To avoid this, male dealers create masculinity through bedding many women, while showing contempt for them as well (or at least appearing to do both).[10] Drug robbers, an interpretive bunch, understand how male dealers accomplish masculinity through women—how dealers want to be seen on the street: as "players." As "dogs."

As "men."

To victimize male dealers, drug robbers use The Girl, a sexual role that diverts attention from a robbery. Although potential victims regard The Girl as nonthreatening, as *no problema,* she is a drug world chameleon, baiting and manipulating male dealers into believing her guise: she is knocking on a door in distress; she is on a street corner asking to buy some weed; she is

walking by and making "eyes"—all with an opening toward sex, a tempting helplessness that means scoring in the world of men.

To their detriment, male dealers often fall for The Girl. As "men" dealing with masculine codes—for instance, that heterosexual men rarely pass up sex with attractive women—dealers pursued The Girl. Then they were robbed. Because a masculine identity is always unfinished and under evaluation, dealers want to prove that they are fulfilling one aspect of their "essential nature"—an excessive sexual drive (West and Zimmerman 1987; West and Fenstermaker 1995). This is what makes them susceptible to the advances of The Girl.

For The Girl, a sexual role hinders her. Male accomplices regard The Girl as an object, not human; as wielding sex, not intelligence. Because males see her as merely breasts and buttocks, a pleasant smile, and a provocative walk, The Girl is not considered as displaying meaningful skill. Also, since she is typecast into a relatively harmless role, a role where she can often avoid arrest or violence, The Girl cannot display, as these men define it, the "heart" to carry through a violent robbery. So, males prevent her from getting higher positions that are respected and better paid.

Male drug robbers also limit The Girl through traditional sexist stereotypes. For reasons ranging from emotional instability, to untrustworthiness, to a natural sex hierarchy, drug robbers pay The Girl little money and limit her participation. The Girl is always absent during the planning and profit division stages; The Girl is sometimes paid no money at all. If she is the girlfriend of a drug robber, *olvidate,* forget it: then he will attempt to exploit her emotions. Drug robbers believe that women in relationships want to prove their love, to show a willingness to jeopardize life and freedom for the heart. These sentiments lead The Girl to a subservient, supportive role, where she assists men with a drug robbery, uses femininity as a skill, and receives a minimum profit (Steffensmeier 1983; Steffensmeier and Allan 1996; Steffensmeier and Terry 1986).

All of this—regulating sex roles in drug robberies, hurling sexual stereotypes, playing on the emotions of women—shows that drug robbers construct masculinity through their treatment of The Girl. Like their drug dealing brethren, male drug robbers want to be "men," and need a distinction from women. To create masculinity, male drug robbers must devalue femininity, the skills The Girl uses to dupe male dealers. Only daring and violent roles—such as abducting and torturing a dealer—contribute to masculinity in drug robberies. So, when The Girl uses sex as a crime skill, it is cheap: it is just kisses, pats, fondles, feels—just provocations.

However, a contradiction exists when male drug robbers define women. Although drug robbers stamp women as weak, untrustworthy, and emotionally unstable, some drug robbers have displayed such "feminine" traits during past robbery attempts.

When Gus could not torture information out of a noncompliant drug dealer, he lost emotional control: he took off his mask in frustration, revealing his face, gold teeth, and tattoos running down his neck—all identifying characteristics that could have jeopardized the entire crew.

When Gus and Pablo were repeatedly punching, kicking, and choking a couple of dealing victims, Manolo "froze": the scene was so violent, so volatile, that Manolo could not follow the whispered instructions—*Take me to the bedroom*—from another victim, who had helped set up the robbery, and wanted to lead him to the hidden money.

When Jonah and Negro recruited Gus for a drug robbery, and gave him a detailed plan, Gus approached the targeted dealer and tried to extort money from him in exchange for the identities of the drug robbers (Jonah and Negro) setting him up.

There are many more accounts of men exhibiting weakness, emotional outbursts, and untrustworthiness—of men displaying traits they ascribe to women. This is an issue that future crime and gang research can potentially highlight. Male criminals and gang members often negatively stereotype women, ascribing to them traits and behaviors that, if we look closely, they display as well. My field research indicates that male study participants always talk up a manly image, discussing their exploits and traits as stoic and Herculean. However, as the brief observations above demonstrate, some stories let out that they also act in "feminine" ways. Therefore, more ethnographic research, or participation observation, can help underline the contradictions in the words of male criminals.

Furthermore, future qualitative-interview research should connect criminal masculinity to the construction of manliness outside crime (for snapshots of this see Laidler and Hunt [2001]). In other words, it would be significant to see how men create and reproduce masculinity with women in the home or other noncriminal settings, and whether these constructions parallel or depart from the ones in criminal interactions. Although seeming like an exception, Bourgois (1996) showed how women in crime-prone areas are often heads of household and can challenge male partners, who are both legally and illegally economically unstable. Candy, the female study-participant Bourgois had befriended, not only challenged men in her home, but also took her resistance to the criminal world on the streets. It is

true, though, that some scholars have found that female drug market participants often remain on the gender hierarchy's lower end (Maher and Curtis 1993; Miller 1995). However, many impoverished and crime-prone men can no longer rely on the once lucrative crack-cocaine economy for survival and have become increasingly dependent on women for their household and income.[11] Thus, discovering whether women's resistance is growing in the current economy can help us understand whether gender dynamics among lower-income, marginal couples are being renegotiated.

An issue this article does not address is The Girl's perspective in constructing masculinity. As Gutmann (1997) argues, research on masculinity should include both, the experiences of women with men, and the ideas of women about men. Doing so reveals that women are active in constructing traditional masculine and feminine ideals (they can instruct sons and daughters, nephews and nieces on how to appropriately be men and women). Also, when male accounts stand alone, they may represent a lopsided version of events, a version bolstering their images as men and excluding emotional, nurturing moments with wives, children, and male friends.

In this research, The Girl's perspective may have opposed, confirmed, or complicated how male drug robbers constructed masculinity. Unfortunately, because of the research's nature (a project on violent drug robbers); because of my position as an ethnographer, who was gathering rich and novel and dangerous data; and because of my understanding of an honor code among males when it comes to standing against women—I hesitated to ask The Girl about issues that may have her re-evaluate her position within the robbery crew. In other words: because a research participant, Julio, was struck in the head with a baseball bat for giving a friend's girlfriend relationship advice (especially as to attaining gender consciousness and abandoning him), I was apprehensive about the issues I raised with The Girl. I did not want to be "the" reason The Girl realized she was getting shortchanged. I did not want to create resentment toward me among the male participants. I did not want to comprise my research or my well-being.

Nevertheless, my larger observations confirm that these men treat The Girl and most women adversely, a behavior based on traditional sexist beliefs. Even if the male accounts of duping The Girl, of creating sexist distinctions between men and women, are more exaggeration than real, it still shows how men want to be perceived as masculine, how men reconstruct events or ideas to create a manly image. But, again, my observations suggest that, overall, these male drug robbers create masculinity through prejudice and discrimination against women. This article captured this masculinity

not only through reporting data and providing analysis, but also through adding humanness and texture: painting a picture, constructing a scene, conveying a language—all bringing readers closer and closer to the masculinity construction of these men.

Notes

1. My description of Melissa as attractive and enticing comes from discussions with the drug robbers I studied, and observations of how other neighborhood males reacted toward her. Furthermore, the label The Girl is a name male drug robbers created to describe her role; thus, I will use this term throughout the article when I refer to her and the role.

2. For a similar observation in a qualitative interview project based in St. Louis, see Miller and White (2003).

3. To be clear, when these men seek sex for status gain, it is not a drug market or street phenomenon; these behaviors and ideas can be found in other places, in other ethnic and income groups. Much of this behavior is also situational (Connell 1995; Messerschmidt 1993). For instance, Bourgois (1996) shows how contesting, maintaining, and altering masculinity depended on social and financial circumstances, and particular social interactions: if male dealers earned a lot of money, then masculinity meant buying luxury; if male dealers had too many children from multiple mothers, then masculinity meant providing child support only to deferential mothers; if male dealers struggled financially, then masculinity meant gloating about getting over on women.

4. For instance, African American street pimps, a dominant form of maleness in many urban ghettos during 1960s and 1970s, did some serious "femininity" while doing masculinity: these men wore high-heeled shoes, extravagant fur coats, and displayed clothing with soft colors. However, people rarely questioned their maleness as they still subordinated women and demonstrated male dominance. A more recent example is of the young men residing in the poorest and most violent Puerto Rican barrios, who thin their eyebrows to demonstrate masculinity.

5. Only Jacobs (2000) has conducted an in-depth study of drug robbers. In this informative account, he drew on twenty-nine semi-structured interviews to analyze small-time drug robbers—their motivations, target selections, retaliation management, and the stages in a drug robbery.

6. But before moving on: it is important that this paper presents drug robbers' masculinity through ethnographic analysis and representation. Through ethnography—its writing, its varied forms—readers can understand masculinity through the social worlds of drug robbers and drug dealers, through the language and meanings, sights and sounds, and experiences that shape and set their everyday interpretations. The context for masculinity—the street, local beliefs and interactions, local lexicon, in Spanish and English, formal and informal, a mix of it all—gives readers a taste, una prueba, of the conditions that influence "being a man" in drug robberies. Although sometimes disagreeing on presentation styles, the ethnographic community's general openness allows me to bring readers closer (at least within a refereed forum) to masculinity in a drug robbery crew. So, rather than remove common expressions that study participants and I used during interactions, I wove them into the discussion and analysis, providing a glossary at the paper's end. I want readers to experience not only rich data, but also rich lived-experiences—a humanness and texture that brings readers closer to the social world of Dominican drug robbers in a South Bronx neighborhood.

7. Throughout the accounts, participants will refer to other men as "nigga." However, it is not used pejoratively; it is a street replacement for casual terms like "guy" or "dude" that men often use to refer to each other. Sometimes, it is used as a term of endearment, such as when some of the participants referred to me as "my nigga, Ran."

8. During my fieldwork, drug robberies were attempted often, sometimes more than once per week.

9. Negro, like some other drug robbers, spoke only Spanish; thus, this is an English translation of his account, which, unfortunately, loses some of the nuances and flavor of his speech.

10. Liebow (1967) finds a similar phenomenon among a group of struggling black men in Washington D.C. He observed that although some men bragged about manipulating women sexually and economically, much of it was exaggerated or fabricated to accomplish a manly image. Some of these men actually left relationships where they benefited economically, and others had developed feelings of love for certain girlfriends.

11. For an interesting discussion on how women wield power in drug markets through sustaining households and supporting men, see Anderson (2005).

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Randol Contreras is currently an assistant professor at California State University, Fullerton. He was born and raised in the South Bronx, where he conducted his fieldwork on neighborhood drug market participants that he had known since childhood. As an urban ethnographer, his goal is to understand how marginal inner city populations cope with a society that excludes them on the basis of race, ethnicity, and class.