

SESSION 3. INTERDISCIPLINARY ANALYSIS OF THE MAFIA.

Interdisciplinary analysis. While this section will try and isolate the various disciplines that have tried to analyze the mafia, we will see that these are all in some way interconnected and that an interdisciplinary approach is needed. This section will also try and answer the following question of how understanding the mafia relates to the studies we are undertaking.

ANTHROPOLOGY.

The discipline. Anthropology is often referred to as “the science of humanity”. It has branched off into four groups; physical anthropology, cultural anthropology or ethnology, social anthropology, linguistic anthropology and psychological anthropology (Hannerz).

- Can the mafia be looked through an anthropological perspective? In what ways?

Cultural anthropology. Cultural anthropology, gives a quite complete analysis of the phenomenon mafioso. This is because, while undoubtedly all associations mafiosi are very different in their

origins and organisation, we can talk about a common “culture of mafia” (Palermo 1), that encompasses a notion of belonging and identity that not only encompasses the affiliated individuals, but society as a whole, setting laws, customs and habits that must be respected by all (Palermo 2,5-6). It created a culture composed of three values; 1) honor, 2) secrecy and 3) *omertà*, which dictated the codes and social norms one must follow to maintain adequate behavior.

Leonardo Sciascia, referring to the mafia, declared, in 1979 that “*when I denounce the mafia, at the same time I suffer because within me, just like in any other sicilian, there is still the continuous presence and need of feeling mafioso. Hence, combatting the mafia, I fight also against myself; it's like a laceration*” (Palermo 6-7).

The way to understand criminal mechanisms is to understand its culture and hence the internal, human, dynamics that form it. This is because it allows the creation of a parallel culture, just as strong but antagonistic: the *cultura della legalità*, culture or legality (Ziliotto).

- According to the criminologist Fabio Giannini, there are a few key factors allowing the associations mafiose to thrive: 1) absence of a strong identity, 2) lack of feeling of belonging to society or institutions, might be due to exploitative governative powers, as in Sicily, 3) lack of rights and established law of violence. To what extent do you agree? What do you think is the anthropological and cultural environment that allows associations mafiose to thrive (Giannini 42-43)?

CRIMINOLOGY.

The discipline. Starting back in the 18th century, some individuals, such as Cesare Beccaria, started to question the justice system with its brutal tactics and its questionable efficiency. From there, various disciplines were combined to try and explain crime and delinquency, looking at its causes, its correction and its prevention. In the last decades of the 20th century it has evolved to include also victimology (Bernard and Mannheim).

Causes of crime. They are a mix of factors that interact with each other, including, biological, psychological, sociocultural and environmental factors (Giannini 15).

ECONOMICS.

The discipline. In broad terms, economics is the social science that seeks “analyze and describe the production, distribution, and consumption of wealth”. In particular it seeks to study the “human behavior as a relationship between given ends and scarce means” (Blaug).

Mafia and profit. According to a study carried out by the University of Reggio Calabria in 2013, the mafia was able to accumulate a profit equivalent to 15% of the GDP per capita of Italy. Over the years the mafia has become an entrepreneur accumulating capital in four summative processes; 1) the formation of financial resources through various criminal activities, 2) using the resources to produce new illegal activities, 3) money laundering and 4) reinvestment of that money in the legal circuits of the economy (Chiabrando 3).

- How can an accurate estimation of such profits be calculated as they are all hidden? How can be differentiate between the

money that has been accumulated from legal and illegal sources when we know that the mafia reinvests clean money in the legal economic circuits?

- What do you think are the main activities or markets in which the mafia acts and gains profit?

‘Borghesia mafiosa’ - the bourgeoisie mafiosa. The academic Umberto Santino, by analysing the phenomenon mafioso brought about the concept of *borghesia mafiosa* which gets crystallized in the 1970s when we see the expansion of associations mafiose both on a national and international level, due to globalization, and the accumulation of illegal profits due to the triumph of capitalism and liberalism. Globalization has many criminological effects; in the peripheries, where the marginalization and in the urban centers. Santino concludes that while the State tries to combat the mafia by incarcerating the presumed heads of the mafia, they are not touching the *borghesia mafiosa*, found within the State and the political and economic powers (“La psicologia”, Pezzino 196, Sulli, Santino).

- What are some of the factors that allowed the mafia to expand and “colonize”? Migration?

Neoliberalism. Neoliberalism seems to favor the mafia, “or at least act with its same objectives”. They both have at the basis, an

ideology of enrichment, with the only difference that capitalism allegedly uses legal means while the mafia illegal ones (Sulli).

- Is there a type of market and economy that could counteract this one and maybe even contrast the mafia?

HISTORY.

The discipline. The reconstruction of events in chronological order, explaining their causes, using primary and secondary sources (“History”).

- How can we reconstruct the history of associations mafiose when the mafia is “a phenomenon that tries to be invisible but at the same time has the necessity to be perceived by society as present and powerful” (Giannini 6, Soraci, “Analisi criminologica”, Maugeri)? What legitimate sources can be used?

LEGAL STUDIES.

Legal response to crime in Italy. The italian penal code, identifies different typologies of deviance. (Giannini 21-22). The delinquent and criminal capacity are judged based on three characteristics; 1) psychological state of offender, 2) a crime of passion, or 3) recurring criminal offense (Giannini 23).

Law n.646. As previously seen, with the establishment of the law n. 646 of 1982 we not only have a clear, legal definition of the mafia and its associations, but also a measure of holding such actors accountable and punishable.

- According to the criminologist Fabio Giannini, in his studies on mafiosi incarcerated before the art. 41 bis, he notes that within prisons mafiosi exert a dominant power and influence on the rest of the incarcerated and that incarceration is actually used to elevate one’s prestige and operates as a place for new encounters and recruitment (Giannini 33).
- Is incarceration an efficient method of holding mafiosi accountable and putting a stop to the mafia?
- What other methods of justice (restorative, re-investment) and accountability could be used?

POLITICAL SCIENCE.

The discipline. The study of governance through the perspective of power (Roskin).

Power and legitimacy. When looking at the sociocultural background in which the mafia evolved we see there is a common thread; the lack of a functioning State. The creation of the mafia that provides an alternative to the inefficiency of the State (Palermo 3, Ziliotto, “La psicologia”, Gribaudo 183, Catanzaro 185, Sulli).

- “Where the State does not arrive, the mafia does” (Melissari 70). Can the mafia be considered a State within the State? Where does it derive its legitimacy? From the services and protection it provides at first?

Power. When analyzing its source of power, we see that they monopolize the use of violence and intimidations in exchange for peace (Ziliotto, Gribaudo 183, Chiabrande 1, Maugeri). Another tactic used by the mafia is corruption (“La psicologia”, Sulli).

- If we define terrorism as the use of violence to achieve a political agenda, can the mafia’s use of violence and intimidations be considered terrorism? Do terrorist organizations give some sort of protection in exchange for soldiers?

Organization or regime. An in depth analysis on the various structure of the associations mafiosi should be needed, but from the previously mentioned organizational methods, we can see that different approaches are used.

- What regimes can be associated with these structures?

International Relations. If we consider the mafia to be a State within a State we can then analyze its relations with all of the associations mafiose within the world.

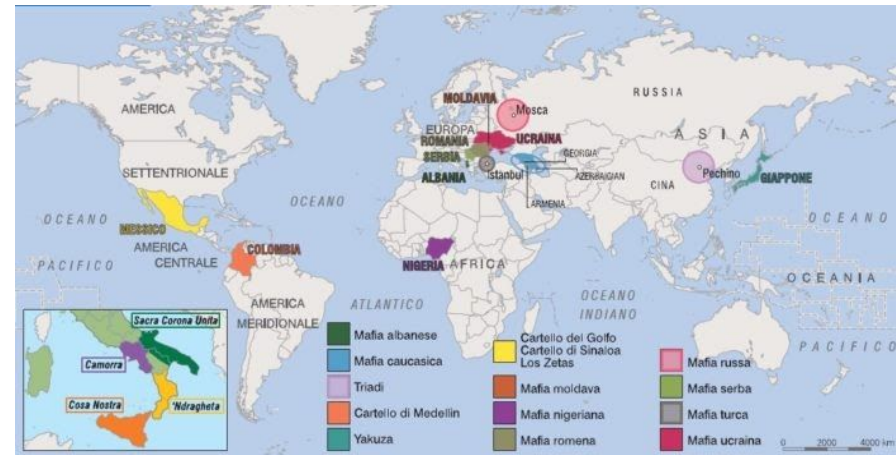


Figure 16 . “Le mafie in Italia e nel mondo”. Studia Rapido.

PSYCHOLOGY.

The discipline. The study of “mental states and process and behaviour in humans and other animals” (Mischel).

“Il pensiero mafioso”, the thought mafioso. In psychology there are two fundamental forces that contribute to the process of determining one’s *pensiero* - thought. The first is egocentrism and the second is sociocentrism. When analyzing the psychology of the mafia, in particular the associations mafiose in Sicily, the psychologist Innocenzo Fiore identified what he called the *pensiero mafioso*, based on the concept of family.

- Because the *pensiero mafioso* is so ingrained within an individual mafioso, and that studies conducted by Bursten in 1973 show that there is a lack of guilt and moral conscious in the personality of the mafioso (Soraci), to what extent are the *pentiti* -collaborators of justice - actually *pentiti* - repented - for their actions and willing to change mentality and have everyone against them? Could it be a tactic for personal gains? What can bring about repentance and the willingness to collaborate with justice?

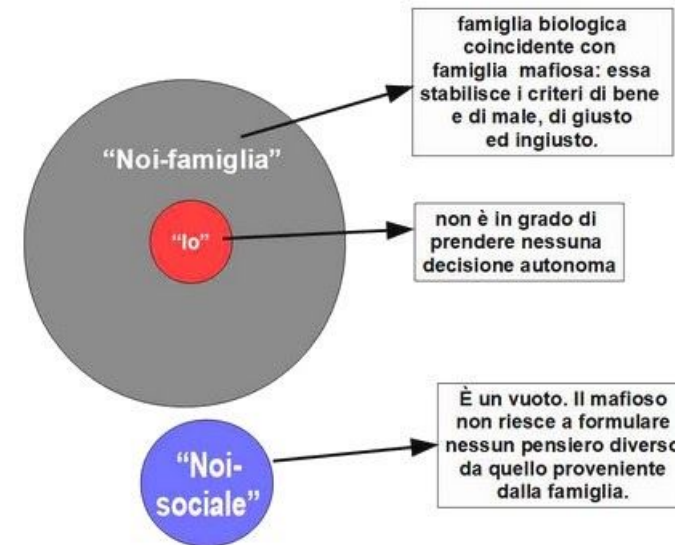


Figure 17. “L’universo psichico del mafioso”.

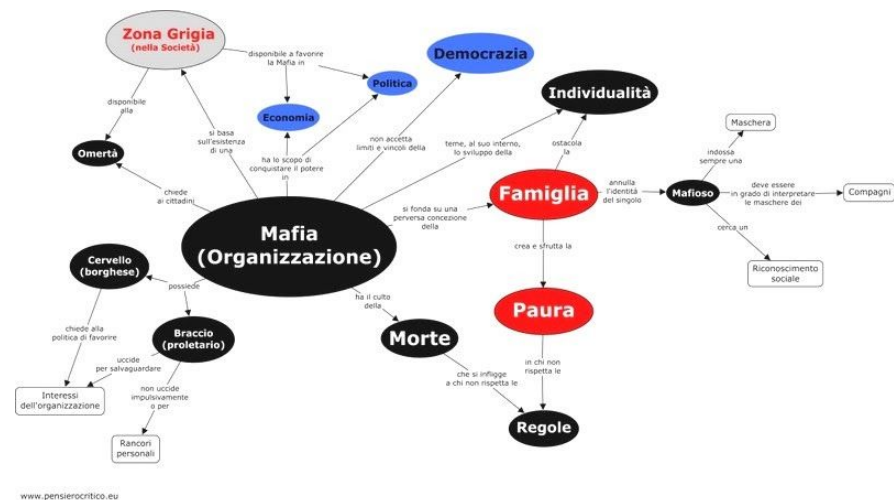


Figure 18. “Mappa concettuale della Mafia”.

The experiment “Lucifer effect”. In 1971 the psychologist Philip Zimbardo carried out a study to conclude that violence is primarily dependent on the environment and not the nature of the individual (“La psicologia”).

Communication. Verbal communication is only a small portion of communication (Giannini 40, Maugeri). As the mafia is “a phenomenon that tries to be invisible but at the same time has the necessity to be perceived by society as present and powerful”(Giannini 6, Soraci, “Analisi criminologica”, Maugeri), it has created a whole new set codified, nonverbal ways to communicate with each other (Giannini 40).

- How can we decode the nonverbal communication of the mafia?

SOCIOLOGY.

The discipline. It is a social science that studies human societies (Form and Faris).

- Is there a typical model of a mafioso (Giannini 43)?

Social class. The mafia does not only recruit those from the lower socioeconomic classes. Many mafiosi are educated and highly qualified (“Analisi criminologica”).

- How and why does an individual choose to enter and become part of an association mafiosa (Giannini 43)? What pushes people to interpret criminal deviance as a cultural value, social prestige and economic success (Giannini 4)?

Recruitment. The media plays a fundamental role. The hate one can have for the State and inefficient institutions can also be another incentivizer to join the mafia. In Giannini’s study he concluded that prisons were a strategic location for the recruitment of new members (Giannini 33). The mafia, among those in need of economic stability or economic success can provide employment. Once a person decides to join, the individual will have to undertake many tests (Veltri, “Analisi criminologica”). Once the initial tests are passed there will be the phase of manipulation in which the mafia will rigidly control the individual’s life. Then the individual will be given a function (“Analisi criminologica”). This is a very generalized recruitment process (Maugeri).

- Where the State is not present and there is high unemployment to what extent is working for the mafia a decision?

THEOLOGY.

The discipline. It is a philosophically oriented discipline that explores religious themes such as God, humanity, the world, and salvation. It is traditionally restricted (Louth and Thielicke).

A distorted religion. What is very interesting and fundamental to look into is the religious or spiritual aspect that is engrained in the functioning or original ideology of the mafia. When looking at the various boss mafiosi we see that while they are crude and brutal, in some cases they are also able to gain what Max Weber would refer to as charismatic authority. They do not, however, only idolize their leaders and actions by associating them with the notions of sacrifice and martyr, but they also strictly follow the rituals and practices of the Catholic Church (Soraci, Giannini 45). When it comes to the theme of God, God is for the mafioso, the justice of the mafia and hence why their killings are justified as a sacrifice (Giannini 45).

- To what extent can we talk about religion? Could it be called, rather an epic story, as the legend of how the three associations mafiosi were created?

The Catholic Church and the mafia. It is only recently that the Catholic Church has condemned the mafia. This because it had previously had an ambivalent and in some cases collaborative relation with it. Under the Archbishop of Palermo Cardinale Pappalardo, the Catholic Church started to publicly denounce the mafia, there is still some questionable actions brought by the Church. Many actions to counter the mafia have been brought by

the Church, such as the foundation of the association *Libera*, in 1995 by the priest Luigi Ciotti (Melloni 253).

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