# Codes of Commitment to Crime and Resistance: Determining Social and Cultural Factors over the Behaviors of Italian Mafia Women

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# Codes of Commitment to Crime and Resistance: Determining Social and Cultural Factors over the Behaviors of Italian Mafia Women

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This article categorizes thirty-three women in four main Italian Mafia groups and explores social and cultural behaviors of these women. This study introduces the feminist theory of belief and action. The theoretical inquiry investigates the sometimes conflicting behaviors of women when they are subject to systematic oppression. I argue that there is a cultural polarization among the categorized sub-groups. Conservative radicals give their support to the Mafia while defectors and rebels resist the Mafia. After testing the theory, I assert that emancipation of women depends on the strength of their beliefs to perform actions against the Mafiosi culture.

## INTRODUCTION

I could go away to the tiniest corner of the world and crawl inside forever. (Rita Atria, cited in Pickering-Iazzi 2007:155)

The role of women in the Mafia[1] has come to the fore in the last decades with their prominent and active roles in the business of their Mafia families.[2] The women have embraced mostly a passive status through offering institutional support and psychological consolidation with their social roles as mothers, sisters and wives. Their relatively passive roles have evolved and diversified

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[1]The Mafia refers to the Sicilian Cosa Nostra historically, but it is used as a term to refer to the Italian organized crime groups in this article. There are four main Mafia groups in the country, which have either loose or tight organizational structures: Cosa Nostra from Sicily, Camorra from Campania, 'Ndragheta from Calabria, and the Sacra Corona Unita from Apuglia.

[2]When I refer to the Mafia family, it signifies a clan, *cosca* in Sicilian, in which the members of the group closely link to each other and every single member is part of the *cosca*, Mafia family. However, it bears emphasis that having a blood tie among the members of the clan is not an obligation to join to the lines of the Mafia family. Four main Mafia groups in Italy have different degrees of closed structure. For instance, the blood relationship is more common among the members of 'Ndragheta while the members of Camorra do not set the blood relationship as a common priority to have an effective operation.

at the same time throughout the history since the emergence of the first Mafia group in Sicily, Cosa Nostra, in the middle of the nineteenth century (Allum 2007; dalla Chiesa 2007; Dino 2007; Fiandaca 2007; Fiume 1989; Iadeluca 2008; Ingrascì 2007a; Longrigg 1997; Madeo 1992; Pasculli 2009; Pizzini-Gambetta 1999; Principato and Dino 1997; Puglisi 1990, 2005; Rizza 1993; Siebert 1996). This diversification of women's characters has not been categorized or conceptualized from a feminist perspective. This article aims to fill this gap first by categorizing women in the Italian Mafia groups according to their roles in the Mafia family and cultural perceptions about the meaning of the Mafia throughout their lives. Three types of women are introduced: conservative radicals (active and passive), defectors, and radicals. Deploying the classification of women as a tool to clarify mapping varied women's identities, this study endeavors to contribute to the theoretical framework concerning the social identities of women influenced by the culture of their own societies and the changes in their social behaviors influenced by different cultural perspectives of each woman toward the Mafia. On one hand, the proposed theoretical inquiry focuses on the emotions, experiences, and cultural perceptions of women whose lives have been taken over by the Mafia's oppression and patriarchy. On the other hand, the proposed theory illuminates the social behaviors of women who resisted the Mafiosi culture or embraced the ethics and morals of the Mafiosi culture and play indispensable roles either actively managing the business of the Mafia or taking a passive role by transferring the cultural codes of the Mafia to the next generation. There are two principal aims of this research. The first aim is to shed light on different behaviors of women and determine the reasons that shape their cultural perceptions about the Mafia. The second aim is to introduce a theoretical framework in order to demonstrate the relationship among social dynamics of culture such as patriarchy, oppression, belief, and action so as to understand the role of women with different cultural perspectives and the mutable character of that role in a Mafia family.

After presenting the method that was employed in this study, I will analyze the social construction of women's identity with the concepts of power, authority and consciousness that will offer a theoretical background before construing the feminist theory of belief and action. Next, I will introduce the feminist theory of belief and action, which attempts to explain the relationship between the women's beliefs and actions. This relationship offers new theoretical insights when the oppression and patriarchy dominate both those beliefs and actions. I divided the main theoretical intervention into three parts. The first part will be presented after describing the features of active and passive conservative radicals. The second part will follow the cases of the defectors and rebels. Finally, the last part will be presented, which is related to women who are against the Mafia but cannot take any action. Therefore, by taking women in the Mafia as a case study, I have sought to advance the research on the changes of the social behaviors of women who have to live in violent and patriarchal communities like the Mafia. Thereby, I aim to decipher the impact of the Mafia system on the beliefs and actions of the Mafia women who show cultural polarization in their perceptions about the Mafia and have articulated these perceptions through beliefs and actions either supporting or opposing the value system of the Mafiosi culture.

## METHOD

Various studies have addressed women in different Mafia groups, but their diverse characters, attitudes toward the Mafia, perceptions of the Mafia image, and roles in the Mafia have never been

**TABLE 1**
Determinants of the Classification of Women in the Mafia

| Classification | Determinants | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | *Committing crime* | *Supporting psychologically and logistically* | *Making confessions* | *Resisting* |
| Active conservative radicals | √ | √ | X | X |
| Passive conservative radicals | X | √ | X | X |
| Defectors | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Rebels | X | X | √ | √ |

studied together to develop a classification of the women's characters and behaviors in different Mafia groups. Conducting research regarding the role of women in the different Mafia groups is limited to the confessions of women and their stories in newspapers and police reports. For this reason, I first traced women's profiles from literature, newspapers, and magazines. I limited the research with the Mafia women after the declaration of the Republic in Italy in 1946. I deployed the meta-interpretation model of Weed (2005) who demonstrated that this model helps acquire explorative insights to interpret qualitative data. In line with the method's steps, I first determined what I needed to include and exclude while reading the stories of the Mafia women. There were both parallel motives and differences among the profiles of the Mafia women so I decided to categorize those women's profiles according to more objective factors. Next, I endeavored to detect those objective factors by concentrating on their behaviors toward the Mafia family and the commitments to either crime or resistance against the Mafia while examining each woman's profile. Hence, I included the related determinants, which shape the very fabrics of women's behaviors. I found that there are four main objective determinants in the diversification of different Mafia women's profiles: (1) committing crime, (2) supporting the Mafia psychologically, (3) making confessions to the state, and (4) standing against the Mafia. This categorization is the first step before presenting the feminist theory of belief and action (see Table 1).

These determinants were derived from the behaviors that women in the Mafia had conveyed. Mafia families are one of the most hidden populations so it is evidently difficult to make research on them. Further, such a classification is challenging because both the context and characters may not illustrate balanced and clear attitudes, as the experience of each woman is unique. Thus, the reason for choosing these four determinants is to lessen the risk of subjectivity in the classification process, as all determinants must be performed through a set of actions but not abstract notions. Three main types of Mafia women are categorized: the conservative radicals (active and passive), defectors, and rebels. More to the point, the main aim of this classification is to serve my ensuing theoretical attempts to depict the effect of the beliefs and actions of women on their personal lives and social environments when they are subject to major risks to their freedom resulting from their actions. Thus, the classification must not be perceived as essentialist. Particularly, I used this classification to provide a baseline for clarifying the arguments employed in the next sections of this article. Additionally, my definition of Mafiosi culture is particularly related with a set of cultural dynamics in a family/society, which is ruled by different codes, secrecy, a certain

level of obedience to the norms, strategic intervention by either women or men to increase the marginal profit of the society/family. Blood-kinship offers great opportunities to penetrate into the Mafia family business easily and gives a certain level of reliability. However, blood-kinship is not a solely determinative element to be a member of any Italian Mafia family groups. I limited the investigated women's characters with the membership of a family so the women's profiles in this study can be a wife, sister, or daughter of a Mafioso. More women have had direct or indirect interactions with the Mafia system than those profiled herein, but this study is focused on women who have a blood relationship in the Mafia family or have established an organic bond through marriage. As a result, this study is limited to women who were born into a Mafia family or became a member of the Mafia family by marrying a Mafioso. Thirty-three women met one of these criteria in this methodological scope (see Table 2 for the names of these Mafia women). In line with the classification, I have sought to contribute to the understanding of the beliefs and actions of women in which I have demonstrated the theoretical inquiry through three different formulations by giving numerical values because three categorized woman typologies are diversified according to the beliefs, actions, the role of patriarchy, and oppression (see Table 3).

## SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF WOMEN'S IDENTITY IN THE MAFIA

This section aims to present a theoretical panorama by discussing the role of Mafia women in the center of social identity, power/authority, and consciousness. These three cultural fabrics are the required elements of the patriarchy/oppression nexus. Furthermore, social identity, power/authority, and consciousness are essential variables that determine cultural perspectives of women toward the Mafiosi culture. Berger and Luckmann (1966) continued to elucidate the role of social identity and they claimed that the realities of the social world are pure productions of humans. Yet, these social productions cannot be imagined without the role of beliefs, perceptions, and acts that are all necessary and determining dynamics of the social and personal relationships. Perhaps more importantly, the power articulates these dynamics by employing authority and ruling hegemony over its subjects. The status of power confirms the differentiation between men and women when the masculinity of man comes to the fore as a superior power traditionally (Conway and Vartanian 2000:196; Wood and Karten 1986). The status differentiation between men and women started to take its lines in feminist discussions with the argument of Hearn (2004) who asserted that a critical focus on the hegemony of the men is necessary rather than the hegemony of the masculinities. The personal traits that are obedient to the cultural discourses shaped by dominant masculinities are the reflections of the strong relationship between the cultural influence and personalities. Munro (2003) reinstated the Foucaultian power and domination perspective by arguing not only macro social dynamics but also micro social interactions are the outcomes of power struggles. Munro's (2003) interpretation may fill the gap between the Mafiosi culture and desired women's personal traits by the Mafia in which a fluid power relationship results with different personal traits. Hofstede and McCrae (2004) claimed the strong correlation of personal traits and different dimensions of culture. Accordingly, the aim of the Mafia system regarding women is to create a stereotype that should serve its system with obedience. This struggle has had fruitful results with the creation of active and passive conservative radicals; even some of the active conservative radicals accomplished being the head of the Mafia family. However, attaining the highest rank in the family does not always stem from the woman's merits. The Mafia women have been at

**TABLE 2**

Classification of Italian Mafia Women According to Affiliation, Kinship, and Commitment to Crime and Resistance

| Names of women | Organized crime affiliation | Kinship status in family | Commitment to crime for the Mafia family | Commitment to resistance against the Mafia family | Classification |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Addolorata Carangelo | Sacra Corona Unita | Wife of Mafia boss Giuseppe Scarlino | Active commitment | No | Active Conservative Radical |
| Luciano Scarliano | Sacra Corona Unita | Daughter of Mafia boss Giuseppe Scarlino | Active commitment | No | Active Conservative Radical |
| Domenica Biondi | Sacra Corona Unita | Wife of Mafia boss Giuseppe Rogoli | Active commitment | No | Active Conservative Radical |
| Liliana Campana | Sacra Corona Unita | Sister of Mafiosi Sandro and Francesco Campana | Active commitment | No | Active Conservative Radical |
| Maria Rosaria Buccarella | Sacra Corona Unita | Sister of Mafioso Salvatore Buccarella | Active commitment | No | Active Conservative Radical |
| Erminia Giuliano | Camorra | Sister of Mafia boss Luigi Giuliano | Active commitment | No | Active Conservative Radical |
| Concetta Scalisi | Cosa Nostra | Daughter of Mafioso Antonio Scalisi | Active commitment | No | Active Conservative Radical |
| Gemma Donnaruma | Camorra | Wife of Mafioso Valentino Gionta | Active commitment | No | Active Conservative Radical |
| Teresa De Luca Bossa | Camorra | Wife of Mafia boss Umberto De Luca Bossa | Active commitment | No | Active Conservative Radical |
| Maria Sarreino | 'Ndrangheta | Wife of Mafia boss Rosario Di Giovine | Active commitment | No | Active Conservative Radical |
| Livia De Martino | 'Ndrangheta | Wife of Mafioso Antonio Di Giovine | Active commitment | No | Active Conservative Radical |
| Rosetta Cutolo | Camorra | Sister of the Mafia boss Raffaele Cutolo | Active commitment | No | Active Conservative Radical |
| Maria Licciardi | Camorra | Sister of Mafiosi Vincenzo and Gennaro Licciardi | Active commitment | No | Active Conservative Radical |
| Assunta Maresca | Camorra | Daughter of Mafia boss Vincenzo Maresca | Active commitment | No | Active Conservative Radical |
| Angela Russo | Cosa Nostra | Mother of Mafioso Salvatore Russo | Active commitment | No | Active Conservative Radical |
| Maria Catena Cammarata | Cosa Nostra | Sister of Mafia boss Pino | Active commitment | No | Active Conservative Radical |
| Maria Grazie Genova | Cosa Nostra | Sister of Mafia boss Diego | Active commitment | No | Active Conservative Radical |

(*Continued*)

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**TABLE 2**
(Continued)

| Names of women | Organized crime affiliation | Kinship status in family | Commitment to crime for the Mafia family | Commitment to resistance against the Mafia family | Classification |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Maria Filippa Messina | Cosa Nostra | Wife of Mafia boss Antonino Cinturrino | Active commitment | No | Active Conservative Radical |
| Francesca Citarda | Cosa Nostra | Wife of Mafia boss Giovanni Bontate | Active commitment | No | Active Conservative Radical |
| Giovanna Cannova | Cosa Nostra | Wife of Mafia boss don Vito Atria | Passive commitment | No | Passive Conservative Radical |
| Antonina (Ninetta) Bagarella | Cosa Nostra | Wife of Mafia boss Salvotore Riina | Passive commitment | No | Passive Conservative Radical |
| Rosalia Basile | Cosa Nostra | Wife of Mafia boss Vincenzo Scarantino | Passive commitment | No | Passive Conservative Radical |
| Ada Bevilaqua | Sacra Corona Unita | Mother of Mafia boss Cosimo Cirfeta | Passive commitment | No | Passive Conservative Radical |
| Anna Mazza | Camorra | Wife of Mafia boss Gennaro Moccia | Passive commitment | No | Passive Conservative Radical |
| Rita Di Giovine | 'Ndrangheta | Daughter of Mafioso Rosario Di Giovine | Active commitment | Yes | Defector |
| Marisa Merico | 'Ndrangheta | Daughter of Mafia boss Don Emilio DiGiovine | Active commitment | Yes | Defector |
| Giuseppina Vitale | Cosa Nostra | Sister of Mafia bosses Leonardo, Michele and Vito Vitale | Active commitment | Yes | Defector |
| Maria Rosaria Mingiano | Sacra Corona Unita | Wife of Mafioso Maurizio Cagnazzo | Active commitment | Yes | Defector |
| Antonella Madonna | Camorra | Wife of Mafia boss Natale Dantese | Active Commitment | Yes | Defector |
| Rita Atria | Cosa Nostra | Daughter of Mafia boss don Vito Atria | No | Yes | Rebel |
| Piera Aiello | Cosa Nostra | Wife of Mafioso Nicolò Atria | No | Yes | Rebel |
| Petralia Margaret | Cosa Nostra | Wife of Mafioso Gaspare Sugamiele | No | Yes | Rebel |
| Felicia Bartolotta Impastato | Cosa Nostra | Wife of Mafioso Luigi Impastato | No | Yes | Rebel |

**TABLE 3**
The Feminist Theory of Belief and Action

| Formulation | Socially constructed women identities |
| --- | --- |
| | Desired personal traits of the mafiosi culture |
| $(\text{Bmc} \ \mathbf{X} \ \text{Amc})^{P} > 0$ | |
| | Active and passive conservative radicals |
| | Personal traits that defy the mafiosi culture |
| $\dfrac{B(\text{Amc}) \ \mathbf{X} \ A(\text{Amc})}{1(\text{Omc})^{P}} > 1$ | |
| | Defectors and rebels |
| | Personal traits who are disabled to resist the mafiosi culture |
| $\dfrac{B(\text{Amc}) \ \mathbf{X} \ A(\text{Amc})}{(\text{Occ})^{P}} = 0$ | |
| | Women who are against the Mafia but cannot take any action |

Bmc = Belief system of the mafiosi culture.
Amc = Action accordance with the mafiosi culture.
B(Amc) = Belief system (against the mafiosi culture).
A(Amc) = Action (against the mafiosi culture).
Occ = Oppression of the mafiosi culture.
P = Patriarchy.

the helm of the family business following the arrests of their husbands/brothers or the departure of male members of the family to another country to manage international activities or to escape from the vengeance of another Mafia family. In this context, the Mafia women stereotype is based on structural needs of the organization and the social perceptions of the Mafiosi towards women.

In addition to the rational motives, in the physical absence of the Mafiosi, the pressure of the state organs against the Mafiosi and disputes among the Mafia families paved the way for women to attain higher status in the Mafia. This woman stereotype, who does not act differently from her male counterpart, is a desired personal trait for the Mafia because the Mafia benefits both from her traditional supportive image and substitutive figure when the male members of the family cannot intervene directly in the family business. In addition to the rational basement of the rise of women as the leaders in the Mafia family, we need to consider the power of matriarchy in Southern Italy. Greenwood (2011b) underscored the importance of intersectionality in the interpretation of social identity, as it is fundamentally structured in the social context and hard to reduce to a constant variable. Social identity does not always depend on stereotypes. Counter to the stereotypes, Southern Italian women have more traditional power than women in other regions of Italy (Gribaudi 1997:83). This power has been conflated with the pragmatism of the Mafia system. Thus, the woman's compliantly constructed social identity comes in many guises; either as a traditional housewife who transmits the values of the Mafia to the next generation or as a Mafia mother who manages the whole business of the family.

Chambers (2005) argued that the similarities between the works of Bourdieu (1996, 2000 2001) and MacKinnon (1989) helped us to comprehend the impact of power on minds and bodies. Lips (1991) explained deftly that the reason of dominance of men lies in the permeating social relations of power, as women have not the same equal social power. More importantly, unveiling these similarities of the power may enhance consciousness-raising in feminist studies. Pitch (2010:31) remarkably expresses a feminist rhetoric of relationships in which she asserts, "the issue is not freeing oneself from ties, but recognizing them, making them our own, using them as a point of departure. What follows then is a very different conception of autonomy, understood as the situation of one who can choose how to be . . . " Similarly, my argument concludes that obligatory integration of women with the oppressive system of the Mafia fosters alienation to the self-consciousness, which plays a propulsive force in the inability of women to recognize the meaning and importance of their reactions against the Mafia system. In this context, Graziosi (2001:133) makes a counterargument and claims that women who are actively involved in a Mafia-related crime should not be treated favorably before the law because a Mafia woman who committed a crime is liable as much as a Mafioso. Opposing this conservative argument, I point out a major systematic problem, which is related to the power of patriarchy that prevents conservative radicals from attaining self-consciousness. It is true that conservative radicals are responsible for their crimes and I do not aim to romanticize the Mafia women who support the Mafia through active or passive commitment. Nevertheless, we must consider that if they are more prone to commit crime, there should be other reasons beyond individually oriented psychological motives. We should seek these reasons through the inertia of those women who are unable to resist the Mafia, which is reckoned with the outcomes of the patriarchal codes. The convergence of the inability of resistance against the Mafia and patriarchal codes create serious challenges for women to attain consciousness and to discover the self. More to the point, consciousness-raising is a significant process to address this weakness and can be realized through interactions among the people who embrace the same ideals. Lack of social orientation and unification among women to realize liberation echoed in the prominent work of Freeman (1972). Additionally, Benjamin (1990) critically analyzed the influence of the male domination through psychological processes, which triggered the increase of women's vulnerability exponentially. On the other hand, Pateman (1988:207) attempted to define patriarchy in the wider context of the political spectrum, in which *freedom* and *subjection* are equated with the *masculinity* and *femininity* respectively. A woman's psyche is influenced by the Mafia's violent atmosphere, patriarchal structure, and oppressive acts.

Cowen (1995:167) suggested that female crime is a response to the social system that abused women and offered a low social class and limited women's cultural representation. In this vein, *omertà* and *vendetta* are two terms that signify the importance of the traditional symbols and protective mechanism of the Mafia's own value system. *Omertà* emphasizes the Mafia members' duties, which demonstrates itself as the practice of loyalty, obedience, and silence (Pezzino 1987:927). On the other hand, *vendetta* represents a revenge-based culture of personal justice (Paoli 2003: 181). *Omertà* and *vendetta* are critical instruments of the patriarchal structure and oppression in creating submission and conformity to the Mafiosi culture while hindering self-consciousness of those women in the Mafia. The Sicilian proverb *"cu è surdu, orbu e taci campa cent'anni 'mpaci"* (He who is deaf, blind and silent will live a hundred years in peace) shows that the code of silence is integrated into the culture of the region (Servadio 1976:28). Unsurprisingly, women have been oppressed under the codes of *omertà* vehemently. The punishment of women

due to the violation of *omertà*, as it occurs in the cases of the defectors and rebels, have produced a certain level of "fear" that prevent the Mafia women from betraying their own families.

Women have had an important role in supporting a culture of "honor" and "vendetta." On one side, both of these codes organize the fabrics of social life. On the other side, these two aggravating factors identify and determine the duties and responsibilities of the Mafia women in a collectively structured closed community like the Mafia.

The landmark work of Morselli and Passini (2011) underlines the importance of authority in diverse disciplines. Particularly, it is argued that "dissemination of values" has a direct influence in the submissiveness to the authority in collectivist societies where the needs of the groups are more important than the individuals (Morselli and Passini 2011:298). Apart from the threats of the Mafia, there are certain perils in the liberalization of women and increase of the defectors and rebels. The Mafia family has a closed structure even though its degree of closed network changes from one family to another. This closed network precludes the organization of a movement among the rebels or women who are against the belief system and authority of the Mafia. This social structure renders the resistance against the Mafia at the personal level among the Mafia women rather than a communal level. In this context, Gilligan (1993) argues that social conditioning has serious effects on women. The roles of the family and siblings certainly determine the social conditioning. Further, Mitchell (2003) asserts that the type and intensity of the relationship among the siblings are important variables that form the children's experiences and their perceptions in the future. The collected data in the present study shows that women of the conservative radical group followed the same road as their siblings, that of supporting the Mafia by affirming its subordination system. If the unification and consistency to resist the belief system of the Mafia cannot be attained by most of women, then social behavioral changes, which aim to defy the Mafia, will be gravely limited. Self-reliance is a pattern of both individualist and collectivist societies (Niles 1998). However, attaining solely self-reliance is not a sufficient element both to protect the solidarity of the Mafia families and to break its cultural codes. The action should be conflated with self-reliance to defy the Mafia. This is to say that it is strategically crucial to eliminate the limitations of the Mafia women concerning their unification and resistance against the Mafia.

Additionally, I need to stress that the Mafia's determinism is rapaciously demanding, but it has more impact on the conservative radicals. Resisting against the Mafia and its authority may create role models and stimulate other Mafia women who have a sense of opposition against the Mafia but cannot take any action due to potential appalling threats posed by their Mafia families toward those women. However, if a social change gives such an impetus to the Mafia women in order to resist the Mafia, first, it requires a change in the social behavior. Hopkins, Kahani-Hopkins, and Reicher (2006) aptly show the connection between feminism and psychology by calling attention to the changes in identity, which determine the behaviors, and so the identity becomes an influential force over the social change. If consciousness against the Mafia is activated and moral values of women are perceived to be superior to the Mafia's values, then women may have a significant opportunity to restructure and construe their own identities to challenge and resolve the determinism of the Mafia system.

## CONSERVATIVE RADICALS

Conservative radicals are divided into two groups: active and passive conservative radicals. The main distinction between these two groups is their involvement in crime. Active conservative

radicals were likely to become involved in crime when their husbands, brothers, or sons were incarcerated; these women became responsible for the family's illicit business and maintain the flow of information among the Mafia members. Therefore, their involvement in crime is facilitated by their active participation and decision-making roles within their own Mafia families in addition to transmitting the values of the Mafia to the next generation. In contrast to the active conservative radicals, the passive conservative radicals did not commit crime but supported and sustained the Mafia system and respected its code of silence so they made a passive commitment to crime. Thus, they played strategic roles in transferring the Mafia's value system to the next generation. Moreover, both active and passive conservative radical women were critically involved in developing the Mafiosi culture. According to these definitions, eighteen active conservative radical women and six passive conservative radical women were analyzed for this study. These women are defined as *radicals* because they applied violence and rejected negative characterizations of the Mafia. Active conservative radicals are *conservative* with regard to protecting the benefits of their Mafia families because they ensure stability and continuity in the values of the Mafiosi culture and its illicit business. Finally, they are active as they commit crime and take influential roles to govern the Mafia clans.

## ACTIVE AND PASSIVE CONSERVATIVE RADICALS

The principal argument is based on the beliefs and actions of the woman. The two significant variables determine their status in one of three main clusters: (1) Active/passive conservative radicals, (2) defectors/rebels, and (3) women who are against the Mafia but cannot take any action. I claim that beliefs toward the Mafia, either embracing or confronting its values, influence the actions that women take in their relations in the Mafia family. Accordingly, if their beliefs or actions support or oppose the Mafia, then it is given a numerical value greater than zero (0) because those beliefs maintained by the actions have certain principles either supporting or resisting the Mafia and Mafiosi culture.

Thus, the theoretical framework first posits that active and passive conservative radicals have clear beliefs about the Mafia and demonstrate this determination through supporting the Mafia. A numerical value, greater than 0, is assigned for both their beliefs and actions. However, the numerical value assigned to their actions can change according to their passive or active roles in support of the Mafia system. A passive conservative radical transmits the value system of the Mafia to the next generation, and an active conservative radical takes an operational role in the business of the Mafia in addition to transmitting the value system. Therefore, an active role receives a higher numerical value than a passive role. Moreover, ubiquitous features of the patriarchy, (P), foster the value system of the Mafia and escalate its influence over the beliefs and actions of women through its historical impact on the social milieus of the male-dominated system. Thus, if we multiply the "belief system of the Mafiosi culture—Bmc" and "action in accordance with the Mafiosi culture—Amc," which are both greater than zero and square the result with the impact of patriarchy, we always attain a number greater than zero. This result also gives us the desired personal traits of the Mafiosi culture, which are active and passive conservative radicals in our case. Finally, active conservative radicals have greater "Amc" value than the passive conservative radicals under every condition as they take active roles. In the outcome of

this formulation, the result for both of the personal traits, active and conservative radicals in our case, must have a value greater than "0" in order to serve to the needs of the Mafiosi culture.

$$(Bmc \; \textbf{X} \; Amc)^{P} > 0 \quad \blacktriangleright \quad \text{Active or passive conservative radicals}$$

Bmc = *Belief system of the Mafiosi culture, greater than "0"*
Amc = *Action in accordance with the Mafiosi culture, greater than "0"*
P = *Patriarchy, greater than "0"*

## DEFECTORS AND REBELS

Five Mafia women are classified in the category of defectors. Similar to active conservative radicals, all women in this category demonstrated an active commitment to crime, but those women later decided to be state witnesses as they discovered that the Mafia was not worth defending their cultural system because it has caused devastation in their lives. What is more, there were also material benefits for the defectors when they took the road of confession. They cooperated with the state when they were arrested, and their regrets about their pasts are conveyed in their testimony. The women in this category are called *defectors* because they faced the true nature of the Mafia outside the circle of the Mafia's social environment after their arrests and eventually they turned against the Mafia. For these women, the moment of taking action against the Mafia and turning away from the chaotic and grim realities of the Mafia to the true legal justice of the courts was a watershed moment, which triggered the "emotional crisis" as well. Defectors confessed their crimes. More importantly, they played crucial roles by deciphering the secrets of the Mafia, which led to the severe damages in the Mafia families by those confessions as a significant number of Mafia bosses were put behind bars with the help of such confessions.

Four Mafia women in this category are defined as rebels. Similar to the passive conservative radicals, the rebels are not involved in committing crime. However, unlike passive conservative radicals, they condemn and reject Mafiosi culture explicitly. Moreover, they resist the Mafia without committing crime. For that reason, they are distinguished from the defectors as well. Rebels demonstrate their active resistance by either cooperating with the state or standing against the Mafiosi culture. In doing so, their resistance imposes serious detriments for the Mafia's neatly ordered cultural heritage. Nevertheless, such a resistance imperils the lives of the rebels at the same time so these risky and yet valorous attempts of those women make them *rebels*, referring to their commitment to resist the Mafia.

Up to this point, I have elaborated the personal traits of the defectors and rebels. Thereof, it seems pertinent to commence with the second step of the theoretical inquiry, which examines the formulation of the theoretical intervention for the defectors and rebels. Similar to the active and passive conservative radicals, defectors and rebels are certain of their beliefs toward the Mafia, so their beliefs receive a numerical value greater than "0." Conversely, these women are against the Mafia system, so they demonstrate their opposition through decoding the closed networks of their Mafia families. For instance, defectors committed crime and played important roles by supporting the Mafia system. However, they decided to turn against the Mafia by collaborating with the state and expressed their regrets; hence, many Mafiosi were arrested thanks to their state

collaborations, which revealed the secrets of the Mafia families. On the other hand, rebels paid a higher price than the defectors because their resistance was directly and primarily related to the resolution of the Mafia's cultural system. Hence, different from the defectors, they did not commit crime in the name of their family business. Resistance against the Mafia arises from both defectors and rebels despite the grim oppression that the Mafia applies when the defectors and rebels violate *omertà*, the code of silence. In this sense, beliefs and actions of the defectors and rebels must receive a higher numerical value than the oppression—threats, violence, intimidation—of the Mafia, in order to take action in the face of extensive deterrent instruments perpetrated by the patriarchal system. The communities, in which violence and patriarchy are influential interchangeably, like the Mafia, are defined by active resistance of the oppressed. Thus, I assign a numerical value greater than 1 when the beliefs and actions of the defectors and rebels, in other words the nominator, are challenged by the oppression, denominator, of the patriarchal system. Otherwise, if this division, which is shown below, is equal to or less than 1, the resistance of the defectors and rebels cannot be attained. If I summarize this formulation, the "Belief system" and "Action against the Mafiosi culture" must be greater than "0" because both the beliefs and actions of the defectors and rebels have certain principles to resist against the Mafia so when the beliefs are coupled and multiplied by the action, the value of the numerator must be bigger than "1." On the other hand, there is still deterrent influence of the oppression and patriarchy on the beliefs and actions of the defectors and rebels so this influence is greater than "0." However, the numerator, in other words the beliefs and actions, must be bigger than the denominator, oppression and patriarchy, to attain the personal traits whose actions are destructive for the close communities like the Mafia in our case. Thus, the result of the division must be bigger than "1" for the emergence of the defectors and rebels.

$$\frac{B\,(Amc)\ \mathbf{X}\ A\,(Amc)}{(Omc)^{P}} > 1 \quad \Longrightarrow \quad \text{Defectors or rebels}$$

B(Amc) = *Belief system (Against the Mafiosi culture), greater than "0"*
A(Amc) = *Action (Against the Mafiosi culture), greater than "0"*
Omc = *Oppression of the Mafiosi culture, greater than "0"*
P = *Patriarchy, greater than "0"*

## WOMEN WHO CANNOT TAKE ACTION AGAINST THE MAFIA

Finally, the last step of developing the theoretical intervention is regarding women who are against the Mafia but cannot take any action because of the threats, affective illness, or physical and psychological violence of the Mafia. Those women cannot make a stance against the Mafia so we do not have any knowledge regarding their perceptions and emotions, which are not addressed in the method of the present study. However, we cannot deny the existence of those women, of whom there may be a large number. On the one hand, they have clear perceptions against the Mafia, making the numerical value of the belief greater than "0." On the other hand, they cannot show those beliefs by their actions because they are under oppression or threat, so the numerical value assigned to their action is equal to "0." Even though they are against the Mafia, their belief system is not strong enough to turn into the actions so the numerator of the division is

always "0." Thereby, the result of this division is equal to "0" per se. Ultimately, a certain number of women have to survive in their own despair.

$$\frac{B\,(Amc)\ \textbf{X}\ A\,(Amc)}{(Omc)^{P}} = 0 \quad \Longrightarrow \quad \text{Women who are against the Mafia but cannot take any action}$$

B(Amc) = *Belief system (Against the Mafiosi culture), greater than "0"*
A(Amc) = *Action (Against the Mafiosi culture, equals to "0"*
Omc = *Oppression of the Mafiosi culture, greater than "0"*
P = *Patriarchy, greater than "0"*

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIVE REMARKS

Abelson (1986:239) claimed in his value/threat hypothesis that "when threatened, beliefs tend to increase in value, via whatever sources are most malleable and useful. Threatened individuals or groups will attempt to decrease the apparent value of the beliefs held by the threatening party." The arguments of Abelson concur with the beliefs and acts of the defectors and rebels who resist against the Mafia. Correspondingly, the Mafia women defy the value of the Mafia's belief system through either the confessions as defectors did or cultural resistance of women as rebels demonstrated such rebellious acts against the Mafia. However, different from the hypothesis of Abelson, the women's stance against the Mafia does not stem simply from the threats. More importantly, the perceptions, which are structured by the cultural statue of the Mafia, are strikingly influential much before taking the decision of resistance so the threats have played a stimulating role in our case. Nelken (2012:8) draws attention to the complex structure of legal culture in which the relationship of the *legal* with the *culture* depends on the culture's evolution whether through a value-based action or an instrumental social action. Women of the Italian Mafia define the *legal culture* with using their own social and psychological dynamics in the canvas of emotions, moral judgment, and reactions. This definition can be reverberated through an instrumental social action of the active and passive conservative radicals or a value-based action of the defectors and rebels. This duality brings us to the impact of emotions on our moral judgments, which are socially constructed and determined by the emotions (J. Greenwood 2011a). Yet, these emotions are the variations reverberated through cultural perceptions about the Mafia that have ultimately different meanings for a conservative radical and a rebel. These contradictory meanings of perceptions widen the cultural gap and lead to cultural polarization between these two personal traits. Nevertheless, we should take into account other internal and external dynamics while analyzing Mafia women and their commitments to crime and resistance.

Secrets are prominent determinants that offer a certain level of solidarity and uniformity to the closed communities. The Mafia organizations, even though many of them are distinguished from each other according to loose and tight structures, highly depend on the strength of their members' abilities to conceal the necessary information. However, there are significant external and internal factors that pave the way for confession and resistance of the Mafia women. The main external factor is the Italian legal system as it provides certain rights, a more flexible punishment system, and even provides social help and a new identity to the Mafia women to protect

them from their own families when they cooperate with state institutions. These rights play a dominant and encouraging role in the process of making the confession decision. However, the main determinants have a relation with the internal factors as the capacity of the internal factors to influence the decisions of women drastically address the final decisions. The internal factors are related to the dynamics of the Mafia family that are under the impact of the organizational structure of the family and psychological limits of women to survive in such a competitive and demanding system. On one hand, the closed social environment limits the "the circle of freedom." On the other hand, a consistent and systematic psychological pressure enforces a Mafia woman to terminate her entire family and social relationships with their own families by confessing to the police. However, when we consider active and passive conservative radicals who defend the principles of their own Mafia families, it is clear in hindsight that those women have certain differences in their social identities and ethical behaviors. As a result, their cost and benefit analyses demonstrate different priorities when we compare them with defectors and rebels who stand against the Mafia. Those confessions of the Mafia women may cost the lives of their brothers, husbands, sons, and their other beloved ones. The high cost of making confessions shows the complex psychological dynamics of the Mafia woman on the path of making confessions. The strength of emotional attachment of those women to their own Mafia families prevent them from acting against the Mafia.

What is more, the patriarchal codes, as a solid form of cultural system, are intended to define the role of women in the Mafia in line with the Mafia's desires and needs. To do so, the instruments of the patriarchy, such as the oppression, *omertà*, and the code of silence, are used to deter the women's disobedience. Second, the patriarchal system attained a certain level of success until the emergence of defectors and rebels who violated the code of silence and challenged the cultural codes of the Mafia system. However, such a resolution remains limited because disobedience to the orders of the Mafia has not been embraced by most of the women. This is another reason why we have more active and conservative radicals than defectors and rebels. Furthermore, the number of defectors and rebels is dramatically less than the number of active and conservative radicals among Mafia families, which have tight structures. This fact is more discernible in the relationships among the members of the Mafia groups whose relationships are extensively based on marriage or blood such as 'Ndrangheta (Ciconte 2008; Ingrascì 2007b; Paoli 1994). The decision process, either to confess about the Mafia or resist against it, is an irreversible path so defectors and rebels take a direct and clear position by revealing the necessary information that they have when those women collaborate with the state. Thus, the process of confession and resistance, which is fostered by the defectors and rebels, has combined with other external and internal factors. This mighty combination has limited the potential power of the Mafia families. Accordingly, it has brought to an end a number of Mafia families.

The Mafia had been popularized and lionized after its establishment, and its glory days endured until the end of the 1980s, particularly in the cultural sphere. Even if the Mafia in Italy is less powerful today, it still holds certain threats for the country's social, cultural, and economic life. Women have played a significant role in the success of the Mafia since its emergence because they have responded in a functional manner to the desires and needs of the Mafia. However, the emergence of defectors and rebels plunged the Mafia's solid system into a deep structural and cultural crisis thanks to the changes in cultural perceptions, which altered the social behaviors of women. The changes in the social behaviors of women toward the Mafia have fostered the social isolation for the defectors and rebels. Most importantly, they risked their lives through the

violation of *omertà*, a serious consequence that could undermine the decision to be a defector or rebel. Thus, the social and individual isolation is a significant scourging factor for these women. In this context, patriarchy has attained its goal overwhelmingly by constructing the social identity of women and limiting their consciousness, so the patriarchy guaranteed that women would serve the Mafia like the active and passive conservative radicals who implicitly and, in some cases, passionately defended the Mafia system.

The active and passive conservative radicals prove the coercive and hidden power of the Mafia. Nevertheless, the defectors and rebels stand alone as evidence that closed and secret social networks, of which patriarchal oppression and profit-making are the means of these families, make the system more fragile in the presence of radical changes in the cultural perceptions and social behaviors of women. The social behavioral approach of the defectors and rebels has an ethical basis through which they make a clear distinction between their own belief systems and the Mafia system. Hence, such consciousness-raising of the rebels and defectors indicates the transitions from the norms and sociocultural background of the Mafia to the women's own norms and liberated footing. This change in social behaviors prompts us to revisit the power and dominance nexus through the social interactions of the Mafia women. Athens (2009) stressed the importance of embracing a realist approach rather than an idealist one in examining the power and dominance nexus in social interactions. Specifically, Athens (2010) argued that the domination of the social action is hard to predict because the construction of a social act may be formulated differently during or after the process of that social construction. In accordance with the Athens argument, the rebel may emerge as a dominant figure against the Mafia by defying its power through her actions. Nevertheless, the Mafia emerges as a prevailing authority after the termination of the resistance by the defectors or rebels. Yet, violating the codes of the Mafia, crying out for justice in a court against the Mafioso, or confessing to the police about the secrets and illicit actions of the Mafia change the name of the dominant actor for a certain period of time during the process of resistance. In this regard, consistency in the fight against the Mafia is crucially important in order to erase hegemonic and dominant Mafia figures completely from the country so the acts of women must be sustainable, intensive, and persistent to lead a permanent social change.

Turning to the theoretical intervention employed in this article, the feminist theory of belief and action has been developed by applying it to women who belong to one of four main Italian Mafia syndicates. Even if the proposed theory is limited to the individual cases in this article, it can be applicable in other parts of the world to analyze the changes in the social behaviors of both men and women in Mafiosi culture, which are formed with secrecy, authority, and patriarchy. The main contention of the feminist theory of belief and action conveys the argument that the beliefs must be strong enough to trigger the actions against the oppression of the patriarchal system and its challenges. If the actions cannot be accomplished or are not resilient enough to overcome the intimidation and deterrence of the Mafiosi, it is impossible for women to defy the Mafia. A remedy to the sufferings of women depends on their cultural perceptions and beliefs, which must be strong enough to be realized through their consistent actions against the Mafia and its oppression. There is one more step for those who live in such oppression: First, they must become aware of the Mafia's intrusive power and must act by standing against it as the defectors did in our case.

The representations of crime and criminality can be predictable and changeable according to the macro social dynamics in a society (Melossi 2000). However, these representations are not solely conditioned by external factors; a personal-based value system can determine and even transform the very meaning of representation of commitment to crime through micro social and

psychological dynamics, which we can construe through the reactions of the conservative active and passive radicals. Conversely, the representations of commitment to crime may transform and even may not be granted in a culture of lawlessness as it is evidenced through the reactions of the defectors and rebels. The patriarchy's evolution and power have limits when it is challenged by those women because their rebellious attempts end violent and profit-oriented closed communities like the Mafia. Yet, such a resolution cannot lead to a complete collapse of the Mafia system because most of the women in the Mafia have not become defectors or rebels. Even though this situation dampens our optimism, if the crucial role of women in the Mafia is understood by the public sufficiently, particularly if the State policies are designed to address this serious and hard social problem and consciousness-raising among women in the Mafia is fostered then the remedy may be attainable. This article does not consider how to develop anti-Mafia policies concerning women. However, if one aims to do so, he or she may first use this study to understand how the women's cultural perceptions and beliefs affect their actions and how those actions influence the system of the Mafia through creating different personal traits. Above all, the freedom of women depends on the concurrence of their cultural perceptions, which are articulated by conflated beliefs and actions. Thereby, the beliefs should be endorsed and put into practice by the actions. If the particular case is a woman in the Mafia, then both the beliefs and actions need to act as two oars, pulling together in the direction of emancipation. Better yet, the social behaviors of women in the Mafia are not static but dynamic and they may radically change as the defectors did by changing their cultural perceptions about the Mafia phenomenon. The emancipation of women hinges on persistent and decisive actions as the rebels did by ending those violent and patriarchal communities once believed to be invincible, unrivaled, and indestructible.

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