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Master's degree in

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WOMEN'S ROLE IN TRANSNATIONAL CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

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SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

This document provides an overview of the literature on gender question and organized crime, focusing on the role exercised by women in the main transnational criminal organizations and, particularly, on the way in which gender conceptions and stereotypes have shaped the view of female figures, both inside and outside the criminal groups. In the first chapter, the focus is on the theoretical approaches and on international legal documents dealing with the theme of transnational organized crime. What emerges is that, for a long time, the assumption was that organized crime was exclusively a male domain environment, where women played the role of victims or collaborators. Only in the last twenty years the literature has undergone a gender revolution. Researches have started to question the traditional portrait of women in criminal groups, revealing they have always been active in organized crime at various levels, from supportive roles to more active tasks and even leadership positions. These studies are essentials for states and international legal authorities in order to better understand and tackle the phenomenon of transnational organized crime with more effective policies and definitions that still today lack of a gender perspective and they are therefore uncompleted and inadequate. Moreover, the paper adopts a multicultural feminist approach as framework of analysis, in order to provide an integrated comprehension of gender in criminality. Therefore, the concept of feminine role is different according to the context in which the criminal associations develop and take action.

For this reason, the second chapter analyses different transnational criminal organizations around the world, trying to understand: what is the role of women in each one; how their level of involvement is conditioned by the social, economic and cultural setting; and how their position has changed over the time. The results of the research reveals the impossibility to refer to "the role of women in criminality" as an homogenous phenomenon and that the imagery related to this world is still dominated by stereotypes and prejudices that prevents from fully understanding gender and criminality question in its many and wide facets.

Then, the third chapter deals with the Italian mafia-type criminal organizations, from Sicilian mafia to Neapolitan 'Ndrangheta and Sacra Corona Unita in Puglia. Even in this case, a review of the main features of each association and of the internal and external social, economic and cultural dynamics is essential to define how women have increasingly emerged in the various groups, albeit in different manners, according to the internal structure of the associations and to the surrounding context. Over time, female involvement, first hidden by authorities and media narrations, has become always more evident in public discourses, partially reducing the stereotypical and succumbing imagery of women that dominated Italian public opinion until then.

Finally, in the last chapter, a more deep investigation has been concentrated on the Neapolitan Camorra group that, compared to other mafia-type organizations, is differs for the presence of female figures who have reached the highest positions and have caused radical changes in the perception of the role of women both in the organization and in the society as a whole.

What emerges from the research is that, although today the role of women in criminal groups have been brought to light by theoretical researches and empirical evidences, much still needs to be done to achieve an effective gender-based approach in studies, laws and policies to prevent and combat organized crime. The stereotypes that still dominate these discourses prevent the full eradication of this pervasive and constantly changing phenomenon, which threatens contemporary society at all levels, and requires an integrated approach, over than the collaborations of all actors from national to international level.

CHAPTER I

WOMEN'S ROLE IN TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME:
THEORETICAL APPROACHES AND INTERNATIONAL LAW

1.1 On the research question and the methodology

The aim of the present research is to investigate the role of women in transnational organized crime theories and policies and to comprehend how the gender question matters in the criminal organizations' structures and activities. Assessing the level of gender gap in organized crime is not only about the overall level of involvement of women, but also about their roles and positions in organized criminal structures and their level of power and access to resources compared to men. For a long time, researches, theories, laws and policies in the field have been characterized by biases and stereotypes related to gender roles and activities and by a lack of a gender perspective. Women were seen predominately as victims and men as perpetrators and it was rarely recognized that these two categories were not mutually exclusive and could sometimes overlap. The consequence was an ineffective and counterproductive implementation of strategies and laws to prevent and combat the crime or an unjust treatment of victims and perpetrators by criminal justice system. In addition, the problem of finding a shared definition of transnational organized crime at international level further complicated the difficulty to combat it in an integral and collaborative manner by states and international institutions. Many progresses have been made in the last decades in the attempt to introduce a gender perspective and to better understand female roles as accused persons, prisoners, witnesses or victims. By the way, challenges still exist in treating women and men in an egalitarian and non-discriminatory way, both as victims and perpetrators.

The present chapter tries to overcome the stereotypes related to women's role in criminal groups and to address the evolution of gender researches, laws and policies on organized crime over the time . Evidence shows that the lack of gender perspective in this field was, and for many aspects still it is a limit in addressing the issue   and it represents another example of a more general lack of gender equality

rooted in all society's areas. At least three fundamental steps are therefore required to fill the gap: a gender–disaggregated data collection; a gender perspective in national and international laws and policies; and finally a new theoretical approach that doesn't consider women as an homogenous and abstract category, but as influenced by the socio-cultural context where they are immersed.

1.2 Definition of gender and of "gender mainstreaming" approach

The term "gender" has different connotations and varies in line with the theoretical approach that considers it. For instance, according to structuralism theory, the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys are socially constructed. For this reason, norms, behaviours and roles associated with being a woman or a man change on the base of the social and cultural contests and evolve over time. This gender construction can produce form of discriminations especially towards women, who experience inequality of treatment in social, political, economic and cultural contests due to the functions and the tasks they are required to perform according to gender construction[1]. While this view places structure at the centre of analysis, more recent approaches underline how gender is in the everyday interactions between individuals in a specific social context, in a sort of "doing gender" performances[2]. Finally, some scholars emphasise how gender is a power relation that operates in conjunction with others characteristics such as race, ethnicity and religion, determining power differential and hierarchies in different social contexts[3].

[1] Barbara Risman, *Gender as a social structure*. Springer International Publishing, 2018.[last access 14 December 2023] https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-76333-0_2

[2] Katherine Dashper and Rebecca Finkel. ""Doing gender" in critical event studies: a dual agenda for research." *International Journal of event and festival management* 12.1 (2021): 70-84.[last access 14 december 2023] https://crisaps.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/09

[3] H. Lorraine Radtke, , Henderikus J. Stam, and Henderikus J. Stam, eds. *Power/gender: Social relations in theory and practice*. Vol. 13. Sage, (1994): 234-236. [last access 23 November] https://books.google.com/books

As a conceptual innovation, gender in criminal studies emerged in 1970s related to the idea of sex crimes as gendered-based and to the understanding that some crimes happen and are treated on the base of stereotypes and meanings related to gender. In 1988 the term "gender" was used for the first time in an international criminal law treaty, the Rome Statute of International Criminal Court. This has marked a fundamental moment as it recognized the importance of the involvement of gender question in international criminal law[4], in order to ensure protection in an inclusive manner. From that moment, many other areas of international laws and policies have embedded the gender issue and, moreover, the concept of "gender mainstreaming" has been introduced. The term was first used in 1985 Nairobi Word Conference on Women and it was defined as a fundamental strategy in Beijing Platform of Action[5]. "Gender mainstreaming" refers to the reorganisation, improvement and development of gender equality perspectives at all levels of definition, policies, programmes and projects at international, national and local level. The aim is to take into account different powers and resources for men and women in order to adopt policies and laws to enhance gender equality.

The present research aims at find out how gender question and "gender mainstreaming" approach has been included in analytical and empirical studies, laws and policies related to Transnational Organized Crime .

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[4] Valerie Oosterveld, "The definition of gender in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court: A step forward or back for international criminal justice." *Harv. Hum Rts. J.* 18 (2005): 55. [last-access-23-November-2023]https://heinonline.org/hol-cgi-bin/get_pdf.cgi?handle=hein.journals/hhrj18&section

[4] Rosemary Okello-Orlale,. "Looking back and ahead: The media and the struggle for gender equality after the Nairobi UN women's conference." *Agenda* (2006): 48-56.[last access 23 November 2023] https://www.jstor.org/stable/4066812

1.3 Research background

In order to understand the role of women in criminal organizations, it is necessary to comprehend how female criminality have been perceived by scholars and lawmakers who have addressed the question of transnational organized crime. Theories, laws and policies have evolved over time, and they have gradually abandoned stereotypical and biased approaches in favour of a more comprehensive consideration on the role of women, based on empirical studies and data gathering. By the way, legal documents, especially in international fora, still lack of an adequate gender approach , that is fundamental to implement effective policies to eradicate TOC and to guarantee the respect of human rights by the institutions involved.

1.3.1 Gender perspective on women in criminal analytical approaches

In early criminal studies, women criminality have been justified by gender- biased explanations. In 1988 Daly and Lind identified a "generalization problem" on the researches about criminality, related to the fact that previous scholars had never explored the issue of crime linked to the   gender ratio[6]. Questions about the genesis of women's criminal behaviour, the quantitative evaluation of women's criminality and the penal treatment of women had never been addressed. As a consequence, criminal theories and models were partial and ineffective to understand the phenomenon in its totality.   Female criminality was limited to studies on

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[6] K. Daly,., M. Chesney-Lind, F. T Cullen,., & R. Agnew, Feminism and criminology. *Criminological theories: Bridging the past to the future*, *267284*. (2002): 33-35. [last access 23 November] https://doi.org/10.1080/07418828800089871

prostitutions or violent depravity, women were considered as passive subjects and the few who committed crime were seen as affected by mental issues[7].

Gender researches in criminal field started at the end of 1980s, when there was a recognition of the sharply increase of women in correction institutions. From that moment, theories which explain the reasons of women's criminality have evolved during years. Already in 1975, Freda Adler published the first book on the matter and she proposed the theory of "masculinity", referring to Freud previous studies[8]. According to Adler, female's crime was related to an alteration in some women's nature and the few of them who engage in aggressive behaviour, were denying their feminine part and behaving like men. Then, in 1980's, was dominant an etiological perspective, which related criminality only to working class women, who were motivated by poverty and economic insecurity. According to this approach, feminine misbehaviour was a consequence of socialization and culture that, in some cases, made women behave like men[9]. On the other side, many scholars, as Pollak, questioned the existence of a gender gap in criminality and claimed the gender-neutrality of delinquency theories[10].

It is only since the end of 20th century that studies have evolved through the work of social reaction school and critical criminologists. According to these theories, penal system's agencies contributed to the construction of criminality[11]. Therefore,

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[7] Byongook Moon, David Blurton, and John D. McCluskey, "General strain theory and delinquency: Focusing on the influences of key strain characteristics on delinquency." *Crime & delinquency* 54.4 (2008):582-613.[last-acess-23-November],319–361.
https://doi.org/10.1177/0022427801038004001

[8] Idem n.7 : 582-613.

[9] Richard B Felson,., and Jo Lane Kelsea, "Does violence involving women and intimate partners have a special etiology?." *Criminology* 48.1 (2010): 321-338. [last access 26 November 2023]https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.2010.00186.

[10] Mioara, Zoutewelle-Terovan, et al., "Criminality and family formation: Effects of marriage and parenthood on criminal behaviour for men and women." *Crime & Delinquency* 60.8 (2014): 1209-1234. [last access 15 November 2023] https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128712441745

[11] Carolyn Heitmeyer, and Maya Unnithan. "Bodily rights and collective claims: the work of legal activists in interpreting reproductive and maternal rights in India." *Journal of the Royal*

women's low volume of prosecution could be the product of a different/ preferential treatment on the part of agencies, rather than being the portrait of their actual criminality rate. Moreover, thanks to the advancement of gender perspectives theories, more attention has been paid to how economic, social and political forces pressure women into crime[12]. These studies have related crime rate to gender differences in criminal opportunities and in type, frequency and context of offending, due to different causes. These scholars have claimed that taboos against female crimes are related to cultural norms, which determine the creation of femininity stereotypes (of weakness, domestication, submission) that are incompatible with criminal behaviours. Crime is almost always stigmatizing for girls, and its potential cost to life chances is much greater than for male criminals[13]. In addition, women moral development predispose them to an "ethic of care'' that restrain them from violence[14]. Then, women are more socially controlled than men and their misbehaviour is more stringently monitored and corrected through negative stereotypes and sanctions since childhood, by family and school. Finally, women offenders are perceived as using their sexuality as the only mean of power and this limits their criminal opportunities. Furthermore, even gender specific crimes as prostitutions are male dominated because both clients and employees are usually men under which prostitutes work[15]. All these aspects have to be considered in studying female criminality.

Anthropological Institute 21.2 (2015): 374-390. [last access 24 November 2023] https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.12211

[12] Dorie Klein,"Afterword: Twenty Years Ago Today." *The Criminal Justice System and Women: Offenders, Victims, and Workers* (1995): 47-53.[last access 10 December 2023] https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-76774-1_1

[13]Darrell J. Steffensmeier, *The fence: In the shadow of two worlds. Rowman & Littlefield,* (1986) .[last access 20 December 2023] https://books.google.com/books

[14]Darrell Steffensmeier and Emilie Allan. "Gender and crime: Toward a gendered theory of female offending." *Annual review of sociology* 22.1 (1996): 459-487. [last access 19 November 2023] https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.22.1.459

[15]Darrell J Steffensmeier and Emilie Andersen Allan. "Sex disparities in arrests by residence, race, and age: An assessment of the gender convergence/crime hypothesis." *Justice Quarterly* 5.1 (1988): 53-80. [last access 23 November 2023] https://doi.org/10.1080/07418828800089611

Lastly, according to recent feminist theories, women criminality can be a consequence of gender inequality. Hence, patriarchal power relations can push women into crime through victimization, role entrapment, economic marginality and survival needs. For instance, many female teens who drift in criminal actions are running away from sexual and physical abuse at home[16] and they display their independence in innovative survival criminal strategies[17]. As a consequence, these researches also state that a growth of gender equality would lead to a lower share of female crime. In the last 40 years, also correctional agencies have started to incorporate gender-informed approaches to the assessment and treatment of women offenders and to develop specific gender training for staff who work in female institutions[18]. One of the activity includes to form staff on specific needs related to common histories of trauma in order to promote women's empowerment[19]. Apart from this, since 1990's many scholars have started to argue that existing risk assessment models were developed on male samples and neglected key risky factors relevant for women offenders[20].For this reason, gender-responsive assessment models have been developed to highlight circumstances which could lead to women's criminality. Parental stress, family support, educational asset, housing safety, mental health and relationship dysfunction are found as particularly relevant

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[16]M. E. Gilfus, "From victims to survivors to offenders: Women's routes of entry and immersion into street crime". *Women & Criminal Justice*, *4*(1), (1993): 63-89.[last access 21 November 2023] https://doi.org/10.1300/J012v04n01_04

[17] Richey Mann, Coramae, *When women kill*. Sunny Press, (1996).[last access 21 November 2023] https://books.google.com/books

[18] Kaitlyn Wardrop, Kayla A. Wanamaker, and Dena Derkzen. "Developing a risk/need assessment tool for women offenders: A gender-informed approach." Journal of Criminological Research, Policy and Practice 5.4 (2019): 264-279. [last access 30 November] https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108

[19] A., Nolan, A Harris & D. Derkzen, *An assessment of the women-centred training program.* Research Report (2017). [last access 30 November] https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-00452-1_5

[20] Franca Cortoni, "The assessment of female sexual offenders." *Female sexual offenders: Theory, assessment and treatment* (2010): 87-100.[last access 21 November 2023] https// DOI:10.1002/9780470666715

risky factors[21]. Considering these variables is fundamental to implement gender-specific correctional programmes and service delivery that address specific areas sensitive for women as: development of a sense of self and self-esteem; sexuality and relationship; prevention from trauma; cultural awareness; parenting and pregnancy skills and mental health skills[22]. From these considerations, it emerges that the gender approach is essential, not only in theory but also in practice, and must be implemented by institutions at all levels, in order to prevent and combat female criminality.

1.3.2 Gender perspective on women in criminal organizations' studies

Numerous theoretical attempts have been made to conceptualize organized crime and explain its internal dynamics, but for many years criminal organizations have been considered as a male phenomenon, both in their hierarchy of power and in criminal activities involved. What was not taken into account is that women have always been active in criminal associations, but not enough research has been carried out into this phenomenon. Past scholars believed organised crime was sexually segregated because the violence related to illegal activities was seen as a male task, while women were more likely to remain in gendered roles as wives or mothers, disconnected from crime[23]. For others, women participation was related to their supportive roles when men were imprisoned or dead without an immediate successors.

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[21] L. Jill Rettinger, and A. Andrews Don. "General risk and need, gender specificity, and the recidivism of female offenders." Criminal Justice and Behavior 37.1 (2010): 29-46. [last acess 25 November 2023] https://doi.org/10.1177/009385480934943

[22] B. Bloom, "Defining "gender-specific": What does it mean and why is it important." *Presentation at the National Institute of Corrections Intermediate Sanctions for Women Offenders National Project Meeting. Longmont, Colorado.* (1997). [last access 12 November 2023] http://static.nicic.gov.s3.amazonaws.com/Library/018017.pdf

[23] Darrell Steffensmeier, and Emilie Allan. "Gender and crime: Toward a gendered theory of female offending." *Annual review of sociology* 22.1 (1996): 459-487.[last acess 12 November 2023] https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.22.1.459

Only recently, studies have revealed growing evidences of women active roles and even leadership positions in many criminal groups around the world and in various period of the history. According to UNDOC (UN Office on Drugs and Crimes) the role of female offenders in trafficking networks have become central and, indeed, in 14 countries around the world, women investigated/prosecuted overcame the 50% of the total traffickers[24]. Researches on women's involvement in criminal organizations and gangs have been prolific since the end of 20th century. For many years, the dominant approach of these studies has been based on the key word: "emancipation"[25]. According to this concept, the role of women was previously limited to being passive wives, sisters and daughters of criminal men, whereas today they occupy important positions in decision-making of organization. Women's emancipation is taking place in criminal groups as it happened in society[26]. By the way, with the increase of feminism studies in female criminality, also this theory was questioned. Although the emancipation approach is relevant in some contexts, additional explanations should be considered, especially the analysis of socio-economic context of the country and of the different criminal structures[27]. More recent studies investigate the symbolic and active power of women in organizations[28], and, more specifically, the relation between women's mobility from workers to leadership roles in relation with the structure of the criminal association in which they operate. These studies analyse which types of skills are

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[24] UNODC "Global Report on Trafficking in Persons" (2018).[last access 17 December 2023] https://www.unodc.org/documents/dataandanalysis/glotip/2018/GLOTiP_2018_BOOK

[25] Freda Adler, *Sisters in crime: The rise of the new female criminal*. McGraw-Hill, (1975).[last access 13 November 2023] https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1975-29913-000

[26] Dina Siegel,. "Women in transnational organized crime." *Trends in Organized Crime* 17 (2014): 52-65.[last-access-20-November.2023] https://idp.springer.com/authorize/casa?redirect_uri=https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/

Darrell J[27] Steffensmeier, Jennifer Schwartz, and Michael Roche, "Gender and twenty-first-century corporate crime: Female involvement and the gender gap in Enron-era corporate frauds." *American Sociological-Review*78.3(2013):448-476.[last-acess-13-November-2023] https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122413484150

[28] Alessandra Dino, "Symbolic domination and active power: female roles in criminal organizations." *Women and the mafia*. New York, NY: Springer New York, 2007. 67-86.[last access 20 November 2023] https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-0-387-36542-8_6

required to women to make career on the base of the complexity of the entity[29]. Others investigate the relation between women careers and the rigidity-flexibility of the organizations hierarchy. The results show that the support/ working role is more common in hierarchical organizations; while the managerial/leadership function is more frequent in flexible and smaller gangs or criminal associations[30].

Many authors have also compared male and female attitudes in criminal groups. Results pointed out that there is gender overlap in motivation related to these crimes: control, respect, revenge and economic survival[31]. In addition to this, contextual drivers arising from the environment also are very strong factors, especially law and judicial systems, social organization and level of corruption. Shultze-Kraft develops the concept of "states of crimilegality", a hybrid political order which can exist between bureaucracy of state and the criminal underworld and which determine the institutional structure[32]. By the way, even if motivations are similar, actions in the commission of the crimes can differ according to gender. For instance, there isn't evidence that women are making inroads in the sales and distribution of crack cocaine, but there is such evidence in methamphetamine sale, human trafficking and shoplifting[33].In these sectors women have proved to be able to exert their own business, also because these are crimes less likely to be dominated by men. These findings encourage a consideration of gender stratified offending

[29] Hernan Mondani, and Amir Rostami, "Uncovering the degree of criminal organization: Swedish street gangs and the role of mobility and co-offending networks." *Social science research* 103 (2022): 102657.[last access 24 November 2023] https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2021.102657

[30] Ernesto Savona and Gioacchino Natoli, "Women and other mafia-type criminal organizations." *Women and the Mafia* (2007): 103-106.[last access 24 November 2023] https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-0-387-36542-8_8

[31] Patricia Morgan, and Ann Joe Karen, "Uncharted terrain: Contexts of experience among women in the illicit drug economy." *Women & Criminal Justice* 8.3 (1997): 85-109.[last access 13 November 2023] https://doi.org/10.1300/J012v08n03_04

[32] Markus Schultze-Kraft, *Crimilegal orders, governance and armed conflict*. Springer, (2018) : 37-43. https://www.palgrave.com/us/book/9783030034412

[33] Finn-Aage Esbensen, Elizabeth Piper Deschenes, and L. Thomas Winfree Jr. "Differences between gang girls and gang boys: Results from a multisite survey." *Youth & Society* 31.1 (1999): 27-53. https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118X9903100100

rates[34]. Moreover, gendered expectations about women's activities still prevail when considering their use of violence. Hence, women report deploying violence when they need to, but they prefer appeal to other means. On the other side, they also are able to take advantage from the gender stereotypes(e.g. men's reluctance to use violence against women) to reduce their exposure to violence in male's dominated criminal arenas[35]. As a consequence, what studies show, it is a fluidity of gender roles in criminal organizations, as women and men reaffirm them in some contexts and transcend them in others[36].

Recently, the interest has been raised also on data gathering about the incidence of women in organized crimes, which confirm that numbers of female offenders is substantial and growing[37] . For instance, the population of women prisoners in Latin America climbed to 51,6% between 2000 and 2015 and more than 60% of them was accused for drug-related offences[38]. Moreover, there seems to be not crime from which women are completely excluded. They are involved in drug trafficking, extortion, money laundering and even human trafficking; they participate both as supporters in male dominated networks, and as bosses of their own network of women. Particularly, in relation to human trafficking, they can be also involved in sexual exploitation activities, which can no longer be considered only as a crime of men against women. If at beginning women were used by the

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[34] Patrick Y Lee   et al., "Representation of elderly persons and women in published randomized trials of acute coronary syndromes." *Jama* 286.6 (2001): 708-713.[last access 23 November 2023] https//doi:10.1001/jama.286.6.708

[35] Miller, Susan L. "The paradox of women arrested for domestic violence: Criminal justice professionals and service providers respond." *Violence against women* 7.12 (2001): 1339-1376.[last access 24 November 2023] https://doi.org/10.1177/10778010122183900

[36] A. B. Houge, K., Lohne, & M. L. Skilbrei, Gender and crime revisited: criminological gender research on international and transnational crime and crime control. *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention*, *16*(2), (2015): 160-174.

[37] UNODC "Global Report on Trafficking in Persons" (2018).[last access 17 December 2023] https://www.unodc.org/documents/dataandanalysis/glotip/2018/GLOTiP_2018_BOOK

[38] Howard Campbell, Female drug smugglers on the U.S.-Mexico border: gender, crime and empowerment. Anthropol Q 81(1) (2008):233–267 [last access 25 November 2023] https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/9781118517383.wbeccj069

organization as key players in many activities, in order to exploit gender stereotypes that dispelled the suspicion, they took advantage from these situations to acquire always more power and to reach middle or high level roles in the associations. For instance, an area in which women have acquired more authority is in human trafficking. On the base of their role they can be classified as: supporters, when they execute the orders of the leaders; partners in crime, when they have a relation with a man and cooperate with him; madams, when they play a major role and coordinate the activities[39]. The benefits for women affiliates are the same as for men and are related to the fact that criminal activities provide alternative career options, material wealth and access to power and influence.

By the way, little studies focus on gendered differences on the impact of organized crime on community level and on international and transnational fields[40]. To this scope ,it is necessary to gather more data on female participation, thanks to the collaboration between institutions and stakeholders at local, national and international level. In an attempt to fill the gap, OCSE Transnational Threats Department has prepared a report on ''The Role of Women in Organized Crime[41]'' in which highlights that a lack of sex-disaggregated data collection and analysis is one of the major impediments to more holistic and gender-sensitive responses to TOC. According to the report, only a small number of gender sensitive prevention and initiatives are identified across the OSCE area and requires member states to enhance their commitment to gender sensitive data collection, strategies and programmes.

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[39] Dina Siegel, "Women in transnational organized crime." *Trends in Organized Crime* 17 (2014): 52-65.[last-acces-25-November-2023]

https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/9781118517383.wbeccj069

[40] Marion Van San, "The appeal of 'dangerous' men. On the role of women in organized crime." *Trends in organized crime* 14.4 (2011): 281-297. [last access 30 November 2023] https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12117-011-9128-y

[41] OSCE "Understanding the role of women in organized crime An OSCE assessment''(2023). [last access 30 November 2023] https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/4/560049.pdf

1.3.3 *The problem of definition of Transnational Organized Crime(TOC)*

Transnational Organized Crime(TOC) emerged at the beginning of 20th century, arising from consumers' demand for products and services previously prohibited by governments. Early examples included the illegal sale of alcohol in US during Prohibition Era[42]. Then, some factors related to Globalisation promoted its growing influence on society, such as: the expansion of markets in absence of legal protection; the greater openness of states after Protectionism period; the lack of norms and weak government; the lack of understanding of legality among population[43]. Nowadays, TOC has assumed an international dimension, becoming a threat not only for states, but for the overall international community. By the way, it has been difficult to find an agreement between state actors to define the issue and plan a strategy to tackle it. Hence, the concept of "organized crime" has the problem that lacks of a scientific shared definition, due to the fact that it includes various crimes and primary describes a social phenomenon. Many scholars have proposed different meanings, focusing on a particular aspect of the issue, but today there is still no agreement on the concept.

The first legally binding instrument to fight TOC was implemented at the "World Ministerial Conference on Transnational Organized Crime", in Italy, in November 1994. During the meeting, UNGA alarmed about the rapid growth and geographical extension of organized crime in its various forms, which undermined the development process and threatened human rights and fundamental freedoms[44].

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[42] Alexander J. Blenkinsopp, "Transnational organized crime, by Frank G. Madsen: London and New York, Routledge" (2010): 366-368.[last access 25 November 2023] https://doi.org/10.1080/17440572.2010.490704

[43] Alison Jamieson, "Transnational organized crime: A European perspective." *Terrorism and Beyond (RLE: Terrorism & Insurgency).* Routledge, 2015. 377-386. [last access 26 November 2023] https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781315697154-5

[44] Phil. Williams, "Crime, illicit markets, and money laundering." *Managing global issues: Lessons learned*-37(2001):234-238.[last-access-2-November-2023]
https://carnegieendowment.org/pdf/files/mgi-ch3.pdf

Even though, at the end of the meeting, organized crime didn't find a shared definition, some characteristics typical of the phenomenon were defined. These included: group organization to commit crime; hierarchical links between members; violence, intimidation and corruption as means of profits and control; laundering of illicit proceeds; potential for expansion into any new activities and beyond national borders; cooperation with other transnational criminal groups[45]. After Naples conference, UNODC (UN Office on Drugs and Crime) was created in 1997 and, in 2002, the "International Drug Control Program" and the "Prevention and Criminal Justice Division" were also implemented[46.] The main activities of UNODC are based on: data gathering; normative work to assist states in ratification and implementation of international treaties and to develop domestic legislation and national monitoring bodies; and capacity building projects to empower staff[47]. In 2003, UNGA adopted the "Convention against Transnational and Organized Crime" (UNTOC), also known as Palermo Convention. According to this document, an organized criminal group is composed by three or more individuals who commit crimes or offences, directly or indirectly, earning financial or other material profits (Art.2). Moreover, organized crime is considered transnational if it respects several conditions, such as: crimes are committed in more than one country or planned in a country and committed in others or involve criminal groups of different states (Art.3)[48]. It is a multidisciplinary instrument because it goes beyond the areas of international criminal cooperation related to law-enforcement, towards

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[45] Dimitri Vlassis, "The global situation of transnational organized crime, the decision of the international community to develop an international convention and the negotiation process." *Annual Report for 2000 and Resource Material Series No* 59 (2000): 73-8.[last access 24 November 2023] https://unafei.or.jp/publications/pdf/RS_No59/No59_00

[46] Frank G. Madsen, "United Nations vs transnational organized crime: a glimpse of the future?." *Journal of Financial Crime* 26.2 (2019): 597-606.[last access 23 November 2023] https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108

[47] Craig N. Murphy, "The emergence of global governance." *International organization and global governance*. Routledge, (2023): 23-34.

[48] UNODC ''The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime'' . (2004):5-6. [last access 23 November] https://www.unodc.org/documents/

other types of collaborative activities, as witness protection programmes and civil society involvement[49]. Three Protocols followed UNTOC; first, the "Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons", especially women and children; second, the "Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by land, Sea and Air"; finally the "Protocol against illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms and ammunitions"[50]. Even though the Convention can be considered as a big step forward in addressing TOC, some problems arise from the definition proposed in the act. The first issue is that there are crimes that are transnational but not organized, and likewise crimes which are organized but not transnational[51]. A second concern is about the actors of TOC, considered as a set of non-state actors bound in cohesive units and identifiable as a criminal organization, and this can be problematic because it doesn't include different other models of organizations, formed by individuals whose interactions are fluid or even ad hoc for a specific aim[52]. A last problem is related to the changing nature of basic structure and criminal activities according to the crime being committed[53]. For instance, the network of relationship required in cocaine trade is significantly different from that employed in arms trafficking because, in the first case, the operation involves many actors who contribute in the production, transport and sale of the product; while in

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[49] Fiona Rebecca Livey, *International legal framework for combating transnational organised crime*. Diss. University of Glasgow, (2017):15-35. [last access 23 November 2023]https://eleanor.lib.gla.ac.uk/record=b3261352

[50]Idem n.48 :p. 56

[51] Allan Castle, *Transnational organized crime and international security*. Vancouver: Institute of International Relations, University of British Columbia, (1997). [last access 23 November 2023] https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003266365-4

[52]Oded Löwenheim, "Transnational Criminal Organizations and Security: the case against inflating the threat." *International Journal* 57.4 (2002): 513-536.[last access 30 November 2023] https://doi.org/10.2307/40203690

[53] Phil Williams and Ernesto U. Savona. "Problems and dangers posed by organized transnational crime in the various regions of the world." *Transnational Organized Crime* 1.3 (1995): 1-42 .[last access 30 November 2023] https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9780203044315

the second the clients are nation-states and the problem of detection is less relevant for organizations.

Other International Organizations have sought to address the threat posed by Organized Crime. The first international legal instrument was introduced by EU in the "Joint Action 733" in 1998[54]. The document described TOC as a serious offence committed through the participation in a criminal organization, but it left a sense of ambiguity around the term with no precise criteria of identification[55]. In 2008, EU adopted the "Framework Decision on the Fight against organized crime", aiming at update the Joint Action, according to UNTOC definition[56]. By the way, criminal provisions of member states have not attained the expected harmonisation because, after 2008, no further legislation has been proposed by EU in order to empower a common strategy on the issue. An effective Directive was introduced only in 2014, which provided the direct confiscation of proceeds of crime(that is any economic advantage derived from a criminal offence)[57], as a way to weaken the criminal organization's activities. Even though the Directive is designed as a powerful instrument, the implementation remained in the will of states parties,

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[54]Decision, Framework. "council framework decision 2004/757." *the Official Journal of the European Union* 50 (2004).[last access 30 November 2023] https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/system/files/attachments/10502/council-decision-2004-757.pdf

[55]Gilles Favarel-Garrigues,. "La criminalité organisée transnationale: un concept à enterrer?." *L'Économie politique* 3 (2002): 8-21..[last access 30 November 2023] https://www.cairn.info/revue-l-economie-politique-2002-3-page-8.htm

[56] Giorgia Bonfanti, "La disciplina penale in tema di terrorismo internazionale tra esigenze di repressione e rispetto dei diritto fondamentali.": 3-15 (2011).[last access 30 November 2023] https://tesi.luiss.it/6574/

[57] European Commission. "Directive 2014/40/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 3 April 2014 on the approximation of the laws, regulations and administrative provisions of the Member States" *Off J Eur Union* 127 (2014): 1-38. [last access 30 November 2023] https://publicatt.unicatt.it/handle/10807/47872

which failed to give it effects in domestic law[58]. What stands out is that both UN and EU instruments lack of a specific definition and of the effective power to impose law enforcement and policies implementation by states and, therefore, to combat the issue of TOC in an integrated and strong way. Moreover, neither of these instruments contain a gender-perspective or specific provisions related to women conditions and activities. Indeed, even the UN Trafficking Protocol, that specifically addresses women, looks at them in a state-centred, paternalistic way, using a language that limit women's roles to mothers and wives and that requires states to protect "their subordinate'' status without women involvement in any decisions affecting them[59].

By the way, an important progress has been made by UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in "Resolution 26/3" in 2017, that stresses the importance of considering gender in prevention of, and fight against TOC[60]. It recognises that understanding the distinct roles and impacts of gender in criminal networks is necessary for developing strategies. At regional level, an advancement on the theme has been made in 2020 in "Tirana Declaration on Strengthening Cooperation in Countering Transnational Organized Crime" by OSCE[61]. Member states are required to co-operate with relevant stakeholders to develop comprehensive responses against TOC. Among the strategies proposed by the Declaration, essential is to improve human rights education and to develop empowerment programmes that consider the particular needs of women and men.

[58] Idem n. 49: 25-38

[59] Carmen Artigas, "Organized crime as a serious form of violation of human rights: the Protocol to Prevent, Supress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children." *(* 2004): 32-48 [last access 23 November]
https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/6697/S0310675_en.pdf

[60] UNODC, "CCPCJ Resolution 26/3 on Mainstreaming a gender perspective into crime prevention and criminal justice policies and programmes and into efforts to prevent and combat transnational organized"(Vienna2017):45-47.[last-access-23.November-2023]
https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CCPCJ/CCPCJ_ Sessions

[61] OSCE, "Ministerial Council Declaration on Strengthening Co-operation in Countering Transnational Organized Crime" (Tirana, 2020). [last access 2 December 2023]
https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/e/5/479768.pdf

Even though these documents represent an advancement in the recognition of the necessity to include women and a gender view on the issue of TOC, legally binding acts do not yet exist at international level and states are lacking in the implementation of the strategies they agreed in international fora.

1.4 TOC and women's human rights violation

"Gender mainstreaming" also implies to consider what is the specific impact of organized crime on women's human rights violation. Even though women can acquire dominant roles in criminal organizations, the structure of these groups are often dominated by gender stereotypes, masculinity and patriarchal structures, which perceive women as wives and caregivers devoted to their husband or fathers, and, as a consequence of their relations, devoted to the criminal organization to which they belong. In all organizations, they perform two mainly roles. Firstly, they are viewed as a valuable piece of property, the symbol of their husbands wealth and power, through their appearance, that is expected to be always perfect and sumptuous. Secondly, their task as mothers, whose aim is to teach children values and codes of the association[62]. Also for this reason, they can be defined as the moral reference point of the family, which is the most fundamental value in criminal groups. For instance, marriages between different mafia families are aimed at creating 'profitable alliances' and women are used as trading goods and are forced to marry men they have never seen before[63].Even though women are active participants in all activities of the criminal groups, especially in the last decades, this doesn't mean that they are perceived as equal to men. They can reach leadership positions, but they are not expected to engage in acts of violence or to commit

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[62] Clare Longrigg, "Women in organized crime in the United States." *Women and the Mafia*. New York, NY: Springer New York, (2007). 235-282.[last access 24 November 2023] https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-36542-8_16

[63] Letizia Paoli, *Mafia brotherhoods: Organized crime, Italian style*. Oxford University Press: 33-36 (2008).[Last access 24 November 2023] https://books.google.com/books

murders[64]. They demonstrate their power through intelligence and cunning, whilst strength is not a quality they are required, unlike men bosses. Even though there are few women who participate to acts of violence, they are considered masculine, with trait attributable to men. Therefore, violence exerted by women is defined by sociologists as an "outside framework" violence, which repress female violence and deny its existence[65].Moreover, women kinship with clan leaders contributes to the closeness between them and power. Their roles are taken into account by other affiliates if they are already part of criminal families, as daughters, sisters or wives of men bosses, who give women an established position in that association. For instance, in mafia clans, men become members after a ceremony, while women are directly part of the group because of their personal relations with male members[66]. Consequently, if they assume a significant operational power, this is often considered as delegated and temporary, and lasts as long as another man, member of her family, regain that power[67]. Another important issue to consider is the sexual and emotional violence in the context of women recruitment in organizations. A study by UK National Crime Agency in 2019 shows that vulnerable women are more targeted by male offenders, who create the impression of a romantic relationship to exploit women and young girls[68]. These patterns especially characterize cases of trafficking in human beings, referred to as ''lover-boy'' method, where the traffickers lure girls into sexual exploitation, catching them

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[64] Monica Massari, , and Cataldo Motta. "Women in the Sacra Corona Unita." *Women and the Mafia.* New York, NY: Springer New York, (2007). 53-66.[last access 23 November 2023] https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-36542-8_5

[65]Felia Allum, and Irene Marchi, "Analyzing the role of women in Italian mafias: the case of the Neapolitan Camorra." *Qualitative Sociology* 41 (2018): 361-380.[last access 12 December 2023]: https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11133-018-9389-8

[66] Tiziano Peccia, "Transgressions de genre dans les organisations mafieuses en Italie." *Les cahiers du CEDREF. Centre d'enseignement, d'études et de recherches pour les études féministes* 24 (2020): 91-117.[last access 12 December 2023] https://journals.openedition.org/cedref/1331

[67] Maria Licciardi, "The Role of Women in the Italian Mafia (2020): 32-45[last access 12 December 2023] https://nuitalian.org/2022/12/15/the-role-of-women-in-the-italian-mafia/

[68] Marcin Konieczny, "Redefinition of War and the Weapons of Mass Destruction in the 21st Century." *De Securitate et Defensione. O Bezpieczeństwie i Obronności* 8.2 (2022): 133-144. [last access 15 December 2023] https://www. nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/news/operation-venetic

through false love promise. In addition, women inside criminal groups continue to be subject to different forms of victimization, which include acts of gender violence such as sexual slavery, domestic violence and forced marriage. For instance, in Central America, they can be subjected to extreme violence for rejecting advances of gang leaders and if they become part of the gang, their bodies and relationships are owned by the group and they completely lose their sexual autonomy[69]. Another example of extreme forms of violence is in Mexico, where, between 2006 and 2021, almost 43 thousands women were killed, according to National Public Security System[70]. This rise in femicides and female homicides are an indirect effect of the confrontation between criminal organizations and state security forces. The mechanisms behind these killings are not completely clear, but the clash between these two groups has increased the circulation of weapons and the lethality of violence has especially targeted women[71]. For Julia Zulver, women and their bodies are strategically targeted with violence as a way to control communities and, in places where the violence is high, also gender violence increases[72].

Structural factors of gender discrimination, which are common not only in organizations but in many countries' institutions and social groups, increase the vulnerability of women in contexts of crisis and violence, leading to higher risk of gender exploitation or direct involvement to criminal activities, as a way to escape poverty and abuse. Data collected by UNODOC show that women and girls are the

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[69] Adam M Watkins, and Chris Melde. "Gangs, gender, and involvement in crime, victimization, and exposure to violence." *Journal of criminal justice* 57 (2018): 11-25.[last access 13 December 2023] https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2018.02.005

[70] Amy Dunckel Graglia, "Finding mobility: women negotiating fear and violence in Mexico City's public transit system." *Gender, Place & Culture* 23.5 (2016): 624-640.[last access 13 December 2023] https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0966369X.2015.1034240

[71] G. Fondevila& R. Meneses-Reyes, "Lethal violence, childhood, and gender in Mexico City". *International criminal justice review*, *29*(1), (2019): 33-47. [last access 14 December 2023] https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2015.1034240

[72] Julia Margaret Zulver, "Complex gendered agency in Mexico: how women negotiate hierarchies of fear to search for the disappeared." *European Journal of Politics and Gender* 1.aop (2023): 1-17.[last access 14 December 2023]

https://bristoluniversitypressdigital.com/view/journals/ejpg/aop/article-10.1332-2515

majority of victims of human trafficking and 30% of total trafficking involves female offenders that are often victims of traffickers, who use them as shields from prosecution[73]. Many of these women continue to be exploited, even though they have command powers. Other than being victims of perpetrators, women also suffer from a lack of gender-based approach by courts. Women victims-perpetrators of traffic face many difficulties in demonstrating they are also victim of abuses and this results in a failure from the courts to recognise the ''forced criminality'' as a form of exploitation and, as a consequence, women are forced to live the phenomenon of double-victimization[74]. The same happens to women who decide to become justice collaborators. In this case women are particularly vulnerable because they decide to escape from criminal contests, often denied by their own family, bringing with them nothing other than their children. The risk suffered by these women is to be judged and abused by the authorities who are supposed to protect them, but instead try to exploit their trauma and vulnerability position. The justice system's need to view people as either victims or criminals, leaves little space for understanding how trauma and victimisation influence pathways into criminality[75]. Another violation operated by courts is related to the fact that during women process, sexual violence and clandestine abortions are almost unaddressed and no rights of sexual self-determinations are considered[76]. This deficit is indicative of the lack of a gender perspective in legal systems and is even more

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[73] UNODOC, ''Female victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation as defendants''(2003): 23-32[last access 15 December 2023] https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/crime/UN_BriefFem_251121.pdf

[74] Edison Lanza,. "Protesta y derechos humanos." *Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression. Protest and human rights.(OAS. Official records* (2019):23-24. .[last access 26 November 2023] http://fronteraysociedad.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/ProtestayDerechosHumanos.pdf

[75] Angela P. Harris, "Gender, violence, race, and criminal justice." *Stan. L. Rev.* 52 (1999): 777.[last access 26 November 2023] https://heinonline.org/hol-cgi-bin/get_pdf

[76] Cóbar Del Valle, Dora Ruth. "La situación de los derechos humanos en Guatemala'' (1998): 223-234.[last access 26 November 2023] https://ipn.usac.edu.gt/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/IPN-RD-124.pdf#page=36

serious in those crimes, as human trafficking, that disproportionally affect women. In addition to this, women are more prone to be subject to sexual violence by public authorities during and after arrests[77]. By the way, these sex-related misconduct have been described as hidden offences, as they are unreported and difficult to demonstrate.

In general, the problem of a lack of gender-disaggregated data on TOC activities and motives is a limit to overcome in order to find evidence necessary to inform better responses. This is fundamental to make academics, policymakers and practitioners move beyond seeing women as victims and men as perpetrators, and ensure they are considering the gender dynamics that contribute to both victimhood and offending[78].

1.5 The implication of a lack of gender-perspective in laws and policies

Even though progresses have been made over the course of years in providing legal frameworks to address the issue of TOC, no gender implications have been effectively implemented by national and international authorities. "Gender-blind assumptions"[79]have prevailed in national and international acts, especially the ideas that: men are perpetrators and rarely victims; women perpetrators are anomalies or passive participants; only certain crimes affect women[80]. The consequences have been policies that deny not only equal access to justice, but also equity in law and this has lead to an increase in the level of criminality and violence. To effectively

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[77]Philip Matthew Stinson, et al. "Police sexual misconduct: A national scale study of arrested officers." *Criminal Justice Policy Review* 26.7 (2015): 665-690.[last access 27 November 2023] https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0887403414526231

[78] Richard B. Felson, *Violence & gender reexamined*. Vol. 21. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, (2002): 56-58.[last access 23 November 2023] https://www.researchgate.net/profile/GailRobinson2/publication/247713407_Violence_and_Gender_Reexamined

[80] Idem n.72 :p.34

prevent and combat the phenomenon, a holistic understanding is required and this is possible only if policymakers and legislators adopt a gender-responsive approach and mainstream gender into policies to combat TOC, taking into account the different roles played by women as victims and perpetrators.[81] To this scope, UNODOC released the "Issues Paper on Organized Crime and Gender" in May 2022, focusing on "gender mainstreaming" in addressing TOC at global level[82]. The aim is to abandon the "one-size-fits-all" policy, towards more specific action plans, which consider the specificity of women experience[83]. This is also a matter of gender equality, that goes beyond the conventional spheres of protection and promotion of equal rights, to include the reduction of the risk that leads women to participate in criminal activities. For this reason is necessary to make gender considerations in relation to offences covered in UNTOC, especially their participation and their role in corruption and money-laundering activities[84]. Moreover, awareness of the existence of discriminatory criminal codes and procedures at national and international level has a negative impact on the treatment of women in the criminal justice system. Courts often ignore the contexts of sexual and gender-based violence lived by girls and show reluctance to take into accounts these elements as mitigating factors[85]. Biases may also lead to underestimate or overlook women's involvement in activities and, in judicial contexts, they are

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[81] UNODC "Education for Justice, University Module Series, Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, Module 9: Gender in the Criminal Justice System''()2019):24-43. [last access 24 November 2023]https://www.unodc.org/e4j/zh/crime-prevention-criminal-justice/module-9

[82] UNDOC "Issue Paper: organized Crime and gender" (2022):23-45. [last access 29 November 2023] https://sherloc.unodc.org/cld/uploads/pdf/Issue_Paper_Organized_Crime_and_Gender_1.pdf

[83]Paul L Simpson, Danika Hardiman, and Tony Butler, "Understanding the over-representation of lesbian or bisexual women in the Australian prisoner population." *Current Issues in Criminal Justice* 31.3   (2019):   365-377.[last   access   28   November   2023] https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10345329.2019.1668339

[84] Police,UN. "United Nations Police Gender Toolkit: Standardised Best Practices on Gender Mainstreaming   in   Peacekeeping''   (2015):34-56.   [last   access   29   November   2023] https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters

[85] L. L. P. Linklaters, "Women who kill in response to domestic violence: How do criminal justice systems respond." (2016): 32. [last access 29 November 2023] https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/confronting-domestic-violence-guide-criminal-justice-agencies

usually depicted as weak. The way in which they are described by media and press can also influence the judgement. Another area that should be included in a gender perspective sense is related to the protection and assistance for women witnesses or cooperating with authorities. This because gender roles may play crucial factors in women's decision to collaborate, as they may be prevented by inappropriate policies adopted by authorities, which lead to double-victimization of already vulnerable subjects. Recognition of protection and long- term support to victims is fundamental to push them to cooperate with authorities[86]. Evidences show that in Italy only 4% of state witnesses are women[87]. This is due to the lack of gender-inclusive exit programmes and trained personnel by public institutions. Finally, an effective gender-responsive crime prevention strategy is necessary for the development of crime-prevention programmes and activities. This require a multi-stakeholder approach through a collaboration between justice system and other sectors, to address the root causes of violence and human rights abuses, included gender-discrimination.[88]

Other important tools and strategies for inclusive responses in combating TOC are proposed by OSCE in 2023 report. Among them, should be underlined: gender-disaggregated data gathering; elimination of gender biases in considering the role played by women; identification of gender-specific vulnerabilities and drivers; and investment in building gender-sensitive capacity in areas such as prevention-prosecution capacity and exit routes[89].

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[86] Idem n. 81

[87] Pasquale Peluso, "Prevenire l'infiltrazione della criminalità organizzata nell'economia legale: il supporto degli strumenti offerti da Society 5.0 alla luce degli effetti della pandemia da Covid-19." *Rivista Italiana di Conflittolgia* 46 (2023):90-106. [last access 29 November 2023] https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&profile=ehost&scope=site&authtype=crawler&jrnl=19711913

[88] Fatjona Mejdini , Kristina Amerhauser, "Gender And Organized Crime." (2022): 23-34.[last access 1 December 2023] https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/GMFA-Gender-and-Organized-Crime-WEB.pdf

[89] Idem note 41:32

What is evident from these documents is that "gender mainstreaming" cannot be separated from the implementation of laws and policies on TOC, but they must be an integral part of the effort to eradicate the phenomenon globally.

1.6 The multicultural feminist approach as analytical framework

As previously seen, fundamental steps towards an integrated comprehension of gender in criminal organization requires both better gender-disaggregating data gathering, and also the implementation of new laws policies based on the specificity of women conditions and rights. By the way, it is also necessary to reconsider a new theoretical approach from which analyse the phenomenon of transnational organizations under a lens focused on women peculiarities. In fact, the idea of hegemonic gender roles (men as criminals and women as victims and households) is defined by dominant Western culture[90]. As a response, multicultural feminism focuses on the connected structures of domination such as race, class and gender, to understand how they interact in determine women conditions in a specific context. The theory was developed during 1980s by a group of feminist that criticised the traditional feminism approach, which saw women as an homogenous group, with the same needs and requests. At the end of 1990s the approach was also applied to criminal studies and particularly to criminal organizations[91]. According to researchers of this doctrine there are different types of femininity involved in a wide range of criminal markets: from human trafficking, to drug selling, to girls in delinquent gangs. The result is that female actions can be understood only in the context of gendered environment. Moreover, they argue that the concept of "femininity'' and '"masculinity'', and the criminal justice approaches to "male''

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[90] Barbara L Andersen, and Jill M. Cyranowski, "Women's sexual self-schema." *Journal of personality and social psychology* 67.6 (1994): 1079. [last access 2 December 2023] https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.67.6.1079

[91] Susan E Barrett, et al. "Multicultural feminist therapy: Theory in context." *The Foundation and Future of Feminist Therapy*. Routledge, (2013). 27-61. [last access 2 December 2023] https://api.taylorfrancis.com/content/chapters/edit/download?identifierName=doi&identifierValue=10.4324/9780203047125-4

and "female" criminality are not universal but time and culture specific, and, for this reason, they have to be considered in analysing women involvement in crime[92]. For instance, Tchambuli women typically played western masculine roles in society and men exhibited many feminine behaviours[93]. Another example is in West African culture, where the image of a submissive woman doesn't reflect female figure in this society and, indeed, they occupy relevant leadership roles in economic, political, social sectors and, as a consequence, even in criminal groups. On the other hand, Albanian women have more supportive functions, rather than being independent businessmen and they often work in shadows of their husbands[94]. Influences on gender roles comes from societal constructions, which determine the type of activities for both genders in various contexts. Multicultural feminism recognizes women's "special vulnerability'' or "special strength" in relation to various crimes and doesn't consider some crimes specifically "masculine'' because the concept is relative[95]. Finally, for multicultural feminists, differences in norms according to the environment lead to different experiences, interests and wants, that affect the position women hold in criminal activities. So it is necessary to analyse the cultural-historic conditions that lead to certain decisions.

In the next chapter different transnational criminal organizations active in different part of the world will be investigated on a gender perspective and women's roles will be examined, taking into consideration not only the specific organizations structure, but also the wider social and cultural context, which plays a role in defining female criminal activities.

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[92] H. R Dammer, E. Fairchild, and J. S. Albanese, "Comparative criminal justice systems: Thompson Wadsworth." (2006):345-355[last access 2 December 2023] https://books.google.com

[93] Lisa Maher, *Sexed work: Gender, race, and resistance in a Brooklyn drug market*. Oxford University Press, (1997):234-236[last access 2 December 2023] https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198264958.001.0001

[94] Amado Philip De Andres, "West Africa under attack: drugs, organized crime and terrorism as the new threats to global security." Revista Unisci 16 (2008): 203-227.[last access 3 December 2023] https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/767/76701612.pdf

[95] Jody Miller, "Up it up: Gender and the accomplishment of street robbery." *Criminology* 36.1 (1998): 37-66.[last access 3 December 2023] https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.1998.tb01239.x

CHAPTER II

WOMEN'S ROLE IN TRANSNATIONAL CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

2.1 The main features of transnational criminal organizations around the world

UNTOC does not contain a precise definition of "transnational organized crime", nor does it lists the types of crimes that might constitute it. The aim of this vagueness is to allow for a broader applicability of the UNTOC to new types of crime that emerge constantly as global, regional and local conditions of change over time. However, in art. 2 of UNTOC, some common features of organized crime are listed: a group of three or more persons that is not randomly formed; existing for a period of time; acting in concert with the aim of committing at least one serious crime; in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or material benefit[96]. The concept of "serious crime'' was discussed at length because states struggled to find an agreement. Finally, it was defined as "a conduct punishable with a maximum deprivation of liberty for at least four years or a more serious penalty"[97]. The Convention also includes some of the activities that can be considered as serious crimes, such as: money laundering, corruption and obstruction of justice. UNTOC covers only transnational crimes, as specified in art. 3. These include: offences committed in more than one state; committed in a state but planned in another; committed in one state by a group operating in another; committed in one state with effects in another[98]. Therefore, an implied definition of TOC encompass all profit-motivated serious criminal activities with international implications. This broad definition considers the complexity of the issue and allows a wider international cooperation between states and international institutions. In fact, the nature of

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[96] UNODC. (2004). "The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime" ,art. 2[last access 4 December 2023] https://www.unodc.org/documents/middleeastandnorthafrica/organisedcrimE

[97] Idem n.95

[98] Idem n.95: art.3

criminal organization is very fluid and it adapts to the change of the context in which it operates and, for this reason, the vagueness of international definition is fundamental to treat new and emerging phenomena.

There is no single structure under which criminal groups operate and they can decide to change their configuration from one model to another over the course of time. Some typical organizational structures can be: top-down hierarchical based (defined by by rigid hierarchy and complex and defined structure, as Mafia –type organizations[99]); gangs (defined by Miller as self-formed associations of peers with a leadership and an internal organization, who act collectively to conduct illegal activities or control a territory[100]) ; network structures(based on fluid relation between flexible cells and no defined leadership[101]). Also, the typology of crimes they commit can vary a lot, even though some common characteristics are present in many organizations, such as: the attempt to gain influence in government, politics and commerce through legitimate and corrupt means; the primary goal of economic gain from legal and illegal investments, the attempt to exploit differences between countries to reach their objectives; violence or acts of intimidations implicit or explicit[102].Activities undertaken by groups have also changed a lot during the years and can cover different areas: from financial crimes(money laundering, counterfeiting, tax evasion) ; trafficking[103](of human beings for sexual or labour

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[99] Bill Blunden, and Violet Cheung, *Behold a pale farce: Cyberwar, threat inflation, & the malware industrial complex.* Trine Day, (2014):34. [last access 4 December 2023] https://books.google.com/books

[100] Walter Miller Benson, *Crime by youth gangs and groups in the United States.* Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, (1992): 380-385.[last access 4 December 2023] https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/156221NCJRS.pdf

[101] Joseph L. Albini, "Donald Cressey's contributions to the study of organized crime: an evaluation." *Crime & delinquency* 34.3 (1988): 338-354.[last access 4 December 2023] https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128788034003008

[102] Yurii Kramarenko, "Organized crime as a social system: characteristics and trends." *Scientific journal «Philosophy, Economics and Law Review». Volume 1 (1), (2021): 190 [*last access 5 December 2023] https: doi.org//10.31733/2786-491X-2021-104-116

[103] Andreas Schloenhardt,, "Organized crime and the business of migrant trafficking." *Crime, Law and Social Change* 32 (1999): 203-233.[last access 5 December 2023]

exploitation, organs, arms, drugs) ; political and economic corruption; to the most recent cybercrime(internet fraud; hacking, espionage, sabotage[104]).

Starting in 1970s, organized crime evolved in 1990s thanks to Globalisation processes of world economy, softer borders and new geopolitical climate. This led domestic organized crime groups, regional in scope and hierarchically structured, to global and transnational organizations, increasingly networked with other criminal groups from all over the world[105]. Network structure is today the most adopted by transnational criminal groups because it gives organizational flexibility, reduces the violence between groups in favour of more cooperation and provides greater efficiency. Consequently, this type of structure makes difficult to identify leaders and this allows organizations to suffer minor setbacks when key-figures are arrested or killed. In addition all units can utilize their complementary skills and finally it allows a more dynamic management, based on the purposes and not on the leader authority and imposed values[106]. Despite similarities, each organization is characterised by its own specific features, which are the product of the external socio-economic-cultural context and of its internal history and evolution.

All of these factors also have an important influence in the role that women can play in different groups around the world and this chapter's aim is to analyse these similarities and differences adopting a gender perspective approach.

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https://idp.springer.com/authorize/casa?redirect_uri=https://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A:1008340427104

[104]Phil Williams, "Organized crime and cybercrime: Synergies, trends, and responses." *Global Issues* 6.2 (2001): 22-26.[last access 5 December 2023] https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library

[105] Charles Tilly, "State formation as organized crime." *Bringing the state back in* (1985): 169-187.[last access 5 December 2023] https://www.jstor.org/stable/40971033

[106] Martin Bouchard , and Carlo Morselli, "Opportunistic structures of organized crime." *The Oxford handbook of organized crime* 1 (2014): 288-302.[last access 5 December 2023] https://books.google.com/books

2.2 Mexican Cartels

Mexican illegal drug business is dominated by cartels (large corporate-like organizations), which often operate in collusion with states and members of institutions and are in violent competitions with each others[107]. At the end of 1930s, thanks to increased agricultural production in Cullican Valley, illegal drug trafficking became a profitable business that in short time would have turned industrial and international. Many women played leading roles, taking control of drug production, distribution and commercialization[108]. For instance, in these years, Ignacia "La Nacha'' Jasso was the head of an important network of drug traffickers and she took control of the cities of El Paso and Ciudad Juarez in Northern Mexico after the death of her husband, the boss of the organization.

Since then, women participation in drug smuggling has increased exponentially, especially after the advent of large cartels in late 1980s[109]. This was related to the fact that women were much less suspected than men, especially during border controls. Then, according to feminist criminology perspective, the reason of the growing of female criminality is that women's liberalization in society is associated, for many of them, with economic marginalization and, as a consequence, to greater crime, especially in a context without infrastructural and social support by institutions[110]. However, if this explanation is true for low-level smugglers, more vulnerable and victimized in drug-trafficking, this cannot be said for middle and upper level offenders. Therefore, for them, drug crime is associated with gender

[107] Charles Bowden,. *Down by the river: Drugs, money, murder, and family*. Simon and Schuster, (2023): 324-345.[last access 5 December 2023] https://books.google.com/books

[108] Carey Elaine, "Mujeres de armas doradas: el narcotráfico en Norteamérica (1900- 1970)" (2010)¨ 379-403. [last access 6 December 2023] https://riudg.udg.mx/bitstream/20.500.12104

[109] Arias Montoya, Omar Luis. "Juan Carlos Ramírez-Pimienta. Cantar a los narcos. Voces y versos del narcocorrido." *Revista de Literaturas Populares. Año XI/número 2,* (2011) : 23-24. [last access 29 December 2023] http://ru.ffyl.unam.mx/jsp/bitstream/10391/3794/1/09

[110] Philippe Bourgois, I. *In search of respect: Selling crack in El Barrio*. No. 10. Cambridge university press, (2003):12. https://books.google.com/books

empowerment as a result of growing social and economic rights of women, due to modernization of Mexican society[111]. By the way, it can't be said that in Mexican cartels gender equality is reached. Indeed, female freedom in drug trafficking world is limited because the structural power remains in the hands of men and, in many cases, women are subordinated to male control[112]. As a consequence, having drug-based wealth and status doesn't translate into gender equality. Some exemptions are represented by high-level women smugglers, who become "drug lords'' thanks to their intelligence and ability to dominate a patriarchal world. A famous example is represented by Zulema, who in 1990s became the leader of cocaine and heroine smuggling in major Mexican cities and she obtained money, power and independence through her capacity to reach the highest bosses as "El Mexicano'', and to exploit their power for her aims. Contrary to standard interpretations of women's motivation for entry into drug smuggling, she was attracted to crime as an opportunity to evolve her career as a simple thief. She adopted a "macho-style" and she gained her acceptance in the male-dominated drug world, reaching the leadership of organization after the death of her lover, "El Mexicano". Although Zulema's case may seem extreme, there are other similar cases of powerful female drug lords, though they seldom appear in social science literature on drugs which emphasize women's victimization[113]. On the other hand, women at middle level of drug organizations, even if they can obtain wealth and status, are never independent from male power and generally perform gender in cultural boundaries and do not question the gender status quo[114]. What they can do is to manipulate

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[111] Gwen Hunnicutt, and Lisa M. Broidy, "Liberation and economic marginalization: A reformulation and test of competing models." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 41.2 (2004):130-155.[last-access-7-December-2023]

https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0022427803257306

[112] Tammy L Anderson, "Dimensions of women's power in the illicit drug economy." *Theoretical Criminology*-9.4(2005):371-400.[last-access-7-December2023]

https://doi.org/10.1177/1362480605057725

[113] Campbell, Howard. "Female drug smugglers on the US.-Mexico border: Gender, crime, and empowerment." *Anthropological Quarterly* (2008): 233-267. [last access 7 December 2023] https://www.jstor.org/stable/30052745

[114] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the subversion of indentity*. New York: routledge, (1990):334-335.[last access 7 December 2023] https://doi.org/10.1177/000169939503800

traditional roles as operational strategy: they can use their relations with male partners to conduct their business, but they remain dependent from them and they are often victims of sexual and domestic violence. For low level smugglers, also defined as "mules" , the situation is even worse, as they are the most vulnerable to gender oppression. Rather than challenging patriarchal gender stereotypes, they use them to their advantages: for instance, they can decide to use their body to corrupt agents at border; pregnant women or women with children may exaggerate maternal styles to convince officials to make them pass without being controlled[115]. By the way, they are at big risk of violence and sexual abuses by both authorities and other criminals and, contrary to men, a glass ceiling prevent them from moving up the ladder of drug industry[116]. A further category is represented by women who are not active in trafficking, but they are spouses, lovers, or have a family relation with male smugglers. In this case they are victim of "gender entrapment''[117] as they are indirectly involved into smuggling and negative consequences of it, even though they decide not to participate, but just because they have a dependent relation with a male member.

According to our analytical framework of analysis, the multicultural feminist approach, it is fundamental to understand the context in which women smugglers undertake their actions and this can be done by assessing women equality rate both in Mexican public sphere and in the widespread idea "Narco- culture''[118]. For what concerns the institutional field, data show that in Mexico, violence against women is perpetrated by public authorities in name of the fight against drug cartels. Indeed, in 2019, the Mexican government passed a law on the use of force that allowed

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[115] Idem n.115

[116] Kelly Fernández-, Patricia María, *For we are sold, I and my people: Women and industry in Mexico's frontier*. Sunny Press,(1983): 45-46.[last access 7 December 2023] https://books.google.com/books

[117] Richie, Beth. *Compelled to crime: The gender entrapment of battered, black women*. Routledge, (2018):320-321.[last-access-7-December-2023] https://api.taylorfrancis.com/content/books/mono/download

[118] Franco Marisol Díaz, "Women and the changing structure of drug trafficking in Mexico." *Voices of-Mexico*(2018):34-35.[last-access-7-December-2023] https://ru.micisan.unam.mx/bitstream/handle/123456789

lethal force as long as it was used as a last resort to protect life[119]. However, the law didn't include the necessity to protect third parties and this caused a large number of civilian death (almost 200 between 2019 and 2020)[120] .This policy also led to direct and indirect forms of violence against women. Direct violence is exercised in many forms. For instance, because there isn't necessity for a warrant, military forces can arrest women for any reasons and many are captured during massive street sweeps in poor communities, or if they are in relation with suspected male drug traffickers. Women are more likely than men to be imprisoned for drug offences, and statistic shows that 80% of girls in prison are accused of drug crimes, compared to 57% of men[121]. Moreover, women in Mexico are more likely to be incarcerated without a fair judicial process; they risk to experience double-victimization if they decide to denounce a violence; and security forces threaten them from reporting violence committed by authorities, especially sexual violence[122]. Indirect violence, instead, is related to a lack of state legislation on violence against women. Indeed, there are government campaigns that frame that domestic violence is a private issue and there is no definition of femicide. Then, state authorities have increased the number of laws and policies that allocate more power and economic resources to military forces; have suppressed funds on social policies; and blocked researches on violence against women[123].

But violence is not only a result of direct contact with security forces, but also an overall militarized approach to fight the war on drug. Therefore, the increased use

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[119] Elaine Carey,. Women drug traffickers: mules, bosses, and organized crime. UNM Press, (2014): 45-46.[last access 7 December 2023] https://books.google.com/books

[120] S Speed, States of violence: Indigenous women migrants in the era of neoliberal multicriminalism. *Critique of Anthropology*, (2016): *36*(3): 280-301.

[121] Evelyn Salinas, "The Mexican drug war's collateral damages on women." *Latinoamericano ELA*(2015):35.[last-access-8-Decembe-2023] http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/01/the-women-of-mexicos-drugwar/272528

[122] Daniel Weisz Argomedo, *The Mexican War on Women*. Irvine, (2023): 103-110.[last access 9 December 2023] https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8vk0j5f7

[123] Alejandro Anaya Muñoz, "Explaining high levels of transnational pressure over Mexico: The case of the disappearances and killings of women in Ciudad Juárez." *The International Journal of Human Rights* 15.3 (2011): 339-358.[last access 9 December 2023]

of the military to combat cartels has led to the increased public violence against women. According to national reports, since the initiation of militarized national security strategy, homicides in the public sphere have overtaken the ones in private space[124]. The most striking example of this phenomenon can be represented by Ciudad Juarez, a city in Northern Mexico where, between 1993 and 2005, more than 370 women were killed. These deaths, which accounted for the 31% of the murders of women in the city, were classified as systemic sexual femicide[125].

On the other side, it is fundamental to understand women perception in "narco-culture". This term refers to the cultural complex referred to Mexican cartels which controls business operations of narcotic trafficking and it is related to media representation of cartels in social context. "Narco –culture'' is dominated by concepts as: "machismo", which defines the man as a symbol of aggression and violence[126] ; "hypermasculinity", that identifies the most negative traits of mexican male masculinity[127]; and other misogynous conceptions which lead to devaluation of women and their attributes[128]. In this field, women are perceived as decorative objects of exhibition, despite of their roles as leaders, producers or distributors. They are pressured to comply with certain stereotypes of beauty in order to show the power of their men. This make even more difficult for women to reach higher

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[124] Christopher Conway, "Sisters at War: Mexican Women's Poetry and the US-Mexican War." *Latin American Research Review* 47.1 (2012): 3-15.[last access 9 December 2023] https://doi:10.1353/lar.2012.0031

[125] Julia Monárrez Fragoso, "An analysis of femicide in Ciudad Juárez: 1993–2007." *Strengthening understanding of femicide: Using research to galvanize action and accountability* (2008): 78-83.[last access 10 December 2023] https://www.academia.edu/download/49070170

[126] Rolando Diaz Loving, "Site under construction: An ethnopsychological representation of the Mexican self concept." *Revista Interamericana de Psicología/Interamerican Journal of Psychology*- 39.2(2005):247-252.[last-access-10-December-2023] https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/284/28439208.pdf

[127] Jack S Kahn, *An introduction to masculinities*. John Wiley & Sons, (2009):35.[last access 10 December 2023] https://books.google.com/books

[128] Shaylih Muehlmann, *When I wear my alligator boots: narco-culture in the US Mexico borderlands*. Vol. 33. Univ of California Press, (2013):98-99. [last access 10 December 2023] https://books.google.com/books

roles without their appearance being sexualized[129]. For this reason, many of them exploit their appearance as an instrument to reach higher position that would otherwise be precluded. According to this culture, one of the primary characteristics of women who get involved in drug trafficking world, especially at middle and high level, is that their credential derive from kinship lines rather than from their direct association with criminal groups. Many of them are therefore wives or daughters of cartels members. A way to attract attention of high bosses is through the participation to beauty contests, which highlights how beauty and cartels are connected[130] and how physical attributes allow women to reach a good social position and meet their economic needs. In these contests, also the plastic surgery is a very common form of taxation of man over a woman's body, who perceive herself as inappropriate and decides to change her attributes for a better chance to achieve what she wants[131]. Due to this narco-culture, there is a widespread tendency of upper-class college girls to offer their sexual services on the ideal to obtain luxuries and high lifestyle. By the way, there are few studies on this phenomenon, which would need further investigation[132].

To conclude, from a gender perspective, in the context of economic and social depravation of Mexico, the only way to acquire a social status, both for men and women, is through criminality. Moreover, the action performed by members of cartels are determined by roles and identities assigned by a society that perceives the violence as a masculine identity value[133].

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[129] Nashaly Ruíz-González, *Mi Rey, El Narco: Masculinity in Mexico's Narco Culture*. Diss. The University of North Carolina at Charlotte, (2019):23.[last access   10 December 2023] https://ninercommons.charlotte.edu/

[130] Arturo Santamaría, "Las jefas del narco. El ascenso de las mujeres al crimen organizado." *Gender and Deviance in Latin America* (2012): 28.[last access 10 December 2023] https://www.crolar.org/index.php

[131]Rebecca Robinson, and Pablo Páramo, "Juvenile prostitution and community rehabilitation: An exploratory analysis of beliefs and values." *Journal of community & applied social psychology* 17.3 (2007): 237-247.[last access 11 December 2023] https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.914

[132] Idem n. 130: 147.

[133] Ben Penglase, "The owner of the hill: Masculinity and drug-trafficking in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil." *The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 15.2 (2010): 317-337.[last

What is striking is that society and culture have fuelled this climate of drug trafficking and criminality[134]. For this reason, state actions should focus on trying to discourage gender stereotypes and create equal opportunities for all social classes with a special focus on gender and other types of intersectional discriminations. Only in this way people would be discouraged in participating in illegal activities and would consciously decide to reach their personal fulfilment, which would benefit all society.

2.3 Albanian criminal organizations

Albanian mafia is an umbrella term used to identify criminal organizations based in Albania or composed by ethnic Albanians. These groups can be considered as transnational criminal organizations because they operate across national boundaries, as they are active in Europe, North and South America, Middle East and Asia[135]. They manage different criminal enterprises, including: trafficking in drugs, arms and humans and they are specially active in cocaine market, thanks to their close relation with 'Ndrangheta of Calabria[136].

Albanian organized crime groups are almost exclusive male. Indeed, statistics show that women constitute between 4 and 7 % of members[137]. There are not significant cases of women in leader positions or having relevant roles at the same level as

access 12 December 2023] https://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1935-4940.2010.01088

[134] Michael G. Peletz, "Neither reasonable nor responsible: contrasting representations of masculinity in society." *Cultural Anthropology* 9.2 (1994): 135-178.[last access 12 December 2023] https://www.jstor.org/stable/656238

[135] P. Ghosh, "Tip of the iceberg: French Police arrest Albanian heroin traffickers, but Balkan criminal gangs tighten grip across Europe." *International Business Times* (2012): 12.[last access 12 December 2023] https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09537287.2016.1185188

[136] Francesco Strazzari, "Between ethnic collision and mafia collusion: The "Balkan route" to state-making." *Shadow Globalization, Ethnic Conflicts and New Wars*. Routledge, (2002). 152-174.[last access 12 December 2023] http://ndl.ethernet.edu.et/bitstream/123456789/29188/1/75

[137] Siân Herbert, "Social Norms, Gender, and Serious and Organised Crime in Albania and Kosovo." (2022): 146[last-acces-13 December -2023] https://www.sddirect.org.uk/media/2076/soc-and-vawg-factsheet.pd

men. On the contrary, women have been often identified as victims of human trafficking or as wives of male offenders. Although the involvement in crime is minimal, compared to other transnational criminal groups, there is a slight increase in female engagement in homicides, thefts, counterfeiting, drug trafficking and kidnapping of children for sale or exploitation. By the way, in most of these cases women are just accomplices and not the main perpetrators[138].What can be highlighted from judicial cases is that Albanian female criminality has not evolved during the past several decades as the method used by male Albanian affiliates to recruit women associates, which is through "emotional bonds'', combined with violence and threats [139]. Women's role in organization remains peripheral as they act as supporters of their husbands and also, Albanian police agencies indicate that is typical for Albanian male offenders to have mistress from other Slavic ethnicities who help them, while being married to ethnic Albanian women who are taking care of their children[140].

Taking into account the multicultural feminist approach, cultural norms are essential in determining why women participation in Albania is not rising as in other criminal organizations and why they cannot reach important roles in the hierarchic structure. A gender analysis of Albania in 2021 found that patriarchal norms, roles and behaviours are still relevant in the division of male and female tasks. In fact, data on the socio-economic gender gap revealed that women: are more likely to be unemployed or work in informal sectors; have less rights; and are underrepresented

[138] F. Paluca-Baley, "Women in organized crime in Albania." *Women and the Mafia: female roles in organized crime structures. Springer, NY* (2003). [last access 13 December 2023] https://doi.org/10.1177/00208728060570

[139] Alexis A Aronowitz,. *Human trafficking, human misery: The global trade in human beings.* Bloomsbury Publishing USA, (2009).[last access 14 December 2023] https://books.google.com/books

[140] Dina Siegel, and Sylvia De Blank, "Women who traffic women: the role of women in human trafficking networks–Dutch cases." *Global Crime* 11.4 (2010): 436-447.[last access 14 December 2023] https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17440572.2010.519528

in politics[141]. According to ancient Albanian moral codes, they are also perceived as property of men after marriage, sexualized and objectified. As a consequence, also in "organised crime culture'' men have to gain power, status and money to provide for their families, while women are linked to organisation through romantic relations with its members[142]. Nevertheless, women's role may be changing as women's empowerment in the region progresses and as their role in society evolves. Data gathered in 2020 show that they are more involved in criminal activities, even if their participation is limited to collaboration and they do not coordinate the operations[143]. Another consequence related to gender roles is that women are more prone to exploitation and trafficking, especially if this is combined to other vulnerabilities factors such as: economic scarcity, health problems and family violence. While prostitution in the Balkans region was almost non existent in 80s, it grew fast in 90s, promoted by criminal organizations, that nowadays control all the market of transit and sexual exploitation. The number of Albanian women involved as prostitutes has been estimated to be as high as 30 thousands and the majority of them are minors between 13 and 16 years old[144]. Most of the victims are recruited through job offers as dancers or models, with promises by traffickers to earn a lot of money[145]. Women are then trafficked from Albania towards western

[141] UNODC "Measuring Organized Crime in the Western Balkans"(2020):34-45. [last access 14 December 2023] https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/OC/Measuring-OC-in-WB.pdf

[142] Crime, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized. "Hotspots of Organized Crime in the Western Balkans Local Vulnerabilities in a Regional Context." *Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, Cenevre* (2019):76-79.[last access 14 December 2023] https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/ocwestern-balkans

[143] Alexander Kupatadze, "Beyond Drugs and Arms: Uncovering Eurasia's Understudied World of Illicit Trade." *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization* (2023):21.[last access 15 December 2023] https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/280/article/906613

[144] Annemarie Stengaard, Rinder, et al, "HIV seroprevalence in five key populations in Europe: a systematic literature review, 2009 to 2019." *Eurosurveillance* 26.47 (2021): 21-44. https://www.eurosurveillance.org/content/10.2807/1560-7917.ES.2021.26.47.2100044

[145] Jana Arsovska,. *Decoding Albanian organized crime: Culture, politics, and globalization*. Univ of California Press, (2015):40-42 [last access 20 December 2023] https://doi.org/10.1177/1057567715596046

European countries: Italy, Netherlands, Belgium and France. Organizations usually move or rotate trafficked victims from one place to another in a system known as "carousel" that ensures that brother owners have a constant supply of new girls[146]. This itinerant nature of the system requires a high degree of integration into several underground schemes because traffickers need to be supported by a network of sex exploiter and by middle-men who help them crossing of national borders through documents' falsification or corruption of border control officials[147].Whether, during the recruitment, the relation between victims and offenders is based on trust, over time the control by traffickers become very high and based on violence and treats towards girls and their families. Due to the brutality of exploiters, some women trafficked decide that collaboration in the criminal activity is more advantageous in the long term, and some of them occupy more than one role in the trafficking nexus as they can act as recruiters or spies on other women[148]. Another implication for trafficked women is the social stigma and discrimination they live in the community, especially in the access to accommodation and health services. This lack of social and family support expose them to the risk of poverty and of being trafficked again. This also happen to victims of gender-based violence, who are often blamed for what happened to them.[149]

According to "Albanian National Security Barometer", in 2022, the majority of Albanian citizens thinks that women are not safe and they perceive domestic

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[146]Donna M. Hughes, "The 'Natasha'trade: Transnational sex trafficking." *National Institute of Justice Journal* 246 (2001): 9-15.[last access 16 December 2023] https://www.academia.edu/download/31099463

[147] Frank Laczko, and Marco A. Gramegna. "Developing better indicators of human trafficking." *The Brown Journal of world affairs* 10.1 (2003): 179-194.[last access 16 December 2023] https://www.jstor.org/stable/24590602

[148]Isabelle Brodie, et al, "'Vulnerability'to human trafficking: a study of Viet Nam, Albania, Nigeria and the UK: literature review." (2018): 23-25. [last access 17 December 2023] https://www.beds.ac.uk/media/266806/literature-reviewfinal.pdf

[149] Yvon Dandurand , et al, "Building resilience to organised crime."(2022):67-68. [last accesss 17 December 2023] https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Yvon-Dandurand/publication/373199589

violence as a widespread phenomenon[150]. It is also perceived that gender is a factor in the propensity to engage in organized crime activities, even though people see women more as victims and not as perpetrators.

From the other side, even though gender norms do not expect women to lead social movements, data reveal that they have proved to be key players in supporting resilience actions from civil society against organised crime and trafficking. They act in civil society to build innovative relations with institutions to promote education, empowerment and gender equality, all factors that reduce the strength of organised crime[151]. As a consequence, women stop being victims and consciously decide to be relevant actresses in the reaffirmation, not only of their position, but of that of all women, in a nation that still do not grant substantial gender equality as a human right.

2.4 Nigerian criminal groups

Nigerian criminal organizations are very active in the European continent and they are involved in drug crimes and financial crimes(especially fraud and money laundering), but they are dominant especially in the trafficking process and particularly in sex trafficking. According to UNDOC, between 3800 and 5700 West-African victims enter in Europe every year, and the majority comes from Nigeria[152]. Trafficking in women is concentrated in the state of Edo (in the South Central part of the country) where, according to a survey by "Women's Health and Action Research Centre", one in three young women have received offers to go to Europe[153]. This high number is due to a particularly disadvantaged situation of

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[150] Arjan Dyrmishi, et al, "Albanian Security Barometer: National Survey 2020." (2021).[last access 17 December 2023] https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/albanien/19486.pdf}

[151] UNODC "Global Report on Trafficking in Persons" (2018).[last access 17 December 2023] https://www.unodc.org/documents/dataandanalysis/glotip/2018/GLOTiP_2018_BOOK

[152] Leggett, Ted. "Transnational trafficking and the rule of law in West Africa: a threat assessment." *Trends Org. Crime* 12 (2009): 307.[last access 19 December 2023] https://heinonline.org/hol-cgi-bin/get_pdf.cgi?handle=hein.journals

[153] Kolawole Azeez Oyediran, and C. Isiugo-Abanihe Uche, "Perceptions of Nigerian women on domestic violence: Evidence from 2003 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey." *African journal*

women in this region and to the experience of success of other women emigrated, which create a self-reinforcing mechanism and sustain the voluntarily acceptance by many victims. The main European destination for Nigerian victims is Italy, where there are as many as 10 thousands Nigerian prostitutes[154]. The high presence of Nigerian women in Italian country started from 1980s, due to high demands for agricultural workers which led many immigrants to move for seasonal jobs and pushed women to prostitution, in order to integrate miserable wages. Since that moment, the market have always increased involving criminal groups, which developed more complex organizational systems[155].

Nigerian organized criminals are one of the first examples of network model, which distinguish them from hierarchical structures common in Italian or Chinese groups. Indeed, at the centre of the network, there are actors with specific skills and important connections, but there isn't a clear boss who controls all the organization. The loose form of networks is very efficient and makes it more difficult for the police to fight crime[156].

Many of the trafficking activities are managed by "madams": usually Nigerian women formerly enslaved in prostitution, who have been able to repay their debts and become exploiters of other female victims[157]. Trafficked women can reach leadership positions by obtaining their madam's loyalty and by earning more money

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of   reproductive   health (2005):   38-53.[last   acess   24   December   2023] https://doi.org/10.2307/3583461

[154] Jørgen Carling,"Trafficking in women from Nigeria to Europe." *Migration Information Source* 1 (2005).[last-access-19-December-2023]

https://www.academia.edu/download/3442064/2005jc002.pdf

[155] Jørgen Carling, *Migration, human smuggling and trafficking from Nigeria to Europe*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration, (2006): 33. last access 19 december 2023] https://www.academia.edu/download/31495649

[156] Jennifer Fleetwood, and Nayeli Urquiza Haas, "Gendering the agenda: women drug mules in resolution 52/1 of the Commission of Narcotic Drugs at the United Nations." *Drugs and alcohol today* 11.4   (2011):   194-203.[last   acess   23   December   2023] https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108

[157] Stefano Becucci. "Nigerian criminal groups in Italy: organizational structure, drug trafficking and sexual exploitation." *Quaderni di Sociologia* 88-XLVI (2022): 71-91. [last access 18 Deccember 2023] https://doi.org/10.4000/qds.4839

than other girls, from their work. This gave them the possibility to become madam's personal assistant and in the future to take her place. Data show that, in Italy, madams are very young and are aged between 25 and 35[158]. The role of the madam is very complex and they can be considered as the main actors in sex trafficking groups because they plan all the phases and take all the decisions related to crime commission[159]. Their work starts by recruiting other women: the process consists in contacting relatives or friends of women whishing to leave the country and, through them, approaching victims. Then madams act as sponsors and they offer women to finance their journey, that range from $500 to $ 2000 to obtain all the documents and from $8000 to $12,000 for the travel. Then, madams make them sign a contract which establishes their obligation to repay debts incurred, which is much higher and range between $40,000 to $ 100,000. The validity of the document is ensured by voodoo rituals that secure the loyalty of women to the madam[160]. After the contract has been stipulated, victims are transported to the destination country by traffickers, contracted and coordinated by madams and, once they arrive, another Nigerian woman acts as intermediary between victims and madams by coordinating women on street and collecting the money earner[161].

By the way, according to a study conducted on a Nigerian criminal group active in Italy (called "Foglie nere''), not all the madams have equal central role in networks and two main groups can be distinguished: the most central madams have economic, social and relational resources that enable them to manage the entire sex trafficking process by participating in all decision making activities; the other group is formed by madams who take decisions only related to the exploitation of the victims and

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[158] Jeffrey Cole,"Reducing the damage: Dilemmas of anti-trafficking efforts among Nigerian prostitutes in Palermo." *Anthropologica* (2006): 217-228.[last acess 22 December 2023] https://doi.org/10.2307/25605312

[159] UNESCO ''Human trafficking in Nigeria: root causes and recommendations'', SHS/CCT/2006/P1/H/2, *Policy Paper Poverty Series* No. 14, 2(2006). [last acess 19 December 2023] http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001478/147844e.pdf

[160]Paolo Campana, "The structure of human trafficking: Lifting the bonnet on a Nigerian transnational network." *British Journal of Criminology* 56.1 (2016): 68-86. .[last access 18 December 2023] https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azv027

[161]Idem n.154 : 34

their profit depend on the earning capacity of the victims exploited but they do not have the power to control all the network[162]. The implication of this finding demonstrates that the role of madam can vary a lot in different networks and it is very complex because it also depends from woman's social and economic influence.

On the theme of sex trafficking of women, scholars have very different point of views and there are two main contrasting positions in the debate: from one side, the moral approach, sustained by radical feminists, which emphasises the sufferance and exploitation suffered by women and rejects the idea of an instrumental and economical motivation to lead women actions[163]; from the other side, the sex-worker approach that considers sex work as a legitimate profession and recognizes that women may play an independent role in the sex market based on their level of consent to prostitution and their personal choices and decisions[164]. However, the polarization of these two models makes it difficult to understand all the multiple roles that an individual can play in the trade industry, because it doesn't consider the contest in which this criminal activity occurs and develops. Indeed, Nigerian women traffickers can be perceived as a "grey area", a definition that underlines the complexity of relationship between the victim and the prosecutor and it explains that women lured into trafficking are enslaved and victimized through a well organized criminal system[165]. Once lured into this trade, Nigerian women are exposed to a pervasive psychological conditioning by traffickers, who persuade

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[162] Marina Mancuso, "Not all madams have a central role: Analysis of a Nigerian sex trafficking network." *Trends in Organized Crime* 17 (2014): 66-88. [last access 20 December 2023] https://doi.org/10.1007/s12117-013-9199-z

[163] Leonard Oshiokhamele Anetekhai. *Augustine's Teaching on the Two Cities (Civitates) and Nigerian Society: A Reflection on Church-State Relations and its Pastoral Challenges*. Cuvillier Verlag, (2020): 34-43.

[164] Liz Kelly, "The wrong debate: Reflections on why force is not the key issue with respect to trafficking in women for sexual exploitation." *Feminist Review* 73.1 (2003): 139-144.[last access 19 December 2023] https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs

[165] Martina Angela Caretta, "Casa rut: A multilevel analysis of a "good practice" in the social assistance of sexually trafficked Nigerian women." *Affilia* 30.4 (2015): 546-559.[last access 23 December2023]https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177

them to evolve their role from victims to partners in crime. According to Siegel, women accept this vertical mobility in order to "reap the rewards" by exploiting other victims[166].

To better understand the reasons that push women to these decision it is essential to analyse the distinctive social and cultural context of Nigeria, where trafficking of women is encouraged by Nigeria's patriarchal society that marginalizes and oppresses women[167]. Indeed, in a typical Nigerian family, daughters have an inferior position to sons, their education is considered superfluous and, in general, parents are more willing to invest in their male sons' future. In addition, during economic crisis and political unrest of 1960s and 1970s women were sent abroad to give financial support for their families and many started to work as day labourers and the prostitution phenomenon developed informally to compensate for the low salaries of seasonal employment. When traffickers realized that profit could be made from this illegal activity, women were encouraged to join European sex market[168].

If, from a certain perspective, family schemes are still stereotyped and women remain victims of gender discrimination as they are marginalized, undervalued and oppressed; from the other, Nigerian women do not always play an inferior position to men, but they assume relevant roles in society. In well-off families, women who are highly educated can occupy relevant positions even in military and political fields, which were previously considered as male areas[169]. Acknowledging the strength and the entrepreneurship of modern Nigerian women is fundamental to understand why the figure of madam exists in Nigerian trafficking and why it is different from other forms of sex trafficking, where women are subordinated or accomplices of men. In this respect, madams' emancipations is also an important

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[166] Idem 139 436-447.

[167] Eva Lo Iacono, "Victims, sex workers and perpetrators: Gray areas in the trafficking of Nigerian women." *Trends in Organized Crime* 17 (2014): 110-128.[last access 20 December 2023] https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007

[168] Idem n. 161 : 68-70.

[169]Joyce Am Ejukonemu, "Gender role in contemporary Nigerian society." *International Journal of Social Science and Economic Research* 3.3 (2018): 1087-1098. [last access 18 December 2023]http://ijsser.org/2018files

mean to persuade new girls to trust the traffickers[170]. Another peculiarity of Nigerian culture, which represent an instrument to convince women to participate in international trafficking is the voodoo ritual. It consists in an oath taken in front of traditional priest, in which a woman swears to pay off their debts to madam. Through this rite, women are completely dependent from traffickers because they fear an unimaginable misfortune if they fail to fulfil it. This is a mean used by madam to exploit their victims and oblige them to pay an exorbitant amount of money, but also to create a sense of loyalty that prevent victims to escape or denounce their exploiters[171]. Even when women have paid back their debts, they can decide to enter voluntarily in the traffic business and work for a madam as a supervisor of other girls or become madam herself. This because , after a long period of exploitation, they often find themselves socially isolated and deprived of the means to conduct a normal life. They believe that illegal sex work is the only option available, as they are marginalized by social community and institutions, which do not provide adequate assistance[172].

In the end, what can be said is that Nigerian trafficking is not only characterized by female leadership, but also by a self-reproducing organizational structure, which makes the system strong and effective. Therefore, trafficked women in Nigerian organizations experience a particular form of vulnerability because they are psychologically subjugated, due to voodoo threatens or the belief of not having an alternative, and they regard to madam position as the only possibility to gain a leadership role and obtain economic power and success. As a direct consequence, this pushes them to pass from exploitation to voluntarily engagement in criminality.

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[170] Temitope Peter Ola, "Migration of Nigerian Women into the Italian Sex Industry through Trafficking." *Acta Universitatis Danubius. Relationes Internationales* 16.1 (2023): 40-56. . [last access 18 December 2023] https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=1166350

[171] Rijk Van Dijk, "'Voodoo'on the doorstep: Young nigerian prostitutes and magic policing in the Netherlands."*Africa*1.4(2001)558-586.[last-access-24-December-2023] https://doi.org/10.3366/afr.2001.71.4.558

[172] Eneze Modupe-Oluwa Baye, "Experiences of Nigerian trafficked women; voices and perspectives from Italy." *Unpublished research paper. International Institute of Social Studies: The Hague* (2012). [last access 30 December 2023] https://thesis.eur.nl/pub/13232

2.5 Japanese criminal organization

Yakuza or Japanese Mafia is a transnational organized crime syndicate (formed by little centralized-criminal groups engaged in illegal actions) originated in Japan. These groups are organized through complex hierarchical structures with an overall boss of the syndicate (the *kumicho* that in Japanese means family-head) and beneath him senior advisors and headquarters chief, who manage different groups[173]. They have relation with other criminal organizations in Japan and abroad and they manage many illegal business related to trafficking of arms, drugs and prostitution. Members follow very strict ritual practices and codes of conduct based on loyalty, respect and honour. Breaking these rules can result in severe punishment, from the expulsion to death. Some figures related to Yakuza also had prominent roles in political, economic and social fields and institutions, especially during the post Second World War period. For instance, in 1960s they were employed by corporations to break striking by workers in labor disputes[174].

Yakuza is generally perceived as a male-dominated organization and the majority of women related to the group have family or romantic relations with male members. Unlike other transnational criminal groups, women here usually perform their "traditional'' roles of supporting their husbands and of raising children and they actively participate only in case their men ask them. By the way, even if women cannot become official members of organized groups, they can exercise influence on organization activities and they play roles in helping conceal crimes, in assisting other affiliates in money laundering and in managing profits of illegal and legal business ventures, acting as civilians allied with the organization[175].

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[173] Joachim Kersten, "Street youths, bosozoku, and Yakuza: Subculture formation and societal reactions in Japan." *Crime & Delinquency* 39.3 (1993): 277-295.[last access 23 December 2023] https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128793039003002

[174] Eiko Maruko Siniawer, *Ruffians, Yakuza, nationalists: the violent politics of modern Japan, 1860–1960.* Cornell University Press,(2008): 233-245. [last access 23 December 2023] https:// books.google.it/books

[175] Bruce A. Gragert, "Yakuza: The warlords of Japanese organized crime." *Ann. Surv. Int'l & Comp. L.* 4 (1997): 147.[last access 27 December 2023] https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119041757.ch20

An exception is represented by bosses' wives, referred to as *One-san* (older sisters), who can gain power and prestige between affiliates, especially if their husband die or is arrested and, just in this case, they have very important roles to fulfil. First of all, they become "mother figures" and they provide the daily necessities of subordinates and their families; then, they are required to resolve any quarrels between group's subordinates or between subordinates and their wives; finally it is their responsibility to protect the whole group against police inquisitions.

From this analysis it emerges that, even if they play relevant tasks, they are perceived as performing their gender roles of protectors, not only of their families but of the entire criminal group[176]. Aside from the *One-san,* other women involved cannot participate in organization's decisions and do not manage illegal activities.

Another peculiar aspect is that, if the general idea is that many women are attracted by Yakuza members because of their promises of economic prosperity, just as many other cases in all criminal organizations, the reality is different and a common occurrence that appears among Yakuza couples, is that women are the main or the only source of financial support for the family[177]. This because, with major legal activity to counter criminality by government, Yakuza members struggle with generating an income. Women can earn money both through legal jobs, but also through illegal business, especially prostitution or drug sale.

From what concern the figure of criminal women in Japanese cultural contest, the imaginary usually place men at the centre of organized crime, whereas the figure of the woman is disempowered and passive. Female figures are usually portrayed in patriarchal frameworks and are shown as victims of sexual trafficking and exploitation or as submissive to men, who disempower, domesticate and sexualize them[178].

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[176] Laura Treglia,. "Yakuza no Onnatachi." *A Companion to the Gangster Film* (2018): 377.[last access 24 December 2023] https://books.google.it/books

[177] Amanda Jones, "Human trafficking, the Japanese commercial sex industry, and the Yakuza: Recommendations for the Japanese Government." *Cornell International Affairs Review* 3.2 (2010). [last access 21 December] https://journals.library.cornell.edu/index.php/ciar/article/view/388/380

[178] Jeff Kingston, *Japan in transformation, 1945-2010*. Routledge, (2013). [last access 21 December] https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9781315833453

However, this is not true for manga or Japanese movies, where the dominant male figure of a Yakuza member is challenged and women are represented as dominant figures. In these narratives they are defined as "lady gangsters" , occupy leaderships positions and can be involved in violent actions[179]. By the way, this type of representation is more functional to the creation of an erotic imagination, rather than placing them in a condition of equality, which in no way reflects the reality. Therefore, differently from other Western criminal organizations, Japanese Yakuza's sub-culture reflects the representation of gender roles imposed by Japanese culture and society[180].

In Japan, women's rights experienced a certain degree of improvement only after the Second World War, when women had access to secondary and tertiary education and when laws passed advocating equality of salaries and working positions. By the way, the Japanese cultural values of family and hierarchy of society was, and still is, based on the past roles imposed by Meiji government at the end of XIX century, when female tasks were limited to the house boundaries and they were expected to show devotion to both their husbands and to the welfare of the country[181]. As a consequence, nowadays, women perception of themselves is strongly connected to their performance as mothers and wives and hardly binds to their education or working achievements, even in case they are the only ones of the family to provide economic contribution. Another relevant element that distinguishes Japanese women from Western ones, is that they are not expected to be attractive and sensual, but, on the other side, once married they have to represent their beauty and value

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[179] Erik Ropers, "Narrating against dominance: Women and organized crime in Japanese discourse and popular culture." *Contemporary Japan* (2022): 1-17.[last access 20 December 2023] https://doi.org/10.1080/18692729.2022.2083336

[180] Ryu Otomo, "Women in organized crime in Japan." *Women and the Mafia*. New York, NY: Springer New York, 2007. 205-217.[last access 20 December 2023] https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-36542-8_13

[181] Óscar Ramos, and Pilar Garcés, "Japanese women's role. Past and present." *Bulletin of Portuguese-Japanese Studies* 10 (2005): 223-242. [last access 21 December 2023] https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/361/36101106.pdf

through their fidelity and devotion to the family[182]. All these social and cultural aspects are reflected in Yakuza perception of gender roles and distinguishes it from other criminal organizations, where women can reach leaderships role and can exploit their physical appearance as a weapon to impose themselves over men at higher positions[183].

From an overall perspective the features of Japanese woman involved in criminal organization is less evolved than in other criminal groups and it is still strongly influenced by gender stereotypes that characterize the entire Japanese society. However, this does not mean that women do not play active and influential roles, although they cannot assume leadership positions. For instance, *One-san* figure represents a split in this strongly hierarchical and male-dominated system and preludes an evolution of gender roles that, from working environment , will be also reflected in the whole society and in criminal organizations.

2.6 Why is it difficult to talk about women's role in criminal organizations?

What emerges from the analysis of different transnational criminal organizations around the world is that it is not possible to talk about the role of women in criminal organizations as an homogenous category of analysis. Therefore, their level of involvement in criminality, as well as the behaviours, roles and actions they perform are very different according to the criminal group of belonging and to the imaginary of woman produced by criminal culture. The definition of gender roles indeed depends on the interaction between internal specific characteristics of each organizations with its history and evolution, other than   on the cultural, social,

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[182] Yoko Sugihara, and Emiko Katsurada. "Gender role development in Japanese culture: Diminishing gender role differences in a contemporary society." *Sex roles* 47 (2002): 443-452.[last access-21-December-2023]

https://idp.springer.com/authorize/casa?redirect_uri=https://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A:1021648426787

[183] Michiko Suzuki, *Becoming modern women: love and female identity in prewar Japanese literature and culture*. Stanford University Press, 2010. [last access 22 December 2023] https://books.google.com/books

economic context in which the group is established or operates[184]. For instance, even if both in Nigeria and Japan women can reach high working position, Nigerian women can exercise leadership roles in criminal groups, while Japanese ones cannot even be affiliates of organization. These enormous differences depend on distinctive gender perceptions of the women and the values they are expected to own, which are eradicated both in criminal groups' and in the countries' culture. As a consequence, national and international institutions need to consider each organization's unicity and peculiarity to develop better gender-based laws and policies to fight them and to protect victims.

Another aspect that emerges from the comparison of transnational criminal groups is that the role of women as victims or perpetrators is never clear and defined. Many of them are linked to criminality by family or love ties and decide to commit illegal actions to protect male members. But it can also happen that women first victims of trafficking decide voluntarily to become exploiters of other victims as a form of ransom from the violence suffered or because they perceive criminality as the only form of economic gain. Indeed, once they are free from oppression, they are marginalized by social community and institutions and the only alternative they have to survive is to return to that crime that violated them. Being aware of these phenomena is essential to be able to create a network of protection of victims that take them away from crime and provide them with concrete possibilities of recovery, in order to improve their lives, granting first of all the respect of their human rights.

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[184] Sally S. Simpson, "Feminist theory, crime, and justice." *Criminology* 27.4 (1989): 605-632.[last access on 21 December 2023] https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.1989.tb01048.x

CHAPTER III

WOMEN' S AGENCY IN ITALIAN CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS

3.1 The complexity of women's condition in Italian context and its influence on mafia representation

In Italy, four mafia-types organizations can be taken into consideration: Cosa Nostra in Sicily,'Ndrangheta in Calabria, Sacra Corona Unita in Puglia and Camorra in Campania. They all originated in the South, but then spread to Northern Italy, as well as abroad. These associations and their multifaceted nature are referred to as "mafia system'', which indicate the integration between criminal activities, socio-economic-cultural dimensions and a combination of ideological and organizational traits. [185] These groups are characterized by different structures (from hierarchical to horizontal), but they share some common characteristics, such as: the use of violence and corruption to control a given territory; the strict relation with the surrounding socioeconomic and cultural context; the strict connection with political and business milieus, where they bring illegal funds to launder. Moreover, one of the main features of mafia associations is their ability to maintain traditional values and ideology (as the law of silence, the code of honour and vendetta) and, at the same time, to adapt to wider economic and socio-cultural changes[186].

In this context, public representation of mafia women portray them as "godmothers" or "victims" , but these stereotypes do not consider economic, social and cultural aspects of the phenomenon and reduce women's stories to static and homogenous categories. As a consequence, their experiences are shaped not only by gender, but

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[185] Francesco Calderoni, "Where is the mafia in Italy? Measuring the presence of the mafia across Italian provinces." *Global Crime* 12.1 (2011): 41-69.[last access 23 December 2023] https://doi.org/10.1080/17440572.2011.548962

[186] Salvatore Lupo, *History of the Mafia*. Columbia University Press,(2009):43-56. [last access 21 December 2023] https://books.google.com/books

also by other social identity categories, that intersect to determine the role of women in a given time and space[187].

Taking into consideration the historical context, it can be said that after the end of the Second World War, women in Italy experienced many difficulties in entering and remaining within the official labour market. This was due to cultural elements, especially the widespread negative perception of female work, particularly in Southern Italy, where having a working woman in family was considered shameful, because it meant that man was not able to provide for the whole family. Similarly, male underestimation of female labour has been at the core of the formal exclusion of women from Mafia, as they were seen as the "weaker sex" and, as such, they should have been protected and not involved in any type of business affair. By the way, since 1970s, the rise in female education and the decrease of birth rate, has led women to participate in labour market, even though structural restraints, coming from the family and the society, have always prevented them to reach completely equality with men in wages and roles occupied. This because, even if women have become always more emancipated and free, their imagery is still related to patriarchal model and their value is still determined by being good mothers and wives. For this reason, they are required to perform a "dual role" in workplace and house, as well in public and private realm and this has determined an ambiguous situation. On the one hand, Italy has shown significant progress in term of gender equality, especially in economic and educational fields; on the other hand, cultural representation of women and also data related to gender violence represent a setback in the achievement of equality's objectives[188]. The complexity of the above picture on female roles, both in labour market and in social costumes, are fundamental to understand the multifaceted condition of women in mafia system.

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[187]Giovanni Fiandaca, ed. *Women and the mafia: Female roles in organized crime structures*. Vol. 5. Springer Science & Business Media, (2007): 33-35. [last access 24 December 2023] https://books.google.com/books

[188] Elizabeth S. Cohen, "Chapter Eleven. Evolving the history of women in early modern Italy: Subordination and agency." *Spain in Italy*. Brill, (2007). 325-354.[last access 22 May 2024] https://brill.com/downloadpdf/book/edcoll/9789047411185/Bej.9789004154

The main instrument used by mafia to exercise control over women is through the code of honour that regulates the whole organization, even if differences in the relevance of the honour-system can be found in different groups. By the way, it is present in all ,mafia associations and it is based on the idea that a "man of honour" is able to defend his land and his woman. Thus, the sexual behaviour prescribed for women (virginity and chastity) is crucial to show respect not only to their men, but also to the entire community and, in addition, feamle body is considered as a family property. Internally, the use of honour is fundamental to give mafia a solid ideological apparatus, but it is also an individual alibi to justify brutal conduct by mafiosi, not only towards external victims, but also towards family members and especially their wives[189]. Therefore, mafia women's virtuous sexual conduct increases men symbolic capital, which is crucial for their recognition and thus domination and, as a consequence, a violation of this conduct justifies the exercise of form of violence against women inside the organization, as a way to re-establish the honour violated. By the way, marital fidelity is not a quality expected by men and this because it exists a double morality regarding gender, for men and women. For instance, betraying a wife is considered as part of the attribute of a mafioso masculinity and female control is expected by a good husband. For this reason, male members of a family can supervise and prohibit women actions in all spheres of their lives, as a mean to protect their reputation and to avoid "'problems"[190]. For instance, this happens to widows, who are compelled to remain faithful to their dead husbands or even boyfriends.

During years, mafia organizations have adapted to the evolving role of women in modern society and the current model of gender relations inside criminal groups is a balance between the application of the code of honour and the concession of free

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[189] Valeria Fabj, "Intolerance, forgiveness, and promise in the rhetoric of conversion: Italian women defy the Mafia." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 84.2 (1998): 190-208.[last access 21 December 2023] https://doi.org/10.1080/00335639809384213

[190] Valeria Pizzini Gambetta, "Becoming visible: Did the emancipation of women reach the Sicilian mafia?." *Speaking out and silencing*. Routledge, 2017. 201-211.[last access 21 December 2023] https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781315087764-15

movement and behaviours, even though the level of freedom is never total and women are always under scrutiny and control[191].

However, what emerges from the analysis that follows is that, from one side, this code of honour has determined the oppression of many female figures and the imposition on them to perform traditional roles as mothers and wives;, from the other side, the mafia moral system has not prevented some of them to take on important roles and emancipate themselves from the traditional submissive figure, by performing illegal actions as violent as those of their male colleagues.

3.2 The traditional women's role: performing soft power

In mafia group there is a strict relation between family and criminal organization and, when a person outside the kinship enters in the association, he is required to neglect his blood relations and devotes himself completely to the mafia family. The allegory of the family creates a condition of subordination, as it involves the idea of belonging and it associates the criminal group with an essential institution in Italian culture. This concept can be defined as "familism" [192]and it describes the defensive nature of Southern families, who protect their members from the world outside, which is perceived as enemy. In this idea is also included the sexual division of social roles in the households, as the father is expected to show authority and protect his family, whereas mother has a fundamental function in the process of education of mafia's basic principles to her children. For this reason, mafia family has been also described as a "greedy institution"[193], which is a system

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[191] Valeria Pizzini-Gambetta,. "Women and the mafia: a methodology minefield." (2008): 348-353. [last access 21 December 2023] https://doi.org/10.1080/17440570802543649

[192] Daniel DellaPosta, "Bridging the parochial divide: Outsider brokerage in mafia families." *Social Science-Research*114(2023):102913.[last-access-28-December-2023] https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2023.102913

[193] G. L Gatta, "Riforma Cartabia e procedibilità a querela: due proposte per la soluzione di vecchi problemi, senza allarmismi e stravolgimenti: A proposito dell'incompatibilità dell'aggravante del metodo mafioso con i reati procedibili a querela, e dell'impossibilità di eseguire l'arresto in flagranza per quei reati in assenza della persona offesa." *Sistema Penale* 2023.1 (2023): 55-63.[last access 28 December 2023] https://air.unimi.it/handle/2434/986350

expecting total adhesion from its members and attempting to incorporate their whole identity. For this reason, the process of primary socialization is crucial for the creation of children identity-building as members of the criminal group[194] and to internalize mafia's principles. Women who performs the role of socialization, also teach to their children the "Law of the Father"[195], which implies transmitting them the idea of female subordination(their exclusive role as mothers and wives) and male superiority, therefore contributing to the persistence of patriarchy system and gender discrimination. This role of education is even more important in cases where the father is away: in prison, in hiding or dead. In these situations the mother passes an ultra-positive image of the father to their children, contributing to the construction of a myth to take as a model of behaviour, especially for sons[196]. What is striking is that "good mafia women" are responsible for collaborating in their own subordination process, but transmitting these masculinity values to their sons is fundamental to make them become "men of honour". Through the role of command exercised by their sons, women can also gain female recognition. This because they remain an essential point of reference for their sons in both their personal lives and careers, as they see their mothers in an ambivalent manner: from one side, a figure to be loved and respected and, from the other, a woman to subordinate[197]. It is evident that the mafia family's influence over its members produce men and women who perceive them as part of the system and therefore

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[194] Clare Longrigg, *Boss of bosses: How one man saved the Sicilian mafia*. Hachette UK, (2009): 43.[last access 27 December 2023] https://books.google.com/books

[195] Rahmat Ramadhani, "Eradication Of Soil Mafia In The Post-Covid-19 Pandemic Based On National Law And Islamic Law Rahmatramadhani." *Proceeding International Seminar of Islamic Studies*. Vol. 3. No. 1. (2022): 33-43.[last access 26 December 2023] https://jurnal.umsu.ac.id/index.php/insis/article/view/9637

[196] Faustino Rizzo, "Vulnerabilità mafiosa: PIPPI con le famiglie che vivono in situazioni di criminalità organizzata." *IL QUADERNO DI PIPPI Teorie, metodo e strumenti del Programma di Intervento per la Prevenzione dell'Istituzionalizzazione-LEPS Prevenzione dell'allontanamento familiare*. Padova University Press, (2023): 96-98.[last access 27 December 2023] https://iris.unimore.it/bitstream/11380/1307887

[197] Lirio Abbate. "Mafia capitale." *Mafia capitale* (2017): 227-232.[last access 27 December 2023] https://www.torrossa.com

active in criminal sphere[198]: men in official positions and women in informal and substitutive roles.

Another fundamental role performed by women in mafia is in transmitting to their sons the value of revenge and in encouraging them to commit it. In mafia context, the murder of a relative or a repentance by a an affiliate provokes not only sorrow, but also shame, and the assassination of the responsible or one of his family members is the only way to re-establish honour. Every organization has ritual practices related to revenge and, also in this case, it is the mother's task to transmit this   knowledge to   children. Female role in revenge shows how women are accomplice in reinforcing hegemonic masculinity, as they stress the expectations for men's virility according to the gender behaviour established by the code of honour[199].

To resume, women traditional role in mafia is relegated to the private sphere. They are required to perform a passive function: first because, through their own respectability and integrity, they protect the authority of masculine reputation of men of honour; second, because they are often considered as mean of change in arranged marriages, through which they serve the strategic purpose of broadening or ending alliances between clans. By the way, they also have active tasks, which are essential to the survival and stability of the organization: they are the main figures dealing with the transmission of the cultural mafia code to children; and they are also involved in transferring them revenge's values[200]. As a consequence, they are not completely inert in front of male figures, but they exercise "soft

[198] Diana T. Meyers, *Gender in the mirror: Cultural imagery and women's agency*. Oxford University Press, USA, (2002):34-42.[last access 28 December 2023] https://books.google.com/books

[199] Ombretta Ingrascì. *Donne d'onore: storie di mafia al femminile*. Pearson Italia Spa, (2007): 67-70.[last access 28 December 2023] https://books.google.com/books

[200] Rosella Marzullo, "Mafia children: From future to past. Knowing other realities to learn freedom." *Review of Social Studies* 3.2 (2016): 45-57.[last access 28 December 2023] http://www.rossjournal.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/RoSS-Vol3-No2-Autumn2016-3.11.16-Final-v2.pdf#page=49

power"[201] using their cultural influence as an arm for imposing their role and as a form of control over their children, especially sons, when they gain leading positions. By the way, as it will be shown in next paragraph, in last decades, mafia women have been always more involved in criminal activity and they even managed to reach very high positions, from which they controlled the family business.

3.3 From traditional roles to leading powers

The first mafia women to exercise active roles in organized crime date back to at least 1920s, when some Sicilian female figures in Cosa Nostra organization started to use violence, in order to regulate relations with affiliates and to control family business, as well as played roles in management of *pizzo* (protection money paid to mafia , resulting from extortion) and drug trafficking. From that moment, women actively participated in mafia activity, especially when their husbands, fathers and brothers were incarcerated[202]. In 1970s, when increasing drug consumption modified criminal business in most European countries, women participation grew sharply because female sex stereotypes rendered them less likely to be discovered by police during transportation. Moreover, drug trafficking entailed activities that could be practiced at home, as packaging and hiding bags of drugs or receiving stolen goods and therefore were more suitable with female roles[203]. In 1980s, women also started to be involved in economic sector of money laundry: this

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[201] Ombretta Ingrascì, "Il potere delle donne nella mafia siciliana tra dinamiche organizzative e processi di soggettivazione-assoggettamento." *Il potere delle donne nella mafia siciliana tra dinamiche organizzative e processi di soggettivazione-assoggettamento* (2022): 113-131.[last access 28 December 2023] https://www.torrossa.com/it/resources/an/5462496

[202] Felia Allum, "Doing it for themselves or standing in for their men? Women in the Neapolitan Camorra (2003). *Women and the Mafia*. New York, NY: Springer New York, 2007. 9-17.[last access 28 December 2023] https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-0-387-36542-8_2

[203] Phil Williams, "Organized crime, drug trafficking and trafficking in women." *The Routledge handbook of security studies* (2010): 149-158.[last access 28 December 2023] https://books.google.com/books

happened after the approval of 'Rognoni-La Torre Law' in 1982, which gave the investigators the authority to seize properties registered under clean names, if suspected of belonging to a mafioso. For this reason, many bosses used their wives to register legal companies owned by the association, to cover illegal activities. Another important women's activity in this period was the "Hermes task",[204]a concept used to indicate that they were messengers between the boss in prison and the affiliates outside. By the way, if at beginning women were only the spoke-person who transmitted bosses' will, this activity was the prelude to a position of leadership[205]. Moreover, the growth of mafia wealth opened up job opportunities for women beyond the private sphere and, the turning point of their contribution took place in 1990s, when the state improved its battle against mafia and many bosses were imprisoned or went underground. As a consequence, women assumed "delegated power"[206]: they were not only courier of their men in prisons, but they started to give orders and managing the clan activities, to fill the power vacuum left by the boss. This change in illegal world was concomitant with the changes in women's conditions in legal world, resulting in the gradual dissolution of gender barriers and the growth of female higher education, which made women more likely to be employed by organized crime[207].

By the way, this new female participation doesn't mean mafia reached gender equality in its illegal activity: women are still employed in low profile jobs and the allocation of power to female figures is limited to emergency period, because they

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[204] Ombretta Ingrascì, *Gender and Organized Crime in Italy: Women's Agency in Italian Mafias.* Bloomsbury Publishing, (2021):101.

[205] Baris Cayli, "Performance matters more than masculinity: Violence, gender dynamics and mafia women." *Aggression and violent behavior* 29 (2016): 36-42.[last access 29 December 2023] https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2016.06.001

[206] Alessandra Dino, "Women and mafia." *Narcomafie, Dizionario di Mafia e Antimafia* (2004).[last access-29-December-2023]https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Alessandra-Dino/publication/265004562

[207] Ombretta Ingrascì, *Mafia Women in Contemporary Italy: The Changing Role of Women in the Italian Mafia since 1945.* Diss. Queen Mary University of London, (2005):234-237.[last access 29 December] http://qmro.qmul.ac.uk/xmlui/handle/123456789/26683

are almost excluded from career opportunities[208]. Moreover, differences remain between the mafia criminal groups: for instance, in Cosa Nostra and 'Ndrangheta the top ranks of drug trafficking are still dominated by male figures, although there are cases of women leading criminal affairs but rarely in the higher levels of organization.

3.4 Women of criminal groups detained in Italian prisons

A fundamental aspect to be taken into account in outlining the figure of women in Italian criminal organizations concerns the incidence of female crime in Italy. According to data collected by the Italian Interior Ministry, on the total number of people arrested, women represent 18.1 % . Of these, only 30% are of non-Italian nationality and 1.3 % are accused of belonging to organised crime groups. For a long time, in fact, even though women played important roles in the criminal association, they remained absent from the lists of the Criminal Police and from judicial investigations. Over time the situation changed and, in 2021, 11 women were on the "List of Dangerous Fugitives" as fugitives or convicted of associative offences relating to crime, drug trafficking and prostitution.

Within the penitentiary institutions, women detained for mafia crimes may be subject to the "Special detention regime" (that refers to art. 41-bis introduced by Decree Law 306/1992), which provides for the isolation of prisoners to avoid relations with external affiliates and the continuation of criminal activities from the prison. According to data collected in 2022, out of 728 people subjected to this particular regime, only 12 are women and all detained at the penitentiary in the city of L'Aquila[209]. In recent years, the number of women subjected to 41-bis condition has remained constant, at around 0,5 % of the total female population in prison. However, the number has increased significantly since the beginning of the 2000s.

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[208]Jana Arsovska, and Felia Allum. "Introduction: Women and transnational organized crime." *Trends in Organized Crime* 17 (2014): 1-15.[last access 29 December 2023] https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-36542-8_3

[209] Luisa Ravagnani, , and Nicoletta Policek. "Women in prison in Italy." *Criminal Behaviours: Impacts, Tools and Social Networks* (2023): 377-410.[last access 22 February 2023] https://www.academia.edu/download/36926301

Indeed, data gathered by Central Direction of Criminal Police revealed that in 2003 there were only 3 women were convicted for serious crimes related to mafia[210]. The restrictions imposed by this special regime are particularly harsh: in fact, prison visiting can only be held once a month behind a dividing glass and the only exception concerns the meetings with children under 12 years that can last an hour and takes place without the presence of partitioning systems, even though they are always supervised by penitential authorities who remain in the room. In addition, the presence in Italy of few penitentiary structures dedicated to women means that they are often very far from the place of residence and therefore from the family and in particular from children, even minors.

Other than to the 41-bis regime, women can be inserted in the AS3 circuit, a high security system dedicated to inmates of high criminal depth that are separated from the remaining detained population in order to avoid oppression or affiliation within the institutions. Unlike the Special Detention, this type of regime does not lead to special imprisonment but, on the contrary, it allows access to treatment opportunities such as the normal prison regime. Despite this, the low number of women subjected to this system is often discriminated against in terms of treatment and investment of resources compared to other prisoners in general but also compared to men part of the same regime. In 2022, out of 9014 prisoners in AS3, only 218 are women and represent only 9% of the total female population held. Many of them do not receive permits to work and their condition is comparable to that of 41-bis inmates.

As regards the presence of women with children in prison, there are currently no specific data on women under such regimes living with minor children. This is because the number of women affiliates in criminal groups detained is extremely small, and also because the Italian judicial authority allows alternative and substitute measures as a matter of priority to pregnant women or mothers with children under 6 years of age. In 2022 only 18 children under 3 years are in institutions and the majority of them are housed in institutions of care where all

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[210]Silvia Logar, and Maggie Leese. "41-bis prison regime (Italy): leave no one behind during COVID-19." *International Journal of Prisoner Health* 17.3 (2021): 296-298.[last access 22 February 2022] https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.110

areas and personnel are dedicated to children care and the aim is the development of mother-child relation. However, these types of structures are insufficient on the territory and generally mothers prisoners with children are hosted in separate areas of ordinary penitentiary institutions, where there are special environments and services dedicated to children[211]. By the way, not all prisons are equipped to accommodate children and this means that there are situations in which they live in ordinary prison environments waiting for transfers to other institutions that can also require quite a long time.

A further specification concerns high security women detained in particular sections, the "Z" sections, which host justice workers. According to data from 2023 in Italy there are 6 women in this particular condition, that is 0.01% of the total female population detained. These sections are completely separate from the others and force those who occupy them to a regime with many limitations, in particular loneliness not only to the outside but also to the inside of the penitentiary[212]. Indeed these women are separated from others to avoid a danger to their own safety, but their detention in this way is very hard, even though they are not subjected to the restrictions of 41-bis regime.

To resume, what emerges from this analysis of the conditions of detained women that have been part of the criminal organizations is that the low number of sentences determines a smaller investment and attention by the authorities for women inmates than for men imprisoned for the same crimes, leading to a situation of gender discrimination in opportunities of re-socialization granted for women in criminal institutions. Moreover, prison authorities and educators are rarely trained according to gender perspectives and, as can be seen, also from the treatment of particular cases such as those of mothers or justice workers. A major work needs to be done to be able to provide better safeguards that guarantee the protection of

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[211] Costanza Agnella,. "L'esecuzione penale delle donne: una prospettiva socio-giuridica." *Antif*2 (2022)*Antigone :* 21-28.[last access 22 February 2022]
https://iris.unito.it/bitstream/2318/1953350/1/Esecuzione_penale_delle_donne.pdf
[212] Maurizio Catino,. "Italian organized crime since 1950." *Crime and Justice* 49.1 (2020): 69-140.[last access 22 February 2022] https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/707319

these particularly vulnerable conditions, that are still ignored by the formal authorities.

3.5 The other face of women 's agency: the justice collaborators

Butler affirms that gender identity is a performative accomplishment compelled by social sanction and taboo and that criminal groups have their own social sanctions and taboos, which influence both their organization and the gender dynamics[213]. The exclusion of women as victims and the lack of a positive construction of female identity are essential factors to marginalize women and making them the powerless class. By the way, the reality shows that women can be as violent as men and, in so doing, sustaining mafia masculinity in the absence of men. But, on the other hand, women can perform their activity also by rejecting this masculinity and showing forms of resistance. Researches highlight how the similarities of men and women in the motives of commitment to crime or in resisting their own families are more similar than the differences between them. Therefore, there are many women born in mafia family or married with mafia affiliates who commit no criminal acts and demonstrate their dissent publicly. This form of cultural performance directly and explicitly attacks the cultural code of mafia. Like the women who are active in criminal activities and reach leading positions, these figures who rise up against criminality can be considered as symbols of resistance against mafia's traditional cultural heritage[214]. Two categories of state witnesses can be defined: from one side, the "defectors", are those women that cooperate with the state when they are arrested, so they reject mafia system only when they are outside the criminal circle and they face the legal justice of courts and confesses their crimes; from the other side the "rebels" , who do not commit crimes and reject and condemn criminal culture while they still are in the organization.[215] According to data, the majority of state witnesses are the victims' relative: mothers, widows, sisters and daughters

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[213] Avril Butler, and Mel Landells, "Taking offence: research as resistance to sexual harassment in academia." *Feminist academics: Creative agents for change* (1995): 156-168.[last access 5 February 2024] https://books.google.com/books

[214] Renate Siebert, "Mafia and anti-mafia." *Organised Crime and the Challenge to Democracy* (2003): 36.[last access 5 February 2024] https://books.google.com/books

[215] Idem n. 203

who, through their own personal choices and their aim of seeking revenge from their loss, they lead to collective changes that can cause enormous damage to criminal organizations.

One of the most prominent female figures that then became symbol of the anti-mafia was Rita Atria. She was a witness and a key collaborator in a major mafia investigation in Sicily. She was born in in a Sicilian mafia family in 1974 and, while she was a child, her father was killed by a hit man from a rival family. In 1991, also her brother was killed by the mafia and her brother's widow, Piera Aiello, became justice collaborator. At the age of 17, Rita decided to follow her sister in law and her main objective was to obtain justice from these murders through the legal system. She was fundamental in the fight against mafia as she gave magistrate Borsellino the name of bosses of the most powerful families and disclosed information about the war between criminal families. As a consequence for her testimony, she was rejected by her mother and her family and she was then moved into a safe house under witness protection. Her contribution led to the arrest of various mafia affiliates but, after the assassination of magistrate Borsellino who was her point of reference after losing all her family and friends support, she committed suicide in 1992, at the age of 18. By the way, her legacy remained and many people consider her as an heroine and a symbol of female rebellion against the crime because of her willingness to sacrifice everything, in order to pursue justice as a form of revenge through legal means. She said: "Before fighting the mafia you must first examine your own conscience, and only after defeating the mafia inside yourself can you fight the Mafia that's in your circle of friends. We ourselves and our wrong way of behaving is the mafia"[216]. As this story shows, leaving the mafia for women means much more than physically getting away from it. They are rejected by their families and they also risk to lose their children, as well as being depicted as mentally ill in order to dismiss their collaboration as the action of a mad woman. For instance, the story of Maria Concetta Cacciola provides an example of this. She was born in 'Ndrangheta family and, at the age of only 13 years, she was forced to marry a member of another criminal group to allow her family to

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[216] Robin Pickering-Iazzi, ed. *Mafia and outlaw stories from Italian life and literature*. University of Toronto Press, (2007): 161.[last access 5 February 2024] https://books.google.com/

climb the 'Ndrangheta hierarchy. She was the victim of abuse by her husband and her family and when, in 2002, her husband was convicted by mafia association, Maria Concetta was locked in the house with her children without any possibility of having relations with the outside world. In 2011, summoned to the police station for the arrest of her eldest son due to driving without a license, the woman took advantage of the circumstance to denounce the state of oppression and violence in which she lives, as well as many aspects of her family's criminal activities. She became a witness of justice and she was introduced in the protection program and transferred to the city of Genoa. There, she found a way to contact her children and, in this way, her family found her position. The parents reached her and tried to convince her to retract the confession, using the children as a means of blackmail. She returned to Calabria and she signed a retraction, where she claimed to have spoken to justice only to get revenge on her father and brother. Repented of this gesture, she was found dead two days later for having swallowed some chloride acid. During the trial of Cacciola family, the prosecution organized a press campaign against magistrates and investigators to delegitimize the way in which witnesses of justice were treated, claiming that the authorities have pushed Maria Concetta to suicide[217]. The aim was both to delegitimize Concetta's testimony and also to prevent future collaborations by other women who could take her as a model.

These two stories represent significant examples of the role of gender dynamics in mafia. The women presented here consciously chose to act against an organization that wanted them oppressed and submissive as they decided to affirm their own personal choices. However, being part of mafia is not an easily reversible process and, despite their rebellion, the cultural model imposed on them has led them to make extreme gesture as a response to the strong internal contrast they have lived. In any case, they have inspired many others women in criminal groups to follow their example, showing that female figures are not only present, but also decisive in determining the fate of mafia.

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[217] Helen Fitzwilliam, "How an Italian judge is dissolving'Ndrangheta family loyalties." *The World Today* 74.1 (2018): 10-17.[last access 5 February 2024] https://www.jstor.org/stable/48564887

3.6 The evolution of women's role in Cosa Nostra organization

As already mentioned, in Italy there are several mafia-style organisations that, despite sharing several common points, also have distinct specificities linked to the context and internal development, that also define a different way of perceiving the role of women, resulting in unique dynamics.

The original mafia, whose traditional Sicilian name is Cosa Nostra, emerged in Sicily in the middle of nineteenth century, as an association of criminal groups, known as "families", that shared a common organizational structure, values and code of conduct[218]. For a long time, Cosa Nostra was defined as "an authoritarian and mono-sexual organization"[219], based on "absolute masculinity" [220]and female figures in mafia family were considered as having a subordinate and dependent status. Their functions were limited to private sphere and they performed especially two roles: as mothers, they educated and socialized their children to the clan values; as wives, they legitimized the male's authority by reinforcing family ties and structures[221] . For this reason, according to the boss Tommaso Buscetta, mafia wives were perceived as "the toy-model of their husbands" [222],who didn't speak or think because trained to keep quiet and remain in the world of domestic life. This image was also reinforced by media's portrayal of mafia female figures, represented as passive and exploited characters, who were related to crime exclusively by family ties and, for this reason, they did not have the possibility to choose and were passive victims of the system. Doing this, they have contributed to perpetuate the idea of their role as supportive figure who grow up dangerous sons. As a consequence, women usually remain excluded from both judicial consequences and widespread

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[218] Idem 185: 23-25.

[219] Renate Siebert , "Le donne, la mafia." *Il Saggiatore, Milano* (1994):61. [last access 29 December 2023] https://www.jstor.org/stable/23193288

[220] Giovanni Falcone, "Io, Falcone, vi spiego cos' è la mafia." (1992):4. [last access 30 December 2023] https://www.archivioantimafia.org/giornali/unita/unita_io_falcone_vi_spiego.pdf

[221] Franco Di Maria, and Girolamo Lo Verso, "Women in mafia organizations." *Women and the Mafia*. New York, NY: Springer New York, (2007). 87-101.[last access 30 December 2023] https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-0-387-36542-8_7
[222] Idem n. 204: 346

visibility and this was due to social factors related to gender stereotypes rooted not only in mafia system, but also in civil belief[223].

Despite the fact that women cannot become affiliates and therefore cannot formally occupy recognized roles, this doesn't mean they are passive and not involved in criminal actions. Their active role emerged particularly after the Maxi trial in Palermo, in 1987, when 475 *mafiosi* were indicted and many women took over their male relatives' business. Since that time, they have increased their participation, reaching, in some cases, command positions[224]. Examples of women in power in Cosa Nostra emerged in the history of Sicilian mafia, especially in periods when the clans have undergone emergency moments and a relaxation of organizational centralization, which have encouraged the use of trusted workers, such as women, for top roles. Two examples are representative of how these leadership positions can be assumed by female figures. The first case is the one of Mariangela Di Trapani, arrested in 2008 in Palermo, who was charged and convicted for Mafia association. She was called "the Mistress'' and her main role was as intermediary between the main bosses of Cosa Nostra. She communicated with them through the '*pizzini*'(small notes transferred from one person to another)[225] and, in addition, she managed the clan's illicit revenues and transferred them to the associates. In 2015, after her release, she took a leading role during a period of clan crisis. To deal with it, the woman arranged a meeting of the most influential bosses, in order to reorganize the group. Despite the reticence of the male leaders to the imposition of a woman as head of the organization, the period of crisis was the reason why her

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[223] Alessandra Dino, "Symbolic domination and active power: female roles in criminal organizations." *Women and the mafia*. New York, NY: Springer New York, (2007): 67-86. [last access 30 December 2023] https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-0-387-36542-8_6

[224] Adriano Schimmenti, et al. "Mafia Women: A Study on Language and Mental Representations of Women Engaged with Mafia Members." *International Journal of Criminology and Sociology*, vol. 3(2014): 267–74,. https://doi.org/10.6000/1929-4409.2014.03.22.

[225] Valeria Pizzini-Gambetta, "Women and the Mafia: A Methodology Minefield." *Global Crime, vol. 9,no.4,*(2008):-348–53.[last-access-30-December-2023]

https://doi.org/10.1080/17440570802543649.

central role was tolerated by the affiliates, who obeyed "the Mistress" [226]. According to Palermo Tribunal she exercised managerial and organizational powers and she acted as substitute of her husband, the leader of the clan.

Another well-known case is the one of Teresa Marino, the wife of a well-known imprisoned boss of Palermo, who was also placed in a managerial role after her main trial with the task of managing the drug trade instead of her husband, in a moment of tension between the families of the clan. In this case, she was also responsible for handling problems and tensions among the clan members, so much so that they themselves voluntarily turned to her, as she had exceptional mediation skills. She also received the bosses in her own home and this gesture represented a testimony of the recognition and the high respect even male leaders had for her[227].

From these two cases, it emerges that only particular female figures and in exceptional circumstances can assume important roles in Cosa Nostra. Almost always, the woman in charge has a marital relationship with the boss who is in prison or on the run. Similar to what happen in the managerial roles of large companies, also in illegal crime women role is evident in times of crisis of the organization and this is because women are considered as trustworthy figures, who can be easily replaced by men at the moment when the crisis ends. Their power is therefore delegated and temporary, but also exceptional because is allowed only during complex times for the organization. Due to this, even though their role is substantial, formally they are not recognized as actual leaders, but as actresses replacing male bosses. In the mafia, therefore, the entry of women do not involve an evolution of the organization according to gender variability, but on the contrary it strengthens the male system: this is because men use women to keep their power intact in circumstances in which they risk losing it during of their absence. Although

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[226] Diego Gambetta, and Peter Reuter. "Conspiracy among the many: the mafia in legitimate industries." *Transnational Organized Crime*. Routledge, 2017. 247-266.[last access 30 December 2023] https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781315084565-17

[227] Ombretta Ingrascì. "Mafia violence. Practices, meanings, consequences." *Rivista di studi e ricerche sulla criminalità organizzata*, vol. 4, no. 4 (2019): 90–98. [last access 30 December 2023] https://doi.org/10.13130

women try, through leadership roles, to make a qualitative leap in their autonomy, their freedom always remains linked to the will of the man they replace. This shows that being active is not synonymous with emancipation[228]. Furthermore, it can be stated that discrimination against women in the illegal labour market is very high and the inclusion of women in positions of power in the clans does not differ much from what happens in the legal markets, where, again, women are placed or expelled according to the needs of the moment and their role is never fully recognized[229]. Indeed, mafia is completely embedded in Italian society and the apparent relaxation of male control is a mere "bait" to deceive the dreams of a parity that does not liberate female figure, but on the contrary limits them and strengthens the male model even more[230].

3.7 The evolution of women's role in 'Ndrangheta

'Ndrangheta is a type of mafia association based in Calabria and dating back to 19th century. It is considered one of the most powerful organized crime group in the world[231]. Its success mainly depends on two factors: from one side, its peculiar structure based on autonomous clans known as *'ndrine*, in which members are linked by kinship; from the other, on the lack of attention paid to this organization by institutions. Indeed, despite 'Ndrangheta has existed for as long as Cosa Nostra, it was designated as a mafia-type association only in 2010, under Article 416-bis of the Italian Penal Code(which is an attempt to define and regulate the crime of

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[228] Jane Schneider, and Peter Schneider, "Mafia, antimafia, and the plural cultures of Sicily." *Current Anthropology* 46.4 (2005): 501-520.[last access 29 decembet 2023] https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/431529

[229] Ombretta Ingrascì, "Women's Power in the Sicilian Mafia between Organizational Dynamics and Processes of Subjectivation-Subjection." *Sociologia Del Diritto*, no. 3 (2022): 113.[last access 30 December 2023] https://doi.org/10.3280/SD2022-003006.

[230] Evelyn Keller Fox, "Reflections on gender and science." *Yale University* (1985): 24.[last access 30 December 2023] https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/full/10.1086/345455

[231] Europol, Threat Assessment, "Italian Organised Crime." *Europol* (2013): 4-16.[last access 5 January-2024] http://www.europeanrights.eu/public/atti/Rapporto_Europol_su_criminalit_oganizzata_italiana.pdf

mafia-type criminal organization)[232]. 'Ndrangheta is widespread in Europe, Americas and Australia and its main activities are related to drug and arms trafficking, other than money laundering, racketing and loan sharking.

The high level of female inclusion in the 'Ndrangheta is another of the characteristics that distinguishes Calabrian mafia from Sicilian one. This is due to the different set-up of the two criminal groups. Therefore, 'Ndrangheta has an horizontal structure based on the blood natural family, whereas Cosa Nostra is more hierarchical and vertical, whose core is the family of election made by affiliates who voluntarily deny natural ties in favour of those of mafia. For this reason, in 'Ndrangheta, women are functional not only within domestic-family sphere, but also in the working criminal one[233]. Even though in both organizations women cannot become official members and, as a consequence, they do not have to swear loyalty to the criminal group, in 'Ndrangheta, if a woman demonstrates certain abilities, can become associated with the title of *"sorella d'omertà"* and her fidelity is implicit in the blood bond she shares with other male members[234]. Therefore, this position is only reserved to wives, daughters or sisters related to affiliates and allows them to operate in the organizations at the same level of men, but without the same recognition.

An example of this inclusion is represented by the roles exercised by prominent female figures in Serraino-Di Giovine family, an 'Ndrangheta clan operating in Milan since 1960s and that was active in the business of trafficking drugs and arms. The boss of the criminal organization was Maria Serraino, who belonged to a longstanding mafia family of Reggio Calabria. In 1960s she immigrated with her husband and children to Milan, where she started an illegal career smuggling cigarettes and stolen goods. During 1970s, she shifted to drugs and weapons trafficking, involving the whole family. She was the leader of the clan and she was

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[232] Sergio Seminara, and Giuseppe Pignatone,"Esperienze a confronto: mafia,'ndrangheta e criminalità nella capitale: conversazione con Sergio Seminara." *Esperienze a confronto: mafia,'ndrangheta e criminalità nella capitale: conversazione con Sergio Seminara* (2014): 39-62.[last access 5 January 2024] https://doi: 10.1400/237195
[233] Ombretta Ingrascì, "Women in the 'Ndrangheta: the Serraino-Di Giovine case." *Women and the mafia*. New York, NY: Springer New York, (2007). 47-52.[last access 30 December 2023] https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-0-387-36542-8_4
[234] Idem n. 203: 37-42

referred to as "grandma heroin" or "The Lady" by her affiliates[235]. She was responsible of distributing merchandise to her sons and collecting money form middlemen. She also had many contacts with corrupt law enforcement officers and even drug suppliers dealt exclusively with her. She was convicted of having ordered the murder of a drug dealer who worked for the family and he was guilt of attempting to go into business on his own. According to her daughter Rita Di Giovine, arrested in possession of 1 thousands tablets of ecstasy, and who then became state witness, Maria was the substantial boss of the organization. She gave orders and managed the criminal actions. Even though her son Emilio was the boss in name, he always turned to his mother for any relevant decision[236].

Another prominent case is the one of Marisa Merico, daughter of Emilio Di Giovine, the formal boss of the clan lead by "The Lady" . She obtained a relevant position in the organization through her father's intercession, becoming known as " 'Ndrangheta princess" and she started to manage father's illegal business at the age of 19, when Emilio was convicted. When she was arrested for money laundering, she became state witness and she denounced all the criminal actions perpetrated by the clan and handled by her grandmother. The case of Serraino-Di Giovine family is representative of the female power in 'Ndrangheta: a power not formally recognised but substantial. Maria Serraino's daughter Rita attributed her mother charismatic leadership abilities a question of blood lines, as a legacy transmitted by her male ancestors, who were bosses of clans. However, the daughter also testify that her mother was not immune from her gender role as wife and from the mafia's image of female figure she was considered a property and an instrument of her husband. In fact, Maria was victim of gender violence by Rita's father and she could not prevent that her daughters were sexually harassed by their

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[235] Idem 219 : 356

[236] Ombretta Ingrascì, "La forza della vulnerabilità: Orientamenti teorici sul processo di separazione delle donne dalla'ndrangheta [The strength of vulnerability. Theoretical perspectives on the separation process of women from the'ndrangheta]." *Rivista di Studi e Ricerche sulla Criminalità Organizzata* 6.2 (2020): 18-46.[last access 30 December 2023] https://air.unimi.it/handle/2434/758124

brothers and father.[237]What is evident is that 'Ndrangheta women can in essence occupy much more prominent roles than in other criminal organizations, like the more traditional Cosa Nostra, but this does not mean that the recognition of gender equality is assumed. Indeed, what is shown by Maria Serraino's example is that women must perform a double role: one of submission inside the house; and another of leadership and control in the organization and with other affiliates. Both must remain distinct and separate and in no case allow the female figures to get out of the task expected to them.

By the way, as already seen previously, the only chance to subvert this system is by rejecting and condemning it, although the price of thus choice can be very high, as it is shown by the story Lea Garofalo, another fundamental female figure in 'Ndrangheta, who decided to oppose to criminality and to become justice collaborator. Lea was the sister of Floriano Garofalo, a 'Ndrangheta boss active in the province of Crotone, and the companion of Carlo Casco, an affiliate of the powerful Cosco 'ndrina. In 2002 she decided to collaborate with Italian police, revealing important informations about Garofalo and Cosco families. Even though she was admitted with her daughter to the Italian protection program, she was killed and her corpse was burned by a Cosco affiliate. Her daughter Denise continued her mother mission and she was a key judiciary witness of the process that lead to the incarceration of her father, responsible for ordering the femicide of her companion[238]. Lea's story is a bit different from the other women that have been presented. It is the story of a woman against the current, who decided not to respect the fidelity imposed by her gender role and, for this reason, she has been denied and punished by her own family and by the man who, according to the values of the mafia, was expected to protect her. In the history of the mafia, several women have sided against the system of criminality and obedience imposed to them and, if at the beginning, their choice came from a need to seek revenge for the death of a loved one (in the case of Lea, the death of her brother), in time, following the example of

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[237] Giovanni Fiandaca, ed. *Women and the mafia: Female roles in organized crime structures*. Vol. 5. Springer Science & Business Media, (2007):27.[last access 30 December 2023] https://books.google.com

[238] Anna Lisa Tota, "Storia di Lea Garofalo e di sua figlia Denise." *Rivista di Studi e Ricerche sulla criminalità-organizzata*3.3(2017):19-31.[last-access-5-December-2024] https://doi.org/10.13130/cross-9279

_.j z< bnhe others that preceded them, they transformed from "seekers of revenge, to seekers of justice[239]''. For this reason, the story of this female figure provides inspiration for men and women who want to move away from criminality and contribute to its destruction.

3.8 The evolution of women's role in Sacra Corona Unita

Sacra Corona Unita(SCU) is a mafia organization founded in 1981 by the Camorra boss Raffaele Cutolo, who wanted to expand his operations from Campania to Puglia. However, after Cutolo's downfall, the group began operating separately, under the leadership of Giuseppe Rogoli. Today, the association is active in the areas around the cities of Brindisi, Lecce and Taranto and its main activities are based on drug and sex trafficking. The SCU is a hierarchical and vertical organization, made up of three levels and members can graduate from one level to the next through baptismal rites: the lowest level is Società Minore,followed by Società Maggiore and finally Società Segreta at the top of organization[240].

Women in SCU perform different but well-defined functions. Some act traditional roles such as "messangers", in charge of maintaining communication between relatives in prison and outside affiliates; others are invested with more active tasks, as "money collectors" and they are recognised and legitimised by other affiliates, even if their roles are still functional to their partners'activities; last, there are women directly involved in criminal affairs, who do not follow the instructions of male members, but they directly administer the earnings with the scope of consolidating the consensus among affiliates. [241]. Just like men, SCU women can make a career in the organization, moving from the role of messengers to the top managerial and decision-making positions. By the way, as in other mafia structures,

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[239] Valeria Fabj , "Intolerance, forgiveness, and promise in the rhetoric of conversion: Italian women defy the Mafia." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 84.2 (1998): 190-208.[last access 5 January 2024]
[240] Andrea Apollonio, "Sacra Corona Unita and'Ndrangheta:"Structural" Differences of Organized Crime." *The'Ndrangheta and Sacra Corona Unita: The History, Organization and Operations of Two Unknown Mafia Groups*. Cham: Springer International Publishing,(2014): 133-145.[last access 5 January 2024] https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-04930-4
[241] Monica Massari, "È la giustizia che mette in mezzo le donne»: il carcere, la mafia, le donne."-*Meridiana*,no.67,(2010):79–93.[last-access-5-January-2024] https://www.jstor.org/stable/23204926

the traditional models of behaviours remain and female figures perform fundamental functions of transmission of mafia culture to their children and of support to their husbands. Consequently, women who obtain leadership positions, usually own delegated power, which derives from the arrest or death of a male boss[242]. Examples of prominent female figures in SCU emerge since its foundation: in the 80' in Foggia, Lucia Rizzi introduced his brother Giosuè, boss of the Foggia clan, in the marketing and distribution of narcotics and she was responsible for the transportation of drugs thanks to her tours as a singer in Italy and abroad. Also, in Mesagne, Domenica Biondi, known as "Donna Mimma", wife of the founder of SCU Giuseppe Rogoli, acquired a leadership position after the arrest of her husband and was in charge of keeping the criminal group together and of managing business. Finally, Ilde Saponaro, wife of the boss of Campi Salentina Gianni De Tommasi, in addition to being the head of clan in the absence of her husband, showed interpersonal skills with the leaders of formal institutions, so as to determine the transfer of magistrates and the opening of criminal trials against them[243]. What is striking, is that tt was precisely in a case involving three women belonging to SCU, Maria Rosa Mammoliti, Maria Caterina Nava and Clara Rugolo, accused of mafia association, that the Court of Cassation, in 1999, reached an historical judgment for the Italian judiciary on the involvement of women and their role in criminal activities. Since then all sentences had absolved mafia women by claiming that their position was passive and their acts attributable to male figures of reference but, in this judicial case, the judges stated that the decision couldn't be founded on " abstract sociological generalizations on the impossibility of a woman affiliate as a member of mafia group", and it was necessary to check if " the behaviours and roles they assume can be associated with the organization and functional to its purposes''[244]. Therefore, the three women were found guilty

[242] Monica Massari, and Cataldo Motta. "Women in the Sacra Corona Unita." *Women and the Mafia*. New York, NY: Springer New York, (2007): 53-66.[last access 5 January 2024] https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-36542-8_5

[243] Dana Renga, Allison Cooper, "Introduction The Banda della Magliana, The Camorra, The'Ndrangheta, and the Sacra Corona Unita: The Mafia Onscreen Beyond the Cosa Nostra." *The Italianist* 33.2 (2013): 190-200.[last access 5 january 2024] https://doi.org/10.1179/0261434013Z.00000000043

[244] Giovanni Canzio, "Sezione I Penale; Sentenza 26 Maggio 1999; Pres. La Gioia, Est. Bardovagni, P.M. Materia (Concl. Parz. Diff.); Ric. Mammoliti e Altri. Annulla Assise App. Reggio Calabria 4

because they had consciously and autonomously accepted their role in the association. That judgment was a mile stone in the Italian fight against criminal organizations as the law on mafia participation was no longer linked to a gender issue and required that those responsible, regardless of their gender identity, had to be punished.

However, it is worth considering that from one side there are women who rebel against their role as mothers and wives through direct and active participation, but from the other side there are also cases of women who reject submission through rebellion against the criminal system and collaboration with justice. Becoming a *penitita* is a conflicting and painful experience, that for many women might be a way to adfirm themselves and to develop powerful capacities for agency[245]. An exemplary case is that of Marcella di Levrano, who in 1987, after having given birth to her first daughter, decided to remove her child from the criminal milieu and denounce the acts of SCU at the police headquarters in Lecce. She contributed, with her statements, to the prosecution of many criminal affiliates in the organization. Again, as was the case for Lea Garofalo, the state was unable to provide adequate protection for the woman and, on 5 April 1990, she was killed by stoning by SCU members[246]. Not only the act of killing is significant as it shows that in the mafia repentance must be punished, but also the method used is symbolic: the murder by stones, in fact, since the past, is used to punish traitors and women guilty of adultery. Every gesture in the mafia is a symbol and the message here is that a woman who rebels is not only guilty against the association but also against her family. She betrayed her husband by rejecting the role imposed on her and, for this reason, her death is considered not only a legitimated, but also a due act.

Luglio 1998." *Il Foro Italiano*, vol. 123, no. 2, (2000): 89/90-93/94. [last access 5 January 2024] http://www.jstor.org/stable/23195489.

[245] Dana Renga, "Screening the Italian Mafia: Perpetrators, pentite and bystanders." *Journal of Italian Cinema & Media Studies* 1.1 (2012): 55-69.[last access 6 January 2024] https://doi.org/10.1386/jicms.1.1.55_1

[246] Robin Pickering-Iazzi, "Dead silent: Life stories of girls and women killed by the Italian mafias, 1878-2018." (2019):2-5.[last access 6 January 2024] https://dc.uwm.edu/freita_facbooks/2/

3.9 Subjective nuances of women's experiences in mafia organizations

What emerges from the analysis of women in Italian mafia organizations is that it can be drawn a parallelism between the lawful world and that of mafia in terms of the use of female labour force. It can be also underlined that the changes in women's social status have had an impact on the transformation of women also inside the mafia. The latter transformation has also been influenced by the evolution of internal organization of criminal groups in term of mentality, structure and illegal business[247]. Despite some differences among the main criminal mafia systems, in all of them women have managed to emerge and to acquire important positions, even though female figures cannot become formal members. Traditional female roles are still fundamental and are related to the code of honour, which is an essential pillar in all mafia-type systems: as mothers, women are required to transmit mafia's values and encourage revenge in their male children in case of betrayal; while as wives they are expected to sustain and support their husbands and to guarantee their men's reputations. By the way, during time, new female involvement in criminality have raised: at the beginning by performing functional activities in obedience to male orders, such as their task as messengers, but then, with mafia participation in drug trafficking, they have also been involved in all levels of trafficking chain and, in some groups, they have also managed to reach leadership roles recognised by other male affiliates. Women, during time, started to acquire two different types of autonomy. From one side, as the result of agentic capacities directed towards perpetrating mafia system and from the other side, a "genuine" autonomy by denouncing the criminal organization in which they are involved. The latter allows them to achieve self-discovery(understanding themselves), self-definition (defining their values and commitment) and self-direction (directing their life)[248], even though they are willing of the risk that this free choice can have on their life.

To resume, women participation in criminal groups is characterized by an extreme variety of experiences and cannot be limited to a single and homogenous

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[247] Idem n.205:p.238
[248] Diana T Meyers,. "Self, society, and personal choice." (1989): 12-14. [last access 6 January 2024] https://philpapers.org/rec/TMESSA

categorization, such as the one of "emancipation", which describe their participation from a passive to an active role bypassing the motivations and the different contexts that determine these changes and their nuances.[249]Therefore, this model needs to be integrated with a more fluid approach, which considers the subjectivity of women's experiences and the different evolution of the various criminal groups. For this reason, in this and the next chapter, some women personal stories have been analysed, in order to go beyond the mere generalization and to really understand how some female figures have been a rift that have changed forever the patriarchal mafia system.

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[249] Marina Graziosi. "Women, the mafia and legal safeguards." *Forum on Crime and Society*. Vol. 1.No.2.(2001):234-236.[last-access-6-January-2024]
http://www.unodc.org/pdf/crime/publications/forum1vol2.pdf#page=136

CHAPTER IV

CASE STUDY: NEAPOLITAN CAMORRA AND THE EVOLUTION OF WOMEN ROLE IN THE ORGANIZATION

4.1 Camorra: the history, the structure and the main values

Camorra is a mafia-type criminal organization, originating in the South Italian Region of Campania and it is one of the oldest and largest criminal associations, dating back to the 17th century. Its history began just after the creation of the Reign of Italy and the king Vittorio Emanuele nominated many *camorristi* as commissioners and policemen, in order to control the protests in Naples after the annexation of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies to the new Savoia domain. By doing so, criminals were not only able to stop rebellions but, at the same time, they strengthened their businesses and control over the population. During time, Camorra's group became always more involved in Naples' civil society and many politicians started to exploit the criminal organization's abilities to control people and gain votes, in exchange of favours[250]. The internal corruption of the Neapolitan public administration and the practice of favouritism provoked the degradation of the political and economic structure of the city and this further strengthened the Camorra power. A turning point for the criminal evolution was in 1911, when, for the first time, an investigation from the Italian police brought to light the link between Camorra and Italian magistracy. The scandal led to a trial that ended with a condemn for 27 *camorristi*[251]. For the first time in its history, Camorra was defeated and this provoked the disappearance of the traditional hierarchical structure, typical of mafia groups, and its rebuilding in a new peculiar structure that has characterized Camorra until today. Therefore, compared to Sicilian mafia, which has a vertical and pyramidal structure and it is very related to hierarchies' respect, Neapolitan Camorra is more horizontal: it is divided into criminal groups

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[250] John Dickie, *Mafia Republic: Italy's Criminal Curse. Cosa Nostra,'ndrangheta and camorra from 1946 to the present*. Hachette UK, (2013):21-26.[last access 22 January 2024] https://books.google.com/books
[251] Behan, Tom. *The Camorra: Political Criminality in Italy*. Routledge, (2005): 199-204.[last access 22 January 2024] https://books.google.com/books

called "clans", led by a "boss" and the number of associates can vary from tens to hundreds, depending on the power of the specific clan[252]. With different clans acting independently of one another, it is impossible to refer to Camorra as an homogenous phenomenon, due to the fragmented and chaotic life of each group. As a consequence, the clans are more resilient when top figures are arrested or killed and more flexible to the renewal of both the leaders and the internal structure. According to Roberto Saviano, an Italian investigative journalist, Camorra's networks of clans overcome other Mafias organizations active in Italy in numbers, economic power and ruthless violence[253]. Between the Two World Wars, these groups started to spread their business in the whole region of Campania, forcing the government to intervene to constrain the phenomenon and, especially during the Fascist period, Mussolini launched a violent repression destroying the major criminal families. After the war, the condition of hunger and misery experienced in Naples became the fertile ground for the reconstruction of Camorra's power. Main activities focused on prostitution and black market, smuggling food, cigarettes and even medicines from US and Eastern Europe. These were the major businesses of the clans until 1970s, when Sicilian Cosa Nostra started to collaborate with Camorra to enter the sector of international drug trafficking[254]. The alliance between the two criminal groups terminated in 1979, when Camorra created its own narco-trafficking business. In this period an important figure, Raffaele Cutolo, led to the creation of a big criminal group, the "New Organized Camorra"(NCO) based on the original vertical structure and on historical honour code and mafia's symbolism. However, few years after the foundation of this powerful organization, other Neapolitan families joined the forces in an alliance called the "New Family Organization"(NF) and declared war to NCO[255]. This was a second point of break

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[252] Marc Monnier, *La camorra: notizie storiche raccolte e documentate*. G. Barbèra, editore, (1862): 23-45.[last access 21 January 2024] https://books.google.com/books

[253] Federico Varese, "The Camorra closely observed." *Global Crime* 10.3 (2009): 262-266.[last access 21 January 2024] https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17440570903079972

[254] Brancaccio, Luciano, and Carolina Castellano. "The 'Camorra'in the public debate: images, topoi,-turning-points."-(2015):48-56.[last-access-22-January-2024] https://www.iris.unina.it/handle/11588/630167

[255] Massimiliano Fraldi, et al. "Delamination onset and design criteria of multilayer flexible packaging under high pressure treatments." *Innovative Food Science & Emerging Technologies* 23 (2014):39-53.[last-access-22-January-2024] https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S146685641400041

in Camorra's history: since 1980s, temporary partnerships between clans have been created, to took the power and impose their will over other criminal groups, and then destroyed, generating internal conflicts, deaths and continuous wars. It is during these years that Camorra created the illegal business of public procurement, which strongly related criminal organizations with legal businessmen and politicians. The activity was based on the handling of waste disposal in the region of Campania and it developed after the 1980 earthquake that devastated the city of Naples and made available state funds for the reconstruction[256]. In this situation, criminal "gangs" seized the opportunity of diverting public funds into their organizations. Indeed, with the complicity of industrial companies, Camorra dumped garbage and toxic materials in and around the provinces of Naples, generating toxic effects on the environment and on human health, specifically in an area that then became known as the "triangle of death[257]. In 1994 the Italian government declared a regional waste emergency, which ended only in 2008, with the approval of a law decree that finally brought waste management into the hands of legal bodies. This was just an example of the absence of state control in the South regions that allowed Camorra to acquire strength and legitimacy in social contests. Therefore, the lack of services, the high unemployment rate and politicians' incapability of facing South's problems led the population to lose confidence in legal institutions and to rely on criminality as the only mean of social and economic development.

Today, Camorra clans have a more differentiated and volatile equilibrium than other mafia groups and the dynamicity of the city of Naples lead clans to continuously change their market and to be active in different illegal sectors. The current   main businesses are related to drug trafficking, racketeering, counterfeiting and money laundering and the criminal groups are often infiltrated in local political and economic activities, as food distribution and fashion industry[258] . By the way,

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[256] Giuseppe Craparo, et al. "Cosa Nostra and the Camorra: Assessment of personality, alexithymic traits, and attachment styles." *International journal of law and psychiatry* 58 (2018): 17-26.[last access 21 January 2024] https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0160252717301711
[257]Felia Allum., *Camorristi, Politicians and Businessmen: The Transformation of Organized Crime in Post-War Naples Vol 11*. Vol. 11. Routledge, (2017): 45-47. [last access 21 January 2024] https://books.google.com/books
[258]   Idem n. 247: 263

Camorra is not only active in Italy, but it can be considered a transnational criminal organization, as it has a strong presence in other European countries, especially Spain, and it also has contact with South American drug cartels[259]. Recently, many clans have also allied with Nigerian and Albanian criminal groups and their power and influence are spreading in the main international criminal businesses. For what concern the internal organization, it is impossible to talk about Camorra as an homogenous group, as the members of each clan identify with it and usually the affiliates are related by family ties. As a consequence, there is not a shared code of behaviour and norms, but each groups has its own rules and ideals to follow.

Studies on Camorra also focused on the social problems related to the local area of Naples that are exploited by criminal groups to expand their membership: one of the main issue is related to the high number of juvenile delinquency, but also to the lack of presence of state policies and social plans and this is the cause of a bad urban planning and housing. Moreover, a mass of young people are unemployed and they see no hope for the future and, as a consequence, they perceive the criminality as the only remaining option. For this reason, Camorra is one of the criminal organizations with a greater number of young affiliates that are involved in murders or violent actions and the majority of these come from very poor suburbs and they experience delinquency situations since childhood[260]. Other important studies related to Camorra values and ideology revealed that adolescents who endorse masculine honour ideal more strongly, also have significantly higher levels of social dominance orientation and legitimizing attitudes towards criminal groups than those who endorsed the ideology less stronger. Moreover, individuals who have a more positive view of criminal organizations also report higher levels of masculine honour[261]. These studies fully reflect the Neapolitan situation, where

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259 Harmonie Toros, and Luca Mavelli. "Terrorism, organised crime and the biopolitics of violence." *Terrorism: Bridging the Gap with Peace and Conflict Studies*. Routledge, 2016. 73-91. [last-access-21-January-2024] https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781315768151-5
260 Felia Allum, "Becoming a camorrista: criminal culture and life choices in Naples." *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 6.3 (2001): 324-347. [last access 21 January 2024] https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13545710110084262
261 Travaglino, Giovanni A., et al. "Investigating the Social Embeddedness of Criminal Groups: Longitudinal Associations between Masculine Honour and Legitimizing Attitudes towards the Camorra." *European Journal of Social Psychology*, vol. 53, no. 4 (2023): , 612–22. [last access 23 January 2024] https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2926.

camorrist values are taken as an example of behaviour and represent a model for many young people grown up in poor and disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Camorra's criminal ideals reflects the values of civil society, but are manipulated and interpreted in a criminal sense. In South Italy, particularly, the law of honour is fundamental and has formed part of everyday life in Naples regulating all social interaction, in a context where legal forces have been considered unreliable and inefficient[262]. For many years, criminality has represented the only form of social control and it has determined the model of behaviour in civil society: defending one's honour and that of one's family has been considered a strong social value and the only way to protect family, since law-enforcing institutions have been absent. In addition, in criminal groups, honour has the fundamental role of controlling and conditioning affiliates behaviour, especially if related to the concept of family. For instance, Cutolo's NCO used the idea of family as the symbol of the organization, to recruit "poor lost souls" [263]and joined them in a large extended family group. Following the tradition of Camorra, Cutolo also defined his affiliates as "sons" and provided a system of special assistance for them and their families. Camorra clans are mainly formed by familiar ties but, as can be seen in NCO's case, even though there are not blood relations, these are replaced by a common sense of family created by the criminal solidarity. In addition, Cutolo required all new members to be catholic and the idea of household was strongly related to the symbolic image of Holy family in religion. This religious justification was another mean to create unbreakable and loyal bonds that went beyond the earthly sphere and were considered as established directly by God[264].

Another fundamental ideal in Camorra is the revenge, which is a common aspect in all criminal groups, but it is particularly violent in Camorra. Indeed, since the mid-1980s, Neapolitan criminal groups have been responsible for almost half of all mafia homicides documented in Italy and they have acquired visibility at international level due to their brutality. Widespread massacres are the common

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[262] Idem n.254 pag. 346
[263] Marco Jacquemet, *Credibility in court: Communicative practices in the Camorra trials*. Vol. 14. Cambridge University Press, (1996):331-345 . [last access 23 January 2024] https://books.google.com/books
[264] Idem 244: 56-63

response even for smallest conflicts or insults and murders are the way to resolve power struggles, using increasingly sophisticated weapons. As a consequence, the requirement to become a member of a criminal group is the capability to show violent and aggressive nature and the firmness to kill everyone can be considered a danger for the organization[265]. The idea of violence is directly linked with another fundamental rule of conduct, the law of silence (*omertà*) that is not only part of criminal groups, but also of the Neapolitan civil society. This code of silence creates conditions for social control both inside and outside the organization and, if not respected, can be imposed by violence.

In this context, where the main values are honour, prestige, revenge, silence and power and where extreme violence is a daily occurrence, women's representation acquire particular significance and should be analysed, in order to understand how these factors condition their roles and activities in Camorra organization.

4.2 The evolution of women's role inside Camorra criminal groups

Contemporary scholars emphasize the paradoxical condition of women in Camorra as in other mafia-types organizations: they play the key roles as upholders of traditions and values in the domestic context, but also as active participants in illicit activities. From one side, they are banned from the criminal organization by formal rules, which prevented them to be admitted while, from the other side, they can be recognised as effective members of these groups[266]. For Camorra, the picture is even more complicated as women have always been involved in the illegal economy of Naples and, in recent times, they have reinterpreted their traditional positions in more "modern" way, adapting to contemporary societal changes. A distinctive feature of female figures in Camorra is the "gendered criminal market approach"[267],

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[265] Monica Massari, and Vittorio Martone, eds. *Mafia Violence: Political, Symbolic, and Economic Forms of Violence in Camorra Clans*. Routledge,(2018): 236-241. [last access 23 January 2024] https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429467554

[266] Ombretta Ingrascì "Criminalità e percezione della sicurezza a Pregnana Milanese. Uno studio di comunità." *Rivista di Studi e Ricerche sulla criminalità organizzata* 3.1 (2017): 19-46.[last access 23 January 2024] https://riviste.unimi.it/index.php/cross/article/view/8280

[267] Heidi Grundetjern, and Sveinung Sandberg. "Dealing with a gendered economy: Female drug dealers and street capital." *European Journal of Criminology* 9.6 (2012): 621-635.[last access 24 January 2024] https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1477370812453103

which impose a gender division of roles that doesn't exist in other criminal organizations. Even historically, women in Camorra have been active in sectors of extortion, usury, gambling, drugs and firearms trafficking. They often use languages and manners that are typical referred to masculine attitudes: they threaten their enemies through intimidation and violence and they even deploy arms. In recent years, they have directly engaged in bloody feuds and revenge killings and they also ordered or personally carried out brutal murders on behalf of their clan[268].Moreover, they are characterized by sentimental independence from men and, in fact, many female affiliates have a background of troubled marriages, betrayals and divorce. This distinguishes Neapolitan criminal women from the traditional image of submissive and deferential wives, still typical of patriarchal mentality of other mafia groups[269].

As underlined in previous chapters, the changing role of women in Camorra reflects the transformations in civil society and in particular, in post-war period, their slow emancipation and their movement from private to public sphere. According to Longrigg, "Neapolitan women play a full part in society, more than women from any other region of Italy and the criminal underworld is no exception"[270] . This can be justified by the fact that the city's lower classes have inherited a urban culture with a low degree of segregation for women, which is reflected in criminality[271]. In accordance with this position, Allum distinguishes three stages of women's emergency from invisibility into powerful positions: the first stage occurred from 1950 to 1976, when women were part of the support system; the second stage between 1976 and 1990, when women defended their men; the third stage from 1990 to 2000 when women finally became criminals[272]. In the first stage, women

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[268] Anna Maria Zaccaria, "L'emergenza rosa: dati e suggestioni sulle donne di camorra." *L'emergenza rosa* (2010): 155-173.[last access 23 January 2023] https://www.torrossa.com/2462183

[269] Gabriella Gribaudi, "12 The Use of Violence and Gender Dynamics within Camorra Clans." *Mafia Violence: Political, Symbolic, and Economic Forms of Violence in Camorra Clans* (2018): 236.[last access 23 January 2024] https://books.google.it

[270] Clare Longrigg, "Women in organized crime in the United States." *Women and the Mafia*. New York, NY: Springer New York, (2007): 235-282.[last access 24 January 2024] https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-0-387-36542-8_16

[271] Idem n. 262 : 171

[272] Felia Allum, "Doing it for themselves or standing in for their men? Women in the Neapolitan Camorra (1950–2003)." Women and the Mafia. New York, NY: Springer New York, (2007): 9-17.[last access 24 January 2024] https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-0-387

performed traditional roles, like in other mafia-type organizations, as mothers and wives and this can be explained by the fact that in this period the respect of mafia's values and traditions was still very eradicated. Women's main task was to educate their sons to become *camorristi* who respect the code of honour and revenge. By the way, some of them began to break away from traditional forms of behaviours and started to display a sort of independence, by participating in some illegal activities as smuggling of cigarettes or stolen goods on street corners. This, however, cannot be considered as a form of conscious emancipation, but rather as a material necessity, due to the precarious living conditions that obliged women to find a way to earn money for their large and extended families. In addition, some wives of important bosses became the official directors of "front companies" created to cover illegal earnings[273]. What is striking is that, since this early stage, Camorra women were different from the other mafia female figures as, even if they performed supportive roles, they were also prepared to become involved and "cross the line" to protect their families.

The second stage date back to 1980s, during the war between Cutolo's NCO and NF and, in this period, women were also involved in the fight. Even though the majority of them maintained a supportive position, some acquired active roles as defenders of their men, taking autonomous decisions. For instance, Rosetta Cutolo, sister of NCO's boss, looked after her brother's criminal activities and was fully involved in the clan actions and decisions while he was in prisons. However, the limits of power conceded to women in this stage is represented by the fact that NCO's affiliates relied on Rosetta, but her leadership was never showed outside the clan. Moreover, the media coverage on female figures was absent and their activities were difficult to document, as male affiliates tended to cover their women as much as possible. The breaking point was highlighted between the second and the third stage, when women became major players in criminal clans. Therefore, in 1990s, after Camorra's wars, many horizontal structured criminal groups were formed, with different activities and codes of conduct. In this varied situation, women found

[273] Baris Cayli, "Performance matters more than masculinity: Violence, gender dynamics and mafia women." *Aggression and violent behavior* 29 (2016): 36-42.[last accee 24 January 2024] https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S135917891630060

a space to take active roles. Moreover, in this period, many former affiliates became state's witness in order to receive lighter sentences and, as a consequence, women had the opportunity to assert themselves in reaction against the effects that these testimonies were having in destroying the clans[274]. An example was represented by Gemma Donnarumma that, in 1995, forced witnesses of justice's wives to ask divorce and to dishonour their husbands, as a way to discourage them from collaboration. Another important figure was the one of Maria Licciardi, who, in 1995, took the power of Secondigliano clan and managed the organization, ordering violent actions, organizing activities and distributing moneys to members.

These examples are the symbols of how women role has been essential for the Camorra survival during years, as many of them have been able to take the control when power vacuum appeared. As a consequence, their involvement became visible also to judicial authorities and this led to an increase in the number of women convicted for participation or even management of criminal activities, as the case of Teresa De Luca Bossa, who was convicted in 2010 as the leader of the Ponticelli clan[275].

By the way, Camorra women cannot be considered as truly emancipated and this because gender parity is not reached in criminal clans. Indeed, despite the apparent sentimental independence and professional career, the deeply rooted male-centred and male-dominated mentality persists in clans and women always need the support of male figures to legitimize their positions. Also in Camorra, the space left for women is limited and even if they reaches high degree of autonomy, this depends on situational factors and familiar conditions that have required their involvement as necessary. Recruiting women to top jobs is a mere instrument for filling gaps left by male bosses in difficult times for the clans, when it is under attack by state or in conflict with other criminal groups[276]. According to Allum and Marchi, women in Camorra can be defined as a "reserve army", who acquire power in state

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[274] Idem n.245 pag. 456

[275] Idem 244: 23-27.

[276] Renate Siebert, "Is there any gender difference in mafia? *The women's places in organized crime of Southern Italy between XIX and XXI century: roles, practices and identities (*2005): 334-335.[last access 23 January 2024] https://www.torrossa.com/gs/462198

of emergency, when the boss is absent and the ranks are destabilized, but they are replaced as soon as competent men can take up the reins[277]. This approach underlines that women, just like reservists army are: skilled, trained and motivated; efficient in performing their traditional roles but also available if the situation requires their direct intervention; willing to use violence; and aware of all the inside informations and sworn to secrecy[278]. As a consequence, even if in Camorra women can reach leadership positions and are respected by affiliates, this cannot be considered as a true form of gender parity because women are exploited by the clans only in certain situations and at specific conditions.

To resume, Camorra's women represent an exception from the mafia's traditional gender roles, as they have been able to acquire always more independence, power and recognition, breaking away from the subordinate model and affirming their position through actions as brutal as those traditionally attributed to men. However, the paradox is represented by the fact that, by their apparent emancipation, women have contributed to defend a strong traditional male phenomenon, the organized crime that seeks to control politics, economy and society and to block the modernization of Italy and thus, the possibility for women to reach a substantial equality.

4.2 Female figures who have contested their gender roles

There are cases of women inside Camorra that have refused their traditional roles and have managed to reach high positions, showing the same violence and brutality that, for many centuries, have been attributed only to men. Some of them have represented a turning point in criminal organization's structure, creating precedents that have made both the world of legality and illegality aware that the role played by women is anything but marginal.

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[277] Felia Allum, and Irene Marchi. "Analyzing the role of women in Italian mafias: the case of the Neapolitan Camorra." *Qualitative Sociology* 41 (2018): 361-380.[last access 24 January 2024] https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-018-9389-8
[278] Idem:pp.387-389

One of the first well-known woman of Camorra was Assunta Maresca, called "*Pupetta*" (little doll), because of her beauty. She was born in Castellammare , a town south of Naples, in 1935. Her father was a smuggler, while her uncle was a famous *camorrista* who controlled their hometown and Maresca family was very active in contraband cigarettes. In 1955 she married Pasquale Simonetti, who also dealt in smuggled goods. Just only two months after their marriage, Simonetti was shot dead by a hit-man, Gaetano Orlando, commissioned by the rival criminal Antonio Esposito. Maresca, who was six months pregnant, killed Esposito with a gun. She was arrested and sentenced to 18 years' imprisonment[279]. Although she was punished by law, Maresca was celebrated by newspapers, who called her "Diva of Crime" and celebrated her devotion[280]. Although the case of *"Pupetta"* passed to the news as a mere passionate murder and the attitude of media was to represent the woman according to patriarchal gender canons, for the first time the case brought to light the true role of women in Camorra as independent and conscious subjects, who were able to take decisions and use the same violence exercised by men. When Maresca was released, she continued to be involved in criminal activities with her new husband, the boss Ammaturo, and became known as "Madame Camorra" in criminal circles. She was arrested again in 1982 and she denied her involvement in crimes for all her life. By contrast, her husband became a collaborator of justice and confessed many of his crimes, something which was unacceptable for Maresca, very faithful to the Camorra law of silence[281]. Also in this occasion the figure of Maresca is striking because media and journals spread the image of women as vulnerable and therefore more willing to become justice collaborator. Despite the death of her husband and one of her son, both caused by Camorra, Maresca always decided not to speak, placing mafia's code of honour over her life and family and showing the world that women cannot be defined as an homogenous and stereotypical group,   as vulnerable and submissive figure

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[279] Percy A. Allum, *Il potere a Napoli: fine di un lungo dopoguerra*. Vol. 27. L'ancora del Mediterraneo, (2001):45-48.[last access 26 January 2024] https://books.google.com
[280] Marcella Marmo, "La rima amore/onore di Pupetta Maresca: una primadonna nella camorra degli anni cinquanta." *La rima amore/onore di Pupetta Maresca* (2010): 113-143. [last access 26 January 2024] https://www.torrossa.com/gs/2462176
[281] Raffaella Monia Calia, "Gomorra: Cento Modi per uccidere." *Quaderni d'altri Tempi 56* (2015):234-236.[last access 26 January 2024] https://www.iris.unina.it/handle/11588/820832

dependent from their husbands. Maresca represents an example but it is not an exception.

Another fundamental female figure is Rosetta Cutolo, sister of Raffaele Cutolo, the founder and head of New Organized Camorra(NCO) , which became the most powerful criminal group of Naples in 1980s. She was the power behind her brother for over 15 years and she was able to expertly manage NCO with great genius and strategy. While her brother created scandal by giving interviews and making speeches in the courtroom, she maintained a low profile and she managed all the clan activities from a castle in a remote village of Abruzzo region[282]. She was able to negotiate with South American cocaine bosses and she participated at high-level meetings with representatives of Sicilian Cosa Nostra. Rosetta was never recognised by NCO members as the leader of the organization, but all affiliates obeyed her orders and consulted her to mediate conflicts. She was arrested in 1993 after twelve years of hiding and she always denied her involvement in criminal activities[283]. Miss Cutolo became a symbol of Camorra as she was able to manage relationships with many male leaders from the most important criminal organizations around the world that, despite not accepting her officially, always respected her authority and great ability of management. However, even though Rosetta Cutolo was the real leader of her clan, she remained hidden in a lower position than his brother, considered the real boss and the main actor.

Very different is the story of Maria Licciardi, also known as "the Godmother", one of the most powerful woman, not only of Camorra but of all criminal organizations' history. She was able to reach the most important positions and to manage national and international trafficking, bringing evolutions that have revolutionized Camorra's activities forever. She was the head of Licciardi clan and one of the most powerful bosses of Camorra of the city of Naples in 1990s. She rose to power and took over as head of the clan of Secondigliano (a neighbourhood of Naples) after her two brothers and her husband were arrested. She was the first female figure who

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[282] G. Bellafante, "Godsister." *Time* 141.8 (1993): 75-78. [last access 26 January 2024] https://elibrary.ru/ 1804743

[283] Simone Ombuen, and Sergio Terracina. "Napoli terremotata." *Napoli terremotata* (1993): 55-57. [last access 26 January 2024] https://www.torrossa.com/gs/4420076

was officially recognised as a boss in a Camorra clan and she introduced many revolutionary changes to the criminal activities. For instance, she broke the Camorra code of conduct by introducing the prostitution trade, which was previously prohibited[284]. She also brought together a coalition of twenty criminal groups in order to expand the control of the city's most lucrative rackets, from drugs to cigarettes and she expanded Camorra's relations with other criminal organizations in Europe and America. the boss was described by other former affiliates, then witnesses of justice, as cold and calculating, but she also generated a great amount of goodwill among the local population of Secondigliano, as she offered social security benefits in a neighbourhood of extreme poverty, where the state was perceived as indifferent and far from people needs. Licciardi became a fugitive and in 2001 she bombed the office of a police's authority as a warning to stop the investigation against her and her clan. By the way, she was arrested after few months and then released in 2009. After the release, she continued her criminal activities before being arrested again in 2021, alleged to have been running extortion rackets as head of Licciardi Camorra criminal association[285].

Another story equally relevant, although antithetical involves another famous woman of Camorra, Anna Carrino. She was for several years at the side of her husband, the boss Francesso Bidognetti, who was at the head of the Casalesi clan. She had an active role as she delivered the "*pizzini*" to and from prison. She also took over the leadership and led the clan while the boss was incarcerated. By the way, differently from many other mafia women who respected the law of silence, when she was arrested in 2007, she decided to become justice collaborator by revealing many secrets of one of the most powerful Camorra's clan. Her decision came after the suspect that her husband no longer trusted her and planned to kill her. For revenge, but also for her personal protection, she collaborated with authorities and she provided informations that led to the arrest of 52 affiliates in 2008. She became known to the news for bringing her story not only in the courtrooms but also to the screens, and for revealing many dark aspects of Camorra

[284] Felia Allum, "Tra struttura e agenzia: un'analisi della camorra." *Tra struttura e agenzia: un'analisi della-camorra*(2006):1000-1024.[last-access-26-Januar-2024] https://www.torrossa.com/gs/2214653
[285] Idem n.273: p. 1029

organization and activity. She was one of the first criminal woman in Italy to have received this media attention and she has always showed herself as a person aware of her actions and crimes and certainly not passive and submissive to male authority.

What emerges from these biographies, which appears so different from each other, is that all the women presented have broken gender rules imposed not only by criminal organizations, but especially by a patriarchal society that wanted them subordinated, innocent, victims. Their actions and attitudes have forever changed the ideal about women in mafia, bringing to light a phenomenon hidden for many years.

4.3 Media's representation of Camorra's women

Today Camorra is undergoing a major change. There has been an increase in the visibility of women and on their roles not only as supporters but also as leaders in the criminal scene. According to Massari "Rather than changes in the role of women, we could talk about changing visibility or invisibility, depending on the historical moments and characteristics of women[286]". The changing of perspective on the representation of women by media can be highlighted by analysing press media's narrative on two women in two different historical moment: Assunta Maresca, called "*Pupetta*" in 1960s and Rosetta Cutolo in 1990s.

For many decades, media and newspapers have tended not to include women in stories about criminality and, if it was done, their name was never reported and they were referred to as "mothers" or "wives" of criminal men. Moreover, they were described as supportive and passive figures and as victims forced by their gender roles to support their men in their criminal choices. A striking case was that of Assunta Maresca, accused of the murder of the killer of her husband, who was a Camorra boss. For the description of her trial in 1959, newspapers emphasized her physical aspect and her body's characteristics, so much that she was rarely

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[286] Monica Massari, "E la giustizia che mette in mezzo le donne: il carcere, la mafia, le donne." *È la giustizia che mette in mezzo le donne* (2010): 79-93.[last access 25 January 2024] https://www.torrossa.com/gs/2462168

mentioned with her name, but media referred to her with her nickname "*Pupetta*", to emphasize her beauty. Another important feature underlined by the press was that she committed crimes because she had an absolute loyalty to her husband, and her offence was described as a gesture of love and romanticism towards him[287]. Newspapers reported her behaviour during the trial, emphasizing the fact that she almost cried in several occasions, "finally" showing her feminine weakness, as a symbol of the fact that behind her strong in appearance, she was just a "woman"[288]. Despite the big national coverage of the news, Assunta's criminal actions were minimized and placed in the background of narration. What the press and, later, also the film industry, tried to do was to put this gender-norm-challenging lady in an acceptable patriarchal frame, trying to highlight that, despite her masculine actions, her beauty, her loyalty and her weakness brought her back to her gender role.

The situation was different with the description of Rosetta Cutolo's case thirty years later. She was defined as a boss of Camorra and the brain of the clan and her criminal activities were listed and reported by all mass media and newspapers[289]. Some "de-gendering" characteristics related to Rosetta figure were underlined by journals and movies, such as her ability to coordinate and manage the organization, her role of command and decision making on all the aspect of criminality and even her violent actions. In this case, the press reported Rosetta's role without emphasizing her physical appearance or her romantic or feminine attitudes aimed at diminishing her power. For the first time, women invisible role was brought visible and this was not only the consequence of the increase of female figures in active positions inside organization, but also the effect of the new justice's collaborators law approved in 1982,by which many former affiliates revealed women involvement, previously neglected by both press and legal system. Since that moment, women role has been further investigated and many documentaries, movies and books have been produced, trying to understand the real contribution

[287] Idem 274 :123-128
[288] Silvia Pezzoli, and Beatriz Peña-Acuña. "Godmothers: Portraits From the Past of Two Distinct Camorra Women"," Madrinas: retratos narrativos del pasado de dos mujeres distintas de la Camorra." (2021): 1-24. .[last access 25 January 2024] https://www.scielo.cl/48672021000200031
[289] Idem n. 276

women bring in criminality. In recent TV series, for example, Camorra women challenge the dominant masculine ideal type. They are represented with no regards for the gender order as violent ladies not less dangerous than men[290].

I believe that the change of perspective in the public representation of Camorra women is fundamental for two aspects: first of all, it shows that they are actively involved in criminal activity and that their motivations are not always linked to love and family relations, but can also be the result of conscious choices that must be investigated and eventually judged by legal authorities; secondly, it highlights that the ideal of violence and brutality as male characteristics are the result of gender stereotypes that deviate from reality and, must be eliminated, in order to achieve a substantial gender equality.

4.4 Camorra's in present days and future evolutions

Camorra is a complex and powerful criminal organization with a significant impact on Italian society and politics. Through academic researches and media coverage, a greater understanding of its history, structure and impact has been developed and, along with it, a reduction of stereotypes related to women's role and activities. What emerges from the analysis of this chapter is that women are able to exercise a multiplicity of roles according to the context and the moment. "One day a victim and the next day a criminal" [291]said Peccia, to make understand the transition from the woman perceived as a victim of a criminal male figure and the "woman of honour". This shift can be explained by the fact that women in illegal ambiences reflect the economic and social changes of the context in which the criminal group develops and, in the case of Camorra, it precedes most of the evolution of gender relations that have been then affirmed in the Neapolitan society . Moreover,

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[290] Giuseppe Balirano, "De-Queering Proxemics in the Screen Adaptation of Camorra Male Dyads: A Multimodal Prosody Analysis." *De-Queering Proxemics in the Screen Adaptation of Camorra Male Dyads: a Multimodal Prosody Analysis* (2017): 60-85. [last access 25 January 2024] https://www.torrossa.com/gs/4203076

[291] Tiziano Peccia, "Relations de genre dans les organisations mafieuses italiennes: de l'invisibilité des mères et épouses à "l'agentivité" des femmes." *Seculo XXI* 8.1 (2018): 341.[last access 29 January 2024] https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Tiziano-Peccia-2/publication/329202495_Relations_de_genre_dans_les_organisations_mafieuses_italiennes_de_l'invisibilite_des_meres_et_epouses_a_l'agentivite_des_femmes/299bf14088194833

Camorra has been demonstrated to be a flexible organization, less related to traditions and more interested in a type of structure efficient and effective than other Mafia-type groups. By the way, in present day it cannot be said that gender discrimination and gender roles do not exist in Camorra. Therefore, women can acquire positions of leaderships but, as highlighted by Ingranscì, the power is delegated and temporary, limited to moment of crises and lasts as long as a man boss affirms a more stable authority[292].

I believe that, in its future evolution, Camorra's power management will be less and less dependent from a question of sex and more related to charisma and will, to the personal characteristics of leaders and to their ability of management of the internal and external relations of criminal organizations. For this reason, women will have more opportunities to compete on an equal footing with men, in conditions of more meritocracy. Another evolution will be in the deployment of violence. Today, even though women bosses can order violent actions, they cannot be involved in the actual execution. There are cases of women affiliates who deal with brutal actions against offenders, but in these case they are defined as masculine with male attributions and, for this reason, they are an exception with respect to the classic female figure[293]. By the way, I think that in the future this type of differentiation between male and female tasks will be less relevant and both women and men affiliated will be employed in certain activities on the basis of their competence and skills. Only in this way Camorra can have the possibility to survive against the threats exercised both by legal authorities, that at national and international level are always more efficient in the fight against organized crime, and by other criminal organizations in the illegal market, which are more competitive than traditional organizations for their ability to evolve and adapt to the social, economic and political changes. A future without women is a future in which Camorra will not survive and the willingness of women's role development is an essential condition for it. At the same time, understanding the gender dynamics is

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[292] Ombretta Ingrascì, "La violenza delle mafie. Pratiche, significati e conseguenze." Rivista di Studi e Ricerche sulla criminalità organizzata 4.4 (2018): 90-98.[last access 29 January 2024] https://riviste.unimi.it/index.php/cross/article/view/11280

[293] Giovanni Fiandaca, ed., *Women and the mafia: Female roles in organized crime structures.* Vol. 5. Springer Science & Business Media, (2007).[last access 29 January 2024] https://books.google.com

crucial for authorities to effectively and definitively eradicate transnational organized crime.

CONCLUSION

A number of conclusions emerge from the above analysis, which has attempted to examine the role played by women in transnational criminal organizations, according to the different economic, social and cultural context of reference. The main intent has been to break down gender stereotypes that depict women as totally passive to crime or, whether involved in criminal actions, only motivated by reasons of love or blood ties with male affiliates. For many years, these prejudices have influenced not only the perception of public opinions, but also of scholars, legislators and jurists, making women's involvement a dark and unexplored area of organized crime. By providing a multicultural feminist approach, the present research has tried to underline the main similarities and differences that emerge between the major transnational criminal groups around the world, focusing on the role of women and their participation in criminal activities. What has emerged is that women condition varies greatly on the base of internal and external influences on organizations, but also that women are always present and perform essential tasks in maintaining and perpetuating criminal culture. A special analysis has been dedicated to Italian mafia criminal organizations and in particular to Neapolitan Camorra, in which women, more than in other organized groups, have acquired leading positions, despite obstacles related to the traditional code of honor typical in mafia. Some famous cases related to female figures who have who have contested their gender expectations, have contributed to modify the imaginary of female offenders not only within Camorra groups, but in the wider illegal and legal contexts.

On the theme of women's involvement, fundamental elements can be highlighted. First of all, the lack of in-depth historical researches about women in criminal fields resulted in the misleading observation that in the past only few women occupied top positions in organized crime and that their motivations were always linked to personal ties with affiliated men, in order to perform their role as mothers, daughters, sisters and wife . However, what has emerged by studies conducted in recent decades is a very different reality: in fact, not only women have always been involved in criminal activities in an active way, but this phenomenon is

widespread, as demonstrated by the analysis of the major criminal international groups. This is true, even though differences were and still are present in gender roles divisions according to the characteristic of the specific organization and the context in which it develops[294]. Therefore, women have always occupied both passive- subordinate roles and more active and powerful ones, according to the level of freedom and autonomy given to them in different contests. Secondly, it can be affirmed that the modernization of society offers women motivations and ambitions to participate more actively in both legal and illegal economies. Evidences show that, today, women not only can reach leaderships roles, but they also have the power to influence and shape how criminal organizations conduct their activities. Their increasing participation in crime reflects their evolving roles and experiences in society. As women gain more social and economic freedoms, criminal opportunities increase. In addition to the outside context, also the changing structures inside criminal organizations, always less hierarchical and more network-based, provide women with new criminal markets and opportunities of "career". They can make their way starting from below positions as foot soldiers and then become managers and leaders, not only by exploiting their personal ties with male affiliates, but also through their personal abilities and their skills. However, women in organized crime cannot be considered as a homogenous group, because differences arise, according to the multicultural feminist approach, on the base of the specific social, cultural, economic and political characteristics of the area in which women operate[295]. If from one side some groups are more willing to give them space of actions, others are less open to change and maintain the original patriarchal structures. By the way, in all groups women have fundamental tasks to play, if not at the front line, at least as bearers of criminal culture and values and as supporters and collaborators. What can be said in general

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[294] Jana Arsovska, and Felia Allum. "Introduction: Women and transnational organized crime." *Trends-in-Organized-Crime-*17(2014):1-15.[last-access-2-February-2024] https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12117

[295] Dina Siegel, "Women in transnational organized crime." *Trends in Organized Crime* 17 (2014): 52-65.[last access 2 February 2024] https://idp.springer.com/authorize/ link.springer.com/article/10.1007/

is that, even in cases in which women have reached the same positions occupied by men, this does not mean that substantial equality has been achieved inside the organizations. Often women cannot even become official affiliates and a transversal feature to many groups is that they reach leadership tasks only in periods of crisis, for instance after the arrest and the hiding of a male boss. For this reason, their power is limited in time and lasts as long as another man occupies that position. Moreover, according to the code of values of many criminal organizations, women must adhere to defined roles in family as mothers and devoted wives and, in some groups, they are also required to represent, through their physical appearance, the power of their men[296]. Gender roles in criminal organizations are still well defined and are rarely disregarded by both men and women.

Then, it is still difficult for national and international authorities to treat the phenomenon of organized crime without failing into gender stereotypes and prejudices that consider women as victims and men as offenders and this prevents the full persecution of perpetrators. This idea is further fuelled by the public perception of women involved in judicial cases. Media and press usually highlight women's emotionsin tribunals, they describe their physical appearance and they tend to justify violent actions committed by female criminals as acts reducible to amorous passions towards their husbands, sons or fathers, but never driven by willingness to commit a brutality in the name of an economic return or power as happen with men[297]. It results that gender is still influential in shaping perceptions of women and their offending behaviors and that criminality and violence are still related to masculine domain. The consequence is that sex representation affects national and international norms, policies and adjudications dealing with organized crime and that legal authorities are inherently biased[298]. The lack of a

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[296] M. Jaraba, The nexus of women and 'Clan Crime': unravelling the dynamics and constraints. *Trends Organ Crim* (2024).[last access 4 June 2024] https://doi.org/10.1007/s12117-024-09530-8
[297] Nienke Grossman, "Sex representation on the bench and the legitimacy of International Criminal Courts." *International Criminal Law Review* 11.3 (2011): 643-653.[last access 2 February 2024] https://brill.com/view/journals/icla/11/3/article-p643_21.xml
[298] Natalie Hodgson, "Gender justice or gendered justice? Female defendants in international criminal tribunals." *Feminist Legal Studies* 25.3 (2017): 337-357.[last access 2 February 2024] https://idp.springer.com/authorize/link.springer.com/article/10.1007

gender perspective requires to be fulfilled and a multicultural feminist approach must be integrated to enable an integrated understanding and an efficient response to the organized crime phenomenon[299]. Other than this, an element of analysis concerns women exiting criminal groups. What emerged is that women who leave criminal groups and become justice collaborators not only leave behind the criminality, but often their own family and, in extreme cases, also their children. They are isolated and condemned by relatives and are often victims of ruthless revenge. In these cases, authorities, that should provide protection and safety, are often incompetent to defend them and the cases involving repentant women killed by criminal organizations are still too high. For this reason, both men and women are prevented from denouncing criminal groups and prefer to turn to illegal actors rather than trust the authorities. This is one of the major consequences of the lack of adequate plans and policies orientated to gender analysis by the legal systems.

Despite the shortcoming, theoretical researches on the role of women in criminality have evolved in the last twenty years, as well as chronicle cases dealing with criminal women, bringing the light on a phenomenon submerged and ignored for many years. However, data gathering, action plans and normative definitions, still lack of a gender perspective and are therefore partial and ineffective. To tackle the issue, in 2020 OSCE members drafted the "OSCE Tirana Ministerial Council Declaration" that raised gender awareness and promoted gender mainstreaming in in the field of TOC as a priority strategy to fight criminal organizations. To address the gender gap, OSCE Secretariat's Transnational Threats Department (TNDT) prepared a comprehensive assessment on the role of women, based on data provided by criminal justice practitioners and civil society across OSCE area. What emerged is that: if rom one side women are often exploited and victimized, on the other they can also be relevant actors. The failure to recognize women's agency hampers the ability to combat TOC and support women that leave organized crime groups, as they are often the victims of revenge of criminal groups

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[299] Jana Arsovska, and Popy Begum. "From West Africa to the Balkans: Exploring women's roles in transnational organized crime." *Trends in organized crime* 17 89-109. (2014) [last access 6 June 2024]:. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12117-013-9203-7

and the authorities fail to protect them. The recommendations drawn by the OSCE meeting should be applied by all states in order to prevent and disrupt organized crime. The main strategies include: increase awareness and knowledge among criminal justice policy making and practitioners; enhance their capacities to employ gender-sensitive approaches to investigate and prosecute organized crime actors; strengthen gender-sensitive prevention efforts tailored to the specific needs of men and women in each context; promote gender-inclusive organized crime exit programs for men and women; build effective partnerships with stakeholders to collect data and exchange experiences and good practices[300].

Apart from this, effectively addressing the gender dimensions of TOC represents a complex challenge that require also a more general plan of actions and policies that involve the society as a whole, because the gender discrimination is still a relevant issuein many states and involve social, cultural, economic aspects that have to been addressed in order to provide a real change in all areas, included legal system and justice.

Recent researches and studies have reinterpreted previous analysis, using a gender perspective and have brought out that organized crime history is full of examples of women who have struggled with greater strength and determination that men to reach positions forbidden to them, paving the way for a change that has conditioned not only the criminal world, but the whole society in an irreversible way. For all these reasons, I strongly believe that the objective of substantial equality of women in society will be achieved not only by recognizing the same opportunity to men and women in economic, social, cultural and political fields , but the gender gap will be reduced also through the demolition of stereotypes and prejudices that prevent to attribute to female figures the ability tochoose not only the good but also the evil.

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