

Organized crime

Literature



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Organized Crime Organized crime is a concept that has been much romanticized by popular media concepts and has become a long-standing American interest throughout the 20th and now 21st century. With its popular depiction in the media, many individuals lack any actual knowledge of the real inter-workings of the mafia. In reality the mafia is a complex and oftentimes gritty business organizations that lacks the popular appeal of television and film. This essay considers my own impressions upon entering this course of the mafia, compares these impressions to the depiction of the mafia in the readings, and finally considers characteristics I associate with organized crime. Upon entering the course I had a number of developed perceptions of organized crime. In defining organized crime, in large part I recognize that my perceptions were established by the movies. I have been a long-time fan of mafia movies. Beginning with the Godfather, Goodfellas, and the Sopranos, my understanding of organized crime has been almost predominantly formed by these media presentations. In terms of organized crime then, I understand it as consisting of families of individuals who have banded together and sought means of avoiding laws to gain wealth. I believe that in accomplishing these goals they oftentimes resort to murder. It's also my understanding of organized crime that it is highly centered around family elements and that individuals who lack an Italian background are not allowed into the mafia. It's also my understanding that in large part organized crime is contained within environments that are generally metropolitan. In these regards, major areas for organized crime are New York City, and Chicago, Illinois. When considering the readings in relation to my understanding of organized crime, I recognize that there are many elements that are different. Perhaps the major elements are in terms

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of mafia structure. While I recognized that there was a highly delineated structure, the readings illustrated these elements in more depth. I also learned a number of historical elements related to the mafia that I had not been previously aware. In these regards, I came to realize that the mafia was much more complex than simply Al Capone and John Gotti, but also included a large and complex variety of individuals involved in organized crime efforts. I recognize that there are a number of characteristics associated with organized crime elements. Perhaps the most obvious such characteristic is that the individuals involved in the organized crime ring are united through a specific ethnic connection. While it is predominantly understood that the major organized crime organizations are Italian, there are also Irish and Hispanic organized crime units (Raab 2005). Indeed, where any concentrated ethnic group of individuals exists, there is generally a reflected organized crime unit. Another prominent characteristic of organized crime members is a view of morality that is in contrast to the main socially held view, some might argue it is an entirely amoral. It seems that rather than adhering to these social laws, these individuals have sought to develop a means of existence on their own standards and are willing to risk imprisonment to achieve these ends. Another characteristic of organized crime members is that they are generally linked to metropolitan cities. It seems that the many varied aspects of city life make it such that organized crime is able to develop a niche market and establish means of subsistence largely without being confronted by law enforcement. Metropolitan areas also make it possible for these organizations to achieve substantially more income than the lower populated suburban or rural areas. Another characteristic of organized crime is a willingness to resort to murder to achieve business

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goals. Indeed, this aspect is perhaps the one element that the media has focused on most intently, as it adds an element of excitement and sensation to their day to day criminal operations. Major mafia historical events are also marked by mass killings or gang wars that have occurred. For instance, Al Capone's St. Valentine's Day Massacre resulted in significant law enforcement measures being taken in Chicago (Arlacchi 1988). Later day mafia wars in the 1970s and 1980s with have also received considerable media attention. In conclusion, it's clear that while the media has depicted a popular depiction of organized crime and mafia existence, in reality there is a much more grittier depiction of mafia existence. This essay has demonstrated my original impressions of mafia life and contrasted this with the understanding I have gained through the course readings. In large part I have gained a deeper understanding of the historical and structural dimensions of mafia life. Finally the essay considered characteristic I associate with mafia life. References Arlacchi, Pino (1988). Mafia Business. The Mafia Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Oxford: Oxford University Press Raab, Selwyn (2005). Five Families. The Rise, Decline, and Resurgence of America's Most Powerful Mafia Empires, New York: Thomas Dunne Books