

Counterculture analysis: al capone



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Al Capone was one of the most notorious leaders of a criminal syndicate in the 20th century (Biography). So how can Al Capone's reputation as a gangster be interpreted as a counter culture? Firstly, a counter culture is a sub-culture that rejects the culture of the larger society (Thomas). Al Capone is notorious for his smuggling of alcohol during the Prohibition era (Biography). Establishing himself and the Chicago mafia as a counterculture (Biography).

Alphonse Capone was an Italian immigrant living in New York at a young age (Biography). He dropped out of school during the sixth grade and joined Johnny Torrio's street gang in New York City (FBI). After Johnny Torrio moved to Chicago Al Capone followed him there assuming the role as his right hand man (FBI). Torrio taught Capone the importance of an opulent and respectable front while running the businesses behind the scenes (Biography). Eventually Torrio retired giving the lead way for Al Capone to take charge after already establishing a fearsome reputation (FBI). It was the beginning of prohibition during the time Torrio retired and Capone took charge smuggling alcohol into the city conceiving the genesis of Capone's fortunes (Biography).

As a sign of his position Capone never walked around armed, he instead traveled with two bodyguards at all times (Biography). Capone eventually gained office in Cicero City after threatening voters with violence and kidnapped election workers (Biography). After the assassination of Capone's mentor Johnny Torrio, Capone gained full titles as head of the mob, by

owning Torrio's nightclubs, whorehouses, breweries, and gambling dens and attaining a government position (Biography). After gaining power Capone was always out, unlike other gangsters, Capone was always well dressed and wanted to be viewed as a businessman (Biography). His bootlegging of whiskey and alcohol was making him rich, but a few incidents including the Valentines Massacre and the Adonis Club Massacre, Capone was blamed for these incidents but was never incarcerated due to lack of evidence (Biography). Finally, in October 1931 Capone was charged with tax evasion, but was never charged for smuggling alcohol (Berger). The Jury found him guilty on two misdemeanor and three felony counts (Berger). Capone was sent to Alcatraz until 1940 when he was released (Biography).

The sociological perspective is a view that involves looking at social life in a scientific systematic way (Thomas). This view assists you in identifying the fact that all people are social beings, in finding a balance between personal desires and demands of your social environment, and in viewing your own life within a large social and historical context (Thomas). Using the sociological perspective one can develop a sociological imagination; which is the ability to understand your place in society and how your actions affect others in your society (Thomas). The actions of this counter cultural group has affected the American government immensely. Laws were changed due to the actions of the Chicago Mafia and Al Capone. By continuously smuggling alcohol into the cities of the United States and making a fortune for themselves, an amendment to the constitution was formulated in order to negate the amendment prohibiting alcohol (Constitution). This brought back the ability to sell liquor in the United States once again (Constitution). Not

only that but they broke other important laws that brought attention to the government and fear to society (FBI).

Ethnocentrism is the belief that one's culture is superior than other cultures (Thomas). Ethnocentrism is imminent in the larger society of America who restricts the sale of alcohol. Where Al Capone was smuggling and selling alcohol to the society that forbid the action to occur (Biography). The larger society of America established a law that prohibited the sale of alcohol in the United States (Constitution). Since the subculture, the Chicago Mafia, did not agree with the amendment they decided to sell the liquor illegally going against the norms of the larger society (Biography). So the larger society found this group as a counter culture for not only bootlegging alcohol, but for breaking other laws and going against other norms as well. They have also murdered, ran a whorehouse, and frequently gambled (FBI). These actions have defied the laws that the larger society created and due to the attempt of their incarceration found themselves to be a more superior culture.

Cultural relativism is judging a person with the standards of that person's culture not your own culture (Thomas). I believe that the Chicago Mafia acts the way they do because of the 18th amendment which prohibits the sale of alcohol (Constitution). Not only did they disagree with this they saw the opportunity to make profits off of this prohibition; which seemed to be quite fruitful considering Capone made millions of dollars (Biography). Due to the defying of these laws the U. S. government, or larger society, they attempted to incarcerate the people behind these crimes (FBI). Which brought on more crime from the Chicago Mafia involving murders and shootouts with cops (Biography). One of these shootouts resulted in the death of one of Capone's

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brother which may have affected Capone's choices of action during this time period (Biography). So due to the laws of the larger society, the Chicago Mafia made actions that defied these laws due to disagreement, desperation, and a chance at opulence (Biography).

Personally I agree with the philosophy of the sale of alcohol; although I do not agree with the direction of the actions that the Chicago Mafia underwent. I agree that the ethnocentric view from the larger society possessed its flaws through the prohibition of alcohol which could have made the government money instead Al Capone took advantage and made the profits for himself (FBI). I do not agree with the actions Capone took to have the ability to sell liquor (FBI). Some of those involving murders including some massacres (Biography). With a sociological imagination one can understand the emotions of the society Capone effected through his actions. Although by understanding cultural relativism one can understand Capone's actions which involved the smuggling of alcohol into American cities (Biography). Through these sociological understandings one can understand the actions of the counter culture and the emotions and reactions of the larger society.

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