

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Why temporality matters in collective resistance: Shifting civic norms in a post-traumatic society

Baris Cayli Messina 

School of Social and Political Sciences,
University of Lincoln, Lincoln, UK

Correspondence

Baris Cayli Messina, School of Social and
Political Sciences, University of Lincoln,
Lincoln LN6 7ST, UK.
Email: bcaylimessina@lincoln.ac.uk

Abstract

What is the role of civic norms for social change after traumatic events, and how do those norms shape collective resistance? The present study seeks to address this urgent query by examining Sicilians' culture war against the mafia. Based on rigorous ethnographic research over a period of 7 years (2016–2023), an extensive database was created, which included 77 commemorative events, a guided city tour, 54 interviews with antimafia activists, and 89 audio–visual recordings totaling 1768 min. I introduce two analytical concepts, “informative rituals” and “transmissive rituals,” that offer a new perspective on how activists leverage the civic norms of social bonds to realize their objectives. I argue that shifting civic norms in a post-traumatic society is not only driven by collective resistance but also requires significant time in the presence of an oppressive force. This study proposes that, for a socially traumatized community attempting to shift civic norms, prolonged and strenuous endeavors are required in order to thoroughly permeate those norms among the general public. The findings demonstrate that the consolidation of civic norms within post-traumatic societies is highly contingent upon its temporal context and sustainability, which explains why culture wars frequently necessitate a long-term communal investment.

KEYWORDS

civic norms, collective resistance, culture wars, mafia, rituals

INTRODUCTION

September 3, 2022, marked the poignant 40th anniversary of General Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa's assassination—a solemn date etched into Palermo's collective consciousness. His appointment as prefect, amid the tumultuous second mafia war, was tragically cut short by an act of violence by the mafia that sent shockwaves across Sicily, embedding a profound sense of outrage and mourning. On Via Isidoro Carini, where the 1982 atrocity occurred, I joined a crowd of mourners that included politicians, police and military personnel, and Palermo residents. Young and old alike displayed a tactile homage to the General's unwavering fight for justice. This was no mere

ritual of mourning; it was an embodiment of common resolve—a collective memory and a steadfast defiance against the shadows that once claimed him. This commemoration transcended personal loss, signifying a communal vow to uphold his legacy of resistance. This gathering transcends being a simple expression of sorrow; rather, it represents a shared commitment to sustain the heritage of defiance that General Dalla Chiesa and similar figures have sowed. It is here, in the shared glances and the quiet solidarity, that the essence of remembrance transforms into an act of collective resistance.

This vivid account, which begins the article, is one of the episodes I encountered during my ethnographic research, and it depicts not a bygone conflict, but a vivid, ongoing struggle against

This is an open access article under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) License, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

© 2024 The Authors. *Sociological Forum* published by Wiley Periodicals LLC on behalf of Eastern Sociological Society.

the mafia's influence in Sicily. Since Italy's unification, Sicilians have united in opposition to the mafia's oppressive norms, persisting through the decades (Cayli, 2014, 2017; Lupo, 2004; Pezzino, 1989; Pickering-lazzi, 2015; Santino, 2009; Schneider, 2018). Over the past 30 years, this resistance has intensified, manifesting in a variety of forms, from public commemorations of the mafia's victims to the propagation of antiracket declarations by businesses (Dickie, 2015; Schneider & Schneider, 2005). Activists work tirelessly to craft new cultural norms, fostering resilience through educational initiatives and social activism, countering the mafia's legacy of violence, intimidation, and mistrust (dalla Chiesa, 2014, 2020, 2021; Grasso & La Volpe, 2012; Rosati, 2014; Santoro & Sassatelli, 2001; Schneider & Schneider, 1994). These efforts are the lifeblood of Sicily's culture war against the mafia, a fight that continues to evolve and adapt to the ever-changing tactics of the mafia. The Sicilian resistance against the mafia represents a deep-seated cultural struggle, one that is embedded in the island's history and collective conscience. It is fueled by a collective memory and the honoring of figures like General Dalla Chiesa. Yet, our grasp on how social norms develop in Sicily's post-traumatic society is still emerging. While antimafia efforts have been well-documented, the nuances of norm evolution and community interaction in this sensitive local context are less uncovered. This study seeks to bridge that gap by engaging with protests, interviewing activists, and observing participants at antimafia events, shedding light on the complex processes of norm formation in Sicily's ongoing battle against the mafia.

In the realm of cultural resistance, this study introduces two pivotal ritual forms: informative and transmissive. Informative rituals serve as educational forums, detailing the historical underpinnings of opposition to systemic wrongs. They aim to equip communities with an in-depth understanding of their resistance's roots and goals. In contrast, transmissive rituals engage on an emotional level, spurring collective action and cementing shared norms through performative expression. While informative rituals construct the intellectual framework for resistance, transmissive rituals channel this knowledge into active societal change. This research underscores the importance of time in solidifying new civic norms and sustaining resistance, particularly against entities like the mafia, highlighting the role of collective memory and ritual persistence in cultural struggles.

THEORIZING CIVIC NORMS AND COLLECTIVE RESISTANCE IN POST-TRAUMATIC SOCIETIES THROUGH ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

Contemporary ethnographic research places a significant emphasis on delineating the causal pathways that precipitate societal transformations. This investigative paradigm sheds light on communal norms by dissecting the environments in which societal narratives take shape (Marcus, 2021; Small, 2013; Tavory & Timmermans, 2013; Yi'En, 2014). Mathuria (2024) draws attention to the pervasive

influence of conflict within both the storytelling and the tangible milieu of Belfast, shaping the lived experience of its inhabitants. Through an ethnographic exploration centered on narrative construction and spatial dynamics, we gain insights into the personal narratives of resistance, the foundational elements of conflict, and the emergent collective drive for societal change. When ethnography is interwoven with the study of collective memory, a holistic vista on social evolution emerges, binding discrete personal stories and community narratives to broader societal challenges and reformative aspirations. This conceptualization of memory transcends a mere archival function; it actively forges identities and spurs communities toward envisaged changes (Closer, 1992; Halbwachs, 1992). The interplay of narrative discourse and historical engagement is crucial to collective recollection (Wertsch, 2002). In this respect, della Porta and Tufaro (2022) reveal how the confluence of emotions and nostalgia profoundly informs the collective psyche, nurturing a powerful mnemonic culture that saturates the social fabric.

The construct of cultural trauma is instrumental in molding the collective memory and identity within societies, driven by catastrophic events that etch deep scars on the communal psyche, altering its narrative fabric and future consciousness (Alexander, 2004). The mobilization against the Sicilian mafia serves as a stark illustration of such trauma's capacity to reshape society's collective memory—an area extensively analyzed in academic discourse (Alexander, 2013; Klein, 2021). The articulation of cultural trauma is inextricably linked to the cultural significance imbued in spaces, transforming sites of historical sorrow into hallowed grounds of collective memory (Davenport, 2019; Eyeran, 2004). Additionally, the fabric of resistance movements is woven through rituals and social interactions, channeling collective adversities into empowerment and spawning new social paradigms (McFarland, 2004). Törnqvist (2021) delves deeper into this dynamic with the notion of “communal intimacy,” delineating how routine interactions can birth a tapestry of solidarity and shared identity.

Scholars of social movements have long presented the significance of developing interpersonal relations and sense of group identity in order to catalyze mobilization (della Porta, 2020; Polletta & Jasper, 2001; Snow & McAdam, 2000). The formation of a collective agenda can incentivize people that are not involved in the same associations to participate in shared cultural activities (Melucci, 1996). In addition, Whittier (1997) maintained that it is through rituals that traditional symbolic codes can be disrupted and the dynamics of social conduct that are usually assumed to be unchangeable can be overturned. From this point of view, it is reasonable to assume that space gains a strategic role in the materialization of rituals and social interactions. Survivors of trauma utilize various strategies to engage with the social structure in order to achieve resilience, which necessitates a multifaceted approach that bounces back and forth to account for the complexities of these social interactions (Clark, 2021; Collins, 2004). Furthermore, when a traumatic event takes place, these communal moments are delineated by narratives that become instruments with which individuals give form to their shared motives of grief.

The imperative to tackle violence and foster resistance necessitates the cultivation of civic norms to facilitate collective transformation. While civic norms, the collective rules and values that societies hold, may not inherently secure unity (Chriss, 2007; Putnam, 2000), examining the narratives of trauma within their original contexts reveals the dynamic evolution of these norms. Such scrutiny enriches our understanding of social unity by assessing how narratives and the spaces they inhabit shape post-trauma society and contribute to the endorsement of norms. The notion of a “culture war” highlights the intense disputes over core values that reverberate through our social and political landscapes (Barker & Carman, 2012). In Sicily, the antimafia struggle draws upon historical suffering to consolidate a stance of cultural and ethical resistance, effectively casting its mission as a cultural conflict against the historical attributes of mafia culture (Cayli, 2012, 2013; Cayli Messina, 2024). Hence, the study of civic norms here underscores the essential role of communal engagement with shared mores and practices in promoting societal harmony and stability (Dalton, 2008; Interis, 2011).

The scholarly discourse on the interplay between cultural trauma, collective memory, and the evolution of community norms in the context of collective resistance remains underexplored, particularly in longitudinal ethnographic contexts. This research intervenes in this lacuna, investigating how the embodied practices of commemoration in Sicily, following the trauma of mafia violence, catalyze the reconfiguration of civic norms. By tracing the norm change process within a post-traumatic society, the study endeavors to elucidate the mechanisms through which shared experiences of grief and resistance coalesce into a transformative social force. It theoretically contributes a nuanced understanding of how norms are not only formed but also perpetuated or altered through collective narrative and spatial engagements, offering a comprehensive examination of the cultural and social reconstruction in the aftermath of trauma.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

Building on the insights of Glaeser (2005) and Katz (2019) regarding the contribution of ethnography to social theory, my study from March 2016 to May 2023 leveraged this method to dissect the complexities of society and the lasting influence of violence and crime. During a cumulative 32 months spent primarily in Palermo, Sicily, I observed the peak of mafia-related violence in the summer months and attended commemoration events. My fieldwork encompassed interactions with two principal groups: antimafia activists, who provided detailed narratives on the mafia's societal influence and their organized resistance, and bystanders—both local residents and foreigners (local and international tourists)—who engaged with antimafia activities from a distance. This rich dataset facilitated an exploration of the communicative exchanges and the strategic use of public spaces by activists, offering a clear view into the distinct roles that

emerge in the throes of this cultural conflict. To gather my data, I adopted a three-tiered strategy: (i) attendance at 77 commemorative events¹ organized for mafia victims,² combined with a guided city tour³; (ii) interviews conducted with 54 antimafia activists⁴ (Table 1); and (iii) 89 audio–visual recordings taken from antimafia events, with a combined duration of 1768 min.

The duration of the commemorative events ranged from 25 min to 8 h.⁵ The length of the interviews ranged from 35 min to 1.5 h, based on the open-ended questions. I used the QDA Miner software to examine in depth the raw data of transcribed text, amounting to 432,678 words. Antimafia gatherings ranged from peaceful demonstrations in opposition to the mafia to recreational activities, including sports and theater performances, to solemn gatherings held in memory of those victimized by the mafia violence. Upon concluding my data analysis, distinct emergent codes crystallized, delineating the relationship between narratives and space within the context of collective resistance. This research identifies two pivotal narrative codes: (i) epistemological narrative and (ii) behavior-focused narrative. These codes, integral to understanding the norm change process, operate within two corresponding spatial dimensions—(i) instrumental space and (ii) sentimental space—each playing a distinct role in the metamorphosis of civic norms.

The study identifies an epistemological narrative that seeks to reshape understanding of the mafia's history and the community's shared tragedies, aiming to lay a groundwork for civic norms. In contrast, the behavior-focused narrative prompts action, harnessing personal knowledge of historical trauma to fuel emotional engagement and collective resistance. Instrumental space complements the epistemological narrative, serving to disseminate knowledge and enhance public consciousness, thus supporting the educative thrust of antimafia efforts. Sentimental space, tied to the behavior-focused narrative, taps into the emotional resonance of locations to bolster the drive for action among those familiar with the mafia's impact.

This approach, intertwining narrative with space, delicately reshapes civic norms and solidifies collective resistance to the mafia. It revolves around two narrative forms: the epistemological narrative, which informs through instrumental space, and the behavior-focused narrative, which galvanizes action through sentimental space. These narratives give rise to two ritual types: informative rituals that educate on the mafia's history and motives for resistance,

¹Many antimafia activists I interviewed participate in commemorative activities despite lacking affiliation. Volunteers who are knowledgeable about antimafia events may assist in their organization. This compilation comprises solely official affiliations. The infighting among antimafia activists reveals their divergences.

²The commemorative events for mafia victims include magistrates, police officers, businesspeople, politicians, civilians, and a child (Claudio Domino).

³The city tour was organized on April 28, 2018 by Addiopizzo.

⁴Twenty-one of these activists are officially affiliated with Libera, Addiopizza, Agenda Rossa, City Angels, NoMA, and Centro Pio La Torre, while the remaining are not affiliated with any organization.

⁵The majority of events lasted approximately 1 h; however, some prominent commemorative events, such as the commemoration of antimafia magistrates Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino, who were assassinated by the mafia 2 months apart in 1992, lasted approximately 8 h.

TABLE 1 The names, professions, age, gender, and affiliation of interviewees.

	The names of interviewees	Profession (at the time of the interview)	Age range	Gender	Affiliation with an antimafia organization
1	Leoluca Orlando*	Mayor of the city of Palermo	75–80	Male	No official affiliation
2	Letizia Battaglia*	Photographer/Died on April 13, 2022	85–90	Female	No official affiliation
3	Pif* (Pierfrancesco Diliberto)	Film director/actor/writer	50–55	Male	One of the founders of NoMa project
4	Claudio Fava*	Head of the Antimafia Commission	50–60	Male	No official affiliation
5	Angelo Sicilia*	Artist	50–55	Male	No official affiliation
6	Umberto Santino*	Director of NoMafia Memorial	80–85	Male	Founder of the Centro Siciliano
7	Graziella Accetta*	Retired businesswoman	65–70	Female	No official affiliation
8	Giovanni Pappacurri*	Director of the Museum of Falcone and Borsellino	65–70	Male	No official affiliation
9	Vincenzo Agostino*	Activist	80–85	Male	No official affiliation
10	Augusta Schiera*	Activist/died on February 28, 2019	80–85	Female	No official affiliation
11	Vito Lucio Lo Monaco*	Director of the Centre of Pio La Torre	75–80	Male	Centre Pio La Torre
12	Giuseppe Castronovo*	Owner Tantestorie Libreria	50–54	Male	No official affiliation
13	Roberto Greco*	Journalist, editor	60–65	Male	No official affiliation
14	Daniele Marannone*	Director, Addiopizzo	35–40	Male	Addiopizzo
15	Rosanna Mellilli*	Teacher	50–55	Female	Agenda Rossa
16	Antonio Vassallo*	Freelancer	55–60	Male	No Mafia project in Capaci
17	Francesco Citarda*	Volunteer, Libera Terra	40–45	Male	Libera
18	Manuela Ruffino*	Teacher	40–45	Female	No official affiliation
19	Antonia Messina*	Vet	50–55	Female	No official affiliation
20	Stefania Ludicina*	Entrepreneur	45–50	Female	No official affiliation
21	Alessio Cicalone*	Social worker	45–50	Male	No official affiliation
22	Manuela Belcastro	Teacher	30–35	Female	No official affiliation
23	Enzo Agrigento	Student	25–30	Male	Fondazione Falcone
24	Giovanni Guzman	Student	20–25	Male	Agenda Rossa
25	Valeria Cicento	Researcher	35–40	Female	No official affiliation
26	Alba Messina	Student	20–25	Female	Libera
27	Stefania Federico	Artist	25–30	Female	No official affiliation
28	Roberto Milanese	Tour guide	35–40	Male	No official affiliation
29	Andrea Araldi	Student	20–25	Male	No official affiliation
30	Sophia Argento	Researcher	30–35	Female	Libera
31	Carla Satta	Vet	55–60	Female	No official affiliation
36	Francesco Belmonte	Unemployed	40–45	Male	No official affiliation
37	Leonardo Rossi	Student	25–30	Male	No official affiliation
38	Sara Bianchi	Student	25–30	Female	No official affiliation
39	Francesca Esposito	Teacher	35–40	Female	No official affiliation
40	Valentina Ricco	Housewife	40–45	Female	No official affiliation
41	Antonella Moretti	Nurse	45–50	Female	No official affiliation
42	Chiara Trapani	Journalist	40–45	Female	No official affiliation
43	Federica Russa	Businesswoman	40–45	Female	No official affiliation
44	Vittoria Lampedusa	Doctor	30–35	Female	No official affiliation
45	Martina Cotti	Physical therapist	40–45	Female	No official affiliation
46	Marinella Lazio	Unemployed	50–55	Female	Libera
47	Francesca Ganci	Student	25–30	Female	Addiopizzo

TABLE 1 (Continued)

The names of interviewees		Profession (at the time of the interview)	Age range	Gender	Affiliation with an antimafia organization
48	Marta Pazzallo	Student	20–25	Female	Agenda Rossa
49	Maurizio Rizzo	Businessperson	30–35	Male	Agenda Rossa
50	Giovanni Amato	Unemployed	25–30	Male	City Angels
51	Salvatore Pedera	Journalist	55–60	Male	Fondazione Falcone
52	Alessandro Ispica	Lawyer	40–45	Female	No official affiliation
53	Sandra Mussomeli	Teacher	35–40	Male	No official affiliation
54	Vincenzo Francoforte	Student	20–25	Male	Libera

The asterisk (*) next to a name indicates that the person has requested for their real name to be revealed. Since these individuals are already known publicly, I agreed to this request as it does not pose any additional risks to them. For other activists who did not have an asterisk next to their name, I used a pseudonym instead.

TABLE 2 How different narrative codes and space codes form informative and transmissive rituals.

Narrative codes	Space codes	Ritual forms
Epistemological narrative	Instrumental space	Informative rituals
Behavior-focused Narrative	Sentimental space	Transmissive rituals

stemming from epistemological narratives and instrumental space; and transmissive rituals that stir emotions and spur societal action, drawing from behavior-focused narratives and the poignant use of sentimental spaces. Such rituals are vital in proliferating cultural norms and fostering societal transformation (Table 2).

In order to protect the anonymity of my interviewees, I have used pseudonyms. In the following sections, certain names were marked with an asterisk (*) indicating that these individuals insisted to reveal their real identity, as they already have a public profile, so I agreed with these interviewees as they are not at risk from any potential harm due to their involvement in this study. Based on the emerging codes from the data, my analysis focused on how activists use collective trauma caused by the mafia in their narratives in different places of commemoration and gatherings, how they express cultural values amidst this shared suffering via commemorative practices, and to what extent they strive to positively influence the local people's behaviors and visitors' perspectives of the city. This strategy guided my empirical analysis until I achieved data saturation. I used my professional camera to visually document symbols and memorials, recorded interviews and transcribed it, and jotted down my observations during my fieldwork notebook in the collection of three different main data sets.

THE WEAPONS OF COLLECTIVE RESISTANCE: INFORMATIVE AND TRANSMISSIVE RITUALS

This section delves into the nuanced orchestration of collective resistance through the lenses of informative and transmissive rituals. Informative rituals leverage historical insights and physical landmarks to educate and recalibrate public perception, while transmissive rituals convert individual memories and community sentiment into a pervasive culture of resistance. As we traverse the narratives

of iconic figures and the solidarity of communal acts, this section dissects the gradual but resolute transformation of civic norms—a testament to the role of temporality in the collective struggle for justice and social change.

INFORMATIVE RITUALS

Epistemological narratives transcend mere historical recounting of the mafia's opposition; they reframe these past events as socially teachable moments. These epistemological narratives foster community education and solidarity against the mafia. Venues are instrumental and act as catalysts for these narratives, illustrating the mafia's impact and molding a shared public conscience. Informative rituals, combined with reshaping perspectives, offer in-depth insights into the mafia's legacy and transform locales into centers of enlightenment and tribute. Symbolic sites thus become educational grounds that narrate the burden of history and future ambitions. This section will navigate readers through the roles that epistemological narratives and instrumental spaces play in cultivating knowledge and civic norms through informative rituals steeped in symbolism that transform those spaces into dynamic classrooms that impart a legacy of both history and aspiration.

At the initiation of the city tour tailored for foreign visitors, the significance of epistemological narratives and instrumental space was clearly discernible. The first stop of city tour with participants was Piazza della Memoria (Memory Square), which was named to commemorate 11 magistrates who were murdered by the mafia.⁶

⁶The names of the 11 magistrates and their assassination dates: Pietro Scaglione—5 maggio 1971; Cesare Terranova—25 settembre 1979; Gaetano Costa—6 agosto 1980; Giangiacomo Ciaccio Montalto—25 gennaio 1983; Rocco Chinnici—29 luglio 1983; Alberto Giacomelli—14 settembre 1988; Antonino Saetta—25 settembre 1988; Rosario Livatino—21 settembre 1990; Giovanni Falcone—23 maggio 1992; Francesca Morvillo—23 maggio 1992; and Paolo Borsellino—19 luglio 1992.

Eleven steel columns can be observed in the photo, memorializing the 11 magistrates killed by the mafia. An artistic rendition of Nike of Samothrace from the Louvre Museum in Paris, crafted by Giovanna De Sanctis, stands in front of the photograph's viewers. The Greek goddess of victory symbolizes not only a tribute to the martyred magistrates but also justice's triumph over the mafia, thanks to their sacrifices (Figure 1).

The concept of temporality is strongly pertinent in this context, as these architectural examples convey more than just the physicality of their construction. Instead, they testify to their place within history, and the enduring legacy of these defining moments which are so deeply embedded into the collective memory. The individuals gathered on the stairwell to listen intently as Alberto, the guide, recounted the tales of two fallen magistrates, Giovanni Falcone and Polo Borsellino. These two magistrates had become symbols throughout Italy for their brave stance against the mafia; news of death threats was well-known before their untimely demise, with members of the public informed by both media outlets and local newspapers. After the participants sat down on the stairs, Alberto said:

The scenery here is breathtaking, yet beneath its beauty lies a history of tragedy and struggle. We must remember the names of those magistrates and the sacrifices they made to bring forth a brighter future. In fact, the very building behind us was once occupied by Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino—two magistrates who worked together to fight against the mafia, and both were assassinated by the mafia. It is their example that taught us to remain brave in the face of adversity and to always speak out in defense of justice.

One of the participants curiously asked what the reactions of citizens in Palermo were when the two judges were assassinated. Alberto responded:

They felt a desperate need for change and knew they had to act. However, simply having police or magistrates on their side was insufficient.

Alberto's narrative encapsulated the integral components of informative rituals as it highlighted the necessity of background information regarding unity and solidarity to contest the mafia's hegemony. The repetition of terms like "brave," "justice," "tragedy," and "struggle" throughout the discourse underscores their enduring relevance over time. The same lexicon employed frequently in collective commemoration activities, of which I attended, is often reflective of the trauma experienced and values advocated by activists. These words serve not only to describe the goals and actions of the collective resistance but also to connect the present with the past. In essence, the notion of temporality is pivotal in affirming that the pursuit of justice amid tragedy are not disparate episodes but enduring chronicles that are conveyed from one generation to another. These terms carry the burden of history, making them fundamental components in constructing the identity and impulsion of activists.

The pizzo (extortion money) is a quintessential marker of the mafia's influence over its territory. Addiopizzo has gained increasing traction across Sicily and La Cappola, a store specializing in traditional Sicilian hats, is just one example of this phenomenon: as I and the participants of the city tour entered the premises, it was clear that not only had they joined the movement against the mafia but also had embraced solidarity. Giorgio and Alberto provided an insightful explanation of the traditional uses of these headpieces as a symbol for members of a *cosca* (mafia clan). While this is no longer the case, the popularity of these hats has increased among both locals and tourists alike. The owners of La Cappola had been threatened by the mafia for months to pay pizzo. When one of their shops in another quartier was attacked, they knew something had to be done. After much deliberation, they decided to boldly put the logo of Addiopizzo on the window of each shop as a symbol of their support.

The proprietors of La Cappola, by elucidating the historical linkage between their traditional hats and the mafia, engage in crafting



FIGURE 1 Eleven steel columns stand in the Piazza della Memoria to commemorate the 11 magistrates killed by the mafia. *Source:* Baris Cayli Messina.



FIGURE 2 The sticker of Addiopizzo on the window of La Cappola. Source: Baris Cayli Messina.

an epistemological narrative that does more than recount history; it recontextualizes a cultural artifact within the present-day ethos of resistance. This act of imparting knowledge is an essential component of an informative ritual—it not only educates the public but also invites them to partake in a redefined narrative that actively contests the symbols of oppression. In doing so, La Cappola transcends its role as a commercial entity and becomes an instrumental space—a locus for critical engagement and collective learning. The decision to brandish the Addiopizzo logo visibly is a transformative gesture, converting their storefront into a platform that publicly renounces the mafia's coercive practices. It signifies a recalibration of the space itself, from a silent witness to mafia influence to an active participant in societal change. This emblematic display, therefore, operates as a communicative act, a component of the informative ritual that signals a new, unified stance against mafia tactics. It galvanizes visitors and locals alike, leveraging both epistemological narratives and the instrumental use of space to fortify the community's resolve against extortion and to reinforce the values of solidarity and activism (Figure 2).

The summer of 1992 was a devastating time for the people of Palermo, as Palermitans witnessed the brutal assassination of two prominent antimafia prosecutors, Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino. Although Sicilians had long been disgruntled with their government due to its notorious collaboration with the mafia, this tragedy brought their anger to an unprecedented level. The feeling of abandonment by the state was overwhelming. When I spoke with Salvatore, who was 25 years old at the time of the assassination, he said:

I attended both of the funerals. Everywhere I looked, there was grief and despair in all eyes—tears and red-rimmed faces. The air around me felt heavy as if there

was no future for us. My heart still aches with anger when I think about those funerals. I still ask how our own state could have forsaken us like this—not just allowing the mafia to take over but also taking part in our destruction.

The narrative surrounding these events, as articulated by individuals like Salvatore, went beyond mere historical recounting. By sharing their personal experiences and reflections, people recontextualized these assassinations as pivotal moments in the history of antimafia efforts. This narrative transformation is a key element of informative rituals, where historical events are not only remembered but also serve as catalysts for societal introspection and learning.

RAI, the state TV channel, broadcasted the funeral of Giovanni Falcone live. Rosaria Schifano, the widow of police agent Vito Schifano who was killed alongside Falcone, spoke through tears in the pews of the church. Her words were full of anguish and defiance as she addressed the men of the mafia⁷:

Now, turning to you, because you are here with us, though certainly not as Christians: know that there is still forgiveness for you too. I forgive you, but you have to get on your knees...

What she said echoed off the walls of the church, brought her to tears: “they (the mafia) would not change.” As the funeral procession of Falcone marched on, there was an angry group of people waiting to confront the politicians. On the other hand, Agnese Borsellino,

⁷The video of Rosaria Schifano is accessible via the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQx5EplskHM>

the wife of Paolo Borsellino, had opted for a private service—refusing to let her husband's death be exploited by the government that Paolo Borsellino so despised. The mourners were filled with both sadness and rage as they felt betrayed by those in power who had failed to protect both Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino (Borsellino & Salvatore Palazzolo, 2015). The people amassed outside of the church vociferously protested the arrival of the politicians, with boos and cries of “buffone” (clowns) echoing in the air.⁸ The fists were raised in anger and insults flew as politicians approached. One journalist pushed closer to Judge Antonino Caponnetto, head of the antimafia pool and a close friend of Falcone and Borsellino, asking him if there was any hope left for the city. He gave a single reply: “It is all over.”⁹

The decision by RAI to broadcast the funeral live served as an informative ritual by turning a private moment of grief into a public narrative. This allowed the entire nation to participate in the mourning process, transforming private sorrow into a collective experience. The live broadcast provided an instrumental space for societal learning about the costs of the mafia's influence and the need for a united front against it. In addition, Rosaria Schifano's words, filled with anguish yet offering forgiveness, presented a powerful narrative that resonated with the public. Her act of addressing the mafia directly in a church full of mourners created an instrumental space for reflection on the nature of justice and the possibility of redemption. It highlighted the human cost of the mafia's actions and served as an epistemological narrative that questioned the status quo.

Within the framework of informal rituals, both the public broadcast of Falcone's funeral and Agnese Borsellino's private funeral can indeed be classified as informative rituals, albeit with distinct approaches and impacts on collective responses to tragedy and injustice. The public broadcast of Falcone's funeral acted as an informative ritual by transcending its private nature to become a shared national experience, thus fostering public awareness and reshaping perceptions regarding the realities of mafia violence and the urgency of addressing it. Through the broadcast, millions of viewers were exposed to the raw emotions of grief and anger displayed by the mourners, as well as the poignant messages conveyed by speakers such as Rosaria Schifano. These visual and narrative elements served to enlighten the public about the profound human toll of mafia activity and the imperative of social unity in combating it. Additionally, the public dissent expressed toward politicians during the funeral underscored widespread dissatisfaction with governmental responses to mafia activities, further enhancing the informative impact of the event. Similarly, Agnese Borsellino's decision to hold a private funeral for her husband can be interpreted as an informative ritual, albeit on a more intimate scale. By opting for privacy, Agnese aimed to shield her husband's

memory from political exploitation and to highlight the state's failure in protecting him despite numerous threats he received. In rejecting a state funeral, she effectively communicated a powerful message about the personal toll of mafia violence and the limitations of state efforts in combating it. Although less visible to the public eye compared to Falcone's funeral, Agnese's decision was widely covered by the media and conveyed valuable insights about the necessity of collective action beyond reliance on the state. Hence, both the public and private funerals functioned as informative rituals on different scales, serving to educate, shape perceptions, and mobilize responses to tragedy and injustice.

I attended the commemorative event of Peppino Impastato in Cinisi where narratives and space functioned together as a powerful tool to shape community identity and civic norms. The cruel and gruesome murder of Peppino Impastato was a result of mafia members' wicked intentions; on the morning of May 8–9, 1978, the people of Cinisi had grown weary of the grip that the mafia had on their small town with the explosion of TNT planted underneath the body of Peppino Impastato that left him brutally disfigured across the railways tracks in Cinisi. He fearlessly spoke out against the mafia's pernicious crimes on his radio station, Radio Aut. But, despite his valiant effort, it was not until 2002 that the Italian state brought Gaetano Badalamenti, who ordered the assassination of Peppino Impastato, to justice. His mother, Felicia Bartolotta, withstood the mafia's wrath as she waited for years to see this outcome. On May 9, 2022, a sea of people shuffled down the streets to the house of Peppino Impastato, banners of all shapes and sizes held high. Many participants came to the Casa of Felicia and Peppino where colorful posters hung from the walls of the house detailing the antimafia movement in Cinisi and how it had evolved over time.

Young people from Palermo and beyond were in attendance to commemorate this momentous occasion. Angela, a student of sociology from Bologna, gasped when she saw Peppino's bed and photographs in the memory house of Peppino Impastato. When I interviewed with Angela and asked what made her visit so remarkable; she responded:

As my eyes met the photo of Impastato's mother and brother walking past his dead body, I was so sad. But an anger came along with it—how could the Mafia hold so much power over Cinisi that people had to abandon Peppino in this way? My thoughts raced as I wondered why it took decades for students and organizations to come together and recognize Peppino Impastato's legacy. Here we were, standing in front of his memorial house, but I couldn't help but wonder if many other Italian citizens even knew his story.

The march to Impastato's house and the display of posters and memorabilia transform physical space into a site of learning and reflection. The house itself becomes an instrumental space, a

⁸The video of the angry crowd can be accessed via the link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9jL35S_QRk

⁹The video of Caponnetto is accessible via the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1WMLdc1a7hQ>

pedagogical tool, with every item—from photographs to personal belongings—serving as testament to Impastato's life and the antimafia movement. This use of space in the ritualistic context helps to localize the abstract struggle against the mafia, making it tangible and immediate for participants like Angela. Angela's reaction to seeing the personal effects of Impastato and learning about the antimafia movement highlights the powerful combination of education and emotion in informative rituals.

The relationship between the church and the mafia has long been a source of debate and contention (Dino, 2014). Despite high levels of historical cooperation between these two entities, there were also brave priests who dedicated their lives to challenging the mafia. One such priest was Pino Puglisi, who was based in Brancaccio, a neighborhood of Palermo where the mafia continues to hold a stronghold. He used the church as a platform to denounce their criminal activities (Ceruso, 2012). His tireless work supporting young people taught them the value of morality and respect for the law, keeping them away from the mafia's influence. But his efforts to remove the roots of the mafia sparked such ire that two mafiosi brothers—Filippo and Giuseppe Graviano—assassinated him on September 15, 1993 (Deliziosi, 2018). The city tour for tourists also included a visit to the cathedral which hosts the shrine of Pino Puglisi. At the entrance of the cathedral, Alberto's voice dropped to a whisper as he spoke of Puglisi's bravery. Alberto said:

Father Pino Puglisi fearlessly risked his life by convincing young people and children to turn away from the mafia and pursue a safe future. His talk with families in the neighborhood was detrimental to the mafia, curbing not only their operational capacity but also their social influence.

In 2020, Leoluca Orlando, the mayor of Palermo and Puglisi's friend, related a very similar narrative. During the commemorative event, Orlando said:

The mafia held an aura of oppressive force; however, this was not the case for him. Father Puglisi showed great courage and tenacity to confront the darkness, striving to form a better world where his actions made the mafia fear him more than any prison cell could.

The statement accentuates the extensive duration of Father Puglisi's boldness, frames it within an historical context, underscores its continuing significance, and demonstrates how the civic norms that Father Puglisi aimed to instill can constitute a greater danger to the mafia than a prison. When I visited the Giardino della Memoria (The Garden of Memory), a park dedicated to those who had perished in the fight against the mafia, I saw young people and students gathered to commemorate Pino Puglisi. A teacher, in a fervent narrative to her students replete with accounts of individuals who confronted the mafia and stressing the requirement for forming "an atmosphere of adherence to the culture of legality", finished her

speech. Their steps echoed the teacher's words as they moved away to pay tribute at the two trees planted in honor of Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino. In my interview with Rosalia, a secondary school teacher that accompanied her classes to the garden, she told me about the importance of this place:

We tell our students stories of their predecessors but when they come here, they really get to feel it. The emotion they feel when they touch these trees is real; it encourages them to think on the values we attempt to teach in them at school.

Rosalia's statement implies that education is not only about transmitting knowledge but also about creating a tangible connection to history and civic norms. The use of phrases like "stories of their predecessors" and "when they touch these trees" emphasizes the temporal aspect. It suggests that students are experiencing a sense of continuity with those who came before them. This temporal connection helps students relate to the values taught in school because they can witness their relevance in a historical context. The accounts of those who suffered at the hands of the mafia are used to bring people together in a shared sense of justice and morality and are often told within places dedicated to honoring these victims. When these tales are retold in schools, churches, or gardens, their social bond is strengthened and can help drive further social action founded upon a civic norm against the mafiosi culture.

The informative rituals take place in various instrumental spaces—streets, memorial gardens, churches, houses, and educational institutions—which become arenas for instilling civic norms and forging a shared identity. The epistemological narratives that unfold in these spaces provide a framework for understanding the communal trauma experienced during the violent decades from the 1960s to the 1990s. These spaces are not merely physical locations but act as vessels of memory and education, where the older generations who witnessed unspeakable violence engage in the transmission of knowledge to the youth. They carry the dual function of embodying the collective memory and educating about the past. In doing so, these instrumental spaces allow for the reexamination of the past, enabling society to interrogate the roles and responsibilities of state institutions during the height of mafia violence.

Informative rituals—rooted in epistemological narratives and manifesting within instrumental spaces—have emerged as pivotal in forging social bonds and establishing civic norms. These rituals utilize the power of knowledge and place to transform individual awareness into collective action. The poignant tales of magistrates Falcone and Borsellino, recounted in the shadow of Piazza della Memoria's solemn columns, exemplify the epistemological narrative. Their stories, rich in detail and heavy with sacrifice, are not merely recited but woven into the very fabric of Palermo's consciousness, educating citizens and visitors alike on the cost of defiance and the price of silence. These narratives gain tangible weight in instrumental spaces—sites like the Piazza and the church where mourners gathered for the magistrates' funerals. These locations are more

than mere coordinates on a map; they are sanctuaries of memory and classrooms of resistance. Informative rituals accomplish a dual purpose: they educate the public on the mafia's brutal history and foster an environment conducive to nurturing the civic norms that will empower society against the mafia. By binding the empirical evidence of the past with the spatial anchors of the present, these rituals ensure that the fight against the mafia is not just remembered but is actively engaged in by a community determined to shape a future defined by solidarity and change.

TRANSMISSIVE RITUALS

In this exploration of transmissive rituals, we unearth how behavior-focused narratives, when woven through the fabric of sentimental spaces, catalyze profound societal change. These rituals, exemplified by movements like Addiopizzo, harness personal and collective stories of defiance against the mafia to spark community-wide action. Sentimental spaces, rich with emotional significance, anchor behavior-focused narratives in the physical realm, transforming abstract principles into concrete experiences that resonate deeply with individuals. By marrying the compelling drive of behavior-focused narratives with the emotionally charged power of sentimental spaces, transmissive rituals do more than memorialize the struggles of the past—they ignite the passions of the present and inspire the actions of the future. Thus, transmissive rituals bind the community together, not just in memory, but in a continual act of resistance. This section illuminates how transmissive rituals are not passive retellings but active engagements, transforming individual empathy into a collective action for justice.

In 2004, Edoardo Zaffuto* and his friends had set out to open a bar in Palermo, yet soon were confronted by the unwelcomed request for pizzo from the local mafia. Refusing to pay the pizzo, they launched their Addiopizzo campaign that same year with printed notes reading “An entire nation that pays the pizzo, is a nation without dignity.”¹⁰ This slogan does not only encourage its audience to abstain from the practices of mafiosi culture but also offers a narrative of solidarity that challenges people to embrace and value the tenets of dignity and culture of lawfulness. When I met the founders of Addiopizzo, Edoardo Zaffuto* and Chloé Tucciarelli*, in the garden of Villa Trabia in Palermo, they said:

It has been nearly a decade and a half since we chose to reject the oppressive rule of the mafia, and we knew that the only way to challenge it was to rally more people behind us and raise our voices in public. After all this time, we still believe that collective action is an essential tool to combat their power. The fight against the mafia that is entrenched in our society has been long and difficult with many

sacrifices made. We can feel a sense of progress, but at the same time, we are painfully aware of how much battle remains to be fought and how much longer it may take for us to see real change. We must retain hope and continue fighting while we cling to sorrow in order to stay true to those who have fallen before us.

The quotation speaks to the unpredictability of this long and difficult battle against the mafia, where hope and despair come face to face. As they reach out for a better future, they are conscious of the heavy toll that has already been taken by those who have gone before them. The temporality of the struggle is both inspirational and devastating; as glimmers of hope appear on the horizon, they must acknowledge the immense cost of doing so and remain steadfast in their dedication despite daunting odds. The concise and crucial slogan of Addiopizzo, which positions “dignity” against “pizzo”, seeks to activate more people to participate in their movement. When I interviewed another activist from Addiopizzo, Francesca, she also highlighted the significance of storytelling and making individuals feel that they are not alone if faced with mafia threats. She emphasized the significance of those who had been victims of mafia violence in the past, saying:

The testimonies and struggles of those who went before us, those martyred by the mafia, serve as a light to guide our path and give us courage. Their plight forms a moral justification for our own endeavors against the mafia and all forms of injustice.

Although enlistment into the Addiopizzo was gradual during its beginning years, after almost 20 years of its foundation, over a thousand businesses have now adopted the use of Addiopizzo stickers that can be observed on windows or in a conspicuous area of their stores. These symbols have been reimagined as powerful cultural materials transmitting solidarity and courage while sending a warning to the mafia that those involved will not bow down to their extortion demands. The expression utilized by Addiopizzo in tandem with physical presence of stickers manifest how activists and locals employ narratives and spaces alike as weapons to combat the mafia. This kind of public visibility helps to direct the attention of customers to the importance of critical consumption against the mafia in the city (Forno & Gunnarson, 2010). The organization also offers legal assistance to threatened shopkeepers, and they have close contacts with the police.

The behavior-focused narrative began not with a cry of war, but with a whisper of taking action, encapsulated in the resolute words they scattered across the city: “An entire nation that pays the pizzo, is a nation without dignity.” This was not just a slogan; it was a clarion call for behavioral transformation—a transmissive ritual that wove the personal valor of a few into the collective conscience of many. The Addiopizzo campaign, birthed from the refusal to yield to the mafia's demands for extortion, blossomed into a movement that transcended the boundaries of personal struggle. As Francesca,

¹⁰The original text in Italian is: “Un intero popolo che paga il pizzo è un popolo senza dignità.”

another activist, joined the founders, she shared how storytelling—recalling the people who fell prey to the mafia's brutality—cast a guiding light on their path. These behavior-focused narratives were not mere retellings of sorrow; they were the moral fiber that wove the present to the past, giving legitimacy and urgency to their cause by embracing the same kind of behavior against the mafia. In the shared history of pain and resilience, the transmissive ritual found its heartbeat, propelling the movement forward, emboldening the community to stand together, not just in memory but in a resolute action to march toward justice.

This collective resolve found a symbol in the stickers of Addiopizzo plastered on the windows of over a thousand businesses that transform those windows into sentimental spaces, an ever-growing testament to the power of behavior-focused narratives in action. And as the narrative of Addiopizzo spread, weaving through the streets of Palermo, it inspired not just the heart but the habits of the city. Customers began to seek those stickers, to support those who had chosen dignity over submission, affecting the very economics that the mafia once thought to control. This change in consumer behavior was a pivotal aspect of the transmissive ritual, turning every purchase into a silent action against the mafia's reign. In the story of Addiopizzo, the transmissive rituals of behavior-focused narratives and sentimental spaces converge to write a narrative of change, etching a new legacy into the streets of Palermo—a legacy of hope, action, and unwavering dignity.

As many enthusiastic activists gathered for the 26th anniversary of Borsellino's assassination, local students from where he had grown up were present. The growing mobilization after such a long time of tragedy and pain was encouraging, but it was hard not to remember the words of Caponnetto at Paolo Borsellino's funeral all those years ago. The brutal murders of Falcone and Borsellino acted as a catalyst that spurred civilian groups to take the reins in the continued fight against the mafia, and since then have been spearheading initiatives to change civic norms in Sicily. While sports activities, conversations about social projects, and speeches marked the day, Salvatore Borsellino's¹¹ address filled the air with emotion when he spoke. "It is both beautiful and heart-breaking to see you here today", he said.

I am happy that future generations will be better off than us, but I can't help but think of those in power, the state, who still have my brother's blood on their hands.

In his statement, Salvatore Borsellino alluded to the well-documented conundrum concerning the mounting suspicions that the mafia had conspired with several parts of state agencies and intelligence services in the contrivance of the assassination plot against Paolo Borsellino, executed under the auspices of the top political establishment and the mafia (Barrometi, 2023; Borsellino, 2023).

These annual gatherings are rites that do more than honor the past; they serve as conduits for the transmission of civic values, embodying the behavioral transformation called for by the legacy of the slain judges. The behavior-focused narrative thread of these rituals is potent and clear: the brutal murders of Falcone and Borsellino are not endpoints but catalysts, igniting civilian groups to assume the mantle in the ongoing battle against the mafia. The activities of the day—sports, dialogues, and speeches—are manifestations of this behavior-focused narrative, each one reinforcing the call to action and the repudiation of the mafia's influence. Salvatore Borsellino's emotionally charged address captures the essence of behavior-focused narratives. His words, laden with a mix of pride and grief, communicate a duality of progress and remembrance, urging the audience to embrace the mantle of change while acknowledging the heavy cost of the struggle. It is within this space of shared emotion—the sentimental space—and collective will that the transmissive ritual finds its heart.

My interview with Giovanni took place in a small, cluttered office in Palermo, on a narrow side street. The table was filled with several T-shirts, emblazoned with the symbols of City Angels—a civil society fighting to safeguard the city streets and help the destitute. When I asked Giovanni about the Piazza della Memoria, he spoke with both sadness and determination in his voice. He explained that in creating this memorial space we needed to commemorate those brave individuals whose stories were forever captured in cultural artifacts. He added:

Simply having this monument was not enough. We had to reconsider if it is enough to break the omertà (code of silence) among ordinary people, a task that all those assassinated judges had hoped to accomplish.

Giovanni's apprehension has been echoed by civil society organizations in Sicily that are committed to eradicating the mafia. Through educational and sporting interventions, dedicated activists are fighting a war to reset mafiosi culture and restore community spirit (Blandano & Lorenzi, 1989; Falcone & Sirignano, 2022). They are working to cut the root of all mafia influence, inspiring the next generation to stand together in defiance of any attempt by the mafia to impose their oppressive governing methods. Nevertheless, these interventions are effective when enacted within the sites of past tragedies and integrated into narratives. Thus, they contextualize the collective trauma of the past in regard to the present and safeguard society from the risk of collective amnesia, furnishing an organic basis for resistance against mafia violence and mafiosi culture. Marta, whom I met through Agenda Rossa, explained the importance of attending commemorative events:

We honor the brave souls who perished fighting the mafia through commemoration. Together we can challenge and defeat the mafia's violence. We must join forces to take back our society and create a new generation of those who dared to stand up against the mafia and its injustice with unbreakable courage and dignity. These are the values that matter.

¹¹Salvatore Borsellino is the brother of Paolo Borsellino who is also leading Agenda Rossa group aiming to promote antimafia values and fiercely embraces a strong critical approach for notorious the political-criminal nexus in the country.

The Piazza della Memoria stands as a quintessential sentimental space, a physical embodiment of the collective trauma and unwavering resolve of the community. The sculptures and plaques do more than memorialize; they evoke a visceral response, compelling visitors to reflect, to feel, and ultimately, to act. Giovanni's testimony in his office, surrounded by the symbols of local activism, further underscores the importance of these sentimental spaces. They are not static monuments but dynamic stages where the past is reenacted in the present, breaking the *omertà* and perpetuating the ethos of the fallen. Marta's words distill the sentiment and intent behind these gatherings. The act of commemoration is both a pledge and a call to arms, a ritual that intertwines mourning with taking action. Through collective participation, the values of courage, justice, and dignity are not only remembered; they are enshrined as guiding principles for a society that stands united against the shadow of the mafia and these guiding principles are employed to be transmitted to the audience hoping to enforce them to take action against the mafia. Within the transmissive ritual framework, behavior-focused narratives come to the fore articulated through speeches and shared stories that not only recount past bravery but also call for present action. These narratives are strategic and intentional; they are designed to resonate with the audience, to align their emotions with the values being honored, and to catalyze a behavioral shift toward active engagement in the fight against the mafia by using spaces sentimentally.

The Addiopizzo campaign and commemorative activities in Palermo exemplify transmissive rituals, powerful practices where behavior-focused narratives and sentimental spaces converge to effect social transformation. Through Addiopizzo's distribution of stickers, a seemingly modest gesture becomes a resonant declaration of community values. These stickers do more than challenge the mafia's demand for pizzo; they serve as public affirmations of solidarity and a call to uphold the dignity that stands in stark defiance to mafia subjugation. Transmissive rituals, steeped in the lived experiences and collective memory of resistance, are not only acts of remembrance but also active engagements that reaffirm and reinforce the community's commitment to the civic norms of justice and lawfulness. They encapsulate the essence of transmissive rituals by enacting behavior-focused narratives—stories of resilience and resistance that resonate deeply with the public—within sentimental spaces that are imbued with emotional significance. It is through these transmissive rituals that the social bond of civic norms is fortified, knitting together individual acts of defiance into a cohesive and powerful fabric of collective action. As the community engages in these practices by taking action, they weave a stronger collective identity, one that is defined by an unwavering stand against the mafia.

WHY TEMPORALITY MATTERS IN SHIFTING CIVIC NORMS

The concept of temporality is pivotal in understanding the evolution of civic norms in the face of prolonged crime, violence, and injustice. It reminds us that the process of change is incremental and deeply

rooted in historical context. Similar to the protracted struggles in places like Northern Ireland, where years of conflict have slowly given way to peace and new social orders, the battle against the mafia's influence in Sicily represents a gradual recalibration of community standards and expectations (English, 2008; McGinty & Du Toit, 2007). Yet this battle against the mafia has the longest period of civic resistance considering the first fight started as early as the 1870s. This illustrates the importance of the Sicilian antimafia movement to explore why certain culture war take over a century.

Shifting civic norms is an arduous process, primarily because the mafia has systematically woven itself into the cultural, economic, and political tapestry of communities. The norms that they have fostered are rooted in a complex network of complicit relationships and coerced silence. The transformation of the mafia's territorial dominance since the 1960s has been a pivotal shift. Initially rooted in territorial control, the mafia diversified into drug trafficking and money laundering, diluting their localized grip. After the 1970s, and also during the 1990s, the introduction of stringent antimafia legislation further altered the landscape, disrupting the traditional code of silence and empowering citizens. This legislative shift created new civic spaces, allowing for the practice of resistance rituals and catalyzing a shift in civic norms that had been long under mafia influence. Breaking this cycle requires not just isolated acts of defiance but a collective movement that can dismantle the foundations of mafia power. However, such movements are often stifled by the very fear and mistrust that the mafia cultivates. The historical narrative reveals that resistance against the mafia has largely been a solitary endeavor, with only a few brave individuals standing against a seemingly insurmountable tide. Since the 1870s, these isolated acts of defiance did little to shift the civic norms dictated by the mafia. It was only after the late 1970s that a more collective form of resistance began to emerge, gaining significant momentum and public visibility in the early 1990s. The slow consolidation of this movement underscores the enduring challenge: to uproot a criminal organization that has had over a century to entrench itself in the social, political, and economic fabric of society.

The act of honoring historical struggles transcends mere commemoration. It is a potent catalyst that propels individuals to seize the defiant narratives of yesteryears and perpetuate a legacy of resistance. Such is the profound role of informative and transmissive rituals: they are not relics of bygone eras but active beacons, casting light on the path to a future where each generation can continue the march against oppression. Yet, the enduring nature of this conflict—spanning across time—poses a profound challenge in nurturing a resilient collective mobilization. The long arc of this resistance is the crucible where these rituals take shape, continually evolving to meet the demands of the fight against the mafia. It is within this temporal framework that a community's unwavering commitment is tested and its resolve to craft a future unbound by the chains of the mafia is proven.

Despite the profound impact of the rituals as articulated in the previous sections, one must consider their limitations. The process of changing civic norms is fraught with challenges, not least of which is the entrenched nature of the mafia within societal structures. Norms do not shift overnight, and the battle against deeply

rooted criminal influence requires sustained effort and the cumulative impact of both educational and action-oriented strategies. The societal transformation seen in post-apartheid South Africa, for instance, illustrates the extended timelines required to alter public consciousness and institutional behavior (Gibson, 2004). The rituals themselves must evolve to address new challenges and adapt to the changing dynamics of crime and resistance. As we contemplate the efficacy of rituals in countering mafia influence, it becomes imperative to understand the complexities and limitations inherent in the transformation of civic norms. The collective resistance against the mafia, therefore, has become a long-term commitment that spans generations, much like the civil rights movements in the United States, which have seen waves of progress and setback over many decades (Morris, 1984; Theoharis, 2018). This extended timeframe necessitates sustained efforts and a continuous narrative of resistance, education, and direct action to gradually erode the established norms and replace them with those founded on justice, legality, and mutual support.

The unfolding narrative of Sicilian activism, marked by the deployment of both informative and transmissive rituals, has heralded a discernible shift in civic norms—albeit at a measured pace. The relentless and multifaceted activities of recent decades have set in motion a process of societal transformation, underscoring the pivotal role of temporality in dismantling entrenched systems of oppression. This gradual metamorphosis of civic norms, while painstakingly slow, signifies a profound counteraction to a history rife with violence and injustice, and merits rigorous scrutiny for its potential to inspire wider change. When confronted with a formidable mafia, the passage of time serves as a catalyst for transformation; even minor acts of resistance amass to threaten the mafia's entrenched authority. It is within this temporal context that the efforts of activists take on a deeper meaning, as they are not merely reacting to the present but actively weaving new societal values that honor the past while forging a just future. The laborious journey to redefine norms, stretching across generations, is an affirmation of the community's enduring vision and commitment to nurturing a culture of defiance and resilience.

Understanding the role of temporality in the evolution of civic norms is key to appreciating the complexity and scale of the challenge. The mafia's influence, deeply embedded in the cultural and institutional weave of society, cannot be unraveled quickly or easily. The long march toward a society emancipated from the shackles of the mafia requires more than just the passage of time—it requires a deliberate reconstitution of the very essence of civic life, embedding new norms of transparency, equity, and justice into the everyday existence of citizens. In essence, the temporality of this struggle encapsulates both the arduous nature of the task at hand and the incremental victories that pave the way to a reimagined society. As the Sicilian resistance demonstrates, it is through time-bound persistence and the collective will to act that the deeply sown seeds of the mafia's oppressive regime can be challenged, and a legacy of empowerment and autonomy can be established for the generations to come.

CONCLUSION

In my analysis, activists and locals are forging new narratives to reshape the tragic tapestry of Sicily's fight against organized crime. They strive to elevate civic values and challenge the deep-seated stereotypes that have long misrepresented Sicily and its inhabitants. This cultural struggle extends beyond mere resistance; it is a deliberate campaign to alter perceptions among Sicilians themselves and to correct the misinformed views of outsiders, who may only know Sicily through the skewed lens of the media, where the region is often unfairly painted with broad strokes of mafia association. However, the longevity of this cultural war underscores the importance of recognizing temporality. The transition from individual acts of defiance to a unified community response is a marathon, not a sprint, requiring a persistent drive from those dedicated to the antimafia cause. Understanding how civic norms evolve over time is crucial—it illuminates not only the role of time in shaping this protracted conflict but also the scale of the challenge and the significance of eventual victories in Sicily's ongoing quest for justice and autonomy.

The study introduces “informative” and “transmissive” rituals as theoretical concepts to understand the role of diverse practices in collective resistance and the challenge to civic norms. Informative rituals use “epistemological narratives” in an “instrumental space” to educate about the mafia and historical tragedies, shaping perceptions and norms. Transmissive rituals use “behavior-focused narratives” within a “sentimental space” to prompt direct action through emotional engagement, leveraging collective memory to spur resistance and change. Both narratives are crucial for activists to propagate civic norms—epistemological narratives build understanding, while behavior-focused narratives spark action. They utilize space to amplify their message and facilitate social change within collective resistance.

The theoretical concepts of informative and transmissive rituals hold significant potential for broad application across a spectrum of global movements, transcending the specific context of mafia-related resistance. These concepts shed light on the dynamics of the pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong, the Black Lives Matter movement, environmental activism by Extinction Rebellion, and other social movements facing authoritarian challenges in countries like Iran and Russia. They provide a framework for exploring how knowledge dissemination and emotional engagement drive action and sustain momentum in the fight for social change and justice.

My 7-year ethnographic study delved into the sensitive realm of local tragedies and their profound effects on Sicilians. Navigating this delicate topic as an outsider required time and patience to develop trust with activists and understand the nuances of their resistance. This extended research effort allowed for an in-depth analysis of social dynamics that underpin collective defiance. Although the current research has its limitations in dissecting the full scope of how narratives, spaces, and norms drive resistance, it underscores the need for future ethnographic work. Future studies could illuminate the subtle “hidden civic norms” that emerge among those indirectly

involved in activism, deepening our understanding of the broader impact of such traumatic events. The elimination of mafiosi culture is a crucial component of the culture war against the mafia, which can be achieved by establishing and consolidating a set of civic norms that shape the perceptions and behaviors of diverse actors and challenge the mafia at its roots. The procurement of civic norms is a laborious process that requires persistent effort among its proponents to succeed in the culture war. Social bonds are an integral part of the struggle to propagate appropriate values, where different forms of narrative and space are the primary instruments required to gain the assent of the masses. This is a complex and lengthy social endeavor. Thus, any future studies inquiring into collective resistance and changes in civic norms through activism should take temporal factors into consideration.

As societies confront the pervasive shadow of oppressive social forces, like the mafia, they find solace and strength in the deliberate practice of informative and transmissive rituals—strategies refined over more than a century to enshrine a culture of lawfulness. The essence of these rituals lies in their ability to leverage the passage of time, recognizing that the cultivation of civic norms is not an instant transformation, but a progressive journey shaped by the confluence of epistemological and behavior-focused narratives. The task of reorienting norms is complex and laden with challenges. Yet, it is through the steadfast collaboration of individuals and the collectivity that societies can traverse this path. By skillfully navigating both instrumental and sentimental spaces, communities can harness the full spectrum of these rituals to illuminate the way forward. It is within this dynamic interplay that the invincible resilience of humanity emerges, capable of dispelling the long-standing darkness of oppression.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank the three reviewers for their insightful comments, which significantly improved the overall quality of this article.

FUNDING INFORMATION

None.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The author confirms that there are no conflicts of interest to declare.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available upon request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

ORCID

Baris Cayli Messina  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8677-4626>

REFERENCES

- Alexander, Jeffrey C. 2004. "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma." In *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, edited by Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser, and Piotr Sztompka, 1–30. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Alexander, Jeffrey C. 2013. *Trauma: A Social Theory*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Barker, David C., and Christopher Jan Carman. 2012. *Representing Red and Blue: How the Culture Wars Change the Way Citizens Speak and Politicians Listen*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Barrometi, Pietro. 2023. *Traditori: Come fango e depistaggio hanno segnato la storia italiana*. Milano: Solferino.
- Blandano, Pietro, and Anna Lorenzi. 1989. *Liberi dalla mafia per vivere la democrazia*. Palermo: Centro Studi Giuridice Sociali Cesare Terranova.
- Borsellino, Salvatore. 2023. *Mio fratello Paolo*. Edizioni Iod.
- Borsellino, Agnese, and S. Salvatore Palazzolo. 2015. *Ti racconterò tutte le storie che potrò*. Milano: Feltrinelli Editore.
- Cayli, Baris. 2012. "Resistance Against the Mafia: A Civic Struggle to Defy an Uncontestable Power." *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures* 21(1): 103–25.
- Cayli, Baris. 2013. "Using Sports Against the Italian Mafia: Policies and Challenges on the Path of Cultural Renewal." *Sociology of Sport Journal* 30(4): 435–66.
- Cayli, Baris. 2014. "Renewing Criminalized and Hegemonic Cultural Landscapes." *Critical Criminology* 22(4): 579–93.
- Cayli, Baris. 2017. "Victims and Protest in a Social Space: Revisiting the Sociology of Emotions." *Emotion, Space and Society* 22(1): 61–70.
- Cayli Messina, Baris. 2024. "Crime and Violence on the Margins of Society: How Justice-Based Power Vacuums Create Deprived Neighborhoods." *Sociology Compass* 18(3): 1–24.
- Ceruso, Valeria. 2012. *A mani nude: Don Pino Puglisi*. San Paolo: Edizione.
- Chriss, James J.. 2007. "The Functions of the Social Bond." *The Sociological Quarterly* 48(4): 689–712.
- Clark, Jeffrey N. 2021. "Resilience as a Multi-Directional Movement Process: A Conceptual and Empirical Exploration." *The British Journal of Sociology* 72: 1046–61.
- Closer, Lewis A. 1992. "Introduction." In *On Collective Memory by Maurice Halbwachs*, edited by Lewis A. Closer, 1–34. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Collins, Randall. 2004. *Interaction Ritual Chains*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- dalla Chiesa, Nando. 2014. *Manifesto dell'antimafia*. Turin: Einaudi.
- dalla Chiesa, Nando. 2020. "La mafia come virus. Insegnamenti involontari della pandemia (a proposito di un dibattito quasi antico)." *Rivista di Studi e Ricerche Sulla Criminalità Organizzata* 6(1): 6–21.
- dalla Chiesa, Nando. 2021. "L'educazione alla legalità, disciplina born to run." *Scuola Democratica* 12: 79–92.
- Dalton, Russell J. 2008. "Citizenship Norms and the Expansion of Political Participation." *Political Studies* 56(1): 76–98.
- Davenport, Elizabeth. 2019. "Rainclimation: How Installation Art Can Reclaim Space, Transform Collective Suffering into Poetic Resistance and Bring Aesthetics to Disabled Viewers." In *The Routledge Handbook of Disability Activism*, edited by Maria Berghs, Tsitsi Chataika, Yahya El-Lahib, and Kudakwashe Dube, 330–8. London: Routledge.
- Deliziosi, Francesco. 2018. *Don Pino Puglisi: se ognuno fa qualcosa si può fare molto: le parole del prete che fece paura alla mafia*. Milano: Rizzoli.
- della Porta, Donatella. 2020. "Building Bridges: Social Movements and Civil Society in Times of Crisis." *Voluntas: International Journal of Nonprofit Organizations* 31(5): 938–48.
- della Porta, Donatella, and Rossana Tufaro. 2022. "Mobilizing the Past in Revolutionary Times: Memory, Counter-Memory, and Nostalgia during the Lebanese Uprising." *Sociological Forum* 37(S1): 1387–1413.
- Dickie, John. 2015. *Cosa Nostra: storia della mafia siciliana*. Roma: Laterza & Figli Spa.
- Dino, Alessandra. 2014. *La mafia devota: Chiesa, religione, Cosa Nostra*. Roma: Laterza & Figli Spa.
- English, Richard. 2008. *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA*. United Kingdom: Pan Macmillan.

- Eyerman, Ron. 2004. "Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African-American Identity." In *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, edited by Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernard Giesen, Neil Smelser, and Piotr Sztompka, 60–111. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Falcone, Maria, and Luigi Sirignano. 2022. *L'eredità di un giudice*. Milan: Mondadori.
- Forno, Francesca, and Carino Gunnarson. 2010. "Everyday Shopping to Fight the Italian Mafia." In *Creative Participation: Responsibility-Taking in the Political World*, edited by Michelle Micheletti and Andrew S. McFarland, 101–24. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.
- Gibson, James L. 2004. "Truth, Reconciliation, and the Creation of a Human Rights Culture in South Africa." *Law & Society Review* 38(1): 5–40.
- Glaeser, Andreas. 2005. "An Ontology for the Ethnographic Analysis of Social Processes: Extending the Extended-Case Method." *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice* 49(3): 16–45.
- Grasso, Pietro, and Alessandra La Volpe. 2012. *Per non morire di mafia*. Milan: Sperling & Kupfer.
- Halbwachs, Maurice. 1992. *On Collective Memory*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Interis, Matthew. 2011. "On Norms: A Typology with Discussion." *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 70(2): 424–38.
- Katz, Jack. 2019. "On Becoming an Ethnographer." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 48(1): 16–50.
- Klein, Gene. 2021. "Confederate Monuments and their Impact on the Collective Memory of the South and the North." *Southeastern Geographer* 61(3): 241–57.
- Lupo, Salvatore. 2004. "Gli alleati e la mafia: un patto scellerato?" *Meridian* 49: 1000–1014.
- Marcus, George E.. 2021. *Ethnography Through Thick and Thin*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Mathuria, Sunjay. 2024. "Walking, Storytelling and Melancholy Survivals: Memorialization of the 'Troubles' in Belfast's City Centre." *Cultural Geographies* 31(2): 213–30.
- McFarland, Daniel A. 2004. "Resistance as a Social Drama: A Study of Change-Oriented Encounters." *American Journal of Sociology* 109(6): 1249–1318.
- McGinty, Robin, and Pierre Du Toit. 2007. "A Disparity of Esteem: Relative Group Status in Northern Ireland after the Belfast Agreement." *Political Psychology* 28(1): 13–31.
- Melucci, Alberto. 1996. *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Morris, Aldon D. 1984. *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change*. New York: Free Press.
- Pezzino, Paolo. 1989. "La Tradizione Rivoluzionaria Siciliana e l'invenzione Della Mafia." *Meridiana* 45–71.
- Pickering-Iazzi, Robin. 2015. *The Mafia in Italian Lives and Literature: Life Sentences and Their Geographies*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Polletta, Francesca, and James M. Jasper. 2001. "Collective Identity and Social Movements." *Annual Review of Sociology* 27(1): 283–305.
- Putnam, Robert. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Rosati, Antonino. 2014. *Mafia e cultura mafiosa*. Cosenza: Luigi Pellegrini Editore.
- Santino, Umberto. 2009. *Storia del movimento antimafia: dalla lotta di classe all'impegno civile*. Rome: Riuniti.
- Santoro, Marco, and Roberta Sassatelli. 2001. "La mafia come repertorio. Frammenti di analisi culturale." *Polis* 15(3): 407–30.
- Schneider, Jane. 2018. "Fifty Years of Mafia Corruption and Anti-Mafia Reform." *Current Anthropology* 59(18): 16–27.
- Schneider, Jane, and Peter Schneider. 1994. "Mafia, Antimafia, and the Question of Sicilian Culture." *Politics & Society* 22(2): 237–58.
- Schneider, Jane, and Peter Schneider. 2005. "Mafia, Antimafia, and the Plural Cultures of Sicily." *Current Anthropology* 46(4): 501–20.
- Small, Mariou Louis. 2013. "Causal Thinking and Ethnographic Research." *American Journal of Sociology* 119(3): 597–601.
- Snow, David A., and Douglas McAdam. 2000. "Identity Work Processes in the Context of Social Movements: Clarifying the Identity/Movement Nexus." In *Self, Identity, and Social Movements*, edited by Sheldon Stryker, Timothy J. Owens, and Robert W. White, 41–67. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Tavory, Iddo, and Stefan Timmermans. 2013. "A Pragmatist Approach to Causality in Ethnography." *American Journal of Sociology* 119(3): 682–714.
- Theoharis, J. 2018. *A more Beautiful and Terrible History: The Uses and Misuses of Civil Rights History*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Törnqvist, Maria. 2021. "Communal Intimacy: Formalization, Egalitarianism, and Exchangeability in Collective Housing." *Social Forces* 100(1): 273–92.
- Wertsch, James V.. 2002. *Voices of Collective Remembering*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Whittier, Nancy. 1997. "Political Generations, Micro-Cohorts, and the Transformation of Social Movements." *American Sociological Review* 62(5): 760–77.
- Yi'En, Cheng. 2014. "Telling Stories of the City: Walking Ethnography, Affective Materialities, and Mobile Encounters." *Space and Culture* 17(3): 211–23.