Cosmopolitan vs. Provincial Newspaper Coverage:
A Content Analysis of the Sicilian Mafia in Italy

A thesis presented to
the faculty of
the Scripps College of Communication of Ohio University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Science

Natalie A. Cammarata
March 2010
© 2010 Natalie A. Cammarata. All Rights Reserved.
This thesis titled
Cosmopolitan vs. Provincial Newspaper Coverage:
A Content Analysis of the Sicilian Mafia in Italy

by

NATALIE A. CAMMARATA

has been approved for
the E. W. Scripps School of Journalism
and the Scripps College of Communication by

Hong Cheng
Associate Professor of Journalism

Gregory J. Shepherd
Dean, Scripps College of Communication
ABSTRACT

CAMMARATA, NATALIE A., M.S., March 2010, Journalism

Cosmopolitan vs. Provincial Newspaper Coverage: A Content Analysis: The Sicilian Mafia in Italy. (64 pp.)

Director of Thesis: Hong Cheng

This thesis is a content analysis of Italian newspaper coverage of the Sicilian mafia ring Cosa nostra during a four-month period surrounding the Italian “decapitation” of Cosa nostra. The study examines the differences between the cosmopolitan newspaper La Repubblica and the provincial newspaper La Sicilia, and how organized crime fits into the hierarchy of media influences introduced by Shoemaker and Reese (1997). The results of this study indicate that the two newspapers, although different in audience, values, and societal stature, are similar to each other in terms of coverage of the mafia. Issues addressed in this thesis include cosmopolitanism vs. provincialism, media framing, and media influences, as well as the mafia as an ongoing sociological and historical research topic in Sicily.

Approved: _____________________________________________________________

Hong Cheng

Associate Professor of Journalism
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to my ever-patient committee members, Dr. Hong Cheng (chair), Dr. Marilyn Greenwald, and Dr. Yusuf Kalyango, for your ongoing guidance and support. Thanks to my family for your devotion to helping me reach my goals, and to my close friends for your kind words and tolerance through this process. To Annalisa Zanuso, Elizabeth (Bee) Jenkins, and Mariessa Shein: Grazie a tutti siete dei santi!
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Purpose</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background Information</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related Studies</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mafia and Media Coverage</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Influences on Media Content</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Framing</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosmopolitan versus Provincial Newspapers</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions and Hypotheses</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Method</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Contributions</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further Research</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A: Definition Of Terms</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Intracoder Reliability Results .................................................................33
Table 2: Intercoder Reliability Results .................................................................34
Table 3: The Frequencies of Articles that Mention Mafiosi ...............................36
Table 4: Framing of the Mafia by Newspaper ......................................................38
INTRODUCTION

This study examines the differences between two Italian newspapers and their respective coverage of the Sicilian mafia ring, Cosa nostra. Through a content analysis of a cosmopolitan newspaper, *La Repubblica*, and a provincial newspaper, *La Sicilia*, the research combines the epistemological and historical research of Cosa nostra with the study of cosmopolitan versus provincial media coverage. The study provides a unique combination of two fields that will hopefully contribute to the ongoing research of both areas of study.

The goal of this study is to determine the ways in which the mafia and its impending nature ultimately influence media coverage. Furthermore, this research will compare the differences between two different types of newspapers, and how the same external force might affect them differently.

Cosa Nostra

Giuseppe “Peppino” Impastato grew up with the mafia in his blood. His father Luigi had close ties with mafia bosses, and his Uncle Cesare was a mafia boss himself. When Peppino was 15 years old, Uncle Cesare was killed by a car bomb, planted by the mafia. Peppino saw the remains of his uncle scattered among the lemon trees in the hills that surround the Sicilian town of Cinisi.

At that point Peppino, traumatized, decided to dedicate his life to fighting the mafia by speaking out against it and mobilizing citizens. As a political activist, Peppino started an antimafia organization that established a newsletter and a radio show. As an offhand journalist and antimafia activist, Peppino became well known in his area,
particularly to the mafia bosses following his every move. By the time he reached 30, Peppino was running for the Cinisi city council. He was elected as a councilor—two days after the mafia murdered him by placing explosives under him on a train.

Peppino died on May 9, 1978, and since then the mafia has killed many more journalists and political activists for spreading the antimafia movement (Dickie, 2004).

In many settings all over the world journalists are stifled by threats of violence, persecution, and murder. Journalists who are closest to the actual threats are often the most cautious in their reporting, and tend to suppress their own work out of fear (Pollett, 2002). While in many nations journalists’ fear stems from the government or wartime violence, Italian journalists’ fear often stems from organized crime, formally structured criminal activity, and the powerful men who are behind the crimes.

The problem of organized crime in Italy began in the 1800s (Dickie, 2004), and is far from over today. Western media are known to romanticize the mafia as in works like *The Godfather* or *The Sopranos*, but the reality of Italian organized crime is that many people live in fear, for good reason. The most notable of the organized crime rings in Italy is Cosa nostra, the most powerful organized crime ring in Sicily (Dickie, 2004). In Italy, the word *mafia* is often synonymous with Cosa nostra and not with other organized crime rings, and the two terms will be used interchangeably throughout the rest of this thesis.

As mentioned above, Cosa nostra is the most influential organized crime group in Italy. While the group has some ties with other crime rings including the Camorra of Naples and the ‘Ndrangheta of Calabria, Cosa nostra is the most notorious of all three,
particularly in the United States because of the American Cosa nostra, a faction of the Sicilian original (Dickie, 2004).
RESEARCH PURPOSE

This study examines Cosa nostra as an Italian case of influences on media coverage, at a local as well as a national level. I will compare the coverage of Cosa nostra between La Sicilia, a provincial newspaper in Catania, Sicily, and La Repubblica, a cosmopolitan newspaper based in Rome. During the past half-century many mafia bosses, or mafiosi, have been fugitives from the law. However, many high profile fugitives were found in their own homes, in the small towns that they held power over. But, due to inefficiencies in the Italian government and police force, pointedly corruption and connections to the mafia, attempts to capture these fugitives were disorganized and failed often (Dickie, 2004). However, on December 16, 2008, the Italian police forces arrested 89 mafiosi and mafia associates, during the “decapitation” of Cosa nostra, described by Italian officials as an operation that prevented Cosa nostra from rearing its head again, as the mafia group had begun to rebuild the commission, the power elite that controls the mafia. The commission had broken down after the arrest of Bernardo Provenzano, “boss of all bosses” or “capo dei capi,” in April 2006 (Dickie, 2004). Following the decapitation, the number of arrests continued to grow throughout December, as police discovered more men linked to Cosa nostra.

This study will provide us with a glimpse of the differences in coverage of the mafia between a provincial and a national newspaper in Italy, and whether or not those differences fall in line with provincialism vs. cosmopolitanism as a theory in mass communication. The study will also contribute to ongoing research regarding external influences on media, and where exactly an outlawed, organized crime association falls
into place in the hierarchy of media influences according to Shoemaker and Reese (1996).

The significance of this study primarily lays in the intrinsic importance of widely overlooked external influences on the media, the mafia, and the differences in coverage of the mafia between a Sicilian newspaper and a mainland Italian newspaper. The mafia puts fear into the heads of not only the average citizen, but also media professionals. One might speculate that Cosa nostra affects the way editors and journalists make decisions regarding what to print and what not to print, and in turn plays the role of an external influence on Italian media. This thesis examines the ways in which this particular external force affects two different types of media and their respective content: one cosmopolitan, the other provincial.

In terms of previous research, Cosa nostra has been the subject of many sociological, epistemological, and historical studies including Anton Blok’s *The History of a Sicilian Village 1860-1960* (1988), Jane and Peter Schneiders’ *Mafia, Antimafia, and the Question of Sicilian Culture* (1994), and John Dickie’s *Cosa Nostra: A history of the Sicilian mafia* (2004), but its role as an external force on the media have barely been touched on. Those who have explored the mafia’s influence on the media, like Chubb (1989) and Pollett (2002) mention the gap between the media and the mafia as an observation of the situation in a historical sense. Similarly, much research has been done on cosmopolitan versus provincial news outlets, and national versus local outlets, but none as applied to a situation where threats of violence from an organized crime association are ever-present. Thus, by combining the two fields of study, the mafia as a social phenomenon and as a subject for cosmopolitan versus provincial media coverage,
the study provides a unique combination that contributes to ongoing research in both
fields.

The findings of this study will, hopefully, not only contribute to journalism and
mass communication research, but also have implications for journalistic practice. By
exemplifying the mafia as a power source that has an impact on local and national media,
the study begins to reveal the ways in which the content of media may be affected and
even skewed by criminal organizations. Journalists can then better understand how their
own work may be effected by external influences and strive for more objectivity and
professionalism in their own reporting.
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The definition of the *mafia* varies among sociological research; one researcher describes it as such: A system of relationships centered on the “cosca,” or gang, linked through its members with the external world, either directly or through intermediaries; an integral part of a network that makes up a “coalition” (Blok, 1988). The research goes on to define cosche (gangs or families) as webs of criminal conspiracy with hierarchies between chiefs and underlings, characterized by function, and responsibility for control over territories (Fiume, 2006).

Other research suggests the difference between a popular culture view of the mafia and a scholarly view. Some argue that popular cultures as well as government entities tend to oversimplify the structural organization of the mafia, lending to it a highly organized and centralized structure (Chubb, 1989). However, a closer examination suggests that the mafia is not so much a tightly organized group but more so a loose federation of cosche in a complex social network, all working together for their own interests as well as larger economic interests of the mafia commission (Chubb, 1989).

By 2006, the commission of Cosa nostra was composed of around 100 cosche (Paoli, 2007). By 2003, research showed that members of Cosa nostra were estimated at about 3,500 men (Paoli, 2003). The men of Cosa nostra make up the soldiers or men of honor (uomini d’onore). Soldiers are at the lowest level of the command structure, and they are often put into groups of ten. A group of ten then reports to a capodecina (head of ten), who then reports to the capo of the cosca. Each capo has one or more advisers (consigliere). Three cosche located within the same area form a district, and the head of
each district is a member of the commission in Palermo. The commission is like a board of management for Cosa nostra, and is located in Palermo because in the capitol and its province reside more than half of all of Sicily’s mafia members (Dickie, 2004).

The mafia as an influential force in Sicily has been acknowledged since the second half of the 1800s, but may have been around more than a century prior to that (Dickie, 2004). There are several theories as to how the mafia actually began. The most popular among most people is that of the “good” mafia, the one that we see in the film *The Godfather* where the Italian mafia offspring began as a form of protection in New York City. Some researchers refer to this theory as the “rustic chivalry” theory. In the late 19th century Pietro Mascagni wrote the play *Cavalleria Rusticana*, which translates to *Rustic Chivalry*. The play was a tale of “jealousy, honor and vengeance” among the peasants of Sicily (Dickie, 2004, p. 13). But the play’s significance is not so much about the story line as it is about the development of the mafia. The play emphasized the idea that all Sicilians have a sense of honor and pride rooted in them from birth, and thus the mafia is not an organized society, but an exaggerated notion of this Sicilian sense of honor.

The rustic chivalry theory was captured in an earlier play first performed in 1863. In *I maffiusi di la Vicaria*, a group of criminals in prison came to be known as mafia members, and the boss stopped his men from picking on defenseless prisoners (Dickie, 2004). The play was the first mention of mafia and mafiosi (derived from maffiusi), and the words took to the streets of Sicily; thus began the first definitive word for the uomini d’onore.
While there are other myths and stories that claim to explain the beginnings of the mafia, what researchers can agree upon is that the mafia developed from the economic and political history of the early 19th century (Fiume, 2006).

Some research suggests that the mafia developed out of “a response to the institutional context” (Sabetti, 2002, p. xix). During the 18th and 19th centuries Sicily was a part of the Kingdom of Two Sicilies, governed by the Neapolitan parliament of Naples in the southern part of the Italian boot. The kingdom was under a feudal system, but throughout the first half of the 19th century the Sicilian people were restless and divided over the state of the government. Some favored the feudal system, while some favored an independent centralized government for Sicily itself. Revolts against the Neapolitan parliament broke out over the course of 60 years, along with the idea of becoming a part of the Italian state (Sabetti, 2002). Sicily did not become a part of the nation of Italy until 1860 when the Sicilian people overthrew the Kingdom of Two Sicilies and became a part of the Kingdom of Italy. During this time the mafia developed out of what Sabetti called an outlaw regime.

“An outlaw regime can gain legitimacy through the protection services it offers and then exploit the position it has acquired, recreating the problems of political organization that plague the lawful regime” (Sabetti, 2002, p. xx).

Most researchers agree that the development of the mafia as an organized entity did not develop until after the unification of Italy. When Italy annexed Sicily in 1860, a capitalist society took place of the feudal system in Sicily. The power of barons was given up to the people, and pieces of land could then be bought and sold. However, when Sicily replaced feudalism with a form of capitalism, they failed to create a “monopoly on
violence” by which officials could hold power over lawlessness (Dickie, 2004, p. 57). Thus, capitalism turned Sicily into a breeding land for violence and crime. “In a hellish parody of the capitalist economy, the law was parceled up and privatized just like the land…violence itself had become a form of capital” (Dickie, 2004, p. 58).

From this point marked the Sicilian problem as it is widely referred, which is a broad term that refers to the island’s ungovernability, backwardness, and violence (Sabetti, 2002). However some researchers have abandoned the notion of backwardness as applied to Sicilian culture. Instead, some argue that Sicilians are just devoted to tradition (Fiume, 2006). Sicilians’ dedication to family, extended family and religion play a large part in their devotion to tradition, and although this may appear to be backward it is really just a strong connection to one’s roots. Some research suggests that Sicily cannot be modernized because of its traditional value; however, others argue that Sicily is modernized, just without development (Fiume, 2006).

In this “industry of violence” the mafiosi became the entrepreneurs. It is clear that the mafia and the Sicilian government officials then are inextricably linked in history. The mafiosi filled, and continue to fill today, the gaps between politicians, government officials, and the local villages in which they reside (Dickie, 2004). At some points in history, mafiosi were politicians themselves. As political intermediaries, they can be said to link the local infrastructure to the superstructure of a broader society (Blok, 1988.) There is also reason to believe that local government played a large part in protecting the mafia and making sure crimes went undiscovered. “The mafia in Sicily is not dangerous or invincible in itself. It is dangerous and invincible because it is an instrument of local government,” (Dickie, 2004, p. 73).
Although a traditional view of the mafia claims that it came about to protect the peasants and townspeople, it has been argued that, at least in the 20th century, mafia bosses sought out to become one of the political and economic elites, not challenge them (Chubb, 1989).

The first time the national government formed a commission to run an investigation for the purpose of learning more about the Sicilian-organized crime business, they failed to recognize the mafia as an instrument of local government (Dickie, 2004). In 1875 the Italian parliament sent a commission to Sicily to investigate the unique landscape of crime that had developed in the most southern part of the nation. The commission, however, ultimately dismissed the mafia as a group of poor, lazy hoodlums (Dickie, 2004).

Following the commission’s failure to recognize a dangerous criminal group, in 1876 the Italian government employed a new Minister of the Interior, Giovanni Nicotera, now known for his authoritarian-style ruling. Sicilian crime became an international embarrassment, and Nicotera responded by cracking down on crime in Sicily, sending guardsmen to encircle towns at night and having suspects deported (Dickie, 2004). While many mafiosi were put on trial, witnesses were split in their recollections of the men as a part of an organized crime group. It was, and still is, difficult to find a witness willing to testify against the mafia. Also, as long as the mafiosi had the protection of some form of political power, they were able to escape conviction. After these trials, the mafia was able to hone their two strongest skills: networking and brutality (Dickie, 2004). They did so for the century thereafter, compelling Cosa nostra to become the international embarrassment it set out to be.
From that point in the 1870s the mafia made its way into national newspaper headlines for gruesome and often fatal crimes (Dickie, 2004). The 1890s brought the mafia’s first full-blown “media circus” with the tediously long trial of the men accused of murdering a former mayor of Palermo, a very popular (among townsmen), antimafia-endorsing citizen (Dickie, 2004). From that point the national media continued to follow the crime, corruption and poverty that Sicily had become accustomed to.

Aside from media revelations of mafia-related crimes and trials, much of the historical research done on Cosa nostra derives from mafia defectors or “pentiti,” who are willing to share their work with antimafia officials and activists. Antimafia activists developed in Italy soon after the mafia itself became a thing of common knowledge in the late 19th century.

Many attempts from leading political figures to crackdown on the mafia occurred during the 20th century, but Cosa nostra has, to this day, never ceased to exist. Its power and dominance has waxed and waned, however, as the Italian political system changed throughout history.

By the 1920s and 1930s Benito Mussolini’s fascist regime hit organized crime hard, or at least made it appear that way. Within three years, 11,000 arrests were made, putting mafia associates behind bars at least temporarily (Dickie, 2004). However, while claiming they had beaten the mafia, sources suggest that the regime was in fact ordering the Italian press to “play down” acts of crime (Dickie, 2004). Mussolini, however, had not beaten the mafia, and by the end of World War II, along with the fascist regime, Cosa nostra again gained strength as a powerful force in Southern Italy.
As Allied forces entered Sicily, mafiosi suspiciously replaced the fascist leaders who were knocked out of power, particularly local mayors (Robb, 1996). The story goes that the American Cosa nostra, in particular the American capo dei capi Lucky Luciano, smoothed over the Allied invasion of Sicily, and, in exchange for Sicilian cooperation, installed mafiosi as local leaders (Robb, 1996).

By the 1950s and 1960s rolled around, Cosa nostra had built up a solid reputation (or cover up) in the construction business. Italy was experiencing a building boom, and the mafia took full advantage. The ventures did not stop at concrete and bricks, however. In the 1970s Cosa nostra established itself in the international heroin market, making its first major mark in the drug world (Dickie, 2004). These enterprises laid the groundwork for many mafia-run businesses today.

In the 1980s, after a series of ongoing murders and crimes associated with the mafia, a new team was organized to lead the antimafia movement in Palermo. Among the men were Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino, two magistrates who were then killed by the mafia nearly a decade later. The movement succeeded in mobilizing local citizens, business owners, journalists and others to protest the mafia and its violent means. By February 1986, a trial of monstrous proportions began—474 men faced mafia-related charges in Palermo (Dickie, 2004). Two of the alleged most dangerous men in the mafia, Salvatore “Toto” Riina and Bernardo Provenzano, were still on the run.

The trial, referred to as the maxi-processo or maxi-trial, turned Palermo into a media circus for nearly two years. The trial concluded in December 1987, handing out 2,665 years of jail time and acquitting 114 of the 474 accused (Dickie, 2004). The media
response expressed the mafia’s mortal existence; Cosa nostra was no longer an invincible being according to the newspapers.

But, of little surprise to those familiar with the Italian legal system’s hiccups, by 1989 only 60 of the 342 convicted were still behind bars (Dickie, 2004). Some newspapers reported, including The Guardian (2001), that the mafia associates’ appeals were handed off to a corrupt judge, Corrado Carnevale, who overturned many of the trials for trivial reasons, such as alleged illness with no symptoms. While this failure to execute sentences was a huge disappointment for the antimafia movement, some were still determined to fight.

Giovanni Falcone eventually moved into a national position in the Ministry of Justice and set up a state-run antimafia system throughout the nation. His efforts broke ground in the early 1990s and the state was on the verge of capturing Cosa nostra’s then boss Toto Riina, one of the most powerful and notorious mafia bosses in Cosa nostra’s history.

But Riina wasn’t one to back down. He led a full-scale series of bomb attacks on Italy’s mainland, namely in Florence, Milan, and Rome, and then finally killed the man who was wont to seal his fate, Giovanni Falcone. Riina ordered Falcone dead in a car bomb in Sicily. Several months later, Falcone’s successor and former colleague, Borsellino, was killed under Riina’s orders as well (Dickie, 2004).

Following the murders those truly devoted to the antimafia movement rallied once again to make sure the mafia didn’t win their fight against the state. Newer, stricter measures were put in place by the legislature, in particular stricter prison laws that prevented mafia bosses from communicating orders from behind bars (Paoli, 2007). The
explosion of enforcement by the state proved to be effective. In 1993 the Italian police forces finally captured Toto Riina, capo dei capi, and issued him a life sentence.

After Riina’s capture Cosa nostra tried to emulate Riina’s war on the state, but did not succeed for long. In 1995 Riina’s first successor was captured. That year a new capo dei capi took over, Bernardo Provenzano. He had long been a member of Cosa nostra but was far more inconspicuous than belligerent Riina. Provenzano took Cosa nostra “under the radar.” There was no more war on the state, killings were discrete and even small-town crime dropped in the Sicilian provinces (Dickie, 2004). His under the radar approach led to a significant drop in media reports of Sicilian organized crime (Dickie, 2004).

By the time Toto Riina was arrested in 1993, the Italian government had developed a significantly more efficient and successful system for capturing mafia fugitives. Despite his attempts to keep Cosa nostra and himself out of the spotlight, Provenzano was captured in April 2006 by state officials (Paoli, 2007).

For most of Provenzano’s rule and currently, extortion was and is the primary source of economic cash flow for Cosa nostra (Paoli, 2007). In 2001, 50 to 80% of shopkeepers in Italy’s southern region were paying the pizzo, or protection racket money (Paoli, 2007; Svimez, 2001). There has been a recent uprising, however, as many Sicilian business owners and young people are standing up to the pizzo and calling for an end to extortion.

Clearly the mafia still plays a role as a local power source in Sicily, but researchers differ in how significant they think the mafia is as a community influence. While the media, law enforcement and often the Italian people give little credit to the
antimafia movement and how it has decreased the presence of the mafia, researchers like Paoli (2007), argue that the successes of the Italian state in the past decade are largely overlooked. Nonetheless, Mafiosi can still play an influential role in their communities, and the war against the mafia is far from over. Cosa nostra is known to reestablish itself as a powerful force, and the fall of the commission and several capo dei capi does not mean that it will not rise again.
RELATED STUDIES

Mafia and Media Coverage

Historically, Italian newspaper readership has been low. Explanations for this include slow development of national literacy rate, limited urbanization and slow communications systems (Forgacs & Lumley, 1996). Despite the rise of powerful, industrialized cities like Rome and Milan, much of the rest of Italy has been prone to underdevelopment.

According to Forgacs and Lumley (1996), while the rest of the industrialized world saw a spread of literacy during the 19th century, Italy developed only an elite readership. When the majority of Italians became literate in the second half of the 20th century, the newspaper did not monopolize information, seemingly due to popularity of radio and the emergence of television.

Adding to Italians’ use of other forms of media is the people’s natural inclination to distrust the government. Historically, the Italian press is known for its lack of independence. The relationships between newspapers and centers of power, such as political institutions and parties, has been outright and established as a norm (Forgacs & Lumley, 1996).

Despite this popular characteristic of Italian newspapers, more recent observation of newspaper-political power relationships shows that this notion may be an oversimplification. In the present day it seems that most newspapers are controlled by companies and entrepreneurs who try to exert their influence on the press, giving
companies a voice and influence over the direction of national conversation and public
affairs (Forgacs & Lumley, 1996).

As far as the relationship between the mafia and the press, research suggests that
the problem of the mafia is underreported. The mafia plays a role in repressing
journalistic freedom by intimidating journalists with the use of violence or threats of
violence (Pollett, 2002).

In the late 19th century research shows that Italian and Sicilian newspapers were
full of crime reports, but a very small portion of those crimes that occurred around
Palermo, the capitol of Sicily, were reported. This can be attributed to the fact that mafia
crimes go beyond any ordinary crime (Dickie, 2004). Mafia crimes are entwined among
many people throughout a community, and the chance that those people will follow
omerta, the code of silence, religiously is very likely. Particularly in the late 1800s the
mafia was a phenomenon that gave protection as well as received protection from the
townspeople, and it follows that the community newspapers would also protect the local
mafia (Dickie, 2004).

In the 1950s, however, the independent left-wing newspaper L’Ora began
devoting more inches to investigative pieces, and was the first major media outlet to
report on organized crime and corruption (Dickie, 2004). In 1958, L’Ora published “the
names, interests, and political contacts of leading mafia bosses,” and the mafia responded
by bombing the L’Ora offices. L’Ora did not back down, and continued with its
investigative and often dangerous reporting. L’Ora opened up the doors for the antimafia
movement, particularly for courageous media outlets. In the 1970s, two L’Ora journalists
were killed for their reporting. Cosa nostra then killed the crime reporter at Giornale di
Sicilia (Dickie, 2004). In 1984 Giuseppe Fava, Italian journalist and founder of I Siciliani newspaper, was killed by Cosa nostra. In 1993 Italian journalist Giuseppe “Beppe” Alfano, while driving in his car, was shot three times and killed by a Cosa nostra associate. Today, journalists continue to live in fear. Roberto Saviano, writer of Gomorrah, the award-winning movie about the mafia in Naples, is now under 24-hour police protection after receiving death threats and uncovering a mafia plot to kill him by a car bomb.

The problem of underreporting in Italy rings true not only when the topic is the mafia. Investigative journalism is not often seen even in large-scale papers. Journalists feel constrained to write only about certain topics, and when they do write about topics that are considered generally off limits, they often limit themselves in how deeply their inquiry will go (Pollett, 2002).

Another factor effecting depth of investigative reporting is whether or not the locale is metropolitan or rural. Crime in Sicily is unique because of the island’s rural landscape. Typically there are higher rates of crime in metropolitan areas, but Cosa nostra plagues not only Sicily’s capitol, Palermo, but the rolling hills and back roads that weave in and out of the towns and villages that make up the island. Berkowitz (2007) argues that more investigative reporting takes place in metropolitan areas because there is more crime in those areas, but this does not explain the lack of critical reporting in Sicily.

Despite this lack of investigative reporting, journalism in Italy is considered a profession, and Italian journalists are required to join the Ordine Dei Giornalisti (Association of Journalists). It was established as the Law of February 3, 1963 n. 69, and was intended to create structure, guidance and laws for practicing journalists in Italy. The
law “recognizes the social importance of journalism,” as well as journalists’ right to freedom of information and criticism. In addition, the law establishes journalism as a profession that requires the utmost respect for the truth in the facts (Ordine Dei Giornalisti, n.d.).

In order to join the association, journalists either prove that they work full-time at a news organization or graduate from an approved journalism school, in addition to passing an admissions examination. The Ordine Dei Giornalisti recognizes 21 journalism schools in Italy that grant either undergraduate or graduate degrees in journalism. Of these schools, there are three in Rome and one in Sicily. The one in Sicily is located in Palermo, which is interesting in that, as mentioned above, Palermo is home to more than half of Sicily’s mafia associates. Although not surprising because, as the island’s capitol, it is likely to be more so pluralistic than the rest of the island, it also presents the city with a conflict between its truth-seekers and its omerta-protected mafiosi.

External Influences on Media Content

There are a number of influences on journalists, which in turn influence content. It is possible to infer things about a news outlet’s organizational and cultural settings, as well as the people that work there, by analyzing the news content (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Shoemaker and Reese break down the influences of media content into a hierarchy. The hierarchy begins at the level of the individual media worker, followed by the media routines of journalists, followed by the organizational/ownership level, which is then followed by external influences on media and lastly followed by the ideological level. At the individual level the researchers argue that personal backgrounds,
experiences, attitudes and values play a part in what content makes it to print (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). The hierarchy breaks down the influences that affect a journalist in his or her everyday environment. According to Shoemaker and Reese, the media routines are the means to an end that journalists use to produce content. They are the “practical responses to the needs of media organizations and workers,” (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). For instance, objectivity is a media routine used to maximize organization credibility and defend the content from critics (Tuchman, 1972).

In their hierarchy of influences on media routines, external influences play a large part in the content produced in newspapers and news broadcasts. External influences include advertisers, public relations campaigns, interest groups, and the government. The degree to which government influences the media depends on the type of government and the nation. In 2008 the non-profit organization Freedom House ranked Italy 65 in press freedom out of 195 total nations surveyed. In Western Europe, however, Italy ranked 24 out of 25 (Freedom House, 2008).

Media Framing

A crucial factor in this study will be the way in which the newspapers frame the mafia and members of the mafia. Media frames have been given a significant amount of attention, particularly in recent years, and for good reason.

Frame analysis examines the selection and salience of certain aspects that journalists highlight by exploring images, stereotypes, metaphors, actors and messages (Hanitzsch & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2008). Typically, a frame can be seen as the selection and salience of certain aspects of a perceived reality which are then used in the text in such a
way as to promote a certain causal interpretation, moral evaluation, problem definition, or suggestion for treatment (Entman, 1993). Kahneman and Tversky (2000) studied how the presentation of a perceived reality could affect the way a population perceived that event. In this study, I will take that notion one step further and argue that the way in which the journalist presents the event, the framing of the event, is first influenced by external factors.

Some research categorizes framing research as either equivalency framing or issue framing. *Issue framing* examines the selection of salient facts and word selection in a news text and how they evoke a certain frame (Kahneman & Tversky, 2000). *Equivalency framing* looks at how two equivalent statements, statements that ultimately say the same thing, may give off two different connotations (Kahneman & Tversky, 2000). For example, one can say, “Out of a total of 1,000, 400 people died in the accident,” or “Out of a total of 1,000, 600 people lived in the accident.” The two statements describe the same event but evoke different frames.

For this study I have determined frames as holistic variables. Holistic variables are formed by combining the factors that contribute to one complete, generalizable frame in a text (Hanitzsch & Walh-Jorgensen, 2009). For example, in a news article if a nation was criticized for disagreeing with American views, its economy labeled as in financial trouble, and its immigration policy too lax, these factors might elicit a negative or critical frame.
Cosmopolitan versus Provincial Newspapers

In her research on journalistic values, Viall (1991) defined value as an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct is preferable to an opposite mode of conduct. Viall argued that values might be influenced by whether or not the news outlet is a leading, metropolitan newspaper or a smaller, local paper. While all print journalists share similar values, “subtle but significant” differences in their value systems ultimately influence the decision-making process (Viall, 1991, p. 42). Viall cites Royce (1908) for his definition of provincialism: “The tendency of a province to possess its own customs and ideas… traditions, beliefs, and aspirations” (p. 46).

While larger metropolitan news outlets cater to a vastly complex audience with different views and values, a provincial newspaper provides the news for a smaller community with similar values. Journalists at small newspapers must work in a more complicated context because they have to take into consideration their own professional values, the values of their organization and, most importantly for the purpose of this study, community expectations (Berkowitz, 2007). A newspaper such as La Sicilia could be considered a provincial newspaper in the sense that the island of Sicily has traditionally been seen as a society outside the realms of Italian norms, and the newspaper in turn serves a small audience with a somewhat homogenous set of values. Smaller communities are said to be more homogeneous in terms of education, income, occupation, religion, and political views (Berkowitz, 2007).

Larger, metropolitan news outlets can be said to follow cosmopolitan tendencies (Ziff, 1986). This means that differences in cosmopolitan and provincial newspapers are based on their communities, and the values of their communities. These differences in
turn result in different decisions in terms of coverage. Cosmopolitan newspapers are more likely to employ investigative journalism as well as report critically about local power sources. Some researchers argue that reporters at smaller newspapers are less likely to write investigative pieces because of the newsroom culture, the economic pressures from the newspaper itself, and the repercussions it may have in the community (Berkowitz, 2007). This could mean that provincial newspapers and cosmopolitan newspapers serve different purposes for their respective audiences.

A newspaper’s purpose or function, along with cultural value systems, influences the values that journalists employ (Viall, 1991). Tichenor et al. (1980) suggest that provincial and cosmopolitan newspapers serve different functions. I will test this theory in the Italian context. According to their research, a less complex community (with a provincial newspaper) would primarily be used as a distributive source by just providing information. On the other hand, a more complex community (with a cosmopolitan newspaper) would not only play the distributive role, but also provide a public arena for discussion through community feedback (Tichenor et al., 1980). In effect, the cosmopolitan paper would provide its pluralistic community with a pluralistic view of the world, and allow for criticism of local power sources, where as a provincial newspaper would be less likely to do so. Based on Tichenor et al.’s theory, I would speculate that the cosmopolitan newspaper would be more likely to frame the mafia critically. Major indicators of this frame are printing more mafia-related names and attributing crimes to specific members of the mafia. As this study is to test the Tichenor et al.’s hypothesis in an Italian context, the following hypotheses for this thesis are formulated as follows:
RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

As reviewed earlier, the mafia has the power to intimidate journalists by using violence or threats of violence, thus repressing journalistic freedom (Pollett, 2002). According to Shoemaker and Reese’s (1996) standards of media influences, the mafia would be considered an external influence repressing that freedom. Thus, journalists may restrain from using mafiosi’s specific names as related to crimes.

Furthermore, based on the theoretical ideals of cosmopolitanism and provincialism in journalism (Tichenor et al., 1980), a provincial newspaper like La Sicilia would be even less likely than national daily La Repubblica to use mafiosi’s names as related to crimes. Hence the three hypotheses formulated below for this study.

**H1**: The name of Bernardo Provenzano, most recent capo dei capi, will be mentioned more often in *La Repubblica* coverage than in *La Sicilia* coverage.

**H2**: The name of Salvatore Riina, former capo dei capi, will be mentioned more often in *La Repubblica* coverage than in *La Sicilia* coverage.

**H3**: The name of Matteo Messina Denaro, alleged current capo dei capi, will be mentioned more often in *La Repubblica* coverage than in *La Sicilia* coverage.

A provincial newspaper would be more susceptible to local external influences such as the “power elite,” which one could say the above mafiosi represent. Provincial news reporters are more likely to base their decisions on tradition and the feelings of the general public than would be a cosmopolitan newspaper. They are also more likely to avoid reporting a community’s internal conflicts as to keep community members at ease (Tichenor et al., 1980). Some small-town newspapers are regarded as “community
boosters,” and journalists may feel it is their duty to protect and build ties with the community first and foremost, and then report the news (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

Provincial and cosmopolitan journalists also differ in the organizational setting they are part and parcel to. Cosmopolitan journalists are working for large companies with many other journalists, and exposure to other, experienced journalists in the workplace may provide them with a greater sense of professionalism. Community journalists, on the other hand, typically work in a smaller setting, and work more so in isolation. They have fewer incentives from their organization to work for, and the values encouraged by the organization are typically those in line with community values (Viall, 1991). In effect, the subculture of the organization to which a journalist belongs influences the coverage in the paper.

The attributes of provincialism would provide organized crime leaders in Sicily with powerful influential control over the news because Cosa nostra is the main power center throughout the island other than the authorities, which may or may not be infiltrated by mafiosi as well.

The following two research questions are raised to address the discrepancies, if any, between the two newspapers’ coverage of Cosa nostra in terms of amount, which is an important indicator of how much the two newspapers would differ in their willingness to cover mafia events.

December 16, 2008 referred to in the research questions was the day on which nearly 100 Cosa nostra associates were arrested. One might speculate that the coverage may change after the event, and La Sicilia might increase coverage of Cosa nostra with some of its more dangerous associates behind bars.
RQ1: Was there any difference between *La Sicilia* and *La Repubblica* in terms of the amount of their Cosa nostra coverage? Did this difference, if any, change after December 16, 2008?

RQ2: Was there any difference between *La Sicilia* and *La Repubblica* in terms of the tones in their Cosa nostra coverage? What was the dominant tone in their coverage?
RESEARCH METHOD

The method for this study was a content analysis. A content analysis is defined as “a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (Berelson, 1952, p. 18). A content analysis will allow us to evaluate differences in coverage between cosmopolitan newspapers and provincial newspapers, and it also illustrates the influence that the mafia might have on journalists and the content they produce (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). In addition, there has been little analysis of Italian newspaper coverage of the Italian mafia, and I believe this study will reveal significant differences between the two types of newspapers.

The newspapers were chosen by their distinctive profiles that set them apart as news organizations. La Repubblica is a cosmopolitan newspaper in the sense that it caters to a national, demographically diverse audience. Established in 1976 by the Gruppo Editoriale L’Espresso, La Repubblica was originally founded as a left-leaning media outlet with ties to the Italian Communist Party. It is known for critical coverage of the controversial Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, as well as the Catholic Church. With a readership of approximately 3 million, La Repubblica has battled Corriere della Sera, also a general interest newspaper, for the top spot in Italian newspapers since the former became a popular daily (Audipress, 2008). Although it is primarily a national media outlet, La Repubblica also has nine local edition papers in other regions of the country.

La Sicilia boasts a longer history than La Repubblica, as it was established first in 1945. It is politically aligned with centrism and conservatism, and has an approximate readership of 450,000 (Audipress, 2008). Although this readership statistic is quite large, the audience is primarily based in Sicily, which is considered provincial territory.
According to research from the web information company Alexa\(^1\), *La Sicilia*’s web site is the 4,854th most popular web site in Italy, whereas *La Repubblica*’s web site is the 11th most popular, as of November 2009 (Repubblica.it – Site Info, n.d.; Lasiciliaweb.it – Site Info, n.d.). This data provides further evidence that the two newspapers differ in structure and purpose.

The study consisted of the sample of online articles published by *La Repubblica* and *La Sicilia* between and including October 16, 2008 and February 15, 2009. Research shows that most Italians use the Internet to access news, newspaper readership is low and no strong tradition of reading newspapers exists in Italy (Pollett, 2002). The time frame is significant because it includes the two months before and the two months after December 16, 2008, the day on which Italian officials arrested 89 mafiosi, what they termed a “decapitation” of Cosa nostra. The total number of articles was 319, with 229 from *La Repubblica* and 90 from *La Sicilia*.

The unit of analysis is each news article. Letters to the editor and editorials are excluded because they express opinions rather than hard news, and this study examined reporters’ use of frames, not editors or local citizens’ use of frames in opinion pieces.

I also coded for the framing of the mafia in terms of news direction that the article evoked. In a content analysis, news direction refers to “the attitude expressed toward any symbol…expressions of attitude are usually categorized as favorable (positive, supportive), unfavorable (negative, critical), or neutral,” (Yu, 1996, p.180). This variable

---

\(^{1}\) Alexa Internet, Inc. is a website information tool that provides data for web sites around the world that includes statistics, related links, and reviews of web sites. The information is updated daily.
measures the portrayal of the mafia and the tone of the article in terms of news direction and is divided into three categories: “supportive,” “critical,” and “neutral.”

This measures in part the respective objectivity of the two newspapers. According to Tuchman (1972), a reporter must make immediate decisions concerning validity, reliability, and truth in order to turn out a credible story. Ideally reporters use their working knowledge of objectivity to reach those decisions. By examining *La Repubblica* and *La Sicilia*’s objectivity in relation to the mafia, we can get a glimpse of the differences in the two newspapers’ decisions as far as what to report and how to report it.

In order to determine the framing, I first coded for the papers’ willingness to print specifics about the mafia by determining whether or not mafiosi are mentioned, which will in turn help to indicate critical, neutral, or supportive frames. Whether or not they are mentioned, as well as which boss’ names are printed, will help determine the frame. The three mafiosi I chose to code for are the three most recent prominent mafia bosses (capo dei capi) of Cosa nostra. Matteo Messina Denaro is the alleged current mafia boss, Bernardo Provenzano is his predecessor, and Salvatore Riina is Provenzano’s predecessor. Both Provenzano and Riina are now in jail, but Denaro remains a fugitive. It was thought that the newspapers might be less inclined to mention Denaro’s name because he is still running from Italian authorities. There was also an “other” category for the rest of the mafia associates who are mentioned in the articles examined.

For the purpose of clarity, the following operational definitions provided a guide for the researcher to follow when conducting this content analysis.

*News Frame:* The selection and salience of certain aspects of a perceived reality which are then used in the text in such a way as to promote a certain causal
interpretation, moral evaluation, problem definition, or suggestion for treatment (Entman, 1993).

*Critical frame:* Specific mafia names are present and linked to a crime or negative act.²

*Supportive frame:* Specific mafia names are present and linked to a positive act

*Neutral frame:* Specific mafia names are absent, or, if present, are not linked to any act.

*Cosmopolitan newspaper:* A newspaper that caters to a pluralistic community with complex views and values, often based in a metropolitan area (Ziff, 1986).

*Provincial newspaper:* A newspaper that caters to a province, which tends to possess its own customs, ideas, traditions, beliefs, and aspirations (Royce, 1908; Viall, 1991).

*Mafia associate:* A person described as a mafioso or working for a mafioso, one who commits mafia-executed crimes under the direction of the Sicilian crime ring Cosa nostra.

In order to determine the reliability of my coding instrument, two tests of reliability were conducted. First, a test of intracoder reliability was conducted to determine the reliability of the single coder’s results over a one-month period. A total of 28 articles, a 9% sample of the total number of articles, were coded. The articles were organized by date, and then a random sample of articles was chosen by selecting every

² The following signal words were used in order to identify the critical frame, including but not limited to: vittime (victims), uccisione (death), sangue (blood), crimine (criminals), as well as any substituted synonyms.
10th article. Out of the 28 articles, 8 were from *La Sicilia* and 20 from *La Repubblica*, 9% of each newspaper’s respective number of articles in the study.

The intracoder reliability was determined by percent agreement and Scott’s pi. Table 1 shows the intracoder reliability for 7 variables. Variables 1, 2, 3 and 5 all had 100% agreement and Scott’s pi = 1.

Variable 6, whether or not other mafiosi were mentioned, had the lowest reliability score, with 92.9% agreement and Scott’s pi = .857. There were two disagreement cases for this variable. Not far behind, variables 4 and 7 had percent agreements of 96.4 and Scott’s pi = 0.9 and 0.887, respectively. Both variables had one case of disagreement. The overall percent agreement for intracoder reliability was 97.96%.

The Scott’s pi and a percent agreement for the intracoder reliability test indicate that the coding is reliable for this study.
Table 1

*Intracoder Reliability Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Percent Agreement</th>
<th>Scott’s Pi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variable 1 (Newspaper)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable 2 (Date)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable 3 (Provenzano mentioned)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable 4 (Riina mentioned)</td>
<td>96.40%</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable 5 (Denaro mentioned)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable 6 (Other mafiosi mentioned)</td>
<td>92.90%</td>
<td>0.856</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable 7 (Frame)</td>
<td>96.40%</td>
<td>0.887</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second test of reliability was conducted by determining percent agreement and Scott’s pi among three coders: the original single coder and two other Italian-speaking coders. All three coders read and coded 28 articles, a 9% sample of the total number of articles. Again, the articles were organized by date, and then a random sample of articles was chosen by selecting every 10th article. Out of the 28 cases, 8 were from *La Sicilia* and 20 from *La Repubblica*, 9% of each newspaper’s respective number of articles in the study.
The results of the intercoder reliability test show that variables 1, 2, 3, and 5 have 100% agreement among all three coders, with an average Cohen’s Kappa of 1. Variables 4 and 7, whether or not mafioso Salvatore Riina was mentioned and the frame of the article, both had an average percent agreement of 95.24%, and Cohen’s Kappa of 0.87 and 0.85, respectively. Variable 6, whether or not other mafia bosses were mentioned, had an average percent agreement of 97.62% and Cohen’s Kappa of 0.95.

The Cohen’s Kappas and average percent agreement of the intercoder reliability test indicate that the coding is satisfactory and indeed reliable.
RESULTS

Although 21.40% of *La Repubblica* stories (49 of its 229 stories) mentioned Provenzano while only 13.4% of *La Sicilia* stories (12 of its 90 stories) did so, this difference is statistically insignificant ($x^2 = 1.90, \text{df} = 1, p > .05$). **H1**—the name of Bernardo Provenzano, the most recent capo dei capi, will be mentioned more often in *La Repubblica* coverage than in *La Sicilia* coverage—was, therefore, not confirmed.

Although 14.8% of *La Repubblica* stories (34 of its 229 stories) mentioned mafioso Salvatore Riina, while 12.3% of *La Sicilia* stories (11 of its 90 stories) did so, this difference is not statistically significant ($x^2 = .279, \text{df} = 1, p > .05$). **H2**—the name of Salvatore Riina, a former capo dei capi, will be mentioned more often in *La Repubblica* coverage than in *La Sicilia* coverage—was, therefore, rejected.

Although only 6% of *La Repubblica* stories (14 of its 229 stories) mentioned mafioso Matteo Messina Denaro, 10% of *La Sicilia* stories (9 of its 90 stories) did so, this difference is not statistically significant, either ($x^2 = 1.24, \text{df} = 1, p > .05$). So, **H3**—the name of Matteo Messina Denaro, alleged current capo dei capi, will be mentioned more often in *La Repubblica* coverage than in *La Sicilia* coverage—was also rejected.
Table 3

**The Frequencies of Articles that Mention Mafiosi**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentions</th>
<th>La Repubblica</th>
<th>La Sicilia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freq. (%)</td>
<td>Freq. (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provenzano mentioned</td>
<td>49 (21.40)</td>
<td>12 (13.40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riina mentioned</td>
<td>34 (14.8)</td>
<td>11 (12.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denaro mentioned</td>
<td>14 (6)</td>
<td>9 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other mafiosi mentioned</td>
<td>111 (48.5)</td>
<td>41 (46)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, the rankings of mafiosi mentions in the two papers were found to be highly correlated, based on a Spearman’s Rho calculation (rho = 1.00).

**RQ 1 examines if there was a difference between La Sicilia and La Repubblica in terms of the amount of their Cosa nostra coverage, and if such a difference—if it did exist—changed after December 16, 2008.**

A difference found in the overall amount of coverage, as La Repubblica accounted for 229 articles in this study, 71.8%, and La Sicilia accounted for 90, or 28.2% of the total number of articles. Again, the articles are the total number of mafia-related news articles printed by each newspaper between the dates of October 16, 2008 and February 15, 2009. La Repubblica published more than 2.5 times the number of mafia-related articles than La Sicilia did during the selected time period.
As far as the frequency of articles related to the date December 16, 2008, the total number of articles from both papers shows that the percentage of articles in fact decreased after the event occurred. A little over half, 56.7%, of the total articles were published prior to December 16, which leaves 43% of the articles published after the event.

Both newspapers published less articles related to Cosa nostra during the two months after the “decapitation,” with *La Repubblica* publishing 129 articles before the event and 100 articles after the event, a decrease of approximately 22%. The number of articles related to Cosa nostra published by *La Sicilia* decreased by a 27%, 52 articles during the two months before the event and 38 articles during the two months after the event.

**RQ2 examines if there was any difference between *La Sicilia* and *La Repubblica* in terms of the tones in their Cosa nostra coverage and identifies the dominant tones in their coverage.**

In terms of frequencies, the two papers were within 3% of each other for all three framing categories, which shows that there is little difference in the newspapers’ tones of the coverage. Furthermore, a Spearman’s Rho correlation coefficient calculation shows a high correlation (rho = 1.00) between the two newspapers’ rankings in terms of their types of coverage. The coverage was predominantly neutral, with 68.5% of the articles from *La Repubblica* and 66% from *La Sicilia* falling into this category. Both papers framed the mafia critically 30.5% of the time. The mafia was framed in a supportive light 1% (*La Repubblica*) and 3% (*La Sicilia*) of the time.
Table 4

_Framing of the mafia by newspaper_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frames</th>
<th>La Repubblica</th>
<th>(%)</th>
<th>La Sicilia</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>(30.5)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>(31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>(68.5)</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>(66)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DISCUSSION

This research was conducted in order to investigate the differences between a cosmopolitan newspaper and a provincial newspaper. The results showed that the two newspapers’ coverage did not differ to the extent that was hypothesized. And, where the coverage did differ, the results were statistically insignificant. Based on the findings, *La Repubblica* and *La Sicilia* share many similarities in terms of coverage of the Sicilian mafia, and differences between the two news outlets are more marginal than polarizing.

Because all three hypotheses were statistically insignificant and thus rejected, the findings suggest that further research must be conducted in order to determine whether or not the results can be confirmed. In order to determine whether or not the results, which showed some differences between the two newspapers’ coverage, are likely to happen again, a repeat study, with provisions, must be conducted.

There are a number of reasons the results may have been statistically insignificant. The insignificant findings may have been due to sample size. The findings show that the number of articles used in the study might have been an insufficient sample to determine accurate findings. Based on *La Repubblica*’s 229 articles and *La Sicilia*’s 90 articles across a four-month timeframe, an extended amount of time may have provided a sufficient amount of articles for the results to be found significant. Providing a base of comparison, i.e. the total number of stories published about all topics from each newspaper during the timeframe given, might have contributed to significance as well.

The statistical insignificance of the results showed that if the study were repeated, the new results might differ from the original findings. However, it also shows that there
is no conclusive evidence to show that the two newspapers differ in the ways that were hypothesized for this study.

The hypotheses tested in this study were rejected by statistical significance; however, the results still provide practical significance and contribute to ongoing research in the field of cosmopolitanism vs. provincialism. We now know that there is a chance the differences between the two newspapers may be marginal or even nonexistent. In fact, the similarities between the two outlets found in this study take precedence over the differences.

One noteworthy similarity between the two papers is their coverage priority rankings for each category of mafioso. When the coverage was ranked by mafioso (including the “Other” category) and correlated, the correlation came to 1.00. This suggests that although the papers differ in the number and percentage of mentions, the two papers’ coverage priorities are actually very similar.

Both *La Repubblica* and *La Sicilia* published the least amount of articles mentioning Matteo Messina Denaro, leading prospect to have taken over Bernardo Provenzano as capo dei capi. Denaro is the only mafiosi who is a fugitive out of the three mafiosi being examined in this study. As he is thought to reside in Sicily and be the successor to Provenzano, it was hypothesized that *La Sicilia* would mention him in less articles than *La Repubblica*. Although there was a difference in the percentage of times Denaro was mentioned, the more significant finding showed that both newspapers mentioned Denaro the least amount of times out of the four categories, which suggests that the two newspapers’ coverage is actually quite similar.
Similarly, the two newspapers mentioned names of “Other” mafiosi the most, and about the same percentage of time (La Repubblica, 48.5%; La Sicilia, 46%). As shown in Table 3, the most mentions of mafiosi accounted for all “Other” named mafia associates. These mafia associates are generally less well known, less high-profile, and potentially less dangerous than the three other mafiosi in the given categories. The Other category held the most amount of mentions, with La Repubblica printing a total of 111 articles mentioning other mafiosi, compared to La Sicilia’s 41 articles that did the same. Despite the gap in number, it is important to remember the capacity of La Repubblica as a mainstream daily newspaper, as its access to resources puts La Sicilia at a disadvantage in terms of ability to produce content. Because of this, the percentage of the articles containing mafiosi mentions takes precedence over the numeric digit.

On another note, the framing of the mafia by each newspaper appears to be extremely similar in terms of news direction, categorized by supportive, critical, and neutral tones. La Repubblica and La Sicilia printed the exact same percentage, 31%, of articles critically framing the mafia. As the frame was determined by the presence of mafiosi names and the attribution of crimes committed by said mafiosi, the frame percentages reflect, in some aspects, the results of the tested hypotheses. This is shown by how, although the two newspapers differed in the percentage of articles that mentioned three leading mafia bosses, the differences were not high, at most 7%.

From this it can be said that the two newspapers are very similar in the coverage of mafiosi, especially based on coverage priorities and framing of the mafia. Based on the findings, one might suggest that either La Sicilia is not a provincial newspaper, but in fact cosmopolitan in its nature of coverage, or that cosmopolitan coverage is not all that
different than provincial newspaper coverage, at least in terms of the external influence being studied in this thesis.

The results can be determined either way. However, there is reason to argue that *La Sicilia* is in fact less provincial than it is commonly thought to be, thus explaining the similarities in coverage between the two newspapers and simultaneously confirming the theory of cosmopolitan versus provincial journalism found in previous research.

According to Tichenor et al. (1980), cosmopolitan media outlets serve more complex communities as compared to the communities that follow provincial media outlets. As a theory, however, cosmopolitan versus provincial journalism research does not provide determination criteria for cases in which a medium’s orientation is not so obviously cosmopolitan or provincial. In this case, the island of Sicily and *La Sicilia* readers may have been wrongfully determined as provincial in orientation, when the island’s progressions during the past century may actually show otherwise. Sicily has traditionally been seen as a society outside the realms of Italian norms and has even been referred to as a backward society (Sabetti, 2002). However, there is reason to believe that the island and its regions have become more heterogeneous and pluralistic, allowing for more of a sophisticated and cosmopolitan society to emerge. *La Sicilia*’s coverage of the mafiosi seems to reflect the ways in which Sicily has grown into a diverse region. One could even conclude that, based on its development as a region, the island’s media landscape has changed in terms of journalistic values—its media are adapting to the ways of a more metropolitan and pluralistic culture.
With that said, it should be noted that by applying the Chi Square calculation to the hypotheses, the results were insignificant. Further research must be conducted in order to test the theories utilized in this study.

Research Contributions

This content analysis provides both familiar and unprecedented results in terms of the differences between cosmopolitan and provincial newspapers. Most critically, this study showed that the differences between La Repubblica and La Sicilia were not as polarizing as commonly thought. In fact, the similarities found between the two newspapers in the framing and coverage of the mafia were more profound than was hypothesized.

The study provides an examination of a particular case of two seemingly very different newspapers, in terms of audience, size, and standing in Italian society. The two media outlets were predicted to have differences in coverage in proportional measures to their differences as news organizations. However, their differences in coverage of the mafia were found to be marginal.

Stemming from research including Tichenor et al. (1980) and his notions of cosmopolitan vs. provincial journalism, as well as Viall’s (1992) work on journalistic values, this study provides another step towards unmasking the differences in coverage of community and metropolitan news. Viall (1991) cites Royce’s (1908) definition of provincialism as the tendency of a province to have its own customs, ideas, traditions, and so on, however from this study we have found that perhaps Sicily as an island is not
as provincial as research suggests. Perhaps the idea of backwardness in Sicily, as suggested by Sabetti (2002), is outdated and needs to be readdressed.

Viall (1992) also touches on the differences between provincial and cosmopolitan news outlets in terms of their values, arguing that metropolitan news outlets cater to a complex audience whereas provincial news outlets cater to a smaller, more homogeneous audience. In turn, the differences in audiences supposedly affect the values of the organization and the coverage the news outlet produces. However, as seen from this study, La Sicilia and La Repubblica are more similar than one might expect according to Viall’s argument. Along the same lines, Berkowitz (2007) argues that journalists who work at smaller newspapers are more likely to take into consideration the community expectations of the newspaper’s audience, but La Sicilia’s coverage of the mafia seems to stray only slightly from the coverage La Repubblica is producing, particularly in terms of framing the mafia.

So do La Repubblica and La Sicilia differ in their functions as news outlets for their respective audiences? With the results provided from this thesis, one could argue that no, the two newspapers do not differ in their function as a source of news in the sense that they provided similar coverage of mafiosi and mafia events during the timeframe studied.

In addition to providing further insight on cosmopolitan versus provincial news organizations and their differences or lack thereof, this study represents an entirely new outlook on Italian media. We are aware, thanks to research like Forgacs and Lumley’s (1996) Italian Cultural Studies, that the Italian media have been stifled and oppressed in the past, and that investigative journalism is often a novelty in Italy. In addition, we know
that newspaper readership in Italy was seen primarily among the elite until the second half of the 20th century (Forgacs & Lumley, 1996). With a slower development of newspaper readers, one can gather that the national interest in crime, politics, and the mafia, is limited to those journalists risking their lives to cover it, and a small part of the readership population. The other contributing factor is the danger of the topic at hand. As the mafia presents itself as a complex topic for journalists and news outlets to cover because of its dangerous and precarious nature, this study gives us a glimpse of how the topic is being handled.

This study also contributes to mafia reporting and mafia intelligence, as it sheds light on who is being covered and how much they are being covered, and from that we can begin to speculate why.

Cosa nostra in Sicily can be classified as an external influence on media of sorts similar to public relations campaigns, government, and interest groups, as described by Shoemaker & Reese (1996) in their hierarchy of influences on news. However, their research also suggests that the individual worker and his or her personal experiences, backgrounds, values, and attitudes influence the news also, and it seems in this particular case that the reporters and contributors at La Sicilia and La Repubblica did not influence the news on an individual level in very different ways in terms of mentioning mafiosi and framing the mafia. From this one might gather, once again, that the mafia’s influence on the two newspapers is not as different as initially hypothesized.

As a combination of media and Italian studies, this study contributes to ongoing research in both fields.
In addition to furthering research in the academic world, this study also contributes to the practical world of journalism as well. It serves as a reminder to journalists everywhere to continue to strive for objectivity and neutrality. As we have seen, seemingly provincial newspapers can embrace cosmopolitan values in the articles they publish, in order to produce a higher standard of news content.

Further Research

This study can be used to help move mass communication research forward by conducting further research related to the topics discussed in this thesis. Further research directly related to this thesis may include a larger sample of news articles from the same newspapers, perhaps enlarged form the four-month range to a year. It is also suggested that this study be repeated but with the total population of all news stories printed by each newspaper, in addition to mafia-related stories, in order to compare the two outlets’ coverage more accurately. In addition, the study could be conducted outside the realm of the chosen event that occurred December 16, 2008.

Another avenue of study from this content analysis could be a repeat study but with an additional newspaper. From the results, La Sicilia is seemingly a less provincial media outlet than originally predicted. A future study might examine the differences between La Repubblica, La Sicilia, and a smaller, community-oriented newspaper with a significantly smaller circulation.

Further research could replicate this study but with different newspapers in a different nation, with a different topic covered. A cross-national study comparing a
cosmopolitan and provincial newspaper from each nation would also contribute to research in this area.

Another avenue of study that could further elaborate on the results found in this thesis is research comparing the number and type of crimes reported in Sicily by local and national newspapers with the number and types of actual crime reports in Sicily. According to Dickie (2004), crimes that occurred in Palermo, the capitol of Sicily and gathering point for Cosa nostra, in the late 19th century were widely underreported in Italian and Sicilian newspapers, compared to crimes committed and reported in the rest of Sicily.

Because the Chi Square results for the hypotheses were insignificant, it is suggested that this study be replicated in order to more clearly determine the validity of the results.

In addition, it is crucial for mass communication research that cosmopolitan and provincial outlets be more clearly defined in order to determine the true differences and similarities that exist between the two types of media.

Limitations

It is critical to note that the hypotheses tested in this study were tested using the Chi square formula, however the data examined was drawn from all relevant news articles printed between October 16, 2008 and February 15, 2009. Because all relevant articles were included in the study, the data are not part of a sample in the true sense of the word. Instead, the data represent the universe, or population, of relevant news articles and results must be interpreted with this in mind. The results, however, still provide a
glimpse of the possible differences between the two newspapers, and provide a building block for further studies.

Another limitation of this study is the language barrier. The news articles collected were in the Italian language, and although the researcher can read and understand Italian, ambiguous cultural nuances may affect the way an article is coded.

This study is also limited in the sense that the news articles were collected from the newspapers’ respective web sites, www.repubblica.it and www.lasiciliaweb.it. As a non-traditional media outlet, the articles published on the Internet may differ in length of article, layout of the article, graphics included, and the placement of the article (i.e. how many clicks from the home page vs. page number in the newspaper). While this study aimed to uncover differences in two newspapers, it essentially uncovered the differences in newspapers’ coverage on their web sites. Because the length of the article as it was found in the newspaper could not be sure to match what was printed in the paper version, length of the article was not included as a variable. A more comprehensive study could be conducted by using the primary source, the print versions, which could account for length of article, placement in the paper, and graphics included with the story.
CONCLUSION

This study attempted to examine the influential role the mafia plays regarding media coverage between two newspapers differing in size, audience, societal stature, and journalistic values.

This study was a successful exploration of cosmopolitan and provincial newspaper coverage in the sense that the goal of this research was to determine the differences in coverage of the mafia between La Repubblica and La Sicilia. Subject to the confines of this study and its sample of articles, the results show that the two newspapers, one cosmopolitan and one provincial by definition, did not differ in terms of coverage to the extent that was hypothesized.

As mentioned previously, a content analysis was conducted in order to test the hypotheses that suggested that a provincial newspaper based in Sicily would mention mafiosi names less so than its cosmopolitan counterpart, because of the mafia’s impending, ever-present nature in the Sicilian community.

Upon examining the results of the study, it was discovered that perhaps the two newspapers being studied were not all that different. The results showed that the two newspapers were in fact much more similar than hypothesized, and differences were found to be statistically insignificant. It is imperative that this issue be reexamined. The hypotheses were rejected based on statistical insignificance, and must be readdressed in order to come to a definite conclusion regarding differences or lack thereof between the two newspapers. Also, further research should be conducted to determine the source of the similarities between the two media outlets, commonly thought to be of different orientations. The results bring to light many questions regarding cosmopolitan versus
provincial news coverage, and whether or not the theories of past mass communication research still hold true in current times and on a global landscape.

One might gather from this study that smaller, provincial newspapers are beginning to encompass pluralistic and cosmopolitan values. The question must be raised: To what extent does community journalism still exist?

One conclusion may be that, as the world of media becomes less diverse in terms of what is being covered, and media conglomerates begin to swallow more and more media outlets in order to make a larger profit, cosmopolitan and provincial news outlets are beginning to move closer together in terms of values and ultimately what they cover. As media magnates like Silvio Berlusconi and Rupert Murdoch begin the take over of television, radio, and print outlets alike, we begin to see news outlets align themselves with the values of their management, in turn we see the same news everywhere we look. This goes hand in hand with the organizational/ownership level of the hierarchy of media influences suggested by Shoemaker & Reese (1996). From this research, one might gather that the organizational level of media influence is in fact more so influential than the individual media worker.

Future research must begin to investigate not only the different—or similar—worldviews that still exist in terms of reporting, but also whether or not community journalism is still an accepted form of news in small communities, or whether they are being swayed by their cosmopolitan counterparts in the interest of capital gain.

Whether or not the shift from provincial to cosmopolitan reporting would be a good or bad thing is a subjective issue. However, it does serve as a reminder to journalists
at any news organization to maintain objectivity and neutrality in their coverage and the content that makes it to print.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A: DEFINITION OF TERMS

Because some terms used in this study are in Italian, the following definitions should provide clear explanations for them.

**Mafioso:** Interchangeable with boss or capo, a mafioso is the head of a family or an entire town of families. A “capo dei capi” or boss of all bosses, is a mafioso considered the head of all Cosa nostra. Bernardo Provenzano is the most recent official boss of all bosses, successor to Salvatore “Toto” Riina. Mafiosi is the plural form of mafioso.

**Cosa nostra:** The organized crime ring that holds power in all of Sicily, often interchangeable with the word mafia in Italy.

**Cosca:** A family or mafia group located in a particular town or province. Cosa nostra is made up of individual cosca. The plural form is cosche.

**Omerta:** conspiracy of silence that mafia members are bound to and citizens are expected to respect.
APPENDIX B: CODEBOOK

This study is a content analysis of two Italian newspapers’ coverage of the Sicilian mafia, Cosa nostra. At the top right-hand corner of each codesheet is a place for a news story’s ID number. Fill in the ID number beginning with the number 001. In order to save resources, codesheets are printed on the front and back of each sheet. So, the front of one sheet will be 001 and the back 002, and so on.

A. Write the title of the article in the space provided.

B. Write the corresponding number for the correct newspaper in the space provided.

1 = La Repubblica
2 = La Sicilia

C. Write the date in the following format: YY-MM-DD. Rearrange the date as it appears on the article into that format.

For each name and category below associated with Cosa nostra, count the number of times the name or category is mentioned. Write the number of mentions in the corresponding space provided for each category. Include all mentions of the names, including that mentioned in the article title. The name could be in any form—first and last names, last name alone, first name alone, or known nickname (i.e. Toto Riina, curtu for Riina, piddu for Provenzano). Do not include pronouns. For “Relatives of the above Mafiosi,” only include relatives of Provenzano, Riina, and Denaro. Relatives include mother, father, children, cousins, nieces, nephews, uncles, aunts, etc. “Other” mafia associates includes any other name affiliated or allegedly affiliated with the Cosa nostra crime ring.

D. Bernardo Provenzano
E. Salvatore “Toto” Riina
F. Matteo Messina Denaro
G. Other

H. Determine the framing of the mafia associates in the article and record the corresponding number in the space provided. Use the names mentioned as indicators of a frame.

If an article links a mafia boss to a positive event, the frame will be coded as supportive.
If an article does not link a mafia boss to an external event, the frame will be coded as neutral.
If an article links a mafia boss to a crime or negative event, the frame will be coded as critical.
APPENDIX C: CODESHEET

Story ID Number __ __ __

A. Article Title


B. Newspaper
1 = *La Repubblica*  
2 = *La Sicilia*


C. Date (YY-MM-DD)


How many mentions for the names of Cosa nostra associates:

D. Bernardo Provenzano


E. Salvatore “Toto” Riina


F. Matteo Messina Denaro


G. Other


H. How does the article portray mafia associates
1 = Supportive
2 = Critical
3 = Neutral


