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## The Organized Crime Neighborhoods of Chicago

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## The Organized Crime Neighborhoods of Chicago

ROBERT M. LOMBARDO

Despite law enforcement efforts, traditional organized crime has continued to flourish in the Chicago metropolitan area. Since Al Capone was arrested in 1931 for income tax violations, those guilty of racketeering in Chicago have continually been prosecuted, yet traditional organized crime continues to exist. Ronald Goldstock points out that the incarceration of an underworld figure may disrupt an individual enterprise until new leadership is established, but the disruption, if any, is often minimal.<sup>1</sup> The death or incarceration of a major organized crime figure results in someone within the hierarchy moving to take his place, and the vacancy in the ranks is filled by a recruit.

Referring to organized crime, Donald R. Cressey notes that in some neighborhoods all three of the essential ingredients of an effective recruiting process are in operation, namely, inspiring aspiration for membership, training for membership, and selection for membership.<sup>2</sup> Evidence of neighborhood areas' providing support for recruitment into organized crime has been found by Irving Spergel and William F. Whyte in their community studies and by Francis A. J. Ianni in his study of a New York crime family.<sup>3</sup> According to Spergel, the presence of a well-organized criminal system in the "Racketville" neighborhood that he studied offered a learning environment that eventuated in certain types of behavior in preparation for later careers in the rackets.<sup>4</sup>

Do the "racket neighborhoods" that were studied by Spergel, Whyte, Ianni, and others still exist today despite changing social and economic conditions? Richard A. Cloward and Lloyd E. Ohlin state that important structural changes have taken place in large urban areas.<sup>5</sup> Suburbanization, the end of machine politics, the large influx of black populations, and the rationalization (movement

toward syndicated gambling) of organized crime have all altered the social structure of racket areas. This position is supported by Selwyn Rabb, who maintains that organized crime is in decline because of increased law enforcement pressure by the U.S. Justice Department and the impact of demographic changes, including the dispersal of Italian American populations away from urban neighborhoods.<sup>6</sup>

This chapter investigates whether neighborhood areas are still relevant to organized crime recruitment today. In the Chicago metropolitan area, five communities have a history of being associated with organized crime. These communities are the homes of the five original "street crews" of the Chicago "Outfit," as traditional organized crime is referred to in Chicago. Street crews are organizational groupings in which organized crime activities are carried out. Do these areas provide new recruits for organized crime in Chicago, as suggested by past research, or are there other mechanisms that continue to provide recruits for the Chicago Outfit?

This discussion begins with a review of the relevant sociological literature linking recruitment into organized crime to the social structure of community areas. The discussion then moves on to a review of the history of organized crime in Chicago and a reconsideration of the sociocultural factors that have contributed to its development. An analysis of nativity and residency data is then conducted in order to determine the communities of origin of the members of the Chicago Outfit. The chapter also reviews the history of each of the five street crew neighborhoods in order to explicate the relationship between these communities and organized crime.

### **DELINQUENT AREAS, RACKET SUBCULTURES, AND DEFENDED NEIGHBORHOODS**

In 1929, John Landesco conducted research into organized crime as part of the Illinois Crime Survey. The main theme of Landesco's book was that organized crime had its roots in the social structure of the neighborhoods in which its members had been raised.<sup>7</sup> He found that the members of the crime syndicate came from neighborhoods "where the gang tradition is old" and where the residents could absorb the attitudes and skills necessary to enter into the world of organized crime.

Landesco was part of the "Chicago school" of sociologists who, like Frederic Thrasher and Clifford Shaw and Henry D. McKay, recognized the existence of certain communities in which attitudes and values are conducive to delinquency and organized crime in particular. Shaw and McKay found that the presence of large numbers of adult criminals in certain neighborhood areas meant that children there are in contact with crime as a career and with organized crime as a way of life.<sup>8</sup>

Other evidence of social structural support for organized crime can be found in the work of Whyte. In his study of Cornerville, a name given to an undis-

closed Boston neighborhood, Whyte found that the "problem" in this "slum" district was not a lack of social organization but the failure of the community's own organization to mesh with that of the society around it.<sup>9</sup> The differential organization of the community became apparent when one examined the channels through which the Cornerville person gained advancement and recognition in their neighborhood and the larger society. To get ahead, a Cornerville resident must move either in the world of business and Republican politics or in the world of Democratic politics and the rackets. Other avenues of social mobility were closed to community residents because of their immigrant status and association with the Cornerville area.

Additional evidence of societal structures that support the pursuit of a career in organized crime can be found in the delinquency literature. Cloward and Ohlin state that the form of delinquency that is adopted in a particular area is conditioned by the social organization of that area.<sup>10</sup> As such, their study uncovered three types of "criminal subcultures": the criminal, the conflict, and the retreatist. Among the various "criminal subcultures" was one that tied delinquency to organized crime in select neighborhood areas.

Spergel proposed a major modification to the Cloward and Ohlin formulation by dividing the criminal subculture into racket and theft adaptations. The central hypothesis of Spergel's work was that "delinquent subcultures" resulted from the varying nature and extent of illicit opportunities available to youth in lower-class neighborhoods.<sup>11</sup> According to Spergel, each neighborhood provided different opportunities for the development of distinctive and characteristic types of delinquent subcultures. The racket subculture was seen as arising within an area where the presence of an integrated and well-organized criminal system offered learning environments that eventuated in certain types of behavior in preparation for later careers in the rackets.

The existence of community structures that support organized crime was also found by Gerald Suttles in his study of the Addams area of Chicago and by Donald Tricarico in his study of Greenwich Village.<sup>12</sup> Suttles found that many of the adolescent street corner groups in the Addams area were building blocks out of which the older, more powerful social athletic clubs (SACs) originated. Some of these SACs had members who belonged to the Chicago Outfit and as such provided a mechanism for the association of youth gangs and street corner groups with traditional organized crime. In the South Village area of New York, Tricarico also found that street corner boys interacted with Mafia clubs, which functioned as outposts for syndicate activity. These clubs served as centers for the consumption of syndicate services, such as gambling, and for the recruitment and socialization of competent personnel.

Both the Addams area of Chicago and the South Village area of New York have been described as defended neighborhoods. The defended neighborhood is classically portrayed by Tricarico as a safe, moral world that kept the city at arm's length.<sup>13</sup> Tricarico notes that while the city may have been threatening and noted for crime, the defended neighborhood was a different place. Although

there were exceptions, people were trustworthy, and crime was infrequent within its boundaries. Doors and windows were left open, and there was no fear of the streets, even at night. Neighbors were watchful and solicitous and closely monitored the movements of strangers. A careful scrutiny of outsiders and a toughness with interlopers earned such neighborhoods a reputation that residents believed would frighten predators away.

The defended neighborhood, just like criminality itself, is the result of weak societal control. Suttles maintains that given the inability of formal procedures of social control to detect and forestall all or even most forms of urban disorder, a set of rules has developed in the form of a cognitive map that is used to regulate spatial movement in order to avoid conflict between antagonistic groups.<sup>14</sup> These cognitive maps give birth to the defended neighborhood as an additional basis for social differentiation and social cohesion. Suttles states that the necessity for this additional basis of social organization lies in the very nature of urban areas, since cities inevitably bring together populations that are too large and composed of too many conflicting elements for their residents to find cultural solutions to the problems of social control.

The roots of the defended neighborhood lie in social disorganization theory. Along with immigration, population diversity, and individual variability, industrialization and urbanization have brought about a change in mechanisms of social control. Robert E. Park, Ernest W. Burgess and Roderick D. McKenzie, state that the general nature of this change is indicated by the fact that the growth of the city has been accompanied by the substitution of indirect, secondary relations for direct, face-to-face, primary relations in the association of individuals in the community.<sup>15</sup> This is caused by the fact that the city is too diversified and heterogeneous to provide a single normative order that is shared sufficiently by its citizens to maintain order. The shift of social control to the formal sections of society has not been entirely successful, as evidenced by the persistence of organized criminality and other forms of aberrant conduct.

What is unique about organized crime is the societal efforts at social control, in the form of the establishment of the defended neighborhood, have actually acted to support deviant phenomena. For example, in the area of Greenwich Village studied by Tricarico, a substantial portion of neighborhood life was organized in defense against strangers.<sup>16</sup> Male street corner groups were the self-appointed enforcers of local order. Their job was to make sure that the streets were safe. This control function was reinforced by the "Mafia," which supported corner boys with a reputation for total violence. This reputation was a valuable resource for the residents of the defended neighborhood, who reciprocated by providing a safe haven for "Mafia" activities.

Roderick D. McKenzie states that in its traditional application, the term *neighborhood* stood for rather definite group sentiments, which were the products of the intimate personal relations among the members of small, isolated communities of which society was formerly composed.<sup>17</sup> Though this definition sug-

gests that the urban neighborhood is a remnant of an earlier rural community, McKenzie maintains that neighborhood sentiment can take on the characteristics and qualities of the current inhabitants. Just as this sentiment reflects lines of religion, language, and ethnic tradition, it may also reflect cultural and normative acceptance of criminal or deviant values. Suttles found this to be true in the Addams area of Chicago. There residents shared collective representations and moral sentiments that allowed them to be privileged to a diversity of knowledge regarding organized crime.<sup>18</sup>

In the Addams area, many residents valued the fact that they shared or believed they shared associations with members of the Outfit. Within the Addams area is a section called Taylor Street. Above anything else, Suttles found that residence in this area implied a connection with organized crime. Even though the public stereotypes applied to the Taylor Street area did not identify a lifestyle acceptable to the larger society, they did offer for some neighborhood residents a certain honor and for others a way of defining people.<sup>19</sup> Thus, persons embraced the images of "gangster," "hood," and "tough guy" that were provided because the images gave them an image of power that few were willing to question. Suttles even found that those who rejected these labels themselves assumed their truth for the wider community. To show how far the residents carried their belief in the crime syndicate, Suttles gave an example of young boys referring to Frank "the Enforcer" Nitti (of Al Capone fame) as casually as other boys might mention current baseball heroes.

Similarly, Spergel found that the racketeer was more than a person who shared a residential identity and knowledge of the underworld.<sup>20</sup> The racketeer was actually the standard bearer of the neighborhood and the acknowledged source of norms and values. These racketeers were sought out to settle family and neighborhood arguments. They were even used as a shroud of protection, for those who claimed their association, against threatening groups from outside the community.

The studies of both Suttles and Spergel indicate that the concerned communities developed values sympathetic to the criminal underworld, which the residents drew upon in orienting themselves to the community. Albert J. Reiss contends that a major source of a person's norms lies in the social controls of the community and its institutions.<sup>21</sup> Criminality results when there is a relative absence of, or conflict in, social rules or techniques for enforcing behavior in the social groups or institutions of which the person is a member. There is obviously a conflict in normative values in any community that embraces the gangster image or acknowledges the racketeer as a source of norms and values. Such conflict may be viewed as a consequence of the failure of the primary group to properly define organized criminal activity as deviant or aberrant conduct. Once such a failure occurs, a specialized social structure is created that will support the pursuit of a life in organized crime.

## **THE HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS OF ORGANIZED CRIME IN CHICAGO**

The city of Chicago, population 4,000, was incorporated on 4 March 1837. Chicago's growth as a city began in 1848 with the completion of the Illinois and Michigan Canal.<sup>22</sup> This canal, connecting the Illinois River and the south branch of the Chicago River, provided midwest farmers with access to Great Lakes shipping and eastern markets. Chicago's first railroad, the Galena and Chicago Union, also began operating in 1848. By the late 1850s, Chicago was the rail crossroads of the nation. In 1860, Chicago's population reached over 112,000 people, making it the largest city in Illinois.

Chicago's ecological position as the gateway to the unsettled lands of the West is also said to have contributed to its involvement in crime. Many young bachelors spent their last nights in Chicago before heading out to make their fortunes in the vast western wilderness. Chicago was often their last chance for supplies and other needed items. Saloons, gambling parlors, and brothels quickly sprang up to make these pioneers' last night in "civilization" memorable. Commenting on the times, Dwight Moody, founder of Chicago's Moody Bible Institute, once remarked: "If the Angel Gabriel came to Chicago, he would lose his character within a week."<sup>23</sup>

Organized crime in Chicago had its beginning in the 1870s with the activities of Michael Cassius McDonald.<sup>24</sup> McDonald owned a tavern known as the Store, which was reportedly the largest liquor and gambling house in downtown Chicago. So extensive was gambling in Chicago's center that the two-block stretch on Randolph between Clark and State streets was known as "Hairtrigger Block," named so because of the large number of shootings that occurred there stemming from disagreements in the gambling houses.<sup>25</sup> McDonald was also active in politics. In an effort to frustrate the reform activities of then mayor Joseph Medill, McDonald organized Chicago's saloon and gambling interests and elected their candidate, Harvey Colvin, as mayor of Chicago. The year was 1873. With Colvin in office, McDonald organized the first criminal syndicate in Chicago, composed of both gamblers and compliant politicians.

With McDonald's death in 1907, control of gambling in Chicago passed to a number of different people, the most prominent of whom were Mont Tennes and First Ward aldermen Michael Kenna and John Coughlin. Tennes, as the proprietor of the General News Bureau, controlled the telegraph wire services that carried race results to Chicago from throughout the United States. Tennes's ownership of the General News Bureau led to his ultimate control of all race-track gambling in Chicago.<sup>26</sup>

### **The Levee**

"Hinky Dink" Kenna and "Bathhouse" John Coughlin, as they were called, controlled politics and vice in Chicago's downtown area and the near South

Side, which was commonly referred to as the Levee. The name "Levee," according to Emmett Dedmon, came about as the result of the influx of southern gamblers to the area.<sup>27</sup> During the 1890s, the Levee occupied the blocks between Van Buren and Roosevelt, from State Street to the river.<sup>28</sup> Dominic A. Pacyga attributes the growth of the Levee, and in particular its red-light district prostitution trade, to the fact that four of Chicago's six railroad depots were centered in the area.<sup>29</sup> By 1910, because of the growth of Chicago's downtown business district, the Levee was eventually relocated to the area between 19th and 22d streets, from State to Clark. The "New Levee," as it was called, became home to many of Chicago's taverns and brothels, including the infamous Everleigh Club at 2131 South Dearborn, which was reportedly frequented by Chicago's elite.

Working in the First Ward as a precinct captain at this time was James Colosimo. Colosimo had earned his position as a precinct captain by organizing fellow street sweepers into a voting bloc.<sup>30</sup> Through his control of the vote in the Italian settlement centered around Polk and Clark streets within the First Ward, Colosimo's political power soon eclipsed that of his sponsors.<sup>31</sup> "Big Jim" Colosimo, as he was referred to, was also involved in prostitution and other vice activities in the near south side Levee district.<sup>32</sup>

Colosimo and his associates built the first Italian crime syndicate in Chicago. Like many other successful Italians of the time, Colosimo became the target of Black Hand extortionists. The Black Hand was not an organization, but a practice by which businessmen and other wealthy Italians were extorted for money. Intended victims were simply sent a note stating that they would come to violence if they did not pay a particular sum of money. Colosimo sent for a New York relative, Johnny Torrio, to help him deal with this threat. Torrio had been a member of New York's Five Points Gang and had dabbled in Black Hand extortion himself.<sup>33</sup> Torrio's usefulness soon extended to overseeing prostitution and gambling for Colosimo.

### **Prohibition**

Upon the death of Colosimo in 1920, Torrio took full control of their crime syndicate, which was now beginning to expand because of the passage that year of the ~~National Prohibition Enforcement Act~~. Commonly referred to as the Volstead Act, this law ended the sale of alcoholic beverages in the United States. This unpopular law created a strong demand for illegal alcohol, which the Colosimo vice syndicate and other similar groups around the city were in a position to supply. They were organized and had the political connections to prevent interference from local government. According to Landesco, all the experience gained by years of struggle against reformers and secret agreements with corrupt politicians was brought into service in the production and distribution of beer and whiskey.<sup>34</sup>

Torrio ran his criminal organization with the help of his trusted lieutenant,



Alphonse Capone, from the Four Deuces Cafe at 2222 South Wabash. Torrio is widely believed to have been a no-nonsense businessman who truly ~~“organized”~~ <sup>“organized”</sup> crime. Humbert Nelli states that he excelled as a ~~master strategist and organizer~~ and quickly built an empire that far exceeded Colosimo's.<sup>35</sup> However, in 1923 Chicago elected reform mayor William Dever, and one year later Chicago police ~~arrested and convicted~~ Torrio on bootlegging charges. Torrio was shot, probably by members of the rival O'Banion gang, shortly before entering jail to serve out his sentence. After his release, he returned to New York, where he worked as a bail bondsman for organized crime figures there.<sup>36</sup>

Dever's reforms forced Capone to move many of the Torrio organization's operations to nearby Cicero, Illinois. As a result, people still associate Cicero with organized crime, even though there is no organized crime group currently centered there today. The Capone syndicate also set up shop in a number of south suburban areas. The widespread use of the automobile ushered in the era of the "roadhouse." Located in the nearby towns of Chicago Heights, Blue Island, Burnham, Stickney, and others, these roadhouses provided all the comforts of the Levee—prostitution, gambling, and liquor.

Reform also caused Capone to support the return of William Hale Thompson to the mayor's office. "Big Bill," as he was fondly referred to, had been Chicago's mayor prior to the reform-minded Dever. Promising that he "was as wet as the Atlantic Ocean," Thompson was returned to the mayor's office in 1927 with strong public support.<sup>37</sup> The retirement of Torrio and the election of Thompson placed Capone firmly in control of Chicago's First Ward and the Near South Side of Chicago.

Capone reportedly donated \$260,000 to Thompson's campaign fund.<sup>38</sup> Such support ~~made~~ it clear that the manipulation of the political apparatus was essential to the operation of organized crime in Chicago. Police and judicial corruption was so widespread that a group of prominent businessmen formed an organization known as the Secret Six. Working in cooperation with the Chicago Crime Commission, the Secret Six donated \$1 million to fight organized crime. This money was used to hire private investigators who developed informants, tapped telephones, paid witnesses, and generally collected information on mob activity that was passed on to a group of Justice Department investigators under the supervision of Eliot Ness.

Outside the area of the First Ward and Capone's organization, other gangs were also working in collusion with local politicians and police to promote vice activities and violate prohibition laws. Dion O'Banion and his followers controlled Chicago's Near North Side.<sup>39</sup> Klondike O'Donnell and his brothers controlled the Near Northwest Side. Roger Toughy, who claimed to be only a bootlegger and not involved in vice, controlled the Far Northwest Side.<sup>40</sup> The "Terrible" Genna brothers controlled the Near West Side Taylor Street area. The Far West Side was controlled by Terry Druggan and Frankie Lake and their Valley Gang. On the Southwest Side both the Irish O'Donnell brothers and the Saltis-McErland Gang were active in bootlegging.

Chief among the Capone organization's rivals were O'Banion and the six Genna brothers. O'Banion was raised in the Irish shantytown of Kilgubbin on Chicago's Near North Side.<sup>41</sup> His ability to deliver the Irish vote made him an important political figure in ward politics. O'Banion and his followers, George "Bugs" Moran and Earl "Hymie" Weiss, were known to the police as hijackers, burglars, and safecrackers. With the advent of Prohibition, the O'Banion gang quickly moved into the illegal liquor business.

The Genna brothers, Angelo, Sam, Jim, Pete, Tony, and Mike, were reportedly under the political protection of Republican ward committeeman "Diamond Joe" Esposito. Diamond Joe operated the Bella Napoli, a well-known Italian restaurant, at 850 South Halsted Street.<sup>42</sup> Esposito had also established himself as a "padrone," or boss, in the Taylor Street Italian neighborhood, utilizing old-country mafiosi tactics.<sup>43</sup> The Gennas had a government license for processing industrial alcohol at their plant, located at 1022 West Taylor, where they also produced illegal whiskey.<sup>44</sup> The Genna brothers were in direct competition with O'Banion for control of bootlegging territories. This struggle led to the deaths of four of the six Genna brothers. The remaining two fled Chicago. Their bootlegging activities were taken over by Joseph Aiello and his family. Both Angelo Genna and Aiello were active in the "Unione Siciliana."

The Unione Siciliana originally emerged as a lawful fraternal society designed to advance the interests of Sicilian immigrants.<sup>45</sup> The Italian American National Union, as it later became known, provided life insurance and was active in Italian American civic affairs. The union was also a major supporter of the White Hand Society. The White Hand was established by Italian Americans to fight Black Hand extortion in the Italian community.<sup>46</sup> The respectability of the union, however, declined with the advent of Prohibition, when the union organized large numbers of Italian immigrants, on Chicago's Near West Side, in the home production of alcohol.

So extensive was bootlegging on Chicago's Near West Side that the intersection of Roosevelt and Halsted streets was referred to as Bootleggers Square. The very fact that the "Unione Siciliana" was involved in bootlegging placed it in direct competition with the Capone syndicate. As a result, Capone tried to take over the organization by electing one of his own followers president. The competition for control of the union led to a number of deaths and the eventual takeover by the Capone organization.

The intense competition among these groups led to Chicago's famous "beer wars" during the 1920s. The gangs mainly aligned themselves according to ethnic ties. For example, the Aiellos, the successors to the Genna brothers, eventually sided with the Capone syndicate. In the end, the Capone organization emerged victorious. Through such violent acts as the "St. Valentine's Day Massacre," which resulted in the deaths of seven men, the Capone organization emerged as the dominant force in Chicago's underworld. When Prohibition ended in 1933, Al Capone was in jail for income tax violations. The organization

that he had created turned its attention once again to the control of gambling, prostitution, and other illegal activities.

During the years that followed Prohibition, it became increasingly clear that organized crime in Chicago was now dominated by the Italians. There is no evidence, as commonly believed, that these Italians were members of an "alien conspiracy" that brought organized crime, in the form of the Sicilian Mafia, to America's urban centers. As a matter of fact, recent research has shown that the Mafia, as the term is commonly understood, never did exist. Pino Arlacchi maintains that "Mafia," as it existed in Italy at the time of the massive Italian immigrations to the United States, was actually a form of behavior, a mechanism of social control, and not a criminal organization as such.<sup>47</sup>

### **Italian Immigration**

Between 1820 and 1930, an estimated 4.7 million Italians immigrated to the United States.<sup>48</sup> This was the largest and longest European exodus in modern times. Driven by the hope of employment and a better life, many of these Italians began migrating to Chicago during the 1850s.<sup>49</sup> The first Italian immigrants came mainly from the more advanced regions of the north, where they had gained experience as merchants, shopkeepers, and businessmen. During the 1880s emigration began to shift to southern Italy, the Mezzogiorno, or land of the midday sun, where living conditions were among the worst of all of Italy.

Rudolph J. Vecoli observes that the causes that initiated and sustained the mass emigrations of Italians from the south of Italy were rooted in the defects of its agricultural system.<sup>50</sup> Most southern Italian farmers were landless peasants tied to the estates of absentee landowners. These landlords paid poorly and made few improvements to their lands. In addition, pestilence, recurring drought, and burdensome taxation plagued the people of the Mezzogiorno. A dramatic increase in the Italian population also contributed to emigration. The island of Sicily alone added over 1 million people to its population during the years between 1871 and 1901.

The harsh conditions of life in the south of Italy led to the development of a fatalistic, alienated view of life—"La Miseria"—in which a people conceive themselves as having little, if any, control over their lives.<sup>51</sup> Such a view prevented a man from cooperating with his neighbors because in so doing he jeopardized his position in a competitive world where goods were scarce. Instead, he used whatever means, fair or unfair, to gain his share of worldly possessions.

The southern Italian's distrust of government and other individuals who lie outside the bounds of family and kinship groups can be traced to the area's history of foreign domination. Since the fall of the Roman Empire, southern Italy has had a succession of foreign rulers, including the Arabs, Normans, French, and Spanish. Howard Abadinsky states that the history of southern Italy is a history of 1,000 years of political, social, and economic repression.<sup>52</sup> As a result, a culture developed in the south of Italy that stressed values necessary

for survival in a hostile environment. Absolute loyalty to the family and distrust of government became the custom of the Mezzogiorno.

Not recognizing the authority of foreign rule, the people of the Mezzogiorno developed their own code of conduct, which stressed suspicion and resentment of government. Omerta, the quality of remaining silent and of being a man with honor and dignity, demanded that a man resolve his own problems without recourse to the law. Joseph L. Albini states that such a custom is common to many societies that have been the victim of government persecution.<sup>53</sup> The code of omerta allowed the people of the Mezzogiorno to cooperate individually to frustrate the efforts of a government that sought only to exploit them.

In Sicily the code of omerta found its most sophisticated expression in the development of the Mafia. Historically, the Mafia was not a secret criminal organization but a form of social organization that developed in Sicily and Calabria, where it is known as the *'ndrangheta*, under very specific social and cultural conditions. The Mafia exploited the gap in Sicilian society left by an ineffective state government. Its main function was to impose some form of rudimentary order on the anarchy of Sicilian life. The Mafia developed as a method of social control in an area where the official political structure was unable to impose its will on the populace.

The typical mafioso was *uomo di rispetto* (a man of respect) "who kept faith with his friends, knew how to repay a favor, held honor and gratitude in high esteem, and was ready to use violence to ensure that these values were respected."<sup>54</sup> Such a man was highly respected in the Sicilian village, where the formal mechanisms of government were in a constant state of disarray. Those who were willing to use violence to protect their honor and the honor of their family were sought out by others who were less capable of protecting themselves from the hardships of life in the Mezzogiorno. The eventual competition among the various mafiosi in each town led to conflict and finally dominance by one individual who now had the entire area under his patronage. Because of their position of dominance and willingness to use violence such *un'uomo d'onore* (men of honor) were entrusted with a series of important functions that were normally the prerogative of the state. These included protection, repression of nonconformist behavior, and the mediation of disputes.

The sociocultural background of the southern Italian and, in particular, the Sicilian immigrant contributed to their entrance and success in organized crime. Their fierce loyalty to the family and suspicion of government allowed these immigrants to rationalize their entrance into the rackets. The ethos of amoral familism justified law violation if it was in the interest of supporting the nuclear family. If jobs were not available in the legitimate sector, one could always turn to the gangster in the underworld to find employment.

The unpopularity of national Prohibition and the southern Italian's distrust of government worked to rationalize the illegal production of alcohol. Prohibition was forced upon the urban working class by social reformers and agrarian America. Corruption was widespread, and the government did little to suppress boot-

legging. As a result, Prohibition was viewed by the Italian immigrant as just one more example of government suppression of the common man.

Many of the southern Italian and Sicilian immigrants who were attracted to organized crime at the time of its inception had subscribed to the code of omerta and had lived under a Mafia-dominated social order prior to emigrating to the United States. Combining the traditions of omerta and those of the Mafia with the illegal opportunities made available by Prohibition, these Italian gangsters became a dominant force in organized crime. These new inheritors of the urban rackets turned to their own communities for recruits. There were large Italian communities immediately adjacent to the Levee and on the West and North sides of Chicago where vice activities were now dominated by the Capone syndicate.

### **THE ORGANIZED CRIME NEIGHBORHOODS OF CHICAGO**

The first Italians who came to Chicago settled within walking distance of the Dearborn Street Station—Polk and Dearborn streets.<sup>55</sup> This area was known among the Italians as the “Polk Depot” and served as an area of transition for newly arriving immigrants. By the 1880s many of Chicago’s northern Italians had resettled in the area centered around Franklin and Orleans streets, where they had founded Chicago’s first Italian Catholic parish, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

According to Vecoli, the establishment of Italian and other immigrant colonies was not haphazard but was determined by the “socio-economic ecology” of the city.<sup>56</sup> The Chicago River with its north and south branches provided the basis for the industrial topography of Chicago. The river’s twenty-four miles of shoreline provided access to both water transportation and waste disposal for the city’s emerging industries. As a result, an industrial belt developed hugging the course of the river.

Leaving the Polk Depot, Italian immigrants began settling in the River Wards along Taylor Street and Grand Avenue and in the Near North and Armour Square community areas. These four communities and the suburb of Chicago Heights became the major southern Italian enclaves in the Chicagoland area. They also became home to the five street crews of the Chicago Outfit. There are other Italian communities in Chicago as well as other communities that have had a reputation of being associated with organized crime. These communities differ, however, in that they did not contain indigenous organized crime groups. The organized crime groups that have been present in these other Chicago areas began because people from the five original street crew neighborhoods relocated there.

#### **Taylor Street**

The most famous street crew neighborhood in Chicago is Taylor Street. Taylor Street was annexed to the city of Chicago in 1851, when the boundaries of

the city were extended to Western Avenue. Taylor Street is contained within the Near West Side community area of Chicago.<sup>57</sup> This area was first settled by German, Irish, and Scandinavian immigrants. In the decades that followed the great Chicago Fire of 1871, new immigrants arrived, including Italians and Russian and Polish Jews.

Taylor Street's involvement with organized crime can be traced to the 1920s and the adolescent street corner group known as the 42 Gang. The 42 Gang derived its name from the legend of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves.<sup>58</sup> The gang had forty plus two members, hence the name 42 Gang. They frequented Mary's Restaurant, which was located on the corner of Taylor and Bishop. The gang specialized in truck hijacking and auto theft.<sup>59</sup> Many members of the 42 Gang were recruited by the Capone mob. For example, Sam Battaglia, William Dadano, and Felix Alderiso, all former members of the 42 Gang, became important members of the Outfit.

Sam Giancana states that the 42 Gang was recruited by Al Capone to help him gain control of bootlegging activities on Chicago's Near West Side.<sup>60</sup> One member of the 42 Gang, Sam Giancana, rose through the ranks to head organized crime in Chicago during the 1950s. Giancana had gone to jail in 1939 on bootlegging charges. While in the federal prison at Terre Haute, Indiana, he met Edward Jones, the policy racket king of Chicago's South Side.<sup>61</sup> After his release from jail, Giancana quickly took over the policy rackets through violence and extortion. The increased revenue that he brought to organized crime greatly increased his stature in the Outfit.

### **Grand Avenue**

Grand Avenue is contained within the West Town Community Area of Chicago.<sup>62</sup> Anthony Accardo, the longtime senior statesman of the Chicago crime syndicate, was born in 1906 at 1353 West Grand Avenue. Accardo had once been a bodyguard and enforcer for Al Capone. Accardo began his criminal career as a member of the Circus Cafe Gang, led by Vincenzo DeMora, aka "Machine Gun" Jack McGurn. The Circus Cafe Gang was a group of young toughs that frequented a tavern called the Circus Cafe on West North Avenue in Chicago. McGurn and Accardo are believed to have been two of the men who actually took part in the St. Valentine's Day Massacre. Accardo's involvement with Capone is believed to have been the beginning of the Grand Avenue street crew and this community's involvement with the Chicago Outfit.

Crime syndicate activities continue in the Grand Avenue community today. There are restaurants in the area where bookmakers regularly meet and a social club at Grand and May where organized crime figures gather. One man interviewed about the neighborhood stated that you could go into a certain restaurant on a Friday night and find twenty bookmakers present and a half dozen more in local social clubs.

### Twenty-Sixth Street

Crime syndicate activities are also visible in the Twenty-Sixth Street area. Twenty-Sixth Street is contained within the Armour Square Community Area of Chicago.<sup>63</sup> It is named after the nearby Armour Institute of Technology (original name of the Illinois Institute of Technology). Armour Square was first settled in the mid-1800s by Irish, German, and Swedish laborers. The northern half of Armour Square was annexed to the city of Chicago in 1853.<sup>64</sup> The southern half of the area was settled after the opening of the Union Stockyards in 1865. By 1895, all of the vacant land in the area had been built upon. In 1908, Charles Comiskey bought land from Chicago mayor "Long John" Wentworth and erected the White Sox ballpark at Thirty-Fifth and Shields.

Italians, Yugoslavians, and Chinese began moving into the community during the early 1900s. In 1912 a group of Chinese, who had lived on the south edge of the Loop, moved en masse to the area of Twenty-Second and Wentworth.<sup>65</sup> This was the beginning of Chicago's Chinatown. The Twenty-Sixth Street crew, in fact, is often referred to as the Chinatown crew because of the large numbers of Chinese who settled in the Armour Square area. Blacks next began to move into the community during the time of World War I. By 1940, nearly one-half of Armour Square's population was black; however, much of the black population was displaced with the building of the Dan Ryan and Stevenson expressways, beginning in the 1950s. Today, the Armour Square community is made up largely of black, Chinese, and Italian residents, each group occupying their own segment of the community.

The Twenty-Sixth Street area is called the "Patch." The term *patch* is increasingly being applied by both the police and those knowledgeable about underworld activities to the other organized crime-connected areas as well. An oral history respondent told the Chicago Historical Society in 1927 that his father had established a successful cabbage farm in the area of Thirty-Fifth and Wells during the late 1800s. As a result, the area became known as the Patch. Local tradition holds that this cabbage patch was the setting for Kate Douglas Wiggin's book, *Mrs. Wiggins and the Cabbage Patch*.

Located between Fourteenth and Indiana and the Twenty-Sixth Street neighborhood is the site where the New Levee, the birthplace of the Capone syndicate, once stood. As a matter of fact, the New Michigan Hotel, which was Al Capone's headquarters, can still be seen on the corner of Twenty-Second and Michigan. The Twenty-Sixth Street crew is considered to be the direct offspring of the original Torrio-Capone syndicate, which is the forerunner of today's Outfit.

The Twenty-Sixth Street neighborhood continues to be a racket area today. This neighborhood is probably the strongest street crew neighborhood in metropolitan Chicago. Unlike the Taylor Street area, there have been no major urban renewal efforts in this community. The housing stock has remained good, and the neighborhood has remained racially stable. While people from other neigh-

borhoods have moved to the suburbs, people from Twenty-Sixth Street have remained in the neighborhood. According to an experienced organized crime investigator, the Outfit has a very real base in this area. Many of the members of the Twenty-Sixth Street crew continue to live in the neighborhood, and there is a social club located in the community where they can regularly be seen.

### **The North Side**

Unlike the Grand Avenue and Taylor Street areas, there is no organized crime activity in the North Side community today. The North Side is located within the Near North Side community area of Chicago.<sup>66</sup>

The turn of the century also brought large numbers of Italians, in particular, Sicilians, to the area who eventually replaced earlier immigrant groups. By 1910, the Italian community extended across Chicago Avenue to Division Street and by 1920 across North Avenue into the Lincoln Park Community Area.<sup>67</sup> Little Sicily or Little Hell, as the Italian community was known, was centered along Sedgwick Street from Division to North Avenue.<sup>68</sup> The name Little Hell predated Sicilian immigration and was derived from the gasworks that were located there near the river whose belching flames lit the sky at night. According to Vecoli, the name Little Hell also began being applied to the area because of extensive Black Hand extortion.<sup>69</sup> The intersection of Oak and Cambridge, in Little Sicily, soon became known as Death Corner because of the large number of shootings, stabbings, and murders that were committed there.

The natural clash between the well-to-do families of the east and the immigrant families of the western portion of the Near North Side resulted in the central area's becoming progressively less desirable as a residential district.<sup>70</sup> Consequently, many of the wealthier families and businesses moved from the area. The residential hotels and large homes that were left behind were soon transformed into profitable boardinghouses, which brought a large transient element to the area as well as a population of lower economic status. Soon, the once-fashionable district became a center for dance halls, prostitution, nightclubs, and other forms of illegal activity and the beginning of the Clark Street and later Rush Street vice districts in Chicago.

~~Vice activities in these areas were strictly controlled by the Chicago Outfit.~~ This dominance can be traced to Prohibition. The control of illegal liquor also facilitated the control of prostitution and gambling, which was centered in the nightclubs and taverns that dotted the area. Once the Capone organization had taken control of bootlegging activities in the North Side area, it was a simple matter for them to also dominate vice activities. The connection between the North Side Italian community and the Chicago Outfit can also be traced to Prohibition and vice activity in the Clark Street and Rush Street areas. ~~The proximity of Little Hell to these areas provided the Capone organization with access to recruits for its criminal syndicate.~~

The North Side, as a street crew neighborhood, no longer exists today. The



old Sicilian neighborhood in which "North Side" organized crime activity was previously centered has been replaced. Much of the area was razed between 1942 and 1962 during the successive stages of the construction of the Dabrini-Green housing complex. This community has completely changed as a result of social and economic development and is no longer viewed as an organized crime area.

### **Chicago Heights**

Another area in which organized crime activity is in decline is the suburb Chicago Heights. The development of organized crime in Chicago Heights parallels the development of organized crime in Chicago. By 1908, this newly established city had a reputation for being overrun with gamblers, and many of the saloons were also supporting prostitution.<sup>71</sup> As a matter of fact, Mayor Lee H. Hooks was arrested with five other people that year on gambling charges. Crime became a recurrent theme in Chicago Heights politics. On 8 April 1915, the Chicago Heights *Star* newspaper reported that mayoral candidate Craig Hood promised to crush commercialized vice and clean out the police department if elected. John Thomas promised in 1929 that, if elected, he would see the commercial gambling and vice of all descriptions did not exist in Chicago Heights while he was mayor.<sup>72</sup>

During Prohibition, Chicago Heights became famous for its bootlegging activities in violation of the Volstead Act. George Golding of the Treasury Department stated in 1928 that Chicago Heights was one huge distillery and that there was nothing in the United States equal to it. Prohibition brought the influence of the Capone mob into Chicago Heights. Prohibition also brought an increase in violent crime as mobsters fought for control of the illegal liquor business. In February 1929, the Shanghai (China) *Times* reported that there were sixty-five murders in a two-year period in Chicago Heights, calling it the most lawless community in the United States.

Today, organized crime activity in the Chicago Heights community is on the decline. The 1989 conviction of Chicago Heights mob boss Albert Caesar Tocco was devastating to the Chicago Heights crew. According to a federal law enforcement officer who had participated in the Tocco investigation, the card rooms and social clubs that the members of the Chicago Heights crew frequented are gone, and it is now difficult to locate organized crime figures in the Chicago Heights area.

### **ORGANIZED CRIME AND HUMAN ECOLOGY**

The records of the Chicago Police Department indicate that there are currently 191 members of the Chicago Outfit. The communities of origin of ninety-eight, or 51 percent, have been identified (Table 7.1). Of these, fifty-nine (60 percent) were born in one of the five street crew communities. Forty (41 percent) still

**Table 7.1**  
**Street Crew Residence, Chicago Crime Syndicate**

	Community						Current	
	<u>Total Members</u>			<u>Nativity</u>			<u>Residence</u>	
	No.	I.D.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Talyor Street	49	25	51	6	24	2	8	
Grand Avenue	33	27	82	23	85	17	63	
26th Street	40	27	67	24	89	15	55	
The North Side	35	11	31	3	27	3	27	
Chicago Heights	29	8	28	3	37	3	37	
Bosses	4							
Unidentified	1							
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>41</b>	

reside there today. These data are consistent with earlier findings that members of organized crime come from select neighborhood areas. A review of the data for each of the individual communities, however, indicates that rates of nativity and residence vary among the different neighborhoods examined.

The majority of the members of the Grand Avenue and Twenty-Sixth Street crews were raised in these two areas. Of the thirty-three current members of the Grand Avenue crew, the communities of origin of twenty-seven (82 percent) have been determined. Of these, twenty-three (85 percent) were raised in the Grand Avenue area. Of the forty members of the Twenty-Sixth Street crew, the communities of origin of twenty-seven (67 percent) have been identified. Of these, twenty-four (89 percent) have been identified as having been raised in this area.

There are also large numbers of organized crime figures still living in both the Grand Avenue and the Twenty-Sixth Street neighborhoods. Seventeen (63 percent) of the identified members of the Grand Avenue crew still reside in the Grand Avenue neighborhood. Fifteen (55 percent) of the twenty-seven identified members of the Twenty-Sixth Street crew still reside there today. The fact that a large number of crime syndicate members were born in street crew areas

and that many still reside there lends support to the conclusion that racket-prone areas exist today.

Qualitative data also support the position that racket areas still exist. Informants state that street crew activities are still visible in both the Grand Avenue and Twenty-Sixth Street areas, where organized crime figures can be seen frequenting social clubs and spending large portions of their time in the communities.

Taylor Street and the North Side, however, report different findings. There are currently forty-nine members of the Taylor Street crew. I have been able to identify the community of origin of twenty-five (51 percent). Of these, only six were raised in the Taylor Street community. Only two still reside there today. The remaining nineteen identified members come from various other Chicago communities. Of the thirty-five current members of the North Side crew, the communities of origin of eleven (31 percent) have been identified. Of these only three were raised in the area, and three continue to reside there today. Both of these neighborhoods have undergone extensive social and economic change, which could explain why they no longer produce recruits for organized crime. Few crime syndicate members reside in either area, and those that are part of both street crews were probably recruited from outside the neighborhood.

Of the twenty-nine members of the Chicago Heights crew, the communities of origin of eight (28 percent) have been determined. Of these, three have been identified as having been raised in the Chicago Heights community. Three continue to live there today. It should be noted that community nativity and residence data concerning the Chicago Heights crew has been particularly difficult to obtain due to the fact that, because of its suburban location, the Chicago Police Department does not keep extensive records on the Chicago Heights crew's activity, and the Illinois State Police no longer have an organized crime unit.

The fact that most of the members of the Grand Avenue and Twenty-Sixth Street crews were raised in these two areas and that a significant number still reside there supports the conclusion that racket-prone areas still exist. These data are particularly significant when one considers that there are a total of 207 community and suburban areas in metropolitan Chicago from which these people could have come. These findings suggest that neighborhood areas are still important to organized crime recruitment today.

The thesis that organized crime in America is in decline because of demographic changes in urban neighborhoods cannot be totally supported by the findings presented here. Though the Taylor Street community is no longer producing new recruits, the Taylor Street crew still exists. In fact, the Taylor Street crew is considered to be the largest and most powerful of the Chicago Street crews, even though the data indicate that most of its members were recruited from outside the area.

These findings suggest that factors other than community contexts explain

how organized crime continues to successfully recruit new members. If neighborhood areas are no longer relevant to recruitment, as in the case of the Taylor Street crew, the question becomes, What is? What are the mechanisms that allow organized crime groups to recruit new members despite changing social and economic conditions?

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