

Organized crime in three regions: comparing the Veneto, Liverpool, and Chicago

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Published online: 9 February 2013
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Abstract This paper studies organized crime in three regions, the Veneto in Northern Italy, Liverpool in England, and Chicago in the United States. Data were gathered from published reports, government documents, and field observation. Case studies were then compiled describing organized crime in each area. The findings suggest that various jurisdictions define organized crime differently. These different definitions correspond to the nature of organized crime in each locality. In spite of these differences, however, there is consensus about the use of the term mafia. Groups that are defined as mafias generally exercise some degree of political influence in their areas of operation. Additionally, criminal groups that began as adolescent gangs retain the gang classification even after they move into drug trafficking and other organized criminal activities. These findings suggest important distinctions between organized criminal groups and improve our understanding of the term organized crime.

Keywords Mafia · Organized crime · Chicago outfit · The Veneto · Chicago · Liverpool · Camorra · ‘Ndrangheta · Crime firms

Research into organized crime presents difficulties not typically encountered in the social sciences. Because organized crime is sustained by collusion, corruption, and complacency, facts and relationships are often difficult to uncover and may better be

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left hidden. Additionally, neither law enforcement nor the academic community can agree on a definition of organized crime. For example, are the clans of the Camorra a mafia group, a gang, or transnational organized crime? The problem of defining organized crime is further complicated by the fact that different terms are used in different countries. For example, Italy and the European Union (E.U.) use the term mafia to describe organized crime groups; however, in the United States (U.S.), the term mafia is generally used only to describe Italian-American organized crime.

In his popular text titled *Organized Crime*, Howard Abadinsky (2010) argues that there is no widely accepted definition of the term “organized crime.” While various government bodies have provided narrow legal definitions, this term is often used in broader and all-embracing ways by the press, which has played an important, but also inaccurate, role in shaping public perceptions and opinions about organized crime (Young and Allum 2012; Di Nicola and Caneppele 2004). In Italy the use of the term is particularly problematic and risks becoming misleading. In Italy, a whole range of different crimes and groups are considered organized crime, from “traditional” mafias to new illegal market players, who often take the form of less structured gangs. In the United Kingdom (U.K.), organized crime has largely been perceived as disorganized crime (Wright 2006). In fact, organized crime has been so disorganized that Southwell (2009) argues that the historical absence of an effective, home-grown organized crime identity has created an ideal environment for today’s transnational criminal groups that have made Great Britain their European home. In the U.S. organized crime has traditionally referred to the Italian-American La Cosa Nostra (LCN). While popular writers continued to call the American LCN the Mafia, scholars and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) have, since the 1960s, made a clear distinction between the Sicilian Mafia and Italian-American organized crime. A successful string of Racketeer Influenced Corrupt Organizations (RICO) prosecutions beginning in the 1990s has left the American LCN on its deathbed.

This paper presents three case studies of organized crime today: the Veneto, a region in Northern Italy, the city of Liverpool in England, and Chicago in the United States. While much of the data is gathered from published sources, the authors have spent time in the field as researchers in each of the three areas discussed. Our purpose is not only to identify similarities and differences between criminal groups in each of these cities, but also to highlight how different societies characterize the organized crime problem. Our research is grounded in Frederic Thrasher’s (1927) argument that every gang has a natural history of its own, which gives each group its own peculiar character. Modern researchers including Gerald Suttles (1968), Martin Jankowski (1991), and John Hagedorn (1998) have extended this position arguing that gang formation is related to local community structure. As such, we should expect organized crime to differ in different settings because of the character of its members and the effects of the physical and social environment.

Organized crime in the Veneto

Our Italian example will use two cities, Verona and Padua, in order to better illustrate Italian views of organized crime. Both are located in the Veneto, one of Italy’s 20 administrative districts. In Italy, the term organized crime is used to describe both

traditional “mafia” groups and other criminal gangs. Italy’s earliest official definition of organized crime can be found in Article 416 of the Rocco Code of 1931, which outlawed associations of three or more people formed to engage in criminal activity (Scotti 2002). After the 1982 assassination of Carabinieri General Carlo Dalla Chiesa, a number of new legal provisions dealing with organized crime were enacted beginning with Article 416 *bis*, the Rognoni-La Torre Act, which introduced the crime of participation in organized criminal associations (Lex 646 1982). *Bis* is the Italian abbreviation for the word amendment. Similar to conspiracy laws in other legal jurisdictions, 416 *bis* outlawed membership in mafia-type organizations even without a direct link between the members and a criminal act, and has allowed the prosecution of top mafia leaders solely for their membership in a criminal association (Turone 2008; Vigna 2006). Article 416 *bis* requires only the presence of a mafia method, i.e., the potential for intimidation, *omerta* (non cooperation with authorities), and the management or control of financial activities, enterprises, and public services for the purpose of deriving illicit profits or wrongful advantages. While this law was created specifically to address the crimes of the Sicilian mafia, the law also applies to the Neapolitan Camorra and to other criminal associations with similar characteristics and aims. In fact, Article 416 *bis* has been amended to explicitly include the ‘Ndrangheta and foreign criminal organizations in order to cope with the threats posed by these groups (Lex 125 2008 and Lex 50 2010).

While far from providing a complete definition of the word organized crime, 416 and 416 *bis* suggest that there are differences between the Sicilian Mafia—perceived as the “real” mafia—and other criminal associations. The Sicilian Mafia has been regarded as the archetype of organized crime in Italy and other parts of the world for almost a century (Paoli 2004; Tranfaglia 1991). Media portrayals have also supported this view, and most organized crime stories have Sicilian Mafiosi as protagonists (Buonanno 2010). Even the metaphors used to describe the Mafia, such as the *cosca*, have transmitted a conception of organized crime tied to Sicilian culture. While the Sicilian mafia has dominated the collective imagination for decades, recent years have seen another Italian organized crime group, the Camorra, rise to prominence with the publication of Roberto Saviano’s (2006) popularly-acclaimed book *Gomorrah* and Matteo Garrone’s (2008) subsequent cinematic adaptation.

In spite of its historical ties to Sicily, the word mafia has become an umbrella term used to describe “mafia-like” organizations such as the Calabrian ‘Ndrangheta, the Apulian Sacra Corona Unita, and the Campanian Camorra or at least the Casalesi clan, the most powerful Camorra group. These mafia groups are regarded as the ideal-type of organized crime. They are large-scale, stable, and structured organizations (Paoli 2003). Originating in Southern Italy, these mafia groups attempt to exercise political dominion over their areas of settlement where they collect lawful and unlawful debts, regulate markets, and influence government contracts, which places them in direct competition with the state (Paoli 2003). They also use violence and intimidation to enter the legitimate economy. Control of territory and government infiltration are essential characteristics in traditional mafia areas (Sciarrone 2009).

Sometimes the term mafia is also used to include smaller organized criminal groups with a local significance such as the Basilischi group from the southern region of Basilicata, and the Mala del Brenta, a crime syndicate from the Veneto that engaged in a series of crimes from the 1970s until the 1990s. Thus the term mafia

has been used to describe criminal organizations that do not have the complexity of traditional Southern Italian criminal groups increasing the confusion surrounding the nature of these criminal associations (Paoli 2003). Furthermore, the term mafia has also been used to describe foreign criminal groups operating in Italy whose internal composition is significantly different from that of Southern Italian mafia families. Many of these foreign groups are best described as criminal “crews” or groups that form and split depending upon the criminal opportunities that arise (Paoli 2007).

Like other countries in the E.U., Italy has been affected by migration. The past 30 years have seen the development of new criminal groups and criminal opportunities that are the direct result of immigration (Paoli 2004). Today, Italy is the cross-roads where foreign criminal groups from North Africa, the Balkans, Russia, China, South America, Turkey, and West Africa come together to engage in various transnational crimes ranging from human smuggling to drug, arms, and sex trafficking (Narula 2009; Parente 2010). Some of these activities involve functional alliances between traditional Italian mafia organizations and other ethnic groups (Roberti 2008; Parente 2010). While some of these groups are labeled “foreign mafias,” their structure is extremely different from that of traditional Italian mafia groups. For example, these foreign groups typically do not invest in the territory where they operate, nor do they seek to control it. Their presence in these areas is strictly linked to their illegal activities (Pennisi 2012). Only a few of these foreign criminal groups, especially the Chinese, exercise political power within their own ethnic communities that is comparable to the political influence held by the Italian mafias. While Italian mafias tend to play a key role in every aspect of the social, economic, and political life of the communities where they are centered, foreign criminal groups typically operate at the margins of their communities engaging only in the provision of illegal goods and services and money laundering (Paoli 2004; Narula 2009). As such, foreign players in Italian criminal markets are best described as organized crime and not mafia organizations.

Thus, in Italy a duality of organized crime can be found. In Italy, it is best to define organized crime as a broader category that includes those actors in criminal markets who are involved in the provision of illegal goods and not the social and political organization of the communities where they reside. This definition is consistent with the definitions of organized crime used in other European nations and at the international level. At the same time, Italy has a number of traditional mafias that not only operate in the south, but also have expanded into other areas of the country. A look at criminal activity in the northern region of the Veneto provides an important case-study of how organized crime operates in Italy today.

In the Veneto, both traditional mafias and foreign organized crime operate simultaneously. Despite their attachment to their home territories, southern mafias have “transplanted” outside their regions of origin to engage in criminal activity in other areas of Italy (Varese 2006). Several “push” factors have been identified to explain this mafia transplantation (Varese 2006). Among them migration from established mafia areas has been an important cause, especially during the period of post-war growth when thousands of migrants from the poorer regions of the south came to work in Northern Italy (Paoli 1994; Varese 2006). With these migrants came a number of mafia members. The danger of attracting mafiosi was exacerbated in the 1960s by the government’s policy of *soggiorno obbligato* (forced relocation). Paroled

mafia members were sent to central and northern regions to serve out their terms in hopes of breaking their ties to the mafia by resettling them among law-abiding people. Much to the regret of Italian authorities, this relocation caused the expansion of mafia activity into these new areas (Violante 1994; Forgione 2008). The organizational structure of the mafias themselves has also facilitated transplantation. The ‘Ndrangheta and Camorra tend to recruit new members on the basis of kinship ties, which has facilitated transplantation, through chain migration as one family member follows another to new areas of the country (Paoli 1994; Varese 2006).

Mafia groups also follow criminal opportunities. Economic development in Northern Italy has provided a fertile ground for mafia business. According to Varese (2006), in order to have successful mafia transplantation “pull” factors are needed such as a demand for criminal protection. Whether originating in the legal or criminal economy, the demand for protection is a key factor that explains why mafias transplant in certain areas and not in others. For example, Varese (2006) argues that the ‘Ndrangheta was able to operate successfully in the town of Bardonecchia (near Turin) because important sectors of the local economy were unprotected by the state and consequently the people turned to the ‘ndranghetisti to settle labor problems and to regulate competition in both legal and illegal markets. While in Verona, another Northern Italian city, transplantation failed because the ‘ndranghetisti were not able to infiltrate the drug market and civil society effectively mobilized against mafia attempts to infiltrate the legal economy.

The presence of mafia groups in Northern Italy has been reported since the 1970s, but has received little public attention until two, 2010 law enforcement investigations: *Il Crimine* and *Infinito*. Their prosecution demonstrated the degree that mafia transplantation has reached in the north (Direzione Nazionale Antimafia [DNA] 2011). They revealed that the nearby district of Lombardy, the rich industrial region surrounding Milan, has been heavily colonized by the ‘Ndrangheta, and that Milan is a key location for drug trafficking. Evidence was also uncovered that Milan is at the center of the ‘Ndrangheta’s efforts to penetrate legitimate businesses, particularly the construction sector because of the abundance of public funds being made available for the Milan 2015 Exposition. There is also the problem of increasing political infiltration. In fact, these investigations have shown that the growing Calabrian immigrant community has allowed the ‘Ndrangheta to develop a political base facilitating the infiltration of local government by ‘ndranghetisti (Paoli 1994; Chiavari 2011; Savatteri 2012).

The situation is different in the Veneto. For many years, mafia groups were almost absent in this part of Italy, but recent reports from the DNA (2011) indicate that there is a significant risk of mafia infiltration in this area. The Veneto, in particular, is considered to be the key to the future of the Italian mafias (Pennisi 2012). Varese’s (2006) analysis of the city of Verona suggests that what has made the Veneto attractive to mafia groups are “pull” factors originating in the local economy. The current financial and economic crisis has severely hit the Veneto region, creating a number of problems for the local economy, particularly access to credit. Mafias have taken advantage of this situation thanks to the liquidity they enjoy from drug trafficking. This liquidity allows them to provide usurious loans, money laundering services, cash for real estate investments, and money for purchasing vulnerable businesses. Because local businesses have difficulty obtaining bank credit, the mafias are seen as a valid alternative when legal sources are

insufficient or not available. In fact, traditional mafias enjoy some appeal in Northern Italy because they offer entrepreneurs what they need—credit (Pennisi 2012). Additionally, mafia groups are viewed as reliable sources because of their subscription to *omerta*, which demands their trustworthiness. The expansion of mafia activity in the Veneto provides an important opportunity to deepen our understanding of how mafias operate in Italy today (Pennisi 2012).

According to the DNA (2011), the Veneto is believed to be an area where there is considerable mafia infiltration, especially by the ‘Ndrangheta. As reported by Pennisi (2012), the ‘*ndrine* in the Veneto come from the Calabrian cities of Lamezia and Crotone. Several law enforcement operations have shown this. For example, the Padua Antimafia Investigative Directorate seized ‘Ndrangheta assets equivalent to 3 million Euros in July 2011 and 500 thousand Euros in July 2012 belonging to Domenico Multari. Multari is a native of Crotone suspected of being an agent of the Dragone ‘Ndrangheta clan who had moved to Verona with his family. The idea was to create wealth in Northern Italy that could be brought to the south (Corriere del Veneto 2011, 2012a). Roberto Saviano (2006), the Italian journalist and author of the book *Gamorrhah*, claims that the ‘Ndrangheta, in true mafia fashion, has also sought to expand its criminal footprint in the north, by infiltrating the powerful Lega Nord, the political party that controls much of Northern Italy.

The Camorra, and in particular the Casalesi clan, is also increasing its presence in the Veneto (Pennisi 2012). Operation “Aspide,” (2011) coordinated by the local *Antimafia Directorate*, provides an important example of how mafia groups work in the Veneto. Aspide is the name of a credit recovery company based in Selvazzano Dentro, a suburb of Padua. Headed by Mario Crisci, a thirty-four-year-old man from Campania, the group made usurious loans to local businesses that were in financial trouble and then acquired them when they were unable to repay the loans. The rate of interest charged could reach 180 %. Most of the victims were small entrepreneurs, especially in the construction sector, and hoteliers. It has been estimated that more than 100 businesses were taken over. Once in control of a defaulting business, Crisci’s group began draining the assets of the business by creating false invoices and sending the money to the Camorra’s homeland in Campania (Pennisi 2012). An estimated 4 million Euros were sent there, most of which went to help the families of imprisoned Camorra members. The local press reported that Crisci chose to operate in Padua because business people were interested in finding ways to avoid paying taxes (*La Repubblica* 2012). What emerged in the Padua region was a system of violence, intimidation, corruption, and connivance. It is worth noting that among the 25 arrested, 8 were from the Veneto including accountants, notaries, and “sloggers” (Corriere del Veneto 2012b) (heavy hitters/enforcers).

While mafia groups may be thriving in the Veneto, other organized crime groups are not doing as well. Most local crime problems are linked to common criminality or attributed to foreign groups, especially those from Nigeria, North Africa, and Eastern Europe that are involved in drug and sex trafficking (Bianchini and Sicurella 2007; DNA 2011). The relative wealth of the region and its geographic location make it a popular destination for international criminal groups (Transcrime 2004). In spite of a growing mafia presence, the public does not think of organized crime as a significant problem. Even if citizens believe that organized crime is a serious problem, they are more worried about street crime and foreign criminal groups than the Italian mafias (Demos and Pi 2010; Lavorgna 2012).

The nature of organized crime in Italy has changed over the years. Cities in the north, like Verona and Padua, are now dealing with both mafia groups and with *straniere*, (foreign criminals) who participate in street-level drug sales and prostitution (DNA 2011; Pennisi 2012). While traditional mafias such as the 'Ndrangheta are expanding to Northern Italy, immigration and the current debt crisis are changing the nature of organized crime throughout Italy. One has only to visit the Vatican to see illegal immigrants selling “knock off” Gucci and Prada bags on the Via della Conciliazione. While this activity may seem harmless, the sellers are at the end of a chain of organized crime that produces the purses, smuggles them into Italy, and distributes them to immigrant sellers. Italy's debt crisis and the associated unemployment have contributed to the organized crime problem as well. Young men in Naples now turn to street-corner drug sales, controlled by various Camorra clans, in order to earn a living. Many of these clans are more akin to street gangs than mafia groups (Paoli 2004). Will these activities spread to the north and other parts of the country? Limits on social spending and an increasing supply of young men willing to turn to the underground economy will have a continuing impact on organized crime in Italy.

Organized crime in Liverpool

A different approach is needed to understand the definition of organized crime in the United Kingdom. British legal definitions are not as easily traceable as the Italian. To understand the evolution of the definition of organized crime in the U.K., it is necessary to study the enactments of Parliament and official government assessments of the organized crime problem. Unlike Italy, the U.K. has not had a consistent approach to organized crime, nor have British laws been sufficient to define the problem. Gregory (2003) argues that existing laws have been ineffective or just not available and that the study of the organized crime problem has lacked reliable data collection and analysis.

It wasn't until 1994 that the House of Commons assigned the Home Affairs Committee to assess the nature and extent of the threat of organized crime in the U.K. (Home Affairs Committee 1994). This new British effort was a direct result of the “moral panic” spreading throughout Europe as a result of the fall of the Soviet Union (Hobbs and Hobbs 2011). Fear that Eastern European criminals were moving towards the West, while mafia groups were crossing the Alps had created a revised version of the alien conspiracy theory (van Duyne 2011). The 1990s also saw the creation of the first European Union, money-laundering directive and the National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS) in the U.K. and later the National Crime Squad. Apart from changes in anti money-laundering legislation, due mostly to pressures from the E.U., the situation in the U.K. remained almost unchanged until 2004, when a white paper titled “One Step Ahead” prepared the way for the Serious Organized Crime and Police Act (SOCPA) and the establishment of the Serious Organized Crime Agency (SOCA) (Home Office 2004). The creation of SOCA in 2005 was viewed as a watershed moment in the government's efforts against organized crime. However, SOCA has proven to be ineffective and in need of reorganization. In 2013, a new National Crime Agency (NCA) will replace SOCA and transfer much of the effort against organized crime to local police forces (Home Office 2011).

The One Step Ahead white paper adopted the NCIS's definition of organized crime. The NCIS has defined organized criminals as: "those involved on a continuing basis, normally working with others, in committing crimes for substantial profit or gain, for which a person aged 21 or over on first conviction could expect to be imprisoned for three or more years" (NCIS UK Threat Assessment Report 2005). This law is based upon the argument that the most successful and serious crimes, in terms of scale, are the most organized. Both the Home Office and SOCA's website list a series of offenses, which are thought to be serious enough to be considered organized crime. They include: money laundering, counterfeiting, public corruption, several types of fraud, and drug, firearm, and human trafficking. The prevailing view in the U.K. is that organized crime is a transnational problem and subsequently a threat to Britain's national borders, yet the NCIS definition pertains to local criminal groups as well, which has led to confusion and a blurred understanding of what is meant by the term organized crime (Harfield 2008; Rawlinson 2008).

The following case study of organized crime in the city of Liverpool provides an excellent example of the sometimes confusing manner in which organized crime is defined in the U.K. Liverpool is a city of 445,000 people in the borough of Mersey, England. In Liverpool, the term organized crime applies to two distinct groups: "crime firms" and street gangs (Shopshire and Mac Farquhar 2002). Crime firms are groups formed specifically for the purpose of committing criminal activities, usually drug trafficking. Street gangs are typically associations of adolescent youth formed largely as a mechanism of social adjustment within a given area (Klein 2001). Crime is only part of the group's focus.

Liverpool has been a center of organized crime activity for many years owing in part to its geographical location and historic seaport, which helped establish it as home to some of the largest drug traffickers in the U.K. In 2011, SOCA dismantled an organized crime network in Liverpool smuggling 40 tons of hard drugs into the U.K. The group was made up of Turkish and other foreign nationals working with overseas traffickers to import cocaine from South and Central America and also heroin and amphetamines from the European continent.

Liverpool is also the home of the Beatles. Their music and the resulting cultural revolution led to increased drug use as amphetamines and marijuana became popular in the 1960s, and drugs became the preferred business of Liverpool's criminals. Today, the image of organized crime in Liverpool is represented by a handful of rich and successful drug traffickers who tower above the underworld of the city and have written its criminal history. One can trace the history of organized crime in Liverpool by following the careers of these men.

Liverpool's most famous gangster is Charlie Siega. Siega's fame is probably due to the fact that he was once interviewed by *National Geographic* (2010) magazine explaining how armed robbery was an easy and quick way to make money. Other famous gangsters include Michael Showers and Tommy Commerford who also began as armed robbers, but moved into the drug business in the 1960s pioneering drug dealing in the city. By the 1980s, a handful of family groups controlled Liverpool's drug market. Showers became a symbol of drug wealth as he drove through the streets of Toxeth, an economically deprived inner-city area, in his white Rolls Royce. Toxeth is known as the "ghetto," because it is inhabited by some 20,000 blacks living in and around Granby Street. Years of tension between the Toxeth community and

other segments of the Liverpool population led to 9 days of rioting in 1981. Nearly 1,000 policemen were hurt and 140 buildings were destroyed. After the riot, Toxteth became a free zone for marijuana dealers, but the real drug revolution came with the explosion of heroin on the other side of the Mersey River. As addiction to heroin (known as “smack” or “skag”) increased, so did the crime rate. Burglaries tripled between 1979 and 1984 in the Kirkdale area, which became the U.K.’s first heroin center. The criminals involved in the heroin boom became known as the “Liverpool Mafia.” The Mafia was made up mainly of middle-aged white men who had earned the seed money for their drug operations from armed robbery. Tommy Commerford was one of the Liverpool Mafia’s leading members and was the one who had established a direct connection to the heroin suppliers.

Early in the 1990s, Curtis Warren became the rising star of the Liverpool and Toxteth underworlds. Warren’s fame came as a result of his movement from the local to the international drug scene (*The Telegraph* 2009a, b). Warren had gone to Venezuela in 1991 and established a connection with the cocaine cartels. Soon cocaine began arriving at the Liverpool seaport, which was then shipped as far away as the Netherlands. The *Telegraph* reported that Warren had amassed a hidden fortune estimated to be between £180 million and £300 million. Warren also appeared on the *Sunday Times*’ “Rich List” and was Interpol’s “Target One” making him Europe’s most wanted man. Dutch police eventually unravelled Warren’s connection to the drug cartels and he was arrested in 1996 after a five-month investigation. After his arrest, Warren began managing his drug empire from prison. He was charged with cocaine distribution again in 2005 and in 2007, this time by the U.K.

Colin Smith was another famous Liverpool drug supplier. In fact, *The Observer* (18 May 2008) dubbed him “Britain’s Cocaine King.” Smith was respected and some say even “loved” by the Liverpool underworld because he had personally expanded the drug market transforming street criminals into wealthy high-level traffickers. For a time, Smith was able to keep a low profile while running his drug business by using haulage contractors and corrupt port officials to move his drugs. He also used counter-surveillance technology while unloading his drugs at the Liverpool docks. Smith bought a home in the richest neighbourhood of Liverpool and built an empire of clubs, pubs, and restaurants. He eventually moved to a villa in Costa del Sol, Spain and would fly back and forth whenever something in Liverpool needed his attention. Smith was murdered in 2007. His death was the result of a war between the Liverpool Mafia and groups affiliated with the Columbian Cali Cartel. Police believed that the Colombians had ordered Smith’s execution because of a missing £72 million shipment of cocaine (*The Observer* 2008).

Recently Liverpool police began dismantling another crime firm, the Whitney gang. The Whitneys are a notorious, family-run drug crew led by Leslie Whitney and his son Paul. They controlled North Liverpool’s crack cocaine and heroin traffic. Seven members of the family and six of their associates were sent to prison for a total of 82 years after the police brought their operation to an end in November 2011. Arrests were made when police observed members of the group throw diaper bags full of drugs from a passing auto (BBC 2011). The members of the gang conducted their activities using tactics borrowed from the American TV show *The Wire*, which taught the Whitney’s to use unregistered, pre-paid cell phones and untraceable vehicles to deliver drugs to their customers. Their strong family structure and blood

ties resembled a mafia clan. Street dealers were employees and only family members controlled the gang's activities. This family structure made it difficult to penetrate the boundaries of the group. Kinship ties prevented family members from cooperating with authorities.

The two main street gangs in Liverpool are the Strand Gang (a.k.a. Nogga Dogs), based in the Strand shopping area in the Norris Green district, and the Crocky Crew from Croxteth, the traditional Liverpool underworld district. Police estimate that of the 40 members of the Strand gang, at least one-fourth have Anti-Social Behaviour Orders restricting their actions by prohibiting their return to a certain area or by restricting their public behaviour such as swearing or drinking alcohol in public.¹ The Crocky Crew is smaller with approximately 30 members. The majority of these gang members are “dysfunctional teenagers,” according to Chief Superintendent Steve Watson, Police Area Commander for Liverpool North (British Broadcasting Company [BBC] 2008). Watson argues that the police should not overestimate the degree of sophistication of these groups. Steve Moore, a retired detective superintendent from the Merseyside Police Department, reported that the word gang is avoided because these groups often have no real hierarchy (BBC 2008). They are loose networks of criminals, some as young as 13, who have graduated from anti-social behaviour to more serious forms of crime (Sergi 2012). Chief Superintendent Tony Doherty (BBC Liverpool 2010), head of the anti-gang unit, warns that while they may not be sophisticated, these young people are fascinated with gun violence.

Gun violence erupted Liverpool in the 1990s when a war broke out between a group named the Johnny Philips' crew and a gang from Dingle, another inner-city neighbourhood, resulting in nearly 80 shootings and several murders. Conflicts over the lucrative drug trade, issues of pride, and control of territory were defined as the biggest causes (*The Observer* 1995). In 2003 the media reported another war between a gang based in Everton and a rival gang based in Kirkdale, which resulted in a car bombing, a number of shootings, and several murders including that of Tony Richardson. Richardson's murder was believed to be in retaliation for a gun attack carried out by his fiancée Jennifer Ellison against a family member linked to the Kirkdale gang (*Liverpool Echo* 2004).

On August 22, 2007, eleven-year-old Rhys Jones was shot dead in the Croxteth Park public housing estate (*Independent* 2008). It is believed that the bullets were fired by one of the Crocky Crew and intended for a member of the rival Strand Gang. The killing made newspaper headlines and was extensively covered by the media. The feud dated back a number of years and involved members from both the Strand gang and the Crocky Crew. The feud was also believed to glamorize gang behaviour and to have attracted other young people to join the gang.

The Liverpool underworld today is a confused and violent arena of street gang conflict. Shootings in the street have made frequent headlines (BBC Inside Out 2008). The weapons of today's Liverpool gangs are guns. Gangs use guns because they are available and because they are “cool” (BBC 2010). According to the U.K.'s

¹ An Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) s.1.1 Crime and Disorder Act of 1998 is a civil order issued by a court against a person who has shown anti-social tendencies. It was introduced in 1998 and is meant to address behaviours, which do not demand criminal prosecution. An ASBO typically prevents a person from returning to a designated place, drinking alcoholic beverages, or behaving in a disorderly manner while in public.

Association of Chief Police Officers (2007), firearms can be purchased for as little as £50 and are easily concealable. Chief Superintendent Tony Doherty believes that the people running these gangs are putting firearms into the hands of their members and actively encouraging them to use them (BBC 2010).

Gang members in Liverpool are not only responsible for an increase in violent crime, but also for an increase in other crimes as well. Home Office figures show that drug related offences are higher in Liverpool than in any other part of the U.K. In Liverpool, the rate of drug arrests is 15.9 per 100,000 while the national average is 4.2 (Sergi 2012). Other crimes such as theft, violence against the person, robbery, and criminal damage to property are also higher in Liverpool than the rest of the country.

The *Liverpool Echo* reported in 2011 that Liverpool gangs have moved into growing cannabis on an industrial scale. Cannabis is the most prevalent illegal drug in the U.K. and it is considered an “ATM for organized crime,” says Detective Bill Stupples of the Merseyside police. According to the *Echo* report, industrial-scale cannabis farms have been found in a chip shop, under railway arches, in abandoned offices, unused clubs, empty cinemas, barns, garages, and private homes. The cannabis business has become very lucrative for the street gangs that rule the public housing estates partly because the law against cannabis possession was downgraded from a Class B to a Class C offense in 2004 providing less of a penalty and, therefore, becoming more attractive to sell (*Liverpool Echo* 2011)

The cannabis trade has also provided Liverpool’s gangs with a link to organized crime. Liverpool has the oldest Chinese community in Britain. The *Liverpool Echo* (2011) reports that some local cannabis farms are run by Chinese Triads and other Oriental groups and employ Chinese human trafficking victims. Liverpool police believe that an agreement has been reached between the Chinese groups, some born and bred in Liverpool or elsewhere in the U.K., and the local drug gangs. This agreement likely involves some sort of protection fee that the Chinese must pay in order to share in the cannabis trade. Cannabis production has also led to an increased use of firearms as growers use weapons to protect their farms. Detective Superintendent Richie Davies of the Matrix (gang) squad told the *Liverpool Echo* (2011) that local street gangs have made it their business to rip off the cannabis growers and to steal their money.

In conclusion, there are two organized crime problems in Liverpool today: armed youth gangs and organized drug traffickers. Gangs are extremely visible and worrisome because of their access to firearms. Escalating violence and social disorder are the two main concerns linked to street gangs. There are disadvantaged areas of the city where young people are at risk of turning to crime. In these areas, the drug trade has established a parallel lifestyle with its own economy offering substantial rewards for relatively little effort and risk. The emerging organized crime threat in Liverpool is the integration of drug traffickers and street gangs. While street gangs traditionally have been focused on providing urban youth with an identity and means of showing solidarity against rival groups, they may sacrifice their sense of belonging for a more rewarding and richer status by participating in the drug trade (Sergi 2012). While there is a concern with gang violence and gun crime, there is also fear that street gang members may evolve into “corporate” gangs. Venkatesh and Leavitt (2000) define corporate gangs as those that have a mercenary purpose such as selling drugs. Gangs, whose sole purpose is to make

money from drug distribution, often resort to violence to enforce control over their distribution territories resulting in increased levels of gun crime. Liverpool's unique characteristics and history make it likely that the city will continue to produce major crime firms that traffic in drugs while social problems and poverty remain a characteristic of urban life that will continue to affect the structure of street gangs.

Chicago

Chicago is the third largest city in the United States with a population of approximately 2.7 million people. Many would agree that the name Chicago is synonymous with organized crime. In Chicago, the term organized crime has historically referred to the Outfit, the city's traditional organized crime group. Tracing its roots to Prohibition and the Capone Syndicate, the Outfit has played a significant role in Chicago's underworld since the 1920s. The Outfit sold narcotics, muscled labor unions, and forced saloon keepers and restaurant owners to install their jukeboxes and pinball machines. They also ran handbooks, dice games, gambling casinos, and brothels. During much of their reign, the Outfit operated with impunity because of its association with the Democratic political machine that controlled Chicago. It wasn't until 2005 that the activities of the Outfit were finally brought to an end when the United States Department of Justice indicted the Chicago Outfit as a racketeering enterprise. Described by United State's Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald as a "hit on the mob," the "Family Secrets," investigation was a milestone event in the history of organized crime, one that has virtually destroyed traditional organized crime in Chicago.

While the Outfit was a potent force in Chicago crime, it was not the only group involved in organized criminal activity. Since the 1980s, African-American and Latino street gangs have participated in drug trafficking, but in some odd way, these groups have never been described as organized crime. In Chicago, the term organized crime has always meant the Outfit and not the fact that a number of people are involved in a group effort to break the law. This distinction can probably be attributed to the Outfit's political power. Their ability to deliver votes in certain segments of the city made them a powerful political force. While street gangs have tried to gain political power, they have never been able to duplicate the influence on city government once held by the Chicago Outfit. Although the Outfit is down and probably out, street gangs and street gang violence has become Chicago's number one (organized) crime problem.

Gangs have had a long and varied history in Chicago. During the late 1800 s criminal gangs such as the Henry Street Gang and the Johnson Street Gang committed robberies and burglaries (Lombardo 2012). During the early 1900s, Black Hand gangs terrorized Chicago's immigrant Italian community demanding extortion money, and the Forty-Two gang hijacked trucks, stole automobiles, and robbed banks. By the mid 1900s, gangs had become less of a criminal problem and more of a problem of adolescent adjustment to urban society. Thirty years of research in Chicago by Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay (1942) found the new focus of gang activity to be juvenile delinquency. However, things began to change in the 1960s as African-American gangs such as the Black Stone Rangers and Vice Lords grew in size as part of a new racial consciousness spreading through Chicago's black communities. Black youth began to turn to gangs as the embodiment of black power (Diamond 2009). Black gangs even flirted with the civil

rights movement for a short period of time. Feeling their new found strength, black and Hispanic gangs began to take over drug distribution in their neighborhoods. By the mid 1980s street gangs dominated the drug trade in Chicago. Until this time drug distribution was controlled by various groups of adult dealers who were more akin to robbery or burglary gangs than street gangs.

Although the activities of Chicago's gangs have changed over time, gangs can generally be defined as follows: A gang is an association of individuals who exhibit a gang name, recognizable symbols, a geographic territory, and an organized course of criminality (Chicago Police Department 1992). In their 2012 report, the Chicago Crime Commission, using data provided by the Chicago Police Department, provided "profiles" of 58 street gangs in the Chicago metropolitan area with a combined membership of more than 68,000 members. In fact, Chicago and the surrounding state of Illinois are believed to contain the largest per capita rate of gang membership in the nation totaling eight gang members per 1,000 residents.

The idea that there are at least 68,000 gang members in Chicago is not shared by members of the academic community. Such conclusions are often referred to as "courthouse criminology," that is findings that are based on data collected by law enforcement and other official sources (Hagedorn 1990). The Chicago Police Department (2012) determines gang membership through a number of mechanisms including admission of membership, the wearing of distinctive emblems and tattoos, the use of gang specific hand signals or symbols, the identification of the individual as a gang member by a reliable informant, or by information contained within the Chicago Police Department's records' system. As such, a person may have been a gang member on the day of his arrest, for 1 year, or for many years and could have been arrested for any number of offenses from disorderly conduct to murder. There may have been 68,000 persons arrested at one time or another who were classified as gang members, but it does not mean that they were all active at the same time or had the same level of gang involvement.

Not only does Chicago boast the highest concentration of gang members in the U.S., it also leads the nation in gang violence. During the first 5 months of 2012, more than 240 people were murdered in Chicago and over 1200 people shot (Tobin 2012). The Huffington Post (2012) reported that more people were killed in Chicago than soldiers lost in the Afghanistan war. The Chicago Crime Commission (2012) directly relates this surge in violence to street gang activity, particularly in the black community.

Virtually all of Chicago's street gangs sell heroin, cocaine, and marijuana. However, the U.S. Justice Department's National Gang Intelligence Center (NGIC) (2011) makes a clear distinction between street gangs and the transnational criminal organizations that supply them with drugs. Most illicit drugs in the United States come from Mexico, and Mexican drug cartels are the major source of drugs for street gangs in Chicago and other American cities. In July 2012 federal authorities arrested 12 members of Mexico's notorious Zeta cartel for importing cocaine into the Chicago area. According to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Mexican drug cartels have contact with high-level members of Chicago's largest street gangs supplying them with drugs for street distribution (Escalona 2012). Chicago has also become the U.S. distribution hub of choice for the Mexican cartels (Bradley 2012). Chicago is the rail and trucking crossroads of the nation and hosts a large Mexican population where drug traffickers can go about their business without raising suspicion.

Since Frederick Thrasher (1927) first studied Chicago gangs, they have largely been a male-dominated phenomenon organized along racial and ethnic lines. These divisions continue today. In order to understand gangs in Chicago, each group must be analyzed individually. Although white ethnic gangs once dominated gangland Chicago, they are literally of no consequence today. Gangs in Chicago today are mainly controlled by two racial/ethnic groups: blacks and Hispanics. The largest and most active of these gangs are the Gangster Disciples, Latin Kings, Black P Stones, Vice lords, Four Corner Hustlers, and Maniac Latin Disciples (Chicago Crime Commission 2012). These groups have been labeled “super gangs” by sociologist James Short (1974), because of the law enforcement and media attention that they attract.

Outlaw motorcycle gangs also have a presence in Chicago. The U.S. Department of Justice defines outlaw motorcycle gangs as organizations whose members use their motorcycle clubs as conduits for criminal activity (National Drug Intelligence Center 2002). One of America’s largest motorcycle gangs is the Chicago Outlaws. Begun in McCook, Illinois in 1935, the Outlaws moved their headquarters to Chicago in 1950 (National Gang Intelligence Center 2002). While they have a history of involvement in drug distribution, prostitution, and gun trafficking, they have been relatively quiet in the past few years. As recently as June 2012, however, two members of the Wheels of Soul, another nationally prominent outlaw motorcycle gang, were arrested in Chicago on murder charges as part of a nationwide crackdown on the gang (FBI 2012). There are also occasional reports of Nigerian, Russian, and Chinese criminal operations, but street gangs are by far the main organized crime problem in Chicago.

Chicago’s black gangs are mainly concentrated in the South and West sides of the city. The most prominent of which are the Gangster Disciples in the South Side and the Vice Lords in the West Side of Chicago. The Gangster Disciples are the largest street gang in the South Side with at least 10,000 members (Chicago Crime Commission 2012). The Gangster Disciples have been in existence, in one form or another, for nearly 50 years. According to the NGIC (2011), they have a presence in 35 of Americas 50 states. While they mainly sell drugs today, during the 1990s, at the height of their power, they attempted to extort neighborhood burglars, auto thieves, and prostitutes; and sponsored dice and card games, offered juice loans, and sold protection to local businesses (Venkatesh 2006). They also attempted to enter the political arena when in the 1990s they began to organize their membership into a political action group titled “Growth and Development.”

Chicago’s Vice Lord Street gang is the largest street gang in the West Side of Chicago. It is estimated that there are at least 13,000 members in the Chicago metropolitan area (Chicago Crime Commission 2012). Like the Gangster Disciples, the Vice Lords have been in existence for nearly 50 years also beginning in the 1960s. Their main criminal activity is drug dealing, but they have also been known to engage in robbery, auto theft, and extortion of independent drug sellers. The Vice Lords are broken down into a number of “sets” or subgroups including the: Cicero Insane Vice Lords, Imperial Insane Vice Lords, Mafia Insane Vice Lords, Renegade Vice Lords, Traveling Vice Lords, Undertaker Vice Lords, and Unknown Vice Lords. The NGIC (2011) reports that 35 states have some component of the Vice Lords street gang. The Vice Lords are part of the “People” alliance of Chicago gangs. Established in the 1980s as a means of protecting gang

members, it has little importance today outside of the prison environment. The Vice Lords main rivals are the gangs belonging to the rival “Folk” alliance, particularly the Gangster Disciples (U.S. Department of Justice 2003).

The largest Hispanic gang in Chicago is the Latin Kings. The Kings rose to prominence during the 1960s in Chicago’s Humboldt Park community. Although the Latin Kings began as a Puerto Rican gang, they have grown to include Mexicans, blacks, and even some whites. The Kings have chapters in virtually every Hispanic neighborhood in Chicago. Boasting nearly 10,000 members, the Kings are broken down into three major factions corresponding to Chicago’s South, Southwest, and North Side Hispanic communities (Chicago Crime Commission 2012). The Latin Kings can also be found in 34 states and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico (NGIC 2011). Their criminal activities include: murder, auto theft, robbery, and extortion, but drug dealing is their main focus.

Chicago’s three major street gangs have a presence in 70 % of America’s 50 states, which suggests that Chicago gangs have expanded across the country. In addition, a 2010 survey on gang migration conducted by the U.S. Justice Department’s National Gang Center (2010) found that most (71 %) law enforcement agencies reported the presence of gangs from other jurisdictions in their towns, however, one half (51 %) of the agencies reported that their local gang problems emerged well before the arrival of gang member migrants. Gang member migration refers to the movement of actively involved gang youth from one U.S. jurisdiction to another. The reasons gang members migrate can be grouped into two categories: illegitimate and legitimate reasons. Illegitimate reasons include drug distribution and other illegal activities, recruiting new members, and avoiding law enforcement. Legitimate or “social” reasons include efforts to improve their quality of life and moves with family for employment and educational opportunities. Overall, respondents decisively rated social reasons as more influential than all other factors casting doubt on the argument that gang migration is a conscious effort in the pursuit of expanding gang territory or drug markets. Gang members typically are not sent to open shop in new territories, but once there they continue to engage in the gang lifestyle and may use their gang contacts to sell drugs.

It is no coincidence that Chicago’s three major gangs began at the same moment in history. The 1960s brought a number of changes to the social fabric of Chicago. Deindustrialization and the global economy fueled the exodus of work from America’s central cities to South America and Asia (Wilson 1987). Between 1967 and 1987, Chicago lost 326,000 (60 %) manufacturing jobs (Wilson 1987). The loss of entry-level work has had important implications for the urban poor who typically make up Chicago’s street gangs. Early gang researchers such as Thrasher (1927) and Whyte (1943) viewed gang participation as “interstitial,” or occurring between childhood and adulthood. Most gang members eventually found work, got married, and matured out of gangs. Like those before them, blacks and Hispanics came to Chicago in large numbers to find employment. However, they came at the wrong time. Changes in Chicago’s workforce deprived them of the economic ladder of opportunity that had served early immigrant groups.

Facing economic hardship, blacks and Hispanics, like those before them, have turned to the underground economy to find work. Daniel Bell (1960) argues that criminal groups have played an important part in the social differentiation of

American society and that the urban rackets have allowed successive waves of immigrants, who are on the bottom rungs of society, a means of economic and social mobility that transcends the involvement of any particular ethnic group.

Just as Irish and Italian gangs in Chicago turned to bootlegging during Prohibition, black and Hispanic gangs have today turned to distributing drugs to make a living.

Deindustrialization and the global economy are not the only factors that have contributed to the development of gangs in Chicago's African-American community. Chicago blacks have experienced what can be described as a "perfect storm" of social problems that have contributed to gangs and gang violence. Segregation, public housing, welfare dependency, and the lack of entry-level work have all contributed to the creation of an urban underclass—people who found few legitimate work opportunities, but increasing opportunities to sell heroin, cocaine, and marijuana. Some have even argued that these social problems have been exacerbated by successful law enforcement efforts (Hagedorn and Rauch 2007). Working in cooperation with the federal government, Chicago Police have successfully prosecuted the leaders of all three of Chicago's major street gangs. While impacting their criminal operations, these prosecutions have also increased levels of violence as members now fight rivals in their own gang for drug distribution territories that were once parceled out by the now incarcerated gang leadership.

While there has been little academic study of Chicago's Latin Kings, Felix Padilla's (1993) study of the Diamonds, another Chicago street gang, provides an important look into the development of gangs in Chicago's Puerto Rican community. Padilla also argues that Puerto Ricans turned to the underground economy because of the disappearance of manufacturing jobs. By the time Puerto Ricans came to Chicago, the economic order had changed. Puerto Rican immigrants had to come to terms with 20 years of structural change that left many without traditional avenues of earning a living. The shift in employment toward service occupations rather than production of goods left only "bad" jobs with poor salaries, no health insurance, and no pensions. Padilla argues that the establishment of the Diamonds was the direct result of the strain caused by the deindustrialization of American society. While Chicago's Puerto Rican community experienced the same labor market problems faced by blacks, a Puerto Rican underclass never developed. Padilla attributes this to the Puerto Rican community's ability to turn in on itself and develop an informal economy based upon street peddling, cottage industry, small ethnic business, bolita (lottery) gambling, and drug distribution.

Although started as a Puerto Rican gang, the Latin Kings are largely Mexican today. Chicago's Mexican community, much like Chicago's Puerto Rican community, has had to cope with changes in the urban economy. While deindustrialization and globalization have had their effect on Mexican employment, social institutions such as the family, church, and small business have played an important role in preventing Chicago's Mexican families from falling into the urban underclass (Moore 1989). Historically, Mexican gangs in Chicago focused their attention on resolving the normative ambiguity that existed between their position in the social structure and their ability to find success in the larger society (Horowitz and Schwartz 1974). The participation of the Latin Kings in the drug trade suggests that drug distribution has provided many with a coping mechanism to resolve this ambiguity through employment in the underground economy. Another reason for

Mexican prominence in the Latin Kings is immigration. The Pew Hispanic Research Institute estimates that there are 525,000 undocumented Mexican immigrants in Illinois most of whom reside in Chicago (Chicago Sun Times 25 July 2012). While research findings tying illegal immigrants to crime are mixed at best, there is strong support for the argument that second-generation offspring often drift into crime as a result of their failure to acculturate into American society, which may help to explain the prominence of the Mexican Latin Kings (Padilla 1993).

As this review has shown, the nature of organized crime in Chicago has changed dramatically over the years. What has not changed are the causes. Organized criminal groups, whether yesterday's Outfit or today's Gangster Disciples, serve a functional role in society. They provide services such as narcotics, prostitution, and gambling that people want, but that society prohibits. Organized crime is also functional because it provides a mechanism to relieve the strain (Merton 1957) caused by a social structure that fails to provide economic opportunity for all its members, particularly minority populations. Whether Irish, Jew, Italian, black, or Hispanic, minority populations have turned to the underground economy to find work. Finally, weak social control has also contributed to the continuation of organized crime. Whether government corruption as in the case of the Chicago Outfit, or the social disorganization faced by immigrant communities, organized crime in Chicago was and is directly related to the social organization of society.

Discussion

This paper has presented case studies of organized in three different regions: The Veneto in Northern Italy, the city of Liverpool in England, and Chicago in the United States. While each area contains criminal associations described as organized crime, the groups are decidedly different. Mafias are the major problem in the Veneto, crime firms in Liverpool, and street gangs in Chicago. While there are major differences, there is also some agreement in the way each jurisdiction applies the label organized crime. In Italy criminal groups are not considered mafia groups unless they exercise political influence in their areas of operation. There appear to be no such mafias groups in the U.K. Additionally both the U.K. and the U.S. are reluctant to characterise street gangs as organized crime. In fact, the U.K. is reluctant to call street gangs, gangs at all. While not calling street gangs organized crime may make sense for the U.K., it makes little sense for Chicago because of the corporate nature of many of its gangs.

In the Veneto, the term organized crime is used to describe traditional mafia groups and other criminal associations. These mafia groups such as the 'Ndrangheta and Camorra have extended their operations from their traditional homes in the Italian south and have attempted to establish a presence in the north of Italy. This transplantation has been met with varying degrees of success, largely depending on local political and market conditions. While there are other groups of organized criminals operating in Northern Italy, they are considered more of a street crime problem than organized crime. Their major activities include street prostitution, drug sales, and the hawking of illegal goods. There is also a remarkable absence of street gang activity in the Italian north.

In Liverpool, the term organized crime is used to describe drug traffickers, characterized as crime firms, and street gangs. Unlike the Italian north, Liverpool has a significant street-gang problem despite the reluctance of the police to classify groups of young criminals as gangs. Liverpool's crime firms differ from the Italian mafias because of a lack of political protection. As such, they provide the clearest example of organized crime in our study. Liverpool's reluctance to classify gangs as gangs suggests that they would not classify gangs as organized crime either. There is also a clear distinction between organized crime as the term is used in Italy and in Liverpool. In Italy, organized crime refers to groups other than mafia groups and in particular groups that are not as sophisticated as real mafia groups. On the other hand, the organized crime groups in Liverpool represent organized crime in the truest sense of the word. Liverpool's crime firms are sophisticated, well organized international drug traffickers.

In Chicago the term organized crime is used to describe the Chicago Outfit. The Outfit can be compared to Italy's "mafia" groups in the sense that it enjoyed political protection. This does not mean that there was ever a connection between the Outfit and the Mafia in Sicily, but that the Chicago Outfit was tied to the existing political structure. Chicago also has a major gang problem. These gangs are clearly organized crime, but are not described as such. They are simply called gangs. The crime firms of Liverpool may shed some light on why. The Capone Syndicate, the predecessor to the modern-day Chicago Outfit, was formed by adult criminals for the administration of vice, gambling, and illicit liquor (Landesco 1968). Many were seasoned veterans recruited from the various segments of the criminal community just like the former robbers who began Liverpool's crime firms. Chicago's super gangs, however, all began as neighbourhood play groups that evolved into criminal organizations.

These findings have important implications for organized crime control. Adolescent street gangs in Chicago evolved into serious organized crime threats when they recognized that their control of inner-city neighbourhoods also allowed them to control the drug trade. Will Liverpool experience the same transformation? Will the emerging violent street gangs of Liverpool evolve into corporatized gangs as found in Chicago (Venkatesh 1997)? Will Liverpool's street gangs become street soldiers for Liverpool's crime firms?

This study has shown that definitions of organized crime depend on conditions found in the areas where the groups emerge. Both the Sicilian Mafia and the Chicago Outfit began in the absence of effective state government. Mafias never evolved in the U.K., which unlike Chicago and Italy has had some manner of formal government since 1284. On the other hand, street gangs developed in the U.K. and the U.S., but not in the Veneto. While the region is industrialized today, the Veneto did not experience the urban social disorganization caused by the Industrial Revolution that contributed to gang formation in these other countries.

While these findings are not definitive, they suggest that there are important distinctions between organized criminal groups. They also support Thrasher's 1927 conclusion that no two gangs are alike and that differences in personnel, experience, and tradition combined with the physical and social environment give every gang its own peculiar character.

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