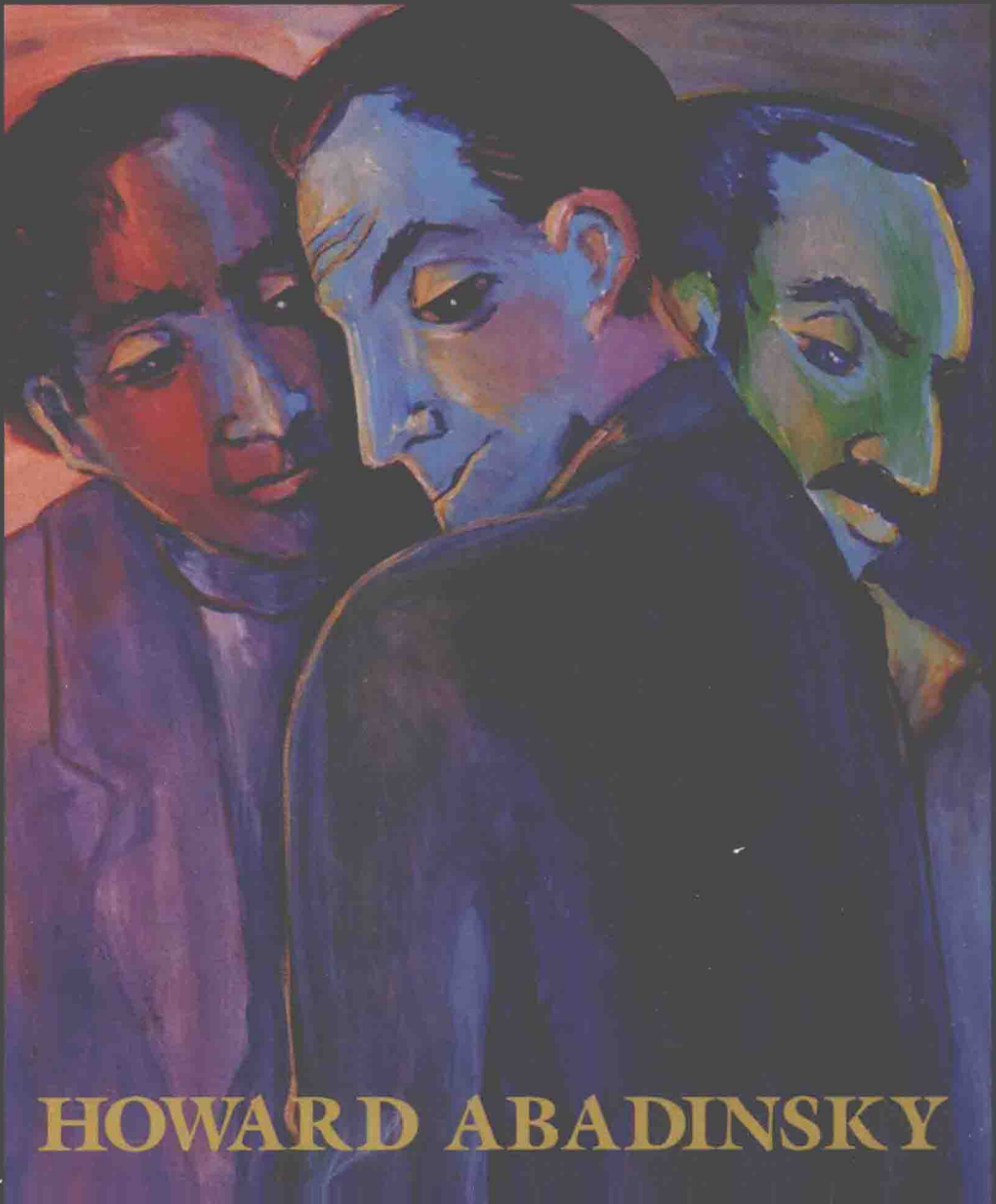


# ORGANIZED CRIME

Fifth Edition



HOWARD ABADINSKY

# **ORGANIZED CRIME**

**FIFTH EDITION**

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**HOWARD ABADINSKY**

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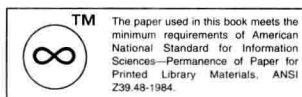
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# **ORGANIZED CRIME**

**Nelson-Hall Series in Law, Crime, and Justice**

Howard Abadinsky, Consulting Editor

*Saint Xavier University, Chicago*

**To Donna, Alisa, and Sandi**

# PREFACE

In 1964, fresh out of college, I was sworn in as a New York State parole officer. Soon afterward, equipped with a badge and a .38, I was assigned to the waterfront section of South Brooklyn known as Redhook. As I struggled to become familiar with the neighborhood, I noticed that my presence on certain streets seemed to generate a great deal of curiosity (I am six feet, one inch tall and in those days weighed an athletic 200 pounds) and, at times, activity—windows opening and closing, people on the streets suddenly melting into doorways or shops. I discussed Redhook with my more experienced colleagues and some of the naivete faded.

Redhook was dominated by a faction of one of New York City's five organized crime "Families." Prior to my arrival, this faction had been involved in a conflict with the rest of the Family, and Redhook had been the scene of a great deal of violence. A tentative truce was in effect when I appeared on the scene. I became familiar with such terms as "wiseguy" and "made guy," *capo* and *consigliere*, and names like "Crazy Joey," "Blast," "the Snake," "Punchy," and "Apples."

After fourteen years as a parole officer and

supervisor, I left New York for Western Carolina University and an academic career. My interest in organized crime continued, and I began to teach a course on the subject. However, a single text, one that was both comprehensive and accurate, was unavailable. Like so many others presenting courses on organized crime, I had students purchase the classics by Francis Ianni (1972), Donald Cressey (1972), Joseph Albini (1971), and Humbert Nelli (1976). Nevertheless, there were still gaps, particularly with respect to emerging organized crime and the statutes and techniques used in organized crime law enforcement.

The first edition of this book (1981) was the result of a need for a basic text that covered all of the important dimensions of organized crime and its control. But organized crime changed; hence a second edition was published in 1985, when I was teaching at Saint Xavier University and becoming familiar with organized crime through contacts developed as a (part-time) Cook County deputy sheriff/inspector.

Ever dynamic, organized crime continued to change, with efforts to combat one aspect of

the phenomenon, traditional organized crime, reaching new levels of prosecutorial success. Public officials and media presentations began to talk of the demise of traditional organized crime, while emerging criminal groups were becoming an even more serious threat.

A third edition of this book was published in 1991, a time when traditional organized crime was being battered by federal law enforcement using the RICO statute. Since that time, the ranks of some organized crime units have been decimated; for all practical purposes a few have ceased to function. According to some observers, the end is in sight—but is it? A number of crime Families have succeeded in recruiting new members and continue to be viable—and dangerous—entities. Meanwhile, emerging groups of criminals have become more sophisticated and more threatening, and additional crime groups have been added to the pantheon we refer to as organized crime. This new edition reflects changes that have occurred and updates information and analyses of orga-

nized crime. For ease of classroom presentation, the curriculum format has been increased from ten to twelve chapters, and several chapters have been reorganized.

I would like to thank the New York Police Department's Organized Crime Investigation Division—Lieutenant John T. O'Brien, Lieutenant Gerard Pope, and Detectives Jerry Rosenberg, John Stebe, and Anthony Farneti; and Robert M. Lombardo, deputy chief, Cook County Sheriff's Police. I would like to thank Nelson-Hall President Steve Ferrara for his continued confidence in the author, and to a most proficient editor Dorothy Anderson.

The author welcomes comments about his work and can be reached at Saint Xavier University, 3700 W. 103rd Street, Chicago IL 60655.

Those interested in joining the International Association for the Study of Organized Crime should contact the University of Illinois—Chicago (OICJ), 1033 West VanBuren, Chicago IL 60607–2919; phone (312) 996–2614.

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## CHAPTER ONE

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# ORGANIZED CRIME: DEFINITION AND STRUCTURE

The walls were clear, there were no systems or dogs. We moved into the compound and checked each window of the house. Only servants were home. I entered from the balcony, (the French doors were open), locked the hall door, and found nothing in the dressing room. I entered the master bedroom and saw this big elegant piece of furniture. . . . I began taking out the velvet cases and placing the jewelry in a pillowcase. I dropped the pillowcase off the balcony to Don, unlocked the hall door after sliding the back of the dresser under the bed. Everything was left real neat and we made our way back to the boat for the return trip to Connecticut with about \$200,000 in jewels. (Abadinsky 1983: 44)

I gave Harry one end of the rope, and I hold the other end. Puggy is kicking and fighting. He is forcing his head down, so we can't get the rope under his throat. Bugsy holds his head up, so we can put the rope under. Then me and Harry exchange the ends, cross them, so we made a knot, a twist. Then we cross them once more. Then we rope around his throat again, to make two loops. Bugsy gets Puggy by the feet and me and Harry get him by the head. We put him down on the floor. He is kicking. Harry starts finishing tying him up. I am turning him like, and Harry gets his feet tied up with the back of his neck. He tied him up like a little ball. His head is pushed down on his chest. His knees are folded against his chest. His hands are in between. The rope is around his neck and under his feet. If he moves the rope will tighten up around his throat more. (Turkus and Feder 1951: 308–309)

**T**wo felony crimes—burglary and murder—but the motives are as different as the perpetrators. In the first example, Pete and Don are professional jewel thieves. Their goal is simple and direct: to secure their victim's jewelry and sell it to a fence. Along with their getaway driver, they were dubbed (by the newspapers) the "Dinner Set Bandits." In the second example, Abraham ("Kid Twist") Reles is describing how he, Harry ("Pittsburgh Phil") Strauss, and Martin ("Bugsy") Goldstein mur-

dered “Puggy,” an ex-fighter and small-time gambler, at the behest of syndicate boss Albert Anastasia. The three were part of a murder unit dubbed “Murder, Inc.” The Dinner Set Bandits ended with the incarceration of their leader, Pete Salerno. The syndicate, organized crime, continues—the death or incarceration of Abe Reles or Albert Anastasia does not end its operations. This is one of the distinguishing characteristics that make organized crime a distinct form of criminality.

The criminality of persons in organized crime differs from that of conventional criminals “because their organization allows them to commit crimes of a different variety [labor racketeering, for example] and on a larger scale [smuggling plane loads of cocaine] than their less organized colleagues” (Moore 1987: 51). In this chapter we will explore the elements that enter into defining organized crime and consider two contrasting organizational models—bureaucratic and patron-client networks—in order to better understand the structure of contemporary organized crime in the United States.

## DEFINING ORGANIZED CRIME

Whether researching or investigating organized crime, one is faced with the problem of defining the phenomenon. Oddly enough, a great many works on organized crime (OC) avoid this problem, as if the obvious need not be defined. The federal Organized Crime Control Act of 1970 (discussed in chapter 11), for example, fails to define organized crime. “The problem in defining organized crime,” states the President’s Commission on Organized Crime (hereafter PCOC), “stems not from the word ‘crime,’ but from the word ‘organized.’ While society generally recognizes and accepts certain behavior and actions as criminal, there is no standard acceptance as to when a criminal group is organized. The fact that organized criminal activity is not necessarily organized crime complicates that definition process” (PCOC 1986a: 25).

The lack of an adequate definition is highlighted by the Task Force on Organized Crime (1976), which noted the inadequacies of state efforts at defining OC. These range from the simple definition of the state of Mississippi—“Two or more persons conspiring together to commit crimes for profit on a continuing basis”—to the more elaborate definition offered by the state of California, which stresses the types of activities that fall under the term *organized crime*:

Organized crime consists of two or more persons who with continuity of purpose, engage in one or more of the following activities: (1) The supplying of illegal goods and services, i.e., vice, loansharking, etc.; (2) Predatory crime, i.e., theft, assault, etc. Several distinct types of criminal activity fall within this definition of organized crime. The types may be grouped into five general categories:

## ORGANIZED CRIME: FBI DEFINITION

Any group having some manner of formalized structure and whose primary objective is to obtain money through illegal activities. Such groups maintain their position through the use of violence or threats of violence, corrupt public officials, graft, or extortions, and generally have a significant impact on the people in their locales or regions of the country.

1. *Racketeering*. Groups of individuals which organize one or more of the following types of criminal activities for their combined profit.
2. *Vice-Operations*. Individuals operating a continuing business of providing illegal goods or services such as narcotics, prostitution, loansharking, and gambling.
3. *Theft/Fence Rings*. Groups of individuals who engage in a particular kind of theft on a continuing basis, such as fraud and bunco schemes, fraudulent documents, burglary, car theft, and truck hijackings, and associated individuals engaged in the business of purchasing stolen merchandise for resale and profit.
4. *Gangs*. Groups of individuals with common interests or backgrounds who band together and collectively engage in unlawful activity to enhance their group identity and influence, such as youth gangs, outlaw motorcycle clubs, and prison gangs.
5. *Terrorists*. Groups of individuals who combine to commit spectacular criminal acts, such as assassination and kidnapping of public figures, to undermine public confidence in established government for political reasons or to avenge some grievance.

Criminologists, too, have their definitions. Donald R. Cressey (1969: 319) is concerned less with criminal activities than with their perpetrators and the relationships among them:

An organized crime is any crime committed by a person occupying, in an established division of labor, a position designed for the commission of crime providing that such division of labor also includes at least one position for a corrupter, one position for a corruptee, and one position for an enforcer.

Michael Maltz (1976) is concerned more with organization than with the actual criminal behavior. He points out a problem of semantics: we call a specific behavior or act organized crime, but when we refer to organized crime in the generic sense, we usually