On the history, theory, and practice of organized crime: The life and work of criminology's revisionist "Godfather," Joseph L. Albini (1930-2013)

Jeffrey Scott McIllwain

Abstract Joseph L. Albini (1930-2013) is a central figure in the historiography and criminology of organized crime and one of the leading revisionists critical of the traditional, centralized paradigm of organized crime rooted in the structural-functional approaches dominating sociology from the 1940s to 1980s. Albini argued that the Mafia was a socially-constructed entity that took on a life above and beyond its actual manifestations, thereby serving a vital role and function in political and social discourse in the United States. Albini used interdisciplinary theoretical perspectives and a mixture of social scientific and historical research methods to analyze data derived from a breadth of documentary sources and underworld and upperworld informants. This allowed Albini to deconstruct the historical and contemporary mythologies about a centralized national Mafia and to develop an alternative framework to evaluate organized crime in its complex and ever-evolving manifestations. Albini also advanced innovative critical criminological approaches that influenced the work of his contemporaries and scholars of later generations. Albini's later work 1) explored the impact of globalization on organized crime including transnational alliances between career criminals, terrorist networks and the security apparatuses of various nation states and 2) developed a conceptual framework, the organized crime matrix, to explain organized crime as a structure of everyday life across time and space.

Keywords Joseph Albini · Organized crime · Criminological theory · Critical criminology · Moral panics · Social construction of crime · Terrorism · Social networks · Mafia · La Cosa Nostra · Donald Cressey · History of crime · Mario Puzo · The Godfather · Italian-American · Ethnic identity · Estes Kefauver · John McClellan

J. S. McIllwain (✉)
San Diego State University, San Diego, CA, USA
e-mail: mcillwain@mail.sdsu.edu

J. S. McIllwain
e-mail: copdoctor@hotmail.com

Introduction

I met Joe Albini at an Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences Meeting in 1995 when I was a young graduate student. Joe introduced himself after I presented my first conference paper, a paper that challenged the historical and criminological assumptions that ethnic Chinese organized crime in the United States was new, emerging, and culturally insular.[1] We started an enjoyable conversation about our research on organized crime, the state of the world, our Southern Italian family lines, and the ups-and-downs of life; a conversation that continued for the next eighteen years and culminated in our co-authored book, *Deconstructing Organized Crime: An Historical and Theoretical Study* (Albini and McIllwain 2012).

Joe made friends in a gentlemanly manner that evoked feelings of a now bygone era where people made eye contact, listened, and did not check their mobile phones every other minute. A couple of years after we met I learned that Joe was a social worker and therapist, and that it was not just his considerable ethnographic skills that reflected his genuine love for meeting and befriending new people and providing an easily captured audience to their personal stories. No wonder, then, that Joe developed a respected career as a researcher who specialized in getting society's outcasts—the mentally ill, prisoners, professional criminals, juvenile delinquents, denizens of the underworld, government agents and bureacrats (both corrupt and honest), and his fellow organized crime scholars—to share their stories with him, stories he coupled with social scientific and historical methods that challenged the way scholars and practitioners view organized crime.

Upbringing, education, and early influences

Joseph Louis Albini was born in 1930 and raised in "America's First Successful Worker-Owned Community," the steel mill and foundry town of Vandergrift, Pennsylvania (Mosher 1995, 2004). He was one of five children born in the United States to Albino and Teresina Napoli Albini, immigrants from San Pietro, Calabria on the southern tip of Italy. Joe's father was a skilled furniture-maker in Italy, but upon arrival to Vandergrift he first worked in a lumberyard then started constructing houses, including the one in which Joe was raised. Joe's mother was raised in an aristocratic environment by her aunt and uncle who worked for a member of the local nobility in Calabria. She ensured Joe adopted her refined manners and social graces, skills that would serve him well in his future professions. He also grew up speaking and reading Italian since it was spoken routinely in the home and community. This language skill would serve Joe well in years to come. Joe took great pride in his Italian-American heritage.

Joe graduated from Pennsylvania State University with a B.A. in sociology in 1954, followed by an M.A. in sociology in 1956 from Louisiana State University specializing in social work. Joe spent his summers as a youth director for Vandergrift's parks and playgrounds, organizing activities for the community's children and gaining a keen interest in neglected children and juvenile delinquents. He then earned his Ph.D. in

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[1] Later published in-part or in-whole in McIllwain (1997, 1998, 1999, 2004a, 2004b). Joe was kind enough to review each of these works before they were published and reflect his influence on me as a scholar.

sociology from Ohio State University in 1963. Joe specialized in the study of juvenile delinquency at Ohio State under the primary tutelage of criminologist Simon Dinitz. Joe's graduate research reflected his strong passion for helping society's most vulnerable, focusing his research on children classified—in the accepted clinical terms of the day–as "disturbed and defective" at the Columbus State School, an institution for mentally ill and disabled youth. Joe evaluated the impact of psychotherapy on the behavior and attitudes of these juveniles and, innovatively, the role of their families in this process for his dissertation (Albini 1963).

Joe dedicated the first decade of his career to the intersection of his scholarly and professional interests in social work, psychology, and sociology. He leveraged his skills and experiences as a social worker, therapist, and hypnotherapist while working as a psychiatric social worker and director of a community-based treatment center from 1960 to 1964. His full-time career as a professor began soonafter at Bowling Green State University in Ohio (1964-1965). He then moved to Wayne State University in Detroit where he spent twenty-six years in their Department of Sociology (1965 to 1991), retiring as a Professor Emeritus. He ended his academic career as a Visiting Professor at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (1992-1998).

Joe spent the first part of his career evaluating community mental health programs, modalities for medical and home care-based treatment of schizophrenics, police domestic violence interventions, and the differentiation in "life-termer" populations in prisons (Albini and Dinitz 1965; Albini et al. 1967; Scarpitti et al. 1965; Dinitz et al. 1965, 1966; Pasamanick et al. 1967; Albini 1968; Unkovic and Albini 1969; Albini 1975a). Joe found resonance in the National Institute of Health funded study of schizophrenia pioneered by Dinitz and the newly appointed Director of Research for the Ohio State Psychiatric Institute, Benjamin Pasamanick. A major innovation for treating mental illness was approved during the 1950s, the prescription of psychotropic drugs. Dinitz recalled just how revolutionary this development was:

> The psychotropic, for the first time in the history of mental illness, offered a possibility of dealing with people in a medical as opposed obviously to a penological or any other kind of way that had been used. No more bloodletting and no more breaking of ankles and all this kind of stuff. And so in a sense it was a revolution. Very few people at the time understood the nature of that revolution…. So the next question was, if it makes that much difference in the hospital, why can't we prevent people from going to the hospital by using these drugs on the outside? (Chafetz 2005, 22).

This new way of thinking fit well within President John F. Kennedy's strongly advocated mental health research and policy initiatives and the National Institute of Health soon provided substantive funding (Shorter 2000). Dinitz and Pasamanick organized a three-year community integration mental health study of a selected group of schizophrenic patients admitted to mental institutions in Ohio. However, two of *Time Magazine's* "100 Best English Novels from 1923 to 2005" (Grossman and Lacayo 2010, 10-16) were proving literary sensations at the time, Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (Kesey 1962) and Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange* (Burgess 1963). Together these novels generated concern about both President Kennedy's reforms and fear

of the possibility of violence by the mentally ill if deinstitutionalized, even though both authors offered a humanistic critique of the subject (Bryfonski 2014).[2] Given this percolating public sentiment and concern about political fallout, Ohio's Mental Health Commissioner soon withdrew his support for the project out of concern for public safety.

Undeterred, a new research partner was secured across the state-line at the Central State Hospital in Louisville, Kentucky. Pasamanick and Dinitz first sent Joe's friend and fellow graduate student Frank Scarpitti to set up the Institute Treatment Center in downtown Louisville that served as the field location for the study. After Scarpitti took a faculty position at Rutgers University, Dinitz asked Joe, who recently completed his Ph.D., to succeed him as the director of the Institute and Joe accepted the position. Joe honed his ethnographic and interview skills during this project and contributed to the publications of its findings. These studies established that "it was safe to keep certain people in the community rather than in the hospital, provided they would take their drugs on schedule" (Chafetz 2007). Dinitz later reported that this project was the most important research of his life given that "it fundamentally improved the lives of countless schizophrenics" (Chafetz 2007).

This entire experience taught Joe that solid research can overturn the conventional wisdom held by an academic discipline, professional practice, and public opinion. He also learned that research did not occur in a political vacuum. This held especially true if it critically addressed a pre-existing constructed fear or cultural norm. Both positive and negative political and professional repercussions were, therefore, to be expected from those committed to the conventional wisdom. He appreciated the fact that "[l]iving this dialectic is what we sign up for as scholars" (McIllwain 2013).

These lessons were formative as Joe's research interests moved to the criminology of organized crime by the end of the 1960s. Nevertheless, he maintained a life-long professional interest in his original areas of scholarly inquiry and professional practice. Indeed, he served as Director of the Clinic for Educational and Therapeutic Hypnosis (1969 to 1971) and Director of the Project for Research in Hypnosis (1984-1991) at Wayne State University, publishing innovative research on the role of hypnosis in sports training and motivation (Albini 1987) while maintaining a private practice in hypnotherapy and hypnotic anesthesiology in Detroit.

The revisionist (1970s to the 1990s)

While Joe and his colleagues were conducting their mental health research during the 1960s, they watched as the Robert F. Kennedy-led U.S. Department of Justice began an aggressive campaign primarilly focussed against Italian-American organized criminals. For example, the Department of Justice indicted nineteen organized criminals in 1960, a number that rose to 687 in 1964 (Clark 1970, 65). Parallelling these efforts, Arkansas Senator John L. McClellan, Chair of the Government Operations Committee and its famed subcommittee, the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, investigated Italian-American "rackets" with news cameras rolling. These hearings served in part

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[2] Interestingly, Kesey used the term "The Combine," a play on the term "The Combination" then commonly used as another term for the Mafia, to define the authorities whom used both coercive and subtle methods, from violence to bribery, to control their mentally ill charges. Years later, Albini observed that many mentally ill patients that he provided care to and interviewed in mental institutions often believed the Mafia/ Combination was out to get them.

to blunt criticism of law enforcement coming from Italian-American civil rights groups. These groups argued that Italian-Americans were being unfairly stereotyped as a distinct societal menace due to the prevalence of a perceived nationwide criminal conspiracy called the Mafia within its community. This perception, civil rights activists argued, reinforced social inequalities (Bernstein 2002, 171-175) while McClellan's investigations made for easy headlines and effective populist alien conspiracy politics and more accepted societal truths. Joe pointed out that the fundamental assumption underlying the politics of this form of American xenophobia is that the "innocent, defenseless American public is the victim of foreign evil-doers who secretly rob it of its moral legitimacy" (Albini 1971, 154). This multigenerational xenophobia fit especially well within the miasma of fear generated by McCarthyism and the Cold War. Salvatore Lupo reinforced Joe's perspective on this political context when he observed, "by offering a demand for these more-or-less illegal goods and services, American society expresses for itself sufficient pathogenic germs to offer a venue for any and all 'immigrant' traditions" (Lupo 2009, 143).

Joe studied under criminologist Walter Reckless at Ohio State and he learned of Reckless' pioneering ethnographic research on organized crime under the tutelage of Robert Park and Ernest Burgess at the University of Chicago during the 1920s (Reckless 1925, 1933, 1969). Joe was also exposed to Reckless' evolving ideas on what would become containment theory and its focus on "push-pull" forces as explanations of deviant behavior. This included "external" pulls such as delinquent acquaintances and "internal" pushes such as rebellion and discontent (Reckless 1961). With this education providing intellectual context, Joe watched and read about the hearings "with equal parts concern and fascination" (McIllwain 2013). At this time, Joe "believed in the existence of the Mafia."

> Why not? After all, the few books I had read on the subject argued definitively that such an organization (called by different names) did exist. A probably even more important factor that stimulated this belief was my Italian background. Mafia was for me, as I am certain it has been for other Italian-Americans, a household term….As many people still do, I had a vague idea of a secret criminal conspiracy consisting of Sicilians who were bound together by secret ceremonies and codes—a society whose most powerful weapon was intimidating and ruthlessly killing anyone who did not do what it demanded (Albini 1981: 125).

Reinforcing this nebulous belief was the number of Italian-American criminals paraded before Senator McClellan's Subcommittee, many of whom "took the Fifth" in order to avoid self-incrimination in their testimony. Evoking the Fifth Amendment when asked about the existence of the Mafia as a nationwide conspiracy reinforced an already widely held assumption that a code of silence, *omerta*, existed within this organization and thereby validated the Subcommittee's and Department of Justice's efforts. Simply exercising a Constitutional right to avoid self-incrimination over alleged criminal activities and associations of any kind did not factor in to the political calculus.

Of particular importance was the plea-bargain arranged testimony of "underworld informant" Joseph Valachi about "our thing," La Cosa Nostra. Despite the hearing testimonies of a host of other underworld denizens and police officials stating they never heard the term "La Cosa Nostra" applied to any crime organization, Senator

McClellan and others would immediately equate "La Cosa Nostra" to "Mafia." Indeed, Valachi never made this connection and explicitly testified under oath that he never used the word Mafia (Albini 1997a, 64).[3] Not that this mattered to Senator McClellan, who dismissed the semantics when he stated, "whether he calls it Cosa Nostra or the Mafia makes no difference" (quoted in Hawkins 1969, 36). Nonetheless, it was spun in such a way as to validate the position of evidence given to the Subcommittee by Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy:

> [A] private government of organized crime, a government with an annual income of billions—run by a commission (which) makes major policy decisions for the organization, settles disputes among the families and allocates territories of criminal operation within the organizations (quoted in Hawkins 1969, 34).

The federal government's "traditional" position on organized crime was consequently taken at face value by a largely unskeptical country yet to experience the assassinations, urban riots, counterculture movement, and Vietnam protests of the 1960s as well as the public trust eroding Watergate scandal and the disclosure of the COINTELPRO and Pentagon Papers during the 1970s. Mainstream criminologists largely accepted and promulgated this uncritical stance as well. One criminological luminary, Donald Cressey, contributed substantially to what became known as either "the governmental, law enforcement, President's Task Force, evolutional centralization, or traditional view" of organized crime (Albini 1997b, 16). Cressey's work was a "significant influence" (Finckenauer 2008, x) on President Lyndon Johnson's Task Force on Organized Crime (Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice 1967). His consultant brief formed the backbone of the Commission's position on organized crime (Cressey 1967). Cressey's follow-up scholarly works, the seminal books *Theft of a Nation* (1969) and *Criminal Organization: Its Elementary Forms* (1972), solidified his positions in academia. James Finckenauer observed in the forward of a reprint of *Theft of a Nation* that Cressey "…set out a view of what organized crime in the United States was like that has influenced law enforcement policies and practices, as well as research and writing on organized crime, for more than 40 years" (Finckenauer 2008, x)

Joe recalled the late-1960s as an "exciting" and "confusing" time when academic interest and research began to focus on organized crime:

> It was an era plagued and yet scintillated by serious methodological problems and questions; it was an era without authorities on the subject; it was a time of fear and apprehension for researchers setting out to investigate a confused and confusing phenomenon—the answer to the description and explanation of the existence of organized crime in America (Albini 1988, 339).

As both an Italian-American and a student of Reckless, as well as having grown up knowing Italian-American numbers runners, gamblers, and loansharks in Pennsylvania,

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[3] As Joe later observed, "we must understand that Valachi was not presented to the American public for his knowledge. He was presented to further solidify in the minds of the American public a mental picture of the ominous, evil, secret society that had taken over America" (Albini 1997a, 65).

Joe was motivated to apply his ethnographic research skills to help clarify the confusion (McIllwain 2013). He was aware of Ned Polsky's (1967) argument that "criminologists during this era believed that it was impossible to conduct field studies in this area of research" (Albini 1988, 339). Yet Joe was undeterred and set out to apply ethnographic research methods pioneered by Reckless and his colleagues at the University of Chicago to the subject, beginning with interviews of members of the President's Task Force on Organized Crime and its lead spokesman, Donald Cressey. Joe shares that he initially agreed with Cressey's "belief in the existence of a secret society called, among other names, 'the Mafia,'" a belief that Albini asserts convinced both of them of "the ominous, terrorizing, and dangerous nature of the area of study we were now investigating." Joe continued, "So convinced was I of his fear and beliefs that I seriously considered terminating my study." Cressey encouraged Joe to continue the work but warned, "above all, 'Be careful'" (Albini 1997, 339-340).

This warning aside, Joe's education and years of social work, therapy, and field research with delinquents, criminals, and the mentally ill instilled in him the confidence that he could, with reasonable precaution, make contacts with underworld and police informants in various parts of the country. He began by evaluating the evidence, exhibits, and testimony provided by local, state, and federal law enforcement as well as alleged and confessed organized criminals to the Kefauver and McClellan committees. What Joe found there in had him perplexed. The data did not square with the conclusions of both committees that a national conspiracy bent on centralized national control of organized crime existed. Joe acknowledged that criminals in different cities had relationships with each other but he found a basic social networking process that "was not limited to the underworld or constrained by a structural-functional construct of centralized, top-down, monopolistic command and control of organized crime on a national level" instead of a national conspiracy (McIllwain 2013). Joe's follow-up interviews with a number of informants on both sides of the law (and some with feet planted in both) further validated this finding.

With the publication of Joe's seminal book *The American Mafia: Genesis of a Legend* (Albini 1971), he became the founding father in the revisionist school of organized crime research. Joe defined, clarified, and evaluated the structure of syndicated crime in the United States and distinguished it from other forms of crime that he identified as political-social organized crime, mercenary crime, and in-group-oriented organized crime (Albini 1971, 35-49). Joe made a simple and valid critique of the traditional, law enforcement narrative of the day reflected in findings advanced in the *Task Force Report on Organized Crime* (1967) and *Theft of a Nation* (1969): That existing contradictions in the literature and previous government hearings and reports did not receive attention and that the history constructed to support this narrative was "false" (Albini 1981, 127). Joe was drawn to the notion that one could not believe a community's legends about itself, be it the underworld or the criminal justice system, and that one should approach the subject of organized crime by understanding the process through which crime is organized in order to understand its role, function, structure, or lack thereof. This explains his scholarly interest in why there was a constant bias in the post-Cressey traditional, law enforcement narrative, "a belief in the unquestionable power of Cosa Nostra families, as though they were the only powerful syndicates operating syndicated crime" in the United States (Albini 1981, 127).

Joe's interdisciplinary research methods were systematic and groundbreaking as applied to the Mafia in the United States. They allowed him to conclude that the narrative of a "unified conception of syndicate crime throughout the country" was not supported by the available data. Instead, he argued, "throughout American history, organized crime has undergone various changes in its structure and function (ethnic and otherwise) and that today, as in the past, variations in this structure and function exist in different parts of the country" (Albini 1981, 127). Joe's approach and findings were shared, built-upon, and validated (in-full or in-part) by an interdisciplinary group of revisionist scholars such as William Chambliss (1971, 1975, 1978), Mark Haller (1971a, 1971b, 1976, 1979), Haller and Alviti (1977), Francis Ianni and Elizabeth Reuss-Ianni (1972), Francis Ianni (1974), Alfred McCoy (1972), Henner Hess (1973), Anton Blok (1974), Dwight Smith, Jr. (1975), Humbert Nelli (1976), Alan Block (1975, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980), and Peter Reuter (1983). These scholars adopted new theoretical and disciplinary approaches, research methodologies, and data sets when analyzing the traditional organized crime paradigm. They collectively advanced the study of organized crime in many new, innovative directions.

Joe did have his critics, though, and some of them were quite severe. For example, Charles Rogovin and Frederick Martens asserted that Albini's pointed criticism of Cressey's work (Albini 1988) in particular ignored "out of ignorance, convenience, or both" contradictory evidence available to Cressey (and the President's Organized Crime Task Force) like the heralded DeCalvacante tapes and subsequently evidenced by other wiretaps and other evidence submitted in government RICO prosecutions during the 1970s and 1980s (Rogovin and Martens 1992). Yet Joe and others (such as those mentioned above) would essentially argue that for every DeCalvacante wiretap (which had contradictory evidence that could support both arguments), there were literally hundreds of examples showing the limits of assumed Mafia power. Furthermore, syndicates of different ethnic and racial compositions engaged in a variety of criminal enterprises throughout U.S. history, reflecting the demographics and opportunities inherent to any specific part of the country at a given time (Albini 1981, 127-128).

In Cressey's defense, he recognized the he "could not at this time present a detailed, accurate typology that incorporates the critical similarities and difference in the many kinds of criminal organizations" (Cressey 1972, 18). Indeed, as argued in his appendix to the *Task Force Report* (Cressey 1967, 33), Cressey clearly states that "…our knowledge of the structure of their confederation remains fragmentary and impressionistic." He then compared the difficulties in understanding "what makes organized crime organized" to trying to determine the structure of Standard Oil through "interviews with gasoline station attendants." Despite this rather substantive research challenge, Cressey still concluded, "in the United States, criminals have managed to organize a nationwide illicit cartel and confederation." The "structure of the cartel and confederation…," he continued, "…today operates the principle illicit businesses in America…" and "…is now striking at the foundations of legitimate business and government as well as came into being in 1931" (Cressey 1969, 35).

The considerable gap between admitted methodological and data limitations and the flawed findings and Mafia narrative they produced was the rub that would generate future criticisms of Cressey's and the Task Force's work. As Gordon Hawkins observed, "sufficient baroque detail is provided [in Cressey's work] to suggest that interviews with gas attendants may not be totally uninformative for those with ears to

hear" (Hawkins 1969, 28). Hawkins and Murray Kempton were two contemporary critics of Cressey's work in particular that influenced Joe while he conducted his research for *The American Mafia* in 1969 and 1970 (McIllwain 2013). Kempton, a columnist who would later win the Pulitzer Prize, wrote a biting, significant critique of *Theft of the Nation* in the highly influential *New York Review of Books* (Kempton 1969, 6-8).[4] Kempton savaged the notion that the then recently released transcripts of the DeCavalcante wiretaps (Federal Bureau of Investigation 1969) used by Cressey for his research for the Task Force and *Theft of a Nation* proved the Mafia hype. There was a "gap," observed Kempton, "between such authority [as Cressey] and the world itself" in the transcripts and this gap served as a "chief source of misinformation." Using a witch analogy Joe would build upon in later work, Kempton held, "One of the few knowledgeable persons I can imagine believing [Cressey] is Sam DeCavalcante himself; the faith of witches and of the hunters of witches survives the failure of witchcraft" (Kempton 1969, 8). Kempton proceeded to systematically juxtapose Cressey's claims against direct quotes from the DeCavalcante transcripts. Such "gaps" are examples of the gaps Joe and other revisionists would identify and fill in the years to come.

Coinciding with the publication of Kempton's critique in the winter of 1969, Hawkins wrote "God and the Mafia" in the influential journal *The Public Interest*. Hawkins provided a substantive assessment of the government's traditional paradigm of organized crime in general, and Cressey's work in particular,. Hawkins argued that belief in the all-powerful Mafia is like belief in the all-powerful God, "…that a large proportion of what has been written seems not to be dealing with an empirical matter at all. It is almost as though what is referred to as organized crime belonged to the realm of metaphysics or theology" (Hawkins 1969, 24). Hawkins quoted Senator Estes Kefauver, Chair of the Senates Crime Commission (the Kefauver Commission) between 1950 and 1951, as an example of this belief:

> A nationwide crime syndicate does exist in the United States of America, despite the protestations of a strangely assorted company of criminals, self-serving politicians, plain blind fools, and others who may be honestly misguided, that there is no such combine….The national crime syndicate as it exists today is an elusive and furtive but nonetheless tangible thing. Its organization and machinations are not always easy to pinpoint…. However, by patient digging and by putting together little pieces of a huge and widely scattered puzzle, the picture emerges….Behind the local mobs which make up the national crime syndicate is a shadowy, international criminal organization known as the Mafia, so fantastic that most Americans find it hard to believe it really exists (Kefauver 1951).

Hawkins expressed surprise about this conclusion. "Now, apart from the bizarre nature of its content," he observed, "one on the most remarkable facts about this quite categorical statement…is that the evidence necessary to substantiate it is never produced" (Hawkins 1969, 25). Others buttressed his observation. First Hawkins quoted sociologist Daniel Bell commenting on Senator Kefauver's hearings, hearings that

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[4] Indeed Kempton's review was selected for Oxford University Press' respected *The Oxford Reader: Varieties of Contemporary Discourse* (Kermode 1971) eighteen months later.

provided a foundation for future government investigations and reports as well as Cressey's research:

> Unfortunately for a good story—and the existence of the Mafia would be a whale of a story—neither the Senate Crime Committee in his testimony, nor Kefauver in his book, presented any real evidence that the Mafia exists as a functioning organization. One finds public officials asserting before the Kefauver their *belief* in the Mafia; the Narcotics Bureau *thinks* that a world-wide dope ring allegedly run by Luciano is part of the Mafia: but the only other "evidence" presented—aside from the incredulous responses both of Senators Kefauver and Rudolph Halley when nearly all the Italian gangsters asserted that they didn't know about the Mafia—is that certain crimes bear "the earmarks of the Mafia" (Bell 1960).

Hawkins then cited the bestselling *Murder Inc.* by King's County (Brooklyn) Assistant District Attorney Burton Turkus and journalist Sid Feder:

> If one such unit had all crime in this country under its power is it not reasonable to assume that somewhere along the line, some law agency—federal, state, county or municipal—would have tripped it up long before this? No single man or group ever was so clever, so completely genius, as to foil all of them forever. (Turkus and Feder 1951).

Hawkins recognized that "there is a considerable folklore relating to organized crime" and that "much of the literature on the subject consists of myths and folktales" (Hawkins 1969, 30). He then set the table nicely for Joe and other revisionists by stating that "the significance of this development has nowhere been fully analyzed but in the light of the functionalist interpretations of myth made by anthropologists; it would be unwise to dismiss it as of little account" (Hawkins 1969, 31). It seemed to Hawkins (Hawkins 1969, 51) that the idea that "one vast criminal monopoly has developed with the profits pouring into the 'the treasury of the Cosa Nostra'" is "extraordinarily fanciful." However, he recognized that "it is true that we do not have the data that would enable us to reject it." And this is where Hawkins and the *Task Force Report* find common ground, for the latter recommended that the relevant disciplines such as economics, political science, sociology and operations research should study organized crime intensively. Hawkins added an optimistic caveat, that these disciplines would do so "…preferably without too many preconceptions." The coming generation of revisionists, with Joe leading the vanguard, rewarded Hawkins' optimism. Their collective revisionist work then served as the foundation for a new generation of organized crime scholars from a number of disciplines to research the diversity and complexity of organized crime in the United States and around the world in the decades to come.

The critical criminologist

No matter which side of the traditional vs. revisionist paradigm debate one embraces, one can recognize that Joe symbolized a tectonic shift in the study of organized crime. *The American Mafia* and Joe's subsequent research built on the work of traditional paradigm

critics like Hawkins, Kempton and Bell by generating interdisciplinary critical criminological approaches and demonstrating their utility in organized rime research. These approaches occurred in the context of the larger criminological discussions of the day that focused on the labeling perspective, social constructionism, conflict theory, and radical critiques of criminology reflective of broader currents in New Left scholarship emerging from the cultural, social, and political turmoil of the 1960s (Michalowski 1981, 44).

Although academic criminology was undergoing an onslaught of critical analyses in the 1970s and 1980s [shaped by Ian Taylor, Paul Walton and Jock Young's groundbreaking radical Marxist-inspired *New Criminology* (1973) and *Critical Criminology* (1975)], Joe's research was a politically tough position to advance among mainstream criminologists, government officials, and the mass media. Contextually, President Richard Nixon won a landslide election in 1972 that built on his successful "law and order" platform of 1968 that was premised on countering the due process revolution of Earl Warren's Supreme Court and perceived Great Society failures (McMahon 2011; Perlstein 2008). Perhaps more importantly, powerful popular culture and media narratives consistently crafted a "gangster image" (Ruth 1996) and a "Mafia Mystique" (Smith 1975) that was Italian-American in origin, clandestinely conspiratorial, and nationally centralized in practice (De Stefano 2006).

Mario Puzo's *The Godfather: A Novel* (Puzo 1969) and the two commercially successful and critically acclaimed films it spawned, *The Godfather* and *The Godfather Part II*, proved driving and defining forces here. Scholars like Joe who criticized this traditional narrative in whole or in part understandably met with criticism and resistance from many quarters inside and outside of academia. This was especially true from a public that came to "view [Puzo's] book as fact" due to its similarities to the findings of Senator McClellan's Subcommittee hearings and the *Task Force Report* and Cressey's scholarly validation in *Theft of a Nation*. This was despite the fact that Puzo "never implied that it was based on a personal knowledge of syndicate-criminal behavior or syndicate structure" and "he made it clear that he never talked to a gangster in his life" (Albini 1981, 130; Puzo 1973, 35).

Nevertheless, Puzo's gift for literary prose "brought the characters to life so well that people came to view his book as fact" (Albini 1981, 130). This included a very upset Frank Sinatra who resented the similarities between himself and the fictional Don Corleone-indebted singer Johnny Fontaine.[5] This widely publicized incident involving Puzo and Sinatra and its popular culture fallout reinforced the "truth" behind the fiction.[6] "People could now see how members of the Mafia acted, dressed, ate, joked around, killed, and even made love," wrote Joe. "The secret society was now exposed, and people lined up for hours at theater box offices to get a glimpse of what life was like in the Mafia….[I]ndeed they were thrilled" (Albini 1981, 130-131).

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[5] Puzo humorously recalled, "The worst thing [Sinatra] called me was a pimp….I do remember him saying that if it wasn't [for the fact] that I was so much older than he, he would beat the hell out of me. I was a kid when he was singing at the Paramount, but OK, he looked 20 years younger. What hurt was that here he was, a northern Italian, threatening me, a southern Italian, with physical violence. This was roughly equivalent to Einstein pulling a knife on Al Capone. It just wasn't done. Northern Italians never mess with Southern Italians except to get them put in jail or deported to some desert island" (Puzo 1972, 27).

[6] A comedic example of this popular culture fallout was represented on Johnny Carson's *Tonight Show* on NBC on November 12, 1976 when insult-comedian Don Rickles interrupted Frank Sinatra's interview with Carson and pretended to bring important news about Sinatra's alleged Mafia connections on the East Coast (Carson 1976).

The "Mafia Mystique" now had a visual portrayal on the movie screen of its stereotypes and an incestuous cycle began to develop where the lines between art and real life dissolved (Albini and McIllwain 2012, 66). Journalists cited the government reports and the government reports cited journalists. Film influenced and was influenced by both journalism and government. "Made men" and their wives wrote "tell-all," "true crime" books allegedly risking life and limb to violate *omerta* while cashing in on the public fascination with all things Mafia. Scholars based their studies on such sources and subsequent government and media reports relied on these scholars for guidance and catchy quotes. Most importantly, as Diego Gambetta found, these "fictional portrayals feed back on the practices of criminals themselves" to the point that "art imitates low life imitating art" (Gambetta 2009, 251-273).

In an analysis of this literature, Mieczkowski and Albini (1987) found that because the government, media, and scholars used each other's incomplete or selective data and their conclusions as sources, they were destined to reinforce the same narrative, an incestuous belief in the existence of a monopolistic national criminal organization. Mieczkowski and Albini emphasized the fact that critical social scientists were helpless in their attempts to alter this belief. Mainstream criminology actively or passively accepted Cressey-inspired support for this interpretation and although there was a growing literature that contradicted the substance of both Cressey's and governmental model, few criminologists noted or challenged these contradictions. As Galliher and Cain (1974) found in their study of criminology textbooks written during this era, the citations in the textbooks widely used at the time only offered documentation that supported a belief in the Mafia. So it comes as no surprise, then, that a new generation of scholars began to notice this and asked critical questions of the dominant traditional paradigm, even if their efforts continued to have an uphill climb in general criminology textbooks twenty years later (Woodiwiss 2004, 230-240).

Joe provided an example of the professional and public blowback some of these scholars experienced in an essay written as part of a *feschrift* to his mentor, Simon Dinitz (Barak-Glantz and Huff 1981). In one of the first televised interviews Joe gave after the publication of *The American Mafia*, he was asked, "'Is it true the Mafia paid you to write this book?'" (Albini 1981, 126). Joe said his first response was laughter, thinking the question was asked in jest. But Joe quickly realized the interviewer's sincerity because the man was so under the spell of Mafia conspiracy theory that he honestly believed that anybody who questioned its existence was certainly an accomplice to its conspiracies. Joe also observed that he, as an Italian-American messenger, may have influenced the interviewer's calculus. "The fact my name ended in an 'i' apparently lent credence to his belief," Joe opined years later (McIllwain 2013).

Not that his Italian roots saved Joe from criticism from fellow Italian-Americans. One such critic approached Joe at a book signing in Detroit and asked him why he refused to say there was a Mafia. "Look, it's the only thing we've got," the man argued. "If these cake-eaters respect us at all, it's because they know we can dump them in the river. Take away that and the Italians will really eat dirt" (Albini 1981, 131). Joe wryly observed that he was in good company when it came to receiving conspiracy-based criticism for researching and writing about the Mafia; "Puzo, himself, has been accused both of being paid off by the Mafia and being a member" (Albini 1981, 130; Puzo 1973, 36).

Frank Scarpitti placed these reactions to Joe's work into their contemporary context. Being the first out of the gate to question the absolute dominance of the traditional

paradigm of organized crime, "there was a feeling among mainstream academics that Joe was trying to excuse Italian-American organized crime." Such criticisms, and the ferocity with which they were sometimes delivered, recalled Scarpitti, led Joe to search for deeper meaning about the process since he believed that it reflected a broader trend in society that was much bigger than criminology's attempts to understand it. In Scarpitti's words, "Joe looked at things in a fundamentally different way before it became fashionable to do so" (McIllwain 2014b)

First Joe recognized that the idea of an all-powerful Mafia, by serving as a socially and politically accepted construct for organized criminal activity, prevented scrutiny of the systemic nature of syndicated crime rooted as it was in the inherent contradictions within both the political economy and diverse social values stemming from immigration, secularization, industrialization, and urbanization in the United States. Indeed, Joe noted a "gross inherent hypocrisy" in that the American public overwhelmingly approved law and order politics and policies but continued to patronize illicit services and purchase illegal goods in seemingly ever-increasing amounts (Albini 1981, 129). "Basically, then," he concluded, "a belief in Mafia and Cosa Nostra has helped the American public, the government, and other segments of American society to fool themselves in a process of circular reasoning, which allows each to believe that they are innocent bystanders or victims of the corrupting influence of syndicate criminals rather than participants in the very system they profess to fear" (Albini 1981, 129-130). Joe and his former doctoral student, Tom Mieczkowski, assessed this phenomenon as manifested in the scholarly literature and larger society and recognized the difficulty social scientists would have in ever changing this conception (Mieczkowski and Albini 1988).

Second, Joe asked, why was the concept of "Mafia" taking a life of its own that evoked responses reminiscent of those received by critics of well-entrenched belief systems such as religion and politics? Asking such a deep question reflected Joe's social worker and therapist background; he was drawn to the silent tides shaping our suppositions about the world around us and our perceived place in it. It is no wonder then that his new methodological and disciplinary approaches and his big-picture questions proved controversial to some of his peers. Like Hawkins before him (1969), Joe looked for deeper meaning in this discourse and published articles addressing this belief system in the context of comparative historical, cultural, and rhetorical examples. Without using the exact words "moral panic," Joe identified and addressed what was clearly the same process in the amplification of fears about the Mafia that engulfed American society in the post-World War II, post-Joseph McCarthy U.S. (De Steffano 2006). Writing in late 1969, Kempton went one-step further, finding Dr. Cressey's errors in *Theft of a Nation* "…are those of a patriot; to him, the Mafia is foreign and legitimate business is native. His work falls quite naturally into the spirit of Cold War studies" (Kempton 1969, 7).

Importantly, Joe's work mirrored the concept of "moral panic" as applied to criminological research and criminal justice practice simultaneously being pioneered by fellow ethnographer Jock Young in his research into drug use and policing in the late-1960s (Young 1971a, b) and further developed by Stanley Cohen in his highly influential work *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (Cohen 1973). Indeed, Cohen's "transactional approach which stressed that deviance was not a property of acts or persons but a label constructed in the course of interaction" (Critcher 2006, 25)–which was itself drawn from the ethnographic work on deviance as a product of the work of "moral entrepreneurs" in

Howard Becker's *Outsiders* (1963) and Kai Erikson's *Wayward Puritans* (1963)–is clearly reflected in Joe's critiques of the term Mafia and the traditional paradigm.

Like Cohen, Becker, and Erikson, Joe emphasized the key role of the media in constructing moral panics. However he went further with regard to the Mafia moral panic by illustrating deliberate political manipulation in this process, manipulation linked directly to what historian Richard Hofstadter identified as the "conspiratorial fantasy" indicative of the "paranoid style in American politics" (Hofstadter 1964). Joe, drawing from his background and experience as a therapist and social worker, emphasized an interdisciplinary social-psychological approach instead of the critiques of capitalism that some of his contemporaries advanced.[7] Joe emphasized these social-psychological factors more directly in his work in the immediate years following the release of *The American Mafia*. For example, in an article provocatively entitled "Witches, Mafia, Mental Illness and Social Reality: A Study in the Power of Mythical Belief" (Albini 1978), Joe expanded upon ideas originating in Hawkins' and Kempton's previously mentioned critique of the traditional paradigm; specifically Hawkins' (1969) comparison of beliefs about the Mafia to beliefs in God and angels and Kempton's comparison of them to beliefs in witches and witchcraft (Kempton 1969, 6).

Joe sought to analyze the Mafia as a belief system by "examining the conditions for the existence of this belief" in this next phase of his work. He hypothesized "that Mafia has the characteristic of a belief (as a social process) and not the characteristics of a scientifically researched and therefore pragmatic finding. In other words, we are dealing here with a dimension of belief rather than scientific truth." (Albini 1978, 285). He observed,

> On a societal level "…there is a tendency (for people) to dispense with systematic understanding and get on with the descriptions, stories, and personal judgments." Thus the public has welcomed eagerly novels such as *The Godfather* and supposed factual accounts of life within the Mafia such as *The Valachi Papers* and has tended to reject those serious scholarly works which argue to the contrary. (Albini 1978, 286).

With public, government, and academic attention so focused on Italian-American organized criminals, Joe argued, "something happened to how America began to view the origins of syndicated crime; syndicated criminals now became known by a new name—Mafiosi." But this focus was happening in a relative vacuum where contradictory data was often either ignored, compromised, or never collected in the first place. Realizing this, Joe asked and answered a reasonable question:

> Yet when examined scientifically, are these Italian syndicate participants found to be different? The answer is no. They used violence; so had the non-Italian participants; they used political pay-offs; so had the non-Italian participants; they made vast sums of money; so had all the others. What was different? They were described with the nebulous term Mafia (Albini 1978, 288).

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[7] Albini's social-psychological approach reflected of a larger distinction between American and British scholars studying moral panics at the time (Thompson 1998). Indeed, even Becker and Erikson's analysis was not leveled at capitalist society as a system of production, so much as the power of control agents, professions and interest groups.

Joe then addressed the symbolic and actualized power of the term Mafia and wrestled with the simplicity of the belief and its wide appeal. His conclusion reflected larger, nascent currents in critical criminology when he concluded,

> Rather than having to accept the fact that syndicates in the U.S. have been operated by people from all types of ethnic and racial backgrounds, that syndicates exist because the American public has and continues to demand illicit goods, and that syndicates openly operate only because they receive protection from American police and public officials, belief in Mafia allows the American public to cast its attention away from such harsh realities and place the blame on this mysterious group called Mafiosi….Put another way, the public needs a scapegoat; if one is not found, one will be invented. (Albini 1978, 292)

This occurred despite the fact high-profile, nationally covered examples of non-Italian organized crime in cases such as Clifford Clifton's high-profile and violently-backlashed reform crusade against non-Italian organized crime and political and police corruption in Los Angeles in the years before World War II (Buntin 2009) and a similar reform movement against the systemically-entrenched, non-Italian organized crime and corruption based in post-war Phenix City, Alabama. It was so pervasive and harmful in the latter that Alabama's Governor deployed the National Guard to implement regional martial law to root out the crime and corruption after the 1954 assassination of reform State Attorney General-elect Albert Patterson by the targeted organized criminals and their upperworld partners and protectors (Barnes 1999).

These critical criminological currents are also manifested in Joe's pioneering research on comparative organized crime studies. Soon after *The American Mafia* was published, Joe was invited to Scotland where he was a Visiting Senior Researcher in Criminology at the University of Glasgow from 1972 to 1973. During this time he gave a number of guest lectures in Britain where he said he was "influenced heavily by the work of British criminologists" (McIllwain 2013).

For example, building on the work of John Mack (1973), Joe examined the problems of definition as applied to his own use of the term "syndicated crime." He tested it against data he collected through ethnographic research with informants in the underworld in England and Scotland. Joe concluded that structural economic, social, and political conditions were behind the substantial differences between the organization of crime in the U.S. on the one hand and England and Scotland on the other. Specifically, he noted,

1) The practice of making legally available most goods and services desired by the public. Here we refer to such services as gambling and the availability of narcotic drugs through medical agencies.
2) The practice of passing legislation which is almost impossible to enforce.
3) The structure of the Court system whose personnel are selected and promoted on civil service criteria as compared to the system of electing judges, district attorneys and a variety of other functionaries of the judicial system in America (Albini 1975b, 300).

Consequently, Joe recognized the relativity of any definition of organized crime in its particular social, political, economic, and cultural contexts. However, he observed, "this

does not mean that its structure cannot emerge in other countries. To reinforce this point let me end with a hypothetical question: 'What would happen in Scotland if tomorrow a law were passed making the sale of alcoholic beverages illegal?' (Albini 1975b, 305).

The lessons Joe learned from this period of research would germinate for some time and would be expanded upon in his later work (Albini and McIllwain 2012). As interdisciplinary scholarship on organized crime advanced, Joe realized that "a focus on organizational structure was not what was at issue when researching organized crime." Such a focus "inherently kept scholarship in the confines of the structural-functionalist perspective that was so dominant in sociology for so long" (McIllwain 2013). Joe argued it was the organization of the crime, "the Mafia as Method," where research should focus. Structure, in all of its forms, would become evident by identifying and following the entire networks as they organized crimes. Joe also recognized that one must also avoid, to use Jay Albanese's (Albanese 1996, 145) words, falling into an "ethnicity trap"[8] and limiting one's analysis to a pre-determined and, sometimes, politically-targeted or expedient group (McIllwain 2013).

The Cassandra (1990s to 2000)

The end of the Cold War generated a fundamental shift in the emphasis of organized crime scholarship that reflected the broader effort of liberal democracies to identify and counter the "Evil Empire" that was "new, emerging, or non-traditional organized crime, which is another way of saying organized crime of non-Italian and non-Jewish descent," with the Mafia/La Cosa Nostra serving as "the standard by which all else is measured" (McIllwain 2004b, 1). Joe possessed a contrarian take that avoided the adoption of the traditional, centralized paradigm of organized in the U.S. to transnational organized crime ingrained in some of the works of the 1990s (i.e., Sterling 1990, 1994; Freemantle 1996; Robinson 2000). Joe viewed the collapse of the Soviet Union in particular as a fascinating opportunity for organized crime researchers in that its former republics served "as a living laboratory for helping identify the multiple types of factors and social conditions that serve to produce organized crime in various settings and at various times in history" (Albini and McIllwain 2012, 120).

It was during this time that Joe retired as an Emeritus Professor from Wayne State. He moved to Nevada in 1991 and accepted part-time work as a Visiting Professor at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He began ethnographic research on the unregulated vice industries of Las Vegas, a small portion of which was published in *Deconstructing Organized Crime* (Albini and McIllwain 2012: 128-147). He also began work as a consultant on organized crime, corruption, and criminal justice reform initiatives in Russia. He traveled there frequently and, aided by Russian and American academics and criminal justice professionals, engaged in the ethnographic research he used in his previous work in the United States and Britain. A number of publications resulted in which Joe and his collaborators discussed the challenges and opportunities confronting the former Soviet republics in a post-Cold War world (Albini et al. 2000; Anderson and Albini 1999; Albini and McIllwain 2012, 120-128; Albini and Rogers 1998; Albini et al. 1999a, 1999b, 2000, 1995; Anderson and Albini 1998; Shabalin et al. 1995a, b).

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[8] An ethnicity trap is "when organized crime is defined in terms of the nature of the groups that engage in it, rather than the nature of the organized crime activity itself, and how and why various groups specialize—or fail to specialize in certain activities" (Albanese 1996, 145).

Joe's research and consultant work on Russian organized crime encouraged his interest in the influence of post-Cold War globalization on transnational networks of organized criminals. As the 1990s came to a close, he focused on the relationship of organized criminals with state and non-state actors engaged in cybercrime (Albini 2001), terrorism and support of terrorism (Albini 2001; Albini et al. 1999b), and the proliferation of nuclear weapons and nuclear weapons-related technology (Albini et al. 1999b, 2000). Joe repeatedly emphasized the need for criminal justice and other government organizations to pursue structural "root-cause" remedies to prevent or mitigate the harms that could come from such alliances. Drawing lessons from his research on organized crime, he argued that emphasizing criminal justice and military responses to terrorism to the exclusion or minimization of other approaches missed the key point that terrorist networks were adapting to government counterterrorism efforts faster and more efficiently than governments realized:

> Those who believe in the use of the past and current methods of dealing with terror are obviously not aware that these methods simply will no longer work; in fact, if anything, the use of these tactics may wreak further havoc as their attempted use will simply convince the modern terrorist that the governments that are willing to use such tactics are totally backward or insensitive to the nature and reality of the modern terrorist threat and may, out of anger and frustration toward such naiveté, see no alternative other than using the modern tactics that they can and will employ (Albini 2001, 266).

Joe observed, "the nature of terrorism has changed dramatically in the past decade" and that this change occurred so rapidly "that the mind-set of both those academics who study terrorism and those governmental officials and agents who must deal with its realities on a daily basis have not yet, it seems, fully been able to adapt to the challenges that these changes have perpetuated" (Albini 2001, 255). In particular, he noted, "organized criminals and terrorists have joined forces. Together, they now have amassed skilled personnel and have acquired the new technologies. It is a new form of warfare that they are now employing" (Albini 2001, 278-279). After providing a number of contemporary and historical case studies to build his case, Joe concluded, "If the world governments have any hope of winning this new war they had better recognize that the rules have changed and seek new approaches toward winning the battle" (Albini 2001, 279).

Joe wrote those prescient words in early 2001, a few months before the pivotal events of September 11, 2001. Joe was researching what would be his last book as the al-Qaeda-hijacked planes crashed into the World Trade Center, The Pentagon, and a field in rural Shanksville, Pennsylvania. His health was declining and he approached me to collaborate with him on researching and writing the manuscript. I accepted his offer and over the next few years we worked together to summarize his research findings and the lessons he had learned over his approximately four decades of scholarship.

It seemed to us that the public was at a general loss to understand the real and valid essence of organized crime, especially as it relates to a decentralized and globalized post–9/11 world. Globalized media was funneling a steady content of Hollywood gangster myths and sensational journalism that fed a seemingly unquenchable global appetite for all things Mafia and organized crime. The traditional American Mafia

construct had a pervasive "global reach" (Woodiwiss 2003) seemingly as pervasive as McDonalds and Starbucks. The public kept hearing of the Mafia but increasingly of an "emerging," "non-traditional" variety with Chinese, Russian, Black, and Mexican as ethnic modifiers in the popular vernacular (McIllwain 2004b, 5-9; 183-187). Of course this made as much semantic sense as saying Russian yakuza, Chinese vory, and Mexican triads, each with their distinctly unrelated cultural and linguistic contexts. Still, there is no doubt that the post-9/11 world clearly demonstrated the global diversity of organized crime. Yet research and policy challenges could not be explained by simply evolving the traditional paradigm or transferring the mythological Mafia constructs of the past because doing so would strip them from the unique historical processes that created and shaped them.

Organized crime, like politics, is inherently local. However, open borders, free trade, and hyper-globalization encouraged local criminal networks to proliferate globally and create and expand opportunities for criminal enterprise unparalleled in scope and scale in human history. These constantly evolving and adapting decentralized networks formed alliances and business partnerships and menaced legal, political, and economic institutions while undermining stability in many parts of the world. Organized crime was increasingly linked to international financial scandals, resource theft, environmental degradation, terrorism and other forms of armed conflict and human rights abuses, directly and indirectly affecting the security and welfare of millions around the globe. It was a confusing time as old paradigms were dusted off to assess these new realities (Woodiwiss 2001, 2003).

Our first objective in *Deconstructing Organized Crime*, then, was to fill the void in this current state of confusion by determining how the confusion came about in the first place. Building on the work of fellow scholars, we provided an account of what the Mafia really consisted of and an assessment of how it originated, where the term itself came from, and how it took on a life above and beyond its actual manifestations and served an important role and function in political and social discourse in the United States. Building on the work of Joe and other scholars, we then addressed theories and paradigms used to analyze organized crime. This allowed us to develop a literature-based definition of organized crime that we believe synthesizes the findings of many of our scholarly peers. We developed the definition in the hope that "it can help bring together in one definition all those elements that make organized crime the complex yet fascinating phenomenon that it is." We defined organized crime as:

> A form of criminal activity occurring within a social system composed of a centralized or decentralized social network (or networks) of at least three actors engaged in an ongoing criminal enterprise in which the size, scope, leadership and structure of the network is generated by the ultimate goal of the enterprise itself (i.e., how the crime is organized). This goal takes advantage of opportunities generated by laws, regulations, and social customs and mores and can be pursued for financial profit and/or the attainment of some form of power to effect social change and/or social mobility via the leveraging and brokering of the network's social, political and economic capital. Members of the network can be from the underworld or upperworld. In some forms, force and/or fraud are used to exploit and/or extort victims, while in others illicit goods and services are provided by members of the network to customers in a marketplace where such activity is

often permitted through the establishment of practices which foster the compliance and/or acquiescence of corrupt public and private sector officials who receive remuneration in the form of political favors or in the form of direct or indirect payoffs (Albini and McIllwain 2012, 81-82).

Neither Joe nor I believed for a moment that this definition would be a definitive one. However, as Joe mischievously commented to me as we were reviewing it together for the last time, "at the least this definition should give our colleagues something to discuss after I am gone" (McIllwain 2013).

Deconstructing Organized Crime then presents case studies built around subjects of our ethnographic and historical research. We analyzed specific case studies of criminal enterprises like gambling and loansharking in the United States and human trafficking, illicit hazardous waste disposal, art and antiquities theft, and illicit drug trafficking on the global level. We also provide case studies of how organized crime evolved in the context of specific geographic and cultural space, focusing on two places close to Joe's heart, the former Soviet Union and Las Vegas. A final emphasis of the book is directed towards the topic of globalization and its effect on contemporary organized crime. We offer an explanation of the relationship between globalization and transnational organized crime and how this affected the evolution of contemporary organized crime networks. The book also analyzes the intersection of terrorist, warfighting, and organized crime networks in conflict zones around the world.

In what would be amongst his last words on the subject, Joe wrote, "ultimately, the study of organized crime is really the study of human behavior in context of the structures, roles and functions of the institutions that compose society." He continued,

> Perhaps when we understand these subjects more completely, and such understanding is followed by an absolute, united and determined desire on the part of all citizens and governments toward eliminating the factors that breed it and make it more harmful, then we can create a successful strategy to end its existence forever. But given nation-states cannot agree on issues like monetary, trade, and defense policies, or even where to host the next Olympics, we are naturally pessimistic. However, our view of the pain and suffering that organized crime in its various forms has caused and continues to cause the people of the world urges us to strive ever forward in mitigating the harms organized crime creates (Albini and McIllwain 2012, 188).

Ratting out "The Boss"

As evidenced by his career as a social worker, therapist, and scholar, Joe was a compassionate man who genuinely wanted to ease the suffering of the powerless and afflicted. Some agreed with and built on his scholarly efforts dedicated to organized crime while others criticized them as they believed in other approaches to mitigate organized crime's harms. Yet it is clear that Joe had a genuine passion for the subject and that he made it a cornerstone of his life work to identify and dispel the illusions that he believed intentionally or unintentionally exacerbated the harms caused by organized criminals. In our words,

Whether or not these illusions existed in the form of the mythologies created…or whether or not they were based upon a desperate need on the part of the public to deny personal or societal responsibility and culpability…, the fact remains that people seek to look beyond their own communities and their own borders to find those which they believe have brought organized crime to their communities and countries. Yet history is too powerful a witness to allow [these beliefs] to stand unchallenged (Albini and McIllwain 2012, 189).

Joe's collective work illustrates that organized crime is not a virus in human history captive to politically expedient social constructs. It is bigger than that. Murray Kempton agreed, pointing us to fellow Pulitzer Prize winner and lauded *Brooklyn Eagle* crime reporter Ed Reid who, "after more than twenty years of turning over and over the pages of the Mafia myth, begins to wonder whether these studies may not represent a lifetime of missing the point" (Kempton 1969, 8):

Are the men of the Mafia in the thumbscrews of a power that overwhelms them…. Who are the suckers? The suckers themselves or the men born to bleed the suckers white? Perhaps the answer lies in a simple concept: the mob boys have reduced their lives to such common concepts of eating and drinking and sleeping that they go on each day, doing the accepted job, but really serving as slave to bigger people about whom they know nothing, like so many ears of corn in a willing windrow ready to be chopped down at the first sign of insurrection or ripeness.

Who really bosses the crime syndicate? (Reid 1969, emphasis added)

Given "there is seemingly nowhere on Earth where organized crime does not exist in some form," Joe and I recognized there was a problem answering Reid's question in the traditional manner. In other words, establishing one person, one group, or one organization as an underworld Leviathan would be a fruitless endeavor. We argue, instead, that identifying individual social systems of organized crime and understanding their local, regional, national, and global interconnectivity via social networking processes, as well as assessing the impact of this interconnectivity on the actors and actions within these systems, are firm starting points. Assessing the human dynamics inherent to the social worlds of actors within those systems as they continuously jockey to gain, protect, and expand their power is another. Still, a broader conceptual framework was needed. We came to "the inescapable conclusion that the criminal groups involved in this activity have in many cases formed vast, complex and intricate types of linkages with one another" (Albini and McIllwain 2012, 179). We call this concept the organized crime matrix and we found it is this matrix that "really bosses the crime syndicate."

Joe and I explain organized crime as a matrix guided by the elements found in organized crime as a method rather than as an organization in *Deconstructing Organized Crime* (Albini and McIllwain 2012, 179-180). As such, the organized crime matrix constitutes the interlocking of networks and relationships that involve a vast number of individuals, groups, and institutions from around the world who weave in-and-out of criminal ventures as they also weave in-and-out of assorted networks themselves,

whether these networks are institutionalized or informal or in the underworld, upperworld, or both. As a result, any structure assessed, defined, or charted by the media, government, or scholars is inherently transitioning as internal pushes and external pulls are constantly re-shaping and re-constituting it. Although a formal hierarchy is a mode of structuring for some networks and "bosses" may emerge in specific time and places, it appears that the evolution of transnational criminality recognizes that the survival of the fittest in the evolutionary processes of power from the local to global levels is most evident among those networks which are structured in a decentralized manner which allows both the network and its members to quickly adjust to the opportunities, risks, and the rapid social changes which globalization produces.[9]

As borders continue to erode and provide a serious challenge to the traditional conception of territorial sovereignty, new values and laws mingle with the old and technology changes daily, giving both criminals and law enforcement agencies new tools to expand communication, logistics, and operating procedures.[10] In other words, organized crime is about the process, not the structure; it is about organizing crime as a verb, not organized crime as a noun. Organized crime networks simply will not put their trust in the reciting of secret oaths or the other traditional methods that have been used to profess loyalty to a group when adaptation is the key to success and survival. Here we echo the findings of Alan Block (1991), who found that if one needed membership to organize crime, there would have to exist "organizational restraint upon the activities of professional criminals." We, like Block, recognize that some organizational hierarchies and boundaries to particular activities may exist at times, "but they are challenged more often than not; territories and organizations are honored only in the breach." The key lies in the vast criminal opportunity existing in a globalized world, the effect of which undermines the stability of hierarchies and makes oaths meaningless. This instability breeds ceaseless disputes over rackets and territories that, in turn, are frequently "characterized by immoderate instances of murderous treachery, which further frustrates organizational security and permanence" (Block 1991, 8).

The concept of the organized crime matrix takes into account that organized crime networks put their trust in the stealth created within the social networking process itself. Criminals have learned that trust is best served by the element of time; the time they have spent with those whom they have come to trust. Close friendships, close family ties, and the trust created through the bonds within a clan, a tribe, or an ethnic group will continue to produce secrecy and trust among future organized crime networks, their reputations for such trust preceding them into new ventures (e.g., Morselli 2001, 2005; Bovenkerk et al. 2003; McIllwain 2003; Gambetta 2009; Varsese 2011).

The organized crime matrix recognizes that conflicts will continue as markets, opportunities, and leadership for involvement in new criminal enterprises evolve and networks compete. Furthermore, modern criminal networks have learned from terrorist and insurgent organizations that operating as small "cells" which do not require immediate instructions or orders from a leader allow both the larger network and their

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[9] This process reflects broader trends faced by networks in the legitimate world as they embrace decentralization and "the chaos imperative" (Brafman and Beckstrom 2005; Brafman and Pollack 2013).
[10] Historically speaking, this is not a new set of challenges. Consider the examples provided in Lauren Benton's (2010) study of law and geography in European Empires between 1400 and 1900.

connected cells an independence of movement. Once the goal and strategy has been set, these cells can be extremely effective as key brokers link them together locally and globally in response to opportunities (structural holes[11]) to build, defend, and grow power within and between what Michael Mann identified as the "four sources of social power: ideological, economic, military, and political (IEMP) relationships." These are not only "overlapping networks of social interaction" within both the upperworld and underworld, but also organizations, institutional means of attaining human goals. "Their primacy," notes Mann, "comes not from the strength of human desires for ideological, economic, military, or political satisfaction but from the particular organizational *means* each posses to attain human goals, whatever these may be (Mann 2012, 2; emphasis added).

What the organized crime matrix focuses on, then, are the illicit means in Mann's equation or, to use Albini's phrasing, the Mafia as method. As such the demise of one network or cell does not have a serious deterrent effect upon the functioning of all the other networks or cells existing within the organized crime matrix outside of the possibility of violence or incarceration as competitors attempt to fill power vacuums or capitalize on new opportunities. Indeed such power fluctuations should be considered the rule, not the exception, when viewed over time. Key brokers exist within this process, but they do not control the matrix. It controls them by providing the pushes and pulls that create and eliminate structural holes. Indeed, the recent work of Scott Helfstein unintentionally illustrates the organized crime matrix in his unparalleled evaluation of "a range of illicit activities that include terrorism, the illegal narcotics trade, organized crime, human smuggling and political corruption." His network analysis of over 2,700 individuals linked by 15,000 relationships spanning 122 countries" is, we would argue, representative of the resiliency of the organized crime matrix and the key brokers that link disparate networks and cells together within it. Helfstein found,

> The criminals and terrorists are largely subsumed (98 %) in a single network as opposed to operating in numerous smaller networks. Connectivity among actors within the illicit marketplace is relatively high. *This should not be construed to say that the network is a cohesive organizational entity. The phenomenon observed and documented here is a self-organizing complex system built through social connections from the bottom up* (Helfstein 2014, emphasis added).

One can argue persuasively that there have been large, powerful syndicates and alliances of syndicates in the past and in today's world. However, experience, modern technology, post-9/11 international intelligence sharing, and smart intelligence targeting practices, backed by data fusion centers and whole-of-government approaches, have taught the modern organized criminal that large organizations are more readily and successfully targeted by government efforts that corruption or political deals fail to impede. It is a new world of criminality. Unlike the larger structuring created by some syndicate leaders in the past–and the Mafia Mystique they engendered–this new world is

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[11] Structural holes are "holes in the structure of the market" that provide the opportunity "to broker the flow of information between people, and control the projects that bring together people from opposite sides of the hole." The concept is based on the Nobel Prize winning economic theory created by Ronald S. Burt. For a summary, please see Burt (2001). For the criminological application of structural hole theory to organized crime, please see Morselli (2005, 2008, 2010).

one where organized crime networks often integrate and converge with other threats to state sovereignty and can undermine or reinforce regional and global security and stability (Helfstein 2014; Miklaucic and Brewer 2013). In the words of security scholar Thomas X. Hammes, the stakes are high and the natures of the actors are often ambiguous:

> The trend has been and continues to be downward from nation-states using huge, uniformed armies to small groups of like-minded people with no formal organization who simply choose to fight. We have slid so far away from national armies that often it is impossible to tell 4GW fighters from simple criminal elements. Many of the former are, in fact, criminal elements-either they use crime to support their cause or they use their cause to legitimize their crime (Hammes 2007, 20).

Hence, the small, interweaving networks of underworld and upperworld actors that compose the organized crime matrix have become the mode with the most efficiency and the least amount of risk. This even applies to those organized criminals that work with networks and organizations deemed security threats. Indeed, Helfstein established that "by most measures of connectivity, terrorists are more central than almost all other types of criminals, second only to narcotics smugglers" to the massive data set he analyzed in his groundbreaking study. Furthermore, he found "it does not appear that terrorists are shunned based on social norms or fear of inviting retribution from law enforcement, as many criminals seem willing to interact with terrorists" (Helfstein 2014, 6-7). This leads us to repeat questions posed by anthropologist Carolyn Nordstrom, who asked,

> Who are the criminals of the twenty-first century? The business people who lie on a customs form to reduce their taxes so they can send pharmaceuticals more cheaply to the needy? The customs agents who let these shipments through because "everyone benefits"? The people who understand how this system works and slips explosives into the pharmaceuticals, speeding unchecked across borders? The robber barons who makes a profit on all this regardless who lives or dies? (Nordstrom 2007, 16)

Deconstructing Organized Crime (Albini and McIllwain 2012, 109-110) offers an historical example that illustrates the timeless dynamics of the organized crime matrix on a number of levels. A letter between smugglers was submitted as evidence to the U.S. Senate's Committee on Immigration in 1902. Written on or about May 1, 1898, this letter from the head of a smuggling syndicate in Canton (modern Guangzhou). He wrote to one of his business partners in San Francisco, pointing out the fluidity and instability of criminal opportunity and organization, the limits of their power, and the difficulties of monopoly and centralized control in a rapidly globalizing world. Such efforts, he argued, would only serve to ensure challenges and competition from other organized criminals and unwanted attention from the state:

> You say how that when you had already bought up the Counsel's interpreter at Canton so as to have a way of getting certificates, afterwards had to know that others secretly obtained certificates and went ahead. Going on, you tell us at San Francisco to conduct some scheme by which others could be sent back, hoping

thus to cut off other people's road, so that our concern can do all of the business and our concern get all the profit. Your idea is excellent and the way good, if only practicable.

Not only these five, but others, also, I have seen come with certificates from Canton. You have schemes, others have schemes. You have influence so as to open up a way, others have greater influence still, and they do the work even more easily. So that others having the money to place will get the certificates. If they can issue them to you they can issue them to others. This is true everywhere. Take San Francisco, for instance; you can neither stop other people's fraudulent comers here. Even though you go to the customhouse and point out those newcomers, prove they are really not merchants, all you can accomplish is to detain them a little and cause them to expend more money. Should the customs people not allow them to land after certain firms had endorsed them, other people then get lawyers and have papers made. Those firms who are engaged in bribing the men over then sign their names and come forward positively identifying the newcomers as relatives or partners. The collector is a most upright man and full of intelligence—never receiving one cent. He is an experienced lawyer, determining cases according to law.

There is no way to hinder these people. The only thing we can do is cause them to go to greater expense. Then, again, there are other things to be considered. There is no certainty in connection with the different positions of the customs officials, whether inspectors or chiefs—some promoted, some degraded. This makes it difficult to hinder others. To have a monopoly or worldly profit is an impossibility. If you have the schemes and the means, you import more; if not, you get through less. Each concern does its own work with the means that each has. If you are hoping to contrive a way by which we could have a monopoly of this business—Canton end as well as San Francisco end—[and] send back those that others may send, I am afraid that your hope will soon see night. Things are very good as they are and as they have been some time back. Should Congress change the laws and there be other changes, the opportunity may go and with it the profit hoped for. Never look for the time when we can get it all. That time will never come. There is nothing like making the most of the present opportunities, few or many, but the more the better. Sooner done, sooner won....

Don't let the present opportunity go by....There is business in Hong Kong and there is business in San Francisco, both well-connected, with big profits as the result. Don't let our concern be the only one hoping for a monopoly. While working for a monopoly, time will be lost. One half a year goes. There is no good doing this. The thing to do is hurry all you can, for fear later on there may be some changes in the law, and so forth. Once a law is against these newcomers our profits will come to an end.

It seems our letter writer recognized what so many before and after him could or would not; that the many challenges facing organized criminals are formidable and constantly evolving, errecting an array of barriers that disuades monopoly and

encourages decentralization and adaptation. In other words, it is the organized crime matrix that "really bosses the crime syndicate."

Conclusion

I believe if Joe could comment on these historical and contemporary examples he would mischievously add that the Mafia was nowhere to be found in any of them. He would then enjoy the learned and possibly passionate discussions of his colleagues that would follow his comment. Joe would appreciate how such debates would continue to shape research on the subject he loved. He would also respect all of those who pursued it with the same passion.

In the end, Joe did not see devils, witches, or a Paul Muni or Robert DeNiro-played gangster behind every criminal enterprise and protection racket. Rather, he saw an organized crime matrix flowing through history, a matrix that engendered responses often times more revealing of the observer than those involved with actual crimes. With that in mind, I believe Joe would encourage his fellow organized crime scholars to ponder the main theme of Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange*; "whether a world in which evil can be freely chosen might still be preferable to one in which goodness is compelled" (Grossman and Lacayo 2010).

Dr. Joseph L. Albini, the "Godfather" of revisionist organized crime scholars, passed away after heart surgery on September 14, 2013 in his adopted hometown of Las Vegas. He was eighty-three and he lived a full and happy life, appreciative of all of the friends and colleagues who supported, challenged, and disagreed him over the years. It seems fitting, proper, and a tad ironic that there is a recently named "Godfather Banquet Room" in the Sons of Italy building in Joe's hometown of Vandergrift, a building that Joe frequented in younger days (McGuire 2012). Sì, per essere un paesano, è piuttosto bravo.

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