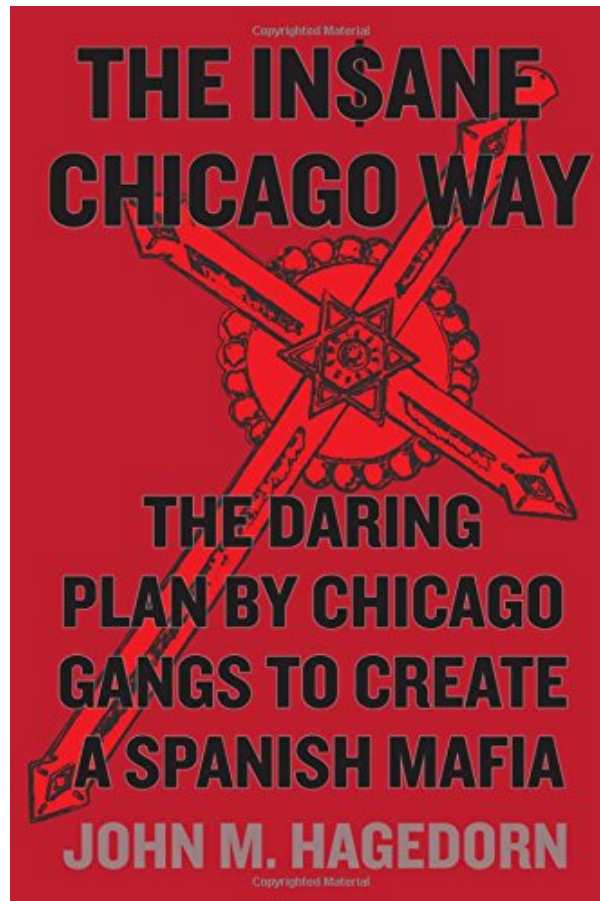
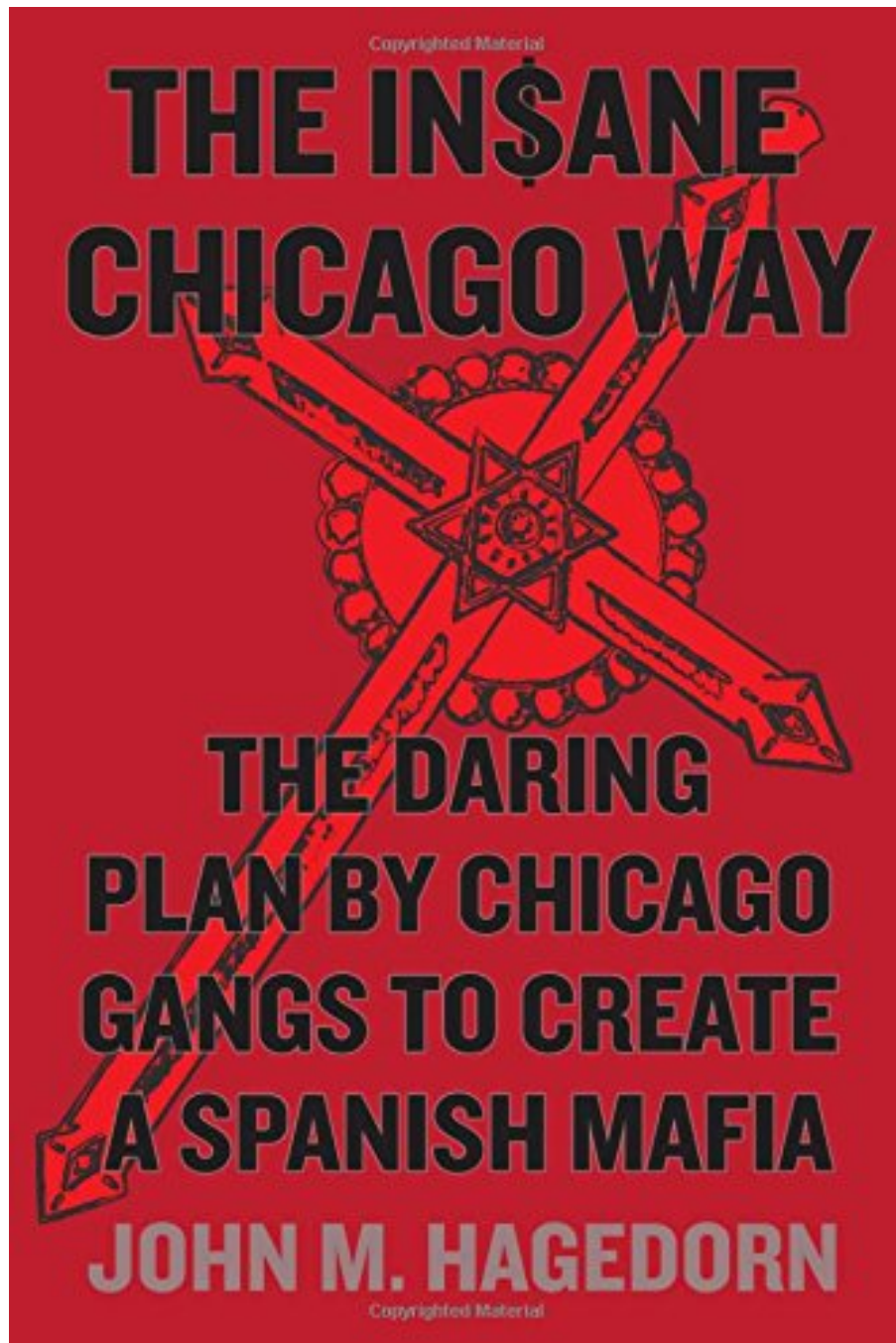


THE INSANE CHICAGO WAY: THE DARING PLAN



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Review

“An intricate tale of violence, mafia influence, and police corruption.” (Chicago Reader)

“Hagedorn has done it again: charted new ground. He presents clean, clear observations in a field dominated by camera obscura posited images of ‘gangs.’ This book opens new questions about gangs, politics, and ‘disorganization.’ Read it.” (Peter K. Manning, author of *Democratic Policing in a Changing World*)

“This is an important book, reminiscent of Sutherland’s *Professional Thief*, Ianni’s *Black Mafia*, and other personal, insider studies of professional and organized crime and criminals. Hagedorn skillfully combines information and insights from multiple sources with scholarly analysis to reveal the nature of organized crime as it evolved during the late twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. His account of relationships between street gangs of this period and Chicago’s Outfit, the legacy of Al Capone and others, is especially important.” (James F. Short, Jr., coauthor of *Juvenile Delinquency and Delinquents*)

“The Insane Chicago Way is quite original and advances our knowledge on gangs in a number of ways. Most criminologists draw a clear separation between organized crime and street gangs, but Hagedorn shows—in a highly compelling account—how Chicago gangs in the 1990s attempted to emulate the mafia. In doing so he paints a new picture of street gangs as they exist in our neighborhoods—not simply as reflections of other forces but as quasi-institutions, major historical agents in the development of violence and violent traditions.” (David Brotherton, author of *Banished to the Homeland*)

About the Author

John M. Hagedorn is professor of criminology, law, and justice at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He is the author of *People and Folks* and *A World of Gangs*, coeditor of *Female Gangs in America*, and editor of *Gangs in the Global City*.

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The Insane Chicago Way is the untold story of a daring plan by Chicago gangs in the 1990s to create a Spanish Mafia—and why it failed. John M. Hagedorn traces how Chicago Latino gang leaders, following in Al Capone's footsteps, built a sophisticated organization dedicated to organizing crime and reducing violence. His lively stories of extensive cross-neighborhood gang organization, tales of police/gang corruption, and discovery of covert gang connections to Chicago's Mafia challenge conventional wisdom and offer lessons for the control of violence today.

The book centers on the secret history of Spanish Growth & Development (SGD)—an organization of Latino gangs founded in 1989 and modeled on the Mafia's nationwide Commission. It also tells a story within a story of the criminal exploits of the C-Note\$, the "minor league" team of the Chicago's Mafia (called the "Outfit"), which influenced the direction of SGD. Hagedorn's tale is based on three years of interviews with an Outfit soldier as well as access to SGD's constitution and other secret documents, which he supplements with interviews of key SGD leaders, court records, and newspaper accounts. The result is a stunning, heretofore unknown history of the grand ambitions of Chicago gang leaders that ultimately led to SGD's shocking collapse in a pool of blood on the steps of a gang-organized peace conference.

The Insane Chicago Way is a compelling history of the lives and deaths of Chicago gang leaders. At the same time it is a sociological tour de force that warns of the dangers of organized crime while arguing that today's relative disorganization of gangs presents opportunities for intervention and reductions in violence.

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Most helpful customer reviews

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Groundbreaking book on gangs, organized crime, and police and political corruption in Chicago. Highly recommended!!!

By Robert Aspholm

Like his previous books, John Hagedorn's *The In\$ane Chicago Way*, shines light on street gangs in critical and innovative ways. Indeed, in the book's introduction Hagedorn acknowledges that his research for this book forced him to reconsider his own views about gangs, which he has been studying for nearly three decades now. This kind of transparency and candor is rare among scholars and public intellectuals of all stripes, and this book is a rich result of that integrity and approach to scholarship.

In telling the story of the attempts of Chicago's Latin Folks gangs to create a Spanish mafia during the 1990s, Hagedorn challenges a number of beliefs that scholars and citizens alike often taken for granted about street gangs, organized crime, urban violence, and political and police corruption. One of the assumptions Hagedorn disputes in the book, for example, is that law enforcement, elected officials, and other state actors, when considered at all in relation to these issues, are viewed as "good guys" whose actions serve to ameliorate and resolve them. The book presents compelling evidence that this is far from the truth.

Another major strength of *The In\$ane Chicago Way* is that Hagedorn has written it in a way that is accessible and captivating not only for academic types, but for laymen, as well. That he achieved this without compromising the level of scholarship required to capture and integrate the nuances and implications of this rich material is a feat in itself. In short, this is not your typical academic/scholarly book. This is a good thing.

Anyone with an interest in gangs, organized crime, police and political corruption, Chicago and urban history, or even organizational dynamics will enjoy this book... and be all the more enlightened for having read it. Highly recommended.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

A Window Into Chicago History and Politics — street gangs, the Outfit, systematic corruption in the "Machine" and the police

By Paul Elitzik

Anyone interested in Chicago history and politics should read Hagedorn's "*The Insane Chicago Way*." The book is not just the story of one turning point in the history of Chicago gangs, or even an overview of Chicago gangs since the 1950s. Hagedorn shows how this story is a window into the broader themes of Chicago history – racial politics, ethnic succession and the growth of Latino power, street violence, mass incarceration, the Chicago "machine," and systematic political and police corruption.

He shows how city and federal policies have done the opposite of their stated aims — the war on gangs and the war on drugs, destruction of the housing projects. This well-written, brilliantly insightful and accessible book combines narrative with sociological analysis and theory, showing how influential approaches leave out essential history – the roles of police and political corruption; underestimate the importance of the Outfit; and substitute a deterministic idea of poverty and neighborhood “disorganization” for the decisions and actions of gang members, which can only be discovered through the kind of direct engagement and in-depth interviewing for which this book is a model. *The Insane Chicago Way: The Daring Plan by Chicago Gangs to Create a Spanish Mafia*

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

Great read and tip of the iceberg on why violence, gangs, drugs, police, and politicians are all ruining Chicago

By Gerardo Serna

There are plenty of people that get excited at the opportunity to "fix" Chicago's gang issues but ALL fail to understand the depth this issue has. Everyone has a plan that works where they live but there is no place like Chicago for street organizations. My Brother John Hagedorn recently released his latest book *The In\$ane Chicago way* and if you really think you have an understanding of gang issues because you have 20+ years doing the work around the country this book will kick you back to 101. No one has written about the street organizations in this manner and no one really knew about what was really going on except for a small group of people. I understand better some people that I knew that play a role in the book and confirmation on many other things that I came across over the years. You have to read it before you even think you have a clue as to how to work in Chicago. There's no organization out there that can certify me on my city only the streets and people like John that actually puts in work can educate me and help me figure out this complex maze we call Chicago. Humble yourself and get the book!

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