

# Concept of Masculinity in Mafia Movies and TV Shows

---

**Vukičević, Ante**

**Master's thesis / Diplomski rad**

**2023**

*Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj:* **University of Zadar / Sveučilište u Zadru**

*Permanent link / Trajna poveznica:* <https://um.nsk.hr/um:nbn:hr:162:500728>

*Rights / Prava:* [In copyright](#)/[Zaštićeno autorskim pravom.](#)

*Download date / Datum preuzimanja:* **2025-01-02**



**Sveučilište u Zadru**  
Universitas Studiorum  
Jadertina | 1396 | 2002 |

*Repository / Repozitorij:*

[University of Zadar Institutional Repository](#)



zir.nsk.hr



DIGITALNI AKADEMSKI ARHIVI I REPOZITORIJ

Sveučilište u Zadru

Odjel za anglistiku

Sveučilišni diplomski studij Anglistike; smjer: nastavnički

**Ante Vukičević**

**Concept of Masculinity in Mafia Movies and TV Shows**

**Diplomski rad**

Zadar, 2023.

Sveučilište u Zadru

Odjel za anglistiku

Sveučilišni diplomski studij anglistike: nastavnički smjer (dvopredmetni)

Concept of Masculinity in Mafia Movies and TV Shows

Diplomski rad

Student/ica:

Ante Vukičević

Mentor/ica:

Izv. prof. dr. sc. Marko Lukić

Zadar, 2023.



## Izjava o akademskoj čestitosti

Ja, **Ante Vukičević**, ovime izjavljujem da je moj **diplomski** rad pod naslovom **Concept of Masculinity in Mafia Movies and TV Shows** rezultat mojega vlastitog rada, da se temelji na mojim istraživanjima te da se oslanja na izvore i radove navedene u bilješkama i popisu literature. Ni jedan dio mojega rada nije napisan na nedopušten način, odnosno nije prepisan iz necitiranih radova i ne krši bilo čija autorska prava.

Izjavljujem da ni jedan dio ovoga rada nije iskorišten u kojem drugom radu pri bilo kojoj drugoj visokoškolskoj, znanstvenoj, obrazovnoj ili inoj ustanovi.

Sadržaj mojega rada u potpunosti odgovara sadržaju obranjenoga i nakon obrane uređenoga rada.

Zadar, 11. rujna 2023.

## Table of contents:

1. Introduction .....	5
2. Masculinity throughout history .....	8
3. Importance of masculinity .....	12
4. Importance of family .....	15
5. Role of the father .....	19
6. Connection between masculinity and Italian identity .....	23
7. Off-white masculinity .....	28
8. Group identity and masculinity .....	32
9. Male relations and problems .....	35
10. Conclusion.....	41
11. Works cited .....	43
12. Concept of Masculinity in Mafia Movies and TV Shows: Summary and key words.....	45
13. Koncept maskuliniteta u mafijaškim filmovima i TV serijama: Sažetak i ključne riječi.....	46

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Mafia movies and TV shows have been very popular ever since movies started to be made. From the silent period of the movies, so from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, movies with topics surrounding mafia and mafia related themes were filmed. Mafia and gangsters are interesting for general public. Their behaviour, their actions, and their hierarchy are in a lot of ways different from the characteristic lives of average people. They appear to act as a society on its own, with their own rules and norms of behaviour which are only applied to them. This is just one of the reasons why this genre became so popular with the viewers from the beginning of cinema. Most of the important characters in mafia movies and TV shows are male. Since that is the case, they also exhibit a lot of notions of masculinity that can be seen in those movies and TV shows. This will be the topic of this paper, concept of masculinity in mafia movies and TV shows.

There are numerous mafia related movies and TV shows that have been made up to this point. As it would be too much to include a lot of them in one paper, I have chosen two movies and one TV show that are considered to be arguably the best of the genre. The first movie, or better to stay movie trilogy that will be analysed is *The Godfather* trilogy (1972, 1974, 1990). *The Godfather* revolves around the Italian-American mafia family called Corleone and it follows mostly the first head of the family Don Vito Corleone and his son and heir at the top of the family, Michael Corleone. The focus throughout the trilogy is mostly on Michael and his climb in the mafia hierarchy. The trilogy also features a lot of other characters that belong to the Corleone blood family or their mafia family. The second movie that will be analysed is a movie *Goodfellas* (1990). It is a movie based on real life of its main character Henry Hill. Henry Hill was a gangster who was involved in the New York mafia during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The movie revolves around his life, from a young age when he first started to do jobs for the mafia, his adult life which fully revolved around his mafia family and the eventual end of his mafia life when he decided to enter the witness protection program. The movie also deals with other members of the New York mafia and the relationships between Henry and his associates. Lastly, the one TV show that will be analysed is *The Sopranos* (1999-2007). The show deals with the fictional New Jersey mafia family which is mostly led throughout the show

by the main character of Tony Soprano. The show ran for 86 episodes and dealt not just with the crime life of Tony and the rest of the characters, but also with their private lives.

This paper will be analysis of the concept of masculinity that can be found in these movies and TV show in order to show what makes them attractive for male viewers. Firstly, I will shortly analyse masculinity throughout history to show how the concept of it changed over time. Certain problems and crises of masculinity will also be analysed in this part. After that, the analysis of the importance of masculinity in gangster genre, especially in the selected movies and TV show, will begin. The reasons for this importance will be mentioned, as well as instances of non-masculine behaviour which is often criticised by the characters. The next chapter revolves around the importance of family. Family is of great importance to mafia members who try to protect it as much as they can. The main idea of this chapter is the contrast between two families of gangsters, their actual families and their mafia families. This conflict will be analysed to see how the two clash and cause problems for the characters. After that there will be an analysis of the role of the fathers in mafia movies. Fathers are very important in mafia since they usually are the ones who are the reason why certain characters joined mafia in the first place. Relationships between fathers and their children in the mafia world will also be analysed here. After that I will try to draw a connection between masculinity and Italian identity that can be seen. Italian identity is constantly present in mafia movies. Its importance is great and there will be an analysis of the extent Italian identity is present within the characters, and how much they have changed from their ancestors. The next chapter will deal with the concept of off-white masculinity. The concept deals with the fact that many men in the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century started to feel nostalgic for times in the past. This is directly connected with the movies that were made at the end of the century, especially the ones about mafia. Furthermore, I will analyse how masculinity is important for a group and collective identity of the group. The relationships between men are vital in organizations dominated by men, and the good and bad sides of it will be analysed in this chapter. On the end I will analyse relations between men that can be seen in these movies and TV shows and the problems they face. This will also be connected to real life problems of ordinary men, and how they can find glimpses of themselves in the mafia world.

These movies and TV show are excellent examples for the concept of masculinity. They include a variety of different male characters. They include both, strong tough men who are always prepared to do what is necessary, but also weaker and more impulsive men who work

as the opposites for the former ones. I will also analyse the behaviour and masculinity of the characters within mafia movies and TV shows to see the importance of masculinity in such organizations as mafia. While doing all of this, I will try to describe how and why men are the most common audience of mafia movies and TV shows, and how they admire the characters which they watch and want to become more like them. Even though they are shown as criminals, and murderers who are able to commit horrific crimes, men are still drawn to them, which is something that I will try to illustrate in this paper by giving reasons and examples for that behaviour. The main goal of the paper is to show that male viewers are attracted to these characters and that, although they pursue illegal and immoral way of life, men admire them. The reasons for this admiration will be especially important in the analysis of the movies and its characters. With the analysis of characters from the movies and TV show, there will also be their direct quotes that further give emphasis on their behaviour and thoughts. When it comes to literature, for the masculinity throughout history I will use Tim Edwards's 'Cultures of masculinity' and George L. Mosse's 'The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity' as well as Herbert Sussman's 'Masculine Identities: The History and Meanings of Manliness'. Ron Wilson's 'The Gangster Film: Fatal Success in American Cinema' will have a strong focus on the characters that can be found in these movies and George S. Larke-Walsh's 'Screening the Mafia: Masculinity, Ethnicity and Mobsters from *The Godfather* to *The Sopranos*' will deal heavily on their attractiveness for male viewers. Also, extracts from 'A Companion to Martin Scorsese' will also be used for the concept of off-white masculinity and analysis of *Goodfellas*.



## 2. MASCULINITY THROUGHOUT HISTORY

Masculinity is a concept that has been important throughout the entire course of human history. Since men were the ones who were mostly in control of the public and civil life in cities and in countries, they had an opportunity to present their way of behaviour. Through their behaviour their masculinity was formed. They exerted such virtues as bravery, honour, and desire for power which became some of the basic traits that started being ascribed to masculinity. These traits remained typical for modern masculinity also, but still in the past masculinity has evolved and changed significantly.

In the period of the Middle Ages, the most masculine and honourable men were considered to be knights. Their strength and success led to their popularity amongst people. Knights were the heroes of many poems and books written in that period. In the Middle Ages virtues that were considered to be masculine were not only courage and honour, but of nobility, loyalty to one's own people and land, and compassion for others (Mosse 18). In the 18<sup>th</sup> century there was a change in the viewing of masculinity. In this century modern masculinity started being formed, but that process did not finish for another two centuries because of the many changes that occurred in the world. Bravery, compassion, and nobility still remained important and something a man has to try and achieve. However, violence which usually accompanied these virtues was now not a necessity because morality took its place. It was more important to be morally on a high level and seek your masculine traits through acting morally rather than through acting violently. Justice and fairness became also new traits considered to be masculine, alongside physical appearance which became very important for the idea of masculinity in this time (Mosse 23).

What also became important for masculinity in this period was work. Work was not considered to be a masculine trait before the industrial period which was going on in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Masculinities were not tied with working in the previous eras. Working was usually connected with slavery or with poor people, and masculinity was reserved only for those who were fighting in wars. However, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century work became of utmost importance for men because through it men could make money, which became more important for an average man because of industrialization and new capitalist society that accompanied it (Sussman 85).

Moreover, in this period men were expected to stay healthy as well as physically in good shape. They were forced to physically exercise in order to reach it. This was done to improve their health, but also their self-esteem which was considered to be higher if a person looks good and is in a good shape. This also became important for men who were doing manual labour. Even though there were more and more machines that substituted men at some jobs, men were still respected for their manual work. For that, they needed to be in good shape. Strong body of a man who does manual work started to be celebrated through poems and artworks, and it became a part of masculinity (Sussman 86). This ideal of a beautiful body and appearance is something that exists even in today's times. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, men were also participants in many wars and battles, but now violence was not highlighted in their endeavours. What became important was their heroism and sacrifices they made for a higher ideal. Sacrificing yourself for a higher purpose became one of the important traits for masculinity because of how dedicated men became to fulfil that goal (Mosse 52).

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century masculinity started to be at risk of being undermined. This was due to several new trends that started to appear. These were movements for women's rights for freedom through which women wanted to become equal to men, and also men who were considered to be feminized and unmanly and who were considered to be a great threat for the masculine way of life. What also led to fall of masculinity in this period were many diseases and vices like alcoholism which were attributed to men. It started to be thought that men can also suffer from some conditions like hysteria and depression that were perceived to be reserved for women (Mosse 85). An appealing male quality that started to appear in this period was the power of will. It started being equated with bravery and symbolised a man's fight against diseases, vices, and against unmanly men who were lacking that power. What accompanies power of will is the desire to exercise your body and also to control yourself and not to succumb to short-term pleasures but to lead a more moderate and more fulfilling life (Sussman 98).

The 20<sup>th</sup> century is a century of great changes that occurred in every aspect of life, and the world changed completely from the times before 1900s. Masculinity adapted to these changes and has been adapting and developing ever since. Even though masculinity did have certain enemies at the beginning of the century, during World War I masculinity again started to dominate societies. The relationship between soldiers who were fighting in the front was of great importance. Their morale had to be very high and it was achieved through comradeship

among soldiers. High moral was also achieved through the belief of the soldiers that they were fighting for a higher cause, and that war would make men out of them. Through this a figure of a warrior was created as an ideal man who represents an entire nation (Mosse 110). Some also believed that this freedom and comradeship amongst men was also preventing them from becoming victims of diseases and unmanly behaviour. Warrior was a type of masculinity that became very popular in the 20<sup>th</sup> century but there was also another one which can be regarded as an opposite of it. That was the socialist type of a man. They rejected the warrior image of a man and were against any type of violence and aggression, and the brutality of war. They were not only opponents of war, but of the masculinity that promoted war. They created a new type of masculinity and manliness which dismisses any type of violence. The ideal of socialists is not the well-being of one nation but of the entire world that would be tolerant and humane (Mosse 120).

Period of fascism was the period that signified the importance of masculinity as non-other period before or since. Masculinity became the most important tool for achieving a country's desires and goals. A new fascist man needed to have all the qualities of a warrior, but also some new characteristics that created a fascist type of masculinity. A fascist man was not a stranger to aggression, and the comradeship between men was of high importance, just like the warrior type. But, the fascist type puts love for one's own country above everything else. This was done so that men would completely sacrifice their lives for the service of the ideal that is their country. Fascists also believed that a new fascist type of masculinity will lead their nations into a better future dominated by fascist men and by such qualities as bravery, order, obedience, and loyalty, especially to their nation (Mosse 170).

After fascism was defeated the fascist type of man disappeared from the wider image of the world. What was promoted after the end of the war were rugged male personalities who were tough and manly in their looks and behaviour. These kinds of characteristics became very popular in the Western world in the post-war period. Violence was also once again attributed to the stereotypical image of a proper man. However, this changed by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Throughout 1970s and 1980s there were more and more liberal ideas about the gender relations and about the division of work between men and women. Women started to take up a better place in the society and were not exclusively tied to household jobs. Men also started to change their opinions and started to have a much more accepting attitude towards women in a work environment. Men also started to change their opinions about masculinity. They started to reject

traditional views of strong and gritty masculinity and started to accept some features which were attributed mostly to women, such as long hair or clothes of various colours. Their behaviour was considered by the older generations to be unmanly and opposite of what masculinity was up until that time. This further blurred the lines of that what is considered to be masculine (Sussman 153). The distinction of what was considered to be masculine and what not became unclear. Men started to question what actually was masculine, and also how to act manly in any given situation. In the past there was a clear line of that what was considered to be masculine and what was not. However, those boundaries disappeared almost completely by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

It can be said that masculinity started to be in a crisis in the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There are views that crisis manifests itself in different fields of life. In these fields men lost influence, control, and power they once held, and became less important and started to be overshadowed by others. The first of those fields is the work field (Edwards 7). Work has traditionally been connected with men. Men viewed it as their place of being and considered it to be reserved only for them. They thought themselves as superiors in comparison to women. With the rise of capitalist societies in the Western world, work became more and more important for men who gained money, power and status through it. Men with good jobs who were well paid started to be considered more masculine than others. However, in modern world many men do not feel the same way about work as in the past. One of the reasons for that are the financial crises that result in unemployment which leaves men jobless. Men lose confidence and their self-esteem because of it. Another reason is that women started to enter the job market more frequently than before. They were no longer considered to be tied to house jobs, and their importance at work started to grow. Work was no longer occupied only by men, and this meant that their power was no longer that big.

Another important field which can be said that is no longer dominated by men is family life (Edwards 10). Family life is also connected with work. In the past men were perceived as the ones who would be responsible for the wealth of a family. However, because of the facts that more and more women work in prestige jobs, men no longer have control over the money flow that comes into their household. Their roles as fathers also became less important. The rising number of divorces that occur in the world has as a consequence that many children do not live with their fathers any longer because mothers are usually the ones that get custody over children.

Still, it is hard to say that these crises all occur simultaneously to the majority of men, and that all crises bear the reason why men are thought to be in an inferior position than before. However, it is true that many men go through at least one of those crises in their lives. It can be regarded to their professional or private life, but it is very likely that something like that will occur. Actual crisis of masculinity lies in a totally different area, which is not so connected with everyday life of a person. The real problem for modern masculinity is that everything which is remotely connected to it is seen in a bad light. Masculinity has almost become a synonym for negativity. It is blamed for many things that happened in the past, and it is considered to be something that should not exist in the present (Edwards 14).

Modern masculinity is also in constant relation with feminism. Since feminism started to become stronger men came in to much more contact with it in both, their professional and personal lives. Men started to feel threatened by it and that is why men started to form movements and groups that contrasted feminism. New magazines started to appear and their only goal was to be directed at men who were looking for sanctuary in which they would again highlight their qualities and strengths. Masculinity found itself in a position in which many of the historically masculine characteristics were no longer considered to be positive. Magazines and books that started to be written about masculinity usually revisited those once positive traits. This was done in order to appeal to men's nostalgic views of masculinity. Works that are in question are also negative towards modern masculinity and the fact that modern men are unable to turn their lives around and to once again hold most power in their own hands. Masculinity also tries to find its place in a modern world since men consider that feminism progressed solely at the expense of men (Edwards 24).

### **3. IMPORTANCE OF MASCULINITY**

Masculinity in movies and TV shows related to mafia is a very important notion. Most of the characters within the mafia world are male. Men are the bosses of crime families, they are underbosses in the mafia world, or they are soldiers who are at the lowest point in the mafia food chain. Men are almost the sole protagonists of the mafia world. Women are usually left

outside of those surroundings and can usually be only some associates, but most commonly not even that. Every organization which is only male in its form is bound to have some aspect of masculinity as one of the most important feature of that organization. In the mafia men should behave themselves as what is stereotypically called real men. Any kind of deviation from that rule is rejected and considered to be problematic in the world of mafia. Mafia can also react negatively if someone acts in a non-masculine manner outside of that world. It can also potentially cause problems for the organization. Example for that can be found in *The Sopranos* where Tony frequently visits a psychiatrist because of his panic attacks. He is afraid that others would find out about it for two reasons. The first one is that it could be possible that Tony would say something incriminating to his therapist. The other reason is because going to a psychiatrist is considered to be a weakness. It is something non-masculine and non-worthy of the boss of the family. Tony ultimately acknowledges his meetings with a psychiatrist to his closest associates only when he has to. At that scene we also find out that Silvio and Paulie also visited therapist for some of the issues they had. This tells us that they were hiding the problems they had because they were afraid that their actions would be considered to be non-masculine and against typical behaviour for a mafia member.

Another example of non-masculine behaviour in *The Sopranos* is the character of Vito Spatafore. Vito Spatafore starts of as a secondary character in the show and later becomes more and more important in the crime family of Tony Soprano. The most important plotline revolving around him is his homosexuality. When the word about him being gay comes to Tony and the rest of the gang, he runs away. The majority of the gang want to see Vito dead since they find his behaviour disgusting and unsuitable for mafia. Tony at surface also finds Vito's behaviour hideous but is reluctant when it comes to murdering him because deep down he actually does not care about Vito's sexuality. Talking to his therapist Tony says, "I suppose something inside me says: God bless...Who gives a s\*\*\*." ("Live Free or Die" 30:26-30:35)- However, Tony needs to keep up the appearance for his associates who want to see Vito gone. Furthermore, in the last season of *The Sopranos* we can also see the character of Johnny Sack, boss of one branch of the New York mafia, crying at his daughter's wedding. This happens at the end of his stay there when he is taken by the police back to prison, where he waits for his trial. Johnny Sack begins to cry uncontrollably as he is put in the police car. After this scene several members of the mafia who were present at the wedding start to question his manhood and his masculinity. His New York associate Phil Leotardo says, "I'll tell you one thing...my estimation of John Sacrimoni as a man, just f\*\*\*ing plummeted...To cry like a woman?" ("Mr. & Mrs. John

Sacrimoni Request...” 37:11-37:24). His reputation and image has automatically declined in the eyes of several of his associates.

Behaviour which is non-masculine can also be seen in *The Godfather*. Fredo Corleone, Michael’s older brother, is seen to be wearing bright-coloured suits, drinking cocktails, and partying in Las Vegas. This behaviour is not worthy of someone who has high status in a powerful mafia family. Fredo and Michael are the complete opposites in that sense because Michael’s appearance is always a stoic one. He wears dark suits and behaves himself accordingly. Moreover, Michael’s son Anthony Corleone is also seen to be lacking certain masculine traits because of his job as an opera singer. Michael tries to change this, and he tries to bring his son closer to him in the family business but does not succeed in this.

Masculine behaviour is something that is expected and welcomed in the mafia world. That is one of the reasons why there is a romantic image of gangsters and mafia related individuals, as seen by men. Gangsters are perceived as positive characters because of their willingness and ability to live their lives as they want to. This leads to admiration and even sympathy by the average male viewer. Image of a gangster is carefully built so that it would be attractive for the viewers who would then go and watch a particular movie or a TV show. Just like men as viewers admire some of the characters they see on the screen because of their masculinity, the same goes for fictional characters in movies or TV shows. Tony Soprano and the whole crew are avid fans of *The Godfather* trilogy. Viewers can see the gang watching *The Godfather* movies together, and also the trilogy is referenced numerous times during the show. Tony Soprano even talks how he loves certain scenes from the trilogy, like when Michael Corleone avenges the attempted assassination of his father, or when younger Vito goes back to Sicily to avenge his own father’s death in the second part. Members of the gang see the characters from these movies as idols and one of the big parts of that is their masculinity and willingness to do whatever it takes.

Another example of the influence movie characters have on Tony Soprano can be found in one of the most famous Western movies of all time, *High Noon*. In this movie the main actor is Gary Cooper and his character is a marshal who must fight of a gang of killers from his town on his own, and has to ignore his feelings and his personal life in doing so. Tony often describes Gary Cooper as an ideal American. He asks “What ever happened to Gary Cooper? The strong, silent type. That was an American. He wasn’t in touch with his feelings. He just did what he had to do.” (“The Pilot” 25:55-25:04). This is how Tony, as a boss of the crime family, wants

to act, and this is what can be seen as a promotion of old nostalgic values by the popular culture to general public. In the same time, the notion of masculinity has changed significantly from the times of Gary Cooper. In this sense there is a clash between past and present ideas of masculinity since “the notion of an ideal male is something that still appears in popular culture” (Larke-Walsh 163). However, the problem with Tony is that he himself does not act like Gary Cooper’s character. He is often not that ‘strong silent type’ which he wants to become. He often lets his feelings get in the way of his business and his rational thinking. He also overreacts many times, both in his domestic and professional life, which leads to problems afterwards. Tony himself expects from others something which he cannot fulfil in a full extent.

In *Goodfellas* the importance of masculinity is also evident. It can be seen in the way men talk with each other in the movie. Making fun of someone can be seen as friendly until some point when it becomes ground for insults and escalation of violence. Also, there are many scenes when characters try to impose their manhood and masculinity on other. The best example for this is probably the most famous scene from *Goodfellas* in which Joe Pesci’s character Tommy DeVito asks Ray Liotta’s Henry Hill if he finds him funny and why. The scene quickly goes from easy going to tense as Tommy seemingly becomes more and more upset because of it, whereas Henry begins to think that Tommy actually became serious. At one point Tommy starts to give out a monologue saying, “You mean, let me understand this cause, ya know maybe it's me, I'm a little f\*\*\*ed up maybe, but I'm funny how, I mean funny like I'm a clown, I amuse you? I make you laugh, I'm here to f\*\*\*in' amuse you? What do you mean funny, funny how? How am I funny?” (*Goodfellas* 00:21:20-00:21:32). In the end of the scene Tommy admits that he was only joking, but still he was partly serious in that the reason why he did that is because he wanted to impose himself. He wanted everybody to see that he was the most dangerous person in the room and that everyone should be afraid of him. This is an obvious example where one tries through his masculinity make oneself stronger and better than the rest.



#### 4. IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY

Masculinity is also inevitably connected with other features and traits that are tied with certain groups of people, in this case, mafia organizations. One of the biggest stereotypes in the world of movies is that mafia members are generally of Italian descent. One research showed that almost 70% of movies which were filmed between 1928 and 2002 that had Italian characters in them featured them in a bad light. They were perceived as criminals, usually taking part in organized crime. This was especially the case after *The Godfather* was made in 1972. Since then there were almost 300 movies up to the year 2002 that were about Italians being mafia members, which means nine movies per a year (Wilson 81).

Most of those movies were made by Italian-Americans and these movies started to form an image of Italian community to the outsiders and to the entire world. Because of the vast majority of the mafia members being Italian in the movies, one of the greatest movie stereotypes started to be made, the one of Italian-Americans being solely mafia members. In addition to creating that image, mafia movies also formed stereotypes about the men and women that are involved in that world. Men are shown to be powerful, strong, confident and capable of providing for themselves and their families. On the contrary, women are usually perceived as housewives who silently approve of their husband's jobs because of all the benefits they get from it, such as money and luxurious lifestyle.

This can be seen in *The Sopranos* and also *Goodfellas*. Tony's wife Carmela is a housewife whose life usually revolves around taking care of their family home and raising of their two children. She knows what her husband does for a living and also knows some of the things he did. Still, she does not know most of the details of what Tony does and she does not want to. She constantly ignores the fact that her husband is a mafia boss and that all of her life is paid with the money which is earned through illegal activities. She created an image of her life where she simply refuses to accept the facts. That is why we can see the shock on her face when she is faced with the harsh truth. In one scene Meadow attacks Tony for being in the mafia and we can see Carmela look down as if she wants to avoid that fact. An even better example is when she goes to see a psychiatrist and talks to him about Tony and his illegal activities saying that they are "organized crime" ("Second Opinion" 49:02). When the psychiatrist asks her if she talks about the mafia, she goes in to a state of shock like she had no idea about it. Her image of her life is destroyed in that one statement. Still, she remains mostly

loyal to Tony. The only thing that makes her leave Tony for a shorter period of time is his extramarital affairs. She frequently mentions it to Tony and after just another one of them she decides to kick Tony out of the house. Still, after a certain time she takes Tony back. She loves the lifestyle too much and decides to ignore all of the facts because it suits her.

In *Goodfellas* there is another example of a woman who silently supports her husband. Henry Hill is married to his wife Karen. She is the opposite of a typical wife of a mafia man because she is Jewish. She is of completely different background than Henry and the rest of the mafia world. In the beginning she does not know what Henry does for a living, but she gradually starts to understand because of all of the places they go to, all of the people they meet and the way Henry talks and acts. Karen says how she knows “there are women, like my best friends, who would have gotten out of there the minute their boyfriend gave them a gun to hide. But I didn’t. I got to admit the truth. It turned me on.” (*Goodfellas* 00:41:12-00:41:24). She marries Henry despite of the fact that he is involved in criminal activities. It even impresses her in a way because she believes that Henry would do anything to protect her and provide for her and their children. She ignores that fact and starts to adapt herself to the lifestyle of a wife of a gangster and enjoys all the privileges that come with it. Just like Carmela the only thing she actually resents her husband is his adultery. Just like Tony, Henry also gets kicked out of the family home because of cheating his wife, but just like Tony, he is taken back and continues to live normally. Both Carmela and Karen support their husband and act as the carers of family homes on which they rely on. Unlike them, the wife of Michael Corleone, Kay refuses to adapt to that lifestyle. She meets Michael when he was completely against his family’s business and decides to marry him even after she finds out what he does. However, the last scene of the first part tells us that she regrets that decision. In the end of the movie we can see Michael being in an office and his associates coming to him and kissing his hand. This is all seen by Kay before the door of Michael’s office is shut thus leaving her knowledgeable about the type of business that will take place behind closed doors. She will eventually leave her husband because she will no longer be able to bear the fact that she is married to a mafia boss.

Still, family is very important in the mafia world. Family is viewed as the pillar of life which needs to be preserved and taken care of. Mafia members love their families and would do anything to protect them. Love for one’s family is something which became one of the main characteristic of Italian gangsters in movies. Family relations are very important in Italy, and it is something that mafia members that live in the USA kept as one of the main features of their

identity. One of the most famous scenes in *The Godfather* sees Don Vito Corleone saying that “a man who doesn’t spend time with his family can never be a real man.” (*The Godfather* 00:24:21-00:24:26). This is one of the most famous quotes from the trilogy and it bears high significance because of the weight that sentence carries. It is like a rule that has to be followed and obeyed. This is why Michael remains angry with Kay for leaving him, because he believes that she was the reason for the destruction of their family.

Family is also a cause of lots of stress for the members of the mafia. In *The Godfather* Michael has to take care for his wife and children but also for his mother, sister and brothers and has to keep them all in mind whilst conducting business. In *The Sopranos* stress from family members is even more obvious. Tony has to deal with his mother Livia who is constantly complaining about everything Tony does and always accuses him of wanting the worst for her. In the same time he has to deal with his father’s brother Junior, with whom he competes to be the boss of the family. He still loves them deeply but is shocked when he realizes that they wanted to kill him. This especially goes for his mother. He cannot accept the fact that his own mother wanted him dead and even attacks his psychiatrist when she brings up that idea. This is because Tony finds it frowned upon to even think about that kind of horrific idea because the Italian tradition puts the role of the mother as a very important one.

Another cause of stress is the clash between blood family of mafia members and also their crime family. The clash between the two is a cause of many problems for gangsters. In *The Godfather*, Michael lost his entire family because of the mafia. His wife divorced him, his son distanced himself completely from his father’s business and his daughter ultimately died as a result of a war between mafia groups. Tony Soprano also risks losing the love and affection of his family because of his business. What both Michael and Tony have in common is that they start to move away from their actual families towards the life of crime. With greater power and influence that they start to have, they start to move further away from their wives and families. Michael even gradually throughout his life tries to make his family business legitimate and tries to make amends but ultimately fails to do so. In the last part of the trilogy when he realizes he cannot leave his past so easily he utters one of the most famous quotes about the haunting of past crimes, the quote being “Just when I thought I was out, they pull me back in.” (*The Godfather Part III* 01:00:03-01:00:07).

The importance of blood family and marriage also became more important. Support from family, time spent with them and connections that were formed through family life became

very important for gangsters. Through that gangsters also became more connected with their Italian heritage and background. Gangsters work not only for themselves but for their families, wives, children, and on the end for each other. However, what often occurs is the clash between blood family and mafia family. The fact that gangsters have to organize their lives between the two often leaves one of the families to be left out or neglected. More often than not, the blood family is the one which suffers more in this case. *The Godfather* is again a great example for that because there, “The idea of family is central to Italian culture and is also most important to the Mafioso; because it references a dualism – the blood family and the Mafia family” (Wilson 90). However, we can also say that some gangsters, even though they do their jobs because of their families, can still be seen as individuals. Vito and especially Michael Corleone can be regarded as such. Although their mafia organization was connected with other Italian-Americans, both Vito and Michael wanted more and wanted to enter the highest society in the USA. They wanted to abandon their mafia roots and become respectable members of society without the burden of their on-going mafia businesses. Throughout the trilogy Michael tries to reach that status by moving away from his Italian background towards politics and high business. “All three Godfather films visualize the move toward individualism begun by Vito and completed by Michael...” (Baker and Vitullo 216). Still, Michael’s endeavour ultimately fails. We can also see him sitting alone at the end of the second and the third part of the trilogy. This signifies that although he tried to do whatever he can to help his family and to reach a certain status he failed. In the end he was left alone as an outcast from everyone who was ever close to him.

## **5. ROLE OF THE FATHER**

Father roles and being a father is very important in a man’s life. Even though mothers are usually the ones that are considered to be closer to their children, and that they have a bigger influence on them, fathers still have a very important role. Still, in many movies and TV shows, especially the older ones, fathers are described as those who go to work and who do their jobs whereas mothers are the ones who look after children. Mothers do most of the raising and fathers are usually there to teach their children to play sports or drive a car. In mafia movies and TV shows fathers have a very important role. It is still true that most of the fathers do not

take part in an everyday and constant raising of children, but their influence is huge. Most of the fathers who are in the mafia are very tough and strict people who know how to force themselves upon others. They have great power in their professional lives and it transfers to their private lives also. They also tend to have a heavy influence on their children's future and careers they are going to have. Also, a lot of the fathers tend to force their children to join the family business and become a part of the mafia. A lot of children do not have practically any other choice besides that. Their lives are predetermined because of their fathers' occupation. Many of them do not want to join mafia but in the end, willingly or not, they do join it. There are also some of them who move completely away from it and chase other businesses that do not have anything to do with the mafia. However, there are also cases in which fathers wanted something different and better for their children than life in the mafia. These examples can be seen in many mafia movies and TV shows, and one of the best examples of importance of father roles are *The Godfather* and *The Sopranos*.

In *The Godfather* we follow the lives of the Corleone family from Don Vito Corleone who is *paterfamilias*, then his sons, mostly Michael Corleone who succeeds him as the Don of the family, and then on the end Michael's children and nephews. Don Vito Corleone is the boss of the mafia family and is a very strong personality. He controls his family with the help of his associates and his sons. Three of his four sons, Sonny, Tom and Fredo take part in the mafia business before the trilogy starts, but his youngest son Michael refuses to be a part of it. Michael wants to pave his own way away from the family business and does not want to identify himself with any of it. In the beginning scene of the first part, Michael talks about his family business to Kay and ends up with saying, "That's my family Kay, it's not me." (*The Godfather* 00:21:11-00:21:14). Michael has this opinion until his father gets shot in the street by a rival gang. After that, Michael slowly becomes more and more involved in the family business, and ultimately decides to be the one who will directly avenge his father. His brothers are reluctant at first but then go along with it. After Michael kills the men who framed his father he becomes a full member of the mafia. His previous desires not to join the mafia and to be outside of that world changed completely after what happened to his father. Because of the fact that his brother Sonny gets killed, that Tom is not an ethnic Italian, and that Fredo is not smart and capable enough, Michael becomes the boss of the family after Vito dies. This is something that Vito did not want for Michael. He wanted his other sons to be a part of his business because he believed that it was inevitable saying "I knew that Santino was going to have to go through all this. And Fredo..." (*The Godfather* 02:28:50-02:28:56). However, he put all of his hopes in Michael

getting out of the family business and having a life of his own. In the last conversation they have we can see Vito telling to Michael that he wanted him to clear the name Corleone. Vito tells Michael that, “I never wanted this for you. I work my whole life, I don’t apologize, to take care of my family... but I thought that when it was your time that you would be the one to hold the strings. Senator Corleone. Governor Corleone or something...” (*The Godfather* 02:29:02-02:29:41). He wanted Michael to be the one who will change the fate of the Corleone family. Don Vito does not regret his choice of life because he believes that he was forced to do what he did, and that because of that one of his children could reach for something that was impossible for him.

When it comes to Michael as a father, he had two children, a son Anthony and a daughter Marie. It is evident in the third part that he has different plans for his children but that his plans ultimately fail. He wanted Anthony to become a part of the family business and to work alongside him. However, Anthony wanted different things from his life and influenced by his mother Kay he completely moved away from his father. At the same time Michael’s daughter Marie adores her father and wants nothing more than to be close to him and his business. She is also in love with her cousin Vincent, Sonny’s son, who wants to become Michael’s heir and become a Don himself. Michael disapproves of their relationship because of this. He especially has a problem with his daughter being in any way associated with the mafia. He knows that Vincent has a grand ambition and that he will not stop until he reaches it. He does not want his daughter to be the wife of a Don. He saw from first-hand how his wife Kay was unhappy with that arrangement and how she was constantly in danger while they were married. He does not want the same future for his daughter. In the end the very thing he was trying to shield his daughter from became the thing that cost her life. In that sense it can be said that Vito and especially Michael failed in their missions that they wanted for some of their children.

In *The Sopranos*, the main character is Tony Soprano who is a member of the New Jersey mafia and later becomes the boss of it. His father Johnny was also in the mafia and Tony simply continued going down the same road as his father after he passed away. Tony never really had a choice in his life other than to be a part of the mafia. His father put him in that business, and even though Tony tried to go to college that quickly failed. Throughout the series we can see that Tony is not the happiest because he has to be in the mafia. He enjoys his life, the money and the power he has but there are still glimpses every now and then of Tony regretting his choices in life. It seems like he would love nothing better than to leave his mafia

life behind and start fresh. However, this is not possible and Tony has to face the fact which is his life. He was simply born in to that kind of a lifestyle and there was no way around it. Just like Michael Corleone, Tony has two children, a daughter Meadow and son Anthony Junior or A.J. Tony has different relationship with them and this is evident from the beginning to ending of the show. A.J. should be Tony's heir and image of his father but he is far from that. As he grows older it is evident that A. J. becomes more and more distant from his family, and especially Tony. He often gets angry, insults his parents and becomes estranged from everyone else around him. He also becomes more and more depressed as the show progresses, which ultimately leads him to attempt suicide. The suicide proves not to be successful and A. J. can be seen getting some control over his life until the end of the show. Tony was always very strict and hard on A. J. but his love for him was always constant. This can especially be seen when he finds him trying to kill himself. Throughout the show Tony realizes that his son could not ever be a member of the mafia because A. J. simply does not have any qualities that could make him good at that.

Meadow is older than A. J. and she is in many things different from him. Meadow is a much better student who ends up going to college. She was also rebellious during the first half of the show, and had many arguments with Tony. She was also critical about his life and the fact that he is the boss of the mafia. This was almost never discussed but we still see her side of the story. However, as she is getting older she becomes more and more defensive when it comes to her father's business. She defends him against others and also expresses more and more understanding to her father's line of work. When it comes to Tony's relationship with her, it could be argued that Meadow is Tony's favourite person there is. He was also sometimes strict with her, but he always allowed her to get away with more things than he allowed to A. J. He deeply loves Meadow and considers her to be more similar to him than A. J. In one of the conversation they have Tony tells to Meadow that, "I tell people you're like your mother but you're all me. Nothing gets by you." ("Bust Out" 35:39-35:45). The amount of affection Tony has for her is best displayed towards the end of the show when Tony brutally beats up a member of the New York mafia because he was provoking Meadow. Their relationship has its ups and downs but the constant still was that Tony wanted only the best for his daughter. He was, also like Michael, completely against the possibility that Meadow ever becomes a part of his business. He even mentions on therapy that he wants her to get away from his business as much as possible. That is why he was disappointed when he realized that Meadow chose law school over becoming a doctor. He was proud of the option that his daughter becomes a doctor, and

believes that she could become closer to his business if she eventually becomes a lawyer. When the show ends it can be said that both of Tony's children were on their own paths in life.

In *Goodfellas* there is no real relationship between a father and a son. However, there is a relationship between a son and a father figure. Paulie Cicero, the boss of the mafia family, can be seen as a paternal figure to Henry Hill. He always watches over him and helps him whenever necessary. He was the one who brought him to the mafia and who was always kind and welcoming to Henry. Father figures can also be seen in *The Godfather* and *The Sopranos*. It can be said that Vincent views Michael as a father figure and he sees in Michael an idol and a person Vincent wants to become. Michael guides him in the mafia life and also shows strictness to him when necessary. In *The Sopranos*, Tony is a father figure for Christopher Moltisanti who is, just like Vincent is to Michael, his nephew. Christopher is a troubled man whom Tony tries to put on the track in the mafia hierarchy during the majority of the show. Towards the end of the show their relationship becomes stranded and Christopher ends his life tragically.

Fathers usually try when it comes to relationship with their children. Even though they are members of the mafia they often want the best for their kids. Being a good father is equated with being a good man, and being a proper masculine figure is at the core of every gangster. Still, although they are focused on their roles as fathers, they often fail in doing it. Protagonists in these movies and TV shows often disappoint their children, which leads to many conflicts between them. Since they are antiheroes with lots of flaws and problems with their character, this starts to affect the relationship with their children. "The audience sees the men really trying, but some alchemy of chance, personality, and circumstance prevents things from working out as they intend." (Lotz 69). They are usually struck by these situations, and it hits them very hard.



## 6. CONNECTION BETWEEN MASCULINITY AND ITALIAN IDENTITY

Since mafia organizations described in this paper are all Italian-American organizations, Italian identity and ethnicity is the one which is viewed. As many other ethnic and racial groups, Italians are just one of them that populate the USA. As most of those groups, every member seeks its place in the world of the new country they are in, and try to assimilate to the new surroundings. The extent of assimilation depends not only on the group as a collective, but on each individual. It mainly depends on how much a person will stay in touch with his ethnic background and behaviour. This can also be seen regarding masculinity. Italians in the mafia are often stereotypically thought of as people who are loud, openly aggressive, are often yelling and screaming, and have a very short fuse. This is true for some of the characters in the mafia movies and TV shows. Some of the examples of them are: Sonny Corleone from *The Godfather*, Tommy DeVito from *Goodfellas*, and Paulie Gualtieri from *The Sopranos*.

However, there are also presentations of different types of Italian men. They do not show their masculinity by being the loudest person in the room, nor do they need to overtly present their aggressive behaviour so that everyone knows who the strongest person in the room is. They show their strength and power by being calm, giving out smart advice and orders that their followers obey without question. They are feared, respected, and loved in lots of times. Examples for these characters are Vito and Michael Corleone from *The Godfather*, Paulie Cicero from *Goodfellas*, and Silvio Dante from *The Sopranos* (Larke-Walsh 169).

The difference between these characters and the characters previously mentioned is the level of accommodation that they grew accustomed in the USA. They have found the perfect balance between their new American identity and their previously solely held Italian identity. They have saved part of their heritage and ethnicity, but still managed to become more assimilated to America's way of life, thinking, and behaviour. This is why they hold higher positions in the mafia than their counterparts. They are bosses of the family or their closest advisors. They are seen to be the ones who can make smart choices, who can choose the right options, and who can be trusted to do what is in the best interest of the family. Still, they have a sense of pride for their Italian identity and heritage and are not shy to show it. They are not ashamed of their background and are proud to show it, and even defend it if necessary. One of the best examples for it is an entire episode of *The Sopranos* which revolves around Columbus

Day and the parade for it. Native Americans oppose this parade because they see Columbus as a historically negative person who enslaved their ancestors. This leads to protests and conflicts between them and the Italians which further leads to arrests. The character of Silvio Dante is the one who is the leader of the Italian group. At the beginning of the episode he says, “You know what it is? I’ll tell you what it is. It’s anti-Italian discrimination. Columbus Day is a day of Italian pride. It’s our holiday and they wanna take it away.” (“Christopher” 02:54-03:05). This can be seen peculiar at first since he is that one character in the show who is, for the most part, perceived to be the one who is calm and rational. Viewers would expect Paulie Gualtieri to be the leader of this cause. However, Silvio is the one who starts to take the situation around Columbus Day very seriously which leads to negative publicity for himself and his associates in the mafia. When Tony confronts him about it Silvio expresses his pride for his Italian heritage and convinces Tony to help him.

Tony Soprano had a different view of their Italian roots than other characters. Tony was always proud on his Italian identity. In one of the first episodes of the show we can see Tony and his family having dinner where Tony and Carmela talk to their children about famous Italians throughout the history. They highlight the most important points they can think of such as the fact that Italians were the largest ethnic group that fought for the USA in World War II, or that the real inventor of telephone was Antonio Meucci and not Alexander Graham Bell. This is done because they want their children to also be proud of their roots and to know who they really are and where they came from. Furthermore, in one of the scenes with his psychiatrist Dr Jennifer Melfi, Tony talks about his view of Italians in the USA. He tells her, “When America opened up the floodgates and let all us Italians in, what do you think they were doing it for? ‘Cause they were trying to save us from poverty? No, they did it because they needed us. They needed us to build their cities and dig their subways, and to make them richer.” (“From Where to Eternity” 17:00-17:14). Tony expresses pride in the fact that Italians “didn't want to swarm around their hive and lose who we were. We wanted to stay Italian and preserve the things that meant something to us: honor and family and loyalty... and some of us wanted a piece of the action.” (“From Where to Eternity” 17:18-17:29). In this way Tony justifies his own life and actions involved with the mafia. However, at the end of the Columbus Day episode Tony goes in a state of rage because he becomes fed up with all the talking about it. In his rage he talks about how a person is not defined by his nationality and tells Silvio how everything Silvio has is because of him and his intelligence, and not because of his background. He talks about how the only measure for success is one’s own hard work, intelligence and persistence and not one’s

nationality. Tony again talks about Gary Cooper and how he finds him the perfect ideal for what an American should be, but his friends mostly do not understand what he is trying to say.

In *The Godfather*, the main characters of Vito and Michael are the ones who try to move away from their Italian background to their new American way of life. They still want to hold on to some of the important things which they find vital for a proper life, such as one's family. But, they try to take up as much of the American way of life as they can. When Vito first comes to New York as a child he is put in quarantine because of the danger he might be sick. We can see Vito looking through his window bars outside at the Statue of Liberty. This can be seen as a metaphor of Vito looking at the symbol of freedom behind a closed room. From that point on Vito wanted to succeed and fight his way in the society. The only way in which he could make a fortune for himself was through illegal activities. This is particularly what Tony Soprano talked about with Dr Melfi. Michael Corleone is seen to be a perspective former soldier who could one day become an important political figure. However, he decides to join the family business and follow at his father's footsteps. He turns his organization into something far bigger than his father ever dreamt of and decides to legitimise his business. He does this because he wants to move away from the stereotypic view of himself, and his entire family. He wants to reach a point where he can become a fully respected member of high American society. However, he does not manage to do so because of his past.

What most of these characters have in common is their desire to act as a true man. This is connected with their Italian identity and ethnicity which further adds to their characterization. This is what separates them from the rest, and also creates a picture of the ideal and strong American that viewers can come into contact with. Just like is the case with characters in the movie or a TV show, they will both, love and respect these types of characters. They become one of the most beloved and iconic figures of movie and television.

Still, it has to be noted that although some of the characters like Sonny Corleone, Tommy DeVito, and Paulie Gualtieri are not considered to be perfect Americans or perfect gangsters even, they are still very much loved by the viewers. Their strong personas that are aggressive and often even funny are amusing for people to watch. Their imperfection is what makes their characters closer to some viewers, and in some cases these characters are more loved than the ones who are perceived to be strong, and silent types. Characters like these are perceived more like classical gangsters, and still show some aspects of masculinity which viewers can see as stereotypical masculine behaviour. A good example for this is the character

of Tommy DeVito, who throughout the movie tries to aggressively promote his own manhood and masculinity to prove his worth in front of his friends. He violently exposes his own persona because he believes that it is the way he will earn respect (Gardaphe 78). However, even though these characters are loved by viewers, their eventual endings are usually tragic. This is most commonly because of the way they acted throughout their life and their aggressive behaviour without thinking first.

In *Goodfellas*, Italian identity is also important in several ways, but there are also other ethnic groups which are put in a contrast to the Italian one. Throughout the movie we can see and hear a lot of stereotypes about Italians like how certain women do not want to be seen with Italians because they perceive them as all being involved in the mafia. In the movie there are different nationalities that are as important like the Italians. The main character of the movie Henry Hill is part Irish, for instance. That is why *Goodfellas* can be seen as a contrast between different ethnic backgrounds. One important part of one's nationality is the fact that Henry Hill cannot become a fully made member of the mafia because he is of Irish descent. The fact that he is not a full Italian means that he can serve only as their associate.

*Goodfellas* is also a movie which shows much of the lifestyle of gangsters, with many of its downsides, but also with some parts that could be considered attractive for male viewers. Some of those parts are drinking, gambling, hanging out with beautiful women, wearing nice clothes, and driving nice cars. This is why *Goodfellas* can be described as a sort of male fantasy where men have a lot of fun. It can even be seen as a buddy movie with lots of humorous elements within it. The connection can also be made between Henry Hill and an average male viewer. When he was a child the only thing Henry Hill wanted to become was a gangster. The reason he wanted to become that is because of all of the gangsters which he was able to see in his surroundings. He saw the way they were living and the way they came to those lives. They were not involved with the misery of average American life, but instead skipped certain obstacles to reach their statuses. They did what they wanted and how they wanted to and answered to nobody. They were his image of a man, and he started to believe that the only way to be a true man is through their lifestyle. He loved their cars, clothes, and their behaviour in general and wanted to become like them. "Hill constructs his view of how to be a man based on what he sees and what he thinks he knows about gangster culture. He is unable to imagine any other way of being a man." (Gardaphe 77).

The same connection can be drawn to male viewers of mafia movies and TV shows because they are attracted to the characters in mafia movies and TV shows because of the same things. The lifestyle of gangster appeals to them, and that is why they can find ideal role models in movies like *Goodfellas*.

## **7. OFF-WHITE MASCULINITY**

As already presented, masculinity has been important in the world almost since the beginning of mankind. Through the course of time, and across different civilizations masculinity had its bigger or smaller importance and role in each society. White masculinity is a particular important masculinity which was in power throughout the majority of the history of the world. In most of those cases other groups of society, such as women or men who were not white were considered to be inferior in comparison with white men. This started to change in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and it caused many white men to question whether they were now inferior, and whether they should be seen as victims and not the ones who were considered to be privileged.

Mafia movies became also the ones that started to change because of this case, and this was especially going on in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Mafia movies that were made in this period are movies which can be called off-white mafia or gangster movies (Ennis 174). Off-white mafia movies are different from other mafia movies of the previous era. They are usually set in some time in the past. This is most commonly somewhere in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, before the 1990s. These movies were made as a response to white man's fears that he was becoming less and less powerful in the modern world. Many white men in the 1990s believed that they were wrongfully accused for actions that were done by other white men in the past who could be seen as oppressors of those who were different. They also believed that they themselves were the ones who were oppressed in the past because of something that was different about them. Because of these it can be said that off-white mafia movies are placed in the past for two reasons. The first one has something to do with the fact that the characters in off-white mafia movies are usually of a non-Anglo-Saxon background. They are usually either Irish, or more commonly Italian. These characters are shown to be discriminated because of

their ethnic background. They are usually immigrants in the USA where they are not welcomed in a good manner. They were thought to be of an inferior background, and seen only as a potential workforce for jobs Americans considered to be unsuitable for themselves. These jobs were usually hard manual jobs. These immigrants were predominantly poor, and they wanted to find a way out for themselves and their families. Some of them started to form mafia organizations and take part in organized crime. Through this they could achieve status, money and easier life. Example for this type of people is Don Vito Corleone whose life in the USA was precisely like this. Also, as previously mentioned, this is the view that Tony Soprano has about the life of the Italian minority in the USA.

The other reason that off-white mafia movies are set in the past is because that was the period when white men had more power than anyone else. After the mafia became strong and influential in the society, its members who were predominantly white men became respectable members of their communities. They were the ones who held power in both, their professional life and also their home life. Off-white mafia movies can be seen by white men as a nostalgic piece of cinema which brings them back to the society that does not exist any longer. White men share the feeling of not having any control or dominance in the world. They victimize themselves because of their loss of power and, “gangster genre films of the 1990s like *Goodfellas* work to revalorize and re-center white masculinity by recalling that white ethnic men, too, were once victims.” (Ennis 176).

The main idea of off-white mafia movies is to become attractive to men who believe that modern world has rejected them and pushed them aside. These movies want to show American history being dominated by white men before everything collapsed for them. Mafia movies are one of the best ways to present this because of their general appeal towards men, especially white men. Off-white mafia movies always talk how mafia members had a hard life, usually because of their origins. This makes the viewers sympathise with the characters. Viewers also start to see themselves in the mafia characters. However, even though European immigrants did suffer discrimination upon their arrival in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century in the USA, still their status had become much better by the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They became much more accepted in society, and other ethnic and racial groups became the ones who suffered discrimination. Never the less some of these movies like *Goodfellas*, which is set in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, view immigrants as being second class citizens. This is done so that it could be more attractive to the target audience because, although much time has

passed, these people still call upon the days in which they were poor and unwanted in the USA. This was especially the case at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the white man's hegemony was a topic which was often discussed.

This is when off-white mafia movies started to become a thing (Ennis 181). They became a reaction to the fact that white men were being criticized more and more because of their history. Off-white movies did not show white men as historical villains who were tyrants towards other racial and ethnic groups. They are shown as people who also suffered from prejudice and who had to work hard to climb in the society. These movies question the ideas of allegiance, ethnic background, the relations amongst men, and not the bad image of a white man who does wrong to others. They try to awaken sympathy with the audience and try to show them a different view of men than what is a constant in the real world. Their main characters had to do everything and anything to survive and become recognizable and respected. There are many off-white mafia movies like *The Godfather Part III* or *Donnie Brasco* but the best representative of them is *Goodfellas*.

In *Goodfellas* the main character is Henry Hill who works his way in the mafia family in New York City in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Being a member of the mafia, or a wiseguy as they call themselves, is the only thing Henry Hill wants to become. He is of part Irish part Italian ethnic background. His ethnic background is one of the most important parts of the movie. Since he is not of completely Italian origin he cannot become a fully accepted member of the mafia, or a 'made guy'. He can be an associate of the mafia and earn them money, but he can never be fully accepted in that circle nor can he have the protection that full members of the mafia have. This fact is the one that will in the end lead him to enter the witness protection programme and to give names of all of his friends and associates to the FBI. Throughout the entire movie Henry Hill has a romantic view of the mafia's lifestyle until the end when he is faced with a choice of a life in prison or becoming a federal witness. Henry's inability to become a full member of the mafia is because of his ethnic background, so it can be connected with the fact that white men were discriminated only because of their different ethnic group. Also, the thing that Henry Hill always wanted to be is to become a part of something which is greater. He wanted to become a part of a larger community and he even says that it was his prime motivation for entering the mafia lifestyle. He wanted to become like the people he admired. His feeling of belonging is what drives him to do everything he does. Henry says towards the end of the movie how, "You know, we always called each other goodfellas. Like

you'd say to somebody: "You're gonna like this guy, he's all right. He's a goodfella. He's one of us." You understand? We were goodfellas, wiseguys." (*Goodfellas* 01:49:59-01:50:12). He wants to be accepted and ultimately appreciated and respected. In the end, although he tries his best, he still remains outside of that group.

This can be seen as a metaphor for white masculinity of the 1990s when the movie was made. White men at that time felt like the new outsiders who took the fault for misdoings of the past. Just like Henry Hill they found themselves to be left out. They wanted to seek approval and feeling of belonging to something bigger than themselves. They wanted to bring a meaning to their lives. This goes for many men who were unhappy with their lives at the time the movie came out. They found a lot of similarities with Henry Hill and identified themselves with him. Also, the fact that Henry is a victim of his ethnic background is something that white men also claim to have been. The victimization of white men can be seen several times in the movie, such as in scenes where Henry Hill and Tommy DeVito are considered to be unsuitable for their wives and possible lovers because of their ethnic backgrounds which is constantly criticized and viewed through prejudices.

In the end of the movie, as mentioned, Henry Hill betrays his friends and enters the witness protection programme. He leaves his old lifestyle and becomes an anonymous member of society. He becomes the very person he wanted to avoid. He wanted to belong and to be a part of something greater, to be respected and admired. In the end he was left without friends, and without the glamorous lifestyle he got used to. He is left with feelings of nostalgia for his old life, and with the realization that it can never be returned. He has the same feelings many of the white men had in the 1990s. Those are the feelings of nostalgia, loss of power and irrelevance. Normal life that average people lead is not enough for Henry, and the viewers of the movie, especially white men, can start feeling the same way. Because of these feelings, viewers make think that Henry Hill became a victim after all. That his life was simply the one that had a lot of obstacles and that the only thing Henry did was try to overcome those obstacles the best way he imagined but ultimately failed.

Henry Hill once had everything and anything he asked for and was now left empty handed and alone in an unknown world to him. Although he was the one who decided to betray his friends, white men can still feel sympathy for him while watching the movie, and also see themselves in Hill's character. Another view of looking at things is that Henry Hill, just like white men in real life, deserved what was coming to him. This is because of the fact that he



wanted everything for himself and that he wanted to relish what life gives him without any consideration as to whom it may harm. The same can be said for white men throughout history who were solely the ones who were at the top of the society and now had to face the fact that they can no longer be alone at that place (Ennis 191).

## 8. GROUP IDENTITY AND MASCULINITY

In postclassical mafia movies we can find certain features that are not masculine necessarily, but are made as such in mafia world. One of them is cooking which is frequently featured in mafia movies, and which is considered to be a positive feature for men involved with the mafia. *The Godfather*, *Goodfellas*, and *The Sopranos*, all of them feature scenes in which some of the main characters cook lunch or dinner most commonly for their male friends. There are many instances when this happens in the pork store in *The Sopranos* or in prison in *Goodfellas*, and mafia men put a great deal of importance on good cooking, which is very appreciative. In the prison scene in *Goodfellas* gangsters are presented as working together to cook dinner where everyone has his task that they have to do. Also, in *The Godfather Part III*, we can see the character of Vincent explaining to his cousin Marie how to cook because she does not know how to cook anything. We can see here a complete reversal in the male and female traits in that a man is the one who knows how to cook and not the woman (Gardaphe 41). Apart from cooking, this is also an example of gangster taking care of each other. Taking care is another feature that is not quite masculine, but is a big part of mafia movies and TV shows. Even though men are considered to be protectors of their wives and children, and family in general, taking care is also evident within the mafia itself. Its usage is to explain intimacy between men in a complete male environment. By taking care of each other, they preserve unity between themselves and also make their group more homogenous. If all of the members of the mafia work for this particular cause this makes the mafia as a collective group one that can be characterised with virtues of loyalty and integrity.

Group identity is very important for the mafia. Men who are involved with it need to feel the support of their friends and colleagues in the mafia world and also need to feel comfortable amongst each other. A lot of times mafia members identify themselves with

military, even the lowest members of the mafia who work on the street are called soldiers. In this sense they try to uplift their profession into something which can be seen as heroic and courageous. In one of the sessions with Dr Melfi, Tony Soprano also equates himself and his colleagues to soldiers. Tony says of his crew, “we’re soldiers. Soldiers don’t go to hell. It’s war. Soldiers...they kill other soldiers. We’re in a situation where everybody involved knows the stakes and if you're gonna accept those stakes, you gotta do certain things. It’s business.” (“From Where to Eternity“ 16:26-16:50). The one connection mafia organization does have with military is group cohesion. Soldiers need to work together in the military to achieve a certain goal, especially during the war period. Individuality is not welcomed and thinking the same about certain issues is something that is expected from them. The same is in the mafia. There should be no questioning of the boss and his commands. He should be obeyed in all of the circumstances. In the same speech he has about mafia members being soldiers Tony also says that, “we follow codes...orders” (“From Where to Eternity” 16:51-16:54). Here, we can see how Tony tries to justify his actions, and those of his friends and associates.

Moreover, mafia members need to work as a group to achieve profit in their enterprises. One member of the mafia can hardly achieve something great on his own. Just like the military can be attractive for some men, so can life in the mafia. Doing something for a bigger cause, working together on big businesses, sharing this with your friends, and in the end make money of all of that, can be very tempting and attractive for a lot of men who watch mafia movies and TV shows. That feeling of belonging can be very attractive for them.

That feeling happened to Henry Hill in the movie *Goodfellas*. The only thing Henry Hill wanted to do in his life was to become a gangster. As a child he would look at the older gangsters from his neighbourhood and he started to idolise them. He liked everything that he saw on them. He liked the cars they were driving and the clothes they were carrying. He also liked the fact that all of them were making a lot of money. In the opening monologue of the movie Henry says about gangsters that, “they weren’t like anybody else. I mean, they did whatever they wanted. They double parked in front of a hydrant and nobody ever gave them a ticket. In the summer when they played cards all night, nobody ever called the cops.” (*Goodfellas* 00:03:09-00:03:19). He was also fascinated with becoming someone important and famous to whom people would show only respect. He talks how, “it was there that I knew that I belonged. To me, it meant being somebody in the neighborhood that was full of nobodies.” (*Goodfellas* 00:03:04-00:03:08). The most important thing he loved about being a gangster was to be a part

of a big group. He wanted that feeling of belonging which is something that many people want in their lives. He wanted to be a part of a group of people who think like him, who look like him, and who share his own dreams and thoughts about life. The first big moment when he starts to feel like a part of the group is the first time he gets arrested. Henry is afraid that older members of the mafia would be angry with him, but actually they come to support him and greet him when he comes out of prison. Throughout his mafia life Henry was always feeling like that. Still, at the end of the movie he chooses his own life in freedom and betrays all of his friends and associates to the FBI. He automatically loses the lavish and luxurious lifestyle he once had. At the very end of the movie he realizes that he became a completely irrelevant person. He became the very person he was fighting not to be his entire life. We can see this despair of Henry in the last monologue he gives at the end of the movie. He talks how, “the hardest thing for me was leaving the life. I still love the life. And we were treated like movie stars with muscle. We had it all, just for the asking... Everything was for the taking. And now it’s all over. And that’s the hardest part. Today, everything is different...I’m an average nobody.” (*Goodfellas* 02:18:18-02:19:45).

Viewers, and men especially, can see a sort of a role model in Henry because of his desire, courage and readiness to achieve his goals. They see in him the image of a person they want to become, someone confident and capable. Viewers in general become drawn to the mafia world which includes murders, robberies, drugs, adultery, and violence. They start taking it for granted and they themselves become infatuated with the mafia world they watch. They start to believe Henry Hill when he talks about how good his life was and sympathise with him when he realizes can no longer live it. His way of life becomes so attractive that all the bad stuff he does is completely ignored because of the image he creates around his lifestyle. “As a spectator, the hardest part about *Goodfellas* is realizing how effectively I can be seduced by “the life” and its logic...if, indeed...intention was to create a story and milieu where the spectator’s sense of right and wrong occupies a significantly grayed moral space at the film’s end, *Goodfellas* succeeds – and no one, not even the spectator, goes untainted.” (Haggins 457).

One thing that can be often seen in *Goodfellas* and *The Sopranos* is that gangsters spend a lot of time with each other. There are many scenes where we can see gangsters playing cards, playing pool, or just drinking beer and enjoying themselves. They usually do this in a place where they feel comfortable, in a known bar or another place of their gathering. Through this they further deepen the connections between each other and also stay close enough so that they

could be able to solve a certain problem if necessary. The idea of guys just hanging out with their friends for the majority of the day can be very appealing to a lot of men watching these types of movies and TV shows. It shows in the surface at least that their lives are without much care. In *Goodfellas* it can be seen how Henry Hill is practically talking to that kind of audience when he says how, “For us, to live any other way was nuts. To us, those goody-good people who worked shitty jobs for bum paychecks and took the subway to work every day, worried about their bills, were dead. I mean, they were suckers.” (*Goodfellas* 00:17:52-00:18:04). In the real life men usually cannot hang out with their friends and practically do nothing for a longer period of time. They also have to take care about the things Henry mentions. Watching these types of movies they can at least live their alternate lives through something they watch on TV. Even though that group functions outside of the general society’s norms of behaviour, it is still attractive because of the unity that can be found among men who are a part of it. Collective identities can be seen in mafia movies and TV shows since they display masculinity not individually but through its multiplicity.

However, there is still some individuality when it comes to gangsters, and it is usually reserved for the bosses of the family. Two best examples for that are Tony Soprano and Michael Corleone. The bosses of the family are usually perceived to be somewhat on a distance from the rest of the group. They have to control and coordinate everything that goes around and are also the one held responsible for anything bad that happens. They are also the ones that need to make the toughest decisions. Because of all of this we can see Tony and Michael as being men with a lot on their minds. This makes them distanced from the others. Tony mentions several times how it is hard to be the boss of the family and how not many could do what he does, because of all of the decision making involved. He tells his advisor Silvio how, “All due respect, you got no f\*\*\*ing idea what it's like to be Number One. Every decision you make affects every facet of every other f\*\*\*ing thing. It's too much to deal with almost. And in the end, you're completely alone with it all.” (“All Due Respect” 17:41-17:55). Silvio will later in the show see this actually happening to himself when he is forced to be an acting boss whilst Tony is in the hospital. He quickly starts to dislike that position and is relieved when Tony takes back his place.

## 9. MALE RELATIONS AND PROBLEMS

Relationships between men are very important in any all-male society or organization. Those relations have its good and bad sides. The good sides are characterised by humorous and relaxed conversations between men, and the bad sides by conflicts that occur. The good side of an all-male group is the constant banter which occurs between them. Men feel comfortable and relaxed with their friends and constantly mock and make fun of each other. Although at surface this can be seen as a bad side of a relationship it actually is not. This “represent conversations among men as a constant, easy banter of humorous mocking and one-up-manship through which men nevertheless foster relationships and express sincere sentiment:” (Lotz 116). This can be seen in mafia movies and TV show also where a group of men just sit around and tease each other. However it can also often be seen that men in some cases can go too far which then leads to a violent reaction of the one who was the object of mocking. Examples for this can be found in *Goodfellas* where Tommy’s character kills one of the waiters for trying to make fun of him, or when his character kills another ‘made guy’ just because of a joke. In *The Sopranos* there are also many scenes like these where characters usually get angry when someone questions their sexual orientation or insults members of their families. When these situations occur it is common that it would end in physical violence or even murder.

Furthermore, men can feel more comfortable in surroundings with men because they can feel free to talk about certain things that bother them. They are afraid to talk about these things with their wives or girlfriends because of the fear that they would look at them differently. These kinds of conversations often occur in private with only the closest friends. That becomes a special place for them where they also feel security and feeling of belonging. These types of conversations are opposite of the previously mentioned bantering or joking. Men can lead serious conversations with each other about some troubles that they are having. They can even expose themselves as vulnerable if they feel comfortable enough. This can be seen in *The Sopranos* in several scenes. Tony and Christopher can be seen talking about depression and meaning of life. Paulie also talked to Tony about his health problems and problems with his mother. Johnny Sack, a member of the New York mafia family who sometimes works with Tony, spoke to him about the love he has for his wife, and how to him, “she is beautiful...that

woman is my life.” (“The Weight” 07:34-07:41). Men can also talk about the expectations that they have to face as men and heads of families. In the first part of *The Godfather* we can see an actor and singer Johnny Fontaine coming in to Vito Corleone’s house to ask if Vito, his actual godfather, can arrange for him to get a role in a movie. Fontaine starts to feel sorry for himself and almost starts to cry when Vito slaps him and shouts at him, “you can act like a man.” (*The Godfather* 00:23:55). The importance of acting masculine is of the utmost importance to Vito and he expects the same from his friends and family.

As in any group or society in addition to good relationships there are also the bad ones. Clashes between men often occur, especially in organization such as the mafia where there are strong masculinities involved and where pride is very important for many of the characters. Pride is a characteristic which many of the mafia members have and they usually hold on to their pride even if it means that they will eventually succumb to it. It can especially lead to conflicts with their fellow mobsters and colleagues. Troubles can also arise if two strong personalities face one another and feel a certain threat coming from their counterpart. This clash can often be seen between an older and younger member of the mafia. The older one can feel threatened by the younger one’s intelligence, capabilities or connections. This can be seen in *The Sopranos* between Paulie and Christopher. Christopher is Tony’s nephew and for a better part of the show Tony mentors him and guides him through the mafia world. Paulie is a character who is even older than Tony and who has been in the mafia long before the show even started. He considers Tony a close friend but feels that his closeness and friendship with Tony is threatened because of the closeness Tony has with Christopher. He also believes that Christopher is climbing in the mafia hierarchy too fast only because of his family connections with Tony. This leads to numerous conflicts between the two throughout the entire show. Each of them tries to impose as the stronger, more powerful and more important person in the mafia.

The same can be seen in *The Godfather*. Michael Corleone is the youngest of Vito’s sons but ultimately he becomes Vito’s heir at the head of the mafia family. Even though he is the last one to become involved in the family business, he still manages to pass his brothers. This leads to conflicts between them. In the first part of the trilogy Sonny, who is the oldest son, starts to feel threatened by Michael’s willingness to do what is necessary, and also calmness, something that Sonny never had. In the second part the same can be seen with Fredo who is far less intelligent than Michael and far less capable of conducting serious crime business. This leads to Fredo’s treason of Michael which carries the plot of the movie. Fredo’s

jealousy and disappointment can be best seen in a conversation he and Michael have. When Michael tells Fredo that he always took care of him Fredo becomes furious and says to Michael, “taken care of me? You're my kid brother and you take care of me? Did you ever think about that?...I'm your older brother, Mike, and I was stepped over!... I can handle things!” (*The Godfather Part II* 02:29:27-02:30:01). Fredo’s pain can be seen in these lines where his pride completely overwhelms him.

Hierarchy is of the utmost importance for any mafia group because it shows the chain of command which every individual must respect and obey. Hierarchy is often explained in mafia movies and TV shows in details so that the viewers could get a better sense of what mafia life looks like and how it is conducted. Hierarchies are very strict and everyone involved knows duties and risks when joining a mafia world. Hierarchies enable the usage of aggression in cases when it is absolutely necessary to use it. A different type of hierarchy can be seen in *The Sopranos*. In *The Godfather* characters are less in touch with the ordinary world of an average person. In *Goodfellas* characters appear to be more childish and boyish than in *The Godfather*. They want to behave like men but still have a lot of qualities that make them more similar to boys than men (Gardaphe 80). In *The Sopranos* we can see characters doing some things which are characteristic for people who are not involved with the mafia whatsoever. Examples are like going to dinners, watching their children play sports or just sitting on the couch and watching TV. Tony Soprano can be seen doing a lot of these things often. That is why he can be compared to an average businessman who works in some company or organization untied with mafia business. He also does not appear to have all the things under control like Vito or Michael Corleone, and it seems that many things that happen to him depend on influences from the outside which he cannot control. Sometimes those influences can cause him a lot of problems. This is where Tony’s stress becomes more and more evident, and this can easily be compared to an average man in the real world. Some of the problems that he has throughout the series are similar as those of many men who watch the show.

One problem, or maybe better to say irritation, is when Tony frequently gets interrupted by his wife, and sometimes by his children, while watching TV after he comes home from work. In one scene when Carmela wants to talk to Tony about money and finances in the future, Tony gets irritated and says how, “I've been busting my pick all day long, to bring home the money you're so concerned about, and I thought, *maybe*, I could have a sundae, and zone out in front of the friggin' TV.” (“For All Debts Public and Private” 14:06-14:13). This is something

with which many men can identify with in their own homes and lives. Another situation is the fact that Tony's elderly mother is also a big cause of stress for Tony, which is again something that many men deal with in their own lives. This makes Tony closer to average male viewer who sees Tony not just as a crime boss, but as an average man with average man's problems. Also, Tony is full of contradictions that make him a more complex character than many other gangsters. He is one of the less expected gangsters because of his character development, and is not the prototypical choice for being a role model to male viewers. This can be seen in a physical sense where he is overweight, unglamorous and not that physically attractive. Despite of this, he hangs around with beautiful women. Although adultery is something which is in a sense a bad thing, this did not have that kind of an effect on male viewers who saw this lifestyle attractive. They saw how a man who is of average looks can lead a life with a lot of money and women around him if he possesses some qualities such as confidence, and belief in oneself. Although Tony used his qualities in a completely wrong environment filled with violence and murder, men are ready to look past it because of the attractiveness of Tony's way of life.

This makes Tony's character a complex one because he does not fit into one simple category. Opinion of viewers about him can change from one episode to another. Through his ordinary appearance and many problems that occur to ordinary people every day, like problems with your family, friends, money, and with your health both mental and physical, Tony can be seen as similar to an everyday American. This is what makes him alluring and attractive for viewers because they can see a part of them in the presentation of the main character. This is what makes him especially attractive for male viewers (Renga 377).

There is also a connection between Tony Soprano as a viewer of TV and male viewers that watch the show *The Sopranos*. Tony is also influenced by what he sees in TV and sees in certain movies ideal lifestyle and values that do not exist anymore. This is visible through his watching of old Western and gangster movies, as well as frequently mentioning certain scenes from *The Godfather* trilogy, and also, through his repetitive mentioning of Gary Cooper who symbolises old American values. In this sense he is the same like viewers who watch *The Sopranos* in a sense that he also wants to be like those characters portrayed in the movie. Just like Tony Soprano fantasies about being like the Corleone family, an average male viewer fantasies about being like Tony Soprano and his crew (Larke-Walsh 227). Because of these reasons it is possible to watch mafia movies and TV shows through two lenses. The first one would be to consider these types of movies and TV shows to be brutal in its appearance, and



without moral. The second view is to consider them as a more of a melodrama where the main protagonists could be considered more of heroes than villains. They can even be perceived as tragic heroes who are forced to live their lives outside of the society's values and outside of what is considered to be an ideal American lifestyle.

Mafia movies and TV shows are in a sense in a contrast because they perceive masculinity through a necessary aggression, but also through certain features that are considered to be more feminine than masculine. They play on the nostalgic and romantic picture of masculinity that is lost and that is outside of the society's constraints and norms of proper behaviour, but also shows certain problems that arise in these types of groups.

## 10. CONCLUSION

To sum up, concept of masculinity is one of the most important concepts for life in the mafia and for gangsters. Their entire idea of a group is founded on the basis of them acting masculine. Acting masculine has always been important for male communities and for men in general, as can be seen throughout history. It goes all the way from the times of great knights who were considered to be the perfect manifestation of masculine behaviour during the Middle Ages. However, masculinity has changed immensely from those times. Just like everything else in the world, masculinity has also had many changes around its concept. Qualities like bravery in battle which were considered to be the most masculine form of expression in certain parts of history were substituted by other qualities like the power of will instead. Masculinity is a constant as something that exists, but its content has constantly been changing.

Mafia movies and TV shows are excellent means to view how masculinity is important in a male community. The best examples of mafia movies and TV shows are analysed in this paper, them being *The Godfather* trilogy, *Goodfellas*, and *The Sopranos*. Mafia members are generally men, and they practice a line of business which requires of them to show certain qualities of masculinity. Anything that is considered to be remotely non-masculine is frowned upon by other members of the mafia. They need to always be careful about their words and actions. Masculinity is closely tied with the importance of family. Family is the core of most men, and the same is with mafia members. Both of their families, their personal and their professional, have a strong influence on them. Both of them are also the source of stress for many of the characters. As much as mafia characters try, they cannot hold the two families separated, and the clash between them happens very often. Within families men have their roles and responsibilities as fathers. Male characters in mafia movies and TV shows are often influenced by their fathers into joining the mafia in the first place. They have a feeling of responsibility towards their children, but the relationship with them is always complicated because of the line of business they are in.

Masculinity can also be tied to Italian identity, and to certain virtues and features that are considered to be primarily Italian. These are put in movies and TV shows about mafia so as to connect some characters more to their Italian descent. Different types of Italian characters are described, but still all of them have a sense of pride and affection for their Italian heritage and the troubles their ancestors had to deal with. The connection between masculinity and

Italian identity is evident in many instances. Off-white masculinity is also very important because it directly played towards an ideal viewer of the mafia genre. It was aimed at the white male audience who were feeling nostalgic about the times when whole power was in their hands, and mafia movies helped them feel more connected to those times. Masculinity is also important because of the collective group identity that mafias have. They expect sacrifice from their members for the benefit of something larger than them, of the group. These ties and connections that happen through a collective identity are very important for the establishment of male relationships. As in any relations, problems between men occur, and they usually happen because of aggressive behaviour that characterise these men. That behaviour brought them to their mafia life and it can sometimes lead to clashes within the mafia. There are also cases when mafia members have similar problems as average male viewers, which further strengthens the connection viewers might have with the characters.

In all of this, what is important is the image viewers get from watching mafia movies and TV shows. Media present them with a picture of what an ideal man should look like and men start to copy and follow that image of a perfect man. One of the role models for masculinity is the presentation of the mafia characters like in the *The Godfather* trilogy, *Goodfellas* and in a TV show *The Sopranos*. Men are drawn to this world because of the way these characters look like, the clothes they are wearing, and the behaviour they show. They are attracted because of the power they have and because of the strength and abilities they show in business. Moreover, they like the male bondage that happens in these types of organizations, and men see in mafia movies and TV shows masculinity that was once standard for all the world, but is today on the margins. They have a romantic and nostalgic notion of masculinity which leads them to idolise many characters from the mafia genre. They ignore their negative sides, like murders, robberies, adultery, and try to seek only the positive sides to which they want to aspire to, and also seek connections and similarities that they have with gangsters. Men admire them and want to be more like them. The same can be seen in *The Sopranos* where men admire the mafia characters from the movies previously made. That is the most basic and obvious metaphor for average male viewers of mafia movies and TV shows who try to find meaning and greater sense of masculinity through them.

## 11. WORKS CITED

1. Baker, Aaron and Vitullo, Juliann. 'Screening the Italian-american Male.' *Masculinity: Bodies, Movies, Culture*, edited by Peter Lehman, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., Routledge, 2011, pp. 213-226.
2. Chase, D., Grey, B., Green, R., Burgess, M., Landress, I. S., Winter, T., & Weiner, M. (Executive Producers). (1999–2007). *The Sopranos* [TV series]. Chase Films; Brad Grey Television; HBO Entertainment.
3. Edwards, Tim. 'Cultures of Masculinity.' Routledge, 2006, UK.
4. Ennis, Larissa M. 'Off-White Masculinity in Martin Scorsese's Gangster Films.' *A Companion to Martin Scorsese*, edited by Aaron Baker, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., Wiley Blackwell Companions to Film Directors, 2013, pp. 173-194.
5. Ford Coppola, Francis. *The Godfather*. Paramount Pictures, 1972.
6. Ford Coppola, Francis. *The Godfather Part II*. Paramount Pictures, 1974.
7. Ford Coppola, Francis. *The Godfather Part III*. Paramount Pictures, 1990.
8. Gardaphe, Fred. 'From Wiesguys to Wise Men.' Routledge, Taylor and Francis group, 2006, New York.
9. Haggins, Bambi. 'The Cinematic Seduction of Not a "Good Fella".' *A Companion to Martin Scorsese*, edited by Aaron Baker, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., Wiley Blackwell Companions to Film Directors, 2013, pp. 442-458.
10. Mosse, George L. 'The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity.' Oxford University Press, 1996, New York.
11. Larke-Walsh, George S. 'Screening the Mafia: Masculinity, Ethnicity and Mobsters from *The Godfather* to *The Sopranos*.' McFarland & Company Inc., 2010, USA.
12. Lotz, Amanda D. 'Cable Guys: Television and Masculinities in the 21st Century.' New York University Press, 2014, USA.

13. Renga, Dana. 'Mafia Movies: A Reader, Second Edition.' University of Toronto Press, 2019, Toronto.
14. Scorsese, Martin. *Goodfellas*. Warner Bros., 1990.
15. Sussman, Herbert. 'Masculine Identities: The History and Meanings of Manliness.' Praeger, 2012, Santa Barbara, California.
16. Wilson, Ron. 'The Gangster Film: Fatal Success in American Cinema.' Columbia University Press, 2015, USA.

## 12. Concept of Masculinity in Mafia Movies and TV Shows: Summary

In this paper, the author highlights the importance of the concept of masculinity in mafia movies and TV shows. Firstly, the paper analyses the concept of masculinity throughout history in order to see how that concept changed and evolved. After that, author of the paper starts the analysis of the selected movies and TV shows, them being *The Godfather* trilogy, *Goodfellas*, and *The Sopranos*. Author of the paper analyses the importance of masculinity and family roles within the characters of those movies and TV shows. Moreover, author analyses the connections between masculinity and the Italian identity of the characters. Furthermore, author deals with the concept of off-white masculinity to show how mafia movies were made for white male audience. The paper ends with the author analysing collective group identity of the mafia members, and the problems they encounter with during their lives. Throughout the entire paper, author also analyses how men who watch these movies and TV shows perceive the characters they are watching.

Key words: *The Godfather*, *Goodfellas*, *The Sopranos*, masculinity, family, Italian, identity, group, collective

### **13. Koncept maskuliniteta u mafijaškim filmovima i TV serijama: Sažetak**

U ovom radu autor ističe važnost koncepta maskuliniteta u mafijaškim filmovima i TV serijama. Najprije se u radu analizira koncept maskuliniteta kroz povijest kako bi se vidjelo kako se taj koncept mijenjao i razvijao. Nakon toga autor rada kreće u analizu odabranih filmova i TV serija, a to su trilogija Kum, Dobri momci i Obitelj Soprano. Autor rada analizira važnost maskuliniteta i uloga u obitelji kod likova tih filmova i TV serija. Nadalje, autor analizira veze između maskuliniteta i talijanskog identiteta likova. Autor se također bavi konceptom off-white maskuliniteta kako bi pokazao kako su mafijaški filmovi snimani za bijelu mušku publiku. Rad završava analizom kolektivnog grupnog identiteta pripadnika mafije, te problema s kojima se susreću tijekom života. Kroz cijeli rad autor također analizira kako muškarci koji gledaju ove filmove i TV serije percipiraju likove koje gledaju.

Ključne riječi: Kum, Dobri momci, Obitelj Soprano, maskulinitet, obitelj, talijanski, identitet, grupa, kolektiv