The Mob In The Media Essay, Research Paper

A social issue that has become very controversial in the 1990 s is the glamorization of mob, and mob life. With the popularity explosion of gangster rap and an abundance of gang related movies; the life of gang members is being portrayed as rich and luxurious. If one looks at rap music and movies as forms of stories it is easy to see why the mob is often portrayed as glamorous. The mob contains elements which make for a good story. The stories and ways of the mob show elements that are common in both the modern day glamorization of the mob and the true mob itself. Areas that make the mob such a popular topic in entertainment are its origination, its workings, its famous crime families, its famous members, and famous organized crime busters.One reason that the Mafia is the topic for so many movies and rap songs is the origination of the mob. Like any good story, the mob had a beginning. Organized crime in America spawned during Prohibition because Alcohol became illegal and people need to drink. Prohibition helped form a criminal hierarchy to supply alcohol (”How to Defeat Organized Crime” N.P.). In 1920, the Volstead Act made alcohol illegal to drink in the United States causing smuggling industries in Canada and Mexico to grow. (Thanks Al Capone) Soon after Prohibition, in 1921, national meetings of the bosses of the La Cosa Nostra where held every five years. (Andy N.P.) Although Prohibition in itself was not very interesting, it helped the Mafia gain money and power, which are two things that make for an interesting story. The workings of the mob create many elements which can de used as themes in songs and movies. The Mafia s strict grooming standards, such as requirements to shave and where a suit, make mobsters look sharp, and make members attractive characters for a good story (Donnie Brasco). The inter workings of the mob, such as the hierarchy of a crime family, fascinate people. The hierarchy which governs most crime families is organized like this: boss, or head of the family. Under him is his skipper or underboss, who gives money to the boss and assign tasks from the boss, a sort of secretary. Under the skipper is the wiseguy or “capo”. A skipper has approximately three to five wiseguys. Wiseguys can act as loan sharks, bookies, or other sorts of things. Their main job is to get their skipper money. (Donnie Brasco) This struggle for power can create conflict that is necessary for a good movie. Corruption of policemen, politicians, and judges is essential to successful Mafia operations. (FBI Founder J. Edgar Hoover s Links to the Mafia N.P.) The corruption of city officials allows the Mafia to use prostitution as a form of income. Prostitution drives organized crime because sex is very desirable, and the Mafia decided to capitalize on it. Prostitution is essentially sex which is the topic in many songs and movies (”How to Defeat Organized Crime” N.P.). Another part of the Mafia that is like a Hollywood movie is the code of honor. An example of this is the respect that is demanded by members of the mob, such as a wiseguy never buying a drink. Someone buys it for him as a sign of respect. (Donnie Brasco) Unlike the royal family of England, one does not need to be blood to be part of the family, which allows others to enter the family such as enemies, from a more powerful mob to act as puppet bosses, or government informants. (Donnie Brasco) This causes many conflicts in the family and an interesting story, which Hollywood likes. “Being sent for” is a saying used by the mob, which is when one s superior is calling one in to talk or sometimes to be killed in an ambush. (Donnie Brasco) Sayings in the mob create colorful dialogue that adds to the level of a movie. The way the mob works would is very similar to some of the elements that are in movies such as, charisma in characters, betrayal, secret codes among men, and conspiracy. The mob s crime families are another factor that leads to the portrayal and glamorization of the mob in many movies and songs. The main mob in America is La Cosa Nostra, or the LCN. The LCN is formed of the five crime families of New York, a family in Chicago, and a Detroit family. (Andy “The Genovese Crime N.P.) The heads of each family meet every five years to settle disputes between families, confirm new bosses, and other miscellaneous tasks. These seven members are known as the “commission.” The five crime families of New York are the Gambino family, the Colombo family, the Lucchese family, the Bonanno family, and the Genovese family. Bosses of the Gambino Family have had mixed fates; some were killed or arrested and some became rich and powerful. (Andy “The Gambino Crime N.P.) The first know boss of the Gambino family was Al Mineo who controlled the family in the 1920 s. (Andy “The Gambino Crime N.P.) Al Mineo was killed during the Castellmmarese war. The purpose of the killing was to undercut his friend, Joe Masseria, who was head of the Genovese family. (Andy “The Gambino Crime N.P.) Al Mineo was replaced by Frank Scalise, who soon stepped down as boss because of the death of chief ally, Sal Maranzo. He stepped down in fear of the wrath of Maranzo foe, Lucy Luciano. (Andy “The Gambino Crime N.P.) Frank Scalise was replaced by Vince Mangano, who was part of the original seven people on the commission. (Andy “The Gambino Crime N.P.) Vince Mangano choose Albert Anastasia as underboss to please Luciano. When Anastasia and Mangano got in an argument, Anastasia got angry, Mangano disappeared, and Anastasia became boss. (Andy “The Gambino Crime N.P.) In 1957 Vito Genovese, Carlo Gambino, and Tommy Lucchese plotted o kill the head of the Gambino family, Anastasia, and the head of the Genovese family, Frank Costello. Costello was gunned down by a lone gunman. Anastasia s under boss was gunned down in a scene that was recreated in the “Godfather”, and then Anastasia was gunned down in a hotel barbershop. (Andy “The Gambino Crime N.P.) Carlo Gambino was instated as the legitimate boss at the next “commission” meeting. (Andy “The Gambino Crime N.P.) The deaths of heads of the Lucchese, Colombo, and Bonanno families left Gambino at the top of the LCN. He ruled for eight years as the “boss of bosses”. (Andy “The Gambino Crime N.P.) Carlo Gambino died in 1976 and Paul Castellano, his brother in law, was left as boss. He ruled the family for nine years away from the city while his underboss, Paul Dellacroce, ruled the streets. (Andy “The Gambino Crime N.P.) When Paul Dellacroce died, his number one man, John Gotti, gained support from the other families and killed Castellano which made him boss. (Andy “The Gambino Crime N.P.) While being boss of the Gambino family, Gotti was under fire from both the justice system and Genovese boss Chin Gigante. He was caught on tape by the feds and was sentenced to life in prison. The Colombo family, a.k.a. the Profaci family began around 1900 by preying on Italian immigrants in Brooklyn. The family grew in the 1920 s because of prohibition. (Andy “The Colombo Crime N.P.) Joe Profaci and underboss Joe Magliocco where the original leaders of the Colombo crime family. They lived through the Castellammarese war and still had their jobs. Profaci, a leader of the LCN, created legitimate businesses so he could live life large and not worry about the IRS. (Andy “The Colombo Crime N.P.) Profaci, a member of the commission, lived as a boss for thirty years because of allies with dominant groups. (Andy “The Colombo Crime N.P.) Profaci, who died of cancer, was replaced by underboss Magliocco. Magliocco, who died, was replaced by Joe Colombo a while later. (Andy “The Colombo Crime N.P.) Joe Colombo went public about denying the mob. In 1971, Colombo was shot by a lone Gunman. (Andy “The Colombo Crime N.P.) Carmine Persico inherited Colombo s and the family came under new power for the next twenty years. Although Persico was in jail, the family became rich through drug dealing and racketeering. (Andy “The Colombo Crime N.P.) When the feds got tough on organized crime a power struggle between Carmine Persico and Vic Orena. Carmine came out on top and picked Andy Russo as new and present leader. (Andy “The Colombo Crime N.P.) The first known Lucchese boss was Tom Reino. He was murdered in the Castellammarese War. This left Tommy Gagliano and Tommy Lucchese as co-bosses of the family. (Andy “The Lucchese Crime N.P.) Lucchese and Gagliano both helped form the LCN and the commission, which Gagliano sat on. (Andy “The Lucchese Crime N.P.) Friend of the family, Sal Maranzo, confirmed Gagliano as head of the family, later Gagliano and Lucchese turned on Maranzo and teamed with Lucky Luciano. (Andy “The Lucchese Crime N.P.) In 1952 Gagliano died, leaving Lucchese a boss. He made money selling drugs and other legal and illegal operations. (Andy “The Lucchese Crime N.P.) Lucchese, Carlo Gambino, and Vito Genovese were plotting to take over all of the crime families. Gambino and Genovese got to the top of their respective families. Together they undermined the Colombo and Bonanno families by making the bosses of the families their allies. (Andy “The Lucchese Crime N.P.) Lucchese died in 1967 from cancer and was replaced by Gambino puppet Carmine Tranunti, who was shortly arrested and replaced by Lucchese friend Tony Corallo, who survived as boss till the commission case in the 1980 s (Andy “The Lucchese Crime N.P.) The Lucchese family was ruled by Vittorto Amyso for a few years, who came into trouble with the law. He was convicted and replaced by current boss Joe Befede. The Bonanno crime family is based in Brooklyn but came from the Castellammarese region of Sicily. Another branch in Chicago was headed by Joe Aiello. (Andy “The Bonanno Crime N.P.) Struggles between Aiello and Al Capone spread to New York in 1930, which started the Castellammarese war, which let Sal Maranzano into power. (Andy “The Bonanno Crime N.P.) Sal Maranzano was killed and Joe Bonanno became boss and helped form the commission. The commission helped Bonanno prosper for the next thirty years. (Andy “The Bonanno Crime N.P.) Bonanno was not challenged in the family until friend Anastasia died. Bonanno felt he was losing power and plotted to kill the leader of the Gambino family. He was demoted by the commission and replaced by Carmine Galante. (Andy “The Bonanno Crime N.P.) New leader Carmine Galante began selling heroin and gained power scaring the other families, which killed him out of fear. (Andy “The Bonanno Crime N.P.) Sonny Napolitano gained power of the family but allowed a FBI infiltration and was killed on the orders of the commission. (Andy “The Bonanno Crime N.P.) Joe Bonanno came back and wrote an autobiography, which lead to the commission case, which intern lead to the arrest of many members of the commission. For this, the Bonanno family no longer holds a seat on the commission. (Andy “The Bonanno Crime N.P.) When John Gotti came to power, he put Joseph Massino as head of family, who now quietly runs the family. (Andy “The Bonanno Crime N.P.) The Genovese family has been the most powerful family in the last 100 years. (Andy “The Genovese Crime N.P.) Joe “the Boss” Masserio was the leader of the LCN. He helped Al Capone in Chicago with a conflicted with another family and its head Sal Maranzano. Joe Masseria supporter, Lucky Luciano planned with family enemy Maranzano to kill Joe “the Boss” and then gain control of the family. Next he killed ally Maranzano and gained control of the LCN. (Andy “The Genovese Crime N.P.) Head of the family, Lucky formed the commission in order to protect himself and settle disputes between the families. (Andy “The Genovese Crime N.P.) Luciano was busted in New York and sentanced to 30-50 years in jail. He was replaced not by underboss Vito Genovese who was accused of murder, but by capo Frank Costello. Costello was later injured by Chin Gigante under the orders of Vito Genovese who was exonerated on murder charges. (Andy “The Genovese Crime N.P.) Vito Genovese was jailed in 1959, but ran the family from the big house. When Genovese went to jail, Tommy was head of the family, who was killed. He was replaced by Gambino friend Frank Tiere. Teri stepped down from the commission in1980 and died in 1981. (Andy “The Genovese Crime N.P.) Chin Gigante took over as leader of the Genovese family and used Fat Tony Solerno as a fake boss, who was taken down in the commission case. Gigante hated John Gotti and wanted to kill him but didn t. (Andy “The Genovese Crime N.P.) The Genovese family lost some money when a mob club was shut down in the mid-1980 s. Chin Gigante was convicted of racketeering charges in 1997. However, the Genovese family is still the strongest family in New York if not the country. It is stories such as the one of the five New York city crime families that make the mob s story that make the mob such a popular topic for movies.

Another factor which makes the mob such a good topic for movies and songs is their famous gangsters. In the movies, the gangsters would play the role of the bad guy. With flashy and ruthless personalities, famous gangsters such as John Gotti and Al Capone would make perfect villains. John “Dapper Don” Gotti was the most powerful gang leader in New York in the 1990 s. He liked to live large as the head of the Gambino Family in which he climbed the corporate ladder by revenging the death of the bosses nephew. He was sent to jail for that, and when he got out, he was upped for his loyalty. (John Gotti, USA N.P.) John then was upped when two underbosses where shot. (John Gotti, USA N.P.) His charisma and fearlessness helped Gotti gain support from other bosses, and he killed his superior to become boss of the family. Three acquittals and his flashy style led his nickname to be changed to the “Teflon Don.” He was later convicted of racketeering and sent to jail. . (John Gotti, USA N.P.) Much like the movies the good guys win in the end. Another famous gangster was Al Capone. Al grew up in Brooklyn and was in many a gangs. (Blewitt N.P.) He moved to Chicago to escape the law. (Blewitt N.P.) Capone soon after earned his hated nickname “Scarface” after being cut with a knife on his check. (Blewitt N.P.) He was working as a bouncer at a nightclub in which he killed many a men. (Blewitt N.P.) Al Capone grew to take over the city of Chicago with 1,000 men on his payroll and half the CPD. (”Al Capone”) He made $105 million in 1927, and was eventually arrested for take evasion. (”Thanks Al Capone, Gambling Booze, Back to the Roots!”) Like many bad guys in the movies, Al Capone s down fall was caused by money. Like bad guys, good guys are necessary for a good story. Organized crime fighters such as Elliot Ness and J. Edgar Hoover play important roles in the resemblance of the life of the mob to moves. Elliot Ness and his gang the “Untouchables” battled Al Capone and his gang in Chi Town. (Eliot Ness N.P.) Like in the movies Eliot Ness and the “untouchables” never took a bribe and never gave up. (Eliot Ness N.P.) This story was some much like a movie that they made a movie, Scarface and a TV show, The Untouchables, out of it. Although J. Edgar Hoover did create the FBI to battle organized crime he cooperated with organized crime because of embarrassing picture of Hoover participating in homosexual activate in the possession of mobsters. (”FBI Founder J. Edgar Hoover Links to the Mafia”) Like in some movies, one doesn t know who is good or bad. The Mafia s origination, workings, crime families, infamous members, and organized crime busters all have elements that make an interesting story, thus the reason for all of the Mafia movies and songs. The elements of betrayal, greed, jealousy, and power are elements that surround the mob and many of these elements are evident in a good story. The mob is picked as the subject for many stories because it has these elements.