

# Gangster essay



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For example, both films make reference to the gangster being an Immigrant, one specially who dislikes his low status in life, and believes he is destined for more. In *Godless*, Henry is half Sicilian and half Irish. *Godless* is set in the 1930s, and I understand that in New York especially in the 1920s, Irish immigration was at a high.

This may be due to the social, religious and cultural changes in Ireland at the time. Another film that depicts Irish Immigration is *Kill the Irishman* (Nathan Hansel; 2011; Mexico).

Irish Immigrants were frowned upon in New York, and this may be indicative of Henry's drive for success, whatever the means of gaining wealth. Also in *American Gangster* the Gangster is portrayed by a African American man, it was post civil rights in America in the 1960s, which would tell us that black people in America at the time should have equal rights, however American's had difficulty accepting this, so early after the civil rights movement.

Again, Frank Lucas may have disliked his low social status, and therefore had the motivation to work hard, regardless of drug legislature. Another representation put forward by these films that is accurate of the time period in which these films are set is the representation of men.

During the 1930s societies were widely dominated by men, meaning that living in America in the 1930s meant living in a patriarchal society. This is represented in *Godless*, when Henry is held at gunpoint by his wife; Karen.

To begin with it appears as though this scene is subverting stereotypes, as Karen is in control using a gun, which is typically iconography associated

with men. However Karen is hysterical, and Henry manages to talk her out of shooting him, and he takes back his power, reinforcing the stereotypes.

When he gets the gun back off Karen, he proceeds to put the gun to her o ‘ see how she likes It’, this domestic violence, shows that Henry Is quite masculine, and he quickly takes back any power his wife has over him.

Examples of this can also be seen in American Gangster, when Frank seems to take pleasure in telling one of his associates that they shouldn’t be wearing the suit he bought, as it attracts too much attention.

The confrontation is between two African American males, who are both In the drug trade, yet Frank takes rank over the others, suggesting that even some males are conforming to living In a patriarchal society. Families were working towards. Linking to the point previously made, the man was typically the one who should provide for the family.

Therefore the male should be the one who allows the family to achieve the American Dream.

The American dream was to have land; such as a nice home, enough money to be stable, and to have a complete family. The desire for this is represented in Godlessly when we see Henry committing a number of criminal acts, Just to have the finer things in life. For example when Karen is narrating the storyline, she says how Henry was willing to ‘ risk his neck Just to have the little extras.

This is also represented in American Gangster, where similarly, Frank is willing to break the law multiple times, to be able to afford a life of luxury.

An example of when we see this is when Frank buys a house, that is surrounded by acres of land and he moves his family in, so that they can live a better lifestyle. To conclude, my wider contextual studies have been useful in understanding the similarities and differences in the gangster films I have studied, as my knowledge has given me a greater idea of what the time period was like that the films are set in.