

## Just when I Thought I was Out, They Pull Me Back In: A Perspective on Traumatic Injury in *The Godfather Part III*

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Received 1 February 2016; accepted 16 February 2016

**How to cite this paper:** Falcone JL. Just when I Thought I was Out, They Pull Me Back In: A Perspective on Traumatic Injury in *The Godfather Part III*. J Med Mov [Internet] 2016;12(3): 140-146.

### Summary

**Background:** *The Godfather Part III* portrays the fictional Corleone family as the third and final installment of *The Godfather* trilogy. The aim is to evaluate traumatic injury and death in the film. **Hypothesis:** The hypotheses are that: a) male characters suffer more traumatic mechanisms than females, b) more traumatic mechanisms occur in the second half of the film, and c) a higher percentage of traumatic mechanisms are penetrating. **Methods:** In this descriptive study, *The Godfather Part III* was critically viewed for incidents of significant traumatic mechanisms. Traumatic mechanisms were documented by running time. Characters that died during the film were evaluated for type of mechanism and cause of death. Categorical statistical comparisons were performed, using an  $\alpha = 0.05$ . **Results:** There were 43 significant traumatic mechanisms and 33 character deaths. A total of 95% of the mechanisms involved male characters whereas 5% involved female characters ( $p < 0.001$ ). A total of 97% of the mortalities involved male characters whereas 3% involved a female character ( $p < 0.001$ ). The traumatic mechanisms and deaths were similar between halves of the film (both  $p > 0.05$ ). Named characters were more likely to die, and traumatic injury led to increased mortality in the second half of the film (both  $p < 0.05$ ). Traumatic injury from a penetrating mechanism was the most common cause of death overall ( $p < 0.001$ ). **Conclusions:** Male characters suffer more traumatic mechanisms and death than females in *The Godfather Part III*. A majority of deaths are from penetrating traumatic injuries.

**Keywords:** History of Medicine, Motion Pictures, Trauma, Violence, Wounds and Injuries.

## Quando pensé que ya estaba fuera, volví a encontrarme dentro: una perspectiva de las lesiones traumáticas en *El Padrino parte III*

### Resumen

**Contexto:** *El Padrino Parte III* retrata a la familia ficticia Corleone en la tercera y última entrega de la trilogía *El Padrino*. El propósito es evaluar las lesiones traumáticas y la muerte en la película. **Hipótesis:** las hipótesis son las siguientes: a) los personajes masculinos sufren más mecanismos traumáticos que los femeninos, b) la mayoría de los mecanismos traumáticos ocurren en la segunda mitad de la película, y c) un elevado porcentaje de los mecanismos traumáticos son de tipo penetrante. **Métodos:** en este estudio descriptivo, la película *El Padrino Parte III* fue críticamente visualizada para detectar casos de mecanismos traumáticos significativos. Estos mecanismos fueron documentados en el tiempo de duración de la película. Los personajes que mueren durante el filme fueron evaluados en función del tipo de mecanismo y la causa de la muerte. Se realizaron comparaciones estadísticas categóricas, utilizando un  $\alpha = 0.05$ . **Resultados:** en la película se detectaron 43 mecanismos traumáticos significativos y 33 muertes. Un 95% de los mecanismos implican a personajes masculinos, mientras que sólo un 5% se produce en personajes femeninos ( $p < 0.001$ ). Un 97% de las muertes se produce en personajes masculinos, y un 3% en femeninos ( $p < 0.001$ ). Los mecanismos traumáticos y muertes se muestran similares en las dos mitades de la película (en ambos casos,  $p > 0.05$ ). Los personajes son más propensos a morir, y las lesiones traumáticas conducen a un incremento de la mortalidad en la segunda mitad de la película (en ambos casos,  $p < 0.05$ ). Las lesiones traumáticas por mecanismo penetrante son, entre todas, las causas más comunes de muerte ( $p < 0.001$ ). **Conclusiones:** los personajes masculinos sufren más mecanismos traumáticos y casos de muerte que los femeninos en *El Padrino parte III*. La mayoría de muertes se deben a lesiones traumáticas penetrantes.

**Palabras clave:** historia de la medicina, largometraje, trauma, violencia, heridas y lesiones.

The author states that this article is original and has not been previously published.

## Technical Details

**Original Title:** *The Godfather: Part III*

**Country:** USA.

**Year:** 1990.

**Director:** Francis Ford Coppola.

**Music:** Carmine Coppola.

**Cinematography:** Gordon Willis.

**Film editors:** Lisa Fruchtman, Barry Malkin, Walter Murch.

**Screenwriters:** Mario Puzo and Francis Ford Coppola based on Mario Puzo's novel, *The Godfather* (1969).

**Cast:** Al Pacino (Don Michael Corleone), Diane Keaton (Kay Adams Michelson), Talia Shire (Connie Corleone Rizzi), Andy García (Vincent Mancini), Eli Wallach (Don Altobello), Joe Mantegna (Joey Zasa), George Hamilton (B.J. Harrison), Bridget Fonda (Grace Hamilton), Sofia Coppola (Mary Corleone), Raf Vallone (Cardinal Lamberto), Franc D'Ambrosio (Anthony Vito Corleone),...

**Color:** Color.

**Runtime:** 162 minutes.

**Genre:** Crime, Drama.

**Production Companies:** Paramount Pictures, Zoetrope Studios.

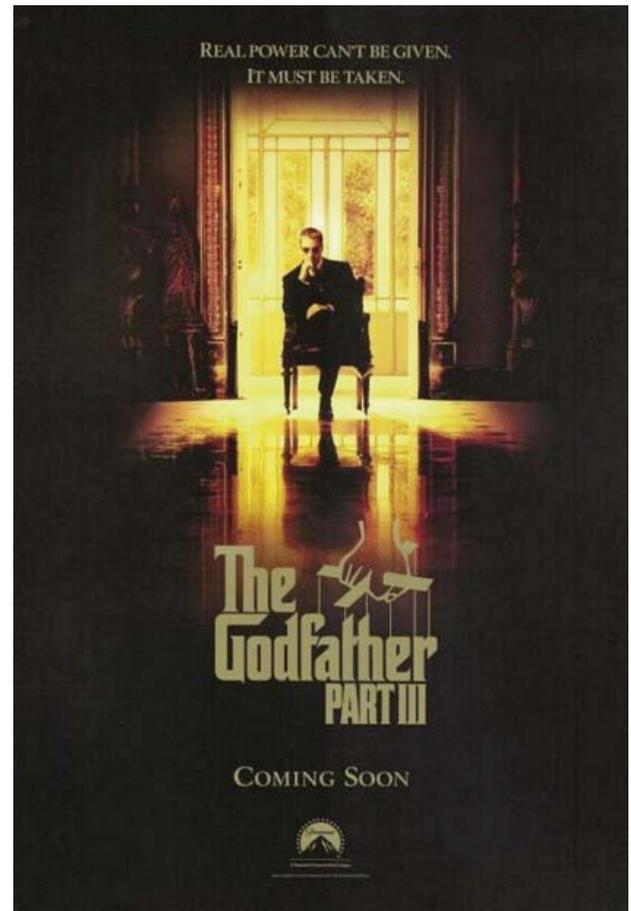
**Synopsis:** "In the final installment of the *Godfather* Trilogy, an aging Don Michael Corleone seeks to legitimize his crime family's interests and remove himself from the violent underworld but is kept back by the ambitions of the young. While he attempts to link the Corleone's finances with the Vatican, Michael must deal with the machinations of a hungrier gangster seeking to upset the existing Mafioso order and a young protégé's love affair with his daughter" (FilmAffinity).

**Awards:** Seven nominations for Oscar (1991), Best Picture, Best Director (Francis Ford Coppola) Best Supporting Actor (Vincent Mancini), Best Cinematography (Gordon Willis), Best Art Direction-Set Decoration (Dean Tavoularis, Gary Fettis), Best Film Editing (Barry Malkin, Lisa Fruchtman, Walter Murch), Best Music, Original Song [Carmine Coppola (music), John Bettis (lyrics) for the song "Promise Me You'll Remember"].

**Links:**

[http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0099674?ref=fn\\_al\\_tt\\_1](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0099674?ref=fn_al_tt_1)

<http://www.filmaffinity.com/en/film346540.html>



[Trailer](#)

## Background

*The Godfather Part III* is the third and final installment of *The Godfather* movie series. *The Godfather* series was voted the best overall trilogy in 2011 by the American Movie Classics (AMC)<sup>1</sup>. *The Godfather Part III* was nominated for seven Academy Awards in 1991, including nominations for Best Picture, Best Director, Best Actor in a Supporting Role, and Best Cinematography<sup>2</sup>. The film was also nominated for seven Golden Globe Awards, including nominations for Best Motion Picture, Best Director, Best Actor, and Best Supporting Actor<sup>3</sup>. However, *The Godfather Part III* did not win any of these awards for which it was nominated, in stark contrast to the accolades of its predecessors. *The Godfather* won three Academy Awards (including Best Picture and Best Actor in a Leading Role) and a record five Golden Globe Awards (including Best Motion Picture, Best Director, and Best Actor)<sup>4,5</sup>. *The Godfather Part II* won six Academy Awards (including Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Actor in a Leading Role)<sup>6</sup>.

*The Godfather Part III* did “win” two Golden Raspberry (Razzie) Awards for Worst Supporting Actress, and Worst New Star<sup>7</sup>. Even though *The Godfather Part III* did not achieve the success of its predecessors, it remains a very important film in the setting of the overwhelming success of the trilogy<sup>1</sup>.

*The Godfather Part III* focuses on the patriarch of the fictitious Corleone crime family—Michael Corleone. He is semi-retired from the mafia, and has personal struggles with guilt about his rise to power and the murder of his brother Fredo. The movie portrays his transition to a more legitimate lifestyle and repair of his reputation. It focuses on his charitable acts, and the purchase of stock in a real estate holding company called International Immobiliare. Michael absolves his business with several members of the mafia at a meeting in Atlantic City, where there is a helicopter-based massacre of many mafiosi, which Michael escapes. Michael's protégé, Vincent Mancini, moves up in rank in the Corleone family, and revenge is achieved with the strategic murder of several powerful individuals that orchestrated the massacre and were opposed to the International Immobiliare business deal. As the film's predecessors, there is considerable violence, with abundant instances of traumatic injury, and is rated R (Restricted) by the Motion Picture Association of America<sup>8</sup>.

While there have been no published manuscripts evaluating traumatic injury in *The Godfather Part III*, two previous manuscripts have evaluated traumatic injury in *The Godfather* and *The Godfather Part II*<sup>9,10</sup>. Those studies showed that male characters were significantly more affected by traumatic mechanisms, and were more likely to die during the film. In *The Godfather*, there was a higher proportion of traumatic injury ( $p = 0.03$ ) and death ( $p = 0.01$ ) in the second half of the film<sup>9</sup>. In *The Godfather Part II*, there was also a higher proportion of traumatic injury (67% vs 33%) in the first half of the film, but this did not reach statistical significance ( $p = 0.06$ )<sup>10</sup>. Penetrating traumatic mechanisms were also much more common than blunt traumatic mechanisms in both films<sup>9,10</sup>. The aims of this study are to describe and discuss the morbidity and mortality portrayed in *The Godfather Part III* with a thorough film review, focusing on mechanism of injury, injury patterns, morbidity, and mortality. Similar to study findings from *The Godfather* and *The Godfather Part II*, the hypotheses for this study are that: a) gender differences occur in that the number of male characters that suffer a traumatic mechanism is higher than females, b) more traumatic mechanisms occur in the second half of the film, and c) a higher percentage of traumatic mechanisms are penetrating.

## Methods

This descriptive study was performed in a similar fashion to two previously-published works<sup>9,10</sup>. *The Godfather Part III* was meticulously viewed and reviewed for incidents of significant traumatic mechanisms<sup>8</sup>. The nature of the mechanism(s) and the timing of the start of the mechanism to the nearest second were noted. Traumatic mechanisms were considered significant if they were deemed to have enough force to cause potential bony or significant soft tissue injury. Any traumatic mechanisms that were deemed not forceful enough or were part of flashbacks from previous movies of the series were omitted. The incidence of traumatic mechanisms over time was graphed and evaluated. The incidence of traumatic mechanisms was also evaluated by movie half, as defined as half of the running time.

Of note, the *Atlantic City Massacre*, Chapter 9 of the film, required a modified estimation method of recording outcomes and times. A television news report in Chapter 10 of the film stated that 12 individuals were killed and 10 were seriously injured. This fact was also cited in a *Godfather* wiki-based website<sup>11</sup>. For the timing of the traumatic mechanisms during this scene, all of the on-screen mechanisms were noted by running time as for the rest of the film. The remaining number of individuals injured/killed that were not seen on screen (22 total) were estimated to have suffered traumatic mechanisms in a steady state during this 59-second span of the movie. A Poisson distribution was used to determine if more mechanisms occurred during this unique part of the movie.

The subset of characters that suffered on-screen traumatic mechanisms and fatal outcomes were evaluated with descriptive statistics. Comparisons were made using timing of the incidents, gender, outcomes, and types of mechanisms with binomial tests, one-tailed z-tests, or chi-square tests. All statistics utilized an  $\alpha = 0.05$ , and were performed using Stata 14 statistical software (StataCorp, College Station, TX).

## Results

*The Godfather Part III* has a running time of 170 minutes<sup>8</sup>. During the film, there were 44 total incidents of on-screen traumatic mechanisms that were considered significant enough to cause bony or soft tissue injury. The flashback of Fredo's death was omitted. The resultant 43 mechanisms were included in the comparative analyses.

Table 1 shows all of the characters that suffer significant trauma during the course of the movie, with the

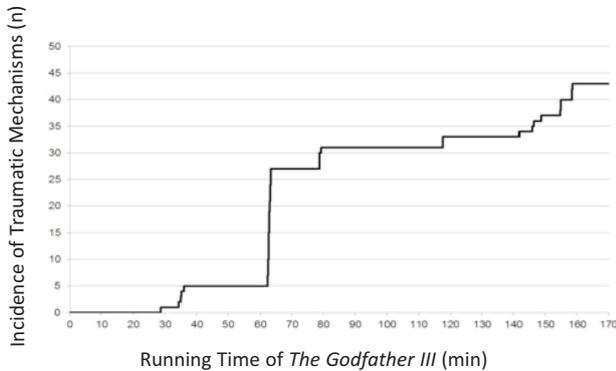
**Table 1.** Characters that suffer on-screen traumatic mechanisms in *The Godfather Part III*.

Character Name	Mechanism(s) of Injury	Timing of Trauma (min)
Joey Zasa	Partial traumatic amputation of right ear by a human bite	28,62
Masked Assassin #1	Punched in the head	34,23
Grace Hamilton	Superficial stab injury to Zone 2 of the neck	35,07
Masked Assassin #1	Gunshot wound to Zone 3 of the neck	35,23
Masked Assassin #2	Defensive gunshot wound through the hand and to the trunk	35,97
Mafioso #1	Gunshot wound(s)	62,30
Mafioso #2	Gunshot wound(s)	62,35
Mafioso #3	Gunshot wound(s)	62,40
Mafioso #4	Gunshot wound(s)	62,50
Mafioso #5	Gunshot wound(s)	62,50
Mafioso #6	Gunshot wound(s)	62,58
Mafioso #7	Gunshot wound(s)	62,60
Mafioso #8	Gunshot wound(s)	62,67
Mafioso #9	Gunshot wound(s)	62,67
Mafioso #10	Gunshot wound(s)	62,69
Mafioso #11	Gunshot wound(s)	62,79
Mafioso #12	Gunshot wound(s)	62,80
Mafioso #13	Gunshot wound(s)	62,80
Mafioso #14	Gunshot wound(s)	62,89
Mafioso #15	Gunshot wound(s)	62,92
Mafioso #16	Gunshot wound(s)	62,99
Mafioso #17	Gunshot wound(s)	63,08
Mafioso #18	Gunshot wound(s)	63,09
Mafioso #19	Gunshot wound(s)	63,19
Mafioso #20	Gunshot wound(s)	63,25
Mafioso #21	Gunshot wound(s)	63,25
Mafioso #22	Gunshot wound(s)	63,28
Anthony "The Ant" Squigliaro (Bodyguard #1)	Thoracoabdominal shotgun wound	78,72
Joey Zasa Bodyguard #2	Multiple gunshot wounds	78,80
Joey Zasa Bodyguard #3	Multiple gunshot wounds	78,80
Joey Zasa	Multiple gunshot Wounds	79,27
Don Tommasino	Shotgun wound	117,57
Don Tommasino's Driver	Shotgun wound	117,57
Corleone Bodyguard	Thoracoabdominal stab wounds	141,83
Corleone Twin Bodyguard #1	Thoracoabdominal stab wounds	145,77
Corleone Twin Bodyguard #2	Thoracoabdominal stab wounds	146,25
Frederick Keinszig	Smothered and hung after death	148,58
Archbishop Gilday	Thoracoabdominal gun shot wounds and thrown from height after death	154,70
Don Lucchesi	Stabbed with his own glasses to Zone 2 of the neck	154,85
Calo	Multiple gunshot wounds	154,85
Michael Corleone	Gunshot wound through and through from the back to left shoulder	158,32
Mary Corleone	Gunshot wound to the chest	158,32
Mosca de Montelepre	Gunshot wound to the chest	158,50

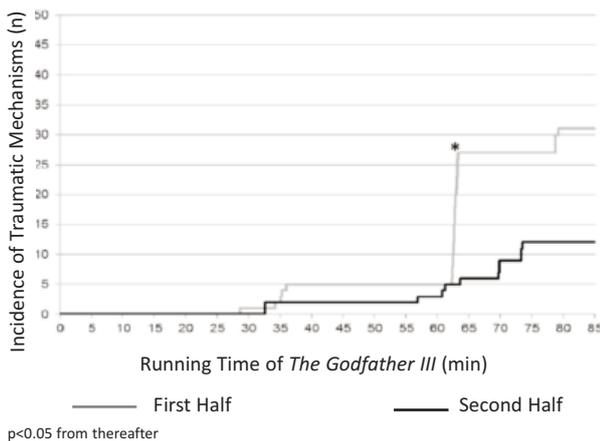
associated mechanisms of injury. A total of 41/43 (95%) of the mechanisms involved male characters whereas 2/43 (5%) of the mechanisms involved female characters. A binomial test showed a disproportionate number of males suffered a traumatic mechanism ( $p < 0.001$ ). These mechanisms occurred for 41 unique characters. The Masked Assassin #1 and Joey Zasa suffer two different mechanisms. The Masked Assassin #1 suffers both blunt and penetrating mechanisms one minute apart from each other whereas Joey Zasa suffers two penetrating mechanisms, the first and last mechanisms in the first half of the film. For these characters, 11/41 (27%) were named characters, whereas 30/41 (73%) were never named during the film ( $p < 0.01$ ).

Figure 1 shows the composite incidence of traumatic mechanisms during *The Godfather Part III*, and Figure 2 shows the side-by-side comparison of incidence of traumatic mechanisms between the first half and the second half of the film. There were 31/43 (72%) incidents of a traumatic mechanism in the first half of the film with 12/43 (18%) incidents of a traumatic mechanism in the second half of the film. A binomial test showed a higher total incidence of traumatic mechanisms in the first half ( $p < 0.01$ ). The trend in Figure 2 shows a higher incidence of traumatic mechanisms in the first half of the film ( $p < 0.05$ ). There were 3/11 (27%) named characters that suffered traumatic mechanisms in the first half of the film

**Figure 1:** Incidence of on-screen traumatic mechanisms in *The Godfather Part III*.



**Figure 2:** Incidence of on-screen traumatic mechanisms in *The Godfather Part III* by half of the film.



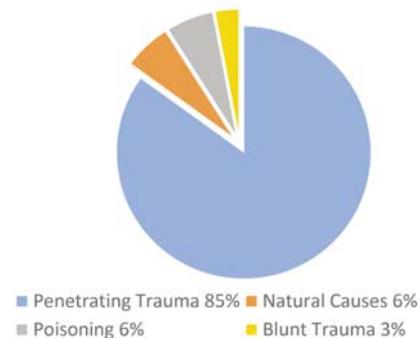
and 8/11 (73%) named characters that suffer traumatic injury in the second half of the film ( $p = 0.22$ ). Using the Poisson distribution, a statistically higher number of mechanisms occurred during the Atlantic City Massacre (22.0 mechanisms/minute) compared with the overall film (0.25 mechanisms/minute) ( $p < 0.001$ ).

The causes and mechanisms of death are shown in Table 2. Thirty-three characters died during the course of the film, with 18/33 (55%) in the first half of the film and 15/33 (45%) in the second half of the film ( $p = 0.73$ ). This included 32/33 (97%) male characters and 1/33 (3%) female characters ( $p < 0.001$ ). A 2 x 2 chi-square test of movie half (first/second) and character status (named/unnamed) showed a higher proportion of named character deaths in the second half (11/15 [73%]) compared to

the first half (2/18 [11%]) ( $p < 0.001$ ). A 2 x 2 chi-square test of movie half (first/second) and traumatic mechanism outcome (life/death) a higher proportion of traumatic deaths in the second half of the film (11/12 [92%]) compared to the first half of the film (18/31 [58%]) ( $p = 0.04$ ).

The overall causes of death are shown in the pie chart in Figure 3. Trauma (both blunt and penetrating) comprise a majority of the deaths (88%) ( $p < 0.001$ ). Penetrating trauma was the most common mechanistic cause of death (85%) ( $p < 0.001$ ). Intentional death by murder occurred in 94% of the deaths ( $p < 0.001$ ).

**Figure 3:** Causes of Death for 33 Characters in *The Godfather Part III*.



### Discussion

In this study, the significant traumatic mechanisms and the deaths in *The Godfather Part III* were evaluated with a thorough film review. The hypotheses for this study were that: a) male characters suffer traumatic mechanisms at a higher rate than females, b) more traumatic mechanisms occur in the second half of the film, and c) a higher percentage of traumatic mechanisms are penetrating.

Consistent with the first study hypothesis, males are both statistically more likely to suffer significant traumatic mechanisms as well as death in *The Godfather Part III*. This is consistent with the results of studies of *The Godfather* and *The Godfather Part II*<sup>9,10</sup>. Therefore, injury and death of male characters is an underlying thematic entity in the trilogy. Females did die in all three films, but the overwhelming majority of traumatic injury was toward males. Of note, the only female that died in *The Godfather Part III* was Mary Corleone, and this was likely unintentional, as Michael was the true target.

Inconsistent with the second study hypothesis, and in direct contrast to findings in *The Godfather* and

**Table 2.** Causes and mechanisms of death in *The Godfather Part III*.

Character Name	Cause of Death	Type of Mechanism
Masked Assassin #1	Possible penetrating brain injury/Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
Masked Assassin #2	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
Mafioso #1	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
Mafioso #2	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
Mafioso #3	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
Mafioso #4	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
Mafioso #5	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
Mafioso #6	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
Mafioso #7	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
Mafioso #8	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
Mafioso #9	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
Mafioso #10	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
Mafioso #11	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
Mafioso #12	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
Anthony "The Ant" Squigiliaro (Bodyguard #1)	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
Joey Zasa Bodyguard #2	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
Joey Zasa Bodyguard #3	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
Joey Zasa	Hemorrhagic shock/Possible penetrating brain injury	Penetrating
Pope Paul VI	Unknown	Natural Causes
Don Tommasino	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
Don Tommasino's Driver	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
Corleone Bodyguard	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
Corleone Twin Bodyguard #1	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
Corleone Twin Bodyguard #2	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
Frederick Keinszig	Asphyxia	Blunt
Pope John Paul I	Poisoned tea	Poisoning
Don Altobello	Poisoned cannoli	Poisoning
Archbishop Gilday	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
Don Lucchesi	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
Calo	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
Mary Corleone	Hemorrhagic shock likely due to penetrating cardiac injury	Penetrating
Mosca da Montelepre	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
Michael Corleone	Unknown	Natural Causes

*The Godfather Part II*, more of the traumatic mechanisms occur in the first half of *The Godfather Part III*<sup>9,10</sup>. A higher statistical number of mechanisms occurs in the first half of the film, which, again, is the opposite of the findings from the first two movies of the trilogy. The main reason this occurred is that about half of the mechanisms (22/43 [51%]) occurred during the Atlantic City Massacre. If this would have been in the second half of the film, the conclusions of this study would be reversed. Interestingly, the traumatic mechanisms and deaths may be more meaningful in the second half of *The Godfather Part III*. The reason is because of the named or unnamed nature of the characters. As a viewer, this author believes that the death of a named or developed character is much more impacting than the death of an unnamed character. More named characters died in the second half of *The Godfather Part III*. Additionally, the "efficiency" of trauma was also higher, meaning that the chance of death from trauma was much higher in the second half of *The Godfather Part III*. These two findings do somewhat support the second

study hypothesis outside of raw numbers alone, and accounts for the emotional impact on the viewer.

Consistent with the third study hypotheses is the fact that a higher percentage of traumatic mechanisms are penetrating, as seen in Table 2 and Figure 3. Penetrating injury and death from a gun was the most common reason, followed by death from a knife. This is consistent with the study of *The Godfather* and *The Godfather Part II*, and is also a common theme of the trilogy<sup>9,10</sup>. This makes sense because of the same director and genre of these three films. However, these results are inconsistent with the incidence and prevalence of traumatic incidence and epidemiology in the United States. Trauma is the third leading cause of death and is the leading source of mortality for patients between 1 and 44 years of age. Of those deaths, approximately two-thirds are unintentional where one third are intentional and a result of violence<sup>12</sup>. In *The Godfather Part III*, traumatic injury is the leading cause of death, and all (100%) of the traumatic deaths in *The Godfather Part III* are the result

of violence. Additionally, 80% of trauma is blunt trauma whereas 20% is penetrating trauma in the United States; moreover, the disability caused by trauma far exceeds the death rate<sup>13</sup>. These facts are inconsistent when considering all of *The Godfather* movies. In a related note, it is interesting that the only two characters that died of natural causes were Pope Paul VI and Michael Corleone—individuals that are polar moral opposites of each other.

From a medicine perspective, Michael Corleone's diabetes is a focus of the film. It is interesting that through the charitable acts of Michael Corleone, he is treated for his diabetic stroke in the Corleone Pavilion of St. Christopher Medical Center in the film.

There are several limitations to this study. First, some of the traumatic injuries are debatable. There are also potential power concerns with lower numbers. But, the entire population of events was used, and there are statistical differences despite low study numbers. Conversely, there are a few strengths to this study. It is relatively straightforward with regard to the methodology of a descriptive study, and it is easily reproducible.

Overall, traumatic injury and death are commonly portrayed in *The Godfather Part III*. Male characters are more likely to both suffer traumatic injury and die. Although more traumatic mechanism and deaths occur in the first half of the film, the named characters were more likely to be injured and die in the second half of the film. Penetrating mechanisms are the most common. This study does give further insight to traumatic injury as it is portrayed in the last installment of one of the most popular trilogies of all time—*The Godfather*.

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