

Keep Your Friends Close, But Your Enemies Closer: A Perspective on Traumatic Injury in *The Godfather Part II*

John L. Falcone

Owensboro Health, Owensboro Health Surgical Specialists, Owensboro, KY (USA).

Correspondence: John L. Falcone. Owensboro Health. Department of Surgery. Owensboro Health Surgical Specialists. Ridgcrest Medical Park. 2801 New Hartford Road Owensboro, KY 42303 (USA).

e-mail: John.FalconeMD@owensborohealth.org

Received 4 November 2014; accepted 19 December 2014.

Summary

Background: *The Godfather Part II* portrays the fictional Corleone family and its role in organized crime. The aims of this study are to describe the trauma and deaths portrayed in *The Godfather Part II*.

Hypothesis: The hypotheses are that: a) male characters suffer more traumatic mechanism/death 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 II* was viewed for incidents of significant traumatic mechanisms. Traumatic mechanisms were documented by time. Characters that died during the film were evaluated for type of mechanism and cause of death. Categorical comparisons were made with chi-square tests, using an $\alpha = 0.05$.

Results: There were 27 traumatic mechanisms and 19 deaths. A total of 93% of the mechanisms involved male characters whereas 7% of the mechanisms involved female characters ($p < 0.001$). A total of 84% of the mortalities involved male characters whereas 16% of the mortalities involved a female character ($p < 0.01$). The traumatic mechanisms and deaths were similar between halves of the film (both $p > 0.05$). Traumatic injury was the cause of death ($p < 0.001$). Penetrating injury was the most common cause of death overall.

Conclusions: There are gender differences in the characters that suffer a traumatic mechanism and death in *The Godfather Part II*. A majority of deaths are from penetrating traumatic injuries.

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

Resumen

Introducción: *El Padrino Parte II* retrata a la familia Corleone y su papel en el crimen organizado. El objetivo de este estudio es describir las lesiones y muertes reflejadas en la película.

Hipótesis: a) los personajes masculinos sufren más procesos traumáticos/muertes que los femeninos, b) hay más lesiones en la segunda mitad de la película y c) en un alto porcentaje los traumatismos son penetrantes.

Métodos: en este estudio descriptivo, *El Padrino Parte II* fue visualizada para detectar lesiones traumáticas significativas que se han documentado con relación al momento en que aparecen. Los personajes que mueren se han evaluados en función del mecanismo y la causa del fallecimiento. Se hicieron comparaciones mediante el test del Chi-cuadrado, usando un α de 0,05.

Resultados: se registraron 27 traumatismos y 19 muertes. El 93% de los traumatismos en personajes masculinos frente a un 7% en femeninos ($p < 0.001$). El 84% de las muertes se produjeron en hombres frente al 16% en mujeres ($p < 0.001$). Los traumatismos y las muertes fueron similares entre las dos mitades de la película (ambos $p > 0,05$). Las muertes se debieron a lesiones traumáticas ($p < 0.001$). Las heridas penetrantes fueron la causa mas común de muerte.

Conclusiones: existen diferencias de género entre los personajes que sufren traumatismos y muerte en *El Padrino Parte II*. La mayor parte de las muertes son por heridas traumáticas penetrantes.

Palabras clave: historia de la medicina, cine, traumatismo, violencia, heridas, lesiones.

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

Background

The Godfather Part II is the sequel to one of the most popular movies of all time: *The Godfather*. *The Godfather Part II* is arguably a very popular movie in and of itself. The film won 6 Academy Awards in 1975, including that for Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Actor in a Supporting Role¹. The Writers Guild of America named this film as the Best Adapted Drama in 1975². According to the American Film Institute, *The Godfather Part II* was ranked as the 3rd top gangster movie, and was rated as the 32nd best movie of all time in 2007^{3,4}.

Technical Details

Original Title: *The Godfather*.

Country: USA.

Year: 1974.

Director: Francis Ford Coppola.

Music: Nino Rota.

Cinematography: Gordon Willis.

Film editors: Barry Malkin, Richard Marks and Peter Zinner.

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

Cast: Al Pacino (Michael), Robert Duvall (Tom Hagen), Diane Keaton (Kay Adams), Robert De Niro (Vito Corleone), John Cazale (Fredo Corleone), Talia Shire (Connie Corleone), Lee Strasberg (Hyman Roth), Michael V. Gazzo (Frankie Pentangeli), G.D. Spradlin (Senator Pat Geary),...

Color: Color.

Runtime: 200 minutes.

Genre: Crime and Drama.

Production Companies: Paramount Pictures, The Coppola Company.

Synopsis: "The early life and career of Vito Corleone in 1920s New York is portrayed while his son, Michael, expands and tightens his grip on his crime syndicate stretching from Lake Tahoe, Nevada to pre-revolution 1958 Cuba." (imdb).

Awards: Oscar for Best Picture (Francis Ford Coppola, Gray Frederickson and Fred Roos), Best Actor in a Supporting Role (Robert De Niro), Best Director (Francis Ford Coppola), Best Writing, Screenplay Based on Material from Another Medium (Mario Puzo and Francis Ford Coppola), Best Art Direction-Set Decoration (Dean Tavoularis, Angelo P. Graham and George R. Nelson) and Best Music, Original Dramatic Score

(Nino Rota and Carmine Coppola); nominated for Oscar for Best Actor in a Leading Role (Al Pacino), Best Actor in a Supporting Role (Michael V. Gazzo), Best Actor in a Supporting Role (Lee Strasberg), Best Actress in a Supporting Role (Talia Shire), and Best Costume Design (Theadora Van Runkle).

Links:

http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0071562/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1

[Trailer](#)



The Godfather Part II portrays the activities and evolution of the fictitious Corleone crime family. Specifically, this movie shows a parallel story over two generations over the male family patriarch. The movie portrays the emigration and rise to power of Vito (Andolini) Corleone in the past. The present portrays Vito's youngest son Michael Corleone after assuming family leadership; the present focuses mainly on business ventures and family interests after an assassination attempt, as well as an investigation of the Corleone family and its

role in organized crime. There is considerable violence in the film, with abundant instances of traumatic injury⁵.

While there have been no published manuscripts evaluating traumatic injury in *The Godfather Part II*, a previous manuscript has evaluated traumatic injury in *The Godfather*⁶. That study showed a few things. It showed that male characters were significantly more affected by traumatic mechanisms. Male characters were more likely to die during the film. Moreover, there was a higher proportion of traumatic injury and death in the second half of the film. Additionally, penetrating mechanisms were much more common than blunt mechanisms⁶. The aims of this study are to describe and discuss the morbidity and mortality portrayed in *The Godfather* with a thorough video review, focusing on mechanism of injury, injury patterns, morbidity, and mortality. Similar to findings from *The Godfather*, the hypotheses for this study are that: a) gender differences occur in that the number of male characters that suffer a traumatic mechanism/death 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 a previously-published work⁶. *The Godfather Part II* was meticulously viewed and reviewed for incidents of significant traumatic mechanisms⁵. 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.

The incidence of traumatic mechanisms over time was graphed and evaluated. The incidence of traumatic mechanisms was also evaluated by movie half. Although not truly half of the total running time, the movie half was defined with the first half represented by the first DVD and the second half represented by the second DVD. The incidence of traumatic mechanisms was also compared when looking at the composite running time of the present story of Michael Corleone and the flashback past story of Vito Corleone. For these comparisons, the penultimate scene of Vito Corleone's birthday was omitted, as this occurred between the main timelines 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 and outcomes with chi-square tests. Gender differences were compared with binomial tests, using an $\alpha = 0.05$. Statistics were performed using Stata 13 statistical software (StataCorp, College Station, TX).

Results

The *Godfather Part II* has a running time of 200 minutes. During the film, there were 32 total incidents of on-screen traumatic mechanisms (1 mechanism/6.25 minutes). There were five mechanisms that were considered insignificant. For example, there is a scene where Frederico "Fredo" Corleone playfully slaps Santino "Sonny" Corleone on the hand, and they exchange playful taps at each other during the penultimate scene. Overall, there were 27 significant traumatic mechanisms during the film included in descriptive and comparative studies.

Table 1 shows all of the characters that suffer significant on-screen mechanical force applied to the body during the course of the movie, with the associated mechanisms of injury. These mechanisms occurred for 24 unique characters. Frederico "Fredo" Corleone, Frank Pentangeli, and Willie Cicci suffered from two different mechanisms at different points in the film. Willie Cicci suffers both a penetrating and blunt force in a running time frame of a few seconds. A total of 25/27 (93%) of the mechanisms involved male characters whereas 2/27 (7%) of the mechanisms involved female characters. A binomial test showed a disproportionate number of males suffered a traumatic mechanism ($p < 0.001$).

There were 9/27 (33%) incidents of a traumatic mechanism in the first half of the film with 18/27 (66%) incidents of a traumatic mechanism in the second half of the film. A binomial test showed there were no differences in traumatic mechanisms by film half ($p = 0.06$). There were 20/27 (74%) incidents of a traumatic mechanism in the present storyline with 7/27 (26%) incidents of a traumatic mechanism in the past storyline. A binomial test showed a higher percentage of traumatic mechanisms in the present storyline ($p = 0.02$).

A 2 x 2 chi-square test of movie half (first/second) and traumatic mechanism outcome (life/death) showed no differences in the deaths in the second half of the film (78%) compared to the first half of the film (56%) ($p = 0.26$). A 2 x 2 chi-square of time period (present/past) and traumatic mechanism outcome (life/death) showed there were no differences in present deaths 55% compared to past deaths 86% ($p = 0.15$).

Table 1. Characters that suffer traumatic mechanisms during *The Godfather Part II*.

Character Name	Mechanism(s) of Injury	Timing of Trauma (min)
Paolo Andolini	Gunshot Wound(s)	2,38
Signora Andolini	Single shotgun wound to the trunk	5,23
Deanna Dunn	Fall while under the influence of alcohol	28,73
Frederico "Fredo" Corleone	Slapped/punched in the chest by Deanna Dunn	29,15
First Unnamed Assassin	Unknown	40,73
Second Unnamed Assassin	Unknown	40,73
Frank Pentangeli	Attempted strangling with a garrote wire	71,35
Unnamed Police Officer	Pushed	72,08
Willie Cicci	Gunshot wound	72,27
Unnamed Police Officer	Unknown	72,32
Willie Cicci	Hit by a car	72,38
Unnamed Prostitute	Unknown	74,40
Unnamed Cuban Rebel	Blast injury from a grenade	80,90
Unnamed Cuban Police Chief	Blast injury from a grenade	80,90
Johnny Ola	Strangled with a hanger	98,67
Bussetta (Corleone Bodyguard/Assassin)	Multiple gunshot wounds	103,05
Unnamed Cuban Looter	Fall	106,57
Don Fanucci	Gunshot wound to left chest, right cheek, and mouth	123,07
Kay Corleone	Punched by Michael Corleone	163,15
Don Ciccio	Stabbed in the abdomen/chest	168,93
First Unnamed Don Ciccio Bodyguard	Single gunshot wound	169,08
Second Unnamed Don Ciccio Bodyguard	Single gunshot wound	169,25
Don Tommasino	Single shotgun wound to the leg	169,27
Hyman Roth	Single gunshot wound to the chest	190,08
Rocco Lampone	Two gunshot wounds to the left chest/abdomen	190,15
Frank Pentangeli	Laceration of the left wrist	190,20
Frederico "Fredo" Corleone	Single gunshot wound	190,72

Figure 1 shows a composite timeline of traumatic mechanisms portrayed in *The Godfather Part II*. The timeline of significant traumatic mechanisms is shown by movie half and by time period in Figure 2. There were no differences in trauma incidence by either movie half or by time period (both $p > 0.05$).

Table 2 shows all of the characters that died during the course of the film. There were 19 characters that died during the film. This includes characters that died on-screen or characters that died off-screen. A total of 16/19 (84%) of the mortalities involved male characters whereas 3/19 (16%) of the mortalities involved a

female character. A binomial test showed a disproportionate number of male characters died ($p < 0.01$). A pie chart of the causes of death is shown in Figure 3. Traumatic injury was the cause of death a majority of the time ($p < 0.001$). Penetrating injury was the most common cause of death overall, as well as for the cohort of characters that died as a result of trauma.

A total of 10/19 (53%) of the deaths occurred in the first half of the film whereas a total of 9/19 (47%) of the deaths occurred in the second half of the film. A binomial test showed that there were no differences in deaths between the first half and second half of the film

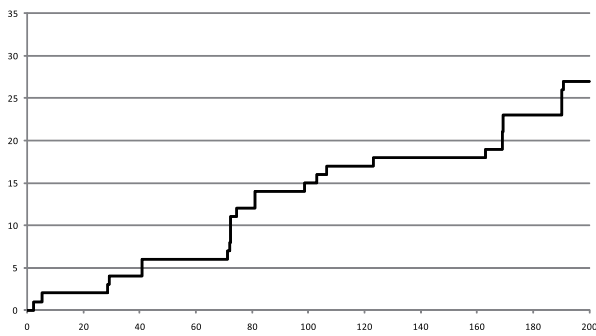


Figure 1. Incidence of on-screen traumatic mechanisms in *The Godfather Part II*.

($p > 0.99$). A total of 13/19 (68%) of the deaths occurred in the present storyline whereas a total of 6/19 (32%) of the deaths occurred in past storyline. A binomial test showed that there were no differences in deaths between the present and the past storylines ($p = 0.84$).

Discussion

In this study, the significant traumatic mechanisms and the deaths in *The Godfather Part II* were evaluated. The hypotheses for this study were that: a) gender differences occur in that the number of male characters

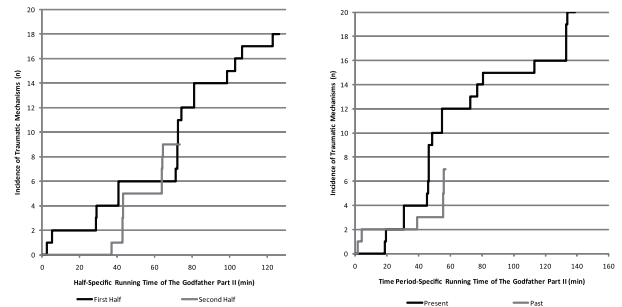


Figure 2. Incidence of on-screen traumatic mechanisms in *The Godfather Part II* by half (A) and by movie time period (B)

that suffer a traumatic mechanism/death 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. Consistent with the study hypotheses, males are both statistically more likely to suffer significant traumatic mechanisms as well as death in *The Godfather Part II*. This is consistent with the results of a previous study of *The Godfather*⁶.

Also consistent with the study hypotheses is the fact that a higher percentage of traumatic mechanisms are penetrating, as seen in Table 2 and Figure 3. Penetrating

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

Character Name	Cause of Death	Type of Mechanism
Paolo Andolini	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
Signora Andolini	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
First Unnamed Assassin	Unknown Trauma	Unknown Trauma
Second Unnamed Assassin	Unknown Trauma	Unknown Trauma
Unnamed Prostitute	Hemorrhagic shock	Unknown Penetrating
Unnamed Cuban Rebel	Blast/Thermal Injuries	Blast Injury
Unnamed Cuban Police Chief	Blast/Thermal Injuries	Blast Injury
Johnny Ola	Traumatic asphyxia	Blunt
Bussetta (Corleone Bodyguard/Assassin)	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
Male Corleone Baby	Aborted Pregnancy	Aborted Pregnancy
Don Fanucci	Hemorrhagic shock/penetrating brain injury	Penetrating
Don Ciccio	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
First Unnamed Don Ciccio Bodyguard	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
Second Unnamed Don Ciccio Bodyguard	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
Carmela Corleone	Unknown	Atraumatic
Hyman Roth	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
Rocco Lampone	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
Frank Pentangeli	Hemorrhagic shock	Penetrating
Frederico "Fredo" Corleone	Presumed penetrating brain injury	Penetrating

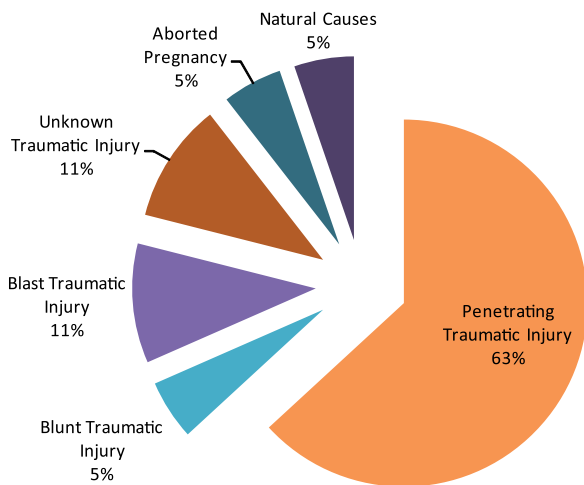


Figure 3. Causes of death for 19 characters in *The Godfather Part II*.

injury from a gun is the most common reason, followed by injury with a knife/sharp object. The two characters that died from a blast injury also likely had an element of penetrating injury from grenade shrapnel. This is consistent with the manuscript describing trauma in *The Godfather*⁶. This makes sense because of the similar director and genre of these two 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 these deaths, approximately two-thirds are unintentional where one third are intentional and a result of violence⁶. In *The Godfather Part II*, traumatic injury is the leading cause of death, and all (100%) of the traumatic deaths in *The Godfather Part II* are the result of violence.

Inconsistent with the study hypothesis is the incidence of traumatic mechanisms in relation to timing in the film. Now, the $p = 0.06$ is nearly-significant, but is not truly statistically significant. This would have been significant if the excluded significant traumatic mechanisms were included. And, although there were more absolute deaths in the second half of the film, traumatic injuries were just as likely to result in death between movie halves and by time period. The incidents of traumatic injury are visually very similar when evaluating Figure 2A and 2B. In a similar fashion, the incidence of deaths was the same when evaluating by movie half and by time period.

Some of the causes of death are assumed and the result of speculation in some cases. It should be

noted that there are three characters (first unnamed assassin, second unnamed assassin, and unnamed prostitute) that are presumed to have died secondary to trauma. The two assassins are found near a drain in shallow water. There are no gunshots heard, but there is blood and a neck injury for one of the assassins. The prostitute was found covered in blood. The unnamed male Corleone baby died from what was first thought to be a miscarriage, but ultimately due to an abortion. Mama Corleone is presumed to have died from natural causes, statistically due to coronary artery disease given her demographics.

Unlike *The Godfather*, *The Godfather Part II* offers minimal insight into trauma systems. There is no objective data in *The Godfather* that support the notion of established trauma systems. None of the characters receive any on-screen pre-hospital triage, assessment, or treatment. It is assumed that personal vehicle was used in the transport/trauma care of Don Tommasino. There are no patients treated for trauma in any hospital. There is an important aspect of public health evaluation of immigrants, in that a 9-year-old Vito Corleone is screened for smallpox by conjunctival examination, is examined by a physician, and quarantined for three months. Federico "Fredo" Corleone is treated for pneumonia as a baby.

There are several limitations to this study. First, some of the traumatic injuries and causes of death are debatable. The study is also somewhat limited in study power, given the relatively low number of individuals used in some of the comparisons. That said, there do remain some significant gender disparities despite a low study population. There are a few strengths to this study. It is relatively straightforward as a descriptive study, and it is easily reproducible.

Overall, traumatic injury and death are commonly portrayed in *The Godfather Part II*. Male characters are more likely to both suffer traumatic injury as well as to die. Penetrating mechanisms are the most common. This study does give further insight to traumatic injury as it is portrayed in one of the most famous sequels of all-time—*The Godfather Part II*.

References

1. The 47th Academy Awards, The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, 2014 - [cited 2014 Jun 18]. Available from: <http://www.oscars.org/awards/academyawards/legacy/ceremony/47th.html>
2. 1975 Award Winners, Writers Guild of America, West, 2014 - [cited 2014 Jun 18]. Available from: <http://www.wga.org/wga-awards/previous-nominees-winners2.aspx>

3. Top 10 Gangster, AFI's 10 Top 10, American Film Institute, 2008 - [cited 2014 Jun 18]. Available from: <http://www.afi.com/10top10/category.aspx?cat=8>,
4. AFI's 100 Years...100 Movies — 10th Anniversary Edition, American Film Institute, 2007[cited 2014 Jun 18]. Available from: <http://www.afi.com/100Years/movies10.aspx>
5. The Godfather Part II. Dir. Francis Ford Coppola. Perf. Al Pacino, Robert Duvall, Diane Keaton. 1974. DVD. Paramount Pictures; 2008.
6. Falcone JL. Leave the Gun. Take the Cannoli: A Perspective on Traumatic Injury in The Godfather. *J Med Mov* 2012; 8(2): 67-72. Available from: http://revis-tamedicinacine.usal.es/es/downloads/doc_view/455-vol8-num2-original03-en
7. Peitzman AB, Rhodes M, Schwab CW, *et al*. The Trauma Manual: Trauma and Acute Care Surgery, 3rd Ed. Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins; 2008.
8. Injury Prevention. The American College of Surgeons Committee on Trauma, 1999 [cited 2012 Feb 2]. Available from: <http://www.facs.org/trauma/injuryprevention.ppt>



Dr. Falcone is a general surgeon and a trauma surgeon practicing in Owensboro, KY (USA). He attended medical school at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine in Pittsburgh, PA (USA) and he completed his residency training at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. Dr. Falcone has a Masters in Medical Education, and is actively involved in the instruction of medical students and surgery residents. He has also completed the Surgical Education Research Fellowship through the Association for Surgical Education, and is very active in surgical education research and mentoring.