

Good thesis on why
does the audience
view jake la motta,
vito and micheal
correle...

[Sociology](#), [Violence](#)



This is a question that films like *Raging Bull* and *The Godfather Part 1* attempt to answer. These films feature "bad" boys who resort to socially unapproved and criminal behavior and still seem to get away with it. In a world where societies make the rules, perhaps their appeal lies in their ability to bend and break those rules. Nevertheless, there are reasons why they seem so untouchable—reasons that have to do with their immediate context, their thinking and their values. This paper will attempt to analyze those reasons.

The film *Raging Bull* (1980) is arguably a film about lust, jealousy, and even a form of revenge. Likewise, the first *Godfather* film is about love, family ties, jealousy and revenge. Specifically, both movies present a main character—a boxer and a mafia boss, respectively—who gets away with breaking the rules. Both Jake LaMotta and Don Vito and Michael Corleone engage in antisocial, criminal, and violent behavior in order to successfully get what they want (Hayes, 89). For LaMotta, it's being the classic alpha male and establishing his dominance over his opponents and his family. For Corleone, it is the satisfaction of seeing his family stay in power and exacting revenge upon his enemies.

The characters take part in various antisocial or criminal activities that are considered by the audience to be necessary for their survival. For instance, LaMotta's violence seems quite acceptable since he desires to win. Additionally, it is through such fights that he earns his living. By winning various championships in boxing, he has been able to raise enough money to take care of his family. The audience perceives these characters to be heroes. They took part in the antisocial and criminal activities for the

purpose of making it in their daily lives.

Moreover, both films suggest that violence is something that the characters can get away with. Raging Bull's LaMotta physically pounds on his opponents in the ring while he verbally and emotionally pounds on his wife and his brother. He is smug, self-important and insists upon loyalty and respect. In the same way, The Godfather's Don Vito Corleone and his son, Michael, are very passionate about maintaining their family's power base (Hayes, 99). Michael, in particular, is known for having the rival dons assassinated at the drop of a hat.

Although it may be argued that LaMotta's violence is more "acceptable" because it is contained within the boxing ring, it still resembles the violence of a beast that cannot be controlled—hence the name of the movie. One classic example lies in the penultimate fight scene, which involves slow motion, close-up, exaggerated action displaced a flesh, flying sweat, and nightmarish growls and groans in perhaps one of the most violent of scenes in cinema. Outside of the ring, however, the character engages in less "acceptable" acts of violence, in his home life and family relationships. For example, he insists that he be obeyed and respected while mistreating his wife through hisses, yelling and even physical blows. He likewise takes out his aggression on his brother.

If there is one thing that ties these characters together, it is arguably social values and expectations of the community in which they were treated. For LaMotta, such values include establishing and maintaining dominance as an obvious alpha male—simple, straightforward and glaringly obvious. For the Corleones, it involves establishing and maintaining dominance as a subtle

alpha male—cunning, calculated and complex. We see their violence more in the results of their orders to their hitmen, rather than through direct confrontation. Regardless of their chosen methods, however, these characters are all proud, self-assured and passionately driven. These feelings come to them since they know that they are working as per the expectations of the society. Since these characters were able to achieve and illustrate what the community expected from them, it had to consider them as heroes. Additionally, this makes the characters, especially LaMotta and Corleone, to have a winning attitude, feel self-assured and proud (Puzo, 123).

Nevertheless, there is a subtle difference between the elder don and, the younger one. Vito Corleone is presented as an ideologically romantic character. His romance played out in flashback and “ soft-focus nostalgia” of his growth and rose to power as a mafia boss in Little Italy (Mann 126) as contrasted with the “ pictorial realism” of depictions of Michael. Thus, it could be said that the violence of Vito Corleone is also more romanticized than that of his successor (Hayes, 109). Michael's methods are more brutal and reflective of his generation, yet they appear to be no less effective than those of his father's methods.

The family values for both parties are interesting. This is more obvious in the Corleone, whose identities are intertwined with those of their family. For them, the family and its power are everything. Thus, they fight to protect their family and express unconditional loyalty to it—known as “ amoral feminism” (Gillett 132)—at all costs. However, they are also capable of wielding power within the family and over the family as well as through it. For example, the dons expect and even demand loyalty from their family

members. They may practice polygamy while forbidding their wives from practicing polyandry. They may even punish their wives for showing any sign of disrespect toward them (Though they may not be as direct about it as LaMotta is with his own wife.).

In comparison, LaMotta has only a cursory understanding of family values. At times, it even seems that he has none. He cheats on wife number one while remaining paranoid about being cheated on by his other wife. He beats up his own wife and his own brother, seemingly without remorse. Nevertheless, he demonstrates that he at least has some love for his brother when the two of them share an awkward hug later on and cut each other some slack despite the earlier violence between them. Despite the many wrangles and fights that he has gone through, he is still able to maintain the brotherly bond. Regarding the setting of the movies, family relationships were taken to be of great importance. They played a major role in ensuring the continuity of a harmonious and united community. Any member that was able to observe these relationships was considered a hero. LaMotta is not an exception. Since he was able to forget all the hard times that he had gone through with his brother, the society as well as the audience had to regard him as a protagonist. In most cases, he can place the interests of the society before his own interests. This is an adorable action that completely influenced how the audience perceived him.

On a related note, the concepts of justice or revenge also play an important role in the violent behavior of these men. One of the reasons why they feel that they can get away with their behavior is because they feel it is justified. In La Motta's case, it is easy for him to think that he is merely "punishing"

an erring wife or brother. In other words, violence is simply the natural response to a real or perceived injustice done to him by a family member. A good example is when LaMotta batters Joey in front of his wife and children. LaMotta did the for the mere reason that Joey claimed that LaMotta had had sex with the entire neighborhood. The audience considers LaMotta to be playing his role. They believe that it was his role to discipline his wife whenever she goes wrong.

In the same way, the Corleones mete out their own brand of Italian-American "justice" by dispensing with rivals in the "traditional" fashion. For them, an injustice committed against one member of their family (E. g. the murder of a relative) is an injustice committed against all of them. It is their duty as head of the family to correct that wrong, often through violent means. Failing to do so is tantamount to failing the family—that is unacceptable. This absurd conviction makes the audience unable to question the boisterous actions of LaMotta, Corleones and Vito.

LaMotta was brought up in a relatively poor background. His father forced him to fight so that he could entertain friends. As LaMotta fought, people threw coins into the ring as a way of rewarding him. His father used this money to pay rent and cater for the general upkeep of the family (Mann, 108). Looking at LaMotta from this perspective makes one to conclude that he was a true hero. He is violent not because he likes but because he just has to be if he wants to bail his family as well as himself out of the social and economic crises.

As elucidated above, LaMotta and The Corleones stand as alpha males that express their violent tendencies in different ways, from straightforward

methods for the former and subtler, more complex ones for the latter. The films that feature them, *Raging Bull* and *The Godfather*, connect their main protagonists and their personas to their cultures. The two movies show audiences what it means to be men—violent men with family ties and their own perceptions of family and justice. In the end, perhaps author Glenn Mann (132) argues it best: characters like these can get away with their behavior because their audiences perceive them in a sympathetic fashion. In other words, it is simply their characters' way of pulling a fast one over the audience. The audience finds it hard to resist the serene atmosphere created by the characters' actions. They end up perceiving them as heroes due to the many challenges that they successfully went through. The audiences unknowingly find themselves applauding the unjust, antisocial and criminal acts committed by the characters in the various scenes of the movies.

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