

## The Sword Fighting Fairy Tale—to Explore the Impact of Violent Films on Juveniles with the Case Study of “Young and Dangerous” Series

Dong LI<sup>1,a</sup> and Zhi-Hai YE<sup>1,b\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Arts College of Jinan University, 601 Huangpu Avenue West, Guangzhou, Guangdong, China.

Email: <sup>a</sup>875145488@qq.com, <sup>b</sup>yezhihai@jnu.edu.cn

\*Corresponding author: Zhi-Hai YE

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**Abstract:** As the cultural products combining business and arts together, violent films represent a kind of non-mainstream subculture different from the mainstream culture, whether in content or forms, they are very attractive to the underage audience and young audience. The series of “Young and Dangerous” released in HK in 1996 became popular all over the country in the next period of time. The film was full of underworld violence and transformed the bloody and cruel struggle of gangland power into the brotherhood with much justice and the courage to love and hate. For young people who have not formed their worldviews and values, the typical adolescent rebellion and impulse are much easier to lead them to imitate the behaviors of violence, so as to form a large stream of unhealthy subculture consciousness and cause great impact on the young people’s world view and view of life. Such consciousness and violence characteristics fit with the impulses of young people themselves and become the incentive for young people to imitate the violent behaviors.<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

The violent films represent a kind of non-mainstream subculture different from the mainstream culture, which could easily attract the young people who have not yet formed their own worldview and views on life. The violent films provide imitation for the inexperienced young people in the face of conflicts with the way of using violence to solve problems and violence to get individual benefits. Under the influence of this subculture, the young people choose more not on the inheritance of the rational main stream culture but the subversion<sup>①</sup>.

### Organization of the Text

In 1996, the gangster film “Young and Dangerous” adapted from the cartoon with same name of HK cartoonist Niulao was released in HK, and became popular all over the country. The series of “Young and Dangerous” was directed by Andrew Lau with Ekin cheng and Jordan chan starring in the films. The films tell the story about the member of HK gangster Hong Xing community Chen Honam and Shanji going through fire and water for their brotherhood, Chen Honam in the film was promoted from the most bottom member of the community to the fit person in three years (on August 25, 1993, he succeeded the leader of Causeway of “HongXing community”) and later became the leader of “HongXing community” in 1997. In such sword fighting atmosphere, the film described the youth impulse and confusion of the new generation of HK young people. Such legend full of legendary is undoubtedly the apple of Eve in the garden of Eden for the young people who have not formed self values and created tremendous impact on the young people whether in HK or in mainland at that moment.

In the view of the content and forms of “Young and Dangerous” series, the “Young and Dangerous” films directed by Andrew Lau used images to display the bloody slaying scenes and

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<sup>①</sup>Yang Yihang, The film series of “Young and Dangerous” in the perspective of subculture,[D],12~15.

aroused the imagination of audiences for violence inside and the unconscious violent impulses with the voices of swords into the flesh, hustled the rights of men to a certain degree, singing on the day and drinking at night and fighting in order to protect the people they love. Many of the hacking scenes look too casual, as if what the knives cut were not life but the sharpening stone to prove their self value of life. Meanwhile, the series films of “Young and Dangerous” are also good at creating the conflicts of interest in the underworld organizations and battles scenes. The whole series used lots of actors to create the sense of “great” form. The way to use great scene for scene rendering and create the atmosphere greatly stimulated the impulses of the audience. Meanwhile, the films also minimized the serious consequences of criminal violence, especially portrayed Chen Honam and Shanji into the “three-good youth” with friendship, loyalty and courage to love and hatred, and created the solitude of the hero that “you cannot control everything in a traits’ world” and all the violence was just to resist the oppression of the evil forces, minimized the moral condemnation of such violent crime, deliberate beautification on the friendship in gangster is more attractive for young underage audience who have not formed their self-worldview and values and the typical adolescent rebellion and impulse are much easier to lead them to imitate the behaviors of violence.

The “cultivation theory” of Gerbner, the United States scholar in communication, proposed that audiences with much exposure to the violent programs on TV and films have higher possibility of estimation to suffer violent attacks than practical and higher possibility than the audience with less or without exposure to the violent programs. The negative impact of violent crimes content in the films and television media is growing. According to the sample survey conducted by the China Youth and children research center on the juvenile offenders in detention from 2001-2002, the juvenile offenders received less positive effects from media but they were attracted by the gangster films. This will pose a huge stream of consciousness of bad subculture and form great impact on the young people’s worldview and values of life.

The popular factor of series films of “Young and Dangerous” provided subculture reference and spiritual support for the inexperienced young people, they served the characters of Chen Honam, Shanji and subculture groups in similar age as their examples, and followed their behavior of life, and completely accepted the <sup>2</sup>image of rogue hero and went on astray in the key period of establishing and forming the values<sup>①</sup>. According to the report of CNS Yichang on November 7<sup>th</sup>, a man in Chongqing was obsessed in the gangster and imitated them to be employed to commit murder, and killed a victim to death with knife on the street. The NetEase News reported an accident on July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2013: 8 students under 14 years old took the protagonists in the films of “Young and Dangerous” as the reference, organized “the heaven and earth society”, conducted multiple assault and blackmail on students and caused harsh impact in and out of school. Kunming daily reported a news on August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2010: the copy of “Hongxing group”. The leader gangster in the film “Young and Dangerous” was called “Shanji”. The gangland related group was named “Hongxing group” with the leader called “Shanji”, the plot of the film “Young and Dangerous” was copied by a gang group with more than 60 people in Xundian. “Shanji” Zhang Xiaodong and the backbone of “Hongxing group” Ma Jingwen, LiHongwei were alumni. In their student days, what’s most popular was the series films of “Young and Dangerous”, the concept of so called “wild world” and “brotherhood” created great impact on them. After their graduation, several people who had returned to the county decided not to give up their “dream” at that moment and rebuilt “Hongxing group”, and constructed the internal organizational structure same as the film contents. The Chinese court net reported a case on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015: a group of young people was influenced by the films of “Young and Dangerous”, usually seek hegemony in local area, aggressed and harmed the neighbors. Jiahe county people’s court in Hunan province held the crime of provocation and affray and five defendants were sentenced different penalties ranging from eight months to one year and nine months. Southern Metropolis daily reported a case on May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015: The great evil criminal gang of Dongguan was ended and the leader in 1980s liked watching news of “Young and Dangerous”. In this case, Zhai Moupeng, the 1980s young people in ShiLong who was indulged in the HK gangster

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①Yang Yihang, The film series of “Young and Dangerous” in the perspective of subculture, [D], 13.

movies, finally realized his “brother dream” last year. According to his visions, there were more than 80 large and small bars in ShiLong, if he got the protection money of 500 RMB per month from each bar, then it could be more than 40000 RMB per month. However, the dream came up quickly and went away quickly..., yesterday, ShiLong police announced to notify that they have successfully destroyed the local great evil criminal gang who dedicated to extortion and protection rackets for a living with the head of two released staff with two times of labor reform and reeducation through labor, arrested 10 people, and dealt with 2 people and also solved 8 cases together. This is also the first great evil criminal group destroyed in Dongguan this year.

Here extract the crime rate during 1988-2007 from China Statistical Yearbook as following:

Table 1. 20 years China crime rate.

Years	The total injured rate	The total crime rate	Felony injured rate	Felony crime rate
1988	75.5	105.8	10.4	14.5
1989	177.3	244.3	14.9	20.5
1990	193.9	271.2	18.8	26.3
1991	204.3	291.1	15.9	22.7
1992	135.1	186.3	14.6	20.2
1993	136.4	170.3	14.7	18.3
1994	138.6	191.2	17.4	24.0
1995	139.6	187.3	18.2	24.4
1996	130.8	178.1	23.5	32.0
1997	130.5	175.8	16.9	22.8
1998	159.2	213.1	12.0	16.0
1999	178.8	238.2	12.5	16.7
2000	287.0	379.6	12.9	17.1
2001	349.3	453.9	14.8	19.2
2002	337.6	432.4	12.5	16.0
2003	340.0	429.7	12.3	15.5
2004	363.0	450.7	11.3	14.0
2005	355.5	450.7	11.5	14.6
2006	354.0	434.0	11.7	14.3
2007	363.9	443.2	11.5	14.0

Directions: Table 1 data is according to "China Law Yearbook" and "China Statistical Yearbook" version of the original data over the years. And, all rate base is one hundred thousand.

We could not conclude that the series films of “Young and Dangerous” is definitely the reason for the soaring crime rate from 1998-2002, but the abstract violence shown in the gangster films undoubtedly induced a large number of juvenile violent desire of minors. The “Young and Dangerous” films were popular in mainland in around 1998 and were released in HK in 1996. The cultural communication in mainland was still difficult around 1996. Considering from 1998, when the “Young and Dangerous” films entered into mainland and was popular all over the country. We could find from the table that from 1998 to 2001, the total injured rate and injury rate respectively has increased by 219% and 212% in the three years. Such great variables deserve us to ponder.

As the product with arts and commercial values, violent film has no wrong in itself. It just moves the more cruel human nature onto the screen in the form of arts and makes us to understand deeper life and society in the real cruelty, and makes it more entertaining. What we should see is how the form of films should exist in our cultural life and how to minimize the negative effects caused by violent movies. In present views, the classification of films could eliminate the negative consequences of violent films to some extent. Meanwhile, we also need to make psychological

counseling for minors and adopt reasonable psychological intervention to transform the adolescent rebellion.

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