Comparing Violence in Foreign Films and Their Remakes: *Infernal Affairs* and *The Departed*

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Introduction

Overview

Films are often used as mediums to portray real-world issues and convey specific narratives about them, positive or negative. Cultural aspects play a vital role in representing an idea, person, or place, and films transform based on their country of origin. Specifically, the United States experiences high levels of violent crimes, with a sharp increase starting in 2019 (UNDOC). Other countries of the same caliber of development as the United States experience similar issues with repressing violent crime. Still, rates vary from country to country partially due to national attitudes toward violence (Harrell & Lipman 1990). Using film as an insight into American attitudes toward violence, this research aims to analyze whether the representation of violence differs in the artistic world from a foreign setting to America. Furthermore, the implications of that for audience attitudes and discussion of American cultural narratives will also be addressed. The scope of this research involves two films, the Hong-Kong original *Infernal Affairs* and the American remake, *The Departed*.

Infernal Affairs (2002)

Written by Alan Mak and Felix Chong and co-directed by Mak and Andrew Lau, *Infernal Affairs* is a 2002 Hong Kong action thriller. The 40th Golden Horse Awards, an annual film festival and award ceremony held in Taiwan, awarded *Infernal Affairs* best picture. The film opens on the streets of Hong Kong and follows two main characters: Chan Wing-yan, an aspiring police cadet with a seemingly bright future, and Lau King-ming, a gang member serving the mafia boss Hon Sam. Ironically, Chan is assigned to go undercover in the gang and collect information for the Hong Kong Police force while Lau infiltrates the police force under the orders of the gang boss. The film skips to a decade later, and Lau has risen to become instrumental in the investigation on Hon Sam, and Chan remains undercover, increasingly stressed from his work. The main plot begins when Lau learns that an undercover police officer is in Hon Sam's gang, and Chan realizes there's a mole in the police force. Both men begin in a race against time to find the mole and lead down a spiraling path of betrayal. *Infernal Affairs* went on as a success with a worldwide gross income over eight million US dollars and eventually became a trilogy. For this research, only the first installment of *Infernal Affairs* will be analyzed because *The Departed* only adapts the trilogy's first movie.

The Departed (2006)

An American crime thriller directed by Martin Scorsese and written by William Monahan, *The Departed*, is an American sensation. Alongside these two, Alan Mak, the original script writer for *Infernal Affairs*, partially directed and co-wrote *The Departed*. *The Departed* won a total of four Oscars and received 147 nominations. The film reimagines *Infernal Affairs* and follows the same plot line as the original, with some added features. The original undercover police officer, Chan Wing-yan is instead Billy Costigan, covert gang member Lau King-ming is Collin Sullivan, and crime boss Hon Sam is Frank Costello. The film takes place in south Boston rather than Hong Kong, and the gang has Irish origin. Due to the similarities, some reviewers have named *The Departed* as a "triumph of old-school craft over Hong Kong flash,"

leading into the Chinese and American perspectives on each film and studies of the purpose of the changes Scorsese made to the original in his rework (Gorin 2006).

Purpose of this Research

Due to *The Departed* being an American remake of an originally Chinese film, deviations from the original have cultural implications from the transition of urban settings, Hong Kong and Boston. Several studies (Marchetti, 2010; Tang, 2020; Wanlin, 2018) have looked at each film's narrative, cinematographic, and directorial changes, focusing on Chinese or American culture. However, there is no prior research on the difference in degree and frequency of violence between each film. This study aims to fill that gap through film analysis and quantitative content analysis of the representation of violence in both films. By researching this topic, this study will provide further detail on cultural differences surrounding violent crime rates in each country and whether that is accurately represented in each film, alongside the glamorization of violence between the two movies, and if that relates to the perception of violence in each country. To serve as a springboard for this study, previous literature on why violence in film is a desired facet will be included. This review aims to discuss whether violence in film is necessary from a narrative perspective and if films with increased violence promote healthy narratives about it. Additionally, the effects of violent media on the audience will also be mentioned to assess whether the film could positively or negatively impact its viewer's mentalities, regardless of enjoyment. These findings are significant because researching if the American remake has more violence, as per this studies hypothesis, can open a space for scholarly discussion on why Americans desire more violence in their films or why this theme sells more often in the context of Hollywood, and whether that connects to America's rates of violence in contrast to Chinas.

Literature Review

Violence in China and America

The United Nations Department on Drugs and Crime has consistently reported data for all countries of the UN related to homicides and violent crimes. According to their database, China has experienced a minor decrease in intentional homicides, per 100,000 people, since 2004 from two to one. In contrast, the United States has an unsteady fluctuation and recently a sharp increase between 2019 to 2020, going from five to seven. Furthermore, China’s statistics of serious assaults, otherwise known as battery, reported to the UN by the Hong Kong Special Administration Region documented 4,780 serious assaults in 2020. The United States exhibited a dramatic difference from China, with 921,505 serious assaults in 2020. Due to the constriction of China’s data to one region, the number could be inaccurate, but the large difference remains significant. This shows substantial concern with violence in the United States, as the United States has a much smaller population than China.

Further analyzing the difference in violence between the countries, the culture surrounding violent acts also varies. In a collection of essays, Steve Harrell and Johnathan Lipman analyze the culture and counterculture surrounding violence in China. They found China has a distinct contradiction, as they characterize it as “a culture that condemns violence, that plays down the glory of military exploits, awards its highest prestige to literary, rather than martial, figures, and seeks harmony over all other values” (Harrell & Lipman 1). Despite this

outlook, China still displays a frequency and range of violent tendencies not much less than other countries. This further questions the validity of the statistics of severe assaults in China, as its significantly less than the United States, contrary to Harrell and Lipman's statement that China does not display much less violence than other countries of the same caliber (Harrell 1990). However, the two researchers agree with other UN data, as they deduce that most of the violent crime in China comes from social or political conflicts (Harrell & Lipman 1990). The United Nations reported that the region of Asia has distinctly more sociopolitical violent crime, as in homicide related to social discrimination or civil unrest, than North America.

American culture surrounding violence diverges from Chinese culture. China often downplays its military exploits, discourages violence within the family structure, and encourages the bottling of emotions (Harrell 1990). While in American culture, most violence concerns issues of honor and status rather than emotional outbursts (Keil 2007). Furthermore, America often celebrates its military with three holidays commemorating its troops. Based on Tom Smith's research on national pride, the United States ranked number one for national pride in military armed forces out of 23 major countries (Smiths 1998). This contrasts China's culture surrounding military, which does not address military exploits as prideful actions. Alongside increased advocation for violence in culture, the United States reports increased violence. Lester Kurtz analyzed existing homicide statistics and found that homicide rates in the United States are substantially higher than in similarly developed countries (1999). In terms of homicides and assaults relating to organized crime, the United States experienced an increase of 13 percent in gang violence in cities with more than 100,000 people from 2000-2012. Gang activity increased between 2001-2005 and has remained the same since, according to the US Department of Justice (Harrell 2005). Lastly, Jen Ludwig conducted an analysis of homicides in America involving firearms, and found that "the rate of gun violence in the United States substantially exceeds that of most other developed nations" (28). Based on previous literature, it is a fair conclusion that American society celebrates violent acts, like military triumphs, more than Chinese society. Due to the encouragement of violent acts or lack of discouragement in American society, there is a resulting increase in homicides and violent crimes as reflected in the UN data.

Depiction of Violence in Media and its Attractions

Violence is not the most significant portion of American cinema. Although, it often appears most in genres surrounding action, thriller, and crime. (Duncum 2006). Paul Duncum analyzes previous literature on violence in popular media and states, "there can be no doubting that violence is highly popular in mass media entertainment and is increasingly gory" (21). When analyzing why people are drawn in by violence in media, Duncum finds that the violent acts themselves are not the primary attraction, but using violence as a "means to an end" or to achieve a goal creates the interest (23). This extends into Grønstad's research, which analyzes the purpose behind screen violence, and declares violence the "staple diet of the American film" (25). A primary focus of Grønstad's research was the use of screen violence for aestheticism, following Duncum's conclusion that violence is attractive when it justifies a means to an end. Grønstad underscores that "violence is deemed acceptable in mainstream films as long as it takes place within a clearly defined moral setting that contains a protagonist-antagonist polarity" (39). While Grønstad discusses narrative aestheticism, Duncum highlights how screen violence is made more attractive by music, color grading, and other attractive editing features in the scene (2006).

Furthering this concept, the attractiveness of violence in film could provide economic opportunities for Hollywood. This is best observed in the creation of the PG-13 rating, as analyzed by James Kendrick writing about screen violence in Hollywood. The rating was created as a place for violent films between R or PG to evade controversy while maximizing profits from the audience's desire for "escapist violent fare" (Kendrick 171). In contrast to appealing to audiences for maximizing profits, Slocum argues that film violence, especially in narrative films, represents "deeply rooted cultural conflicts" (650). Slocum's proposal represents an essential conclusion of previous literature on screen violence that the recurrence of film violence represents changes in cultural values and loss of conservatism towards aggressive behaviors.

Effects of Viewing Media Violence on Behavior

The aforementioned studies have shown that violence appears increasingly in films and media, which leads to the discussion of the effects on the viewers (Slocum, 2000; Grønstad, 2008). In David Phillips study on mass media and homicides, he analyzes homicide trends in the United States alongside large viewings of violent media like wrestling or boxing tournaments and mass coverage of a suicide. His study was the first systematic evidence that mass media violence can trigger a brief increase in U.S. homicides, finding statistically significant results that these two factors positively correlate with each other. Mass coverage of suicides was also found to cause brief sharp increases in U.S. suicide rates, bolstering the point that violent media can have strong effects on behavior. To further substantiate this point, a 2010 review by Craig Anderson et. al. concluded that exposure to violent videogames is a risk factor for increased aggressive behavior and decreased empathy. This seems to be most prevalent in young teenagers since they are the target audience of this media and an impressionable group (APA).

The Departed vs. Infernal Affairs

Foreign films commonly contain aspects that represent their culture and appeal to a native audience. Upon "Americanizing" or adapting these films to Hollywood, many cultural aspects dissipate, and therefore elements of the film disappear or change. In her analysis of Hollywood adaptations of foreign films, Christina Schrage finds that Hollywood often changes the undertones of films while keeping the same plot or sometimes deviates and instead take inspiration from the original source text, if there is one present (2019). She further concludes that Hollywood remakes are often more successful due to their installations of updated effects from the original and the addition of attractive, famous American actors (2019). In contrast to Schrage's argument that Americanizing films takes away from essential cultural elements of the original, Jennifer Forrest argues that remakes must have a difference from the original, or they may fall under the guise of plagiarism. Unfortunately, *The Departed* is guilty of "Americanizing," and adds a very American narrative of China in the film, further expanded on by Marchetti.

To analyze the concepts of film violence and the differences in cultural elements of films, two specific examples are offered: *Infernal Affairs* and its remake, *The Departed*. Several studies (Luthe, 2015; Marchetti, 2010; Wanlin, 2018) have analyzed the differences in the films with a focus on cultural implications and urban culture, specifically the transition from Hong Kong to Boston. Li Wanlin conducted a cross-cultural comparison of the two films, primarily analyzing narrative and stylistic changes between *The Departed* and *Infernal Affairs*. The first noticeable difference is the dialogic encounters between characters and the immense theme of American individualism within them (327). Furthermore, Wanlin says that *The Departed* uses the idea of

American individualism to allude to historical context and make an ironic joke out of the ideology, where the characters of *The Departed* often use individualism as a meager justifications for their violent acts. On the historical side, this follows the tale of the Irish gang members, or in a broader context of Boston, Irish immigrants, who, according to the film, had only one option to rise up against their less-than-ideal circumstances (poor living conditions and racially divided neighborhoods): illegal violence (2018).

Lihang Tang explores the concept of urban culture in each film and specifically looks at the theme of struggle in each movie. *Infernal Affairs* reflects the style of a classic Hong Kong gangster film. Because of the actual gangster culture of the city, Hong Kong was the perfect location to create this type of narrative. However, Tang says when this same narrative is relocated to Boston the struggle becomes ethnic (2020). Remarkably similar to Wanlin's conclusions, Tang underscores that racial struggles are a huge part of the United States' social issues. Boston's largest immigrant group is the Irish, who have often been "bullied" and therefore found escape in gang activity (2020). While Tang has not discussed the difference in frequency or meaning of violence between the two films, she briefly reviews that the violence in *Infernal Affairs* is more pronounced and dramatized with slow pans and music, aligning with Grønstad's aforementioned ideas of aestheticism.

Lastly, Gina Marchetti analyzes *The Departed* and *Infernal Affairs* in more context of their directors, audience reactions, and critic reviews. She directly applies Jennifer Forrest's dilemma of plagiarism or transformative visions. Marchetti adds to the conversation of transformative cultural themes by highlighting the differences in the questions each film poses. *Infernal Affairs* seems to allude to the handover of Hong Kong from British Colonialism to the Communist party and the national uncertainty surrounding the change in culture that could occur from this. In contrast, *The Departed* does not allude to the racial struggles of immigrants in Boston or why their misfortunes manifested as violence but instead uses the questions *Infernal Affairs* contained to direct American xenophobia and an image of the Chinese government as an insatiable customer of American technology (2010). *The Departed* took remnants of the *Infernal Affairs* narrative to alter the story and messages in a more American-appealing and politicized way.

Methods

To analyze the correlation between violence in film and a country's culture surrounding violence, this study will use quantitative content analysis and film analysis. There is no set method to approach analyzing film, and it can involve several different fields mixing into one, as denoted in Grønstad's research on the collaboration of philosophical and religious elements. Film analysis concerns the broad spectrum of how a film is constructed, how it impacts the audience, how meaning is created, and how cultural and ideological aspects are implanted (Geiger & Rutsky 2005). All of these are analyzed to conclude the film's social implications and viewers' response in the context of the topic and social attitudes towards it (Nichols 2021). Due to the allotted time and scope of this research, this study used a coding format from Kumar's study, "An Analysis of Violence in Hindi Cinema." This coding scheme fits this study because Kumar analyzed the same aspect of the film, the amount of violence in each movie, and crafted an unbiased codebook applicable to any cinema. This method allows more accessible data analysis due to its advantages of collecting information on the frequency of themes (violence) in several films. While this study used only two movies and Kumar analyzed 25 films, the methodology remains the same.

This study analyzed two films, *The Departed* and *Infernal Affairs*, resulting in 252 minutes of content. *Infernal Affairs* is a trilogy, but since this study aimed to explore the difference in violence between a foreign film and a Hollywood adaptation, only the first installment of *Infernal Affairs* is analyzed since *The Departed* only follows the plot of the first film. These films were chosen due to their high awards and the nuanced differences in the plot and focus between each film, making *The Departed* not a scene-for-scene remake and allowing for more analysis of why extra screen time may have correlated with increased violence. Scorsese's expansion on the original plot in *Infernal Affairs* falls in line with Forrest's criteria for a proper remake, allowing for further discussion on the differences between each film that several researchers (Marchetti, 2010; Tang, 2020; Wanlin, 2018) already participated in. This study dealt with the sensitive topic of violence and was approved by the Institutional Review Board. To analyze the amount of violence in each film, every act of violence in either movie was counted and classified into four sets: type of violent act, weapon used, consequences of violence, and reason for violence. Categories for each of these classifications were sourced from Kumar's study. Due to the large variety of violent acts in his research, any section with zero was omitted from the final data sets, with the exception of psychological damage. In order to correctly count acts of violence, each act was individual; for example, if A hits B and B hits A back, this counted as two separate instances of violence. Several acts of violence in succession committed by the same person was also calculated individually; if A hits B and then A hits C after, this will count as two instances. All data will be stored in a secure document with additional information like descriptions and characters involved for ease.

This study presents the collected data through four tables, one for each category in which the violent acts were classified. For example, the data table for the type of violence listed each type of violence that appeared in either of the films organized under the title for clarity of which film it occurred in, along with the frequency of occurrence as counted by the coding. A percentage of which type of violence was most frequent in each movie is included. All categories will use this format, and the results displayed are discussed further in data analysis.

Results

Types of violent acts were coded under nine categories from Kumar's study. All percentages are rounded to the tenth place. Violence in films takes on several forms, and Table 1 addresses the violent act and instrument of aggression. *The Departed* had a total of 163 incidents, while *Infernal Affairs* had 58; this exhibits a 181 percent increase in violence in *The Departed*. As noted in observations, *The Departed* contained 53 percent of *Infernal Affairs* total violence before it's opening title card. Furthermore, each film displayed unique categories, as *The Departed* contained verbal threats, and *Infernal Affairs* showed vehicle damage.

Table 1: Classification of Violent Acts				
Violent Activity	**The Departed**	**Percentage**	**Infernal Affairs**	**Percentage**
Shooting	90	55.2%	40	69.0%
Verbal Threat	3	1.8%	0	0%
Kick	6	3.8%	1	1.7%
Punch	41	25.2%	4	6.9%
Hitting with object	15	9.2%	5	8.6%
Slapping	3	1.8%	1	1.7%
Car/Bike Damage	0	0%	7	12.1%
Stabbing	2	1.2%	0	0%
Property Damage	3	1.8%	0	0%
Total	163	100.0	58	100.0

Both films contained shootings as their primary source of violence, with 55.2 percent of acts being shootings for *The Departed* and 69 percent for *Infernal Affairs*. This coincides with the results in Table 2, where the most common weapon for both films was guns. *The Departed* displayed 91 instances of using a firearm as an instrument of aggression, a 121 percent increase from *Infernal Affairs'* 41 instances. Furthermore, *The Departed* contained significantly more (537 percent increase) violence with the use of the body, often depicting gruesome beatings.

Table 2: Classification of Weapons				
Weapon	**The Departed**	**Percentage**	**Infernal Affairs**	**Percentage**
Use of Body	51	31.3%	8	13.8%
Gun	91	55.8%	41	70.7%
Knife	2	1.2%	0	0%
Stick	0	0%	3	5.2%
Rod	6	3.7%	4	6.9%
Other objects	8	4.9%	2	3.4%
Explosive	1	0.6%	0	0%
Car	1	0.6%	0	0%
No weapon	3	1.8%	0	0%
Total	163	100.0	58	100.0

Surprisingly, *The Departed* showed many violent acts motivated by anger, as shown in Table 3, reviewing the reasons for violence. *The Departed's* total increase in violence coincides with the motivations, as 42 instances of violence were committed because of evil, nearing the definition of senseless violence. This shows an 800 percent increase from "evil" violence in *Infernal Affairs*, which had a mere four offenses. Noted in observations during coding, *The Departed* contained mostly gang violence (members committing violent acts), while *Infernal Affairs* had much more police violence (using force to uphold the law).

Table 3: Classification of Motivations				
Reason for Violence	**The Departed**	**Percentage**	**Infernal Affairs**	**Percentage**
Evil	36	22.08%	4	6.9%
Anger	28	17.2%	3	5.2%
Upholding the Law	36	22.1%	30	51.7%
Self-Preservation/Defense	19	11.7%	11	19.0%
Revenge	6	3.7%	0	0%
Well Being of family	2	1.2%	0	0%
Well Being of society	0	0%	1	1.7%
Ambition or Power	6	3.7%	4	6.9%
Other	30	18.4%	5	8.6%
Total	163	100.0	58	100.0

The Irish mobsters in *The Departed* exhibited more evil violence, resulting in more harm done to others than the violence in *Infernal Affairs*. This theme is depicted in Table 4 below, which denotes the outcomes or consequences of violent acts. Acts solely to inflict psychological damage were not present in either film; however, the category was included due to later discussion about differences in portraying the mental toll of violence between the movies. The majority of the no-injury consequences resulted from missed bullets during shootings. Notably, *The Departed* displayed not only increased violence but also exacerbated implications in comparison to Infernal Affairs. This is shown by the 125 percent increase in death from *Infernal Affairs* to *The Departed*.

Table 4: Consequences of Violence				
Circumstances	**The Departed**	**Percentage**	**Infernal Affairs**	**Percentage**
Death	18	11.0%	8	13.8%
Serious wound	19	11.7%	5	8.6%
Minor would	45	27.6%	6	10.3%
Psychological damage	0	0%	0	0%
No injury	81	49.7%	38	65.5%
Cannot code	0	0%	1	1.7%
Total	163	100.0	58	100.0

Discussion

Proportion of Violence

The American remake included several near-exact scenes as *Infernal Affairs* but had much more violence, mostly in added scenes. Two significant character deaths were added in *The Departed*, the death of Costello, played by Jack Nicholson, and Colin, played by Matt Damon (see figs. 1-2). This addition increased the violence and altered the story in terms of Costello's death. *Infernal Affairs* did not share the end of the gang leader, in this case, Hon Sam, likely because it went on to become a trilogy. However, the addition of Colin's death in *The Departed* did not have a lasting effect on the narrative other than changing the characterization

of Mark Wahlberg's character, Dignam, from a crude sergeant to an ex-police vigilante, as he shoots Colin in cold blood during the final scene of the film.



Fig. 1. "Colin Shoots Costello." Warner Bros. Entertainment Studios, 2006. Author's screenshot.



Fig. 2. "Dignam Executes Colin in His Apartment." Warner Bros. Entertainment Studies, 2006. Author's screenshot.

The significant difference in violence between *The Departed* and *Infernal Affairs* coincides with Grønstad's research pronouncing violence was the "staple diet of the American film." Colin's death to conclude the film substantiates this theory, which occurred for the shock factor rather than a progressive expansion of the original story. This also supports Duncum's research as *The Departed* showed further evidence that violence is prevalent in entertainment. Several aforementioned researchers delved into why violence is an attractive feature, and Duncum's claims were most supported by the type of violence in *The Departed*, as he describes that violence used as a "means to an end" or to achieve a goal is often the most attractive form (2006). The entirety of the film has underlying themes of forging a path in the world and carpe-diem-related ideals, which are even stated in the opening line of the film declared by Costello: "I don't wanna be a product of my environment, I want my environment to

be a product of me." This phenomenon makes the gang members' acts appeal to audiences, as they commit violence to preserve their status or advance their wealth or power.

A scene that serves as the best example of this occurs when Billy picks a fight with two gangsters minding their business in a store. He punches and throws around one man then proceeds to bludgeon the other with a coat rack (see fig. 3). This was not included in *Infernal Affairs*, and the additional scene was added to show the extreme measures Billy had to take to earn the respect of Costello. This categorizes under the "Ambition or Power" section of Table 1 and adds to the difference in violence between the two films, as *The Departed* involves violent offenses against innocents or those not actively participating in criminal activities. This supports Slocum's research that film violence often reflects "deeply rooted cultural conflicts" (650). This is evident from *The Departed*'s expanded violence, US Department of Justice, and UNDOC data. The US Department of Justice reported in the early 2000s, around when *The Departed* was made, that cities saw an increase in gang-related homicides by 13 percent. Gang violence increased between 2001-2005 and has remained constant (Egley & Howell). UNDOC reported that America consistently exhibits more homicides and serious assaults, reflecting *The Departed's* increased depiction of death and beatings.



Fig. 3. "Rival Gang Member Bludgeoned by Billy." Warner Bros. Entertainment Studios, 2006. Author's screenshot.

The final unexpected aspect of this study's results were the difference in violent acts motivated by anger. Harrell's research on China's culture surrounding violence concluded that most violent acts are a result of emotional outbursts from long periods of bottling emotions (3). This sparked the hypothesis that *Infernal Affairs* would have more violent acts motivated by anger than *The Departed*, however, this was not the case. *The Departed* contained 28 violent acts motivated by violence, an 833 percent increase from *Infernal Affair's* three acts. This surprising finding challenges Harrell's research on the assumption that Slocum's remains true, that film reflects cultural elements.

Gun Violence

A large portion of the violence in both films comes from the use of firearms, mostly happening in shootouts when the gang and police force come into contact. *The Departed* contained more and varying gun violence than *Infernal Affairs*. *The Departed* often had the gang members using their firearms against rival gangs, police, and civilians involved in street affairs (see figs. 4-5). In contrast, *Infernal Affairs* mostly had police carrying guns and the gang members only brandished their weapons during altercations with the police, like the shootouts. Similar to the increased violence, the difference in gun violence assists Slocum's research on film violence reflecting cultural ideals and conflicts.



Fig. 4. "Billy Threatens Local Dealer." Warner Bros. Entertainment Studios, 2006. Author's screenshot.



Fig. 5. "Inspector Lau Kin Ming in the Police Academy." Media Asia Films, 2002. Author's screenshot.

China has both cultural and legal reservations surrounding firearms. According to the People's Republic of China Firearms Management Law, Article 3, holding, manufacturing, trading, and transporting firearms is prohibited. Cretacci's study on cultural attitudes towards firearms further adds that China has a cultural resistance to firearm ownership (2018). Both factors lead to the lower gun violence in China compared to the United States. *Infernal Affairs* reflects Chinese views on firearms by only having police officers openly show their guns and avoiding violence involving the gang members against civilians. Conversely, *The Departed* represents America's cultural attitude towards firearms as nearly every character in the film carries or owns a gun. The United States legislation for owning firearms comes from the second amendment "right of the people to keep and bear arms." This causes the United States to suffer from a "rate of gun violence that substantially exceeds that of most other developed nations" (Ludwig 2017). Both films fall in line with their country's broader cultural context.

How Violence is Portrayed

Paul Duncum's study on violence in popular media concluded that violence is widespread and becoming increasingly gory. *The Departed* and *Infernal Affairs* differ in how violence is portrayed based on how extreme it is. Noted as an observation, *Infernal Affairs* contains several deaths and injuries but only has three scenes where blood is visible: SP Wong's, Chan's, and Tsui's death. In contrast, every scene in The Departed containing violence has the presence of blood or some other visible injury. The Departed also severely exacerbates the gruesomeness of the death of the rival gangsters (see fig. 6). The difference between Queenan and SP Wong's death, the same character in each film, is shown by the substantial increase in blood upon his fall in *The Departed* compared to the small amount trickling down Wong's forehead in *Infernal Affairs* (see fig. 7-8).



Fig. 6. "Rival Gang Member Murdered." Warner Bros. Entertainment Studios, 2006. Author's screenshot.



Fig. 7. “Queenan’s Death in *The Departed*.” Warner Bros. Entertainment Studios, 2006. Author screenshot.



Fig. 8. “SP Wong’s Death in *Infernal Affairs*.” Media Asia Films, 2002. Author’s screenshot.

Death is one of the consequences of violence in Table 4, and *The Departed* intensifies this aspect. However, the film explores the effect of violence on the psyche of Billy much more than *Infernal Affairs* does. This is the justification for including the empty coding section psychological damage. Billy slowly loses his sanity and identity throughout the film; as he witnesses more violence, his mental state worsens. When explaining his situation to his therapist, Billy declares, “I’m having panic attacks. Other night, I thought I was having a heart attack… I haven’t slept for weeks” (Scorsese 2006). Both films explore the relationship between Billy/Chan and their therapist; however, Billy opens up about his struggles and requests prescriptions, while Chan sleeps through the sessions (see fig. 9-10). This falls into Grønstad’s statement that violence is more attractive when in a defined moral setting with a protagonist-antagonist struggle, as Billy’s battle against the gang is both mental and physical.



Fig. 9. “Billy in His Therapy Session.” Warner Bros. Entertainment Studios, 2006. Author’s screenshot.



Fig. 10. “Chan in His Therapy Session.” Media Asia Films, 2002. Author’s screenshot.

Conclusion

This study found that violence is portrayed as a desirable aspect of American films, and the Hollywood production of *Infernal Affairs* exacerbates the violence to satiate the American diet of film. *The Departed* displayed further violence, gore, exploration of mental health, gun violence, and death compared to *Infernal Affairs*. The films appropriately reflect their country's culture and attitudes surrounding these subjects, except in the unexpected case that *Infernal Affairs* did not explore the Chinese phenomenon of emotionally motivated violence, bottling of emotions, and mental health issues that lead to aggression. These subjects were hypothesized to be present in *Infernal Affairs* due to the conclusions of Harrell’s research. The overall collected data supported the initial assumption of this study that *The Departed* would have more violence than *Infernal Affairs*, and the films would explore the cultural implications of this, as mentioned in previous research (Luthe, 2015; Marchetti, 2010; Wanlin, 2018). This research fills the gap by studying the difference in violence between the two films, while past studies analyzed variations in film techniques and narratives.

Limitations and Future Research

While the data supports this study's hypothesis, it would be a large generalization to say that American remakes of foreign films display increased violence. This underscores an important limitation, that this study only researched a pair of films. For future research, a much larger scope is recommended, which analyzes various genres and movies. The collected data also has a significant limitation, as each film was coded once by one person, which leaves room for human error, especially in scenes like the shootout with rapid counts of violence. In terms of the basis of the study and exploration of cultural conflicts, the UNDOC data provided for China may be inaccurate, as it was a suspiciously low number for such a large population and seemed to represent a small area. In this case, if the actual homicide or serious assault numbers in China were higher than in the United States, the conclusion and hypothesis of this study would be altered, as *Infernal Affairs* would then be suspected to have more violence. Suppose this study was replicated in the future to reach a more thorough and well-supported conclusion. In that case, future research should study a more comprehensive range of foreign films and their American remakes. Each film should also be coded several times or by several people to count violent acts accurately. When this is conducted, the study should also analyze whether the movie gives a positive or negative narrative about violence, as *The Departed* has increased violence but gives a positive description of the adverse effects of violence.

Implications to Community

This research's findings apply to a broader community of researchers and young teenagers. This research opens the door to further scholarly conversation about violence in media, specifically in the realm of American remakes of foreign films, and why Americans seem to desire violence as a primary aspect of their entertainment. This study has demonstrated an instance where the Americanized version of the film contains more violence, which calls into question the effect on the viewers. As previously mentioned, violent media can become a risk factor for decreased empathy and increased aggressive behavior in teenagers. Mass viewings of violent media can lead to brief spikes in either U.S. homicides or suicides, depending on the content. While *The Departed* has increased violence that sometimes seems like a flashy or shock-factor addition, its well-meaning narrative about violence's psychological toll and consequences contributes to an actionable solution for America's film industry. Positive changes to the mass media sample would include reducing senseless violence and its severity (gore) and including essential narratives against violence when it is included in the production. Finally, relating to both films, productions in a specific country should attempt to reflect the cultural and legislative aspects of the land within the film, as *Infernal Affairs* should have further explored the relationship between mental health issues in China and increased participation in gangs and violence.

Although this issue may seem to concern a selective group of film scholars, it directly impacts larger film audiences, which are left with different messages about violence, advocacy, or not depending on the film.

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