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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJnPdgiKJrc>

### **Gun & Film Violence**

America has significantly more mass shootings than any other country and is notorious for its highly spectacle media glamourization of violence. The US is also known for its mass gun ownership with approximately 1 in 3 Americans owning a firearm, according to Pew Research center. I wanted to explore the arguments that sound the link between media and gun control, bring up key points, as well as stating what I believe is the case at hand. I believe gun portrayal in the films does inspire real life violence to a minor extent; but only when paired with other external factors like mental illness and a lack of education etc. I believe stricter federal gun laws that prevent easy accessibility to people with mental illness and criminal past will reduce gun violence in the country.

According to Patrick Jamieson, Daniel Romer of the university of pennsylvania "in 2018, over 39,000 Americans died from gun-related deaths" and "young persons ages 15-24 have the highest rates of firearm homicides". These two facts juxtaposed indicate that there may be a correlation between young people

and gun violence; posing the question what has led to this correlation. Depending on who or what group you ask may give a varied response, but a common answer among people is violent films and movies. In a response about the parkland shooting, at the time then President Donald Trump has stated that he believes what motivates mass shootings is violent movies and that he may have to take executive actions to regulate and enforce stricter ratings systems.

At first thoughts, this may seem like a very practical way of looking at the issue at hand. It's very difficult to avoid films that feature gun violence as they're commonly featured in blockbusters, critically acclaimed classics, and indie films. They are surprisingly more common in PG-13 rated movies, in fact, according to Christopher J. Ferguson and Patrick Markey, the rate of gun violence in PG-13 movies have tripled since the 1950s to modern times. This would be implied by social commentators and politicians that the impressionable youth in America is getting influenced by violent movies.

Jamieson Weitz suggests that "more gun violence in movies, and the mere presence of guns may increase aggressive behavior" and Patrick E. Jamieson, and Daniel Romer states that "the positive relation between relative amount of TV violence involving guns and actual homicides due to firearms, especially

among youth, is consistent with the hypothesis that entertainment media are contributing to the normative acceptance of guns for violent purposes". This may indicate it may not even be a film violence issue, but rather a TV violence issue and that it desensitizes the use of guns in real life.

In an interview with award winning filmmaker Quentin Tarantino, the director was asked about why his movies were so violent, sparking a quick and heated debate about the effects it had on society. The interviewer claimed that the youth will attempt to mimic whatever they see in the films, whereas Quentin argues that the youth are smarter than that and can tell the difference between reality and fiction.

However, In the study conducted by Christopher J. Ferguson and Patrick Markey, they researched "the relations between violent films, violence, and homicides were examined while controlling for age shifts, poverty, education, incarceration rates, and economic inequality"; and found out that "economic inequality, the unequal distribution of income and resources across residents, has been found to predict violent crime". Ultimately, this translates to even though there is a large presence of gun violence in pg-13 rated movies, it doesn't contribute maliciously to gun related crime in society.

To answer the question "Do films cause gun violence?"; the answer would be a complicated mixed bag of answers. To some degree I films could normalize gun behavior and encourage the sales of weapons but that's not what motivates a criminal to commit a massacre. I believe the reason for these crimes are fueled by compounding factors such as mental health, radical ideologies, and lower socioeconomic background and so forth.

I believe the reason why the films are commonly blamed is because it's an easy scapegoat for politicians to use instead of creating practical gun control reform laws because that would go against their lobbyist interests such as the NRA's. Brennan Weiss and Skye Gould of business insider states that "the NRA spends millions influencing Congress and the White House to advance its agenda. And its monetary prowess is still growing".

Practically speaking, it's virtually impossible to live life without seeing some sort of gun violence, not only in film but also in media in general, so if violent films were the cause, more people would commit more gun crimes. Also, only in America do we deal with these types of issues whereas other countries that also have access to violent films do not; the difference is in the key gun control laws.

## Academic References

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