

PG-13 movies surpass R-rated movies in gun violence

By Natalie Crofts

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PHILADELPHIA — There is now more gun violence in PG-13 movies than R-rated movies, according to a new study.

Historically, PG-13 movies had about the same amount as violence as PG and G-rated movies, but that has changed in recent years, according to a study released Monday in the journal *Pediatrics*.

"It's shocking how gun use has skyrocketed in movies that are often marketed directly at the teen audience," said co-author Brad Bushman from Ohio State University in a press release. "You have to wonder why we are seeing this surge in gun violence in PG-13 movies, when it isn't appearing in G, PG and R-rated films."

Researchers analyzed a database of 420 top-grossing movies of all ratings to determine how exposure to gun violence has changed. The study found R-rated movies had almost the same amount of gun violence from 1985 to 2010. PG and G-rated movies also remained the same as their 1985 rates.

However, they said the amount of gun violence seen in PG-13 movies has dramatically changed. While PG-13 movies had almost no violence in 1985, rates consistently grew and then accelerated, the study found. PG-13 movies tied R-rated movies for average amount of gun violence in 2010, and then surpassed R-rated movies in 2011 and 2012.

"It's disturbing that PG-13 movies are filled with so much gun violence," said co-author Dan Romer of the Annenberg Public Policy Center in a press release. "We know that movies teach children how adults behave, and they make gun use appear exciting and attractive."

The MPAA states PG-13 movies may allow depictions of violence, but that it generally shouldn't be both realistic and extreme or persistent. Violence in R-rated movies may be extreme or persistent.

"By the standards of the MPAA, PG-13 movies shouldn't have as much violence as R-rated movies, but they clearly do," Bushman said. "It appears sex scenes are more likely to result in an R rating than scenes of violence."

Researchers said they are concerned about the effect seeing gun violence can have on young audiences. They cited the "weapons effect," which has found just seeing a gun or a depiction of a gun can make someone more aggressive.

"Because of the increasing popularity of PG-13 films, youth are exposed to considerable gun violence in movie scripts," the researchers wrote in the study. "The mere presence of guns in these films may increase the aggressive behavior of youth."

They claimed the weapons effect from movies can occasionally take a dark turn.

"These movies essentially provide young people scripts for how to use guns in real life, as we have seen in copycat killings," Bushman said. "It is a bad situation."

The PG-13 rating was created in response to complaints about violence in PG movie "Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom," released in 1984. Researchers said now may be the time to once again rethink the rating system.