

Onscreen sex doesn't always sell

Study reveals new information about sexual depictions in the movies.

Despite the longstanding belief that sex sells, researchers Dean Keith Simonton from the University of California, Davis, and Anemone Cerridwen from Vancouver have discovered otherwise.

In a study of 914 films released during the 2001 to 2005 period, they found that, on average, films with more sexual activity and nudity earned less than those without as much detailed onscreen action.

In a [publication](#) released in the November edition of the *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*, the researchers concluded that "at present, no filmmaker should introduce such content under the assumption that it guarantees a big box office, earns critical acclaim, or wins movie awards. On the contrary, other forms of strong film content appear far more potent either commercially or aesthetically."



The team used box office numbers, Motion Picture Association of American (MPAA) ratings, critical reviews and awards as the basis for their comparisons.

While some films such as *Titanic*, an oceanic love story of historic proportions, appear to support the idea of sex sells, it ranks only sixth on the scale of overall top grossing movies adjusted for inflation, trailing *Gone With the Wind*, *Star Trek*, *Sound of Music*, *E.T. The Extraterrestrial* and *The Ten Commandments*.

The 10 top grossing films in this study group include *Shrek*, *Spider-Man*, *Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith*, *Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*, *Spider-Man 2*, *The Passion of the Christ*, *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, *Finding Nemo*, *Harry Potter and Sorcerer's Stone* and *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*.

In comparison with many other films released during the same time frame, most of these movies contain minor to moderate depictions of sexual content, with some portraying no sex or nudity.

Simonton and Cerridwen suggests

that the concept of sex sells may, in fact, be "one of those self-perpetuating urban myths."

However, they also discovered that the involvement of females as producers, directors, writers or actors in a film's development did not necessarily decrease the amount of sexual depictions. Rather,

"sexual content actually increases with the proportion of women who make up the cast."

It was an interesting find considering that the the researchers' data established that, on average, sexual depictions in mainstream movies do little to justify their inclusion. "Even worse," they say, "whatever justification cinema sex may claim may depend on the implicit exploitation of women."

Parent Previews picks best family movies of 2009

Each year the staff of *Parent Previews* (found on the Internet at ParentPreviews.com) reviews hundreds of movies from a parent's perspective. While they look for some of the typical things a parent may be sensitive to -- like gunshots, nudity or tobacco use -- they also search for movies that provide positive messages and character development.

While some of the movies on the *Parent Previews Top 10 Movies for 2009* list may



share accolades from the Oscars or the Golden Globes, this list of the “best” movies from the past year puts parents first:

Marrying fantastical premises with charming, believable characters, this aerostat adventure is a definite thumbs [Up](#) experience for everyone from older children to senior citizens. *Up* is Definitely *Parent Previews* pick for best movie of 2009.

Probably more appealing to the girls in your home, [Hannah Montana: The Movie](#) delivers a fun package of songs and positive messages (along with surprisingly good performances) that is nearly devoid of objectionable content.

A true story about a family who reaches out to help a young boy in need, [The Blind Side](#) serves as a strong reminder to look around and see those we might be passing by on the side of the road.

Rising far above expectations, [Cloudy With A Chance of Meatballs](#) delivers appropriate humor and great messages about getting too much of a good thing and learning to develop and embrace your best talents.

[Confessions of a Shopaholic](#) offers a plentitude of thought provoking insights into the current credit crisis and the reality of shopping addictions. Yet it manages to do so in a manner that is both entertaining and encouraging and should be appealing (and, hopefully, enlightening) to teens.

With more depth than the average adolescent flick, [Bandstand](#) acknowledges difficult teen issues and gives credibility

to the students who deal with the challenges of growing up.

While some teens may balk at watching an historical drama, [The Young Victoria](#) offers a compelling true story of a teen heroine who grew to become the longest reigning monarch in world history. It also has great costumes and a cool romance that shows how a marriage can work to better both individuals.

Although violence may be a concern for parents of younger children, [Star Trek](#) is a solid action film suitable for most teens that includes powerful messages about teamwork and friendship.

If *Star Trek* is too intense for your ‘tweens, you may want to give [Astro Boy](#) a try. This animated movie offers action adventure with messages about taking control of your own life and making good decisions. And it looks great!

It’s tough to find a teen action adventure that doesn’t include the usual language and sexual content. [Race to Witch Mountain](#) meets this goal, and offers pure popcorn fun that is rare on movie screens.

Riding without a helmet....

Study looks at risky behaviors portrayed in G and PG movies

Children are being exposed to risky behaviors when it comes to G and PG films according to a [study](#) published in *Injury Prevention*.

Researchers found that only 75 percent of boaters wore personal flotation devices, 56 percent of car passengers wore seat belts, 35 percent of pedestrians used crosswalks and 25 percent of cyclist wore helmets in the movies.

Although the entertainment industry continues to portray adults and children participating in unsafe behaviors, researchers concluded that parents can help counter these depictions by taking time to educate their children about safety practices.

Celebrity activism on the slopes

January 14-17, 2010 The Fairmont Banff Springs hosted Robert F. Kennedy Jr.’s Waterkeeper Alliance Sports Invitational. Among the celebrities who attended were Alec Baldwin, Tim Robbins, Marla Maples, Virginia Madsen, Alan Thicke, and Bruce Greenwood.

During their stay, the celebrities participated in ski and other outdoor activities. The invitational, meant to raise money for environmental protection culminated in a gala dinner and concert.

While the Waterkeeper Alliance has raised millions of dollars since its inception in 2000, this exclusive winter extravaganza also puts the spotlight on celebrity activism. During recent years, increasing numbers of actors and other well known personalities are plugging causes or speaking out against issues like global warming, literacy, missing children and animal rights.

Musician Bono and actress Angelina Jolie have long been spokespersons for humanitarian concerns. Leonardo DiCaprio gave his star presence to the film *The 11th Hour*. But at what point does celebrity status clash with credibility?

While a star’s involvement draws attention to a cause, he or she may only be serving as a mere spokesman. Parents can increase their children’s media literacy by helping them research organizations before pledging dollars or time.