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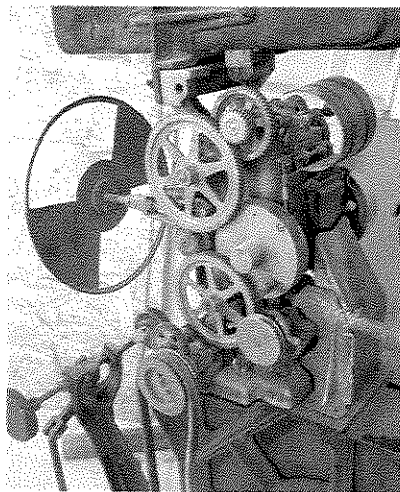
RANT

Romantic Movies Aren't Ruining Relationships After All (But You Won't Believe What Is!)

by Sasha Brown-Worsham April 12 at 3:15 PM

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Have you ever watched a romantic comedy and wondered why on Earth your life doesn't look like that? Why are **Katherine Heigl** and **Meg Ryan** always falling in love in quirky, funny ways that end up being insanely romantic? No?

For years we have been hearing that romantic comedies are messing with women's heads and making us have higher expectations for romance. But a new study from *Communication Monographs* that surveyed college students found that there was little to no relationship between watching romantic comedies often and believing in things like "love conquers all," "one and only" love (soul mate), and "love at first

sight."

Take that rom-com haters. But seriously, didn't the original thought kind of underestimate women anyway?

I understand the difference between movies and real life. I understand that Meg Ryan's "meet-cute" is probably not going to be mine. Even so, I DO believe in soul mates.

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I know that sounds crazy and maybe even naive, but hear me out: It's not that I believe every person has only one soul mate. I believe there are many possible soul mates. But I do believe in just knowing that someone is right for you and that is something you know in your bones. And it's not because I watched too many movies.

We ladies are drilled from an early age with this notion of happily ever after and marriage as an end point and destination rather than a new beginning.

So it's no wonder women are shocked when romantic notions aren't quite as they expected. No fairy tale ever shows what happens after marriage when the handsome prince throws his socks on the floor and you go ballistic over his half-assed dish washing.

Even with all its problems, I still believe in marriage and soul mates. I believe in the romance of falling onto the couch together, exhausted after a day of caring for little ones. That IS romance. That's its own rom-com. So, good for the students in the study who know the difference between real life and moves.

Because you know what? Real life is better. It's richer. It's more complicated. And it's more fun. Take that Meg Ryan!

Do you think rom-coms ruin you for romance?

Image via Grand Canyon NPS/Flickr

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sasha Brown-Worsham can't decide whether she is a mother, writer, or runner, but is usually all three at some point each day. She has written for dozens of print magazines, newspapers, and websites. She rarely ever writes on bathroom walls. More

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Most People Don't Confuse Romantic Comedies With Reality

Young adults in study didn't base relationship expectations on these movies

April 12, 2013



FRIDAY, April 12 (HealthDay News) -- Watching romantic comedy films does not lead young adults to develop unrealistic expectations about relationships, according to a new study.

Researchers surveyed 335 college students, aged 18 to 26, in the Midwest and found that watching romantic comedies often was not strongly associated with romantic ideals such as love at first sight and having a soul mate.

The study was published online April 12 in the journal *Communication Monographs*.

"These findings discredit the popular assumption that exposure to romantic comedies is a major source leading to unrealistic relational expectations among young people," principal investigator Veronica Hefner, an assistant professor of communication studies at Chapman University in California, said in a journal news release.

Hefner and her colleagues did find, however, that young adults who said they watched romantic comedies to learn about relationships were slightly more likely to believe in romantic ideals, particularly the idealization of a partner. This includes believing that a partner should be perfect or will be completely accepting, loving and understanding.

"What really matters is not what you watch, but why you watch," Hefner said.

About 70 percent of the study participants were women. Overall, men and women had the same responses about romantic beliefs. Hefner said this finding challenges the popular belief that "women are the ones who are most idealistic and most influenced by romantic comedies."

More information

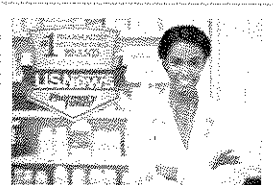
The Nemours Foundation offers teens advice about healthy relationships.

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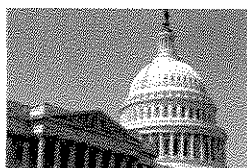
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HUFF POST WOMEN

Romantic Comedies Don't Really Make You Have Unrealistic Expectations About Love, Says Study

The Huffington Post | By Emma Gray
Posted: 04/15/2013 3:54 pm EDT | Updated: 04/15/2013 3:54 pm EDT

Turns out, watching "[Pretty Woman](#)" over and over again won't make you believe that a rich man will fall in love with you over a weekend, show up outside your apartment building in a limo, and [climb up your fire escape](#) with a rose in hand. A new study concluded that [romantic comedies don't actually cause](#) people to have unrealistic expectations about love. So feel free to continue your rom-com binge-watching without guilt.

The study, led by Veronica Hefner, Ph.D., assistant professor of communication studies at Chapman University, [surveyed 335 students](#) at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. According to *ScienceDaily*, the researchers found that there was [not a strong relationship](#) between believing in "soul mates," "love at first sight" and the idea that "love conquers all" and watching romantic comedies. "These findings discredit the popular assumption that exposure to romantic comedies is a major source leading to unrealistic relational expectations among young people," Hefner told *ScienceDaily*.

The results also contradict the [conclusions of a 2008 study](#) out of the University of Edinburgh, which found that fans of classic rom-coms were less effective at communicating their wants and needs to their romantic partners. However, this may have less to do with exposure to the narratives of romantic comedies and more to do with the reason people watch movies in this genre in the first place. Hefner and her team found that there was a correlation between people who [viewed rom-coms in order to glean information about relationships](#) and the tendency to idealize romance and one's romantic partners, reported *ScienceDaily*.

In other words, don't actively look for realistic lessons on love from fictional accounts of romance. But if you like to indulge in a little (or a lot) of [Nora Ephron](#) on a weekend -- and why wouldn't you? -- you'll be just fine.

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Most don't confuse romantic comedies with reality

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Washington - Watching romantic comedy films does not lead young adults to develop unrealistic expectations about relationships, according to a new study.

A survey of 335 undergraduate students in the Midwest found no significant relationship between reporting watching romantic comedies often and belief in the ideals "love conquers all," "one and only" love (soul mate) and "love at first sight."

"These findings discredit the popular assumption that exposure to romantic comedies is a major source leading to unrealistic relational expectations among young people," said the study's principal investigator, Veronica Hefner, Ph.D., assistant professor of communication studies at Chapman University, Orange, Calif.

Hefner conducted the online questionnaire survey at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign with Barbara J. Wilson, Ph.D., the university's executive vice provost for faculty and academic affairs. The authors did find, however, that those viewers of romantic comedies who reported watching with the motivation to learn about relationships were slightly more likely to endorse romantic ideals overall and, in particular, the belief in "idealization of partner." Idealizing one's partner includes believing that the partner should be flawless or will be completely accepting, loving, and understanding, according to Hefner.

Compared with exposure to romantic comedies, a stronger influence on viewers' beliefs about relationships was the reason that young people watch these popular movies, Hefner said.

"College students who reported watching romantic comedies to learn about love and relationships were more likely to endorse idealistic romantic beliefs than those who watch for other reasons," she said. "What really matters is not what you watch, but why you watch."

Nearly half of the survey respondents reported they were currently in a relationship. Students ranged in age from 18 to 26 years. Of the 335 respondents, 71 percent were female and 29 percent were male.

The researchers found no differences in responses about romantic beliefs between men and women who responded to the survey. The lack of a sex difference in the findings disputes another popular belief, Hefner said—"that women are the ones who are most idealistic and most influenced by romantic comedies."

The study has been published online this week in the National Communication Association's journal Communication Monographs.

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The Nemours Foundation offers teens advice about healthy relationships.

SOURCE: *Communication Monographs*, news release, April 12, 2013

- **Under embargo until 12 April 2013 09:00 GMT**

Romantic Comedies Affect Beliefs About Relationships Less Strongly Than Expected

These films are also more realistic than widely thought, a new study shows

Romantic-comedy films are not a major source for developing unrealistic expectations about relationships among young adults, finds a new study to be published online this week in the National Communication Association's journal *Communication Monographs*.

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"College students who reported watching romantic comedies to learn about love and relationships were more likely to endorse idealistic romantic beliefs than those who watch for other reasons," she said. "What really matters is not what you watch, but why you watch."

Again, these students were more likely to believe in idealizing their partners than in romantic beliefs such as love at first sight, but Hefner pointed out that this idealization could have a positive social influence. Some studies have shown that viewing one's partner as wonderful and perfect was beneficial for a romantic relationship and was linked to higher levels of satisfaction in the relationship.

Nearly half of the survey respondents reported they were currently in a relationship. Students ranged in age from 18 to 26 years. Of the 335 respondents, 71 percent were female and 29 percent were male.

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In fact, the researchers found that male characters in popular romantic comedies express romantic ideals more often than women do. In this separate study, published in the same article, they performed a content analysis of the 52 top-grossing romantic comedy films between 1998 and 2008, including 2008's "27 Dresses" and the top-grossing "rom-com" of that period, "My Big Fat Greek Wedding." Of the 52 movies analyzed, 98 percent reportedly featured a romantic ideal expression, whereas 75 percent of the films featured a romantic ideal takeaway message. Ideal expressions were any statements related to one of the four ideals. Takeaway messages were the overall impressions of the films.

"Of the ideal statements expressed in these films, the most common were related to soul mates," Hefner said, "whereas the most common takeaway ideal theme was the notion that love conquers all."

Despite this prevalence of idealism, however, the most commonly expressed statements in these movies overall were actually realistic in nature. These practical expressions or challenges to the ideals, such as "relationships take hard work," were twice as common in these films as were the idealistic comments.

Still, Hefner said, "the bottom line is that the interactions and statements found in these films are not idealistic at all. However, the larger themes of the movies are idealistic. It seems that the couples go through realistic challenges and difficult obstacles, but resolve their differences with ideal conclusions."

The article, "From Love at First Sight to Soul Mate: The Influence of Romantic Ideals in Popular Films on Young People's Beliefs about Relationships," appears online on Friday, April 12, 2013 in Communication Monographs (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03637751.2013.776697>)

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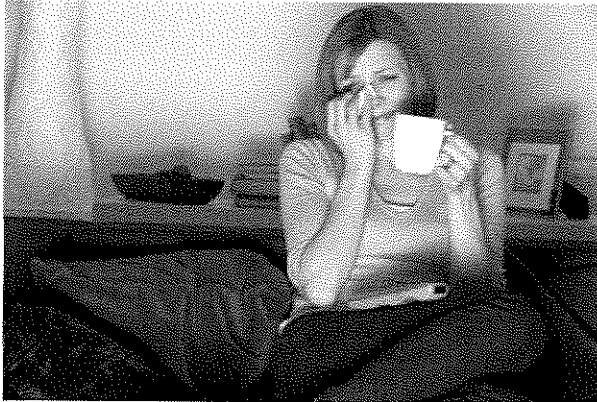
Study suggests romantic comedies affect relationship beliefs less strongly than expected



April 13, 2013 by Ashley

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From the Taylor & Francis press release via MedicalXpress:



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Romantic comedies affect beliefs about relationships less strongly than expected

Posted on April 14, 2013 by Stone Hearth News

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Compared with exposure to romantic comedies, a stronger influence on viewers' beliefs about relationships was the reason that young people watch these popular movies, Hefner said.

"College students who reported watching romantic comedies to learn about love and relationships were more likely to endorse idealistic romantic beliefs than those who watch for other reasons," she said. "What really matters is not what you watch, but why you watch."

Again, these students were more likely to believe in idealizing their partners than in romantic beliefs such as love at first sight, but Hefner pointed out that this idealization could have a positive social influence. Some studies have shown that viewing one's partner as wonderful and perfect was beneficial for a romantic relationship and was linked to higher levels of satisfaction in the relationship.

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Nearly half of the survey respondents reported they were currently in a relationship. Students ranged in age from 18 to 26 years. Of the 335 respondents, 71 percent were female and 29 percent were male.

The researchers found no differences in responses about romantic beliefs between men and women who responded to the survey. The lack of a sex difference in the findings disputes another popular belief, Hefner said--"that women are the ones who are most idealistic and most influenced by romantic comedies."

In fact, the researchers found that male characters in popular romantic comedies express romantic ideals more often than women do. In this separate study, published in the same article, they performed a content analysis of the 52 top-grossing romantic comedy films between 1998 and 2008, including 2008's "27 Dresses" and the top-grossing "rom-com" of that period, "My Big Fat Greek Wedding." Of the 52 movies analyzed, 98 percent reportedly featured a romantic ideal expression, whereas 75 percent of the films featured a romantic ideal takeaway message. Ideal expressions were any statements related to one of the four ideals. Takeaway messages were the overall impressions of the films.

"Of the ideal statements expressed in these films, the most common were related to soul mates," Hefner said, "whereas the most common takeaway ideal theme was the notion that love conquers all."

Despite this prevalence of idealism, however, the most commonly expressed statements in these movies overall were actually realistic in nature. These practical expressions or challenges to the ideals, such as "relationships take hard work," were twice as common in these films as were the idealistic comments.

Still, Hefner said, "the bottom line is that the interactions and statements found in these films are not idealistic at all. However, the larger themes of the movies are idealistic. It seems that the couples go through realistic challenges and difficult obstacles, but resolve their differences with ideal conclusions."

The article, "From Love at First Sight to Soul Mate: The Influence of Romantic Ideals in Popular Films on Young People's Beliefs about Relationships," appears online on Friday, April 12, 2013 in Communication Monographs.

