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Stetson University Researcher Says Smoking in Films Does Not Influence Teens to Pick Up Habit

New study examines effects of movies and youth smoking

DELAND, Florida, Jan. 29, 2019 – Some studies have suggested watching movie stars smoking on the big screen prompts teens to smoke. Smoking in films also has been targeted and scrutinized by policymakers and scholars as a potential cause of adolescent smoking. However, current research disputes previous studies and opinions.

New research findings published in the American Psychological Association's journal *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, suggest that current survey data does not support the contention that clear links exist between movie smoking and teen smoking.

"[Movie Smoking and Teen Smoking Behavior: A Critical Methodological and Meta-Analytic Review](#)," is based on research by [Chris Ferguson, Ph.D.](#), professor of psychology at [Stetson University](#); Patrick M. Markey, Ph.D., professor of psychology at Villanova University; and Rune Kristian Lundedal Nielsen, Ph.D., assistant professor of digital design at IT University of Copenhagen. The research authors explored the correlation and impact of movie- and teen-smoking studies by examining the results of multiple longitudinal studies.

"The correlation between teens watching movies with smoking in them and the actual smoking behaviors is near zero with very little impact," said Ferguson.

Why the discrepancy? The researchers determined that the data in previous studies was not used accurately.

"We found bad statistics as well as statistics being misused in a way that they are not meant to be used after examining the correlation coefficient," explained Ferguson.

Besides the misappropriated statistics, teen smoking is down even though smoking in movies may have become more prominent in recent years.

According to the 2017 National Youth Tobacco Survey, which was featured in the [CDC's "Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report"](#) last summer, 3.6 million middle and high school students stated they had used a tobacco product in the past 30 days, a decrease from 4.5 million eight years ago.

“The evidence of media effects on smoking are much less than what some people have claimed or imagined,” said Ferguson. “Smoking rates among teens are still down and teens are actually smoking less than they have ever before.”

Ferguson, who is well known for his research on the effects of video game violence, received his doctorate in clinical psychology from the University of Central Florida. His clinical background includes working with offender and juvenile justice populations as well as conducting evaluations for child protective services.

About Stetson University

Founded in 1883, [Stetson University](#) is the oldest private university in Central Florida. Stetson focuses on intense learning experiences in a supportive community that allows students to develop their voice in a connected, inclusive environment. Stetson University ranks No. 5 on U.S. News & World Report's 2019 list of Best Regional Universities (South), and has been recognized as one of The Princeton Review's 384 Best Colleges, 2019 edition. [Stay connected](#) with Stetson on social media.

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