

1. What are the research questions?

The study investigates whether knowing that emotionally aversive stimuli are fake changes their impact on perception and memory, which may also depend on how much they enjoy viewing violent media.

2. How does this study extend previous research on this topic?

Previous research has consistently demonstrated an effect known as emotion-induced blindness, where emotional images embedded in a rapid stream impair people's ability to see a subsequent target. Emotional stimuli also tend to be remembered better. A previous study also investigated whether this effect can be modulated by how people think of the images (e.g., informing the participants that the aversive images were fake). Informed people continued to experience emotion-induced blindness. The current study aims to investigate whether enjoyment of violent media may modulate this attentional bias towards the aversive stimuli even when they know the images are fake. In this experiment, the participants will be informed that the pictures are fake at the second half of the experiment and will compare against the first half when they were not informed.

3. What are some potential real-world implications of this research?

What is the appeal of violence in the media and why do people enjoy it? This is a question that has received considerable attention and this study may shed some light on understanding why people may enjoy violent entertainment. This could contribute to the public discussion that consistently worries about the appropriateness of having violence in the media and may have implications beyond the psychology literature too.

4. What is a potential issue or limitation of the study?

A limitation of the study is the reliance on a specific sample of people's reports on how much they enjoy violent media. The sample might end up skewed to a low- or high-end distribution in enjoyment or there may be no split at all as people may just enjoy violent media anyway. A way to address this is to research the general enjoyment of violent content and compare to see if the sample is representative of it.

5. What is the methodology of this study?

In this study, people look for a target in each rapid stream of items, and the target can be preceded by an emotional picture. The emotional picture often prevents people from seeing the target, an effect known as emotion-induced blindness. Here, the emotional pictures are all fake, created by special effects studios, and we are measuring whether knowing that they are fake alters their impact on target perception, as well as the degree to which the pictures are remembered. We are testing whether this knowledge has a different impact depending on how much people enjoy violent entertainment and whether this is modulated by personality characteristics that are indexed through questionnaires.

6. For more information about the phenomenon of emotion-induced blindness, some papers to read are:

Most, S. B., Chun, M. M., Widders, D. M., & Zald, D. H. (2005). Attentional rubbernecking: Cognitive control and personality in emotion-induced blindness. *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, 12(4), 654-661. <https://doi.org/10.3758/BF03196754>

Wang, L., Kennedy, B. L., & Most, S. B. (2012). When emotion blinds: A spatiotemporal competition account of emotion-induced blindness. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 3, 438.

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2012.0043>