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Long-term cognitive desensitization effects and short-term cognitive priming effects of exposure to media violence: evidence from three countries

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Information processing theory suggests that priming of aggressive thoughts should play a role in the short-term effects of media violence in stimulating aggression in more aggressive people while cognitive desensitization should play a role in making heavy violence viewers characteristically more aggressive over time. Longitudinal data obtained on males in females in Finland, Israel, and the USA over 15 years from middle childhood to young adulthood provide support for both these hypotheses. Males in all countries who were high violence viewers in childhood displayed beliefs more accepting of aggression by the time they reached young adulthood (i.e., cognitive desensitization). However, in adulthood, there was a relation between viewing violence in adulthood and expressing more aggressive thoughts (i.e., priming) mostly for already aggressive people.