

Counterintuitive Age Trends, Dual Processing, and the Development of Irrationality—Or, Obesity is Contagious, but What Does One Catch?

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Results from a variety of studies indicate that children sometimes surprise us by outperforming adults on cognitive, judgment, and decision-making tasks. In this presentation, I present data from two new studies that add to these counterintuitive age trends. The first study is focused on age trends in the obesity stereotypes of Latino- and Caucasian-American children and adolescents. The second study involved use of eight identically flavored beverages and examination of how an “illness” prime and endorsements by obese and non-obese children affect the perceived taste of 7-11 year-olds. The findings raise a number of issues, such as: Is rationality really bound by information processing constraints? Why, under some conditions, does the size of the normative/descriptive gap *increase* with age? Why does the tendency to base judgments on implicit or intuitive processing increase with age? The ultimate hope of this presentation is to engage the interests of dual-process theorists such that they take more seriously the need to understand the developmental antecedents of the non-normative thoughts and behaviors often seen in adults.