

The Perils of Adolescence

March 05, 2015

The Huffington Post:

Adolescence is a perilous time of life. It's a time of heightened risk taking — reckless driving, risky sex, excessive drug and alcohol use. For decades the prevalent view — the common wisdom of parenting manuals — was that teenagers feel invulnerable, immortal. They simply perceive less peril in dicey situations and believe they have much more control than they actually do. In short, they underestimate life's very real risks and dangers.

But scientists who study adolescent decision making now dispute this common parenting wisdom. Teenagers do indeed underestimate risk — sometimes — but at other times they overestimate how risky and harmful a situation is. So the actual risk taking cannot be simply explained by a diminished perception of risk.

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The results, reported in a forthcoming issue of the journal *Psychological Science*, were clear and provocative. People in every age group were influenced by others' perceptions, changing their own ratings to be more like those of others. Even mature adults demonstrated a need to conform, though social influence did diminish from childhood through adulthood. Read the whole story: [The Huffington Post](#)

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