

Summary

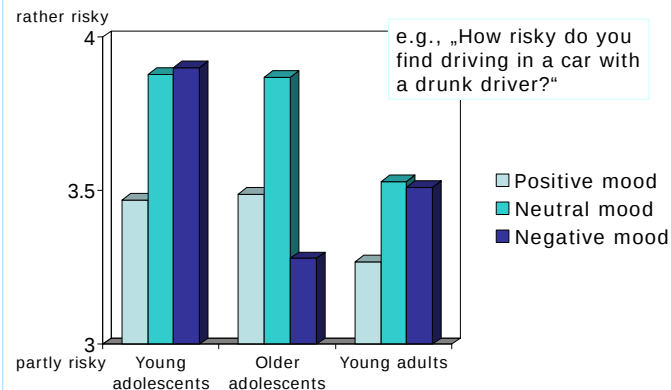
Binge drinking, deviant behavior, and unprotected sex are risk behaviors that peak in adolescence. But what makes adolescents take risks? Studies find that adolescents do not differ greatly from adults regarding logical reasoning capacities; they do not perceive themselves as invulnerable and sometimes are even more risk averse than adults.

Findings from our project show that mood can trigger risky decision-making more strongly in adolescents compared to young adults. These findings may help to better understand contradictory findings on adolescents' risky decision-making in rather neutral study contexts vs. the more affect-laden real world.

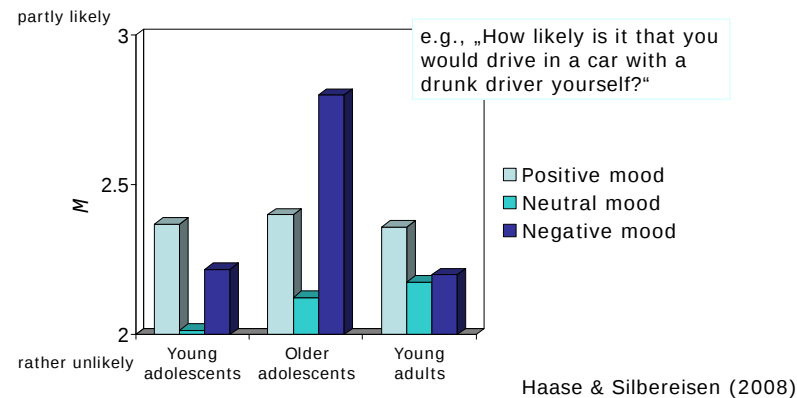
Studies

In one study, we examined mood influences on risky decision-making in early adolescents, older adolescents, and young adults (Haase & Silbereisen, 2008). Positive, neutral, and negative mood were induced using audiovisual video clips, which were effective across age groups. Outcomes were risk perceptions and anticipated risk decisions regarding developmental risks (i.e., smoking, drinking, riding in a car with a drunk driver, getting into a fight, and having unprotected sexual intercourse) and actual financial risk behavior (i.e., choosing between a sure gift certificate and a raffle as compensation for study participation). Positive and negative mood lead to increases in various aspects of risky decision-making compared to neutral mood. This effect was more pronounced in adolescents compared to young adults (see Figures). Another study addressed affective influences on risky decision-making in adolescents with risky vs. normative alcohol use. In further studies, we have examined positive affect as a resource for goal engagement.

Risk Perceptions



Anticipated Risk Decisions



Manuscripts and Theses

Haase, C. M.¹ & Silbereisen, R. K.¹ (2008). Mood influences on risky decision-making in adolescence and young adulthood. Manuscript submitted for publication.

Haase, C. M.¹, Poulin, M. J.², & Heckhausen, J.³ (2008). Positive affect as a resource for goal engagement: Longitudinal and experimental evidence. Manuscript in preparation.

Hädicke, J.¹ (2008). Alcohol consumption in adolescence: Psychosocial correlates and affective influences on risky decision-making. Unpublished diploma thesis, University of Jena, Germany.

Future Research

Rainer K. Silbereisen and Claudia M. Haase are currently working on a grant proposal to study emotion, emotion regulation, and risky decision-making in adolescence and young adulthood. We plan to combine survey and experimental studies using self-report as well as behavioral measures to examine how emotions influence risky decision-making in adolescents and young adults.

Collaborations

¹ University of Jena, Germany

² University at Buffalo, USA

³ University of California, Irvine, USA