Laboratory for Rational Decision Making, Department of Human Development

Donate to Dr. Valerie Reyna’s Research

“Developing Brains, Developing the Future”

We are often faced with situations that require us to make important decisions that affect our health and wellbeing. The mission of the Laboratory for Rational Decision Making is to understand how people make decisions and how to help them make better decisions. Dr. Valerie Reyna has proposed a powerful theory called “Fuzzy Trace Theory” to explain how choices that emphasize the bottom-line or “gist,” and not a collection of numerical facts or “verbatim,” are essential to making good decisions. One area of particular focus in our lab has been to learn how adolescents make decisions about engaging in risky behaviors such as sex and underage drinking. Our research projects have included the use of cutting-edge technologies such as functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) to examine brain processes involved with decision-making and web-based tutorials with avatars to improve the decision-making process. Results of our research program have been used to inform public health and education policy as well as, guide intervention programs. Further, the lab is an exciting, dynamic learning environment that provides undergraduates with training and skills that will help them succeed in their careers and advanced studies. Your help is essential to support students, cutting-edge research, and outreach to the community to achieve our goal of “Developing Brains, Developing the Future.”

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