

The Effects of Normal Aging on Reasoning Ability: A Dual-Process Approach

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Abstract : The objective of the current research was to use a dual-process theory framework to explain these age-related differences in reasoning. Seventy-two older (M = 80.0 years) and 72 younger (M = 24.6 years) adults were given a variety of reasoning tests (i.e., a syllogistic task, base rate task, the Cognitive Reflection Test, and a perspective manipulation), as well as independent tests of capacity (working memory, processing speed, and inhibition), thinking styles, and metacognitive ability, to account for these age-related differences. It was revealed that age-related differences were limited to problems that required Type 2 processing and were related to differences in cognitive capacity, individual difference factors, and strategy choice. Furthermore, older adults' performance can be improved by reasoning from another's' perspective and cannot, at this time, be explained by metacognitive differences between young and older adults. All of these findings fit well within a dual-process theory of reasoning, which provides an integrative framework accounting for previous findings and the findings presented in the current manuscript.

Keywords : aging, dual-process theory, performance, reasoning ability

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