Nainita Madurai

Exam 3 – ANTH 313

12/03/2009

1. One neurological change that occurs during adolescence is the relative decline in size of the prefrontal cortex. The prefrontal cortex is the area of the brain that controls the abilities to determine the difference between good and bad, to contemplate future consequences of activities, to work toward a defined goal, to predict outcomes, and to suppress desires to partake in activities that are socially-unacceptable. The behavioral correlate of the size reduction of the prefrontal cortex is obviously the increase in participation in high-risk and other possibly detrimental activities. Another neurological change that occurs during adolescence is the levels of input of dopamine to the limbic brain regions and the prefrontal cortex. Its behavioral correlates are desire for novel, external stimuli and an increase in the importance of social reinforcement.
2. Dr. Derrick Kranke and Dr. Lisa Damour both spoke about psychological development in adolescence and how adolescents are impacted by the environment around them. Dr. Kranke discussed the effects of taking prescription medication for mental disorders in adolescents. He specifically differentiated between younger and older adolescents. On the other hand, Dr. Damour discussed the why adolescents seek psychiatric attention and how and why they make certain choices that affect their well-being, specifically why they experiment with illegal substances. Both Kranke and Damour used interview methods to arrive at their conclusions. However, Dr. Damour interviewed adolescence in a clinical setting (she is a psychiatrist) so she takes her data from her occupation. Dr. Kranke is doing an anthropological study of adolescence and takes data from his research. Dr. Kranke found that the younger adolescents who take prescription medication are more negatively affected by the stigmas against mental disorders. The older adolescents seem to be able to communicate their mental problems better with their peers than the younger ones. Dr. Damour talked about how illicit drug-use and other socially-unacceptable behaviors that adolescents engage in are often done to elicit response from parents. She defined two categories of adolescent activities that bother parents: those that have no real lasting impact (like dying your hair or wearing certain clothes), and those that do have lasting impact (such as drug-use and alcohol abuse). She also defined two categories of risk analysis in adolescents: the actual risk of doing the activity as opposed to the risk of getting caught. The research of both Dr. Kranke and Dr. Damour is very important to the anthropology of adolescence. It gives an insight to why, behaviorally, adolescents are more likely to need and want drugs and other stimuli, and how taking these drugs affects their identity and sense of self in society.
3. Illicit drug-use is common among adolescents because the importance of social interaction and the necessity for external stimuli increase. According to Dr. Lisa Damour adolescents often engage in risky behavior activities to elicit a response from their parents. During adolescence, children develop the desire to remove themselves from a strong parental influence and to associate with other adolescents in their own age group. Developmentally, adolescents’ bodies are changing and so are their minds. Self-identity becomes more important; the need to experience certain emotions and feelings becomes more important. This in turn increases the desire to experiment with various external stimuli, mainly illicit drugs.
4. Internet facilitates suicide among adolescents in Japan by providing faster and easier communication. Lonely youths across Japan use the internet to connect with other suicidal youths via chat rooms, online groups, and various other websites. These adolescents contemplate suicide and the internet provides them with access to people who feel the same way as them. This in turn leads to group suicides and suicide pacts, because to them dying alone is a much scarier thought than dying with someone else. Committing suicide with someone else also gives these youths courage to go through with it. The internet is particularly chosen by youths because the internet is a medium through which you do not hear a voice or see a face. The people you chat with online do not have to know who you truly are and they do not judge you; what they have in common with you is that they want to commit suicide. It is much easier to talk about thoughts of suicide to someone who you do not know online than to talk about it with your family or friends face to face.

95% of Geauga County Amish adolescents choose to be baptized and therefore eschew the “ways of the world” because to reject the church would mean leaving their family and the way of life they have known for fifteen years. Going out into the “outside” world means making decisions that an adolescent may not be ready to make. It also goes back to the idea that adolescents who have must make more decisions are the ones who struggle with identity issues. The Amish life is structured. Once the adolescent is baptized he or she is expected to settle down, get married, and continue his or her life according to the rule of the church. A main reason behind rumspringa is to allow the adolescents to experiment with the forbidden; without it the Amish fear that the desire to rebel would be too alluring. If an Amish adolescent were to make the decision to not get baptized he or she would be shunned and, as a sixteen or seventeen year old, they would have to learn to make a living in a world they have only known for a year.

1. The youth cultures approach is different than the anthropology of adolescence approach because it focuses on adolescence as a segregated and separate culture. Youth culture is based on age-segregated social groups. Youth culture is a subculture with defined interests, behaviors, and styles. It examines youth outside of everyday environments such as school, home, and work. The youth cultures approach is good for questions that deal with youth categorizations or questions dealing with global media and its effects on youth. However, it does not accommodate for individual discrepancies and does not explain certain developmental aspects of adolescence. The anthropology of adolescence approach is good for questions that deal with adolescent development, whether it is behavioral, neurological, biological, etc. However, anthropology of adolescence cannot explain certain socio-cultural phenomena in adolescence. In the article by Sharon Kinsella, entitled “Cuties in Japan”, Kinsella uses the youth culture approach because it examines the repercussions of the “cute” subculture within a certain group of adolescence and how it was influenced by media and how it influenced how the adolescents behaved, dressed, and did countless other activities. In the article by Rowe, Maughan, Worthman, Costello, and Angold, entitled “[Testosterone, antisocial behavior, and social dominance in boys: Pubertal development and biosocial interaction](http://webdrive.service.emory.edu/groups/research/lchb/PUBLICATIONS%20Worthman/PUBLICATIONS%20CMW%202004/Tess,%20antisocial%20behavior.pdf)”, the authors use the anthropology of adolescence approach by examining the development of adolescence within their society and regional culture; they also examine mental health and biological changes within adolescence.
2. A question I would ask that would use the anthropology of adolescence approach would be: what is the effect of war on adolescence, specifically in the cultural atmosphere of the Middle East? (This is actually what I want to research in the future) The reason I would ask this using the anthropology of adolescence approach is because I would want to research socio-cultural aspects of the region and how it affects adolescent development. The research question I would ask that would use the youth cultures approach would be: How do adolescents who are part of the cult of “Anime” view themselves and why do they love and enjoy Anime so much? The youth culture approach would be beneficial in this study because I would focus on unique culture that Anime creates in the United States and how it influences styles and behaviors of adolescence.
3. The readings and lectures that I believe are continuous with the historical works in anthropology of adolescence were those of Dr. Damour and Dr. Korbin. Damour described and researched how adolescence is a time of “storm and stress” and how and why it is this way. Dr. Korbin’s research reminds me of earlier ethnographies that we read in class. The readings and lectures that I thought were discontinuous with the historical works in anthropology of adolescence were some of the youth culture readings that talked about the affects of globalization, modernization, mass media, and the spread of information. In the quickly changing world adolescence is getting prolonged and is consequently changing as well.

EXTRA CREDIT: I think that anthropology of adolescence is a growing and thriving field. The research and data that it yields can be used in multiple disciplines from psychology to political science. Adolescents, as complicated and complex as it is to understand them, are the future. I think it is incredibly important to study how and why they develop the way they do in this quickly changing world. There are adolescents and children around the world whose lives can contribute to the anthropology; for example the children and youths living in prisons in Bolivia, or in the slums of Brazil. What I am interested in studying in the future is adolescence in the Middle East.