
A study on the psychological development

The following paper reviews two studies in the field of developmental psychology; more specifically, it focuses upon adolescent antisocial behaviour. The researchers of these two studies published their results in reputable psychology journals.

The first study dealt with children who were in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. Researchers gave a survey to the 163 participants, (72 males and 91 females). The survey listed 23 antisocial behaviours, and the young adolescents reported whether they had ever participated in each activity. Then each subject reported how frequently he or she had engaged in these activities over the past year. Because of the significant differences between how males and females answered 33% of the yes/no questions, researchers conducted factor analyses by gender.

This study found that there are many different reasons for adolescent antisocial behaviour. The researchers found that male adolescents tended to be more violent than females. Females who did exhibit violence did not direct their aggression at individuals as males did. Antisocial females tended to engage in other types of deviant behaviours, such as class cutting and drunkenness, more than their male counterparts.

Also, males were more specialised in deviant behaviours; the reasons for their actions appeared more clear-cut. Males who participated in violent behaviours were different from those engaging in property damage and other types of crimes. From the results of this research, one can conclude that antisocial behaviour is gender specific; males and females engage in different types of deviance.

The second study had similar results; however, it went further in explaining the causes of adolescent antisocial behaviours. Researchers conducted a longitudinal study where they studied 314 third, fourth, and fifth graders. Later, when these children entered the ninth and tenth grade, the researchers returned to conduct further evaluations. Eighty-five percent of the original participants did not take part in the second half of the study; however, the researchers conducted analyses and discovered that these dropouts did not throw off their results.

The researchers used several types of tests. When studying the children initially, they used a peer social preference test, which asked children to evaluate their peers and decide which ones made good playmates.

They also used teacher academic and behavioural ratings, where teachers rated the academic

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performance of their students, as well as the child's level of popularity among other children. In addition to these surveys, teachers filled out the Pupil Evaluation Inventories, (PEI), and the Walker McConnell Scale of Social Competence and School Adjustment (WMC) for each student. The PEI is a list of 34 behaviours, and teachers check off all the behaviours that applied for each student. The WMC is a list of 43 behaviours, and teachers determine how frequently a child engages in a deviant behaviour, using a scale of one through five. The researchers also used classroom and playground observations. When studying the children as adolescents, researchers had the subjects fill out surveys, contacted the local authorities for police records, conducted structured interviews with the adolescents, and asked the mothers of their participants to rate their offspring's problem behaviours using a similar scale as the self-report survey.

This study also detected a gender difference in antisocial behaviours. Researchers found that males who reported that they fought with their peers and suffered from peer rejection tended to be antisocial. The predictors for female antisocial behaviour were causing trouble in lower grades and problems with schoolwork.

Both studies detected a gender difference in adolescent antisocial behaviours; however, the first study focussed more on the types of deviance in which each gender engages while the second study dealt more with the predictors and reason behind the behaviours.

The first study dealt briefly with reasons. It said that males tended to be more clear-cut as to why they participate in certain behaviours while it is more obscure to understand why a female does so. The second article, in a way, states the same thing. It is easy to see why a male becomes antisocial. Those who do have been tormented by their peers while they were young. Because of early persecution, they lash out. The behaviours do not cease there; they continue into adolescence. On the other hand, female adolescent antisocial behaviour appears to be more of a mystery.

According to the second study, females who become antisocial experienced academic problems and caused some trouble in early grades. They do not appear to be quite so deviant as their male counterparts. One reason for their behaviour is academic problems, which seems unrelated. The first study concluded that female antisocial behaviour did not tend to be violent and, if it was, it was not directly against persons in particular. Perhaps this is because the route of the problem, as suggested in the second study, is not of a personal nature. The problem is academic failures, which knock at their self-esteem. Maybe they do not blame people for their shortcomings but blame themselves.

The researchers involved in the second study appear to have conducted their research using better means than the first set of researchers. The first study relies solely upon the response of

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adolescent students on one survey. It is a one-time test and therefore cannot yield as much information as a longitudinal study. In addition, it only factors in self-report. Even if the adolescents were completely honest when filling out the survey, they do not necessarily know themselves well enough to evaluate their actions objectively. A common phenomenon for individuals in this stage of life is adolescent egocentricity, where an individual feels that the world revolves around them. The adolescents in the study may not see their behaviours as deviant or harmful. They may underestimate the amount of harm they cause by such behaviours.

In this article, I learned that there is clearly a gender difference in adolescent antisocial behaviour. The studies, however, bring up a couple of questions. First, how much does nature influence the gender difference, and what kind of a role does nurture play? In addition, I wonder why poor academic performance causes females to behave antisocially, and why academic performance does not effect their male counterparts in the same way.

If I were to conduct research based on the findings of these two studies, I would perform another longitudinal study. Because I have more questions about female antisocial behaviour, I can focus my study on just girls. I could take a sample of girls who are younger than those studied previously, evaluating them before they go to school. I can observe each girls playtime behaviours and give the mothers surveys to evaluate their daughters behaviours. In this longitudinal study, I would take measures more often than twice. I understand that morality in this type of study may suffer; therefore, I would take a sample of one thousand girls initially. I can evaluate these girls maybe every two years, using the methods I used with the preschoolers, as well as additional methods such as participant and teacher surveys. There must be a connection between poor academic performance as a young child and deviant behaviour as an adolescent; however, the connection is not understood. Perhaps from studying subjects at an earlier age, I could find an underlying cause for both the predictor and the deviant behaviours.

After I understand better the causes of female antisocial behaviour, I can conduct the same type of study on males. I can use the same methods as I described above. This type of research still does not get to the root of the nature/nurture issue; however, psychologists have debated the subject in the past and will continue to do so. Nonetheless, by combining the two studies, I can understand better the causes of adolescent antisocial behaviour as whole.

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