An Unabridged Treatise on Memetic Pandemonium within the Adolescent Psyche, Annotated.

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Middle school¹ is a memetic⁹ melee.²⁴

¹ Some readers² may have subconsciously repressed their memories³ of going to school during the ages of 11-14, but it should be noted⁵ that unless Heisenberg is called into play,⁸ most all of us DID go to school during this period of our lives.

² The cultured, erudite, and much-learned scholars to which this humble article caters.

³ Examples abound, including, “she said that he said that she said that I said that you said we were going out, but that isn’t true”⁴ and, “How can you possibly assign homework when there is a ________⁷ concert only 1500 miles away tonight?”

⁴ Although most courts have recently banned quintuple-hearsay statements, this is still valid in the Court of Middle School Cheerleaders.⁶

⁵ So noted.
Note: The author is married to the cheerleader coach at his middle school and therefore speaks from experience.

Insert whatever rock/country/beatboxing concert you may have attended or wish you could have attended when you were a 7th grader.

See footnote two for target audience of this scientific quip.

"Memetic" is the adjective form of the noun “meme” and is a word that can be used in such diverse places as groundbreaking treatises, Scrabble™ games, and Hang-Man games in which the plurality of opponents fall under the subcategory of people as defined in footnote eight.

A meme is a single unit of culture that can be replicated and transmitted from one mind to another using an imitable medium such as gestures, writing, or speech.

Including, “No Child Left Behind Except Joe”: (Middle School Psychoanalysis Quarterly, Vol 42), “Horace Mann Hears a Who?”: (Historical Education Primer Weekly – Special bi-annual edition), and “Middle School, Middle Earth, and Miranda Rights”: ibid

“Meme” is a term originally coined by Richard Dawkins in his book The Selfish Gene that discusses the evolutionary principles of both replication and transmission of ideas. Much like how viruses compete with each other in an evolutionary King-of-the-hill within the playground of our DNA, memes compete with each other in a cultural King-of-the-hill idea free-for-all in our minds.

An integrated blueprint of all human behavior and knowledge which shows the capacity for social learning and symbolic awareness, differentiated by political boundaries, social castes, and/or ability to understand why Elephant Jokes are hilarious.

Putting an “L” sign on one’s head to signify the target’s status as a “loser”, fist-bumping replacing high-fiving, and the wearing of sagging pants by our academically-ineligible football players, are all easily mimicked
transmitted and replicated) by others in the school. Some memes fail miserably, like trying to change the radically enthusiastic clapping, hooting, and hollering during a middle school pep assembly to students in the assembly sitting in the stands and silently doing “jazz hands” to show your school spirit before the big game.22

15 Seriously, when else does anyone get to use the “ibid” meme other than footnotes?

16 The author continuously fought the “to cursive or not to cursive” fight for over a decade with his middle school classes until one day when he decided to introduce mirror writing18, a meme that spread through his accelerated history classes faster than the “Who Dat?” meme spread in New Orleans during the Saint’s 2010 Superbowl run.

17 Middle school students are, not surprisingly, meme-sponges when it comes to new speech patterns or catch phrases. Examples of middle school students copying each other’s speech patterns are too numerous to enumerate here.

18

19 Other possible playground analogies rejected included “Red rover, red rover, let Darryl come over” and “extreme see-saw dodgeball”.

20 Most meme-theorists believe that memes are subject to natural selection (including mutation, variation, competition, and Galapagos-finch-beak-inheritance-ization). Unfortunately for the middle school teacher, this natural selection does not mean that all memes currently winning the constantly changing game of vying for mind-space in a 12-year old are “positive” by default; natural meme selection goes to the most successfully reproduced and transmitted idea. It is perhaps here that the battle must be taken up by teachers, administrators, and parents.23

21 How do you put three elephants in a refrigerator? You open the door and shove them in. How do you put an alligator in a refrigerator? You can’t, the refrigerator is full of elephants.
The three students who wanted to be professional mimes were excited about this prospect, but they were nowhere to be found during the assembly; apparently someone had taken the key and locked them in their invisible boxes behind the bleachers.

As a full-time warrior for the students’ decreasing attention spans, the author has found that introducing novelty in class engages his charges’ brains long enough to slip in information that they might see later in the year on the state tests. In fact, the method of presentation of this article is much like the author’s presentation style in class.

1648, from Fr. mêlée, from O.Fr. meslee "confused fight, mixture," from fem. pp. of mesler "to mix, mingle". Online Etymology Dictionary, © 2010 Douglas Harper

Come-on, admit your brain was engaged for the last five minutes... Think about how many different memes have been injected into your brain during this reading. If in the next year there is a large outbreak of academic articles that misuse, abuse, and otherwise confuse footnotes, this group of memes (also called a memeplex) will have been successful.

Resources on Memetics


Articles published in the *Journal of Memetics* between 1997 - 2005 are now available for free!