



ADHD#6 - Schools, Part II

Lincoln Stoller, PhD., 2012

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License](#)



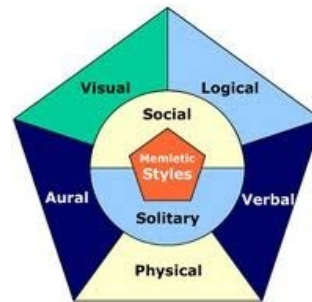
In Part I we saw that State Schools serve the interests of government and industry. Here I'll argue that State Schools use ADHD to control students, spend less of their resources on students, and create a more uniform product from students. These objectives support State Schools' not-so-hidden mandate to produce useful, obedient workers.

The state rewards schools for consistency and conformity in their product, and economy in their operation. These criteria are applied to students through regimented programs, approved classes, like-minded teachers, and national test standards. In order for this program to succeed, students must cooperate. Let's look at the forms of non-cooperation that might threaten this program.

Different kids

Different rhythms, styles and levels

The notion that an IQ of 100 is normal, and that every normal person should have an IQ of at least 100 is bogus. There are multiple types of intelligence that include auditory, kinesthetic, social, rational, and visual. People develop these skills at different rates and ages; there are gender differences, and research shows differences by race, culture, and class.



"You should really pay attention to all of you. That's one of the difficult things with the educational system I think for some people. I've run into some people who are well educated, who have all of that, and have no relationship to their body at all..."

– Crista Dahl, quoted in [The Learning Project](#)

Individual needs

Kids have many individual needs that are amplified when their families and society are dysfunctional or dislocated. Typical dislocations are single-parent households, family strife, economic hardship, racial, religious and national conflicts, crime, violence, and illness. As a result a majority of children are under stress, suffer depression and sleep deprivation. These kids need help whether or not they are officially in crisis. They will not respond well to a system that steals their day, treats them like animals, and expects them to toe the line.



"Back then I didn't care if I was alive or dead. I wouldn't kill myself, but I'd get to scary points doing drugs that would nearly kill me... I got their attention in a way I didn't want. I didn't want them to send me away or anything. But I got too deep into everything, and they thought I needed help... they arranged for me to go away to school in Utah... I hated my parents before I went: I hated them. I hated my sister; I hated my brother..."

– William Ashburton, quoted in [The Learning Project](#)

Different interests

Kids are generally uninterested in academic topics. These topics are socially irrelevant, personally unrewarding, largely useless, and are taught by people with a shallow knowledge of the fields.



The difference between mentoring with an enthusiastic person who is spiritually connected to their subject and an adversarial, textbook-based class managed by a "certified teacher" is the difference between heaven and hell.

"I didn't have interest until I left Sudbury (school), which is kind of weird because I'd say, 'I'm bored, there's nothing to do here. I'm bored, I'm bored, I'm bored.' Then I got home and immediately it kicked into overdrive. I got interested in solar energy, sustainable living techniques, farming, agriculture, other woodsy survival stuff..."

— Sonya Peters, quoted in [The Learning Project](#)

"I would rather have someone who is inspired by their work stand in front of me and be my teacher, even if they don't know how to teach. Because — you know something — that doesn't matter. In the end what matters is the osmotic link that is made between your and their enthusiasm. Just by being in the same room at the same time..."

— Neil deGrasse Tyson, quoted in [The Learning Project](#)

Anti-social or anti-teacher attitudes

Kids' undeveloped social personalities can manifest dysfunction. A child's greatest challenge is often to learn, state, and satisfy their needs. Frustration, anger, confusion, and fear can manifest anti-social behaviors like fighting, taunting, bullying, excluding, manipulating, lying, and stealing. It would be foolish to treat these as biological diseases.

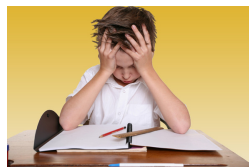


"To all those experts who claim that (ADHD children's) state of being is biologically predetermined, I pose the following question: how intimately do you get to know the stories of the children — and their families — before you so readily recommend that they be labeled and drugged?"

— Chris Mercogliano, *Teaching the Restless, One School's Remarkable No-Ritalin Approach to Helping Children Learn and Succeed.* (2003, Beacon Press, Boston). p.234

Behaviors

If you don't fit into the narrowly prescribed classroom environment, then how will you behave?



Wrong learning style or rhythm

If the classroom environment irritates you, then you tune out. If the classroom rhythm confuses you, then you disengage. If you're a verbal person in a nonverbal situation, then you speak out. If you're a movement-oriented person in a sedentary environment, then you move, and the more you're admonished against moving, the more you need to move.



Personal Needs

If your personal issues are not recognized in the classroom and you don't have the power to speak out, then you act out. If you're feeling isolated and exploited, then you seek attention of any kind. If you're depressed and you're being punished, then you get angry.

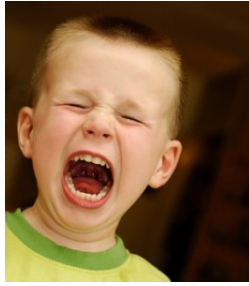


Different interests

If class bores you, your mind will go somewhere else. Imposing discipline does not make one less bored. If you're really bored you'll behave in a way that engages you, involves you, or makes you the center of attention.

If you're confronted with material that's both boring and confusing, then you'll be disoriented, and distracted. If you pursue your interests

in the face of class rigidity, then you'll be disruptive.



A trouble-maker

If you have anti-social attitudes you'll be a problem from the start. If you're reacting against other students, authorities, and structures in an environment that has neither sympathy for you nor a mandate to help you, then there will be little tolerance for your behavior.

Perceptions

These actions are a list of behaviors that define ADHD, but isolated behaviors alone are not enough to warrant officially being labeled "ADHD". In addition, one must display these behaviors consistently, in multiple situations, over a long period of time, and not as a result of other dysfunctions or disabilities.

Schools are not at liberty to care about your problems in other situations: you present a problem to them. In addition, schools thoroughly invade one's life through homework, social networks, and families that pressure their kids to meet academic standards. The same problems that manifest in school can manifest at home and in extra-curricular situations. The pressure and rigidity of school extends from kindergarten through high school, covering a span of time that's sufficient to satisfy the diagnostic criteria and officially identify your problem with school as a problem in your brain.

Finally, "alternative explanations" usually refer to obvious or severe learning or psychological disabilities and do not include the above list of needs and differences. Therefore I argue that it is not only possible, but likely that ADHD behavior in school is a label that has no biological merit and instead identifies unusual problem kids.

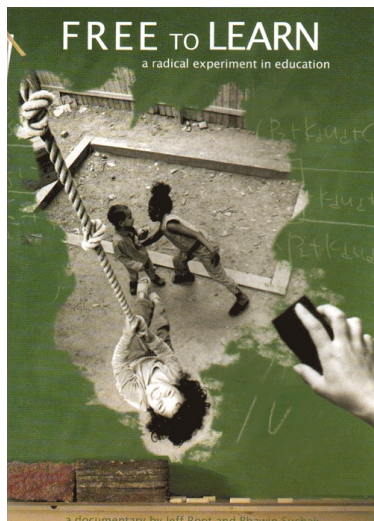


We should wonder just how different these kids really are. Perhaps those kids who are acting-out are just the most disaffected among a population that's all under duress. Perhaps the ADHD kids – now roughly 10% of the school population – are not a problem but a warning to a system that is not serving students' or society's interests.

Keep it simple

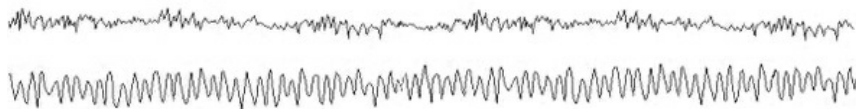
I do not discount the possibility of a unique biological configuration that manifests ADHD behavior. The point is that a biological explanation is unlikely and unnecessary as far as school is concerned. Remember that no biological cause of ADHD has yet been found, nor has anyone been cured of ADHD through biological means.

In contrast, the above non-biological causes do generate ADHD behavior, and institutions do benefit from assigning the label. Furthermore, the only cure for ADHD that has been found is non-biological. It consists of therapy, emotional support, social training, and removing compulsory schooling.



"Instead of Ritalin, what we have given William (at the [Albany Free School](#)) is a heavy dose of autonomy, self-regulation and community. These aren't miracle cures by any means. But they are the best antidotes we have found to a society that is mass-producing hyper-stimulated, unbonded children, kids it then proceeds to mass-regulate by chemical means... Rather than getting rid of William, like his previous school did, we helped him to begin ridding himself of some of his self-defeating and antisocial strategies, so that he could gradually become a functional and valued member of the community. We refused to coerce him into a submissive docility that so often only serves to mask smoldering fires of failure, rage, and disaffection – and turns children into human time bombs." –

– Chris Mercogliano, op. sit., p.228



But what about brain waves?

Neurofeedback has both psychological and biological effects. In truth, there is no hard and fast dividing line because biology and psychology feed back on each other. Here are two simple ways to describe what neurofeedback does to benefit a person with ADHD behavior.

Relief and relaxation

Relaxation is under-appreciated. It's seen as an aspect of recreation. All systems are more flexible and stronger when they're relaxed, and this applies to cognitive and emotional systems as well as muscular or skeletal systems. A person in distress or in crisis is often stuck; they need other resources and other approaches. Neurofeedback modulates and reconfigures one's mental state, and it is likely that this process aids in a person's ability to find insight, strength, and to make progress.

Reorientation and reprogramming

In the popular biomedical view, neurofeedback leads one's brain into a new state through process of habituation and entrainment. This discounts the possibility that you might actually be intentionally controlling your own change at some unconscious level, but let's leave that aside: one's brain state changes.



If some part of ADHD behavior is because people are stuck in a certain pattern – addicted to a kind of behavior, if you will – then neurofeedback can help them to stop and look around: something like a gentle hand that prevents individuals from continuing to bang their head against a wall.

This observation fits with the theory that ADHD is related to an excess of theta brain waves and a deficit of alpha brain waves. The theta waves correlate with low arousal and inattention. The alpha brain waves correlate with focus and thinking. By lowering one and raising the other, as the theory goes, an inattentive person "wakes up." This complements rather than contradicts emotional or behavioral causes. It does not have to be one or the other, and it makes sense that if emotions and these brainwaves are two aspects of the same issue, then addressing both together offers a better approach.


In the view of Lynda and Michael Thompson who run [the ADD Centre in Toronto](#), neurofeedback facilitates other therapies.


"Without neurofeedback training, it takes incredible energy and on-going supervision from parents and teachers to keep children with ADD on track... Neurofeedback empowers people to make changes and achieve things that were just not possible for them before."

– William Sears and Lynda Thompson, *The ADD Book, New Understandings, New Approaches to Parenting Your Child* (Little, Brown, and Company, New York, 1998), p.227

I have doubts about any long-term solution in context of State Schooling where the school seems to be the real problem; yet there is much evidence that even here therapy has resolved ADHD behavior. Neurofeedback helps here too.

To automatically receive new issues of this newsletter, subscribe by entering your email address [here](#). You can retrieve past issues [from my website](#).



 Facebook social plugin

Powered by **Mad Mimi**®