LOOK CLOSER: SCRUTINIZING HIGHER EDUCATION'S CONCEPTION OF ATTENTION THROUGH NEURODIVERGENT EYES

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Dramatic changes in education have occurred in the last twenty years due to technological developments, including social media, smartphones, increasing access to the internet, the move to learning management systems, the growth of online classes, and artificial intelligence, just to name a few. Most recently, a global pandemic caused higher education institutions to experiment with remote learning and different course models such as HyFlex. In the same twenty years, two different generations, demographically distinct from previous generations of college students, have moved into universities with the expectation that a college education is necessary for success. As such, it is unsurprising that higher education needs have shifted. Yet, in many ways, higher education has not changed at all. Structurally, it is more of the same in terms of the scheduling of classes, classroom management, syllabus policies, grading and assessment, and accommodations.

The gates of academia may seem open to all who wish to attend, yet the academic cultural walls are hard to climb once inside. The structures and systems of higher education are predisposed to accept and support specific types of students with specific expectations for those students, based on long-held higher education conceptions of intelligence and how it is demonstrated in the classroom. Bernard Stiegler articulates deep attention as being needed to solve the "battle for intelligence" and to counteract the problems of ADHD.[1] This conception fits with the structural setup of higher education, ignoring the diverse forms of brain function, behaviors, and intelligence that exist among the student population and the world. Notions of the hegemonic good student,[2] academic excellence, and cultural capital acquired in higher education's hidden curriculum[3] are tied up in conceptions of attention that reach back to Eurocentric ideas of learning. However, neurodivergent students and their capacities do not fit so neatly into the boxes of higher education, and neither do their forms of attention; yet, often, these students are penalized through classroom management

[1] Bernard Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).
[2] Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power," in *The Foucault Reader* (London: Penguin, 2020), 51-75.
[3] Michael Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum,* 4th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2019); José Victor Orón Semper and Maribel Blasco, "Revealing the Hidden Curriculum in Higher Education," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 37, (2018): 481-498. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-018-9608-5.

policies and traditional ideas of structured education.[4] Rather than trying to force these students into such boxes, this paper will argue it is necessary to reconceptualize what deep attention might be for these students and what educational possibilities exist if that is done.

Conceptions of the Attention Economy, Deep Attention and Hyper Attention

The attention economy is conceptualized as the new modern economy in which attention is the scarcest resource and exists as a valuable commodity with a growing industry of companies that specialize in capturing and measuring attention in a world where information runs rampant.[5] This attention economy has created changes in the ways people work, play, and learn with social media being a major driver in such shifts.[6] There has been much worry and conversation regarding the loss of attention (or what consumes attention) with discussion over causes and what could be done to bring back the ability to focus.

Bernard Stiegler conceptualizes attention across multiple works and in doing so, ADHD is brought into the discussion multiple times.[7] For Stiegler, attention is much more than concentration, instead involving the meshing of past experiences described as primary and secondary retentions and anticipation of future experiences described as protentions; attention itself is the accumulation of these retentions and protentions.[8] Stiegler states, "It is an accumulation of experiences in what I have previously called secondary retentions that the horizons of anticipation are formed."[9] Stiegler adds the concept of tertiary retentions, which are externalized memories that transcend the individual and create the collective memory, consisting of technological artifacts (ranging from

[4] M.L.N. Birdwell and Keaton Bayley, "When the Syllabus is Ableist: Understanding How Class Policies Fail Disabled Students," *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* 49, no. 3 (2022): 220-237. https://doi.org/10.58680/tetyc202231803; Juuso Niemenin and Henri Pesonen, "Anti-ableist Pedagogies in Higher Education: A Systems Approach," *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice* 19, no. 4 (2022): 1-15. https://ro.uow.edu.au/jutlp/vol19/iss4/08/.

[5] Patrick Crogan and Samuel Kinsley, "Paying Attention: Towards a Critique of the Attention Economy," *Culture Machine* 13 (2012): 1-19. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-023-04460-4.

[6] Samson Liberman, "Attention Deficit: Alienation in Platform Capitalism," *Symposion* 8, no. 1 (2021): 79-88. https://doi.org/10.5840/symposion2021813.

[7] E.g., Bernard Stiegler, "Within the Limits of Capitalism, Economizing Means Taking Care," Ars Industrialis. Accessed Mar 23, 2024, https://arsindustrialis.org/node/2922

[8] Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth*; Bernard Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery 1: The Hyperindustrial Epoch* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014).

[9] Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery 1*, 65.

writing to art to video and more) containing this collective memory.[10] Attention itself is not an individual capacity but a psychic and social capacity.[11]

In *Taking Care of Youth and the Generations*, Stiegler discusses at length deep attention in contrast with hyper attention,[12] starting with Katherine Hayles's conception of deep attention and hyper attention.[13] Hayles describes deep attention as being "characterized by concentrating on a single object for long periods (say, a novel by Dickens), ignoring outside stimuli while so engaged, preferring a single information stream, and having a high tolerance for long focus times."[14] Hyper attention meanwhile is "characterized by switching focus rapidly among different tasks, preferring multiple information streams, seeking a high level of stimulation, and having a low tolerance for boredom."[15] Hayles argues that higher education institutions must recognize the shift in cognitive modes that has occurred in recent generations and adapt accordingly. In articulating this shift, Hayles recognizes that both forms of attention have their advantages and that the development of deep attention occurred after that of hyper attention as deep attention requires certain environmental necessities that are luxuries—a quiet, secure environment with danger at bay. Deep attention is most effective at solving complex problems that are presented in a single medium, while hyper attention is useful for being flexible and adapting to rapidly changing environments with multiple information streams. Hayles argues a synergic combination of the two forms of attention should be cultivated to take advantage of each form's strengths.

Stiegler critiques Hayles's conceptualization of deep attention as focusing on duration rather than concentration, a distinction he makes in connection to his larger conceptualization of attention.[16] He argues that "attention's depth has less to do with duration than with the length of the circuits of transindividuation it activates…required precisely at the moment of learning, for this depth."[17] Further, Stiegler asserts that hyper attention, rather than focusing on multiple streams at once, instead is hyper*solicited*, meaning there are no circuits being activated, producing what he calls "*infra-attention,* a superficial form of attention that does not allow for length or complexity in mental connections.[18] Stiegler recognizes the implications of cultivating such a combination of deep attention and hyper attention proposed by Hayles and rejects it; he does not see the value in hyper attention, seeing it as more informational consumerism than

[10] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 2: Disorientation,* trans. Stephen Barker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).
[11] Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth.*
[12] Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth*.
[13] Katherine Hayles, "Hyper and Deep Attention: The Generational Divide in Cognitive Modes," *Profession* (2007): 187-199. https://www.jstor.org/stable/25595866.
[14] Hayles, "Hyper and Deep Attention," 187-199.
[15] Hayles, "Hyper and Deep Attention," 187-199.
[16] Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth*.
[17] Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth*, 80.
[18] Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth*, 80.

distributed attention, resulting in "an often hyperactive attentional *deficit*," and advocates strongly for a return to deep attention. Because he views attention as more than individual, as psychic and social, he argues that the cognitive shift from deep attention to hyper attention is a crisis of intergenerational relationships. Attention is created through intergenerational relationships in which the adults transmit experiences and knowledge to the next generations, "constructed of *retentions,* which then create *protentions,* that is, the expectations without which *attention* is impossible."[19]

Stiegler argues that Foucault's biopower[20] has been replaced by psychopower, a form of power focused on turning people into consumptive markets stimulated by media cultural institutions.[21] Such psychopower has resulted in the destruction of "attention itself, along with the ability to concentrate on an *object* of attention, which is a social faculty; the construction of such objects is, in fact, the construction of society itself, as civil space founded on [cultural] knowledge including social graces, expertise, and critical thinking (i.e., contemplation)."[22] Stiegler sees the form of deep attention as vital for the continuation of society, entrance into adulthood, and intelligence. As Stiegler articulates his argument, he claims even the ability to think is under threat, but that it is possible to win this "battle for intelligence" in the educational system by cultivating deep attention.[23]

Reproduction of Barriers and Conception of the "Good Student"

Stiegler is not wrong in arguing that educational institutions are one of the main distributors of cultural knowledge, and with that, cultural capital. Cultural capital is "an economy of cultural goods" that is considered legitimate, including the knowledge, skills, behaviors, language and other less tangible resources that accompany one's social class.[24] Connected to cultural capital is also Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus, which can be defined as the dispositions that individuals learn over time, which organize their actions toward social situations.[25] Individuals can have multiple forms of expression organized by the habitus, but for these expressions to count, they must be validated by the institutions in which they operate. According to Bourdieu, institutions do not fully determine how individuals will act, behave, or talk because individuals have different life histories that have taught them lessons about what is

[19] Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth*, 8.
[20] Michel Foucault, "Bio-Power," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 257-290.
[21] Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth*.
[22] Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth,* 13.
[23] Stiegler, *Taking Care of Youth*.
[24] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (New York: Routledge*,* 1987).
[25] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 1990).

appropriate in different situations (and if they do not know, they improvise). In addition, institutions cannot exist if people do not collectively behave according to some semblance of what the institution sanctions as appropriate behavior.

Higher education institutions distribute cultural capital to those who make it through their hallowed halls and beyond. Education has often been presented as the equalizer for students, a transformative opportunity for students to move up in society, yet this is not true for everyone. Michael Apple notes, "[j]ust as our dominant economic institutions are structured so that those who inherit or already have economic capital do better, so too does cultural capital act in the same way."[26] Those students who know and understand the norms, expectations, and values in higher education institutions are at an advantage and already equipped to succeed.[27] The educational system sets up the facade that everyone exists on the same playing field with the same resources, and thus, the winners have earned their way to the top, even though entrance to the field of competition comes with stigmatized backgrounds, experiences, and educational differences. The likelihood of reaching the highest levels of education reduces with each increase of level, especially for those students who do not fit the mold, although such a possibility is never precluded. Although scholars like Bourdieu, Apple, and others are referring to the influence of class in educational institutions, this can be extended to students who do not fit the mold of the "good student" that has been in place since the beginning of higher education.

The image of the "good student" permeates higher education and is based upon previous educational experiences, requires years of preparation to become, and involves more than academic prowess. Socially appropriate behaviors are included as well, such as timeliness, active participation in class, organization, "paying attention," following the rules, respect for authority, responsibility, good work ethic, etc. This has often been described as the hidden curriculum of education.[28] This good student image exists as its own form of cultural capital in the minds of students, parents, administration, staff, and faculty. For faculty who may conceive of themselves as former good students, this conception travels with them into the classes they teach and guides their expectations, teaching methods, and policies. This kind of thinking allows educators and their institutions to avoid dealing with the complex issues that surround difficulties in higher education, some of which stem from the ways in which higher education is conducted. Students who are already disenfranchised are further stigmatized as "not measuring up" to standards that are centered in middle to upper-class norms and designed for wealthy, white students going back hundreds of years. What is considered normal is rarely questioned; only

[26] Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum*.
[27] Leslie Ann Locke and Teniell Trolian, "Microaggressions and Social Class Identity in Higher Education and Student Affairs," *New Directions for Student Services* 2018, no. 162 (2018): 63-74. https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.20262.
[28] Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum*; Orón Semper and Blasco, "Revealing the Hidden Curriculum," 481-498.

expectations for students to "measure up" are established. Moreover, the knowledge that students come with is not considered legitimate. Instead, it is something that needs to be fixed or corrected, positioning students as the source of the problem rather than addressing the failure of the current educational structure to match the students, a structure that has long been ableist in its design.

Students can internalize this deficit thinking as well, which can result in students becoming detached in class and struggling even more, confirming that they are not good students.[29] Angela Valenzuela notes that this detachment from the learning environment can also occur when students perceive their knowledge, identities, and values are not acknowledged or valued in return.[30] The current neoliberal practices of higher education, such as increasing class sizes and expectations for administrative labor from faculty, add strains that disincentivize them from reaching out to students perceived to be struggling.[31] Internalized deficit thinking for students can run up against the teacher's concept of the "good student," as detachment and disruptive behaviors do not fall in line with the idea of a "good student." If a professor (even mistakenly) perceives that a student does not care about the class, there is even less motivation for the teacher to reach out with support.[32] At the very least, this could continue a hostile relationship with education for the student.

This relationship is most evident in the student's relationship with the faculty member. It is the instructors, lecturers, and professors who provide access to recommendation letters, connections to internships, resources, scholarship help, etc., opening up not only cultural capital but also social capital. To access these forms of capital, students need to develop close relationships with their professors; those most likely to accomplish this are those considered to fit the concept of the good student. The meeting of students and teachers creates the classroom learning experiences through the hidden curriculum, intentional or not, which translates into these relationships.

Neurodivergence in Higher Education

While the hidden curriculum of higher education has yet to change, what has changed is the student population. College populations have diversified more than ever across a variety of diversity markers.[33] Included in this is the

[29] Manu Sharma, "Seeping Deficit Thinking Assumptions Maintain the Neoliberal Education Agenda: Exploring Three Conceptual Frameworks of Deficit Thinking in Inner-City Schools," *Education and Urban Society* 50, no. 2 (2016): 136-154. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124516682301.
[30] Angela Valenzuela, *Subtractive Schooling: US Mexican Youth and the Politics of Caring* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999).
[31] Sharma, "Seeping Deficit Thinking Assumptions," 136-154.
[32] Valenzuela, *Subtractive Schooling*.
[33] Leslie Davis and Richard Fry, "College Faculty Have Become More Racially and Ethnically Diverse, but Remain Far Less So than Students," Pew Research Center, July 31, 2019. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/07/31/us-college-faculty-

increase in neurodivergent students attending college, both domestically and internationally.[34] Neurodiversity acts as an umbrella term, including Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, Meares-Irlen Syndrome, Tourette's Syndrome, Synesthesia, and other similar atypical conditions.[35] The term arose in the late 1990s out of the work of Judy Singer, an autism and disability activist and Australian sociologist, as a way to shift perceptions from a deficit perspective to one of different strengths and abilities and disrupt ableist thinking and structures.[36]

Higher education has long been structured in ableist ways, and until the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990, there were no requirements to adjust these structures. However, even with the ADA in place for the last three decades, there is still much about higher education that retains this ableist structure. Fiona Campbell defines ableism as "a network of beliefs, processes and practices that produces a particular kind of self and body (the corporeal standard) that is projected as the perfect, species-typical and therefore essential and fully human. Disability then is cast as a diminished state of being human."[37] Critical disability studies examines ableist structures in higher education, and scholars frame it as a methodology that examines not the bodily or mental capacities but instead the social norms and conditions that stigmatize the disability community.[38] Dianne Pothier and Richard Devlin point out, "[d]isability is not fundamentally a question of medicine or health, nor is it just an issue of sensitivity and compassion; rather, it is a question of politics and

student-diversity/; Melanie Hanson, "College Enrollment & Student Demographic Statistics," Education Data Initiative, July 26, 2022. https://educationdata.org/college-enrollment-statistics.

[34] Colin Henning, Laura Summerfeldt, and James Parker, "ADHD and Academic Success in University Students: The Important Role of Impaired Attention," *Journal of Attention Disorders* 26, no. 6 (2021): 893-901. https://doi.org/10.1177/10870547211036758; Theo Bakker et al., "Background and Enrollment Characteristics of Students with Autism in Higher Education," *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders* 67 (2019). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rasd.2019.101424; Marco Pino and Luigina Mortarim, "The Inclusion of Students with Dyslexia in Higher Education: A Systematic Review Using Narrative Synthesis," *Dyslexia* 20, no. 4 (2014); 346-369. https://doi.org/10.1002/dys.1484.

[35] Christopher Luchs, "Considering Neurodiversity in Learning Design and Technology," *TechTrends* 65 (2021): 923. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11528-021-00667-9.

[36] Judy Singer, *NeuroDiversity: The Birth of an Idea,* (Judy Singer: 2017).

[37] Fiona Kumari Campbell, "Inciting Legal Fictions: 'Disability's' Date with Ontology and the Ableist Body of Law," *Griffith Law Review* 10 (2001): 44. https://research-repository.griffith.edu.au/bitstream/handle/10072/3714/17563_1.pdf?sequence=1.

[38] Julie Avril Minich, "Enabling Whom? Critical Disability Studies Now," *Lateral* 5, no. 1 (2016). https://csalateral.org/issue/5-1/forum-alt-humanities-critical-disability-studies-now-minich/.

power(lessness), power over, and power to."[39] It is within this framework that neurodivergence and neurodiversity have come to describe not a deficiency but a naturally occurring variation in brain development that results in different strengths and challenges like anyone else who may be neurotypical.[40] Strengths may include better memory, ability to solve complex mathematical calculations in one's head, easy visualization of three-dimensional objects, aptitude for repetition, ability to learn things quickly, and others.[41] While neurodiversity contains many different types of brain variations, as Stiegler focused on ADHD as an issue with deep attention, this will be the focus of the remainder of this paper.

Neurodivergence and Attention

It is easy to see why ADHD is the subject of focus when talking about a deficit in attention as it is right in the name of the disorder—attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder. ADHD is "a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that shows clear evidence of interference with social, academic, or occupational functioning in two or more settings," such as in the home or school.[42] There are a variety of therapies and treatments for ADHD, including education, behavior therapy, help with social skills, and medication. All of these can prove helpful in reducing ADHD symptoms, especially if used in a combination of treatments. There is also research that shows good academic success for students with ADHD, provided the students are supported well.[43] It is a matter of what these supports look like.

In higher education, the practice until now, as pointed out earlier, is to fix the student (usually through accommodations) rather than examine barriers within the structures and pedagogy. A common pattern is a student presents a documented diagnosis of ADHD to the accommodations office on campus, which then decides what accommodations are needed for the student and sends a letter of accommodation to the professors. All of this is done without knowing how the courses are set up or what policies exist in the course; in addition, the letter that is sent to all professors is the same. The accommodations may not even

[39] Dianne Pothier and Richard Devlin, "Introduction: Toward a Critical Theory of Dis-citizenship," in *Critical Disability Theory: Essays in Philosophy, Policy, and Law,* eds. Dianne Pothier and Richard Devlin (Toronto: UBC Press, 2006), 2.
[40] Cleveland Clinic, "Neurodivergent," Cleveland Clinic, June 6, 2022. https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/symptoms/23154-neurodivergent.
[41] Scott Robertson and Ari Ne'eman, "Autistic Acceptance, the College Campus, and Technology: Growth of Neurodiversity in Society and Academia," *Disability Studies in the Undergraduate Classroom* 28, no. 4 (2008). https://doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v28i4.146; Cleveland Clinic, 2022.
[42] Henning, Summerfeldt, and Parker, "ADHD and Academic Success," 893-901.
[43] Lorna Hamilton and Stephanie Petty, "Compassionate Pedagogy for Neurodiversity in Higher Education: A Conceptual Analysis," *Frontiers in Psychology,* (2023): 2. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1093290.

be applicable, e.g., extended exam time for a course that does not have exams but may have other pedagogical or structural issues that the accommodations do not address. Students often do not know the range of accommodations that exist and instead are set up with a pre-existing set of accommodations that may not meet their needs.[44] Common accommodations for ADHD students include audio recording of lectures, testing in separate rooms, additional time for exams, audio books, notetaking services, distraction-free rooms, adaptive equipment, and other technology.[45] However, there is no feedback loop for the existing practices in the course to be accommodated. Instead, if something is not working the student must return to the accommodations office to request changes.[46] This indicates that it is not the structures or pedagogy being adjusted, but the student. This is all dependent on a student having a diagnosis to begin with, which can be difficult to get for students who have little access to healthcare. It may seem as if this works in the moment. Yet, ADHD students are often masking their behaviors in order to fit in and avoid negative criticisms from other classmates and the instructor. Masking involves repressing natural responses and is emotionally and mentally exhausting for the student, which can lead to a variety of mental health issues.[47] Moreover, while providing accommodations to students may allow a university to comply with the law, this is the bare minimum and does not constitute prioritizing pedagogical practices that affirm ADHD students. To do this, higher education institutions need to incorporate universal design in everything, physically and educationally.[48]

The advocation for universal design for learning (UDL) is not new. The Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) published the framework in 2002 to design instruction to meet the needs of all learners, with multiple means of engagement, representation, action, and expression of learning.[49] Since then, a large body of literature has accumulated, documenting its success in a variety of educational settings and contexts, including higher education.[50] The benefit of

[44] Jay Dolmage, *Academic Ableism: Disability and Higher Education* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017).
[45] Robert Weis, Christina Till, and Celeste Erickson, "Assessing and Overcoming the Functional Impact of ADHD in College Students: Evidence-Based Disability Determination and Accommodation Decision-Making," *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability* 32, no. 3 (2019): 279-295. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1236801.
[46] Dolmage, *Academic Ableism*.
[47] Hamilton and Petty, "Compassionate Pedagogy for Neurodiversity," 2.
[48] Zahava Friedman and Denise Nash-Luckenbach, "Has the Time Come for Heutagogy? Supporting Neurodivergent Learners in Higher Education," *Higher Education* (2023): 2. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-023-01097-7.
[49] CAST, "Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 2.2," Accessed Apr 2, 2024. https://udlguidelines.cast.org/.
[50] Theresa Cumming and Megan Rose, "Exploring Universal Design for Learning as an Accessibility Tool in Higher Education: A Review of the Current Literature," *The Australian Educational Researcher* 49 (2022): 1025-1043. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-021-00471-7; Beth Fornauf and Joy Erickson, "Toward

UDL is that courses are designed as accessible for everyone from the beginning, including ADHD students as well as other neurodivergent students, making accommodations largely unnecessary. However, there still exist barriers to its widespread implementation, including a discourse of normalcy regarding ability that exists in higher education.[51] One of the major obstacles to UDL in higher education is the way in which professional development is approached as voluntary. Faculty are first rarely trained in effective teaching practices while in graduate school, and then are not required to participate in teaching and learning sessions once in professor roles, making widespread creation of accessible courses hard to achieve as each professor must decide to do it for themselves.

Stiegler is concerned with future generations not being able to tackle complex problems that face our current world, but more than that, he considers the destruction of attention to be a social crisis, a relationship crisis, one which must be remedied in order to take care of the youth and future generations, and that education must take steps to do so. However, three important factors are not considered. First, it is not that people with ADHD cannot pay attention as described in deep attention; it is that it just looks different than the neurotypical standard, nor do the behaviors that may accompany ADHD fit with what is considered good classroom behavior (e.g., stimming, in which repetitive movements or noises are made). There is also a phenomenon known as hyperfocus that is associated with ADHD and other forms of neurodiversity. Hyperfocus has four criteria consistently reported in research: an intense state of concentration or focus; when engaged in hyperfocus, unrelated external stimuli do not appear to be consciously perceived; to engage in hyperfocus, the task has to be fun or interesting; and during a hyperfocus state, task performance improves.[52] In addition to forms of attention such as hyperfocus being an aspect of ADHD, it is also important to note that complex problems require perspectives and ideas from across the board, meaning that cognitive diversity in the way people think is a benefit, not a disadvantage. Increased creativity and novel problem-solving abilities are associated with having ADHD.[53] But more importantly than this is that taking care of people involves not leaving them behind. To create inclusive learning environments, higher education must not rely on old methods of teaching but must open its doors to the students that are

an Inclusive Pedagogy Through Universal Design for Learning in Higher Education: A Review of the Literature," *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability* 33, no. 2 (2022): 183-199. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1273677.

[51] Fornauf and Erickson, "Toward an Inclusive Pedagogy," 183-199.

[52] Brandon Ashinoff and Ahmad Abu-Akel, "Hyperfocus: The Forgotten Frontier of Attention," *Psychological Research* 85 (2021): 2. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00426-019-01245-8.

[53] George Bush, "Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder and Attention Networks," *Neuropsychopharmacology* 35, no. 1 (2010): 278-300. https://doi.org/10.1038/npp.2009.120.

here already and build relationships with them, not with some imagined ideal of what they should be.

Conclusion

In 2022, philosopher Rosi Braidotti stated that even with "new ways of thinking about what we are becoming, what is becoming possible for us today with gene editing, with all the stem cell research, will all the amazing things that we have developed and discovered. And yet our values, our representations, our forms of self-understanding are still attached to older visions of the human."[54] This is higher education's issue in many cases, but certainly in the case of neurodivergent students. These students deserve a learning environment that is constructed to include them fully, not as an afterthought and not as something to be fixed. The students come to universities to learn, and it is the universities who must adjust to fit the students. First and foremost, universal design needs to be required across institutions along with required training for faculty about neurodivergence and its effects. For needed accommodations, conversations with the institution's ADA office and faculty need to happen so that the accommodations work effectively for the courses involved. Syllabi policies also need reworking to remove behavioral grading. Assessment of learning should be focused solely on learning rather than on creating compliant employees, a purpose that belongs outside of higher education.[55] These are just a few of the changes that could help welcome diverse learners. Such learning spaces can be transformative for everyone, but especially for neurodivergent students whose self-fulfilling prophecies of not being good students may stem from negative experiences of trying to conform, rather than learning how to work with their strengths. It is time to reimagine what higher education can be and move beyond one-dimensional solutions.

[54] CCCB, "Rosi Braidotti: 'The concept of human has always been associated with relations of power," YouTube Video, 9:43, March 17, 2022, https://youtu.be/mb2_a-UX1OE?si=BBma6dEvFkKF7Hik.

[55] Birdwell and Bayley, "When the Syllabus is Ableist," 220-237; Niemenin and Pesonen, "Anti-ableist Pedagogies," 1-15.