

An evaluation of "grappling with the medicated self: the case of adhd college stu...

[Profession](#), [Student](#)



The essay by Meika Loe and Leigh Cuttino "Grappling with the Medicated Self: The Case of ADHD College Students" takes the reader into the minds of several college students, all of which have been diagnosed with ADHD and were actively receiving treatment for their ADHD via stimulants. The way that this essay is laid out with the different perceived selves varying from student to student, an effective blend of George Mead's theory of self: The "I" and the "me" as well as Erving Goffman's "Dramaturgical Analogy." This essay explores the different angles of perceived self that the students experience while juggling the role of a student with their medication for the ADHD diagnosis, which provides each individual with an altered version of themselves.

The essay "Grappling with the Medicated Self: The Case of ADHD College Students" amplifies how the social reality that exists adversely impacts college students through social interaction, in the sense of environmental factors contribute to college students entering into the college atmosphere this can be seen within the essay "many [students] express some awareness of the interplay between body and society; while they believe that they are biologically different from others, they also realize that their environment plays a crucial role in the construction of self."

It is this shift from high-school to college that the students attributed to their need for a medicated self in order to meet these standards and thrive to the level of expectation that came with entering college. As seen in the essay "the students face great expectations to be committed to their studies through regular, methodical, and disciplined work, especially when attending

a competitive liberal arts college." While attempting to meet the high demands that college entails, these students are being forced to be altered chemically in order to have the same advantage that others naturally have when it comes to being a college student.

While taking on the new identity of being a college student, the ADHD students that were interviewed take on the journey of college with the help of their medication to be able to meet the standards that are placed upon everyone. While becoming a college student is one feat they are not just treating their diagnosis to function at the level needed for college but they are also losing part of their identity. This loss of identity can be seen in the essay "the process of identity maintenance and verification can be interrupted or "broken" in context of pharmaceutical use resulting in stress." As both George Mead and Erving Goffman both agree a sense of self is important, just by being a college student, these students are having a conflict identifying what their sense of self is.

For George Mead and his Theory of self: The "I" and the "me" in order to have a sense of self, one must have both the "I": is always in a constant state of evolution because it is responsible for responding and reflecting on the "me", while the role of the "me": represents the behaviors, expectations, and attitudes that we have learned through our ongoing interactions with others throughout our developing lives. The conflict between the "me" that is being perceived, that is the student who chose to go to college thinking that it was manageable because high-school is behind them. And the response that the "I" that is trying to formulate in accordance

to what the "me" is encountering, that of the demands being greater than high-school and needing to do more in order to be a functioning student. The only way that the "I" has to respond to the "me" effectively is in cooperation with the treatment of the stimulants that are altering the sense of self. This ongoing conflict between the "I" and the "me" results in an incomplete version of an actual self because of our actual self-needs a balance between the "I" and the "me."

The element that Erving Goffman attributes to the reflection of this essay is in the sense of his Dramaturgical Analogy. Goffman's theory focuses on the idea that interaction is being in a sense that everyone has a role in a play and they are performing their roles within that play. The five principles involved within the Dramaturgical Analogy are that:

"(1) people engage in performances to present themselves to others; (2) people work in teams or collectively to express the characteristics of a social situation; (3) people distinguish between different types of social space in which to perform; (4) people must worry about the credibility of their performances, and (5) people must avoid communication out of character."

All of these factors are present in the essay in different forms of reflection from the informants involved. (1) is reflected from all of the informants in the sense that they are all engaging in an ongoing performance of attending college as their altered self in order to be there and meet the demand placed on college students. If the medication was removed, this would not be an act to the same extreme as it is being medicated, the medicated self makes this

more of an act that if it was an individual not taking medication and being altered to function properly to attend college.

(2) is reflected in the sense that knowingly participating or not, everyone that attends the college is playing an intricate role within the Dramaturgical Analogy of being in college and what it means to be a college student.

(3) is reflected throughout all of the informants, however, it is Ali who is the only one who chooses to make the distinction between herself as medicated and unmedicated. In Ali's case, she believes that her "unmedicated self is "normal" and her medicated self has a sense of belief that she can function at a higher level, a level that the college system seems to demand."

(4) is reflected in the sense that if the informants involved did not have the ability to have an altered medicated self, that their natural performance would not be convincing enough on its. With the help of the medication and having the ability to conform to what they need to be in order to be at college, it validates that the performance is adequate enough to compensate their perceived natural inadequacy.

(5) can only be seen when the informant Lauren is presented in the essay. Lauren chooses to take her pills all the time with no justified break from them, as the seen by the others who take breaks from their pills on weekends, holidays or only take their pills when they felt that they needed the medications to help. Lauren is the only informant that does not seem to have a conflict of self, for the fact that she is only ever her medicated self without any breaks from the medication. In the essay "Bury (1982) [refers to

this as] “ normalization”, or fully integrating illness into one’s sense of self.” Lauren chooses to acknowledge that she has the diagnosis of ADHD enough to become a “ different person” and to continually not situationally take her medication which is how she avoids the battle of the self and the medicated self.

After reading this essay and applying the two theories to this essay, I have decided that this essay does a fantastic job of integrating the two theory’s George Mead’s theory of self: The “ I” and the “ me” as well as Erving Goffman’s “ Dramaturgical Analogy” into one coherent essay. The essay reads well especially through the perspectives of the informants that agreed to be apart of the research. Unlike Lauren and the informants that had quit taking their stimulants entirely, the “ remaining informants expressed a discomfort in the idea of taking medication for the rest of their lives.”

The essay does an amazing job in emphasizing that “ many ADHD students attempt to manage the job of ‘ student’ with medication to achieve instrumental ends while aiming to protect their “ true selves.” While the essay emphasizes that this is the case for many ADHD students, it also provides alternative perspectives regarding being a college student with ADHD and taking stimulants and how it is impacted as well as reflected on identifying your self in both a medicated and nonmedicated aspect of self.