

This essay will follow the path of genetic and neurological behaviour to learnt behaviours through to socioeconomics. It will look at how each of these alters behaviour and the impact of these behaviours within the learning environment. The NSW government describes behaviour as;

“Behaviour is a response to things that are happening: internally - thoughts and feelings. externally - the environment, including other people. (NSW Health 2020)

Behaviours are diverse and are influenced by many different factors. While behaviours can be learnt or influenced throughout a lifetime, genetic or neurological behaviours precede all other aspects. Genetic and neurological factors shape the brain's development, impacting how individuals respond to stimuli and interactions with their environment. These factors can result in learning difficulties, cognitive challenges or neurodivergence, which can potentially affect social skills, communication or sensory processing. Each of these can lead to changes in behaviour. For example, Autism sees around 80% of cases can be linked to genetic factors. Children with autism can struggle with social interactions and communication issues, things such as; eye contact, delayed speech development or difficulties understanding facial expressions. This could lead to behavioural differences within the classroom. People with Autism also have sensory needs and potential repetitive behaviours, this could be things such as sensitivity to sounds, lights or smells, or the need to flap hands, rock back and forth or fixating on objects and routines. While these are things that would not usually affect students throughout their school day, the loud and bright environment of the school, or the smell of school dinners can be over stimulating for ALN students. This could lead to behaviours which the school would deem negative, Autism is just one of many Additional Learning Needs and each disorder comes with its own challenges. Many people with ALN can learn to cope with these traits, but at a young age in the school environment they can be very difficult to navigate. Many children with ALN have a diagnosis and this will be included in their IDP when starting school, while others will spend months getting into trouble and being mislabelled as ‘naughty’ or ‘poor behaviour’ when in actual fact they potentially have underlying ALN needs and are not receiving the help they need, resulting in poor behaviour from an over stimulating school environment. While students who have a diagnosis of ALN they will be given provisions to help them succeed. This could be professional provisions such as speech and language therapy or funding for a one-to-one support or smaller amendments made by the school. A quiet classroom to eat lunch if the school hall is too noisy, bright or loud. Permission not to wear full school uniform if there are sensory issues or the use of a busy box when they have trouble sitting and focusing in class. Disruptive behaviour is not tolerated in schools. It may result in the learner being removed from the class, detention or possible exclusion depending on the school and their behaviour policy. School A's behaviour policy clearly outlines a 5-step plan on how to deal with behaviour of any kind. It also clearly states; “A serious breach is committed by a pupil that may result in a loss of lunch time/internal exclusion or fixed-term exclusion.” (Hewitt 2024). However, removing the learner from class

will continue to impact their learning as gaps will surface in their schoolwork. It also creates an obstacle when it comes to friendship, their interactions and to them their behaviour is not disruptive and can therefore lead to a misunderstanding as to why this has happened.

Following on from cognitive or gene-related behaviours, further behaviours gained are learned behaviours. There are three main types of learned behaviour, Classic conditioning: learning by association a neutral stimulus or with a natural occurring stimulus such as the Pavlovian response theory. For example, this could be the teacher using a bell to signal the end of play time, that the students know to line up to go in as an automatic response. Next is operant conditioning, this is learning through positive or negative reinforcement, where behaviours are more likely to be repeated if they lead to a reward. This could be praising students when they have tidied up or Friday treats for having a good week. Lastly is observational learning, this is learning by observing or imitating the behaviours of others. This would be seeing teaching staff and other students modelling the behaviours wanted in the school environment. Learning behaviours begin when a student enters school or classroom, even as flying start/part-time nursery younger students learn through trial and error which behaviours are tolerated and those that are not. For example, snatching toys from another child will result in them being told off, losing playtime or not tidying up toys after use will not be tolerated. Whereas older students could collaboratively establish class rules at the start of the year which demonstrates their understanding of what is expected of them within their school and allows inclusion of making this rule list to help create a sense of belonging and a safe environment, as well as respect. Whilst teaching behaviours is a great way of learning, it takes time. Modelling behaviours can be done much more often and not only by teachers but older students. The use of prefects in schools provides a role model to which other pupils can aspire. Prefects meet the high standards of politeness, uniform standards, attendance and punctuality. School A has taken modelling to the next level by combining year groups 5 & 6, 3 & 4 and 1 & 2, this allows the older students to model the desired behaviours to the younger age groups daily. Whilst modelling behaviours is the main benefit for this change, learners have the chance to make a wider range of friends and learn to communicate more effectively. While this has a positive effect on modelling behaviours for most, there are the select few students who struggle to model the desired behaviour. Some students who are expected to model behaviours need a role model themselves and can get carried away with the 'poor' behaviours of their younger peers. While it is important for the students to model the 'good' behaviour it is also important for the staff within the school to also model behaviour. Paul Dix wrote 'When the adults change, everything changes' and explains that a school in northern England used fantastic walking and even the teachers modelled the walking which had a positive effect on students.

"why crush behaviours with punishment when you can grow them with love? Visible consistency with visible kindness allows exceptional behaviour to flourish." (Dix 2017)

Following genetic or learned behaviours is external factors, such as socioeconomic status strongly influences behaviour. Children from a lower socioeconomic background often exhibit higher levels of behavioural problems such as aggression, disruptive behaviour and disengagement. While students from a higher socioeconomic background tend to display more positive behaviours and higher academic engagement. This can be attributed to factors such as stress from home life, lack of resources, nutrition deficiencies and a difference in expectations at home compared to school. There are many ways socioeconomic factors can influence a student's behaviour: This includes stress and anxiety, as children from lower-income families can experience higher levels of stress due to financial instability, housing insecurity leading to parental conflict which can impact a child's behaviour in school. Often stress and anxiety manifests itself as difficulty concentrating, disruptive behaviour and difficulty forming social connections. As the child carries an emotional burden from home into school and may even lead to an emotional outburst. Children from low-income families may experience nutritional deficiencies. Limited financial resources can limit their access to nutritious food or possibly any food. A lack of food, or good nutrition can significantly affect a child's behaviour in school by causing, restlessness, difficulty concentrating, irritability as hunger can impact brain function and mood regulation. According to (Gautam et al. 2023) 10 out of 14 studies found a positive link between high income families and children's consumption of fruits and vegetables, which implies that children from a high-income background have a higher chance of consuming a high number of fruits and vegetables compared to those from a low income. Specific behaviours such as aggression and disruptive behaviour is more likely to be exhibited in schools in socioeconomic areas and disruptive behaviours such as talking back, arguing with teachers or physical aggression. In areas of lower socioeconomic income will have lower academic engagement. This will be due to a lack of motivation, poor attendance and less participation in lessons. Whilst coming from a lower socioeconomic background can affect children's behaviours in a negative way growing up in a wealthy socioeconomic area can encourage good behaviour.

In conclusion, there are many varying factors that can affect a child's behaviour within the school setting. These factors begin to affect people before they are even born, the genetics of your parents and their ancestors can affect a child's personality or brain function before any outside influences. Then outside factors such as environmental influences like culture, social interactions and life experiences. This means the family or area of the world a child is born into can affect their behaviours further. Being born into a loving family who has the financial means to care for them can affect their behaviour positively. Whereas a child who is put into the car system may have resentment and emotional issues that will affect their behaviour throughout their life. Once the child starts school, the school in their catchment area, and the friends they make at school will all continue to affect changes in behaviour. A child's behaviour is constantly affected by their environment, this means the people, places, and situations around them can significantly influence how they will act and react in any given moment.

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