

Star Wars did not cau

UNITED STATES

Technology's evolution to a fast pace may have more to answer for than we think, says Michael Oberschneider.

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away, there was no Facebook or Twitter, no emailing or texting. Personal computers had yet to invade our homes, and most of us had access to maybe four or five TV channels, max. That faraway galaxy was the 1970s – and it was also a time when ADHD was virtually unheard of.

In 1970, the prevalence of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder was around 1 per cent for school-aged children, and it was very rare for a teenager or adult to be diagnosed with the condition. Now, United States Centres for Disease Control statistics show that 11 per cent of children between 4 and 17 have been diagnosed with ADHD at some point in their lives. Moreover, research has shown that 60 per cent of children diagnosed with the condition take it forward with them into adulthood.

There are several factors that have contributed to the dramatic increase of ADHD over the past 40 years – and the related upsurge in stimulant medication prescriptions – including better diagnostic tools, decreased stigma, and heightened awareness. Still, the unfolding parallel between the growth of technology in our lives and the increase of ADHD cannot be ignored, and in my opinion, *Star Wars* is an incapable data point.

The first of George Lucas's space epics was released in 1977. Its memorable characters, sweeping saga and blazing special effects all played an obvious role in its massive success and enduring impact.

But less attention has been paid to one truly revolutionary quality:

its groundbreaking editing.

Before *Star Wars*, movies moved at a slower tempo. The camera might hold a shot for several minutes at a time, with individual scenes playing out in something like our own real time. Lucas changed all of that with fast-paced cuts and accelerated, rhythmic editing.

In his book *The Editing of Star Wars: How Cutting Created A Classic*, author Linton Davies notes that the first film contained 2177 cuts – far more than *Annie Hall*, *Saturday Night Fever*, or any of the other big movies of 1977.

The rapid pace of these cuts amped up Lucas's narrative, Davies writes. "A quickly cut sequence increases the perceived significance of what happens on screen, not least because it

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paradoxically tends to increase the overall duration of the sequence by repeating various actions from a number of different angles and perspectives."

For example, in the scene where Luke Skywalker, Han Solo and Chewbacca overrun the Death Star prison block in a quickfire gun battle, Oscar-winning editor Paul Hirsch wove together a series of shots with an average length of a mere two seconds.

Not much actually happens in this sequence, Davies writes – the trio gun down the guards and shoot out the security cameras. But "the extremely quick editing creates a feeling of confusion and disorientation", and the editors enhanced the drama by presenting

screen, not least because it shots from multiple angles. "In fact, the same shot of era being smashed is used times in 15 seconds, but the pace of the scene means the repetition goes unnoticed viewer."

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It was after 1977 that our entertainment hours b bound up in technology – notably with the rise of games, whether with Atari consoles or the PacMan-era age of arcades.

Is it a coincidence that

