

accept the positions they find themselves in after schooling, even though it is disadvantages arising from social class background that create inequalities in educational success.

The work of Althusser: education as an ideological state apparatus

The Marxist Althusser (1971) saw the main role of education in a capitalist society as the reproduction of an efficient and obedient labour force. This involves two aspects:

- the reproduction of the necessary technical skills.
- the reproduction of ruling class ideology (the dominant beliefs and values) and the socialization of workers into accepting this dominant ideology (this is known as false consciousness).

Althusser argues that, to prevent the working class from rebelling against their exploitation, the ruling class must try to win their hearts and minds by persuading them to accept ruling class ideology. This process of persuasion is carried out by a number of ideological state apparatuses, such as the family, the media, the law, religion and the education system. Althusser argues that in contemporary Western societies the main ideological state apparatus is the education system, which:

- passes on ruling class ideology justifying the capitalist system.
- selects people for the different social classes as adults, developing the right attitudes and behaviour; for example, workers are persuaded to accept and submit to exploitation, and managers and administrators to rule.

Bourdieu and the reproduction of class inequalities

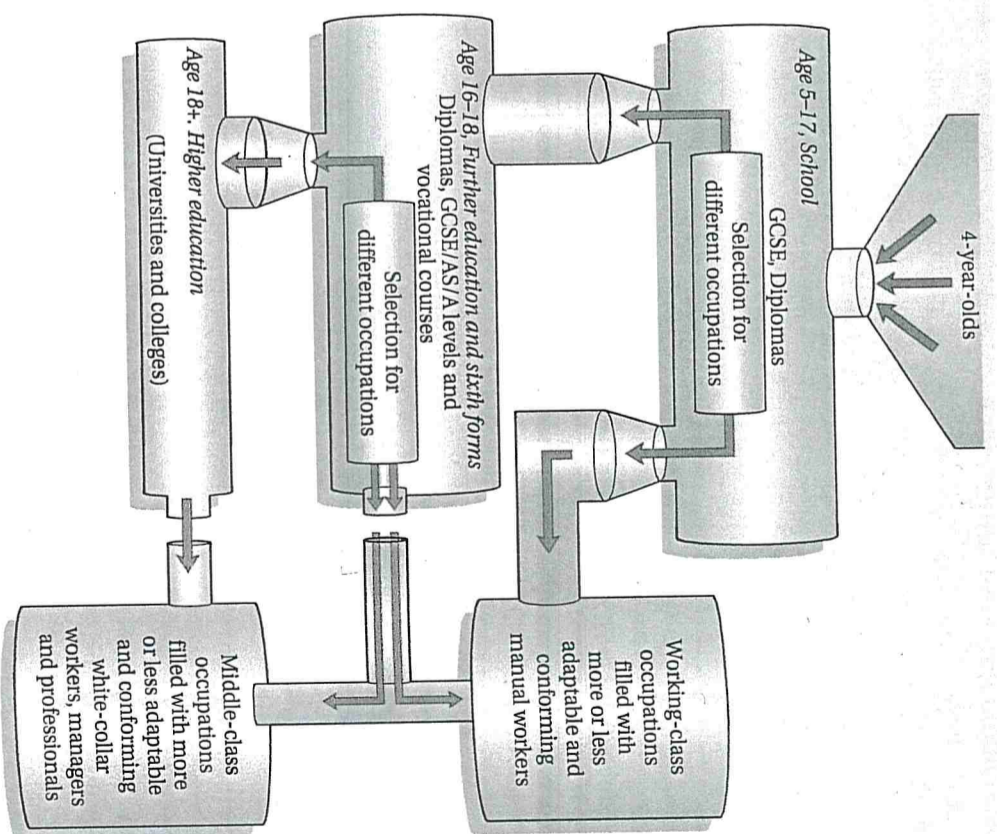
Bourdieu (1977) regards a key role of the education system in capitalist societies as legitimizing (justifying) class inequalities and reproducing the class structure. Bourdieu argues that each social class possesses its own cultural framework or set of ideas, which he calls a habitus. This cultural framework contains ideas about what counts as good and bad taste, good books, newspapers, TV programmes and so on. This habitus is picked up through socialization in the family. The dominant class has the power to impose its own habitus in the education system, so what counts as educational knowledge is not the culture of society as a whole, but that of the dominant social class. Those who come from better-off middle- and upper-class backgrounds have more access to the culture of the dominant class. Bourdieu calls this advantage cultural capital. He therefore suggests success in the education system is based on the possession of cultural capital and of access to the habitus or culture of the dominant social class.

Pupils from lower social classes do not in general possess cultural capital, so the educational failure of the majority of these pupils is inevitable. However, the dominant ideology (as seen in the functionalist view) is that success and failure in the education system is meritocratic, based on individuals' talents and hard work, and those who succeed are seen to deserve their higher places in the class structure. However, success and failure are really based on the possession of cultural capital, and the education system devalues working-class culture and regards it as inferior to upper- and middle-class culture. This makes it very difficult for pupils from lower social classes to succeed in the education system, while the upper and middle classes have an in-built advantage and much greater chances of educational success before they even start school. This makes it easier for higher-class individuals to stay in the class they were born into, and legitimizes the higher social class positions which they go on to hold as adults. In this way, Bourdieu argues, the education system legitimizes and reproduces class inequalities from one generation to the next.

Schooling, repression and hegemonic control: Illich and Freire

The Marxist idea of education reproducing inequality and a conformist, submissive and obedient working class is reflected in the work of Illich (1995). Illich argues schools are repressive institutions which promote conformity and encourage students into passive acceptance of existing inequalities and the interests of the powerful, rather than encouraging them to be critical and to think for themselves. Illich suggests schools do this by rewarding those who accept the school regime

Figure 2.1 Education and the class structure



False consciousness: failure by members of a social class to recognize their real interests.

Ideological state apparatuses: are agencies which set to spread the ideology and justify the power of the dominant social class.

Habitus: is the cultural framework and set of ideas possessed by a social class, into which people are socialized and which influences their cultural tastes and choices.

Cultural capital: is knowledge, language, manners and forms of behaviour, attitude to the dominant culture and values, taste in lifestyle which gives a set of ideas over upper-class students, and consent to them who possess them by the rest of society. In-built advantage: hegemonic control of the middle-class-conformist where control of the education system/working class is mainly achieved through the hegemony and acceptance of ruling class ideas.

Hegemony: refers to the dominance in and values, taste in lifestyle which gives a set of ideas over upper-class students, and consent to them who possess them by the rest of society. In-built advantage: hegemonic control of the middle-class-conformist where control of the education system/working class is mainly achieved through the hegemony and acceptance of ruling class ideas.

with qualifications and access to higher levels of the education system and better jobs. Those who don't conform, or who question the authority of teachers or the value of the education provided by schools, are excluded from further progress in education, and end up in lower-level jobs. Illich suggests the solution to this is to abolish schooling altogether - what he calls deschooling. Freire (1996) sees schools as repressive institutions, where learners are conditioned to accept oppressive relations of domination and subordination, and to listen to their betters, for example through obeying teachers and deferring to their superior knowledge. The work of Althusser, Illich and Freire suggests that the education system plays an important role in producing the hegemony and hegemonic control of the ruling class - convincing the rest of society to accept the truth and superiority of the ruling class's set of ideas over others, and winning their consent to continued control by the dominant class.

Activity

- 1 Refer to figure 2.1. Suggest the attitudes and values that might be required by those leaving the education system at different stages for different levels of employment.
- 2 Can you think of values or ideas that are passed on through the education system which might be in the interests of the dominant groups in society rather than in the interests of all?

- a school keeps in close touch with parents through newsletters and school reports.
- a school has friendly, happy and respectful relationships between students and between staff and students.
- a school participates in cultural activities outside school, like school recreational and cultural trips, and involvement in local community activities.
- a school encourages pupils to participate actively in school life, like taking part in decision-making through school councils.

The hidden curriculum

The ethos of a school is normally reflected in and supported by the hidden curriculum, as well as the formal programme of subjects and lessons making up the overt curriculum, which a school designs to promote the educational achievement of students.

Students learn attitudes and values reflected in the school ethos and hidden curriculum simply by participating in the daily routines of school life. For example, a school with a sports specialism might have displays of athletic trophies, rather than other achievements, in the hallway near the school's entrance, or a Catholic faith school might display religious artifacts like crosses or statues, communicating things valued by the school and encouraging respect for them by the students. Things underpinning the ethos, like punctuality, respect for authority, school rules, uniforms, school assemblies, prize giving, an emphasis on academic achievement and exam success, the organization of students into grouping by ability (see 'Banding, streaming and setting' below), students standing in line, raising their hands to answer questions, opening doors for teachers, or giving way to them in corridors, and so on all seek to instil certain values, attitudes and behaviour among students.

In contemporary Britain, many parents will assess a school's suitability for their children in terms of its ethos, put into practice through the hidden curriculum, and whether these combine to produce high educational standards. For many parents today, a good school is one that has high-quality teaching, good discipline and an ethos promoting high achievement and that succeeds in getting the best results in NCT's (National Curriculum Tests, commonly still referred to by their previous name of Standard Assessment Tests, or SATs), and GCSE and AS/A level examination results in the area.

Do schools make a difference?

Rutter et al. in their book *Fifteen Thousand Hours: Secondary Schools and their Effects on Children*, reported research they had carried out in twelve schools. This study attempted to show, in the face of much previous research suggesting the opposite, that good schools can make a difference to the life chances of all pupils. Rutter et al. suggest that it is features of the school's organization which make this difference. These features are summarized below.

- Teachers are well prepared for lessons.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' academic performance, and set and mark classwork and homework regularly.
- Teachers set examples of behaviour; for example, they are on time and they use only officially approved forms of discipline.
- Teachers place more emphasis on praise and reward than on blame and punishment.
- Teachers treat pupils as responsible people, for example by giving them positions of responsibility/looking after school books and property.
- Teachers show an interest in the pupils and encourage them to do well.
- There is an atmosphere or ethos in the school which reflects the above points, with all teachers sharing a commitment to the aims and values of the school.
- There is a mixture of abilities in the school, as the presence of high-ability pupils benefits the academic performance and behaviour of pupils of all abilities.

Activity

Refer to the box 'Do schools make a difference?'

- 1 Explain how you think each of the features of a good school which Rutter et al. describe might or might not help pupils of all backgrounds and abilities to make more progress.
- 2 Do you agree or disagree with Rutter's features of a good school? Are there any other features that you would expect to find in a good school or college? Give reasons for your answer.
- 3 List at least three characteristics, based on your own opinions and reading, of a good teacher.
- 4 Outline three features of the ethos of your school, or the one you last attended.
- 5 How important do you think the role of the school and teachers is in the educational progress of pupils compared to material and cultural factors outside of school?

TEACHER STEREOTYPING, PUPIL IDENTITIES AND THE HALO EFFECT

Teacher-student interaction through the process of schooling and everyday classroom life, and the standpoint teachers adopt in their dealings with pupils, can influence the construction and development of positive or negative pupil self-concepts, or pupil identities: how they see and define themselves and how other people see and define them. Teachers are constantly involved in getting to know their pupils through classroom interaction over a period of time. They are actively judging and classifying (or typing) pupils in various ways, interpreting their behaviour, and forming impressions of them, such as whether they are bright or slow learners, troublemakers or ideal pupils, hard-working or lazy, or as 'normal'/'average' or 'deviant' types. This process of classification or labelling by teachers can contribute to the moulding of student identities, and has been shown to affect the educational performance and classroom behaviour of students.

The stereotype held by the teacher (good/bad, thick/bright, 'normal'/'deviant' student and so on) can produce a halo effect. This means that a teacher who has formed a good impression of a student in one way, for example seeing them as cooperative, polite and helpful, may see that student more favourably in other unrelated ways too – for instance, as being bright and hard-working (even if they're not) – and therefore encourage and support them. The opposite halo effect may also occur, when a poor impression in one area – for example for being stumpy, difficult and disruptive – may affect other unrelated impressions too, with the student also being seen as lazy or not very bright (even if this isn't true).

Waterhouse (2004), in case studies of four primary and secondary schools, suggests that teacher labelling of pupils as either normal/average or deviant types, as a result of impressions formed over a period of time, has implications for the way teachers interact with pupils, they can then become what Waterhouse called a 'pivotal identity' for students – a core identity providing a pivot which teachers use to interpret and reinterpret classroom events and student behaviour, and these pivotal pupil identities ('deviant' or 'normal'), once established, dominate the interpretation of specific acts of classroom behaviour. For example, Waterhouse suggests a student once typed or labelled with a pivotal identity of 'deviant' is likely to have episodes of normal, conformist classroom behaviour interpreted by the teacher as a temporary episode or phase in the life of someone who is typically a classroom misfit; episodes of deviant, disruptive behaviour by a student typically labelled as 'normal' or average are likely to be interpreted as a temporary phase or episode which will soon pass, and will have no long-term implications for the pupil's identity or for their future school careers. This construction by teachers of normal or deviant pupil identities may lead to the self-fulfilling prophecy discussed below on pages 43–4. Pupils' behaviour is influenced by the way teachers react to them, and may give rise to student responses such as teacher-pupil conflicts, classroom confrontations, and the formation of a range of pro- or anti-school subcultures (see pages 47–9).

Labelling refers to the process of defining a person or group in a certain way – as a particular 'type' of person or group.

A stereotype is a generalized and oversimplified view of the features of a social group, allowing for few individual differences between members of the group.

A halo effect is when pupils become stereotyped, either favourably or unfavourably, on the basis of earlier impressions.

The self-fulfilling prophecy is where people act in response to predictions which have been made regarding their behaviour, thereby making the prediction come true.

Teacher stereotypes of the 'ideal pupil' and the construction of pupil identities. It was Becker (1971) who first discovered that teachers initially evaluate pupils in relation to their stereotypes of the 'ideal pupil', which set the standard for teachers' judgements of the quality of young people as pupils, and (in a perfect teacher world) would represent the typical normal or average conforming pupil. Hempel-Jorgensen (2009) suggests the 'ideal pupil' identity includes things like hard work, concentrating and listening to teachers, performing well academically, such as through tests and exams, accompanied by good behaviour, staying out of trouble, and conforming to rules laid down by teachers in order to achieve well.

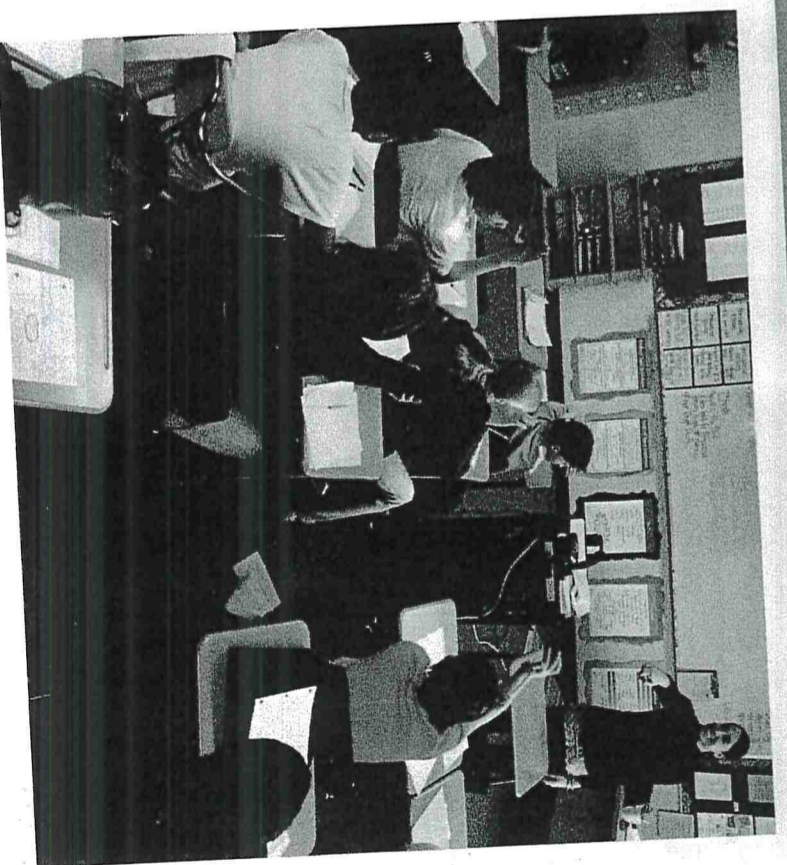
Hempel-Jorgensen, following year-long research on twelve primary schools in Hampshire, using observation and conversation with children and semi-structured interviews with teachers, suggests that pupils themselves share a similar conception of an 'ideal learner' – the characteristics they thought their teacher would like in a new pupil if one was to come into the class. She found that influences how they view themselves as learners – their learning identity – and how they view their classmates, and that this may have a significant impact on their educational motivation, aspirations and academic attainment. These 'ideal pupil' and 'ideal learner' identities arise out of the daily teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil interactions in the schooling process.

Long-established research by writers such as Becker (1971), Rist (1970), Cicourel and Kitsuse (1971), Keddie (1971) Hargreaves, Hestor and Mellor (1975) and Hargreaves (1976) has repeatedly shown that the category of 'ideal pupil' has become a significant reference point for teachers, and the extent to which students conform to or deviate from it influences teachers' dealings with pupils, and, as Hempel-Jorgensen suggests, how students view their own and their classmates' learner identities. A whole range of non-academic factors such as speech, dress, personality (how cooperative, considerate, likeable, polite, helpful and so on), relationships with other children, conformity to discipline, enthusiasm for work, conduct and appearance make up this stereotype of the ideal pupil, and influence teachers' assessments of students' ability. Becker (1971) and Rist (1970), for example, found the social class of students, and the extent to which they conformed to the middle-class standards of teachers, rather than student abilities, were the most significant factors influencing teacher typing or labelling. Ethnic background and sex can also have important influences on this evaluation.

An American study by Harvey and Slavin (1975) showed photographs of children from different ethnic and social class backgrounds to a sample of ninety-six primary school teachers, and they found white, middle-class children were identified as more likely to be successful students, while teachers had lowered expectations of those from poorer and non-white backgrounds. Gillborn (2011) found that the 'ideal pupil' stereotype held by teachers also favours those who are white, and that many teachers simply do not see black children as likely academic successes. He found that teachers were denying opportunities to black children, especially Black Caribbean pupils, regarding their social class or gender, their ability and achievements, their subject choices or their drive and ambition. They were more likely to be placed in lower teaching groups, denied access to the most sought-after subjects, and less likely to be entered for the top exams because of not fitting the stereotype of the ideal pupil likely to succeed. Hartley and Sutton (2011) suggest the ideal pupil stereotype is also more likely to be applied to girls, including Indian Asian girls, than to boys. The reasons for this are explored more fully in the next topic.

Research into teacher stereotypes of the ideal pupil therefore suggests students – particularly male students – from lower-working-class homes, and from some ethnic groups, are often seen as being poorly motivated and lacking support from the home, and liable to be disruptive in the classroom. This may mean they are perceived by teachers as lacking ability, even if they are very able. By contrast, those from middle-class and white backgrounds most closely fit the teacher's ideal pupil stereotype, and teachers may assume that children who enter school already confident, fluent and familiar with learning, who are more likely to be from middle-class homes, have greater potential, and will push them to achieve accordingly. In short, the evidence suggests that the 'ideal pupil' and the associated 'ideal learner' identities held by pupils – in general fit most closely the profile of white, middle-class and Indian Asian girls. This typing or labelling by teachers based on the 'ideal pupil' conception can positively or negatively affect students' later academic achievement by, for example, influencing decisions about what streams or sets to put students in, and what options

In what ways might attitudes and behaviour of teachers affect a student's progress?



and exams are made available to them. To summarize, the expectations arising from teacher stereotypes and evaluations may well change the behaviour of pupils and their learner identities, and lead to the self-fulfilling prophecy discussed below.

LABELLING AND THE SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY

The way teachers assess and evaluate students affects pupil identities and subsequently their achievement levels, as pupils may gradually bring their own self-image in line with the one the teacher holds of them. Those labelled as 'bright' and as 'ideal pupils' who are likely to be successful in education are more likely to perform in line with the teachers' expectations and predictions, while those labelled as 'slow', 'difficult' or of 'low ability' and unlikely to succeed are persuaded not to bother ('what's the point in trying – the teacher thinks I'm thick anyway'). In both cases, the teachers' predictions may come true. This suggests the difference between 'bright' and 'slow' or 'good' and 'bad' students, and the progress they make in school, is created by the processes of stereotyping and labelling. This is the self-fulfilling prophecy, which is illustrated in figure 2.2.

Classic research by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) in California provided useful evidence of the self-fulfilling prophecy. They found that a randomly chosen group of students whom teachers were told were bright and could be expected to make good progress, even though they were no different from other students in terms of ability, did in fact make greater progress than students not so labelled.

The previous section on the 'ideal pupil' suggests the self-fulfilling prophecy is likely to have the most negative effects on working-class and black boys. Recent research into the self-fulfilling prophecy by Hartley and Sutton (2011) suggests this may apply to gender too, with labelling, stereotypes and the expectations of teachers, as well as peers, parents and the media, generating a self-fulfilling prophecy with negative effects on the performance of boys. In Hartley and Sutton's study of 140 children in three Kent primary schools, children were assigned to two groups, with the first group told that boys do not perform as well as girls, and the other not told this. They were then tested in maths, reading and writing. Boys in the first group performed significantly worse than those in the second, while girls' overall performance was similar in both groups. Hartley and

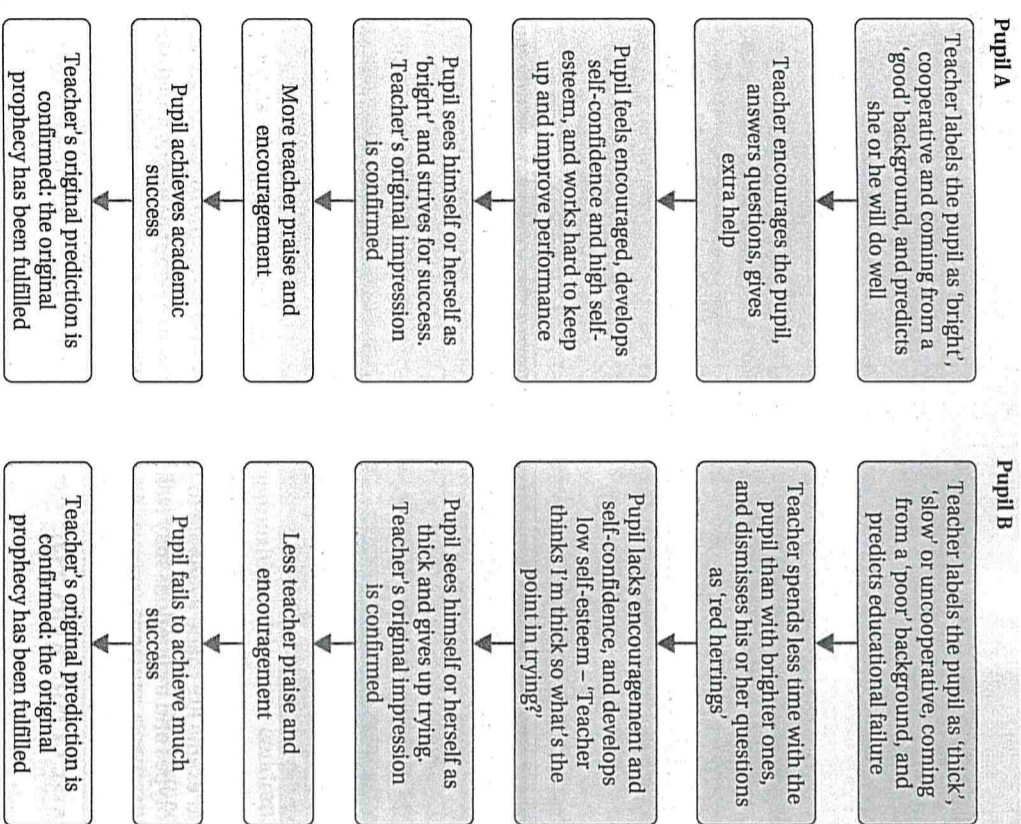
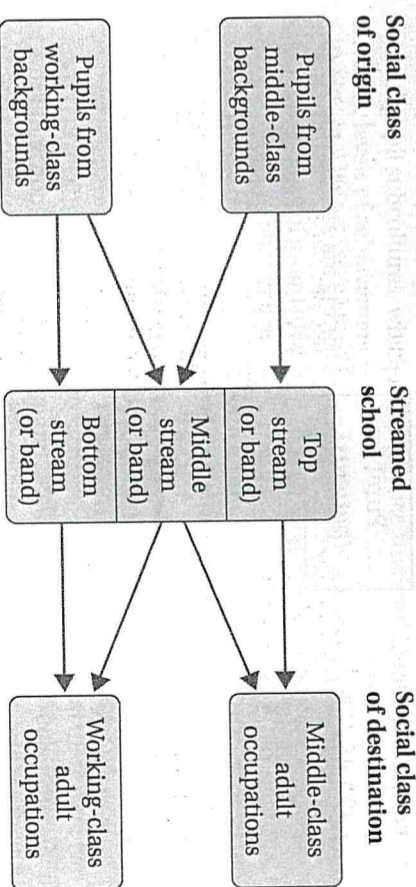


Figure 2.2 The *segment 2.3* Social fulfilling prophecy across divisions and two examples streaming/banding



Sutton's research suggested that boys' relatively poor performance nationally could be explained in part by negative gender stereotypes, including those held by teachers, generating a self-fulfilling prophecy; this was fuelled further by adults, including teachers, and wider society routinely using phrases like 'silly boys', 'school boy pranks' and 'why can't you sit nicely like the girls?'

Banding, streaming and setting

Banding, streaming and setting are ways of grouping students according to their actual or predicted ability. 'Banding' is used in two ways. It is sometimes used to describe the situation in which comprehensive schools try to ensure their intakes have a spread of pupils drawn from all bands of ability. More commonly, it is used as an alternative word for streaming. Streaming is where students are divided into groups of similar ability (bands or streams) in which they stay for all subjects. Setting is where school students are divided into groups (sets) of the same ability in particular subjects. For example, a student might be in a top maths set, with the most able maths students, but in a bottom set for English. Being placed in a low stream or set may undermine pupils' confidence and discourage them from trying, and teachers may be less ambitious and give less knowledge to lower-stream children than they would with others.

This was confirmed by Ball's research in Beachside Comprehensive (1981). Ball found that top-stream students were 'warmed up' by encouragement to achieve highly and to follow academic courses of study. On the other hand, lower-stream students were 'cooled out' and encouraged to

Educational triage refers to the way schools divide pupils into three groups – those who are likely to succeed in exams (mainly concerning GCSEs A–C (or grades 9–4 from 2017)) whatever happens, those who have a chance of succeeding if they get some extra help (mainly those around the C/D-grade boundary) and those who have little chance of succeeding whatever is done. Schools concentrate on the first two groups, and particularly the second group, and basically write-off those who have little chance of success.

Banding either where schools try to ensure their intakes have a spread of pupils drawn from all bands of ability, or, more commonly, is used as an alternative word for streaming.

Streaming is where schools, students are divided into groups of similar ability (bands or streams) in which they stay for all subjects.

Setting is where students are divided into groups (sets) of the same ability in particular subjects.

follow lower-status vocational and practical courses, and consequently achieved lower levels of academic success, frequently leaving school at the earliest opportunity.

Smyth et al. (2006) found that students in lower-stream classes have more negative attitudes to school, find the teaching pace too slow, spend less time on homework and are more likely than other students to disengage from school life, and become disaffected with school. Such evidence suggests streaming has harmful effects on the learner identities of young people labelled as of low ability. It damages their self-esteem and self-confidence, and has a negative impact on their educational aspirations and attainment.

Streaming, and to a lesser extent setting, are often linked to the stereotypes of the ideal pupil discussed above, and teacher expectations may lead to the positive or negative self-fulfilling prophecy. Research conducted for the Sutton Trust (Sutton Trust/Ipsos MORI (2010)) found that, while setting was a good way of stretching bright pupils from poor backgrounds, not enough of them were reaching top sets. It also found streaming put poorer pupils at a disadvantage and favoured those from the middle class. The evidence suggests that, in general, the higher a pupil's social class, the greater their chance of being allocated to a top stream, for reasons which will become clearer later in this chapter.

Streaming therefore contributes to the underachievement of working-class pupils, and affects the occupation and social class they may eventually achieve. This is illustrated in figure 2.3.

UNEQUAL ACCESS TO CLASSROOM KNOWLEDGE

One of the consequences of streaming and setting is that not all children are given access to the same knowledge. Keddie found that teachers taught those in higher-stream classes differently from those in lower streams. Pupils were expected to behave better and do more work, and teachers gave them more, and different types of, educational knowledge, which gave them greater opportunities for educational success. Lower-stream working-class pupils might therefore underachieve in education partly because they have not been given access to the knowledge required for educational success.

Educational triage

The term 'educational triage' is derived from medical triage whereby, on a battlefield or in the Accident and Emergency Department of a hospital, doctors and nurses treat patients in a priority order of those who might survive if they get immediate treatment, those likely to survive who don't need immediate attention, and those who have little chance of survival whatever is done.

Gillborn and Youdell (2000) found schools were undertaking a similar process of educational triage, dividing students into three groups: those who they thought were most likely, with little additional help, to get 5 GCSE A–C grades (or grades 9–4 from 2017) or more recently the 6 GCSEs

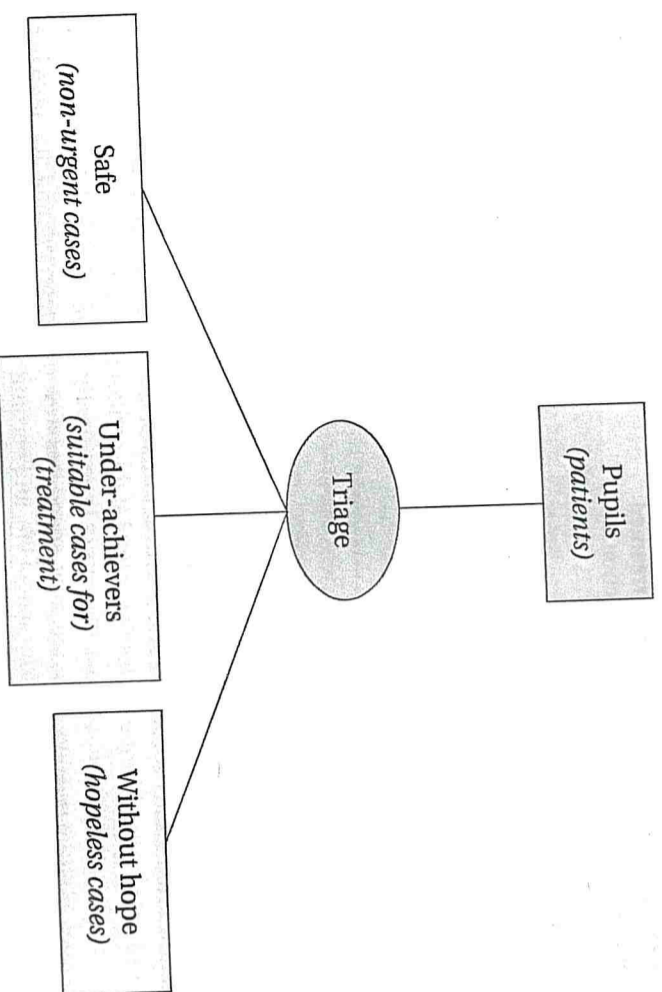


Figure 2.4
Educational triage
Source: Gillborn
and Youdell (2000).
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A*-C grades necessary for the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) (this includes GCSEs in English, maths, two sciences, a foreign language and a humanity, such as history or geography); those on the grade-C/D borderline, who with a bit of extra help, might get a C grade or better; and a third group of hopeless cases who were unlikely to achieve a C grade or above, whatever was done. Schools focus their attention on the first two groups, as this will improve their position in the league tables (discussed later in this chapter) and give the impression of a good and successful school. The third group are basically written off as no-hopers and left to die an educational death. This process of educational triage is shown in figure 2.4

In 2011, the government announced that, to end what it saw as a culture of low expectations in some schools, every secondary school in England would be expected to increase the proportion of all pupils achieving five A*-C grades at GCSE, including English and maths, from the 35 per cent in 2011 to at least 40 per cent by 2012 and 50 per cent by 2015. Schools not achieving this standard would be regarded as underperforming, and would risk being taken over by the headteacher of a higher-performing neighbouring school or by an academy. This renewed emphasis on school improvement is likely to intensify the process of educational triage, as even more attention and school resources are diverted onto those who stand at least some chance of reaching the 5 GCSEs A*-C target, and away from those pupils who seem highly unlikely to achieve this standard, whatever schools do.

The school processes and teacher stereotypes and expectations described above mean that those most likely to be in the third group seen as no-hopers, and written off and left to die an educational death, are those in the bottom streams, who are more likely to be the most disadvantaged lower-working-class white and black students – predominantly boys – and those with special educational needs.

Student responses to the experience of schooling: school subcultures

Students experience, and react and adapt in a wide variety of ways to schools' attempts to label and categorize them, in accordance with the various features of school life considered so far in this topic. This includes the formation of the 'ideal pupil' identities held by teachers, and the 'ideal learner' identities held by pupils themselves. These adaptations or responses frequently take the

The English Baccalaureate (EBacc) is a performance measure for schools to show the proportion of pupils who achieve at least five GCSEs A*-C in the English, two sciences, a foreign language and a humanity, like history or geography.

A pro-school subculture is a group of pupils who are organized around a set of values, attitudes and behaviour which generally conforms to the academic aims, ethos and rules of a school.

form of pupil subcultures, which can influence students' identities and their motivation in school and their levels of achievement.

Pupil subcultures are groups of students who share some values, norms and behaviour, which give them a sense of group identity and belonging, and provide them with support and peer-group status during the schooling process. These subcultures take a variety of forms, ranging from pro-school to anti-school subcultures, with a variety of other responses between these, and these may themselves vary according to social class, gender and ethnicity.

DIFFERENTIATION AND POLARIZATION

Lacey's (1970) study of a middle-class grammar school found that there were two related processes at work in schools – differentiation and polarization. Most schools generally place a high value on things such as hard work, good behaviour and exam success, and teachers judge students and rank and categorize them into different groups – streams or sets – according to such criteria. This is what Lacey called *differentiation*. One of the consequences of differentiation through streaming, setting and labelling is *polarization*. This refers to the way students become divided into two opposing groups or 'poles': those in the top streams who achieve highly, who more or less conform, and therefore achieve high status in terms of the values and aims of the school, and those in the bottom streams who are labelled as failures and are therefore deprived of status. Studies by Hargreaves (1967, 1976) in a secondary modern school, Ball (1981) in a streamed comprehensive school, and Abraham (1989) in a comprehensive school using setting found that teachers' perceptions of students' academic ability and the processes of differentiation and polarization influenced how students behaved, and led to the formation of pro- and anti-school (or counter-school) subcultures. Involvement in such subcultures, and interactions and relationships among pupils themselves within them, can shape their identities and have an important effect on their chances of educational failure or success.

THE PRO-SCHOOL SUBCULTURE

A pro-school subculture consists of groups of pupils who generally conform to the academic aims, ethos and rules of a school, and tends to be linked to students in upper streams and sets who are valued and rewarded and given status as they fulfil the school's ambition for good behaviour and academic success. 'The lads' in Willis's study of a Wolverhampton comprehensive school (see below and page 34) called this conformist group the 'ear 'oles'. Mac an Ghaill (1994) found a conformist pro-school subculture emerged in two male groups, which he called the 'Academic Achievers' and 'New Enterprisers', who were skilled manual working-class white and Asian students who were aspiring to middle-class careers, through either academic success (the Academic Achievers) or success in vocational subjects like technology and computers (the New Enterprisers). Sewell (1998) found a pro-school subculture among some black pupils ('the conformists'), who sought to achieve academic success and avoid racist stereotyping and labelling by teachers by conforming to school values.

Belonging to such a pro-school subculture is likely to encourage peer-group support for success in education. Such students are, in general, more likely to be from middle-class or skilled working-class backgrounds.

THE ANTI-SCHOOL (OR COUNTER-SCHOOL) SUBCULTURE

An anti-school subculture, sometimes called a counter-school subculture, consists of groups of pupils who rebel against the school for various reasons, and develop an alternative anti-school identity, made up of a set of delinquent values, attitudes and behaviour in opposition to the academic aims, ethos and rules of a school. In this subculture, truancy, playing up teachers, messing about, breaking the school rules, copying work (or not doing any) and generally disrupting the smooth running of the school become a way of getting back at the system and resisting a schooling which has denied students status by labelling them as failures by putting them in lower streams and sets. This



The anti-school, or counter-school, subculture

is a subculture of resistance and an *anti-learning subculture*, and provides a means for pupils to improve their own self-esteem, by giving them status in the eyes of their peer group which has been denied them by the school. Participation in such subcultures contributes further to poor educational performance, and in many cases contributes to the self-fulfilling prophecy of underachievement.

For the reasons considered above, and explored further in the following topic, anti-school or counter-school subcultures are more likely to be comprised of pupils who are Black Caribbean and White British working-class males. Typical of the anti-school subculture was that found by Willis among the working-class 'lads' in a Wolverhampton comprehensive school (see page 34), who were opposed to the main aims of the school and the pro-school 'ear' 'oles', and sought to free themselves from what they saw as a boring and oppressive schooling by making 'having a laff' the main purpose of their school day. Both Mac an Ghalil's and Sewell's research also identified groups of Black Caribbean working-class boys in the bottom streams or sets – the 'Macho lads' and 'the rebels' – who were similarly hostile to schooling. They tried to achieve status and identity denied by the school through aggressive masculinity and peer-group support available through the formation of an anti-school subculture. Their rejection of school was an act of rebellion against racist stereotypes and labelling by teachers, who saw them as anti-school, anti-authority macho boys.

Jackson's (2006) research among 13- to 14-year-old boys and girls, based on interviews and questionnaires with pupils and teachers from six comprehensive schools, suggests that some girls may be increasingly becoming part of anti-school subcultures, as they adopt 'ladette' behaviour – a female equivalent of the assertive, boisterous and crude 'laddish' culture found among boys – and an 'it's uncool to work' approach to school, and a similar confrontational approach, and attempt to make teachers' lives hell. Jackson's evidence, though, also suggested that many girls still tried to achieve academic success, working clandestinely by hiding their work and effort, at the same time as adopting ladette behaviour.

BETWEEN PRO- AND ANTI-SCHOOL SUBCULTURES: A RANGE OF RESPONSES

Woods (1979) suggested that dividing the responses of pupils to the experience of schooling into just the two 'poles' of conformity or opposition through pro- and anti-school subcultures is too simple. While Woods's research is now old, his framework is still relevant today as it does suggest there is a wide variety of possible responses and adaptations to school, each of which will influence what students achieve in school, and students may change their responses over time as they move through schooling. These responses may also affect individual pupils rather than whole groups, as

A subculture of resistance is one that not only has some differences from the dominant culture, but is also in active opposition to it.

Figure 2.5 Woods and pupils' adaptations to schooling

implied by the term 'subculture', and may span social class, gender and ethnic differences at different stages of the schooling process. For example, students' response may change from rebellion to ingratitude or compliance as they grow older and subject options, exams and post-school career or education choices loom. Woods identified eight responses ranging from pro-school to anti-school, as shown in figure 2.5 below.

Activity

- 1 List all the reasons you can think of to explain why pupils from lower-working-class homes are more likely to be placed in lower streams than those from middle-class backgrounds.
- 2 Have you had any experience of the self-fulfilling prophecy in your own schooling? How do teachers communicate impressions of whether they think you are 'bright' or not, and how do you think this might have affected your progress?
- 3 In what ways do you think students in lower streams are treated differently and given different knowledge from those in higher streams? Give examples to illustrate your answer.
- 4 How do you think schools and teachers 'warm up' or 'cool out' students?
- 5 Is there any evidence of an anti-school subculture in your own school, or the school you once attended? What do you think membership of an anti-school subculture might mean to those who belong to it? Draw on examples from your own schooling.
- 6 Drawing on Woods's research in figure 2.5, try to identify some subcultures or individual responses in your own school (or the one you once attended), and explain the various ways that such subcultures or individual responses might affect student identities and educational achievement.

PRO-SCHOOL

- **Ingratiation:** pro-school conformity as in the pro-school subculture, with eagerness to please teachers and win favour with them.
- **Compliance:** conformity, but basically for what they can get out of schooling, like exam success, not because they necessarily like or enjoy school.
- **Opportunism:** those who try to gain both teacher and peer group approval, who move between both, depending on which response seems most beneficial to them at the time.
- **Ritualism:** lack of interest and engagement with schooling, but appearing to conform by going through the motions and avoiding trouble.
- **Retreatism:** not actively opposed to school values, but indifferent to them – messing about in class, distracted and lacking concentration, daydreaming, indifferent to exam success, and dropping out from involvement in school, including any school subcultures.
- **Colonization:** those who generally accept school for what it offers them, but reject school for things it forbids. Such pupils take opportunities as they arise to have fun, express aggression and hostility so long as they avoid getting into trouble.
- **Intransigence:** troublemakers who are indifferent to school, and who aren't that bothered about the consequences of non-conformity.
- **Rebellion:** outright rejection of schooling and its values, and involvement in anti-school activity, as in the anti-school subculture.

ANTI-SCHOOL