



GSOC.ED6 Streaming, Setting and Pupil Subcultures

AQA 8192 · Calculators not allowed · about 75 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Answer ALL questions. Use sociological vocabulary and name sociologists where you can.

- 1** Stephen Ball's study of banding at 'Beachside Comprehensive' found pupils placed in the top band were disproportionately from which background?

- ☐ A) Middle-class backgrounds
☐ B) Working-class backgrounds
☐ C) Backgrounds were evenly spread with no pattern
☐ D) Only pupils with siblings already at the school

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

- 2** Schools sometimes organise pupils into groups based on judged ability.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

- 3** The sociologist Stephen Ball studied a comprehensive school he called 'Beachside Comprehensive'.

(a) Explain what Ball's study investigated. (2)

(b) Explain one of Ball's findings about the effect of banding. (2)

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

- 4 The sociologist Colin Lacey studied 'Hightown Grammar' school and developed the concepts of 'differentiation' and 'polarisation'.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

- 5 The sociologist Paul Willis studied a group of twelve working-class boys, known as 'the lads', in his 1977 book Learning to Labour.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

- 6 State one criticism that is often made of Willis's study of 'the lads'.

(Total for Question 6 is 2 marks)

- 7 Some sociologists, including Peter Woods, have argued pupils respond to school in more varied ways than a simple pro-school/anti-school split.

(Total for Question 7 is 4 marks)

- 8 State one criticism that is often made of Lacey's differentiation-polarisation model.

(Total for Question 8 is 2 marks)

- 9** A pupil is placed in a low set for a subject soon after joining a school.
Explain how streaming or setting might create a self-fulfilling prophecy for a pupil placed in a low set.

(Total for Question 9 is 6 marks)

- 10** Some sociologists, such as Willis, emphasise anti-school pupil subcultures as the main reason some working-class pupils underachieve. Others point to the effects of streaming and setting itself, or to material and cultural factors outside school.

Evaluate the view that pupil subcultures, rather than a pupil's own ability, are the main reason for the underachievement of some working-class pupils. In your answer you should refer to sociologists' views and consider more than one explanation.

(Total for Question 10 is 12 marks)

- 11** Sociologists use the term 'pro-school subculture' to describe one possible pupil response to school.

(Total for Question 11 is 2 marks)

- 12** Sociologists use the term 'anti-school subculture' (or 'counter-school culture') to describe the opposite pupil response.

(Total for Question 12 is 2 marks)

- 13** Setting and streaming have both advantages and disadvantages, according to different sociologists and educators.

(a) Explain one advantage a school might see in using setting or streaming. (2)

(b) Explain one disadvantage or criticism of setting or streaming. (2)

(Total for Question 13 is 4 marks)

- 14** State one alternative to streaming or setting that some UK schools use, and one reason a school might choose it.

(Total for Question 14 is 2 marks)

- 15** Explain one similarity between Ball's study of banding and Lacey's study of streaming.

(Total for Question 15 is 2 marks)

16 Willis described how 'the lads' ended up in similar manual jobs to their fathers.

(a) Explain what sociologists mean by 'social reproduction' in relation to Willis's study. (2)

(b) Explain one way schools might try to counter social reproduction and support pupil aspirations regardless of stream or set. (2)

(Total for Question 16 is 4 marks)

Mark scheme · GSOC.ED6 Streaming, Setting and Pupil Subcultures

Question 1

- **B1** A (middle-class backgrounds)
- **Answer: A**

Question 2

- **B1** streaming: grouping pupils into separate classes or teaching groups based on judged general ability, across most or all subjects (oe)
- **B1** development distinguishing this from 'setting', where pupils are grouped by ability separately in each individual subject
- **Answer: Streaming groups pupils into separate classes based on judged general ability across most or all subjects; setting, by contrast, groups pupils by ability separately in each individual subject.**

Question 3

- (a) **B1** identifies Ball studied a comprehensive school that grouped new pupils into bands based on ability soon after they arrived
- (a) **B1** development, e.g. he then followed pupils over time to see the effect of this banding on their experience and achievement
- **(a) Answer: Ball studied a comprehensive school that banded new pupils by ability soon after arrival, and followed pupils over time to see the effect of this banding.**
- (b) **B1** finding, e.g. Ball found teachers tended to treat top-band pupils differently, for example with a faster pace and higher expectations
- (b) **B1** development, e.g. this could reinforce the initial banding decision over time, an example of a self-fulfilling prophecy
- **(b) Answer: Ball found teachers tended to treat top-band pupils with a faster pace and higher expectations, which could reinforce the original banding decision over time, an example of a self-fulfilling prophecy.**

Question 4

- **B1** identifies differentiation as the process by which a school separates and categorises pupils, e.g. through streaming or setting by ability
- **B1** development, e.g. this creates a clear hierarchy of higher- and lower-status groups within the school
- **B1** identifies polarisation as pupils responding to this by moving towards one of two opposite extremes, forming subcultures
- **B1** development, e.g. some pupils in higher streams form a pro-school subculture, while some pupils in lower streams form an anti-school subculture
- **Answer: Lacey's differentiation is how a school separates pupils into a hierarchy through streaming; polarisation is how pupils respond by forming subcultures at opposite extremes, a pro-school subculture in higher streams and an anti-school subculture in lower streams.**

Question 5

- **B1** identifies Willis carried out ethnographic research, close, long-term observation of the boys during their final years at school
- **B1** finding, e.g. he found 'the lads' formed a counter-school culture that rejected academic effort and mocked pupils who conformed and worked hard
- **B1** development, e.g. the lads instead valued having a laugh, informal status among peers and an anti-authority identity
- **B1** further development, e.g. Willis argued this anti-school culture ironically prepared the lads for the low-skilled manual jobs many went on to do, similar to their fathers, reproducing their class position
- **Answer: Willis's ethnographic study of 'the lads' found they formed a counter-school culture rejecting academic effort and valuing 'having a laugh' and peer status instead, which he argued ironically prepared them for the same kind of low-skilled manual jobs their fathers had done.**

Question 6

- **B1** identifies a recognised criticism, e.g. the study was based on a very small sample of twelve boys at one school, so its findings may not generalise widely
- **B1** brief development, e.g. or that it focused on only one type of pupil response (anti-school, working-class boys), not the

Question 7

- **B1** identifies one type of pupil response Woods described, e.g. 'ritualism', going through the motions of school life (attending, following rules) without really believing in or valuing its goals
- **B1** brief development of that response
- **B1** identifies a second, different type, e.g. 'retreatism', a pupil who withdraws or daydreams, neither actively conforming to nor rebelling against school
- **B1** brief development of that response
- **Answer: Peter Woods identified pupil responses beyond simple conformity or rebellion, including 'ritualism' (going through the motions without believing in school's goals) and 'retreatism' (withdrawing or daydreaming, neither conforming nor rebelling).**

Question 8

- **B1** identifies a recognised criticism, e.g. it can oversimplify pupil responses into only two poles, when researchers such as Woods show a wider range of pupil adaptations exists
- **B1** brief development
- **Answer: Lacey's model can oversimplify pupil responses into only two poles, when Woods and others show a wider range of adaptations, such as ritualism and retreatism, actually exists.**

Question 9

- **B1** identifies that set placement is often based on early or partial judgement of ability, which may not fully reflect the pupil's true potential
- **B1** identifies this can lower teacher expectations for pupils in that set
- **B1** explains this may lead to a less demanding curriculum or slower pace being used for that set, in contrast to the faster pace Ball found in top bands
- **B1** explains the pupil may lower their own effort or aspirations in response to being placed in a low set
- **B1** development, e.g. this combination of lower expectations, a less demanding curriculum and lower pupil effort can then produce the very outcome (lower achievement) that was originally predicted
- **B1** clear, accurate use of terminology throughout (e.g. self-fulfilling prophecy, teacher expectations, differentiation)
- **Answer: Set placement based on an early, partial judgement can lower teacher expectations, leading to a less demanding curriculum and pace than Ball found in top bands; a pupil may then lower their own effort, so lower expectations, teaching and effort combine to produce the very underachievement originally predicted.**

Question 10

- **Level 4** (10-12): A detailed, well-balanced evaluation that accurately explains BOTH subculture explanations AND at least one alternative explanation (e.g. streaming/setting itself, or material/cultural factors), supported by accurate reference to named sociologists. Strengths and weaknesses of each view are analysed, and a reasoned, supported judgement is reached. Sociological terminology is used accurately and consistently throughout.
- **Level 3** (7-9): A clear evaluation that explains both a subculture explanation and an alternative explanation, with some accurate reference to sociologists. Some analysis of strengths/weaknesses. An attempt at a conclusion, which may be only partly supported.
- **Level 2** (4-6): Some relevant explanation of subculture and/or alternative factors, with limited development or accuracy. Little clear evaluation or comparison between explanations.
- **Level 1** (1-3): One or two isolated, undeveloped points about pupil subcultures or underachievement, with little or no sociological terminology or accurate detail.
- **Level 0** (0): No relevant content.
- **Indicative content:**
 - Subculture case: Willis's study of 'the lads' found a working-class anti-school counter-culture that rejected academic effort and reproduced their fathers' manual-job class position; Lacey's differentiation-polarisation model explains how such subcultures form in response to streaming.
 - Subculture case continued: Woods's wider typology (e.g. ritualism, retreatism) shows pupil responses to school are more varied than a simple pro-school/anti-school split, but still centres pupils' own responses as a key factor.
 - Alternative case (streaming/setting itself): Ball's Beachside Comprehensive study found top-band pupils, disproportionately middle-class, received a faster pace and higher expectations, suggesting the school's own organisation, not just pupil culture, drives differences in achievement.
 - Alternative case (material/cultural factors): factors such as material deprivation, cultural capital and language codes (covered elsewhere in this strand) offer explanations rooted in resources and home background rather than in-school pupil subcultures.
 - Evaluation of the subculture case: critics note Willis's small, unrepresentative sample of twelve boys at one school, and that subculture theory can be too deterministic, understating pupils who resist categorisation into a single subculture.
 - Evaluation of the alternative case: critics note that streaming/setting and material/cultural explanations do not fully explain why some pupils in the same set or same material circumstances still achieve very differently from one another.
 - A balanced conclusion should note that subcultures, school organisation (streaming/setting, teacher expectations) and material/cultural background are likely to interact and reinforce each other rather than acting as entirely separate, rival causes.

Question 11

- **B1** a group of pupils who accept and support the school's values and goals, e.g. working hard and following rules (oe)
- **B1** development, e.g. often associated by Lacey with pupils placed in higher streams or sets
- **Answer: A group of pupils who accept and support the school's values and goals, working hard and following rules; Lacey associated this often with pupils placed in higher streams.**

Question 12

- **B1** a group of pupils who reject the school's values and goals, e.g. by disrupting lessons or mocking pupils who work hard (oe)
- **B1** development, e.g. often associated by Lacey with pupils placed in lower streams, and studied in depth by Willis
- **Answer: A group of pupils who reject the school's values and goals, e.g. by disrupting lessons or mocking pupils who work hard; Lacey often associated this with lower streams, and Willis studied it in depth.**

Question 13

- (a) **B1** identifies a plausible advantage, e.g. teaching pace and content can be matched more closely to a group's needs, or focused catch-up support can be targeted at pupils who need it
- (a) **B1** brief development
- **(a) Answer: Teaching pace and content can be matched more closely to a group's needs, and focused catch-up support can be targeted at pupils who need it most.**
- (b) **B1** identifies a disadvantage, e.g. it can create a self-fulfilling prophecy for pupils placed in lower sets, or contribute to the formation of anti-school subcultures (Lacey's polarisation)
- (b) **B1** brief development
- **(b) Answer: Setting or streaming can create a self-fulfilling prophecy for pupils placed in lower sets, and can contribute to the polarisation into pro-school and anti-school subcultures described by Lacey.**

Question 14

- **B1** identifies a genuine alternative, e.g. mixed-ability teaching, where pupils of different abilities are taught together in the same class
- **B1** brief accurate reason, e.g. to avoid the self-fulfilling prophecy and subculture effects linked to streaming, or to allow pupils to learn from and support one another
- **Answer: Mixed-ability teaching, where pupils of different abilities are taught together, is sometimes used to avoid the self-fulfilling prophecy and subculture effects linked to streaming, and to let pupils support one another.**

Question 15

- **B1** identifies a genuine similarity, e.g. both studies show that a school's own organisation, not just pupils' individual ability, helps shape achievement and pupil identity
- **B1** development, e.g. both were based on close, in-depth research within a real UK secondary school rather than survey data alone
- **Answer: Both studies show that a school's own organisation, not just individual ability, shapes achievement and pupil identity, and both were based on close, in-depth research within a real UK secondary school.**

Question 16

- (a) **B1** identifies social reproduction as the process by which the class position of one generation is reproduced in the next generation (oe)
- (a) **B1** development linking this to Willis's finding that 'the lads' ended up in similar manual jobs to their fathers, despite (or partly because of) their anti-school culture
- **(a) Answer: Social reproduction is the process by which one generation's class position is passed on to the next; Willis found 'the lads' ended up in similar manual jobs to their fathers, despite, and partly because of, their anti-school culture.**
- (b) **B1** identifies a genuine measure, e.g. offering careers guidance and raising-aspirations programmes to pupils in all sets and streams, not just the top ones
- (b) **B1** brief development of how it helps
- **(b) Answer: Offering careers guidance and raising-aspirations programmes to pupils in every set and stream, not just the top ones, can help counter the kind of social reproduction Willis described.**