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ABSTRACT
                The labeling theory of deviance is used as a basis
from which to comment on the dynamics of the labeling process in
schools in general. Several research studies have demonstrated the
self-fulfilling prophecy of labeling techniques. Four types of
behavior can be distinguished: behavior that breaks a rule and is
labeled as deviant; behavior that does not break a rule and is not
labeled as deviant; behavior that does not break a rule but is
labeled as having done so; and behavior that breaks a rule but is not
labeled as deviant. IQ tests, personality tests, and categories such
as "slow learner" and "hyperactive" are seen to be guilty of
attaching stigmatic labels and, in some cases, mislabeling
altogether. The effects of being labeled appear to encourage behavior
conforming to the label; the individual is treated by others as being
deviant and, consequently, identifies with the traits inherent in the
deviance. Analysis is made of the active/passive role of the student
in the labeling process and of the conditions under which and
processes through which students are stabilized in deviant careers.
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LABELING AND THE SOCIALIZATION TO DEVIANCY IN SCHOOLS:

NOTES ON LABELING THEORY AND THE SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY

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ABSTRACT

This paper utilizes labeling theory of deviance as a basis for a commentary on the dynamics of the labeling process in schools in general and on the problematics associated with educational research on the self-fulfilling prophecy in particular. Focus is placed on three main areas: the origin of deviant labels and labelers in the school, being labeled in the school, and becoming deviant in the school. Several of the more important issues discussed include the rise of school labeling, the phenomenon of false labeling, the active/passive role of the student in the labeling process, and the conditions under which and the processes through which students are stabilized in deviant careers.

LABELING AND THE SOCIALIZATION TO DEVIANCY IN SCHOOLS: NOTES ON LABELING THEORY AND THE SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY

"Label cans not children." In recent years, this cry has been voiced ever more frequently and fervently. It symbolizes a recognition that attaching a deviant or stigmatic label to a child stimulates attempts to treat or control a supposed deviant condition of the child, which, in turn, can have the ironic and pejorative effect of worsening or creating this very condition.

Nowhere has the concern over the consequences of "societal reaction" -- labeling and then treating children as deviant -- been more pronounced than in the work of critics of the school. While not the first analysis to focus on the negative effects of labeling (cf. Hoffman, 1962), Rosenthal and Jacobson's (1968) seminal study on the "self-fulfilling prophecy" was perhaps most responsible for setting the anti-school labeling movement in motion. Briefly summarized, Rosenthal and Jacobson found that randomly-selected students, who teachers were led to define or label as "late-bloomers," did in fact "bloom." The authors inferred from these results that teachers, on the basis of the labels and subsequent expectations they held for the "bloomers," acted in such a way as to bring about increased IQ gains in the designated pupils. Hence, they postulated the existence of the prophecy-phenomenon within the school. It is important to emphasize that Rosenthal and Jacobson found the self-fulfilling prophecy to operate in a positive direction. However, what produced consternation in the field of education and served as a potent indictment of school labeling was the realization that the prophecy-effect could work in an opposite or negative way. The implication evoked was clear: there are many students in our schools who, though potentially bright or normal, are being made "dumb" (intellectual deviants) because they are defined and

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treated as such.[1]

While fueling the fires of those opposed to school labeling, Rosenthal
and Jacobson's study has become, in academic circles, something of a Kuhnian
(1962) "paradigm," in that it set forth a central theme which has functioned
to define and organize the work of a good many social scientists. The vast
majority of the efforts within this paradigm have been empirical in nature
(many of these experimental) and aimed at assessing the validity of Rosenthal
and Jacobson's findings (for a summary, see Baker and Crist, 1971; Brophy
and Good, 1975). In contrast, there has been a relative dearth of theoretical
or conceptually-oriented analyses focusing on the phenomenon of school labeling
and the mechanisms involved in the production of the self-fulfilling prophecy.[2]
The purpose of the present essay is to counteract this anti-theoretical trend.
The thrust of the essay will be to utilize the literature of the "labeling
theory of deviance" in an attempt to highlight the dynamics of the labeling
process within schools.

It is perhaps appropriate to briefly summarize the essentials of this
labeling perspective at this point. The central tenet of labeling theory is
that deviance is an ascribed or conferred state. Actors become "deviant" when
those around them label, define, or categorize the actors as such. This view
is in marked contrast to that held by traditional sociological perspectives,
which conceive of deviance as behavior which violates the norms of a group.
While labeling theory does not deny the reality of "behavior which violates
norms" (it is referred to by labeling authors as "rule-breaking"), the perspec-
tive prefers to reserve the term "deviance" for behavior and actors that are
actually considered to be deviant in the context of everday life. For, as
labeling theorists are quick to point out, breaking a rule does not differentiate

between those who are thought to be deviant and treated as such and those who are not: there are actors who violate norms but escape labeling, and there are those who do not violate norms but are thought to be deviant nonetheless.

While this point has been made by a number of labeling theorists (cf. Kitsuse and Cicourel, 1972), not to mention a number of authors outside the labeling perspective, Becker (1963:20) was most responsible for forcefully bringing this insight to the fore in a typology he developed in his work Outsiders. Cross-cutting the dimensions of obedient/rule-breaking behavior (and actors) with perceived/not perceived (labeled) as deviant, Becker arrived at four basic types: (1) pure deviant: behavior (or an actor) that breaks a rule and is labeled as deviant; (2) conforming: behavior that does not break a rule and is not labeled as deviant; (3) falsely-accused: behavior that does not break a rule but is labeled as having done so; and (4) secret deviant: behavior that breaks a rule but is not labeled as deviant. It is notable that Becker has been criticized for these concepts, particularly that of the "secret deviant" (Gibbs, 1966). Specifically, if Becker holds (as do all labeling theorists) that behavior and actors are deviant only if labeled or publically perceived as such, then how can there be "secretly" deviant behavior or actors? To be consistent, Becker should have perhaps classified this fourth type as secretly rule-breaking behavior and actors. While it is good practice to keep one's concepts straight, it is, however, poor policy to allow arguments over terms to obscure central insights -- in this case, Becker's important observation that there is not a one-to-one relationship between rule-breaking and being considered a deviant.

The major importance of the labeling theory conception of deviance is that it has led authors within the perspective to focus on three subsidiary concerns. First, given the labeling stance that deviance occurs only when a deviant label is applied, it is only natural that labeling theorists have

delved into the issue of the origin of deviant labels or categories (e.g.,
mental illness, juvenile delinquency) and into the origin of "labelers,"
those who produce "deviance" by ascribing deviant labels. Second, the idea
that there is not a one-to-one relationship between rule-breaking and being
labeled a deviant has forced interest in the problematic of the conditions
that influence who gets labeled. Often examined is the use of ascriptive
characteristics as criteria for labeling. And third, the notion that labeling
changes the meaning of an act or actor by constituting its nature as deviant
has led to the examination of the consequences of labeling and the reactions
it calls forth. The main proposition offered, one that is hotly debated and
parallels the self-fulfilling prophecy argument within the educational
literature, is that societal reaction has the unanticipated consequence of
prompting actors to engage in rule-breaking careers.

One final matter warrants brief attention. In this essay, we will not
employ a strict labeling theory definition of "deviance." Instead, consistent
with the traditional usage of the concept in sociological writings, we will
utilize the term deviance as the equivalent of and interchangeably with the
term rule-breaking. On those occasions in which we have employed deviance to
mean "labeled as deviant," we have made every effort to make the intended
usage quite clear.

THE EMERGENCE OF SCHOOL LABELING

It is undoubtedly a truism to say that no one will be deemed to be deviant
unless labels exist and there are people to apply these labels. But this is an
important truism. All too often the origin of deviant labels or categories and
the behavior of the labelers within a given system is taken for granted. Yet,
it must be remembered that the kind of labels and labelers in existence is
never given and, moreover, will significantly affect the nature of societal

reaction because they are key elements of the process in which actors are socially recognized as being deviant (Becker, 1963; Bustamante, 1972; Connor, 1970; Platt, 1969; Szasz, 1970).

This section is devoted to a brief review of the rise of school labels and labelers and, thus, of school labeling. The very nature of this endeavor should serve to re-emphasize the point underscored above: namely, that categories of deviance and those who place actors into these categories (in this case within the school) are problematic in the sense that they usually have not existed forever nor need they continue to exist -- a message, we might add, that many critics of school labeling have been trying to get across.

By 1850, the ever-burgeoning urban centers of this nation were faced with pressing social issues. On the one hand, the great numbers pushed and pulled to the cities by industrialization and immigration were becoming increasingly vocal in their demand for economic and social equity (Cremin, 1951:33). On the other hand, it was the belief of the entrenched middle and upper classes that the fabric of society was disintegrating and that immediate measures had to be taken to re-establish its stability (Katz, 1971:30).

Emerging from the midst of this turmoil was a group -- Horace Mann, Henry Barnard, and James Carter its most prominent members -- "who saw in education the means of alleviating the whole condition of society and thereby bringing about human progress" (Cremin, 1951:49). Not only would education be "the great equalizer" as Mann had claimed (Silberman, 1970:53), but it would also eradicate the moral decadence wrought by urbanization. The message that education was the panacea of societal ills fell on fertile ground. Americans responded by instituting compulsory attendance laws (the first in 1852 in Massachusetts) and by making the "common school" a reality (Cremin, 1951:81).

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However, most public schools were quite ill-prepared to handle either the sheer number or diversity of its new populace. Thus, the school was unable to filfill its promise to be the "messiah" of urban society in particular and American society in general. As a result, the school was subjected to mounting castigation during the last quarter of the nineteenth and first quarter of the twentieth centuries. The increasing belief in the omnipotence of science, in no small part a by-product of Darwinism (Butts and Cremin, 1975:323), as well as the positive value placed on the rationalism inherent in the then prestigious business-industrial ideology (Callahan, 1962:2), generally determined the focus of this criticism. There was a call for the school to utilize "the principles of scientific management" so as to achieve greater efficiency in its work (Callahan, 1962:42-64).

As Callahan (1962:65-94) has indicated, education responded to these demands by feverishly attempting to rationalize the operation of the school, a move which was consonant with the bureaucratic mode of organization the American school had been moving toward, for a number of reasons, since the middle of the nineteenth century (Katz, 1971). This response was not peculiar to large urban school systems but was evident in such places as Middletown in the early 1920's. As the Lynds (1937:205) have pointed out, "Education [in Middletown] was becoming scientific with a vengeance." One sector of the efficiency movement was a campaign for what was known as "differentiation" (Butts and Cremin, 1953:439). Essentially, this was an effort to label or classify students by intellectual, physical, and emotional characteristics in order to better match given types of education with the needs of the students. Attempts at "differentiation" occurred as early as the 1890's, and by 1919 Cubberly (1919:537) was able to proudly contend:

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The effect of introducing these special classes has been to reduce waste, speed up the rate of production, and increase the value of the output of our schools. The condition of our schools before about 1900 ... was that of a manufacturing establishment running at a low grade of efficiency. The waste of material was great and the output small and costly.

It should be noted that this "differentiation" campaign was the first attempt of the school to apply widespread formal deviant labels, that is, to officially label or categorize students who failed to measure up to a behavioral or intellectual standard. Of course, it is undoubtedly true that the attachment of informal stigmatic labels (e.g., "dumb") by teachers occurred previous to and concurrently with this movement.

The classification or labeling of students as deviants has not subsided since the time of Cubberly. Rather, two occurrences have led to its blossoming. First has been the rise in the number of student deviant labels or categories. A quick glance at today's schools reveals the presence of a myriad of deviant labels, such as "educable mentally retarded," "emotionally disturbed," "hyperactive," "handicapped," "slow learner," "truant," and "underachiever." This phenomenon has been largely a product of the increasing sophistication and use of standardized intelligence, achievement, and personality tests (Gross, 1970; Kitsuse and Cicourel, 1968), the infusion into the school of the classification systems of mental health (Kaplan, 1971) and special education (Kolstoe and Frey, 1965), and the environmentalist spirit of the 1960's which has created such labels as the "disadvantaged" and "culturally deprived" student. The second occurrence has been the increasing number of "labelers," that is, agents who are in a position to categorize students, who have come onto the school premises. Except for teachers and principals, there

were rarely any other potential labelers in the school before 1910 (Keller and Viteles, 1937). However, the public's acceptance of the need for vocational counselors around 1910 (Mathewson, 1957; Share et. al., 1971), the persistent belief in testing (Kitsuse and Cicourel, 1968), the newly established faith in the mental health movement (Cicourel and Kitsuse, 1963; cf. Kittrie, 1971), and federal financial support for the training and employment of school counselors and psychologists (Magary, 1967; McDanienls, 1967) have all combined to fill the roster of the school labeling team.

As theorists within the labeling approach to deviance have noted, when an array of deviant labels or categories and of agents who have a stake in assigning these labels to people are present, the labeling of actors as deviant will be widespread (Bustamante, 1972; Connor, 1972; Platt, 1969; Szasz, 1970). It should be of little surprise, therefore, that labeling in schools is quite extensive. Indeed, as White (1966:8) has asserted, the school has become "the great classifying agent" in our society (cf. Mercer, 1973).

BEING LABELED

The role of the school as a "great classifyer" is looked upon quite favorably by many. There is a certain rationality and humanitarianism to it. After all, is not labeling, or, as it may be known, diagnosing, integral to any effort aimed at effectively distinguishing deviant actors and, in turn, helping these actors to eliminate or handle their deviant condition?

The perverse side of labeling begins to emerge, however, when one considers the inaccuracies in the labeling process, that is, that actors can be "falsely-accused" of having failed to conform to a normative standard. The tragedy of inaccurate labeling is that in the context of everday life false definitions seem to have a way of coming true. This, of course, is the heart of the "self-fulfilling prophecy." For, as developed by Merton (1968:477), "the self-fulfilling

prophecy is, in the beginning a _false_ definition of the situation evoking a new behavior which makes the original conception come _true_" [[mphasis Merton].

Within the realm of education, the fear is that the faulty labeling or definition of a student as deviant, whether it be in reference to the student's intellectual capacity or behavior in class, will set in motion processes that make the student become what he/she has been labeled.

An important problematic, then, is how mislabeling comes about in the school. I.Q. and achievement tests, devices whose "primary function is to classify, sort and arrange people"(Simon, 1971:65), have been widely berated for falsely assessing the abilities of students. In particular, they are most heavily criticized in relation to their utility in evaluating minority youth, the objection being that they are "culture bound" and, thus, inherently suspect (cf. Clark, 1963; Pepin, 1971; Pettigrew, 1966; Simon, 1971; Yourman, 1970). Less obvious, the situational aspects of testing must also be considered as potential sources of distortion. For example, the physical and emotional state of a student or the performance expectations of the tester (Rosenthal and Lawson, 1964) could influence a student's performance independent of the student's capacity. Also of interest is how test scores are actually used by teachers to evaluate (label) students. As recent research by Leiter (1976) has indicated, test scores are often not taken at face-value by teachers. Rather, they are interpreted, that is, become meaningful, largely by how they mesh with the "background knowledge" the teacher has already accumulated regarding the students (e.g., the student's past performance, behavior in class, race). While setting a raw test score within a broader context may lead to more accurate assessment of a student's abilities (e.g., a low score my approriately be viewed as the outcome of a "bad day"), it should be recognized that it may also be a source of misconception (e.g., a high score may be inappropriately attributed to

"luck").

Another set of standardized measures which have been focused on as sources
of mislabeling are personality tests. Increasingly used by school psychologists
and counselors to label students, personality tests have been judged unreliable
by Gross (1970:378), who has asserted that they are the "newest pseudoscientific
form of prejudice,creating bias through unrealistic scores indicating that
someone is 'neurotic' or 'maladjusted' or 'introverted.'" Of course, the
general reliability and validity of psychological categories or labels per se
have long been questioned. In regard to their use within schools, Szasz (1970:
35) has commented on how the very nature of mental health labels severely inhibits
the possibility of accurate labeling:

> Clearly there is no childhood behavior that a [school] psychiatrist could
> not place in one of these categories. To classify as pathological aca-
> demic performance that is "under-achievement," "over-achievement," or
> "erratic performance" would be humorous were it not so tragic. When
> we are told that if a psychiatric patient is early for his appointment
> he is anxious, if late he is hostile, and if on time, compulsive -- we
> laugh, because it is suppose to be a joke. But here we are told the
> same thing in all seriousness.

Far less formalized criteria for labeling than testing, which may be
equally if not more important, are ascriptive characteristics (e.g., a student's
age, race, sex). The total configuration of such ascriptive traits constitute
a central part of a student's "appearance," and serve to "announce" a student's
"social identity" (Stone, 1970). The symbolic significance of these charac-
teristics, that is, how they are interpreted, is largely determined by the way
in which they mesh with the cultural baggage that a teacher or school labeler
brings into an encounter with a student (cf. Becker, 1952; Rist, 1970). To the

extent that ascriptive characteristics elicit false impressions or expecta-
tions, they will function as a source of mislabeling.

It is perhaps worth noting that a wide variety of research studies has
either explicitly or implicitly suggested that educators utilize appearance-
based as opposed to achievement-based criteria when labeling or evaluating
students. Traits which appear to be employed by educators as yardsticks for
labeling students as deviant include physical attractiveness (Clifford and
Walster, 1973; cf. Berscheid and Walster, 1972), sex (Meyer and Thompson, 1956),
language (Davis and Dollard, 1940; Rist, 1970), race (Davis and Dollard, 1940),
dress (Rist, 1970). and any combination of symbols which would be indicative
of low socio-economic status (Cicourel and Kitsuse, 1963; Davis and Dollard,
1940; Becker, 1952; Warner et. al., 1944; Rist, 1970).

Thus far, we have discussed "falseness" in labeling in the sense that
the label applied is patently incorrenct. While the importance of the
occurrence of this "falsely-accused" phenomenon in schools should not be
understressed, neither should it be allowed to dominate our perspective on
labeling -- for two reasons. First, there is a risk that the stance that
mislabeling transpires in the school can degenerate into the extreme position
that all labeling is unrelated to whether or not a student violates a normative
standard. The possibility that this view will be fostered becomes more real
when we consider that nearly all research on the self-fulfilling prophecy in
schools either experimentally induces erroneous teacher definitions of students
or intentionally focuses on situations where mislabeling will occur. There are
few attempts that assess the extent to which the labels applied are "correct."
It is perhaps instructive that there has been a tendency among some labeling
theorists to overplay the seemingly spurious side of social control or treatment.

While a bit harsh in his assessment, there is an element of truth in Lemert's
(1972:17) assertion that:

> The most serious charge is that labeling theory depicts social
> control as arbitrary and more or less washes out any causative
> significance substantive actions may have for persons who become
> deviants....Pushed to the extreme the theory makes deviance a
> kind of artifact or spurious imputation of social control.

Second, the exclusive emphasis of mislabeling could serve to obscure a
more fundamental manner in which labeling is "false." As suggested, there are
many times in which the labels applied to a student are correct in the sense that
an actor has transgressed a norm. Thus, a student who plays hooky, when caught,
is deemed a "truant." The falseness does not lie, then, in a miscalculation
of the student's actions. Rather, it emerges because statements made about
an actor's behavior have a way of being transformed into statements about an
actor's identity, being, or essence. The student who plays hooky runs the
risk of being objectified as a truant. The difficulty about inferring an
ontological state of an actor from the actor's behavior has been argued by
Sagarin (1976:25; cf. Katz, 1972):

> The little verb 'to be' has caused a great deal of pain. I want to
> alleviate some of that pain by clearing up a terrible confusion....
> We say of a person who drinks too much that he 'is' an alcoholic,
> and we say of people who think bizarre thoughts that they 'are'
> schizophrenic. This person is a drug addict and that person is a
> homosexual. Others are sadomasochists, pedophiliacs, juvenile
> delinquents. The English language is constructed in such a way
> that we speak of people being certain things when all we know is

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that they do certain things. The result is an imputed identity,

or rather a special kind of mistaken identity. [Emphasis Sagarin]

There is one final and important issue that deserves attention. In

large part reflecting the state of the literature on the self-fulfilling

prophecy in education, our discussion of school labeling has implicitly

assumed that students play little part in the label they receive. The image

conjured up is one in which school personnel, armed with standardized tests

and personal views, attach labels more or less accurately to the awaiting

student populace. The underlying theme present is that students lack the

capacity to affect whether or not they are labeled, and that, when labels

are ."false," students become ready victims of the labeling process.

There is much truth to this image. There are many instances in which

students are labeled independent of any will they might have. It has long

been noted that students occupy a subservient status in the school (Waller,

1932), and the wisdom of this insight should not be lightly regarded. As

Berger and Luckman (1966) have stated, "He who wields the bigger stick has

the better chance of imposing his definitions of reality." And, students

have few sticks with which to fight. Nevertheless, any analysis which views

labeling as a totally one-sided process in which labels flow from the powerful

to the awaiting prey runs the risk of distortion. This stance inevitably

involves a passive or "empty-organism" conception of "man." As a number of

critics of labeling theory have stressed, such a view just does not resonate

with reality. They have noted that not all labels are imposed in a coercive

fashion. Instead, actors are often integrally involved in the labeling process.

They frequently seek out (Turner, 1972; Merton, 1973a; Williams and Weinberg,

1970), negotiate (Scheff, 1968), or, at the very least, resist (Broadhead,

1974; Davis, 1964; Rogers and Buffalo, 1974) being designated a deviant.

It is significant that one of the least thought about areas in the self-fulfilling prophecy literature is the active role of the student in the labeling process. While it is true that student characteristics are examined, these are usually ascriptive characteristics, the more passive or given side of the student. Moreover, the focus is nearly always on how these characteristics affect how the teacher interacts with the students and not, simultaneously, how the student interacts with the teacher. Researchers must begin to be more conscious of the fact that many labels in school are the outcome of interaction, and that the interaction often involves the active and mutually influencing participation of both the student and school personnel. It is perhaps worth stressing here that this notion receives support from the writings of such symbolic interactionists as Mead (1934), Cooley (1964), Blumer (1969), Goffman (1959, 1963), and Stone (1970), who have emphasized that both public or social and internalized identities (selves or "me's") emerge through the interaction of active, reflective, interpretive individuals.

BECOMING DEVIANT

Given that deviant labels and labelers exist in the school, that school labeling is widespread, and that there is a certain falseness involved in school labeling, two questions remain: First, does school labeling have the pejorative effects attributed to it? And second, if so, through what processes are these effects realized? The aims of this section are rather modest. No definitive answers to these questions will be offered. Instead, our desire is to highlight several of the important probelmatics that surround the assessment of the effects of school labeling.

As stated earlier, the central proposition offered by critics of school labeling is that labeling students as deviant will eventuate in their becoming

deviant (rule-breaking). As also stated earlier, it is held that the process through which this transformation occurs is the self-fulfilling prophecy: a false definition comes true. What has been largely ignored, however, is a related process which is central to labeling theory. Here, the initial label or definition is viewed as being only partially false. The label is correct in the sense that the actor who is labeled has actually violated a norm; social control is not spuriously exercised. Yet, there is a certain falsity elicited by the label. For when it is applied, it functions to make an ontological statement about the actor. It conveys the message that the actor _is_ a deviant, one who can be expected to persist in breaking norms. It is at this juncture that the falseness emerges full-blown (and thus, in a sense, a self-fulfilling prophecy is present). The labeling theorists argue that, in the absence of labeling, the actor's deviance would have been merely transitory. It is the labeling of the actor as a permanent deviant, of casting the actor with a deviant social identity, which eventuates this very state -- the stabilization of the actor into a career of constant norm-violation.

Nearly all of the literature assessing the effects of school labeling has been oriented toward testing the occurrence of the first process outlined above (where the initial definition is completely false). Moreover, most research has focused on situations where the incorrect, deviant labels conferred upon students are ultimately academic (e.g., "slow learner") as opposed to behavioral (e.g., "troublemaker") in nature. Within this restricted area, the findings generally do not permit any definitive conclusions: some studies support the operation of the self-fulfilling prophecy within schools, while others do not (cf. Baker and Crist, 1971; Brophy and Good, 1975). It is perhaps significant that the state of the research within labeling theory (oriented toward testing whether labeling stabilizes transitory norm-violation) is equally confusing.

What we gather from the existence of contrary findings is that any extremist statements concerning the occurrence of the effects of labeling would pro⁣ᴮᴬᴮ⁣ʟʸ be falsified. The path which seems best to follow, as several labeling theorists have argued (Thorsell and Klemke, 1972; Tittle, 1975), is to cease debating in either/or terms and begin instead to delineate the conditions under which labeling results in more, less, or the same amount of deviance.[3]

There are three general rubrics of conditions that would appear to be particularly likely to specify any effects of labeling. First are the characteristics of the students being labeled. For example, one might expect the impact of a teacher's labeling to be far more weighty on a child just entering school who is in the process of forming an "academic identity," than on a high school student who has already accumulated a number of labels over the years. Similarly, the effect of being officially labeled "a truant," for instance, may be radically different for a student who has played hooky numerous times than for a student who is experimenting with this activity for the first time. Second are the characteristics of the labelers. Of special import here may be whether a labeler is a "significant other" of the student and the amount of influence the labeler may wield. A third and final rubric is the characteristics of the label applied and the subsequent treatment or control it engenders. It should be made clear that, up to this point, we have talked primarily about the "effects of labeling." What is important, however, is not simply the impact of being labeled per se, but, instead, the impact of the entire "societal reaction," that is, of the labeling and all the sanctions (whether positive or negative) that are forthcoming. .In reference to the consequences of "reaction" in the school, then, we might expect differential consequences according to the severity, duration, extensiveness, consistency, and "nature" (e.g., is a student suspended from school or sent to a counselor) of

the reaction employed.

While the conditions influencing the impact of reaction are in dire need of specification, there is another sphere which is equally deserving of attention: the delineation of the basic processes through which labeling creates deviance in schools (given the necessary conditions are present). Since the earliest research on the self-fulfilling prophecy, there has been a distinct tendency by researchers to speak of the overriding process of the self-fulfilling prophecy, but not examine what transpires between the initial labeling of the student and the eventual outcome of this labeling. This has probably been due to the fact that the Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) study, which served as the prototype for much of the research that followed, employed a before/after experimental design, and to the fact that getting at "process" is an inherently difficult research task (cf. Cullen and Cullen, 1973). This is not to say that there are no empirical works examining how the self-fulfilling prophecy actually occurs (cf. Rist, 1970; Keddie, 1971; Brophy and Good, 1975). Indeed, there are a number of these studies, and they are beginning to appear ever more frequently. However, these works have been mostly low-level and "positivist" in nature, such as analyses of how being labeled affects the frequency and type of interaction a student has with a teacher and, in turn, the student's performance. Grounded in the context of the everday life of the classroom, these researches are valuable for their substantive findings. Yet, the difficulty which characterizes them is that they tend to reduce to descriptive accounts; rooted in the "context of everday life," they seem never to escape. What we believe are needed, then, are efforts which are more analytical or theoretical than these descriptive studies, but which, at the same time, are not cast on such a broad or unspecific level (as is usually done in reference to the self-fulfilling prophecy) that they leave what actually goes on

unexamined. In a sense, we are calling for "middle-range" analyses of the processes through which the effects of labeling are realized.[4]

The remainder of this section is devoted to setting forth several ways through which students may "become deviant" in school. Four ways or processes, all abstracted from literature on labeling theory, will be delineated. Before proceeding, it is well to mention that, while each of these four processes may be analytically distinct, they undoubtedly mesh in many and intricate fashions in everyday life, a problematic which will not be confronted here.

The first and most frequently cited process in the labeling theory literature is that of identity-transformation, or, as Berger and Luckman (1966; cf. Travisano, 1970) have termed it, "alternation." Labeling an actor as a deviant (e.g., "emotionally disturbed") is seen to objectify the actor as a deviant. In effect, it ladens the actor with a deviant social or public identity. Since people respond to one another on the basis of how they interpret one anothers' identity (i.e., who one another are), the actor's others respond to the actor as though he/she were a deviant. All of the actor's actions are viewed in light of this identity. Any announcements by the actor denying his/her deviant identity are left unvalidated. The result of this (socialization) process is that the actor may eventually internalize his/her public deviant identity. This is significant, because an actor's behavior is profoundly affected by how the actor interprets or responds to his/her identity. Conceiving of oneself as a deviant serves as an organizing principle for future activity; it exerts a pressure to act in a manner consistent with this self-image. The actor is thus led to engage in increased deviance.

Second, labeling theorists have contended that labeling and treating an actor as a deviant can stabilize an actor in a deviant career by altering the costs and benefits of conformity. Once labeled a deviant, an actor is the focus

of much discrimination (e.g., in jobs) and social castigation. Chances to earn financial or psychological rewards in the legitimate sphere are curtailed. On a strictly utilitarian level, it no longer "pays" to try to make it in a world where one receives the short-end of the stick. A deviant way of life thus becomes an attractive package. This situation can readily be seen to occur within the school. As Keddie (1971) has noted, when lower-track pupils in Britain begin to take on traits of their upper-track counterparts, they are likely to be discouraged from doing so by their teachers. The question that must come to the students' minds is, why bother to try to succeed?

A third way is the phenomenon of "constraint." Here, labeling theorists argue that there are situations in which societal reaction will trap an actor in a deviant role independent of the actor's volition. This is well exemplified by the research of Rist (1970), which has shown that elementary school students, labeled as intellectual deviants on the basis of lower-class appearance by a classroom teacher, were exposed to such a limited curriculum by the teacher that they necessarily became what they had been labeled. Formalized tracking or ability grouping may also effectively do this. For as Jencks et. al. (1972) have observed, "a student's...curriculum is the most important determinant of what the school will try to teach him[her]."

Last, labeling theory authors have asserted that reaction often places actors in contexts (subcultures, institutions) where the actors learn values and skills conducive to nonconformist behavior. Within the school, one might expect that segregating "deviant" students either within a single class or into special classes may serve as just such a context where students learn to be deviant (e.g., are exposed to "definitions favorable to violation" of either intellectual or behavioral standards; cf. Sutherland, 1973) and, thus, are launched on deviant careers within the school.

CONCLUSIONS

In closing, we would like to dwell on several further issues. This essay has dealt with the school largely as though it were a self-contained system. We have essentially left uninvestigated how the wider society may impinge upon school labeling. It is perhaps significant that not only have we been guilty of this omission, but the vast majority of researchers commenting on the self-fulfilling prophecy have as well. Yet, from our perspective, there are a number of areas in society/school relations that could be fruitfully explored. For instance, of crucial substantive import is how the wider social context affects the types of labels and labelers that emerge in the school, helps to provide the "cultural baggage" teachers utilize as criteria for labeling, influences the "baggage" students rely on to interpret the meanings of teachers' reactions and negotiate public and internal identities, and counteracts or worsens the pejorative consequences of school reaction (e.g., parents who either resist or reinforce the definition of their child as "dumb").

Equally ignored and of potential significance is how labeling within the school may influence the wider society. One area that may be affected is the stratification system. It seems clear that the labels assigned to students have the potential to function to a greater or lesser extent as central determinants of the educational experiences students receive and, thus, to a greater or lesser extent as determinants of the future lives they will lead. Moreover, it would appear that the processing of students all too often mirrors the hierarchy of society, that is, the disadvantaged are more likely to accumulate devalued labels and the advantaged more likely to accumulate valued labels. One possible result of all this, then, may very well be that labeling in schools serves as a mechanism which helps to perpetuate the existing

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stratification system in our society. Cast in a slightly different light, it is possible that school labeling is an instance of what Merton (1973b:445) has referred to as the "Mathew Effect": the phenomenon of the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. Or, as Saint Mathew quite aptly phrased it: "For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath" (Quoted in Merton, 1973b:445).[5]

And lastly, we would like to end by asking the reader to ponder the folk saying that "sticks and stones can break my bones, but names will never hurt me." For it seems evident to us that whoever first chanted this phrase must never have been labeled and felt the effects of being called a deviant.

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FOOTNOTES

[1]It should be stressed that the importance of the Rosenthal and Jacobson study was not that it clearly demonstrated the occurrence of the self-fulfilling prophecy in schools -- the study was severely critisized on methodological grounds and the many attempts to replicate its findings have presented equivocal results. Rather, the study's primary significance was, as we suggest below that it raised a controversy that gained much attention from both academics and those in the general populace.

[2]For a recent exception to this trend, see Wilkins (1976).

[3]Critics of labeling theory have continually contended that labeling is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for the occurrence of deviance: many actors can become stabilized in deviant careers without ever having been labeled, and (as we have noted) labeling does not always cause actors to violate norms (Broadhead, 1974; Cohen, 1966:30; Davis, 1972; Gove, 1975; Mankoff, 1971; Tittle, 1975; Ward, 1971). In turn, the claim is made that labeling theory is not a complete theory of deviance. While these claims are essentially valid, they should not be viewed as deprecating the value of the perspective. First, although labeling theory cannot account for all rule-breaking, neither can any competing deviance approach. And second, (as suggested above) the really important question is not whether it is a complete theory, but rather whether the labeling approach provides insights into how a greater or lesser amount of rule-breaking (in this case, in schools) is produced.

[4]For an analysis that begins to make inroads in this direction (as it pertains to the labeling of the "mentally retarded), see Mercer (1973:96-123).

[5]It should be noted that a recent study by Williams (1976) has argued against this line of thought.