

Does labelling have an impact on students?

Introduction

Aim

- Do labelled students both genders show difference in behaviour and attitude towards school?
- Do students of different age groups, who think that they are labelled, develop lower self esteem as a result of a given label?
- Is the label given to a student seen as a motivation not to end up as predicted?

Reasons for choice of research topic:

School is an institution in which we the students learn norms and values of our society through teachers and the hidden curriculum. I believe that at school you have different personalities which sometimes seem changed as teachers give students labels, by this I mean that I have friends whose attitude has changed because they feel that they are labelled by teachers. Teachers are just as normal as any other people in society and therefore inevitably label students due to the information they have about them as well as the way students behave in class. I want to find out how the given label changes the students. As there is a large number of different students there would be a range of different ways a student's attitude and personality changes; these changes can cause negative and positive outcomes, as I have seen it many times in my school time. I therefore want to investigate what changes happen in a student's attitude towards that teacher he or she was labelled by, the subject that teacher teaches and the way that student thinks about him or herself.

In addition to this do I also like to find out what students in general think about labelling and what effect it has on life at school. This is a very significant issue in education as a teacher's judgement should not affect a student's academic performance negatively.

What other sociologists have said about my research topic

Labelling is a very important part of life and appears in all social areas. For example: in education where teachers label student due to their background, their behaviour in class, their academic performance and their attitude. The views of the teachers have an effect on the student's personality and achievement.

Jonathan Blundell, Active Sociology for GCSE

Research has shown that children who are predicted to be a failure or a success by a teacher's judgement are more likely to be what was predicted, as these predictions have an effect on an individual's view of him or herself and his or her self esteem.

An introduction to Sociology, Second Edition, Ken Browne

Students, who are labelled by teachers, try to bring their self image in line with the teacher's judgment of them. They might think what the point in trying to improve is when the teacher has already said that they are hopeless in that subject. Even if these students try to resist this label, they would find it hard to

achieve as some teachers might deem it a waste of resources spending time trying to improve in that subject.

Pauline Wilson and Allan Kidd, Sociology for GCSE

In school students can be given different labels from different teachers, however, all these labels have an impact on students. They have the choice either to reject the label or they can become a self fulfilling prophecy

Active Sociology

Negative labelling of students can lead to a self fulfilling prophecy of failure. They say that teachers tend to evaluate pupils in terms of an ideal student by looking at appearance, personality, speech and social class.

Becker (1971) & Keddie (1971)

Negative labelling can mean students get put into lower streams or bands. He had found out that pupils in the top bands were from higher social classes. Teacher had higher expectations of them and they were taught in different ways. Keddie found out that teachers allowed pupils in the top streams access to higher levels of knowledge. Working class students did not get this knowledge.

Ball (1981)

Key terms/Concepts

- Labelling
Thinking of someone or something in terms of a label, e.g. when a teacher labels a student
- Self-fulfilling prophecy
When assumptions lead to that situation e.g. when students told by teacher they will fail, then do fail because they do not think it worth trying.
- Halo effect
Students are typecast on the basis of early impressions based upon their appearance, clothing, manners, speech and school records of their homes.

Who will I use in my research?

I will use an equal amount of males and females, aged between 11 and 19 years. These all would be students from Kidbrooke School, who all would be from either White, Black and Asian ethnicity. I choose these because I want a fair result, as different ethnicities are seen differently by teachers, also do they have different upbringing which results in different personalities.

What methods will I use and why?

- I will make a closed questionnaire. This is because it would allow me to create graphs and charts to show my results.

- I will make use of secondary sources such as research carried out by other sociologists, because I can analyse it and check if it is still relevant.

Methods

For my investigation I will be using the following methods:

- 1. Questionnaire**
- 2. Analysis of secondary sources**
- 3. Interviews**

1. Questionnaire

This is when sociologists collect information by creating a list of questions that should be answered by a selected group of people. The answered questions can then be analysed and presented in a chart, graph or diagram. I will use a closed questionnaire, as this type of questionnaire allows me to give options of which the selected people have to choose from.

I have chosen this method to use for my research because it would allow me to get information that I am able to present in a graph, chart or diagram. Another reason for choice is that the method is not very difficult for the people I chose and myself, as the selected group of people can answer the questions, which means that they only have to tick boxes and I then only have to calculate the results to make my final analysis. In addition to this, this method is very quick because the chosen people would not use more than five minutes to answer the questionnaire.

There are few potential problems that can occur with this method, such as the fact that not every person selected for my research is able to identify his or herself with some questions and the answer possibilities, therefore the person would not answer the question. Some of the questions might seem too personal for a few of the people chosen.

I will try to overcome the above mentioned problem by making the questions look responsible and sensible, so that the questions do not involve inserting personal experience. In addition to this I would only require to state sex, gender, ethnicity and age. This would mean that the questionnaire is anonymous and therefore can be completed without worrying about personal information to be exposed. On the top of the questionnaire I will state the purpose of my research and that the received data is processed and kept confidentially.

2. Analysis of secondary sources

This is when sociologists collect information using secondary sources, which means that the information is taken from other sociologists' research and the results of the research. Such sources are textbooks, newspapers, internet and many more.

I have chosen this method to use for my research because it offers a range of information on my chosen topic. In addition, it is an uncomplicated way of gaining information as I only have to look for it in these above mentioned sources. I am going to use the internet and sociology books so that I can achieve the most possible information. I

select these particular sources as I have access to them all the time and I know how to make efficient use of them.

The potential problems with using this method are that I might not find exactly what is required in my research. Besides another significant possible problem is that the research, from which I take information, is not contemporary, meaning it could have been made e.g. some 30 years ago; since then society has widely changed.

I will try to overcome this problem by searching in actual and updated material so that any coursework is accurate. And even if I make use of non-recent research I would mention when it was made in my work.

Ethical Considerations

When I am doing my research I will have to consider some ethical key points, which have great impact on the quality of results I will get.

A major consideration is the fact that some of the information I get while carrying out my research is very personal info. Therefore if the participants want this information to be anonymous and confidential, I as the researcher have to respect his or her will. This is important because of the fact that every participant has the right to choose the way he or she wants the given information published, and also because if I did publish information, which is meant to be confidential, the participants would not be part of any further research as I broke their will.

Another point to consider is to publish my results and findings accurately and honestly, this is for the reason that with my research I want to find out something, I want to prove something and find out the truth, therefore it is very important for me to be accurate and honest. This can be achieved if I firstly collect information accurately; I can do this through putting down as many notes as possible when I am making an interview, calculate the numbers in my questionnaire at least two to three times so that I can be sure of my results. Honesty is also of large significance as I expect honesty from my participants, which means that I will also have to be honest.

A further consideration is the environment in which I carry out my research; by this I mean that I have to choose a sensible place in which I can interview my participants. They have to feel comfortable and safe, because these are factors that can determine the quality of information I can get from them. Also does the health of the participants and mine as well not be in danger, because it has to be considered that some opinions can only be said in an environment where people are who share the same. I choose the library as it is a quiet place, where I can assure confidentiality to my respondents, because the interview would be held in a nice corner where they would feel safe, understood and private.

Pilot Questionnaire

I am carrying out research on what impact a label can have on students. This questionnaire is totally anonymous and confidential. Please answer the questions honestly.

Question 1

How old are you? Please circle.

11	14	17
12	15	18
13	16	19

Question 2

What is your ethnicity? Please circle.

Black African/Caribbean Asian White Dual Heritage
 Other (please state)

Question 3

What is your gender? Please tick appropriately.

Male Female

Question 4

Do you feel labelled by one or more teachers? Please tick appropriately.

Yes No

Question 5

What type of label do you think you are given? Please tick appropriately.

Positive Negative

Question 6

Why do think that you are given this label? Please tick two of the following options.

- The teacher does / doesn't like me.
- I do / don't like the teacher/s.
- I do/ don't have any interest in one /more subjects.
- I do / don't have problems with other students in the class.
- I do / don't want to work in lessons.

Question 7

How do you feel when you think you are labelled? Please circle one or more.

Normal Angry Depressed Insecure Happy
 Cool Appreciated Special Fearful

Other:.....

Question 8

Do you think your academic performance (how well you do at school) has changed due to the label given? Please tick appropriately.

Yes

No

If Yes: **Question 9**

If No: Go on to **Question 10**.

Question 9

How do you think your performance has changed? Please tick appropriately.

Improved

Decreased

Same

Question 10

If you think you are labelled, do you agree yourself with the given label?

Yes

No

Question 11

If you think you are labelled, do you show the teacher through behaviour, homework and attitude towards that subject that you are not the way he or she thinks you are. Please tick appropriately.

Yes

No

Question 12

Please describe why you behave this way.

.....
.....
.....

Question 13

Do you think that a label has an impact on a student's life? Please tick appropriately.

Yes

No

If Yes:

Why do you think so?

.....
.....

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire.
Sabine.

Changes to Pilot Questionnaire

This is my pilot questionnaire; I tested it on five students in my class. Doing this allows me to find out if my method of research is working, meaning if I am able to use the results in my research, and also in what ways I am able to improve this method in order to a) gain more appropriate data and b) make it as easy as possible for respondents to answer.

I have decided to make following changes:

- At **Question 4**:

I made a link to **Question 13**, this is because not every student feels labelled, and therefore would the following questions not relate to him/her. The student would waste his/her time reading through the subsequent questions and possibly not complete the questionnaire. Henceforth I decided to make a link to **Question 13** as this question doesn't require the respondent to be labelled.

- At **Question 6**:

In this question I added other options as I only provided options corresponding to a negative label. To make what information I require from my respondents I included instructions which say what I exactly need.

In my questionnaire I made sure that the questions I asked are not biased, open and closed (as this will help me with creating charts in my analysis), easily understandable and directed to my aims.

Final Questionnaire

I am carrying out research on what impact a label can have on students. This questionnaire is totally anonymous and confidential. Please answer the questions honestly.

Question 1

How old are you? Please circle.

11	14	17
12	15	18
13	16	19

Question 2

What is your ethnicity? Please circle.

Black African/Caribbean	Asian	White	Dual Heritage
Other (please state)			

Question 3

What is your gender? Please tick appropriately.

Male

Female

Question 4

Do you feel labelled by one or more teachers? Please tick appropriately.

Yes No

If No, then please go on to Question 13.

Change made.

Question 5

What type of label do you think you are given? Please tick appropriately.

Positive Negative

Question 6

Why do think that you are given this label? Please tick two of the following options and either circle **do or don't**.

Change made.

- The teacher does / doesn't like me.
- I do / don't like the teacher/s.
- I do/ don't have any interest in one /more subjects.
- I do / don't have problems with other students in the class.
- I do / don't want to work in lessons.

Question 7

How do you feel when you think you are labelled? Please circle one or more.

Normal

Angry

Depressed

Insecure

Happy

Cool

Appreciated

Special

Fearful

Other:.....

Question 8

Do you think your academic performance (how well you do at school) has changed due to the label given? Please tick appropriately.

Yes No

If Yes: Question 9

If No: Go on to Question 10.

Question 9

How do you think your performance has changed? Please tick appropriately.

Improved Decreased Same

Question 10

If you think you are labelled, do you agree yourself with the given label?

Yes No

Question 11

If you think you are labelled, do you show the teacher through behaviour, homework and attitude towards that subject that you are not the way he or she thinks you are. Please tick appropriately.

Yes

No

Question 12

Please describe why you behave this way.

.....
.....
.....

Question 13

Do you think that a label has an impact on a student's life? Please tick appropriately.

Yes

No

If Yes:

Why do you think so?

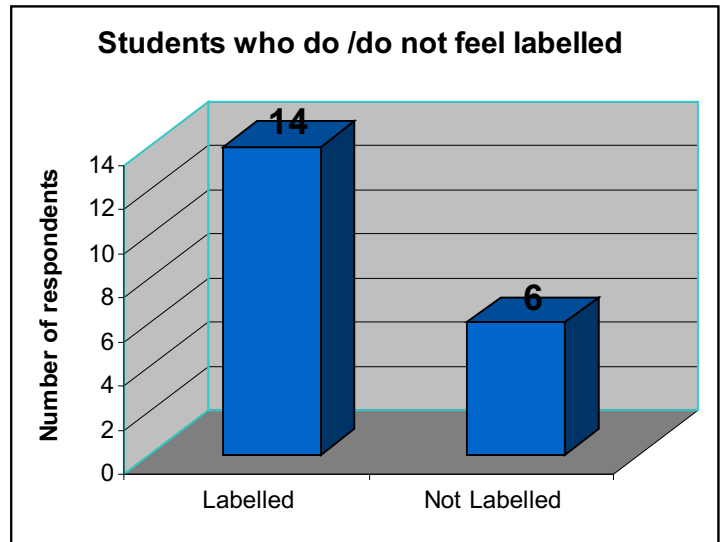
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**Thank you very much for completing this
Questionnaire. Sabine.**

Analysis of findings

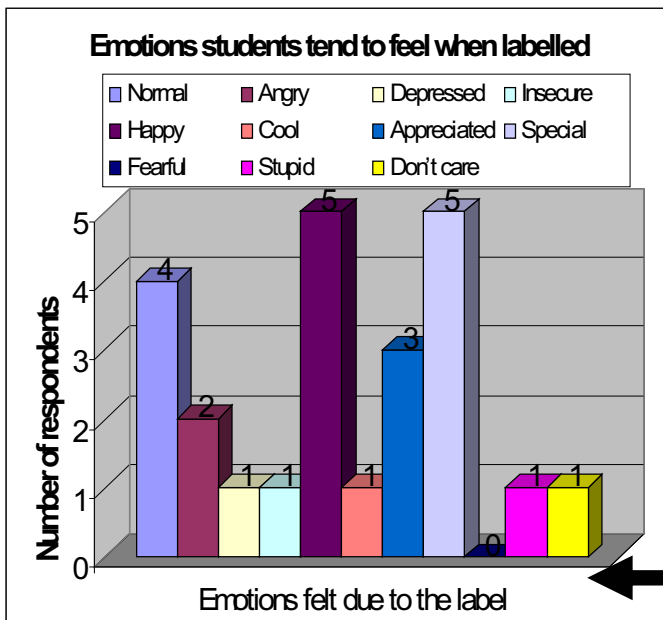
Aim: Is the label given to a student seen as a motivation not to end up as predicted?

The data that I have collected from using my questionnaire shows that 14 out of the 20 respondents see their given label as motivation to keep on performing well academically and to start improving their performance. This shows that a label given to a student has an impact on the way he or she thinks of his or her performance in school. Out of these 14 students who see their given label as motivation 5 are of White ethnicity, 5 of black and 4 of Asian ethnicity. These results show that in my research the ethnicity of a student does not have an impact on his or her view on the given label, because students from each questioned ethnicity see a label as motivation.



From my questionnaire and some conversations I had with some of my respondents I found out following views on labels:

- A positive label gives them more confidence in the particular subject and in school overall. This label is also seen as a motivation to continue to do well at school. The better they do the more confidence they gain.
- A negative label is firstly seen as a down point, but after the stage of acceptance this label is a good motivation to improve the performance at school, especially when the parents have been involved someone's school life.



However, a small number of respondents did not see a given label as a motivation, as they all see themselves as negatively labelled, they all believe that status in school is far more important than a label given and the academic performance. They did also say that they can't be bothered to do something when many of their teachers say that there is no point of them being in class.

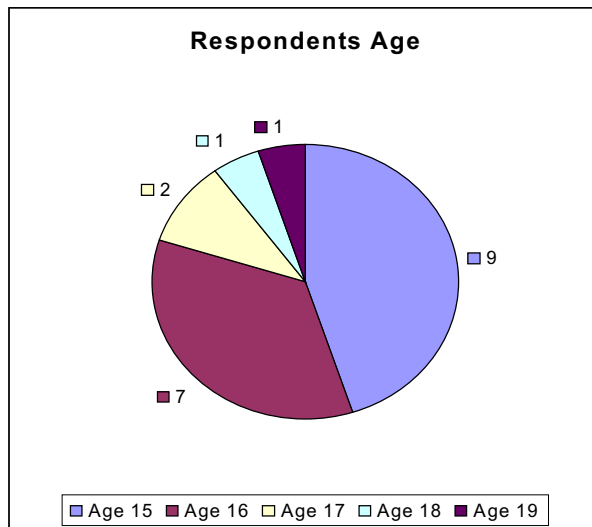
Following this I did furthermore analysed how students feel when they are labelled using my questionnaire, which gave optional emotions. These are my results.

The results of my data are similar to that of the secondary data. During my research I found that a given label is approached differently by students, as the majority of my respondents see the given label as motivation to improve and continue to do well at school. These respondents choose not to end up a self fulfilling prophecy when labelled negatively. However, the minority of my respondents, which were labelled negatively, “did not care” about the given label; they take on the teacher’s perspective of themselves and see no need for improvement. The secondary data also showed that students have the choice either to reject the label or become a self fulfilling prophecy.

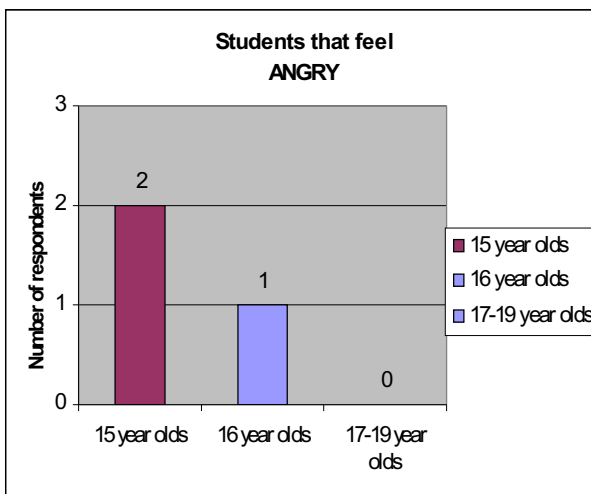
The results of my data also show that students from various ethnic backgrounds see a given label as a motivation, whereas the secondary data stated that specific ethnic minorities tend to agree with the label as it is often given to this specific ethnic group.

Aim: Do students of different age groups, who think that they are labelled, develop lower self esteem as a result of a given label?

The data I have collected from my questionnaires shows that the age of a student that feels labels has an impact on the way he or she feels as a result of this label. The age is of great importance as the respondents are mentally on different stages, which means that the way a given label is taken determines how students feel about themselves. I have found out the age range of my respondents, which I presented in this graph. It shows that my respondents are aged between 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19 years . These age groups show difference in dealing with a given label, which also has an impact on self esteem.



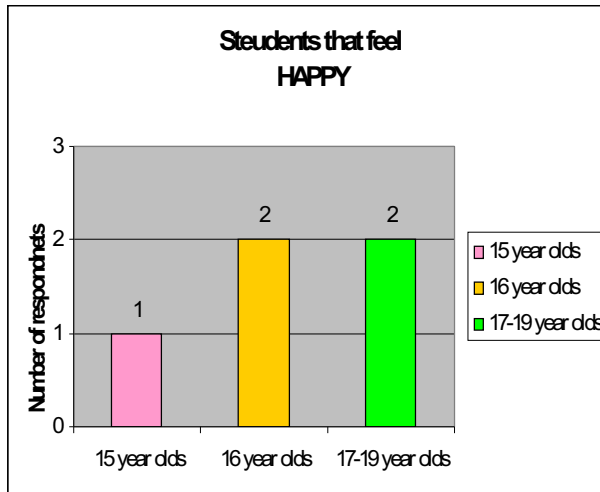
I looked at some of the main positive and negative emotions felt due to a given label and how these can affect a student’s self esteem and how the age groups respond differently.



• **Students that feel Angry due to the label**

In this graph I am presenting the number of students that are angry when labelled. It shows that the 2 of the 9 15 year olds feel angry, whereas none of the 17-19 year olds feel this way. This shows that the level of maturity is important when dealing with a label; as a

result of this the 15 year olds are more likely to develop a lower self esteem as they tend to take a label as a teacher telling them off, whereas the 17 -19 year olds already developed an understanding of how to manage a label and see it as a motivation. As the graph shows the 16 year olds are in the middle with only one of the 7 respondents feeling angry, which shows that they are at the point of developing that special understanding.



- Students that feel happy due to the label

In this graph I am presenting the number of respondents of each age group that feels positive and happy due to their given label. It shows that the older bound of my respondents tend to feel more positive about a given label, from this I assume that the given label is positive. This means that the older the

student is the more understanding he or she has of the hidden curriculum and how to achieve the best from school; this knowledge can then benefit those who are experienced.

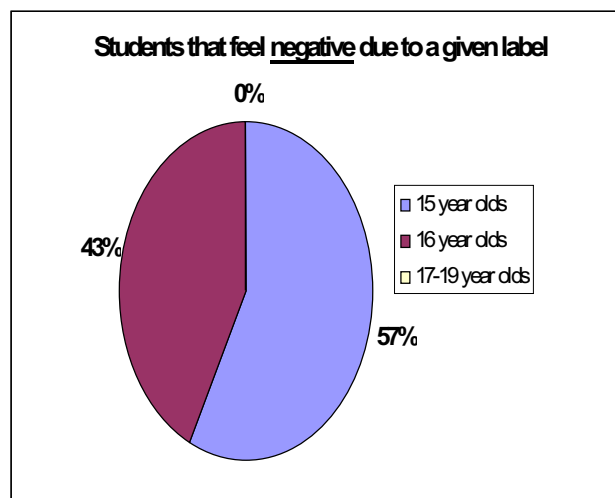
- Students that feel negative due to the label

In this chart I summarised the general negative emotions I collected from my research; this shows that the youngest respondents feel not very good about their given labels, which can mean that their level of confidence might decrease, as the teacher's label them "bad". At this

young age especially students tend to take statements more personal than others; this could result in a low self image throughout their education.

The 16 year olds show a bit more maturity and less than a half of my respondents feel negative due to a given label. This age group is the "transition group" in my research; this means that they are at the stage of developing more maturity and an understanding of how to deal with a label.

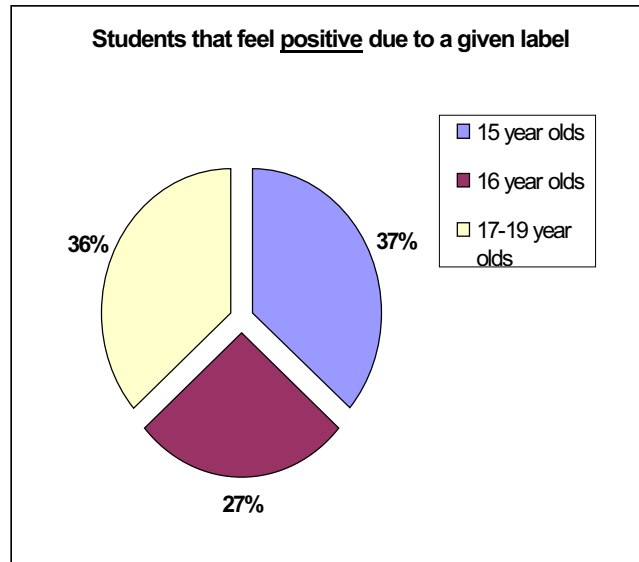
The oldest group, the 17-19 year olds, show no negative feelings due to given label in my research. This is because they have reached a stage of maturity at which they understand that a given label, whether positive or negative, should be a motivation to do better and achieve more. However, do I believe that at



the beginning and in the moment the label is received, there might be a slight sad feeling felt by everyone who has been labelled negatively.

- Students that feel positive due to the label

In this chart I summarised the positive feelings of all my respondents due to a given label. All age groups feel generally equally positive when labelled. I have to point out that all 17-19 year olds feel positive because of a given label, this then results in higher confidence. This age group is able to evaluate its progress and performance and also to ask for advice to improve.



The 16 year olds, who feel the least positive of all my respondents, are still at the stage of understanding this concept. My results show that a positive label increases a student's self esteem.

To fully answer my aim, I can say that the 15 year olds tend to develop a lower self esteem, because they are the youngest and therefore fail to understand that a label can be rejected and that a label is not a personal attack from teachers. The other two older age groups already comprehend this and therefore can evaluate their performance and reject the label to do better and increase their confidence at school.

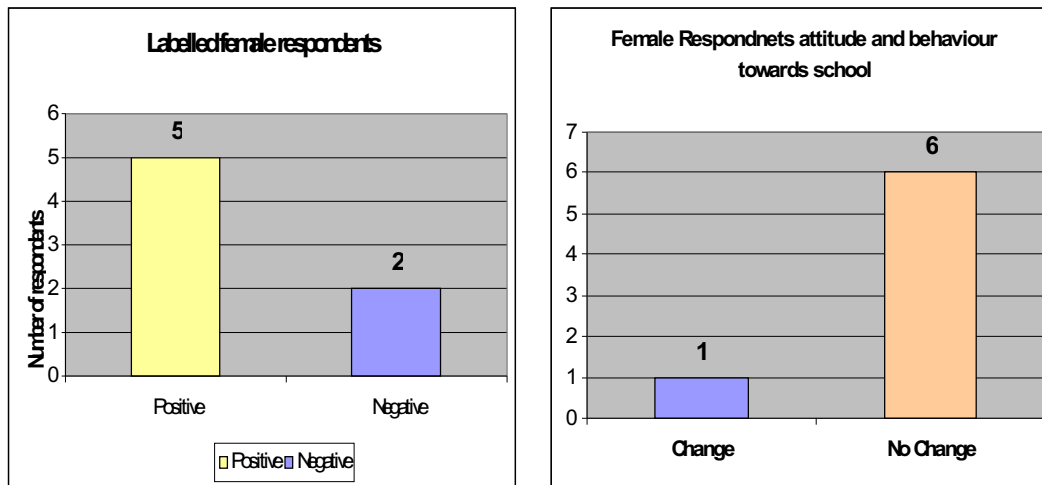
Due to this data I am able to say that the development of a lower self esteem depends a) on the type of label given and b) with the age of the student being labelled. My results show that in each age group there are some students who feel very comfortable and confident as they feel positive due to the given label. Feeling positive has a great impact on how students think of themselves, because feeling good increases their self esteem. The respondents that are in the position of developing lower self esteem are mainly found in the middle aged bound of my research; these students tend to feel negative because of the given label.

The results of my data are similar to that of the secondary data which states: ***predictions have an effect an individual's view of him of herself and his or her self esteem*** (*An introduction to Sociology, Second Edition, Ken Browne*) During my research I found that a given label can change the way a student think of him/her. The age is also of great importance as mature students may respond differently to younger students; however, many responses are very similar. The secondary data also shows that students, who are labelled, try to bring their self image in line with the teacher's

judgment. Positive labels increase confidence, negative ones decrease it; this goes for all age groups.

Aim: Do labelled students of both genders show difference in behaviour and attitude towards school?

Firstly I analysed the number of girls that felt labelled and also if their behaviour and attitude towards school has changed, due to the label. The following two graphs make it easier to visualize these points.

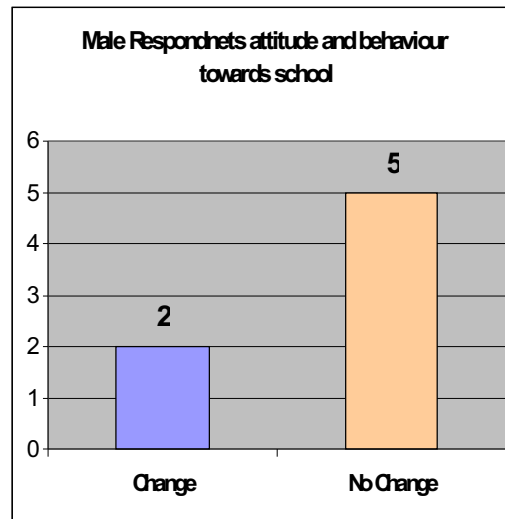
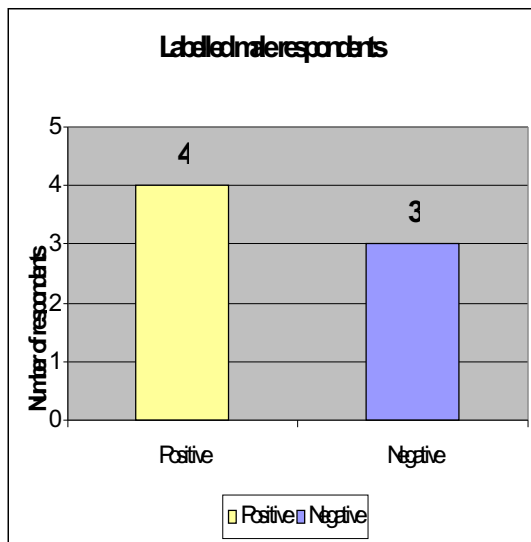


From this can see that only one of the labelled student's attitudes toward school has changed due to a given label. The 5 positively labelled students' attitude did not change, as they were labelled good already. They all put down a common reason for not changing their behaviour and attitude, this was to continue working hard and making sure that the label stays the way it is and even improve if possible.

One of the two negatively labelled girls changed her attitude towards school, and stated in the questionnaire that she has had enough of all teachers think bad of her and that it is time for her to change her attitude and perform better so that she is able to get a good future.

The other girl stated that she can't be asked to do something at school, and what the point of doing something is when the teachers tell her that she will fail anyway.

Now I am analysing the male respondents.



From these graphs I know that only two male respondents changed their attitude towards school. In this case though, one of the four positively labelled students changed his attitude towards school. In the questionnaire he states that he prefers to be known as a bad boy not as a nerd, and that his status in the yard is more important to him than what a teacher says. One of the negatively labelled students changed his attitude towards school too, however, he wants the teachers to see his new character and desire for a good future, regardless his anti school behaviour in the past.

I found out that in both genders there are people who do not need to change their attitude towards school, as they have the right one already. However, those who need to do better do not change as they see it as a waste of time. Just the way the secondary source states: **They might think what the point in trying to improve is when the teacher has already said that they are hopeless in that subject.** (*Pauline Wilson and Allan Kidd, Sociology for GCSE*) There are also a few students that change their attitude positively to improve and not end up as what the teacher has predicted- rejection of a label. Nevertheless, there was one male respondent that changed his attitude because he believes in what fellow students think of him rather than what a teacher says.

In this research I have to consider that my findings might not be very reliable as not every respondent completely completed the questionnaire; in addition to this could some questions have been misunderstood and therefore not answered properly. Another weakness of my data is the small number of labelled respondents, which decrease the reliability of my results.

Conclusion

AIM: Is the label given to a student seen as a motivation not to end up as predicted?

Through my results I found out that positively labelled students do everything to sustain that label and end up as good as the teacher predicts them; however, the ones who felt negatively labelled didn't see the label as a motivation not to end up as predicted, in fact they see it as a motivation to do end up as predicted. They see no point in improving, just like some of the teachers. This matches the secondary sources which state: "**Students, who are labelled by teachers, try to bring their self image in line with the teacher's judgment of them. They might think what the point in trying to improve is when the teacher has already said that they are hopeless in that subject. Even if these students try to resist this label, they would find it hard to achieve as some teachers might deem it a waste of resources spending time trying to improve in that subject.**" *Pauline Wilson and Allan Kidd, Sociology for GCSE*

AIM: Do students of different age groups, who think that they are labelled, develop lower self esteem as a result of a given label?

The research has shown that depending on the age and maturity of students their confidence increases or decreases. I found out that the younger band of my findings tended to develop a lower self esteem, as some of them are not able to identify a label from an insult from a teacher. The upper band however feels confident as they know what to do and how to improve so their performance increases, which would result in a higher confidence. The secondary sources state: **The views of the teachers have an effect on the student's personality and achievement.** (*Jonathan Blundell, Active Sociology for GCSE*)

AIM: Do labelled students of both genders show difference in behaviour and attitude towards school?

My findings show that in both genders there are individuals who change their attitude toward school because of a given label; these changes can be positive and negative. I also found out that it is hard to change an anti school attitude as the teachers might not see the labelled student as important anymore. As the secondary sources states: **Even if these students try to resist this label, they would find it hard to achieve as some teachers might deem it a waste of resources spending time trying to improve in that subject.**

Pauline Wilson and Allan Kidd, Sociology for GCSE

Evaluation

During my research I noticed many strengths, but also weaknesses. I am now looking at what went well and what did not in each section of my questionnaire.

- Introduction

Strength	Weakness
I think that my aims are a strength as they are well thought and relating to big issue in education.	The section of what other sociologists have said about my chosen issue could have been in more detail and not so general, as it makes it difficult to find the right quotes.
My reason for choice is a strength as I in detail stated why I wanted to investigate about this issue.	I could have included more key terms/concepts, by searching in different sources.
My choice of methods is a strength because these are reliable methods which I can practice very easily.	My choice of respondents was too specific and made it difficult to carry out my method of research.

- Methods

Strength	Weakness
I think I analysed the methods I want to make use of properly, as I found it very easy to make sure that I avoided the potential problems.	I did only use two method of research which limits my results for my findings.
I described the methods in much detail and discussed the strengths and weaknesses precisely.	I received criticism on my pilot questionnaire as not everyone was able to understand my questions.
I considered the ethics and made sure to apply this on my method of research.	The questionnaire seemed to be too long form my respondents, which reduces the quality of my findings.
I made changes to my pilot questionnaire, and indicated any errors that might occur.	
I created a questionnaire in which all questions help me answer my aims.	

- Analysis

Strength	Weakness
I think my use of graph is a strength as I can present my findings in chart form, which makes understanding much easier.	I analysed the findings slightly from my point of view and opinions rather than from what the facts state.
I compared and contrasted my findings to my secondary sources effectively by using quotes.	I included information that does not answer my aims, in any way to complete my hypotheses.

Bibliography

In my research I used sources to help me with my investigation. Here is the list of source:

- *Jonathan Blundell, Active Sociology for GCSE*
- *An introduction to Sociology, Second Edition, Ken Browne*
- *Pauline Wilson and Allan Kidd, Sociology for GCSE*
- *Active Sociology*
- *Becker (1971) & Keddie (1971)*
- *Ball (1981)*
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Labeling>