

Labelling and self-fulfilling prophecy

Devon grew up on a rough estate in the Midlands, living with his mum. He was bright and engaged all through primary school. His mum put him in for the Eleven Plus but his mark was not high enough for him to get into the Grammar School. He went to a local secondary, but his teachers expected trouble from pupils like him so they focused on making him behave himself rather than stretching his abilities. Devon kept getting into trouble in class. Devon thought the teachers were picking on him. His behaviour got worse and his academic progress slowed and then stopped. Devon started hanging around with some other 'bad kids'. As a teenager he got caught shoplifting. The shop manager insisted that the police be called and Devon was arrested and charged. He was convicted and fined for his offence, and his picture was circulated to local businesses on a list of known offenders. Devon tried to sort his life out but could not get a job. He kept getting stopped and searched by store detectives and police officers. One day, being stopped whilst leaving a shop, Devon just snapped and shoved the store detective who had stopped him, causing him to trip, fall and hit his head. He was convicted of assault this time. Devon started spending more time with the 'bad kids' in the area, who had grown up and were now involved in activities like drug dealing. His mum tried to get him to enrol in a college to increase his opportunities but Devon refused, saying that education is for losers and his lifestyle gives him all the opportunities he needs.

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