

Culhane, John S, 2008, *An Exploration, using a Cultural Analysis Approach, of Streaming and its Outcomes in the Context of a Voluntary Catholic Secondary School.*

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Ability-grouping appears to be a sensible and logical means of class-group formation in secondary schools, given the wide disparity in academic skills, as well as prior attainment among the student cohort. Though the rationale of streaming emphasises attainment, this benefit has been disputed by several researchers, and non-academic shortcomings of tracking have been highlighted. It is contended here that ability-grouping leads to different experiences of schooling since certain class-groups are likely to contain concentrations of deficits while others appear to benefit disproportionately. These issues are explored with data from the higher and lower streams of Year Two. Perceptions of advantage or otherwise are explored as well as issues of self-esteem, school community cohesion and the relative quality of student-teacher relationships. The evidence for divergent experience is strong in some scales, such as the perception of educational advantage among the higher stream while the quality of student-teacher interaction also seems to be markedly different between the streams. Other issues explored, such as the impact of streaming on self-esteem and on alienation from the school community are less conclusive and further study would seem to be necessary.