SOCIOLOGY (BHS315116)

FEEDBACK FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

INVESTIGATION PROJECT

ETHICAL RESEARCH

The Investigation Projects covered a wide range of topics that related to inequality in contemporary Australian society. It was pleasing to see that candidates are choosing a wider range of topics as this demonstrates that the full breadth of research areas from the syllabus is understood. However, some candidates are choosing topics that present serious issues relating to ethics such as invasion of privacy and coercion. Topics related to sensitive issues such as mental illness, domestic violence and sexual behaviour, for example, bring deep issues relating to the ethics of social research. Just stating an awareness of these issues does not absolve the candidates from actually carrying out ethical research.

The type of questions that are asked in surveys, the age of the participants chosen for the research and the method of carrying out the research all have an impact on how ethical the research actually is despite any statements or disclaimers. Posting such surveys publically through social media or emailing via Google forms where the participants are not carefully chosen can pose a problem. That is not to say these methods cannot be used, as they are an excellent way to gain a wide range of opinions. Caution needs to be taken in how this type of method of dispersing surveys can support ethical research on some topics. The ethics forms are NOT included with the report but should be submitted to the teacher. Blank copies of the Ethics Form should not be included with the report as this is completely unnecessary.

WORD COUNT ISSUES

Important issues related to word count and length of some Investigation Projects have arisen. Candidates and teaches are expected to familiarise themselves with the Guidelines and stay within those boundaries. Some Investigation Projects were in excess of 30 pages because of the inclusion of unnecessary material in the Results, The Research Design and Method and Appendices sections of the report. There is a pattern developing where students are outlining the limitations in their research in the Method Section so they aren't included in the word count. The limitations of the research design process need to be in the Discussion not the Method. Word counts must be strictly observed.

Inclusion of definitions and background information on the area of the research should be in the Introduction as part of the literature review and are not exempt from the word count.

TOPIC SELECTION

The three topics outlined in the IP Guidelines (the causes and consequences of inequality: political, social and/or economic, social differentiation and structured inequality as reproduced through socialisation, and structured inequality as it occurs through the institutions of family, school, work and/or media) appear to have given rise to some confusion among candidates over what they are meant to be doing.

Teachers and candidates are reminded that they are to investigate these topics in relation to the social categories set down in the Investigative Project Guidelines, i.e. gender, indigenous Australians, age/youth, ethnicity and rural/regional Australians. That is, individuals experience inequality as a result of belonging to one of these categories. So women, for example, experience inequality because of their gender and youth experience inequality as a consequence of their being young. **Socio-economic status is not one of these categories.** While SES may be an issue **within** the categories listed in the Guidelines, candidates need to be aware that they are not exploring SES of itself but rather how it is a component of one of the listed categories contributing to that group's experience of inequality. For example, people living in rural and regional Australia tend on average to have lower incomes that people living in the capital cities.

This may contribute to the inequality they experience but the research project is about people living in rural and regional areas, not people from different socio-economic groups. This distinction is particularly important when investigating an area such as education. A number of projects focused on the inequality that exists between government and non-government schools. Candidates seemed to have believed they were exploring youth inequality, but they were not exploring how young people experience inequality because of their youth but how some young people (in government schools) experience inequality relative to other young people (in non-government schools) because of their socio-economic status. Candidates are urged to develop a clear understanding of how their research fits within both parts of the Guidelines – that is both the focus topics and the social categories – before embarking on their primary research.

CONNECTING TO THE TOPIC AND FOCUS AREA/S

Better Investigation Projects selected topics and focus area/s that related to the requirements in the IP guidelines. Many of these Investigation Projects included the details on the cover page that reflected this. This may have helped these students to remember to align their report with the topic and focus areas chosen, as the stronger Investigation Projects did this very well. For example, gender inequality in education was aligned with: social differentiation and structured inequality as reproduced through socialisation. In this example, the secondary sources and primary research instrument were aligned with and reflected the 3 key areas identified in the topic: "social differentiation", "structured inequality" and "socialisation". Stronger Investigation Projects related their introduction, analysis and discussion and conclusion back to these key areas very successfully.

However, many candidates chose very broad areas to investigate that were only loosely/vaguely connected to the chosen topic and/or focus area/s. This tended to be reflected in a less robust primary research instrument as well as a weaker analysis and discussion.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Stronger Investigation Projects included a wide range of relevant and appropriate secondary sources that related to the chosen topic and focus area/s. Secondary sources included data, statistics, quotes and summaries from recent Australian research relating to the topic from such sources as: ABS, AIFS, ACER, government reports and other sources of Australian research data. Other sources included media articles, documentaries and podcasts.

Other types of secondary sources also included a range of sociology texts, which were often the source of information relating to sociological theories, terms and concepts relating to the topic and focus area/s. Some candidates incorporated social commentary and analysis from non—fiction books such as Annabel Crabb's, *The wife drought,* and Clementine Ford's, *Fight like a girl.*

Stronger Investigation Projects successfully synthesised secondary source information from a wide range of sources to relate to specific aspects of the chosen topic and focus area/s. Throughout the analysis and discussion, the secondary source information, presented in the introduction was related to specific aspects of the key findings of the primary research.

Weaker Investigation Projects often listed a wide range of secondary sources in their reference list and these were *sometimes* referred to quite well in the introduction of the report. However, many candidates failed to make good use of their secondary sources in the analysis and discussion.

Some candidates relied too heavily on research relating to other countries where the findings weren't comparable to the Australian context or even the chosen topic/focus area in some cases. In each case, relevant Australian research was available. This suggests that candidates need to refine their browser search to the Australian context.

In some reports there was more focus on theoretical analysis than there was on sociological analysis of inequality which would have strengthened responses rather than detracting from them. There was a tendency for candidates to feel the need to use sociological perspectives (conflict/functionalist) in their reports without making any meaningful connections between these theories and the topic examined. If anything, in a number of instances, this detracted from the quality and strength of the argument they were making as the links made were tenuous and if anything highlighted their lack of understanding of the perspectives. Candidates should be encouraged to include the perspectives if and where appropriate, not just a "you must include the perspectives" approach. There was more focus on theoretical analysis than there was on sociological analysis of inequality which would have strengthened responses rather than detracting from them.

INTRODUCTION

A number of candidates did not discuss secondary research in their introductions. The focus was purely theory, which did not provide a sound justification for the study of the specific inequality. Also, there were a number of folios that did not have a clear research question or hypothesis. This is essential as it provided a clear and concise objective of the research project. Furthermore, candidates need to clearly address one of the research topics (gender, age, etc.) and research questions (causes and consequences) and make direct links back throughout their folio.

If candidates choose to include a hypothesis, as well as, a research question then they need to be very careful to ensure that their analysis/discussion is clearly linked back to this hypothesis and that they demonstrate how their study's findings supported, or didn't support, their prediction. Generally, a research question is more applicable for social research than the formulation of a hypothesis.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

Stronger reports were generally well supported by well-designed, robust primary research. Some candidates conducted very comprehensive primary research that included a well-designed survey, interview and content analysis. On the whole, these were, very well designed and executed, research methodology and results were well presented, and these candidates were also able to use their primary data very well in the analysis and discussion.

However, some candidates who conducted more than one type of research failed to use the data to really add to their analysis and discussion. They would have been better off doing one really good piece of primary research. A folio can be of an 'A' standard with only one form of research. It is not necessary for a student to do 50 surveys and 2 interviews. More effort applied to investigating the sociology related to the topic would be of more benefit than excessive research.

Some candidates were very brief in their methodology and didn't discuss sample size, sampling method, research design and procedure. There were also a number of candidates that did not explicitly discuss ethical considerations. Whilst this doesn't need to be extensive, it is essential that candidates clearly address each ethical consideration for assessment against criterion 5.

The research design and method section does not need to exceed TWO pages at most. There is no need for three or four pages to be included in this section. Strong reports concisely outlined how research was conducted and how ethical risks were maintained without providing a history of the research method or onerous outlines of literature reviews.

It is important that candidates understand that the quality of their final report and the validity of the findings obtained are directly linked to the quality and thought put into the questions they choose to ask in a survey/questionnaire/interview. Poorly conceived questions result in poor quality/ambiguous findings and tenuous conclusions drawn.

Many candidates designed very good surveys that allowed them to gather data that showed relationships to aspects of their topic and focus area/s. A simple example of this is - level of parental education and future educational aspirations. Some candidates produced excellent graphs that were able to highlight these relationships very effectively.

Weaker reports often included a very simple opinion poll that only gathered perceptual data and failed to provide any rich information that allowed the candidate to demonstrate the relationships between factors in their topic and focus area/s. These were usually presented in very basic pie graphs that are not a very good way to present data that has any level of complexity.

MARKERS FIND IT USEFUL WHEN A REPORT INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:

- Clear overall statement of the research design and method as it related to the topic/focus area/s
- Sample size and type – for example, "a stratified opportunity sample …"
- A brief explanation to provide evidence of their understanding of this aspect of research methodology
- Concise, but detailed, statement of ethical considerations as it related to their research instrument, including measures taken to ensure the ethical soundness of their research
- Concise, but detailed, explanation of the reasoning behind the inclusion of survey or interview questions. (This does not mean a wordy and laborious account of why each question was included.)

Stronger reports included evidence of the process of designing the survey or interview. Some candidates, who organised the information into themes and sub-headings, very effectively presented explanations of the research method and design. For example: candidates were able to explain the combination of questions that were included to determine SES, which could then be correlated with responses to other questions.

RESULTS

Candidates often presented a brief overall statement of the key findings of the primary research, in relation to the topic and focus area/s, and then presented a series of graphs that represented their quantitative data as well as tables of qualitative data.

Stronger Results sections included bar graphs that showed the relationships between key aspects of their primary research data, such as gender and engagement in STEM subjects. The graphs were appropriately labelled and included a concise, but appropriately detailed explanation of the information represented in the graph. This provided strong evidence of the student's understanding of the data they had represented in the graph. Candidates should not put data, such as listing of all the percentages, beneath the graph itself. This information is already available to the marker from the graph and it just adds unnecessary length to the folio. Only those graphs and tables mentioned in the analysis and discussion should be included in the report. Extra graphs should NOT be placed in the Appendices.

Weaker results sections presented very basic graphs and tables that failed to provide strong evidence of the candidate's understanding of the primary research data they had collected or how it related to the topic and focus area/s. Only processed data should be presented in the results section of the report.

A number of candidates used Google forms in order to survey a large number of participants, which was an excellent strategy, as many obtained reasonably large sample sizes. However, many candidates who used Google forms (or Survey Monkey etc.) did not process the raw data, and simply relied on the graphing function of the online survey tool to create their graphs. Consequently, many of these graphs were simple pie charts or tables that did not show a relationship/correlation, when the data had clearly been gathered in such a way that with some effort could have showed relationships and correlation. Moreover, discursive notes beneath the charts failed to show trends or even a simple analysis of the data, or were missing.

A variety of graph presentations rather than just bar graphs or pie charts allows the candidate to demonstrate an understanding of how data can be best represented.

Many candidates gathered qualitative data through their survey or interview questions. These were often very effectively presented in the results section in a table, or series of tables. The data had been organised into themes and summarised. This organisation seemed to facilitate the effective use of this qualitative data in the analysis and discussion.

A stronger analysis of data would include presenting their interview findings under subheadings or subtopics (for example: gender inequality in work, subtopic might be 'traditional gender roles').

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis and discussions were generally done well. Stronger candidates make direct links between their primary research and secondary research findings. Candidates are also urged to include discussion of at least some sociological sources and broader sociological ideas in their reports. The age of the Internet has meant candidates have access to a vast range of commentary and opinion. Much of this commentary, however, is not of a formal sociological nature. There is nothing wrong with using this commentary where appropriate but candidates are urged to temper it with reference to at least some sociological sources. This issue is particularly acute in relation to topics such as sport. A number of candidates exploring gender inequality in sport made use of a wide range of commentary they had located on the Internet but none of it was sociological.

Many candidates presented this section very effectively. The paragraphs were effectively sequenced, each one examining an aspect of the topic and focus area/s. Each paragraph was well-structured and included evidence from an aspect of the primary research data and how it related to secondary source information. The discussion was clearly linked to an aspect of the topic and focus area/s. Written expression was formal, objective, concise, and included appropriate sociological terms and concepts.

Some candidates appeared to 'run out of steam' in this section, however, up to this point the research had been very promising, but in the analysis and discussion the candidates failed to consolidate the good work they had done, sometimes lapsing in their expression (e.g. use of first person, informal language etc.), or failing to incorporate their secondary source information into their discussion.

Some candidates provided some real insight when they discussed the limitations of the primary research, and, without expending too many words, were able to offer suggestions for future research in the area. This is the appropriate place to mention the limitations of the research as part of the evaluation of the results and the conclusions to be drawn from them.

Strong conclusions provided a concise, but effective 'round up' of the findings of the primary and secondary research data and made links back to the topic and focus area/s. A number of candidates didn't include a conclusion, which weakened their report.

REFERENCE LISTS

The Investigative Projects reflected once again the ongoing difficulties candidates experience in accurately referencing their work. Candidates are reminded that the reference list at the end of their report must include **all** and **only** those works cited in the report. There were many instances where candidates had referred to authors in their report that had presumably been taken from references within other secondary sources the candidate had used. These sources also need to be cited in the reference list unless the candidate's citation in their report specifically states that the work being referred to is being accessed through another work. In addition, candidates need to check if a text is an edited work or not. For example, Germov and Poole edit the text, *Public Sociology*. Thus a different writer authors each chapter. Very few candidates were able to accurately reference this source and other similar sources. Healey's Social Issues are examples of edited collections and articles within the editions need to be referenced as such.

Many candidates used non-academic sources of information such as study.com and theconversation.com. While these sources can provide social commentary on topics they should be used in addition to academic sources.

APPENDICES

Candidates are reminded to include a copy of their raw data and a copy of their blank research tool in the appendices. Transcripts of interviews should also be included in this section. Only processed data should be presented in the results section. Raw data (quantitative and qualitative) should be presented in an appendix, or appendices, at the end of the report. Many candidates failed to present their raw data in an appendix. Extra graphs, copies of information from secondary sources, ethics forms and the like should NOT be included in the appendices.

WRITTEN EXAM

GENERAL COMMENTS

Overall, the quality of answers was strong and there was evidence of many students preparing thoroughly for the exam.

Markers focus on assessing Criteria 1 and 2 through the inclusion of sociological terms, concepts and theories applicable to the question in a structured response. At least two sociological explanations must form a part of the argument for a C award or higher. More successful answers include analysis of the topic and the theories rather than just information and explanations. The integration of the stimulus and other examples is an expected part of the answer. Better candidates provided an evaluation of the theories by considering the strengths and limitations.

Criterion 7 is assessed through the evaluation of the quality of the answer in response to the question. Successful candidates are able to write an answer to the question using sociological theory applied to examples from the stimulus and the course, leading to a logical conclusion. Candidates are reminded that an integral element of the Sociology paper is the supplied stimulus material and this is a required element in order to achieve a C or higher award for Criterion 7.

SECTION A

QUESTION 1 – SOCIALISATION AND SOCIAL CONTROL (14 Responses)

Only a small number of candidates responded to this question. I would encourage 2019 candidates to consider this question, as it is very straightforward.

Students showed a sound knowledge of socialisation from the three main perspectives. This was explained through socialisation within the institutions of society e.g. family, education, peers, work.

Explanations of social control and informal and formal sanctions formed a significant part of most answers. The students drew upon Stimulus 1 – 'Conforming to society's norms' to support their statements. Some answers also incorporated references to the other stimulus pieces and thus showed the candidate's ability to respond to the question in a flexible and knowledgeable way.

Students are reminded that they should also consider evaluations of the perspectives/theories that they use within their answer. Several students did this competently by contrasting the functionalist and conflict perspectives on social control. Factors such as power within society to form and enforce norms, policing and SES and gender roles were considered in these evaluations.

CRITERIA 1

Knowledge of foundational concepts related to socialisation and social control was evident. The three main perspectives were explained well by many candidates. Statements were supported by reference to the stimulus. Better answers evaluated the functionalist and conflict perspectives on norms, social control and power.

CRITERIA 7

It is critical for students to construct an answer to the question as written on the exam paper. Many students focused more on the process of socialisation than on the mechanisms of social control.

A balance between these two aspects of the question enables students to compose a more complex answer and show evidence of a sustained response.

QUESTION 2 – SOCIALISATION AND IDENTITY (39 Responses)

Candidates who did well on this question showed a detailed understanding of the process of socialisation and the formation of identity. Many candidates began their responses by addressing this part of the question by referring to the socialisation process and the learning of norms and values that make up the culture of society.

Strong responses considered the formation of identity through the interactionist perspective. Theorists such as Cooley, Mead and Goffman featured in several responses to show how individuals form their identity. The inclusion of the stimulus to support this was a feature of these responses.

The agents of socialisation were covered well by considering primary, secondary and tertiary socialisation within the institutions of society such as the family, school, peer group and work place.

A small number of candidates included re-socialisation. The functionalist perspective on socialisation was contrasted well with the conflict perspective.

Some very capable candidates were able to evaluate the process of socialisation by considering individual agency and the ability for an individual to not only form their own identity, but also to have an impact on the norms and values of society.

Markers were looking for the integration of the stimulus and other examples within a structured response. It was pleasing to see that some candidates used references to more than one of the stimulus pieces within their essay.

QUESTION 3 – THEORIES OF DEVIANCE (260 Responses)

As in previous years, this was the most popular question with candidates; therefore feedback from several markers has been included in this report.

MARKER 1 COMMENTS

A number of candidates displayed a clear understanding of the theories of deviance, and the stronger responses made good use of the stimuli and directly addressed the question, regarding why some people are more likely to be involved in criminal behaviour in CAS.

Stronger answers included a wide range of relevant terms and concepts throughout their discussion, had effective sequencing of paragraphs and individual paragraphs were well structured, linking back to the aspect of the topic under discussion. Candidates related their discussion of the limitations of the theories to specific examples from the stimulus materials.

On the whole, students demonstrated a reasonably strong knowledge of the theories discussed. Stronger answers also unpacked the elements of each theory and related them to specific examples from the stimulus materials.

Strong responses were able to elaborate effectively on the connection between the theory and the sociological perspective – for example, Durkheim's functionalist theory of anomie was linked to Structural Strain theory and the positive and negative functions of deviance.

This link then enabled further opportunities for discussing the strengths and limitations of the theory in explaining youth crime in CAS.

Some students used examples from more than one of the stimulus materials provided to demonstrate their understanding of each of theories discussed. In general, however, the stimulus materials were underutilised by many candidates.

MARKER 2 COMMENTS

There were good opportunities to use all four stimuli as evidence to support answering the questions, however nearly all candidates solely focused in on using Stimulus 3 (Youth Crime); this was a lost opportunity. Future candidates are advised to look further afield than the obvious, and consider how each stimulus might be useful to a response.

The stronger responses directly addressed the question and built an argument throughout, using evidence and theory, to do so. A small number of responses also used the stimulus as evidence to support discussions on the limitations of theories, which was commendable as it made for a full, evidence-based discussion; this is a recommended strategy for the top-end students of the future.

The strong responses explained how the theories aligned with the sociological perspectives, and why they were either absolute or relativist in nature. These discussions were directly aligned to evidence to support the discussion, and demonstrated a rich understanding and great sociological thinking capacity. These responses made good use of Stimulus 3, and also in some cases stimulus 1, 2 and 4.

The strong responses for C7 were well structured with a brief introduction defining deviance, and explained which theories were to be discussed; paragraphs started with a relevant topic sentence, incorporated evidence (usually the stimulus), and analysed the evidence through the lens of the theory. The nature of the question was well integrated throughout. All future candidates should critically examine using a structured approach in their writing, rather than 'free-writing'.

The weaker responses tended to have similar issues. The response did not explicitly integrate the question in a meaningful way; and there was a 'dump' on the theories that was information only and lacked analysis and depth/detail. The length of response did not equate to quality of discussion in the majority of cases.

Most of these responses did not link key elements of theory to the stimulus or other evidence to support the discussion, and there was a lot of writing time spent copying out large sections of the stimulus word for word, rather than paraphrasing/summarising the salient points to support the analysis and discussion.

Other general issues that were problematic included lack of accuracy (e.g. confusion over the theorists' names – sometimes switching between theorists names within the one discussion), incorrect dates (which were ignored in the marking process), and describing theories in very basic, broad-brush strokes that lacked real detail. There was also evidence of poor paragraphing structure, and varying issues with introductions that were either absent, vague, or too long; conclusions often did not directly answer the question, and there were spelling and grammar errors.

MARKER 3 COMMENTS

Most students were well prepared for this question. Whilst preparation is desirable, it is essential that students directly answer what the question is asking. Weaker responses discuss 'why some groups are more likely to deviate', however failed to create an argument around 'why some young people are more likely to be involved in criminal behaviour' as asked in the question. Stronger responses demonstrated a depth of theory knowledge, including the specific theorists, approaches and features of each theory. Generally, students used the stimulus material well. Stronger responses also included specific evidence from CAS and were able to apply the theories directly to real world examples. Most students provided a basic evaluation of the limitations of deviance theory, however stronger students were able to discuss these weaknesses in more detail and depth, again applying them to real world examples.

QUESTION 4 – RELATIVITY OF DEVIANCE (94 Responses)

Weaker candidates provided answers that were very descriptive, generalised and clearly rote learned. These responses provided only a superficial and very predictable analysis of "*the four theories of deviance*".

This approach is clearly not called for in response to Question 4 on the relativity of deviance. In less successful essays there was very minimal attempt to apply the stimulus material to the question. Less successful students drifted into a pre - prepared explanation of theory, with no analysis or link back the question.

More successful students explained the meaning of the relativity of deviance and spent some time on this aspect of the question. Candidates who did well on this question used at least half of their essay expanding on the concept of the relativity of deviance and the relationship to cultural, space, age, ethnicity, gender, religion etc. Markers were looking for evidence of use of the stimulus and other examples from the course to support their analysis. Better responses included reference to Labelling and Cultural Transmission theory to explain the relativity of deviance. Effectively extending their response in some instances with very cleverly applied analysis of conflict / feminist approaches.

SECTION B

QUESTION 5 – INSTITUTIONS AND CHANGE (97 Responses)

Candidates are reminded that in Section B of the paper, they must refer to at least two institutions (work, family, education and mass media) in their answers. A small number of answers referred to only one institution.

All candidates understood that they needed to outline changes in institutions over time. Most candidates discussed family, and either work or education. In general candidates successfully referred to at least one stimulus, with stronger responses incorporating a number of the stimuli into their essays.

There were a number of weak responses that only discussed in a general way that families and work/education have changed over time, without referring to evidence or any theories. Candidates are reminded that they must address the question, which asks them to construct an argument that evaluates alternative theoretical explanations of the ways in which at least two institutions have changed over time. This requires them to apply theoretical perspectives to explain the changes over time.

Many candidates discussed theoretical perspectives as they applied to the institutions (e.g., a functionalist and a conflict perspective of family and of work); the strongest responses were able to apply the perspectives to an explanation of the changes over time within the institutions and thus fully address the question.

Stronger candidates provided specific examples of change; for example, relating the Child Care Act 1972 and the Family Law Act 1975 to changes in both the family and work, including a detailed analysis of how the two are linked (legislative changes and the resulting changes).

Many responses were written as two separate essays, one dealing with one institution and the second dealing with another. Stronger responses integrated a variety of sociological terms and concepts into their essays. Stronger responses included more reflective conclusions, rather than simply concluding that institutions have changed over time.

A worrying trend this year was the number of answers that did little more than paraphrase the stimulus. As part of criterion 7, students need to discuss and analyse the stimuli provided, but there is an expectation that they will do much more than this. Students are reminded that they are answering a specific question. The stimuli provided are intended as a reference point from which this question can be answered but it is expected that answers will include a broader discussion of sociological ideas and concepts as well as information from their wider study of the course.

Better answers were able to refer not just to broad sociological perspectives such as functionalist or conflict approaches but to particular sociologists and their ideas. The very best answers were even able to include a relevant a quote or two from specific sociologists.

QUESTION 6 – INSTITUTIONS AND STRATIFICATION (138 Responses)

MARKER 1 COMMENTS

It seems that most students managed their time appropriately and produced a large range of outstanding essays on the set topic. Students provided a range of responses/approaches but most popular was reference to the institutions of education and family.

There was evidence of some very well-prepared students who were able to utilise a great range of sociologically relevant concepts and terminology. Of particular note was the development and impressive application of theoretical explanations. This was particularly the case for question 6. Some weaker responses were characterised by writing too generally and in some instances too much. Thereby losing focus on the precise wording of the question.

A sounder approach is to use the stimulus material well to add a layer to a, at times, generic approach. Very few candidates were unable to draw on at least two appropriate explanations in response to the specifics of the question. More successful responses included reference to family structure, language codes and parental attitudes. Some generalised assumptions and connections to cultural deprivation, social and cultural capital were made in only the weaker responses. In addition, some generalised comments about the nature of public/private school education were made without supporting evidence.

MARKER 2 COMMENTS

Many of the responses included a wide range of theories, terms and concepts. However, many of the responses failed to fully address the essay topic.

The concept of stratification was usually very briefly defined at the beginning of the introduction, however, many students never went beyond this and failed to fully explain or link their discussion back to stratification which was central to the essay topic.

Very few terms and concepts that related specifically to stratification were included. For example, the term *life chances*. In addressing this essay topic, it is necessary to include at least some of the basic terms and concepts that relate to stratification. The institutions were defined, explained and discussed. Stronger responses linked this back to stratification.

Most responses included a range of alternative theories that related to the institutions (particularly family, education and work). However, this discussion about the institutions was not often linked to how the theories explained the ways in which stratification was created and maintained through the institutions.

Some responses made very good use of the stimulus materials, often including examples from 2 or 3 stimulus, to support their discussion. Weaker responses used very little evidence from the stimulus materials, often using only 1 stimulus. Some included lengthy quotations from the stimulus that were not effectively linked to the discussion. Most responses included at least a brief discussion of the limitations of the theories or theoretical perspectives. Stronger responses linked this discussion to the topic.

QUESTION 7– INTERRELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN INSTITUTIONS (97 Responses)

Markers were looking for a strong explanation of how the institutions are interrelated. However many essays failed to answer the question adequately and provide a satisfactory exploration of the interlinking of at least two institutions. Institutions were discussed using theory and concepts, but *separately.* Rarely were the interrelationships between the institutions sufficiently explained for example the way that institutions influence change and maintain stratification in other institutions.

Stimulus examples were mostly included, but were often not applied well to sociological concepts or to explain theory effectively. Some candidates copied out long passages from the stimulus rather than paraphrasing the relevant concepts or using short quotations with explanations of the relevance of the quotation to the concept/theory.

The structure of many essays was an issue. Markers were looking for the inclusion of strong topic sentences in paragraphs, strong linking sentences that reiterated the question/argument and strong conclusions.

Those students that did well on this question were able to integrate the stimulus examples throughout, using the stimuli to support theory and concepts very well. Good essays also answered the question, clearly explaining the interrelationship between institutions through aspects such as socialisation, inequality, change, etc.

QUESTION 8 – INSTITUTIONS, POWER AND POLITICS (37 Responses)

Most students seemed well prepared in their responses to this question. There were a number of different approaches to answering the question, however most students explored power distribution within the institutions, drawing on political influence to support their arguments. This included lengthy discussions on the roles of legislation and policy in reinforcing/changing power distribution within the institutions of family, education, work and the media. Common political topics included the influences of the Family Law Act, paid parental leave, contraception, education funding, and deregulation in the workforce and changes in media ownership. Stronger responses made direct links to how the approaches of Functionalist, Conflict, Feminist and Interactionist would view power distribution within the institutions and included evidence from CAS and the stimulus to support and strengthen their arguments.

Concepts such as status, stratification, social mobility, patriarchy, gender role socialisation, social reproduction and structured inequality added sociological insight and value to discussions. Some students struggled to connect theory directly to their arguments. It was essential that students made clear connections between how the approaches view power within the institutions and analyse/evaluate these views using real world examples.