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Examples of Student Essays

- Essay 1: 'School is a significant site in which sex/gender is produced'. Discuss. (2,000 words)
- Essay 2: 'School is a significant site in which sex/gender is produced'. Discuss. (2,000 words)
- Essay 3: Evaluate the claim that we are now living in an information society. (1,500 words)
- Essay 4: Evaluate the claim that we are now living in an information society. (1,500 words)

If you haven't already done so, read through the following examples of student essays. Essays 1 and 2 are written on the same topic; Essays 3 and 4 are written on another topic.

Essay 1 illustrates how applying the basic standards we have been discussing really can help to produce a good essay. It is a strong essay displaying more advanced writing skills. Depending on the exact requirements of the module, it would probably receive a grade at the top of the range. In contrast, Essay 2 is a weaker essay suggesting less developed social scientific writing skills. Although it might gain a pass mark, it would probably be towards the bottom of the grade range. The word limit for Essays 1 and 2 is 2,000 words.

Essay 3, like Essay 1, is also a strong essay but one written for an early, intermediate module. The Essay 3 question doesn't require the critical sophistication or nuance of Essay 1's, as you would expect from a lower level module, but it does expect some evaluation, achieved through a 'compare and contrast' approach. Essay 3 would probably receive a mark in the higher

grade bands, depending on the specific requirements of the module. You will see that Essay 4, while answering aspects of the question, doesn't demonstrate the theoretical depth or evaluative skills of Essay 3. It would, however, probably gain a pass mark, but at the lower end of the grade band. The word limit for Essays 3 and 4 is 1,500 words.

Essay 1

'School is a significant site in which sex/gender is produced.'

Discuss

This essay critically explores the claim that school is a significant site in which sex/gender is produced. The claim derives from a broadly social constructionist position, namely one that views sex/gender as being the product of social meanings and practices rather than something biologically given. The essay begins by outlining the social constructionist critique of the biological account of sex/gender. It then reviews recent research on gender and schooling to explore the extent to which the social meanings and practices that make up life in school may be seen as producing relational forms of masculinity and femininity. In exploring these issues, the essay endorses a broadly social constructionist standpoint on gender and schooling, although it also seeks to highlight a number of potential limitations to this position, particularly as these relate to the literature's account of the body and social agency.

Conventional or 'common sense' accounts tend to view masculinity and femininity as biological categories characterized by a range of fixed physical and psychological differences in which the supposed attributes of masculinity (for example, rationality and the capacity for physical action) are valued over those of femininity (for example, intuition and the capacity for caring). The feminist cultural theorist Chris Weedon (1999) locates the origins of these ideas (at least in their contemporary form) in nineteenth-century biological theory and in Victorian middle-class values. However, she also points out that they have been reinvigorated in more recent work in the fields of sociobiology and evolutionary psychology (see for example, Thornhill and Palmer, 2000; Wilson, 1978).

The social constructionist position takes issue with this biologically reductive account. Drawing, in particular, on the work of Michel Foucault (1977, 1984), commentators from this perspective have sought to argue that masculinity and femininity cannot be understood as fixed biological categories but are instead produced in and through social meanings and practices. This position is distinct from earlier sociological accounts of 'sex role' (see for example, Rossi, 1985). Earlier accounts had tended to view gender as the social elaboration of an

underlying biological sex difference. Social constructionist theory, on the other hand, argues that the notion of biological sex difference is itself a social construct. For example, Thomas Lacquer (1990) has demonstrated that the notion of distinct male and female bodies arose in the nineteenth century. Prior to this, maleness and femaleness were seen as variations on a single body. Equally, Judith Butler (1993, 2004) has argued that sex/gender is a 'performative enactment'. She suggests that, like other categories of the person, maleness and femaleness do not precede social meanings and practices but are brought into existence through an active 'gendering', that is the citation of sex/gender 'norms' embodied in what, following Foucault, she refers to as discursive practices. Importantly, Butler (1993, p. 238) also argues that gender is systematically (though not inevitably) produced through a 'heterosexual matrix' which equates 'proper forms of masculinity and femininity with heterosexuality and identifies gay masculinities and lesbian femininities as, in some way, 'failed' or 'damaged'.

Bob Connell's influential work in the sociology of masculinity endorses this critique of biological essentialism but questions whether it risks writing the body out of existence. Connell suggests that forms of masculinity and femininity cannot be reduced to supposed biological differences but argues that bodies have 'forms of recalcitrance to social symbolism and control' (see, in particular, Connell, 1995, p. 56).

Connell also suggests that Butler's 'hard' social constructionist account risks writing social agency out of existence. Connell argues that there are multiple versions of masculinity (and, by implication, femininity) that are actively produced through relations of similarity to and difference from key social others. For example, forms of 'laddish', heterosexual, white working-class masculinity may be defined in opposition to forms of 'respectable' middle-class masculinity, to non-white ethnicities, to forms of femininity and to gay masculinities. This argument places a greater emphasis than does Butler's on the notion of pupils as 'active makers of their own sex/gender identities' (Mac an Ghaill, 1994, p. 90). Thus, whereas Butler tends to downplay agency (the active 'speaking' of sex/gender) in favour of a notion of performativity (being 'spoken by' social meanings and practices), Connell retains a stronger account of it.

Drawing on the work of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1971), Connell also argues that masculinities and femininities can be understood as being engaged in 'hegemonic struggle'. This refers to an ongoing and potentially shifting process of competition, negotiation, alliance-building and sometimes coercion whereby, under particular conditions, particular versions of masculinity and femininity come to be 'culturally exalted' or 'idealized' while other versions are marginalized and subordinated (see Connell, 1990, p. 83).

Broadly social constructionist ideas of this kind have informed a body of recent literature on sex/gender and schooling (see for example, Duncan, 1999; Epstein and Johnson, 1998; Kehily, 2002; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Martino and Meyenn, 2001; Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003; Skelton and Francis, 2003; Thorne, 1993).

Within this literature, schools are seen as significant sites in which sex/gender is actively produced. This is to say that sex/gender is viewed not as something that is simply brought into the school ready formed but as something actively produced and reproduced in the processes and practices of schooling itself. This active production of sex/gender has a number of dimensions and the following discussion focuses on three of these: the ways in which the content and practices of schooling encode sex/gender; the ways in which pupils actively use sex/gender to negotiate schooling; and the ways in which sex/gender intersects with other social relations.

Perhaps the most obvious means by which sex/gender is said to be produced in the social constructionist literature is via the content and practices of schooling itself. For example, Thorne's (1993) study of two US elementary schools draws attention to the ways in which the categorization of children by gender is threaded through the material and social fabric of the school, such as in teachers' talk ('There's three girls need to get busy', p. 34) or the organization and management of learning (for instance, dividing pupils into gender-based 'teams', p. 67). Similarly, Epstein and Johnson (1994, p. 214) point to the ways in which the regulation of pupils' clothing (in particular, sanctions against girls' clothing thought to connote too overt a sexuality) frequently embodies notions of 'appropriate' or 'proper' forms of gender. While Thorne (1993, pp. 35–6) draws attention to the fact that many aspects of schooling will also play down or contradict gender categorizations, it remains the case that the content and practices of schooling encode sex/gender as a significant category of difference.

However, while sex/gender can be said to be encoded in the content and practices of schooling, the literature also suggests that pupils are themselves active agents in its production. Thorne (1993), for example, describes the children in her study as engaging in 'borderwork', practices by which they actively produce, strengthen and assert sex/gender differences. For instance, she describes a game of team handball which began as a co-operative and informal activity in which gender was not strongly marked but which rapidly accelerated into a more aggressive interaction themed as 'the boys against the girls' (p. 65). In this moment, Thorne suggests, sex/gender was being actively produced (or in Butler's terms, 'performatively enacted') as a significant category of difference.

As well as producing sex/gender through friendship group interactions, the literature also suggests that pupils use sex/gender to negotiate and resist schooling. Kehily and Nayak (1996, p. 214) describe an account from a group of secondary school pupils in which one of them (Samantha) was claimed to have pursued a teacher (Mr Smedley) round the classroom with a sprig of mistletoe with the intention of 'getting some lipstick on the top of his head'. In this instance, a heterosexualized form of femininity is used satirically to undermine the authority of a male teacher (see also Walkerdine, 1981).

While heterosexualized forms of sex/gender are clearly deployed to subvert adult authority, it is also possible to argue that sex/gender is used to negotiate

schooling in more subtle ways. For instance, Connell has argued that boys use masculinity to negotiate or build a 'subjective orientation' to the curriculum and that, in the process, the curriculum is important in producing differentiated forms of masculinity. He writes:

the differentiation of masculinities occurs in relation to a school curriculum that organizes knowledge hierarchically, and sorts students into an academic hierarchy. By institutionalizing academic failure via competitive grading and streaming, the school forces differentiation on the boys. . . . Social power in terms of access to higher education, entry to professions, command of communication, is being delivered by the school system to boys who are academic 'successes'. The reaction of the 'failed' is likely to be a claim to other sources of power, even other definitions of masculinity. Sporting prowess, physical aggression, sexual conquest, may do. (Connell, 1993, p. 95)

This general argument informs Máirtín Mac an Ghaill's (1994) study of a multi-ethnic English secondary school. Mac an Ghaill identifies a variety of differentiated masculinities – the 'macho lads', the 'academic achievers', the 'new enterprisers', and the 'real Englishmen' – through which boys in the school collectively negotiated the curriculum, their home backgrounds and their perceived employment futures. The 'new enterprisers' were, perhaps, particularly interesting in that they broke with the conventional distinction (identified by Connell, above) between anti-academic, 'laddish' forms of masculinity, and pro-school masculinities validated by academic success. Mac an Ghaill argues that the 'new enterprisers' were able to build a pro-school masculine identification out of a newly vocationalized curriculum that offered recognition for academic success in non-traditional subject areas, especially Information and Communication Technologies.

The final area highlighted by the social constructionist literature as a means by which sex/gender is produced in the school concerns the ways in which masculinities and femininities are produced in and through relations of similarity to and difference from social others. As discussed above, Thorne's (1993) concept of 'borderwork' draws our attention to the ways in which sex/gender is used by pupils to produce themselves in gender-differentiated terms. This opposition between forms of masculinity and femininity is perhaps the most central relation underpinning pupils' sex/gender identifications in the school. However, both Mac an Ghaill (1994) and Epstein and Johnson (1998) underline the extent to which school-based masculinities and femininities are also produced in and through relations of age, class, ethnicity and sexuality, as well as in relation to forms of masculinity and femininity deemed subordinate or otherwise inferior.

For instance, Epstein and Johnson cite an exchange between a group of four Muslim girls in a large single-sex comprehensive in which a fifth girl is described in the following terms:

Shamira is not traditional (i.e. she does not occupy a conservative form of Muslim ethnicity). She is a big tart and wears lipstick that doesn't suit her and she walks around sticking her tits out. (Epstein and Johnson, 1998, p. 117)

The girls in this example can be seen to be constructing their own femininity in opposition to Shamira, whose femininity is deemed inappropriately westernized and sexualized. This, then, is an example where sex/gender is spoken through intra-ethnic identifications (traditional versus westernized) and through an opposition to a subordinated femininity (the 'madonna' versus the 'whore'). As Epstein and Johnson also argue, although drawing on wider social relations, such gender constructions occur within and are specific to the dynamics of individual schools.

The girls' appraisal of Shamira in terms of sexuality underlines the centrality of sex and sexuality to the production and policing of gender in pupils' cultures. Mac an Ghaill (1994, pp. 90–6), for instance, describes the ways in which the secondary school boys in his study worked at producing masculinity through 'competitive and compulsive' sexualized talk and practice within their friendship groups. This consisted of the sexual-objectification of girls and women and the homophobic harassment of boys perceived as gay or 'insufficiently masculine'. Epstein and Johnson (1998, p. 158) suggest that anti-lesbian harassment appears less central to girls' culture than does anti-gay harassment to boys' culture. Nevertheless, as the Shamira example demonstrates, they argue that heterosexualized appraisal of other girls is central to the production of femininity within girls' friendship groups.

The recent social constructionist literature has, therefore, made a systematic case in support of the proposition that schooling is a significant site in which sex/gender is produced. It argues that the content and practices of schooling encode sex/gender; that pupils actively use gender to negotiate schooling; and that gender is produced within local pupils' cultures through relations of similarity to and difference from key social others. Work on the relationship between gender and sexuality in the context of the school has been particularly significant. Such arguments, I would argue, fundamentally undermine biologically determinist readings of sex/gender. Nevertheless, it may be possible to qualify the social constructionist account. In particular, following Connell, it is possible to argue that the theoretical tension between a 'hard' social constructionist account (in which social agency is replaced by a notion of performativity) and the emphasis in the literature on pupils as 'active makers of sex gender identities' is not fully addressed or resolved. Equally, it may also be possible to argue that the literature does not fully resolve the exact status of the body in the social constructionist account. However, it remains the case that the recent literature on gender and schooling significantly adds to our understanding of the social construction of gender and sexuality.

References

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Commentary on Essay 1

In reviewing this essay we are not particularly concerned as to whether the answer is 'right' or not. The literature it draws on is from cultural studies and sociology and it is undoubtedly the case that the question of sex/gender could have been addressed from a number of alternative disciplinary points of view – for example, developmental psychology or biology – that might have generated different arguments. Instead, the issue of interest to us is the extent to which the answer demonstrates effective social scientific writing skills. As with any piece of work, the essay is not without flaws. For instance, it could be argued that evidence in support of the 'conventional' view of gender is not explored systematically enough to be rejected with such certainty by the author (although this may simply reflect the balance of argument in the literature the author was required to read). Equally, it could be argued that the concept of sex/gender 'performativity' is not fully explained and that it is not fully illustrated through the research evidence cited. Similarly, the critique of the literature on schooling and sex/gender in the conclusion (the arguments about the status of the body and social agency) appear to repeat Connell's theoretical points without really growing out of the evidence explored in the main section of the essay.

Having said this, the essay has a number of strengths that suggest it should receive a grade towards the top end of the range. Let's explore these in terms of structure and writing skills, content and social scientific skills.

Structure and writing skills

- The essay begins with an introduction that identifies the subject of the essay, indicates the debate lying 'behind' the question, signposts its content and establishes the author's position. (See Section 7.1.)
- The main section uses a standard 'evaluative' structure, that is, it outlines competing positions then explores the evidence for and against them before coming to a conclusion. (See Section 4.3.)
- It builds a logically progressing argument that develops through the following steps: the social constructionist argument is more convincing than the conventional biological account; this is because sex/gender is 'performative' and relational; this can be demonstrated in relation to schooling. (See Section 8.1.)
- It 'flows' reasonably smoothly, is well signposted throughout (see paragraphs 1 and 7), makes use of summary/introductory points (for example, in the

statement, 'As well as producing sex/gender through friendship group interactions, the literature also suggests that . . .') and makes accurate use of spelling, grammar, paragraphing and sentence structure. (See Section 8.4.)

- It provides an evaluative conclusion that summarizes the preceding argument, provides a clear endorsement of the statement in the question, and identifies potential absences in the argument. (See Chapter 9.)
- It is slightly long (2,200 words) but is probably just on the outer limits of acceptability. (As with other regulations, remember to check the rules on essay length that apply to the actual course you are studying.) (See Section 2.3.)

Content

Effective coverage of theoretical issues and research evidence is clearly central to any essay answer. The author of this essay appears to have used or referenced a range of relevant sources and provided detailed coverage of both theoretical material and research evidence. Without knowing the exact content of the course she or he was studying it is difficult to comment on this in much detail, but the coverage looks thorough and the detailed handling of the material suggests wide-ranging reading and a good understanding of the issues.

Social scientific skills

- The answer addresses the question set. (See Section 4.2.)
- The essay is effectively referenced, including page details where necessary. (See Chapter 10.)
- It makes good use of relevant quotations. The Connell quotation is a 'classic' statement of the social constructionist position. The quotation from Epstein and Johnson adds some 'colour' to the argument and is effective in illustrating and illuminating a complex argument. Both support rather than replace points made by the author. (See Section 8.3.)
- Within the confines of a 2,000-word essay, it provides a complex and thorough engagement with relevant theory and applies this theory to and supports it with empirical evidence. (See Sections 2.2 and 8.2.)
- The essay demonstrates effective skills of selection and summary. (See Section 8.2.)
- It provides an effective evaluation of relevant concepts, debates and evidence. (See Sections 2.2, 4.2 and 8.2.)
- It comes to a clear conclusion that is supported by the preceding argument. (See Chapter 9.)
- It makes good use of appropriate academic vocabulary and concepts. (See Sections 8.2 and 8.4.)

Now let's take a look at Essay 2.

Essay 2

'School is a significant site in which sex/gender is produced.'

Discuss

This essay looks at the arguments for and against the idea that school is a significant site in which gender is produced. The first section shows where this idea comes from and contrasts it to the deterministic account. The second section gives evidence in favour of the theory of Social Constructionism.

We are used to thinking that gender is biological. Men are men and women are women and this is natural. Sociobiologists and evolutionary psychologists would agree with this point of view. This is called 'Deterministic'. Men are better at rational tasks and thinking in three dimensions. They are also stronger. Women are better at intuition thinking and emotionality. E.O. Wilson is an example of this approach. However, writers such as Foucault, Butler and Connell have challenged this. They argue that gender is constructed in practices and meanings, such as the 'enactment of gender norms'. Butler calls this 'performativity'.

Connell argues that gender is hegemonic'. This means that there are different types of masculinity in competition but that certain types (such as sportsmen) are 'idealized' (Connell, 1990). Connell got this idea from Gramsci, an Italian Marxist. An example of hegemonic masculinity is given by Swain who argues that playing football in the playground makes boys dominant in the school because this draws on a sporting version of masculinity that is dominant in the wider society (Swain, 2000).

Foucault is very important in this Social Constructionist theory. He argued that the term 'homosexual' does not refer to a pre-existing identity but constructs that identity. This does not mean that same-sex sexual activity did not happen before the nineteenth century (when the term homosexual was invented), it means that that same-sex sexual activity did not imply a particular type of personality (the homosexual) before this. The homosexual is therefore Socially Constructed as of course is the heterosexual. Butler argues that biological sex is also a Social Construction (Butler, 1993).

Schools are a place where Social Construction happens. This has been argued by many eminent Academic thinkers including Mac an Ghail and Epstein. Connell argues that masculinities appear in relation to the curriculum.

the differentiation of masculinities occurs in relation to a school curriculum that organizes knowledge hierarchically, and sorts students into an academic hierarchy. By institutionalizing academic failure via competitive grading and

streaming, the school forces differentiation on the boys. . . . Social power in terms of access to higher education, entry to professions, command of communication, is being delivered by the school system to boys who are academic 'successes'. The reaction of the 'failed' is likely to be a claim to other sources of power, even other definitions of masculinity. Sporting prowess, physical aggression, sexual conquest, may do. (Connell, 1993)

This is one way that schools Socially Construct gender.

A second way is that children actively produce gender for themselves. Take the example of children lining up to leave the classroom. They used to be told to form lines so that girls were in one line and boys were in another. In fact, I remember that in my first school it still had two entrances one marked for boys and the other for girls. Foucault would see this as an example of the ways in which schools produce sexual difference. Now however girls and boys will be told to form a single line but Barry Thorne argues they will still try to form lines according to gender.

This is an example of boys and girls actively producing gender for themselves which Thorn calls 'borderwork' (Thorn, 1993).

Sexuality is a big theme in much of this writing on schooling and gender. There are lots of examples where children use sexuality to try to undermine their teachers. A famous one is Valerie Walkerdine's example of two little boys calling their nursery teacher rude names. Many people are surprised that children as young as this would dare to be so cheeky. Another example is the 'Christmas kiss' story told by Kehily and Nayak (1996). In this case a secondary school girl chased her male teacher round the classroom with a sprig of mistletoe and claimed she was trying to kiss him on the head. The pupils liked to retell this story so that the story itself was one way in which they 'had a laugh' and resisted the authority of the school. Unfortunately the teacher had a nervous breakdown. These examples also show how gender is used in the classroom to 'negotiate the curriculum' indicating how schools Socially Construct gender.

Mac an Ghaill (1994) is very interested in the ways in which boys use homophobic abuse to police other boys. To be identified as a sissy is to invite homophobic abuse whether or not one defines oneself as gay, often in the form of more or less ritualized humour. The use of humour and insult constitutes a regulatory practice by young men in schools through which they establish and exhibit heterosexual masculinities. The forms of humour and insult employed are primarily either sexist (for example, the teasing and harassment of girls or insult to other boys via insulting their mothers or sisters) or homophobic abuse of young men who did not display 'hyper-masculinity'. Swain talks about this too. He describes how the football-playing boys in his research would abuse boys who weren't very good at football by calling them 'Gaylord' and 'poofers'. Since these boys were at primary school calling them homosexual was not because they were homosexual but because this was a way of saying they were like girls. The point Swain is making

is that football is a dominant form of masculinity in our society and that the boys in the school tried to lay claim to dominance in their own right by being good at football. However, this dominance was also at the expense of other social groups such as girls, homosexuality and boys who weren't any good at football. Mac an Ghaill argues that boys 'make up' collective identities as boys out of a Compulsory Heterosexuality, Misogyny and Homophobia.

heterosexual male students were involved in a double relationship, of translating the 'other', including women and gays (external relations), at the same time as expelling femininity and homosexuality from within themselves (internal relations). (Mac an Ghaill, p. 90)

Barry Thorne describes how one boy in her research was called a 'sissy' by other boys because he wore a one-piece snow suit which they thought was 'wimpy' and because he liked to play girl's games in the playground as well as playing boys games. She says he was a bit of a loner and didn't have many friends. Some children were more likely to get away with this sort of thing. A girl got away with it because she was a good athlete and because she could fight which gave her respect with the other children. But one of the teachers described her as 'wanting to be a boy'.

There are three ways that schools produce gender. The pupils produce gender for themselves. The school produces gender through things like making children line up in different lines. And the children 'negotiate the curriculum'.

In conclusion, this essay has presented a lot of evidence to show that 'school is a significant site in which gender is produced'. In fact, Christine Heward describes schools as 'masculinity factories' and I would tend to agree with her. Gender is obviously very important in the school day. Schools are always doing things that reproduce gender even though they sometimes try to do the opposite of this. And even when schools do try to do the opposite of this the children themselves resist this by reproducing conventional ideas about gender (Thorne). Butler calls this 'performativity' but you could see it from the 'Deterministic' point of view of which EO Wilson is an example which would argue that the children are just being boys and girls because they are programmed to be this way by Evolution. This argument is difficult to get away from at the end of the day because there are some obvious differences between men and women so we probably should expect to see these in children as well. I would argue that we need to have a Middle Ground where we put together the Deterministic and the Social Constructionist point of views. In fact, this is what Connell argues when he says that you can't get away from the body.

The body, I would conclude is inescapable (Connell)

This is what I would argue.

References

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Commentary on Essay 2

You can probably see for yourself that this essay is not as strong an answer to the question as that provided by Essay 1. Why is this? Again, we can break down our thoughts into issues related to structure and writing skills, content and social scientific skills.

Structure and writing skills

Although the essay has an introduction, conclusion and some signposting, its structure and the writing skills displayed are weak. In particular:

- The introduction is underdeveloped compared to Essay 1. It does not establish the author's position on the question and both the signposting and the allusion to the debate lying 'behind' the question are vague. (See Section 7.1.)
- There are systematic errors in spelling and punctuation (e.g. 'there' instead of 'their'; incorrect use of the apostrophe; unnecessary use of capital letters on terms such as 'social constructionism'), sentences are sometimes cumbersome and paragraphs are sometimes too short. (See Section 11.4.)
- There are errors in the spelling of several authors' names (Foucolt instead of Foucault; Barry Thorne instead of Barrie Thorne).
- The brief section beginning, 'To be identified as a sissy is to invite homophobic abuse . . .', and ending, 'homophobic abuse of young men who did not display "hyper-masculinity"', is plagiarized from Epstein and Johnson (1998, p. 181). (See Section 11.5.)
- Although the essay begins by discussing theory and then moves on to look at empirical evidence, the logical progression of the argument is problematic. For

instance, the relevance of paragraph 5 to the question needs to be more clearly established, while the material on sexuality and schooling is not clearly located as an example of the ways in which gender is produced in schooling practices. (See Section 8.1.)

- Given the word limit, the essay is rather short (1,500 words). (Remember to check the rules on essay length that apply to the actual course you are studying.)

Content

The material covered appears to be relevant to the question set, drawing on similar literature to Essay 1. However, the understanding of this material appears to be much shallower in comparison to that displayed in Essay 1 and the breadth of detailed reading (as evidenced in the identification of major arguments and relevant evidence) appears more limited.

Social scientific skills

Once again, these areas are weak compared to Essay 1.

- Referencing is inconsistent and incomplete. (See Chapter 10.)
- The introduction and conclusion are thin. (See Chapters 7 and 9.)
- Handling of theory is poor, suggesting an inadequate understanding of the material. For example, although the discussion of Foucault and homosexuality is good, the concepts of performativity and hegemony are not fully explained. (See Sections 2.2 and 8.2.)
- Both the Mac an Ghaill quotation and the first Connell quotation are used without a full explanation of the points being made. (See Section 8.3.)
- The empirical evidence is sometimes left to 'speak for itself' without a full explanation of the point it is being used to illustrate or support. (See Section 8.2.)
- The information cited about the author's own schooldays detracts from the professionalism of the argument by appearing merely anecdotal. (See Section 11.3.)
- The evaluative conclusion is undermined by an incorrect understanding of Connell's argument about the relationship between the body and the social.
- Use of appropriate academic vocabulary is underdeveloped. (See Section 8.2.)

Essays 3 and 4 address a different question but again demonstrate the ways in which good academic practice can produce a stronger essay.