Exam skills

L017 • Gendered experiences within school • AQA A Level Sociology 7192

Measurable objective

Evaluate how curriculum, teacher interaction and pupil identities may shape gendered experiences within school.

Apply feminist and interactionist perspectives to everyday school processes.

Theory reset: interactionism

Interactionists study meanings, labels and everyday interactions.

In education, labels can shape self-concept, behaviour and opportunities.

Evaluation: interactionist evidence shows processes, but may need linking to wider structures such as gender norms and labour-market expectations.

Teacher expectations

Teachers may communicate different expectations through praise, discipline, subject advice and assumptions about behaviour.

This does not require deliberate prejudice; routine expectations can still produce patterned experiences.

Evaluation: learners are not passive. They may accept, resist or reinterpret expectations.

Hidden curriculum

The hidden curriculum refers to lessons learned through routines, rules, interactions and school culture rather than formal syllabus content.

It may communicate ideas about appropriate masculinity, femininity, authority and subject suitability.

A strong answer gives a precise example, not just the phrase “hidden curriculum”.

Feminist lens: school culture

Feminist sociologists examine whether school culture reproduces patriarchy through stereotypes, harassment, subject images or unequal expectations.

Liberal feminism emphasises equal treatment and opportunity. Radical feminism focuses more on power, control and male dominance.

Evaluation: schools can also challenge gender inequality through curriculum, safeguarding and role models.

Pupil agency and subcultures

Pupils create peer cultures and identities that can support or undermine achievement.

Some forms of masculinity may devalue schoolwork as feminine or uncool; some forms of femininity may place pressure on appearance, popularity or compliance.

Evaluation: gender identities intersect with class, ethnicity, sexuality and school context.

Worked application

Item detail: Leila receives advice that physics is “very competitive”, while Noah is encouraged to apply with the same grade.

AO1: gendered subject image and teacher expectation. AO2: the advice is the application. AO3: the case suggests a mechanism, but evidence of final choices and wider context is needed.

Response space:

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Route choice

Access: define hidden curriculum, labelling and pupil agency.

Scaffold: annotate a fictional subject-advice conversation.

Core: write two analysis paragraphs using teacher interaction and peer culture.

Stretch: compare interactionist and feminist explanations.

Response space:

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Assessment

6 marks: Explain two ways experiences within school may influence gendered choices.

10 marks: Applying material from Item A, analyse two ways school experiences may shape subject choices.

30 marks: Evaluate the view that school processes are the main reason for gender differences in education.

Response space:

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Recall and review

Retrieve one school process, one concept and one evaluation.

Improve one paragraph by adding a rival explanation or evidence limitation.