Knowledge organiser

L018 • Gender identities and subject choice • AQA A Level Sociology 7192

Measurable objective

Explain how peer cultures and institutional options may shape gender identities and subject choice.

Evaluate explanations using class, ethnicity and evidence limitations.

Theory reset: identity

Identity refers to how people understand themselves and are recognised by others.

Gender identity is socially constructed through interaction, institutions and cultural expectations.

Subject choice can become part of identity: some subjects feel “for people like me”, while others feel risky or out of place.

Gendered subject image

A gendered subject image is the social understanding that a subject is more suitable for one gender.

This can affect confidence, belonging, peer approval and willingness to continue.

Evaluation: subject images can change and are not experienced equally by all learners.

Peer cultures

Peer cultures may reward or punish subject choices, effort and ambition.

A learner may avoid a subject not because of ability, but because the identity attached to it feels socially costly.

Evaluation: peers matter, but school options, family resources and labour-market expectations also shape decisions.

Science capital and belonging

Science capital refers to science-related knowledge, contacts, experiences and confidence that make science feel familiar and possible.

ASPIRES-style research is often used to show that aspirations and identity are shaped by family resources, school experience and social recognition.

Evaluation: science capital helps explain participation, but should not be reduced to individual confidence alone.

Institutional options

Subject blocks, entry criteria, timetable clashes, travel and staffing can structure choices.

A learner may appear to “choose” a gendered route because other options were difficult, discouraged or unavailable.

Evaluation: this helps avoid blaming pupils for choices shaped by institutions.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality means gender works together with class, ethnicity and other identities.

Averages for “boys” and “girls” can hide major differences within each group.

A strong answer avoids treating girls or boys as a single uniform category.

Route choice

Access: define subject image, peer culture and science capital.

Scaffold: trace one learner’s subject decision through three influences.

Core: write two item-based analysis paragraphs.

Stretch: evaluate whether gender or class is the stronger influence in the case.

Response space:

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Assessment

6 marks: Explain two ways peer cultures may influence subject choices.

10 marks: Applying material from Item A, analyse two ways institutional options may shape gendered choices.

30 marks: Evaluate sociological explanations of gender differences in subject choice.

Response space:

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Recall and review

Retrieve one concept, one example and one evaluation.

Write a final judgement beginning: “Gender matters, but its effect depends on…”