1.7 The Social Construction of Identity: 30-minute Pack

AQA 8192 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Where a question refers to Item H, use both the Item and your own knowledge of the social construction of identity in your answer.

1 Evaluate the view that identity is mainly shaped by society, rather than being fixed by biology or entirely a matter of individual choice. In your answer you should refer to more than one type of identity (for example gender, ethnicity, nationality or class).

(Total for Question 1 is 12 marks)

2 Explain one way schools might unintentionally reinforce socially constructed gender expectations, even without meaning to.

(Total for Question 2 is 4 marks)

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3 The sociologist Ann Oakley (1972) identified four processes through which parents and others socialise children into gender roles.

(a) Explain what Oakley meant by 'manipulation'. **(2)**

(b) Explain what Oakley meant by 'canalisation'. **(2)**

(c) Explain what Oakley meant by 'verbal appellation'. **(2)**

(d) Explain what Oakley meant by 'activity exposure'. **(2)**

(Total for Question 3 is 8 marks)

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Mark scheme · 1.7 The Social Construction of Identity: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

Level 4 A detailed, well-balanced evaluation that accurately explains how at least two forms of identity (gender, ethnic, national or class) are socially constructed, supported by accurate reference to named sociologists such as Oakley, Anderson or Bourdieu. Strengths and limitations of the 'social construction' argument are analysed, and a reasoned, supported judgement is reached that neither denies biology any role nor treats identity as purely a free individual choice. Sociological terminology is used accurately and consistently throughout. Where gender or ethnicity is discussed, no group's identity or culture is presented as more natural, normal or valid than another's.	**10-12**
Level 3 A clear evaluation that explains at least two forms of identity, with some accurate reference to named sociologists. Some analysis of strengths/limitations. An attempt at a conclusion, which may be only partly supported.	**7-9**
Level 2 Some relevant explanation of one or more forms of identity, with limited development or accuracy. Little clear evaluation or comparison.	**4-6**
Level 1 One or two isolated, undeveloped points about identity, with little or no sociological terminology or accurate detail.	**1-3**
Level 0 No relevant content.	**0**

Indicative content:

- Gender identity: Oakley's (1972) four processes (manipulation, canalisation, verbal appellation, activity exposure) show how gender identity is actively taught by parents and others, as illustrated by the relatives' language in Item H, even where families try to treat children similarly.
- National identity: Anderson's (1983) 'imagined community' shows national belonging is built and maintained through shared culture, symbols and media, rather than through personally knowing every fellow citizen.
- Class identity: Bourdieu's (1979) concept of habitus shows how deeply learned tastes and habits from a person's class background can feel like a natural personal identity, while still being socially produced.
- Ethnic identity: as Item H shows, a person can hold multiple, situational identities (national, heritage-based, local) at once, supporting the view that identity is actively constructed through social context rather than fixed by ancestry alone.
- Evaluation for social construction: this view usefully explains why identities can differ between societies, change over historical time, and shift depending on social situation, which a purely fixed or biological account would not predict.
- Evaluation against/limiting social construction: critics note that some biological factors are not purely socially constructed (see the nature/nurture debate elsewhere in this strand), and that individuals are not entirely free to choose their identity, since social structures (such as how others categorise and treat them) also constrain it.
- A balanced conclusion could argue that identity is best understood as actively shaped by society within real limits, some of which are biological and some of which are imposed by how others perceive and treat a person, rather than as either fully fixed or fully chosen.
- A convincing top-level answer compares at least two named concepts (e.g. Oakley and Bourdieu, or Oakley and Anderson) and uses Item H as a worked illustration rather than treating each concept in isolation.

Question 2

identifies a plausible way, e.g. praising boys and girls using different language for similar achievements, or offering different subject/activity encouragement based on gender	**B1**
development of the example	**B1**
links this to Oakley's framework, e.g. identifying it as a form of verbal appellation, manipulation or activity exposure occurring in school rather than only at home	**B1**
development, e.g. explaining that because these patterns are usually unintentional, they can be harder for schools to notice and change than a formal, written school rule would be	**B1**

Answer: A school might unintentionally encourage boys towards certain subjects or activities and girls towards others, a form of Oakley's 'activity exposure' happening at school rather than only at home; because such patterns are usually unintentional, they can be harder for a school to notice and change than a formal written rule.

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Question 3

(a) identifies manipulation as encouraging behaviour seen as appropriate to a child's gender, and discouraging behaviour seen as inappropriate (oe) **B1**

(a) a correct example, e.g. praising a girl for being 'pretty' or 'gentle', or a boy for being 'brave' or 'tough' **B1**

(a) Answer: Manipulation is encouraging behaviour seen as appropriate to a child's gender and discouraging behaviour seen as inappropriate, e.g. praising a girl for being gentle or a boy for being brave.

(b) identifies canalisation as channelling children towards toys and objects seen as appropriate to their gender (oe) **B1**

(b) a correct example, e.g. giving dolls to girls and construction toys or footballs to boys **B1**

(b) Answer: Canalisation is channelling children towards toys and objects seen as appropriate to their gender, e.g. giving dolls to girls and construction toys to boys.

(c) identifies verbal appellation as the use of different nicknames, labels or descriptive words for children depending on their gender (oe) **B1**

(c) a correct example, e.g. calling a boy 'champ' or 'tiger' and a girl 'princess' or 'sweetheart' **B1**

(c) Answer: Verbal appellation is the use of different nicknames or descriptive words for children depending on their gender, e.g. calling a boy 'tiger' and a girl 'princess'.

(d) identifies activity exposure as encouraging children to take part in different activities and tasks depending on their gender (oe) **B1**

(d) a correct example, e.g. involving girls in helping with cooking or caring tasks and involving boys in outdoor or mechanical tasks **B1**

(d) Answer: Activity exposure is encouraging children to take part in different activities depending on their gender, e.g. involving girls in cooking or caring tasks and boys in outdoor or mechanical tasks.

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