

Lead in

1 Ask students to justify their categorisation or give examples.

Possible answer

- a Traditionally men have been thought to be better at subjects like Science and Mathematics. Women have been thought to be better at Art and Design and Foreign Languages. These days, these tendencies are less common. Women increasingly have better academic results in all subjects, especially at school.
- b Traditionally, activities like Electrical repairs and Map-reading are associated with men, whereas woman are associated with Looking after children and Cooking. However, as with academic subjects, these ideas may not be true these days.

2 Key

- a multitasking
- b No, because people, especially women, may be expected to do more activities at the same time.

Audioscript

Presenter In today's edition of *Focus on Gender* we focus on another of the supposed differences between men and women. I'll let our contributor Maggie Weston explain.

Maggie Weston Hi, Sue, thanks. You know, it's several decades ago that women first challenged men's superiority in society, yet, as we all know, the old male/female stereotypes haven't gone away. People still believe, for example, that men are better at finding their way somewhere and that women are better at dealing with people, but in recent years a new difference between men and women has been discovered. I'm talking about multitasking – the ability to do several different things simultaneously, an apparently natural ability that most women have, but that most men can't comprehend. **Of course, this isn't actually a 'new' difference. Women have always had this ability** – it's simply that, until recently, men have been unaware of just how poor they are at multitasking themselves. Now, many men openly admit that women are superior in this area, and **admire them for being**

able to multitask so efficiently. I recently overheard a 30-something-year-old man at a party saying – even boasting – that his wife could prepare dinner, talk to a friend on the phone, help their two children with their homework, and welcome him home from work all at the same time. The person he was telling came up with a similar story: his wife could read a book, watch television, and hold a conversation at the same time without a sign of panic. **For their part, most women take this ability for granted and can't understand why men find it so difficult.** They believe it's something they have had to learn in the modern world: society expects women to do everything, so that's what they have to do. Some even see it as a curse rather than a talent. A friend of mine said recently she thought that employers preferred to take on women because, unlike men, they could be relied on to do three things at the same time. The question that people are now asking is this: is the ability to multitask a genetic difference between the sexes, or is it something that women learn how to do from experience? According to neuroscientists, there are observable genetic differences between men's and women's brains, but these do not explain women's superiority when it comes to multitasking. **In fact, studies by scientists show that on average men and women are equally good at doing several tasks simultaneously.** A possible explanation for the apparent difference is that while men are capable of multitasking at work, they prefer to focus on one thing at a time in their home environment. **Women on the other hand are under more pressure at home to multitask, partly because men don't, or won't.** So there we have it. What do you think? I'll end with a quote from another friend of mine. I wonder if you'll agree with her when she said, and I quote: 'Who else has the time not to multitask except men?' Thanks for listening, even if you've been cooking lunch, writing another chapter of your latest novel, and planning your next holiday at the same time.

Multiple choice

3 Key

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| 1 B | 3 B | 5 A |
| 2 A | 4 C | |