Teaching notes

Using this issue

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This online issue of the magazine contains suggestions regarding how some of the articles in the printed magazine could be used, either by students or teachers. To aid revision, there is a worksheet on Geoff Andrews’ article on social class and a sample exam question on the ‘Power and politics’ topic. There are two PowerPoint presentations — one looking at the gender gap in higher education, and one linked to Tanya Bunsell’s article on doing ethnography in ‘deviant’ subcultures.

How religious are European Muslims? (p. 6)

For students

Note carefully the reasons given in the article as to why older/first generation immigrants are likely to be more religious than their Western counterparts. Make sure that you understand the important concept of ‘endogamy’ in this context. Note too the important point about religious belief in the West being seen as a ‘choice’ rather than a given. Can you think of any exceptions to this?

Also worth noting are the three reasons given by the author, David Voas, regarding why the children and grandchildren of immigrants may actually turn out to be more religious than their parents/grandparents. Another important concept to note is that of ‘immigrant Puritanism’.

The article suggests that for some Muslim immigrants religion may become the most important ‘identity marker’. An interesting follow-up to this is a podcast (see the weblink below) based on a large-scale longitudinal survey in which both white British-born subjects and people from ethnic minority groups were asked to rate themselves on a scale of ‘Britishness’. Several interesting and important points emerge from this, so it is worth making some notes.

www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/2012/10/17/how-british-is-the-uk-podcast

For teachers

If any students have not yet read the article, then it would be particularly useful to see what reasons they can think of as to why people like Ishmael might be more or less religious than their parents. One way of doing this would be to draw a table with two columns — one for reasons why the children of immigrants might be more religious than their parents, and one for reasons why they might be less religious. If this activity is done in small groups, the answers could then be compared.

Doing ethnography in ‘deviant’ subcultures (p. 10)

For students

Tanya Bunsell’s article provides a wealth of detail, not only about a particular research method (ethnography), but also about some of the problems and issues raised when conducting research on what is seen as a ‘deviant’ group — in this case, one with relatively few members. The article raises
some very important points about the ethical side to such research, and you should make a note of these. You should consider how Tanya Bunsell was able to conduct research into this group — she had certain characteristics that made her more acceptable, and more easily able to gain access, to this group than many other sociologists. Can you think of any possible disadvantages that this may lead to, as well as the obvious advantages? Try to compare this research to any of a different ‘deviant’ group that you have come across. What are the similarities and the differences?

For teachers

See the PowerPoint (Doing ethnography in ‘deviant’ subcultures) in this online issue for some photos that could be used as the basis for a class discussion.

The return of social class? (p. 16)

See the worksheet provided in this online issue.

Performing gender and breaking the rules (p. 22)

For students

This is a good article to read in conjunction with Tanya Bunsell’s article on female bodybuilders, as the women she describes are not ‘performing gender’ in the usual, or generally acceptable, manner.

As you read Ralph Fevre’s article, think carefully about the following points:

- Make sure that you understand what is meant by ‘essentialism’ in discussions of gender, and why sociologists would not agree that gender behaviour is all down to biology.
- What argument does the author put forward regarding how young women and girls do not have as much ‘freedom of choice’ as they might think.
- What does the author mean when he says that many school rules are, in fact, defending girls’ ‘real freedom of choice’?

What is meant by the following: ‘The mirage of sexual attractiveness bringing material success helps to shore up patriarchy’? Perhaps you could discuss this with some of your classmates. Can you think of any examples of how and where this ‘mirage’ is perpetuated? (Think of some television programmes and ‘celebrity’ magazines.)

Why do feminists who think that capitalism is at the root of the problem for women think that despite the many advances of women in society, little has in fact changed? What kind of social and commercial pressures are placed on boys and young men to grow and ‘perform’ in a particular way? What might be preventing some of them from achieving what is expected of them? If you were/are at a school that placed great emphasis on conforming to a particular dress code, how did/do you react to this? Hopefully, after reading this article, you will have a better understanding of at least some of the reasons for what might be seen as ‘petty rules’.

Racism and policing: views from the inside (p. 26)

For teachers

If not already covered in class, make sure that students are aware of the events surrounding the murder of Stephen Lawrence and, in particular, the main recommendations of the Macpherson Report.
Students should also have a good understanding of concepts such as ‘institutional racism’ and ‘canteen culture’. This article is useful as an example of a small-scale study, in which the personal characteristics of the researcher are important. It also provides an example of ‘snowball sampling’. Students should be encouraged to understand how racism can be expressed in ‘covert’ ways, and why it might be that some people accept being a victim of racism as perhaps the lesser of two evils. What comes across powerfully in this article is how being a victim of racism at work can have a significantly negative effect on other aspects of a person’s life.