Revision

Practice exam-style questions

Joan Garrod

This resource contains some guidance on answering the exam-related questions in certain articles in SOCIOLGY REVIEW Vol. 29, Nos 1 and 2. Note that this is guidance only — you may have taken a different approach, but you should make quite sure that you have answered the question.

Housing market and family trends: generation rent
SOCIOLGY REVIEW Vol. 29, No. 1, p. 2

Question

1. Summarise what Figure 2 tells us about the relationship between income and housing tenure. (4 marks)

There is a wealth of information to be gathered from Figure 2, so you will have to summarise the main points briefly. Remember that there are only 4 marks to be gained.

First, make sure that you have correctly identified that the group on the left of each bar chart represents the quintile with the lowest income, while that on the right represents those with the highest income.

You could then say that those with the lowest levels of household income were the least likely to have a mortgage, and the most likely to be ‘social renters’ (i.e. renting from an authority or housing association), while the reverse is true for those with the highest levels of income.

Another point you could make would be that outright ownership and renting from the private sector were features more evenly spread across the income groups. While you might well be able to offer plausible reasons for this, there is no point in doing so — you have not been asked for this, and would not be rewarded.

An important point, however, is that the figure shows that there is a relationship between household income and housing tenure.

Question

2. With reference to the article, outline two ways in which the housing market may influence family structure. (4 marks)

First, some general points about this type of question. You have been asked to outline two ways, so do this — no more, no less. Separate out the two ways by leaving a line between them, and/or numbering them clearly.

Second, while here you are asked to refer to the article, in an exam you will usually be asked to refer to an Item. Make quite sure that the information you give is taken from the source — do not copy
chunks of text — by making clear reference to the fact that your answer is drawn from the source. You can do this by saying things such as, ‘As it says in the Item’, or ‘The Item refers to’. Try to use your own words, and remember that you are asked to ‘outline’ — beware of writing more than you need.

As far as this particular question is concerned, you could use the following information.

- The lack of affordable housing and the increasing difficulties of obtaining a mortgage means that many young people are unable to set up a household of their own, and many continue to live with their parents, in effect creating an extended-family household.
- The fact that many young people are either living with their parents or are in rented properties, and are saving to buy a home of their own, has led some of them to delay starting a family. This has contributed to the rising age at which couples have their first child, meaning that there are more older first-time parents.

**What’s it like to seek asylum? Qualitative research and a social harm perspective**

*SOCIOLOGY REVIEW Vol. 29, No. 1, p. 7*

**Question**

Outline and explain two difficulties of using qualitative research to explore the problems faced by asylum seekers. (10 marks)

Again, you have been asked to write about two problems, so make quite sure that that is what you do. Also, this question carries 10 marks, so not only must you identify and outline a problem, you have to offer an explanation. It is still a good idea to separate the two parts of your answer, either by numbering, or by saying, ‘One problem is’ and then, ‘A second problem is’.

It would be helpful to write just one brief introductory sentence showing the examiner that you understand what is meant by qualitative research. However, your answer must focus on using qualitative research to investigate the difficulties faced by asylum seekers — do not fall into the trap of writing about general problems of qualitative research.

Problems you might identify include:

- Potential difficulties identifying, and gaining access to, asylum seekers.
- The subjects might be reluctant to discuss their problems openly.
- Potential problems of communication, if the asylum seeker’s ability in English is poor, or the researcher lacks the skill to address them in their native tongue and does not have access to a skilled interpreter.
- A sense of justice on the part of the researcher might lead to a loss of objectivity when discussing asylum seekers’ problems.
- The use of oral history to explore asylum seekers’ backgrounds is expensive and time-consuming.
The ‘white working class’ and diversity

SOCIETY REVIEW Vol. 29, No. 2, p. 18

Question 1
Explain, using examples, the concept of ‘parallel lives’. (6 marks)

In a question such as this, always look at the source material to see the context in which the concept is used. If a definition is given in the text, avoid simply copying it out — always use your own words. The sense in which the term is used here refers to the fact that because in many towns and cities people from different ethnic and religious groups live in small communities with people similar to themselves, they can spend most of their lives having relatively little interaction with those from different groups. Put this into your own words, and then think of examples. You could refer to aspects such as schools, places of worship, shops, cultural events, leisure activities and where these take place, and so on.

Remember that only 6 marks are available so tailor the length of your answer accordingly. Make quite sure that you have given an explanation of the meaning of the concept, and at least two examples, as the question asks for ‘examples’ in the plural.

Question 2
Applying material from the article, evaluate the view that low-income members of the white working class are inevitably hostile towards increasing religious and ethnic diversity in their neighbourhoods. (20 marks)

This question carries 20 marks, so you need to write at some length. Remember that the skills that you are asked for are Application and Evaluation. It is a good idea in such questions to underline key words or phrases — though be careful that you don’t end up with almost everything underlined.

Here, it would be helpful to underline the two skills (‘applying’ and ‘evaluate’) and the key word ‘inevitably’. This is important because the use of this word suggests that the hostility of one group towards the other(s) will always occur. You need to see whether the research here suggests that this is the case.

You will need to read the article very carefully, always bearing in mind what it is that you have been asked to do. When asked to evaluate a particular view (or theory, perspective or whatever) it is a good idea to write briefly on why such a view might be held (is there evidence?), who might hold it, and why — exactly what you write will, of course, depend on the question.

Note carefully what the authors here say about what evidence there is to suggest that such hostility exists. Now look for any evidence from the research in favour or against the view expressed in the question — there is plenty of material for you, so be careful to keep your answer within sensible time limits. If you can, mention other evidence or research that is relevant to the debate, to show that you have a broad sociological knowledge of the issue. Finally, in these higher-mark questions, always try to write a brief conclusion in which you summarise your arguments regarding what the evidence suggests. In this particular question, your conclusion might well refer to that key word, ‘inevitably’.
Ethnicity and inequality in state schools

SOCIOMETRY REVIEW Vol. 29, No. 2, p. 28

Question 1
Outline two reasons why state schools such as that discussed in the article would try to adopt some features of prestigious fee-paying schools. (4 marks)

Remember that you need only ‘outline’ the reasons — again, separate out your two reasons clearly.

Think about such schools:

- wanting to be seen as ‘different’ from ‘ordinary’ state schools in order to attract able and hard-working students
- using techniques to persuade socially ambitious parents that their sons will learn to be ‘gentlemen’
- the use of ‘hyper-selection’ to ensure good exam results and thus further enhance their reputation
- gaining and keeping a good reputation increases the probability of students going on to the most prestigious universities

Question 2
Applying material from the article, analyse two ways in which schools such as King Henry’s School contribute to inequalities in England’s state education system. (10 marks)

Remember that you must use material from the article (though you should not copy out large sections of text), and you should analyse (draw out) how the ways you have selected contribute to inequalities in the state education system. Separate out your two ways to show clearly that you have done what the question requires you to do.

Read the article carefully, and pay particular attention to the conclusion, where the issue raised in the question is directly addressed. Aspects you might consider include:

- high levels of selection (an option not open to most state comprehensive schools)
- the overt focus on copying aspects of prestigious public schools (how many state comprehensive schools could offer water polo as a sport?)
- the perpetration of the idea that certain cultural forms are superior to others, which can lead to social divisions
- the location of such schools in middle-class suburbs with house prices sufficiently high to be beyond the reach of many ‘ordinary’ people, and allowing them to escape many of the challenges faced by schools in impoverished areas.

Joan Garrod is a managing editor of SOCIOMETRY REVIEW.

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