

GCE 2004

June Series



Mark Scheme

Sociology

(Unit SC3W)

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Dr Michael Cresswell Director General

SOCIOLOGICAL METHODSAnswer **all** parts of the Question.**1****Total for this Question: 60 marks**

(a) Explain what is meant by “secondary sources” (**Item B**, line 13). (2 marks)

Two marks for an appropriate explanation, such as an existing source of information which has been collected or created by someone other than the researcher.

(b) Suggest **one** advantage and **one** disadvantage of carrying out “longitudinal research” (**Item A**, line 9). (4 marks)

Two marks for one appropriate advantage, such as:

- repeat studies can create comparative data;
- often uses the same sample;
- particularly appropriate for the study of large-scale social phenomena.

Two marks for one appropriate disadvantage, such as:

- sample attrition;
- sustaining funding/high cost;
- changing demographic composition of the target group over time;
- respondents being aware that they are part of a research project.

(c) Suggest **three** problems associated with using questionnaires “distributed through the post or over the internet” (**Item A**, line 8). (6 marks)

Two marks for each of three appropriate problems such as:

- lower response rate;
- researcher would not know who had completed and returned the survey;
- there is no way of knowing if respondents have understood the questions or response categories;
- answers may be incomplete;
- the internet is not a secure means of communication;
- respondents more likely to lie or exaggerate.

(d) Identify and briefly explain **two** reasons why “experiments in a laboratory setting” (**Item A**, lines 2 – 3) are rarely used in sociological research. (8 marks)

Two marks for each of two appropriate reasons identified, such as:

- the limited scale of the laboratory;
- the ethical problem of often having to mislead research subjects about the real purpose of the experiment;
- the artificial nature of the laboratory experiment;
- the moral issue of the potentially negative impact involvement in experiments can have on research subjects;
- the difficulty of controlling variables that might affect social behaviour;
- the ‘Hawthorne effect’ (demand characteristics);

- the perceived characteristics of the researcher;
- 'experimenter effect'.

Two further marks for each of the reasons explained, such as:

- The limited scale of the laboratory prevents the studying of large-scale social movements/issues that concern most sociologists.
- Misleading research subjects about the real purpose of the experiment may result in emotional or psychological damage and is contrary to BSA guidelines on research.
- The artificial nature of the laboratory experiment raises issues of ecological validity.

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| (e) Examine the reasons why some sociologists prefer to collect and use quantitative data in their research. (20 marks) |
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0 No relevant points.

1 – 7 Answers in this band will show only limited knowledge and understanding.

Lower in the band, this may be one or two quasi-commonsensical points about data in general. Higher in the band, answers will show a limited, undeveloped sociological knowledge, for example, two or three weak descriptive points about some examples of quantitative data. Interpretation of material may be simplistic or at a tangent to the question, for example a weak account of a research study that used quantitative data. Analysis will be very limited or non-existent.

In this band, candidates' answers are likely to be characterised by the poor logical expression of ideas and the use of a limited range of conceptual terms, perhaps often used imprecisely and/or inaccurately. Spelling, punctuation and grammar may show serious deficiencies and frequent errors, perhaps impairing the intelligibility of significant parts of the answer.

8 – 15 Answers in this band will show reasonable knowledge and understanding.

Lower in the band this might be confined to a competent if basic account of some characteristics, advantages or uses of quantitative data. Interpretation may be limited and not explicitly linked to the demands of the question; for instance, answers may be diverted into often lengthy descriptive accounts of particular examples of quantitative data such as the Census, poorly linked to the question.

Higher in the band, knowledge will be broader and/or deeper, and will begin to identify a wider range of advantages or uses of quantitative data. Material will be accurate, though at times its relevance may not be made explicit. There may be some limited explicit analysis or evaluation, for instance, through some weakly developed awareness of the methodological reasoning behind the collection of quantitative data. However, this is *not* a requirement, even to reach the top of the band.

In this band, candidates' answers are likely to be characterised by the fair to good logical expression of ideas and the competent use of a reasonable range of conceptual terms. Spelling, punctuation and grammar will be of a reasonable standard. Commonly used words and sociological terms will generally be spelt correctly. There may be minor errors of punctuation and grammar, but these will not seriously impair the intelligibility of the answer.

16 – 20 Answers in this band will display sound, conceptually detailed knowledge and understanding of sociological material relating to quantitative data. This will be accurately and sensitively interpreted to meet the demands of the question. The candidate will show the ability to organise material and analyse and/or evaluate so as to produce a coherent and relevant answer.

Candidates will consider a range of reasons for collecting and using quantitative data. Material may be drawn from issues of theoretical preference, validity, reliability, comparison and representativeness; an awareness of the differences between primary and secondary quantitative data; usefulness as a source of hypotheses; utility in relation to different research contexts and issues; ethical concerns.

Lower in the band, answers may examine a more limited range of material.

Higher in the band, answers may be more detailed and complete, and/or may show a clear rationale in the organisation of material leading to a distinct conclusion.

In this band, candidates' answers are likely to be characterised by the very good to excellent logical expression of ideas and the precise use of a broad range of conceptual terms. Spelling, punctuation and grammar will be of a very good to excellent standard. Commonly and less commonly used words and sociological terms will almost always be spelt correctly. Punctuation and grammar will be used correctly throughout to facilitate the intelligibility of the answer.

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| (f) Using material from Item B and elsewhere, assess the usefulness of participant observation in sociological research. (20 marks) |
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0 No relevant points.

1 – 7 In this band, analysis/evaluation will be very limited or non-existent, and answers will show only a limited knowledge and understanding.

Lower in the band, this may be one or two quasi-commonsensical points about the usefulness of participant observation, or some material ineffectually recycled from Item B. Higher in the band, answers will show a limited, undeveloped sociological knowledge, for example, in the form of a few descriptive and undeveloped sociological points about participant observation.

There may be little or no awareness of the different forms of participant observation used in sociological research. Reference to Item B will be restricted to the simplistic identification of one or two relevant points and these are likely to be stated rather than interpreted in the context of the question. Analysis and evaluation will be very limited or non-existent.

In this band, candidates' answers are likely to be characterised by the poor logical expression of ideas and the use of a limited range of conceptual terms, perhaps often used imprecisely and/or inaccurately. Spelling, punctuation and grammar may show serious deficiencies and frequent errors, perhaps impairing the intelligibility of significant parts of the answer.

8 – 15 In this band there will be some limited analysis and/or evaluation (though lower in the band this will be implicit), and answers will show a reasonable knowledge and understanding of some potentially relevant material.

Lower in the band, answers will tend to be more limited in range, offering a broadly accurate if basic account dealing mainly with one form of participant observation. Some less focused material may also appear, for example, lengthy but weakly linked descriptive accounts of studies using participant observation.

Higher in the band, knowledge and understanding will be largely appropriate to the demands of the question identifying a range of advantages and disadvantages of participant observation. Coverage of both covert and overt approaches may not be balanced. Accounts of studies using participant observation will be more closely linked to the issue of usefulness. There will be some limited explicit analysis and/or evaluation, for example through some brief reference to methodological issues or weak comparison with other methods.

In this band, candidates' answers are likely to be characterised by the fair to good logical expression of ideas and the competent use of a reasonable range of conceptual terms. Spelling, punctuation and grammar will be of a reasonable standard. Commonly used words and sociological terms will generally be spelt correctly. There may be minor errors of punctuation and grammar, but these will not seriously impair the intelligibility of the answer.

16 – 20 In this band, analysis and evaluation will be explicit and relevant, and answers will show a sound, conceptually detailed knowledge and understanding of relevant sociological material concerning the usefulness of different forms of participant observation drawn from Item B and elsewhere. The practical, ethical or theoretical strengths and weaknesses of participant

observation will be accurately identified in some detail. There will be a clear focus on the covert/overt dimension.

Material drawn from Item B and other examples of research studies employing participant observation will be relevant, accurate and sensitively interpreted. Analysis and evaluation will be explicit and sustained, perhaps being anchored in relation to the concepts of reliability, representativeness and validity, or through linkage to methodological preference. Explicit analysis and evaluation may also be displayed through the direct comparison of covert and overt approaches, comparison with alternative research methods or by some recognition that this technique may be more or less appropriate for particular research purposes.

Lower in the band, answers may consider a more limited range of material or occasionally lack focus or structure. Higher in the band, interpretation will be more fully focused and evaluation more thorough, and answers may show a clear rationale in the organisation of material leading to a distinct conclusion.

In this band, candidates' answers are likely to be characterised by the very good to excellent logical expression of ideas and the precise use of a broad range of conceptual terms. Spelling, punctuation and grammar will be of a very good to excellent standard. Commonly and less commonly used words and sociological terms will almost always be spelt correctly. Punctuation and grammar will be used correctly throughout to facilitate the intelligibility of the answer.