

General Certificate of Education
January 2007
Advanced Subsidiary Examination



SOCIOLOGY
Unit 3

SC3W

Tuesday 16 January 2007 9.00 am to 10.00 am

For this paper you must have:

- an 8-page answer book.

Time allowed: 1 hour

Instructions

- Use blue or black ink or ball-point pen.
- Write the information required on the front of your answer book. The *Examining Body* for this paper is AQA. The *Paper Reference* is SC3W.
- This paper consists of **one** question. Answer **all** parts of the question.
- Do all rough work in the answer book. Cross through any work you do not want to be marked.

Information

- The maximum mark for this paper is 60.
- The marks for part questions are shown in brackets.
- You will be marked on your ability to use good English, to organise information clearly and to use specialist vocabulary where appropriate.

SOCIOLOGICAL METHODS

Answer **all** parts of the question.

Total for this question: 60 marks

1 Read **Items A and B** and answer parts (a) to (f) which follow.

Item A

When sociologists conduct surveys, including those that are longitudinal in format, information is usually gathered from questionnaires or interviews. Whether in self-completion questionnaires or one of the several forms of interview, designing questions is difficult.

One major issue with designing questions is how structured they should be. Some interviews are highly standardised, using questions with fixed response categories. Thus, 5
for example, a question could be formatted in the following way:

<p>If there were to be a general election tomorrow, which political party do you think you would vote for?</p> <p>[Instruction to interviewer: record response as appropriate.]</p>		
Conservative	<input type="checkbox"/>	10
Labour	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Liberal Democrat	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	

However, all kinds of interviews have problems. Partly as a result of these, some sociologists opt instead for joining in the activities of the group under study, even though 15
this is often more time-consuming. It is argued that both covert and overt observation of behaviour generate far more useful data than simply asking questions.

Item B

Sociologists often make use of secondary data in their research. These data exist in a wide range of forms, including personal and historical documents, official statistics, media reports and previous sociological research. Secondary sources can produce either quantitative or qualitative data. Both positivists and interpretivists make use of secondary data in their research. 5

Positivists claim to identify causal relationships by analysing official and non-official statistics. For example, Durkheim used existing statistical data to develop an explanation of the social causes of suicide.

Alternatively, interpretivists claim to have uncovered stereotypes by carrying out qualitative content analysis of media output. For example, the Glasgow Media Group has 10
shown how the selective use of particular words and images contributes to the negative stereotyping of certain social groups.

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- (a) Explain what is meant by a 'longitudinal' survey (**Item A**, line 1). (2 marks)
- (b) Suggest **two** problems, **apart from** the one identified in **Item A**, with 'joining in the activities of the group under study' when carrying out sociological research (**Item A**, line 15). (4 marks)
- (c) Suggest **three** disadvantages of 'using questions with fixed response categories' in sociological research (**Item A**, line 5). (6 marks)
- (d) Identify and briefly explain **two** advantages of carrying out overt rather than covert observation in sociological research (**Item A**, lines 16 – 17). (8 marks)
- (e) Examine the factors that influence a sociologist's choice of research method. (20 marks)
- (f) Using material from **Item B** and elsewhere, assess the usefulness of different forms of secondary data in sociological research. (20 marks)

END OF QUESTIONS

There are no questions printed on this page