

General Certificate of Education
January 2008
Advanced Subsidiary Examination

SOCIOLOGY
Unit 3

SC3W



Tuesday 15 January 2008 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.
- Part questions (e) and (f) should be answered in continuous prose. In these part questions 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** below and answer parts (a) to (f) that follow.

Item A

There are many issues that sociologists need to consider when choosing a research method. These are often categorised into the practical, theoretical and ethical issues that affect research. Ethical issues relate to the moral aspects of research and are so important that the British Sociological Association issues a code of conduct for researchers to follow.

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Some sociologists prefer to make use of secondary rather than primary data in their research. Pearson (1983) used historical documents while Hey (1997) made use of personal documents in the form of the notes that female pupils secretly pass to each other during lessons. Other sociologists, particularly positivists, prefer to make use of official statistics created by government agencies.

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Item B

Iglesias and Torgerson of the York Trials Unit examined the effectiveness of postal questionnaires, looking in particular at the issue of response rates.

‘Postal questionnaires are frequently used in research and are often the only cost-effective method for collecting information. Postal questionnaires, however, do suffer from low response rates and this can threaten the quality of the data created. Improving response rates is therefore of critical importance for the researcher.

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We found that a seven-page questionnaire had significantly lower response rates among people aged over 70 years than did a three- or four-page questionnaire. Even issues such as whether the questionnaire has print on both sides of the page has an effect on whether it is returned. The quality of the questions is also very important. A few simple modifications to the questions greatly improved not just the response rate but also the quality of the answers received.’

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Source: adapted from C IGLESIAS and D TORGERSON, *Improving response rates to questionnaires*, York Trials Unit Newsletter Issue 3, The University of York, May 2004

- (a) Explain what is meant by 'primary' data (**Item A**, line 6). (2 marks)
- (b) Suggest **two** 'ethical issues' that sociologists might take into account when choosing a research method (**Item A**, line 2). (4 marks)
- (c) Suggest **three** advantages of using personal and historical documents in sociological research (**Item A**, lines 7–8). (6 marks)
- (d) Identify and briefly explain **two** disadvantages of using 'official statistics created by government agencies' in sociological research (**Item A**, line 10). (8 marks)
- (e) Examine the reasons why some sociologists use participant observation in their research. (20 marks)
- (f) Using material from **Item B** and elsewhere, assess the usefulness of postal questionnaires in sociological research. (20 marks)

END OF QUESTIONS

There are no questions printed on this page