

General Certificate of Education
January 2006
Advanced Level Examination

SOCIOLOGY
Unit 5

SC5W



Friday 20 January 2006 9.00 am to 10.30 am

For this paper you must have:

- a 12-page answer book

Time allowed: 1 hour 30 minutes

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 SC5W.
- This paper contains **two** Sections. Answer all parts of the question in **Section A** and **one** question from **Section B**.
- Do all rough work in the answer book. Cross through any work you do not want marked.

Information

- The maximum mark for this paper is 60.
- The marks for questions (or part questions) are shown in brackets.
- You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers. Questions 1(d), 2 and 3 should be answered in continuous prose. Quality of Written Communication will be assessed in these answers.

SECTION A: THEORY AND METHODS

Answer **all** parts of this Section.

Total for this section: 20 marks

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

Item A

Sociologists use quantitative and qualitative secondary data in research. However, the usefulness of each of these types of data has been questioned. For instance, there is a lively debate among sociologists about the use of official statistics. Governments collect and publish statistics on a wide range of social activities and use them to help develop policies and plan for future needs. 5

However, both interpretivists and Marxists make criticisms about both the validity and the reliability of official statistics. In studies on suicide, crime, unemployment and poverty, the interpretations put on statistics have been challenged. In contrast to this, many positivist sociologists argue that in the scientific study of society, official statistics are a valuable source of information that should never be ignored. 10

Item B

Researchers argue about whether or not sociology can be called a science. For some, the argument focuses on the research process, whilst for others it depends upon the definition of a science. According to Kuhn, what makes a subject a science is the fact that all those who practise it share the same 'paradigm'. A paradigm is a model of how scientists should work, what questions they should ask, and even what answers they ought to find. Using this model of science, some would argue that sociologists do not have a shared paradigm, and thus sociology cannot be seen as a science. It is also argued that, unlike the natural sciences, sociology cannot be objective and value-free. 5

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- (a) Briefly explain what is meant by 'reliability' (**Item A**, line 7). (2 marks)
- (b) (i) Identify **two** examples of '**qualitative** secondary data' (**Item A**, line 1). (2 marks)
- and**
- (ii) Briefly explain how **one** of these examples of **qualitative** secondary data might be useful in sociological research. (2 marks)
- (c) Identify and briefly explain **two** issues that might cause some sociologists to question the reliability and/or the validity of official statistics (**Item A**). (4 marks)
- (d) Briefly examine why some sociologists have argued that sociology 'cannot be objective and value-free' (**Item B**, line 8). (10 marks)

Turn over for Section B

SECTION B: THEORY AND METHODS

Answer **one** question from this Section.

Total for this section: 40 marks

EITHER

2 Evaluate the usefulness of observational techniques in sociological research. *(40 marks)*

OR

3 Evaluate how the concepts of modernity and post-modernity have influenced sociologists' understanding of society today. *(40 marks)*

END OF QUESTIONS