

General Certificate of Education
June 2008
Advanced Subsidiary Examination



SOCIOLOGY
Unit 3

SC3WR

Tuesday 13 May 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 black ink or black 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 SC3WR.
- 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** and answer parts (a) to (f) that follow.

Item A

Some sociologists favour the use of qualitative data to study social behaviour. Such data can be created by primary research or drawn from a variety of sources including letters, diaries and other personal documents.

Some researchers argue that covertly observing members of a social group is the most effective way to generate qualitative data that is high in validity. This involves the researcher immersing themselves in the everyday life of a group without its members being aware that they are being studied.

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Other researchers have collected life histories through unstructured interviews or individuals writing down their own life story.

Item B

One of the most important decisions for a researcher is their choice of research method. The researcher's theoretical position is a major factor in determining choice of method. For example, positivist sociologists start from the belief that there is an objective social reality that is 'out there' and can be measured. As a result, they choose methods that create quantitative data in order to identify patterns of social behaviour. Interpretivists, on the other hand, are more concerned with uncovering the meanings that social actors hold.

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Although there are many methods and sources of data that a researcher could use when investigating social behaviour, time and cost usually limit what they can actually do.

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- (a) Explain what is meant by ‘validity’ (**Item A**, line 5). *(2 marks)*
- (b) Suggest **one** advantage and **one** disadvantage of using life histories in sociological research (**Item A**, line 8). *(4 marks)*
- (c) Suggest **three** disadvantages of ‘covertly observing members of a social group’ (**Item A**, line 4). *(6 marks)*
- (d) Identify and briefly explain **two** disadvantages of personal documents in sociological research. *(8 marks)*
- (e) Examine the problems sociologists may face when using questionnaires in their research. *(20 marks)*
- (f) Using material from **Item B** and elsewhere, assess the claim that a sociologist’s choice of research method is primarily influenced by theoretical factors. *(20 marks)*

END OF QUESTIONS

There are no questions printed on this page