

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS  
General Certificate of Education  
Advanced Subsidiary Level and Advanced Level

**SOCIOLOGY**

**9699/02**

Paper 2 Principles and Methods 2

October/November 2005

Additional Materials: Answer Booklet/Paper

**1 hour 30 minutes**

**READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST**

If you have been given an Answer Booklet, follow the instructions on the front cover of the Booklet.  
Write your Centre number, candidate number and name on all the work you hand in.  
Write in dark blue or black pen on both sides of the paper.  
You may use a soft pencil for any diagrams, graphs or rough working.  
Do not use staples, paper clips, highlighters, glue or correction fluid.

Answer **two** questions.

At the end of the examination, fasten all your work securely together.

The number of marks is given in brackets [ ] at the end of each question or part question.

This document consists of **3** printed pages and **1** blank page.



Answer **two** questions.

- 1 A social problem is any condition or form of behaviour that gives rise to concerns about the cohesiveness and stability of society. Delinquency, divorce, unemployment, and industrial conflict, are just some of the phenomena that may be considered social problems. However, it is important to note that what constitutes a social problem in one society may not be regarded as such in another. Alcohol consumption is an example of this. Even within a particular society social problems can be and often are viewed differently. For example, some groups in a society may regard immigration as a problem while others may regard racism as a problem. It is usually the most powerful groups who are able to define what is considered a social problem and what social policies are adopted for dealing with it. Hence, it is important to discover where power lies in order to identify and understand social problems.
- (a) What is meant by the term *social policy*? [2]
- (b) Describe **two** social problems in your society. [4]
- (c) Explain how some groups may benefit from having the power to define what is considered a social problem. [8]
- (d) Assess the view that sociological research should be used as a basis for solutions to social problems. [11]
- 2 Participant observation is a major research strategy in Sociology. It is used to gain a close and detailed understanding of a given area of study through an intensive involvement with people in their natural environment. Laud Humphreys's study of homosexuals in *Tearoom Trade* and William Foote Whyte's study of the gang in *Street Corner Society*, are classic examples. Participant observation may be overt or covert. Supporters of this research strategy argue that it enables the sociologist to achieve a detailed understanding of the subject under study and the data it produces is high in validity. However, critics identify a number of drawbacks with participant observation, not least the many ethical problems that it gives rise to. In general, interactionists favour the use of participant observation as a research strategy, while positivists find many faults with it.
- (a) Distinguish between *covert* and *overt* participant observation. [2]
- (b) Describe **two** ethical issues associated with **covert** participant observation. [4]
- (c) Explain why interactionists favour the use of participant observation as a research strategy. [8]
- (d) Using examples, assess the factors that may affect the validity of studies that are based on participant observation. [11]

3 There is no agreed measure of the extent of poverty in modern industrial societies. Most people would agree that poverty exists, but judgements about how much there is and why it exists depend on how it is defined and measured. Most definitions of poverty are relative, though an absolute standard may also be used. Using a relative concept of poverty, some sociologists have argued that an 'underclass' exists in countries like the USA and the UK. This group consists of people who live on very low incomes, such as the long-term unemployed, single-parent families living on welfare benefits, and elderly pensioners who are entirely dependent on state pensions and benefits. It has also been claimed that some ethnic minorities, such as Hispanic and Afro-Caribbean groups in the USA, are disproportionately represented within the underclass. However, not all sociologists agree that an underclass exists or that it is a helpful concept.

- (a) What is meant by the term *absolute poverty*? [2]
- (b) Describe **two** examples of **relative** poverty. [4]
- (c) Explain why the concept of an underclass has been criticised by some sociologists. [8]
- (d) Assess 'the culture of poverty' explanation for the existence of poverty in modern industrial societies. [11]

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