



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

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**SOCIOLOGY**

**9699/22**

Paper 2 Principles and Methods 2

**October/November 2011**

**1 hour 30 minutes**

Candidates answer on the Question Paper.

No additional materials are required.

**READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST**

DO **NOT** WRITE IN ANY BARCODES.

Write your Centre number, candidate number and name on all the work you hand in.

Write in dark blue or black pen.

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.

You may not need all the answer lines for your answer.

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

This document consists of **13** printed pages and **3** blank pages.



Answer **two** questions.

For  
Examiner's  
Use

- 1 Positivists believe that society should be studied using the methods of the natural sciences. They see these methods as providing an accurate and objective way of isolating and measuring the *variables* that shape human behaviour. The quantitative data produced using this approach allows correlations and comparisons to be made from which generalisations can be established.

Positivists believe that scientific methods help to prevent the researcher's values influencing the research findings. But they may be unrealistic in thinking that natural science is free from the influence of values. For example, some studies have shown that social factors may influence what scientists believe is legitimate knowledge, leading them to reject theories that clash with the dominant way of thinking at the time.

Interpretivists think that using a scientific approach to study society would be inappropriate. They claim that sociological studies are always likely to be influenced by the researcher's values and that attempts to use scientific methods to measure people's attitudes and beliefs will inevitably over-simplify the complex nature of social reality.

- (a) In the context of scientific research what is meant by the term *variables*?

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 ..... [2]

- (b) Describe **two** reasons why scientists may reject theories that clash with the dominant way of thinking at the time.

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2 Questionnaires are a set of written questions that are either given to respondents to complete or are posted to them. Postal questionnaires are most likely to reach the largest group, although they have the lowest response rate. Questionnaires are widely used in sociological research because they allow a large number of questions to be asked to a wide group in a short space of time. Sociologists working within the positivist tradition favour the use of questionnaires because of the *reliability* of the method and the ability to identify trends and make generalisations from the data that is collected. From an interpretivist perspective, however, research based on questionnaires is said to lack validity.

Interviews are an alternative to questionnaires. There are three main types of interview – structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Structured interviews are similar to questionnaires in that they contain pre-set questions that are asked in the same order every time. Whereas a questionnaire may be given to a respondent to complete privately, a structured interview consists of a spoken question-and-answer session between interviewer and interviewee. The presence of the interviewer in this process brings some advantages when compared to questionnaires, but it may also create the problem of researcher effect.

(a) What is meant by the term *reliability*?

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(b) Describe **two** advantages of using structured interviews rather than questionnaires.

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3 Functionalists believe that social order is based on *value consensus*. They also claim that the interests of all social groups are served by a social system that is stable and efficient in producing goods and services. Such a system requires leaders who make decisions on behalf of others, and these people have to be adequately rewarded. Therefore inequality is an important part of a stable and efficient society, and all social groups benefit from that inequality.

By contrast, conflict theorists argue that society is made up of groups with different interests, and social life is a struggle between these groups to achieve power and domination. Social inequality, in this view, benefits the rich and powerful in society at the expense of other, weaker groups. Feminists believe that women are a disadvantaged group who are discriminated against in ways that benefit the interests of men.

(a) What is meant by the term *value consensus*?

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(b) Describe **two** examples of social inequality.

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