



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

CANDIDATE
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SOCIOLOGY

9699/23

Paper 2 Principles and Methods 2

October/November 2012

1 hour 30 minutes

Candidates answer on the Question Paper.

No additional materials are required.

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

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.

DO NOT WRITE IN ANY BARCODES.

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 Sociology is based on the idea that each member of society is constrained and limited, to some greater or lesser extent, by the social world. One source of social constraint is the law. People obey the law all or most of the time, and this is partly because formal sanctions exist to punish law breakers. But even in areas of society where there are no laws or formal sanctions, individuals still generally conform to the norms and values of their community. *Customs*, conventions and fashions all may act as social constraints on the individual. For example, there is no law preventing men wearing dresses, yet few, if any, choose to do so.

Fear of informal sanctions may play a significant part in encouraging people to follow the expected patterns of behaviour in society. Yet even in situations where there are few, if any, sanctions to deter us from acting against the social norm, we often still choose to conform to group expectations about what is seen as appropriate behaviour. In such cases it would seem that social norms and values have become so deeply internalised in the individual that it becomes very difficult, if not impossible, to act otherwise. However, social conformity may also occur because the individual is powerless to act in any other way. This may be particularly the case with disadvantaged groups, such as the poor, who have few resources with which to oppose the social constraints that shape their lives.

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

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(b) Describe **two** examples of informal sanctions.

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..... [4]

2 Sociologists carry out research in order to collect data in a systematic and organised way. This data provides the sociologist with evidence to help them describe or explain the social world. Sociological research involves a series of clear stages, all of which need to be carefully considered in advance. Deciding on an area or subject for research is the first step. It is likely that the decision about what to study will be influenced by the values of the researcher, or by the values of the organisation that has agreed to fund the project.

The next stage involves developing the aims or hypothesis of the research and then choosing a research strategy. Choice of research methods is likely to be influenced by both practical and theoretical factors. Whether or not to use *triangulation* is another matter to be decided. Decisions also need to be made on how or whether to use sampling techniques and pilot studies. A pilot study is a small-scale trial run carried out before the main research. Further stages in the research process include conducting the research, interpreting the results and reporting the findings.

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

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(b) Describe **two** advantages of using a pilot study in sociological research.

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3 Sociologists have distinguished between absolute and relative poverty. Absolute poverty occurs where people have insufficient income to obtain the basic necessities of life such as food, shelter and clothing. Examples of absolute poverty are rare in modern industrial societies today. Government welfare payments are available to ensure that every member of society has the minimum income needed to survive. However, people who are dependent on welfare payments still experience relative poverty. This is because their income is much less than the average for society as a whole.

There is a debate about whether the existence of welfare payments has created a culture of dependency among the poor. In one view, the availability of welfare payments is said to discourage the poor from working hard to find their own ways of escaping poverty. A different view sees the poor as trapped in a *cycle of poverty* from which it is very hard to break free through individual effort alone. People from some social groups are more likely to experience poverty than others. Women face a greater risk of poverty than men. Single mothers and older women living alone are two groups who have a particularly high risk of experiencing long periods of poverty.

(a) What is meant by the term *cycle of poverty*?

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(b) Describe **two** difficulties a poor person may face in trying to escape poverty.

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