

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 2004

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.

Answer **two** questions.

- 1 Sociologists are strongly opposed to accounts of social behaviour that rely on common sense. They point out that in everyday life 'common sense' is just a phrase people use to claim that what they are saying is beyond question. But the claim is not backed up by any systematic appeal to evidence; if it were it would cease to be common sense. By contrast, sociological reasoning sets out the steps of an argument systematically, shows where and how the argument is supported by evidence, and states how the evidence was collected.

Furthermore, sociologists attempt to examine the assumptions on which their own research and arguments are based, so that they are not misled by irrational and unsupportable ideas. They also make their work available for criticism and review by other sociologists so that any *bias* may be detected; common sense simply claims that it is common sense, and therefore cannot be challenged.

- (a) What is meant by the term *bias*? [2]
- (b) Describe **two** possible sources of bias in a piece of sociological research. [4]
- (c) Explain how the use of the hypothetico-deductive method may make sociology superior to common sense. [8]
- (d) Assess the view that sociological research can never be as rigorous and objective as research in the natural sciences. [11]

- 2 *Interpretivist* sociologists favour participant observation as a research method. This is where researchers join the life of the people they are studying, not only to be able to observe people in their natural surroundings, but also to learn to see things and feel things as they do. One of the worries of participant observers is 'sympathetic bias': the idea that they may be influenced to give a kindly but biased account of research subjects who have become friends. Indeed, the more successful they are in becoming members, the more difficult it is for them to avoid sympathetic bias.

- (a) What is meant by the term *interpretivist*? [2]
- (b) Describe **two** difficulties that a sociologist may face in gaining access to a group they wish to study. [4]
- (c) Explain why supporters of participant observation believe that it is important to study people in their natural surroundings. [8]
- (d) Assess the arguments of those who criticise the use of participant observation in sociological research. [11]

- 3 Functionalists claim that everyone's interests are served by a social system that is stable and efficient in producing goods and services. A stable and efficient society has to have managers and so on to organise things 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 hence inequality is to the benefit of everyone.

By contrast, conflict theorists argue that society is made up of groups with different interests, and social life is a struggle between groups trying to impose their interests on others. Social stability mostly benefits those who are currently doing well out of the system.

- (a) What is meant by the term *inequality*? [2]
- (b) Describe **two** types of inequality in modern industrial societies. [4]
- (c) Explain why functionalists consider that inequality is an important part of a stable and efficient society. [8]
- (d) Assess the claim that differences in status and wealth mostly benefit the rich and powerful groups in society. [11]

