

Social Science Reference Sheet

Question 1:

Explain the differences between sociology, anthropology, and political science within the field of social science. Provide examples of research topics for each discipline.

Answer:

Sociology is the study of human social relationships, institutions, and society. It examines patterns of social behavior, social interaction, and cultural norms. Research topics include family structures, social stratification, urbanization, and crime.

Anthropology focuses on the study of humans, past and present, emphasizing cultural, social, and biological development. It often uses ethnographic methods to understand cultures and societies. Topics include kinship systems, rituals, language evolution, and human origins.

Political science analyzes systems of governance, political activities, political thoughts, and behavior. It covers the functioning of governments, political institutions, public policies, and international relations. Research topics include electoral systems, democracy, policy analysis, and global conflicts.

These disciplines differ in their focus: sociology investigates social patterns and institutions, anthropology explores human diversity and cultural practices, while political science studies power structures and governance.

Question 2:

Describe the structure and function of a typical social survey. Why are surveys important in social science research?

Answer:

A social survey is a research method involving the systematic collection of data from a population using questionnaires or interviews.

Key components:

- **Sampling:** Selecting a representative group from the larger population.
- **Questionnaire:** A set of structured or semi-structured questions.
- **Data Collection:** Gathering responses through face-to-face, telephone, online, or mail methods.

- **Analysis:** Interpreting the data to identify trends, correlations, or patterns.

Surveys are important because they allow researchers to gather quantitative data on attitudes, opinions, behaviors, and demographics from large groups. They are essential for understanding social trends, informing public policy, and testing sociological theories.

Question 3:

Discuss the ethical considerations and societal impacts of conducting social science research with human participants.

Answer:

Ethical considerations in social science research include:

- **Informed Consent:** Participants should be fully aware of the study's purpose and voluntarily agree to participate.
- **Confidentiality:** Researchers must protect the privacy and identity of participants.
- **Non-maleficence:** Avoiding harm or distress to participants.
- **Right to Withdraw:** Participants can leave the study at any time.

Societal impacts include the potential to inform policies, improve social welfare, and promote understanding of social issues. However, misuse of data or unethical research can lead to public mistrust, reinforce stereotypes, or harm vulnerable groups. Ethical oversight and transparent communication are essential for responsible research.

Question 4:

Explain the concept of social stratification and discuss its advantages and limitations in understanding society.

Answer:

Social stratification refers to the hierarchical arrangement of individuals or groups in society based on factors like wealth, power, education, or social status.

Advantages:

- Helps explain patterns of inequality and mobility.
- Provides a framework for analyzing social class, gender, race, and other divisions.
- Aids in understanding the distribution of resources and opportunities.

Limitations:

- May oversimplify complex social realities.
- Can reinforce stereotypes or justify inequalities.
- Does not always account for individual agency or cultural variations.

Ongoing research aims to develop more nuanced theories that address intersectionality and social change.

Question 5:

Describe the principles of qualitative research and how interviews are used to explore social phenomena.

Answer:

Qualitative research seeks to understand social phenomena through in-depth, non-numerical data.

Principles include:

- Contextual understanding of participants' experiences.
- Flexible, open-ended data collection methods.
- Emphasis on meaning, interpretation, and process.

Interviews are a key qualitative method, allowing researchers to explore participants' perspectives, motivations, and experiences in detail. They can be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured. Interviews are used to gather rich, descriptive data on topics such as identity, beliefs, social change, and group dynamics.

Reference Sheet Summary

- **Sociology:** Social patterns, institutions, and interactions.
- **Anthropology:** Human diversity, culture, and development.
- **Political Science:** Governance, power, and policy.
- **Social Surveys:** Quantitative data collection and analysis.
- **Research Ethics:** Consent, confidentiality, and participant welfare.

- **Social Stratification:** Hierarchies and inequality.
- **Qualitative Research:** In-depth exploration of social life.