

Student 2 – Social Science Answer 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 investigates how people interact within groups and the structures of society. It looks at social behaviors, institutions, and cultural expectations. Research in sociology might examine topics like family organization, social inequality, urban life, or patterns of crime.

Anthropology is centered on understanding humans across time and space, focusing on cultural, social, and biological aspects. It often uses in-depth observation to study things like kinship systems, cultural rituals, language development, or the evolution of humans.

Political science studies how societies govern themselves and how power is distributed. It explores government systems, political behavior, and public policies. Common research topics include how elections work, the functioning of democracies, policy effectiveness, and international relations.

In summary, sociology focuses on social patterns and institutions, anthropology explores cultural diversity and human development, and political science analyzes governance and power structures.

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 method for systematically collecting information from people, usually through questionnaires or interviews.

Main components include:

- **Sampling:** Choosing a group that represents the larger population.
- **Questionnaire:** Developing a set of structured or semi-structured questions.
- **Data Collection:** Gathering responses in person, by phone, online, or by mail.
- **Analysis:** Looking for trends, relationships, or patterns in the responses.

Surveys are essential in social science because they enable researchers to collect quantitative data on people's attitudes, opinions, and behaviors from large groups. This helps in understanding social trends, shaping public policy, and testing social 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:** Ensuring participants know the study's purpose and agree to take part voluntarily.
- **Confidentiality:** Protecting participants' identities and personal information.
- **Non-maleficence:** Making sure no harm comes to participants.
- **Right to Withdraw:** Allowing participants to leave the study at any time.

Social science research can benefit society by informing policies and improving social welfare. However, unethical research or misuse of data can lead to mistrust, reinforce stereotypes, or harm vulnerable groups. That's why ethical oversight and clear communication are crucial.

Question 4

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

Answer:

Social stratification is the way society organizes people into hierarchies based on factors like wealth, power, education, or social status.

Advantages:

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

Limitations:

- May oversimplify the complexity of social life.
- Can reinforce stereotypes or justify existing inequalities.
- Doesn't always account for individual choices or cultural differences.

Researchers continue to refine stratification theories to better address issues like intersectionality and social change.

Question 5

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

Answer:

Qualitative research aims to understand social life through detailed, non-numerical data.

Key principles include:

- Gaining deep, contextual understanding of participants' experiences.
- Using flexible, open-ended methods for data collection.
- Focusing on meaning, interpretation, and the processes behind social actions.

Interviews are a central tool in qualitative research, allowing for in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives, motivations, and experiences. These can be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured, and are used to gather rich data on topics like identity, beliefs, social change, and group dynamics.