**Introduction to Sociology**

Chapter 4 “Perspectives”: Assignments

**4.1 The origins of sociological perspectives**

**Q1**

In many fields of research, including sociology, different perspectives can be used to approach a problem or topic. What is the purpose of a perspective? Do perspectives differ from frameworks or paradigms? Argue why or why not.

**Q2**

Can different perspectives be used to understand the same problem or topic? Argue why or why not.

**4.2 Sociological themes and topics**

**Q1.**

What is a “sociological topic”? Give an example of a sociological topic that is debated in your country.

**Q2.**

Explain what a “sociological theme” is. How do sociological themes relate to the concept of “perspectives”?

**Q3**

Suppose you’re interested in the sociological dimensions of climate change, such as in the human behavior that causes this change, or in the consequences of climate changes for human beings. Can you link this topic to the three overarching themes of sociology, i.e., Culture, Social Relations and Inequality? Formulate one question per theme, and identify what type of question you pose (descriptive, theory, application). Use the following table:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Sociological theme** | **Sociological questions** | **Type of question** |
| 1 |  |  |  |
| 2 |  |  |  |
| 3 |  |  |  |

**Q4.**

Suppose you want to study the topic of crime. Give an example of how different sociological themes can be used when approaching this topic, and how these approaches may lead to different explanations for criminal behavior.

**Q5.**

Below is a table with research questions. Link these research questions to one or more sociological theme, and if applicable, to a sociological subtheme.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Research question** | **Sociological theme (s)** | **Subtheme(s)** |
| 1 | What are the social causes of stereotypes? |  |  |
| 2 | How does the number of friends someone has at work influence their likelihood of getting a promotion? |  |  |
| 3 | To what extent are groups in conflict with each other? |  |  |
| 4 | Which determinants make children academically outperform their parents? |  |  |
| 5 | Do what extent does peer-group pressure influence behavior? |  |  |
| 6 | How does an individual’s level of education influence their job status? |  |  |

**4.3 Causal explaining or subjective understanding?**

**Q1**

Suppose a team of researchers wants to understand why certain neighborhoods have higher crime rates than others. They find among other factors that bad upkeep of buildings and public amenities in a neighborhood causes higher crime rates.

Q1a. In Chapter 1, different levels of analysis were introduced (i.e., macro, meso, micro). On what level does this finding operate? Explain why the other two levels are not applicable here.

Q1b. Is this finding closer to an ecological explanation or an application of “Verstehen”? Explain why.

Q1c. Is this an example of a “Black Box” explanation? Argue why or why not.

**4.4 Multilevel framework**

**Q1**

Empirical findings show that the homicide rate in the US is much higher than it is in many other western countries, like the Netherlands and Italy. Use a multilevel framework (see below) to come up with an explanation for this finding. Fill in the empty boxes, identify the type of relationships for each arrow, and explain the relationships between the different boxes.

Homicide rate in a country

*…*

*…*

*…*

**Q2**

The year 2020 was a year of protest around the world (e.g., Black Lives Matter, anti-vaccination protests, anti-China protests in Hong Kong, etc.). Often, protests start small, but then the number of people protesting grows strongly. How can you explain this increasing support for protests movements? Why are more and more people joining protests and riots? Use a multilevel framework to present a scientific explanation of this phenomenon.

**Chapter generic assignments**

**Q1.**

Read the following article about Christians in Sri Lanka, on *The Conversation*: <https://theconversation.com/who-are-sri-lankas-christians-115799>

Q1a. Describe which sociological themes are applicable to this article, and why this is the case. Do these themes overlap in this article?

Q1b. Which sociological topics are being discussed in this article?

Q1c. Take the sociological theme of “social relations”. Come up with an appropriate descriptive and theoretical question regarding the issues discussed in this article, that links to this theme. Also indicate which subtheme of social relations is most appropriate for each question.

**Q2**

Select a social problem you find interesting and find a news article about this problem; it can be anything you like. You might be interested in the rising income inequality in western countries, crime among young people, anything goes. Please answer the following questions with respect to the social problem and news article you selected:

1. Briefly describe the societal problem and news article (in just 3-4 sentences).
2. Formulate a normative question about this societal problem.
3. Formulate a descriptive and theoretical (sociological) question about this social problem.
4. Formulate a hypothesis, which gives an answer to your theoretical question.
5. To which sociological theme is your social problem and hypothesis related?
6. Use a multilevel framework to explain the social problem you’re interested in.
7. Suppose you want to test whether your explanation is true or not. Which method do you prefer to use? Describe the data will you use and why (administrative, survey, online data, qualitative field research, experiment)? Please give a sufficiently detailed description of your data.
8. Please reflect on the issues of *internal validity and external validity* and how do you deal with them? Do they threaten the conclusions of your study?

Make sure that you can present your answers in the meeting.