

WRAP Exams · wrapexams.com

Prelims PYQ, Mains model answers, and copy evaluation. Write to the desk for this paper, a doubt, or the AI waitlist.

ask@wrapexams.com · +91 85951 84903 · wrapexams.com

Q1(c)

The difference between information and data in social science is subtle. Comment.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · Sociology GS 1 · 10 marks · Social Change in Modern Society

Social Change in Modern Society: Sociological theories of social change; Development and dependency; Agents of social change; Education and social change; Science, technology and social change.

Core demand of the question

- The difference between information and data in social science is subtle. Comment
- Keep the comment within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Information is a report; data are information organised for a research question.

Durkheim turned official suicide counts into sociological data by classification.

Blumer warned that grids can freeze living meanings.

Census and **NFHS** are public information until a defined indicator is built.

Numbers alone do not make data.

Introduction

Information is a report that something happened or was said. Data are information that has been selected, classified, and made usable for a research question. The difference is subtle because the same table can be either, depending on theory and procedure.

Body**The subtle cut**

- A newspaper figure, a rumour, or a raw census cell is information. It becomes data when it is defined, coded, and tied to an indicator.
- **Emile Durkheim** did not treat suicide counts as self-explaining information. He turned official records into data by classifying types and relating them to integration and regulation.
- Herbert **Blumer** warned that variable analysis can freeze meanings that actors still negotiate. Then the "data" are only the researcher's grid.

How social science makes data

- Concepts, operational definitions, and sampling rules convert a stream of talk or files into comparable cases.
- The **Indian Census** and **NFHS** publish information for many users. A sociologist makes data by asking, for example, about female work or household headship with a stated definition.
- **Max Weber**'s ideal type is a way of organising information so that it can be compared, not a photograph of a person.

Comment

- The subtlety is that no fact arrives innocent. Selection has already occurred in the office that recorded it.
- Good practice names the coding, the missing cases, and the theory that turned information into data.
- Bad practice treats a dashboard as data because it is numerical.

Flow diagram

Information reports files talk -> Selection coding theory

Selection coding theory -> Data for a question

Data for a question -> Claim

Conclusion

Information is a report. Data are organised for a question. **Durkheim's** suicide files and the **Census** show the conversion. The difference is subtle because theory and office procedure sit inside both.

Facts & figures

Durkheim on suicide

Used official records as constructed data on integration and regulation, not as raw truth.

Blumer

Criticised variable analysis that treats meanings as already fixed information.

Indian Census

A vast information system whose work, caste, and household cells become data only under stated definitions.

NFHS

Survey information on health and fertility that researchers recode as indicators of inequality.