



## Worksheet 3: Two-sided arguments answers

- 1 Evaluate the positivist approach to sociological research.

One side of the argument	Other side of the argument
<i>That positivism is the best approach to research.</i>	<i>Interpretivists have identified some criticisms of the positivist approach.</i>
<b>Example:</b> <i>Positivists use a quantitative approach as it allows researchers to identify patterns and trends which can be used to make comparisons.</i>	<b>Example:</b> <i>A quantitative approach fails to give reasons behind the numbers – an interpretivist approach can gain qualitative data to give us the ‘whys’ behind patterns and trends.</i>
<b>Example:</b> <i>Positivists also aim for an objective approach. They try not to be personally involved in the research process – for example they might use self-completion questionnaires. This means that there is less likelihood of researcher bias which will lower the validity of findings.</i>	<b>Example:</b> <i>Interpretivists argue that sociology can never be totally objective or value-free. This is because researchers have values which inevitably affect the research process. Many researchers are influenced by theories like feminism or Marxism. Even the choices of topic and methods are influenced by researcher values so objectivity is an impossible goal.</i>

- 2 Evaluate the view that questionnaires are the most effective research method.

One side of the argument	Other side of the argument
<i>That questionnaires are the most effective research method.</i>	<i>That questionnaires are not the most effective research method.</i>
<b>Example:</b> <i>Questionnaires are made up of mainly closed, standardised questions. This means that the data is likely to be high in reliability as the same questions can be repeated and similar results will be obtained. This means that the results are trustworthy.</i>	<b>Example:</b> <i>Unstructured interviews are likely to produce much more valid data than questionnaires. This is because the interview is a natural conversation in which the respondent can go into depth and detail in response to prompts and open questions from the interviewer.</i>



- 3 Evaluate the view that validity is the most important aspect when planning sociological research.

One side of the argument	Other side of the argument
<i>That ethics are the most important aspect of a research project.</i>	<i>That ethics are not the most important aspect of a research project.</i>
<b>Example:</b> Maintaining ethics involves keeping participants safe. Milgram's experiments and the Stanford prison experiment, for example, failed to keep people safe. If they are harmed physically or emotionally this may have consequences for the researcher. They may be subject to legal claims and their work will not receive recognition by peers, so, it is crucial to abide by ethics.	<b>Example:</b> If a research project fails to achieve validity it is of little use because it has failed to show the true picture of the social reality. Some researchers use a covert approach to ensure validity knowing that it breaks ethical guidelines but with deviant groups this is the only way to get good quality data as participants will not know they are being studied and hence act naturally.