2.7 Research Ethics: 30-minute Pack

AQA 8192 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Use sociological vocabulary and name sociologists where you can.

1 Using your knowledge of research ethics, explain how the researcher's approach addresses the specific ethical challenges of researching children.

(Total for Question 1 is 6 marks)

2 Evaluate the view that ethical guidelines make it too difficult for sociologists to carry out valuable research. In your answer you should refer to sociologists' views and consider more than one point of view.

(Total for Question 2 is 12 marks)

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3 Calculate the percentage of the sample that requires parental or guardian consent, and explain why this extra requirement exists for that group.

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

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4 State one additional safeguard, beyond parental consent, that a researcher studying under-16s might be expected to put in place.

(Total for Question 4 is 2 marks)

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Mark scheme · 2.7 Research Ethics: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

identifies the school acting as a gatekeeper, controlling and approving access to the pupils	**B1**
identifies parental/guardian consent being sought, in addition to the pupil's own consent, addressing children's limited capacity to give full informed consent alone	**B1**
identifies the anonymous design, with no names collected, as protecting participants' confidentiality	**B1**
identifies pupils being told they can stop at any point without giving a reason as protecting their right to withdraw	**B1**
explains that together these steps show the extra safeguarding needed when researching a vulnerable group such as children, beyond what would be expected researching adults	**B1**
accurate use of terminology throughout (gatekeeper, informed consent, confidentiality, right to withdraw)	**B1**

Answer: The school acts as a gatekeeper, controlling access to pupils. Seeking parental/guardian consent alongside the pupil's own agreement addresses children's limited capacity for full informed consent, the anonymous, no-names design protects confidentiality, and telling pupils they can stop at any point protects their right to withdraw. Together, these steps show the extra safeguarding needed when researching a vulnerable group such as children.

Question 2

Level 4 A detailed, well-balanced evaluation that accurately explains BOTH the case that ethical guidelines restrict valuable research AND the case that they are necessary and do not simply block good research, supported by accurate reference to examples such as covert observation studies and BSA guidance. Strengths and weaknesses are analysed, and a reasoned, supported judgement is reached. Sociological terminology is used accurately and consistently throughout.	**10-12**
Level 3 A clear evaluation that explains both the restriction case and the necessity case, with some accurate detail. Some analysis and an attempt at a conclusion, which may be only partly supported.	**7-9**
Level 2 Some relevant explanation of research ethics, with limited development or accuracy. Little clear evaluation or comparison of views.	**4-6**
Level 1 One or two isolated, undeveloped points about ethics, with little or no sociological terminology or accurate detail.	**1-3**
Level 0 No relevant content.	**0**

Indicative content:

- Case that ethics restrict research: covert methods that could reveal important truths about closed or deviant groups, such as gangs studied in the style of James Patrick's work, become harder to justify under strict informed-consent rules.
- Case continued: gaining full informed consent from every participant, for example in large-scale observation of a public setting, can be impractical, limiting what researchers can study.
- Case continued: strict ethical requirements around children and vulnerable groups can slow down or block otherwise valuable research, for example on school bullying.
- Case that ethics are necessary: protecting participants from harm and deception is a basic moral obligation that should not simply be set aside for research convenience.
- Case continued: guidance such as the BSA's still allows well-designed covert or child-focused research to proceed where genuine safeguards, such as gatekeeper consent and anonymity as in Q1, are built in.
- Case continued: unethical research risks damaging participants directly, and can damage the reputation of sociology as a discipline, reducing access for future researchers.
- A balanced conclusion should weigh the real practical restrictions ethical guidelines place on some valuable research designs against their essential role in protecting participants and the discipline's credibility.

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Question 3

identifies the correct number requiring parental/guardian consent: 55 (the under-16s) **B1**

calculates the percentage: 55/80 x 100 = 68.75% (awrt 69%) **B1**

explains that under-16s are generally considered less able to fully understand and independently weigh up what taking part in research involves **B1**

links this to the broader ethical principle of extra protection/safeguarding for children as a vulnerable group **B1**

Answer: 55/80 x 100 = 68.75% (awrt 69%) of the sample requires parental or guardian consent. This extra requirement exists because under-16s are not considered able to give full informed consent alone, so parental/guardian agreement is needed alongside the child's own consent, as part of the special care taken when researching children.

Question 4

identifies a genuine additional safeguard, e.g. an enhanced background/DBS check on the researcher **B1**

brief development, e.g. or having a responsible adult, such as a teacher, present during data collection **B1**

Answer: An additional safeguard would be an enhanced background/DBS check on the researcher, or having a responsible adult, such as a teacher, present during data collection.

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