

Values Card Sort

In this activity, you will explore whether sociologists can ever be fully neutral in their research.

Researchers may bring their own beliefs, interests, political views or assumptions into a study. These are known as researcher values. Sometimes those values may shape the research in an unfair way. This is called bias.

Your task is to decide which statements show:

- **Possible example of researcher values**
- **Possible example of bias**
- **Could be objective**
- **Not sure**

What you need to do

Step 1

Work in pairs or a small group.

Step 2

Read each statement card carefully.

Step 3

Sort each card into one of the four categories:

- Possible example of researcher values
- Possible example of bias
- Could be objective
- Not sure

Step 4

Be ready to explain your choices. There may be some cards your group disagrees on. That is fine. The important thing is to justify your reasoning.

Questions to think about while sorting

As you discuss each card, ask yourselves:

- Does this show a belief, interest or assumption?
- Does this seem unfair or one-sided?
- Is the researcher trying to be neutral?
- Could this affect the quality of the research?

Follow-up discussion

Once you have sorted the cards, discuss these questions:

1. Which examples show researcher values?
2. Which examples show bias?
3. Are values always a problem in sociological research?
4. Can a researcher have values without producing biased research?

Be prepared to share one answer with the class.

Quick debrief:
“One thing I have learned about researcher values is...”



A sociologist believes poverty is mainly caused by government policy

A researcher asks more follow-up questions to working-class pupils than middle-class pupils

A study uses the same questionnaire for every participant

A feminist researcher chooses to study domestic abuse



A researcher ignores findings that do not support their theory

A sociologist records responses word-for-word

A Marxist researcher is interested in inequality and class power

An observer changes how they behave depending on the group they are studying

