

1. When doing sociological research, it is essential to understand both the individual and societal contexts that the object of study exists in. Interviews and focus groups are useful tools which help researchers gather this data, however their usefulness is entirely dependent on the researcher's ethics.
2. Focus groups are an important tool for researchers, as they can observe how unique individuals interact with both the questions and amongst themselves. Picking a focus group requires a deep understanding of the concept that is being studied along with the principles of human interaction. Healthy and productive focus groups can maintain conversations about the topic presented, producing valuable data. Typically, a healthy focus group consists of individuals with varying ages, backgrounds, and with limited prior interaction with the researcher.
3. What are other forms of qualitative research that can be used in conjunction with interviews and focus groups? Case studies can be an extremely useful tool when conducting interviews, especially if the individual comes from unique circumstances that do not align with the general population. For example, if a researcher were to study immigrant experiences, interviewing a multitude of people who immigrated for a variety of different reasons produces a better picture of the commonality shared between them. By performing a case study, we can better visualize the connections between seemingly disconnected individuals.
4. How do we understand our own positionality on the issues we study? There is no objectivity in research; being that it's a human construct and humans are innately opinionated. That being said, there are methods we can use to understand our opinions on the topics we research. One of the most effective tools we can use is disclosure. By providing a brief description of ourselves and our background, we can give other researchers clarity on why research decisions and opinions were made and formed.
5. How do we maintain objectivity in qualitative research? The most effective way is to limit personal stake in the research being conducted. For instance, if a researcher is studying gender and identity, it would be irresponsible for a researcher which has a personal attachment to the concept (in this case, a researcher who themselves may not fit into the gender binary). If a researcher does have attachment to the concept they study, it is necessary to have a second opinion overseeing the research.