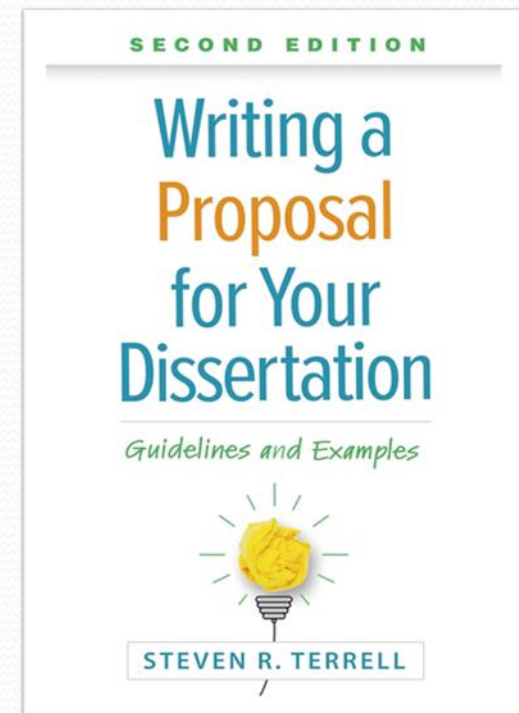


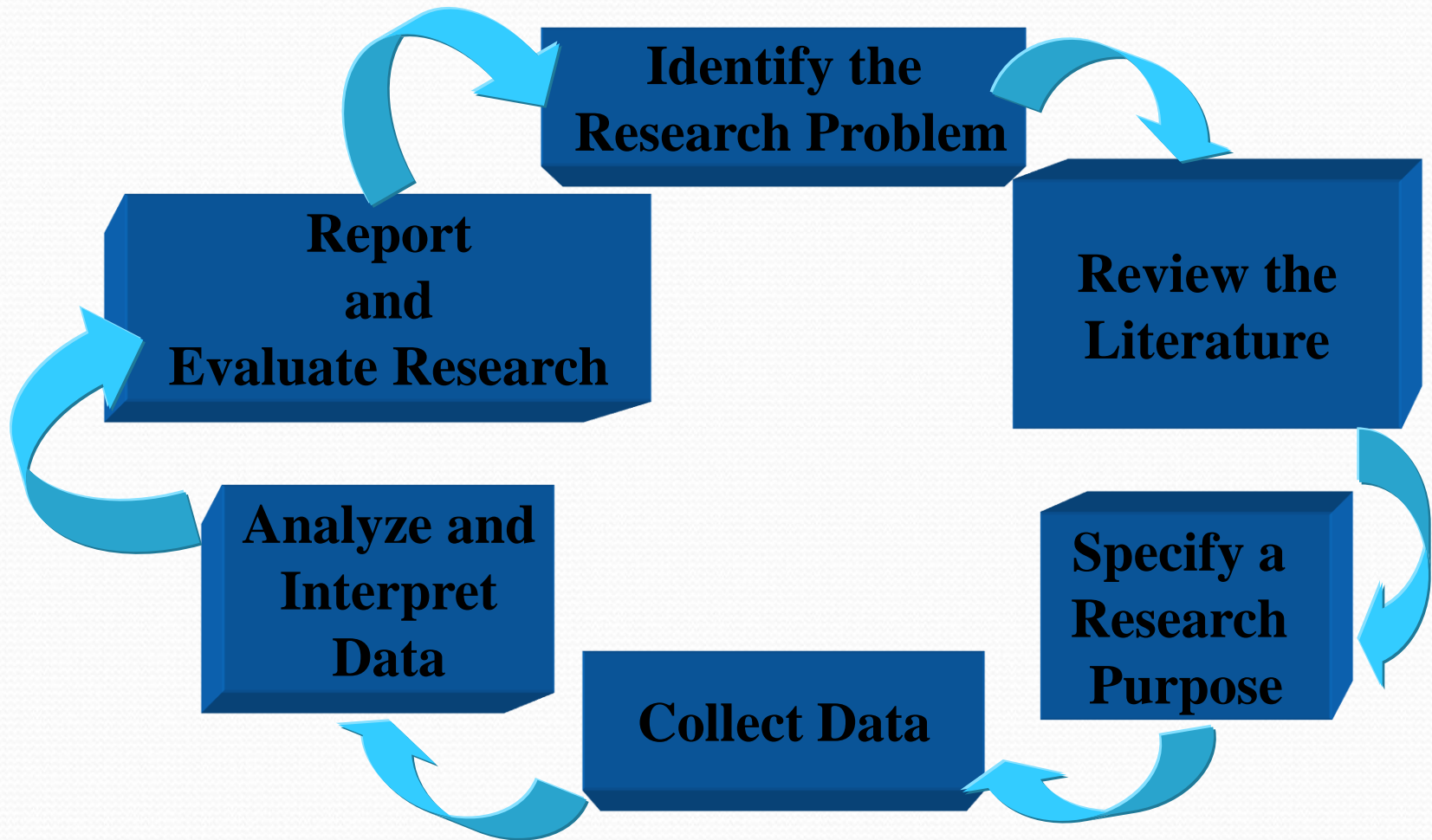
Overview of Qualitative Research

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Click on Picture for Book Details.

The Process of Research





The research problem represents the specific issue, concern or controversy that we want to investigate; a good research problem must meet six criteria:

1. The problem is interesting to the researcher.
2. The scope of the problem is manageable by the researcher.
3. The researcher is comfortable in terms of their knowledge, time and resources needed to investigate the problem.
4. The problem can be researched through the collection and analysis of data.
5. Investigating the problem has theoretical or practical significance.
6. It is ethical to investigate the problem.

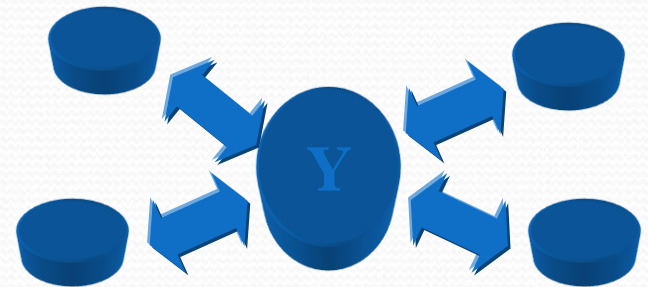
Explaining or Predicting Variables Versus Exploring or Understanding a Central Phenomenon

Quantitative Explaining or Predicting Variables



The independent variable (X) influences a dependent variable (Y) - deductive

Qualitative Understanding or Exploring a Central Phenomenon



In-depth understanding of Y; external forces shape and are shaped by Y (inductive)

The Nature of Qualitative Research

- Qualitative research is the collection, analysis, and interpretation of comprehensive narrative data in order to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest.
- Useful for describing and answering questions about participants and contexts.
- Quantitative data tells you “if”; qualitative data tells you “why” or “how”.
- Allows the research to promote a deep, holistic understanding of a particular phenomenon.



The Importance of Qualitative Research

- Provide insight into the complexity of common occurrences.
- Provide specific concrete details to guide understanding in a particular setting.
- Provide insight into the “local” meanings that activities and practices have for participants.
- Develop a comparative understanding of phenomena as experienced by different participants in different settings.

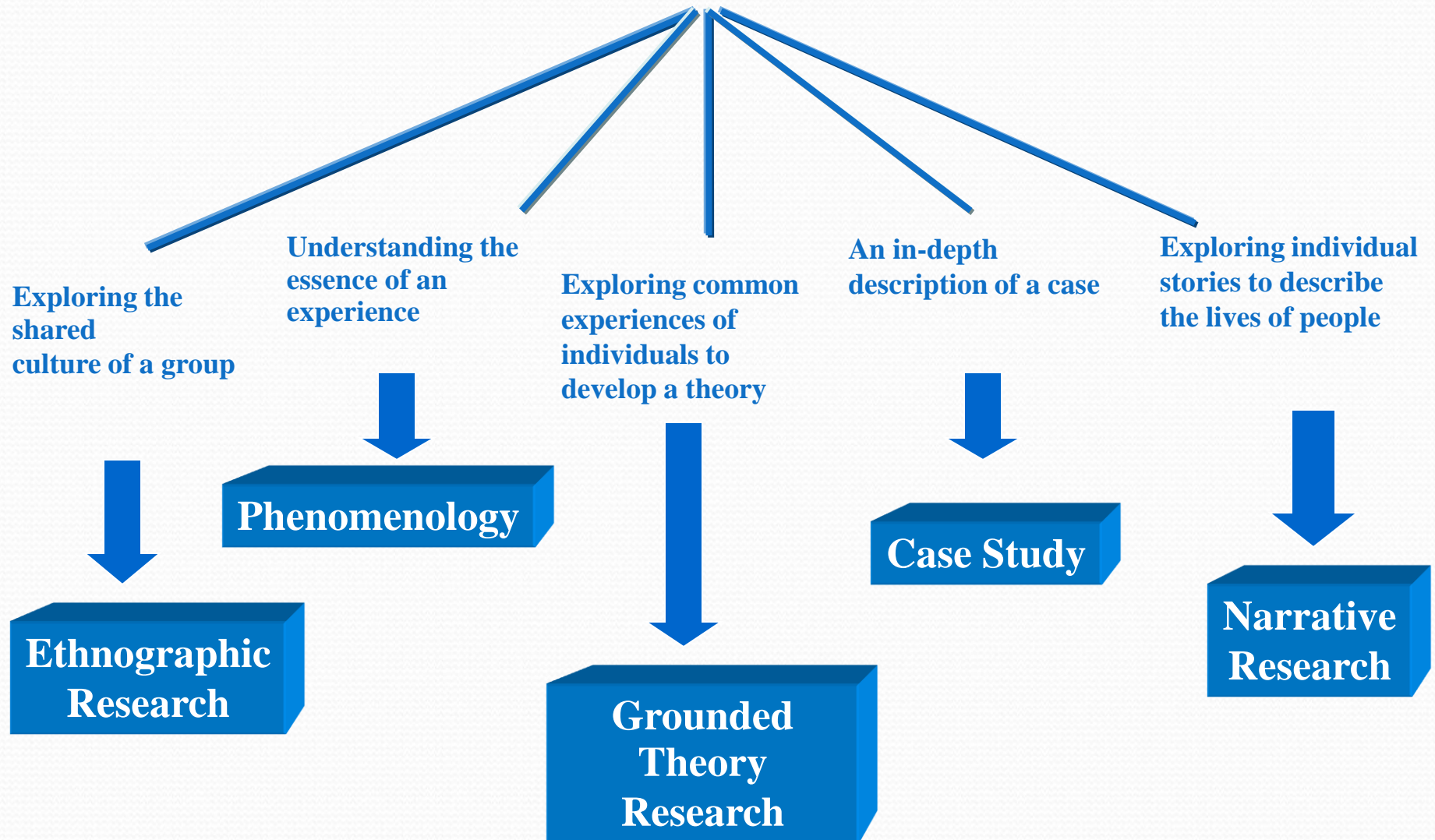
Eight Characteristics of Qualitative Research

1. Researchers immerse themselves in the situation.
2. The data reflects the participants' perspectives.
3. Sources of data are real-world situations or natural contexts.
4. Data is narrative in nature.
5. Researchers focus on personal interactions with participants.
6. Researchers avoid early decisions or assumptions about the study.
7. Data are analyzed inductively.
8. Methods provide clear, detailed information reflecting participants' voices.

Range of Qualitative Approaches

- Five most common approaches
 - Case study
 - An effort to seek an understanding of a single person or entity.
 - Ethnography
 - An effort to describe and analyze all or part of the culture of a community by identifying and describing participants' practices and beliefs.
 - Phenomenology
 - An effort to understand the meaning of an individual's experiences.
 - Grounded theory
 - An effort to derive theory grounded in the perspectives of the participants.
 - Narrative
 - The study of how different humans experience the world. Allows people to tell their personal stories.

Qualitative Designs and Uses



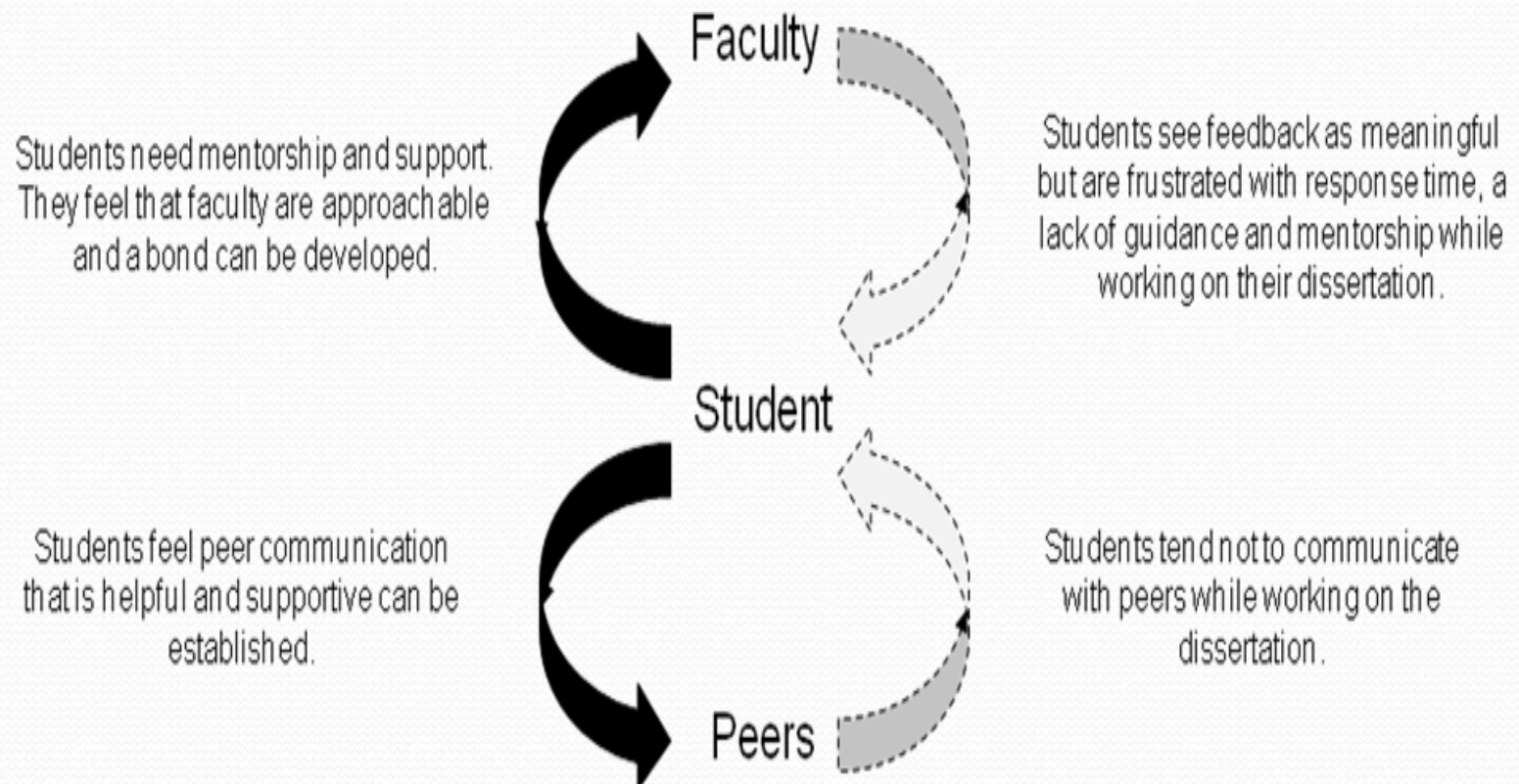
Characteristics of Grounded Theory Research

- Focus: developing a theory grounded in data from the field.
- Type of problem: best suited for investigating problems based on the views of the of participants.
- Discipline background: grounded in sociology.
- Unit of analysis: studying a process, action or interaction involving many individuals.

Characteristics of Grounded Theory Research

- Data collection forms: primarily interviews with 20 to 60 individuals.
- Data analysis strategies: open coding, axial coding and selecting coding.
- Written report: generating a theory illustrated in a figure.
- Example: Theory of attrition in online doctoral programs.

A Grounded Theory of the Student-Faculty Connectivity and Persistence in a Limited Residency Doctoral Program



What is Ethnographic Research?

Qualitative research procedures for describing, analyzing, and interpreting a culture-sharing group's shared patterns of behavior, beliefs, and language that develops over time.

Characteristics of Ethnographic Research

- Focus: Describing and interpreting a culture sharing group.
- Type of problem: Describing and interpreting the shared patterns or culture of the group.
- Discipline background: Anthropology and sociology.
- Unit of analysis: Studying a group that shares the same theme.

Characteristics of Ethnographic Research

- Data collection forms: Uses primarily observations and interviews but perhaps other sources during extended time in the field.
- Data analysis strategies: A description of the culture-sharing group; themes about the group.
- Written report: Describing how the culture-sharing group works.
- Example: Go North!

What is Narrative Research?

In **narrative research**, researchers describe the lives of individuals, collect and tell stories about people's lives, and write narratives of individual experiences. As a distinct form of qualitative research, a narrative typically focuses on studying a single person, gathering data through the collection of stories, reporting individual experiences, and discussing the meaning of those experiences for the individual.

Characteristics of Narrative Research

- Focus: Exploring the life of an individual.
- Type of problem: Needing to tell stories of individual experiences.
- Discipline background: Humanities, anthropology, literature, history, psychology and sociology.
- Unit of analysis: Studying one or more individuals.

Characteristics of Narrative Research

- Data collection forms: Using primarily interviews and documents.
- Data analysis strategies: Analyzing data for stories, “re-storying” stories, developing themes, oftentimes uses a chronology.
- Written report: Developing a narrative about the stories of an individual’s life.
- Example: The Executioner’s Song

What is Phenomenological Research?

A descriptive study of how individuals experience a phenomenon. This is the lived experience but can also include psychological constructs such as grief, anger or love. the descriptive study of how individuals experience a phenomenon

Characteristics of Phenomenological Research

- Focus: Understanding the essence of the experience.
- Type of problem: Needing to describe the essence of the experience.
- Discipline background: Philosophy, psychology and education.
- Unit of analysis: Several individuals who have shared the same experience.

Characteristics of Phenomenological Research

- Data collection forms: Using primarily interviews with individuals although documents, observations, recordings and art may also be used.
- Data analysis strategies: Analyzing data for significant statements, meaning units, textural and structural descriptions, description of the “science”
- Written report: Describing the “essence” of the experience.
- Example: A description of a person or persons reaction to a catastrophic event such as the Holocaust.

What is Case Study Research?

Qualitative research involving a bounded system focusing on a case or issue that is representative of the system. The case is the actual event, process or program, etc, (i.e., a setting or context) being studied.

Characteristics of Case Study Research

- Focus: Developing an in-depth description and analysis of a case or multiple cases.
- Type of problem: Providing an in-depth understanding of a case or cases.
- Discipline background: Psychology, law, political science, medicine.
- Unit of analysis: Studying an event, a program, an activity, more than one individual.

Characteristics of Case Study Research

- Data collection forms: Using multiple sources such as interviews, observations, documents or artifacts.
- Data analysis strategies: Analyzing data through description of the case and themes of the case as well as cross-case themes.
- Written report: Developing a detailed analysis of one or more cases.
- Example: Psychological evaluation and presentation.

Validity of a Qualitative Study

- Validity
 - The degree to which the qualitative data collected accurately gauges what is being measured.
- Two components
 - Trustworthiness
 - Understanding

Validity - Trustworthiness

- Credibility – taking into account all the complexities in the study and addressing problems that are not easily explained.
- Transferability – including descriptive, context-relevant statements so the reader can identify with the setting.
- Dependability – collecting stable data.
- Confirmability – assuring the neutrality and objectivity of the data.

Validity - Understanding

- Descriptive validity – the factual accuracy of the account
- Interpretive validity – the meaning attributed to the behaviors or words of the participants
- Theoretical validity – the explanation of the phenomenon being studied in relation to a theory
- Evaluative validity – sufficient objectivity in reporting data to avoid bias, preconceived judgments, or evaluations

Reliability

- The *consistency* with which data measures what is being attempted to be measured over time
- Qualitative perspective is the reliability of the techniques that are being used to collect data
- Reliability is a necessary but not sufficient characteristic – validity is the priority

Technical Issues

- General strategies for ensuring the technical merit of a qualitative study
 - Talk little, listen a lot
 - Record observation accurately
 - Begin writing early
 - Let readers see for themselves
 - Report fully
 - Be candid
 - Seek feedback
 - Write accurately

Ethical Issues

- Ethics can be considered in terms of how the researcher treats the participants in the research setting.
- The nature of qualitative research provides the potential for conflict and harm.
 - Qualitative research is intimate – there is little distance between the researcher and the participants.
 - Qualitative research is open-ended – the nature of the process requires the use of an emergent design as the situation unfolds.

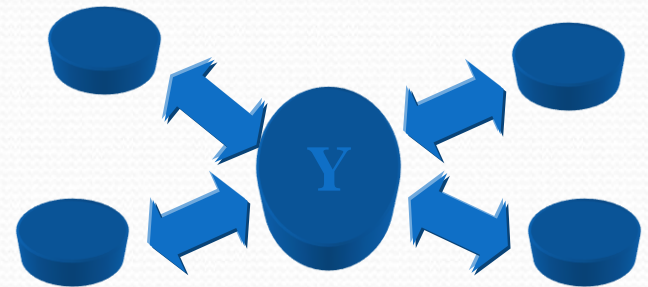
At the risk of repeating myself; this all leads to understanding “if” versus “how or why” in a valid and reliable manner...

Quantitative
Explaining or Predicting
Variables



The independent variable (X) influences a dependent variable (Y) - deductive

Qualitative
Understanding or
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In-depth understanding of Y; external forces shape and are shaped by Y (inductive)