Mandatory R.: McGrath, J.E. 1982. "Dilemmatics." In McGrath, J.E., Martin, J.M., Kulka, R.A. (Eds.)

The study of research choices and dilemmas

→ research process can be viewed as a series of interlocking choices, in which we try simultaneously to maximize several conflicting ~~dise elife~~ deliderata (Desiderata)

⇒ not to be viewed as a set of problems to be "solved"

⇒ rather as set of dilemmas to be "lived with"

"dilemmatic view of the research process" –
→ proper starting place for a discussion of methodology is:

a) to lay out the series of generic choice points

b) to describe those choices in "dilemmatic" terms

c) to discuss what the beleaguered researchers can do

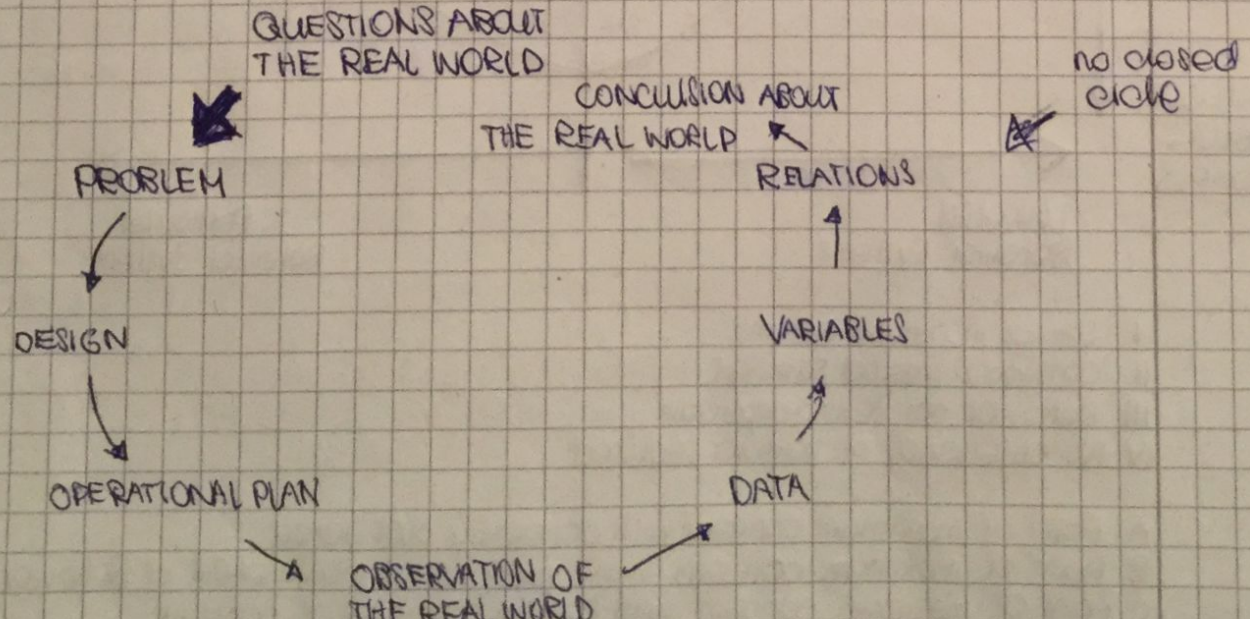
⇒ There is no "best" strategy or true method that will guarantee success

First & Second Rule of Dilemmatics

RULE ① Always face your methodological problems squarely; Or, Never turn your back on a Horned-Dilemma

RULE ② A wise researcher never rests; Or, That laurel (Lorbeere) you are about to sit on may turn out to be an unrecognized horn of another methodological dilemma

The Cycle of Empirical Research

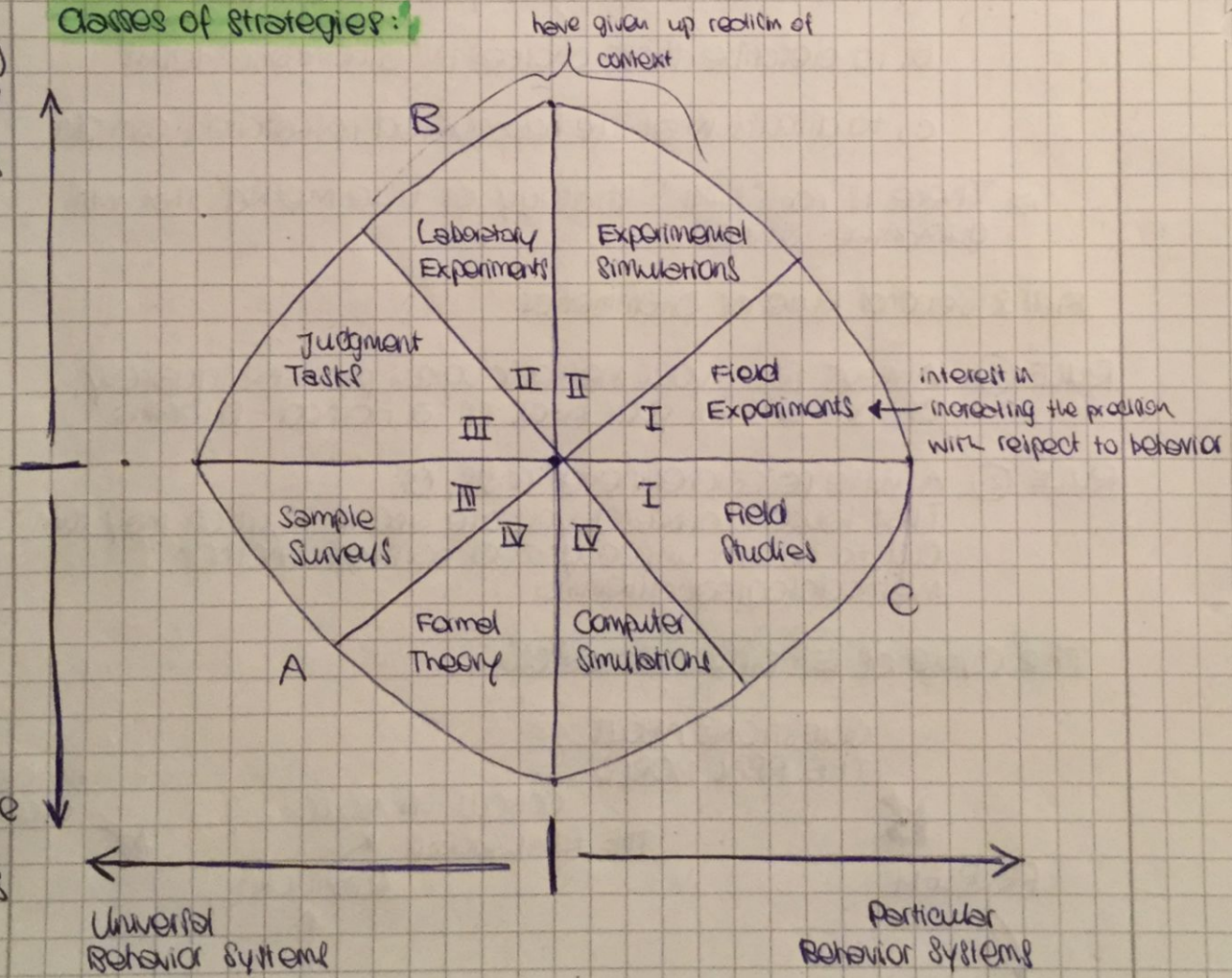


Strategies, Designs, and Methods as Stages of the research process

- One can state a set of dilemmas and a related set of choices within each of these "stages" (as seen in the spiral) scale 1
- Step distinction between three levels:
  - (a) strategies or research settings for gaining knowledge
  - (b) plans or research designs for carrying out studies
  - (c) methods or research techniques for measuring, manipulating, controlling, and otherwise contending with variables

Research strategies and the three-horned dilemma

Classes of strategies:



I Settings in natural systems
II Contrived & created settings
III Behavior not setting dependent
IV No observation of behavior required

A Point of maximum concern with generality over actors
B Point of maximum concern with precision of measurement of behavior
C Point of maximum concern with system character of context

Three conflicting desiderata

- All research evidence involves some population (here, A, for Actors) doing something (here, B, for Behavior) in some time/place/thing setting (here C, for Context)

  ⇒ always desirable to maximize

  (A) generalizability with respect to populations

  (B) precision in control and measurement of variables related to the behavior(s) of interest

  (C) existential realism, for the participants, of the context within which those behaviors are observed

  ⇒ if one maximizes, others will eventually decrease
  ⇒ dilemma

QUADRANT I STRATEGIES

field studies & field experiments

⇒ taking place in settings that are existentially "real" for the participants

QUADRANT II STRATEGIES

laboratory experiments & experimental simulations

⇒ involve deliberately contrived settings, not existentially "real" for the participants

THE THREE-HORNED DILEMMA

To maximize on one desideratum is to have relatively unfavorable levels of the other two

To optimize between two desiderata is to guarantee a minimum on the third desideratum

RULE (3) The researcher, like the voter, often must choose the lesser among evils

RULE (4) It is not possible, in principle, to do an unflawed study: or
Fantasize, if you will, about lying in clover, but be prepared to awake on a bed of horns