

INFO 272. Qualitative Research Methods

Components of the Research Process

Fall 2014

What is Qualitative Research?

- ❖ **In this course we'll be focusing on:**
 - ❖ Field-based Research
 - ❖ An inductive** analytical approach
 - ❖ The subjective** experiences of research subjects as data
 - ❖ Researcher reflexivity**

Outline

- ❖ Uniting qualitative and quantitative approaches
 - ❖ Common quality criteria (confidence, relevance)
 - ❖ Mixing methods?
- ❖ Steps and sequencing in the research process (two versions) — linear vs. iterative

Uniting Qualitative and Quantitative

Common Quality Criteria:

- ❖ **Confidence** – how well does this research map to reality? What evidence is there that it was a product of an empirical encounter and not the researcher's vivid imagination? How convincing is the research design?
- ❖ **Relevance** – how well does this research link to theory? What is the research's broader importance, its contribution, its applicability?

Uniting Qualitative and Quantitative

1. In order to quantify, first qualitative distinctions must be made (the question of categories)
2. Statistical analysis still requires interpretation
3. Both quantitative and qualitative analysis can involve systematic procedures (*see grounded theory*)

Uniting Qualitative and Quantitative

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archive.wired.com/science/discoveries/magazine/16-07/pb_theory

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WIRED MAGAZINE: 16.07

SCIENCE : DISCOVERIES

The End of Theory: The Data Deluge Makes the Scientific Method Obsolete

By Chris Anderson 06.23.08



Illustration: Marian Bantjes

THE PETABYTE AGE:
Sensors everywhere. Infinite storage. Clouds of processors. Our ability to capture, warehouse, and understand massive amounts of data is

"All models are wrong, but some are useful."
So proclaimed statistician George Box 30 years ago, and he was right. But what choice did we have? Only models.

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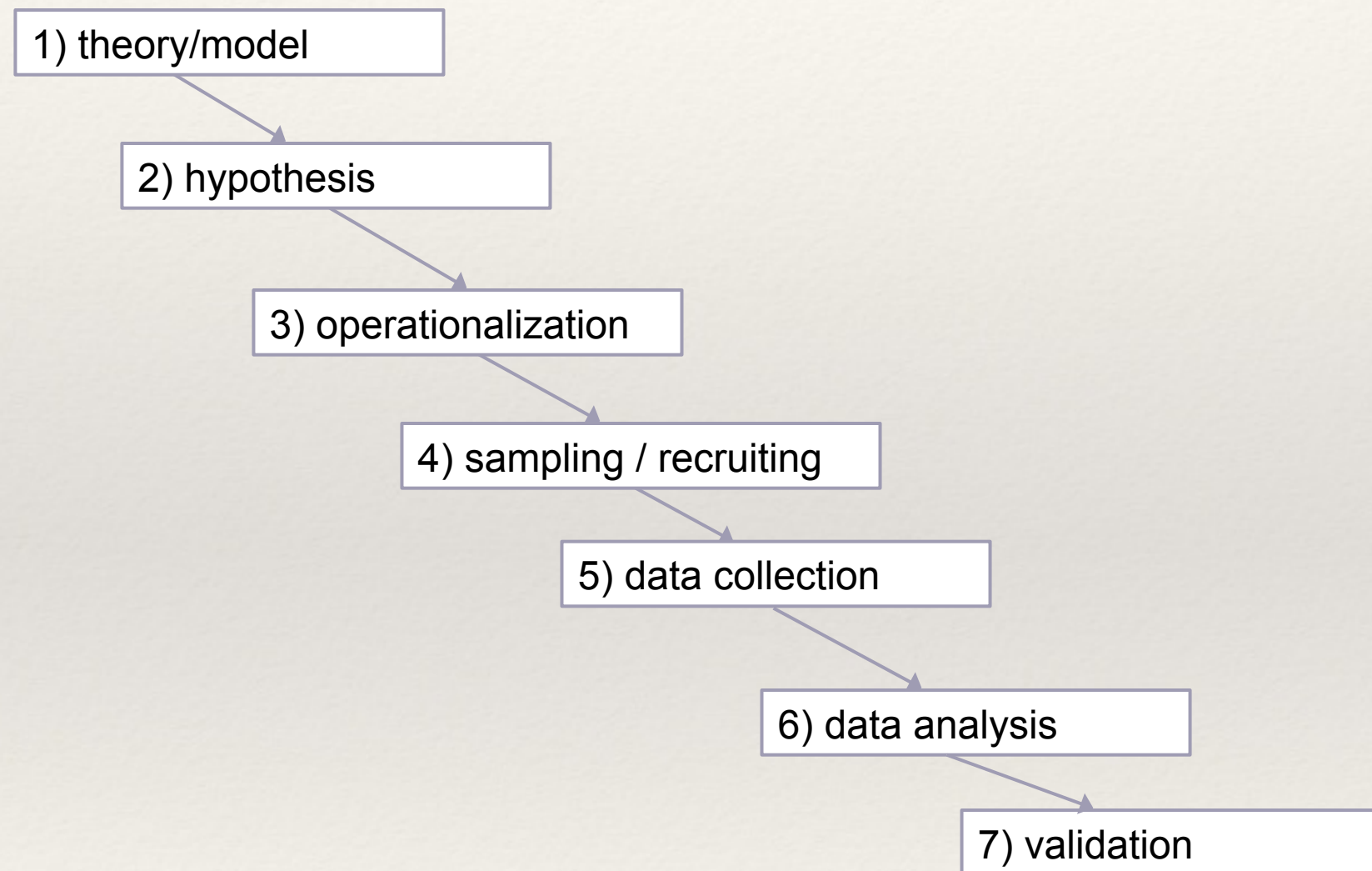
Uniting Qualitative and Quantitative

Mixing Methods?

- ❖ Time ordering:
 - ❖ Qualitative to define concepts —> Quantitative to refine, test
 - ❖ Quantitative to test —> Qualitative to explain/interpret results
- ❖ Enhancing Rigor

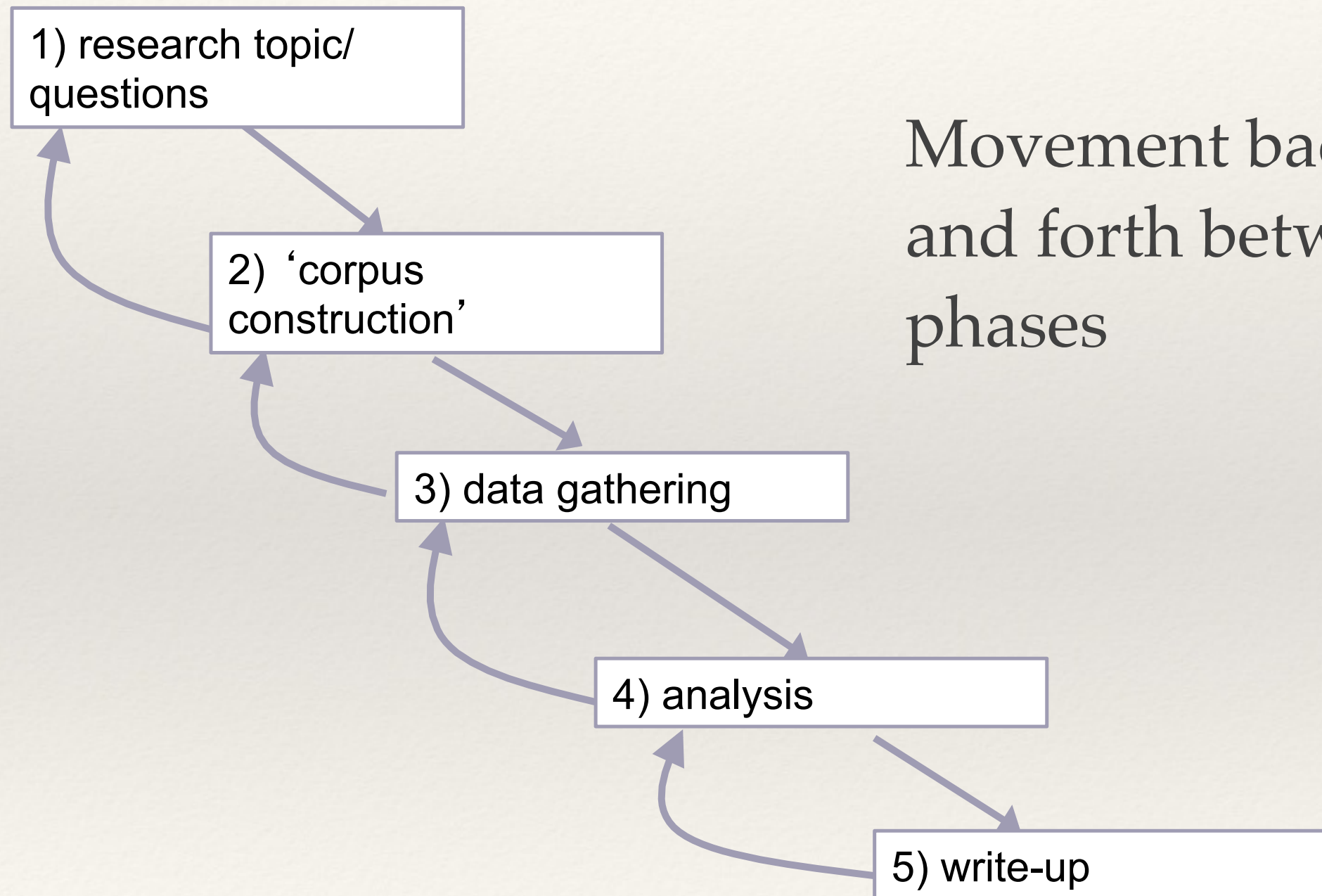
Components of the Research Process and Sequencing

The Linear Model



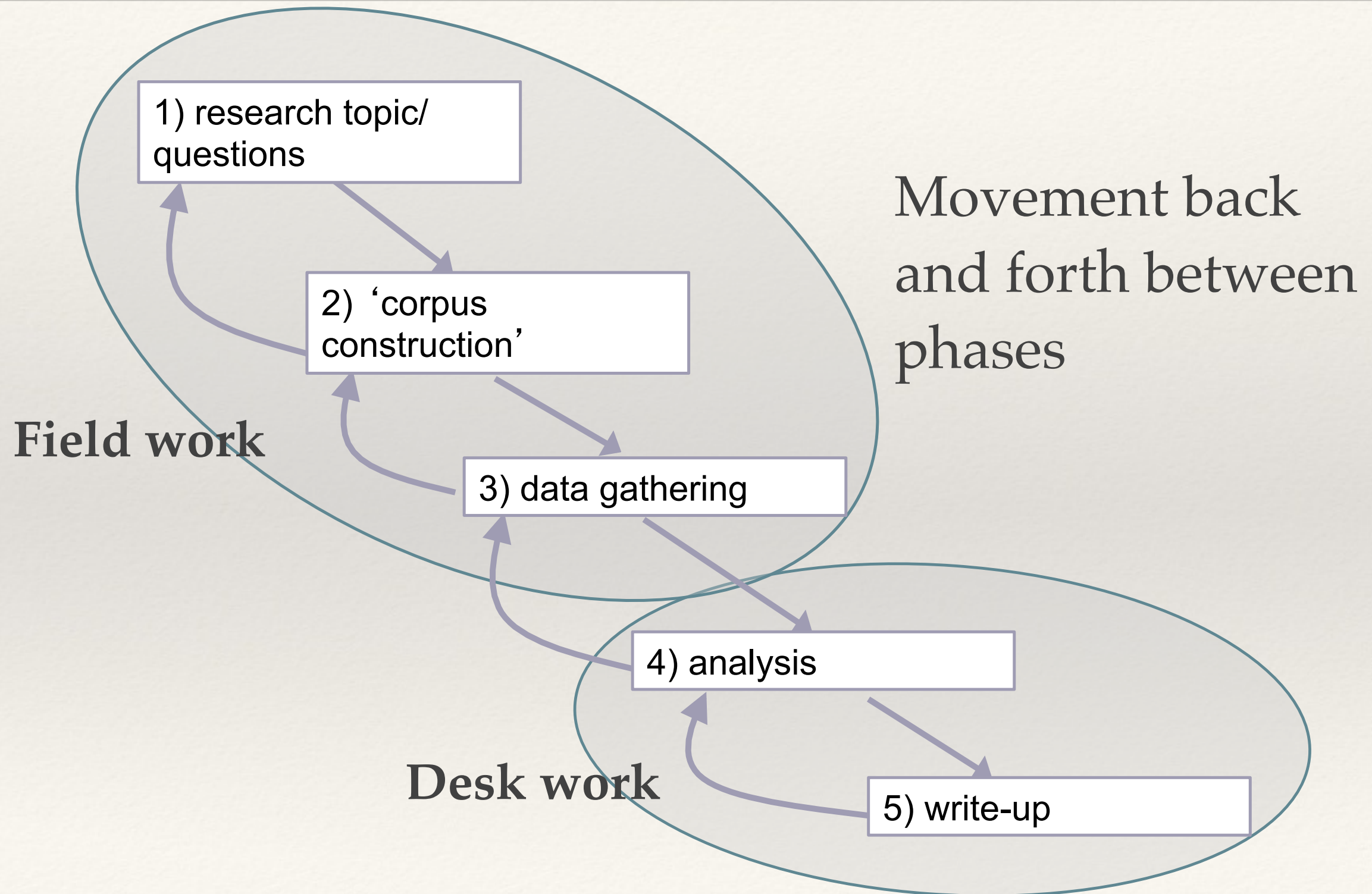
[adapted from U. Flick, An intro to qualitative research, chap. 4]

The Iterative Model

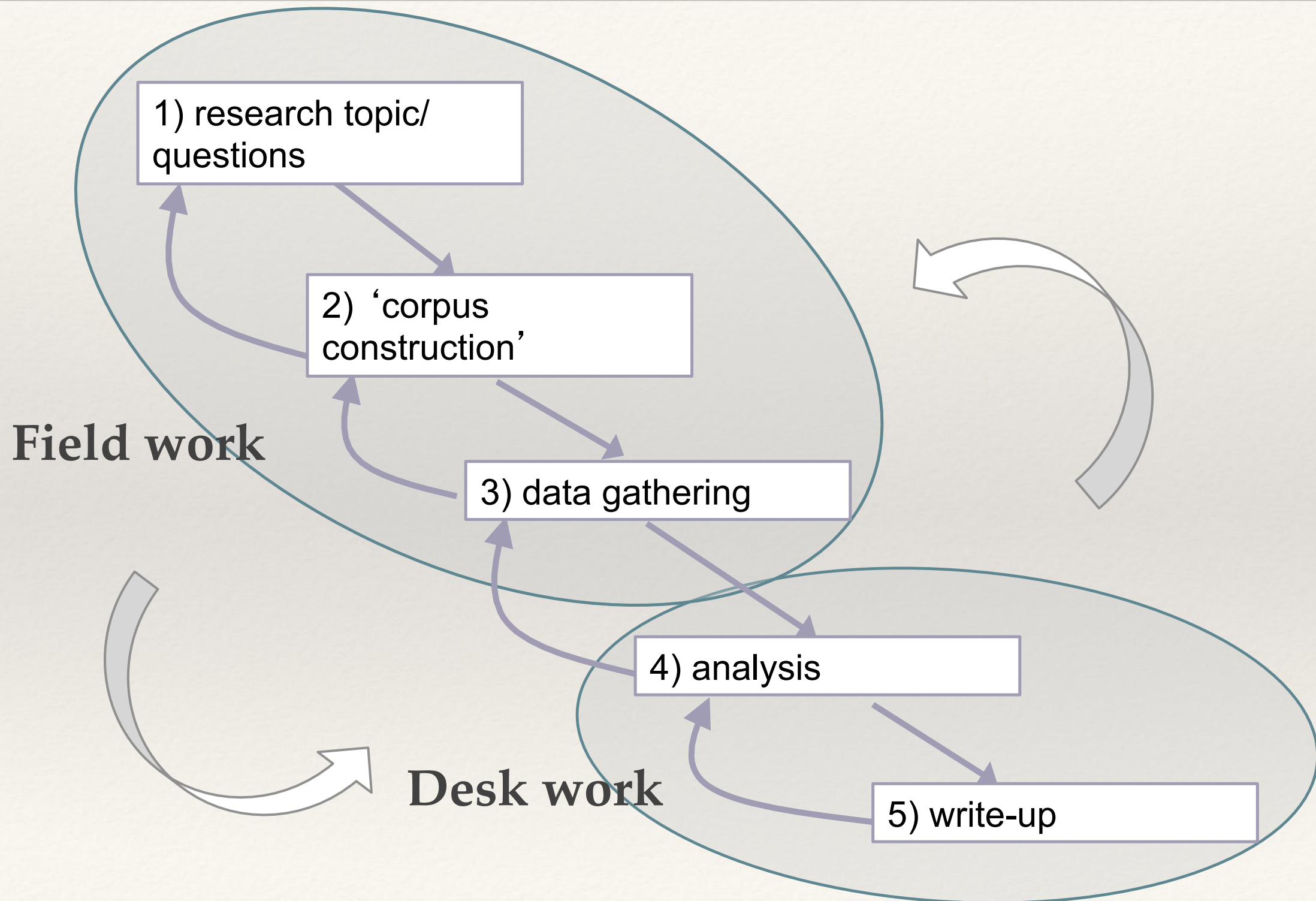


Movement back
and forth between
phases

The Iterative Model



A Double Iteration



1) Research Topic / Questions

- ❖ A question, set of questions, or a general topic
- ❖ **'the boy with the hammer' (law of instrument) =** match between research questions and methods used to answer those questions
- ❖ *(does not mean that questions always precede choice of method, nor does it mean that you will not tend to favor certain methods)*

2) Sampling ('Corpus Construction')

- ❖ Alternative term for 'sampling'
- ❖ Alternatives to sampling for representativeness
- ❖ Inclusive of:
 - ❖ selecting people for interviews
 - ❖ selecting texts or images or other material artifacts
 - ❖ field site selection

3) Data gathering

- ❖ Different from sampling / 'corpus construction'?
- ❖ **Technique** - how the communicative process between researcher and research participant influences the data produced
- ❖ Data is inclusive of:
 - ❖ interviews (transcripts)
 - ❖ participant-observation (field notes)
 - ❖ collecting texts / images

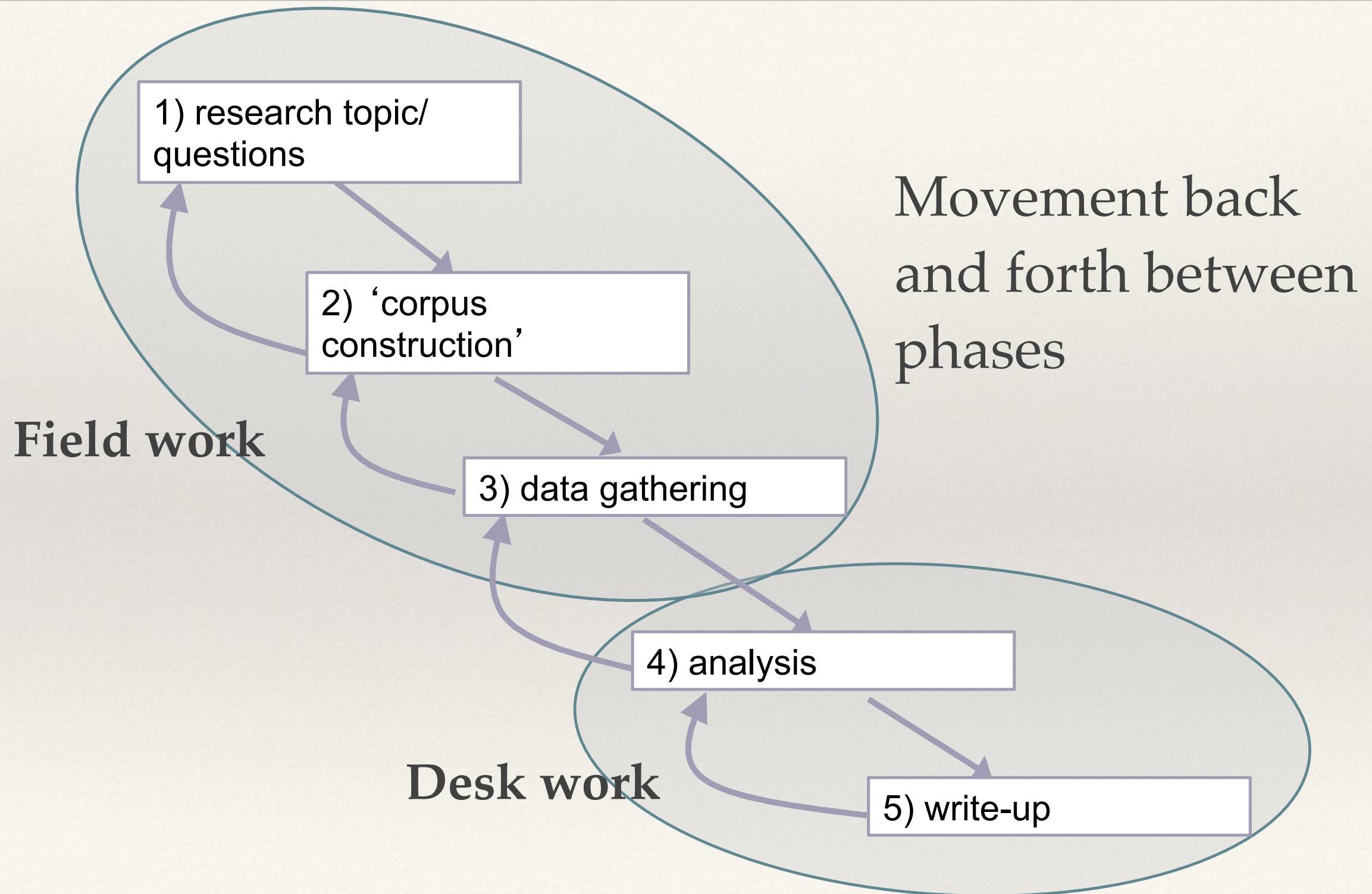
4) Analysis

- ❖ a process of working through aggregate data to systematically identify emerging themes
- ❖ established forms:
 - ❖ Discourse analysis
 - ❖ Rhetorical analysis
 - ❖ Semiotics
- ❖ grounded theory?

5) Final report

- ❖ writing involves committing claims to paper / screen and is therefore an extension of analysis
- ❖ coping with heterogeneous data
- ❖ staying close to the data

The Iterative Model



In Summary

- ❖ Qualitative and Quantitative paradigms intrinsically bound together
- ❖ Mixing Methods - yes
- ❖ Inductive Analysis is well supported by a an Iterative Research Approach