## Characteristics of Quantitative, Qualitative, and Action Research

*Jim Spickard, University of Redlands, 2005*

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| **Quantitative Research** | • description  
• inference | • propositional  
  (“what's happening”; “what does it look like”) | • population statistics  
• randomly-sampled surveys  
• content analysis  
• detailed observation of behavior | • designs/owns  
research  
• observer |
| **Qualitative Research** | • description | • propositional (same) | • interviews  
• surveys  
• ethnography  
• phenomenology | • designs/owns  
research  
• observer |
| **Action Research** | • change  
• skill (“how-to”) | • propositional (same)  
• skill (“how-to”) | • any | • directs & facilitates  
research process  
• participant observer |
| **Participatory Action Research** | • change  
• empowerment | • propositional (same)  
• skill (“how-to”) for groups | • any | • facilitates  
research process  
• consultant observer |

Note that the division of research types into quantitative, qualitative, and action research does not correspond to Jürgen Habermas’ tripartite association of knowledge with the human interests in control, understanding, and liberation. Habermas is concerned with the role of theory in knowledge, not with systems of knowledge-generation *per se*. For various technical philosophic reasons, the two systems do not line up.