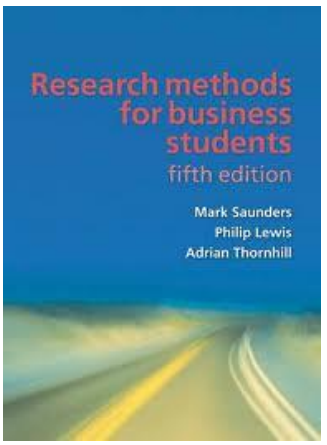
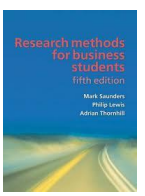
The Research Process



The Research Process



1. *Formulate and clarify your research topic*
2. *Critically review the literature*
3. *Understand your philosophy and approach*
4. *Formulate your research design*
5. *Negotiate access and address ethical issues*
6. *Plan and collect data*
7. *Analyze the data*

Formulate and clarify your research topic *(Chapter 2)*

Rational Thinking	Creative Thinking
• Examining your own strengths and interests	• Keeping a notebook of ideas
• Looking at past project titles	• Exploring personal preferences using past projects
• Discussion	• Relevance trees
• Searching the literature	• Brainstorming
• Scanning the media	

Turning research ideas into research projects

- Specify the Research Area (theoretical realm)
- Specify the Research Setting
- Writing the *Research Problem* and eventual *Research Questions*

- *"The pitfall that you must avoid at all costs is asking research questions that will not generate new insights"*

Critically reviewing the literature *(Chapter 3)*

- *Purposes:*
  - Help you refine your research questions and objectives;
  - Highlight research possibilities that have been overlooked implicitly in research to date;
  - Discover explicit recommendations for further research;
  - Avoid simply repeating work that has been done already;
  - Sample current opinions in newspapers, professional and trade journals, gaining insights into the aspects of the research questions and objectives that are considered newsworthy;
  - Discover and provide an insight into research approaches, strategies and techniques that may be appropriate to your own research questions and objectives.

Critically reviewing the literature

- *Content:*
  - Include the key academic theories within the chosen area of research;
  - Demonstrate that your knowledge of the area is up to date;
  - Through clear referencing, enable those reading your thesis to find the original publications that are cited;

"A description and critical analysis of what other authors have written"

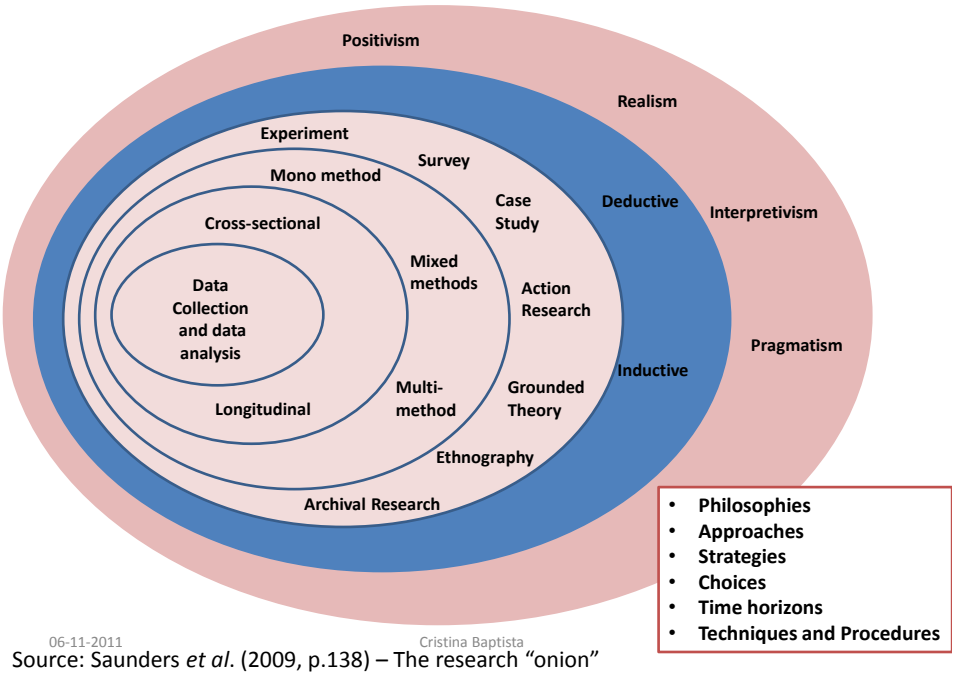
Critically reviewing the literature

1. *Start at a more general level before narrowing down to your specific research questions*
2. *Provide a brief overview of key ideas and themes*
3. *Summarize, compare and contrast the research of the key writers*
4. *Narrow to highlight research work most relevant to your own research*
5. *Provide detailed account of the findings of this research and show how they are related*
6. *Highlight those aspects where your own research will provide new insights*

Critically reviewing the literature

- *Planning your literature search strategy*
  1. Define the parameters of your literature search
     - Language of publication; subject area; business sector; geographical area; publication period; literature type.
  2. Generate your key words
  3. Use relevance trees
  4. Scanning and browsing

Understand your philosophy and approach *(Chapter 4)*



Source: Saunders *et al*. (2009, p.138) – The research "onion"

Understand your philosophy and approach *(Chapter 4)*

- "Both qualitative and quantitative methods may be used appropriately with any research paradigm. Questions of method are secondary to questions of paradigm, which we define as the basic belief system or world view that guides the investigation, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways." (Guba and Lincoln, 1994,p.105)

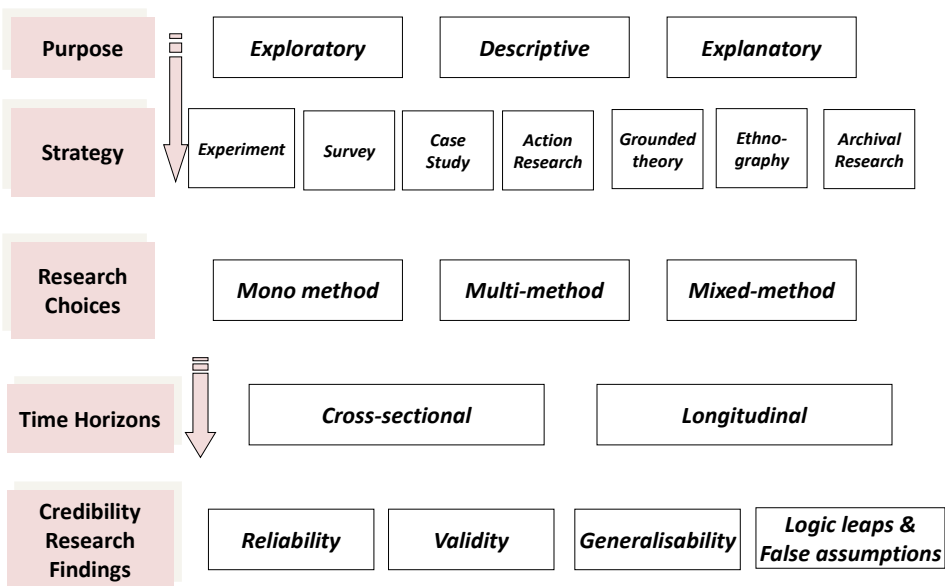
- "The research philosophy you adopt contains important assumptions about the way in which you view the world."

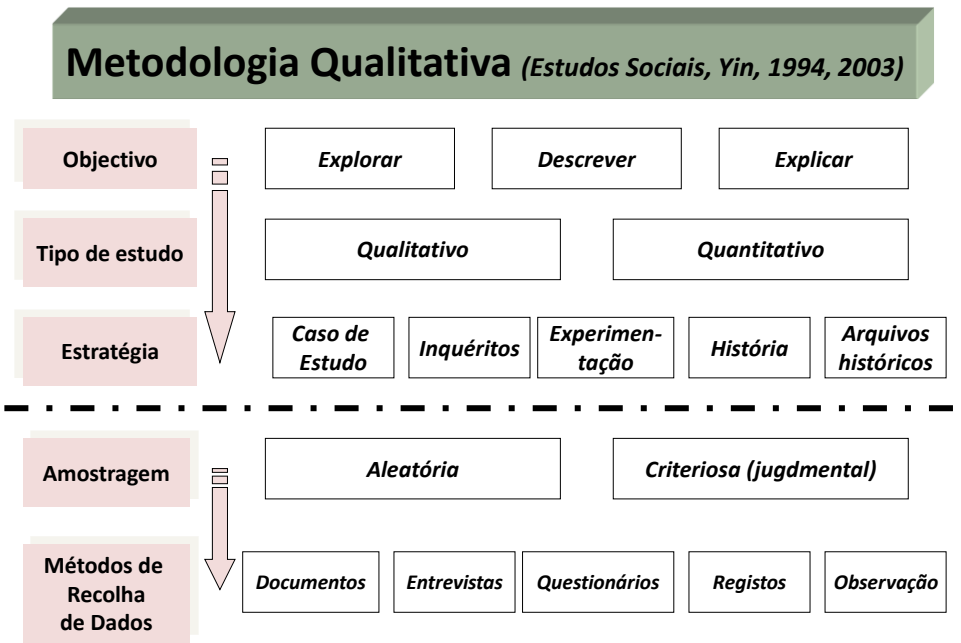
Understand your philosophy and approach *(Chapter 4)*

Issue	Positivism	Postpositivism	Critical Theory et al.	Constructivism
Inquiry aim	Explanation: Prediction and control		Critique and transformation; restitution and emancipation	Understanding; reconstruction
Nature of knowledge	Verified hypothesis Established as facts or laws	Nonfalsified hypotheses that are probable facts or laws	Structural / historical insights	Individual reconstruction coalescing around consensus
Knowledge accumulation	Accretion – "building clocks" adding to "edifice of knowledge"; generalizations and cause-effect linkages.		Historical revisionism; generalization by similarity	More informed and sophisticated reconstructions; vicarious experience

Source: Adapted from Guba and Lincoln (1994, p.112)

Formulate the research design *(Chapter 5) – (Saunders, 2009)*

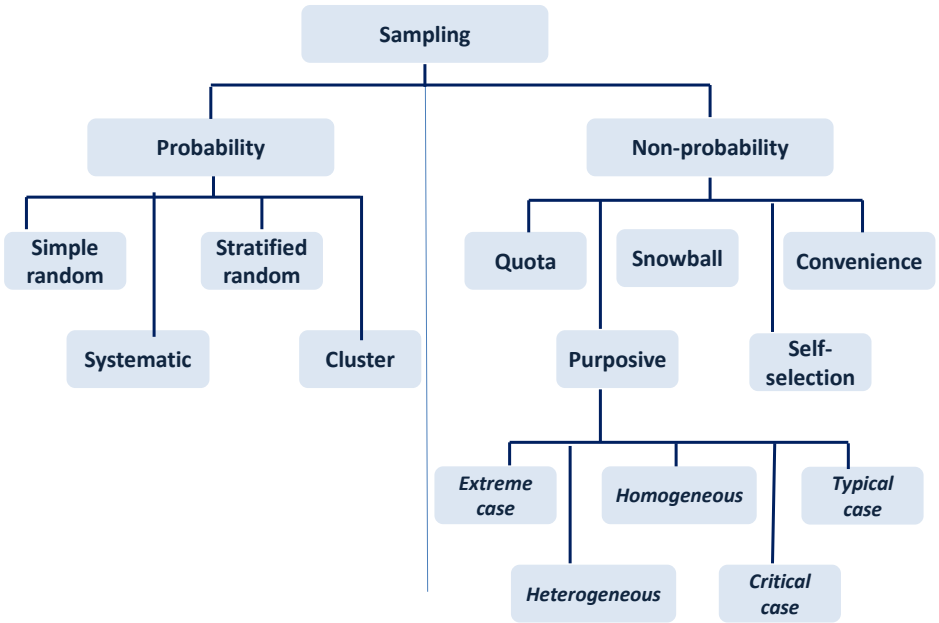




Negotiating access and research ethics *(Chapter 6)*

- Ensuring familiarity and understanding
- Allowing yourself sufficient time
- Using existing and developing new contacts
- Providing a clear account of purpose and type of access required
- Overcoming organizational concerns
- Possible benefits to the organization
- Using suitable language
- Facilitating replies
- Developing access incrementally
- Establishing your credibility

Selecting samples *(Chapter 7)*



Source: Saunders *et al*. (2009, p.213) – Sampling Techniques

Conventional Positivistic Criteria	**Marshall & Rossman (1989)**	**Lincoln & Guba (1990) (Trust-worthiness)**	**Yin (1994)**	**Miles & Huberman (1994)**
Internal Validity: the degree to which findings correctly map the phenomenon in question	Truth Value: the extent to which the findings are accurate	Credibility: an analog to internal validity	Construct Validity: establishing correct operational measures for the concepts being studied Internal Validity: (for explanatory or causal studies); establishing causal relationships	Internal Validity / Credibility / Authenticity: Do the findings of the study make sense? Are they credible to the people studied and to readers? Do we have an authentic portrait of what we are looking for?
External Validity: the degree to which findings can be generalized to other settings similar to the one in which the study occurred	Applicability: the extent to which findings are generalizable to another setting or group of people	Transferability: an analog to external validity	External Validity: establishing the domain to which a study's findings can be generalized	External Validity / Transferability / Fittingness: degree to which the conclusions of a study have any larger import
Reliability: the extent to which findings can be replicated, or reproduced, by another inquirer	Consistency: the extent to which findings would be replicated if the study were conducted with the same participants in the same context	Dependability: an analog to reliability	Reliability: demonstrating that the operations of a study – such as the data collection procedures can be repeated, with the same results	Reliability / Dependability / Auditability: degree to which the study is consistent, stable over time and across researchers and methods
Objectivity: the extent to which findings are free from bias	Neutrality: the extent to which the findings are reflective of the subjects and the inquiry itself rather than researcher's biases or prejudices	Confirmability: an analog to objectivity		Objectivity / Confirmability: degree to which the findings are free from unacknowledged researcher biases