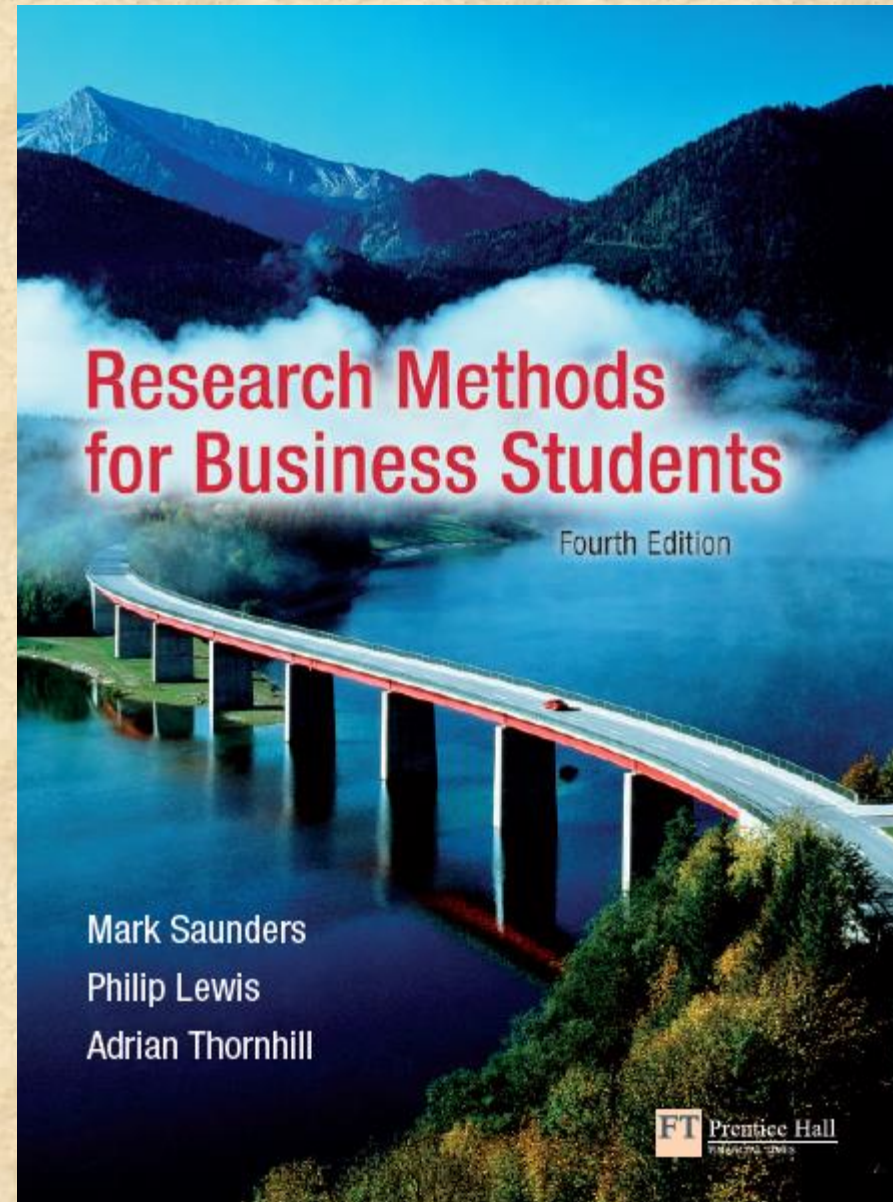


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5



Formulating the research design

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this chapter you should be able to:

- understand the importance of having thought carefully about your research design;
- Identify the main research strategies and explain why these should not be thought of as mutually exclusive;
- explain the differences between quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques and analysis procedures;
- explain the benefits of adopting multiple methods to the conduct of research;
- consider the implications of adopting different time horizons for your research design;
- explain the concepts of validity and reliability and identify the main threats to validity and reliability;
- understand some of the main ethical issues implied by the choice of research strategy.

5.1 Introduction

- ✓ In the **research onion**, as a way of depicting the issues underlying choice of data collection method or methods, the outer two layers are **research philosophies** and **research approaches** (chapter 04).

5.1 Introduction

- ✓ The next three layers are research strategies, research choices and time horizons.
- ✓ These three layers can be thought of as focusing on the process of research design, that is, turning your research question into a research project (Robson, 2002).

5.1 Introduction

- ✓ The way you choose to answer your research question will be influenced by your research philosophy and approach.

5.1 Introduction

- ✓ Your research question will subsequently inform your choice of research strategy, your choices of collection techniques and analysis procedures, and the time horizon over which you undertake your research project.

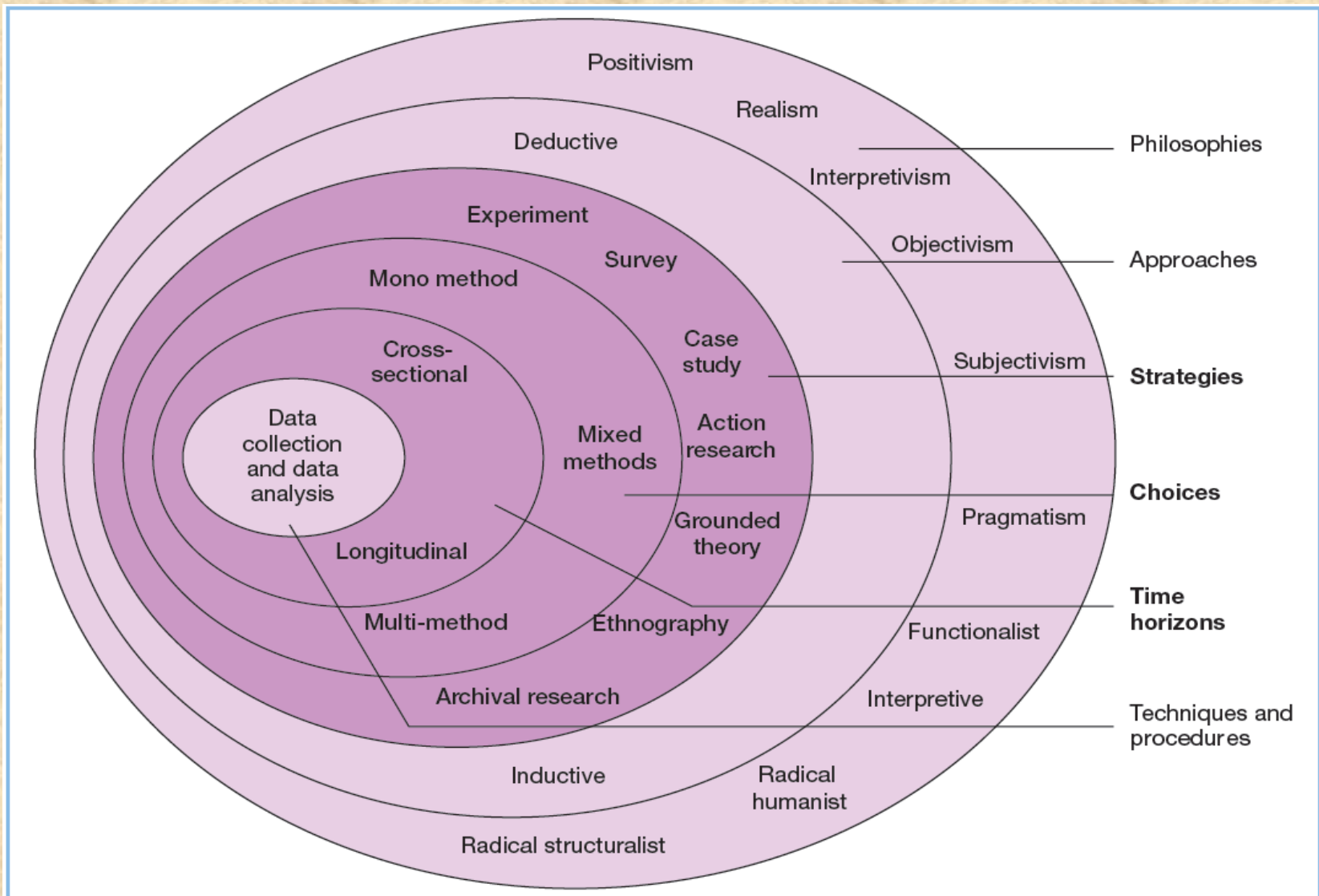


Figure 5.1 The research 'onion'

Source: © Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Adrian Thornhill 2006

5.3 The need for a clear research strategy

Survey

- ✓ The **survey** strategy is usually associated with the deductive approach.
 - ✓ It is most frequently used to answer **who, what, where, how much and how many** questions.
 - ✓ It tends to be used for **explanatory and descriptive** research.

5.3 The need for a clear research strategy

- ✓ Surveys are popular as they allow the collection of a large amount of data from a sizeable population in a highly economical way.

5.3 The need for a clear research strategy

- ✓ Often obtained by using a questionnaire administered to a sample, these data are standardized, allowing easy comparison.

5.3 The need for a clear research strategy

- ✓ The survey strategy allows you to collect quantitative data which you can analyze quantitatively using descriptive and inferential statistics.

5.3 The need for a clear research strategy

- ✓ The data collected using a survey strategy can be used to suggest possible reasons for particular relationships between variables and to produce models of these relationships.

5.3 The need for a clear research strategy

- ✓ Using a survey strategy should give you more control over the research process and, when sampling is used, it is possible to generate findings that are representative of the whole population at a lower cost than collecting the data for the whole population.

5.3 The need for a clear research strategy

- ✓ The questionnaire is not the only data collection technique that belongs to the survey strategy.

5.3 The need for a clear research strategy

- ✓ Structured observation, of the type most frequently associated with organization and methods (O&M) research, and structured interviews, where standardized questions are asked of all interviewees, also often fall into this strategy.

The End