

# *Graduate Research Seminar*

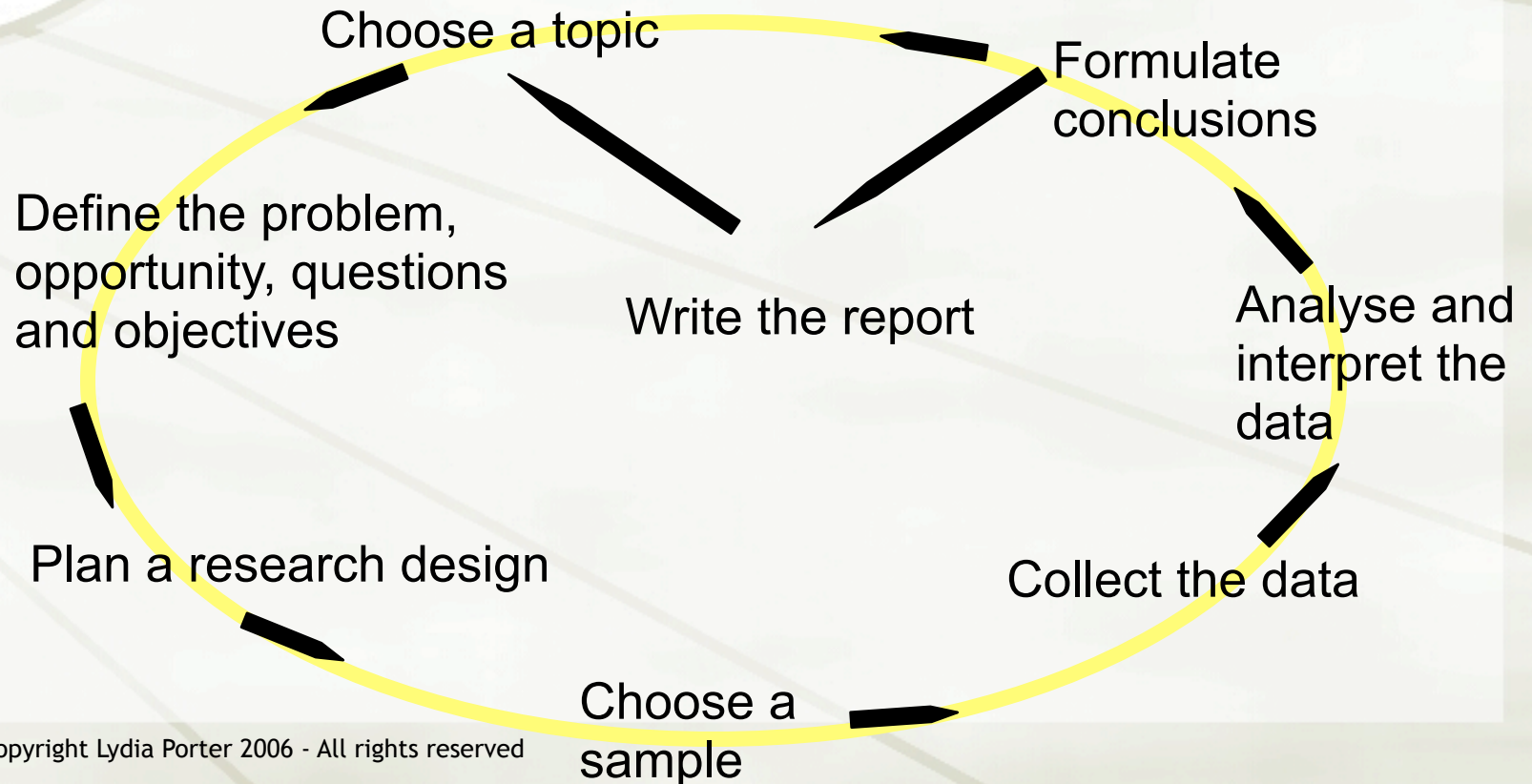
IUM, September 2006



# *What is research?*

- ★ A process of “finding out”, enquiry, investigation.
  - ✦ Starts with a question.
- ★ Systematic and methodical.
  - ✦ Follows a plan.
- ★ Increases knowledge.
  - ✦ Personal and social.

# *The research process*





# *Defining the problem*

★ “The formulation of the problem is often more important than the solution.” *Albert Einstein*





# *Defining the problem*

- ★ Alice: Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?
- ★ Cat: That depends a good deal on where you want to get to.
- ★ Alice: I don't much care where...
- ★ Cat: Then it doesn't matter which way you go.



# *Planning your search*

- ★ Define the topic.
- ★ Think about the scope.
- ★ Think about your outcomes.
- ★ Think about housekeeping.
- ★ Secondary sources or primary research?
  - ★ Search the sources.
  - ★ Design the strategy and collection.



# *Research design*

- ★ A framework for the collection and analysis of data.
- ★ How important is it to:
  - ★ Express causal connections between variables.
  - ★ Generalize to larger groups than those being investigated.
  - ★ Understand behaviour and its meaning in a specific social context.
  - ★ Have an appreciation of phenomena over time.





# *Choosing a design*

- ★ Quantitative:

- ★ Experimental.

- ★ Survey (cross-section, longitudinal).

- ★ Qualitative:

- ★ Case study.

- ★ Ethnography.





# *Collecting the data*

many research designs = many data collection methods

primary research versus secondary research



# *Primary research methods*

★ A technique for collecting data:

◆ Instruments:

- ◆ Self-completion questionnaires.
- ◆ Structured interviews.
- ◆ Structured observation.

◆ Participation:

- ◆ Depth interviews.
- ◆ Unstructured observation.



# *Using secondary data*

## ★ Advantages

- ★ Saves time and money.
- ★ Unobtrusive.
- ★ Makes longitudinal and comparative studies possible.
- ★ Can give context to your own data.
- ★ Can result in new discoveries and new directions for research.
- ★ Permanence and public scrutiny.

## ★ Disadvantages

- ★ Original purpose may not match your need.
- ★ Data may be too old.
- ★ Access may be difficult or costly.
- ★ Aggregations and definitions may be unsuitable.
- ★ Data may be presented in a distorted way.
- ★ May be difficult to verify the data's accuracy.