

Chapter 7: Writing Research Reports

Introduction



Writing a research report is naturally **an important step in the scientific process**, since the report places the research study in the public domain for consideration and confirmation. Beginning researchers generally find the process much easier after they have completed one or two studies. **A key to successful writing** is to follow the *guidelines developed by journal editors, or styles developed by individual companies or businesses*. The same basic five-section format is used for all reports.

Ethical considerations in conducting research should not be overlooked. Nearly every research study has the potential of affecting subjects in some way, either psychologically or physically. Researchers dealing with human subjects must take great care to ensure that all precautions are taken to alleviate any potential harm to subjects. This includes carefully planning a study as well as debriefing subjects upon completion of a project.

The **final part of this chapter describes financing research projects**. This topic is relevant to all researchers because lack of funds often cancels good research projects. The chapter describes a variety of sources that provide financial assistance; none should be overlooked.

Research Reports



7.1 Research Reports

The first step in writing any research report is to **identify the intended readers**. This is an important decision because the organization, **style**, and even the mode of presentation depend on the target audience. In mass media research, there are typically two types of audiences and two types of research reports:

1. Reports **aimed at colleagues** and intended for publication in scholarly and professional journals or for presentation at a convention.
2. Reports **aimed at decision makers** and intended for in-house use only.

The format, length, style, and organization of a published report will have to conform to the guidelines of the journal in which it appears. Since colleagues are the target audience for such reports and papers, the writer must pay close attention to the theory underlying the

research, the methods used, and the techniques of analysis. In the second instance, there is more flexibility. Some decision makers prefer to be briefed orally by the researcher. In such cases the verbal presentation might be supplemented by a written summary, handouts, visual aids, and, on request, a detailed report. In other circumstances, the researcher might prepare a written report with a short executive summary, confining most of the technical material to appendixes. No matter what the situation or audience, the primary goal in all research reports is accuracy.

The Need for
Accurate
Reporting
Procedures



7.2 The Need for Accurate Reporting Procedures

Researchers need to report research accurately for two reasons. First, a clear explanation of the investigator's methods provides an opportunity for readers to more completely understand the project. Researchers should keep in mind that in most cases, a reader's knowledge of a given project is based solely on the information contained in the report. Since readers do not instinctively understand each procedure used in a study, these details must be supplied. Second, an accurate report provides the necessary information for those who wish to replicate the study. Enough information must be included or filed somewhere in public archives to enable reproduction of the study without the necessity of personal contact with the investigator. This is to ensure that a study is always respectable regardless of the decades or generations that may pass.

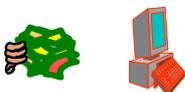
Ability to
replicate

Researchers should also be able to replicate a published study from the information contained therein. Realistically speaking, however, this is not always possible. Mass media journals have limited space, and journal editors do not have the luxury of printing all raw data, tables, and graphs generated by a study; they are forced to eliminate some essential information. Therefore, alternative—data archives—is very important.

The
conclusion

The conclusion, then, is that individual researchers must take full responsibility for accurately reporting and storing their own research data. To facilitate this task, the following subsections describe the important elements of research that should be included in a published study. The lists may appear long in some cases, but in reality, most of the information can be contained in a few short sentences. At any rate, it is better to include too much information than too little.

The
Mechanics of
Writing a
Research
Report



7.3 The Mechanics of Writing a Research Report

Beginning researchers may find the writing style used for research reports awkward or unaesthetic, but there is a definite purpose behind the rules governing scientific writing: clarity. Every effort must be made to avoid ambiguity.

Given the wide variety of approaches to research, it stands to reason that the approaches to writing a research report are equally varied. Most research reports, however, include only five basic sections or chapters: introduction, literature review, methods, results, and discussion.

Introduction



7.3.1 Introduction

The introduction should alert the reader to what is to follow. Most introductions usually contain the following:

Problem statement



1. **Statement of the problem.** The first job of the report writer is to provide some information about the background and the nature of the problem under investigation. If the research topic has a long history, then a short summary is in order. This section should also discuss any relevant theoretical background that pertains to the research topic.

Justification



2. **Justification.** Another important area to be covered in this initial section is the rationale and justification for the project. This section should address the question of why it is important for us to spend time and energy researching this particular problem. Research can be important because it deals with a crucial theoretical issue, because it has practical value, or because it has methodological value.

Aims of the current study



3. **Aims of the current study.** Most introductory sections conclude with an unequivocal statement of the hypothesis or research question to be answered by the study.

Literature Review



7.2.2 Literature Review

The second major section is the review of the literature. In some formats, the literature review is incorporated into the introduction. As the name suggests, the literature review section briefly recapitulates the work done in the field. This review need not be exhaustive; the writer should summarize only those studies most relevant to the current project. All literature reviews should be accurate and relevant.

Accuracy



1. Accuracy

A concise and accurate distillation of each study in your review is a prerequisite for any literature review. The main points of each study—hypotheses that were tested, sample, method, findings, and implications—should be briefly summarized. The review should be selective but thorough.

Relevance

2. Relevance

A literature review should be more than a rote recitation of research studies. It must also contain analysis and synthesis. The writer is

obligated to discuss the relevance of the past work to the current study. What theoretic development can be seen in past work? What major conclusions have recurred? What were some common problems? How do the answers to these questions relate to the current study? The ultimate aim of the review is to show how your study evolved out of past efforts and how the prior research provides a justification for your study.

Methods

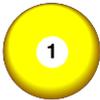
7.3.3 Methods



The methods section describes the approach used to confront the research problem. Some of the topics that are usually mentioned in this section are as follows.

Variables used the analysis

1. *Variables used in the analysis*



This includes a description of both independent and dependent variables, explaining how the variables were selected for the study, what marker variables, if any, were included, and how extraneous variables were controlled. Each variable also requires some justification for its use — variables cannot be added without reason. The mean and the standard deviation for each variable should be reported when necessary.

Sample size

2. *Sample size*



The researcher should state the number of subjects or units of study and also explain how these entities were selected. Additionally, any departure from normal randomization must be described in detail.

Sample characteristics

3. *Sample characteristics*



The sample should also be described in terms of its demographic, lifestyle, or other descriptor characteristics. When human subjects are used, at least their age and sex should be indicated.

Methodology

4. *Methodology*



Every research report requires a description of the methods used to collect and analyze data. The amount of methodological description to be included depends on the audience; articles written for journals, for instance, must contain more detailed information than reports prepared in private sector research.

Data manipulation

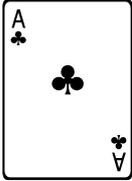
5. *Data manipulation*



Often the collected data are not normally distributed, and researchers must use data transformation to achieve an approximation of normality. If such a procedure is used, a full explanation should be given.

Results

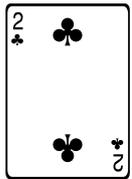
7.3.4 Results

Description
of the
analysis

The results section contains the findings of the research. It typically contains the following:

1. *Description of the analysis*

The statistical techniques used to analyze the data should be mentioned. If the analysis used common or easily recognized statistics, a one-sentence description might be all that is needed, such as "Chi-square analyses were performed on the data" or "Analysis of variance was performed....." If appropriate, the particular statistical program used by the researcher should be identified. Finally, this part should include an overview of what is to follow: "This section is divided into two parts. We will first report the results of the analysis of variance and then the results of the regression analysis."

Description
of findings

2. *Description of findings*

The findings should be tied to the statement of the hypotheses or research questions mentioned in the introduction. The author should clearly state whether the results supported the hypotheses or whether the research questions were answered. Next, any peripheral findings can be reported. Many researchers and journal editors suggest that interpretation and discussion of findings be omitted from this section and that the writer should stick solely to the bare facts. Others think that this section should contain more than numbers, suggesting the implications of the findings as well. In fact, for some short research articles, this section is sometimes called "Findings and Discussion." The choice of what model to follow depends upon the purpose of the report and the avenue of publication.

Tables

3. *Tables*

Tables, charts, graphs, and other data displays should be presented parsimoniously and, if the article is being submitted to a journal, in the proper format. Remember that many readers turn first to the tables and may not read the accompanying text; consequently, tables should be explicit and easily understood by themselves.

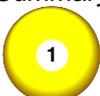
Discussion



7.3.5 Discussion

The last section of a research report is the discussion. The contents of this section are highly variable but the following elements are common.

Summary



1. *Summary*

A synopsis of the main findings of the study often leads off this section.

Implication/
discussion/
interpretations



2. *Implications/discussion/interpretations*

This is the part of the report that discusses the meaning of the findings. If the findings are in line with current theory and research, the writer should include a statement of how they correspond with what was done in the past. If the findings contradict or do not support current theory, then some explanation for the current pattern of results is provided.

Limitations



3. *Limitations*

The conclusions of the study should be tempered by a report of some of its constraints. Perhaps the sample was limited or the response rate was low or the experimental manipulation was not as clean as it could have been. In any case, the researcher should list some of the potential weaknesses of the research.

Suggestion
for future
research



4. *Suggestions for future research*

In addition to answering questions, most research projects uncover new questions to be investigated. The suggestions for research should be relevant and practical.

Writing Style



7.4 Writing Style

Since the writing requirements for journal articles and business or government reports vary in several ways, the following guidelines are divided into two sections, writing for scholarly journals and writing a report for business or government decision makers.

Writing for
Scholarly
Journals

7.4.1 Writing for Scholarly Journals

There are nine principal guidelines for writing for scholarly journals.

Avoid first
person
pronouns



1. **Avoid using first person pronouns:** I, me, my, we, and so on. Research reports are almost always written in third person (“Subjects were selected randomly.” “Subject A told the researcher . . . and so on. First person pronouns should be used only when the article is a commentary.

Organize
tables and
figures



2. **When submitting a paper for professional publication,** place each table, graph, chart, and figure on a separate page. This is done because if the article is accepted, these pages will be typeset by one department of the printing company and the text by another. (In management reports, tables, graphs, and other displays are included in the text unless they are too large, in which case they should be placed on separate pages.)

Read
guidelines



3. Read the authors' guidelines published by each journal.

They provide specific rules concerning acceptable writing style, footnote and bibliography formats, the number of copies to submit, and so forth. A researcher who fails to follow these guidelines may decrease the chance that his or her report will be accepted for publication — or at least substantially delay the process while alterations are made.

Follow the
format



4. Be stylistically consistent with regard to tables, charts, graphs, section headings, and so forth. Tables, for example, should follow the same format and should be numbered consecutively.

Label clearly



5. Clearly label all displays with meaningful titles. Each table, graph, chart, or figure caption should accurately describe the material presented and its contribution to the report.

Simple
language



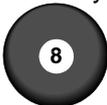
6. Keep language and descriptions as simple as possible by avoiding unnecessary and overly complex words, phrases, and terms. The goal of scientific writing is to explain findings clearly, simply, and accurately

Active voice



7. When possible, use the active rather than passive voice. For example, “The researchers found that. . .” is preferable to “It was found by the researchers that. . .” Writing in the active voice makes reading more pleasant and also requires fewer words.

Proofread
carefully



8. Proofread the manuscript carefully. Even researchers who are meticulous in their scientific approach can make errors in compiling a manuscript. All manuscripts, whether intended for publication or for management review, should be proofread several times to check for accuracy.

Miscellaneous



9. Miscellaneous considerations:

- a. Avoid phrases or references that could be interpreted as sexist or racist.
- b. Check all data for accuracy. Even one misplaced digit may affect the results of a study.
- c. Use acceptable grammar; avoid slang.
- d. Provide acknowledgments whenever another researcher's work is included in the report.
- e. Include footnotes to indicate where further information or assistance can be obtained.

Write a
Report for
Business or
Government
Decision
Makers

7.4.2 Writing a Report for Business or Government Decision Makers

Guidelines for writing a report for business or government decision makers include the following.

Excessive
summary

1. **Provide an executive summary at the beginning of the report.** Since busy decision makers may not read anything else in the report, great care must be taken in constructing this section. Some useful hints are:

- a. **Get right to the point** and state conclusions quickly.
- b. **Keep the language simple and concise.** Don't use jargon, clichés, or overly technical terms.
- c. **Be brief.** Keep the summary to no more than a page — surely no more than two pages. Anything else ceases to be a summary.

Place
complicated
discussions

techniques

2. **Place detailed and complicated discussions of methods in a technical appendix.** Summarize the procedures in the body of the report.

3. **Use clearly defined and easily understood quantitative analysis techniques.** Most decision makers are not familiar with complicated statistical procedures. Keep the basic analysis simple. If it becomes necessary to use advanced statistical procedures, explain in the body of the report what was done and what the results mean. Include another technical appendix that describes the statistical technique in detail.

Use graphs
and charts

4. **Use graphs and charts wherever appropriate** to make numerical findings more understandable and meaningful. Never let tabular material stand alone; to ensure that its importance is not overlooked, mention or explain each such item.
5. **Decision makers like research** that provides answers to their questions. Put the conclusions reached by the investigators and, if appropriate, recommendations for action in the last section of the report.

Research
Ethics

7.5 Research Ethics

The majority of social research involves observations of human beings—asking them questions or examining what they have done. Since human beings have certain rights, the researcher must ensure that the rights of the participants in a project are not violated. This requires a consideration of ethics: distinguishing right from wrong and the proper from the improper. Unfortunately, there are no universal definitions for these terms. Instead, a series of guidelines, broad generalizations, and suggestions has been endorsed or at least tacitly accepted by most in the research profession. These guidelines will not provide an answer to every ethical question that may arise, but they can Wip Triage researchers more sensitive to the issues.

Before discussing these specific guidelines, we list some hypothetical research situations that **involve ethics**.



1. A researcher at a large university hands questionnaires to the students in an introductory mass media course and tells them that if they do not complete the forms, they will lose points toward their grade in the course.



2. A researcher is conducting a mail survey about attendance at X-rated motion pictures. The questionnaire states that responses will be anonymous. Unknown to the respondents, however, each return envelope is marked with a code that enables the researcher to identify the sender.



3. A researcher recruits subjects for an experiment by stating that participants will be asked to watch "a few scenes from some current movies." Those who decide to participate are shown several scenes of bloody and graphic violence.



4. A researcher shows one group of children a violent television show and another group a nonviolent program. After viewing, the children are sent to a public playground, where they are told to play with the children who are already there. The researcher records each instance of violent behavior exhibited by the young subjects.



5. Subjects in an experiment are told to submit a sample of their news writing to an executive of a large newspaper. They are led to believe that whoever submits the best work will be offered a job at the paper. In fact, the "executive" is a confederate in the experiment and severely criticizes everyone's work.

These examples of ethically flawed study designs should be kept in mind while reading the following guidelines to ethics in mass media research.

General
Ethical
Principles



7.6 General Ethical Principles

General ethical principles are difficult to construct in the research area. There are, however, at least four principles from the study of ethics that have relevance.

First, is the principle of autonomy, or the principle of self-determination? Basic to this concept is the demand that the researcher respect the rights, values, and decisions of other people. The reasons for a person's action should be respected and the actions not interfered with. This principle is exemplified by the use of informed consent in the research procedure.



A **second** ethical principle important to social science research is that of nonmaleficence. In short, it is wrong to intentionally inflict harm on another.



A **third** ethical principle — beneficence—is usually considered in tandem with nonmaleficence. Beneficence stipulates a positive obligation to remove existing harms and to confer benefits on others. These two principles operate together, and often the researcher must weigh the harmful risks of research against its possible benefits (for example, increase in knowledge, and refinement of theory).



A **fourth** ethical principle that is sometimes relevant to social science is the principle of justice. At its general level, this principle holds that people who are equal in relevant respects should be treated equally. In the research context, this principle should be applied when new programs or policies are being evaluated. The positive results of such research should be shared with all. It would be unethical, for example, to deny the benefit of a new teaching procedure to children because they were originally chosen to be in the control group rather than the group that received the experimental procedure. Benefits should be shared with all who are qualified.

Although it is difficult to generalize, it is clear that **mass media researchers must follow some set of rules to fulfill their ethical obligations to their subjects and respondents.** Cook (1976), discussing the laboratory approach, offers one such code of behavior.

1. **Do not involve** people in research without their knowledge or consent.

2. **Do not coerce** people to participate.

3. **Do not withhold** from the participant the true nature of the research.

4. **Do not actively lie** to the participant about the nature of the research.



5. **Do not lead the participant** to commit acts that diminish his or her self-respect.

6. **Do not violate the right** to self-determination.

7. **Do not expose** the participant to physical or mental stress.

8. **Do not invade** the privacy of the participant.

9. **Do not withhold benefits** from participants in control groups.

10. **Do not fail to treat** research participants fairly and to show them consideration and respect.

Voluntary
participation
and Informed
Consent



7.7 Voluntary Participation and Informed Consent

An individual is entitled to decline to participate in any research project or to terminate participation at any time. Participation in an experiment, survey, or focus group is always voluntary and any form of coercion is unacceptable. Researchers who are in a position of authority over subjects (as in the situation where the researcher hands the university students questionnaires) should be especially sensitive to *implied* coercion: even though the researcher might tell the class that failure to participate will not affect their grades, many students may not believe this. In such a situation, it would be advisable to keep the questionnaires anonymous and to have the person in authority be absent from the room while the survey is administered.

Voluntary
participation



Voluntary participation is a less pressing ethical issue in mail and telephone surveys, since respondents are free to hang up the phone or to throw away the questionnaire. Nonetheless, a researcher should not attempt to induce subjects to participate by misrepresenting the organization sponsoring the research or by exaggerating its purpose or importance. For example, phone interviewers should not be instructed to identify themselves as representatives of the "Department of Information" to mislead people into thinking the survey is government-sponsored. Likewise, mail questionnaires should not be constructed to mimic census forms, tax returns, social security questionnaires, or other official government forms.

Closely
related

Closely related to voluntary participation is the notion of *informed* consent. For people to volunteer for a research project, they need to know enough about the project to make an intelligent choice. Researchers have the responsibility to inform potential subjects or respondents of all features of the project that can reasonably be expected to influence participation. Respondents should understand that an interview may take as long as 45 minutes, or that a second interview is required, or that upon completing a mail questionnaire, they may be singled out for a telephone interview.

In an experiment, informed consent means that potential subjects must be warned of any possible discomfort or unpleasantness that might be involved. Subjects should be told if they are to receive or administer electric shocks, be subjected to unpleasant audio or visual stimuli, or undergo any procedure that may cause concern. Any unusual measurement techniques that may be used also must be described. Researchers have an obligation to answer candidly and truthfully, as far as possible, all the participant's questions about the research.

Experiments



Experiments that involve deception (see the following subsection) cause special problems with regard to obtaining informed consent. If deception is absolutely necessary to conduct an experiment, is the experimenter obligated to inform subjects that they may be deceived during the upcoming experiment? Will such a disclosure affect participation in the experiment? Will it also affect the experimental results? Should one compromise by telling all potential subjects that deception to be involved for some participants but not for others?

A second problem



A second problem is deciding exactly how much information about a research project must be disclosed in seeking to achieve informed consent. Is it enough to explain that the experiment involves rating commercials, or is it necessary to add that the experiment is designed to test whether subjects with high IQs prefer different commercials from those with low IQs? *Obi-llovs!f*, msorrie situations the researcher cannot reveal everything about the project for fear of contaminating the results. For example, if the goal of the research is to examine the influence of peer pressure on commercial evaluations, alerting the subjects to this facet of the investigation might change their behavior in the experiment.

Problems might occur



Problems might occur in research examining the impact of mass media in non-literate communities, for example, if the research subjects did not comprehend what they were told regarding the proposed investigation. Even in literate societies, many people fail to understand the implications for confidentiality of the storage of survey data on computer disks or tape. Moreover, an investigator might not have realized in advance that some subjects would find part of an experiment or survey emotionally disturbing. Since it is impossible for informed consent to apply to all situations, the American Psychological Association has suggested that researchers have a responsibility to continue their attention to subjects' welfare after the completion of data collection.

Research findings



Research findings provide some indication of what research participants should be told. Subjects always want a general description of the experiment and what was expected of them; they want to know whether danger was involved, how long the experiment would last, and the experiment's purpose. As far as informed consent and survey participation are concerned. There is a wide variation among researchers about what to tell respondents in the survey introduction. Almost all introductions identified the research organization and the interviewer by name and described the research topic. Less frequently mentioned in introductions were the sponsor of the research and guarantees of confidentiality or anonymity. Few survey introductions mentioned the length of the survey or that participation was voluntary.



Finally, one must consider the form of the consent to be obtained. Written consent is a requirement in certain government-sponsored

research programs and may also be required by many university research review committees, as discussed next in connection with guidelines promulgated by the federal government. In several generally recognized situations, however, signed forms are regarded as impractical. These include telephone surveys, mail surveys, personal interviews, and cases in which the signed form itself might represent an occasion for breach of confidentiality. For example, a respondent who has been promised anonymity as an inducement to participate in a face-to-face interview might be suspicious if asked to sign a consent form after the interview. In these circumstances, the fact that the respondent agreed to participate is taken as implied consent.

Concealment
and
Deception

7.8 Concealment and Deception

Concealment and deception techniques are encountered most frequently in experimental research. Concealment is the withholding of certain information from the subjects; deception is deliberately providing false information. Both practices raise ethical problems. The difficulty in obtaining consent has already been mentioned. A second problem derives from the general feeling that it is wrong for experimenters to lie or otherwise to deceive subjects.

Many critics argue that deception transforms a subject from a human being into a manipulated object and is therefore demeaning to the participant. Moreover, once subjects have been deceived, they are likely to expect to be deceived again in other research projects. At least two research studies seem to suggest that this concern is valid. Studies have found that high incidence of suspicion among subjects of high school age after having been deceived.

On the other hand, some researchers argue that certain studies could not be conducted at all without the use of deception. They claim that the harm done to those who are deceived is outweighed by the benefits of the research to scientific knowledge. The same arguments can be used both for and against concealment. In general, however, concealment is a somewhat less worrisome ethical problem, provided enough information is given to subjects to allow informed consent and all the subjects' questions are answered candidly.

Obviously, deception is not a technique that should be used indiscriminately. It is suggested that before the investigator settles on deception as an experimental tactic, three questions should be examined:



1. How significant is the proposed study?
2. Are alternative procedures available that would provide the same information?
3. How severe is the deception? (It is one thing to tell subjects that

the experimentally constructed message they are reading was taken from the *New York Times*; it is another to report that the test a subject has just completed was designed to measure latent suicidal tendencies.)

Another set of criteria was put forth by Elms (1982), who suggested five necessary and sufficient conditions under which deception can be considered ethically justified in social science research.



1. When there is no other feasible way to obtain the desired information
2. When the likely benefits substantially outweigh the likely harms
3. When subjects are given the option to withdraw at any time without penalty
4. When any physical or psychological harm to subjects is temporary
5. When subjects are debriefed as to all substantial deception and the research procedures are made available for public review

Researchers are offered good advice for the planning stages of investigations.

When an experiment is concluded, especially one involving concealment or deception, it is the responsibility of the investigator to debrief subjects. Debriefing should be thorough enough to remove any lasting effects that might have been created by the experimental manipulation or by any other aspect of the experiment. Subjects' questions should be answered and the potential value of the experiment stressed. How common is debriefing among mass media researchers?

Protection of
Privacy



7.9 Protection of Privacy

The problem of protecting the privacy of participants usually occurs more often in survey research than in laboratory studies. Subjects have a right to know whether their privacy will be maintained and who will have access to the information they provide. There are two ways to guarantee privacy: by assuring anonymity and by assuring confidentiality. A promise of anonymity is a guarantee that a given respondent cannot possibly be linked to any particular response. In many research projects anonymity is an advantage, since it encourages respondents to be honest and candid in their answers. Strictly speaking, personal and telephone interviews cannot be anonymous because the researcher can link a given questionnaire to a specific person, household, or telephone number. In such instances, the researcher should promise confidentiality; that is, the respondents should be assured that even though as individuals they can be identified, their names will never be publicly associated with the information they provide. A researcher should never use "anonymous" in a way that is or seems to be synonymous with "confidential."

Additionally, respondents should be told who *will* have access to the information they provide. The researcher's responsibility for assuring confidentiality does not end once the data have been analyzed and the study concluded. Questionnaires that identify persons by name should not be stored in public places, nor should other investigators be given permission to examine confidential data unless all identifying marks have been obliterated.

Ethics in
Data
Analysis and
Reporting



7.10 Ethics in Data Analysis and Reporting

Researchers are also responsible for maintaining professional standards in the analysis and reporting of their data. The ethical guidelines in this area are less controversial and more clear-cut. One cardinal rule is that researchers have a moral and ethical obligation to refrain from tampering with data: questionnaire responses and experimental observations may not be fabricated, altered, or discarded. Similarly, researchers are expected to maintain reasonable care in processing the data to guard against needless errors that might affect the results.

Researchers



Researchers should never conceal information that might influence the interpretation of their findings. For example, if two weeks elapsed between the testing of the experimental group and the testing of the control group, this delay should be reported so that other researchers can discount the effects of history and maturation on the results. Every research report should contain a full and complete description of method, particularly of any departure from standard procedures.

Science is a
public activity



Since science is a public activity, researchers have an ethical obligation to share their findings and methods with other researchers. All questionnaires, experimental materials, measurement instruments, instructions to subjects, and other relevant items should be made available to those who wish to examine them.

Finally



Finally, all investigators are under an ethical obligation to draw conclusions from their data that are consistent with those data. Interpretations should not be stretched or distorted to fit a personal point of view or a favorite theory, or to gain or maintain a client's favor. Nor should researchers attribute greater significance or credibility to their data than they justify. For example, when analyzing correlation coefficients obtained from a large sample, it is possible to achieve statistical significance with an r of only, for example, .10. It would be perfectly acceptable to report a statistically significant result in this case, but the investigator should also mention that the predictive utility of the correlation was not large, and specifically, that it explained only 1% of the total variation. In short, researchers should report results with candor and honesty.

Finding
Support for
Research



7.11 Finding Support for Research

Research costs money. Finding a source for research funds is a problem that confronts both quantitative and qualitative researchers in all fields of social science.



A researcher in need of funding should contact these organizations for details about the types of studies they support and the amount of funds available, as well as instructions for preparing research proposals.



University or college researchers should determine whether the institution has a program of research grants for individual faculty members. Many colleges award such grants, often on a competitive basis, for social research. Typically these grants are modest in size — usually under \$5,000 — but they are among the easiest to apply for and to administer. In many cases grants are available for student research as well.

Finally



Finally, most colleges and universities have an Office of Contracts and Grants (or some similar title) that can be of great help to researchers. In addition to aiding the researcher with the bureaucratic requirements necessary for a grant application, this office can offer valuable assistance in other areas. For example, this office might offer computerized searches for sponsoring agencies, information about current grants, budget advice, preparation of abstracts, and even word-processing services. Researchers in the academic setting should take advantage of this resource.