

SECTION 2

WRITING A QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH REPORT

INTRODUCTION

As you learned in Chapter 3, the social and behavioral sciences have more than One Right Way of organizing a quantitative research report. Although arrangements vary, all research reports answer the following four overarching questions:

- What question did you ask (and why should anyone care)?
- What did you do?
- What did you find?
- What does it all mean (and why should anyone care)?

Chapters 4 through 7 discuss how you address these questions. Turns out you tackle big questions by answering several “smaller” ones (smaller in scope, not in importance). Your responses to these questions will appear in different sections of your research report depending on your discipline. In Section 3 you will see how some disciplines go about organizing responses to these questions.

The question-based approach I’ve used in this section plays to your strengths. As a student, you answer questions all the time; you know the drill. Further, it is a straightforward strategy to ensure that you include essential information in your report. But, here’s the caveat (a.k.a. my recurring nightmare) – you approach your research report as you would a final exam. You carefully answer each question on a separate page. Then you mash the pages together and, *Voila!* You have your report. At this point I wake up clammy and hyperventilating. With labored breath, I croak: “Connect the dots!” These questions are not islands unto themselves; they form an integrated network of ideas. Accordingly, your responses to these questions need to form a coherent whole.

Chapter 8, cleverly titled “Odds and Ends,” includes important components that supplement the major sections of your report. Many of these components are bookends, such as your title page and appendices. Other components, such as citations, are integrated throughout your report.