

CHAPTER 8 - INFORMATION CONVENTIONS

This section moves the reader back from the *specific* information reported in the methods and the results sections to a more *general* view of how the findings should be interpreted.

Look at the following discussion section from a research report in the field of applied psychology. In this study the productivity of older and younger factory workers was compared. Notice the kinds of information that are included in this example.

EX 8.1

AGE, EXPERIENCE, AND PERFORMANCE ON SPEED AND SKILL JOBS IN AN APPLIED SETTING

Discussion

original hypothesis	¹ The decremental theory of aging led us to inter that older workers in speed jobs would have poorer performance, greater absenteeism, and more accidents compared with other workers.
findings	² The findings, however, go against the theory. ³ The older workers generally earned more, were absent less, had fewer accidents, and had less turnover than younger workers. ⁴ One possible conclusion is that the requirements of the speed jobs in the light manufacturing industry under study do not make physical demands on the older workers to the limits of their
explanation for findings	reserve capacity. ⁵ The competence and experience of the older workers in these specific Jobs may have compensated for their reduced stamina...
limitations	⁶ This study has taken a step in the direction of defining the relationship between age, experience, and productivity in one particular industry. ⁷ It is possible of course that other industries with a different complex of speed jobs and skill jobs may produce entirely different results. ⁸ In addition, it is important to emphasize that methodological problems in the research design limit our interpretations.
need for further research	⁹ The approach outlined in this study should be replicated in other manufacturing plants, as well as in other occupational areas in light, medium, and heavy industries in order to construct a typology of older worker performance in a variety of jobs.

EXERCISE 8.2 Analysis

Read the following discussion section from a report in the field of management. The study was carried out to determine if management by objectives (MBO) practices would improve the quality and quantity of work and level of satisfaction of employees in a human services agency.

THE EFFECTS OF MBO ON PERFORMANCE AND SATISFACTION IN A PUBLIC SECTOR ORGANIZATION

Discussion

¹The results of the satisfaction questionnaire were mixed.

² Satisfaction with supervision significantly increased after implementation of the MBO program, and there was directional (but not significant) support that work satisfaction improved.

³These results are consistent with previous research (Steers, 1976; Tosi et al., 1976). ⁴Our findings thus lend support for the hypothesis that MBO leads to a satisfaction improvement, at least over the short term (Ivancevich, 1976). Reliance on these measures must be tempered, however, because a control group was not available and only two measures were taken (before and after) in assessing changes in satisfaction.

⁶ Because a high degree of variability was found in the data, it would be beneficial to replicate this study on larger and different populations. ⁷It would also be interesting to measure satisfaction over several periods of time instead of for one pre- and one post- intervention. ⁸The limitations in field experiment notwithstanding, this study suggests that MBO may have a favorable impact on performance and satisfaction in public sector agencies. ⁹Reinforcement of the MBO process and continuous reinforcement while using the system should aid in its acceptance and use.

Now identify the elements of information

Sentences 1, 2, 3 and 4:	Information element	_____
Sentence 5:	Information element	_____
Sentences 6 and 7:	Information element	_____
Sentence 8	Information element	_____
Sentence 9:	Information element	_____

EXERCISE 8.3 Arrangement

The discussion section from a research report in the field of sociology is given here, with the sentences in scrambled order. Rearrange and number the sentences in the order that you think the authors originally wrote them. Refer to the boxes which show the typical sequence of information elements.

SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY AMONG COLLEGE UNDERGRADUATES

- A. ____ We therefore recommend that colleges that wish to prevent cheating should not emphasize the social environment to the detriment of the intellectual environment.
- B. ____ It seems clear that both theories are able to explain statistically significant amounts of variance in college cheating.
- C. ____ The two perspectives examined were (1) culture conflict theory, and (2) internal social control theory.
- D. ____ In the first case, we can expect that to the extent that a student has a high level of conflict orientation, he or she will have an increased probability of cheating.
- E. ____ This research has attempted to assess two theories of deviant behavior in terms of their ability to account for cheating among a sample of college students (N = 650)
- F. ____ Finally, since there was a surprising lack of consensus among the students in our sample on precisely which activities their faculty members were likely to see as forbidden, we further recommend that faculty members would do well to take time occasionally to clarify precisely what will be defined as "scholastic dishonesty" in their classes.
- G. ____ On the other hand, to the extent that he has a high level of internal social control, his tendency to engage in cheating should be correspondingly reduced.

EXERCISE 8.4 – Gap fill

The following discussion section is from a study in the field of economics. The study investigated the monetary value of illegal, informal housing in the urban areas of developing countries. Fill in each blank space with any appropriate word.

Discussion

¹This study _____ data from the Philippines to determine whether a squatter-owner's valuation of his own house _____ compare with that of an independent appraiser. ²The results show _____ discrepancies in the estimates were quite large for individual properties. ³However, these discrepancies were largely offset when the averages for reasonably sized samples were compared. ⁴This _____ earlier findings by Kain and Quigley (1972) for conventional housing in the United States. ⁵Overall, it _____ that squatter housing markets behave as economically rational entities similar to conventional markets. ⁶They _____ be accounted for in any analysis regarding housing markets in developing countries.