CHAPTER 6

Presenting Your Research

LINDSEY L. COHEN AND LAURIE A. GRECO

REASONS FOR PRESENTING RESEARCH

When you consider submitting your research for conference presentation, is it is wise to weigh the costs and benefits of the endeavor. The costs might include the time commitment of writing and constructing the presentation, the potential for rejection from the reviewers, and the anxiety inherent in formal presentations. The benefits include disseminating information to appreciative audiences, such as professors, students, clinicians, teachers, and other professionals interested in new ideas to assist them in their own work. As a personal gain, feedback can be invaluable to you in the development of your research program. Presenting research at conferences also allows for the opportunity to meet potential future advisors, employers, collaborators or colleagues. Conferences are ideal settings for networking and, in fact, many conferences have forums organized for this exact purpose (e.g., job openings listed on a bulletin board). Although the benefits of presenting at conferences appear to outweigh the costs, you should consider the specific pros and cons for you, your research, and your particular situation before embarking on this experience.

PRESENTATION VENUES

There are many different outlets for presenting research findings ranging from departmental presentations to international conferences. The decision of submitting a proposal to one conference over another should be guided by both practical and professional reasons. In selecting a conference, you might answer the following questions: Can I afford to travel to this location? Will my presentation be ready in time for the conference? Am I interested in visiting the city that is hosting the conference? Do the dates of the conference interfere with personal or professional obligations? Will my friends and colleagues also be attending this conference? Are the philosophies of the association consistent with my perspectives and training needs? Is this the audience to whom I wish to disseminate my findings? Are there other professionals that I would like to meet attending this conference? Are the other presentations of interest to

LINDSEY L. COHEN • Department of Psychology, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV, 26506-6040
LAURIE A. GRECO • Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, Division of Psychology, Cincinnati, Ohio 45229-3039

me? Is continuing education credit offered? By answering these questions you should be able to pinpoint the conference that is best suited for you and your research.

TYPES OF PRESENTATIONS

After selecting a conference, you must decide on the *type* of presentation. In general, presentation categories are similar across venues and include poster and oral presentations (e.g., papers, symposia, panel discussions) and workshops. In general, poster presentations are optimal for disseminating preliminary or pilot findings, whereas well-established findings, cutting-edge research, and conceptual/theoretical issues often are reserved for oral presentations and workshops. If you are unsure about whether your research is best suited for a poster or oral presentation or workshop, consult with more experienced colleagues. Keynote and invited addresses are other types of conference proceedings typically delivered by esteemed professionals or experts in the field.

The most common types of conference presentations, poster presentations, symposia, panel discussions, and workshops, deserve further discussion. Typically, these scientific presentations follow a consistent format, which is similar to the layout of a research manuscript. For example, first you might introduce your topic and highlight related prior work, and outline the purpose and hypotheses of the study. Second, you could review your methodology, and, lastly, present and discuss salient results (see Drotar, 2000).

Poster Presentations

Poster presentations are the most common medium through which researchers disseminate findings. In this format, researchers summarize their primary aims, results, and conclusions in an easily digestible manner on a poster board. Poster sessions vary in duration, often ranging from between 1–2 hours. Authors typically are present with their posters for the duration of the session to discuss their work with interested colleagues. Poster presentations are relatively less formal and more personal than other presentation formats with the discussion of projects often assuming a conversational quality. Typically, many posters within a particular theme (e.g., health psychology) are displayed in a large room so that audiences might walk around the room and talk one-to-one with the authors. In addition, conference reviewers accept many more posters for presentations than symposia, panel discussion, and workshops, and, thus, the acceptance criteria are more lenient. Related, researchers might choose posters to present findings from small projects or findings of relatively less importance (e.g., preliminary or pilot results). Symposia, panel discussions, and workshops allow for the formal presentation of significant findings or of multiple studies.

Research Symposia

Symposia involve the aggregation of several individuals who present on a common topic. Depending on time constraints, 4–6 papers typically are featured, each lasting roughly 20 minutes, and often representing different viewpoints or facets of a broader topic. For example, a symposium on the etiology of anxiety disorders might be comprised of four separate papers representing the role of familial influences, biological risk factors, peer relationships, and

emotional conditioning on the development of maladaptive anxiety. As a presenter, you might discuss one project or the findings from a few studies. Like a master of ceremonies, the symposia Chair typically organizes the entire symposia by selecting presenters, guiding the topics and style of presentation, and introducing the topic and presenters at the beginning of the symposium. In addition to these duties, the Chair often will present a body of work or a few studies at the beginning of the symposium. In addition to the Chair and presenters, a Discussant is part of a symposium. The Discussant concludes the symposium by summarizing key findings from each paper, integrating the studies, and making more broad-based conclusions and directions for future research. Although a Discussant is privy to the presenters' papers prior to the symposium in order to prepare the summary comments, he or she will often take notes during the presenters' talks to augment any prepared commentary. The formal presentation is often followed by a period for audience inquiry and discussion. Although presenters are often researchers of varying levels of experience, Chairs and Discussants are usually senior investigators.

Panel Discussions

Panel discussions are similar to research symposia in that several professionals come together to discuss a common topic. Panel discussions, however, generally tend to be less formal and structured and more interactive and animated than symposia. For example, discussants can address each other and interject comments throughout the discussion. Similar to symposia, these presentations involve the discussion of one or more important topics in the field by informed discussants. As with symposia presentations, the Chair typically organizes these semi-formal discussions by contacting potential speakers and communicating the discussion topic and their respective roles.

Workshops

Conference workshops typically are longer (e.g., lasting at least three hours) and provide more in-depth, specialized training than symposia and panel discussions. It is not uncommon for workshop presenters to adopt a format similar to a structured seminar, in which mini-curricula are followed. Due to the length and specialized training involved, most workshop presenters enhance their presentations by incorporating interactive (e.g., role-plays) and multi-media (e.g., video clips) components. Workshops often are organized such that the information is geared for beginner, intermediate, or advanced professionals.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

After selecting a venue and deciding on a presentation type, the next step is to submit an application to the conference you wish to attend. The application process typically involves submitting a brief abstract (e.g., 200–300 words) describing the primary aims, methods, results, and conclusions of your study. For symposia and other oral presentations, the selection committee might request an outline of your talk, curriculum vitae from all presenters, and a time schedule or presentation agenda. Some conferences also request information regarding the educational objectives and goals of your presentation. One essential rule is to closely adhere

to the directions for submissions to the conference. For example, if there is a word limit for a poster abstract submission, make sure that you do not exceed the number of words even by one. Whereas some reviewers might not notice or mind, others might view it is as unprofessional and possibly disrespectful.

Although the application process itself is straightforward, there are differences in opinion regarding whether and when it is advisable to submit your research. A commonly asked question is whether a poster or paper can be presented twice. Many would agree that it is acceptable to present the same data twice if the conferences draw different audiences (e.g., regional versus national conferences). Another issue to consider is when, or at what stage, a project should be submitted for presentation. Submitting research prior to analyzing your data can be risky. It would be unfortunate, for example, to submit prematurely, such as during the data collection phase, only to find that your results are not significant or contrary to study hypotheses. Although some might be willing to take this risk, remember that it is worse to present low quality work than not to present at all.

PREPARING AND CONDUCTING PRESENTATIONS

Choosing an Appropriate Outfit

Dress codes for conference proceedings typically are not formally instated; however, data suggest that perceptions of graduate student professionalism and competence are influenced by dress (e.g., Gorham, Cohen, & Morris, 1999). Although the appropriateness of certain attire is likely to vary, a good rule of thumb is to err on the side of professionalism. You also might consider the dress of your audience, and dress in an equivalent or more formal fashion. Females, for example, might consider a dress, skirt, or pants suit. For males, either a suit or slacks with a dress shirt and tie is recommended. Although there will be people at conferences wearing other styles of dress, students and professionals still early in their careers are best advised to dress professionally. In addition to selecting your outfit, there are several preparatory steps you can take to help ensure a successful presentation.

Preparing for Poster Presentations

THE BASICS. The first step in preparing a poster is to be cognizant of the specific requirements put forth by the selected venue. For example, very specific guidelines often are provided, detailing the amount of board space available for each presenter (typically a 4-foot by 8-foot standing board is available). To ensure the poster will fit within the allotted space, it may be helpful to physically lay it out prior to the conference. This also may help to reduce future distress, given that back-to-back poster sessions are the norm; knowing how to arrange the poster in advance obviates the need to do so hurriedly in the few minutes between sessions.

TIPS FOR POSTER CONSTRUCTION. The overriding goal for poster presentations is to summarize your study using an easily digestible, reader-friendly format. As you will discover from viewing other posters, there are many different styles to do this. If you have the resources, professional printers can create large glossy posters that are well received. However, cutting

large construction paper to use as a mat for laser printed posters pages can also appear quite professional. Regardless of the framing, it is advisable to use consistent formatting (e.g., same style and font size throughout the poster) and large font sizes (e.g., at least 20-point font) that can be read from a distance of approximately six feet. Another suggestion for enhancing readability and visual appeal is to use bullets, figures, and tables to illustrate important findings. Generally speaking, brief phrases (as opposed to wordy paragraphs) should be used to summarize pertinent points. In short, it is important to keep your presentation succinct and avoid overcrowding on pages. Although there are a variety of fonts available and poster boards come in all colors imaginable, it is best to keep the poster professional. In other words, Courier, Arial, or Times New Roman are the probably the best fonts to use because they are easy to read and they will not distract or detract from the central message of the poster (i.e., your research). In addition, dark font (e.g., blue, black) on a light background (e.g., yellow, white) is easier to read in brightly lit room, which is the norm for poster sessions.

WHAT TO BRING. When preparing for a poster presentation, consider which materials might be either necessary or potentially useful to bring. For instance, it is wise to bring tacks with which to mount the poster, as well as other types of adhesives (e.g., glue and double-sided tape). It also is advisable to create handouts summarizing the primary aims and findings and to distribute these to interested colleagues. The number of copies one provides often depends on the size of the conference and the number of individuals attending a particular poster session. We have found that for larger conferences, 50 handouts are a good minimum. In general, handouts are in high demand and supplies are quickly depleted. In which case, you should be equipped with a notepad to obtain the names and addresses of individuals interested in receiving the handout via mail or e-mail.

CRITICALLY EVALUATE OTHER POSTERS. We also recommend critically evaluating other posters at conferences. You will notice great variability in poster style and formatting, with some researchers using glossy posters with colored photographs and others using plain white paper and black text. Make mental notes regarding the effective and ineffective presentation of information. What attracted you to certain posters? Which colors stood out and were the most readable? Such informal evaluations likely will be invaluable when making decisions on aspects such as poster formatting, colors, font, and style.

Conducting Poster Presentations

In general, presenting a poster is straightforward—tack the poster to the board at the beginning of the session, stand next to the poster and discuss the details of the project with interested viewers, and remove the poster at the end of the session. However, we have found that a surprisingly high number of presenters do not adequately fulfill these tasks. Arriving to the poster session at least ten minutes early will allow you to find your allocated space, unpack your poster, and decide where to mount it on the board. When posters consist of multiple frames, it might be easiest to lie out the boards on the floor prior to beginning to tack it up on the board.

During the poster session, remember this fundamental rule—be present. It is permissible to browse other posters in the same session; however, always arrange for a co-author or another colleague knowledgeable about the study to man the poster. Another guideline is to be available

to answer questions and discuss the project with interested parties. In other words, refrain from reading, chatting with friends, or engaging in other activities that interfere with being available to discuss the study. In terms of answering difficult questions, see suggestions in Table 4. At the conclusion of the poster session, it is important to quickly remove your poster so subsequent presenters have ample time to set up their posters. Suggestions for preparing and presenting posters are summarized in Table 1.

Preparing for Oral Presentations

THE BASICS. Similar to poster sessions, it is important to be familiar with and adhere to program requirements when preparing for oral presentations. For symposia, this might include sending an outline of your talk to the Chair and Discussant several weeks in advance and staying within a specified time limit when giving your talk. Although the Chair often will ensure that the talks adhere to the theme and do not excessively overlap, the presenter also can do this via active communication with the Chair, Discussant, and other presenters.

WHAT TO BRING. As with poster presentations, it is useful to anticipate and remember to bring necessary and potentially useful materials. For instance, individuals using Power Point should bring their slides and back-up overheads in case of equipment failure. Equipment, such as microphones, VCRs, and overhead machines, often are available upon request; it is the presenter's responsibility, however, to reserve equipment in advance.

CRITICALLY EVALUATE OTHER PRESENTERS. By carefully observing other presenters, you might learn valuable skills of how to enhance your presentations. Examine the format of the presentation, the level of detail provided, and the types and quality of audiovisual stimuli. Also try to note the vocal quality (e.g., intonation, pitch, pace, use of filler terms such as 'um'), facial characteristics (e.g., smiling, eye contact with audience members), body movements (e.g., pacing, hand gestures), and other subtle aspects that can help or hinder presentations.

TABLE 1. Poster Presentations

• Constructing Your Poster	• Follow conference guidelines
	• Summarize study using a professional and reader-friendly format (e.g., short phrases, large font size, plain font)
	• Use consistent formatting throughout poster (e.g., same style and font type)
	• Use bullets, graphs, tables, and other visual aides
	• Keep succinct and avoid overcrowding on pages
• Deciding What to Bring	• Tacks to mount poster
	• Adhesives (e.g., glue or double-sided tape)
	• Handouts summarizing primary aims and findings
	• Notepad and pen for addresses
• Evaluating other Presentations	• Observe variability in poster formats
	• Note effective and ineffective presentation styles
	• Incorporate effective aspects into your next presentation
• Presenting Your Poster	• Arrive at least five minutes early to set up
	• Be present or arrange for co-author(s) to man the poster
	• Be available to answer questions
	• Avoid engaging in interfering activities (e.g., reading, talking to friends)

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE. In terms of presentation *delivery*, repeated practice is key to effective preparation (see Williams, 1995). For many people, students and seasoned professionals alike, public speaking can elicit significant levels of distress. Given extensive data supporting the beneficial effects of exposure to feared stimuli (see Wolpe, 1977), repeated rehearsal is bound to produce positive outcomes, including increased comfort, increased familiarity with content, and decreased levels of anxiety. Additionally, practicing will help presenters hone their presentation skills and develop a more effective presentational style. We recommend practicing in front of an "audience" and soliciting feedback regarding both content and presentational style. Solicit feedback on every aspect of your presentation from the way you stand to the content of your talk. It might be helpful to rehearse in front of informed individuals (e.g., mentors, graduate students, research groups) who ask relevant and challenging questions and subsequently provide constructive feedback. Based on this feedback, determine which suggestions should be incorporated and modify your presentation accordingly. As a general rule, practice and hone your presentation to the point that you are prepared to present without any crutches (e.g., notes, overheads, slides).

BE FAMILIAR AND ANTICIPATE. As much as possible, try to familiarize yourself will with the audience both before and during the actual presentation. By having background information, you can better tailor your talk to meet the professional levels and needs of those in attendance. It may be particularly helpful to have some knowledge regarding the educational background and general attitudes and interests of the audience (e.g., is the audience comprised of laymen and/or professionals in the field? What are the listeners' general attitudes toward the topic and towards you as the speaker? Is the audience more interested with practical applications or with design and scientific rigor?). By conducting an informal "audience analysis," you will be more equipped to adapt your talk to meet the particular needs and interests of the audience.

Similarly, it might be helpful to have some knowledge about key logistical issues, such as room size and availability of equipment. For example, will the presentation take place in a large, auditorium-like room or in a more intimate setting with the chairs arranged in a semi-circle? If the former, will a microphone be available? Is there a podium at the front of the room that might influence where you will stand? Given the dimensions of the room, where should the slide projector be positioned? Although it may be impossible to answers all such questions, it is a good idea to have a general sense of where the presentation will take place and who will be attending. Suggestions for preparing and conducting oral presentations are summarized in Table 2.

Conducting Oral Presentations

USING AUDIO-VISUAL ENHANCEMENTS. One strategy for enhancing oral presentations is to use audio/visual stimuli, such as slides, overheads, video clips, or flip charts (e.g., Hoff, 1988; Wilder, 1994; See Table 3). When using visual enhancements, keep it simple, and clearly highlight important points using readable and consistent typeface. Information should be easily assimilated and reader-friendly, which generally means limiting text to a few phrases rather than complete sentences or paragraphs and using sufficiently large font sizes (i.e., 36-48 point font for titles and 24-36 point font for text). In addition, it is a good idea to keep titles to one line and bullet to no more than 2 lines of information. Additionally, color schemes should be relatively subdued and "professional" in appearance. For overheads, a light background and dark text are recommended, whereas the reverse is true for slide presentations (i.e, dark

TABLE 2. Oral Presentations

Preparing for Your Oral Presentation	• Adhere to program requirements (e.g., stay within time limit) • Check on equipment availability • Reserve necessary equipment (e.g., VCRs, laptop for Power Point presentation, overhead machine) • Bring necessary materials (e.g., Power Point slides, overheads, video clips) • Be prepared to present without any materials in case of equipment failure
Familiarizing Yourself with the Environment	• Conduct informal "audience analysis"—Familiarize yourself with audience before and during presentation • Tailor your talk to meet the professional levels and needs of the audience • Anticipate room size (e.g., will talk be held in a large auditorium or in a more intimate setting?)
Giving Your Talk	• Dress professionally • Maintain good posture; avoid standing in one place • Avoid distracting mannerisms (e.g., pacing and filler words such as "um") • Avoid standing in one place or behind a podium • Maintain eye contact with your audience • Be vocally energetic and enthusiastic
Enhancing Your Presentation	• Practice, practice, practice! • Solicit feedback from colleagues and make appropriate modifications • Observe other presenters; initiate effective presentational styles and incorporate effective modes of delivery • Use enhancements and audio/visual aides such as video clips, Power Point, slides, cartoons or comics • Use humor and illustrative examples (e.g., metaphors, real-life stories, cartoons, comic strips, jokes) • Avoid information overload; Instead, clearly deliver 2–4 "take-home messages"

background and light text). See Figure 1 for an example of a poor and good slide for an oral presentation.

Using audio-visual aids, such as video clips, also can contribute substantially to the overall quality and liveliness of a presentation. When incorporating video clips, pre-set volume levels and cue up videotapes in advance. We also recommend announcing the length of the video, dimming lights before playing the tape, and giving a concluding statement following the video.

Multimedia equipment and audio-visual aids have the potential to liven up even the most uninspiring presentations; however, caution against becoming overly dependent on any medium. Rather, be fully prepared to deliver a high-quality presentation without the use of enhancements. It also might be wise to prepare a solid "back-up plan" in case your original mode of presentation must be abandoned due to equipment failure or some other unforeseen circumstance. Back-up overheads, for example, might rescue a presenter who learns of a broken slide projector five minutes before presenting.

When using slides and overheads, it is important to avoid "going overboard" with information. Many of us will present research with which we are intimately familiar and invested. With projects that are particularly near and dear (e.g., theses and dissertations), it may be tempting to tell the audience as much as possible. It is not necessary, for example to describe the intricacies of the data collection procedure and present *every* pre-planned and post hoc analysis, along with a multitude of significant and non-significant *F*-values and coefficients. Such information overload might bore audience members who are unlikely to care about or remember so many fine-grained details. Instead of committing this common presentation blunder, present

TABLE 3. Audio-Visual Enhancements

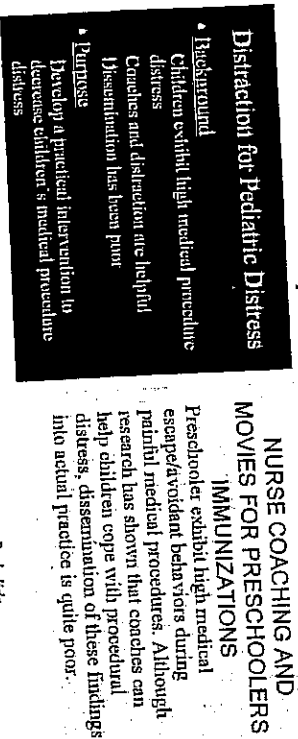|	
Examples of Audio-Visual Aides	• Slides • Overheads • Video clips • Flip charts • Cartoons and comic strips
Tips for Using Overheads and Slides	• Test equipment in advance • Keep it simple; use to clarify and enhance • Avoid going overboard (too much might detract from presentation) • Use reader-friendly format (e.g., short phrases, avoid overcrowding) • Remember *One × Six × Six:* Only *ONE* idea per visual; Less than *SIX* bullets per visual; Less than *SIX* words per bullet • Highlight important points using readable, consistent typeface • Use professional color schemes (e.g., light background, dark text for overheads and dark background, light text for slides) • Speak to audience, not to visual aides • Stand to the side of your screen to avoid blocking audience's view • Pause as you change slides/transparencies; practice for smooth transitions • Be prepared to present without your overheads/slides
Tips for Using Videos	• Test equipment in advance • Pre-set volume levels and cue tape in advance • Introduce video clip and announce its length • Dim the lights before playing • Give a concluding statement following the video • Use video clips to illustrate and enhance presentations

key findings in a bulleted, easy-to-read format rather than sentences. To avoid overcrowding of slides and overheads, you might remember the *One × Six × Six* rule of thumb: Only *ONE* idea per visual, less than *SIX* bullets per visual, and less than *SIX* words per bullet (see Figure 1). Also, as a general guideline, the goal of your presentation should be to clearly disseminate a few (e.g., 2–4) "take-home messages" that the audience truly *will* take home!

In short, remember and hold fast to this basic dictum: Audio/visual aides should be used to *clarify* and *enhance* (Cohen, 1990; Wilder, 1994). Aides that detract, confuse, or bore one's audience should not be used (soliciting feedback from colleagues and peers will assist in this selection process). Overly colorful and ornate visuals, for example, might detract and distract from the content of the presentation. Likewise, visual aids containing superfluous text might encourage audience members to read your slides rather than attend to your presentation. Keeping visuals simple also might prevent another presentation faux pas: reading verbatim from slides.

USING HUMOR AND EXAMPLES. The effective use of humor might help "break the ice," putting you and your audience at ease. There are many ways in which humor can be incorporated into presentations, such as through the use of stories, rich examples, jokes, and cartoons or comic strips. As with other aides, humor should be used in moderation and primarily to enhance a presentation. When using humor, it is important to be natural and brief and to use non-offensive humor related to the subject matter.

Another strategy for spicing up presentations is through the use of stories and examples to illustrate relevant and important points. This can be accomplished in many ways, such as

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Example Slides

Distraction for Pediatric Distress

- **Background**
  Children exhibit high medical procedure distress
  Coaches and distraction are helpful
  Dissemination has been poor
- **Purpose**
  Develop a practical intervention to decrease children's medical procedure distress

Good slide

NURSE COACHING AND MOVIES FOR PRESCHOOLERS IMMUNIZATIONS

Preschooler exhibit high medical procedure escape/avoidant behaviors during painful medical procedures. Although research has shown that coaches can help children cope with procedural distress, dissemination of these findings into actual practice is quite poor.

Bad slide

FIGURE 1. Examples of good and bad oral presentation slides

- In dimly lit rooms, it is better to use slides with a dark background and light text.
- Keep titles to one line and avoid using all capital letters.
- Bullets are preferable to sentences.
- Use underlining, italics, or bold font to help organize the information.
- Use a consistent font style throughout the presentation.
- Attempt to use parallel construction of text.
- Present related information together and avoid including other points.
- Keep the information succinct.
- Avoid acronyms, unless they were clearly defined on a prior slide.
- Including relevant clip art can enhance a slide, however, avoid distracting from your talk by having too many images in the presentation or more than one image per slide.

by providing practical and real-life examples or by painting a mental picture for the audience using colorful language (e.g., metaphors, analogies). Metaphorical language, for instance, might facilitate learning (Skinner, 1953) and help audience members to remember pertinent information. Similarly, amusing stories and anecdotes can be used to engage the audience and decrease the "impersonal feel" of more formal presentations. Regardless of whether or how humor is used, remember to do what "works" and feels right. Trying *too hard* to be amusing likely will come across as contrived and stilted, thus producing the opposite of the intended effect.

ATTENDING TO OTHER SPEAKERS. When presenting research in a group forum (e.g., symposia), it may be beneficial to attend to other speakers, particularly those presenting before you. Being familiar with the content of preceding talks will help to reduce the amount of overlap and repetition between presentations (although, some overlap and repetition might be desirable). You might, for example, describe the similarities and differences across research projects and explain how the current topic and findings relate to earlier presentations. The audience probably will appreciate such integration efforts and have a better understanding of the general topic area.

ANSWERING QUESTIONS. Question and answer sessions are commonplace at conferences and provide excellent opportunities for clarifying ambiguous points and interacting with the

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Presenting Your Research

TABLE 4. Handling Difficult Questions

Type of question	Suggestions
Questions without readily available answers	• Admit your unfamiliarity with the question • Ask the questioner if he/she has thoughts as to answer • Hazard a guess, but back it up with literature and acknowledge that it is a guess • Pose an answer to a related question • Simply state that the questioner raised an important point and move on to other questions
Irrelevant questions (e.g., "Where were you born?")	• Avoid digressing from the topic • Offer to meet with the questioner following the presentation
"Dumb" questions (e.g., "What does 'hypothesis' mean?")	• Offer a brief explanation and move on • Do not insult the questioner • Stick to empirical data and avoid personal attacks
Politically sensitive questions (e.g., being asked to comment on opposing theoretical viewpoint)	• Choose either the most pertinent question or the question you would like to answer first (e.g., "I'll start with your last question.")
Multiple questions asked simultaneously	• Ask the questioner to repeat the questions
Offensively worded questions (e.g.,	• Avoid becoming defensive • Avoid repeating offensive language
Vague questions (e.g.,	• Ask for clarification from the questioner • Re-state the question in more specific terms

audience. When addressing inquiries, it is crucial to maintain a professional, non-defensive demeanor. Treat every question as legitimate and well intentioned, even if it comes across as an objection or insult. As a general rule, in large auditoriums it is good to repeat the question so that everyone in the room hears it. If a question is unclear or extremely complicated, it may be wise to pause and organize your thoughts before answering. If necessary, request clarification or ask the questioner to repeat or rephrase the question. It also may be helpful to anticipate and prepare for high-probability questions. Wilder (1994), for example, recommends anticipating questions likely to be asked and preparing responses in advance.

There are several types of difficult questions (Table 4). Also, we recommend preparing for a non-responsive audience. If audience members do not initiate questions, some tactics for preventing long, uncomfortable silences are to pose commonly asked questions, reference earlier comments, or take an informal survey (e.g., "Please raise your hand if you work clinically with this population."). Even if many questions are generated and lead to stimulating discussions, it is important to adhere to predetermined time limits. End on time and with a strong concluding statement.

Above all, avoid becoming defensive and critical, particularly when answering challenging questions. Irrespective of question quality or questioner intent, avoid making patronizing remarks or answering in a way that makes the questioner feel foolish or incompetent. Try to avoid falling into an exclusive dialogue with one person, which might cause other members of the audience to feel excluded or bored. If possible, offer to meet with questioner and address his or her questions and concerns at the end of the talk. Another suggestion is to avoid engaging in mini-lectures by showcasing accumulated knowledge and expertise in a particular area.

Instead, only provide information that is directly relevant to the specific question posed by the audience (Wilder, 1994).

CONCLUSION

There are great benefits to presenting research, both to the presenter and the audience. Before presenting, however, you should consider carefully a number of preliminary issues. For instance, you must decide whether your study is worthy of presentation, where to present it, and what type of presentation to conduct. Once these decisions are made, prepare by practicing your presentation, examining and learning from other presentations, and consulting with colleagues. Sufficient preparation should enhance the quality of your presentation and help decrease performance anxiety. We are confident that you will find that a well-executed presentation will prove to be a rewarding and valuable experience for you and your audience.

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Publishing Your Research

ALAN E. KAZDIN

Publication of research is an essential part of science. Indeed, one often hears of the accumulation of knowledge in science. This accumulation depends not only on the completion of research but also on preparation of reports that disseminate the results. Publication helps the investigator to consider other goals as well. Preparing a manuscript for publication helps the investigator to consider the current study in a broader context and the focus of the next studies. There are of course many professional and career goals served by publishing one's research. Publication of one's research signals a level of competence and mastery that includes development of an idea, designing, executing and completing the study, analyzing the results, preparing a written report, submitting it for publication, and traversing the peer-review process. Knowledge, talent, and persistence are required to complete the sequence and these characteristics are recognized to be evident among those who publish. This chapter focuses on publishing one's research. The topics include preparing a manuscript, selecting a publication outlet, submitting the manuscript for review, and revising the manuscript as needed for publication.

There are many outlets to communicate the results of one's research. Prominent among these are presentations at professional meetings, chapters in edited books, full-length books, and professional journals. Journal publication, the focus of this chapter, holds special status because it is the primary outlet for original research. In terms of one's career, journal publication also plays a special role primarily because articles accepted for publication usually have undergone peer review. Acceptance and publication attest to the views of one's peers that there is merit in what was completed. For any given article, only a few peers (1 editor, 2–3 reviewers) may actually see the manuscript. Multiple publications add to this and after a few publications one can assume there is a building consensus about one's work, i.e., others view the contributions as important and worthy of publication.

ALAN E. KAZDIN • Child Study Center, Yale University School of Medicine, New Haven, CT 06520