

**DISCOVER THE RESEARCHER IN YOU:**

*A Guide to Understanding  
& Using Research*



Ohio Department  
of Mental Health

*Office of Program Evaluation and Research*

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Ohio Department  
of Mental Health

*Office of Program Evaluation and Research*

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***“Discovery consists of seeing  
what everybody has seen and thinking  
what nobody has thought.”***

**Albert Szent-Gyorgyi**, in *Irving Good,  
The Scientist Speculates (1962)*  
U.S. (Hungarian-born) biochemist (1893 – 1986)

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## Acknowledgments

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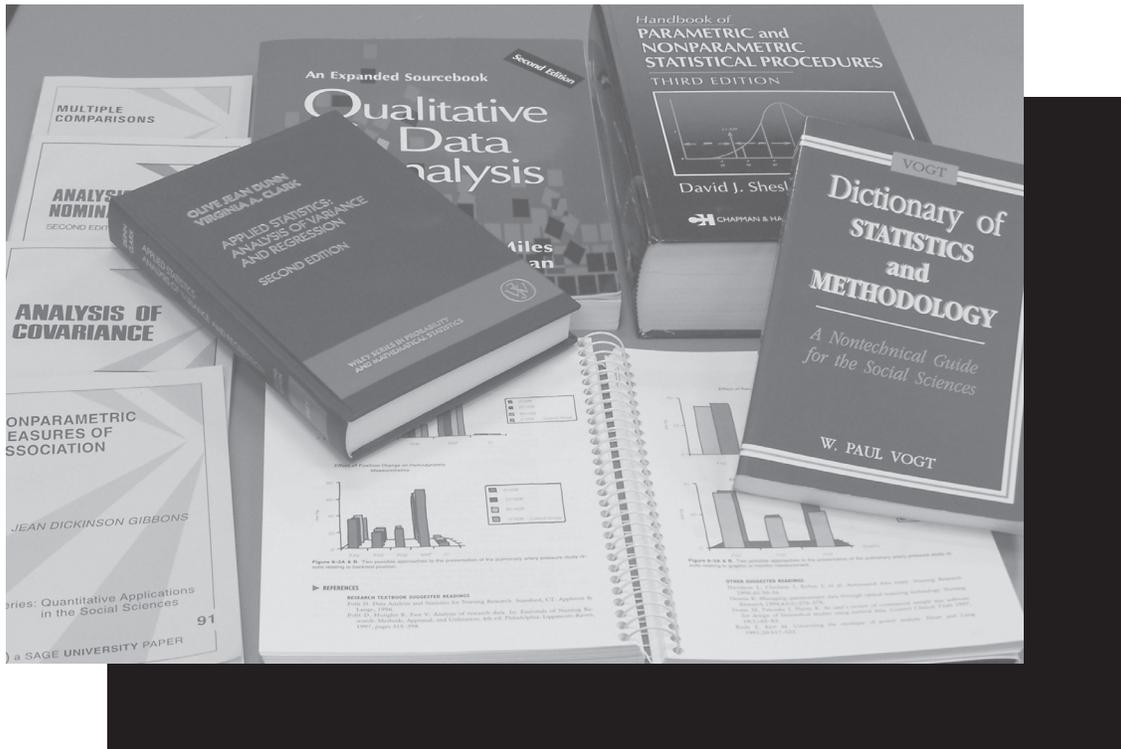
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# Preface

This booklet is designed especially for persons who know nothing or very little about research. It is intended as a self-help guide to enhance understanding and use of mental health research. The booklet is not a detailed, in-depth resource and therefore cannot be used to design or develop research studies. Its purpose is to assist people in recognizing the value of research and to develop or improve their ability to locate, evaluate, and apply mental health research findings.

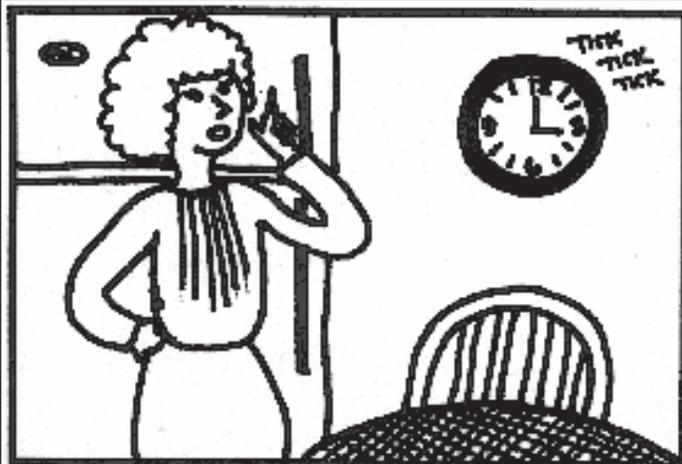
When using the booklet for the first time, people may want to read sections slowly in order to gain a clear understanding of the information. People may also want to use the booklet as a resource when reading or listening to research reports or when talking about research with others.

No specialized training or education in statistics, mathematics, or research methods is required to use the booklet. All that is necessary is a willingness to discover new things about research and its uses.



A grayscale image showing a hand holding a pen, poised to write on a graph. The graph has a jagged line that rises, falls, and rises again. The background is a grid of horizontal lines.

## Part I: Understanding Research



I wonder what makes it "tick"?



AH!!

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## On Being a Researcher

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In today's society, people come across research results nearly every day. Many things we see or use daily were actually developed and refined through research. Electric lights, airplanes and telephones are but a few examples. Research results are found in newspaper and magazine stories, television reports, and even commercials and advertisements. You may remember seeing ads that claim "9 out of 10 doctors recommend" a certain brand of aspirin and hearing commercials that say "4 out of 5 people prefer the taste" of one soft drink over another one. Or, you may recall reading a report that said, "52% of the people surveyed agree" with a particular issue. Have you wondered how people come up with those results? Were you curious about what the 10<sup>th</sup> doctor recommended or which soft drink the 5<sup>th</sup> person chose? Did you want to know why the other 48% of people surveyed disagreed? Researchers ask questions like these when they develop studies and examine research results.

Some people describe researchers as specialists who design and conduct studies and who have expertise in statistics. Indeed, people who work in the field of research are very knowledgeable about these subjects and about ways to find information. Some also describe them as "experts" in testing and measuring. Observation and measurement are valuable "research tools" to gather facts and data. Researchers rely on data, rather than intuition or what they think they know, to answer questions and solve problems. However, these "research tools" are often used by people other than research specialists. People observe, measure, and test things practically every day in their search for information. You may have had an opportunity to use these tools yourself.

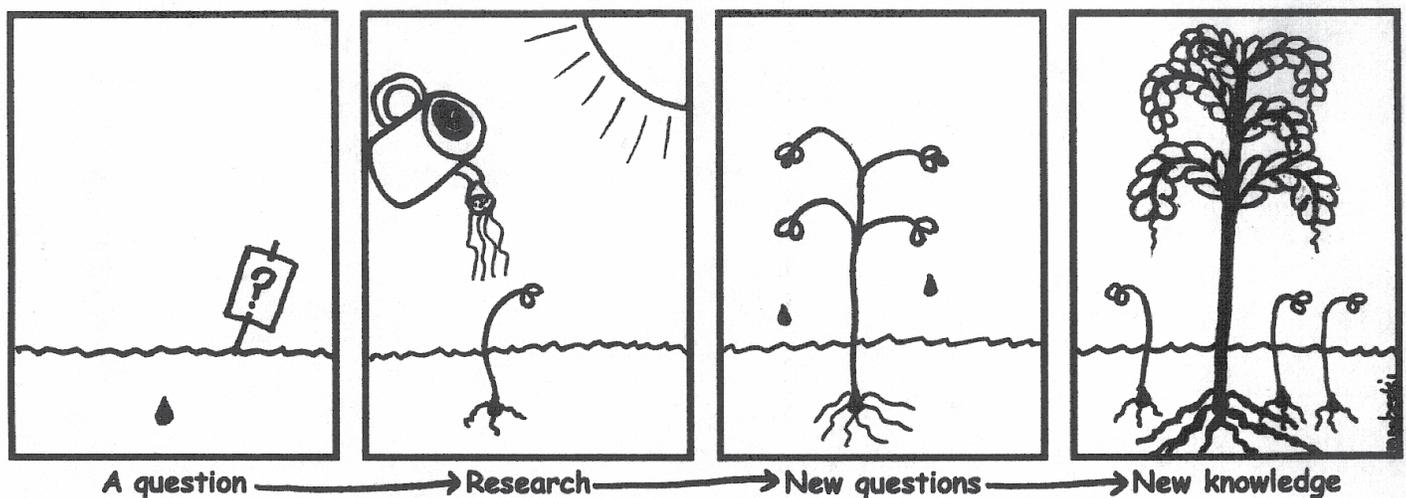
Researchers are people who are curious and like to learn new information. They go about searching for knowledge in a systematic or step-by-step manner. Each question leads to new information which generates more questions and new answers. This process of discovery forms building blocks which are put together to create knowledge about a topic or issue. Sometimes the process reveals conflicting information or very puzzling results. When this occurs, researchers look over their previous steps, develop new or different questions, and begin to seek answers in order to explain the contradictory or puzzling results. Using the discovery process is a very important part of being a researcher. This approach may sound familiar to you. Many people besides researchers seek answers to questions in a step-by-step fashion and use different ways to find information, especially when the answers do not make sense or are perplexing. In this way, persons who ask questions and search for answers in their daily lives are not much different than research specialists.



## What is Research?

The word *research* originally came from the French word *recherché*, which means to seek out.<sup>1</sup> To better understand what *research* means, let us break it into two parts: *re* – *search*. *Search* means to look, *re* means again. So research basically means “to look again.” This definition reflects the fundamental purpose of research — to ask questions and look for answers on an ongoing basis.

*Research* actually refers to more than a continuous search for information. It is a process — a systematic or well-organized approach — to discover new knowledge. The specific aim of research varies from study to study, but generally the primary purpose reflects one or more of the following goals: 1) to describe, explore, explain or predict something of interest, such as an event, behavior or situation, 2) to develop greater understanding of complicated issues, or 3) to find solutions to complex problems.



The **research process** involves carrying out activities in a step-by-step manner. Each step is purposeful and deliberate. Briefly, the steps are as follows:

1. **Develop a research idea.**

In this step, the researcher selects a topic, issue or problem of interest. The researcher also clearly defines the focus or main goal of the study and evaluates why the topic, issue or problem is important to study.

2. **Review the previous research literature.**

Next, the researcher determines what is already known about the topic, issue or problem by reviewing previously published research and studies presented at conferences. In this step, the researcher identifies what is not known or what gaps exist in knowledge.

3. **Select the methods.**

The researcher chooses a place where the study will be done, who and how many people will participate, how they will be selected, and what they will be asked to do. He or she also decides when and how to obtain information.

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4. **Collect the data.**

Next, the researcher conducts the study. He or she gathers data and organizes the information that is obtained. He or she also prepares the data for analysis.

5. **Analyze the results.**

In this step, the researcher examines the data thoroughly and carefully. This may involve looking for patterns, identifying themes or reviewing statistical results to determine if they are significant.

6. **Interpret the results.**

The researcher then states what the results mean and how the findings might be used.

7. **Share the results with others.**

The researcher prepares information about the study for publication, presentation at meetings or conferences, and distribution to groups or individuals.

These steps are used to design and conduct studies to find information that is important or beneficial to others. The intent is to develop knowledge that can be applied to groups of people similar to those involved in the study or that can be applied to similar settings or situations. Researchers refer to this information as “generalizable” knowledge.

It is important to know that research is carried out within a particular context which defines the focus or creates the underlying reason for the study. Here, context refers to the setting or the environment in which the study will take place. The context is used to frame the specific questions of the study and how the results are interpreted. There are many different kinds of contexts in which research is done. Research results, in turn, provide important knowledge about the context and can bring about changes in perspectives. For example, until recently, no one did research on mental health recovery. Questions about recovery were not posed because the prevailing view was that people diagnosed with severe mental illness would be in a hospital or institutional setting for the remainder of their lives. New knowledge from research on mental health recovery helped to dramatically change this view. We now know that people can and do recover. As a result, the majority of mental health research is conducted in the community context.

**<sup>1</sup>Source for the definition of research:**

*Morris, W. (1981). The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.*

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## How Can I Use Research?

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Research findings are not just for people who are developing new studies. The findings can be used in many valuable and beneficial ways. Four scenarios are below that illustrate the variety of ways people can use mental health research findings. Following this, a chart is presented of additional ways to use mental health research.

### Scenario 1

Let's assume you are a member of a team at the JOBS FOR EVERYONE CENTER. Let's also assume that the team consists of people who receive mental health services, case managers and vocational counselors. Your team wants to write a proposal to the Board of Directors to increase funding for employment programs at the center. Before your team can proceed, the Board of Directors want evidence that this expansion will be a worthwhile endeavor. Specifically they want to know if paid employment can make a difference in the lives of people with severe mental illness. Your team decides to look for research reports, in particular those that have findings about employment of people with severe mental illness, to include as evidence to present to the Board of Directors.

### Scenario 2

An advocacy group at THE BEST PRACTICES MENTAL HEALTH CENTER consists of people receiving mental health services, family members and case managers. This group wants to prepare a formal recommendation to start a comprehensive medication management program. Before the group can proceed, the Clinical Director of the Center has asked for evidence that this program is a good idea. In the discussion with the Clinical Director, the group presents findings from research that demonstrates the value of such programs in community mental health settings.

### Scenario 3

Let's suppose you are a member of a consumer-run self-help organization – THE RECOVERY CENTER. The goals of the Center are to educate the community about mental illness and to promote acceptance of persons with mental illness in the community. The Center has been invited to present a workshop at a conference on recovery and has asked you to speak. The audience will want to know what barriers people with mental illness face in the community and what approaches work best to reduce stigma and promote acceptance. You decide to include research findings about stigma and community acceptance, in addition to personal accounts of dealing with stigma and barriers to acceptance.

### Scenario 4

Administrators at THE “WE ARE HERE FOR YOU” CENTER want to develop a policy on consumer empowerment that staff must follow. The staff want to know how consumer empowerment will improve the way they deliver services and how being empowered will help consumers in their recovery. The administrators have scheduled an information session to discuss the policy. In the meeting, the administrators describe the purpose and rationale (reasons) for the policy. Their reasons include research findings that show consumers view empowerment as an important aspect of recovery.

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## **Additional Uses of Research**

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There are many additional ways to use mental health research studies and many types of people who can use them. A few examples are provided below.

### **Persons and Family Members of Persons Diagnosed with Mental Illness**

#### **Personal uses**

Find new information and learn how it applies to you.

Find new knowledge to assist in recovery and building resiliency.

Discuss new learning with other persons or family members of persons diagnosed with a mental illness.

Find knowledge to make informed choices about services and programs.

#### **Education & Awareness**

Find facts and new knowledge to inform and educate the general public about mental illness and treatment.

Use in out-reach to other persons diagnosed with a mental illness and their families.

Use to change public opinions, attitudes and beliefs about mental illness.

#### **Advocacy**

Include in requests to a mental health agency or a mental health board for new programs and services. Include in requests to improve current programs and services.

Call attention to why a mental health issue is important.

Advocate for changes in mental health laws and policies.

## **Mental Health Clinicians, Therapists, Clinical Supervisors, and Case Managers**

### **Clinical uses**

Find answers to clinical questions and solutions to practice issues.

Identify ways to improve mental health services and client outcomes.

Develop, evaluate or revise programs or interventions.

Develop, evaluate or revise treatment guidelines or practice standards.

### **Education & Awareness**

Increase knowledge about mental illness and effective mental health services and programs.

Increase knowledge and understanding of an issue.

Explain why a mental health issue is important, or call attention to it.

### **Advocacy**

Change public opinions, beliefs and attitudes about mental illness.

## **Quality Improvement Directors, Evaluation and Research Directors**

### **Administrative uses**

Find ideas or “jumping off points” for quality improvement projects.

Find information to help evaluate whether a new program or service should be included or excluded.

Find information to help evaluate if an existing program or service should continue, should be discontinued, or needs improvement.

Find information to improve program outcomes.

### **Education & Awareness**

Increase knowledge and understanding of an issue.

Explain why a mental health issue is important, or call attention to it.

### **Advocacy**

Change public opinions, beliefs and attitudes about mental illness.

## **Mental Health Administrators, Policy Makers**

### **Administrative uses**

Find facts and information to develop and revise policies.

Find information to support funding or to use as rationale for funding requests.

Find information to assess or evaluate the effectiveness of existing programs and services.

Find information to determine if an existing program or service should continue, should be discontinued, or needs improvement.

Find information to improve the organization and delivery of mental health services.

Find facts and information to assist with making decisions about services and policies.

### **Workforce**

Identify staff training needs.

Find effective approaches to reduce staff turnover.

### **Education & Awareness**

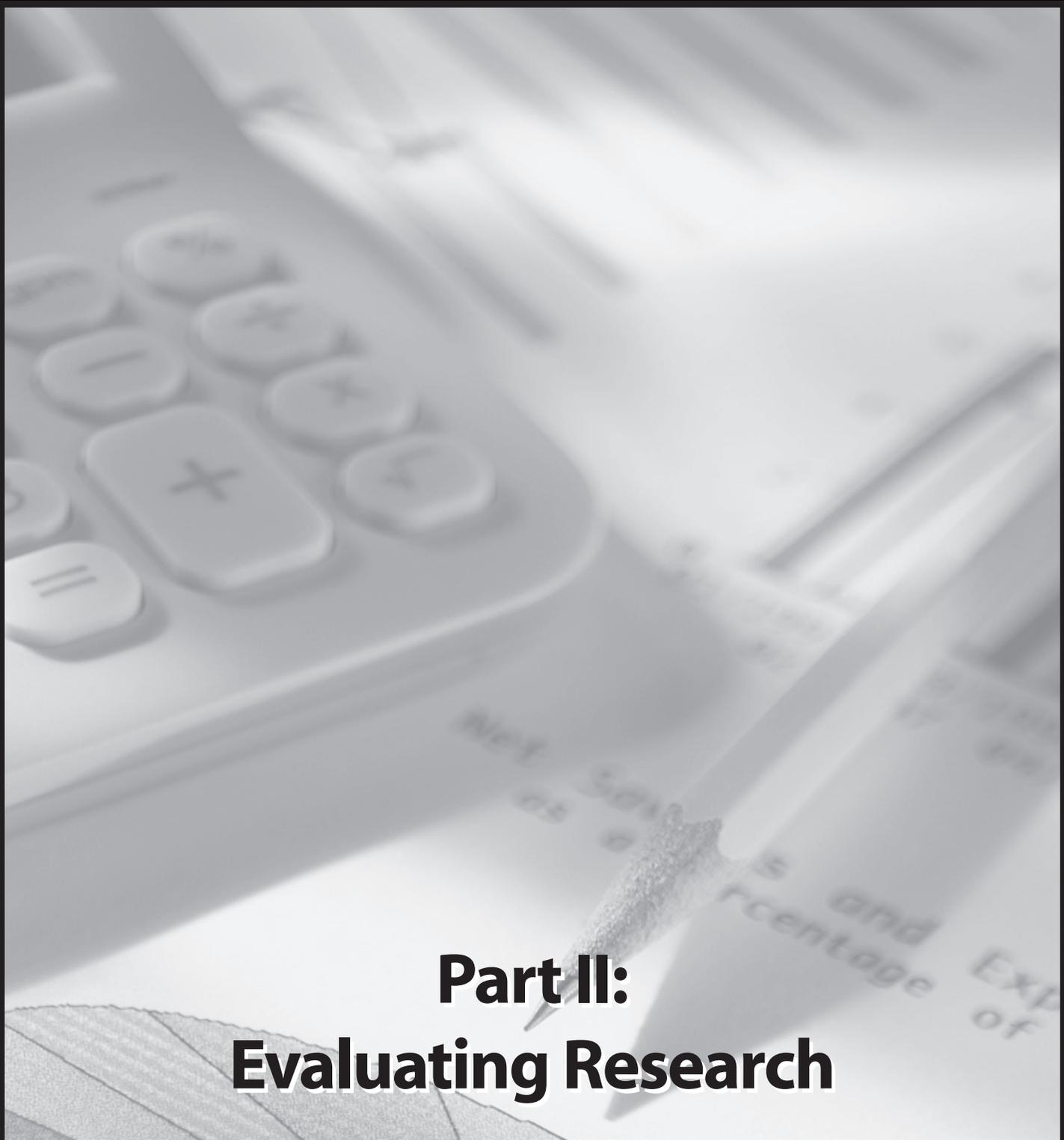
Increase knowledge and understanding of an issue.

Explain why a mental health issue is important, or call attention to it.

### **Advocacy**

Change public opinions, beliefs and attitudes about mental illness.

Find facts and information to challenge and convince policymakers and legislators to make changes to benefit people with mental illness, their families, and their communities.



## **Part II: Evaluating Research**

***“There is no harm in doubt and  
scepticism, for it is through these  
that new discoveries are made.”***

**Richard Feynman, *Letter to Armando Garcia J, December 11, 1985*  
U.S. educator & physicist (1918 – 1988)**

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## Introduction to Part II

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Researchers are expected to make reports of their studies available for public review. The review may take place when reading journal articles or when hearing or seeing presentations and posters at conferences. Public review, as well as public evaluation, of research is extremely important and serves many functions. Some of these include:

- To assess the potential value of the study findings and how they should be used
- To provide feedback to improve future studies
- To make sure that the research was conducted ethically and appropriately.

In Part II, you will find two checklists to assist you in evaluating research reports. Remember that you do not need to have specialized training or courses in research to evaluate a report. Such training and education is helpful but not required.

The first checklist is short and will be especially helpful to people who have very little or no experience in evaluating research. This checklist can be used in other ways. For example, you may want to use it when making choices about which research reports to read or when deciding which sessions to attend at a conference. You may also want to ask researchers some of these questions at conferences.

The second checklist is longer and will be useful when completing a thorough evaluation of a research report. The questions are organized according to the components of a research report. (Part III, Getting the Most Out of a Research Report, provides a definition of a research report and describes its typical contents.) People who have little or no experience in evaluating research may wish to select questions from the second checklist rather than using all of them. Some questions include terms that may be unfamiliar to you. Be sure to check for their definitions in the Glossary in Part IV, Understanding the Language of Research. In Part II and Part III, certain terms will appear in underlined *italics* the first time they are used. Their definitions can be found in the Glossary.



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## Research Evaluation...A Short Checklist

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- ✓ 1. What makes the study useful, important or of interest to me?
- ✓ 2. What do I want to know from the research?
- ✓ 3. How might this research help me, my family members or other people I know or work with?
- ✓ 4. Why did the researchers decide to do this study? Why is the study important? Does the study address a gap in knowledge or provide new information?
- ✓ 5. Were consumers or family members involved in helping to design the study? Were board members, administrators or agency staff involved in helping to design the study?
- ✓ 7. What steps did the researchers take to prevent harm or distress to the research participants? Was the study approved by an Institutional Review Board (IRB) or a similar committee on ethics?
- ✓ 8. What are the limitations and biases of the study? How do the limitations and biases influence the results?
- ✓ 9. How will the researchers use the findings? What future studies could be done on this topic/issue?
- ✓ 10. How can I and others use the findings? For example, can the findings be used to:
  - improve a current practice or service?
  - develop or revise a policy?
  - change a mental health law?
  - support a request for funding?
  - support implementation of a new program or service?

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## Research Evaluation...A Longer Checklist

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### **Background/Significance of the Study**

- ✓ What makes the study useful, important or of interest to you?
- ✓ What do you want to know from the research?
- ✓ Did the researchers clearly explain why they did the study?
- ✓ Have the researchers convinced you of the importance of the study?
- ✓ Does the study address a gap in knowledge or provide new information about the topic or issue?
- ✓ Were constructs, variables and terms clearly defined?
- ✓ Was a clear rationale presented for the constructs or variables examined in the study?
- ✓ Were consumers or family members involved in helping to design the study?
- ✓ Were board members, administrators or agency staff involved in helping to design the study?

### **Research Questions/Hypotheses**

- ✓ Were the research questions and hypotheses clearly stated?
- ✓ Did the research questions and hypotheses accurately forecast what would take place in the study?

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### **Methodology**

- ✓ Were the procedures clearly described?
- ✓ Could someone repeat the study after reading the *methods* section?
- ✓ Were appropriate criteria used to select the *sample*?
- ✓ Were methods used to prevent *bias* in the study?
- ✓ Were the procedures and *instruments reliable* and *valid*?
- ✓ Were the procedures and instruments free of potential bias (e.g., age, gender, racial/ethnic)?
- ✓ Was a *control group* needed to address the main question of the study?
- ✓ Was an appropriate control or *comparison group* used in the study?
- ✓ What steps did the researchers take to prevent harm or distress to the research participants?
- ✓ Was the study approved by an Institutional Review Board (IRB) or a similar committee on ethics?

### **Sample, Representativeness, Generalizability**

- ✓ Did the researcher justify the size of the sample?
- ✓ Did the researcher describe the methods used to determine sample size?
- ✓ Was the sample size sufficient to find significant results?
- ✓ Do the characteristics of the sample match those of the *population* of interest?
- ✓ Did the *study setting* match the location where the results will be applied?

### **Statistical Methods and Results**

- ✓ Did the researchers use appropriate statistical tests to evaluate hypotheses or answer the research questions?
- ✓ Did the researchers use the appropriate statistical tests for *small sample sizes*?
- ✓ Did the researchers clearly identify the *major findings* of the study?

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## **Discussion, Limitations and Implications**

- ✓ Did the researchers identify the limitations and biases of the study?
- ✓ Did the researchers discuss how the limitations and biases influence the results?
- ✓ Did the researchers discuss recommendations from or practical implications of the findings?
- ✓ Did the researchers discuss what future studies could be done on this topic/issue?
- ✓ Did the researchers state how they will use the findings?
- ✓ Did the researchers recommend how others can use the findings? For example, did they indicate that the findings might be used to:
  - improve a current practice or service?
  - develop or revise a policy?
  - change a mental health law?
  - support a request for funding?
  - support implementation of a new program or service?

### **Adapted from:**

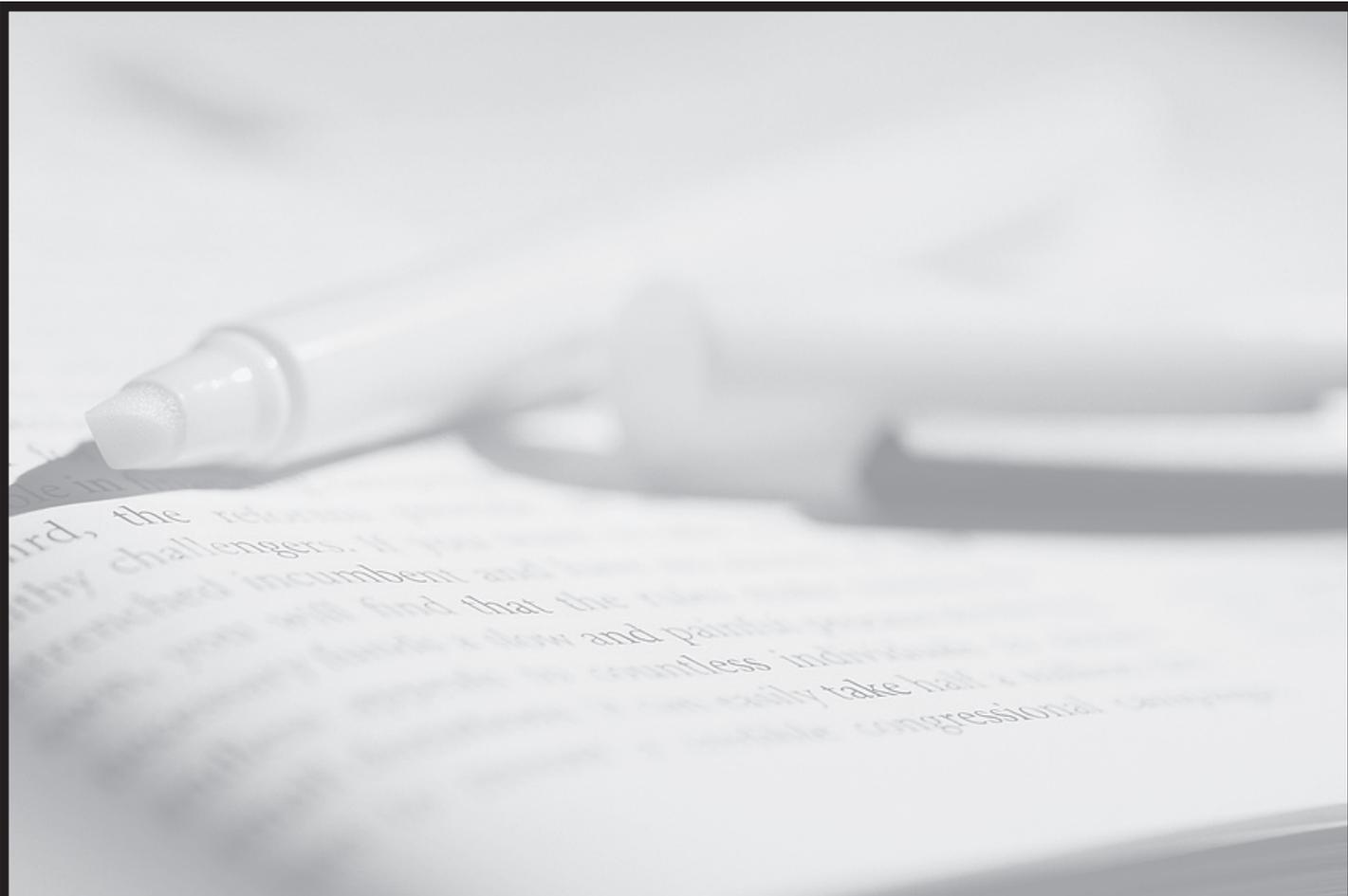
Heacock, H., Koehoorn, M., & Tan, J. (1997). *Applying epidemiological principles to ergonomics: A checklist for incorporating sound design and interpretation of studies*. *Applied Ergonomics*, 28 (3), 165-172.

Kazdin, A E. (1998). *Research design in clinical psychology* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

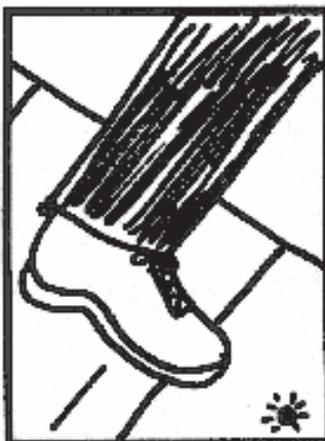
Krathwolh, D.R. (1988). *How to prepare a research proposal* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University.

Center for Disease Control. (2006). *Taking Part in Research Studies: What Questions Should You Ask?:*  
<http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pubs/brochure/unc3bro.htm>

National Alliance on Mental Illness. (2006). *Protection of Research Volunteers:*  
[http://www.nami.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Inform\\_Yourself/About\\_Research/Protection\\_of\\_Research\\_Volunteers.htm](http://www.nami.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Inform_Yourself/About_Research/Protection_of_Research_Volunteers.htm)



## Part III: Getting the Most Out of Research Reports



Heaven...  
just a penny



Don't bother:  
it's just a penny.



I'd pick it up if it  
was a dollar!

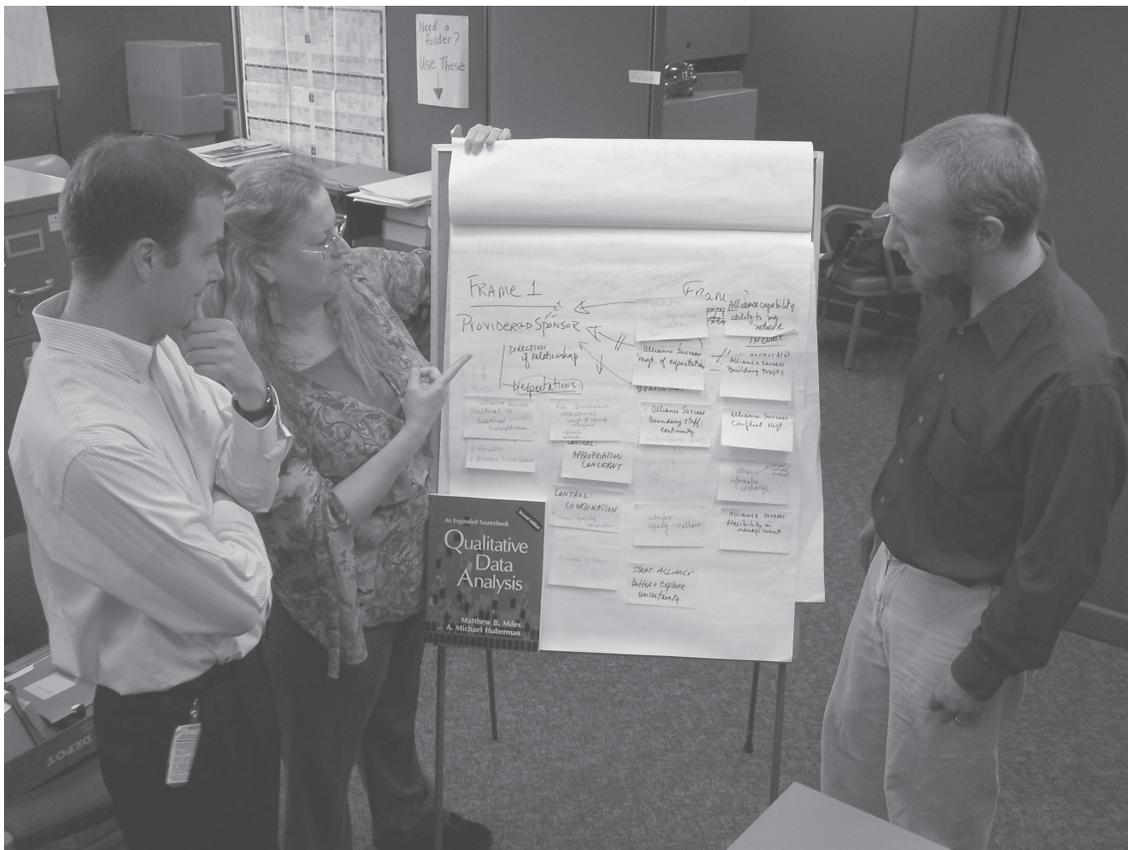


WOW! A 1943  
copper penny-this is  
worth a fortune.

## Introduction to Part III

Researchers are expected to prepare reports of their studies and to make them available to other people to use. This step in the research process is extremely important because it represents the first time the researcher's work is available for in-depth public review. As mentioned in Part II, public review is carried out for many reasons, including the development of new or improved studies. Most importantly, public review provides an opportunity to discover findings that advance or clarify knowledge about a topic or issue. The review also offers an opportunity to discover findings to use in practice settings, in making decisions about programs and in improving services.

Research reports are written in a particular style using specialized terms. They often include a large amount of information. For these reasons, trying to understand a research report can be overwhelming. As a result, some people pass by research reports when searching for information on mental health topics and issues. Part III of this booklet gives information to help you become more confident and skillful in navigating research reports. The information is a way to “open the door” to getting the most out of a research report.



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## What is a Research Report?

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A research report contains the history of a study from the beginning to end. In the report, the researcher will answer five basic questions:<sup>1</sup>

1. What is the study about?
2. How does the study fit into what is already known?
3. How was the study done?
4. What was found?
5. What do the results mean?

Researchers generally follow a standard format to prepare their reports. Most often, the format includes the following sections: *Abstract*,<sup>2</sup> Introduction, *Methods*, Results, Discussion and References. The amount of detail about the study and results will be different in journal articles, formal presentations and posters. The actual labels for each section may also differ slightly.

A brief description of the purpose and content of each section of a research report is presented below.

### Abstract

The abstract provides a summary of the research. It gives a general or “snapshot” view of the study. The abstract is short, usually limited to one or two paragraphs in length. Most often, it includes the following information: 1) the purpose of the study (why the study was done); 2) a description of the participants (the people, agencies or organizations involved in the study); 3) a brief explanation of the methods (what the participants did in the study); and 4) the most important findings. An abstract may also contain a brief statement about the *implications* of the findings.

### Introduction

The introduction “sets the stage” for the study. Its purpose is to describe the *context* of the research and provide *background* information. Most often, the introduction contains the following: 1) why the study was done (its purpose); 2) why the topic or problem is important to study; 3) what is known about the topic or issue and how the study relates to prior knowledge; 4) what information or knowledge is missing; and 5) the specific research question that is addressed. The major *variables* are also identified in this section. The introduction may include research objectives and *hypotheses* examined in the study.

### Method

This section explains how the study was done. It provides a precise and thorough account of what took place. The information is detailed so that another researcher may repeat the study in the same way it was originally done. The method section contains the following information: 1) a description of the participants (who they are, how many were involved, how they were selected); 2) the *measures* or *instruments* (things used in the study such as tests, *questionnaires*, and *interview* guides), and 3) the procedures (where the study was done, who conducted the study, what the participants did, how the measures or instruments were used). This section may also include a description of how *data* were prepared for analysis.

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## Results

The results section explains what was found from the analysis. It may begin with statements that describe the researcher's general approach to analysis or the type of analyses that were done (e.g., statistical analysis). The results may be presented as numbers in the text, in tables or in figures (graphs or diagrams). This format is commonly used in *quantitative research* reports. The results may also be presented as quotes from participants, as summaries of participants' perspectives, or as vignettes ("portraits" created with words). This format is commonly used in *qualitative research* reports.

## Discussion

This section explains what the results mean. It provides a non-technical interpretation of the findings. The researcher will answer the research question, indicate if the results support the research hypothesis, or state how the findings relate to the research objective. The researcher will also point out unusual or surprising findings and talk about what these findings mean. This section often includes suggestions for future research on the topic or issue. It may also include recommendations about use of the findings.

## References

This section lists the resources that are used to develop the study components (e.g., the research question, the methods, and approach to data analysis). Resources commonly include books, journal articles, presentations at conferences and meetings, and reports or documents available on the Internet. Resources may also include communication with experts and other people who are knowledgeable about the topic or issue.

<sup>1</sup> **Source for the five basic research questions answered in a research report:**

Locke, L.F., Silverman, S.J., & Spirduso, W.W. (2004). *Reading and understanding research*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, p. 175.

<sup>2</sup> **Terms in underlined *italics* are defined in the Glossary in Part IV, Understanding the Language of Research.**

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## The Best Kept Secret About Research Reports

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A lot of people know that research reports provide new findings or up-to-date information about topics, issues or problems. In fact, many seek out research reports just for that reason. Perhaps the best kept secret about research reports is that they offer more than just findings. They are actually a gold mine of information that people can use to solve problems, to work more effectively, or to better understand issues important to them.

It is important to know, however, that a single research report will not supply answers to *all* questions you may have about a topic or issue. A research report will also not give *in-depth* or *step-by-step* guidance on how to use the information and findings.



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## Using Research Reports

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The types of information available in a research report are described in the section, “What is a research report?” The following table offers ideas on ways you can use that information.

Research Report Section	Uses
<b>Abstract</b>	Find out if the study addresses a topic, issue or problem of interest to you.
<b>Introduction</b>	<p>Learn about the topic, issue or problem. For example, you can find out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How people define or view it</li><li>• Why people think it is important</li><li>• Why, how or where it began</li><li>• What is known about it</li></ul> <p>This information can enrich and expand your understanding of the topic. It could help you decide if your interest is really a different topic, issue or problem.</p> <p>Find new facts and information to consider in regard to a topic or issue of interest.</p> <p>Find new terms or words to use when searching for information on the topic, issue or problem.</p>
<b>Methods</b>	<p>Learn new or different ways to observe or collect information.</p> <p>Discover new ways to assess events, characteristics or behaviors as they apply to individuals or mental health organizations.</p> <p>Learn about ways to observe and record data accurately and efficiently.</p>

Research Report Section	Uses
Results	Learn new or different ways to organize and analyze data.
Discussion	<p>Discover new information related to the topic, issue or problem.</p> <p>Find:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggestions for new programs, approaches or services</li> <li>• Information to use to support a change or improvement in a practice or service</li> <li>• Ideas for research studies.</li> </ul>
References	Find new or additional resources related to the topic, issue or problem.

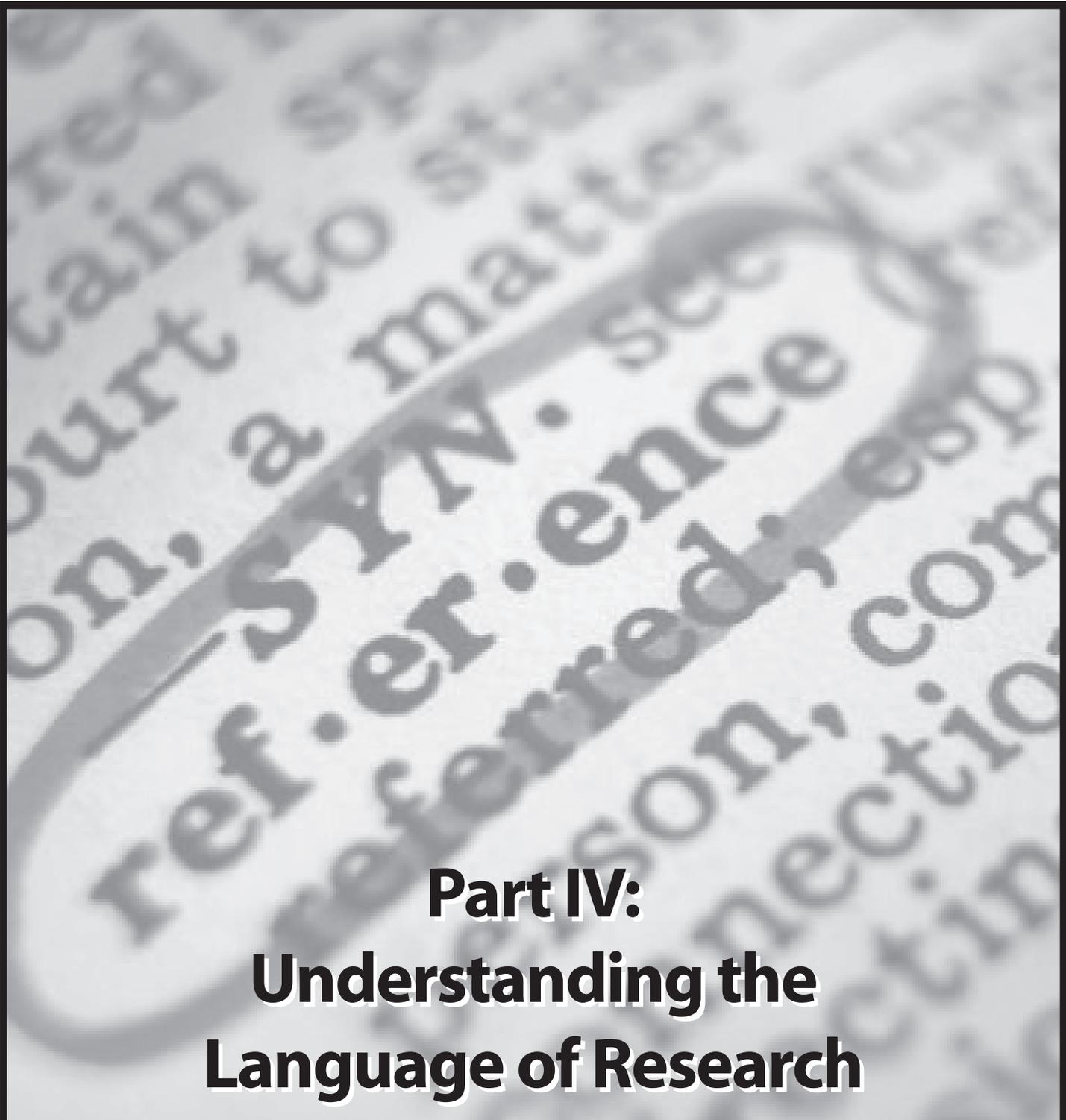
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**Part IV:**  
**Understanding the**  
**Language of Research**

*“The outcome of any serious research  
can only be to make two questions  
grow where only one grew before.”*

Thorstein Veblen  
*U.S. economist & social philosopher (1857 - 1929)*

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## Introduction to Part IV

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Researchers use scientific language to prepare reports and presentations. This specialized form of communication requires use of certain conventions (format and style) and use of technical words distinctive to the field of research. Use of this “scientific voice” allows researchers to provide precise information about their studies in a standard way.

Scientific language is obviously not the same language used by the general public, clinicians, agency staff and administrators. For some, it may even sound like a foreign language. For others, the language and related terms may seem confusing and mysterious.

Part IV of this booklet offers two keys to begin unlocking scientific language used in research reports. The first is a list of terms frequently used in research articles and presentations. The terms are grouped by categories that represent components of a research study. This list can help you become familiar with some of the specific terms and where they will be found in a research report. It is important to know, however, that *every term in this list will not be used* in a particular research article or presentation. The second key is a glossary — like a dictionary — that defines research terms found in the list. Definitions of all terms in the list are in the Glossary along with some additional ones.

The glossary and list of research terms are by no means complete or exhaustive. Other terms may be used in research presentations and reports. There are a number of resources available that define and explain terms excluded from this booklet. For examples, see the references at the end of Part IV and the resources in Part V, Finding Mental Health Research Information.



## Frequently Used Research Terms

Research Component	Related Terms
<b>Introduction</b>	Background of the Study Problem statement Gap in knowledge Literature review Rationale  Concepts/Constructs Conceptual framework Operational definition Theory/Theoretical framework
<b>Research Questions, Objectives, or Hypotheses</b>	Alpha Hypothesis Hypothesis testing Independent variable/Predictor variable Dependent variable/Outcome variable
<b>Types of Research Designs</b>	Clinical Trial Cross-sectional Ethnographic Experimental Longitudinal Naturalistic Phenomenological Qualitative Quantitative Quasi-experimental
<b>Explanations of Research Designs</b>	Bias Confounding variable/Extraneous variable/ Intervening variable Control group/Comparison group Experimental group/Intervention group/ Treatment group Pilot study

Research Component	Related Terms
<b>Sample</b>	Cohort Population Power Random assignment Random sample Representative/representativeness Sample size Small sample
<b>Types of Research Methods</b>	Focus group Grounded theory method Interview Observation Questionnaire
<b>Descriptions of Measures/ Instruments</b>	Coefficient alpha/Cronbach's alpha Likert scale Parameter Reliability Scale of measurement Nominal scale Interval scale Ordinal scale Ratio scale Validity
<b>Data &amp; Data Collection</b>	Aggregate Categorical Continuous Demographic Distribution Outlier Variability  Baseline Context Study setting
<b>Statistical Tests</b>	ANOVA Chi square Coefficient alpha/Cronbach's alpha Correlation Regression t-test

Research Component	Related Terms
<b>Descriptions of Statistical Tests</b>	Alpha Rationale Statistical significance
<b>Results</b>	Alpha Coefficient alpha/Cronbach's alpha Data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demographic data</li> <li>Socioeconomic data</li> <li>Distribution</li> </ul> Descriptive statistics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Central tendency</li> <li>Mean</li> <li>Median</li> <li>Mode</li> </ul> Inferential statistics Outlier Parametric statistics Nonparametric statistics Norms Multivariate analysis $p$ value Power Statistic Statistical inference Statistical tests <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ANOVA</li> <li>Chi square</li> <li>Coefficient alpha</li> <li>Correlation</li> <li>Regression</li> <li><math>t</math>-test</li> </ul> Statistical significance Variability
<b>Discussion</b>	Generalizable/Generalizability Implications Limitations Major findings Representative/representativeness

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## Glossary of Research Terms

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**Abstract.** A summary of the research study. The abstract briefly describes the purpose, methods and major findings of the study.

**Aggregate.** A way to handle data. Refers to considering all data together, in a group, rather than individually.

**Alpha ( $\alpha$ ).** Used in hypothesis testing. The probability of incorrectly rejecting a hypothesis that is true. Also see *p value*.

**ANOVA.** Analysis of Variance. A statistical procedure used to test differences between means of two or more groups.

**Applied research.** A scientific study done to answer a clinical question or solve a practice problem. Also see *Basic research, Scientific*.

**Background of the study.** The part of the introduction in a research report that describes the purpose and reasons for doing the study. Often includes a literature review.

**Baseline.** Data on variables that are collected at the beginning of the study. Comparisons are made between baseline data and data gathered during the study to determine whether or not changes occur.

**Basic research.** A scientific study done to create new knowledge for the purpose of learning or building theories rather than finding solutions to problems. Also known as pure research. Also see *Applied research, Scientific*.

**Bias.** Lack of objectivity that distorts the results of the study. Examples of potential sources of bias include how participants (the sample) are selected, the way data are collected, and the types of instruments or measures used in the study.

**Categorical.** Data or variables that differ in kind; they do not vary by amounts or degree. Gender (male, female) is an example of a categorical variable; values of 1 = male, 2 = female are examples of categorical data. Also known as nominal data/variables.

**Central Tendency.** Statistics that describe a set of scores that come from the middle or center of a distribution. Most often includes mean, median, and mode. Researchers use these statistics to describe the most typical scores in a set of data.

**Chi square ( $\chi^2$ ).** A statistic used to compare frequencies of two or more groups. Researchers often use chi-squares to test nominal (categorical) data.

**Clinical Trial.** A research design used to test the effects of a treatment such as a therapy approach or medication. Researchers compare treatment group results with control group results.

**Code/Coding.** A system of rules and procedures to prepare data for analyses. For example, coding steps often involve assigning abbreviated names to variables, assigning numbers to responses to questionnaire items, or labeling phrases and quotes from interview questions. Coding also refers to writing instructions that tell a computer how to handle data.

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## Glossary of Research Terms

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**Coefficient alpha.** A statistic that represents reliability or internal consistency. Researchers use this statistic to determine how well items on questionnaires and scales “hang together.” They also use this statistic to evaluate whether the items measure the same characteristic at different points in time and in different samples. Also known as Cronbach’s alpha.

**Cohort.** A group of individuals who share a similar set of experiences that occurred at the same time.

**Comparison group.** See *Control group*.

**Concept.** An idea or thought. Concepts provide a way to categorize information about persons, objects or things. Also see *Construct*.

**Conceptual framework.** A preliminary stage of a theory. A summary of concepts that pertain to the research study. Researchers use a conceptual framework as a guide when designing and carrying out the study. Also see *Theoretical framework*.

**Confounding variable.** A variable that can interfere with the results of a study. A confounding variable is not the variable of interest in the study. However, if not controlled, confounding variables make the findings confusing, puzzling or difficult to interpret. Also known as an extraneous or intervening variable.

**Construct.** A group of ideas (concepts) that are derived from theories. Constructs are used to explain behaviors, relationships or characteristics of persons, objects or things. Also see *Concept*.

**Context.** Refers to the environment or setting in which an event occurs. Also refers to situations or conditions that precede or follow an event.

**Continuous.** Data or variables that differ by amounts or degrees. An example of continuous data is a person’s age in years or months.

**Control group.** A group of individuals in a study who do not receive treatment or are treated in a traditional or regular manner. Researchers compare data from the control group and the experimental or intervention group to determine whether a treatment is effective. Also see *Experimental group*.

**Correlation.** A statistic that shows the degree of relationship between variables. Correlations are expressed as decimal numbers between .00 and plus (+) or minus (-) 1.00. Higher correlations (.70, .80, .90) indicate that a strong relationship is present between variables. A positive correlation means that high scores on one variable are associated with high scores on a second variable. A negative correlation means that high scores on one variable are associated with low scores on a second variable.

**Cronbach’s alpha.** See *Coefficient alpha*.

**Cross-sectional.** A research design in which individuals or events are compared at the same point in time. For example, a cross-sectional design was used by researchers who wanted to look at the relationship among cultural factors, stressors, medication monitoring and psychiatric symptoms. The sample consisted of adults who received community-based services in Ohio’s mental health system in a particular year. The adults were diagnosed with a severe, persistent mental illness. Several variables were examined, including age, gender, race, help needed in managing psychiatric medications, and interpersonal and environmental stressors.

**Data.** Facts, numbers, or values that have been collected about individuals, objects or events.

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## Glossary of Research Terms

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**Demographic data.** Values that depict characteristics of a sample. Most often includes age, gender, race/ethnicity and socioeconomic data. Also see *Socioeconomic data*.

**Dependent variable.** A response, behavior or outcome that is measured to obtain research results. Also known as outcome variable or criterion variable.

**Descriptive statistics.** Numbers or graphs used to summarize a set of scores; includes central tendency statistics (e.g., mean, median, mode), frequencies, percentages.

**Design.** A blueprint or guide for doing a scientific study. Includes a description of the setting (where the study takes place), the sample, methods, and plans for analyzing the data.

**Distribution.** The shape of a line for a set of scores when they are plotted on a graph. Researchers use this information to describe sets of scores obtained in their studies. They also use this information when deciding which statistical tests to use. Two typical distributions are “normal” and “skewed.” In a “normal” distribution, the line is shaped like a bell. Most scores cluster around the middle while the other scores spread out toward both ends of the graph. In a “skewed” distribution, most of the scores clump together at one end while the other scores form a tail that stretches toward the other end of the graph. Also see *Nonparametric statistics*, *Parametric statistics*.

**Ethnographic research.** A type of qualitative research that is used to study cultural or social groups. Researchers directly observe the group and gather detailed descriptions. The intent of the research is to increase understanding of interactions, beliefs, values or views about the world. Also see *Qualitative research*.

**Experimental research.** A research design that allows researchers to determine how selected variables (independent variables) influence an outcome (dependent variable). Researchers use experimental designs to make judgments about causes and effects. Also see *Control group*, *Experimental group*.

**Experimental group.** A group of individuals who receive the treatment or intervention of interest in the study. Also known as the intervention group or treatment group.

**Focus group.** A small group of individuals (five to ten people) who meet to discuss or share their expertise on a topic of interest. Focus groups allow researchers to understand the depth and breadth of a problem or issue that is important to particular groups of individuals. Information from focus groups can also assist researchers with interpretation of results from their studies, and may also be used to plan and design studies.

**Gap in knowledge.** A statement that identifies what important information is missing about the topic, issue or problem that will be studied.

**Generalizable/Generalizability.** The degree to which sample results can be universally applied or extended to the population from which the sample was taken.

**Grounded theory method.** A qualitative research technique that is used to discover problems and issues and the ways people address them. In using this method, researchers read through in-depth interviews or detailed observation notes line by line. These data are read several times in this manner. This approach allows researchers to become increasingly “grounded” in the data and to develop a richer understanding. While reading, researchers also identify and refine themes that emerge. These themes are then linked to concepts or theories and are used to describe an issue or explain a problem of interest. Also see *Qualitative research*.

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## Glossary of Research Terms

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**Hypothesis.** A formal statement that predicts the relationship between variables. A “hunch” about behaviors or events of interest that is examined in a research study.

**Hypothesis testing.** The process of accepting or rejecting a hypothesis. Also see *Hypothesis*.

**Implications.** What the research results mean and how the results can be used.

**Independent variable.** A variable that is controlled or fixed by the researcher. Also known as X-variable, predictor variable, explanatory variable, and factor. This variable may have an effect on the dependent variable. For example, if everybody in one group gets a new service, that service is the independent variable in the study. Also see *Dependent variable*.

**Inference.** A judgment or conclusion based on facts or evidence. Researchers make inferences based on the data that are collected in their study and the results of the analysis.

**Inferential statistics.** Data about a sample that are used to make judgments (inferences) about a population.

**Instrument.** A device or mechanism to collect data in a systematic way. Interview guides, surveys, and questionnaires are examples of research instruments.

**Interval scale.** A measurement scale in which numbers represent levels or degrees of an attribute or characteristic. A thermometer is an example of an interval scale. Many scales and tests used in research are based on an interval scale.

**Intervening variable.** See *Confounding variable*.

**Intervention group.** See *Experimental group*.

**Interview.** A two-way conversation started by an interviewer to obtain information. Interviews may be done with individuals or with groups of people. Interviews may be done in person (face-to-face), completed by telephone, or may involve use of a computer.

**Likert scale.** A scale where numbers or letters represent the extent to which a person agrees or disagrees with a series of statements or questions. Likert scales often include five choices that range from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

**Limitation.** An aspect of a study that may influence the results or the extent to which the findings are generalizable.

**Literature review.** The part of a research report that discusses previous studies completed on the topic or issue of interest. Also see *Background of the study*, *Problem statement*.

**Longitudinal.** A research design in which the same individuals or events are studied at several points in time. This design allows researchers to observe changes over time.

**Major finding.** The most important result from the research study.

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## Glossary of Research Terms

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**Mean.** Arithmetic average. The total result is divided by the number of scores. Extreme scores (those that are very high or very low) can skew the mean. Here, skew refers to distortion or misrepresentation. When a mean is skewed, it does not accurately show the “true” mean of a set of scores. Also see *Central tendency*, *Outlier*.

**Measure.** A standard or way to determine quantity or amount. Research measures are often used to assess characteristics, attitudes, behaviors, and abilities.

**Median.** The exact middle of a set of scores. Half the scores are above and half are below the median. Also see *Central tendency*.

**Methods.** The steps and procedures to gather and analyze data in a research study. Also see *Methodology*.

**Methodology.** Part of a research report that explains the steps and procedures used in the study. Most often includes information about the sample, instruments/measures, and data collection times.

**Mode.** The most frequently occurring score in a set of scores. Also see *Central tendency*.

**Model.** A representation or copy of something in the real world that is used for testing. In a research study, a model is often presented as a map or diagram that shows how different variables are expected to be related. There are several kinds of models used in research. Examples include conceptual/theoretical models and statistical models.

**Multivariate analysis.** Statistical tests that examine more than two variables at the same time.

**Naturalistic.** A type of scientific study in which researchers look at the behavior of persons or objects in their usual or natural environment.

**Nominal scale.** A measurement scale in which numbers are used to classify, name or label an individual, attribute or category. The numbers have no specific order or importance. Nominal scales are often used to designate group membership (such as male, female, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status). Nominal scales are also used to indicate characteristics that individuals do and do not have (such as a diagnosis of anxiety disorder, a family history of schizophrenia).

**Non-parametric statistics.** A group of statistical procedures that researchers use to test data that are not normally distributed. Also known as “distribution-free” statistics. Also see *Distribution*.

**Norms.** Standardized scores that have been developed using a group from a population. Norms are generally considered as “typical” scores for a group. Norms exist for many tests and questionnaires that are used in mental health research.

**Null hypothesis.** A formal statement that there is no difference or no relationship between variables. Researchers often use the results of statistical test to decide whether to reject the null hypothesis.

**Observation.** An individual or event is watched for a specified length of time.

**Operational definition.** A statement that gives a clear description of how a variable will be measured.

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## Glossary of Research Terms

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**Ordinal scale.** A measurement scale in which numbers indicate rank (from highest to lowest). For example, the ranks of 1 = Some High School, 2 = High School Graduate, 3 = Some College, 4 = College Graduate, indicate that persons with higher rankings have more education than those with lower rankings.

**Outcome variable.** See *Dependent variable*.

**Outlier.** A number or value that is unusually large or unusually small when compared to others in a set of data. Also known as an extreme score.

**Parameter.** A characteristic or measure of a population.

**Parametric statistics.** A group of statistical procedures that researchers use to test data that are normally distributed. Also see *Distribution*.

**Phenomenological research.** A type of qualitative research that is used to study human experiences. Researchers gather detailed information from persons living an experience in order to increase understanding of the meaning of the experience. Also see *Qualitative research*.

**Pilot study.** A smaller version of a study is carried out before the actual investigation is done. Researchers use information gathered in pilot studies to refine or modify the research methodology for a study and to develop large-scale studies.

**Population.** A well-defined group of individuals, objects or events. All members of a population have at least one known characteristic in common. Researchers use data from samples to generalize findings to a population.

**Power.** The probability that a statistical procedure or research design will detect differences or effects when they are present. Researchers use power to determine how likely they are to find “true,” significant results based on the size of the sample.

**Predictor variable.** See *Independent variable*.

***p* value.** Probability value. A number that reflects the likelihood that statistical results have occurred by chance. Results with *p* values equal to or less than .05, .01 or .001 are labeled as statistically significant. Also known as level of significance. Also see *Statistical significance*.

**Problem statement.** A description that provides information about the issue or problem that is the focus of the research study. Includes the question that the study will address.

**Qualitative research.** A scientific study in which narrative information (detailed description) is obtained about complex issues, sensitive topics or life experiences. The information provides a deeper understanding and is used to generate new theories or hypotheses.

**Quantitative research.** A scientific study in which numerical information (numbers or values) is obtained about an issue, topic or problem. The information is used to describe or predict the relationship between variables, test research hypotheses and answer research questions.

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## Glossary of Research Terms

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**Quasi-experimental.** A research design that resembles an experimental design but has no random assignment. This design allows researchers to look at relationships between variables rather than causes and effects. Also see *Experimental research*, *Random assignment*.

**Questionnaire.** Individuals record their responses to questions or statements. Also known as the “paper and pencil” method.

**Random assignment.** Individuals are placed into groups or treatment conditions in such a way that each person has an equal chance of being selected for any group or treatment. In addition, placement of any individual into a group or treatment condition does not influence the placement of any other person.

**Random sample.** A group of persons are selected from a population in such a way that each individual has an equal chance of being chosen. In addition, the selection of one person does not influence the chances of other people being selected.

**Rationale.** A logical basis or the reason for something.

**Ratio scale.** A measurement scale in which numbers indicate levels or degrees of a characteristic in relation to an exact zero (0) point. The distance between each level is equal and each level can be compared to an exact zero (0) point to provide meaningful information. Weight and number of clients receiving services are examples of characteristics measured on a ratio scale.

**Research.** A scientific study in which information is gathered in a logical or systematic way. A research study provides new knowledge about a topic or issue that applies or extends to other populations or settings. Also see *Generalizable/Generalizability*.

**Regression.** A statistical procedure that is used to describe linear relationships between dependent variables and independent variables.

**Reliable/Reliability.** The degree to which observations or measures are consistent or stable. Also see *Coefficient alpha*.

**Representative/representativeness.** The extent to which a sample reflects characteristics of the population from which it was taken. How closely characteristics of the sample resemble or match characteristics of the population.

**Sample.** A set of cases taken from a population of people, objects or events.

**Sample size.** The actual number of people, objects or events involved in the research study.

**Science.** Knowledge that is formed over time through observation, investigation, and theoretical explanations.

**Scientific.** An adjective that describes something that has an objective basis. Also describes something created in a systematic way. Also see *Science*.

**Small sample.** The number of participants is less than or equal to 30.

**Socioeconomic data.** A category of demographic data. Most often includes education, income, occupation, and marital status.

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## Glossary of Research Terms

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**Statistic.** A number or value that is calculated from data.

**Statistical inference.** The process of making conclusions about a population using data collected from a sample.

**Statistical significance.** A conclusion made about the results of statistical tests. If results are statistically significant, it is unlikely they happened by chance or by errors in sampling. Statistical significance does not mean that the results automatically have practical significance or importance. Also see *p value*.

**Study setting.** The location or environment where the research takes place. Determines, in part, the extent to which the results can be applied or generalized to other settings of interest. Also see *Context*.

**Systematic.** An adjective used to describe something done in a step-by-step manner. Also used to describe something arranged in an orderly, organized way.

**Theory.** A group of statements that explain a set of events, facts, behaviors, and experiences. In research, a theory describes one's point of view or perspective about how these are interrelated.

**Theoretical framework.** A summary of the theories, concepts, or constructs that relate to the research study. Researchers use a theoretical framework as a guide when designing and carrying out the study. Also see *Conceptual framework*.

**Treatment group.** See *Experimental group*.

**t-test.** Researchers use this statistical test to see if differences exist between two groups.

**Valid/Validity.** The extent to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure.

**Variable.** A characteristic or attribute of interest in a research study.

**Variability.** The extent to which scores differ from one another.

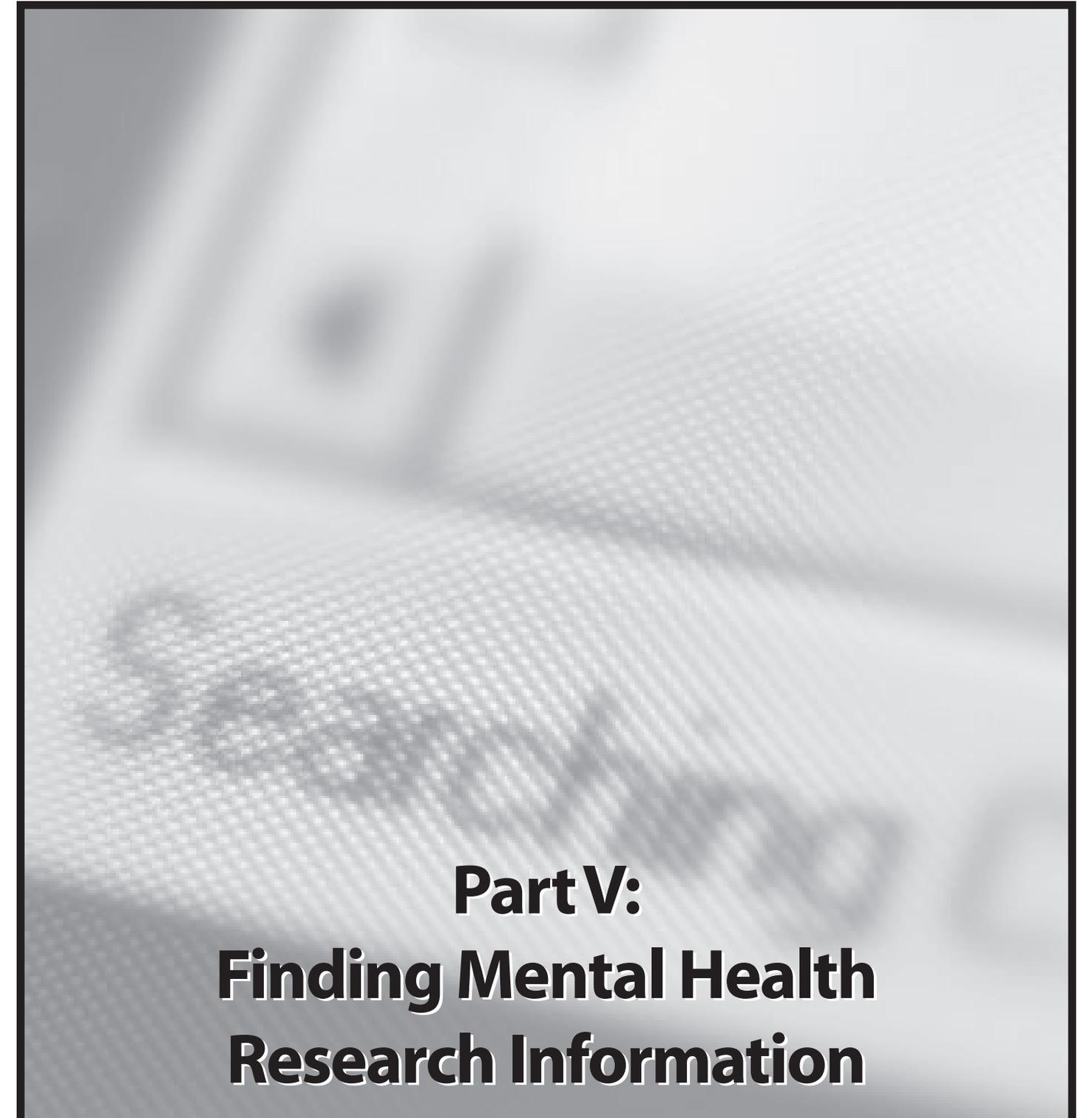
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## Glossary of Research Terms

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**Part V:  
Finding Mental Health  
Research Information**

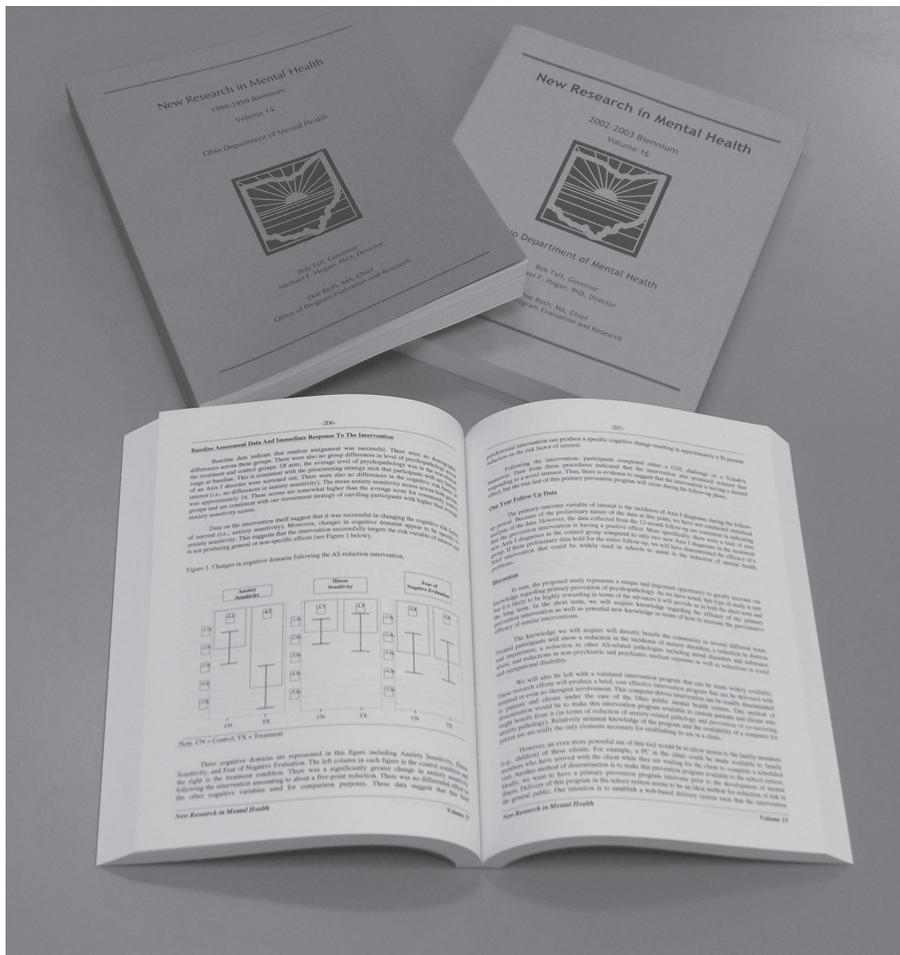
*“The beginning of knowledge is the  
discovery of something we  
do not understand.”*

Frank Herbert  
*U.S. science fiction novelist (1920 - 1986)*

# Introduction to Part V

Research reports are available in a variety of formats. They often appear as articles in professional journals and are included as chapters in books. Research reports are frequently given as formal presentations or posters at conferences and meetings. They are included in articles in newspapers, newsletters and magazines for the general public. They can also be found on the Internet. The amount of information provided about the study will vary depending on the particular format. Research reports in professional journals are longer and contain more detailed information than those found in newspapers or newsletters for the general public.

Part V of this booklet focuses on resources that are available to find printed and on-line research reports on mental health topics. These include resources available through the Ohio Department of Mental Health, national mental health and healthcare organizations, libraries and the Internet. Some tips are offered on finding mental health research information through the Internet. Also, information is provided that will be helpful if you are asked to volunteer to participate in a research study or if you are asked to assist with planning or conducting a research study.



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## Where Can I Find Information About Research Sponsored by the Ohio Department of Mental Health?

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Visit the Ohio Department of Mental Health Web site at: <http://www.mh.state.oh.us>

Click on “ODMH Research” then click on Research News, Research Activities, Research Publications or Join our Research Listserv. Here is what you will find:

**Research News** – announcements about new research publications and new research studies funded through the ODMH Research Grants Program.

**Research Activities** – information about OPER (Office of Program Evaluation and Research) staff’s involvement in research projects and statewide initiatives that are aimed at improving treatment, services and outcomes, and aiding in the prevention of serious mental illness.

**Research Publications** – information about *New Research in Mental Health*, *Toward Best Practices*, and OPER research reports.

*New Research in Mental Health* is published every two years and contains reports of ODMH-funded research projects as well as reports of research projects funded by federal or other sources.

*Toward Best Practices Booklets* grew out of the Department’s desire to share key research results with Ohio’s mental health community. Each booklet highlights major findings that can be used to improve practice and outcomes for consumers served in local mental health systems. The results contained in each booklet are from projects funded by the Ohio Department of Mental Health’s Research Grants Program and from research conducted by the Office of Program Evaluation and Research.

*OPER Reports* present the results of policy-related studies conducted by ODMH.

You can also send an on-line request for printed copies of these reports. (Copies can also be requested by calling the Office of Program Evaluation and Research, 614-466-8651.)

**Join Our Research Listserv** – an opportunity to request direct delivery of information and announcements regarding new OPER research publications and reports to your e-mailbox.

When visiting the ODMH Web site, be sure to check out the ODMH electronic newsletters. *Connections*, *ODMH Kids News*, *Quality Matters*, and the *Ohio Forensic Newsletter* often include information and findings from research studies.

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## Where Else Can I Find Research on Mental Health?

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**Public libraries** are great places to find journal articles and books that contain research reports about mental health topics. They provide access to many types of resources on mental health. Librarians are also available to help you find materials and information. Some types of public libraries that you might visit when trying to find research on mental health topics include:

- Community libraries
- Hospital libraries
- State Library of Ohio
- University and college libraries

A short list of professional journals is provided below to assist you in your search. These journals publish research on mental health topics and issues on a regular basis:

- Community Mental Health Journal*
- Journal of Behavioral Health Services and Research*
- Journal of Dual Diagnosis*
- Psychiatric Services*
- Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*
- Schizophrenia Bulletin*

**The Internet** is a good resource for finding research reports on mental health topics. Once linked to the Internet, you can search for information by typing words into a search box or search screen. Be sure to use words specific to your topic of interest (e.g., “mental health recovery research”).

**A note of caution:** The search will most likely yield a variety of Web sites. Be selective about Web sites that you visit. Choose sites sponsored by reputable groups or organizations. Avoid sites where the sponsorship is unknown, unclear or questionable. There are many computer problems that can arise from visiting questionable Web sites. Also, be selective about the information you choose to access. A document may look like a research article or report on the surface, but may only contain someone’s opinions or personal views on the topic. This is fine, if you are looking for this type of information.

Look for Web sites that provide links to **on-line professional journals, listservs, e-newsletters and organizations.**

Several professional journals are available on-line and are very good resources for information about research on mental health topics. Be aware that you may be able to access only the abstract of the article through the Web site. Publishers of professional journals frequently allow access to abstracts but require people to subscribe to the journal to obtain the complete article. In this case, check with a library in your area. You may be able to access the article on-line if the library subscribes to the journal.

Listservs send e-mail information about a variety of topics, including highlights from mental health research reports. Some offer abstracts of research studies with links to the full article or report. Keep in mind that not all of them provide this information. Look for

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“moderated” listservs which means that the owner or sponsor of the Web site examines the information before it is sent or posted. To receive the e-mails, you need to subscribe to the service.

E-newsletters also contain highlights or abstracts of research reports. Some provide links to the complete report. Be sure to include the ODMH e-newsletters mentioned previously in your search.

Many **mental health and healthcare organizations** offer information about mental health research reports and findings on their Web sites. Examples include:

ODMH Office of Program Evaluation & Research: <http://www.mh.state.oh.us>

Boston University Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation: <http://www.bu.edu/cpr>

Center for Quality Improvement in Mental Health: <http://www.cqaimh.org/quality.html>

The Cochrane Collaboration: <http://www.cochrane.org/reviews/index.htm>

Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center: <http://dms.dartmouth.edu/prc>

Human Services Research Institute (HSRI): <http://www.hsri.org>

National Alliance on Mental Illness: <http://www.nami.org>

National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors: <http://www.nasmhpd.org>

National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors Research Institute:  
<http://www.nri-inc.org>

***Examples of Federal governmental sites include:***

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality: <http://www.ahrq.gov>

National Guideline Clearinghouse: <http://www.guideline.gov>

National Institute of Mental Health: <http://www.nimh.nih.gov>

Substance Abuse & Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA), Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) National Information Center: <http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov>

**The media** are also a resource to consider when searching for research on mental health topics. Highlights or brief summaries of mental health research findings are occasionally printed in newspapers and incorporated in news reports aired by television and radio stations. These news reports often include the name of the journal in which the study is published. If not, consider contacting the newspaper or station to request information to help you locate the report (e.g., title of the study, researcher’s name, journal, year of publication).

## Are There Resources That Explain Research in Easy-to-Understand Language?

Absolutely! Many resources are available, both in print and on-line. The examples below are written for people who have little to no experience in reading and evaluating research. Overall, they are fairly easy to understand.

Doorden, A.M. (1998). *Lippincott's need to know research survival guide*. Philadelphia: Lippincott.

Huck, S. (2000). *Reading statistics and research*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: Addison Wesley Longman.

Huff, D. (1993). *How to lie with statistics*. New York: Norton.

Jones, W.P., & Kottler, J.A. (2006). *Understanding research: Becoming a competent and critical consumer*. Columbus, OH: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.

Locke, L.F., Silverman, S.J., & Spirduso, W.W. (2004). *Reading and understanding research*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Niles, R. (2006). *Statistics that every writer should know*. Available on-line at:  
<http://nilesonline.com/stats>



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## Where Can I Find Information About Participating in a Research Study?

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Several groups have put together pamphlets to assist people who are asked to volunteer for a research study. The pamphlets include information about your rights as a research participant and examples of important questions to ask before making a decision about participation. Below are several Web sites that provide on-line access to pamphlets that discuss participation in a research study. The Web sites also have information about requesting printed copies of the pamphlet, free of charge – either on-line or through a toll-free number.

Center for Disease Control, *Taking Part in Research Studies: What Questions Should You Ask?*: <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pubs/brochure/unc3bro.htm>

National Alliance on Mental Illness, *Protection of Research Volunteers*:  
[http://www.nami.org/Content/NavigationMenu/InformYourself/About Research/Protection of Research Volunteers.htm](http://www.nami.org/Content/NavigationMenu/InformYourself/About%20Research/Protection%20of%20Research%20Volunteers.htm)

National Institute of Mental Health, *A Participant's Guide to Mental Health Research*:  
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/clinres.cfm>

US Food & Drug Administration, *Clinical Trials of Medical Treatments: Why Volunteer?*:  
<http://www.fda.gov/opacom/lowlit/cltr.html>

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## What Questions Should I Ask About Participating in Research?

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Below is a short list of questions that you may want to consider if you are asked to volunteer to participate in a study. The on-line pamphlets mentioned previously provide additional examples of questions. You may also find this list helpful if you are asked to become involved in planning a study or assisting with research activities, such as recruiting potential participants, collecting data or interpreting results.

1. How will my participation be helpful?
2. How long is my assistance needed? How much time will I be expected to devote each day (or each week)?
3. Will I receive compensation for my participation? Will I have any out-of-pocket expenses, such as parking fees and transportation costs?
4. Who is sponsoring the research? What organization is funding the study? Where can I find additional information about the sponsor and the funding source?
5. Will the research study be submitted to an Institutional Review Board or similar committee on ethics?
6. What is expected of people who will participate?
7. Who should I contact if I have additional questions about my participation?

### **Additional questions, if you are asked to help carry out research activities:**

Will training and ongoing support be provided?

Will the training include information on research ethics and protecting the confidentiality and privacy of data?

Will I be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement?





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