

SECOND EDITION

Analyzing Social Settings

A Guide to Qualitative
Observation and Analysis

John Lofland
Lyn H. Lofland



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To Erving Goffman

1922–1982

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Preface

People familiar with the initial edition of this manual may find it helpful to have an explanation of how this revision is similar to and different from it.

Our primary goal is still to assist people in *doing* qualitative data collection and analysis. The most conspicuous change in our approach to this goal is the reordering of the materials into a sequence of tasks, to be performed roughly in the order they become problematic in research. This is quite different from the original edition, which discussed qualitative analysis at the outset, followed by data collection techniques and the mechanics of analysis.

In this resequencing, none of the basic topics covered in the original have been deleted. Rather, we have enlarged this edition to include several new topics, and the discussions of many of the old topics have been expanded. The principal additions and enlargements are as follows:

- ▶ The initial edition said very little about the social relations aspects of participant observation and intensive interviewing. We have included a full-scale treatment of these aspects in the new chapters called “Getting In” and “Getting Along.” Here, we have especially tried to address ethical questions.
- ▶ A new first chapter (“Starting Where You Are”) stresses the importance of *personally* caring about what is being researched.
- ▶ A new concluding chapter (“Guiding Consequences”) strives to set the research process in larger social and ethical contexts of *relevance* to the researcher.
- ▶ The question “what is interesting research?” is now raised (in Chapter 8).
- ▶ This edition’s Part Two (“Focusing Data”) contains basically the same material as the old Part One (“Qualitative Analysis”), but it has been extensively rearranged and—we believe—simplified. The six “units” described in the old Chapter 2 have been assimilated into the eleven more sophisticated “thinking units” of Chapter 6. The “static” and “phase” analysis ideas from the old Chapter 2 have been consolidated with the “causes and consequences” of the old Chapter 3 to become part of the seven questions around which Chapter 7 (“Asking Questions”) is organized.

- ▶ Throughout, we have revised the prose, deleted examples that are now out of date, and called on the best of the most recent studies and methodological commentaries.
- ▶ Unlike the original, this edition has a comprehensive and current bibliography.

Otherwise, and to repeat, virtually all of the original *Analyzing* is still here. We have simply expanded the coverage and streamlined the presentation. It is our earnest hope that previous users will find these revisions and enlargements helpful.

Acknowledgments

The debts we wish to acknowledge vary as to how specific they are to this book.

We desire first to express gratitude for the support of a number of colleagues who have not been specifically involved in producing this particular work. However, through conversations, admonitions, off-hand remarks, publications, and examples, they have had an important hand in it "once removed." For brevity's sake, we list only their names: Herbert Blumer, Fred Davis, Barney Glaser, Erving Goffman, John Irwin, Anselm Strauss, Jacqueline Wiseman and Morris Zelditch, Jr.

This volume is dedicated to Erving Goffman, our mentor and friend, who died in 1982 at age 60. He was to us the most outstanding practitioner of, and advocate for, naturalistic inquiry in social science. We grieve his premature passing.

As indicated in the preceding notes, this edition has been considerably revised from the original. These revisions have not arisen in a vacuum, but have grown in the course of working with students struggling to do qualitative field research. This book is a direct product of our efforts to help such students—it is a distillation of what we have learned from them about what has seemed most useful and important. Thus, perhaps our most important debt is to the hundreds of undergraduate and graduate students at the University of California, Davis, who have, over the course of more than a decade, "tried out" and reacted to a succession of formulations of these materials. We wish to thank them for all their patience and tenacity and to express regret that there are too many of them to name individually.

A manual of this sort can emerge only out of the accumulated data collection and analytic experiences of generations of naturalistic researchers. We owe a special debt to all the men and women whose writings have formed the "data base" for our efforts. They are listed in the bibliography.

Finally, a number of persons have provided very direct assistance. Kathy Charmaz painstakingly and expertly examined the entire manuscript in detail, provided much salient commentary, and rescued us from many misstatements and ambiguities. The detailed and constructive suggestions

of James Cramer, Gary Hamilton, Patrick Jackson and Carl Sundholm on the "Focusing Data" chapters were extremely helpful. Several anonymous reviewers have assisted us significantly in sharpening the text. We thank them and the two editors who arranged their assistance, Larry J. Wilson and William Oliver. Mary Arbogast and Bill Reynolds edited our too often involuted and excessively qualified prose into cleaner and more pointed text. Leland Moss guided us through the production process with grace and tact. And Doris Craven patiently and precisely typed and retyped our multicolored scrawlings on complicated and pasted-up draft pages.

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