INTRODUCTION

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I n introducing the first edition of this book, we noted that we, like many other researchers we know who utilize qualitative data, have grappled with how to transform our fieldwork experience represented in the vast amounts of data gathered into journal articles. Questions such as the following emerge: What do I want to write about? On which aspects of the data do I focus? How do I construct a compelling argument? How do I reduce what I have to say so that it fits into a journal-sized article? What did I find most interesting and how does it link with theory? How do I depict the actual complexity of life that occurred in the organization? For us, the difficult questions have centered on: How do we see the most interesting questions arising from our research? How do we choose the best theoretical location for our work? How do we convey the meaning of our work—its significance and import—so that it resonates with readers? Ten years later, we continue to grapple with these questions, but we now appreciate that it is just the "nature of the beast" when we adopt a qualitative unstructured approach to inquiry.

Since the first edition of the book, understanding of the interpretive turn toward language has matured (Bruner, 1996; Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Geertz, 1983, 1988; Rabinow & Sullivan, 1987; Rorty, 1989), as has awareness and concern with the writing project and how we narrate our research. Whereas little discussion and few, if any, courses existed in doctoral programs then, today, there is some consideration of writing as part of the professional development of faculty (Boice, 2000). Furthermore, in those institutions in which qualitative research has a strong tradition, courses concerned with representation are available. However, as a foundational activity of our profession, writing continues to

be insufficiently discussed. This paucity of attention to writing occurs at the cost of individual and collective wisdom. In neglecting matters of writing, we impoverish our capacity to generate theoretically relevant insights into every-day life.

We write this edition of the book for several reasons. First, we write to consolidate and reflect our refined understanding of the task of writing qualitative research articles, building on the increasing appreciation of the artful side (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997) of producing disciplinary texts. Second, we write to provide an update on the state of qualitative writing and, in particular, to recognize and reflect on examples of the variety of qualitative research that has proliferated in our journals. Third, during the past decade, the popularity of qualitative research has continued to grow and to spread across disciplines. It has been adopted in communities in which, in the early 1990s, few qualitative studies appeared, such as Information Systems. Recognizing this, we write to explicitly expand our consideration of qualitative writing in journals to incorporate work from two additional disciplines in which it has burgeoned—Information Systems and Health Studies.

We continue to imagine you, the reader, as similar to those people with whom we have had and continue to have conversations about writing our research for publication. You are likely to be graduate students who are learning about qualitative research and writing issues for the first time, as well as more seasoned qualitative researchers who are exploring ways to become more reflective about what you are doing. We expect that those of you who will find this book most interesting and useful will be right in the throes of writing up fieldwork or proposals for research projects, or those of you reflecting more generally on the writing process.

WRITING ABOUT WRITING

When we wrote the first edition, we noted several authors who had already written about writing and who had informed our perspectives. Some of these authors offered practical guidance for the writing process. A book by the sociologist Howard Becker (1986) concretely examined the mechanics of the writing process, including the underlying fears about writing and social organization conventions that hinder clarity in writing. Another sociologist, Gary Alan Fine (1988), developed ten practical "commandments" about writing. In

particular, he emphasized that, because all writing is socially situated, social scientists should have particular audiences and purposes in mind as they write. He also encouraged researchers to use literary techniques such as metaphors and poetic language to bring an argument to life for readers. Wolcott (1990, 2001) developed some hands-on and very useful suggestions for moving along the writing process in its various phases, as reflected by his chapter titles: getting going, keeping going, tightening up, finishing up and getting published. Continuing in this tradition, Huff (1999) outlines a step-by-step approach to the writing process that begins with choosing a subject and ends with a manuscript submitted for publication. She emphasizes the importance of writing in a way that is consistent with the rules of having good conversations.

Participating in the interpretive turn (Bruner, 1996; Geertz, 1983, 1988; Rabinow & Sullivan, 1987) with its attendant concern with language and the construction of meaning, other authors had turned their attention to the texts researchers produced and examined their narrative strategies and textual practices. Gephart (1986, 1988) examined rhetorical conventions, for example the use of passive or quasi-passive voice and the creation of gaps, to support and legitimate arguments based on quantitative data. The work by Van Maanen (1988, 1995) and Geertz (1988) examined the narrative strategies associated with ethnographic writing. Since that time, other authors have made important contributions. Ellis and Bochner (1996) produced and collected a range of writing that experimented with various textual forms in order to deliberately push the boundary on conventions for disciplinary texts. Focusing on narrative as one facet of the interpretive turn in social sciences, Czarniawska (1999, 2004) examined the use and analysis of narrative in scientific practice, including writing endeavors.

In writing this revision, we continue in the intellectual tradition represented by these works. How critical it is to have an emerging tradition of writing about writing to draw upon! As well, the intellectual foundation for this edition of the book continues to be informed by rhetoric and literary theory in the social sciences. In particular, we have been influenced by the work of Booth (1961, 1967) and Iser (1978, 1989), who have incorporated into literary criticism the notions of implied author and reader and active texts and readers; by the work of Knorr-Cetina (1981), Latour (1987), and Latour and Woolgar (1986), who have examined scientific texts as part of their investigations of science in action; and by the work of Bazerman and his colleagues (Bazerman, 1988; Bazerman & Paradis, 1991; Bazerman & Prior, 2004), McCloskey

(1985, 1990, 1994), Selzer (1993), and Winsor (1996), who have examined directly the rhetorical dimension and textual practices of disciplinary texts.

Our book also differs from the above work in that we seek to provide a systematic, yet very concrete approach to composing qualitative research. Although we definitely bring a literary and rhetorical understanding to this book, we seek to integrate this knowledge and perspective into specific and critical issues that we, as writers, face in constructing written accounts of our fieldwork. In doing so, our major focus concerns how to convert our field engagement into theoretically relevant insights and claims to an audience based in our relevant professional community.

WRITING OUR FIELDWORK

After some seventeen or so years of thinking, reading, researching and writing about writing, we now take for granted that efforts to transform qualitative research efforts into written textual form concern much more than the rational presentation of data. Composing qualitative research is not a linear process in which we gather "facts" in the field that speak for themselves and make our contribution apparent to all readers (see Becker, 1986, and Feldman, 1995, for discussions of this).

From the perspective we occupy today, we believe that the major tasks of writing with qualitative data involve connecting the field and academic worlds via literature-based ideas that illuminate insights garnered in the field and produce knowledge claims viewed as unique contributions by the relevant professional community of readers. We do not simply present facts that stand alone, but rather craft arguments intended to persuade readers that we have something new to offer relative to extant literature. At the personal level, the crafting and shaping of the manuscript involves ourselves as authors; the research setting, including members with whom we interacted for longer or shorter periods of time; the arguments we make and how we develop them in the text; and our informal as well as formal interactions with colleagues and members of our communities around our developing stories. At a more general, though nevertheless influential level, our writing task takes into consideration the academic institutional setting, with its associated norms for "doing science" and journal review processes, and our largely academic community of readers.

FOCUS ON "THEORIZED STORYLINE"

So, how do we craft a manuscript that brings together the academic and field worlds to develop theoretically relevant insights regarded as a contribution? In the first edition of this book, we called upon the metaphor of "story" to illuminate matters of writing for management journals. By invoking this metaphor, we were better able to draw attention to *how* we write, and to begin to explicate what it takes to compose qualitative research for our journals.

In this second edition, we have retained and elaborated the narrative perspective. The distinguishing characteristic of stories is that they possess a discernible framework for structuring the written account. Stories are grounded in events, and provide a narrative structure that organizes those events into some arrangement of the past, present and future. Further, they provide an explanation of the turn of events through the development of a plot. Whereas in the first edition we developed the idea of story, but only implicitly incorporated storyline, in this edition we explicitly develop storyline as a narrative device that helps us write together the field and academic worlds.

One day, while we were writing the first edition of this book, Karen Locke's young (at that time!) son, Ian, showed her a picture that he had drawn in school that day. The picture portrayed a snowman and had three separate scenes representing the narrative structure of the story that Ian had crafted. The first scene showed a snowman with a top hat and smile. The second scene introduced the sun, along with the snowman as he had looked in the first scene. In the final scene, the sun was still shining, but all that remained of the snowman was a puddle and the top hat.

This story still is relevant, but now our interpretation focuses more on storyline. Very simply, yet elegantly, Ian's story of the snowman showed not only the chronological progression of events over time, but also potential storylines that explained the turn of events involving the snowman and the sun: the introduction of the sun had caused the snowman to melt; the appearance of the sun threatened the very life of the snowman; life can present precarious situations, and so on.

Similarly, as qualitative researchers, we observe organizational events and members' interpretations of those events as they unfold. Indeed, what we offer in the way of distinctive knowledge is a view of events in organizations as process- and meaning based; we are uniquely situated to contribute to knowledge about how organizational phenomena occur, as well as what those phenomena mean. As qualitative researchers, we convert our engagement with

this field into theoretical insights and ideas of interest and import to a disciplinary audience. We accomplish this by articulating a *theorized storyline,* or a particular kind of plot that relates the field and academic worlds. Thus, we link organizational members' actions and interpretations of what happened with theoretical discussions to generate possible claims concerning what might have happened. In the case of the snowman, for example, we might momentarily imagine the snowman as organization and link the field complication of the sun melting the snowman to some theoretical discourse. So, we could offer knowledge claims about how organizations are strategically vulnerable to certain aspects of the environment, or that a liability of newness exists for young organizations in turbulent environments.

By invoking the metaphor of stories and drawing attention to the importance of generating theorized storylines, we more readily notice "how" we write, and are better able to integrate it with the "what" of our writing. For example, we notice: (1) how extant literature looks *before* the proposed study, including significantly its gaps or omissions; (2) how extant literature looks *after* the proposed study, including changes that result from addressing the gaps; and (3) how the insights garnered *along the way* shed theoretical light and significance on the complications faced by actors in the field. Similarly, Weick (1995) suggests that, "In a full defense of an idea, the author shows how some display looks different before and after it is viewed using the innovation that is proposed."

Finally, by invoking story and theorized storyline, we also draw attention to the significant social dimension of composing our manuscripts in disciplinary communities. For example, we begin to discern the complexities and nuances associated with how we craft our character as scientific storytellers. How do we establish our character in the texts we write, and how does what we produce persuade our disciplinary readers to regard or disregard our claims? We also notice the important task of *re*-writing that accompanies our manuscripts' journeys from initial sharing of ideas to eventual publication of those ideas in our disciplinary journals. Along the way, our ideas and theorized storylines can undergo significant shaping!

ORGANIZATION OF CHAPTERS

We have maintained the metaphor of story in the organization of this edition of the book. Chapter 1, "The Style and Practice of Our Academic Writing,"

explores taken-for-granted assumptions in our profession that influence, and more particularly, mystify the process of writing up qualitative research. It also provides a framework for thinking about composing qualitative research for journal publication. Specifically, it suggests our major writing task is to convert our engagement with the field into theoretical insights and ideas of interest and import to a disciplinary audience. In Chapter 2, "Crafting a Theorized Story-line," we draw on the metaphor of plot to introduce the idea that we accomplish this writing task by articulating a *theorized storyline,* or a particular kind of plot that relates the field and academic worlds. It highlights four rhetorical moves authors use in establishing theorized storylines in their manuscripts: articulating study significance, situating the study in the literature, problematizing the liter-ature through gap creation, and making space for the study to contribute by foreshadowing how it addresses the problematization. Chapter 3, "Developing the Theorized Storyline," examines how authors draw on the rich, specific descriptions of everyday life in organizations to illuminate the theoretical sig-nificance of complications faced by actors in the field. We show how, in devel-oping their theorized storylines for journal articles comprised of limited space, authors have produced some innovation in representing field data. Chapter 4, "Characterizing the Storyteller," shows how authors construct the storyteller in journal articles. Reflecting the impact of the interpretive turn on authors' por-trayals of themselves in published studies, it highlights the question of who we want to be in our writing. It examines how, in addition to depicting the charac-ter of the institutional scientists in their texts, authors are increasingly revealing their human face. Chapter 5, "Re-Writing the Story," has been reframed to more explicitly consider our writing efforts as a social process, focusing on how members of our academic community participate in our writing as we craft and re-craft our manuscripts on their journey to publication. This edition extends in three respects our profile of manuscripts along the way to publication. First, we have incorporated the journeys of seven additional articles (for a total of 13) via interviews with the authors and materials of the review process for these arti-cles, including reviewer and editor comments. Second, through these inter-views, we provide a glimpse into the critical arena of sharing early drafts of manuscripts prior to submitting them for formal review. Finally, the comments from editors and reviewers, as well as author responses, enable us to extend the portrait of exchanges during the formal review process that shape and negotiate the writing of the manuscript. Finally, in "Concluding Comments," we share some closing thoughts on writing matters.

In each chapter, we use actual examples from published writings drawn from mainstream journals in Management, Information Systems, and Health Studies. As well, in keeping with the informal style of writing we use in this book, we reference the authors of these works by using both their last and their (usually more informal) first names. Each of these examples uses wholly qualitative data in its presentation. No particular criteria were applied to the selection of the articles discussed, except that they illustrated especially well the aspect of writing under discussion. The examples are by no means exhaustive. As you read, we would hope that both your knowledge and repertoire of others' qualitative work, as well as your own work, will provide additional illustrations.

The final caution we issued in our first edition still holds: Throughout our writing of this book, we have been well aware of two primary and sometimes conflicting motivations. On the one hand, we want to provide especially first-time researchers with support to make the transition from the field to writing a creative, rather than debilitating one. To this end, throughout the book we identify and illustrate a number of rhetorical practices that authors use to craft and develop their theoretical insights. On the other hand, we want to avoid espousing a normative "how-to" guide or boilerplate approach to composing qualitative research. We are not advocating one right or correct way to write up data. To do so would dampen the creativity in each person's writing adventures, resulting in increasingly uninteresting and similar work. So, in this book we have sought very intentionally to examine what a wide variety of authors using qualitative data in journals are up to in their work. The outcome, we hope, is that as conscious writers and readers of the theorized storylines we craft, we will all contribute to the generation of knowledge that is more imaginative, thoughtful, reasoned and insightful.

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THE STYLE AND PRACTICE
OF OUR ACADEMIC WRITING

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Writing this book underscores that whatever else we may be as researchers and scholars, we are at the core a profession of text writers. The knowledge our various disciplines have assembled about organizations is composed and maintained in written texts. As scholars who study organizational phenomena, our research efforts are known, in large part, through our written products. The papers and monographs we write stand symbolically for the data gathering and analytic efforts we put into our scholarship. In addition, as we are all too aware, our ability to be individual members in good standing in the profession revolves around the ability to write our disciplines' texts; our careers, visibility, and professional mobility are all implicated in our writing (Frost & Taylor, 1995).

Indeed, knowledge-creating professions (Bazerman & Paradis, 1991) constitute themselves and maintain organization and power through networks of texts, such as journals, books, newsletters, that frame and select the topics and issues paid attention to. In addition, those individuals who are in positions to decide on the disposition of these texts, such as editors and members of editorial boards, are widely viewed as enjoying considerable professional power. Moreover, embedded in these texts are taken-for-granted assumptions, a field's normative traditions, concerning what we write and how we do so. Like it or not—and sometimes we do and sometimes we don't—in this profession, we are about writing. And this writing sets the terms of much of our work lives.