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## Preface

For over than three decades, a quiet methodological revolution has been taking place in the social sciences. A blurring of disciplinary boundaries has occurred. The social sciences and humanities have drawn closer together in a mutual focus on an interpretive, qualitative approach to research and theory. Although these trends are not new, the extent to which the "qualitative revolution" has overtaken the social sciences and related professional fields has been nothing short of amazing.

Reflecting this revolution, a host of textbooks, journals, research monographs, and readers have been published in recent years. In 1994 we published the first edition of the *Handbook of Qualitative Research* in an attempt to represent the field in its entirety, to take stock of how far it had come and how far it might yet go. The immediate success of the first edition suggested the need to offer the *Handbook* in terms of three separate volumes. So in 1998 we published a three-volume set, *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues*, *Strategies of Inquiry*, and *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. In 2003 we offer a new three-volume set, based on the second edition of the handbook.

In 2000 we published the second edition of the *Handbook*. Although it is not as readily clear that the "field" of qualitative research is still defined primarily by tensions, contradictions, and hesitations—and that it is not yet a unified arena—we believe that the handbook continues to be valuable for solidifying, interpreting, and organizing the many and varied differences that characterize it.

This new volume is intended to define the field of qualitative research. It is a companion volume to the first. Building on themes in the first