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Sequential Analysis

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There is nothing covered up that will not
be uncovered, nothing hidden that will
not be made known.

Matthew 10:26

Educational, clinical, and social psychologists,
among others, have shown a renewed interest in
what is generally referred to as *sequential
analysis* ... the major impetus behind the resurgence
of sequential analysis methods has been the change in focus
from the study of one organism over time to the study
of the social interaction between organisms. (p. 564)

Dillon, Madden, & Kumar (1983)

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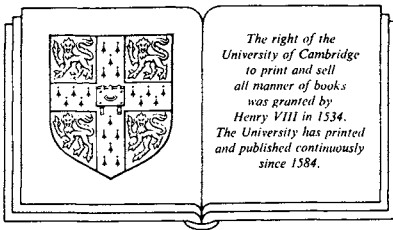
A Guide for Behavioral Researchers

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PREFACE

This book was initially inspired by Gene Sackett's conference on observational methods, held at Lake Wilderness, Washington, in 1976. In many ways that conference was a call for statistical approaches to the detection of interaction sequences in the observation of social behavior. This book is an integration of the methods needed for this task.

Many of the methods were in place prior to 1976, but were not well known. Fortunately, statistical workers have recently shown interest in the problem, and new methods have been developed. In fact, at the time of this writing there may be a bewildering array of procedures for the researcher.

What we present here is an integration of current techniques with suggested guidelines and rules of thumb. We will learn about the power and limitations of these techniques only by using them. Our goal is to make the techniques accessible, and in fact even easy to use.

The book is a sequel to an introductory volume by Roger Bakeman and John Gottman, also published by Cambridge University Press. Beginners should start with that book.

We wish to acknowledge the help of our teachers, particularly James Ringland and Stanley Wasserman. Professor Wasserman was very generous with his time in agreeing to review a draft of this manuscript. This work would not have been possible without the support and release time provided by Research Scientist Development Award K00257MH and a semester's sabbatical leave in 1984 to the first author.

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Reading This Book Quickly

We know that some readers will be fascinated by the statistics we discuss, while others will be dismayed. Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of this book are elementary. Chapter 16 is a summary of the major ideas in the book. Section 15.6 is titled “Doing the Minimum,” and it contains our most basic set of recommendations that will have reasonably wide applicability.