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Theodore C. Bestor et al./Doing Fieldwork in Japan

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Introduction: Doing Fieldwork in Japan

"You can observe a lot just by watching."
—attributed to Yogi Berra

This book brings together the experiences and reflections of twenty-one foreign scholars whose research in Japan has relied on talking to ordinary people (and extraordinary ones as well) about their lives and experiences; participating in everyday events; reading and listening to Japanese media, both popular and highly specialized; slogging through archives and bureaucratic records; and piecing together analyses and interpretations of contemporary Japanese life through the direct experiences of fieldwork. The book is certainly not a step-by-step how-to manual, but it does offer many insights and suggestions about doing research in Japan. We hope that it will be useful and accessible to various audiences concerned with information about Japan: graduate students and advanced researchers; Japan specialists and comparativists; academic scholars and people who use academic research for business or policy goals; journalists and businesspeople; students and

instructors in courses about contemporary Japan. All of these audiences are concerned in one way or another with how field research in Japan is accomplished, if only to evaluate the usefulness of its results.

We also hope that the book offers models for social scientists planning research in other modern, complex societies; this book is focused on Japan and necessarily involves content and context specific to Japan, but it is our point that fieldwork in any society involves careful attention to cultural specificity. Many social scientists have written books on fieldwork and methodology, but we know of no other collection of research essays that explores such a range of research topics and methodologies with cultural context in clear focus. The fact that our contributors tackle such a wide variety of topical issues in their research should enable researchers planning fieldwork in other cultural contexts to draw inspiration, or at least insight, for their own projects elsewhere.

On a practical level, researchers encounter many issues as they plan for and engage in field research in Japan. Graduate students often struggle to identify appropriate methods for conducting their first fieldwork in Japan, sometimes because of a lack of detailed familiarity with either field research or with Japan, at other times because adapting general research methods to a specifically Japanese context presents unexpected problems. Non-Japan specialists doing short-term comparative research in Japan (with or without Japanese collaborators) face other challenges of reworking familiar techniques to unfamiliar settings. Still other questions about fieldwork in Japan, often raised by people who are interested in Japan but have little or no exposure to social science research methods, revolve around how a field researcher can "penetrate" the supposedly "closed" world of Japanese information and emerge with any useful, informed observations.

Through this book, we hope those who actually conduct fieldwork will gain a better understanding of some successful, concrete strategies for such research. We hope that the interdisciplinary insights made by our contributors will broaden understanding of the ways fieldwork can provide important data that are not easily found through other means. And we hope that general readers with an interest in Japan will find in these accounts of fieldwork a wide spectrum of illustrations of the grassroots realities of everyday life in contemporary Japanese communities, companies, institutions, and social movements.

If field research is regarded as a distinctive methodological approach, some academic disciplines such as anthropology and sociology that rely

heavily on this technique are the obvious focus of attention. But in this volume we have defined fieldwork as gathering information in situ: on site, nonexperimentally, from and about human informants. Framed in this way, researchers in many fields including history, political science, literature, religion, theater and performance studies, linguistics, organizational behavior, art history, legal studies, media studies, geography, management, architecture, and economics also rely to a greater or lesser extent on field research, even if "fieldwork" as such is not defined as part of a particular discipline's methodological canon.

As we worked on this volume, we were aware, of course, that many scholars of Japan have written excellent accounts of their own field research experiences. Some of these are extended examinations of both personal experience and Japanese society. Daniel I. Okimoto's *American in Disguise* (1971) and Dorinne K. Kondo's *Crafting Selves* (1990) both recount the refractions of multiple identities as researcher/American/Japanese American that occurred in their relationships with family, friends, mentors, and fieldwork contacts. In *Okubo Diary,* Brian Moeran reflects on the eventually bittersweet dissolution of formerly close ties between him and his family and their friends and neighbors in a Kyushu pottery community (Moeran 1985). And Joy Hendry has written a biographical account of her research career spanning many different periods of research in Japan (Hendry 1999a). Some studies, including Kondo's, as well as Anne Allison's ethnography of bar hostesses and male sexual fantasies (Allison 1994), Edward Fowler's account of life on skid row in Tokyo (Fowler 1997), Robin LeBlanc's ethnography of women and local politics (LeBlanc 1999), and Gail Lee Bernstein's life history of a rural woman (Bernstein 1985), place the researcher's role and interactions methodologically and rhetorically as a centerpiece and touchstone for the analysis. In a similar vein, the Media Production Group, founded by the late Jackson H. Bailey and David W. Plath, has produced an extended series of documentary videos focused on fieldwork in Japan by anthropologists and historians.[1]

Other researchers have written about much more specific aspects of their fieldwork, often in an introduction or as a theme running throughout a larger work. Yuko Ogasawara, for example, discusses the question of academic credentials and entry to the field in office settings (Ogasawara 1998); Christena Turner reflects on issues of gender and social class in her research on Japanese factory workers (Turner 1995); Michael Ashkenazi has written about the interrelationships among networks of informants and the anthro-

pologists with whom they are engaged (Ashkenazi 1997); Matthews Hamabata examines how his status as an unmarried, male, Japanese-American student shaped his relationships quite differently with male and female elite contacts as he studied kinship and family businesses (Hamabata 1990). Still other scholars have written short essays, much like those in this volume, that examine a particular facet of fieldwork experience: Fran Markowitz and Michael Ashkenazi explore questions about sexuality in fieldwork in Japan and elsewhere (Markowitz and Ashkenazi 1999); Takeyuki Tsuda discusses his interactions as a Japanese American among other foreign workers in an electronics factory (Tsuda 1998); and both David W. Plath and Robert J. Smith have written about their use of fieldnotes as a key methodological element of their research (Plath 1990; Smith 1990). And there exist in various disciplines reviews of the development of scholarship on Japan that have discussed methodological as well as topical or interpretive issues: William W. Kelly (1991) and Jennifer Robertson (1998) on anthropological research; Mariko Tamanoi (1990) on gender studies in Japan; and Andrew Gordon (1998b) on Japanese studies as an area studies field. In addition, the field of Japanese studies has been analyzed in the context of national academic cultures, including Helen Hardacre's volume (1998) on Japanese studies in the United States, and the collection edited by Harumi Befu and Josef Kreiner (1992) that compares perspectives on Japan in the scholarship of ten countries, in which David W. Plath and Robert J. Smith (1992) specifically examine American studies of Japan.

Against this backdrop, we knew that this volume could not be encyclopedic. There were many difficult decisions about what to include and exclude. A first decision was to limit ourselves to contributions from nonnative fieldworkers—that is, people for whom the cultural and social experience of operating in Japanese society is itself an important source of data for their analyses. Many distinguished scholars whose native language and culture are Japanese have done excellent fieldwork and have contributed widely to the English-language scholarship on Japanese society and culture, including Hiroshi Ishida, Takie S. Lebra, Hiroshi Wagatsuma, and Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, to mention just a few who have spent considerable portions of their scholarly careers engaged with Japanese studies outside Japan. Of course, many of the topics our contributors have examined are the same or similar to topics studied by Japanese researchers, but clearly the methodological implications of immersion in a foreign cultural setting make the conduct of fieldwork very different for natives and nonnatives.

Another decision was to try to focus on specific lessons that can be drawn from research experiences. Although our contributors convey much of their wider personal experiences in Japan, we asked them to focus on techniques, puzzles, problems, and solutions that they encountered while doing research. Also, we restricted ourselves to authors who have carried out *academic* rather than journalistic, market, or personal research in Japan. There are, of course, many very interesting and informative accounts by foreigners of their experiences in Japan, including those of a sumo wrestler (Kuhaulua with Wheeler 1973), a schoolteacher (Feiler 1991), and a wanderer (Booth 1997) among many, many others, but we decided to focus exclusively on academic research experiences.

And finally, we did not seek out polemics about the openness of Japanese institutions to critical external scrutiny. This is not to deny that such problems exist (and some of our contributors discuss their own encounters with bureaucratic secrecy and suspicion). In the field of Japanese studies, some scholars have written about the intellectual constraints inherent in the political culture of area studies, particularly as research focuses on issues of national interest (Samuels 1992, 1994). Other criticisms of Japanese intellectual and bureaucratic circles, like Ivan P. Hall's *Cartels of the Mind* (1998), argue that Japan maintains an intellectual isolationism that renders much research impossible and restricts discourse to "approved" topics. Still other critiques, like Pat Choate's *Agents of Influence* (1990), argue that Japanese cultural, social, and political elites have effectively channeled avenues of foreign research on Japan into noncritical arenas.

This book does not directly address these kinds of macrocritiques of the openness of Japanese society. At least implicitly, however, the research experiences of the contributors to this volume suggest that stereotypes of Japan as a society that is impenetrable to outsiders, able to deflect critical inquiry, and able to shape outsiders' perspectives into propagandistically positive directions are overdrawn. Our premise is that there are many ways researchers can develop independent, critical interpretations of Japanese society and culture that take into account elite perspectives, radical counterviews, or the outlook of ordinary members of society.

Although we did not set out with geographical criteria in mind, the chapters of this book demonstrate the accessibility of Japanese communities and institutions of many different kinds and in many different parts of the nation. Certainly, Tokyo has been the major center of research on Japan by foreign scholars, particularly and understandably for those with a focus on

national institutions of politics and policy-making. This book contains many accounts of research in and around Tokyo, both in the halls of power and in the back alleys of daily life. But the book also includes examples of research in other major cities, such as Osaka, Kyoto, and Kobe, as well as in rural, suburban, and urban communities in Okinawa, Kyushu, Shikoku, Hokkaido, and various parts of the main island of Honshu. The map at the front of this book shows the locations of the significant research sites discussed in the following chapters (places that are mentioned simply in passing are not included).

The practice of fieldwork does not have a specific set of well-defined rules of engagement or strategies that apply across all research settings. The twenty essays in this volume recount the challenges faced by scholars from a range of disciplines—anthropology, history, political science, international relations, religious studies, and sociology—examining dozens of different facets of Japanese society. We asked our contributors to tell some of their favorite fieldwork stories and to reflect on what they have learned from these experiences. We encouraged them to focus not only on how these incidents affected their own research, but also on how their insights might help others. We hope their ability to laugh at themselves as they recount their mistakes will lend courage to others taking their first plunge into fieldwork in Japan.

The lessons from these fieldwork accounts are twofold. Most directly, accounts of field research experiences and techniques are useful within the field of Japanese studies to help students and others learn how to conduct independent research in Japan. At a more general, analytic level, descriptions of field research undertaken in Japan focus attention on how disciplinary research problems and techniques are inevitably situated in specific cultural, historical, and social contexts. This is a topic not only of great immediate relevance to Japanese studies, but it also helps to stimulate the kind of reflective consideration of research methods in context that contributes to a more sophisticated understanding of the relationship between area studies and social science disciplines.

Area and Method

This book began on a day of torrential rain in June 1990, when Theodore C. Bestor and Patricia G. Steinhoff both decided not to venture out to their respective research sites and instead spent the day—inside and dry—talking about fieldwork methods. Steinhoff's former doctoral student, Suzanne

Culter, had already suggested the need for a book to help new researchers with their first project in Japan, and they had discussed what it might include. Bestor had been thinking along similar lines while teaching methods courses to graduate students. The conversation—and the shape of the book—developed over the next several years in various venues, including a miniworkshop attended by Bestor, Mary C. Brinton, Takie S. Lebra, and Steinhoff that was held under the auspices of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC). At the time, SSRC's Joint Committee on Japanese Studies was struggling with the council's efforts to redefine area studies vis-à-vis disciplinary knowledge. The workshop, held in Honolulu in 1995, discussed the ways in which research methods in Japanese studies link the work of scholars in adjacent disciplines. After the workshop, Bestor and Steinhoff extended invitations to about two dozen researchers to write essays about their fieldwork experiences. Some invitees were unable to participate, and others regrettably had to withdraw along the way because of competing obligations. The editors have added other scholars, especially younger researchers, along the way.

In 1996, Victoria Lyon Bestor joined the editorial team. She became the organizational ramrod and provided critical insights based on her many years of participant observation of fieldwork (fieldwork on fieldwork, perhaps), her own experience doing research on Japanese philanthropy and civil society, and her long familiarity with the field of Japanese studies as a whole. Her expertise on library resources, especially electronic ones, in Japanese studies has also contributed to this volume. In her own words, she became the editorial "sheepdog" for the project, setting deadlines, nipping at the heels of contributors, and nagging her coeditors when necessary. The final product has been an intense collaboration of the three editors, largely carried out electronically, but punctuated by brief editorial conferences at Association for Asian Studies (AAS) meetings, at International House in Tokyo, and in hotel lobbies here and there—in short, completed on the run, rather like some of the fieldwork described in the following chapters.

From a methodological perspective, this volume grows out of discussions about the complicated dynamic of field research, poised between standardized disciplinary research methodologies and the challenges of doing research within a particular culture. Japanese society has highly developed patterns for conveying or restricting social information and has been the focus of a great deal of interdisciplinary research under the rubric of area studies. We would argue that area studies researchers develop a mediated research technique or methodology that draws upon the cultural specificity

of the research setting and uses that local insight as a means to modify general, standardized disciplinary research methods. The results of good fieldwork, in turn, inform both area studies and the general academic disciplines. In addition, their interdisciplinary training encourages area studies researchers to borrow methods from adjacent disciplines that may be more fruitful in the Japanese context than the mainstream methodologies of their own disciplines, which were devised in other cultural contexts.

Simultaneous with the decade-long gestation of this volume there has been an intensive debate within academic circles about the relationship between and the relative merits of area studies training and theoretical disciplinary training. The approaches have been set in opposition to one another in a variety of ways. Global versus local knowledge is one such rubric. In his presidential address for the AAS in 1997, James Scott defended area studies as a necessary antidote to what he referred to as the "thin formalizations of high altitude, low oxygen theory." This volume was inspired in part by a desire to explore the tension between area studies and social science disciplines through the methodological problems that arise in the course of doing fieldwork. Andrew Gordon has suggested that some scholars view area studies as "an artisanal craft akin to bricklaying" and theory as "a grander pursuit akin to architecture." In this perspective, the cathedrals of learning are the creations of architects (theoreticians), not of craftspeople (area specialists). In contrast, Gordon proposes the metaphor of "think[ing] of theory and discipline as the lens and camera, the scholar as a photographer and the area the object or subject being examined." Suggesting that theory and method in area studies and the social sciences are integrally complementary, Gordon observes that "usually the best photographers pay attention to their lenses, and the top lens makers know something about taking pictures" (Gordon 1998b: 387–405). Gordon's perspective reflects an ideal that is easier to achieve in disciplines such as history and anthropology, which acknowledge the geographic or cultural basis of much knowledge. His view is less persuasive in social science disciplines such as sociology and economics, which are often more interested in grinding perfect lenses than in taking beautiful pictures. We hope that this volume may help some in those disciplines to think more about how adjusting the lens to the scene may improve the sharpness and depth of the picture.

The essays in this volume address these broad questions through the immediate, firsthand experiences of Japan specialists from a range of disciplines that vary in their stance toward research methods. Our authors have

used a broad array of research techniques and interpretive approaches in an extremely diverse set of research environments, from fish markets to the radical underground, from coal mining towns in Hokkaido to anti-U.S. protests in Okinawa, from prosecutors' offices to junior high schools, from bioengineering labs to the newsroom of NHK television. Each essay draws on the author's own field research experiences and highlights some of the challenges faced and solutions discovered to the tasks of collecting data. The essays are necessarily selective: neither the topics about which the authors have done research nor the methodological techniques and interpretive frameworks they have used are covered in full. Yet through the juxtaposition of these glimpses of different topics and techniques, as well as the discovery of issues that crosscut different fieldwork situations, a broad picture of the possibilities of fieldwork in Japan emerges.

Many of the chapters raise the question of Japanese language ability. Certainly the linguistic levels expected of researchers keep rising as each succeeding generation of fieldworkers has access to more systematic language study earlier and earlier in their academic training. All of the authors of these essays speak Japanese well and use the language fully in their field research. But it is important to note that the ability to do fieldwork and linguistic fluency are by no means the same thing. One challenge of fieldwork is evaluating the fit among research topic, research techniques, and the linguistic requirements of the project. Even the most fluent researcher—foreign or native speaker of Japanese—must learn to evaluate the linguistic environment of a particular topic. The collective point of the chapters here is *not* that there is an absolute standard for language ability nor that linguistic competence is the be-all and end-all of research. Rather, any research project requires careful attention to feasibility in light of the linguistic abilities required by the project and the interpretation of data.

First-time researchers with limited Japanese language skills may need to tailor their research ambitions to fit their language limitations. Yet doing fieldwork is in itself a powerful language-learning opportunity, which can be readily assessed by reflecting on the improvement in one's language facility from the beginning to the end of the field research. What seemed impossible at the beginning of a research experience may become much more feasible just a few months later. Moreover, as a project gets underway, even a researcher with the highest levels of language training will find it necessary to master new terminological terrain; indeed, the specialized vocabularies and semantic domains of any Japanese institution or setting provide an

enormous amount of basic social and cultural data that a fieldworker will need to master in order to understand the ethnographic site and the phenomenon under study.

Ethnographers and other field researchers, Clifford Geertz suggests, establish their authority in part by telling their readers how they found their field site and how they came to be accepted by the people among whom they conducted research (Geertz 1988). This trope of discovering one's way into a field site and a research topic is taken up in many of the chapters that follow. They illustrate something of the very human qualities of fieldwork and the motivation to use fieldwork as a means to tell the stories of other people, to bring "their" stories back with "us." Beyond this, these accounts also address the very practical questions that first-time researchers agonize over. We hope that reading about the experiences of other researchers in Japan, presented more frankly and in more detail than is usually possible in formal research monographs, will help new researchers gain the confidence to find their own way.

Successful completion of a fieldwork enterprise is another common feature of the essays in this volume. However, as several authors note, the process of writing up one's research is often subject to delays that unexpectedly enrich and broaden the final product. Other avenues of research may also serendipitously present themselves, diverting the researcher's path. These discoveries may redirect the original research project or lead to research topics that are picked up later in one's career. Our authors express twinges of guilt about how long it took to bring their projects to completion—just as the editors wish that this volume had been completed much, much sooner—but they (and we) are unanimous in feeling that the ultimate results are much better for these unanticipated delays.

The chapters in *Doing Fieldwork in Japan* are grouped loosely around several themes, including getting started, gaining access to a fieldwork site, and making contacts; navigating bureaucratic institutions; surveying and interviewing techniques as well as getting access to statistical and archival data; and building and maintaining networks over time and among different research sites and cultural groups. Of course, this arrangement represents only one partial way of organizing the chapters, and any reader will find innumerable other themes that link the fieldwork experiences and techniques of the contributors.

Merry Isaacs White leads off by providing insights into how a researcher of a certain age gains the confidence of teenagers to get them to reveal their

own understandings of their lives and the impact of popular culture on them. Patricia G. Steinhoff writes about her research among progressive social movements and underground political groups through fieldwork at demonstrations, courtrooms, and prisons. Joy Hendry explores the complex and often unpredictable networks of introductions and chance encounters that serendipitously draw a researcher and a research site together. Helen Hardacre and Ian Reader both study religion in contemporary Japan, and their two chapters present different approaches to fieldwork, including various modes of participating in religious life, maintaining contact without becoming a target for conversion, and the role of chance in determining the directions of one's research.

Research among more highly structured bureaucracies is the focus of the next group of chapters, in widely varying ways. Samuel Coleman's research was conducted inside the laboratories of biogenetic research groups, and he discusses issues of access and accountability in doing research on scientific institutions. David L. McConnell did fieldwork on the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program for English-language teaching, and his chapter talks about gaining entrée to schools, to teachers, and most importantly to the bureaucratic guardians of the program at the national level of the Ministry of Education. David T. Johnson focuses on fieldwork in a public prosecutors office, in which issues of professional, legal confidentiality and the bureaucratic structure of the organization framed his fieldwork. Sheila A. Smith's research examines Japanese defense policy and cooperation between Japan and the United States on security issues; her chapter discusses getting access to bureaucrats, uniformed personnel, policy analysts, and academic specialists concerned with security issues, and also learning to interpret the semantics of Japanese discourse on security as a key element of understanding its political context. Ellis S. Krauss explains his multifaceted fieldwork on political journalism and NHK television news broadcasting, which involved extensive interviewing on the production of news programs and detailed content analysis, including cross-national comparisons of news broadcasts.

National agencies and the mass media in Japan sponsor enormous amounts of large-scale social survey research, and the published results are widely used by foreign researchers. Mary C. Brinton discusses the creation of national surveys, some of the limitations of such data, problems of gaining direct access to data sets for further analysis, and how she conducted her own survey concerning labor, education, and gender equality with samples drawn from several regions of Japan. On a different scale, Suzanne Culter discusses

the process of designing and conducting qualitative, structured interviews through her own experiences both in a rural community, where she studied local responses to the painful restructuring of the coal mining industry, and in an urban setting, where she studied local social policies directed toward foreign migrants. John Creighton Campbell draws on his extensive research on budget politics in the national bureaucracy and on health and welfare policies at both the national and local levels to illustrate techniques for systematically getting information, including statistical data, from working bureaucrats involved in the policy process. David M. Arase recounts how he abandoned his prior plans of conducting formal interviews with bureaucrats and adapted new strategies for observing and synthesizing data in the midst of his research in order to discover how foreign-aid policy is actually made and implemented. Historians often do not regard what they do as fieldwork, but Andrew Gordon's research on labor history and the interactions of companies, unions, and the government demonstrates the delicate field research skills that are required to identify, locate, and finally negotiate access to historical archives held in institutional hands.

The final cluster of chapters addresses issues of tracing networks and locating the researcher in relation to them, in the short term as well as over the longer haul, sometimes across multiple sites and sometimes across generations. Through her research on popular singers of *enka* ballads, and particularly the communities of fans and professional marketing people who surround them, Christine R. Yano shows how she created contacts and juggled multiple identities of student, fan, and parent in the field. Glenda S. Roberts reflects on a variety of different fieldwork experiences working alongside factory workers, studying government social welfare programs, and analyzing corporate employment policies to show how unpredictable opportunities affect the researcher's ability to explore a subject from various perspectives, and how research interactions can suddenly develop a personal dimension. Drawing on research in urban neighborhoods and wholesale markets, Theodore C. Bestor's chapter focuses on the ways in which he developed networks as he engaged in "inquisitive observation" and how various techniques of social mapping and reading signposts on the local landscape enabled him to sketch out large, complex institutions. In a very different setting, Joshua Hotaka Roth explores networks of Brazilian Japanese workers in Hamamatsu and discusses how fluid definitions of identity among and between local residents, *Nikkeijin* (foreigners of Japanese descent), and himself shaped his research experiences. And finally, Robert J. Smith draws on

his experiences of over fifty years of research in Japan to reflect on changing relationships with community members and friends and changing perspectives on Japanese society.

The appendix on digital resources and fieldwork, by Victoria Lyon Bestor, provides an overview of some of the key tools for accessing on-line information, along with the caveat that—as other chapters also emphasize—successful use of web sites and other electronic media also depends on fundamental fieldwork techniques: interviewing experts and understanding documents in their social contexts.

Fieldwork and the Ethics of Research

Researchers at American universities are bound both by the ethical codes of their own disciplines and by their institutions' compliance with federal research requirements to maintain ethical standards that reflect the three principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. For most social science research that does not involve physically or psychologically invasive procedures and entails little risk of harm to the subjects, the primary concerns are to ensure that subjects have given their informed consent to participate in the research and that their privacy is protected by the way the research materials are maintained and the results are publicized. The current regulations also provide additional requirements when the research involves minors, prisoners, or other vulnerable populations who may not be able to give informed consent.

Researchers going into the field in Japan today as graduate students or postdoctoral scholars will most likely be required to obtain formal approval from their institution's Committee on Human Subjects or institutional review board before they may begin their research. (Specific procedures vary from university to university, and researchers should check with their local university research administrators.)

Our contributors discuss, both explicitly and implicitly, many of the key issues of fieldwork ethics in research on human subjects. Even though much of the fieldwork described in this volume was carried out before these formal requirements were applied to social science research conducted outside the United States and not funded by federal agencies, it is clear from their accounts that our authors have maintained high ethical standards. Their experiences in applying standards appropriately within the Japanese cultural context may also suggest ways to present or explain field research that will

be useful to researchers whose institutional review board for human-subjects research may not understand the research environment in other countries.

Most of the authors in this volume emphasize the need for introductions from a third party in order to obtain research access. Whether the introductions are for permission to conduct participant observation or to interview individuals, they ensure that the human subjects of the research understand its purpose and range and have given their informed consent to participate, even if the researcher does not return home from Japan with a folder of legalistic signed documents of consent. In a society where the careful cultivation of interpersonal trust is given far greater weight than formal contracts and where written contracts often are viewed with distrust, there are many research situations in which American-style legalistic consent requirements would not only be culturally unfamiliar, but would call into question the researcher's cultural understanding and trustworthiness. And no one who has done any interviewing in Japan doubts for a minute that a respondent who does not want to answer a question knows how to avoid a substantive response, even if he or she is too polite to throw the researcher out the door.

There are many descriptions in this volume of how well-placed Japanese provided the introductions that opened doors for a young, foreign researcher. What these accounts do not convey is the understanding that such introductions involve the standard Japanese cultural practice of borrowing trust from other people in order to gain access to a new situation, which carries complex obligations to act responsibly and not misuse or damage the trust. The researcher must understand that his or her behavior in the research situation not only affects the relationship between researcher and research subjects, but also reflects directly on the person who made the introduction. The person providing an introduction is—in a very real cultural sense—accepting a role as social guarantor. The social networks many contributors to this volume describe in detail cannot be changed or disregarded at the researcher's whim; they are very real, constraining social facts that bind the researcher to his or her introducer and to the group of people among whom she or he is doing research. If difficulties arise, the research subject will most likely complain directly to the go-between who introduced the researcher, with long-lasting negative consequences for both the researcher and his or her erstwhile sponsor.

Several chapters in this volume describe how researchers obtained informed consent from their interview subjects in Japan and how they pro-

tect their subjects both during the interview and in their subsequent use of the material. White describes her procedures for obtaining parental consent before doing research with minors, and Steinhoff explains how she gained prisoners' informed consent to interview them. (Both of these projects involve research populations to which the regulations for human-subjects protection are specifically pertinent.) Even in less sensitive settings, there is often a lengthy process of obtaining institutional access for participant observation or interviews, as both Johnson's and Culter's chapters demonstrate. Roberts and Coleman each describe situations in which access was denied and the ways in which they were able to reorient their research projects around other field sites. Still other authors discuss their lengthy searches and the chains of introductions sometimes required to find research sites that would accept them. All of these examples demonstrate how ethical research standards can be applied appropriately in the Japanese context, and we encourage researchers new to Japan to pay particular attention to them.

Other perennial issues for social science research are questions of objectivity and how field researchers can ensure the validity and reliability of their findings. There are some fundamental divisions within the social sciences about how this can be accomplished, and to some extent the expectations vary with the discipline and topic. Field researchers generally fall into the camp that argues for the value of depth and understanding of context over those who insist upon statistical significance based on scientific sampling methods as the only acceptable standard. Several of our contributors explicitly discuss the ways in which methodological models of research design in their disciplines cannot be taken for granted in the field. Brinton and Culter describe their efforts to produce research that would meet rigorous sampling and statistical standards within the constraints of Japanese research conditions. Arase describes how he abandoned the formal research plan that his American advisors had approved when he discovered it would not help him learn how policy was really made in Japan.

Most of our authors are less constrained by a statistical or hypothesis-testing model of social science research, but their accounts reveal how they attend to the underlying principles of reliability and validity. They tell us how they have expanded their research to different sites or settings, explored the research problem at different levels, or utilized multiple methods to gain a fuller understanding and to cross-check their findings. Many emphasize the value of returning to the same research site or maintaining long-term con-

tact with the same research subjects as ways of correcting early misconceptions, deepening their understanding, and observing stability and change over time.

Several researchers also speak frankly about how they manage problems of objectivity in their relations with their subjects or with persons who have provided institutional access. Hardacre describes strategies for dealing with religious organizations seeking converts, while Steinhoff notes the choices she has made in order to do research with radical political groups. McConnell and Roberts both acknowledge the pressure from bureaucratic organizations to produce only favorable reports and describe how they avoid these demands. Bestor describes the suspicions he encounters that an American studying Japanese seafood consumption must be an agent for environmental activists bent on disrupting Japanese markets. Many researchers also describe their strong sense of gratitude and obligation to the informants and organizations that have made their research possible and discuss how they try to reciprocate in small ways without compromising their position as objective researchers. There is no single correct approach to these difficult issues of access, obligation, and reciprocity, but we hope that reading about how other researchers have dealt with them will raise awareness and stimulate further discussion.

The chapters that follow provide many examples of how scholars have done fieldwork in Japan. While the essays stand on their own as methodological studies, we believe they may be most instructive when they are read in conjunction with what the same scholars have produced from their fieldwork. To make it easier to match up the fieldwork essay with the research that resulted from it, we have asked each author to suggest a few of their own publications for the list of related readings that appears at the end of the chapter. (Citations of other work on the topic are included in the comprehensive bibliography that appears at the end of the volume.) Reading the fieldwork chapter alongside an example of the research product will illuminate how researchers incorporate the results of participant observation and interviews into their publications and how different methodical strategies may be related to different ways of presenting the results.

Together these chapters demonstrate that with proper training, patience, and ingenuity field researchers can find Japanese society to be an incredibly open, diverse, and multivocal society in which they can "observe a lot just by watching" (and listening and asking).

Notes

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1. The Media Production Group's (MPG) series, "Voices of Experience," includes six videos of extended interviews about fieldwork with Jackson H. Bailey, Theodore C. Bestor, L. Keith Brown, William W. Kelly, Margaret Lock, and Takie S. Lebra. These interviews are also summarized in a single video titled *What's an Anthropologist Doing in Japan?* (MPG 1992b). Other documentary videos in the series include *The Language of My Teachers,* which follows the research of Robert J. Smith from Japanese-language training during World War II through fieldwork in Japan during the Occupation era and subsequent research through the late 1990s (MPG 1996b); *Ella's Journal,* focused on the fieldwork of John Embree and Ella Lury Wiswell in Suye Mura in the 1930s and Wiswell's return to the village on the fiftieth anniversary of their research (MPG 1996a); and *Times of Witness: Fieldwork in Japan,* featuring Smith and Wiswell discussing social change in Japan during their research careers (MPG 1996c). Videos produced by the MPG are distributed by the Asian Educational Media Service at the University of Illinois. Its website includes an extensive catalogue of audio-visual materials on Japan, in addition to listings of these MPG productions: www.aems.uiuc.edu/.