

9:14

Twelve Years later...

Abstract

Sept. 1957

83/115  
C

TWELVE YEARS LATER: AN ANALYSIS  
OF FIELD EXPERIENCE

ROSALIE HANKEY WAX

Reprinted for private circulation from  
THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY  
Vol. LXIII, No. 2, September 1957

PRINTED IN U.S.A.



Reprinted for private circulation from  
THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY  
Vol. LXIII, No. 2, September 1957

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

TWELVE YEARS LATER: AN ANALYSIS OF FIELD EXPERIENCE

ROSALIE HANKEY WAX

ABSTRACT

This paper is an analysis of that crucial period of field work during which the student changes from a novice to a professional. The data are provided by a detailed description of the personal experiences of a field worker attempting to begin work in a relatively difficult situation. The account suggests that one of the most salient tasks faced by the novice in a difficult field situation is the definition of his role. In achieving this definition he passes through three stages: (1) the stage of insecurity of role, (2) the stage of gradual definition of role, and (3) the stage of validation of role. In the course of this development the student usually believes that he is achieving his ends by *learning* from his informants. In point of fact, however, he is *teaching* them to assume the role behavior which will enable him to learn from them.

From July, 1943, until May, 1945, I lived as a participant observer first in the Japanese Relocation Center at Gila, Arizona, and later in the Tule Lake Center for "disloyal" Japanese in northern California. Immediately on leaving the field, I wrote a long autobiographical saga describing my experiences in full detail.

In recent years, colleagues, distressed by the scarcity of detailed accounts of how an investigator works, have repeatedly urged me to publish this material. I pointed out that it was crude, unstructured, and that I could not possibly rewrite it without robbing it of its one literary virtue—its conscientious and engaging naïveté. Finally, an astute colleague suggested that I present it in the form of excerpts with appended analyses. Here, then, is a shortened version of the first part of the document, which describes what I did and what was done to me during the first five months I spent in the Gila center. The analysis which follows was written in 1957.

I arrived in the Gila center in southern Arizona in July, 1943. The community at this time numbered approximately 12,000

people. The administration assigned me to a bedroom in the women staff workers' barracks. Since fraternization with evacuees was not encouraged by the administration, receiving Japanese visitors in this room was not good policy, and almost all interviews had, perforce, to take place in evacuees' living quarters or the administrative offices in which the evacuees worked.

I began work with one Issei informant who had been employed for the study<sup>1</sup> of the center and I hoped to acquire additional informants through half-a-dozen letters of introduction to Japanese friends of the anthropologist who had previously worked in Gila.

In establishing an acquaintance with these and other potential informants, no role was possible but that of a student of sociological phenomena. The assumption of an occupation such as teacher or nurse, under which covert studies could have been car-

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed description of the relocation and of the centers see D. S. Thomas and R. Nishimoto *The Spoilage* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 1946).



ried out, would not have been compatible with the policies of the War Relocation Authority. Accordingly, I introduced myself as a student of anthropology, hired by a group of professors who had no connection with the administration. The object of my employers was to obtain and publish the true picture of the evacuation and life within the centers.<sup>2</sup> I emphasized the confidential nature of my data and added a description of some phase of the study which was likely to meet with the approval of informants. Most evacuees, for instance, were pleased to hear that a study of Japanese financial losses due to evacuation was under consideration. Since informants almost invariably asked me about my occupation and "why I lived in camp if I didn't belong to the WRA," this self-introduction was usually made at the first interview. (I never used the term "informant." It carried the connotation of "informer." Instead, informants were called "the people who talk to me.")

In my inexperience I had high expectations of the effectiveness of this initial role. I knew that the status of student carried considerable prestige with the Japanese. I anticipated that the academic objective would meet with approval, reasoning that the evacuees would be pleased with a correction of the inaccuracies previously published by ill-informed and prejudiced persons. Above all, I expected that the fact that the study had no connection with the WRA administration would facilitate gaining rapport.

Optimism, however, was rapidly succeeded by bewilderment. Calls upon evacuees to whom an introduction had been provided yielded little but a polite exchange of amenities. When any specific question on attitudes to the center was asked, the informant usually professed ignorance or else took refuge in verbiage phrased to conform with what he thought a Caucasian would like to be told or ought to be told. The Issei

informant also proved to be a cautious individual who confined his reports largely to innocuous topics.

Perhaps the most important handicap during this early period was my notion that there were two distinct varieties of Japanese, a "pro-American" and a "pro-Japanese." This incorrect idea sprang from my emotional reaction to the current anti-Japanese propaganda, a reaction which took the form of a stubborn faith that the great majority of Japanese residing in America did not look with any favor on Japan, did not seriously consider expatriation or repatriation, believed that the United States was going to win the war, and, in short, held many of the attitudes which I imagined I would hold in their place. The other variety of Japanese, I thought, was "pro-Japanese" and comprised a small group, inclined to violence and responsible for all the disturbances in the centers. With this group, I had been told, it would be almost impossible to make contact.

This incorrect preconception greatly increased the difficulties of gaining a proper perspective of the facts, which were that only a few evacuees belonged in either category and that the great majority vacillated between the two extremes as they were moved by events inside and outside. It also increased the difficulties of interpreting data, since significant statements betraying the vacillation of persons classed as "pro-American" were ignored or relegated to the status of incomprehensible phenomena. Finally, it unnecessarily limited contacts, since I later discovered that the so-called agitators and those residents who were more sympathetic to Japan were approachable, once the proper techniques were applied.

At the conclusion of the first month of work I had obtained very little data, and I was discouraged, bewildered, and obsessed by a sense of failure. Nevertheless, one fact at least was now apparent: attempting to get specific and accurate information on the matters in which the study was interested was, at this period of the investigation, poor technique. A radical change of approach was

<sup>2</sup> No specific problems were proposed at this time or during the 18 months I spent in the field: I was expected to serve more as a reporter than as an anthropologist.



in order. Thereupon, I decided to concentrate on an attempt to become saturated with center attitudes and behavior and gain the confidence of many individuals of varied background, opinion, and age.

The first step in the new program consisted of undertaking simultaneously a number of sociological and anthropological studies which had no connection with the delicate center attitudes and very little connection with the kind of data I was employed to get. Women were interviewed on how they thought evacuation had altered their way of life. Parents were interviewed on what they thought evacuation had done to their children. Anyone at all was interviewed for information and attitudes on social stratification in Japan and the United States. The secretary of the co-operative was interviewed on the proposed co-op educational program. Officers of the community council were interviewed on what they thought about juvenile delinquency. A serious study of Japanese was undertaken with a Kibei instructor. Almost all these interviews were arranged by recommendation from one informant to another, except for officers of organizations who could be contacted directly.

These red-herring studies had many advantages besides the primary one of facilitating contacts. They provided an excellent opportunity to become familiar with the pattern of center life and made an entree which none but the most timorous of evacuees could refuse without discourtesy, presenting the field worker in the role of a conscientious scholar.<sup>3</sup> They provided the opportunity for a return visit to discuss specific problems which appeared as the investigations were pursued. They gave the informant a reasonable story to tell too curious neighbors.

Such a device would not have been nearly

<sup>3</sup> Industry proved to be an excellent policy in the centers, for, to some extent, it alleviated suspicion, since one of the traits commonly associated with Caucasian spies was that they were believed to dawdle about with no legitimate occupation. Industry, per se, also commanded considerable respect among the Japanese.

so effective in a normal modern community as it was in the centers. The extreme monotony of life there, the scarcity of recreation, and the fact that few evacuees were ever too busy to begrudge the time for a chat provided an ideal background. Even employed evacuees rarely had anything to do in the evening but sit and talk. Consequently, though some informants were probably not deceived by this ruse, once it became apparent that I was not going to ask embarrassing questions, my visits were usually not resented.

Nevertheless, a great many of the first interviews were quite fruitless. Some evacuees did not attempt to hide their opinion that I was a dissembling spy. Others were more courteous but confined their comments to the questions pertinent to the interview or to long stories of the painful experiences of themselves, their friends, or the Japanese in general. I persevered, however, and, in time, some of the persons who had served me as informants invited me to call as a friend.

When some of these friendly individuals began to be of marked assistance, giving a considerable amount of their time, I offered to pay them for their trouble. These offers were politely refused. (Part of this refusal to accept payment sprang from the fact that it would have stigmatized the informant as an *inu*, that is, a stool-pigeon.) Even the language teacher refused payment in a manner which implied that the suggestion was in poor taste. One did not accept payment for talking with a friend. This produced a situation—created by informants—which comprised an extremely important step in the eventual development of rapport. Informants had indicated that they were willing to accept me as a friend or friendly acquaintance but not as an employer. The value of the role hinged upon the fact that it put me under an un verbalized obligation. My informants and I knew that I was getting information on the strength of a personal relationship. I had no means of recompensing them except by returning their friendship and accepting the obligations it implied, the



most important of which was observing the complicated taboos of the in-group. I had much to learn, however, before I was able to convince a sufficient number of informants that I was worthy of this quasi-membership in the in-group.

This information was slowly gained through assuming the role of a willing learner. Instead of giving information to a stranger who dominated a somewhat formal interview, friendly informants now began to instruct me in some of the less confidential aspects of center life and attitudes and in the rudiments of Japanese etiquette. Issei men were most inclined to do this. My inferior age and sex status made them less hesitant to give instruction and offer advice. At first this instruction consisted chiefly of dissertations on Japanese customs and other matters on which the younger generation was ill-informed. The respectful attention with which this instruction was received often put informants in a mellow mood, and they might proceed to informative, though still cautious, discussions of current center attitudes or even to advice on gaining rapport. This advice was often given by implication. An informant might remark that the Japanese were "very suspicious people." One quoted a Japanese proverb: "Look upon every stranger as if he were a thief," thereby implying that if I expected to get information I must exercise great caution and patience.

One of the most valuable pieces of advice given by informants was the repeated statement, "Japanese seldom lie; but they will seldom tell you anything to your face." More sophisticated informants expressed the same idea by remarking that Japanese prefer to make significant statements briefly and by implication. They added that if the hearer has the intelligence to understand the suggestion, well and good; if not, it is his misfortune. I took this advice to heart but was not able to apply it capably until I had learned far more about the center attitudes, simply because I often could not recognize the hints when they were given to me.

The inferior role of learner did not cause

me to lose status as a scholar, for, as I learned from informants, the ideal Japanese scholar is a modest and self-effacing individual. Moreover, the task of "understanding the Japanese" was one which every Japanese believed ought to be approached with modesty by an ignorant Caucasian, even if he had a university degree.

In any case, skill at small talk and gossip and at making the proper responses to a recital of grievances was acquired. Some familiarity with the tabooed subjects was gained and some skill at showing no curiosity about them. For instance, it was discovered that an academic interest in Japanese culture was flattering, but interest in what anyone thought of the Japanese emperor or the American government was taboo.

When I began to make modest progress in the Japanese language, informants drilled me in simple phrases and were delighted when I remembered their instructions.<sup>4</sup> While my exuberant and energetic personality prohibited any attempt to conform to the ideal standards of Japanese female behavior, my forceful remarks were not resented if they were covered with a veneer of self-depreciation. It was good manners to apologize for anything which conceivably merited an apology. Gradually, familiarity was gained with the cynical and ironic humor which permeated the camp and concerned itself chiefly with the hardships of center life and sarcasms aimed at staff members or Japanese who were disliked. With practice it was possible to take an active part in such byplay.

It should be stressed that the salient advantage of the role of learner did not lie so much in the semiformal instruction given but rather in the increased intimacy of the

<sup>4</sup> It was not imperative that I learn Japanese, since most evacuees could carry on a fluent conversation in English if they chose to do so. On rare occasions I used an interpreter. On the whole, however, I found it more practical to use Issei informants who spoke some English. If they were ashamed of their English, I demonstrated my difficulties in attempting to learn Japanese, which almost invariably put them at ease.



relationship and the informants' largely unconscious imparting of attitudes. Both the red-herring studies and the role of learner gave an additional advantage: they provided for many evacuees the only opportunity for conversing with a Caucasian on equal terms or with the Caucasian in the quasi-subordinate position of learner. Many of their contacts with the WRA staff were on the basis of employer to employee or of the Japanese as petitioner and the Caucasian as the potential donor or withholder. It was, therefore, a rare treat for an evacuee to be approached as an authority, capable of instructing a "stuck-up Caucasian."

As I proceeded with the three-faceted role of conscientious investigator of innocuous scholarly subjects, willing learner, and half-accepted friend, I was able to gain skill at the most fundamental technique of all—alleviating their suspicion. The primary importance of this task had, of course, been appreciated from the beginning of the study. It was obvious, for instance, that part of the technique consisted of avoiding tabooed topics, at least until relations were well established. However, it was extremely difficult to acquire a thorough knowledge of these taboos without an intimate knowledge of center life. Moreover, there were subtle gradations in taboos, depending on closeness of intimacy. In an early interview, hinting that one understood the significance of certain taboos was poor policy: it might be interpreted as an effort to extract information on a delicate topic. As the acquaintanceship deepened, informants began to take for granted that I had some familiarity with touchy matters. In time, I could discuss some of them openly and give no offense. Certain subjects, however, could never be introduced. Attempting to identify any Japanese whom an informant was discussing was always taboo and was associated with a governmental investigator.

I was just beginning to conclude that I had developed considerable skill in alleviating suspicion when I committed what was probably the crudest error in almost two years of field work. A friendly informant re-

marked during an interview that one could always tell when Japanese were under emotional strain "because they get so quiet."

A few weeks later I visited a family with whom extremely good rapport had been developed. A group of intimate friends of the family also called. The conversation turned to the possible fate of those evacuees who had recently been sent to Tule Lake. One of the visitors remarked that he had just received a letter which was very informative. I was extremely curious as to what might be going on in the newly established center for "disloyal" Japanese. Relying on my rapport with the hosts, I remarked that I would like to see the letter. The silence that fell on the chatting group was almost palpable, and the embarrassment of the hosts was painful to see. The *faux pas* was not that of asking to see a letter, for letters were passed about rather freely. It rested on the fact that one did not give a Caucasian a letter in which the "disloyal" statement of a friend might be expressed. The enormity of the error was increased by the fact that the hosts were my closest Japanese friends, had treated me with candor and affection, and had assisted me greatly. Now I repaid these favors by embarrassing them before Japanese friends and giving the impression that they were consorting with a spying Caucasian. I immediately apologized for attempting to pry into private correspondence and the tension eased. Fortunately, the hosts trusted me sufficiently to interpret the incident correctly.

After this experience I redoubled my efforts to control my enthusiasm and to approach delicate matters obliquely, if at all. The error, in fact, was eventually turned to good account. It was found that a delicate topic might be approached by degrees. If a hint of the silent tension manifested itself, the subject could be dropped. The overwhelming importance of patience was re-emphasized. Until *all* informants present trusted me, I could show no curiosity on those matters about which data were often most urgently required. Indeed, while rapport was being built up, it was good policy



to show no special interest if an informant began to skirt a delicate topic. Weeks later, he might bring it up again and give more details. It took months, for instance, to learn who some of the alleged *inu* were. Information was eventually gained from a woman who had been expressing unusual hostility toward the administration. Instead of exhibiting shock or curiosity, I reminded the informant of the "ears in the walls." The informant, encouraged by this atypical reaction from a Caucasian, continued with fury: "That Omura, Miura, and Mohri! They are the worst ones. Before I'm going out [of the Center] I'm going to see Mohri. I'm going to tell him, 'You just wait till the war's over. Then we'll see that you get yours.'"

In the Gila center at least half-a-dozen visits extending over several months were usually required to impress a potential informant with the fact that I was dissociated from the administration and could be trusted not to report anti-administration or pro-Japanese statements. In fact, the alleviation of suspicion was a never finished task calling for constant alertness, no matter how intimate rapport might be. No informant ever forgot that he was talking to a Caucasian—a person whose country was at war with Japan.

The program of becoming familiar with center attitudes was continued for almost five months, during which much information was collected but little of the kind of material desired by the head of the study. My employer wanted long and detailed verbatim statements of evacuee attitudes—especially their attitudes toward current events. I was doggedly submitting my red-herring studies and describing the attempts I was making to reach the point where I could get the kind of information I was supposed to get. As the letters from my superior grew increasingly critical, I grew increasingly stubborn. I knew I was not doing a capable job, but in my more optimistic moments I hoped I was making progress.

Then, in early December, 1943, the camp was shaken by an event of the type on which

the study particularly desired data. An adolescent Nisei boy, who was later diagnosed as schizophrenic by his physician, had for many months been attempting to obtain permission to leave camp and continue his education. He had answered the Military Questionnaire in the negative and, like many other Nisei, had later decided to change his answer to affirmative. He was given a hearing before the Project Attorney, a man with a singular lack of insight into the evacuee's behavior and its motivations. The boy explained that he had become angry over the evacuation and the abrogation of his rights as a citizen and, moved by illogical emotion, had answered in the negative. The attorney insisted that if the boy had had the sentiments of a loyal American, he would have taken legal means to right the injustice done him. The boy attempted to explain that his emotional state, his ignorance of law, and his loss of faith in the intentions of America precluded such calm behavior. The attorney dismissed this explanation as irrelevant, held that the boy was disloyal to the United States and a liar, and recommended that he continue to be classed as disloyal. The boy did not know of this negative recommendation, although he probably suspected it. Months passed. His parents prepared to relocate, although their son's status was still undetermined. The young man brooded on his predicament and became more and more irritable and depressed. One evening, he went to the Army-patrolled camp entrance, paid no attention to the sentry's challenge, walked out of the gate, and was shot.<sup>5</sup> In a few hours the news spread, and the camp buzzed with excitement.

I immediately made a round of visits. To my surprise little effort was needed to obtain data on the rapid development of attitudes. Acquaintances or friends, individually or in family groups, did not censor their excited comments. With new informants such as the

<sup>5</sup> The wound was not serious. The young man made a rapid recovery and was allowed to relocate, the attorney's recommendation being overruled in Washington.



injured boy's physician, his pastor, and his neighbors, no introduction was needed. Detailed opinions and explanations were freely offered; some informants did not even conceal the fact that a certain group of hot-heads were counseling a meeting "to make something of the shooting." The officers of the community council appeared glad to explain their plans for controlling the situation and for presenting the administration with certain requests which, if acceded to, would quiet the excited residents. In short, it was possible for the first time to prepare a detailed, accurate, and well-balanced report, which presented a comprehensive picture of the dynamics of an event and the attitudes it produced.

Just as I was finishing this report I received a letter curtly ordering me to abandon my time-wasting interest in the Japanese language and in quaint Japanese customs and to report what was going on. Under the circumstances, I could do little but laugh. I wrote in reply that I would not defend my strange field techniques in detail but would allow the inclosed report to justify them. Needless to say, my techniques were not criticized again.

The success in reporting this incident served as convincing evidence that the techniques pursued in the five preceding months had been effective and revived my dwindling self-confidence. In fact, the crisis appeared to crystallize my attitudes toward the field situation and those of the residents toward me. I found that my hesitant techniques and precautions had fallen into a coherent pattern. Consequently, I now could proceed boldly where previously I had crept step by step. As for my informants, it is possible that up to this time many of them had not been conscious of the fact that they trusted me. Previously they had given me casual assistance. Now, for the first time, my need for data was specific and obvious. My informants were forced to make a choice. Either they must cut me off coldly, or they must accept me in a closer intimacy. Almost all chose the latter course. Some began to regard me as a friend who looked to them for

clarification and interpretation of current issues and came to expect that I would call on them for enlightenment. This was an ideal situation, for this was exactly the type of data the study required.

From this point forward it was relatively easy to keep informed on the salient political and social developments. All that was required was to maintain the existing rapport, pick up the issues as they came along, ask questions about them if attitudes permitted or, if they did not, merely keep my ears open. Rapport was so well established in some families that an important issue was bound to be brought up and discussed before me almost as if I myself were an evacuee.

#### ANALYSIS

This document provides an unusually detailed description of the initial and perhaps the most important period of field work—the period during which the student changes from a novice to a professional. It is, in fact, a naïve and forthright depiction of the complex process of redefinition of the self, a blow-by-blow account of how a student changed from a baffled creature who did not know what she was to a competent and "self-confident" individual whose role had been validated and reinforced by "significant others." In addition, the student quite unconsciously betrays the fact that she changed her informants' conception of their role, that she taught unresponsive or hostile individuals how to be good informants.

The document indicates that this process may be divided into three chronological stages: insecurity, gradual definition, and validation of role.

The student attempted to define her role in general terms before she entered the community. "No role was possible but that of observer of sociological phenomena." Much of her "discouragement, bewilderment, and sense of failure" sprang from the fact that she was trying to operate in a relatively unstructured situation. She literally did not know what her role entailed. Even the phrase she coined to define her role, "observer of



sociological phenomena," was confused jargon. She had never seen anyone play the role and had never heard it adequately described. The term was equally meaningless to her potential informants. They did not know what she was, and, even if they had, they would still have been obliged to learn how to behave in the presence of this strange human specimen.

Her discomfort was increased by the fact that her potential informants had a series of crippling roles ready and waiting for her. To them she was at best a well-meaning but ignorant pest in whose presence one had to keep a strict watch on one's tongue. At worst she was a clever and hypocritical spy for the administration, trying, by kindness, to lead them to betray themselves or their fellows.

If her own image of herself had been clear and well defined, if she had been reasonably sure that she was capable of playing the role of a competent investigator, she might have found this situation irritating, but not demoralizing. Indeed, many months later, when she took up residence in the "disloyal" Tule Lake Center, she was not at all disturbed when informants regarded her as a spy. But during this period of initiation she found herself trying to defend what to her was an ideal rather than a real self-image against the community's already well-defined derogatory appraisals. Desperately she tried to see herself as "a person to whom one gave information," while everyone about her regarded her as "a person to whom one gave no information."

Harry Stack Sullivan remarks that "when anything spectacular happens that is not welcome to the self, not sympathetic to the self dynamism, anxiety appears, almost as if anxiety finally became the instrument by which the self maintained its isolation within the personality."<sup>6</sup> The anxiety which this student suffered in trying to defend the self of which she approved was so agonizing that she was unable to describe it

adequately in her document. She spent days alternately crying or writing letters to relatives and academic friends. Then she refused to associate with the Caucasian staff members, hoping that this irrational rudeness would make her more acceptable to the Japanese. She repulsed the overtures of a few kindly and insightful staff members who tried to draw her out of her self-imposed solitary confinement, interpreting their offers of friendship as "attempts to steal her data." (Paradoxically, she had no data worth stealing.) Finally, she succumbed to an urge to eat enormously and in three months gained thirty pounds.

The acute nature of these symptoms suggests that she was struggling to cling not only to the role of a competent field worker but to the central and most essential parts of her personality. If a trusted person had asked her whether she were doing good work, she would have admitted that she was not. But she dared not admit it to herself.

Curiously, the student consciously defined the process of role definition as a one-sided phenomenon. She saw herself as initiating red-herring studies so that she might gradually slide into the role of learner and accept instruction in the complicated art of "understanding the Japanese."

But her document clearly indicates that she taught her informants as energetically as she learned from them. With dogged persistence, she showed them how a sociological investigator behaved, and she demonstrated again and again that she was sincere, reliable, and trustworthy. Simultaneously, she trained them in their role of informants, let them know what kind of information she wanted, and, with their help, developed devices which enabled them to communicate it.

It was through this complex reciprocal interaction that the roles of "sociological investigator" and of "informant" became defined. The student learned to adopt the refinements of behavior which enabled her to perceive what she was becoming and to communicate this image more efficiently to informants. And, thanks to their assistance,

<sup>6</sup> *Conceptions of Modern Psychiatry* (Washington, D.C.: William Alanson White Psychiatric Foundation, 1947), p. 10.



she was no longer the inept, bumbling self she had been. The amorphous ideal role was taking on a concrete social substance.

Conversely, the informants learned that she was "catching on," that she often knew more about juicy items of gossip than they did, and that, above all, she did not "blab to the administration." Thereupon, many of them took the trouble to learn what kind of information she wanted. Indeed, some eventually became so well trained that they attended secret meetings and made voluminous mental notes of rumors and expressions of public opinion so that they might give her long accounts which they expected her to take down verbatim.

Perhaps the most interesting phenomenon revealed by this autobiographical document is the fact that the evacuee community accepted the student's definition of her role before she accepted it herself. If she had been thoroughly convinced that she was a competent investigator, she would not have been surprised when, after the shooting of the evacuee boy, informants, both old and new, poured out more information than she could take down. For the first time she was presented with irrefutable evidence that she was what she wanted to be. Her role was being validated and reinforced by the society in which she lived. Whether she liked it or not, she now was "the sociological investigator."

It is significant that from this point the tone of the document undergoes a radical change. The field worker's activities seem to take place in another dimension. As she herself remarks: "I now could proceed boldly where previously I had crept step by step." In the most salient meaning of the popular phrase, she was now sure of herself.

This analysis suggests that the fundamental process involved in the initiation into full-scale field experience does not differ significantly from the process of learning any new role. The neophyte passes through an initial period of anxiety and distress, during which he and the persons with whom he interacts contribute to the definition of both his and their roles. If both parties are able

to agree on these definitions and are able to communicate the fact that they agree, much of the anxiety disappears and is replaced by the complex phenomena which we call "self-confidence."

In this case the first stage in the process is depicted with unusual clarity, for few mitigating or blurring conditions were present. The field worker was cut off from many aspects of her former life and self. She literally did not know what she was and had only the vaguest notion of what she ought to do. If she and her informants had not been able to create a structure in which they were both able to operate, the result, at least for the field worker, might have been catastrophic.

The practical implications are obvious. The experienced professional, bulwarked by the approving appraisals of his colleagues, may undertake a long period of solitary field work in a hostile and un-co-operative community and suffer no extraordinary psychological discomfort. But the neophyte, whose status is on trial, ought to avoid so extreme an ordeal. He should be accompanied or visited frequently by someone who can reinforce the approved image of his developing self.

In this more fortunate situation, he will still suffer the anxiety which, if Sullivan and others are correct, accompanies all situations in which the self is ill-defined. But he will probably suffer less if he realizes that his symptoms are an instrument of self-defense rather than an indication that he is bound for a mental hospital. Moreover, he may take comfort in the fact that a large part of his "cure" lies in work, or, if he prefers, in play. He must learn to play his own role and the role of his informants, and he may be obliged to teach them both to his informants.

Explicitly or implicitly, most discussions of field methodology have pictured the field worker in the role of learner. The role of teacher has received relatively little emphasis. Similarly, many social scientists, particularly anthropologists, state that they were significantly changed by their first field experience. Only rarely will they admit that



they changed the subjects of their investigation.

Perhaps these two neglected aspects of field work are related. The social scientist who attempts to maintain the fiction that a human being can interact with or communicate with another human being without changing him is understandably reluctant to admit that he transformed his informants into teachers.

Obviously, one cannot play the role of learner if the informant does not know how to play the role of instructor. And if the informant does not know how to play this role, no one but the field worker will teach him.

It should not be overlooked that this process involved an emotional as well as an intellectual communication. Understandably, the evacuees did not like Caucasian Americans, and, like mistreated and unloved children, they were not willing to adopt a new role or learn new skills to please a person whom they regarded with hostility and distrust. Most of them had to become aware that the student liked and respected them before they would take the trouble to become competent and co-operative informants.

On the other hand, while emphasizing the importance of friendship, the student should have noted that many people who liked her did not become particularly skilful informants and that some people who disliked and perhaps even despised her became excellent sources. Among the latter were the relatively intelligent but arrogant pro-Japanese agitators in the Tule Lake Center, who believed that they could carry on long conversations with a Caucasian female during which she would learn nothing and they would learn a great deal.

Here, however, the field worker was able to step into a situation which had been structured for centuries. Because of long and arduous training in proper Japanese behavior, she was able to participate with a fair amount of skill in a favorite form of Japanese gamesmanship—the art of communicating by means of cryptic and oblique implication. When these would-be experts in intrigue discovered that she could play this game, they could not resist the challenge.

The unstated, yet fundamental, rule of this game characterizes many highly formalized competitive situations such as the interaction between skilled diplomats or between two opposing lawyers. It is, perhaps, even more clearly manifested in such games as chess or bridge: that is to say, one need not respect a person's general role in order to respect his segmental role. So long as a player is playing, his status depends on his skill. Moreover, this type of conversational gymnastics is one of the most admired attributes of a geisha. And in the dismal and tension-ridden Tule Lake Center there were no geishas. The astute reader will perceive that the unfortunate agitators were beaten before they started.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, an extended and repeated contest between a skilful professional (the agitator) and an apt and observant amateur (the field worker) can have only one outcome. The amateur improves by reason of the fact that he has placed the professional in the role of teacher.

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

<sup>7</sup> There were a number of other reasons why the agitators proved to be excellent informants; for a fuller discussion see R. H. Wax, "Reciprocity as a Field Technique," *Human Organization*, XI, No. 3 (1952), 36-37.