

公開講演会要旨

American National Character

スタンフォード大学 フーバー研究所 Alex Inkeles*

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要 旨

林教授を代表とする日本側研究チーム, およびアメリカ側研究チームは 1950 年代初期に国民性の研究をはじめている。両チームの研究方法は, はじめはかなり異なっていたが経年的にみて同じ方向に進んでおり, いくつかの点で類似した結果に到達している。

日本側の研究は, データ解析による回答パタンの関連性分析や図示等を多用して国民性の研究を進め, アメリカ側の研究は国民性の中核の要素を尺度でとらえることを考えている。両者とも, 社会心理学的な調査結果, すなわち, 一般の人の態度, 価値観, ものの考え方, 感じ方, 日常生活の行動様式といった個人をベースに経年的に安定した永続する結果にもとづいて検討を進める立場である。

アメリカ人の国民性として, アメリカ人の心に深くきざまれ, 永続している性質(格)のうち, われわれの研究グループがとらえたもののいくつかを例示するとアメリカ人は,

- 1) 競争を好む。
- 2) ヨーロッパの多くの国民に対比して, 自分たちの国家の制度に誇りを持っている。
- 3) 自力本願で, 独立心が強く, 個人主義的である。
- 4) 個人主義とは矛盾しているようだが, 一方で, ヨーロッパの国民に比べてはるかに自分たちの属する共同体やボランティア活動に積極的に関わっている。
- 5) ヨーロッパの国民に比べて, アメリカ人ははるかに多くの組織や団体に所属している。
- 6) 他人をととても信用している(ドイツ人の3倍, イタリア人の8倍。一方, 日本人は, この点に関しては中庸である)。
- 7) 効率的であることに意義を感じている(日本人もある程度似ている)。
- 8) 楽観的である(ヨーロッパの国民は必ずしもそうではない。日本人はこの点に関しても中庸である)。
- 9) 革新的である(日本人と同様に)。
- 10) 個々の人々について強い平等感を持っており, かつ, 反権威主義である(この点は日本人もそのようになり始めている)。

等々が挙げられる。

それぞれの国民は, 他のすべての国民とはなんらかの点で異なっているが, また, 別の点においてはかなり似ているものである。どの国の国民性も固定しているのではなく, 幾分かの変化を伴っている。しかし一方で, 各々の国民は他と区別できる特質を維持することも可能である。即ち, 近代化によって世界中の国民が全く一樣になるということはないであろう。

* Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305, U.S.A..

I would like to express my appreciation to Dr. Akaike and to the staff of the Institute of Statistical Mathematics for the opportunity to be with you and to share my experiences in studying the American national character with my Japanese colleagues, Prof. Hayashi, Prof. Suzuki and his team, who have been studying the Japanese national character. I would also like to apologize for the fact that I cannot address you in Japanese, but I hope you will find the interpretation helpful.

I began to study national character about the same time that Prof. Hayashi did, in a different part of the world——we were separated by great space but we moved in the same direction because around 1953 when the first study of Japanese national character was done I wrote an article in the *Handbook of Social Psychology* called “National character: an exploration of a new area of research.” Although we started from very different points, in many ways over time, independently, we have come together. One can say that we have had an intellectual, methodological and theoretical convergence.

Nevertheless, many differences in our approaches remained. For example, Prof. Suzuki likes to say that he thinks of my approach as being “top-down,” and his approach as “bottom-up.” But my approach is more theory-driven and Prof. Hayashi and his team, I think, are more, as they put it, “data-driven.” They are, perhaps one might say, more empiricists. They tend to emphasize the *distinctive* patterns for given countries, whereas my research has been much more for the general, or what might be universal, characteristics which could be studied across countries. And, as many of you know, they have worked with a presentation of their results in a Euclidean space, whereas I have tried very hard to find some simple, general *numeric* which could be used to describe national character, such as a position on a five-point scale.

Nevertheless, our approaches also involve many similarities. For example, both of us do not interpret national character mainly in terms of the historical characteristics of a people. We also do not emphasize certain forms of national behavior, such as the frequency with which a country goes to war or the aggressiveness it displays in trade. Those are treated as different dimensions from our approach. And we also do not emphasize, for example, national, political or economic institutions, such as whether a country has a constitution or not, or has a royal family or not. I think one could say our common model is the social psychology model of national character. We are focusing mainly on attitudes and values, belief systems, ways of thinking, ways of feeling, and ways of acting in daily life and in interpersonal relations as our approach to how to conceive national character.

In my own work I try to emphasize the idea of the *core* elements of the national character, which are difficult to define, but which we think of as those things that are most deeply rooted in the person. For this reason, we would not include in the definition of national character the answer to the question “Are you better off now than you were last year?” As one can see from these results, this is the kind of thing that is very unstable. It changes from year to year. It has nothing to do with the deep aspect of the person, but is mainly an observation that an individual makes of where they are standing at the present time. So we tend to exclude from considerations of national character this type of pattern. What type of pattern are we looking for? The answer is that we are looking for patterns which are characterized by the fact that they are relatively enduring over time.

They do not last just one year, but there is a great deal of stability in the response which characterizes a people. I will give one or two illustrations of this.

In this first illustration, the American public was asked, "Here is a list of values. Which of these values is most important to you?" And then the values were arranged in rank order. As one can see, overall this is a very stable pattern. From 1968 to 1981, each value was rated more or less in the same way by the American public, regardless of which year they were asked these questions. I particularly call attention to the line where the response is "freedom," meaning independence or free choice. As one can see, it ranked third in each of the different years when the study was done, indicating great stability in the American population in the interest of this value — something I will come back to in the later part of my discussion.

Another example of stability is given in Table 1, which describes the percentages of two different national populations which said they were either happy or unhappy. The first country is the Netherlands and the second country is Italy. The time period is from 1976 until 1986. The Dutch people, as one can see, are outstanding in the frequency with which they say "I am very happy." They always ranked first amongst ten countries in Europe over this entire period of time. By contrast, the Italian people much more often said "I am not too happy," and they always ranked next to the last, ninth.

In addition to this kind of long-term stability, we have to deal with one other issue which is very important. Is it essential for something to be incorporated into the national

Table 1. Stability over time of national reports on happiness.

Question: "Coming to more personal matters, taking all things together, how would you say things are these days — would you say you're very happy, fairly happy or not too happy these days?"

Year	Percent "very happy"	Rank*	Percent "not too happy"	Rank*
	Netherlands		Italy	
1976	38	1	38	9
1978	44	1	44	9
1979	49	1	33	9
1982	44	1	36	9
1983 (April)	43	1	31	9
1983 (Sept/Nov)	41	1	34	9
1984	43	1	29	9
1985	39	1	29	9
1986 (Mar/April)	44	1	27	9
1986 (Nov)	41	1	28	9

* Ranks are within a set of 10 EEC countries, and are based not on "very happy" category above, but rather on *mean* national happiness scores averaged over the 10 surveys.

Source: Elizabeth H. Hastings and Philip K. Hastings, 1976-1986, reporting EEC data.

Rabier et al., Reporting EEC Data, and *Eurobarometer*, Nos. 3, May 1975, to No 24, October 1985.

character that is unique to a given country? Many people feel that that is an important requirement of national character. I personally do not hold to that position, but I will give you one interesting illustration of that approach.

What we have here is the famous *giri-ninjo* scale developed by Prof. Hayashi and his team. As one can see, there are marked contrasts in the popular answers in Japan as against the United States. For example, on the question "Should you follow your conscience or should you rely more on custom?" in the United States more than twice as many people, 76 percent, said "you should follow conscience." In Japan, only 30 percent said that. Most Japanese said you should try to either "follow custom," or they were uncertain how to deal with this situation.

Another revealing question is "Suppose you have to teach your child about life. Should you teach children that money is the most important thing?" Disagreeing with that position were 94 percent of the Americans; in other words, they overwhelmingly

Table 2. Marginal distributions for question items, Japan and the United States, 1978 (Suzuki, T. (1984). *Ways of life and social milieus in Japan and the United States: a comparative study, Behaviormetrika*, 15, 77-108 より転載).

#	Question Items	Response Categories	*	1978 Survey	
				Japan	U.S.
2.2B	Two personality types	1. According to principle	▽	44	48
		2. Maintaining interpersonal harmony	▼	50	46
2.4	Way of life	1. Get rich	●	14	7
		2. Become famous	—	2	6
		3. Life that suits own taste	●	39	36
		4. Cheerfully, without worry	●	22	36
		5. Live pure and just life	●	11	10
		6. Serve society	—	7	2
2.8	Continue to work	1. Continue to work	▽	69	67
		2. Stop working	▼	25	27
5.1	Benefactor vs. business	1. Go back home	■	51	64
		2. Go to the meeting	□	42	29
5.1C-1	Employment examination (relative)	1. One with the highest grade	□	72	72
		2. Your relative	■	23	22
5.6H	Friendly vs. efficient	1. Friendly but not an efficient worker	■	72	65
		2. Efficient worker but not worry others	□	11	23
8.10	One's job goals	1. A good salary	●	7	15
		2. No risk of unemployment	●	23	18
		3. Working with people you like	●	30	14
		4. A feeling of accomplishment	●	38	52
		Number of respondents		2032	1322

* Classification of response categories

reject that idea, whereas only 40 percent of the Japanese reject that idea. Again, we see a very sharp contrast between the two countries.

If one emphasizes only this approach to national character, one will overlook something very important, and that is that there are many approaches to life which are shared across many nations and many cultures. And on some issues, the Japanese people and the American people are very close, as will be shown by the next illustration.

In this case, I have selected questions to highlight the fact that in 1978, in the national survey, the Japanese people and the U.S. people tended to choose pretty much the *same* answers on many questions dealing with the areas of work and ways of living. For example, in response to a question concerning what is here called "two personality types" (different ways of approaching the work situation), stressing that one should maintain interpersonal harmony (which many assume is a unique Japanese characteristic) in fact was chosen equally often by people in Japan and in the United States. Another example involves the question: "Suppose you had a choice between two fellow workers, one of whom was very efficient but not too friendly and the other who was very friendly but not too efficient, which would you prefer?" As one can see, in Japan and the United States, those who prefer a friendly co-worker, even if he/she is not efficient, are about the same proportion.

Against this background, which makes clear, I hope, how we approach national character, I would like to give a very brief, capsuled summary of some of the things we believe we have found out about the American national character through studies of this kind. I will be emphasizing features of American attitudes and values and ways of thinking which I think are fairly deeply rooted in the typical American, are very widespread in the population, are generally agreed to by the overwhelming majority of the population, and are relatively stable over time. These are not the only characteristics that might be mentioned but obviously in the time available I must make some selection. I will also try to provide some contrast between these characteristics of the American population and people in other countries who have been studied by these methods.

First, I would like to mention something which is not usually first on my list but is of special interest, I think, because, as you know, the world is facing the possibility of a trade war. At the present time this involves, as of today's news, the United States and Europe, but over many years it has also involved the United States and Japan.

Americans tend to approach life as if it were a race, and the fastest person will win the race. This is true both for the nation and for the individual. One must be ready to compete in the race. But, they add a second aspect, and that is that they insist very much on the notion of "fair play," or, as they often put it, "the playing field must be absolutely level for both sides." If they feel the playing field is not level, they get very upset, and they carry this idea over into the field of trade. I am not saying they have the correct image, but Americans at the present time tend to think that the playing field has been tilted and they are at the lower end and must go uphill and the people they are competing with, who are at the top end, must go downhill, which is much easier. And they say, "we want the playing field to be brought back to a level condition." I mention this early on because people often say, "Well, national character research is very interesting, but does it have any

practical use?" This is an example where an idea in the mind of people can have great influence on the way in which they conduct their international relationships in the world of trade.

I would now like to mention five or six, not more than ten, characteristics of the American people that I think are worth attention.

First I would mention something I think the people of Japan know very well from their own experience. Americans are outstanding amongst nations in the extent to which they are proud of their national institutions. They generally consider that the United States is the greatest place in the world. If one asks an American population, "Can you tell me some good things about your country?" 85 percent will name things like freedom, the political system, the national constitution and other features that they are proud of. By comparison, in most other countries the people can think of only a few things that they are proud of. For example, in Germany, only about ten percent and in Italy only about five percent of the people spontaneously mention some aspect of their country that they are proud of. Indeed, to people from other countries, the United States people often seem to be very boastful. I think the Japanese people have that impression when they meet Americans; they are too quick to boast about their country.

The next feature I would like to mention is a complex of qualities. It includes self-reliance, being very autonomous, being very independent (recall that I mentioned this ranked third on the list in the American value scheme). This might be summed up in the idea of individualism. Americans are very individualistic. They believe very much that persistence and hard work will be rewarded in this life, and they reject the idea that what happens is a result of fate or luck. They feel much more that it is their own responsibility whether they succeed or fail. Of course, this individualism can be carried to extreme degrees. Everyone has read about the tragedy which occurred recently in the United States when a young Japanese student was shot by a man when he came to his door on Halloween. Part of American individualism is to insist that everybody has a right to have a gun. If one has guns in the house one runs the risk of tragedies of this kind arising.

It will sound like a contradiction, but the next point I am going to mention involves community action, volunteering and cooperation with one's neighbors. These qualities sound like the opposite of individualism, but the United States is outstanding not only in individualism but also in this kind of activity—communal action, volunteerism and cooperation with neighbors. For example, in one comparative study people were asked, "Do you have an obligation to take action in your local community?" The number of people who chose the answer, "Yes, I feel such an obligation", was five times greater in the United States than in Italy and twice as frequent as in Germany.

The United States people are also very quick to join organizations. When de Tocqueville first came to the United States in the middle of the 19th century, he observed this characteristic already manifest in the country. It was very striking to him, and the evidence supports him even today. For example, the number of organizations joined by the typical American is more than double that for Great Britain and more than four times that which is common in Italy.

Next, I would like to mention the theme of trust, which is very popular in national

character research — interpersonal trust. In one study, people were asked, “Do you think most people can be trusted?” Fifty-five percent of the people in the United States said “Yes.” In Germany, only 19 percent; in Italy, only 7 percent — a very large contrast. In another question, people were asked, “Do you have lots of faith in people or little faith in people?” In the United States, a small percentage said “little faith in people.” In Italy, almost 60 percent said “I have little faith in people.” Japan, incidentally, is a middle-level country in this respect — not very trusting but not very distrusting. This fits the pattern that Prof. Hayashi pointed to — of the Japanese preferring the middle position.

Next I would mention a sense of efficacy. We mean by efficacy the sense or feeling that one has that one can overcome the obstacles of life, both yourself personally, and collectively as a nation. During the second world war, there was a slogan that was attributed to an important general. He said, “The difficult we do immediately; the impossible just takes a little more time.” It is a contradiction, of course. If it is impossible, it cannot be done at all. But the idea is that “the impossible we will do; it just takes a little time.” This is a very strong sense of personal efficacy. In our recent presidential campaign, Mr. Perot went before the American people and said, “You, the American people, and I, together *we can do anything, anything in the world.*” I am not an expert on Japan, but I think most Japanese political figures would be much more modest in what they would declare Japan could do. In general, I would say that this dimension is one on which Japan and the United States, amongst nations, rank very high. Both are very efficacious people, full of the sense that they can overcome “impossibles.”

The next theme is optimism. Optimism means basically taking a positive view towards the long-term future, feeling that things will turn out well. This is a strong contrast with the case I mentioned earlier, when I said that if one asks how things will be next year, it goes up and down, up and down. But if one asks Americans, “Looking far into the future, will life get better? Will people accomplish everything that they hope for in life?” then a high proportion of Americans at a constant level will say “Yes,” because basically their approach to history is optimistic, in contrast with the approach of the people of many countries in Europe who see history in pessimistic terms. In this respect, I believe Japan also is in the middle ground, not amongst the pessimistic nations but not amongst the most optimistic nations.

The next characteristic I would mention is innovativeness, that is, the readiness to adopt new ways of doing things, an openness to new experiences. By contrast, Japan, although also very innovative in technology and related fields, tends to be somewhat more weighed down by the sense of custom, an idea very seldom introduced by Americans spontaneously into their discussions.

The last quality I will mention involves two elements. One could speak of it as either anti-authoritarianism or as a sense of very strong personal equality. Americans are outstanding amongst national populations in their readiness to say, “I am the equal of any other man.” In contrast to Japan, as we saw earlier, Americans are much more likely to say, “I will not leave things to politicians. I must decide for myself.” This is another area of convergence, however, because if one looks at the data that Prof. Hayashi has collected

over time, one will see that each five years the proportion of the Japanese people who say "I am not going to leave things to the politicians. I must decide for myself" gets higher and higher, so eventually they will be at about the same level as the United States.

One important aspect of equality is the equality between men and women. A study by Hofstede measured forty different countries on the extent to which the national population accepted women as the equal of men. Before I give the results, I should say I think the women will be glad to hear what I have to report; the men will not be so happy. In Mr. Hofstede's study amongst advanced countries, Japan had the smallest proportion of people who believe that women are the equal of men. That is the negative side of the picture. The positive side is that each five years the proportion of women who would rather be reborn a woman than a man keeps rising in Japan, which would suggest increasing equality between the sexes.

I hope, from this picture of the American national character, that it will be clear that in some ways each nation is different from every other nation but in some ways it is very much like every other nation. No national character is frozen in stone. They are all undergoing some degree of change. In my view, this increases the chances of international understanding. At the same time, each nation has the possibility of preserving some features which will be distinctive, perhaps even unique, to that country, so that in the process of modernization we don't all become completely homogeneous.

I hope that Prof. Hayashi and his team, and I and some members of my team may have a chance to come together again in perhaps ten years or, if we are very lucky, perhaps in twenty years, and see how this process is unfolding.