

## Future Planning-A Comparative Study of Japanese and American Boys

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### INTRODUCTION\*

The future expectations and aspirations of young people in various societies have been investigated by Gillespie and Allport (1955) in a study using so-called future autobiographies. In this type of assignment the subjects were asked to outline their future from the day of writing until they were about 70 years of age. The authors made brief content analyses of these essays, but the major part of their publication was devoted to an analysis of the questionnaire items that had been given at the same time.

The idea of analyzing future autobiographies was taken up again by Danziger (1963) who used them to develop a quantitative index of so-called "self-rationalization". Among other things, he wanted to check if a positive correlation existed between the degree of self-rationalization in a particular sociologically distinct group and the degree of rationalization of that group's members: - a hypothesis based on ideas of Max Weber and Karl Mannheim.

Weber (1922) attached great importance to the role played by rationalization in many areas of social life. He maintained that one vital aspect of rationalization is the replacement of

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\* = This Introduction is similar to that of a paper read at the 18th International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, Tokyo, 1968, entitled, "A cross-cultural study of future expectations and aspirations among adolescent girls" by Helmut Morsbach and Chie Okaki.

automatic, unthinking acceptance of ancient customs by a conscious adjustment to particular situations in terms of self-interest. This causes a conscious rationalization of means, while suppressing emotional, uncontrolled actions. According to Weber, a large degree of rationalization is particularly evident in highly industrialized societies with a powerful bureaucracy.

The sociologist Karl Mannheim (1935) took up this idea and concentrated on the tendency in persons living in a highly rationalized society to show increasing self-rationalization of their own lives. This he described as a systematic control of drives which the individual must have achieved in himself before he can carry out, or integrate in, a rational action structure. In the extreme, a person comes to regard his life increasingly as something that can be consciously planned and manipulated, something like a machine. He would thus be able to plan ahead much more than in other, less industrialized societies. Such a person could be expected to show certain personality characteristics such as lack of fantasy and increasing self-control in co-ordinating his activities towards one goal:- that of personal success.

This is what Danziger (1963) tried to measure in his test of "self-rationalization". Here, future autobiographies are evaluated according to seven criteria. Indications of strong self-rationalization were taken to be:-

1. a large degree of realism about specific and personal events in the future ("Ego-reality")
2. suppression of fantasy ("Ego-fantasy")
3. absence of values which could distract from a personal career of success ("Non-career values")
4. a high degree of economic interest
5. superior planning ability by mentioning more than one route to the life goal ("Contingency statements")

6. frequent mention of objective time references in the future
7. the view that one's future is distinctly subdivided into consecutive phases, instead of being just a vague mist ("Time structure")

These seven criteria were found to be positively intercorrelated, and the resulting "Self-Rationalization Index"\* (ranging from zero to 25 points) is the sum of all sub-scores. The test proved to possess adequate reliability and validity.

### METHOD

For the present investigation future autobiographies were collected from 67 Japanese and 58 American senior high school boys during 1967/68. While the Japanese Ss were tested at two high schools in the Tokyo area, the American data came from an urban high school in Pennsylvania, U.S.A.

The results were analyzed according to the method described by Danziger (1963), which yielded quantitative data on the degree of self-rationalization; as well as by the method of content analysis which allowed frequency counts of the various topics to be made.

Finally, the boys were compared to the girls of their own culture, since both sexes had been tested at the same time. (A comparison of females in these two cultures has already been reported by Morsbach and Okaki (1968).

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### A. Comparison of Japanese males with American males

A look at Table I shows that the two groups did not differ significantly as regards their total SRI scores. This is not surprising, as both Japan and the United States are highly industrialized countries with a well-established system of administration. In line with the results obtained by Danziger

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\* =hereafter abbreviated as SRI

(1963), a similar degree of future planning and thus of self-rationalization could be expected among the Japanese and American boys tested.

However, in spite of this over-all similarity there did appear to be significant differences in the scoring category labelled *Economic Interest*, where the Japanese high school students attained a significantly higher score than their American counterparts. A more detailed content analysis (Table II) shows that the Japanese Ss mentioned wishes concerning acquisition of money and other goods significantly more often. Frequently they made statements about exact amounts to be procured by a definite date in the future, e. g.,

“22 years of age (April): Become a technician at as big a company as possible. May well work at a government office (lest my employer in a small organization should go bankrupt --- for the sake of my future wife and children).

25 years: save yen 500,000 by then, (about \$ 1400).

25 years (Sept.): Marry my girl friend. I invite acquaintances, friends. It costs a hundred thousand Yen (collect two thousand Yen from each guest to cover part of the expenses). Go to Hawaii for the honeymoon. It's cost? Rent an apartment (as cheaply as possible).” (Subject JM6)

Possession of a house and/or a car was also mentioned significantly more often\* by the Japanese Ss. One possible explanation of this finding might be the comparatively higher standard of living enjoyed at present by the U. S. sample. Future ownership of house and car was probably not mentioned by the latter because it was so self-evident to them. They did, however, frequently mention the area in which they wished to reside, e. g.,

“For a place to live, I would find a suburb of some city or

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\* =note that the difference was significant at the 10%-level of confidence only

where there are a few people but not too many.” (AM 43)

Where American boys did mention money it was largely related to the payment of college fees. Some stated that they intended to work in the vacation between leaving school and entering college so that they could pay part of the fees. The Japanese boys' wish to possess a lot of money was frequently coupled with a desire to lead a free life, so that the money in itself did not seem to be the final goal. This is evident in those stories where it was mentioned that the S would leave his firm as soon as he had saved enough money - then he would set up his own business, or travel abroad. The fixed future of a “salaryman”, employed for life by one company, was feared by many Japanese Ss, also by those to whom money was not so important. In any case, the occupation of “salaryman” was shown to possess very low status by Ushijima (1961, p. 338). In the most extreme cases, Ss wanted to escape from the social system of Japan by dreaming up vivid fantasies, e. g.,

“First of all, I will buy an island in the Pacific where nobody lives, and which cannot be found on the map, and build my ideal country there. The conditions to be an inhabitant there are, firstly, to be a good man, not to betray other people's trust, or to be of above 120 IQ. I will gather the inhabitants by using my subordinates. I will gather poor orphans and able people from everywhere in the world, build a great research institute on the island, and then do experiments I want to do. There I will teach knowledge to children and create geniuses, and accomplish my life's ambitions with the people's love and respect, as a king of the country. I hate to live with the stupid in the world throughout my life... and what I want to do finally is to kill all politicians on earth, and to destroy all weapons. The world is uninteresting only because of stupid politicians and stupid people.”

(JM 22)

Others planned to change the political and social system of Japan. Although only one boy expressed the definite wish to join the "Zengakuren", many others were critical the "salary-man" future awaiting them. The conflict between the knowledge of their humdrum future and their ideals is expressed in the following example,

"If I can graduate from college without trouble, I don't want to join the group of fellows who are called "salaryman". The hell of rush hour every morning, being an apple-polisher, showing constraint:- I really hate to bow to others after becoming an adult. However, I have no concrete ideal to answer the question, "What do you want to be?" (JM 13)

The knowledge that in the conflict between reality and ideals, reality was bound to win, caused the same writer to become very pessimistic,

"...lonely man', 'a small man', 'a man of no dreams' - I seem to become such a man. Too big a society, too small a self. I would have no complaints if I could sleep under a grave stone with incense in a corner, after being pushed and pushed away.... Can nothing be done? Though I want to escape, I cannot. Moving out of the home, suicide, an entirely mean way. Are these mean ways not given to us, the youth? Ah, harshness of the human world!" (JM 13)

Such down-hearted stories about the future were not found in the American sample. Only two boys feared that their future would be less rosy than the present. But this was due to an admitted lack of inner ambition as well as fear of failure instead of external circumstances. Generally, the American boys' outlook was optimistic since they expected to be more free to choose what they wanted to become in life. Compared to this, the future of the Japanese Ss was far more predetermined. Furthermore, at the time of writing, they were worried about the college entrance examinations - a decisive step in their future

development which was likely to affect them for the rest of their lives. Most Japanese Ss mentioned that they were worried about this, and showed signs of irritation and sometimes fear of failure, e. g.,

“What I want to do most... is to go around and see Japan on my own feet. I want to climb up all the mountains in Japan. But I cannot do it now, since there is a big wall called university. I must break it up. It is a big burden for us senior high school students. Without entrance examinations I could spend the long senior high school days in a meaningful way.” (JM 4)

The American Ss did, of course, also write about entering college in the near future. However, no entrance examinations were looming ahead, and almost all of them aimed only at entering the near-by state college. High-prestige universities were not mentioned. Neither was any mention made of possible failure to enter a graduate school by those who wanted to continue with their studies after the first degree. Furthermore, definite study plans were often voiced by the American Ss, including major subjects to be pursued which were then to become the basis of a future career.

On the other hand, a number of Japanese Ss stated that they just wanted to follow a liberal arts course without mentioning details about possible areas of specialization. It seems that in Japan the usual four-year university education gives students a chance to live and act more freely than during the last years in high school - a trend opposite to that usually found in the United States.

However, detailed future plans among the Japanese sample were found among those Ss who planned a career in science or technology. These boys generally showed a higher degree of self-rationalization than the other Japanese boys. In their future planning they showed realism, e.g. by stating that they

wanted to use their energy and ability so that Japan might profit from it, or by wanting to study medicine with high ideals in mind. A boy wanting to study science wrote the following,

“I would like to become an electrical or mechanical engineer, because I think it is the way of science which makes humanity happy, improved, and developed... I feel four years of college are of too much value to be spent by playing. I feel courage in myself when I think we should take responsibility for Japan... Develop my own ability... so that Japan will develop into an excellent country, a society which is not inferior to other countries.” (JM 11)

Another's plans to become a doctor were expressed like this,

“After graduating from college I will pioneer various types of underdeveloped areas by remaining in the research room, but, if it is impossible due to various conditions, I want to practice medicine by going to a no-doctor-village. However, since sufficient actions cannot be carried out due to the incomplete apparatus of medicine if I go *just* there, it is necessary to keep close relationships with my home hospital. After the village hospital becomes established, I will move out to another area, and by doing so I would like to make our country one of no non-doctor-villages.” (JM 27)

Others wanted to change the country in a political way which was less clearly defined, e. g.,

“In the future I have to examine the present society... I go to college for that. Whole areas of law, politics, economics and sociology are necessary. I want to be an intellectual agitator (university professor?), journalist.” (JM 18)

It is evident from the variance of the total scores that the Japanese Ss were significantly more heterogeneous in their future planning and self-rationalization than either their American counterparts or the Japanese high school girls (see



TABLE I  
Differences between mean scores of Japanese and American boys  
in regard to measures of self-rationalization

VARIABLE	MEAN SCOPE		SIGNIFICANCE LEVEL Japanese boys vs, American boys
	Japanese boys (n=67)	American boys (n=58)	
1. <i>Ego-reality statements</i> (min=0 max=7)	5.04	5.86	N. S.
2. <i>Ego-fantasy statements**</i> (min=0 max=3)	2.78	2.79	N. S.
3. <i>Non-career values**</i> (min=0 max=2)	1.84	1.90	N, S,
4. <i>Economic interest</i> (min=0 max=2)	0.32	0.09	.02
5. <i>Contingency statements</i> (min=0 max=2)	0.09	0.07	N. S.
6. <i>Objective time references</i> (min=0 max=4)	1.68	1.39	N. S.
7. <i>Time structure</i> (min=0 max=5)	2.73	3.09	N. S.
TOTAL SELF-RATIONALIZATION SCORE (min=0 max=25)	14.58	15.19	N. S.
Variance (s <sup>2</sup> ) of total scores***	19.32	9.52	.01

\*=Chi-Square Test and Fisher Exact Probability Test

\*\*=Points were *subtracted* if these variables occurred in an essay

\*\*\*=Difference between variances calculated acc. to Hays, W. L., *Statistics for Psychologists*. New York : Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1963, p. 351-2.

Tables I and III). Thus, while the *average* SRI scores of Japanese and American boys did not differ significantly, the range of total scores did. The Japanese Ss showed many cases of either extremely high self-rationalization (characterized by absence of fantasy statements, concern with money, careful and realistic planning in many stages, and with references to future dates); the other extreme showed a preponderance of fantasy statements coupled with many comments on the undesirable present-day situation of Japan, which did not, however, link up with their own personal future.

While the first-mentioned careful and realistic planners were sometimes found among the American boys as well, the extremely low scorers were notably absent. Social conditions in the U. S. were never criticized to any extent; on the contrary, many remarked that it was good to live there, e. g.,

“I feel that the United States is the best home that anyone could ask for. Here we have many opportunities to get a good education and a good job.” (AM 21)

Even the imminent call-up for military service was only rejected by two of the American boys tested. Quite a number even looked forward to being a soldier for various reasons. Thus we find remarks such as the following:-

“I do not plan to go to college because I did not have the grades to go. I plan to enlist in the army and serve my country, so that the war can be over as soon as possible.” (AM 19)

“If I am ever called to fight for my country I will do so gladly.” (AM 21)

“Sooner or later I will have to get help with my problem (of selecting a career). Right now I am considering the Army Recruiter as a solution to my problem. Fortunately there is a good future today in the Armed Forces, anyone with the ability will be trained to do almost anything he

wishes, and for nothing.” (AM 24)

“Upon completion of college I may enlist in the air force. I have always wanted to become a pilot and I believe I will have to remain in the air force for a period of four to five years. Then, hopefully, I will be able so get a job with a large business firm as a pilot.” (AM 34)

Among the American boys tested, few speculated how to influence or to change the present system in the U. S. Neither were big changes in the “American Way of Life” anticipated. On the other hand, there was more concern than in the Japanese sample with changes affecting the whole world. Expected changes due to improved medical services, space travel, changes in world politics, and possible world war were discussed, e. g.,

“Things will really have changed in the world. Maybe there won't even be a world left if the U. S. A. and Russia have World War III and start using the atom bomb and other nuclear weapons. I hope this doesn't happen. In the future we will probably have other colonies or be ready to start other colonies on the moon and other planets...

By age fifty-five... just about everything in the U. S. will be run by computer or other electric devices. The world should be under one supreme rule by this time, probably an electric brain.” (AM 26)

These speculations might reflect the present-day involvement of the U. S. in world affairs, and the conflict between the major ideologies, all brought into greater consciousness by the war in Vietnam.

Although conscious of these political developments, most American boys tested were mainly occupied with their individual plans and aspirations. From Table II it is evident that the American sample planned to marry earlier than their Japanese counterparts, some even before graduating from college. The average number of children wanted was also higher,

**TABLE II**  
**CONTENT ANALYSIS OF FUTURE AUTOBIOGRAPHS**  
 (Percentage of subjects who mentioned specific topics)

<i>CATEGORY</i>	<i>PERCENTAGE</i>		<i>SIGNIFICANCE LEVEL *</i> Japanese boys vs. American boys
	Japanese boys	American boys	
a) mention of importance of money	35%	17%	.05
b) mention of a house to be owned	21%	34%	.10
c) big future changes in the world mentioned	6%	24%	.01
d) marriage and family mentioned	47%	84%	.001
e) future wife described	12%	21%	N. S.
f) religion mentioned	0%	19%	.01
g) expected age at marriage (average)	30 years (n=8)	25 years (n=18)	—
h) number of children wanted (average)	2.75 (n=4)	3.42 (n=12)	—

\* = Chi-Square Test and Fisher Exact Probability Test

and they more often mentioned the wish of being together with their future family than the Japanese boys did. This becomes especially evident in two stages of life :-

During retirement and old age, after the children would presumably have left the house, the Americans mentioned more frequently that they would plan activities together with their wives. Secondly, at the stage when travelling in their country or abroad would have become financially possible, more American

Ss mentioned that they wanted to undertake trips together with wives and children. This was rarely mentioned in the Japanese sample, but could of course have been implied all the time, and the boys might have been unwilling to mention this for some reason.

In any case, marriage, although mentioned frequently, seemed to be more remote to the Japanese boys. This could be due to the fact fewer marriages in Japan are of the love match type (see e. g. Blood, 1967 ; Ushijima, 1961, p. 282), as well as the fact that the age at which a male's marriage takes place is higher in Japan on the average than in Western countries (Ushijima, 1961, p. 349). Although dating is much more prevalent in the U. S., the evaluated autobiographies devoted relatively little space to a description of the desired wife, and even less in the Japanese sample. Sometimes, American boys would hope for a wife,

“with an intelligent, beautiful, and wonderful personality.”  
(AM 1)

or,

“...a pretty, attractive, understanding, patient girl with blond hair.”  
(AM 2)

But, on the whole, they were content to marry “the right girl” without further elaboration.

One important area of difference is the religious one. Among the American Ss, 19% mentioned that God or religion was an important factor in their life (see Table II). Remarks such as the following were sometimes found :-

“My future is in the hands of God. I believe that God has a plan for every human being. If a person asks God to show him this plan his future will be serving God as it should. For that reason, I cannot even hope for anything in particular for the future, only that God's guidance will be on my life, showing me the right way.”  
(AM 36)

The Japanese Ss, on the other hand, never mentioned religion once. According to various authors (e. g. Motoami et al., 1961, p. 478 ; Basabe, 1967) this was not unexpected.

#### **B. Comparison of American males with American females**

The last column of Table III shows that American boys and girls did not differ significantly except in the category labelled "*time structure*". No significant differences were found in the SRI total score, nor in the variances. There are, however, some differences in content. For the girls, family life plays a more important role than for the boys, whose planning was more concerned with their future occupation.

The girls tended to regard their future as consisting of four major stages, viz., college and/or training for an occupation, young wife and mother, middle age, and old age. The boys saw their future life as divided into significantly fewer stages, viz., college and/or training for a future career, working life, and old age. The difference therefore lies in the period after college and before old age. For the American girl, the phase as young mother with children of school-going age is distinctly separate from that of middle age when the children have left home. It is during the latter phase that she expected either to go back to work, or to intensify her social activities, or just to "enjoy life".

Another slight difference is also visible in the attitudes towards old age. It seems that the girls tested were more afraid of becoming a burden to their children, and thus they tended to stress their striving for independence during that period, whereas the boys frequently mentioned that they would like to live with their children and grandchildren.

In spite of the differences mentioned, it can be concluded that there is a large degree of agreement between the future expectations of the American males and females tested.

TABLE III

Differences in mean scores of Japanese boys and girls, as well as of American boys and girls, in regard to measures of self-rationalization

VARIABLE	MEAN SCORE				SIGNIFICANCE LEVEL *	
	Japanese boys (n=67)	Japanese girls (n=30)	American boys (n=58)	American girls (n=35)	Japanese boys vs girls	American boys vs girls
1. <i>Ego-reality statements</i> (min=0 max=7)	5.04	6.93	5.86	6.00	.001	N. S.
2. <i>Ego-fantasy statements**</i> (min=0 max=3)	2.78	2.80	2.79	2.69	N. S.	N. S.
3. <i>Non-career values**</i> (min=0 max=2)	1.84	1.83	1.90	1.83	N. S.	N. S.
4. <i>Economic interest</i> (min=0 max=2)	0.32	0.33	0.09	0.06	N. S.	N. S.
5. <i>Contingency statements</i> (min=0 max=2)	0.09	0.43	0.07	0.23	.001	N. S.
6. <i>Objective time references</i> (min=0 max=4)	1.68	2.03	1.39	1.67	N. S.	N. S.
7. <i>Time structure</i> (min=0 max=5)	2.73	3.10	3.09	3.86	N. S.	.05
TOTAL SELF-RATIONALIZATION SCORE (min=0 max=25)	14.58	17.45	15.19	16.34	.001	N. S.
Variance (s <sup>2</sup> ) of total scores***	19.32	4.04	9.52	12.40	.01	N. S.

\*=Chi-Square Test and Fisher Exact Probability Test

 \*\*=Points were *subtracted* if these variables occurred in an essay

 \*\*\*=Difference between variances calculated acc. to Hays, W. L., *Statistics for Psychologists*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1963, p. 351-2.

### C. Comparison of Japanese males with Japanese females

Here the differences were much greater than the ones found between males and females of the American sample. Table III shows four significant differences, viz., between the total score variances, between the percentage of ego reality statements, between the number of contingency statements, and between the total SRI scores.

As regards *variance of scores* it is apparent that the Japanese girls represented the most homogeneous group of all. One reason was their tendency to plan a very realistic future - there were no "dreamers" among them, in strong contrast to the Japanese boys.

This also explains the differences between the sexes in the "ego reality" category. There may be a number of reasons for this :- Although specifically asked to write about their personal future, many boys speculated about future social and political changes which did not affect them directly. The girls, on the other hand, wrote about themselves as requested. Social and political changes were mentioned in passing, and then only if they had a direct bearing on their future. Neither did any girls strive to become famous in such a way as to incur minus points for fantasy statements. This could of course be due to the fact that the chances of girls becoming famous in Japan are very slim, so that it might not have entered their minds to consider this possibility. Girls saw their future as relatively settled after marriage, and determined in its basic course by the husband's abilities and chances. The uncertainty therefore mostly consisted in getting the "right" husband. Even here there is greater security for the Japanese girl due to the system of arranged marriage (see Ushijima, 1961).

When the girls' expectations were compared with those of the boys, whose future depends much more on entering the



“right” university and the “right” company, it is understandable that some boys should entertain dreams of future wealth, fame, or power, to escape for a little while from the pressures of the immediate future. Social and political changes in the world could in any case be expected to affect males more than females. For the girls, keeping a neat home, educating the children and controlling the household expenditure represent tasks which were not regarded as having changed much through the years. From the future autobiographies it therefore seems that “my-homism”\* is much more prevalent among the girls than among the boys.

This, however, was not so strong that girls did not seriously consider another possibility - that of getting a job. But this future possibility was mostly stated conditionally, e. g. “...if I don’t marry”. However, this additional possibility was usually stated so realistically that girls scored significantly higher than boys on the category labelled “*Contingency Statements*”. Those few girls who rejected marriage completely sometimes stated that they would like to be a man, a wish which corresponds to findings by Motoami et al (1961, p. 493) where about half the women interviewed stated that they would like to have been born (or be born again) as men. Among the essays written by the Japanese boys there was no hint of anyone preferring the female role - this is again supported by the findings of Motoami et al (1961, p. 493).

Finally, the Japanese females obtained a significantly higher *total SRI score*. This is due to the fact that in six of the seven scoring categories the females obtained higher scores (see Table III). And in the one category where the males were higher (“Non-career values”), the difference amounted to only one hundredth of a point.

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\* the popular Japanese term for strong privatism.

## SUMMARY

Future autobiographies were collected from 67 Japanese and 58 U. S. American senior high school boys. These essays were checked for self-rationalization according to Danziger (1963). Furthermore, content analyses were undertaken.

Major findings when comparing the two groups:-

### 1. As regards degree of self-rationalization :

No significant difference in the average degree of rational planning of the future (SRI score), -but significantly greater heterogeneity of total scores in the Japanese group, - significantly more economic interest shown by the Japanese Ss.

### 2. As regards content analysis :

Among the Japanese future autobiographies the major characteristics were: Fear of college entrance examinations, - aversion to becoming a "salaryman", - desire to see change in the present political and social system of Japan, - creative improvement of Japan by the application of science.

Main features of the American future autobiographies were: Stronger religious and family ties, - more concern about the future development and fate of the whole world, - acceptance of military service, - a generally more optimistic outlook.

The results were discussed and interpreted in accordance with previous results in this field, especially as regards similar protocols obtained from female Ss in the two cultures.

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## 要 約

本研究のために、67名の日本人男子高校生及び58名の米国人男子高校生から未来自叙伝を蒐集し、それらを先ずダンチガー（1963年）のいう自己合理化（self-rationalization）に関して検討した。そして更に、内容分析を行った。

両群を比較して得られた主な結果：

### 1. 自己合理化の度合について

未来の合理的計画性（SRIスコア）の程度の平均値には有意な差が見られなかった。

日本人群の総計点の分散がより大であり、統計的に有意であった。

日本人被験者の方がより高い経済的興味を示し、有意差が見られた。

### 2. 内容分析に関するもの

日本人の未来自叙伝の主な特徴は、大学入試に対する恐れ、サラリーマンになることへの嫌悪感、日本の、現在の政治的・社会的機構が変化するようにとの願望、科学の応用による日本の創造的改善、などであった。

また、米国人被験者の未来自叙伝の主な特徴としては、強力な宗教的・家族的結合、全世界の将来の発展と運命に対する関心の強さ、兵役の受容、全般的に楽観的な見方をしていること、などが挙げられる。

結果は、この領域における、これまでの研究結果を参考にしながら、特に両文化内の女子被験者の示す、類似したプロトコルについて、論じられ、解釈された。