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Psychological Types and National Character:

An Informal Commentary*

in: American Quarterly 5 (1953) 325-343

IN 1880 John Fiske gave a series of lectures before the Royal Institute, on "American Political Ideas," in which he prophesied that the English-speaking people would, within a few centuries, cover Africa with teeming cities, railroads and telegraphs, this being the manifest destiny of the race. Such unreflective ethnocentrism, such complacency about urban, industrial society is very much muted today among people of Fiske's distinction; it is often from the less industrialized countries, now undergoing urbanization, that such sentiments come. A good deal of what I have to say will be a tribute, if at times a qualified and critical one, to the work American anthropologists have done in challenging Western ethnocentrism, in helping us to appreciate the values of other, quite different cultures.

We have to keep reminding ourselves how widespread were various forms of racist thinking among well-informed and humane people until very recent times. In his book on Social Darwinism in America, Richard Hofstadter calls to our attention the once-reputed book, Applied Eugenics, by Paul Popenoe and Roswell H. Johnson, a book which viewed city people as pathological and recommended a return

*This article was developed from a lecture given on March 5, 1953 in the Benjamin Franklin Lecture Series at the University of Pennsylvania entitled, "A Portrait of Western Man." The QUARTERLY will present another article from this series in its next issue. Mr. Riesman has also drawn for this article on a lecture delivered at Winter Veterans Administration Hospital on May 13, 1953.

to rural living to counteract the dysgenic effects of urbanization.* Eugenics is, *par excellence*, the application to modern city populations of rural attitudes towards livestock—an inherently aristocratic bias towards “breeding” and “blood-lines.” Typically, the eugenicist engages in a monstrous game of science-fiction, in which he dreams of breeding humans for “quality” as if we had decided once and for all what human qualities were worth preserving. (Having had some experience as an amateur dairy farmer, I know it is no simple matter even to breed Jersey cows for quality, since a tussle always goes on between efficient milk and cream production per se and a variety of aesthetic standards, originally brought over from England, not to mention a further consideration of whether the cow is pleasant to deal with or not!)

I bring up these bits of intellectual history because they give point to the misgivings which many people feel about scientific study of the differences between national groups. For example, my ethically sensitive colleague, Margaret Mead (to whom I would like especially to pay tribute, for I have learned so very much from her work), has expressed in conversation her judgment that at this historic moment it is unstrategic to emphasize the constitutional or biological differences among peoples, lest this be an invitation to a renewed scientific racism or some malignant program of eugenics. Anthropologists have been among the most valiant and capable in the battle against racism; and Margaret Mead among them is quite understandably wary of work that would classify people by their hereditary endowment.

It is considerations of this sort that compel us as social scientists to anticipate the consequences of our discoveries (including terminological ones), much as the theoretical physicists were compelled by the atom bomb into a sudden consciousness of human chain reactions. The bomb has a very immediate real effect; it quite obviously increases the offensive and destructive power of even a tiny handful of men—the sky now seems to be the limit. But I think the two situations are, fortunately, not comparable. The demagogue hardly needs the social scientist's assistance in making use of the visible or invisible differences among people for bellicose ends. While of course gangsters with ideas are more dangerous than gangsters without them, there are plenty of explosive ideas around, and men manipulated other men before modern social scientists or even Machiavelli wrote their books.

I say all this is fortunate for the practicing social scientist, because I don't want us to become any more influential than we are, lest out

*The spirit of this article is not bibliographical and the works mentioned are often merely suggestive of large areas of thought.

of piety and politics we might censor our curiosities. I am inclined to think that we are not going to add appreciably to the evil in the world, or to the good, whatever we do, and so we can safely get on with our work—wherever our curiosity leads us. Just as I don't like to hear novelists and poets being asked to be “constructive,” or to take their places in the war of ideas, so I resent it when even from the best of motives the ivory tower is converted into a battlement. To be sure, my faith in the long-run healing qualities of knowledge is perhaps unfounded; Aldous Huxley and George Orwell and a number of other gifted anti-utopians have tried to talk such people as me out of this Enlightenment prejudice. Yet just because so much in the world seems shaky and uncertain, I feel all the more strongly how important it is that social scientists be idly curious and refuse immediate responsibility for such indubitably good causes as world peace or better race relations. And, by the same token, I think we should gather here to discuss our common human situation in the spirit of Justice Holmes, who had no belief in panaceas and almost none in sudden ruin. If we find the concept of national character a clarifying one, we should not inhibit ourselves from employing it because of the all-too-evident dangers of abuse.

Indeed, where concepts are “used” in the study of national character, with some ideological bias, by scientists who should know better—I am angered. During the last World War, it seemed to me that for psychiatrists to speak of “the” Germans as paranoid—or even as authoritarian—was to enlist science in the service of chauvinism. I wondered whether people who talked about “the” Germans in this way were sure they could sacrifice themselves to an unheralded martyrdom if they had the bad luck to live in a totalitarian regime. And I have wondered, too, if America was so free of sadists and politically neutral organizers as to make us so sure “it couldn't happen here,” given the social and economic disorganization and the international assistance Hitler had in coming to power, especially from the German Communist Party. On such occasions, I ask myself whether the concept of national character (as distinguished from casual conversation about, let us say, “Germanic” intellectual traditions) had not better be left wholly out of the scientific vocabulary, lest pretentious support be given to racist and nationalist name-calling.

But what has greatly encouraged me as to the possibilities of pursuing such work in a detached and scientific spirit are the publications which Ruth Benedict, Geoffrey Gorer, and Margaret Mead turned out during World War II on the national character of enemies and allies. For instance, Ruth Benedict's book on Japanese culture, *The*

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Chrysanthemum and the Sword, persuasively testifies to the objectivity with which trained anthropologists can pursue applied research. In this connection, we should notice one very important semantic point. The psychiatrist Brickner called his war-time book in which he compared the Germans to paranoid patients, *Is Germany Incurable?* Anthropologists, however, tend to avoid such nouns as "Germany" or "Japan" or "France," and to substitute their term, "culture," for older terms like "nation" or "people." In fact, whether we think of culture with the little "c" of the anthropologist or with the big "C" of the humanist, as long as we don't use the capital "K" of *Kultur*, the overtones are neutral ones; the phrase "German culture" carries hardly any of the freight of "the German nation," or "the Germans," let alone the phrase "Imperial Germany" which Veblen used in his caustic World War I tract for the times. If I am right, this is some testimony to the way the term "culture" in the proper context serves already to objectify group relations; it imports an unindignant attitude, if not necessarily an unevaluative one.

To be sure, there are pitfalls in applying the term "culture" to a national group: can one, for example, speak of national cultures at all in a modern industrial state, or should one speak only of the cultures of the several social strata which transcend national boundaries? It is often said that a burger of Lyons is closer in type to a burger of Bremen or Buffalo than any of them is to a factory worker in his own country. Likewise, there are those who believe that the lower-middle class is the same nasty creation of urban life and capitalism wherever one goes, all that changes being language and a few incidental customs. Obviously, the ghost of Marx stalks such controversies, as well as the ghosts of Gobineau and Mazzini and other vicious or amiable nineteenth-century nationalists. To put such ghosts to work rather than leave them free to haunt us, I would like to see studies of national and class character done comparatively from a number of different vantage points. Let those who assume the homogeneity of the lower-middle class everywhere in the Western world see what they can do with the assumption, as contrasted with alternative assumptions. Certainly, Lloyd Warner's work in this country is an effort to study class as culture, though in terms of life-style rather than simply of market and industry relations, and in terms of the cross-cultural tugs within an individual who moves from one class-culture to another. And studies such as those of Jurgen Ruesch, Martin B. Loeb and co-workers, on the several illness-styles of the different social classes in America invite cross-national comparisons in order to see whether or not there is a lower-middle-class backache and an upper-middle-class allergy in

Milan as in San Francisco.

Elaine Bell has reminded me of the wonderful gambit in Stephen Potter's *Gamesmanship*: "But what of the South?"—a gambit no less applicable to Italy, France, or China than to the United States. There are regional cultures, social-class cultures, religious-enclave cultures, even "family cultures," where the family makes the same impress on its members that Harvard or Yale are said to do. The problem, in other words, is not "culture" per se—a term whose proliferating meanings Kroeber and Kluckhohn have recently tried to analyze and organize—but rather which aspects of culture are relevant for which specific problems. In the present state of our knowledge, the question must remain open whether each nation has a "national character" in terms of any significant variables, but our common sense tells us that we shall find differences—significant for certain problems if not for others—as we cross national boundaries.

Where national and ethnic groups nearly coincide (as racial ideologists have so often sought to force them to do), the differences can be striking enough—as we can see by analogy within our own country. Thus, the difference between a Methodist accountant in a Wichita bank, earning say \$4,000 a year, and a Jewish liquor salesman in Brooklyn, earning the same, is likely to be at least as great as the different cookeries they favor. And both will differ markedly from a Greek restaurant owner in South Bend, worried about the good name and appropriate dowry for his teen-age daughter. All three will differ from an Irish Catholic supervisor in a utilities company office in Boston—and so we could go on at the \$4,000 meridian and find substantial difference even among people all of whom admire Jack Benny, enjoy baseball, and drive 1950 Chevrolets.

In fact, our ideology of tolerance and our assumption that the melting pot would serve to boil away these differences have prevented us from giving them sufficient academic attention—it goes without saying that they have had a great deal of lay attention—not all of it friendly. The brilliant voting studies of Samuel Lubell, reported in *The Future of American Politics*, came as a reminder that ethnic groups persist in this country even to the fourth and fifth generation, particularly so if it becomes the interest of some political machine to recreate them. In the southern counties of Illinois there are people of German descent who have lived there for a hundred years, and have, so far as the eye can see, become fully "Americanized." Their children attend American high schools, intermarry with Scotch-Irish and other stocks; German is not spoken or German culture recalled. Yet many of these families, life-long Democrats, voted for Willkie

on the war issue. And they bring up their daughters to serve their future husbands blood sausage and like solid fare if they should marry a family of German ancestry, while also teaching them the salads and other dishes appropriate to entertaining the ladies' club of Cairo or Carbondale—dishes that may also be appropriate at home if they should marry a non-German boy.

If we look at the Germans and Jews in America, not to speak of Poles, Italians, and Czechs, it seems as if the closer we get to One World in the international area, the less homogenized is the product of the melting pot within our own country. In fact, the whole nineteenth-century notion that urbanization and industrialization create uniformity has to be reexamined in much closer detail, for the Zionist, the Theosophist, and the anthropologist are all members of ethnic, religious, and occupational cultures which are newly differentiated as the result of contemporary movements of peoples. All are city dwellers, whatever ideological distrust of the city they possess. Everett C. Hughes, Oscar Handlin, and Nathan Glazer, leading students of the melting pot, would be inclined to argue that modern life, in America as elsewhere, creates cultural differences as rapidly as it erases them.

But cultural differences, no matter how forcefully they may strike the ear, the eye, or the nose, are not necessarily correlated with character differences of equal significance. The relations between character and culture are so subtle that I couldn't go into them here even if I fully understood them, but I think we can all see that the German girl in Southern Illinois may share the general orientations of her neighbors in some respects and not in others, and that the question we ask will determine our emphasis on surface similarities and dynamic differences or vice versa.

The overlapping rôles of men and women which several recent studies illustrate, can also conveniently exemplify the overlapping that occurs in any selection we make for purposes of study. There are Americans who are more like Frenchmen than most Frenchmen—and they are still Americans. There are Jews who are very "Irish." There are upper-class dead-end-kids. And so on. We are dealing here, not with cages in a zoo to which assignment can be made by some Linnaean scheme, but with an incredibly heterogeneous, ever-shifting set of outlooks which flow into one another in space and time. We are dealing here, not with animals instinctively adapted to an environment, but with human beings who contain at any one historical time a much greater repertory of rôles than is ever made manifest. As George Herbert Mead observed, we are each of us an entire stock company, as well as prompter for all the parts. Correspondingly, if we are men

we contain the "part" or "rôle" of the women with whom we interact, and vice versa—and not only in those collegiate or army shows in which we put on bras, use pillows for breasts, and wear lipstick in a mock-denial that there is anything womanly about us.

It is this chameleon-like quality of human beings that makes it so immensely difficult for the researcher to select categories which will clearly divide one group from another on any important axis. As Franz Boas discovered, even such seemingly fixed factors as head-form and height alter under environmental influence, so that the children of immigrants to this country take on an "American" shape, just as Guernseys and Jerseys grow coarser and bigger in the next generation after importation from the Channel Islands. And when we deal with national character, we are stressing precisely those aspects of personality which are by definition socially conditioned, and are ignoring somewhat less malleable differences of temperament and physique. Moreover, the researcher himself has a body and is socially conditioned; he is changing, and his subjects are changing during the very progress of his work. The study of national character indeed seems to be an Alice-in-Wonderland croquet game.

In my opinion—and I want to turn now to some of my own studies—we do best if we accept these conditions of the game and frame our questions accordingly. We must invent the categories we use to analyze character, for we cannot take without afterthought the differences that seem to exist in nature. If we assume, for instance, that national character is a fairly stable thing, we are in for some surprises. We are apt to think of the Hopi of New Mexico as a very peaceable people, of the "Hopi Way" as being incorrigibly mild, unenergetic, and anti-individualistic. Yet it appears that young men from the Pueblos made excellent GIs in World War II. Whereas they often carried their prayer-sticks with them and remained emotionally in touch with Hopi culture, they became enterprising combat soldiers, good mechanics, and even good bar companions though previously untutored in drinking. It is perhaps still more surprising that many of them were able to come back from the ETO to the Pueblos and, though thought a bit wild by the elders, settle back into the rituals and routines almost as if they had never been away. The metamorphosis of individuals which we see here on a small scale strikes us whenever we look at the history of a people who are supposed by the unwary to have a fixed national character. "The" Swedes were "war-like" not so many generations ago; now they produce peace-makers. "The" English have gone through fantastic transformations from Elizabethan times

to the present. From Merrie England to the Cromwellian sobersides, from eighteenth-century license to mid-Victorian rigidity, and from this to mid-twentieth century "spontaneous collectivism"—these are immense shifts of the emotional center of life for millions of people.

It is, I think, these shifts which especially interest us, as time-bound Westerners. That is, we want to know to what extent our national or group character bears some relation to recent historical changes, as against that part of us which has developed in the slower reaches of Darwinian time. We are interested in a description broader than Freud's concept of genitality and narrower than fate. And in that perspective, character and culture appear to be remarkably fluid.

It would be going, however, much too far to say that there is no such thing as national character, as a moderately tenacious organization of motives in a population at large. Rather, what we have to do is to distinguish clearly between character and behavior, seeing—as Freud gave us techniques for seeing—that the same behavior can spring from very different motives, while of course the same motives can give rise to the most variegated behavior. Restaurants recruit dishwashers from those who don't like dirt and from those who do; some like the slop of dishwashing, and some enjoy gleaming new kitchen equipment—the former, in fact, are often repelled by the latter. (Margaret Mead, who has studied these matters for the advisory council of the National Sanitation foundation, adds that officials of Boards of Health and designers of kitchen equipment are also recruited from dirt-haters—though she suggests that a relaxed sanitarian would never become a happy sloppy dishwasher, or a tightened-up dishwasher an effective sanitarian.) The management of restaurants requires the establishment of counterpoint among these different character types who supply, inspect, and work in kitchens; stern necessity may impose similar behavior on the different types, but each will pay a different character-conditioned price, or reap a different character-conditioned reward, from the procedures. Poor timing may install sanitary equipment before the "anal" types are available to enjoy it.

Nations are perhaps even more complicated than restaurants, and historically it seems to me that the division of labor and the differentiation of tasks leads to a steady obsolescence of the need to build into men the motives that become institutionalized in the very arrangements of society. Aldous Huxley's acidly brilliant vision in *Brave New World* that advancing mechanization and organization require a graded retrogression in personality development may metaphorically describe what has happened to some people and some cultures, but it is no less true that standardization in machinery (once the earlier,

more ferocious stages of industrialization are over) allows us greater rather than less variety in character structure. What does tend to become standardized in such a country as America is not a response to machines but something much more complicated; a response to the demands which people *feel*, correctly or not, the social environment imposes on them.

Let me be quite specific here, and employ as an illustration what Geoffrey Gorer, Reinhard Bendix, and other observers have taken to be peculiarly true of contemporary American society, namely that Americans are heavily obligated to be friendly, and that in fact we place a much greater premium on friendliness than most peoples of the Western world. This is said to be a somewhat indiscriminate friendliness, as ready to embrace a stranger one has met in a club car as to embrace a brother or schoolfellow one has grown up with. As Gorer puts it, we are not only lonely if we are not with people, but feel guilty also. In *The Lonely Crowd*, my co-workers and I have sought to make these observations more concrete by linking them with institutional developments.

We know, for instance, that, as teachers are becoming more preoccupied with teaching as a human relations art, they increasingly mark children in their school reports on coöperation as well as on their skill in specific subjects. Likewise, we know that in business and industry personnel forms rate people on their friendliness—their "service with a smile"—in a great variety of white-collar jobs. Projective personality tests are sometimes employed in order to make a judgment of such behavior traits and underlying motives. The attitude such testers take could be illustrated by a TAT (Thematic Apperception Test) report I have just finished reading on a graduate student in history. The analyst has a great deal to say about his subject's interest in history, i. e. in dead people, as a morbid preoccupation, an over-intellectual "defense in depth" against warm, outgoing relations with his fellow human beings. The analyst speaks of the student's rather negative attitude towards social conventions, his preference for TAT stories with an unhappy ending, and his fears for his personal safety, as if a "normal" person must be blithely gregarious, unworried about bombs, and "accepting" of other people in general and their conventions in particular! To be sure, his occupation leads him to look for pathology, not for health. He does observe that the student is highly intelligent, creative in story-telling, and possessed of unusual literary gifts—gifts demonstrated by some quotations from his stories. But the possibility that one can lead a life which is sane but unbalanced,

satisfying but one-sided, seems to escape the interpreter, as does the notion that one could be truly and even warmly related to ideas or history rather than to one's contemporaries. When I read his report, I wondered who was being "projective"—that is, whether the write-up didn't tell us at least as much about the character of the analyst as about that of its supposed subject. And the values represented in such an analysis are probably not unrepresentative of certain themes in the American national character at large. Of course, my own reaction is in turn projective!

What I am suggesting here is that American institutions appear to require, or to be felt to require, the lubrication of human friendliness from a great many participants, especially in the expanding white-collar and service occupations. Moreover, this demand is one that most Americans seem able to comply with, without feeling that an undue strain is put on them; that is, it is more than surface compliance. Indeed, I think we can see that Americans are friendly not only because we feel we have to be to get along but also because we are brought up to value friendliness for its own sake, to regard it not only as a lubricant of organization but as a consumable in its own right. More than most people, we want to like people and to be liked. Moving as we do against an ever-changing natural and urban landscape, we are very conscious of the people who fill the social space around us. Their response helps locate us in an otherwise bewildering cosmos. We smile, not only to show our Ipana-scrubbed teeth, but to disarm the stranger and to convert him into a friend. Why should he not be a friend, even an intimate, in a society of mobile individuals? Friends, like children, are an indubitable blessing, even if sometimes also a strain, when all other values and goals in life are subject to change and reappraisal. Many novels and plays have been written recently about the "failure of success"—about the career man or career woman who makes the grade but loses his friends and/or his soul in the process. Our literature reveals few stories of people who are a success in the sphere of friendship but feel defeated in some other sphere. Indeed, as I have indicated, there seems to be an increasing tendency to assume that unless one can make friends one cannot make the grade at all—an idea which can confirm itself if widely held for long enough.

Of course, I do not mean to say that all white-collar Americans respond to the demand that they be friendly with equal willingness and inner assent. Some may even go shopping when they are lonely, or eat a snack, rather than join a club. Many, as Reinhard Bendix suggests, would prefer to live according to the Continental model of a few close friends, held on a life-time lease, coupled with reserve

for people at large. Many, moreover, who wish they didn't have to make friends of people of lower social position or disesteemed ethnic groups, do so out of fear of being thought snobbish or intolerant. In sum, we might say that there are more people who are friendly in America than there are friendly people. Nevertheless, in the complex processes by which the requirements felt by one generation tend to become the motives for which the ensuing generations will seek outlets, it would seem that the emotional vocabulary of friendliness is readily learned by Americans; we want to be friendly and we interpret life and modify our institutions so as to make this want seem sensible.

If we turn now from this single trait of friendliness and its institutional and ideological supports to look in a more general way at American character, I think we can see some of the ways in which my collaborators and I, in *The Lonely Crowd* and other writings, have sought to develop a distinction between a character type we term inner-directed and one we term other-directed. Along with an examination of many other aspects of character and behavior, we have looked at shifts in the evaluation of friendship and its qualities which seem to be occurring in the American middle classes; and we suggest that the attitudes just discussed are more compatible with other-direction as a mode of conformity than with inner-direction. It is hard to sum up briefly the mutations by which these ideal types, as we employ them (in Max Weber's meaning of ideal), differ from each other, but I should point out that the inner-directed type seems to me common to the Western world today, wherever industrialization has made its mark. This type is work-oriented, often driven; it is individualistic, apt to have a stern conscience, or at least to be possessed by clear-cut goals bestowed by parents and other authoritative adults. This type has, so to speak, internalized its ancestors. If contemporaries are obeyed and their expectations satisfied, it is somewhat less because of a need for their love and somewhat more because of their direct instrumental utility. The type is likely to look to pastor or priest for guidance rather than to unburden to peers. Formality of dress and manners is only one sign of the ability and desire to maintain a certain distance from others. In contrast, the other-directed type seems to me to be emerging as an influential minority in the West, and most noticeably in the United States, after the job of industrialization has been done: this is the type more attuned to the voices of contemporaries than to ancestors. Even if this type has a pastor, the latter will have taken courses in pastoral psychology and will prefer the rôle of pal to that of awesome mentor. The other-directed type is consumption-oriented, and friends are among the

"goods" of the consumption area; the type looks about horizontally to peers for response and guidance, or to their generalized reflection in the mass media of news and opinion. The type is not so ambitious, not so individualistic, in some ways not so opportunistic, as the inner-directed type.

I think we can see now how the dimension of friendliness may fit into this account. It is very far from being the whole story of other-direction; it is only one facet, and in our interviews we have come across people whom we would term in the main other-directed even though they were not given to friendliness of the sort I have been describing. The converse case is even more clear: America is simply full of men whose friendliness is that of the frontiersman, not of the other-directed urbanite and suburbanite. That is, there is a peppy, luncheon-club or revival-meeting American friendliness that goes back to our small town and rural past—a friendliness quite without the somewhat anxious and dependent and inquiring resonance more typical of other-direction. This illustration will, I hope, make it clear that when we speak of a national or group character, we are talking about a Gestalt, a context in which all specific traits have to be interpreted in terms of the whole. We can no more identify other-direction with friendliness than with extraversion or any other simple index by which we sometimes try to distinguish Americans from Europeans. The difficulty of empirical work with these vaguely delineated concepts comes from this very fact, that no single axis suffices to distinguish one character type from another.

Other-direction appears to be compatible with certain requirements—and certain liberations—of an advanced industrial economy and of one with a good deal of abundance. It is a type that fits well enough in a social scene which no longer requires great work-mindedness or great abstinence or great financial honesty of its participants but focusses on the art of spending, including spending time with others on and off the job. It is a type that can flourish when the technological requirements for productivity have become routinized in universities and research and development departments and when, correspondingly, the personnel requirements can loom large. And in such an age there tends to be a reduction in the relative number of people engaged in manufacturing and in extractive industries and agriculture, and an enormous growth in the service trades and professions—the areas of the economy classified as "tertiary" by Colin Clark. Among these tertiary industries are those of education and entertainment, which increasingly are called upon to set the tone and fill up the time of the society premised on abundance and widely distributed leisure.

Now I see no inevitability that demands other-direction as the price we must pay to keep our industrial society from going to pieces. Rather, as I have tried to make clear, a society's "needs"—if indeed we can speak at all with such teleology—can be met by a great variety of character types, harnessed to their tasks in a complex social organization by institutional arrangements. Thus, I can conceive of a society with a Leontieff-profile similar to ours—that is, with similar production and distribution accounts—which achieved these ends without calling on the sensitive mechanisms of other-direction, just as the Japanese elite were able to organize industrial production in their country on the foundation of a culture and character quite different from that of their Western models. Industrialism, like other aspects of culture capable of diffusion, can be adopted, once it has been invented, under conditions quite different from those needed for its origination, much as the people who invent stories and the people who retell them need not have the same character. All we can say with a modicum of assurance is that the United States, as it has moved away from nineteenth-century individualism, has undergone profound changes of mood and spirit which the concept of other-direction tries to capture. The correlations I have suggested in *The Lonely Crowd* between these developments and long-term demographic changes in the Western world are at most suggestive—a possible program for research.

In terms of the problem of national character, at least two questions arise. Is other-direction—if we can cope with the phenomenological difficulties of describing it—something which is constant in American history, and only more noticeable at the present time than heretofore? Or is it a character type we may expect to emerge, other things being equal, in cultures which reach a similar demographic, industrial, and organizational plateau? Or, indeed, as Europeans for several centuries have hoped and feared, does America represent the shape of European or even global things to come? As for the first question, when one reads Tocqueville, one gets an impression of America in the 1830's startlingly like the America of today, and in many ways unlike the America of the post-Civil War period. The Americans of Tocqueville's scrutiny are friendly; they regard all comers as peers; they tend to live in the present; they are joiners; they are more impressed by personal qualities than by craftsmanlike skills; and so on. If we are still, or have again become, such a type, we can at least suggest that certain conditions true in Tocqueville's time are still true, or have been re-created, despite the enormous changes on many fronts—and I am

thinking particularly of social equality and mobility, of the lack of firm class barriers.

I say this knowing that many students of American society have insisted for years that, with the closing down of frontiers, there is less mobility, less opportunity to rise from the bottom. But I have read their evidence and am unconvinced. Undoubtedly, we have a class system, with some relatively fixed prestige positions—although I don't think more fixed than in the past. But we have enlarged the educational ladders by which people can climb from one position to another, and in small business we have a large place for working-class entrepreneurship to demonstrate its energies and talents. Thus, the social scene does not present individuals with clear pyramids of class authority, as, despite much greater socialism, Europe still does. A Swiss businessman recently said to me, "It takes a long time for us Swiss to get used to the fact that when we go into a store we have to be polite to get waited on, rather than as at home having everybody running because we are the son of some big-shot." It is interesting that this remark was made by a man the political institutions of whose country are probably more democratic than ours.

Hence I would suggest that other-direction is, in some of its aspects, related to social equality (it develops within the American middle class—not in the upper or lower classes) and to its emancipating as well as its constricting features. I don't think equality has been constant in America, but rather that we are seeing now, with the cutting off of greenhorns from Europe, with the rapid urbanization of our green grass growers, with the cutting down of the pelf, power, and prestige of the business tycoon, and with the vastly greater public school education—we are seeing a kind of return of the repressed, a restoration under new circumstances of an earlier perhaps more intransigent and less subtle equalitarianism. I am anything but an historicist, and I don't think this had to happen, or that anything in the American setting, genes, plains, or processes of socialization per se demanded it. (However, I am inclined to think that Western Europe, which has long been able to export its masses to America and there forget about them, is now in the throes of a development which is similar in some respects. Feudalism crumbles in Europe under the aegis of Coca-Cola and the comics—a development which forces the intellectual leaders of European society to take a look at the popular culture of their own lower strata which they had previously been able to be romantic about. The spread of American popular consumption practices and even of a certain feeling of equality does not alone allow us to predict that Europe, too, will see a movement towards other-direction. Where

equality and abundance have gone hand in hand, there are some signs of it, but we lack the comparative studies which would carry us beyond surface impressions. All these transatlantic questions, complicated as they are by polemics and inferiority feelings on both sides, must remain open for the time being.)

When however, we start talking about the character types I have labelled inner-directed and other-directed (there is no space here to sketch in other complicating aspects of the typology), we are not talking about national character in the strict sense, even though the boundaries of one or another type turn out to lie more within than without the confines of a given nation. Moreover, it is arguable that we are talking somewhat less about character than about culture—that is, about two somewhat contrasting, somewhat overlapping patterns of value, possession, belief, and so on, which can be differentiated in America—patterns of culture which, as I have earlier implied, are not necessarily "carried" by equally differentiated character types. This, to repeat, means that Americans may *be* one way, and *behave* in another way, within wide limits. I shall return to this problem in a moment, but here I want to make clear that the very amorphous boundaries of this typology, both nationally and psychologically, result from an effort to set forth an hypothesis as to historical development in the Western world as a whole. In fact, I have been very explicitly making a selection of themes, creating abstract or constructed character types: I start with an idea, not with Rand-McNally. And this is because I am curious, less about the differences between Frenchmen or Germans, or Norwegians and Danes, and more about the possible consequences for Western man of long-continued industrial advance under conditions of social equality and quick and ready communications.

In this connection, recently reported work by Professor Daniel Lerner on the impact of mass media of communication on the Turkish hinterland is most suggestive. In his research, the standard socioeconomic categories served less well to divide the modern-minded from the traditional peasant than aspiration—tested by such questions as what the respondent would do if he were premier (the traditionalist found the question shocking or pointless) or where he would like to live if he couldn't live in his own village. The peasant in transition already has opinions on such matters and can imaginatively project himself into new situations—but this immensely significant process will not be captured by use simply of regional, occupational, and income categories. Yet it is these that we are tempted to fall back upon in order to avoid commitment to any necessarily tentative

theory of social and psychological change. Development of such a theory requires us sharply to limit the number of variables the researcher works with—to fight down the temptation to multiply the number of our character types in the hope of a closer "fit" with our data. Since our consciences and our critics daily remind us of the interconnectedness of things, of the complexity of factors to be taken into account, we look longingly to the safety of including "everything"—sex and class, occupation and region, age-grade and religion, until every conceivable sub-culture counts as a single type. Yet in the present state of research on national character, when our ambitions have out-run our abilities, we can hardly do without an uncomfortable messiness of approach.

It follows that, in trying to capture with such terms as "inner-direction" and "other-direction" both great historical movements and minute character changes, I knew that I could not be "operational" in any strict sense. For I was dealing with something lying between psychoanalytic characterologies which are based on sexual orientation—Freud's oral, anal and genital types, attitudes presumably found among all groups—on the one hand, and Max Weber's kind of ideological construction on the other. Though interview material helped to stimulate my concepts, along with other similarly unprocessed data, I did not come across—or expect to come across—individuals who would unequivocally be seen as representative of one type rather than another. Particularly was this true with other-direction which, as an emerging tendency, would, except in pathological instances, always be found in combination with inner-direction. Sharpening the definitions to make it less difficult to deal with individuals would have made it, perhaps, more difficult to deal with history. The individuals who come to life in the pages of the best ethnographic accounts of preliterate peoples seem to represent for us "the" Hopi Way, or "the" Salteaux Way, or "the" Trobriand Way, with somewhat less confusion; their range of idiosyncrasy appears less bewildering. In contrast to this, a modern stratified industrial society, as I have pointed out earlier, is constantly throwing up new types of people, which means that older types are, because faced with the newer ones, also changing.

Moreover, the gap between ideology and behavior, always present in a society, tends to widen, especially as the rôles people are capable of playing grow in number. Recently, a psychologist, Elaine Bell, began developing a questionnaire which might distinguish between inner-direction and other-direction among teen-agers. She presented them with a number of hypothetical situations, such as the following:

John is an 8-year-old boy who is expecting his ninth birthday. His parents have given him a choice between two expensive presents. He may either have his first two-wheeler bike, like those which most of his friends have. Or—since his hobby is building things out of wood—he may choose his own workbench, complete with tools.

- a) Which gift do you think John would be most likely to choose? (check one)
 - the bike
 - the workbench
- b) If you were John, which would you choose?
 - the bike
 - the workbench

The high-school and college groups to whom the test has so far been given tended to choose the bike, not only for John but for themselves, despite their awareness that a workbench is far more expensive. Other questions—dealing for instance with ambition for fame as against desire for popularity; with honesty versus group morale; with attitudes towards the problem of *The Caine Mutiny*; well over 100 questions in all—seemed to reveal among the high schoolers a fairly consistent tendency to choose the "groupy" as against the "individualist" response.

This work is in its exploratory stages, and what these answers mean is by no means clear. Many of the questionnaire situations posed a dilemma between conformity to peer-group values and conformity to adult standards or internalized principles. Some young people consistently chose to conform to the wishes and standards of their friends even when there might seem to be compelling moral and personal reasons for opposing them. As one student of mine put it, in trying to explain why he and his fellows could so easily move into the Army and radically change his mode of behavior, and then, with surprisingly few strains, move back into civilian life: "We have been trained for only one thing all our lives: to do what our age-mates do, irrespective of content; this formal principle is, in effect, our character." Yet with such a student one could not necessarily conclude that he is actually other-directed. He may believe in conformity as a virtue; he may have adopted as the content of his ethics an attitude compatible with other-direction as an ideology. And for many others equalitarianism—even leveling of self to the perceived level of others—becomes a matter of principle, not of opportunism—though indeed one would be mistaken not to recognize that opportunism can itself become a matter of principle, as it did for some of Balzac's heroes.

Though the relations between ideology and character remain obscure, it is revealing to know what the ideology of these young people is.



and to surmise the extent to which it may have changed in recent decades, although even there one cannot be sure one is not dealing with an adolescent syndrome—a stage on life's way rather than a total life pattern. In fact, Erik Erikson has emphasized the "rôle diffusion" of the American adolescent as a problem of his search for identity in an ever-changing culture. Taking his comments together with Margaret Mead's observation that what appears as other-direction may sometimes spring from a highly moralistic desire never to let others down, we are presented with a whole set of problems that may not be answerable until we have followed these adolescents into their jobs, their marriages, their middle age.

If we want to probe "beneath" ideology, we may resort to tests such as the Rorschach, which are more "projective," that is, they probe more deeply into underlying motivations. But anyone who is familiar with Rorschach reports knows that they ordinarily focus on dimensions of character of a different order—such traits as suspiciousness, masculinity, compulsiveness, sexual adequacy, imagination, and so on. For many purposes of cultural analysis and comparison, these dimensions are highly relevant ones; they inform the work of A. Irving Hallowell on the Salteaux, of Cora Dubois on the Alorese, of the Jules Henrys on the Pilaga Indians, of Anthony F. C. Wallace on the Tuscarora Indians, etc. The Rorschach will perhaps allow us to distinguish between the character structure of a tribe like the Ifaluk that trusts people and fears only ghosts and one like the Alorese that suspects people and puts no trust in ghosts either. In the skilled hands of such an analyst as Ernest Schachtel, the test may even show whether a boy will be delinquent or not. But the concepts of inner-direction and other-direction are intended to capture not such specific facts, and even generalized orientation to space and to people, but rather something still more underlying and general, namely, the attitude people take toward their society, their unconscious way of relating themselves to their place in the society and to the others in it.

Yet what is "place" in society and who are the "others"? A person who may be considered clearly other-directed will differ very much from others of his general "type" depending on the perceptions he has of the rôle-behavior expected of him, and of the others who form his audiences. In his very effort to conform he may reject certain values which are more compatible with other-direction than with inner-direction; he may obey what he senses of the mood of others rather than the imperatives *they* actually obey. Events may deprive one either of the assured values or of the personnel towards which one has been compliant; one may be plunged into new situations

where the salient others contradict each other; or one may interpret a new situation as an old one and thus miss others' cues. Rorschach testers, steeped in Freudian dynamics, have been less concerned about these levels which both link and separate character and behavior—though again, the imaginative projective tester can say an astonishing amount about these levels if encouraged to do so. Nevertheless, it is plain that an enormous amount of work must be done before an empirical method for testing character in our sense can be worked out. In the process our terms must be refined or discarded for better ones. But in any case I am inclined to think that the testing of individuals and the description of historically-conditioned character types cannot be easily reconciled; aim, method, and focus are different—as my book *Faces in the Crowd* indicates.

In what I have said so far, it may sound almost as if I were impatient with the tumultuous variety of Western men and women, who make the task of the investigator so baffling and complex; I can't recall giving a lecture where I have felt so troubled by the difficulties I was too rapidly passing in review or by-passing. Actually, I find a kind of pleasure in the refractoriness of human beings to all analytic systems, including my own. As Freud found in the "resistance" of his patients the actual dynamics of cure, so I find in the "resistance" of individuals to the solution of historical questions a challenge also. Since, as I said at the outset, I believe in the social sciences for their own sake, for what they can contribute to our understanding for the sheer pleasure of understanding, the fact that the tasks are endless and insuperable is not a source for regret. Sisyphus suffered from having to push a stone uphill, but if it had been a tennis ball batted around, he would have enjoyed it. Life is partly a stone to be pushed uphill and partly a tennis ball to be played with, and research, if it is to understand and cope with life, will do well to nourish itself on a similar dialectic.

