Looking inside Japanese-Japanese Intracultural Business Negotiation

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ABSTRACT

Culture-based negotiation practices and preferences in business continue to attract the interest of academics and practitioners. Observers, however, have collected little data on Japanese–Japanese interactions. Most research on Japan focuses on Japanese interactions with non-Japanese. That over-focus in addition to the relatively low output of the post-bubble era means that current textbooks, popular business books, and even academic articles often draw on sources that are 20–30 years old. Some behaviors are newly identified by the survey adopted in the present study, such as the frequently observed new value creation. Other behaviors such as emotional displays appear contrary to the expectations of the literature. This quantitative and qualitative survey thus identifies current Japanese–Japanese intracultural practices in business negotiation and casts light on the differences among participants in negotiation rather than perceiving monolithic teams. The data stem from 80 Japanese managers surveyed on business negotiation practices. This update of the knowledge on Japan will help academics and non-Japanese practitioners better understand and prepare for business in the country.

Keywords: Business negotiation; Japan business; cross cultural; business practices
JEL classifications: F51, D74, J52

1 Introduction

Japan is rising in economic power as well as in terms of the interest paid by academics and the international business community. However, little information about Japan's business community and its practices was refreshed or created anew during the lost decades, roughly the early 1990s to about 2010 (Fukao et al., 2014; Hayashi and Prescott, 2002; Lise et al., 2013). Much of the knowledge in use appears to stem from the bubble economy era, roughly 1986 to 1991 (Okina et al., 2001) and the years immediately after. Even the relatively recent publication of Adair et al. (2007) employs data developed in the late

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1990s for Adair et al. (2001). Similarly, Adler and Gundersen (2007) discuss Japanese negotiation preferences in some detail; however, they draw extensively on Graham (1993).

One aged source of information frequently cited in the academic literature is the 1988 work by March that sensationalizes the abilities of Japanese business negotiators. March (1988) cites no empirical data and refers only to three casually developed Japanese–Japanese anecdotes; yet, the book remains part of the understanding and misunderstanding of Japanese business and business negotiation practices. Zhang and Kuroda's (1989) study accusing Japanese negotiators of frequent deception and aggressive tactics is similar in style and content as well as in its lack of empirical data. Stepping forward in time, the 2012 work of another popular business author, Boye Lafayette DeMente, draws mainly on the well-informed but aging content of his post-bubble 1994 and 2004 research. Thus, there is a weak basis for understanding the current reality of Japanese business negotiation. This study rectifies the lack of primary evidence about Japanese–Japanese intracultural business negotiation behaviors.

As the years between the bubble and current tentative recovery have progressed, the number of academic publications on Japanese business per year has dropped off along with the once ferocious Japanese economy. Similarly, the number of "doing business in Japan" books has fallen since the days of the bubble economy; indeed, one of the best of these, Nishiyama (1999), is already over 15 years old. Like many, Nishiyama focuses on Japanese interactions with non-Japanese, underscoring the lack of research on Japanese–Japanese interactions. Haghirian (2010) provides a more recent and well-researched addition to available information on business practices in Japan. Her comments on business negotiation, however, are also mainly in the context of intercultural rather than intracultural interactions. An additional ray of light appears in the 2012 work of Lee and colleagues, which empirically examines the preferences of Japanese–Japanese business negotiation; however, it does not identify specific tactics or behaviors.

Japanese language materials outside the popular press are also lacking in the field of Japanese–Japanese negotiation behaviors. While Ma (2005) investigates the threats and personal investigation of counterparties, this author does not strictly identify whether these are used among Japanese business negotiators. Similarly, commonly used textbooks may advise on behaviors such as threats, gaining emotional leverage, compromising, bargaining, and logic-based persuasion (e.g., Hirahara and Kannonji, 2002), but do not offer empirical evidence of their use. Few other Japanese language materials specifically identifying negotiation behaviors among Japanese participants were found in this literature search. We are thus left with fundamental questions about Japanese business behaviors in the Japanese–Japanese context in the face of the significant noise generated by research on Japanese interactions with foreign businesspeople.

The available materials primarily investigate and discuss interactions as seen through the prism of Japanese to non-Japanese interactions. While some information from these streams of research remains important, there is a large gap regarding the intercultural workings of Japanese business negotiations with Japanese. We cannot expect Japanese actors in business to behave the same with Japanese and with foreign individuals. Adair et al. (2009, p. 157) are right to point out that "doing as the Romans do is only appropriate if the Romans themselves think and behave as they would normally, which is unlikely when they are meeting non-Romans." Similarly, Carté and Fox (2008) note that in cross-cultural business meetings, most parties are adjusting in advance and during the event to the other parties' ways of doing things. Tung (1988) shows that negotiators position themselves in their cultural environment as well as by using their personal characteristics. In business negotiation instances, Weiss (1994) describes the "coordinated adjustment" of the various parties of a negotiation in that they must adjust to the needs, skills, and expectations of others, creating a newly negotiated script and process. Such a coordinated adjustment process is spontaneous, common, and perhaps unavoidable. Thus, it is pointless for visitors to Japan to follow the advice of Katz (2006, p. 264): "When negotiating business here, people expect that you understand and follow the Japanese way of doing things."

As Japanese and foreign businesspeople adjust to each other, updated information about Japanese–Japanese interactions would be helpful for foreigners seeking to carefully adjust. Additionally, Japanese businesspeople may need to adjust to other Japanese, particularly when new to the workforce. The research presented here therefore updates the current knowledge, which is lacking in academic, empirical, and valid business sources about the behaviors and practices of Japanese businesspeople in Japanese-only settings.

Updates to knowledge on business behaviors are necessary as culture, experiences, and behavioral preferences change. Culture changes over time, even if slowly (Schwartz, 2006), although value structures may evolve more swiftly (Schwartz, 1992). Culture derives from experiences lived and received, attitudes, norms, values, and other inputs (Browaeys and Price, 2011). Therefore, the lost decades may have informed and reformatted the values, and ultimately the practices, of Japanese business managers. In summary, practices and behaviors reflect culture and therefore its inputs (Browaeys and Price, 2011; Schneider and Barsoux, 2002).

To what extent has Japan changed since the bubble economy ended? The business environment evolved significantly with the reforms in the late 1990s followed by a flurry of Koizumi-era reforms (bank lending, postal system, and foreign affairs) and other events. Recently, the Abe administration has brought nominal growth to the stock market and expectations about it. Negative changes have come about through a public loss of confidence in business, particularly through widely publicized food scandals among respected brand names such Snow Brand in 2002 and Fujiya in 2007 as well as revelations of widespread mislabeling scams in 2013 followed by the 2014 Maruha Nichiro food pesticide scandal. The erosion of nationally respected corporate brands such as Sony has also impacted the conscience of the business community, as has the successful Nissan Renault cooperation. Other management scandals, especially the accounting misadventures of Olympus, have made corporate governance into the centerpiece of the "Third Arrow" reforms of the Abenomics program. Even public institutions have not been immune as evidenced by the perceived and real failures of major power generation companies and government agencies in the aftermath of the tsunami-driven nuclear power catastrophe of March 2011. Together, these events form an experience different from that in the 1980s/1990s, and thus the business community may be differently conditioned, and behave differently, now compared with 20 years ago. For example, in support of the suspected change in culture and behavior in Japan, a respondent in this research wrote, "Although reacting in the former Japanese way as an organization, more Japanese react in a western style as individuals."

In summary, our understanding of the Japanese business culture of the 1980s, 1990s, and even 2000s has not been properly refreshed and may now be insufficient or misleading. Moreover, that understanding has been presented largely in light of Japanese interactions with non-Japanese. Finally, data on the previous generation, often of dubious quality, seem to be recirculating from older into more recent resources. Thus, a new baseline needs to be established that can be considered by Japanese as well as non-Japanese business actors and academics. This study contributes toward understanding current practices as found by Japanese among Japanese.

In particular, it addresses three main questions. The first is whether we can catalog behaviors that Japanese businesspeople experience and therefore expect based on frequent observations by practitioners in Japanese–Japanese business negotiations. This is the main contribution of the data collected for this study. The second question is whether all the practices identified in the recent (post-bubble) literature are present or have disappeared. This information will help update the prevailing views about Japanese business practices, the literature on which is often based on intercultural experiences and viewpoints rather than intracultural ones. The third question is whether there are behaviors at play that were not expected by Japanese participants and non-Japanese observers. Responding to this last question may help Japanese business practitioners as well as researchers as they react to the evolving milieu of Japan's business world. To answer these questions, this study reviews and updates the beliefs propagated about Japanese business negotiations from approximately the end of the bubble era to the early 2000s. Haghirian (2010) appears to start a new period with up-to-date information on Japanese intracultural practices, a new stand of the literature to which this study contributes.

This study answers the above questions based on data derived from a 2013–2014 survey of 80 Japanese managers with experience in business negotiation. The survey does not cover all preferences or situations, merely the behaviors observed by business practitioners in Japanese–Japanese business discussions. Thus, the data help establish the expected practices in place as well as identify the differences between reality and expectations in the literature on Japanese business negotiation.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows. The next two sections describe the methodology and findings of the survey. Thereafter, a discussion of the findings is presented followed by conclusions, which include the limitations of the study and propose next steps for continuing research.

2 Methodology

2.1 Survey development

The survey instrument included items on negotiation behaviors and practices. These items were included after a review of recent publications and the investigator's interactions with Japanese business actors in formal interviews, casual conversations, and business negotiations. Academic articles, textbooks, and popular business books from the bubble era and the years immediately following were reviewed as well. Older items that retain currency in academic discussion were also considered for the survey; however, only one source before 2000 directly affected the creation of the instrument, namely Nishiyama (1999). Certain recent texts were excluded, specifically Adair et al. (2007), Adler and Gundersen (2007), and DeMente (2012), for the reasons discussed in the literature review.

Certain items were brought into the survey from the literature on negotiation practices in other countries, not only Japan, and from the general set of practices known as "mutual gains negotiation" or, more casually, the Harvard Way. Bringing these items into play is not an attempt to compare Japanese–Japanese styles with western or other paradigms. Such a comparison is beyond the scope of this report, which seeks mainly to establish current practices as described in the main research questions. The purpose of including those items "new" to the conversation about Japan is to provide a positive check for their presence or absence. Without investigating those items, it would be possible to miss potentially important developments in practice. One such item is the creation of new value, a cornerstone concept in mutual gains negotiation, but one completely absent from the literature on Japanese negotiation.

Likewise, the research design did not select behaviors for the survey based on a particular theoretical framework such as distributive versus integrative behaviors (Walton and McKersie, 1965) or phasic structures (Holmes, 1992), or the models of negotiation reviewed in Lewicki et al. (1992), thus allowing the study to concentrate first on what is in place in the field, including cultural preferences that do not match with framework categories rather than confirming or defeating an existing theory. Other survey items were drawn from the experience of the author and interview comments by Japanese business practitioners.

The survey was limited to 26 items. Some items found in the literature on Japan were excluded because of a lack of evidence in the formal and informal interviews conducted leading up to the survey. Both integrative and distributive behaviors were included. Distributive behaviors, those maximizing gains to one party, were represented in items 3, 4, 5, 19, 20, 22, 23, and 25. Integrative behaviors, those allowing mutual gains, were included in items 1, 2, 7, and 8. Culturally interpretable items comprised the majority of the remainder of the survey. Additionally, the survey was designed with fewer rather than more items to allow completion in 15–20 minutes, minimize the demotivation of respondents, and maximize completion rates. Respondents were asked the frequency with which they observed certain behaviors and selected answers from Always (いつも), Sometimes (時々), Rarely (まれに), and Never (一度もない). These data formed the basis of the findings.

Table 1 shows the sources from which the survey items were drawn (the item number is related to the English version of the item shown in Table 4). Some of these sources, mainly Yotsukura (2003), deal with Japanese–Japanese negotiations and business interactions. Yotsukura (2003) is of particular interest because it is based on the transcribed phone conversations of Japanese businesspeople in day-to-day communications. Haghirian (2010) also specifically handles Japanese–Japanese interactions; however, this is not the main target of that work. The other authors have generally participated in intracultural Japanese interactions.

The survey was initially completed by two Japanese managers to confirm the comprehensibility and accessibility of its words and phrases. Minor improvements were then made based on their comments, written and verbal, to the author. The survey included a comments box to capture the managerial level of respondents as well as their position in negotiations. While the survey did not ask about gender, it was confirmed that five of the 90 respondents were women.

After the final content of the survey was set in English, a translation was undertaken. The translator was a second-year MBA student, a native speaker of Japanese with high language skills in English and negotiation training completed during the MBA program. Thus, the translator was competent in the relevant vocabulary and topics in both languages. The author and translator discussed the translation, item by item, in several iterations. Finally, the Japanese translation was checked and commented upon, with some items reverse translated by another native Japanese-speaking MBA student with strong English skills and the appropriate negotiation coursework. Nonetheless, items 15 and 24 were cut from the analysis because of the unsatisfactory translation of the original intent.

2.2 Survey implementation

The survey was disseminated via email to 244 individuals with an explanation in Japanese and a link to the survey webpage. The Japanese was followed by the same explanation in English and bilingual identifying information about the

Table 1. Source materials and survey items.

Source	Survey item(s)
Alston and Takei (2005)	4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 19, 21, 23, 25, 26
Brett and Okumura (1998)	7, 18, 25
Carté and Fox (2008)	6, 11,14, 16, 24, 25
DeMente (2004)	1, 2, 5, 7, 9, 10, 12,13, 18, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26
Direct experience of the author in Japan and interviews with experienced Japanese	1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 23, 25
Hirahara and Kannonji (2002)	1, 2, 12, 19
Negotiation literature not related to Japan	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 19, 25
Nishiyama (1999)	5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23
Yotsukura (2003)	13
Zhang and Kuroda (1989)	3, 5

researcher. These individuals were selected from business directories and mailing lists. Another 43 were emailed after selection from the author's network of direct acquaintances based on status as Japanese managers in Japanese organizations according to their business cards.

Searches were created by using LinkedIn's advanced search filters. These searches, in English, filtered for rank as a manager, presence in Japan, and the word *negotiation.* The search results, totaling in the thousands, were narrowed to 186 individuals who received an "InMail" message containing a link to the form on Survey Monkey. The author manually checked each of the 186 profiles, and many more, to confirm suitable candidates based on characteristics such as undergraduate university in Japan, long-term employment in Japanese organizations, and brief or no employment in non-Japanese organizations. Thus, the study population represented a "general population" sample derived from LinkedIn, business directories, and business cards. These sources create an appropriate target population because all three identify rank and activity in the company. Overall, the study population broadly included those Japanese businesspeople who participate in business negotiations as decision makers, leaders, team members, and team supporters. However, it was not possible to survey all businesspeople in Japan. Thus, the outreach methods reflected the realities of the available media and networks. Moreover, the survey did not collect information on the area of industry occupied by respondents, nor their age or location.

In total, 90 valid survey responses were received, a 19% response rate based on the total outreach population of 473. The response rate of those selected from business directories reached only 5%. The approximate rate of response through LinkedIn searches was 30%, similar to the response rate from the personal network of the author. Thus, LinkedIn, a networking platform based on trusted connections (Schaub, 2014), performed equivalently to a personal network. Of the 90 respondents, 10 were removed from consideration because they did not report their managerial rank; however, their comments were evaluated. The survey began in June 2013 and closed in September 2014 with more than half of the responses arriving after May 2014.

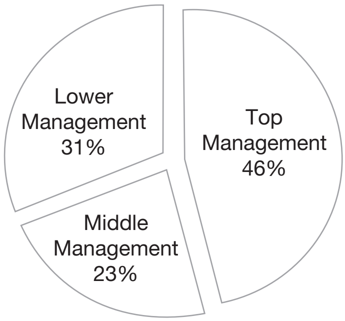
Participants were relatively sophisticated in terms of business skills and self-presentation as well as having at least moderately strong English skills. Evidence for this could be found in the simple fact of a presence on LinkedIn maintained by many participants. Because LinkedIn creates "professional modes of interaction" (Papacharissi, 2009), a high percentage of the contacted individuals accepted the survey invitation, as mentioned above. Others managers on LinkedIn responded but declined to participate. This high response rate, accepting and declining, indicates that Japanese managers are receptive to business-related research proposed within the LinkedIn virtual space.

As an intentionally erected barrier to gathering responses from non-Japanese, the survey contained only Japanese (i.e., no English). Thus, accidental or intentional participation by non-Japanese would seem unlikely. No records submitted included patterns or comments that would suggest a participant from outside the target population.

Managerial level was based on three standard categories (top, middle, and lower), corresponding to the classic categorizations of Mahoney et al. (1965). These three levels were specified in descending order of power: owners/founders or their top agents (i.e., CEO), middle managers with tactical level decision-making authority, and frontline supervisors who execute tasks (Boone and Kurtz, 2012; Cyert and March, 1992; Montana and Charnov, 2008; Robbins et al., 2014).

Of the 80 respondents providing information about their rank, 37 were top managers pursuing strategic direction, decision making, creating alliances, and so on. Their job titles included designations such as 会長 and 社長 (president or top manager) as well as 取締役，代表取締役，代表 (executive board members, chairman of the board, and representative agent). This largest group accounted for 46% of all respondents. An additional 18 respondents identified their level between top and lower management with C-level titles such as 執行役員, 役員, 常務執行役員 as well as lower titles such as vice president, legal counsel (本部長, ディレクター), and so on. Lastly, 25 respondents indicated that they were at the lower management level with titles such as directors, group heads, section chiefs, department chiefs (次長, 営業部長, 事業部長, 課長, 部長, 副部長, 購買), and so on (see Figure 1 and Table 2).

Figure 1. Respondents by managerial level.



Of these 80 respondents, 70 provided information specifically clarifying their actions in negotiation. Their comments were interpreted to place the respondent in one of four positions: Final Decision Maker, Lead Negotiator, Team Member, and Team Supporter. The position of Final Decision Maker is described in the negotiation literature regarding the back table or constituents (Adams, 1976; Ross and Lacroix, 1996; Zhang and Kuroda, 1989) and it refers to the person or group who wields power to approve or annul the agreements of even highly authorized negotiators. The Final Decision Maker may take a seat at the table to interact directly with counterparts or may be absent from the table (Ross and Lacroix, 1996). Some negotiators can act independently (i.e., they are simultaneously the Final Decision Maker and the Lead Negotiator). The Lead Negotiator leads and directs interaction with counterparties and has high decision-making authority while organizing and directing a team along with guiding strategic business thinking (Brett et al., 2009; Erauw and Stonier, 2005), although the lead speaking and strategy roles need not be combined in the same person. A negotiation Team Member executes the directions of the leader, contributes skills and knowledge, and interacts with counterparties under the guidance of the Lead Negotiator (Ashcroft, 2004; Brett et al., 2009). The category of Team Supporter covers those remaining individuals who contribute to negotiations but do not directly interact with the counterparties. Table 3 shows the positions and responsibilities of respondents.

The four positions in Table 3 serve as proxies of decision-making power from highest to lowest. Final Decision Makers include those currently or in past professional work in this position. This group included 40 individuals, or 57% of the 70 respondents who included this information. Lead Negotiator roles were taken by 18 respondents, or 25% of survey participants. About 15%, or 10 respondents, identified themselves as Team Members with no decision-making or leadership role. Lastly, two individuals (3%) had other supporting

Table 2. Manager role and responsibility.

Role	Responsibility
Top management	Strategy, alliances, major decision making, vision, generalist skills
Middle management	Planning, resource allocation, lower decision making, management, internal negotiation, planning
Lower management	Execution, supervision, specialist skills

Table 3. Negotiator positions and responsibility.

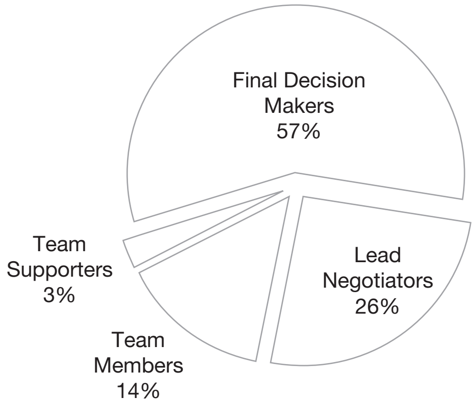
Position	Responsibility
Final Decision Maker	Approves or rejects agreements; may or may not interact with the counterparties; may be the same person as the Lead Negotiator
Lead Negotiator	Organizes and directs the negotiation with strategic business goals; authority is more or less limited unless this person is also the Final Decision Maker
Team Member	Executes tasks as directed; interacts directly with counterparties under the guidance of the Lead Negotiator
Team Supporter	May support the team, but does not interact directly with counterparties

roles such as preparing data. Figure 2 shows the breakdown of respondents by negotiation position.

3 Findings

To discover which behaviors are most and least common among Japanese business negotiators, the frequency of choices offered (Always, Sometimes, Rarely, Never) were calculated. Given the difficulty of defining Sometimes, this item was left out of consideration. Comparing responses for Always with those for Never identified the behaviors most and least likely to be observed, but did little to clarify the remainder of the behaviors. Comparing responses for Always with those for Rarely combined with Never provides a clearer stratification of the data. Behaviors always found by a high percentage of respondents to be always in negotiations are considered to be frequently in use. Japanese negotiators,

Figure 2. Respondents by negotiation position.



and perhaps foreign businesspeople, should thus expect to encounter these very often. Only two such behaviors were found. Another two were characterized as being observed always by only a low percentage of respondents and never by a high percentage. Negotiators need not expect these to surface, but they should nonetheless be cautiously aware of them. The rest of the behaviors investigated, 18 in total, lie somewhere in between. To characterize the behaviors in an easy-to-use fashion, they were identified with one of three categories: Expect to encounter, Do not expect to encounter, and May encounter. One behavior, number 13, was observed Sometimes by all participants and therefore is considered to be one that may be encountered.

A closer look at the frequency of observations helps clarify some of the behaviors. Figure 3 separates survey items 3, 5, 19, and 22, which are unlikely to be encountered. Of these, 19 and 22 are so uncommon as to be absent from the standard playbook of negotiation participants. Similarly, two behaviors are clearly differentiated by their likely presence, namely items 2 and 26.

Expect to encounter (high value for Always) and Do not expect to encounter (high value for Rarely+Never) are clear in Figure 3, whereas the middle descriptor, May encounter, demands further qualification. By viewing the same data with Rarely+Never on the vertical axis and Always on the horizontal axis, four groups are obvious on the scatter chart in Figure 4. The four behaviors with high Rarely+Never scores and low Always scores are at the upper left. At the far right are the two items very frequently observed. The larger circle encompasses a group that more respondents see Never or Rarely and fewer see Always. The smaller circle covers a group of behaviors that are seen Always by more individuals but Rarely and Never by a smaller number. The survey items in the larger circle that are less often observed include items 4, 7, 10, 11, 12,

Figure 3. Frequency chart.

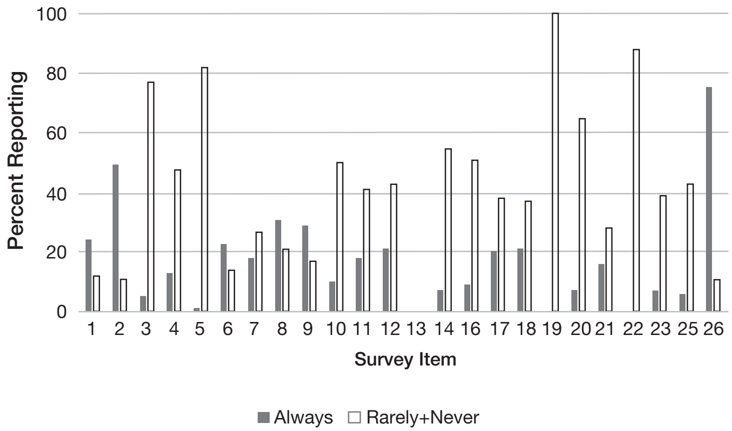
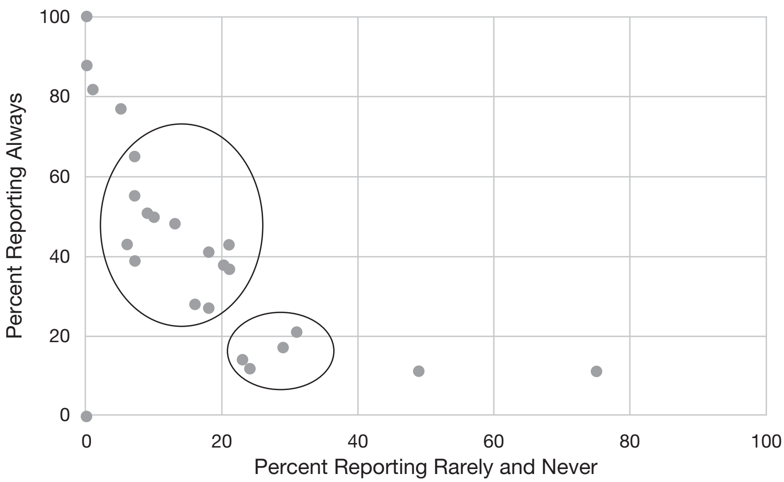


Figure 4. Behavior plot.



14, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 23, and 25. The items in the smaller circle that are somewhat more likely to be observed include items 1, 6, 8, and 9. Academic readers will appreciate the apparent difference in behaviors as a guidepost for future research directions. However, the wise practitioner will keep all 17 items firmly in sight. The data referred to in Figure 4 are detailed in Table 4.

Table 4. Behaviors in order of frequency observed in intracultural Japanese business negotiation.

Survey item	Survey item, in English	Percentage that *always* observed this	Percentage that *sometimes* observed this	Percentage that *rarely* observed this	Percentage that *never* observed this	Current status
1	Compromise	24	63	11	1	May encounter
2	Collaboration	49	41	11	0	Expect to encounter
3	Haggling	5	18	53	24	Do not expect to encounter
4	Anchoring	13	40	40	8	May encounter
5	Lies	1	17	35	47	Do not expect to encounter
6	Teams with more than three members	23	63	14	0	May encounter
7	Easy sharing of information	18	54	25	2	May encounter
8	New value creation	31	48	19	2	May encounter
9	Strong positive emotions	29	53	17	0	May encounter
10	Strong negative emotions	10	39	44	6	May encounter

11	Substantive progress made after normal work hours	18	41	35	6	May encounter
12	Direct (linear) logic in use	21	36	39	4	May encounter
13	Indirect (non-linear) logic in use	0	100	0	0	May encounter
14	High respect for women if in the team	7	39	26	29	May encounter
16	Gaps longer than one month between responses	9	40	35	16	May encounter
17	Rush to complete before the end of the financial year	20	42	28	10	May encounter
18	Deep investi-gation before negotiations	21	42	26	11	May encounter
19	Threats	0	0	25	75	Do not expect to encounter

(*Continued*)

Table 4. *(Continued)*

Survey item	Survey item, in English	Percentage that *always* observed this	Percentage that *sometimes* observed this	Percentage that rarely observed this	Percentage that *never* observed this	Current status
20	Requests for discounts or special conditions after agreement has been reached	7	28	36	29	May encounter
21	Hidden decision maker	16	56	24	4	May encounter
22	Surprises, shocks	0	11	56	32	Do not expect to encounter
23	*Naniwabushi* used in order to get concessions	7	55	31	8	May encounter
25	No verbal response to a proposal	6	51	31	12	May encounter
26	Formal seating order by seniority or hierarchical position	75	15	8	3	Expect to encounter

Table 5. Survey items with strong differentiation among subpopulations by managerial level.

Survey item	Manager subpopulation choices	Comment
4. Anchoring	Lower managers, Always: 16% Middle managers, Always: 16% Top managers, Always: 8%	Lower and middle managers were more likely to see this behavior.
10. Strong negative emotions	Lower managers, Always: 10% Middle managers, Always: 0% Top managers, Always: 16%	Middle managers see much less of this and 67% claimed rarely or never to have observed it as opposed to 40–45% of lower and top managers.
14. High respect for women if in the team	Lower managers, Always: 4% Middle managers, Always: 11% Top managers, Always: 5%	The results may indicate that women are not given special treatment.
20. Requests for discounts or special conditions after agreement has been reached	Lower managers, Never: 32%; Always: 0%; Middle managers, Never: 33%; Always: 0%; Top managers, Never: 22%; Always: 14%	Top staff see this more often, possibly because such requests are routed to them.
22. Surprises, shocks	Lower managers, Never: 40% Middle managers, Never: 11% Top managers, Never: 35%	Lower and top managers may not be exposed to these or may not be sensitive to these.
23. *Naniwabushi* used in order to get concessions	Lower managers, Always: 0% Middle managers, Always: 16% Top managers, Always: 5%	Middle managers see this somewhat more.

3.1 Differences among subpopulations

Ordinal data from the scalar responses were collected in the survey. Such data, however, cannot be subjected to regression analyses because ordinal data have by definition no numerical value and no intervals between values can be established. Nevertheless, they can be summarized in the form of percentages, as in Table 4, or in terms of frequency of response.

Table 6. Survey items with strong differentiation among subpopulations by position in the negotiation.

Survey item	Position subpopulation choices	Comment
5. Lies	Position 2, Never: 16.7% Position 3, Never: 40% Position 4, Never: 47.5%	A much larger percentage of those with final decision-making experience never observe lies than do team members. The reason may be that some of these individuals are removed from face-to-face discussions.
9. Strong positive emotions	Position 2, Always: 16.7% Position 3, Always: 40% Position 4, Always: 27.5%	The team leaders appear to experience this more often. No respondents at all claimed never to see this.
14. High respect for women if in the team	Position 2, Never: 22.2% Position 3, Never: 50% Position 4, Never: 20%	Half of team leaders do not observe this behavior, a sharp difference compared with other positions.
20. Requests for discounts or special conditions after agreement has been reached	Position 2, Rarely and Never: 45% Position 3, Rarely and Never: 30% Position 4, Rarely and Never: 75%	The final decision makers observe this much less frequently; such requests may be made to lower positions who block the request from reaching the final authority.

For a number of survey items, clear differences are visible among subpopulations when considered either by managerial level or by position in the negotiation. Table 5 describes those differences by managerial level. Table 6 identifies and discusses some of the differences evident among the subpopulations described by position in the negotiation. The results found in these tables and the lack of strong explanations provide starting points for future research.

Table 7. Pass through of behaviors over time.

Survey item	Post-bubble Japanese–Japanese	Post-bubble Japanese–foreign	Pass through	Currently Japanese–Japanese
1. Compromise	Yes (DeMente, 2004; Hirahara and Kannonji, 2002)	Yes (DeMente, 2004)	→	May encounter
2. Collaboration	Yes (DeMente, 2004; Hirahara and Kannonji, 2002)	Yes (DeMente, 2004)	→	Expect to encounter
3. Haggling	Yes (Alston and Takei, 2005)	Yes (Alston and Takei, 2005; Zhang and Kuroda, 1989)	**No**	Do not expect to encounter
4. Anchoring	Not in the literature or interviews	Yes (Alston and Takei, 2005; Nishiyama, 1999)	→	May encounter
5. Lies	Not in the literature or interviews	Yes (DeMente, 2004; Nishiyama, 1999)	**No**	Do not expect to encounter
6. Teams with more than three members	Not in the literature or interviews	Yes (Alston and Takei, 2005; Carté and Fox, 2008; Nishiyama, 2000)	→	May encounter
7. Easy sharing of information	Not in the literature or interviews	Yes Brett and Okumura, 1998; Nishiyama, 1999; DeMente, 2004; Alston and Takei, 2005)	→	May encounter
8. New value creation	Not in the literature or interviews	Not in the literature or interviews	**NA**	May encounter

(*Continued*)

Table 7. *(Continued)*.

Survey item	Post-bubble Japanese–Japanese	Post-bubble Japanese–foreign	Pass through	Currently Japanese–Japanese
9. Strong positive emotions	Not in the literature or interviews	Yes (Alston and Takei, 2005; DeMente, 2004; Nishiyama, 1999)	→	May encounter
10. Strong negative emotions	Not in the literature or interviews	Yes (Alston and Takei, 2005; DeMente, 2004; Nishiyama, 1999)	→	May encounter
11. Substantive progress made after normal work hours	Not in the literature or interviews	Yes (Alston and Takei, 2005; Carté and Fox, 2008; Nishiyama, 1999)	→	May encounter
12. Direct (linear) logic in use	Yes (Hirahara and Kannonji, 2002)	Yes (interviews)	→	May encounter
13. Indirect (non-linear) logic in use	Yes (DeMente, 1994; Nishiyama, 1999; Yotsukura, 2003)	Yes (Alston and Takei, 2005; DeMente, 2004; Nishiyama, 1999)	→	May encounter
14. High respect for women if in the team	Not in the literature or interviews	Yes (Carté and Fox, 2008)	→	May encounter
16. Gaps longer than one month between responses	Not in the literature or interviews	Yes (Carté and Fox, 2008)	→	May encounter
17. Rush to complete before the end of the financial year	Not in the literature or interviews	Yes (interviews)	**NA**	May encounter

18. Deep investigation before negotiations	Not in the literature or interviews	Yes (Brett and Okumura, 1998; DeMente, 2004; Nishiyama, 1999)	➔	May encounter
19. Threats	Yes (Hirahara and Kannonji, 2002)	Yes (Alston and Takei, 2005)	**No**	Do not expect to encounter
20. Requests for discounts or special conditions after agreement has been reached	Not in the literature or interviews	Yes (Nishiyama, 1999)	➔	May encounter
21. Hidden decision maker	Not in the literature or interviews	Yes (Alston and Takei, 2005; DeMente, 2004; Nishiyama, 1999)	➔	May encounter
22. Surprises, shocks	Not in the literature or interviews	Yes (DeMente, 2004; Nishiyama, 1999)	**No**	Do not expect to encounter
23. *Naniwabushi* used in order to get concessions	Not in the literature or interviews	Yes (Alston and Takei, 2005; DeMente, 2004; Nishiyama, 1999)	➔	May encounter
25. No verbal response to a proposal	Not in the literature or interviews	Yes (Alston and Takei, 2005; Carté and Fox, 2008)	➔	May encounter
26. Formal seating order by seniority or importance	Not in the literature or interviews	Yes (Alston and Takei, 2005; DeMente, 2004)	➔	Expect to encounter

Note: Direct experience of the author in Japan and interviews with experienced Japanese businesspeople contributed to the inclusion of items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 20, 21, 23, and 25. The negotiation literature not specifically related to Japan also contributed to the inclusion of items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 19, and 25.

3.2 Comments by respondents

Comments, in Japanese and English, were left by about one-third of respondents. One remarkable comment refers to the overall purpose of a negotiation. Respondent 38 wrote that "Japanese people tend to have great interest in 'Why it is' (the reason). Only after they are satisfied with the answer is it possible to discuss the main subject." This comment indicates that even before the conversation becomes a business negotiation, there may be a general discussion, or at least unilateral consideration, about whether and how the organizations and their goals might fit together. The start of a negotiation is therefore the first exploration of potential and alliances for some Japanese business actors. This behavior at the outset of a negotiation does not appear in the literature on pre-negotiation preferences and expectations, although empathy in negotiations has been summarized and further investigated (Galinsky et al., 2008). It has previously been associated with Japan only in casual business writing (DeMente, 2004) and not in the academic literature. As such, this tenuous but compelling finding invites further empirical investigation.

4 Discussion

Returning to the research questions posed in the literature review, clear answers have been found.

1. Can we catalog behaviors that Japanese businesspeople experience and therefore expect based on frequent observations by practitioners in Japanese–Japanese business negotiations?

Yes, it is possible to catalog behaviors that Japanese businesspeople expect based on frequent experience in Japanese–Japanese business negotiations. The two behaviors identified as Expect to encounter in Table 7 are likely to surface in most business negotiations. Additionally, it would be reasonable to expect the 17 items identified as May encounter to appear. The implication for business practitioners is that they should prepare for these behaviors in Japanese–Japanese business interactions. Together these 19 items form the start of a catalog of behaviors that should be expanded and refined with additional investigation.

Some new items have entered the catalog of the post-bubble period and some have apparently left it. Since the bubble and post-bubble catalogs were never compiled, we can only infer their content. While the sources in Table 7 are limited for Japanese–Japanese interactions (the inclusion of survey items was discussed in Section 2.1), this table shows what has passed from previous to current practice and what appears to have entered anew. Items 15 and 24 were removed, as the wording may have been unclear. In summary, according to Table 7, the current catalog is much like the previous one albeit with some clear differences. These differences are discussed below in response to research question two.

2. Are all the practices identified in the post-bubble literature present or have some disappeared?

As seen in Table 7, the four practices presented in the literature on the post-bubble era appear to be extremely rare. Haggling (3), lies (5), and surprises and shocks (22) are all now unlikely to be met in Japanese–Japanese business negotiations according to the survey results. While Japanese studies consider haggling to be unusual in negotiations (Alston and Takei, 2005), it is identified in the literature on Japanese behaviors with other Japanese businesspeople. Nonetheless, it does not appear to be part of the usual business culture currently. Lies are mentioned, especially from the point of view of the literature on Japanese interactions with non-Japanese; however, these may have been face-saving untruths rather than substantive deceits. Indeed, this survey shows that lies are not perceived by Japanese to play a role in Japanese–Japanese business negotiations. Surprises and shocks could be misinterpreted by non-Japanese observers. Although lies figure heavily as a complaint by non-Japanese in the literature on interactions with non-Japanese, they are not observed by Japanese among Japanese. Surprises are not even mentioned in the literature on Japanese–Japanese interactions.

Behaviors that appear to be close to extinction include threats (item 19); however, there is no concrete empirical evidence that they were more or less common in intracultural negotiations during the post-bubble economy years. Threats are mentioned only once in the literature on Japanese–Japanese interactions (Hirahara and Kannonji, 2002) and only twice in the literature on Japanese–foreign interactions (Alston and Takei, 2005; Nishiyama, 1999). Nishiyama (1999) states that threats are offensive to Japanese counterparties, but does not delve into the use of threats in Japanese–Japanese situations.

Behaviors that have survived include the remaining items on the survey. However, the literature, as discussed above, has focused on Japanese interactions with non-Japanese and is unclear about behaviors previously common in intracultural Japanese business conversations. The reason for the continuity of so many behaviors is not obvious and may be the result of slow change, uniform training, a lack of training, or popular perceptions about business behavior. Indeed, despite changes in the business environment and society at large, a broad shift in negotiation behaviors seems not to have taken place.

3. Are there behaviors at play that were not expected by Japanese participants and non-Japanese observers?

Some of the behaviors at play were not identified in the literature or in the interviews before the survey. The identification of these behaviors represents new data contributed by this study. These include the frequent use of direct logic, new value creation, and displays of strong emotions. All these were scored as generally or widely in use according to the survey results, suggesting that observers, Japanese and non-Japanese, should change their perceptions of Japanese negotiation behaviors. The following discussion about specific negotiation behaviors is limited by the relative lack of qualitative comments by respondents. Indeed, even the comments captured were not generally helpful for understanding why a behavior is in or out of use.

Hidden decision makers (item 21): This issue has been proposed by several sources in the literature, as noted in Tables 1 and 7. The Japanese respondents in this survey confirmed that the practice remains frequent. Thus, this widespread practice is perhaps easily detected by the sensitive antennae of Japanese businesspeople, whereas it may remain confusing for non-Japanese observers, as implied by its presence in the literature.

Strong negative and positive emotions (items 9 and 10): Although non-Japanese observers generally claim that Japanese are not emotional (Hall and Hall, 1987, pp. 125–126) and that non-Japanese businesspeople should never show strong emotion (Alston and Takei, 2005; Nishiyama, 1999), the respondents found displays of strong positive emotion to be definitely at play. Furthermore, displays of strong negative emotion are common according to the survey results. This finding contradicts most casual commenters and established cross-cultural sociologists such as Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2012), who describe Japan as neutral, rather than affective, and therefore unlikely to produce strong displays of emotion. Graham (1993), however, finds that Americans are simply unable to detect the emotions displayed by Japanese negotiation partners; affective expressions are present, but it is difficult for the less sensitive non-Japanese to notice. Further, Brett and Okumura (1998) hint at the frustration among Japanese intracultural negotiators, but do not determine whether this is expressed or observed during negotiations. The finding of the current study is somewhat supported by that of Lee et al. (2012) that Japanese negotiators do endorse emotional, as well as logical, appeals for distributive gain. Additionally, rank may play a role as displays by higher managers to lower managers may be more common (Schlunze et al., 2014).

Logical style (items 12 and 13): Although non-Japanese observers and even Japanese practitioners who commented in this research see a logic deficit, straightforward direct logic is clearly at play. Direct and indirect logic approaches are merely strategic choices for communication and problem solving from which Japanese practitioners can select. Indeed, the negotiation textbook of Hirahara and Kannonji (2002) proposes logic (論理) as a persuasion technique.

High respect for women if in the team (item 14): The responses showed that few managers observed this. The numbers reporting that they never saw this differed by managerial level, with 32% of lower managers never observing this compared with only 22% of middle and upper managers. The difference may be the result of a generational shift as younger staff see different behaviors toward women than older staff. One reason may be that women are accorded the same status as men in many organizations in the current business world in Japan (Haghirian, 2010). More research should thus be conducted into this issue and its inverse, namely the negative treatment of women during negotiations in Japan.

Post-agreement requests for concessions (item 20): Respondent 8 wrote, "Special treatment after the contract is signed is only possible when a true relationship exists. If a change in conditions (such as an exchange rate fluctuation) occurs, a discussion is held most of the time." This respondent sees such requests as eminently possible when relationships and events meet. However, the foreign writers noted above have largely taken a different attitude toward such concessions, expressing frequent frustration at what is perceived as a distributive tactic rather than a relationship-building process.

Based on the foregoing, some tentative conclusions and signposts for theory development can be suggested. Previous research has left the impression that Japanese negotiation teams are monolithic in purpose and possibly in behavior, as hinted at in some texts (DeMente, 1994; March, 1988; Zhang and Kuroda, 1989) as well as two cases presented briefly about emotions among Japanese negotiators (Browaeys and Price, 2011). However, the differentiation among respondents by managerial level and position refute the notion that individuals have the same experiences, observations, and insights. The data instead suggest that the team is a dynamic place in which individuals are impacted by their negotiation position and managerial level. Causation for such differences might lie in their differing responsibilities in the negotiation process. Final decision makers may not see so much of the face-to-face interactions and would thus be insulated from some tactical ploys to gain advantage or to build relationships. During face-to-face interactions, the team leader may be targeted by different behaviors than team members. For example, the counterparties may seek to build relationships and trust with the highest available authority, but may attempt to gain distributive advantages by taking riskier behaviors with lower ranked team members. While compelling, these tentative hypotheses cannot be confirmed by the data of the present study. They may, however, be further developed and investigated in the future.

5 Conclusions

Although most behaviors in Japanese–Japanese negotiation have continued over time, the results of this survey of Japanese businesspeople contradict and even reverse four expectations about the Japanese business community and their negotiation interactions that appear repeatedly in the literature. The information generated in this research is the more remarkable because almost half of the study population are top strategists in their organizations such as CEOs, chairs, and other executive board members.

One conclusion is that the academic community, international and Japanese speaking, is not closely in touch with the reality of the Japanese business world. The expectations of the academic world seem to be based largely on older research and the insights of sociologists discussing broad cultural patterns that do not necessarily play out in the business community as in other segments of a culture.

Another conclusion may be that the concepts in the survey are understood differently by the survey respondents and observers of Japan. The concepts are part of complex schemata that might be different among Japanese and non-Japanese observers. Even seemingly objective issues such as truth and deception might be understood through different schemata. When these schemata do not match, there may be misunderstanding and conflict (Beamer, 1995).

Some items, for example the rush to complete agreements before the end of the business year, have not been identified by the literature at all; yet, 62% of our respondents identified this as occurring sometimes or always. Thus, a previously unrecognized behavior has come to light. More revelations may be found in future surveys.

The implications for Japanese negotiators are that they can reliably expect to experience certain negotiation behaviors from other Japanese identified as widely in use in this report. At the same time, they may not expect to see other behaviors; those would be unusual or even upsetting to experience. Knowing what behaviors are widely in use helps Japanese negotiators better adjust their understanding and positioning regarding other Japanese counterparties.

The implications for non-Japanese negotiators include tuning their antennae to expect certain behaviors from Japanese, thereby avoiding the misinterpretation of neutral or benevolent behaviors. At the same time, these negotiators might adjust more smoothly to Japanese behaviors in order to know what to expect in advance.

5.1 Limitations

The author acknowledges certain limitations of this study such as the lack of information on the sector and activity of the businesses represented among respondents and a study population too broadly defined. A weak point of survey-based research is the survey format itself. Lengthy surveys may capture more data, but garner fewer responses as demotivated participants renege during the process. Thus, not all possible negotiation behaviors could be included in this survey. An improvement would be to allow participants to add behaviors and identify the frequency with which they employ and/or observe them.

Using self-reported data unconfirmed by independent analysts is also a limitation. Such an improvement would, however, require the collection of voice and/or video data, something the inherently private nature of business talks makes difficult. In the absence of this, the observation of behaviors by business practitioners remains an appropriate data collection approach.

This survey sought only to identify what observers notice. It is thus a starting point for creating a baseline understanding of the behaviors encountered in Japanese–Japanese intracultural business negotiations. The survey did not attempt to identify preferences based on situational factors such as power balance, urgency, stakes, relationships, geographic locations within Japan, or other factors.

Surveys are additionally weak regarding the collection of rich qualitative data. While the survey allowed opportunities for comments, these were not always on topics of immediate interest. Face-to-face interviews would help dig deeper into the issues raised in this study. Finally, despite the process of dual translation and iterations of development and testing, some respondents indicated that the survey was awkward. Therefore, future surveys should be developed not merely with testing by the study population, but with their direct input.

5.2 Next steps

Many issues should be researched and discussed regarding Japanese intracultural negotiations and business interactions with non-Japanese. One issue is determining whether Japanese behave differently with Japanese than with non-Japanese and the extent to which they do so. Such an investigation should follow up on the research of Adair et al. (2009) in which the cognitive schema of Japanese and other business negotiators are compared. Other issues to be investigated include the impact of mediating factors such as relationship, perceived power balance, urgency, stakes, and negotiator experience.

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Appendix

Survey items in Japanese as they appeared on the survey and the English versions.	
Survey item, Japanese	**Survey item, English**
妥協	1. Compromise
協力	2. Collaboration
討論、言い争い	3. Haggling
金額交渉をする場合、最初の言い値を思い切り安く（または高く）提示する	4. Anchoring
嘘、偽りが盛り込まれた商談	5. Lies
３人以上のチーム	6. Teams with more than three members
情報シェアが簡単に行える環境	7. Easy sharing of information
新たな価値を求める	8. New value creation
肯定的感情が強い	9. Strong positive emotions
否定的感情が強い	10. Strong negative emotions
所定労働時間内で意義のある進展がある	11. Substantive progress made after normal work hours
ダイレクトかつ論理的に商談を行う	12. Direct (linear) logic in use
遠回し、間接的な商談手法をとる	13. Indirect (non-linear) logic in use
チーム内に女性がいれば高い敬意をはらう	14. High respect for women if in the team
商談の決定権をもつ上司がその場の商談にいない場合は、部下が指揮をとり意思決定を行う	15. When the decision-making manager is absent, subordinates take the initiative, assume authority, and make decisions
返信、返答が１ヶ月以上時間を要する	16. Gaps longer than one month between responses
会計年度末前は急いで商談を終わらせる	17. Rush to complete before the end of the financial year
商談前の相手側企業に関する事前調査は綿密に行う	18. Deep investigation before negotiations

(*Continued*)

(*Continued*).	
Survey item, Japanese	**Survey item, English**
脅しや脅迫による商談	19. Threats
契約合意後に割引や特別待遇の要請を行う	20. Requests for discounts or special conditions after agreement has been reached
最終意思決定者が明確ではない -	21. Hidden decision maker
意表をつく	22. Surprises, shocks
義理や人情といった心理的な感情から譲渡につなげる	23. *Naniwabushi* used in order to get concessions
地位の上下関係によって決まる	24. Settled according to rank or hierarchy
提議に関する返答が口頭で行われない	25. No verbal response to a proposal
公式な商談での座席配列は年功または地位の上下関係によって決まる	26. Formal seating order by seniority or hierarchical position