Some Observations on Japanese and American Policing

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The highly successful Japanese and less than successful American policing situations were compared in terms of: historical background, police organization and format, cultural environment, social-cultural background of officers, training, police socialization, and general nature of policing. Positive influences upon Japanese policing were found to be: the nature of the Japanese people; their deliberate recruitment of ideal police candidates—especially recruiting from samurai families; the highly respected paternalistic and benevolent image in Japan of the police as governmental officials; their deliberate socialization of officers into the police fraternity by using pride, duty, and responsibility to ensure professionalism; and their very extensive and thorough academy training in continuity with later field training and performance. It was suggested that in the United States we begin to address our problems in both selection and training by formulating and then enforcing national guidelines similar to those in Japan.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to present the results of a comparison of policing in Japan and the United States in the hope that something might be learned which will benefit us in dealing with our problems here. Though our difficulties are reasonably well known, it is unfortunate that we have looked almost exclusively within our own country for solutions. More should be done in the way of examining the operations of law enforcement elsewhere.

Why study the Japanese? They have a totally different language and culture. Except for international trade, we do not appear to have much in common. The tremendous potential of the examination of the Japanese situation lies in the observation that Japan has experienced many of the same characteristics which we have used as excuses for the miserable plight of American policing: a history of police corruption, an extremely high population density, a violent historical tradition, and a rapidly declining economy. Yet in spite of these, the Japanese have a crime rate

and a police institution which serve as models for the world. It would be of value to determine how they have accomplished this.

Findings

In respect to law enforcement, Japan is a completely different world. Part of the reason can be found by examining the historical backgrounds of policing in Japan and the United States.

Historical Backgrounds of Modern Policing

The Japanese police prior to the end of World War II were, for the most part, corrupt, incompetent and dictatorial. With the occupation of Japan, the United States attempted to reorganize the Japanese police. The Japanese government was ordered to create a separate and independent police force in every sizeable community in Japan, much like we have in the United States. There was no provision for centralization or compulsory cooperation. The result of attempting to impose such a system on a country with centuries of feudal history and a prefectural orientation was predictable chaos. After the occupation, the Japanese people were given the choice—which they overwhelmingly approved—of re-centralizing their police (Wildes, 1953). The eventual result was the creation of in 1954 of the National Public Safety Commission as an overseeing body, with the various prefectural police under the central authority of the National Police Agency (Daizo, 1975). This organization of the Japanese police remains today.

As important as this reorganization was, after the end of World War II something else happened which more drastically effected the Japanese police than any other event in their history—with the end of the military after the war, many samurai men joined the newly formed Japanese police. The samurai influence upon Japanese policing is enormous. Researchers and writers surveyed in this study made little mention of this event, and this writer learned of it only by accident through personal dealings with the Japanese police while studying in Japan.

Centuries ago, Japan had nearly a caste system. The highest class, second only to the rulers, were the samurai. Unlike the sword-weilding fighters of the movies, they were also a social class of people with a code of life which is characterized by honesty, courage, devotion to duty, and kindness. Such factors made these men excellent warriors. With the breakdown of the feudal system, the samurai moved into the military, then into the Japanese police after World War II. The following point cannot be sufficiently emphasized: *the most important thing which determines the quality of the police is the quality of people who become police officers.*

Some historical points of American policing are crucial to the understanding of our current dilemma. One is that we never really wanted police forces in this country. They were created reluctantly a few at a time, vested with increasing authority and duties, and grudgingly accepted as a necessary evil. Efforts to centralize our police meet with a paranoid fear of a "police state." The result is nearly 40,000 separate law enforcement agencies scattered across the country. Another important observation for our purpose here is that our police often look into history to the western sheriff for a model to emulate rather than looking forward; so do our people.

After the western period, full-time police forces were created across the U.S. in most cities. When prohibition was enacted, the professionalization of law enforcement was set back many years. Shortly after, the Depression and New Deal era arrived. The Depression forced college educated professionals

into the police ranks; the New Deal provided the funds to modernize the police. (This brief insightful sketch is provided by Bopp and Schultz, 1972, who also emphasized further professionalization after World War II with the creation of college law enforcement programs, first in California and then spreading across the country.) In the 1960s, American law enforcement suffered more serious setbacks, and for the first time its role became a major issue in this country. That issue has not yet been resolved.

In summary, both the Japanese and American police had dark beginnings characterized by citizen abuse, corruption, and incompetence. Through major historical events the Japanese were given a new birth. The American police were not, and our problems continued to develop. The ranks of the Japanese police were enriched by large numbers of high quality men especially suited to law enforcement—the ranks of American police, for the most part, were not.

Format and Organization of Modern Policing

Japan has a National Public Safety Commission which oversees law enforcement in that country. To perform actual supervision, the National Police Agency was created which directs and supervises the 39 prefectural police. The National Police Agency serves mainly to fix standards and to coordinate administation through six regional bureaus. It does not function on the operations level, though it is staffed by police officials. Actual police operations are located at the perfectural level where constant close control and supervision is exercised by the National Police Agency. The Agency is characterized by standardized testing, recruitment, training, administrative structure, and actual street police operations.

The situation in the United States is completely different. We have federal law enforcement agencies with limited specialized jurisdictions which are under the control of different federal departments. The states have their own law enforcement agencies which are often separate from each other and are also under the control of different state bureaus. Our counties have separate agencies under the control of different departments. The cities generally have only one agency each, controlled by the city government. Federal, state, county, and city agencies have no control over each other or agencies below their level. The result is nearly 40,000 autonomous agencies which average less than 10 sworn officers each. Agency size ranges from one to many thousands. Though the states have created boards to set minimum standards for recruitment and training within their states, for the most part there is little standardization across the U.S. Educational requirements range from no requirements to advanced college degrees. Training time varies from a few weeks to many months, often with no standardized criterion to ensure learning. Recruit screening may be uncontrolled due to political appointments or extremely sophisticated employing expensive methods such as psychiatric evaluations and highly competitive examinations. It is difficult to find a valid generalization with which to characterize American police.

In summary, the Japanese police are an identifiable unit which operates on the prefectural level, and are controlled and administered by the national government. The American police are multilevel and fragmented; they are controlled and administered almost individually with little standardization.

Cultural Environments of Policing

Generally speaking, the role of government in Japan is much different than that in the U.S. In the U.S. it is a natural extension of the will of the people, and is viewed as an in-dwelling function of society. The function of the government in Japan is to lead, shape and tutor. The prestige of government officials is very high in Japan. The Japanese police, then, derive some of their respect from their status as government servants. Japanese police officers are much more than enforcers of the law. They possess "enormous moral authority" as teachers in the shaping of conduct to conform to agreed-upon community expectations.

It may be difficult to imagine how such a seemingly lighthanded role could bring people into conformity. In Japanese culture, security is found in being accepted by the family, the neighborhood, the work group, and by society. A good example of this is the near impossibility of obtaining employment in Japan by what we call "knocking on doors." The Japanese must have the support and recommendation of family, neighborhood, school, etc. This necessary group support also applies to admission to college and marriage. Any kind of prosperity, and sometimes actual survival, requires this acceptance. Therefore, fear of exclusion is very real (Bayley, 1976). These factors account for not only the cultural environment and role of the Japanese police, but as will be seen, the behavior of the police within their own group.

American government is described by Bayley (1976) as created reluctantly to accomplish particular objectives. We believe that public officials must be closely watched and that the more power they possess, the more dangerous they are. This has historical roots which can clearly be traced to our early experiences with England. It is the main reason for our fragmented police agencies and is much of the reason for our fear of the police today. We boast that we are governed by laws, not by people, and we use the law to define the role of public servants, to limit their power and discretion, and to solve social problems. In fact, we seem to have an almost blind faith in the law. Enactment of criminal statutes is usually our first step rather than a last resort to solving social problems. But we certainly have little trust in the legitimacy of the law, though we have much faith in its power.

This paradox can be explained. The government of this country is strongly influenced by the legal profession. Not only our legislators, but also many of our state governors, mayors of large cities, and high governmental officials have a background of legal training. They quite naturally tend to see the law as the solution to problems, and laws are enacted for every purpose. But the public has mixed emotions about these laws. Historically, we rebelled against the laws of England. That rebellion gave birth to the United States as an independent nation. Texas rebelled against Mexico. Our young adults rebelled against the Viet Nam war and the laws which said they must fight in it. In the United States, rebellion against unpopular law or government is a source of national pride. We obey laws and support our governmental officials when we agree with them and when such obedience and support is to our personal advantage. The U.S. is characterized by many different subcultural groups, races, attitudes, and life orientations. The result is that what may be seen by one as an advantage, may be seen by another as an obstacle. Our attitude toward the police takes on various manifestations. One of the best characterizations of American police officers is that they are "Rorschachs in blue."

In summary, the American police have the authority of human-made law, the legitimacy of which is open to question and to be decided upon by each individual. The Japanese police possess the enormous weight of "an unspoken moral consensus" (Bayley, 1976).

Social-Cultural Backgrounds of the Police

It was exphasized earlier that the most important determinant of the quality of the police is the quality of people who become police officers. Two of the contributors to a person's quality are social and cultural background. The Japanese, unlike the Americans, recruit their officers mostly from the marginal middle class. Our police come mostly from the working class, with some recruitment from the lower and middle classes. Japanese recruitment with respect to social class is deliberate; where ours is not (Bayley, 1976). Further, the Japanese middle class not only contains the samurai families, but also contains the conservative attitudes most in line with the moral views of the people. This middle class in Japan is also the most numerous class. Police recruitment in our country is slowly changing toward the middle class.

The police in our country also tend to be conservative but for a different reason than the Japanese. Japan recruits such people deliberately, while in the U.S. police work attracts the unusually conservative.

It might appear that the result is the same—it is not. Japanese police officers represent the views of the people, while our police do not. This observation is supported by Skolnick (1975) in his "Sketch of the Policeman's Working Personality." Also, the conservative Japanese police bring into police work character traits which make them particularly suited to the work. Some examples of these traits are honesty, courage, kindness, devotion to duty, and thier willingness to conform to society. This is less true of American police officers.

Training of Police Officers

Another striking difference between the police forces of Japan and the United States is the Japanese police forces' total lack of college preparatory programs for law enforcement. In the U.S. there are well over 1,000 such courses, with the number still growing. More important, it is widely believed here that the college program is an indispensable part of police preparation.

However, Japanese training is far more extensive, thorough, and practical than ours. It is also standardized, while our training is not. In Japanese academy training the recruits are confined for one year. They are trained about 12 hours a day, including part of Sunday. After this year of training, they are sent to the street for one year to be very closely supervised and trained further. They then return to the academy for at least three more months. During their career, they receive ongoing in-service training. By contrast, American training is far shorter, and the nature and content of it is much different. Japanese academy training concentrates largely upon indoctrinating the recruit with a proper attitude and role concept, the importance of community relations, as well as the more technical aspects of law enforcement (Daizo, 1975). American academies do almost the opposite, providing extensive training in firearms, law, and other "hands on" skills.

To summarize, Japanese training is thorough and standardized. It prepares the officer to work with the community. American training varies greatly across the country and works to prepare the police officer to perform police tasks

and to become a member of a "closed fraternity."

Police Socialization

Thus far a major factor has not been dealt with—a factor that, more than training or education, determines police performance—the socialization process within law enforcement which has the effect of shaping the recruit into the image of other officers in the "closed fraternity." The results of police socialization are much different in Japan and the United States.

As discussed in the cultural environment of policing, socialization into group orientation begins almost at birth in Japan. When recruits enter the academy, they are ready to be socialized into the work group. The academy itself has an excellent opportunity to do this because of the absolute control it has over recruits during their first year in police work. It begins at once. According to Bayley (1976):

> Responsible behavior is secured in Japan by developing allegiance of the individual to the work group in such a way as to legitimize its disciplinary claims on him and to intensify his feeling of obligation not to offend against it. The work group in Japan dominates personal life. It has the emotional overtones of a family.

The influence of the American police academy on recruits cannot compare to the influence of the Japanese academy. First, it does not include the time controls that the Japanese academy have over recruits. Second, it does not carry the weight and influence as part of working life that the Japanese academy carries. This is not to imply that American police academies do not attempt to mould their recruits. But a glaring difference exists. Completely different agents are used in Japan and the United States to socialize the police: Japanese officers are unified through pride and responsibility (Bayley, 1976), our police are unified through fear of a perceived ever-present danger and through societal rejection.

When recruits leave the academy and start to work, another major difference emerges between the Japanese and American police. For the Japanese, the change to street duty is intermeshed and coordinated with training in the academy. Officers continue to be housed together in mandatory dormatories for several months after beginning street duty. Every effort is made to relate and unify what is learned in the academy with field experience. In the U.S., as soon as recruits arrive on the street they usually are told to forget most of what they learned in the academy because it is impractical. They are impressed with two things which they must remember to survive: that police work is terribly dangerous, and that they can expect no help or support from the public. In other words, the police are left with but one hope to protect themselves and do their job—each other. It is these two things more than anything else which provide for American police socialization. The force of this socialization is so strong that it is capable of undoing both the results of college education and academy training. The American police, too, must conform if they are to survive; but their survival concern is more physical where that of the Japanese is more social. Consider the following observation of Manning and Van Mannen (1978).

> Even the introduction of better educated and more highly trained recruits has provided precious little encouragement for those seeking to alter the police culture from the inside. This latter point is particularly crucial, for it suggests that there are powerful means available within the occu-

> pation that act to systematically discourage innovation while they encourage the status quo.

The Japanese police do not apparently suffer as a result of lack of college programs compared to American police for two basic reasons. First, the Japanese obtain what is essential from thorough training and cultural values. Second, much of that which is provided in the American college program is undone by the police as soon as the recruit arrives on the street. Possibly a short diversion for a personal, yet typical, example is justified. One afternoon in one of this writer's college classes, a student stated that when he obtained his degree and entered law enforcement, he was going to try to change some of the ideas of the men running the agency which he entered. Another student in the class, a police officer, gave him some advice: "No you're not. You are going to keep your mouth shut and wait until those old fools die before you try to change anything. If you don't, you're going to get fired!"

Although both the Japanese and American police are strongly socialized into the work group, the Japanese conform because it is natural for them to do so. There, pride and responsibility are used as agents of unification. Japanese police are socialized deliberately into the work group because it facilitates better policing. American police are "driven inward against their will" and conform to the often antiquated and counterproductive existing police culture because it is necessary to survive on the job, especially in the face of perceived ever-present danger and lack of community support (Bayley, 1976).

General Nature of Police Work

The Japanese people usually refer to their police as "Omawari-San." This roughly corresponds to "Mr. Walk-about." The newest term for our police is "the rollers." Both describe what people usually see them doing. The difference is obvious. Bayley (1976) provides a good analogy:

> An American policeman is like a fireman; he responds when he must. A Japanese policeman is more like a postman; he has a duty round of low key activities that relate him to the lives of the people among whom he works.

Japanese police perform almost all their duties on foot, working out of police substations located in practically every neighborhood. The penetration of the community by Japanese police is pervasive but quiet. They are seen so often that they are scarcely noticed. American police, with little exception, perform their duties from rolling patrol cars which they seldom leave except in response to a call.

The two biggest reasons for the difference in patrol methods in Japan and the U.S. can be combined. They are: the extent and severity of crime, and the physical characteristics of the area policed. The American police use patrol vehicles because this country has very high rates of serious crimes and a considerable spatial spread of our population across cities and across the country. For the sake of illustration, Japan has a population one-half the size of ours, but the country is about the size of the state of California. In addition, they have a population density in inhabited areas of about ten times that of the U.S. Finally, a much smaller percentage of their city land is devoted to roads than ours. These points deserve mention because so many people complain about the disadvantages of the patrol car in the U.S. without apparently ever stopping to wonder why it was adopted. To dispatch a Japanese officer from a Koban (similar to an American police substation) on foot to deal with a drunk

seven blocks away is feasible. To dispatch an American officer on foot to deal with an armed robbery seven miles away is absurd. Not only do American officers have to travel much farther to problems which are much more serious, but there are so many such calls that there is seldom time to get out and walk around with the people who are not in need of immediate assistance. This point can not be overstated: crime dictates methods of patrol. So does the combination of population distribution and geographical characteristics.

Closely related to the method of patrol is the general style of policing. Japan has an exclusively service style of policing. This style emphasizes continuous contact with the citizens. Japanese police visit each household in the country twice a year and make inquiries. In this way, they are able to meet the respectable people they are protecting in addition to the trouble-makers they encounter on the street. We see virtually none of this in the U.S. and it is unfortunate. How much of our failure to maintain such contact is due to the necessity of dealing with crime in progress and calls for assistance, and how much is due to neglect cannot be determined at present. It is of interest to note that when James Q. Wilson (1968) studied eight representative communities, he did not find any service-style agencies in communities with high crime rates. Instead, he found legalistic or watchman styles.

At this point it is appropriate to supply some crime statistics: the U.S. has, per capita, approximately 5 times the number of murders as Japan, 100 times the robberies, and 4 times as many serious crimes as Japan's total of serious and minor crimes. Studies show Japan's relative rates of reporting is higher than ours (Bayley, 1976). Hence, this implies that our true crime rate in relation to that of Japan is much higher than these figures indicate.

The element of danger encountered in police work in relation to its influence upon police socialization in the United States has been dealt with earlier in this discussion. However, danger also directly influences the general nature of policing. On a per capita basis, there are 15 times as many police killed in the United States each year as there are in Japan. Due to the passive nature of the majority of Japanese people, their general high regard for the police, and the known expertise of Japanese police in unarmed combat, it is probable that the comparable rate of assaults on American police is much higher yet. The result of this difference in danger is evident in the posture of the police in their respective environments. Where the Japanese officers are low key and almost unnoticed, their counterparts in the U.S. are suspicious, defensive, heavily armed, and often over-bearing. Part of the reason for this can be traced to the western tradition in this country and the public's image of the police officer as a "take charge person." Much of it also results from a deliberate attempt by the American police to instill fear in potential trouble-makers, to convince people that they mean business, and to thereby lessen the chances of opposition in the future from such people. As Skolnick (1975) has pointed out, American police are continually preoccupied with danger. Their behavior largely results from this fear which they carefully hide from the public.

In both Japan and the United States, the police exercise wide discretion in their daily activities. Discretion is recognized in Japan as a necessary part of the role of the police. This discretion is used to help fulfill the purpose of Japanese criminal justice—to return the individual deviant to society. The police openly consider the individual's characteristics in order to determine if he or she genuinely repents. Written apologies are used extensively to acknowledge personal responsibility for the acts

in question and to express a commitment by the individual to conform. The Japanese rely heavily upon the network of human obligations within which individuals live to produce reformed behavior (Bayley, 1976, pp. 134-156). In summary, it is impossible to clearly determine cause and effect so as to see how much of Japanese policing is the result of lack of crime and how much is reason for lack of crime.

Conclusion

This study was undertaken for the purpose of comparing some aspects of Japanese and American policing. It was hoped that something might be learned which could be of benefit to us in dealing with our many problems in the U.S. What do we know now that we did not know before?

We know that there is hope at least. To begin with, we know that there is another country in which the police function very well in spite of high population density, a tradition of poor police performance, a deteriorating economy, and a violent tradition. And we know that the police can be given a new birth, that they can be re-created. The Japanese did so. Also, in spite of the warnings of some, we can see that it is possible to have a strong governmental control over the police at the national level without having a "police state." It is suggested that federal control over and coordination of local and state police recruiting, training, and in-service performance be drastically increased in this country. During the tenure of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration some improvements were made in American policing. Unfortunately, many of the anticipated objectives were not met because, among other problems, the states were entirely too light-handed in setting and enforcing standards for state and local policing. This was partically due to fear of local and state politics. The Japanese example shows us that national control and leadership of law enforcement can work well in a democratic nation.

We also know it is possible to achieve continuity of academy training, street experience, and the objectives of police organizations through careful planning and implementation. Such plans should be developed either at the federal level or by the states, with close supervision. Also, it is necessary to monitor both the street training experience and later officer field performance to determine that continuity exists and objectives are being met. Rather than working a hardship on the American police, it is anticipated that officers will not only perform better but will be much more satified with their work. This is because one of the most difficult things about being an American uniformed police officer is having very little concrete notion of what kind of performance is expected.

The example of the Japanese also goes a long way toward answering questions surrounding the issue of police discretion. It is suggested that guidelines for discretion be taught the recruit in the academy and during the field training period on the street. It should be determined that guidelines are being followed. This has been done successfully in Japan and could be done with some success here.

In a somewhat different vein, we know that psychological and emotional ties to the family, the workgroup, and to society are crucial for behavior modification and maintenance of some amount of conformity in Japan. This is probably the area of greatest difference between Japanese and American cultures and the largest reason for our differences in respect to policing. Deterioration of such ties in the United States and their reciprocal responsibilities and obligations has led, to some degree, to the crime we have here and to the problems we have with our police. Yet increasing ties to the police agency

where dishonesty, abuse, or lack of dedication are prevalent can worsen our problems. It must be remembered that the need to belong has been used many times to lead police recruits into corruption in this country. It is suggested that on the agency level no attempts be made to develop stronger ties between officers and the organization until all such problems are solved. Then, through many of the methods used in Japan, officers can be joined to or caused to identify with their agencies much more closely. In doing so, it will be necessary for the agency administration, with the cooperation of the local governments, to adopt a sincerely benevolent attitude toward the police employee. This must be followed by deeds which clearly establish that the agency goes out of its way for its officers and offers them both assistance in personal matters in time of need and pride in belonging. Most of our police have a strong sense of fairness and responsibility and will respond with drastically increased loyalty and commitment.

Probably the most significant lesson to be gleaned from this comparison of Japanese and American policing is as follows: the most important thing which determines the quality of the police is the quality of people who become police officers. The Japanese are as successful as they are largely because of the quality of police recruits who enter the profession. Because they start with the best, they have won half the battle before training begins. Because in many instances we start with whatever we can get, we are often doomed in any attempt to produce quality police. An agency in the Portland, Oregon, area has required a college degree for all police recruits for 25 years and has never had difficulty getting applicants. To this writer's knowledge it is the only agency in the U.S. which has this requirement, though a college degree has been recommended as the minimal requirement for uniformed police officers by various commissions which have studied American policing for a great many years. It is suggested that the time is past due for our national government to step forward and require college degrees for all police applicants in the United States. But, as the Japanese have shown us, this is not enough. To further insure quality police applicants, all testing and background investigations of applicants should be conducted by federal officials. Final selection of officers should be left to local and state agencies only after applicants are properly qualified in this way. To attract men and women with the necessary high qualifications may require some federal support to upgrade salaries (as is done in Japan). This support can also be used to induce state and local cooperation in bringing about these changes. Recent years are full of examples of our national government forcing things down the throats of the states through sugar coating them with federal funds. One example is the 55 mile-per-hour speed limit.

Finally, what degree of success would be obtained in attempting to apply lessons from the Japanese example to the American situation? Frankly, such a question presents a great deal of difficulty to this writer. Fortunately or unfortunately I had first-hand experience with Japanese culture and policing in Japan while living with a Japanese family. That experience deeply impressed me with the enormity of difference between Japan and America. It is a difference which defies description and must truly be felt to be appreciated. Though this paper has attempted to provide a comparison of the differences in policing which exist, they need to be seen first-hand. Japanese policing is as it is mainly because of the nature of the Japanese people. To a large degree policing is rooted in the culture in which it occurs. It is impossible to totally transplant Japan-

ese policing into the United States, though the suggestions made here are feasible and would bring about some clear improvement. For U.S. policing to become anything like "a model for the world," changes in our culture must occur. This is unlikely, pending some major calamity or historical event which forces us to face our many shortcomings as a people. Yet this final point is an interesting one, for it was in precisely this way that Japanese policing was given a new birth.

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