

The relation of the images of people engaged in public service and the attitudes towards politics and society in Japan^{1),2)}

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This study investigates the characteristics of images of people engaged in public service and the relation between those images and political attitudes and engagement. The results reveal that the proportion of positive images for the police is higher than for judges and municipal government workers. The present results also reveal that, when taking national government into account, attitudes and interest in regional politics are high, as are the positive images of judges. On the other hand, positive images of municipal government workers and the police are not connected to levels of satisfaction with regional government. Reflecting on the Japanese political system, these results suggest that college students do not clearly distinguish between national and regional government and that political values in general influence evaluations of workers in a variety of public service occupations.

Key words: social image, public service, attitude towards politics/society

Citizen Participation in Japan

From the promotion of regional decentralization in 1999 and regional crime prevention programs, to the planned enforcement of a citizen-judge system in 2009, recent years have revealed a trend towards greater citizen participation in Japan. In the Japanese system, responsibilities are divided, with trials being played by the national government level and regional administration and policing being played by the regional government level. Citizen participation occurs in cooperation with public servants, such as judges, municipal government workers, and the police. According to Kobayashi (2005), Japanese have a weak sense of active participation in politics or

society, and even when they do engage in political and social action, they tend to withdraw from activities demanding a strong degree of participation. In particular, those under the age of 39 have a weak cognizance of the importance of political and social participation.

Given these conditions, it is important to examine the attitude of young people towards the public servants with whom they would cooperate, in order to help facilitate the citizen participation of these members. Seen from the political socialization perspective (Hyman, 1959), new adult members of a society learn and acquire the society's particular political culture through the family, schools, and the mass media. Thus, if they learn an attitude favoring the public servants (judges, municipal government workers, and police) in charge of the citizen-judge system, regional decentralization, and regional crime prevention, they will become more interested in politics and more positive towards citizen participation. If they do not like the public servants, they are

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predicted to become more avoidant towards politics and citizen participation.

The Image and Prestige of People Engaged in Public Service

Much research on attitudes towards people in public service has investigated the occupational prestige and stereotypes of public servants. Glick, Wilk & Perreault (1995) in their study of American college students' occupational images, found that lawyers have high prestige, police have mid-level prestige and the occupation is seen as masculine, and social workers have mid-level prestige and the occupation is seen as feminine. A national study of occupational prestige in Japan has found that judges have high prestige and are ranked high on educational attainment, income, skill, and contributions (Yahara, 1998). Police have high prestige and are seen as having heavy responsibilities. Municipal office section chiefs have mid-level prestige and are ranked high on income and authority (Yahara, 1998). In a study of Japanese college students' images of municipal workers, Takahashi (2006) has shown that the students view such public servants as "traditional and authoritative (red-tape), and working under good job conditions." Thus, the prestige of and attitude towards people employed in public service differs greatly depending on the type of occupation.

Purpose

This study, (1) establishes the characteristics of the image Japanese college students have of people employed in public service, and (2) analyzes the relationship between the image and political/social engagement. The concrete examples of public servants chosen are judges, municipal government workers, and police.

Method

Survey participants and technique

387 college students participated. A collective survey was distributed and collected simultaneously during a seminar (July 2005 through May 2006).

Survey contents

(1) Image items: 17 image items were taken

from Takahashi (2006) and "not applicable" was added, yielding 18 items total used to inquire into each occupation (Table 1).

(2) Attitude towards politics/society: Engagement with regional politics/administration was measured on a 4-point scale with the question, "To what degree are you engaged with politics and administration in the city in which you currently live?" Feeling of political satisfaction was measured on a 4-point scale with the question, "To what degree are you satisfied with the government?" Feeling of political efficacy was measured on a 4-point scale with the question, "To what degree do you think the opinions and wishes of everyday citizens like us are reflected in the country's politics?" And, attachment to the region was measured on a 3-point scale with the question, "I feel attached to the region."

Results

Comparison of Images of Workers in Public Institutions

The results of a Q-test carried out on the positive factors for the images of judges, municipal government workers, and police revealed significant differences on all items, excluding "not applicable." A multiple comparison (McNemar test according to the Ryan method) was carried out, yielding significant differences, as shown on Table 1. The positive factors of the images of judges, municipal government workers, and police were analyzed using dual scaling (quantified type III based on cross-tabulation; Fig. 1). The square of the correlation ratio was .15 for axis I and .09 for axis II. The characteristics of the images of each profession were interpreted based on the results of Table 1 and the items located closely together for each occupation in Fig. 1. The characteristics of the image of judges were "fair," "one level above ordinary citizens," "many hardships on the job." The characteristics of the image of municipal government workers were "carrying out work according to custom," "believers in safety first," and "rarely fired." The image of police included, "a job with a high social contribution," "strong sense of justice," "having a high pressure attitude," and "many improprieties and scandals."

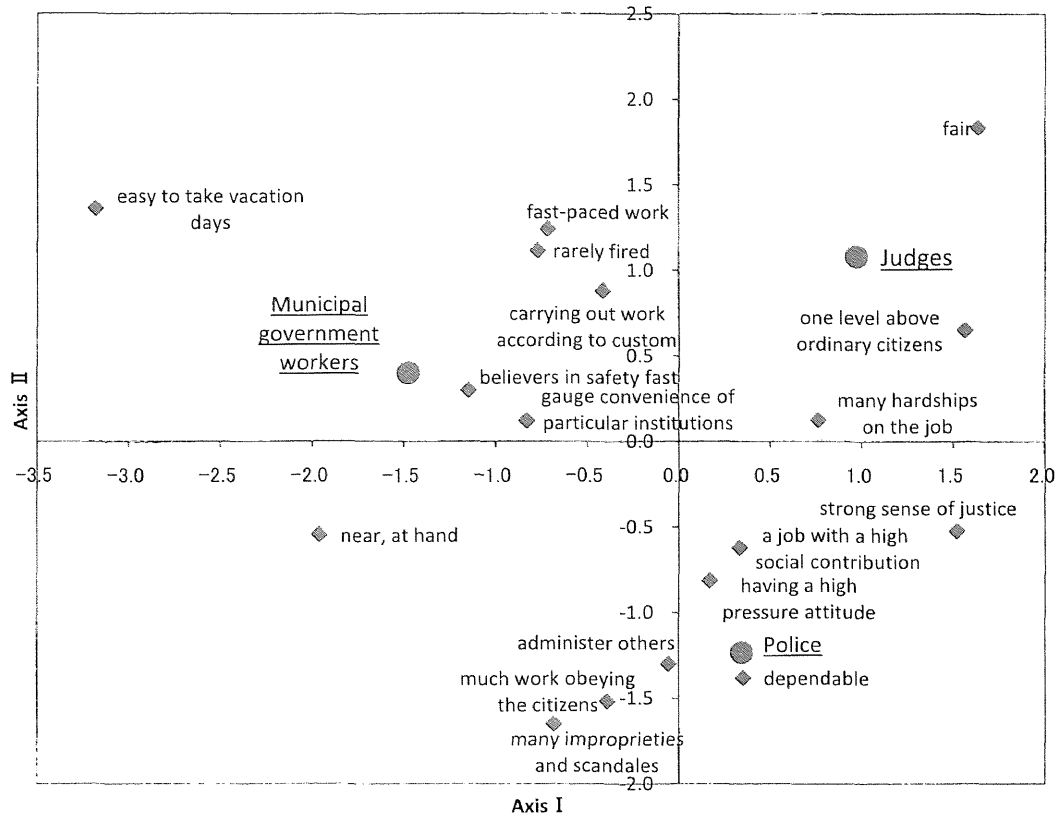


Fig. 1 Classification of the Images of People in each Public Service Profession

The Relationship between Images of Workers in Public Institutions and Political/Social Attitude

A principal factor analysis was carried out on each of the images of judges, municipal government workers, and police (Table 1). The results revealed that for each of the occupations, the principal component expressed the negation or affirmation of the image. The principal components of each analysis were used as indices. The correlation between the principal component scores and the attitude towards politics/society were calculated (Table 2). The results revealed a mid-range correlation among the three images of the different public servants. Furthermore, when feeling of political satisfaction, feeling of political efficacy, and engagement with regional politics/administration were high, the affirmative image of judges was strong. When the feeling of satisfaction with politics was strong, the positive image of municipal government workers was strong as well. When the feelings of satisfaction with the political situation and with political efficacy were strong, the

positive image of police was strong as well.

Discussion

This study investigated the characteristics of the images of people engaged in public service and the relationship between those images and political attitude and engagement. The results revealed that the image of judges was that they are "fair" and "one level above ordinary citizens," and that the image reflects the high prestige of the profession (Glick et al., 1995; Yahara, 1998). Municipal government workers are seen as "believers in safety first" and "rarely fired." As Takahashi (2006) suggests and taking the mention of red-tape into account, there is a negative image of self-protection. Police, however, have a positive image as having "a job with a high social contribution" and a "strong sense of justice." Furthermore, the positive proportion for the police was higher than that of the judges and the municipal government workers. These results suggest that

Table 1 Image for Each Public Service Profession

| image items | Judges | municipal government workers | Police | Q-test | The principal component | | |
|---|----------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|--------|
| | | | | | Judges | municipal government workers | Police |
| 17 strong sense of justice | 36.4 <i>b</i> | 1.6 <i>c</i> | 42.6 <i>a</i> | 198.1 * | .59 | -.30 | .62 |
| 12 fair | 36.2 <i>a</i> | 4.3 <i>c</i> | 10.6 <i>b</i> | 160.2 * | .56 | -.33 | .51 |
| 13 administer others | 6.9 <i>c</i> | 10.1 <i>b</i> | 21.3 <i>a</i> | 50.8 * | .54 | -.41 | .65 |
| 9 dependable | 9.3 <i>b</i> | 8.0 <i>c</i> | 24.7 <i>a</i> | 72.9 * | .43 | -.42 | .64 |
| 4 a job with a high social contribution | 33.0 <i>b</i> | 24.5 <i>c</i> | 53.5 <i>a</i> | 86.8 * | .41 | -.45 | .62 |
| 8 many hardships on the job | 51.9 <i>a</i> | 21.0 <i>b</i> | 48.7 <i>a</i> | 110.0 * | .28 | -.14 | .35 |
| 5 one level above ordinary citizens | 48.1 <i>a</i> | 4.5 <i>c</i> | 30.6 <i>b</i> | 190.0 * | .16 | .22 | .28 |
| 14 near, at hand | 0.8 <i>c</i> | 18.1 <i>a</i> | 10.4 <i>b</i> | 72.3 * | .07 | -.47 | .44 |
| 7 rarely fired | 31.1 <i>b</i> | 42.8 <i>a</i> | 16.8 <i>c</i> | 77.7 * | -.06 | .14 | .18 |
| 2 carrying out work according to custom | 42.0 <i>b</i> | 46.8 <i>a</i> | 27.4 <i>c</i> | 40.2 * | -.17 | .46 | -.07 |
| 16 easy to take vacation days | 1.3 <i>b</i> | 15.4 <i>a</i> | 0.5 <i>c</i> | 99.2 * | -.19 | .25 | -.03 |
| 15 much work obeying the citizens | 4.5 <i>c</i> | 12.0 <i>b</i> | 21.8 <i>a</i> | 61.3 * | -.24 | .36 | -.19 |
| 3 fast-paced work | 29.3 <i>b</i> | 37.8 <i>a</i> | 13.8 <i>c</i> | 66.4 * | -.28 | .55 | -.30 |
| 10 gauge convenience of particular institutions | 11.2 <i>c</i> | 21.5 <i>a</i> | 15.4 <i>b</i> | 21.8 * | -.31 | .47 | -.17 |
| 6 having a high pressure attitude | 21.0 <i>b</i> | 19.7 <i>c</i> | 40.7 <i>a</i> | 56.7 * | -.33 | .55 | -.20 |
| 1 many improprieties and scandals | 6.6 <i>c</i> | 34.6 <i>b</i> | 55.3 <i>a</i> | 214.4 * | -.43 | .57 | -.38 |
| 11 believers in safety first | 15.4 <i>c</i> | 36.7 <i>a</i> | 20.2 <i>b</i> | 64.0 * | -.43 | .56 | -.24 |
| 18 not applicable | 2.4 | 3.7 | 2.1 | 3.1 <i>n.s</i> | (2.19) | (2.95) | (2.70) |

Notes

* $p < .05$ ^{a, b, c} Different letters represent significant differences between professions.

Bold letters represent readings more than 35%.

Parenthesis represents eigenvalue.

Table 2 Relationship between the Image of Workers in Each Public Service Profession and the Attitude towards politics/society.

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|--|---------|---------|--------|--------|------|--------|
| 1 Image of judge(+) | | | | | | |
| 2 Image of municipal government workers(-) | -.17 ** | | | | | |
| 3 Image of police(+) | .39 ** | -.20 ** | | | | |
| 4 Attachment to the region | .05 | -.07 | .06 | | | |
| 5 Engagement with politics/administration | .13 * | -.06 | .04 | .24 ** | | |
| 6 Feeling of political satisfaction | .15 ** | -.15 ** | .20 ** | .06 | -.01 | |
| 7 Feeling of political efficacy | .17 ** | -.04 | .12 * | .05 | .08 | .33 ** |

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

because police have a direct relationship to the preservation of safety for the college students as individuals as well as for the region, they therefore are seen by students as close to them and their image is favorable.

No relationship was found between the image of the people in public service and attachment to

the region. The images of the people in public service were consequence of engagement with politics and regional government. The regional attachment was consequence of engagement with the regional society. Revealing no relationship between the two is likely due to the weak participation of Japanese young people in politics and society (Kobayashi,

2005).

Furthermore, judges in the Japanese system work at the national level, while police and those in regional administration are employed at the level of regional government. Thus, the attitude towards the national government matches that of the image of judges, and the attitude towards area and regional governments mirrors that of the police and the municipal government workers. However, the results of this study revealed that, taking the national government into account, the attitude and interest in regional politics was high, as was the positive image of judges. On the other hand, the positive images of municipal government workers and police were not connected to satisfaction with the regional government. These results suggest that college students do not clearly separate national and regional governments and the value of politics in general influences the value of workers in a variety of public service occupations. Thus, in order to promote citizen participation in cooperation with the public servants, it is necessary to increase confidence in public servants in general.

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