

Not Leather Boots but Dress Shoes: White-Collar Masculinity and the Far-Right Movement

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This paper investigates whether white-collar masculinity can play a role in the life of a far-right activist. The current study employs the methods of psychosocial analysis devised by Wendy Hollway and Tony Jefferson. Using the case of a Japanese far-right activist, it explores how the hegemony and decline of “salaryman masculinity” in Japan interacted with his life. It draws attention to the suffering of white-collar men in their struggle to comply with hegemonic masculinity. These men’s suffering tends to be overlooked due to their stable socio-economic status, but it can potentially play a role in their investment in far-right discourse.

Keywords: masculinity, far-right, psychosocial analysis, shame, Japan

1. Introduction

Gender norms play a significant role in far-right movements. Scholars have discussed in depth the roles of women in such movements and the ways in which they attempt to achieve their subjectivity (Blee, 2002; Latif, Blee, DeMichele, & Simi, 2020; Pilkington, 2017; Köttig, Bitzan, & Petö, 2017). At the same time, masculinity has also gained the attention of scholars studying the far-right. It has been observed that people perform masculinity through violent acts, choice of attire, and other

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behaviors, which are prevalent in far-right cultures (Miller-Idriss, 2017; Bitzan, 2017; Nayak, 1999). Construction of effeminate or excessively masculine ‘others’ is a key factor in many narratives of far-right activists (Köttig et al. 2017; Green, 2019).

Considerable attention has been paid to working-class masculinity. Researchers have uncovered the connection between class systems, the masculine norms ascribed to class (especially the working-class), and racism (Nayak, 1999; Pearson, 2019). Investment in the ‘racist’ self can be a strategy for young working-class boys to comply with the requirement of masculinity at school (Frosh, Phoenix, & Pattman, 2000). Studies on the ‘push’ aspect have found that there might be a sense of deprivation of masculinity behind working-class youths’ attachment to far-right/racist activities. Facing a crisis of their class and its masculine culture, working-class youth engage in racist violence and harassment in order to assert their working-class masculinity (Nayak, 1999). The youths perceive the deterioration of their own class while also experiencing loss of masculinity on a personal level through events like bullying, which potentially cause young people to be attracted to the masculinity of far-right movements (Kimmel, 2006; 2007; Treadwell and Garland, 2011).

However, the relationship between white-collar masculinity and far-right movements has not been sufficiently explored, and the current study aims to fill this research gap. Middle-class supporters have a significant presence in far-right movements such as the British National Party (Rhodes, 2011) and “Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes” [Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the Occident, PEGIDA] (Vorländer, Herold, & Schäller, 2018) as well as among the supporters of Donald Trump (Walley, 2017) and of Brexit (Antonucci, Horvath, Kutiyski, & Krouwel, 2017). Considering the presence of the white-collar middle-class in these movements, studying their masculinity and its role can enhance our understanding of the nature of such movements. This study will analyze the life-story of an activist in a far-right movement in Japan, where white-collar middle-class participants supposedly maintain a considerable presence.

Following the studies of Nayak (1999), Kimmel (2006; 2007), Garland and Treadwell (2011), and Gadd and Dixon (2011), this study will address the following research question: can a sense of loss related to white-collar masculinity play a role in men’s attraction to far-right movements? Rather than observing the condition of white-collar men in general, this study will analyse how this sense of loss occurs through an in-depth and contextual exploration of a case study. The current study draws many insights from Gadd and Dixon (2011) and other psychosocial studies to presume that the research subject neither has wholly autonomous agency nor is merely a product of social structure. Instead, the current study posits that “both inner worlds of psychic suffering and outer worlds of social structural oppression are constitutive of such subjects, their capacity for agency, and the forms of agency that are possible” (Frost & Hoggett, 2008, p. 440).

Such a presumption enables the current study to thoroughly analyze the activist's meaning-making in relation to his far-right activities and to focus on his adoption of relevant forms of masculinity from the point of view of his trauma and other sufferings arising from events in his life.

First, the paper will provide a very brief account of the background of the case study: the current state of Japan's far-right movements and "salaryman masculinity". "Salaryman masculinity" is a form of masculinity that once enjoyed the status of "hegemonic masculinity" in Japanese society. "Hegemonic masculinity" is a kind of masculinity which "embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy" (Connell, 1995, p. 77). It is the key normative concept affecting the life of the subject of this study, Sato Masayuki (pseudonym). The paper will then explain the methodology used, particularly the in-depth life-story interview method and the analysis focused on "shame". This section will be followed by a detailed examination of Sato's life-story. In the discussion and conclusion, it will be argued that the sense of loss can stem from the very normative power of white masculinity that puts pressure on white-collar men. Although such a sense of loss can play a role in men's participation in a far-right movement, it tends to be overlooked because these middle-class men do not appear to suffer from any troubles due to their relatively stable socio-economic status. This study stresses the importance of acknowledging the subjectivity of individuals vis-à-vis the norms of masculinity and her/his suffering arising from it.

2. The Background of the Current Study

2.1 Far-Right movements in Japan

Characterized by their use of intimidating street activities, far-right movements have become a major concern in Japan since the mid 2000s. The most well-known group, "Zainichi Tokken o Yurusanai Shimin no Kai" [the League of Citizens Intolerant of the Privileges of Zainichi, hereafter Zaitoku-kai], was established at the end of 2006. The group's primary aim has been to abolish the "privileges" they claim resident Koreans (*zainichi*) enjoy, including the Special Permanent Residency status and their use of Japanese-style names (*tsumei*) in official documents (Ito, 2014). *Zainichi* are "a population of colonial-era migrants from the Korean peninsula that settled in the Japanese archipelago and their descendants" (Lie, 2008, p. x. For other usages of the term, see Chapman, 2008, p. 3). The focus of Zaitoku-kai's activities has ranged from denying or relativizing the war-time atrocities committed by the Japanese Army, to countering the activities of the political left/progressives (Higuchi, 2014, p. 155). Zaitoku-kai has conducted street agitations where people chant hateful and resentful slogans like: "Korean Cockroaches, go home!" (Ito, 2014, p. 434).

In 2016, far-right groups in Japan instigated election-oriented activities. After the electoral campaign for Tokyo Governor in July 2016, where the leader of Zaitoku-kai, Sakurai Makoto, secured more than 110,000 votes (approximately 1.7 % of the valid votes), he announced the

establishment of “Nippon Daiichi-Tou” [Japan First Party, hereafter JFP] (Gill, 2018). Sakurai (2017) claims that the electoral campaign was a natural course of action for them as they had acted to remove the then Governor Youichi Masuzoe, and they believed that this contributed to his resignation. Simultaneously, as Gill (2018) pointed out, it is noteworthy that the movements experienced setbacks preceding 2016, which might have motivated them to change their strategy: their previous hate-inciting activities resulted in several defeats in court cases brought against them, which required them to pay compensation for damages; after 2013, the counter-activists intensified their activities and did not let the activists freely engage with hate-inciting, street-based activities (Akedo, Cho, Kiyohara, & Tominaga, 2015), and the Hate Speech Elimination Act was introduced in May 2016. According to JFP’s report on political funds submitted to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, the number of those who paid the membership fee was 1,052 (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2019). Since the establishment of JFP, its candidates have stood for election to various local assemblies. In 2020, the party’s second attempt to elect a member to the Nakagawa city council in Ibaraki prefecture proved successful (although she later left the party). Sakurai stood for the election for Tokyo Governor again in 2020, this time gaining nearly 180,000 votes (approximately 3% of the valid votes). Such accomplishments in JFP’s campaigns, if minor, suggest that they are likely to engage with electoral campaigns for the time being.

As mentioned above, studies of Japanese far-right movements have shown that similarly to far-right movements in other countries, those who can be classified as middle-class, white-collar workers are not marginal in these movements. Contrary to initial speculation around the dissatisfaction of single men with precarious employment being the main driver of far-right movements (for example, Yasuda, 2012), Higuchi (2014, pp. 15-17) notes that the occupations of Zaitoku-kai members who have appeared in the media and/or who participated in his seminal study varied widely. They included business owners, public sector officers, housewives, and students, and were not necessarily young part-time workers. Similarly, Nagayoshi (2019, pp. 22-26), based on an online survey, concluded that factors like low socio-economic status, low education and lack of romantic partners do not predict (or only weakly predict) the likelihood of a person being an online disseminator of conservative/xenophobic views. In this context, Sato, a 61-year-old (at the time of the interviews in 2018) former long-serving worker in a public sector organization, who was married and had three children, was not an exceptional type of activist within these movements. His case will provide us with a rich insight into the role of white-collar masculinity in men’s investment in the discourses of far-right movements.

2.2 Salaryman masculinity

The concept of “salaryman masculinity” is the key to understanding Sato’s particular way of investing himself in the norm of masculinity. According to Connell (1995), various forms of

masculinity co-exist in a society. While there is a type of masculinity that enjoys hegemonic status, some forms of masculinity (typically, gayness) are put in subordinate positions while others might be described as “complicit”, in that they contribute to the maintenance of patriarchal culture (Connell, 1995, pp. 78-80). With this hierarchical relationship between masculinities, as Messner (1997) noted, some men bear greater costs than others in order to live under the hegemony of a form of masculinity. This form of hegemonic masculinity can be different from one context to another (Beasley, 2008).

In post-war Japan, “salaryman masculinity” has become hegemonic (Dasgupta, 2013, pp. 8-9; Hidaka, 2010, p. 2). A salaryman is typically imagined as a full-time, white-collar, heterosexual male worker. He is employed by a company that promises lifetime employment and a steadily rising salary. In return he is expected to demonstrate loyalty to the company. He is a husband, a father, and most importantly, the sole breadwinner, on whom his wife and children depend (Dasgupta, 2013, p. 1; Hidaka, 2010, p. 3).

Alongside this conventionally patriarchal arrangement, salaryman masculinity was characterized by a collectivist culture, which became part of Japanese identity. Loyalty to one’s company and close relationships between colleagues were promoted through various events, formal or informal drink occasions, and even playing *mahjong* (a type of board game) together (Dasgupta, 2013, p. 139; Atsumi, 1989, p. 135), as indeed was the case with Sato. The collectivist culture cultivated by these conventions was regarded as the source of salarymen’s dedication and as the secret of the strength of Japanese economic power (Vogel, 1979). Going out with colleagues (*tsukiai*) was obligatory and thus in practice was not always welcomed by salarymen (Atsumi, 1979). Moreover, it was known that excessive dedication to work and sacrifice of private life resulted in undesirable consequences, such as *karoshi* (overwork death) and divorce, which such men failed to anticipate (see collections of essays in Inoue, Ueno, & Ehara, 1995). However, Japan’s identity as a collectivist society was popularized through *Nihonjin-ron* (translated literally as “theory of Japanese people”), a type of popular books, which were read widely by office workers and students (Befu, 2001). Despite the fact that, strictly speaking, only part of the population could be categorized as salarymen (see, for example, Roberson, 1998), salarymen, referred to as “*kigyo senshi*” (corporate soldiers), became a symbol of masculinity in a country where the use of real military power became a taboo after the defeat in World War II (Taga, 2006, p. 100).

Since the 1990s, a number of the preconditions of the hegemonic status of salaryman masculinity have been lost. Japan’s economic prosperity, which had been closely associated with this hegemony, was depleted when the “bubble economy” burst in 1991, causing considerable economic turbulence. As companies became reluctant to hire full-time workers, the rate of part-time workers increased from 16.4% in 1985 to 34.3 % in 2010 (Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, 2013, p. 184), and lifetime employment has become less commonplace (Kingston, 2013, pp. 82-83).

In addition, the importance of private life, especially time with family, was rediscovered. According to a survey by NHK (Japan's public broadcaster), in 1973, 36 % stated that they prioritized their work over free time, while in 2018, this had fallen to only 19 % (NHK, 2018, p. 4). Young men became *furiita* (freeters, a term commonly used to refer to young people in part-time employment) not only because they had limited opportunities for gaining full-time employment, but also because they wanted to differentiate themselves from their fathers who had been absent from home (Kingston, 2004, p. 272). Young employees started to prioritize time with their families and partners over socializing with their colleagues (Dasgupta, 2013). It is true that some of the features of salaryman masculinity, particularly the norm of the labor division between men and women, have endured, constraining opportunities for female promotion, and limiting the lifestyles of the young males (Taga, 2006, pp. 102-9; Cook, 2016). However, along with the decline of Japan's economic power, the legitimacy of the core factors of salaryman masculinity has been seriously put into question.

3. Methodology

It is not an easy task to talk about one's loss, especially when one is invested in the norm of masculinity. Noting this difficulty, this study will employ the psychosocial analysis proposed by Wendy Hollway and Tony Jefferson (2013). They suppose a defended subject who, instead of knowing her/his own demands and rationally acting to fulfill these, invests her/himself in a certain discourse due to a defense mechanism against unacknowledged anxiety. Hollway and Jefferson recommend using the Free Association Narrative Interview Method (FANIM), which enables interviewers to uncover unacknowledged anxiety by letting the interviewee freely associate any event in her/his life relevant with the topic (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013, pp. 31-34; Gadd & Jefferson, 2007, pp. 61-62). The key assumption and features of FANIM are:

- the importance of asking questions that invite story-telling;
- the avoidance of "why" questions that might encourage over-rationalization;
- careful adherence to the utilization of the interviewee's words and meaning framework in the re-posing of questions;
- minimalist facilitation (Gadd & Corr, 2015, p. 72).

In order to judge whether the sense of loss related to white-collar masculinity can play a role in men's path to the far-right movement, this study needs to closely examine the relations between masculinity, defense mechanisms, and the far-right activities in men's life. A case study is useful for such a project due to its ability to deduce some theoretical implications from the relations of factors that are identifiable within the phenomena in question (Mitchell, 2000).

Borrowing ideas from psychoanalysis, the method values the concept of *gestalt*, meaning the “wholeness” of the life-stories recounted, and it incorporates into the analysis various events happening across interviewees’ lives (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013, p. 34). Rather than attempting to draw insights that would be generalizable across the sample or analyzing a case deemed to be typical of the sample, this study chooses one “extreme” case where the relevant factors and mechanisms (such as salaryman masculinity and defense mechanisms) work most actively (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 229). This method has been employed to explain how people come to commit hate crimes and racial harassment (Gadd & Dixon, 2011) as well as violent street confrontations as members of a far-right group (Treadwell & Garland, 2011).

“Shame” is a key emotion to analyze defense mechanisms. According to Scheff (2000; 2001), “unacknowledged shame” causes anger, in turn reinforcing the sense of shame. Scheff (2001, para. 9) argues that shame is “a class name for a large family of emotions and feelings that arise through seeing the self negatively, if even only slightly negatively, through the eyes of others, or even for only anticipating such a reaction”. Shame has been employed to account for young males’ participation in the English Defence League (Treadwell & Garland, 2011), and racially-motivated crimes (Ray, Smith, & Wastell, 2004). This study is particularly concerned with the role of shame regarding masculinity.

The psychosocial method of analysis assumes that defense mechanisms against anxiety and shame result in one’s investment in particular discourses, including those through which s/he projects the negative emotions onto ‘others’ (Hollway & Jefferson, 2014; Gadd & Corr, 2015). What is crucial behind this mechanism of projection is the emptiness of the concept of ‘race’. Gadd and Dixon (2011, p. 220) argue that the “apparent capacity of ideas of race to alleviate crises of the self is part of the reason why people’s prejudices may seem to come from nowhere, out of the most trivial and fleeting experiences”. In the Japanese context what counts is not race, but rather *minzoku*, which is roughly translated as “ethnicity”. The concept of *minzoku* was employed in prewar Imperial Japan to claim the superiority of the Japanese over other East Asian populations who were not biologically distinguishable from the Japanese (Kawai, 2015). In postwar Japan, “*tan’itsu minzoku shinwa*” (often translated as “the myth of homogeneity”), the idea that the Japanese archipelago is and has been occupied by one *minzoku* sharing the same culture and lineage, has become prevalent, marginalizing various minorities including *zainichi* (Lie, 2004). *Minzoku* or ethnicity is no less empty a concept than race (Rattansi, 2007), and as such, the mechanism of projection described in Gadd and Dixon (2011) is still applicable to this case study.

The interviews were conducted as part of my PhD project. To investigate why people participate in far-right movements in Japan, I conducted fieldwork from July 2018 to March 2019 and gathered life-stories from 25 activists. I contacted them by directly approaching JFP members who were engaged in street-based activity and subsequently expanded my connections with other JFP members. Sato was introduced by one of these members of JFP. The two interviews with Sato took place in October 2018 in a café in his town.

As a researcher it is important to acknowledge my own positionality (Preissle, 2008), especially when inter-subjective dynamics may have affected the generation and analysis of the interview data. Before embarking on this PhD project in 2017, I had worked for the National Police Agency (NPA) of Japan. The NPA mainly carries out administrative tasks, such as legislation, rather than operational tasks, and in this sense it is a white-collar workplace similar to private companies. As a former employee of this conservative white-collar workplace, I have acquired salaryman comportment, mannerisms, and thinking, which I still recognize in myself more than three years later.

My career might have affected the interviews with Sato in several ways: our common experiences as former employees at public sector organizations helped us build a rapport; he also seemed to find it easy to share his tough experiences of working in a hierarchal bureaucratic organization. Although it is undeniable that the interviews and their analysis might have disproportionately elicited one particular aspect of Sato's life, this aspect is arguably an integral part of his life and so I decided to use his life-story for this study.

4. The case of Sato

4.1 Sato Masayuki

Sato Masayuki was well known among the supporters of JFP for his important role in the party. Sato joined the party in April 2017. When we met, he was dressed in a suit and followed common business manners (such as exchanging of business cards, the use of formal language [*keigo*] and providing his *curriculum vitae*), giving me the initial impression that he was a long-serving salaryman. In fact, at the time of the interview, he was working as a part-time inspector of electronic products, but he had worked for a major public sector organization for more than 30 years until 2017. Not only did he serve the organization for a long time, but he received considerable promotion during that time. In Japan, public officers are sometimes categorized into first class (*kyaria*) officials, second-class and third-class, according to the type of recruitment exam and their prospects for promotion. He stated: "I started the position lower than a third-class official and, at last, I got the position, which was the highest that a third-class official could get".

Despite his seemingly successful career, while telling his life-story, Sato described himself repeatedly as a *dame-ningen* (a Japanese term that refers to a mixture of being a loser, a waster, or a stupid person). In what follows, I suggest that the discrepancy between his admiration for masculinity and his perceived inability to live up to it played a critical role in motivating Sato's engagement with JFP. He described his experience of wanting to change his self-image and his inability to raise his voice; of having an enduring grudge towards his perceived oppressors; and of longing to recuperate the love lost within his family, whom he had neglected and let down. These

factors led him to feel ambivalent toward salaryman masculinity, a feeling that became stronger as he grew older. Sakurai's masculinity provided him with an alternative form of masculinity to replace salaryman masculinity, the legitimacy of which he came to question.

4.2 Relationship with and between his parents during his childhood

When asked to talk about his childhood, Sato responded: "I was a timid boy". He told me that he was bullied by female classmates due to his inability to speak up and described what he was like as a child as follows. "I was always unconfident and wondering why I have such a character. . . . I could not ask, 'Sir, can I go to the washroom?' I wet my pants in the classroom many times." One of the episodes central to his childhood concerned his father. Sato's father was "a nagging person at home". Sato recounted that his father "used to write hundreds of New Year cards by hand", and said: "when I shook the table even a bit, he shouted like 'Stop it!' Well, he was drinking alcohol at that time. . . . He would get angry unless the dinner was prepared, and everyone was sitting at the table at five-past-five."

Sato's low self-esteem and his ambivalence toward masculinity might have been closely related to the relationship between his father and mother. Sato's father "went to university, which was rare in that period". On the other hand, his mother's academic career ended at elementary school. When Sato's father shouted at his mother for trivial things that were not necessarily her fault, his mother blamed herself because she was "not as clever as him".

I hated to hear [her say] "It's unavoidable to get scolded, because I am an idiot," but by hearing it over and over again every day, it's like it has become part of myself, and somewhere in my mind, I started to think I was a *dame-ningen*.

After graduating from high school, Sato left home to attend university, but this experience did not help him develop self-confidence. He was disappointed at not getting into a top institution ("there were other universities that I wanted to enter"), and by the unruly situation he found there in the late 1970s. "On the first day of every exam period, as soon as we arrived in the classrooms or the lecture hall, Chukaku-ha [a radical left-wing group at that time] students would appear setting off firecrackers, like 'bang bang!'"

4.3 Gambling addiction and "restoration of lost love"

After graduating from university, Sato worked for a supermarket for six months, and a credit card issuer for a year and a half. Then he entered a public sector organization at a rank below third-class official and was tasked with manual labor, but later he took an exam to obtain a role that was more clerical. This may not have been a good decision for Sato and his family. Eventually, he was assigned to the construction division, where he worked like a "slave". "The manager became so arrogant that he would put his legs on the desk and read cartoons." Sato's boss liked playing

mahjong, so “when the boss said he wanted to play *mahjong*, we booked a hotel and played *mahjong* overnight”. As he was required to socialize with his boss during the week, he had to work even at the weekend to make up for the lost time. Sato was promoted, but the task he was assigned was stressful for a person like him. He became a deputy manager at a branch, and was “in charge of dealing with complaints”. He had to go to the office of a fierce right-wing group to apologize for his firm’s shortcomings, which at the time he regarded as no more than a scary experience. At the time of the interviews, he still believed that his former junior colleagues had not appreciated him. “A good person, but unreliable” is how he believed his subordinates viewed him. “I did not take my subordinates for drinks, and was not a strong leader in the workplace, who directed others to do this and that.”

Under such working conditions, Sato’s relationship with his wife and children became distant. “I do not have any memory of having gone somewhere with my own family.” He became abusive to his own family, in much the same way as his father punished his mother. “I was a mean parent who used to scold their mother, but whom they [his children] could not consult about anything.”

When Sato was finally transferred to a less busy post, “there was a hole in [his] heart”, which he filled with *pachinko*, a type of gambling similar to slot machines. His addiction led him to spend “all the money for the deposit” they had saved for a house and part of “the education saving plans for my three children”. He “wanted to die”, but “was too cowardly” to take his own life. After three years of addiction, Sato was saved by a book entitled *Breaking Away from Pachinko Addiction*, which he found after fighting with his wife a day before her birthday in 2000.

The foreword was great. . . . “To break away from *pachinko* addiction is to live a new life. It is the restoration of a lost love.” That made me cry. . . . “I have to live a new life. I must manage to do it. I have to make my family happy.” Looking back, it sounds like a stupid story. But I stopped [playing *pachinko*], the next day.

Following this period, Sato experienced his “most stable” time. He was further promoted, and his salary rose accordingly (although he states he was “very careful not to make any mistake and fall from the ladder”, never declining requests from his boss). He bought his own house seven years after he stopped playing *pachinko*. Moreover, his relationship with his wife and children improved. “How enjoyable the present time is. They talk about various things with me.”

4.4 Retirement and participation in JFP

Spending more time with his children made Sato reconsider the way he had lived. Looking back at his life as a salaryman, he stated:

Well, without questioning it, we vaguely had an image that if we went to work on weekends and went out with colleagues [*tsukiai*], we would be at the top of a large-sized branch office, get a pension and a retirement allowance. . . . Seriously, there could have been more fun time that I could have spent with my family.

In contrast, his son seemed to fully enjoy his life with those he truly wanted to spend time with.

[T]hey cherish their own lives, and when I see [one of Sato's children] going to Osaka to see his joyful friends, whom he met online and who share the same hobby, I just think it's wonderful. . . . I think I should have realized it earlier. If you want to live a true life, you have to actively engage yourself.

Alongside Sato's children, many young people in Japan seemed to have stopped believing in careerism and instead prioritized their own lifestyles. Sato was shocked to discover that the young manual laborers in his workplace no longer longed for the "blue" uniform of office workers as he did when he was young. Instead, they designed their lives according to their own preferences.

Many episodes related to "Koreans" appeared in relation to this period of Sato's life. During his childhood, the subordinate status of Koreans and other foreigners as "others" had been clear in his community. Sato's memory of childhood and youth included some instances of discrimination against *zainichi* Koreans, foreigners and *burakumin* (descendants of outcast groups in Japan). He was told not to play with children from a family who lived diagonally across from his family. He asked the adults why but received no clear answer. A classmate with blue eyes, who perhaps had a non-Japanese parent, was bullied.

After purchasing his house, Sato notices that now "Koreans" own houses in his neighborhood. They are members of his "community", but are also perceived as suspicious outsiders whose ethnicity is not fully clear. He suspects that two of his new neighbors have Korean origins, "judging from the way they talk and their faces". One, who lives next to him, is a good person, but the other is "noisy", dishonest and dirty. This neighbor steals baskets from supermarket stores and lets his dog excrete everywhere. "So, I refuse to accept such people. . . . I just want them to observe the rules like the one living next to me does." Nevertheless, despite his unwillingness to accept such behavior, he says nothing to the troublesome neighbor, thus causing the resentment to fester. "Well I thought many times of saying 'How can you make such noises!' but . . . there is no point in having a dispute."

It was not only in his neighborhood that he perceived that "Koreans" had crept. At work he had to deal with troubles caused by "South Korean companies" after the introduction of open

bidding. According to him, these troubles included deception, fraud, or complaints made by residents about the behaviors of the employees of these companies. He stated that when he hired Japanese companies in the selective bidding system, he benefited from their “sincere” service. To him, such a dedicated approach cannot be expected from these foreign companies. “[T]hey think that it’s enough to earn money to pay the salaries of their men and get away with doing the job halfheartedly”. Consequently, Sato thought: “it is best to do things within the system which is native to each country”.

Another important factor that contributed rather directly to his later participation in JFP occurred in the mid-1990s, when he listened to his uncle’s experience of the war. Previously, after reading *Chugoku no Nihon Gun [The Japanese Army in China]* by journalist Honda Katsuichi during his time at university, he had believed that “the Japanese are the worst and evilest”. The book focused on the atrocities on the Chinese front. Sato could not even bear to read it all as he was shocked by the images of “piles of dead bodies and bones”.

His uncle, who had served on a renowned Japanese warship, told a different version of the story of the war. In his story, the senior officers on the warship cared in a fatherly manner for the subordinates like the uncle. The story also featured a tale of pure love between female students and young crew members of the warship who helped each other so that the relationship developed during short breaks from their duties. These tales changed Sato’s inhuman image of Imperial Japanese military. “At one time [the public] hailed him [the uncle] if they knew that he was a soldier” but the uncle complained that “as soon as the war was over, things changed drastically”. “People believe that all we did at that time was evil, but those days were a springtime for us.” Rather than facing Japan’s shameful past, Sato colluded in the denial. “Little by little, I started to feel that the situations described by *The Japanese Army in China* . . . were not representative of what happened.”

These experiences appeared to inspire his interest in the alternative teachings of the far-right. In 2012, Sato bought a computer. While watching YouTube videos, he came across a video of Sakurai’s street agitation. Although he found it “funny” that Sakurai was wearing a bow tie during his street-based activities, the more he listened to him, “the more [he] was drawn to him”. He broke down in tears when he met Sakurai in person and shook his hand at one of his soapbox speeches in his 2016 campaign.

He was very, very kind. Although there were many people in the audience and he was very busy, covered in sweat, when I asked him to shake hands with me, he was like “Sure, no problem”. It was totally different from his fierce image [during his street-based activities].

To Sato, what distinguished Sakurai from others was the fact that he “persevered with his own agenda” and had not been silenced or compromised, as he himself had been.

I worked as a salaryman for 36 years. I could not say what I wanted to say. I shut up and obeyed [the bosses] and sometimes I projected my dissatisfaction onto my family. You know my personality; I have always listened [to what others say], putting a smile on my face. When I saw the actions of Mr. Sakurai, who will never compromise, I just envied him.

Sato decided to join JFP following his retirement in 2017. His last boss was a first-class engineer official and “strict” like his father but also derogatory towards office workers like Sato, whose presence he considered to be “infesting” engineers.

He said that every time, and I could not stand it. . . . Yeah, I was very fed up, and I took a week off before retirement. . . . [T]hey were surprised, saying “You are abandoning your duty!” but I just said “Let me do what I want after 34 years”.

Immediately after joining JFP, Sato put himself up for an important role in the party. He unexpectedly found himself to be good at delivering speeches on the street, and according to what he somewhat proudly told me, his sisters and brothers were surprised to see such an aspect of him. Other JFP members started to treat him as one of the core figures. He believed this decision gave him the chance to become someone people would “care” about and take notice of: no longer a timid “*dame-ningen*”.

One of his proposed policies was maintaining the “quiet life”.

[W]hen I see my sons, one working full-time, and the other part-time, I see that even a part-timer can enjoy themselves, without being caught in confrontation [*isakai*]. So we should aim to have a quiet life, a calm life, that’s my idea.

“A quiet life” means “being without the kind of troubles that happen when foreigners come in”. Sato believes they will cause trouble by claiming their rights. He wishes to embrace the “quiet life” to enhance his children’s lives, which they enjoy in their own ways.

5. Analysis

Sato’s involvement in the far-right movements cannot be explained in terms of his pre-existing political stance, which was not clear before 2012. Before that, when he felt that the power of the conservative Liberal Democratic Party should be balanced, he sometimes even voted for the Japan Communist Party (which far-right activists regard as one of the primary enemies).

His participation is better understood by considering his ambivalence towards masculinity. His sense of shame began at an early stage in his life. He and his mother were oppressed by his patriarchal father, and by identifying with his mother, who repeatedly called herself an “idiot”, he started to think of himself as a “*dame-ningen*”. He was so unconfident that he could not speak up about what he wanted, consequently wetting his pants and being bullied by female classmates. Caught in self-disgust and “wondering why I have such a character”, he might have developed both an aspiration to masculinity and a hatred for the pressures arising from it. The discrepancy between what he hoped to be and what he was widened after he started to work for the public sector organization and became invested in salaryman masculinity. While he longed to pursue careerism and be a strong leader, in his subjective view he was promoted only because of his obedient attitude toward his boss. The shame emerging from this discrepancy was first projected onto his family, as had been the case with his father, but the part of himself which hated this masculinity made him regret it. As the norm of salaryman masculinity loosened its hold on him through his learning how to “live a true life” and to communicate with his children, his hatred was directed towards what this norm represented. This resulted in his holding a strong grudge against his last manager and led to his retirement happening in a way that made him seem to be “abandoning [his] duty”, which bewildered his colleagues.

Still, it seemed that he maintained a contradictory feeling towards the norm of salaryman masculinity. His thorough compliance with business manners and his lengthy and detailed accounts, accompanied by his anger towards himself for failing to live up to the ideal of a salaryman (such as being “a strong leader in the workplace”) suggest that he had not fully denied the value of salaryman masculinity. It is true that, being influenced by the younger generation, Sato seemed to have adjusted his goal to one of being a good father who is loyal to his family and himself, rather than a successful salaryman. As seen above, this transition is not unique to Sato. However, it was not easy for him to abandon his attachment to the norm of masculinity. Relinquishing the pursuit of this might have had the effect of making him accuse himself of being “*dame-ningen*” again. The relinquishment was all the more painful as the transition exposed his desire for the disappearance of the norm which he had long believed to be valuable, and for which he had sacrificed his personal life.

His projection of shame onto *zainichi* is hard to understand without taking into account both his investment in the image of a caring father (which stemmed from his regret for having been a mean parent) and his persisting shame of being unable to be an ideal salaryman. The former made him excessively sensitive to the threat to his children’s “quiet life”. Consequently, although he did not suffer much from his Korean neighbors, the troubles caused by a neighbor, who in his eyes might have looked as selfish as he had been to his family, led to the conclusion that “I refuse to accept such people”. At the same time, his nativist attitude extended to the way the Japanese economic system should operate. This was primarily related to his son’s unstable socio-economic

status but might also have stemmed from his experience as a salaryman. He compared the way “South Korean” companies did their jobs “halfheartedly” as opposed to the “sincere” services of Japanese companies, which he had desperately wished to be a legitimate part of as an excellent salaryman, but had failed to do. To him, the success of “South Korean” companies might have been outrageous in the light of the salaryman way of life, for which he had sacrificed happiness with his family. It is noteworthy that he did not have an experience of shame immediately related to Koreans. Nor was he even sure about the true identity of “Korean” neighbors and companies. However, the marginalization of *zainichi* and foreigners which he experienced in his childhood enabled ethnicity to work as an empty category onto which to project his own anxiety and shame. Moreover, the subordinate status of foreigners in his childhood memory might even have reinforced his view that their intrusion into the neighborhood and the Japanese economic system was illegitimate and threatening.

An even more important factor might have been his strong sympathy with his uncle, who served as a crew member of a warship in Imperial Japan. The nostalgia of Sato’s uncle echoed Sato’s own in many ways. His uncle’s “springtime” with all the good memories of the time on the warship became controversial just after the fall of Imperial Japan, when everything associated with militarism became taboo. This caused Sato’s uncle to have an ambivalent feeling toward these memories. It is noteworthy that he told Sato his story sometime in the mid-1990s, because this was the period when the dispute over the war-time atrocities intensified, which might have strengthened the uncle’s ambivalence. They shared a similar experience of being unable to speak up for what they wanted. His uncle’s complaint about the change of public attitudes toward the former soldiers attracted the sympathy of Sato, who was alienated from his own family due to his salaryman life. Moreover, to Sato the experience of his uncle on the warship might have embodied Sato’s ideal of a workplace, where he could have thrived as a salaryman: the part Sato remembered well from the story of his uncle was characterized by the care from senior officers and cooperation between colleagues. Such a workplace, in reality, was not available to Sato because of the “arrogant” bosses and was finally rendered unavailable because the whole society became more individualistic, bringing advantages which Sato himself could not deny. Both men had a sense of masculine entitlement that was being denied to them owing to changes in economic circumstances, social norms regarding family life, and how Japan’s past was remembered.

Sakurai Makoto provided Sato with hints for how to acquire a new form of masculinity. Wearing a bow tie and looking ‘funny’, Sakurai did not resemble a typical salaryman in any sense (indeed, with a bowtie and braces Sakurai looked like a comedian in his early videos). Nevertheless, his attitude, according to which he “will never compromise” in pursuing his agenda, and his taboo-breaking discourse (such as his denial of the rights of *zainichi* and of the need to apologize for war-time atrocities) chimed with Sato’s aspiration to “say what I wanted to say”. It is not only such masculine omnipotence that Sato obtained through far-right activities. As he became used to making speeches in the street, his brothers and sisters started to recognize a new aspect of him, and his fellows respected him. Sakurai’s dual faces—a “fierce” street activist to his enemies and a

“kind” leader to his followers—gave Sato an idea of what he should hope to be, namely a father who could protect his sons from the threat of foreigners by raising his voice.

6. Discussion and conclusion

Sato’s case demonstrated that a sense of loss related to white-collar masculinity can play a role in men’s involvement in far-right movements, as has previously been observed with working-class masculinity. At the same time, it is noticeable that Sato’s sense of suffering did not result from a perceived decline of his own or his fellows’ socio-economic status, but rather arose, at least in part, because his socio-economic status was high enough to be influenced by the normative power of salaryman masculinity. The suffering surfaced due to the decline of this normative power and the rise of an individualistic value, in which Sato saw some advantages. Due to their relatively stable socio-economic status, such suffering experienced by white-collar men might easily be overlooked, compared with that experienced by men from lower socio-economic classes and by women. Confirming the argument of Gadd and Dixon (2011), the case study suggested that in order to understand why even seemingly successful individuals are drawn to far-right movements, it is important to have a nuanced understanding of the subjectivity that emerges through the interaction between social and psychological factors. This study also pointed out that for a man like Sato, far-right movements do not necessarily help restore the kind of masculinity accepted in his social strata, as was observed in the study on working-class masculinity and far-right movements. To him, Sakurai embodied an alternative form of “masculinity” to salaryman masculinity by expressing his own emotions to save his kind (in Sato’s case, his children).

The case of Sato illustrates how investment in far-right teachings can stem from some negative feelings that do not necessarily have much to do with Imperial Japan or the targeted minority. The situation of Sato and of other men like him, who have a particularly strong attachment to the issue of masculinity, has some similarities with that of former soldiers who feel confused when faced with the fall of their version of hegemonic masculinity. They both wonder what to do with their emotional investment in the hegemonic masculinities on which they spent their precious time. For a man like Sato, the former soldiers’ lament at the death of Imperial Japan overlaps with his own regret for the decline of his empire, namely Japan as an economic giant with salaryman soldiers. This in turn leads him to be attracted to the discourse that glorifies Imperial Japan and relativizes its wrongdoings. Such a transition affecting masculinity can even cause a man’s shame and his grudges to come to the surface and can activate the mechanism of projecting these negative emotions onto ‘others’. In Sato’s case, what underpinned his projection of shame onto ‘Koreans’ was merely his childhood memory, where discrimination against *zainichi* and foreigners was explicit in the community.

It should be noted that Sato's case is only one path among others by which a former salaryman may be drawn to far-right teachings; not all former salarymen follow the same path, nor do all of those with the same grudge about masculinity join in the far-right movements. Still, adding this pattern to the recognized "cognitive structure" (Donmoyer, 2000) will be meaningful if one wishes to understand why particular people join the far-right movements, because it is not only Sato who experienced the changes of the masculine norm along with those of wider social circumstances. Reflecting the changing environment since the early 1990s, Japanese people began to search for a new mode for Japan other than that of an economic giant, such as the pursuit of cultural supremacy under the banner of "Cool Japan", or the pursuit of family-oriented life rather than materialistic success (Leheny, 2018). It is no surprise that some of those who experienced both pre- and post-90s Japan now feel the keenest need to be reconciled with this changed environment.

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