

THE WHITE-COLLAR STRATA IN POSTWAR JAPAN

SHIGERU SUSATO

The white-collar strata in Japan, which have been steadily growing in size since the end of World War II, especially as a result of the economic resurgence in the 1950's and the rapid growth in the subsequent years, are now finding themselves at an important turning point in their history—a turning point in their social composition, in the scope of their job opportunities, as well as in their work and their social status and class situations. At the lower level of the white-collar group the traditional distinctions are being lost, while in the very nuclei of this group is taking place a new development toward further differentiation. In what follows, an attempt will be made to analyze various factors that have bearing on the social position of the Japanese white-collar strata in an effort to trace the directions in which the white-collar strata as occupational and social classes have followed during the postwar years.

I. CHANGES IN THE STRUCTURE OF THE LABOR FORCE IN JAPAN'S INDUSTRIALIZATION

The industrialization of a country is a process in which highly-mechanized big business becomes a predominant form of production. As mass-production techniques become socially diffused, the total output of productive activities increases rapidly. Technical division of labor in each productive unit, an increase in productivity, propagation of calculated rationalism in management, centralized administration of labor force are the phenomena inevitably associated with the process of industrialization, and these together bring about a rapid change in a substantial redistribution of human-material resources, thus creating a new pattern in the distribution of occupational opportunities. The blue-collar strata emerge and grow in the first stage of industrialization, followed by the white-collar strata. As industrialization proceeds, however, the growth in number of the white-collar strata gradually begins to exceed that of the blue-collar strata. The driving force which is at work behind this phenomenon is the expansion and rational reorganization of administrative functions in produc-

tive organizations which correspond to innovative changes in production techniques. The re-arrangement and expansion of mass-distribution mechanism are taken to be expected with the growth of total production output. The change in the employment structure is indicative of what A. Siegfried called "*lage administratif*."

In postwar Japan, the high economic growth which started in the mid-50's brought about a change, although relative, in the occupational structure of the gainfully occupied population in the aforementioned sense. As indicated in Table 1, the number of employees engaged in clerical, managerial, and professional-technical work is showing a gradual increase mainly in proportion to the growing share of non-manual work.

A probe into this tendency in the manufacturing industries (Table 2) reveals that the expansion and bureaucratization in the organization of the leading industrial firms brought about by this economic growth have resulted in a high percentage of the white-collar strata in the structure

Table 1. Number of Gainfully Occupied Population

(Unit: 1000 persons)

	1959	1964	Ratio of Increase (%)	
			1954-59	1959-64
Total Number of Labor Force	43,691 (100)	47,629 (100)	11.3	9.0
Non-agricultural Labor Force	12,315 (28.2)	15,863 (33.3)	21.5	28.8
Professional & Technical	2,172 (5.0)	2,679 (5.5)	15.2	23.4
Managerial	967 (2.2)	1,415 (3.0)	15.0	46.4
Clerical	4,472 (10.3)	6,182 (13.0)	38.5	38.2
Sales	4,704 (10.8)	5,587 (11.7)	12.5	18.8
Manufacturing & Transportation	14,473 (32.9)	16,631 (34.9)	32.5	14.5
(Operative)	12,512 (28.6)	14,321 (30.1)	32.5	14.5
Agricultural, Fishing	14,169 (32.4)	11,676 (24.5)	Δ10.7	Δ17.6
Public Security	495 (1.1)	575 (1.2)	15.2	16.1
Services	2,333 (5.3)	2,866 (6.0)	19.5	22.8

Note: Δ indicates that ratio of increase is minus.

Source: *Vital Statistics*, 1% sample data for 1964.

Table 2. Ratio of Office Employees and Productive Workers in the Manufacturing Industries

(Unit: 1000 persons)

Year	Total Number of Employees	Managerial, Clerical & Technical Employees	Productive Workers
1935	2,631 (100)	185 (7.0)	2,446 (93.0)
1955	4,798 (100)	815 (17.0)	3,948 (83.0)
1960	7,405 (100)	1,309 (17.7)	6,096 (82.3)
1961	7,996 (100)	1,473 (18.4)	6,523 (81.6)

Source: Ministry of Trade and Industry, *Kōgyō tōkeihyō* (Industrial Statistics).

of employed persons, which had already by 1955 far exceeded the prewar ratio.

Incidentally, the definition of the white-collar strata is still open to question. A further statistical adjustment will have to be made for the non-manual populations indicated in Table 1 in order to bring into bold relief what the white-collar strata are in reality. So far various attempts have been made to interpret and explain the white-collar strata in sociological or economic terms, especially in terms of their traditional differentials from the blue-collar strata. These methods, however, have limitations in presenting the real picture of the present-day white-collar strata.

Historically, the white-collar strata have been formed as a result of the complexity of the social composition brought about by the gradual expansion and differentiation in the transfer of the authority which formerly belonged to the proprietary managers. Furthermore, the social character of the white-collar strata today shows great diversity because of the changes in the market situations, traditional status levels, present functions, individual promotion possibilities and other factors for different kinds of white-collar workers.

Now, the white-collar strata do not necessarily form "one compact horizontal structure."¹ But various attributes and behavioral patterns of those who constitute only one component part of the strata are sometimes over-emphasized, and quite often explanations or interpretations to be given thereon also vary according to the changes in the conditions of their existence. A good part of the inconsistency that can be found in the white-collar concept has resulted from this confusion. However, further discussion of this problem lies outside my present essay. Instead of arriving at a hasty conclusion from the analysis of the aforementioned factor, a fresh start has to be made by establishing the factual data upon the structure and dynamics of the white-collar strata in order that assessment can objectively be made of the office employees' sector which is to be properly placed in an internationally-comparable statistical category.²

Of all the employed population engaged in the non-manual occupations, I would like first to take up clerical employees and professional-technical employees, and then, by indicating the collective attributes common to them all, proceed to discuss the various components constituting what may be termed the wider-scale white-collar strata, as far as

¹ C. W. Mills, *White Collar*, New York, Oxford Univ. Press, 1951, p. 75.

² For the definition of white-collar strata, refer to R. Girod, *Etudes sociologiques sur les couches salariées*, Paris, M. Riviere, 1961, pp. 11-77. An example of the studies made from such viewpoint is M. Crozier, *Le Monde des employés de bureau*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1965.

these collective attributes can be recognized in more or less tangible degrees. In that case, it would be highly important to grasp the reality of the postwar white-collar strata in Japan in the light of the statistical data thus analyzed.⁸

II. SOCIAL BACKGROUND AND HERITAGE OF THE WHITE-COLLAR GROUP

As already pointed out, the expansion of the postwar Japanese white-collar strata owes its economic basis to the economic growth since 1955 when Japanese economy had recovered from the blow of defeat. The big industrial firms, highly mechanized with the introduction of innovative techniques, proceeded to reorganize themselves and secure larger market shares. In the 1960's such reorganization process continued side by side with mass investments on equipment, bank credits or loans provided by the Central Bank which bolstered such investment, and also with an intensified market competition between big firms. This helped to streamline the whole industrial structure on an extensive scale, thus increasing both the weight of the secondary industries and the number of people engaged in the tertiary functions of the secondary industries, promoting at the same time the mass-production and mass-consumption system. Further, in the mid-50's the mass communication and distribution industries, which form the very foundation of mass consumption, become one of the leading lines of Japanese economy. The progress of information revolution in what is called the age of "post-industrialism" presupposes increased occupational opportunities for the new white-collar strata in the tertiary industries.

This quantitative growth of the white-collar strata resulted at the same time in changes in their social character. Particular attention has to be paid to the changes that have taken place in the traditional employment practices that conditioned the sociological meaning of the prewar status of white-collar workers, and also to the new functional differentiation of their service and the subsequent widening of their inner differentials. In the pages that follow, an effort will be made to analyze these points.

The customary practices for recruitment of manpower in modern industries in postwar Japan, which are the determinant conditions underlying the social composition of the white-collar strata, have not changed wholly from the prewar conditions, although they have undergone some

⁸ Hayashi, Susato, Suzuki, *Nihon no howaitokarā* (White-collar in Japan), Tokyo, Daisho-sha, 1963. In this survey, the white-collar strata was defined using the sample of 3000 adult males in Tokyo.

important changes. Already by the time of their entry into the labor market in the 1920's the Japanese white-collar strata had formed a hierarchy of social status at the level of individual firms and government offices.⁴ This means that the educational record held by a worker which represented the achievement of a higher educational level was of such rarity value in prewar Japan that it brought into being a distinctive differentiation between blue- and white-collar workers. Furthermore, the blue-collar and the white-collar strata were almost completely separated from one another both in work and market situations. The selection by educational backgrounds in the recruitment of manpower in the whole industries further accelerated this process of differentiation and separation. Thus the industries were enabled to minimize the cost of job training. The emphasis placed on a higher educational background at the time of employment resulted in a rigid differentiation of promotion possibilities within an organization, which now became a customary practice. To obtain a white-collar job was also a powerful weapon to get a secure and permanent position in the hierarchy of Japanese society in which tradition and modernity coexisted in two tiers. Bureaucratic and industrial organizations tried to employ would-be white-collar employees with a higher educational background as their future cadres who could go up the hierarchical ladder, and highly evaluated their general knowledge and experience as well as the administrative ability that they had acquired in the course of their service. The recruitment of manpower was not necessarily considered from the viewpoint of special aptitude for the jobs required by management. This had a significance of its own when the pace of industrialization and technical innovation was slow and the rational and functional job differentiation within an organization was still immature.

It also must be taken into consideration that lifetime attachment and the seniority system in promotion and remuneration were customary, as is often pointed out, for the prewar form of management in Japan, especially in big firms and government offices. In addition to these practices, there were also some special welfare privileges and, usually, an annual raise in salary for employees, all of which were based upon the presupposition that the length of service would be functionally correlative to one's ability to accomplish his job. Such employment conditions which became customary practices, enabled the white-collar employees to keep themselves in relatively secure careers, whereas insecurity was the common

⁴ Refer to H. Hazama, *Nihon rōmu kanri-shi* (History of Japanese Labor Management), Tokyo, Daiamondo-sha, 1964, and S. Matsushima, *Rōmu kanri no nihonteki tokushitsu to henshen* (Characteristics and Transition of Labor Management in Japan), Tokyo, Daiamondo-sha, 1962.

experience of the majority of Japanese people. The main force that compelled the white-collar employee to devote his whole career and life to his organization was its "familism", which was the ideological principle of Japanese management.

Sociologically, a business enterprise as a functional and rational organization was also regarded as one extended family where the paternal authority of management presides, so it demanded selfless loyalty from, and bestowed mercy in turn upon, all its employees. As a result, the stability of labor-management relations was secured, and conflicts between class interests were repressed. Thus, the prewar white-collar strata were hemmed in by these practices, and in consequence had little chance to move to other firms. Besides, as previously touched upon, the occupational experience of each white-collar employee was characteristic in that it lacked much applicability to other firms, as it was based primarily on "particularism." The whole system was not one to be found in Western countries where an individual is made to work as a functional unit of work within an organization, and where authority is vested on him according to his job qualifications. In prewar Japan, however, a certain scope of work was assigned to a particular section, with due emphasis on the maintaining of hierarchial relations of the organization as a whole. Consequently, the work assigned was carried out within each section by maintaining a smooth human relationship, and step by step its procedure was learned by experience through personal contact. This led to an over-emphasis on sectionalism or departmentalism and also on conformity to the customary practices and the existing human relationship of the organization. Therefore, promotion possibilities depended on each employee's personal allegiance to his superiors. The economic, social and psychological rewards given out with each promotion were proportionate to the degree of his allegiance to the organization and/or the particular section to which he belonged. Such setting that formed the behavioral pattern of the white-collar strata resulted in the "promotion from within" which still characterizes the business leadership in the present-day Japan.

Although microcosmically the white-collar employees were scattered and isolated in their work situations, they were well integrated macrocosmically into the organization as a whole, and the differentiation of promotion possibilities within an organization was directly connected with the differentiation of their "life chances" (M. Weber). Furthermore, the position held by an individual organization in a particular industrial or business sector—and particularly the gap existing between big and small businesses—produced further differentiation, thus establishing the differen-

tiated patterns of consciousness and behavior of the white-collar group. Viewed as a whole, however, the devotion and allegiance of the Japanese white-collar to his firm were crystalized into what is called "absolute allegiance to one's firm" or "corporation-centrism" expressed as a "particularistic" and "local" attitude.⁵

III. STRUCTURAL CHANGES WITHIN THE WHITE-COLLAR GROUP

Now, how were these institutional conditions and the corresponding patterns of consciousness and behavior of the white-collar strata affected by the various changes brought about by the postwar economic growth? In postwar Japan, as will be discussed later in this paper, higher educational institutions produced a great mass of would-be white-collar employees in proportion to the growing number of white-collar jobs. However, it was only after World War II that the industrialization process in Japan gained momentum, and, moreover, the start itself was rather late. As Western industrial techniques had to be quickly introduced and digested, both the establishment of higher educational institutions and the development of human resources necessitated thereby were of considerable importance. Because of the late start in industrialization, the white-collar strata in Japan have rather a short history, and the demand for white-collar employees has still been met in the form of social mobility of those people who have various social origins. As a matter of fact, the social origins of white-collar employees distributed according to their fathers' occupations indicate that the white-collar strata recruit their new members from various occupational strata of the population.⁶ This is due mainly to the fact that the bureaucratization of management started only in the 1930's, that small- and medium-sized firms were numerous at that time, and that the administrative organization of these firms was still paternalistic and immature. Therefore, chances to obtain white-collar jobs were fairly limited. However, as industrialization and the resulting urbanization proceeded, sons of the white-collar families, availing themselves of the social and economic positions held by their fathers, gradually came to have greater possibility to acquire the same occupational and social status as their fathers' through the process of what is called "anticipated socialization." This was particularly true of those who were engaged in

* Cf. A. W. Gouldner, "Cosmopolitans and Locals: Toward an Analysis of Latent Social Roles", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. II, pp. 281-306, 1957.

• Nihon shakai gakkai, Chōsa iinkai, *Nihon shakai no kaisōteki kōzō* (The Stratification of Japanese Society), Tokyo, Yūhikaku, 1958. Cf. S. M. Lipset & R. Bendix, *Social Mobility in Industrial Society*, Berkeley, Univ. of California Press, 1959.

the administrative and professional occupations. (See Table 3, 4) It must be pointed out that the upward mobility of manual workers' sons to the white-collar strata was extremely limited, and that the recruiting of white-collar workers on the basis of their educational background brought forth the relative inflexibility of this upward mobility. Educational background is, after all, the key to defining not only the social composition of the Japanese white-collar strata in each enterprise but that in the entire society as well.

Table 3. Social Origins of White-collar Workers Distributed According to Father's Occupations (%)

Subject's Occupation	Father's Occupation							Others
	Professional Work	Managerial Work	Clerical Work	Owner of Small Business (With Employees)	Owner of Small Business (No Employees)	Agricultural	Productive Workers	
Clerical	6	8	23	13	9	29	7	5
Professional	24	7	11	14	8	21	7	8
Managerial	8	26	8	17	10	22	4	5

Source: Hayashi, Susato, Suzuki, *op. cit.* pp.175-9.

Table 4. Educational Background of Japanese Business Leaders (%)

Last Schooling	School Education of the 50- to 69-age Group in 1965 (of Japanese Population)	School Education of Japanese Business Leaders	School Education of American Business Leaders
Primary School	83	3	4
Middle School (Old System)	10	6	20
Higher Professional School	} 7	23	19
College or University		68	57

Source: Mannari, *Bizinesu erito* (Business Elite), Chūō-kōron-sha, Tokyo, 1965.

After the war higher educational institutions were rapidly popularized and democratized as the only available source of recruitment of the white-collar population. With the economic growth, the national income per capita rose to the prewar level and continued to increase further in the subsequent years. The reform of the whole educational system following the war led to the establishment of a unilinear school-education system. The desire to acquire higher education, which now became the prime requisite replacing the old "noble lineage" in feudal society, was deep-rooted in the whole society and created a strong demand for higher education. The levelling-off of college education resulted in the enrollment

of some 1,200,000 college students (20% of the population of the same age group) in the latter half of the 1960's. (See Table 5, 6)

Table 5. The Occupied Position of New College and University Graduates
(Number of Persons, %)

	1955	1960	1963
Professional Work	34,692 (49.5)	42,603 (42.7)	52,806 (44.3)
Office Work & Sales	28,429 (40.6)	49,440 (49.6)	58,204 (48.8)
Management	788 (1.1)	1,400 (1.4)	1,840 (1.5)
Others	6,196 (8.8)	6,263 (6.3)	6,481 (5.4)
Total	70,105 (100.0)	99,706 (100.0)	119,331 (100.0)

Source: Ministry of Education, *Gakkō kihon chōsa hōkoku* (Report of the Basic Survey on Schools).

Table 6. Composition of the White-Collar Strata on Different Educational Levels (Males in Tokyo) (%)

Levels of Education	Middle School	High School	College & University
Small- & Medium-Sized Business Employees (1)	24	49	21
Big Business Employees (1)	7	48	45
Small- & Medium-Sized Business Employees (2)	18	48	34
Big Business Employees (2)	7	39	53
Professional-Technical Employees	7	22	70
Big Business Administrative Employees	5	17	74

Note: "Small- & Medium-Sized Business (1)" and "Big Business (1)" indicated above represent wholesale and retail business firms employing less than 30 persons and those employing 30 or more persons respectively. Similarly, the same items marked (2) represent manufacturing companies employing less than 300 persons and those employing 300 or more persons respectively.

Source: Hayashi, Susato, Suzuki, *op. cit.*

Leaning upon the patterned differentiation of promotion by educational ground and also their status security, the white-collar with a higher educational background often came to hold the command post as a "professional manager" and take the leadership in the Japanese management. Reflecting the economic growth in recent years, however, industrial organizations have been seriously affected by a wave of mechanization and bureaucratization. In consequence, productive workers are forced to perform simple and repetitive operations, while higher administrative jobs are more and more professionalized, thus giving birth to a new white-collar group with multiple managerial techniques. This has led to the emergence of those white-collar who, freed from the traditional hierarchical system, have come to have a much wider scope of discretion in their job performance than ever before. Occasionally, however, there have been clashes

between their professional competence and administrative authority. At any rate, the conventional system of responsibility and authority has been decentralized and horizontally differentiated. Although the merit system which presupposes the dynamic deployment of manpower has not yet been fully materialized, the trend toward it has gradually manifested itself. Most big business enterprises have attempted, under the slogan "Let Us Innovate Our Management!", to make a reform in their multi-functional organization through an extensive distribution and transfer of authority. This foresaw the arrival of post-industrialism which calls for an innovation in administrative management necessitated by the intensified international competition and changes in the market structure.

At the other end of the scale, the rationalization of clerical work procedures in relation to business machinery has produced social consequences similar to those to be found in factories. Much of work and decision-making has been routinized, so that a small group of executives who make strategic decisions have now been separated from a mass of subordinates whose functions no longer qualify them as brain workers.

Such trends have necessitated a profound change in the personnel policy primarily based upon the conventional seniority system, causing, on the one hand, personnel-screenings and reorganizations in the middle management which made a rapid but gross growth in the postwar years, and increasing, on the other hand, the number of professional staff, especially those who are required to do the jobs that are supplementary to the strategic decision-making of top management. As a logical consequence, the double-track promotion system has been introduced to replace the old single-track system. Meanwhile, the expansion of the tertiary functions in the secondary industries has resulted in the formation of a specific group of persons who are in charge of analysis and management of strategic business information. The image of this new white-collar worker is at present in the process of being formed.

Viewed microcosmically, however, this change has helped to promote a structural change in the white-collar strata, for, while retaining some of the old practices, the white-collar strata have had to adapt themselves to meet new demands. Now, the specialized semi-skilled office work is assigned to the less educated, and business mechanization, which has begun to gather speed in the 1960's, has opened the way for the female participation in white-collar jobs in the capacity of machine operators or minor office workers. This change has had its due effects on the social status of the white-collar jobs in general. The work hitherto assigned to male white-collar workers from high school tends to be more and more

confined to minor clerical work or simple business operations. On the other hand, the staff training system for college graduates still remains inadequate, and the length of waiting time before they become cadres is often a source of complaint among educated young white-collar.

Now, the young labor force in Japan is generally in short supply, and the demand for young productive workers eligible for technical training is increasing with technological innovation. Consequently, more and more high-school graduates who were originally recruited as minor office workers are employed as factory hands in the automated process, forming new gray-collar strata. Technological innovation has resulted in the simplification of work in the productive process, but at the same time it has enhanced the responsibility of workers with a higher capacity for machine-tending services (for example, process control in equipment industries or numerical control in automated processing industries), as well as the resultant demand for "quality" labor.

IV. WORK CAREERS AND ASPIRATIONS OF WHITE-COLLAR

Originally, white-collar work was characterized by a quality differential under each work condition; in other words, it was a kind of work which was not merely non-manual but which also required more or less knowledge, responsibility and personal judgement and had some scope of freedom in self-expression.⁷ Administration of white-collar work, therefore, was not conducted in the form of impersonal and standardized training. Except for giant organizations, white-collar work tended to be performed in one and the same social context well-known to all the members in the same section. The section itself was an isolated small work group into which all the members were integrated along with the executives and the upper administrative personnels. The psychological distance existing between the white-collar employees and the management was much less than the state of near severance between the white-collar and the blue-collar. However, as already pointed out, business mechanization caused a small industrial revolution among the general office workers involving the lower sector of the white-collar group, and promoted the routinization of minor office work. Women's participation in the white-collar jobs was a common occurrence in all developed countries, and Japan was no exception to the rule. Female workers with less aspirations began to replace male workers in the fields where long-term training was not needed, and where income, the interest in the work, and

⁷ Cf. D. Lockwood, *The Blackcoated Worker*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1958.

the prestige associated with it were at a low level, thus forming a new layer similar to that of the male workers from high school who had been far removed from the decision-making job.

The social status of an occupation depends in part on the amount of income or opportunities that the occupation provides, but more on the educational background and the social origins as well as the sex structure of the people who are engaged in it. What, then, was the situation in which the white-collar workers could enjoy their traditional superiority? The conditions have now changed in which an individual worker could identify himself with the enterprise throughout his business career, deriving much satisfaction from his job, and in which promotion possibilities and chances to develop his abilities were still open to him, and the scope of work left to his own discretion still wide. What is worse still, the objective conditions in which the majority of the white-collar strata were placed, such as pecuniary rewards and "life chances" closely connected therewith, are no longer attractive as the traditional differentials between blue- and white-collar workers have already been largely removed.

One aspect of the managerial change in postwar Japan was the removal of the difference in status between blue- and white-collar, such as can be seen, for instance, in the disappearance of the rigid division and social distance between "office" and "factory." This was equally true of the pay scale, and also of the nature of bonus as it has changed from a form of profit-sharing which it formerly was to a sort of supplementary pay given out to all personnel. In the 1960's, which saw the arrival of the stage of affluent economy, big business firms have succeeded in building up among the masses the image of middle-class life which could be materialized on the standardized life patterns, and consequently the average quantity-wise consumption pattern has been inculcated into the masses. This has replaced the importance once attached to the cultural and social differences among the various social classes which existed in the former Japanese society, by that of the quantitative possession of various consumer goods. Various surveys so far conducted indicate that the consciousness belonging to the intermediate strata has found its way even into the productive workers.⁸

Modern economic growth has produced an imbalance in the demand for and supply of young workers, due chiefly to demographic changes and the decreased ratio of young people available for production work,

⁸ For example, see Kokumin Seikatsu Kenkyūsho (The Social and Economic Affairs Research Institute), *Shōhisha no seikatsu-ishiki to shōhi chochiku kōdō ni kansuru jittai chōsa* (Research on Consumer's Attitude toward Life and His Behavior of Consumption and Savings).

Table 7. Wage Composition by Age, 1966 (manufacturing industries only)

Age	Blue-collar			White-collar			White-collar (Graduates of new and old colleges and universities)		
	Average Length of Employment (year)	Wage (1000 yen)	Number of Employees (1000 persons)	(A)	(B)	(C)	(A)	(B)	(C)
	(A)	(B)	(C)						
-17	1.4	15.9	270	1.4	15.5	3	—	—	—
18-19	2.2	21.0	340	1.3	20.3	44	—	—	—
20-24	4.0	28.2	699	3.5	27.7	219	1.6	29.6	45
25-29	5.8	34.8	625	5.6	36.7	285	4.1	37.7	120
30-34	7.9	39.7	510	8.8	47.6	220	7.5	50.7	90
35-39	10.3	43.7	415	12.2	56.4	158	10.6	63.8	41
40-49	12.3	46.5	553	15.5	66.4	214	14.1	83.4	33
50-59	12.7	44.2	315	16.2	67.4	107	15.2	95.0	13
60-	8.4	30.0	97	10.1	45.8	30	9.6	61.5	3

Source: Ministry of Labor, Statistical Research Division, *Chingin kōzō kihon tōkei chōsa hōkoku* (Basic Statistical Report on the Wage Structure) 1966, (Average monthly fixed wages only).

for more than 70% of young people now go on to senior high school. In accordance with the demand for higher levels of technically-trainable workers, there can be seen a distinctive growth of the gray-collar, rather than the blue-collar, recruited from high-school graduates, as well as a considerable raise in the starting salary. The earnings of the lower-grade white-collar are roughly on a par with the young gray-collar's income, and there is an overlap in the income brackets of skilled manual and non-manual workers. (See Table 7) This is a fact of primary importance that shows the narrowing down of the differentials between the economic positions of white- and blue-collars. As far as office workers are concerned, there is no difference between high-school graduates and college graduates under 30 years of age, and the difference begins to appear with age, reaching the maximum in the 50's when the majority of college graduates are expected to assume administrative posts. The considerable decline in the starting salary for the college-graduate white-collar as compared with the prewar level has caused latent frustration among them, and the relatively favorable income curve for productive workers has now proved the bitterest pill for the lower-grade white-collar to swallow.

However, there exists a complicated difference in the white-collar incomes of different industries varying according to the size of enterprise, so that much caution is needed in discussing the average white-collar income; because income gaps are still wide between big and small firms.

It is, at any rate, still premature to conclude that there is an irreversible trend towards the proletarianization or impoverishment in the white-

collar strata as a whole. The situation can better be described by insisting upon the tendency toward the bourgeoisification of the productive workers in big industries on the one hand, and upon the economic and social decline of the lower-grade white-collar on the other.

V. CLASS IDENTIFICATION AND OTHER SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF WHITE-COLLAR IN PRESENT-DAY JAPAN

The relative falling-off of the economic and social status of the white-collar strata has exercised a peculiar influence on the class identification of the strata. Various surveys conducted on class identification point out the subtleties of this awareness.⁹ As shown in Table 8, one's subjective identification with the middle (economic) class stands at a much lower level in Japanese society than in the industrially advanced countries, while that with the working class (A) is especially stronger in the professional white-collar and in the younger age-group. (The working class (A) here represents workers having the inclination to support progressive political parties, whereas (B) represents workers who do not positively show any such political orientation.)

Table 8. Class Identifications of the White-collar Strata (%)

Age	Professional-Technical Employees			Office-Employees of Big Industries			Office-Employees of Small- & Medium-sized Industries		
	20-29	30-39	40-49	20-29	30-39	40-49	20-29	30-39	40-49
Class Identification	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Working Class (A)	69	42	32	53	44	35	46	48	48
Working Class (B)	18	20	24	16	19	27	29	22	40
Middle Class	10 (44)	36 (56)	44 (52)	24 (45)	32 (60)	27 (57)	21 (42)	28 (60)	6 (42)
Capitalist Class	3 (31)	1 (15)	0 (4)	3 (35)	2 (21)	1 (18)	2 (34)	0 (23)	0 (15)
DK	0 (10)	1 (18)	0 (12)	4 (10)	3 (10)	10 (8)	2 (7)	2 (7)	6 (19)

Note: The figures in the parentheses show the ratio of the future subjective identification.

Source: Hayashi, Susato, Suzuki, *op. cit.*

On the other hand, a higher percentage of white-collar workers in small- and medium-sized firms identified themselves with the working class (B) as a whole. In analyzing this from the standpoints of age, income and education, attention should be paid to the fact that young white-collars with a high educational background are fully conscious of their falling short of the quantitatively high consumption pattern in terms

⁹ K. Odaka, *The Middle Classes in Japan*, Foreign Affairs Association in Japan, Tokyo, 1966. Hayashi, Susato, Suzuki, *op. cit.* pp. 149-174.

of property and income, hence their hesitation in identifying themselves with the middle (economic) class.

As previously stated, however, the evolution of mass-consumption society in Japan has provided life patterns and consumer's behavioral patterns based on the image of middle-class life. The tendency to be identified with the middle (economic) class may possibly become clear in the white-collar strata, as time goes on. Now, one of the main aims of mass communication, which combines mass production with mass consumption, particularly in the case of strategic and organized advertising, is to create consumption desires among the white-collar, for they are always the first to sail down the stream of mass consumption, with other strata following in their wake. In this way, the white-collar strata have been mobilized as the mainstay for westernizing the people's way of living in the postwar years. This holds true not only in the way of material consumption but also of leisure and amusement. The abundant supply of various consumption goods necessary for a westernized way of living and for raising the living standard has now been facilitated. Yet, it is still very difficult to attain a certain level of "cultural" life. At present, with the white-collar strata, the gap has widened between the continuously rising level of desirable consumption and the real income.

However, this trend is likely to change, as prospects for their careers become brighter and their job satisfaction increases with increases in economic and socio-psychological rewards. To cite an instance, the questionnaire on the same subjects has revealed that those who answered it entertained a promising future before them, having an optimistic outlook that they would eventually go up to the middle (economic) class, and showing a sign of turning to conservatism as they grew old. (See Table 8) In contrast to this, as far as this survey is concerned, a considerable portion of the blue-collar strata consistently identify themselves with the working class (A) both at present and in the future, although their self-identification with the middle (economic) class may also increase in the future, just as in the case of the white-collar strata.

The above-mentioned duality of the class consciousness existing in the white-collar strata will become more complicated when the possible directions of their class identification are taken into consideration. To sum up, the white-collar strata on the whole tend to identify themselves with the middle (prestige) class, but not necessarily with the middle (economic) class. (See Table 9)

Moreover, as will be touched upon later, the young white-collar workers have a higher knowledge of, show a deeper interest in, political

Table 9. Self-identification of the White-collar Strata to the Hierarchical Prestige Classes (%)

	Upper Middle	Lower Middle	Upper Low	Lower Low
Total	9	42	34	10
Small- & Medium-sized Firm				
Office Employees (1)	6	30	52	12
Big Firm Office Employees (1)	6	57	31	1
Small- & Medium-sized Firm				
Office Employees (2)	6	48	42	2
Big Firm Office Employees (2)	6	61	25	3
Professional-Technical Employees	9	52	30	6
Big Firm Managerial Employees	36	50	12	0
Big Firm Productive Workers	3	33	46	16

Source: Hayashi, Susato, Suzuki. *op. cit.*

and social issues, and especially nation-wide ones. This fact, combined with the sense of repression and resistance, reinforces their class identification with the working class. The white-collar, especially young and high-educated, show such complexity of class identification that two contradictory identifications—one with the middle (prestige) class and the other with the working class—coexist in one and the same individual.

It is also true, however, that the young and well-educated white-collar may gradually derive satisfaction from their jobs, entertaining at the same time expectations to secure a respectable position. Holding as they are the middle position in their respective firms, they do not consider it quite impossible to get promoted or to have chances to participate in the decision-making of management. Nevertheless, job satisfaction or economic and psychological rewards they get at present are far removed from their expectations, and in some cases, the tendency for intensified selective promotion in the white-collar strata has become a reality due to a wave of managerial modernization, arousing in their minds anxieties and frustrations.

The emergence of workers in affluent society¹⁰ has narrowed down the gap in consumption patterns between blue- and white-collar workers, which in turn has often developed a tendency toward the marginal differentiation that has forced white-collar workers to seek various status symbols. On the other hand, that value-orientation which places more weight on the pleasures and happiness centering around the nuclear family makes its appearance as promotion possibilities decrease and a sense of alienation in daily work deepens.

In such a complicated situation, especially among the young and well-

¹⁰ Cf. Gothrop, Lockwood, et. al., *The Affluent Worker*, vol. I-II.

educated white-collar who feel more or less dissatisfaction and anxieties a sense of repression and resistance raises its head. Such a sense of repression and resistance is also responsible for the white-collar strata's identification with the working class.¹¹

As is evident from the foregoing, it is hard to define the social character of the modern white-collar in Japan. In general, however, allegiance and devotion to one's firm or organization still plays the predominant role in their life and behavior. Such strong identification with the firm is usually expressed in the form of "corporation-centrism."

In parallel with this, there is the problem of "dual allegiance," a problem which requires a specific analysis here, for, although it is not necessarily a factor peculiar to Japanese industrial and business firms alone, it does represent a special feature they have in relation to the trade unionism in Japan. Let us first take up the trade union which is one of the two objects within a Japanese enterprise to which "dual allegiance" should be directed.

The postwar liberation of the labor movement in Japan had followed an eventual course until Japanese unionism was firmly established in the 1950's. The characteristics of Japanese trade unions are:

- (i) For the purpose of rapid unionization, business organization has served as a convenient basis; in consequence, a trade union newly formed in a particular business organization comprises all the regular workers of the organization as its members. It is, at the same time, a mixture of white- and blue-collar workers, and is closely related to the closed labor market centering around big industrial and business firms.
- (ii) Generally, a Japanese trade union has two basic functions, i.e., to improve labor conditions, and to make the union function in the way that a factory committee does in the West. The demand for improved labor conditions, however, depends quite often upon the solvency or financial position of each enterprise.
- (iii) The white-collars tend to take leadership in union activities. This can be attributed in large measure to the fact that they have easier access to the administrative information, and a deeper knowledge about the conditions, of each firm.
- (iv) "Enterprise unionism"—unionism with first priority placed on the interests of the enterprise—often tends to drift in the direction of the "profit above all else" principle in line with the enterprise's managerial policy. The management expects all its employees to take

¹¹ K. Odaka, *op. cit.*, pp. 20 et. seq.

primary interest in the growth of the firm and to devote themselves to it in order to meet successfully the competition between firms.

On the other hand, it cannot be denied that most white-collar join in union activities for various reasons, such as the firm's relative over-employment, the insecurity of their positions, the sense of repression and resistance, and their demand for social reform.¹² However, it is interesting to note that there are times when the "profit above all else" principle that the firm adopts reinforces the closed nature of Japanese-type trade unions, and that allegiance, which is derived from "familism" in management, is still exercising considerable influence on the labor-management relations in Japan. The reality that lies behind "dual allegiance" is that an employee's identification with the firm exists side by side with that to the union within the same individual.¹³ "Identification" here may be defined as the degree to which a member of an organization feels that he belongs to it not merely as its nominal but also as its real member in the sense that it is for him the basis of his life. Identification in this sense can be divided into the following categories: (a) dual identification—identification with enterprise and union; (b) all-out devotion to enterprise; (c) free and unbiased devotion either to enterprise or union; (d) all-out devotion to union; (e) lack of devotion to both—the discontented type. Of these, categories (a) and (e) can be found in highest numbers among the blue- and white-collar workers. As far as personal traits are concerned, especially those blue-collar workers who belong to category (a) are relatively advanced in age, usually thrifty and independent, and well aware of the real advantages and disadvantages of life. They show a higher degree of satisfaction with their work and the human relations in their work group, and feel little or no clash of value orientations in their dual allegiance to enterprise and union. The union is to them a basis for sustaining their livelihood and providing precious chances for promotion, and their membership makes them feel that the union is something not external to the firm, and that it exists as an integral part, and in the interest, of the firm. Therefore, those who belong to this type tend to form the stabilized forces in the firm. In contrast to them, the discontented feel that the firm and the union ought to have shared the responsibility of improving their living and welfare conditions; hence their dissatisfaction and complaints toward both. Their identification with both enterprise

¹² Public service workers' unions may go unhampered by such particularism and, therefore, serve as a vehicle to unify the labor front, but the individual public service worker is not very different from the aforementioned civil white-collar worker. Hayashi, Susato, Suzuki, *op. cit.*, pp. 244-292. For literature in English, see A. Sturmthal, *White-collar Trade Unions*, Urbana, Univ. of Illinois Press, 1966, pp. 205-260.

¹³ K. Odaka, *Nihon no keiei* (Japanese Management), Chūō-kōron-sha, 1965, pp. 229-309.

and union generally stands at a low level. This type can be found in fairly large numbers among the younger and well-educated.

It is, undoubtedly, very difficult now to place younger white-collar workers in big firms under effective control, and so also it is to enhance their allegiance or devotion to their firms through the conventional methods of paternalistic management. However, there is no denying that there exists also a pattern of judgement that the improvement of their way of living and status depends in large measure upon the growth of their respective firms. In deciding, for example, whether or not the workers in a firm should exercise their right to strike in making various economic and social demands, a set of judgements on different situational levels are required. Here the general trend is toward particularism, and such situational assessments are mostly made within the framework of that particular firm.

Among the various types of identification that can be found in the white-collar strata, there is potentially an accumulated layer of white-collar workers of this discontented type. In their assignments, however, these clerical and technical white-collars are divided into small, easily-controllable groups so that they may be unknowingly integrated into one whole administrative organization. But the problem lies in the absence of a proper channel through which they can voice their dissatisfaction or protest arising out of the gaps between their expectations or desires and the realities into which they are thrown, and that is the reason why they come to take a critical attitude toward the present political and economic system including the firm to which they belong.

As a whole, the Japanese white-collars certainly have high levels of knowledge and information on political and social issues as compared with the blue-collars and the owners of small- and medium-sized businesses. Yet the interest they have is essentially the "knowledge-centered interest" in which knowledge and action remain separated.¹⁴ Politically, the white-collar strata account for one-fourth of the 62,000,000 eligible voters in Japan, so it may reasonably be expected that their political orientations will considerably affect the returns of general election. But the reverse is the case, for their political interest, on the average, does not rouse them to any organized action not only in voting but also on those issues that have more or less bearing on their daily life or its environment. Moreover, with the young and well-educated white-collars, dissatisfaction and

¹⁴ J. Watanuki, "Daitoshi shimin no seiji-ishiki" (Political Attitude of Citizens in Big Cities), *Nihon rōdō kyōkai zasshi* (Journal of the Japanese Labor Association), Jan., 1967.

anxiety in various dimensions of their social life may often motivate them to demand for social reform, but those in the 30-44 age group tend to show a sign of conservatism, and those in the over 45 age group quite often turn out to be conservatives. These findings are more or less connected with their levels of status or income within the enterprise, and it is doubtful whether the young strata will continue to have the same demands for social reform as they go up the ladder of these levels. Inasmuch as theirs essentially is knowledge-centered interest, their responses to political or social issues on a nation-wide scale are quick and often sharply critical, but they seldom put them into action. As repeatedly pointed out, their present economic positions and social status are far removed from those superior ones which were established on the basis of the socially unequal structure of the prewar society and also of the relative scarcity of the white-collar workers. Time and time again they find themselves being gnawed by chronic frustration caused by the gaps between their aspirations for higher standards of living and the realities that surround them. It is true that knowledge-centered interest and intellectual rationalism are very likely to develop in them a sense of repression and resistance as well as a critical attitude, and these in turn are directed not only against various political issues but also against old-line political leaders and conventional tactics and techniques in politics. But to give a concrete shape to such criticism is no easy matter.

On the other hand, the presence of a large number of white-collar employees in small- and medium-sized enterprises in the secondary and tertiary industries can never be overlooked. That they still hold a traditional subordinate position in their labor-management relations is a cold fact. With them, it should be noted, even such a sense of repression and resistance and such a critical attitude as indicated above are most likely to be lost for good because of the very nature of their business careers and also of their social and occupational situations.

The origin of the white-collar strata in Japan can be traced back to the social structure firmly established in the early 1930's, and throughout the postwar period of economic growth and technological innovation they have shown a remarkable growth in number, and many new internal differentials among them have also appeared with changes in Japanese management. Constantly exposed not only to their needs for adapting themselves to new situations but also to the insecurity in status resulting from the reorganization of their respective firms, the white-collar strata in Japan have gone through a variety of economic and social changes, showing, at each turn, multi-lateral reactions in every direction.