

# Japan's Immigration Policies and the Growing Need for Integration

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## ***SECTION I: INTRODUCTION***

In light of Japan's demographic and economic reality, the Japanese government should be facilitating the integration of Japanese Brazilians<sup>1</sup> in Japan and expand their abilities to live and work in Japan, in all areas and not just in low-skilled jobs. Japanese Brazilians have now been migrating to Japan for more than twenty years, and Japan is in dire need of young, vibrant immigrants of all skill levels who want to live there and who would be contributing to its economy, which Japan so desperately wants to improve. If Japan chooses not to open its borders to migration, its economic prowess and stature will continue to fall into deeper decline. Japan should start with a concentrated effort to improve the integration of the willing Japanese diaspora (the majority from Brazil) but eventually, it will have to consider more welcoming broad immigration policies.

The first section of this paper will discuss how Japan has historically dealt with immigration, in particular focusing on its treatment of foreign workers. Traditionally, it has been a closed country, but since the 1980s, Japan has been faced with increasing numbers of foreign workers and consequently, has been revising its immigration policies. Section two will evaluate the Japanese Brazilians in Japan as a test case for opening immigration. Because of their shared ethnic origin, desire to migrate to Japan, and increasingly longer-term residency in Japan, this people group is well suited for successful integration into Japanese society. Currently, they are facing discrimination in a variety of areas: housing, language, societal status, and acceptance in their new "home" that should be addressed so that newcomers in Japan can lead fulfilling lives while they work. The final section will consist of comparative policy analysis with Germany as it shares similar cultural tendencies as Japan (relatively homogeneous population, high emphasis

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<sup>1</sup> a diaspora group which had emigrated since the early 1900s

on cultural and ethnic belonging, bloodlines, discomfort with the “other” [in this case, immigrants] etc.). German only recently began admitting its need for immigrants and developing integration policies. This country analysis reveals that increased public awareness and discourse on the standard/quality of life for immigrants led to more flexible and revised policies. Granted, there will be inevitable pains for the Japanese as they continue to adapt to newcomers in their society, but given Japan’s current socioeconomic reality, there are few other viable options.

In terms of methodology, this study benefits from the recent proliferation of academic research on Japanese Brazilians as well as a growing scholarly and media interest in ethnic diversity in Japan and the country’s related policy adjustments. In addition to an expansive literature review, a research trip to Japan was conducted in June 2012 which enabled insightful primary observation of local government integration programs, related non-profit actors, and aspects of immigrants’ social and work environments. For a broad perspective of immigration in Japan, Tokyo, Hamamatsu, and Toyota city were visited during the trip: Tokyo is home to national government offices and Japan’s leading universities; Hamamatsu is a mid-sized industrial city, known for its numerous company factories, its diverse immigrant population, and multicultural services; and Toyota is in essence, a company town which is also home to hundreds of small firms producing car parts for Toyota and also to the largest residential complex where Japanese Brazilians live. Contact with several professors who work with Japanese Brazilians and other immigrant groups in Japan as well numerous local conversations also enhanced this analysis, as did a factory tour of a Toyota automobile plant. I am very much indebted to my MPR supervisor and her professional contacts whose assistance led to a fulfilling schedule of visits and meetings.

A note on funding: My field research was financially supported by two grants through the University of Ottawa that contributed to the travel portion of the trip. Unfortunately, due to the rigorous ethics approval process and its tight timelines, after consulting with a few professors, I decided to pursue my research without it (as I was told it was highly unlikely that I would obtain it before the scheduled field study). This decision had the consequence of my not being able to directly quote any of the people I met in Japan in this paper. Another regrettable result of not having ethics approval was that I was deemed ineligible for significant scholarship funding, which would have assisted greatly with the costs of this research—More than half of the expenses were paid out of my own pocket, but as I felt this subject matter could not be investigated properly without field study, I decided that I would go to Japan regardless of my funding situation and have been saving up for the past year. Overall, I am extremely thankful for the grants and also the opportunity and encouragement I received for the field study portion of this project.

**Comment [NC--1]:** Srdjan suggested that I mention the difficulty I had with the ethics approval. Please let me know if the tone and content are appropriate. Thanks 😊

## ***SECTION II: JAPAN'S IMMIGRATION POLICY—CULTURAL & ECONOMIC COMPROMISE***

This chapter will examine the major revisions in Japan's immigration policies that affect foreign workers, namely the laws that have permitted them to enter Japan. Special attention will also be given to the cultural and economic justifications for these immigration laws and their influence on how foreigners are viewed in Japanese society. A brief outline of Japan's immigration history will also illustrate the effects of these justifications on what types of immigrants were accepted. Major policy changes will be discussed, focusing on those affecting foreign workers—which make up the most contentious group of immigrants to Japan.

## *THE HOMOGENEITY FACTOR*

The most predominant cultural belief that currently shapes Japanese national identity—and exerts political and social pressures—is that of Japanese exceptionalism. In this view, to be Japanese is to have Japanese blood. Legally, the country’s citizenship is based on the principle of *jus sanguinis*, which means that it is acquired through shared blood.<sup>2</sup> This principle is closely associated with Japanese theories of ethnic distinction, commonly referred to as *nihonjinron* literature, which celebrate Japanese uniqueness as a package of language, culture, and spirit that has developed a harmonious and successful nation.<sup>3</sup> For example, Japan’s low crime rates and social stability have long been attributed to its homogeneity.<sup>4</sup> Since the end of World War II, there has been a proliferation of works published in the genre which have gained widespread credibility and appeal.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the Japanese government has promoted the tenets of *nihonjinron* literature such that they have become a prevailing ideology in Japanese society.<sup>6</sup> From there sprouted the importance of Japan as a homogenous society, one characterized by a “‘monotone heritage’ which includes traditional culture components like tea ceremony and ink painting.”<sup>7</sup> As Japaneseness is to be celebrated, *nihonjinron* ideas lead to the exclusion of others from Japanese society. Strong notions of purity and impurity exist in Japan, especially related to foreigners.<sup>8</sup> What comes from the outside is seen as a source of pollution or contamination<sup>9</sup>, so foreigners bring with them “alien and impure cultural elements into Japan thus threatening...its

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<sup>2</sup> Linger, p. 277.

<sup>3</sup> Befu, Harumi “Nationalism and Nihonjinron” In *Cultural Nationalism in East Asia: Representation and Identity*, by Harumi Befu, 107-35. Berkley, 2003 as cited in Linger, p. 277.

<sup>4</sup> Hasegawa, Koichi, 2005, “The Development of NGO Activities in Japan: A New Civic Culture and Institutionalization of Civic Action”, in Robert Weller ed. *Civil Life, Globalization, and Political Change in Asia*, Oxford: Routledge, pp.110-122,2005. p. 114.

<sup>5</sup> Linger, pp. 277-8.

<sup>6</sup> Linger, p. 278.

<sup>7</sup> Hasegawa, p. 114.

<sup>8</sup> Tsuda 2003, p. 126.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

distinctive culture.”<sup>10</sup> A way to prevent contamination is to keep social distance from foreigners.<sup>11</sup> As a result, these ideas cause Japanese to have difficulty interacting with and accepting others.

Despite this claim of a homogenous Japanese society, ethnic and cultural diversity exists. There are two considerable indigenous groups found in Japan, the Ainu and Burakumin, both of whom have faced discrimination.<sup>12</sup> Okinawans are another national minority group whose historical, racial, and cultural differences have been suppressed within the mainstream Japanese discourse.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, thousands of Koreans and Chinese have lived in Japan for several generations. Numerous scholars have denounced *nihonjinron* literature, declaring that these ideas support a “myth of homogeneity”.<sup>14</sup> Regardless of its questionable validity, the hold of Japan’s unique ethnic and cultural identity dominates official and mainstream perceptions, making it difficult for minorities to publicly assert difference although ethnic diversity does exist in Japan.<sup>15</sup>

### *PUSH AND PULL FACTORS*

Immigration to Japan has occurred in sudden spurts over time. The first major wave of immigrants came during the Japanese colonial period: since the early 1900s, significant numbers of Koreans and Chinese have lived in Japan. They, and their descendants, are often referred to as “oldcomers” (*orudokamazu*)<sup>16</sup> who despite living in Japan for generations, currently have only

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<sup>10</sup> Tsuda 2003, p. 127.

<sup>11</sup> Tsuda 2003, p. 129.

<sup>12</sup> See Linger, p. 220 for brief discussion of Ainu and Tsuda 2003, p. 386 on the Burakumin.

<sup>13</sup> Howell, David L. “Ethnicity and Culture in Contemporary Japan.” *Journal of Contemporary History* 31, no. 1 (1996), pp. 175-190.

<sup>14</sup> See Tsuda 2003 and Eiji Oguma, A Genealogy of ‘Japanese’ Self-Images, Trans. David Askew. Trans. Pacific Press, 2002.

<sup>15</sup> See Linger, p. 220 and for further analysis, Peter N. Dale, *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness* (London 1986); Kosaku Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan: A Sociological Inquiry* (London 1992); and Harumi Befu, (Berkeley 2003).

<sup>16</sup> “The Political Construction of Foreign Workers in Japan.” Shipper, Apichai W. *Critical Asian Studies* 34:1 2002:55.

permanent alien status—not full citizenship.<sup>17</sup> Prior to 1952, they were official colonial citizens, but with the importance of racial purity growing in Japan during that period, their citizenship was revoked in that year.<sup>18</sup> In either case, they were never accepted as being Japanese by the government or people because of the strong tie of Japanese lineage to Japan's national identity.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, the Koreans and Chinese have not fully integrated into Japanese society: they are encouraged to use Japanese names in order to assimilate; the government has enacted discriminatory policies against their ethnic schools, and they do not have the right to vote.<sup>20</sup> Naturalization is an option for them, but it comes at the cost of their ethnic identity: they would have to give up their original names and deny their ethnic and cultural heritage and “pretend” to have been Japanese (culturally) from birth.<sup>21</sup> The continued exclusion of Koreans and Chinese in Japan demonstrates its historical integration challenges, which are linked to ideas of Japanese homogeneity, and as a result, the Japanese level of acceptance towards other ethnic groups is strikingly low.

The next major influx of migrants to Japan occurred during the 1980s when foreign workers became important in Japan. Immigrants arriving thereafter are referred to as “newcomer” (*nyūkamazu*) groups in Japan and include Indochinese refugees, Asian and Middle Eastern labourers, and most significantly, Latin American *nikkeijin*, which refers to Japanese who have emigrated and are part of Japanese diaspora groups. Traditionally, Japan has not permitted the migration of unskilled foreign workers. Prior to the 1980s, labour demands had been met internally through the maximization of the domestic workforce, using untapped

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<sup>17</sup> Yamanaka 1993, p. 74.

<sup>18</sup> Hein, Patrick. "Does ethnic origin determine integration success? A comparison of Immigration Policies in Germany and Japan." *Asian Ethnicity* 13, no. 2 (2012), p.173.

<sup>19</sup> See Narzary, Dharitri Chakravarty. "The Myths of Japanese 'Homogeneity.'" *China Report* 40, no. 3 (2004), p.317 and Howell 1996.

<sup>20</sup> Takaya 2006, p. 48.

<sup>21</sup> Shipper, p. 64.

resources like women and the elderly, and this contributed to the illusion of Japanese uniqueness, as Japan was the only advanced nation that developed its economy without depending on foreign workers.<sup>22</sup> In reality, the Japanese government had made the conscious decision to not import workers in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>23</sup>

In the 1980s however, it became clear that the Japanese economy was in need of more workers. The domestic labour market could not keep up with the rising demand for unskilled workers, and as a result of Japan's booming economy and impressive yen value stemming from the 1985 Plaza Accord,<sup>24</sup> hundreds of thousands of workers were coming from other parts of Asia where wages were not so attractive. Furthermore, the demand for foreign workers was high, with small and medium Japanese firms facing an acute unskilled labour shortage at this time, especially in the manufacturing sector.<sup>25</sup> Japan's increasingly educated and affluent population was less willing to work in such jobs<sup>26</sup> which only emphasized the necessity of migrant labour. In fact, the smaller firms' very livelihoods were tied to the availability of foreign workers as their poor working conditions were unattractive to Japanese labourers.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, it was this economic climate that compelled the Japanese government to discuss the recent waves of immigration and possible solutions to its economic challenges. Despite the demonstrated need, the government did not reverse its position on foreign unskilled workers due to fears of disrupting social cohesion<sup>28</sup> and of adversity related to racism and income inequalities as experienced by other advanced countries that had allowed temporary workers like Germany, France, and the United

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<sup>22</sup> Tsuda 1999, p. 687-688.

<sup>23</sup> Hein, p. 171.

<sup>24</sup> Yamanaka 1993, p.74.

<sup>25</sup> Tsuda 1999, p. 688.

<sup>26</sup> Tsuda 2009, p. 206.

<sup>27</sup> Yamanaka 1993, p.81.

<sup>28</sup> Shipper 2002, p. 58.

States.<sup>29</sup> Apparently, the notion of maintaining a homogeneous Japanese identity was still very important socially—and thus politically—and it influenced the decision to continue banning these workers even though they were already entering the country and being hired in large numbers.

### *1990 IMMIGRATION REFORM: A JUGGLING ACT*

Provoked by illegal migration and economic concerns, in June 1990 a new law, the Revised Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act,<sup>30</sup> was implemented and maintained limited unskilled labour levels while introducing ten new residency categories (mostly for professionals) under which foreigners could enter and stay in Japan.<sup>31</sup> The practice of hiring unskilled foreigners remained prohibited,<sup>32</sup> but in order to accommodate the demand for factory workers in small firms, “the...Reform created a new category of “long-term” residence for descendants of Japanese emigrants (*nikkeijin*) up to the third generation. This change has permitted thousands of Japanese-Brazilians and Japanese-Peruvians to enter, work, and live in Japan with few restrictions.”<sup>33</sup>

Important to note is that *nikkeijin* were granted this permission to reside in Japan based on their bloodlines, and assessed “Japaneseness”.<sup>34</sup> The ruling Liberal Democratic party at the time seemingly had a preoccupation with maintaining cultural and racial homogeneity which, according to popular belief, were crucial to Japan’s post-war economic miracle.<sup>35</sup> The *nikkeijin* were invited to visit their ancestral homeland, learn the culture, and work in any suitable

<sup>29</sup> Yamanaka 1993, p. 74.

<sup>30</sup> The law was officially passed in 1989 but implemented in 1990. Thus, related literature uses both dates.

<sup>31</sup> Yamanaka 1993, p. 76.

<sup>32</sup> Tsuda, T. and W. A. Cornelius, 2004. “Immigration to Japan: Myths and Realities,” In *Controlling Immigration* Second edition.. W. A. Cornelius, T. Tsuda, P. L. Martin and J. F. Hollifield, eds. pp. 439–476. Stanford: Stanford University Press as cited in Yamanaka, Japan as a Country of Immigration: Two Decades after an Influx of Immigrant Workers 2008, p. 190.

<sup>33</sup> Yamanaka, New Immigration Policy and Unskilled Foreign Workers in Japan 1993, p. 77.

<sup>34</sup> Shipper 2002, p. 56.

<sup>35</sup> Yamanaka, Japan as a Country of Immigration: Two Decades after an Influx of Immigrant Workers 2008, p. 79.

position, with no activity restrictions.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, even though Latin American *nikkeijin* received access to Japan in order to fill an economic gap, as the rationale for their entry was based on shared ancestry, there was little political or public opposition to this change.<sup>37</sup> However, the reality was that most do not speak much Japanese and their behaviour was more “Brazilian”, which then led to social and economic discrimination as they were then treated as disposable workers filling low-level positions.<sup>38</sup> Here, the enduring concepts of purity and pollution play a role for *nikkeijin* were seen as contaminated by their association with degrading factory jobs as well as by living abroad.<sup>39</sup> In essence, the new law created a “back door” permitting unskilled foreign workers, which was inconsistent with the traditional and official ban.<sup>40</sup> This easier access for *nikkeijin* could be interpreted as an odd but acceptable arrangement for the government: on one hand, it could publicly promote this reform as an opportunity for overseas Japanese to learn about Japan which kept in line with *nihonjinron* concepts; and on the other hand, their entry provided the low-skilled workers that factories so desperately sought without aggravating public discomfort with foreigners and racial contamination.

Economic concerns had a tremendous influence on the 1990 immigration reforms. Additional visa modifications for foreign students, a trainee-program, and entertainers were also created to mask sources of cheap labour in the new policy.<sup>41</sup> Students were now permitted to work four hours per day, but given the high cost of living in Japan, especially as most of these students came from poorer neighbouring countries, they were willing to work extra hours—

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<sup>36</sup> Tsuda 2010, p. 628.

<sup>37</sup> Tsuda 2010, p. 628.

<sup>38</sup> Tsuda 2010, p. 629.

<sup>39</sup> Tsuda 2003, p. 387.

<sup>40</sup> Yamanaka, *New Immigration Policy and Unskilled Foreign Workers in Japan 1993*, p. 77.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

illegally—and as foreign students, they would accept lower wages than Japanese.<sup>42</sup> Company trainees came from Asian countries where Japanese firms have a presence to receive training in technology, knowledge, and skills in Japanese public and private organizations.<sup>43</sup> These programs, which had initially begun in 1982, were expanded in 1991.<sup>44</sup> “In reality...the trainees labor at inferior, temporary positions in industrial niches not occupied by Japanese...” and since they are trainees, not employees, they do not receive proper salary and are not protected under labor laws.<sup>45</sup> Trainees also drop out of their programs, as they do not deliver the promised benefits, and become illegal workers instead.<sup>46</sup> “Female entertainers, who are supposed to engage in ‘theatrical performances, musical performances, sports, and other show business,’ often work in the sex industry (which often overlaps with the ‘entertainment’ industry).”<sup>47</sup> It is easy to see how workers in any of these categories could be subject to exploitation, as their labour status is restricted and their work often menial. Similarly, one could understand why they might leave these positions in search of better paying ones, even if that meant working illegally. Meanwhile, the same reforms also criminalized the recruitment and hiring of illegal migrants.<sup>48</sup> In addition to these immigration policy modifications, Japan also imposed visas on several Asian countries in the early 1990s, which in essence turned foreigners from these countries who were residing in Japan into suspicious visitors<sup>49</sup> and often illegal overstayers then subjected to deportation and prison. Accounting for the rising numbers of students, trainees, entertainers, *nikkeijin*, as well as illegal foreign workers “yields a total of about five hundred thousand

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<sup>42</sup> Yamanaka, *New Immigration Policy and Unskilled Foreign Workers in Japan 1993*, p. 81-2.

<sup>43</sup> Shipper 2002, p. 45.

<sup>44</sup> Shipper 2002, p. 57.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Shipper 2002, p. 50.

<sup>47</sup> Shipper 2002, p. 52.

<sup>48</sup> Yamanaka, *New Immigration Policy and Unskilled Foreign Workers in Japan 1993*, p. 76.

<sup>49</sup> Shipper 2002, p. 43.

unskilled workers in 1991, close to one percent of Japan's work force”<sup>50</sup>—a considerable number given the official Japanese declaration that no unskilled labourers were allowed.

These immigration reforms highlight the challenges for Japan in terms of addressing its economic needs and goals while attempting to maintain its distinct Japanese identity. Immigrants were coming and staying in Japan, and being hired as cheap labourers despite the restrictions on their status, and the Japanese government permitted this through its inconsistent labour regulations. The ruling government was unwilling to openly admit unskilled foreign workers, keeping in line with its long-standing ban;<sup>51</sup> yet contentious perspectives existed within its various departments. The Ministry of Labour advocated protection of all employees in Japan, regardless of status, in order to prevent a two-tiered employment system,<sup>52</sup> and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sought to defend the human rights of all foreigners in Japan, although it did not have jurisdiction over undocumented migrants.<sup>53</sup> Other business-minded ministries like Construction, International Trade and Industry, and Fisheries and Transportation also favoured more open immigration policies.<sup>54</sup> “In contrast, the [Ministry of Justice] MOJ and the Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW) take a nationalist position against illegal foreigners.”<sup>55</sup> As demonstrated in the 1990 immigration reforms, foreign overstayers were denied the right to work as unskilled workers and *nikkeijin* were granted preferential visas based on their bloodlines.<sup>56</sup> The MOHW ceased to provide medical assistance to illegal foreigners in 1990 which prevented them being part of any public medical insurance plan.<sup>57</sup> Overall, the MOJ is known to be a very

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<sup>50</sup> Yamanaka, *New Immigration Policy and Unskilled Foreign Workers in Japan 1993*, p. 77.

<sup>51</sup> Tsuda 2009, p. 207.

<sup>52</sup> Shipper 2002, p. 60.

<sup>53</sup> Shipper 2002, p. 59.

<sup>54</sup> Tsuda 2010, p. 626.

<sup>55</sup> Shipper 2002, p. 59.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Shipper 2002, pp. 59-60.

conservative ministry, where the value of homogeneity in guarding social stability is entrenched.<sup>58</sup> It also has almost exclusion jurisdiction over immigration and sits at “the top of the Japanese bureaucratic hierarchy in terms of policy-making” which is why its position was reflected in the 1990 reforms.<sup>59</sup>

### *CONTEMPORARY ECONOMIC CONCERNS*

This immigration debate persists, and even twenty years later, the question of whether the flow of immigrants should continue to fill the gaps in the Japanese labour force or whether policies should continue to preserve a homogenous society is still politically relevant. However, the discussions have evolved and since 2000, they now acknowledge the pressing influence of a globalized economy and the fact that there are more than registered 2 million foreigners in Japan.<sup>60</sup> (See Appendix 1 for a chart of foreigners in Japan over time.) More recent arguments for allowing foreign workers—and thus cultural diversity in Japanese society—seem to be based on neo-liberalism, which advocates the acceptance of *skilled* foreign workers so that individuals’ productive capacities are maximized and innovation is fostered.<sup>61</sup> However, this type of economic thinking encourages multiculturalism—which here means permitting people of different ethnic origins in the Japanese labour force—as a human resource for economic competitiveness, rather than in terms of human rights.<sup>62</sup> Consequently, this promotion of diversity, inspired by neo-liberalism, is indifferent to the plight of undocumented migrants and socioeconomic problems related to ethnic diversity;<sup>63</sup> in fact, this type of multiculturalism “is no longer a demand for their inclusion of minorities...but a doctrine that participates in their

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<sup>58</sup> Tsuda 2010, p. 626.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Takaya 2006, p. 50.

<sup>61</sup> Takaya 2006, p. 51.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Takaya 2006, p. 54.

exclusion” instead.<sup>64</sup> And unfortunately, this is the type of multiculturalism that the Japanese government seems to be promoting<sup>65</sup>—when actually its immigration policies and visa revisions should be addressing the issue of low-skilled migrant workers as well.

As time passes, the economic arguments for immigration are only intensifying as it is well known that Japan is characterized by a fertility rate far below replacement levels and an aging population with the highest life expectancy in the world.<sup>66</sup> As a result, its total working population continues to decline drastically as the ratio of workers to persons age 65 and above falls, as does Japan’s overall population.<sup>67</sup> These demographics have implications for health care, pensions, and especially economic welfare,<sup>68</sup> as the tax base shrinks while costs are on the rise. Unsurprisingly, immigration has been cited as a possible solution to Japan’s demographic woes: advocates believe that permitting immigrants could alleviate some of looming consequences.

A steady level of consumption is a main component of economic growth, which the Japanese government has been trying to recover since its prolonged recession during the 1990s.<sup>69</sup> Since then, Japanese consumers have been wary of spending; for example, “between 2001 and 2007, per-capita consumer spending rose only 0.2 percent”.<sup>70</sup> In struggling with its stagnating economy, the government’s debt has now amassed to over 200% of GDP<sup>71</sup> so any increased sources of tax revenues, from immigrant consumption for example, could help offset this financial burden. Officially accepting more foreign workers would widen Japan’s tax base, which would also help improve Japan’s economic situation. The Japanese government is indeed

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Japan just implemented a points system for skilled workers in 2012. See <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/fl20120306ad.html> for more details.

<sup>66</sup> Muramatsu and Akiyama 2011, p. 426.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Muramatsu and Akiyama 2011, p. 427.

<sup>69</sup> Flath, David. 2005. *The Japanese Economy*. 2nd ed., p. 99.

<sup>70</sup> Tabuchi 2009, p. B1.

<sup>71</sup> CIA Factbook: Japan, Economy section 2012.

aware of these arguments: In 2003, the Japan Business Federation estimated that permitting the entry of 6.1 million guest workers by 2025 would keep the consumption tax rate at 10%; otherwise it would have to increase to 18% to sustain the current level of Japanese social security benefits.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, it has been demonstrated that even illegal migrants exert a certain degree of consumption<sup>73</sup> which means that this stream of migrants is also contributing to Japan's economic growth.

By United Nations estimates, Japan would need 17 million net immigrants by 2050 to keep its population at the same level as 2005<sup>74</sup> and thereby "...address worker scarcity, falling demand, and a possible collapse of the pension system..."<sup>75</sup> Clearly, this is a sizeable challenge for Japan, but one that immigration could help. However, it is important to note that recent levels of foreigners in Japan hover at 1–2%<sup>76</sup> of the total population and that to attain such a level would require an immense escalation for the next forty years. Is this figure even close to realistic for Japan, given that its society has always had quite conservative attitudes concerning foreigners? Skeptics like Yeong-Hae Jung believe that before contemplating such large numbers of immigrants, Japan must first focus on making its society attractive to foreigners.<sup>77</sup> In the past 20 years since the 1990 reforms, immigrant numbers surpassed 2 million and these additions have already aroused considerable debate.

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<sup>72</sup> Jung, Yeong-Hae. "Can Japan Become "A Society Attractive for Immigrants?" Identity, Gender and Nation-States under Globalization in East Asia." *International Journal of Japanese Sociology*, no. 13 (2004), pp. 54-55.

<sup>73</sup> Hanson, G. H. 2007. *The economic logic of illegal immigration*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations. Cited in Calderon-Canola 2010, p. 91.

<sup>74</sup> Replacement Migration: Is It a Solution to Declining and Aging Population? 2000.

<sup>75</sup> Sharpe 2010, pp. 365-6.

<sup>76</sup> Japanese Bureau of Immigration Control cited in Yamanaka, Japan as a Country of Immigration: Two Decades after an Influx of Immigrant Workers 2008, p. 190.

<sup>77</sup> Jung, p. 66.

## *NIKKEIJIN POLICY REVISED*

Regarding the Latin American *nikkeijin*, the hope that they would be able to contribute to Japan's economic growth while integrating easily into society has now diminished. Frankly, "...the admission of the *nikkeijin* has failed to solve Japan's immigration dilemma... In fact, despite their ethnic affinity with the Japanese, they have proven to be just as disruptive to the country's ethnonational cohesion as other foreign workers in Japan".<sup>78</sup> Culturally, they were not as similar to Japanese nationals as policymakers had hoped and thus, they were not accepted as ethnic Japanese but rather, treated as foreigners.<sup>79</sup> Consequently, the Japanese government has tried to curtail the number of *nikkeijin* receiving visas,<sup>80</sup> and in light of the recent global economic recession, in April 2009, a special repatriation program was offered to them, which paid for their return flight home, spouses and children included, in exchange for their promise not to return to Japan under their current preferential visa category.<sup>81</sup> The reasoning behind this policy was that it was enacted to deal with rising unemployment which at the time (spring 2009) was at a 3-year high of 4.4%.<sup>82</sup> According to a Japanese bureaucrat in labour policy, the program also served to help laid-off LAN return home which could be seen as a better option than staying in Japan and being less likely to find a job, given the discrimination against foreigners and lack of available work.<sup>83</sup> The repatriation program received international media attention, as the official press release was widely interpreted to mean permanent repatriation, with no right to return to Japan; however the government hastily clarified the vague wording, announcing that the intention was to encourage departures until the economy improved, which in their opinion,

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<sup>78</sup> Tsuda 2010, p. 630.

<sup>79</sup> Tsuda 2010, p. 629.

<sup>80</sup> Tsuda 2010, p. 630.

<sup>81</sup> Tabuchi 2009, p. B1.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Sharpe, Michael Orlando. "When ethnic returnees are defactoguestworkers: What does the introduction of Latin American Japanese Nikkeijin (Japanese descendants) (LAN) suggest for Japan's definition of nationality, citizenship, and immigration policy?" *Policy and Society* 29, no. 4 (2010), p. 362 .

meant approximately three years.<sup>84</sup> International media was taken aback by this policy as it appeared to contradict the notion of common Japanese ethnicity under which the *nikkeijin* entered the country in the 1990s.<sup>85</sup> Arguably, they were also receiving a departure package, based on their shared ancestry as well, since nothing similar was offered to other foreign workers.<sup>86</sup> In August 2009, it was reported that about 8,000 Japanese Brazilians had left Japan<sup>87</sup> and the policy expired a year later, in the spring of 2010.<sup>88</sup> According to the Brazilian Association of *Dekasseguis* (seasonal workers), from 2008 to 2009, the number of Brazilians in Japan decreased by 14.4% from 312,500 to 267,400 meaning that a total of 45,100 left.<sup>89</sup>

Twenty years after the 1990 reforms, Japan's national identity in relation to immigration is still subject to tensions and ambiguities as the Latin American *nikkeijin* experiment demonstrates.<sup>90</sup> The gap between economic need and Japanese reluctance for migrants has not been adequately resolved.<sup>91</sup> The repatriation package policy corresponded with Japanese discrimination against foreigners and arguments based on bloodlines. However, around the same time, the Japanese government made several moves that recognized the contributions of foreigners: in 2008, the government announced that highly skilled foreigners were needed to bolster its economy and that Japan should also welcome more foreign students and visitors.<sup>92</sup> In January 2009, an "Office for the Coordination of Policies on Foreign Residents" was created in the government Cabinet Office to deliver more interrelated assistance from various ministries

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<sup>84</sup> Sharpe 2010, p. 363.

<sup>85</sup> Sharpe 2010, p. 362.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ashi Shimbun a newspaper. cited in Sharpe 2010, p. 363.

<sup>88</sup> Sharpe 2010, p. 363.

<sup>89</sup> Brazilian Association of *Dekasseguis* (seasonal workers): <http://www.estadao.com.br/noticias/cidades,censo-2010-populacao-asiatica-no-brasil-cresceu-177-em-dez-anos.748616.0.htm>. Translated by Luciano Xavier, Brazilian API student (accessed Aug 20, 2012).

<sup>90</sup> Sharpe 2010, p. 365.

<sup>91</sup> Sharpe 2010, p. 366.

<sup>92</sup> Sharpe 2010, p. 366.

and to assist in the integration of immigrants including language and vocational training among other things.<sup>93</sup> Throughout 2009, other policies to tighten controls on immigrants and resident registration as well as more efforts to integrate them were proposed and discussed,<sup>94</sup> which clearly indicates that while the sentiment to restrict access was still influential, progress had been made in terms of developing strategies to assist foreigners in Japan. It is also due to the large influx of *nikkeijin* since 1990 that policies and Japanese perspectives have been obliged to adapt; “...ironically, the introduction of coethnics from Latin America in an effort to maintain homogeneity has helped to open the door to make for a more unified immigration policy with a view towards integration”.<sup>95</sup>

### *TOWARD BETTER POLICIES*

In the 1980s, Japan began to experience a larger presence of foreigners in its territory. However, its attempts of reconciling economic need and mainstream attitudes concerning foreign workers since then have been perplexing and contradictory. Due to the absence of one transparent and consistent position on the role of foreign workers in Japan, the government and society continue to have debates and growing tensions with regards to migrant workers. The bias for Japanese homogeneity tends to reject them whereas their value to the Japanese economy is obvious. Overall current policy treats them as temporary, in that they are supposed to work in Japan for a specific time period only and then return home. Unfortunately, the reality is that despite their temporary status, a significant number of them end up staying in Japan for years (as mentioned above), some becoming illegal during this time, and because they have not been encouraged to immigrate or integrate, they remain separate from mainstream society. Only the

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<sup>93</sup> Harden, B. 2009, January 23.. Japan works hard to help immigrants find jobs: Population-loss fears prompt new stance. *Washington Post Foreign Service* A1, A12., cited in Sharpe 2010, p. 366.

<sup>94</sup> Sharpe 2010, p. 367.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

*nikkeijin* have renewable visas that allow for longer-term stays, but the majority of Japanese nationals, employers included, still view them as seasonal workers to be dismissed in the slow times.<sup>96</sup> Japan's lack of a unified position on how to engage and treat foreign workers has significantly changed economic and social conditions in its society; one effect is that a de facto multi-tiered labour market has been created, based on race and nationality.<sup>97</sup>

“The ad hoc nature of Japan's current immigration policy has proved to be defective.”<sup>98</sup> It would be better if the Japanese government publicly recognized that the country needs migrant workers and that these people have participated meaningfully in the Japanese economy, often working in low paying and difficult positions that Japanese nationals look down on. At the very least, recognition of the migrants' existence and contributions would allow this perspective to permeate into Japanese society, challenge the myth of ethnic homogeneity, and encourage Japanese people to understand this truth about their country. Perhaps some would change their perspectives on this issue, and more conducive policy discussions could take place eventually. For the migrants themselves, more welcoming policies would improve their status and livelihoods in Japan. As it stands, the official ban on unskilled workers is not working—as they are already in Japan—and is impossible to uphold, given the wage gap between Japan and other countries in Asia.

### ***SECTION III: JAPANESE BRAZILIANS CASE STUDY***

This section will examine Japanese Brazilians and their return migration experience to Japan: in short, they are not doing well. As mentioned briefly above, their immigration to Japan has incited a ripple of change into the treatment of foreigners in the country. They are a cross of

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<sup>96</sup> Ishi 2003, p. 80.

<sup>97</sup> Shipper 2002, p. 60.

<sup>98</sup> Yamanaka, *New Immigration Policy and Unskilled Foreign Workers in Japan 1993*, p. 84)

the familiar because of their Japanese ancestry as well as the exotic as Japanese diaspora, and this blend is challenging Japan's perception of ethnic homogeneity. Nonetheless, even after twenty years of migrating, *nikkeijin* are experiencing persistent difficulties with integration into mainstream Japanese society. These struggles seem to result from a combination of Japanese institutional regulations, labour practices, and cultural norms that are entrenched in Japanese societal organization and systemically marginalize foreigners. However, with their legal status and sizeable population in Japan, the presence of Brazilian *nikkeijin* clearly calls for more official support mechanisms in Japan's treatment of immigrants as they illustrate the country's undeniable and ongoing ethnic diversification. In this chapter, integration issues—relating to their work, upbringing tied to their history, and education in Japan—that accentuate how Japanese conventions exclude those who are somewhat “different” will be explored.

### *HISTORY & MIGRATION*

During the period known as the Meiji Restoration (1861–1912)<sup>99</sup>, Japan was restructuring its agricultural society into an export-centred economy, and as a result, many farmers were left unemployed.<sup>100</sup> Emigration for Japanese farmers first started in 1885 to Hawaii and other parts of the United States.<sup>101</sup> In 1908, Japanese began to immigrate to Brazil as the Japanese government was seeking emigration opportunities for its rural citizens due to their poor status.<sup>102</sup> Most of these emigrants came from the western parts of Japan (Okinawa, Hiroshima, and Fukuoka for example) and moved to the southeast and southern parts of Brazil, especially to the states of Sao

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<sup>99</sup> Dresner, Jonathan. "Instructions to Emigrant Laborers, 1885-94 : "Return in Triumph" or "Wander on the Verge of Starvation". " In *Japanese Diasporas : Unsung Pasts, Conflicting Presents, and Uncertain Futures*, by Adachi Nobuko, 52-68. New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 53.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Scottham, Krista Maywalt and Rodrigo Hitoshi Dias 2010, *Acculturative Strategies and the Psychological Adaptation of Brazilian Migrants to Japan*, *Identity*, 10:4, 288.

<sup>102</sup> Ishikawa, Eunice Akemi. "Return of Japanese-Brazilian next generations : Their Post-1980s Experiences in Japan ." In *Return migration of the Next Generations : 21st century Transnational Mobility*, by Dennis 1941- Potter, Robert B Conway, 59-78. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009, p. 60.

Paulo and Paraná where they worked on coffee plantations.<sup>103</sup> As Brazil was also experiencing an agricultural labour shortage stemming from the abolishment of slave trading in 1888, Japanese farmers filled a gap and thus, an agreement between the two governments was reached.<sup>104</sup> On the whole, Japanese emigration to Brazil took place in three waves: the first from 1908–1923, the second during 1924–1941 and the rest after 1952.<sup>105</sup> By the early 1930s, there were over 100,000 Japanese in Brazil,<sup>106</sup> and as of 2006, they numbered almost 2 million.<sup>107</sup> While Japanese Brazilians have steadfastly maintained Japanese cultural practices while living in Brazil, most are now of the second to fourth generations and cannot speak Japanese although most children learn it as a second language.<sup>108</sup>

As explained above, a large influx of Latin American *nikkeijin* resulted from Japan's "ethnic preference immigration policy" in 1990 as to maintain the ban of unskilled migrants and not upset Japan's ethnic homogeneity.<sup>109</sup> It is important to note that some *nikkeijin* immigrants had settled in Japan before 1990 and that this group included mostly second generation (*nissei*) Japanese Brazilians, who could speak Japanese fluently and who had Japanese citizenship.<sup>110</sup> These migrants left Brazil in the 1980s during its severe economic crisis.<sup>111</sup> However, during this time, the number of Japanese Brazilians in Japan was small: only 14,528 in 1989.<sup>112</sup> After the immigration law reforms, the expansion of migration by Japanese Brazilians was facilitated by transnational labour broker companies (*empreiteiras*) that assist in recruitment, obtaining visas,

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<sup>103</sup> Ishikawa, pp. 60-61.

<sup>104</sup> Lone, S. 2001, *The Japanese community in Brazil, 1908–1940: Between Samurai and Carnival* cited in Scottham and Dias, p. 228.

<sup>105</sup> Ishikawa, p. 61.

<sup>106</sup> Nishida, Mieko. "Why Does a Nikkei Want to Talk to Other Nikkeis? Japanese Brazilians and Their Identities in São Paulo." *Critique of Anthropology* 29, no. 4 (2009), p. 426.

<sup>107</sup> Nishida, p. 425.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Tsuda 2009, p. 208.

<sup>110</sup> Nishida, p. 428.

<sup>111</sup> Tsuda 2009, p. 208.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

sometimes financing their flights to Japan, and finding factory jobs for their clients.<sup>113</sup> Little or no costs are required in advance for these services, as the fees are collected during the migrants' the first six months of employment, with their passports held as a deposit until full repayment has been made.<sup>114</sup>



*A billboard for a labour company near Homi Danchi, Toyota City*

These companies greatly reduced the risk of migration for Brazilian *nikkeijin* by providing essential resources, and they contributed to the growth of a “culture of migration” among Japanese communities in Brazil that flourished.<sup>115</sup> Indeed, Japanese Brazilian numbers swelled as a result: in 1991, they reached 100,000, a figure that doubled by 1996, and at their peak in

<sup>113</sup> Tsuda 2009, pp. 208-09.

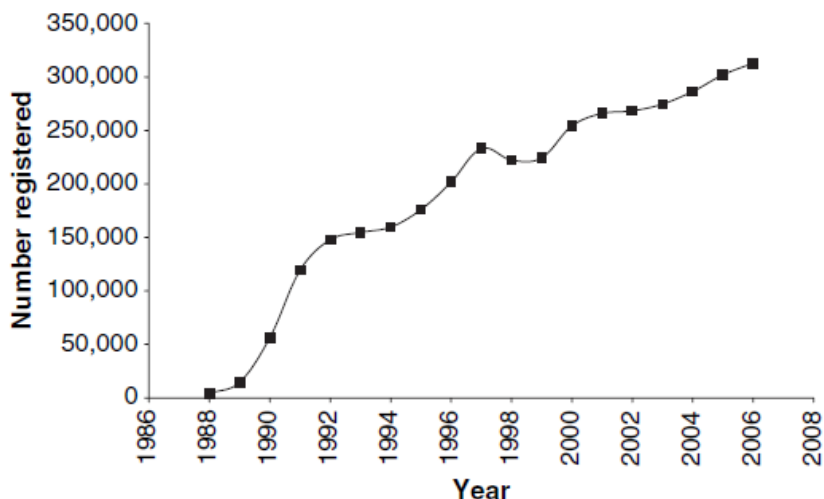
<sup>114</sup> Green, Paul. "Generation, family and migration: Young Brazilian factory workers in Japan." *Ethnography* 11, no. 4 (2010), p. 519.

<sup>115</sup> Tsuda 2009, p. 209.

2007, there were about 316,000 *nikkeijin* in Japan.<sup>116</sup> (Their numbers have since decreased somewhat as a result of the economic recession in 2008-09.<sup>117</sup>)

TABLE 1 <sup>118</sup>

NUMBER OF BRAZILIANS REGISTERED IN JAPAN 1988–2006



Source: Japanese Ministry of Justice.

*ENSUING MIGRATION PATTERNS*

The 1990 modifications to immigration policy privileged *nikkeijin* not only in terms of granting unrestricted activity and employment access but also in terms of a path to permanent resident status in Japan. The regulations stipulated that immigrants of Japanese descent up to the third-generation (*sansei*), along with their spouses, would be permitted to enter Japan on Long-

<sup>116</sup> Takenoshita, Hirohisa, Yoshimi Chitose, Shigehiro Ikegami, and Eunice Akemi Ishikawa. "Segmented assimilation, transnationalism, and educational attainment of Brazilian migrant children in Japan." *International Migration*, forthcoming, p. 5.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> McKenzie, David, and Alejandrina Salcedo. "Japanese-Brazilians and the Future of Brazilian Migration to Japan." *International Migration*, 2009, p. 3.

Term Resident visas that lasted up to three years and were indefinitely renewable.<sup>119</sup> . After ten years in Japan, one can apply to become a permanent resident (a path not generally open to migrants in Japan such as students or company trainees).<sup>120</sup> In essence, these *nikkeijin* visas enabled them to live in Japan for an unlimited amount of time. However, in terms of mindset, *nikkeijin* viewed themselves as temporary workers who would work a few years and then return home despite their legal status in Japan which enabled permanence.<sup>121</sup>

Although the intent of most *nikkeijin* migrating to Japan was to earn some money and return to Brazil in the near future, a considerable number of the *nikkeijin* migrants are staying in Japan for longer periods of time.<sup>122</sup> In 1997, a survey indicated that “41 percent have already been in Japan for more than three years, 40 percent intend to remain in Japan for at least three more years or do not know, and roughly 50 percent wish to settle long-term in Japan.”<sup>123</sup> Another pattern of migration that emerged among Japanese Brazilians was that of circular migration, in which migrants would move between the two countries. With the new visa categories, the numbers of Brazilian repeat migrants increased annually and grew from just 1,422 in 1989 to 42,267 in 2001.<sup>124</sup> Circular migration had become a distinct feature of the migration flow to Japan, and “by 2001, 52% of all Brazilians who arrived were repeat entrants.”<sup>125</sup> Japanese Brazilians have now been migrating to Japan for over twenty years and are a permanent and considerable population in Japan. Regardless of their initial hopes/plans, they are staying longer and are in fact settling in Japan over a longer term.

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<sup>119</sup> Tsuda, Takeyuki. *Strangers in the Ethnic Homeland, Japanese Brazilian Return Migration in Transnational Perspective*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003, p. 93.

<sup>120</sup> MIPEX: Japan, Areas of Integration, Long Term Residence: <http://www.mipex.eu/japan>.

<sup>121</sup> Linger, p. 270.

<sup>122</sup> Tsuda 2003, p. 377.

<sup>123</sup> Kitazawa, Toyoie, Brazilian *nikkeijin* survey in Oizumi Town (trans.) pp. 104, 141, 148 as cited in Tsuda 2003, p. 377. PUT IN MAIN

<sup>124</sup> Japanese Ministry of Justice, Immigration Bureau Statistics cited in Tsuda 2003, p. 239.

<sup>125</sup> Tsuda 2003, pp. 239-240.

One of the general motivations for why Japanese Brazilians flocked to Japan to work in factories— including those who were educated and had professional jobs at home—was to save money in order to pursue markers of a middle-class Brazilian lifestyle (buying a house or a car or starting a business) that would be facilitated after working in Japan.<sup>126</sup> The persistent deterioration of Brazilian economy in the 1980s and early 1990s compelled *nikkeijin* to migrate; although they did not as a group experience severe unemployment in Brazil, their relative comfort and ability to maintain a high quality of life was compromised and this pushed them to Japan.<sup>127</sup> The wage differentials between the two countries was an important draw: many Japanese Brazilian factory workers believed that they could earn the same in one year in Japan as in ten years in Brazil.<sup>128</sup> According to income data from 2010, Brazilian migrants to Japan, 90% make an annual income of about 3 million yen [slightly more than \$30,000 USD].<sup>129</sup> Impressively, in 1995, the Japanese Institute of Labor reported that annual *nikkeijin* savings were about \$20,000 USD, which was four to five times of their average salary in Brazil.<sup>130</sup> Wages were more lucrative in the early 1990s; although wages were still higher in 2006, a World Bank survey reported that the average income earned in Japan by *nikkeijin* was about double what they made in Brazil.<sup>131</sup>

In Japan, there are a few regions with a concentration of Japanese Brazilians which are mainly industrial areas and include Gunma Prefecture (Oizumi, Ita and Tatebayashi cities), Aichi

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<sup>126</sup> Ishi, Angelo. "Searching for Home, Wealth, Pride and "Class": Japanese Brazilians in the "Land of Yen"." In *Searching for Home Abroad: Japanese Brazilians and Transnationalism*, edited by Jeffrey Lesser, 75-102. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003, p. 77.

<sup>127</sup> Tsuda 2003, pp. 88-9.

<sup>128</sup> Ishi 2003, p. 76.

<sup>129</sup> Scottham and Dias, p. 293.

<sup>130</sup> Tsuda 2003, p. 88.

<sup>131</sup> McKenzie and Salcedo 2009, p. 9.

Prefecture (Toyota and Toyohashi) and Hamamatsu city in Shizuoka Prefecture.<sup>132</sup> As of May 2012, Brazilians comprise the largest group of registered immigrants in Hamamatsu with a population of 12,186 which amounts to almost half of the 25,093 foreigners in the city<sup>133</sup> and in Toyota, they number 5,991, also as the biggest group foreign residents in the city which outweighs the next group by roughly 3,000.<sup>134</sup> Nagoya and areas outside of Tokyo also have considerable *nikkeijin* presence.<sup>135</sup> Socially, Japanese Brazilian communities in Hamamatsu and Oizumi cities have developed growing ethnic businesses such as restaurants, grocery stores, clothing shops, and nightlife venues along with churches and schools that offer services in Portuguese.<sup>136</sup>



*Inside a Brazilian restaurant—Servitu—in Hamamatsu*

<sup>132</sup> Tsuda 2009, p. 209.

<sup>133</sup> HICE News, June 2012. Hamamatsu Foundation for International Communication and Exchange. English version. Hamamatsu Multicultural Center, p. 1.

<sup>134</sup> Toyota International Association figures from International Division, Toyota City Hall.

<sup>135</sup> Tsuda 2009, p. 209.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

## WORKLIFE CHALLENGES

The type and status of employment that Japanese Brazilians obtain dictates many aspects of their living standards in Japan. Typically, low-skilled factory labour is the main area of work for immigrants as good Japanese language skills are not required for these positions. The main industries of Japanese Brazilian employment include construction, automobiles, and electrical appliances.<sup>137</sup> The majority of *nikkeijin* work in the 3D jobs: dirty, dangerous, and difficult, that Japanese people look down upon, which is in stark contrast to their previous social status in Brazil where they were likely professionals or business owners.<sup>138</sup> These jobs are part of the periphery of the Japanese labour market, located in small and medium companies and most *nikkeijin* are contracted through third-party labour-brokerage firms.<sup>139</sup> As a result, they are not usually official employees of the companies and are hired as a temporary and short-term work force to be used when necessary.<sup>140</sup> “These migrants have been termed *dekasseguis* (i.e., ‘seasonal migrants’) because of the intended duration of their stay.”<sup>141</sup> They can be dismissed at any time under these contracts, in response to the current economic climate, and also have to pay a portion of their wages to these intermediary agencies.<sup>142</sup> Moreover, their compensation and treatment is different from Japanese workers.<sup>143</sup> With these contracts, they are viewed as disposable and temporary labour and are often purposely excluded from company events and opportunities to interact with Japanese workers.<sup>144</sup> As they spend most of their time in Japan

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<sup>137</sup> Tsuda 2009, p. 217.

<sup>138</sup> Tsuda 2009, p. 216.

<sup>139</sup> Tsuda 2009, p. 212.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> Scottham and Dias, p. 289.

<sup>142</sup> Ishikawa, p. 65.

<sup>143</sup> Tsuda 2009, p. 217.

<sup>144</sup> Tsuda 2009, p. 212.

working<sup>145</sup>, this type of treatment means that Japanese Brazilians are not improving their language skills nor are they establishing relationships with locals that could help them adjust to living in Japan. In fact, this characteristic of the Japanese employment structure maintains the segregation of immigrant workers and limits their development as competent employees.

Meanwhile, regular workers in the Japanese labour market have very high job security with lifetime employment and additional earnings for seniority.<sup>146</sup> Only about 10% of Japanese Brazilians have regular, full-time employment in Japan, where they are directly hired by a company.<sup>147</sup> In these cases, it is usually smaller firms that hired *nikkeijin* directly as they suffered most from labour shortages and could not afford to lose more workers.<sup>148</sup> Perhaps when the immigration reforms took place in 1989-90, Japanese Brazilians were expected to work as short-term labourers requiring little or no accommodation by their employers. However, as they now have been moving to Japan for more than twenty years and increasingly settling there for longer periods of time, this type of employment is inadequate for their well-being and demonstrates a clear source of discrimination: foreigners are relegated to difficult jobs with low benefits, and even when they have legal status in Japan, they are clearly viewed as second-class labourers with little chance to gain secure, satisfying employment.

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Koike K. (1988) *Understanding Industrial Relations in Modern Japan*. New York: St. Martin's Press as cited in Takenoshita, Hirohisa. "Labour Market Flexibilisation and the Disadvantages of Immigrant Employment in Japan: The Case of Japanese-Brazilian Immigrants." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 39 (2013, in press), p. 7.

<sup>147</sup> Takenoshita, p. 10.

<sup>148</sup> Higuchi, N., and Tanno, K. (2003) 'What's Driving Brazil-Japan migration? The Making and Remaking of the Brazilian Niche in Japan', *International Journal of Japanese Sociology*, 12: 33-47 as cited in Takenoshita, p. 10.

## *IDENTITY & EXPECTATIONS*

The enduring conception of Japanese identity—comprising not only ethnic descent but linguistic and cultural understanding and competency as well—is at the root of the social marginalization of Japanese Brazilians as they are first approached as Japanese for their physical attributes but then categorized as foreigners for their cultural differences.<sup>149</sup> Japanese nationals were generally confused upon initial encounters.<sup>150</sup> Some felt disappointed and disillusioned and these sentiments developed into a stigma against *nikkeijin*.<sup>151</sup> Previous research has suggested that mainstream Japanese have an affinity with *nikkeijin* based on their Japanese ethnic origin and that there is less discrimination against them than towards other immigrant groups.<sup>152</sup> This sentiment can be illustrated by the following quote: “since we see them as people who were originally Japanese, we feel closer to them than other foreigners.”<sup>153</sup> Yet, Japanese nationals still have prejudice (and misconceptions) against them. On the whole, these types of reactions can be attributed to the cultural expectations perpetuated by the myth of Japanese exceptionalism and homogeneity that remains prominent in Japan. As people of Japanese ethnic origin, *nikkeijin* were expected to be similar to Japanese nationals. However, as homogeneity in conduct and language did not seem to hold with them, the tendency to distrust outsiders took effect and was further exasperated by the fact that these were actually people with Japanese shared ancestry.

The Japanese Brazilians’ foreignness, cultural and linguistic, coupled with their seeming poverty led to a highly unfavorable impression with majority Japanese upon their immigration to Japan. Although untrue, *nikkeijin* were seen as descendents of poor Japanese who had to leave

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<sup>149</sup> Tsuda 2009, p. 211.

<sup>150</sup> Tsuda 2009, p. 212.

<sup>151</sup> Tsuda, 2003, p.117.

<sup>152</sup> Tsuda 2009, p. 210.

<sup>153</sup> Tsuda 2003, p. 105.

their homeland for Brazil and now are returnees in Japan because they could not survive economically in Brazil either.<sup>154</sup> This is a general impression of poverty that Japanese associate with immigrants who do the 3D jobs in Japan, and to them, Japanese Brazilians represent a “‘past poor Japan’ that modern Japanese prefer to ignore”.<sup>155</sup> More significantly, Japanese are uncomfortable with Brazilian *nikkeijin* for what they deem as their “Brazilian” behaviour that differs from Japanese norms.<sup>156</sup> These include their work ethic, noisiness, and social habits such as partying into the late hours.<sup>157</sup> In Homi Danchi, a housing complex in Toyota city where large numbers of Brazilians live, a rule board was posted in Japanese and Portuguese with guidelines such as “please don’t use the plaza late at night and before the sun rises”; “let’s stop barbecuing on the verandah [sic]”; and “conversing in loud voices bothers your neighbors”.<sup>158</sup> Flyers were also distributed in Portuguese asking residents to “respect the regulations of communal life, to avoid any problems with your neighbours”.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Tsuda 2009, p. 210.

<sup>155</sup> Ishi 2003, p. 81.

<sup>156</sup> Tsuda 2003, p. 117.

<sup>157</sup> Tsuda 2009, p. 211.

<sup>158</sup> Yamashita, Karen Yei. "Circle K Rules." In *Searching for Home Abroad: Japanese Brazilians and Transnationalism*, edited by Jeffery Lesser, Durham: Duke University Press, 2003, p. 68.

<sup>159</sup> Yamashita, p. 69.



*Bilingual sign in Homi Danchi housing complex, Toyota City*

Difficulties with the Japanese language further compound the cultural barrier as it is the most apparent struggle for Japanese Brazilians in Japan as most do not speak Japanese fluently and even when they can speak, very few can adequately read or write it.<sup>160</sup> Their poor language skills highlight the fact that they are foreign and not Japanese according to nationals who share the “one Japanese language and culture” mindset. Japanese Brazilians did not meet the expectations of sharing Japanese cultural practices, and their differences from mainstream Japanese society have actually created a schism between the two groups that has resulted in widespread discrimination.<sup>161</sup>

One such example is accommodation. Housing is often provided by the companies or intermediary labour agencies, as renting by foreigners in Japan is quite difficult.<sup>162</sup> As such, large

<sup>160</sup> Ishikawa, p. 67.

<sup>161</sup> Scottham and Dias, p. 289.

<sup>162</sup> Ishikawa, p. 67.

numbers of Japanese Brazilians often live in the same residential areas which are commonly seen as negative due to the growing estrangement between them and core Japanese society.<sup>163</sup> This housing divide is another reason for segregation as it is harder to meet Japanese nationals in their neighbourhoods which also affects language learning and social inclusion.<sup>164</sup> Japanese landlords have been known to refuse to rent to Brazilian *nikkeijin* as well; and there is no law that prevents housing discrimination or discourages these practices.<sup>165</sup> In effect, the majority of Japanese Brazilians are relegated to living in Brazilian enclaves.<sup>166</sup>



*Homi Danchi, where 50% of residents are foreigners*

The move from Brazil to Japan affects the behaviour and self-perception of *nikkeijin* in unforeseen ways. In Brazil, Japanese Brazilians cherish their Japanese cultural heritage as a part of their self-identity.<sup>167</sup> To them, being Japanese is equated to being honest, hard-working, and

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ishikawa, pp. 67-8.

<sup>165</sup> Beauchamp, E. 2002., *Opening the Door* as cited in Scottham and Dias 2010, p. 289.

<sup>166</sup> Scottham and Dias, p. 289.

<sup>167</sup> Ishikawa, p. 62.

educated—all attributes that make them different from other Brazilians.<sup>168</sup> In short, they are proud of being Japanese descendents. In Brazil, *nikkeijin* have a positive minority status, and their ethnic qualities are looked upon favourably in society.<sup>169</sup> (The *nikkeijins*' upward movement in social class since their humble emigration roots,<sup>170</sup> and Japan's position as a global economic force contributed to this privileged position.<sup>171</sup>) Unfortunately, when Japanese Brazilians move to Japan from Brazil, this perceived Japanese identity is no longer viewed positively as they are foreigners by law and treated as such by mainstream society for their differences despite having Japanese ethnicity and blood.<sup>172</sup> As a result, Japanese Brazilians “lose their confidence” in being Japanese and start to feel stronger ties to Brazil<sup>173</sup> which, in turn, affects their identity. Takeyuki Tsuda has coined a phrase for this reaction against hegemonic cultural expressions as the strengthening of their counteridentities.<sup>174</sup> Many seek comfort and security in being Brazilian and choose to reconnect with the culture through choosing activities and foods that are popular or common in Brazil, not Japan.<sup>175</sup> Although Japanese Brazilians vary in their reactions to unjust treatment in Japan, there has been a marked patriotism in which they display the Brazilian flag in stores and dance samba in the streets.<sup>176</sup> They also exhibit Brazilian middle-class consumption patterns outside of work by buying new cars and electronic goods and spending social time in Brazilian establishments.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Tsuda 2003, p. 65.

<sup>170</sup> Tsuda 2003, p. 66.

<sup>171</sup> Tsuda 2003, p. 67.

<sup>172</sup> Ishikawa, p. 62.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Tsuda 2003, p. 263.

<sup>175</sup> Scottham and Dias, pp. 289-90.

<sup>176</sup> Takenaka, p. 261.

<sup>177</sup> Ishi 2003, p. 82.

## *NEXT GENERATIONS*

The educational realities for Japanese Brazilian children in Japan illustrate that they, like their parents, face a daunting task when living in Japan: as students, they are meant to learn, but given the linguistic hurdles, their development is often compromised. Although children's language acquisition is faster than that of their parents, they experience hardships when enrolled in Japanese schools.<sup>178</sup> Several obstacles to their learning are systematic: Japanese has two alphabets as well as many ideograms that have little relation to European romance languages, which does not help Brazilian students.<sup>179</sup> They may learn to speak Japanese quickly, but their reading and writing skills do not usually become sufficient for basic functioning in Japan.<sup>180</sup> Additionally, migrant children do not have parents who can help them with their studies due to a lack of time, from busy factory work schedules, and an insufficient knowledge of Japanese and the school system.<sup>181</sup>



*Brazilian nikkeijin students singing at a cultural event in Hamamatsu*

<sup>178</sup> Ishikawa, p. 68.

<sup>179</sup> Linger, p. 67.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Ishikawa, p. 68.

In Japan, attending high school is not compulsory, and there is an entrance exam which most Japanese Brazilian students have little chance of passing due to their lack of Japanese fluency.<sup>182</sup> Also, schooling is actually not required by law for foreign children in Japan<sup>183</sup>, and education through to junior high is non-selective, meaning that there are no grade or course repeats.<sup>184</sup> These stipulations, in effect, impede foreign students' academic achievements in Japanese schools as it is possible to finish junior high without a strong knowledge of the subjects or language, since no students repeat classes and their chances for high school, not to mention university, are bleak. Furthermore, at the national level, there are no integration programs for migrant children so it is up to the local governments to decide if and what education assistance will be given.<sup>185</sup> Consequently, education for migrant children will vary depending also on where they settle in Japan. Some Japanese Brazilian children lose their desire to study because of their difficulties, and many adolescents do not enter high school but rather work factory jobs after junior high to make money for eventual plans in Brazil.<sup>186</sup>

In recent years, certain cities in Japan which have a significant number of foreign residents have attempted to improve the situation by creating different measures for educating migrant children. One such arrangement was to establish a separate classroom for foreign students: the "*kokusai kyōshitsu*" meaning international classroom.<sup>187</sup> This is where foreign students can spend hours a day improving their Japanese language skills, mostly reading and writing.<sup>188</sup> The fear is that if these students do not receive focused language training, they will be

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<sup>182</sup> Linger, p. 68.

<sup>183</sup> Sharpe 2010, p. 361.

<sup>184</sup> Takenoshita et al., p. 7.

<sup>185</sup> Takenoshita et al., p. 8.

<sup>186</sup> Ishikawa, p. 69.

<sup>187</sup> Linger, p. 65.

<sup>188</sup> Linger, p. 66.

lost in their other classes and more likely to quit school.<sup>189</sup> The problems to having such a classroom, along with the policy of no grade repeats, are that the students may never catch up on the class curriculum and that they are separated from their Japanese peers who could help with their adjustment to school. Other tactics include hiring Japanese-language tutors to help foreign students individually<sup>190</sup> and also bilingual assistants who meet the children and their parents during school visits within a prefecture.<sup>191</sup> These measures also have been critiqued for the insufficient amount of time or irregularity of the sessions.<sup>192</sup> Moreover, as migrant children are not evenly distributed in Japanese schools, available assistance is ad hoc and varies which prompts one to think that national policies could lead to better solutions.



*A private Portuguese-language school in Homi Danchi*

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<sup>189</sup> Linger, p. 67.

<sup>190</sup> Castro-Vázquez, p. 57.

<sup>191</sup> Linger, p. 211.

<sup>192</sup> Green, Paul. "Generation, family and migration: Young Brazilian factory workers in Japan." *Ethnography* 11, no. 4 (2010), p. 330.

Other Japanese Brazilians are enrolled in Portuguese-language schools<sup>193</sup>, which have their own challenges in delivering satisfactory education to their students. One consideration is that they are usually expensive<sup>194</sup> which means that with the economic downturn, *nikkeijin* parents may be less likely to afford the tuition and some schools have closed down as a result.<sup>195</sup> These private schools, unfortunately, are not fully accredited by the Japanese government, which means that although students can receive primary and secondary education, attending university in Japan is unlikely as their curricula do not meet Japanese standards.<sup>196</sup> Especially as these schools do not operate in Japanese, the children do not have the language skills for further study and are also ill-equipped for living in Japan. However, some of these schools are recognized by the Brazilian Ministry of Education<sup>197</sup> and Brazilian universities have opened online programs for *nikkeijin* to complete at a distance.<sup>198</sup>

Another significant issue is that migrant children's time in Japan is often viewed as temporary by their parents and their schooling suffers as a consequence of their parents' work and lifestyle.<sup>199</sup> With the intent of returning to Brazil, earning and saving can become the priority ahead of the children's education.<sup>200</sup> However, the actual return is often delayed or does not take place, and even with long-term residence, many Japanese Brazilians see themselves as temporarily in Japan.<sup>201</sup> Such sentiments also affect their children, who do not know if they

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<sup>193</sup> There are also schools that teach in Spanish as well as Spanish and Portuguese schools such as Escola el Mundo in Hamamatsu city.

<sup>194</sup> Yoshida, T. (2007) 'Keep Brazilian immigrant children in schools'. *Asahi Shimbun* [newspaper] cited in Castro-Vázquez, p. 69.

<sup>195</sup> Paulo Feiro is one example of a bilingual private school that has shut its doors after the 2008-09 recession.

<sup>196</sup> Castro-Vázquez, p. 62.

<sup>197</sup> Castro-Vázquez, p. 69.

<sup>198</sup> HICE News, April 2012. Hamamatsu Foundation for International Communication and Exchange. Portuguese version. Hamamatsu Multicultural Center, p. 1.

<sup>199</sup> Ishikawa, p. 69.

<sup>200</sup> Ishikawa, p. 69.

<sup>201</sup> Takenoshita et al., p. 6.

should make efforts to study in Japan or if they should expect to be returning to Brazil.<sup>202</sup>

Teachers could also be discouraged as they also do not know if these children will remain in their classes. As for these children's future prospects, whether they settle in Brazil or Japan, they will face linguistic barriers, especially in reading and writing, and a low-skill set, especially if they do not complete high school.<sup>203</sup>

The future for Brazilian *nikkeijin* young adults in Japan is often bleak as they do not have many options. Those who came to Japan as teens were suspect of not finishing high school, not knowing either language sufficiently for work and daily use, and ultimately lacking the skills for decent employment—they mostly succumb to the allure of high and quick wages available in what one could also term as a 'dead-end factory job'.<sup>204</sup> This scenario is in striking contrast to most *nikkeijin* in Brazil who were part of the middle class and were often well educated. As a result of the option to work in Japan, Japanese Brazilians' "well-known enthusiasm for higher education and urban professional occupations declined notably."<sup>205</sup> Some young adults chose to work in Japan instead of going to college in Brazil as a path to financial gain: others put off college for later, but still, others gave up this option permanently.<sup>206</sup> Daniel Linger refers to factory work as a "seductive honey trap" for young Brazilians that seems attractive in the short-term but actually leaves them on the socioeconomic margins in both countries.<sup>207</sup> Crime is

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Ishikawa, p. 69.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Nishida, p. 430.

<sup>207</sup> Linger, p. 135.

another path that some choose to take. Brazilian *nikkeijin* gangs have formed in Hamamatsu<sup>208</sup> and indeed, Brazilians were ranked first for incidences of youth crimes in Japan in 2006.<sup>209</sup>

Overall, the status of education for *nikkeijin* children, and essentially all young migrants in Japan, is severely inadequate. All concerns parties (students, parents, teachers, schools, education boards, and ministries) must take this problem seriously in order to find feasible solutions. At present, it is a disturbing reality for the younger generation of migrants to Japan with dire consequences for them personally as well as for society as a whole. As children are meant to develop into the leaders for the future, these patterns of overwhelming difficulties, lack of training, and ultimately, missed/closed opportunities must be undone and new paths established so that these children may also influence tomorrow's ways.

### *REALITY & FUTURE*

From 1994 to 2007, the number of permanent visas acquired by Japanese Brazilians grew from 373 to 94,358.<sup>210</sup> Thus, it seems that more and more Japanese Brazilians are settling for the long-term in Japan despite their initial desire to save money and return to Brazil.<sup>211</sup> Especially for those with children, the latter's growing attachment and sense of belonging in Japan is a reason for families to stay.<sup>212</sup> Parents may gain opportunities through their children's schooling to become involved in local Japanese communities.<sup>213</sup> But in general, a longer stay does not mean that Japanese Brazilians are attempting to increase assimilation and pursue labour mobility and as such, they are confined to their peripheral working status.<sup>214</sup>

<sup>208</sup> Tsumura, Kimihiro. "Lonely Swallows: Living as Children of Migrant Workers", (movie), 2012.

<sup>209</sup> Ishi, Angelo. The Impact of Transnational Migration to Japan on Japanese-Brazilian Families—Powerpoint presentation for the International Organization for Migration. 2008.

<sup>210</sup> Ishikawa, p. 63.

<sup>211</sup> Tsuda 2009, p. 221.

<sup>212</sup> Green, p. 516.

<sup>213</sup> Green, p. 516.

<sup>214</sup> Tsuda 2009, p. 222.

So what can be done in terms of integration to improve the livelihood of *nikkeijin* in Japan? Much discrimination occurs in several areas of their lives: work, community/living space, and education. As Japan's cities and neighbourhoods are changing as a result of their immigration, more official policies should be created to address these areas of difficulties and prejudice so that they can live well alongside with Japanese nationals and participate fully in mainstream Japanese society. Many changes that will assist Japanese Brazilians could also lead to better circumstances for all immigrants in Japan (i.e. education and labour policies). As Japanese Brazilians are a large and recent group of immigrants, this section discussing their experiences in Japan seeks to use them to advocate for why Japan should incorporate new laws and policies for its incoming migrant populations. As it stands, their passageways to Japan are facilitated by sprouting third-party intermediaries and an accommodating visa scheme, but upon arrival, *nikkeijin* find themselves slotted into a particular subset of society and rarely are permitted to enter the mainstream. In terms of working status (seen as permanently temporary), language acquisition (not enough free time to learn), social habits (Brazilian customs are discouraged), and options for future generations (undereducated with little opportunity for social mobility and better lives than their parents), they are marginalized and without further assistance and coherent national policies that address their plight, this population will continue to struggle in Japan. Similarly, other "newcomer" immigrant groups to Japan (Thai, Filipino, and Iranian for example) have even less chance for successful integration than Japanese Brazilians as they are obviously less similar to Japanese nationals (culturally and linguistically) and reside in smaller numbers in Japan as well.

#### ***SECTION IV: POLICY OPTIONS***

This section will outline possible options that are useful for Japan to consider in dealing with its immigrant population. The most important change is also the most difficult: this is the challenging task of breaking down the notion of Japanese exceptionalism that has persistently led to problems in relations between Japanese locals and immigrants. This resolution consists of an ideological shift that would take much time and effort to develop, but it is absolutely essential for long-term improvements for immigrants and their families. Next, a review of Germany's (selected for reasons outlined below) evolving treatment of its incoming migrants and their offspring will further assist in contemplating possible policy solutions for Japan. The focus areas for comparison related to citizenship law reforms, language training, educational practices, and how they are applicable to Japan will be discussed. Lastly, an explicit plea is outlined for Japan to improve its treatment of immigrants and respectfully grant them the rights which will lead to fulfilling lives.

##### ***FIRST: DISSOLVE NOTION OF SUPERIOR HOMOGENEITY***

The major obstacle to decent conduct towards immigrants in Japan is the nation's fixation with its ethnicity and its associated special heritage which renders Japanese people and things unique and good. This belief in cultural superiority and the talents of Japanese people, sharing the same blood, which was fundamental to Japan's rapid industrialization and development into an economic superpower is wrongheaded for several reasons and needs to be broken down in order for a more adequate incorporation of migrants in Japanese society. First and foremost, the claim of one Japanese people that breeds success is simply false. Japan has regions with local customs and different accents; however, these have been suppressed or diminished in light of the

dominance of *nihonjinron* literature.<sup>215</sup> As mentioned earlier, there are Aboriginal people groups in Japan, but they have been marginalized, forced to assimilate, and/or ignored<sup>216</sup> which also allows this myth to perpetuate. Second, the entrenched belief in triumphant Japanese uniformity essentially means that Japanese people are more likely to have difficulty adapting to foreigners and differences in customs and ways of living because they are groomed to feel superior. Already, this preference for sameness is resistant and potentially opposed to diversity as it implicitly views others as subordinate to and less capable than Japanese people. The notion of impurity associated with foreigners and the ability to be corrupted by contact with the outside (of Japanese ways) could lead to fear and discomfort with behavioural differences and basically conditions adherents to discriminate. One can imagine that these feelings of apprehension towards what is outside of Japan, would be only exacerbated with regards to immigrants who live in Japan. (Section II on difficulties faced by Japanese Brazilians served to illustrate how these ideas have affected their immigration to Japan as those who confound traditional notions of Japaneseness.)

The recommended action here would be for the Japanese government to make an official declaration on the contributions that foreigners have made to Japan's economic success, which would in turn justify creating policies that assist in their adaption to living in Japan. Although it may never be recognized as part of public policy, migrant workers are essential to the production of many Japanese commodities. Take Toyota for example: it is one of Japan's leading companies and acknowledges that its cars could not be made without the work of its' hundreds of subsidiary companies.<sup>217</sup> These smaller factories mainly employ immigrants like Japanese Brazilians, and

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<sup>215</sup> Narzary, p. 315.

<sup>216</sup> Narzary, p. 314.

<sup>217</sup> Toyota website: [http://www.toyota-global.com/company/profile/facilities/japanese\\_production\\_site.html](http://www.toyota-global.com/company/profile/facilities/japanese_production_site.html).

so it is not difficult to see that without their hard work, a world-renowned “Japanese” product is manufactured—partly due to foreigners working in Japan. Upon issuing a favourable public statement on immigrants and promoting this stance, the government would be empowered to develop more integration policies. Reducing the foothold of the myth of Japanese exceptionalism and encouraging Japanese people to appreciate immigrants would alleviate much of the societal stress and tension that currently exists towards immigrants in Japan. All areas of life for immigrants could be affected—work, community interactions, and school environment.

Granted, this is definitely a far-stretch for Japanese politicians for the time being. In Germany, it was only after an official recognition of the tremendous role of immigrants in the German economy that favourable policies ensued. Prior to this declaration, many German actors in public life and discourse (NGOS, churches, politicians) demanded accommodations for immigrants and updates to Germany’s citizenship laws.<sup>218</sup> Admittedly, this is not yet occurring in Japan although there are local actors who provide support to immigrants<sup>219</sup>, and the illusion of Japanese distinction is publicly attractive and has been used politically<sup>220</sup> which impedes support for immigrant-friendly policies. Propping up this false belief may be easier than dealing with the reality of Japan as a country of immigration. However, with over 2 million registered foreign nationals now living in Japan<sup>221</sup>, a dismissal of superior homogeneity—or at least a tolerance of others—is the direction that Japan needs to take if it is to formally improve the quality of life of its newer residents. Perhaps time and more public awareness of the challenges that migrants and

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<sup>218</sup> Triadafilopoulos 2012 Spring, p. 6.

<sup>219</sup> I met with several during my field research including prominent professors in the field, local government officials, and NPO staff.

<sup>220</sup> Narzary, p. 311.

<sup>221</sup> Aiden, Hardeep Singh. "Creating the 'Multicultural Coexistence' Society: Central and Local Government Policies towards Foreign Residents in Japan." *Social Science Japan Journal* 14, no. 2 (2011), p. 213.

their children face may lead Japan to act, but this is the key change that would open the path for better integration of immigrants in Japan.

### *WHY GERMANY: IMMIGRANTS & RESULTING POLICY CHANGES*

In analysing potential options for integration improvements in Japan, Germany was selected as a country whose progression in widening its welcome to migrants could be relevant to Japan for a variety of reasons: Germany was traditionally a homogenous society but one which has opened up for about fifty years now; ethnic German returnees and a significant number of Turkish labourers make up the most prominent immigrant populations; German immigration and integration policies have been reformed in light of the influx of migrants within its borders. For Japan, it is useful to look at other countries to observe how they have adapted their policies to deal with incoming migrants and assess whether these measures could be applicable to its current situation.

In reviewing literature in other countries of immigration, one sees parallels and useful lessons in comparing Japan to Germany. Historically, Germany is a country that has also based its citizenship on the principle of *jus sanguinis*. The ethnic citizenship regime in Germany is known as *Volksgemeinschaft* and did not encourage integrative measures for Germany's immigrants because race and ethnicity are fundamental to being German.<sup>222</sup> Moreover, foreign guest workers and ethnic returnees (post-WWII, Germans were expelled from neighbouring countries) feature predominantly in Germany's immigration patterns in the past century and both groups have had significant impacts on the country's integration laws for newcomers as well as its ethnic makeup and identity as a nation. Despite an influx of hundreds of thousands of Turkish

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<sup>222</sup> Sharpe, Michael Orlando. "What Does Blood Membership Mean in Political Terms?: The Political Incorporation of Latin American Nikkeijin (Japanese Descendants) (LAN) in Japan 1990–2004." *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 12, no. 1 (2011), p. 124.

migrant workers that began in 1961, Germany has repeatedly declared that it was not a country of immigration since the 1970s.<sup>223</sup> Likewise, Japan considers itself a non-immigration country<sup>224</sup> although scholars tend to refer to it as a recent country of immigration.<sup>225</sup> Even through this brief outline of Germany's immigration patterns, one can see that its experiences could be possibly useful for Japan in addressing its current challenges in integrating migrants, mainly the large numbers of Japanese Brazilians at this time. In fact, in the 1980s, Japan had already looked internationally for incorporation models for its migrant worker population; Germany's policies of differential exclusion—that gave migrants access to its labour market amidst restrictions in other areas—actually influenced Japan's 1990 immigration reforms as they minimized social costs which eased the public's tolerance to the influx of migrants.<sup>226</sup>

Now a short word on the main immigration groups: Since the end of the Second World War, ethnic Germans from neighbouring countries had been returning to Germany, but mostly in small numbers (30,000 or so annually).<sup>227</sup> However, with the fall of the Communist Bloc in the late 1980s and early 1990s, hundreds of thousands of these German repatriates, called *Aussiedler* entered (numbers of asylum seekers also grew exponentially), and with them, new policies sprung up to deal with these larger influxes.<sup>228</sup> German returnees received special resettlement services, automatic citizenship, and also language training whereas other immigrants received modest integration assistance.<sup>229</sup> This preferential treatment was based on their common ethnicity. Turks have been migrating to Germany for over fifty years now. Initially, the migrant

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<sup>223</sup> Jopke, Christian. "From Postnational Membership to Citizenship: Germany." In *Immigration and the nation-state: the United States, Germany, and Great Britain*, by Christian Jopke, 1-366. Oxford University Press, 1999, p.192

<sup>224</sup> Sharpe 2011, p. 124.

<sup>225</sup> See MIPEX Japan 2010, Tsuda 2003, and Linger 2001.

<sup>226</sup> Aiden, p. 190.

<sup>227</sup> Orloff, Debora Hinderliter, and Christopher J. Frey. "Blood Relatives: Language, Immigration, and Education of Ethnic Returnees in Germany and Japan." *Comparative Education Review* 51, no. 4 (2007), p. 460.

<sup>228</sup> Triadafilopoulos, p. 3.

<sup>229</sup> Triadafilopoulos, p. 3.

workers consisted of Turkish men in their prime from 18–49 who came to Germany to work in factories in the 1960s as West Germany was experiencing an industrial boom and Turkey’s economic and political climate at the time was unstable.<sup>230</sup> In 1969, the millionth Turkish worker’s arrival was celebrated, and German companies were eager to have migrants who filled positions on their assembly lines.<sup>231</sup> As of 2011, there were 4.5 million Turks living in Germany and from the booming 1960s to the present time, Germany’s ethnic makeup has changed.<sup>232</sup> Several generations of Turks now call Germany home, and more children of Turkish ethnicity are being born there. The *Volksgemeinschaft* conception of citizenship which privileged *Aussiedler* over other immigrant groups, namely Turks, also enabled Germany to differentiate and deny others equal rights.<sup>233</sup>

However, by the mid-1990s, political discussions on Germany’s tough citizenship law—that intended to keep naturalization a rarity—were heating up as it seemed perverse to favour the ethnic returnees regardless of their language (in)proficiency or knowledge of German culture over children of another heritage born and raised in-country.<sup>234</sup> In light of this reality, Germany’s citizenship based on *jus sanguinis* was deemed increasing insufficient which led to calls for reform. Politicians took note and in 1998, the ruling government recognized immigrant contributions to Germany and vowed to revise its citizenship law.<sup>235</sup> The following year, the Citizenship Act was amended to include a provision permitting citizenship based on the *jus soli* principle.<sup>236</sup> Non-German children were then granted citizenship at birth—provided that one

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<sup>230</sup> Bartsch, Brandt and Steinvorth. Turkish Immigration to Germany A Sorry History of Self-Deception and Wasted Opportunities 2010 FULL p. 1. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/turkish-immigration-to-germany-a-sorry-history-of-self-deception-and-wasted-opportunities-a-716067-2.html>

<sup>231</sup> Bartsch, Brandt and Steinvorth. p.1.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

<sup>233</sup> Ortloff and Frey, p. 451.

<sup>234</sup> Triadafilopoulos, p. 5.

<sup>235</sup> Triadafilopoulos, p. 5.

<sup>236</sup> Triadafilopoulos, p. 6.

parent met the conditions of legal long-term residence in Germany.<sup>237</sup> However, the possibility of dual-citizenship remained closed for non-EU citizens which meant that these children had to choose their citizenship upon reaching young adulthood between the ages of 18–23.<sup>238</sup>

### *LANGUAGE & EDUCATION*

Germany created further integration measures in response to its burgeoning immigrant populations. The Residence Act of 2004 developed an integration course—combining 600 hours of language instruction with 30 hours of civic learning—which was mandatory for those seeking permanent residency in Germany.<sup>239</sup> Notably, this policy was applicable to all adult immigrants, not just *Aussiedler* ethnic returnees as was previous practice for language training.<sup>240</sup> These programs that began in 2005 were part of Germany’s first federal immigration and integration law.<sup>241</sup> As these changes were nationally implemented, one could assume that the central government was committed to investing in integration mechanisms for its immigrants.<sup>242</sup> Language became one of the main means for adult integration, which also led to modifications for the ethnic returnee group as well: from 2005 onwards, all repatriates and their family members, many of whom had little or no prior exposure to German) were then required to pass a basic German language test.<sup>243</sup> Naturalized citizens were to demonstrate oral and written language competency at a standardized B1 level, and higher scores would led to reduced years of mandatory residency before becoming a German citizen.<sup>244</sup> In 2007, a standardized citizenship test was also developed with 300 questions on various elements about Germany (history,

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<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Reference 39 in Triadafilopoulos, p. 8.

<sup>240</sup> Ortloff and Frey, p. 452.

<sup>241</sup> Anil, p. 1365.

<sup>242</sup> Ortloff and Frey, p. 454.

<sup>243</sup> Federal Ministry of the Interior, Germany as cited in Ortloff and Frey, p. 455.

<sup>244</sup> Triadafilopoulos, p. 8.

geography, legal framework, cultural practices etc.): the test then became a required component of the naturalization process.<sup>245</sup> In general, these policies attempt to encourage potential immigrants and citizens to familiarize themselves with fundamentals of life in Germany as well as the language which would enable them to better participate in civil society. They suggest a trend to assimilate or adapt to the mainstream in order to become a citizen, rather than an attempt to incorporate the immigrants and their customs. However, these reforms demonstrate that Germany has accepted that immigrants are living long-term in its territory and has made concessions to give these people access to permanent and secure status as well as some training to facilitate their daily lives in their new country of residence.

In terms of education policies, Germany has been moving away from an assimilationist model of foreigner pedagogy towards intercultural practices, albeit slowly since the 1980s.<sup>246</sup> However, educational and cultural matters are governed by each of the sixteen federal states, which has led to uneven regional educational responses in terms of incorporating minority ethnic children.<sup>247</sup> Of the few noteworthy policies, campaigns to increase diversity in the education field by encouraging people with migrant backgrounds to become teachers are well-regarded.<sup>248</sup> Minority ethnic teachers in Germany are still rare (only representing 1% of teachers in 2006), and having role models for migrant students is an essential but still missing component in intercultural education.<sup>249</sup> The lack of common German-as-a-second-language standards, learning targets, teacher training, and support to implement intercultural education have also been identified as areas for improvement.<sup>250</sup> Nonetheless, in Germany, there are discernible

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<sup>245</sup> Triadafilopoulos, p. 9..

<sup>246</sup> Faas 2008, p.108.

<sup>247</sup> Faas 2008 p. 109.

<sup>248</sup> MIPEX (Migrant Integration Policy Index) Germany webpage: <http://www.mipex.eu/germany>, 2010 results.

<sup>249</sup> Faas, p. 120.

<sup>250</sup> MIPEX Germany webpage 2010 results.

attempts by education policymakers to address their migrant populations. Much assessment of German education continues to advocate more integration measures<sup>251</sup> rather than consider its policies as a model for adaptation. However, as underscored in the second section, Japan is less progressive than Germany in reacting to its immigrants, and for that reason, recent Germany decisions and policies can be useful and possibly applicable to the current Japanese context.

### *RELEVANCE TO JAPAN*

In reviewing Germany's citizenship reforms, language policies, and educational attempts to incorporate immigrants and their offspring into the mainstream, one recognizes that these practices have led to changes in Germany society. There are now more German nationals of non-German ethnicity, and a clear, legal path for naturalization in addition to *jus soli* citizenship for children of migrants. After fifty years of immigration, Germany is continually adapting and revising its integration policies.

Japan has now experienced over twenty years of significant immigrant inflows, after which substantial issues remain. One could imagine that eventually Japan may follow Germany's pathway to implementing a conditional citizenship by birth. Already there are immigrant children being born in Japan and knowing only this country as their home. I believe, however, that it is too soon for Japan to consider this option due to its entrenched and widespread belief in a homogenous Japanese identity. Such significant changes in citizenship will probably occur amidst much public debate and support, which are not present in Japan at this time. Japanese policymakers modified immigration laws in 1989 through sly and discreet mechanisms that allowed for large numbers of migrant workers while still appeasing popular public opinion of Japanese exceptionalism which tolerated *nikkeijin* entry solely based on shared ancestry and

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<sup>251</sup> See Faas 2008 and Anil 2007.

assumed cultural affinity.<sup>252</sup> This majority viewpoint has not yet been openly challenged in Japanese society; although many scholars have professed its fallibility, it remains an influential and respected perspective that continues to block the general admission of people of other ethnicities into Japanese citizenship.

The language capability of immigrants is an area that the Japanese government should and can improve in the near future. As naturalization is a rare occurrence in Japan, attaining a certain level of linguistic competency will not allow for easier access to citizenship as in Germany, but language is obviously important for communication, and better skills will lead to more opportunities and self-confidence in everyday situations. Germany initially only offered language training to its ethnic returnees but eventually expanded access to all immigrants as part of its integration efforts. Of course, official recognition and acceptance of the fact that many immigrants reside in Japan over the long-term and even permanently would be a clear justification for investment into their language learning. As discussed previously, *nikkeijin* have their special visa and are legally permitted to obtain permanent residency in Japan, so prioritizing their language training makes sense. As most work long hours in factories, their rigorous schedules may hinder them from seeking to improve their linguistic abilities. Therefore, government policies need to encourage learning, factor in their working lives, and weigh out these priorities.

The persistent image of migrant workers, including *nikkeijin*, as temporary is one that must be reworked. As it stands, the idea is maintained by both the migrants and the Japanese government for different motivations and prevents committed actions on either side. Migrants may believe that they will only stay for the short-term and thus not learn the language while the

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<sup>252</sup> Shipper, p. 65.

government can avoid financial costs and public outcry. Citing temporariness removes the likelihood of workplace advancement and places additional strain on migrant children who are unsure of whether they will stay or go and also face the daunting Japanese school system.<sup>253</sup> In the case of Japanese Brazilians, some conduct multiple stays in both countries, but the trend is to increasingly stay in Japan for longer periods of time.<sup>254</sup>

Like Germany, Japan needs common language learning, teacher training, and support to implement intercultural education practices. Again, admission from the national government on this issue and the necessary funding to develop education policy and programs would be advised. As it stands, “the central government’s inactivity reinforces a circle of educational under-investment”.<sup>255</sup> National endorsement and guidance on the education of immigrants are required for effective change. The difference between these two countries is that Germany has officially declared that it will implement measures for its immigrants and their offspring whereas it is still unknown whether Japan will recognize its immigrants as significant contributing members of society, which would entail revising its immigration, citizenship, and integration laws accordingly.<sup>256</sup> As for migrant teachers in Japan, this is not yet possible given Japan’s strict citizenship laws and school system. Encouraging Japanese nationals who speak Portuguese and Spanish to participate in the education system is a possibility.

In essence, the most important factor in improving the quality of life for immigrants in Japan is solidly tied to the will of the national government. If the government decides to treat them as long-term residents and address the shortcomings in their legal rights and status, language learning, and educational achievements, then *nikkeijin* and eventually other immigrants

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<sup>253</sup> Ortloff and Frey, p. 461.

<sup>254</sup> Green, p. 513.

<sup>255</sup> Ortloff and Frey, p. 462.

<sup>256</sup> Ortloff and Frey, p. 466.

will be able to have decent lives in Japan. This revelation is ultimately linked to the stronghold conception of Japanese identity as ethnic and unique and highlights the reason why pushing for an official declaration of immigrant appreciation is the most crucial step for the Japanese government to take. Other policy measures that Japan could consider are based on Germany—a suitable choice for its similar history, attitudes, and major immigrant groups (ethnic returnees and migrant workers). Integration efforts grew as a result of the ensuing transformation of communities that immigrants brought about in Germany which incited political and public debate which led eventually to support. As Germany is thirty years more “mature” than Japan in terms of immigration-related policy and programs, it provides a suitable model and ideas that could be attempted in Japan. Ideally, German advances in immigrant education, language training, and access to citizenship can inform Japan’s responses to its migrant communities which are currently marginalized and enable them to have better lives.

## ***SECTION V: CONCLUSION***

So what is actually possible for Japan with regards to policy changes? It is highly unlikely that the low-skilled industrial sector will be subject to any restructuring or marked job quality improvements in the near future. This type of work has long existed in Japan and will not soon disappear, so there will *always be* dirty, dangerous, and difficult factory jobs. Japan’s national priority is its economic well-being, and there is little chance that this vital field will undergo much change in order to improve the livelihoods of immigrants. The best venues for Japanese Brazilians and eventually other migrant workers to achieve a better level of welfare are firstly by social means through language acquisition and more organized opportunities to interact with locals and secondly, through improved access for younger populations in terms of education

policy, especially decided and implemented at the national level. Japan has a burden of cultural norms that is detrimental to accepting immigrants and it will always have to consider them when engaging in integrative policy changes. As mentioned, the most important change is for the government to make an official pronouncement of approval and recognition of the inputs of immigrants into Japan's economy to break down the myth of superior Japanese uniqueness which is also the justification for why immigrants should now be accommodated and invited to join Japan's mainstream society. This declaration would entail a drastic change of direction for related Japanese policies, yet its benefits would be all-encompassing and widespread in many facets of society.

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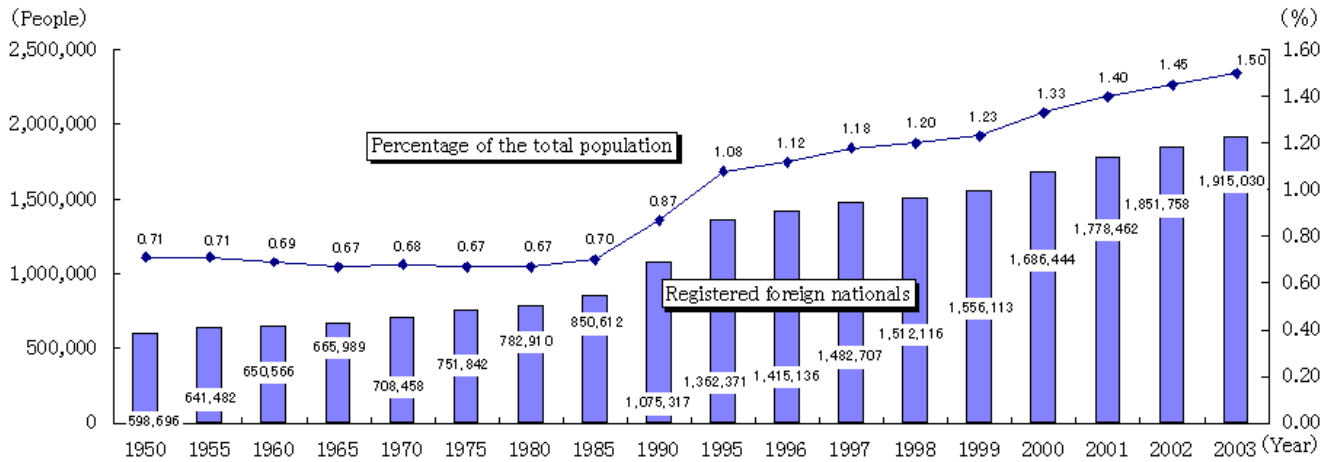
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**APPENDIX 1**

Chart 3 Changes in the number of registered foreign nationals and its percentage of the total population of Japan



(\*) "Number of registrated foreign nationals" as of December 31 each year.

(\*) The "percentage of the total population of Japan" is calculated based on the population as of October 1 every year from the "National Census"(for 1950-1995 and 2000) and "Estimated Population"(for 1996-1999 and 2001-2003) of the Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications.