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Tainted Blood: *Jus Sanguinus* and the Sociolinguistic Ostracism of Japanese Brazilians

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Abstract

Japanese Brazilians in Japan are in a crisis as a result of an economic downturn. Just as the younger generation had started to show some progress in Japan, the recession's calamitous effects jeopardized the livelihood of Japanese Brazilian communities across the country. This paper examines the role of language in the history leading up to the current crisis. It traces the impact language has had in creating the status quo of the Japanese Brazilians in the labor market, education, and community life. In accordance with the eminently disadvantaged status of Japanese Brazilians among immigrants in Japan, extraordinary measures must be taken to integrate fledgling Japanese Brazilian communities into mainstream Japanese society. This paper concludes with suggestions for rectifying the situation using a lingual framework.

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Introduction

On a national level, language is singularly important as a means of identifying state membership. In Japan, the relationship between language, nationalism and identity is especially complicated. Prior to national unification as a result of the Meiji Ishin in 1868, social status and identity in Japan was dominated by patriarchal hierarchies (Hall 1965, p. 78). With the rise of nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, the concepts of being Japanese and Japanese uniqueness arose. Then as now, the majority of Japanese believed they were part of a homogenous nation of singular ethnic descent (Lie 2001, p. 1). The theory was also extended to language. Popular ideology contended that Japan was of "one language, one race" (Brody 2002, p. 1). This claim of racial purity is of dubious validity; nevertheless, it provides a paradigm for examining Japan's continuing reticence to accept foreigners.

Japan's international policy from the seventeenth through the mid-nineteenth centuries was *sakoku* 鎖国 (national isolation). Japan did maintain trading relations with the Chinese, Ryukyu kingdoms, Korea and Holland (Tashiro and Videen 1982, p. 284-285). Dutch traders actually maintained a factory on a man–made island called *Deshima* 出島 in Nagasaki (National Diet Library 2009). A pivotal moment in international relations, however, came in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, when the fledgling Meiji government began encouraging emigration to Manchuria, the Philippines and Brazil (Brody 2002, p. 45). Of particular interest were the emigrations to Brazil, the first phase of which began in 1908 and lasted until 1923. The discrepancy between what Brazilian farmers were assured, i.e., that Brazil was a place to found a new civilization, and the semi-slavery conditions they faced was the first of many communication missteps between Brazil and Japan (Yamashita 1992, p. 6; Brody 2002,

p. 46). Despite the abhorrent conditions faced by the first emigrants, the Japanese government continued to subsidize emigration.

Following the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, the second wave of emigration began in 1924 and lasted until WWII, although the Brazilian government greatly reduced the immigration quota post 1934 due to rising nationalist sentiment (Brody 2002, p. 48). Japanese emigration resumed following the end of the American occupation in 1952, and continued until approximately 1963, when the labor demands of a burgeoning economy cut off the supply of emigrants (Tsuchida 1998). In total, over 234,000 Japanese resettled to Brazil (Suzuki 1969). It is important to note that the Japanese government advocated cultural assimilation into Brazilian society.

In line with their government's encouragement, Japanese emigrants to Brazil began to integrate. From the original 234,000 emigrants, there are now nearly two million Japanese Brazilians in Brazil (Goto 2007). In a recent study, there were strong indicators that many of these Japanese Brazilians had assimilated into Brazilian life. These included a lack of participation in Japanese community activities and an increasing rate of intermarriage with Brazilians (Mckenzie and Salcedo 2007, pp. 10-11). The most demonstrable evidence of assimilation, however, concerned Japanese language proficiency. Amongst *issei* 一世 (first-generation Japanese emigrants) approximately 89 percent could speak Japanese and 58 percent could read it. These numbers declined drastically with each generation. Of the *nissei* 二世 (second-generation), only 62 percent could speak Japanese, and 28 percent could read it. Among the *sansei* 三世 (third-generation), only 35 percent could speak Japanese and less than 20 percent

could read it (Mckenzie and Salcedo 2007, p. 10). This linguistic trend was clearly evident even in the late 1950s (Brody 2002, p. 49), and it did not bode well for future events.

Events in the 1980s would bring foreigners to the forefront of a massive debate in Japan. In the late eighties, Japan experienced a bubble economy, and the demand for new workers was unprecedented. Rural reserves had already been depleted, Japan's population was aging, and the remaining youth were reluctant to take 3K jobs—those which are *kitsui* きつい (difficult), *kitanai* 汚い (dirty) , and *kiken* 危険 (dangerous)—in the undermanned manufacturing and construction sectors (Brody 2002, p. 3). Japanese deemed these jobs beneath them. One potential solution for filling these undesirable positions was foreigners (Lie 2001, p. 10). With the signing of the Plaza Accord in 1985, which resulted in the depreciation of the U.S. dollar in relation to the yen, Japan and its booming economy looked increasingly attractive to potential immigrants (Shimada 1994).

Those who came to fill this void—many of whom were illegal or overstayed their visas—were primarily from poor Asian countries, e.g., Iran, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Thailand (Lie 2001, 13). The presence of foreigners was unremarkable; there were already over a million Koreans and Chinese in Japan from the postwar period (Lie 2001, 19). What perturbed the previously halcyon collective conscious of the Japanese was the visible presence of somatically distinct outsiders, in particular ones who would gather in public. This sparked conversations about finding new, less conspicuous foreigners (Brody 2002, p. 3).

Given Japan's austere disposition towards foreigners, rectifying this problem was problematic. In parity with public sentiment, the government of Japan wanted to maintain the façade of a homogenous society of pure race and language (Terazawa 1990, pp. 64-65). Yet the

pressures of the exploding economy demanded action. The government's solution to the problem was ingenious—let in ethnic Japanese who were living abroad through a back door policy. Historically, the regulation of foreigners in Japan is not logically related with their labor market activity, meaning that the government interprets the status and controls the low-skilled migration through modification of interpretation (Kambayashi 2010, p. 3). This legal malleability allowed for a duplicitous compromise.

The 1990 revision of the *nyūkanhō* 入管法 (Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act) made it legal for those—up to the third generation—who could prove their relation to Japanese emigrants to obtain new long-term residence visas (Tanno 2010, p. 117). Unlike short-term specialist visas for skilled laborers, these new visas were infinitely renewable, could be exchanged for permanent residency, and did not limit the types of work available to the holder. Moreover, the same status was conferred on the spouses and children of these laborers. In effect, no restrictions were place on labor by foreigners of Japanese ancestry (Hayakawa 2010, p. 22). This allowed Japan to satiate its need for lower-class immigrant labor while simultaneously appearing steadfast on the issue of admitting unskilled immigrants. Instead of importing unskilled foreigners from other countries, Japan was welcoming back long-separated Japanese citizens, who would putatively share cultural characteristics with their homeland (Yamanaka 1993). Nevertheless, even on the basis of language, a constitutive part of cultural unity, strong evidence of linguistic differences already existed.

Despite their obvious removal from mainland Japanese society, Japanese Brazilian laborers were a uniquely attractive solution because of Japan's peculiar sense of what it means to be Japanese. Japanese tend to conflate the concepts of nationality, ethnicity and race. When one is born in Japan, one is registered in the *koseki* 戸籍 (family registry). Registry in the *koseki* is

considered proof of being *nihonjin* 日本人 (Japanese person) in the amalgam of aforementioned ways (Lie 2001, p. 145). Thus, with *jus sanguineous* seemingly rendering one sufficient for membership into Japanese society, all first generation emigrants are Japanese, in the sense of both blood and culture. The problem with this practice is its neglect of cultural identity.

How does one classify a person born in Brazil to Japanese parents? Raised in a vastly different culture speaking a different language, a second generation immigrant may repudiate affiliation with Japan; because they were not born in Japan, these *koseki*-bereft individuals are technically labeled *nikkeijin burajirujin* 日系ブラジル人 (Japanese Brazilians). In normal speech, however, this is shortened to just *nikkeijin* 日系人, which roughly translates to non-Japanese of Japanese descent. The word *nikkeijin* thereby not only distinguishes those of Japanese national descent legally from other foreigners, but also presupposes shared ethnic and cultural values. It is assumed that through their immanent understanding of Japanese culture, *nikkeijin* not only have a fair grasp of the Japanese language, but that they respect, and will act according to, Japanese customs (Gunde 2004). In summary, the limitations of the Japanese language—reflecting inherent cultural assumptions—make it difficult for Japanese to comprehend the discursive nature of identity.

This is not to say that there was not considerable deliberation before the decision to admit a vast number of *nikkeijin* into Japan. To the contrary, this new immigration policy was hotly debated. In a situation analogous to that faced by Japanese officials in the mid-nineteenth century with the arrival of commodore Perry, the Japanese were confronted with two choices: continue a modern *sakoku* or open the country in what is known as *kaikoku* 開国 (Brody 2002, p. 37). Again, we see the power of language. Framing the debate in the historic language of *sakoku* and

kaikoku made the outcome a foregone conclusion. It was merely a matter of finding the most diplomatic way of accomplishing the opening.

Reviving the timeworn polemic of what it means to be *nihonjin*, proponents of *sakoku* posited that opening Japan would dilute racial purity when immigrants integrated themselves into society. In their eyes, Japan's strength "stemmed from having a common race and culture; allowing foreign workers into Japan's borders would bring about Japan's decline" (Kanji 1990). Another concern of *sakoku* adherents, which was later justified, was that the introduction of unskilled labor into the Japanese market would engender a dual market system and perpetuate a foreign underclass (Tezuka 1992). As foreigners entered into lower class jobs, Japanese society, incapable of accommodating outsiders, would force them into ethnic ghettos. This would only exacerbate the crime problem foreigners presented. Ergo, the logical solution was to further automate industry and thereby reduce the need for manual labor (Shimada 1990). In summary, many Japanese had yet to come to terms with globalization.

The pervasiveness of this ethnocentric desire for seclusion was, ironically, also conspicuous in the position of *kaikoku* advocates. Instead of attacking the notion of Japanese superiority, they begrudgingly accepted the inevitable: Japan was already undergoing internationalization (Brody 2002, p. 40). They criticized *sakoku* advocates for ignoring the *a priori* existence of illegal immigrants which had sparked the controversy. Instead of expending energy in an ultimately meaningless debate, they argued, Japan should act to ameliorate the human rights violations and exploitation endured by current illegal workers (Brody 2002, p. 39). They claimed that the ratification of the U.N. International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families would be seen as a moral step in the right direction, both domestically and internationally (Kitamura 1993). *Kaikoku* supporters felt that,

even if immigration was undesirable, it was incumbent on the government to alleviate current suffering and prepare for the future.

As *nikkeijin* laborers flooded into the country in the early-to-mid-nineties following the passage of the *nyūkanhō*, immigration became *passé*. Most Japanese came to accept foreigners as reality (Lie 2001, p. 6). Worker exploitation, the formation of ethnic communities and a multitude of other issues, many of which stem in large part from a language barrier, have not gone away, however. In fact, the massive scale of *nikkeijin* immigration into Japan has renewed concern of human rights abuses at local and national governmental levels (Higuchi 2009, p. 9).

The desperate need for workers in Japan coupled with a foundering Brazilian economy provided the impetus for *nikkeijin* to flock to Japan (Mckenzie and Salcedo 2007, p. 1). They did so largely through *haken gaisha* 派遣会社 (intermediate labor-brokering companies). These dispatch agencies subcontract to Japanese manufacturing companies (Brody 2002, p. 61). From the outset, the assurances and protection offered by these *haken gaisha* are tenuous at best. These companies recruited *nikkeijin* in Brazil, offering them the opportunity to trade the economic turmoil of Brazil for the relative stability of a First World country and a stable, high-paying job. Yet, strikingly similar to the Japanese who embarked for Brazil nearly a century earlier, *nikkeijin* were largely unaware of what awaited them thanks to paucity of information coming out of these *haken gaisha* (Ibid., p. 62).

Harsh reality quickly set in for the uninformed workers once they reached Japan. Most *nikkeijin* had signed up expecting guaranteed long-term employment. Instead, these *haken gaisha* would hire and fire *nikkeijin* according to demand (Brody 1999$_{d}$). Most *nikkeijin* who went to Japan became part of the “just-in-time” system utilized by medium and large companies in

export-oriented automotive and electronics companies (Higuchi 2009, p. 8). Just-in-time "synchronizes production activities by gaining an accurate understanding of the quantity of orders and sharing information about orders from the parent company to the subcontractor at the end of the of the chain". Japanese manufacturing companies use this system to reduce redundancy by increasing or decreasing the number of workers in a matter of days (Tanno 2010, p. 112). As a part of this flexible system, *nikkeijin* are afforded almost no job security; they are often dispatched from one factory to another, and they are the first fired when production slows (Higuchi 2009, p. 7). Unfortunately, stable labor was far from the only discrepancy between what *nikkeijin* were promised and what they encountered in Japan.

Prior to their arrival, *nikkeijin* often entertained romanticized notions of Japan and their place in Japanese society (Ishi 2003, p. 88). One reason for this was the Japanese government's unwavering praise over the years for what they considered a diasporic population (Linger 2003, p. 210). When referring to *nikkeijin* in Brazil, the Japanese lauded them for their high attainment. There, most *nikkeijin* were well respected (Ishi 2003, p. 81). Japanese politicians would express sympathy for the suffering endured by these Japanese abroad, and pride for their remarkable ability to overcome it. Attempting to further reify the mystical quality of being *nihonjin*, they drew favorable comparisons with native Japanese, claiming that, when faced with unbearable hardship, *nikkeijin* exhibited the same *nintai* 忍耐 (perseverance) and *doryoku* 努力 (effort) as Japanese in the homeland (Roth 2002, pp. 33-34). One Japanese mayor went so far as to say that *nikkeijin* who have grown up in remote Japanese communities in Brazil are more Japanese than contemporary Japanese who have grown up in Japan (Yamanaka 2003, p. 177). With little previous contact between *nikkeijin* and Japanese in Japan, hopes were high. These feelings were not to last.

Many of these hopeful *nikkeijin* quickly became disillusioned with Japan after experiencing life there firsthand (Roth 2003, p. 110). The bulk of *nikkeijin* underwent an identity boomerang effect, and started to identify more with Brazil than they had before coming to Japan. They christened themselves Brazilians, and the Japanese agreed (Lesser 2010). Japanese and Brazilians alike soon realized that extant cultural differences, stemming from and compounded by language issues, are not easily reconciled.

In a self-perpetuating cycle, the Japanese language only served to reinforce the rift between Japanese and *nikkeijin.* Japanese began referring to *nikkeijin* in Japan as *gaijin* 外人 (outside people), which signaled social separation from “normal” *nihonjin*. The *nikkeijin* responded to this treatment by “withdrawing into their own social groups and isolating themselves in acts of ethnic self-segregation” (Tsuda 2003, p. 125). This alienation physically manifests as ethnic clusters near major manufacturing centers.

Socially and culturally rejected by the Japanese population, *nikkeijin* congregate in these ethnic enclaves. In the small town of *Hamamatsu* 浜松 in Shizuoka prefecture, for example, there were nearly 19,000 *nikkeijin* in 2007, comprising nearly half of the factory workers (Sanchanta 2007). *Nikkeijin* there operate many small businesses including “retail stores selling imported Brazilian food, drinks, clothing, cosmetics…” (Yamanaka 2003, p. 190). There are also Brazilian restaurants, discos and banks, as well as Portuguese language newspapers and TV shows (Ibid.). This is typical of several other cities with high *nikkeijin* populations (Ibid., p. 167).

The recency and magnitude of the Japanese Brazilian immigration cannot be overstated. In 1989, the number of Brazilians in Japan was miniscule; as of 2010, there were over a 267,000 *nikkeijin* in Japan, constituting more than 13 percent of the total foreign population (Hōmushō

2010; Kambayashi 2010). The debilitating lack of a common language—in the holistic sense of communication—between Japanese and Japanese Brazilians currently exceeds that of other immigrants, and accordingly it seems to explicitly proscribe their utter failure at integration. When the Japanese government reluctantly opened the door to large numbers of *nikkeijin* in 1990, they thought they had devised a perfect solution for their burgeoning economic problems—workers who were, to an extent, ethnically Japanese. Their reliance on *jus sanguineous* has proven to be a poor choice, however, as Japanese Brazilians are currently excluded from the Japanese primary labor market, mainstream education, and Japanese social circles to an even greater degree than the now semi-integrated Chinese and Koreans from the postwar period.

Much as the migration of Japanese Brazilians was economically driven, the rise of notorious short-term sub-contracting *haken gaisha* that employ the bulk of the newcomers is inextricably tied to the communicative breakdown between *nikkeijin* and Japanese. From the outset, there is no clear flow of information from these companies to employees concerning the terms of employment. The mistreatment continues in the workplace, with advancement opportunities scarce-to-nonexistent for those not fluent in Japanese. Unfortunately, these *haken gaisha* are also usually responsible for pensions and entrance into the national health care system. In many instances they even control *nikkeijin* housing (Kobayashi and Yamada 2010). In essence, Japanese Brazilians are often at the mercy of these discriminatory companies—a particularly pernicious condition in light of the 2008 Lehman Shock's effect on the flexible labor market.

Public education in Japan brooks little room for foreign students and even less for those who do not understand Japanese well. A growing number of foreign children never make it to school in the first place, but if they do, the national government does little to help students with Portuguese speaking parents in the Japanese language education system. Adrift between two

worlds, these children often find it exceedingly difficult to succeed in the test-oriented Japanese system when they must prepare rigorously for high school and college entrance examinations. The alternative is Portuguese language schools. At their peak in 2008, a number of these schools have shut down, and the rest are in dire financial straits. Even those who graduate from Portuguese schools are left with few options in unilingual Japan, as they are very unlikely to enter tertiary education, and most employers will not hire them.

The language barrier also inevitably aggravates everyday life. Local laws concerning street vending, trash disposal and other activities which differ significantly from foreign laws are not always available in languages other than Japanese. This poses a major problem for Portuguese speakers. Moreover, they have no means of redress when such misunderstandings arise; most do not speak Japanese, which severely limits productive discussion with Japanese locals. The dearth of conversation only worsens the situation by driving a wedge between the two groups. The only real progress being made is in the younger generations, but this too has ground to a halt with the closure of their schools and the firing of their parents.

The lingual divide between *nikkeijin* and Japanese readily apparent in the employment, educational, and community spheres has its roots in the idiosyncrasies of Japanese-*nikkeijin* history. The damage wreaked on *nikkeijin* communities by the economic events of 2008—unparalleled among the Japanese or other immigrant groups in Japan—was, in light of the evidence presented herein, all too foreseeable. In spite of this, nothing was done to change the status quo; Japanese Brazilians were still an excluded group before the Lehman crash in 2008, as they remain today.

In the absence of proactive measures preventing their profligate exploitation, *nikkeijin* are suffering unduly, yet Japanese seem uncommitted to bettering the situation. Scholars have been in universal agreement that the segregation of *nikkeijin* from mainstream society is attributable to cultural disparities between the host culture and the immigrants (Lesser 2010). If Japan means to demonstrate to the world their willingness to internationalize, they should start with the population of over a quarter million struggling in their midst. Acculturation will be impossible if nothing is done to lessen the divide between the host culture and the *nikkeijin*. Greater language education support and a reduction in the grip of *haken gaisha* on Japanese Brazilians are some possible ways to ameliorate the situation. Japanese managers learning to speak Portuguese, for instance, would also be taken as a sign of good faith. Measures such as this would give *nikkeijin* the reason to and means by which they can emerge from their social and linguistic seclusion.

The need for urgent action is twofold: the depression is causing immediate hardships, and significant numbers of *nikkeijin* will face similar hard times in the future if nothing changes. In spite of the plight of the *nikkeijin* and changing economic conditions in Brazil and Japan, “a stable migration system has now been established between the two countries that seems to assure the continued influx of Brazilian *nikkeijin* into Japan’’ (Tsuda 1999, pp. 23-24). The large population of *nikkeijin*, unlike any other, is a litmus test for an eminently insular country trying to show other countries its worldly side in a time of increasing internationalization. Buying *nikkeijin* plane tickets to send them back to Brazil is not an auspicious beginning.

Language and the labor market

For *nikkeijin* in Japan, the bankruptcy filings of the Lehman Brothers firm in 2008 marked a turning point. The global repercussions of the financial collapse which followed hit Japan particularly hard. Due to their position in Japan's flexible labor market, *nikkeijin* were devastated. The economy is the proximate cause of this adversity, but this paper argues that it is discrimination, often of the lingual variety, which relegates *nikkeijin* to a vulnerable position at the bottom of Japanese society and makes such adversity unpreventable. This treatment must be addressed if *nikkeijin* are to escape their insecure economic circumstances in the future.

The economic stratification accompanying the arrival of *nikkeijin* came as no surprise to most Japanese. With no efforts to prevent it, stratification essentially became a self-fulfilling prophecy. In the eighties and early nineties, the vast majority of Japanese thought of Japan as a classless society (Umesao 1986, pp. 61-62). Economic success, egalitarian social structure and low crime rate were attributed to Japan's cultural and ethnic homogeneity (Kanji 1990). Although the claim of universal social equality among Japanese is apocryphal at best, the *sakoku* belief that foreign laborers were destined for a lower class became a reality. This is not, as some thought, because the *nikkeijin* were inherently of lower status and less well educated (Lie 2001, p. 28). Rather, it was Japan's decision to leave their livelihood in the hands of capricious *haken gaisha*.

Japan's labor shortage, the only real motivation for letting *nikkeijin* immigrate, was confined to the lower paying, labor-intensive sectors. As the number of "high value-added, low energy and low resource industries" increased in conjunction with the educational attainment level of young Japanese, Japan's labor market experienced a significant structural change (Mori

1997, p. 44). Suddenly, there was a massive shortage of workers for 3K jobs, and there were no young Japanese to fill them. Previously, temporary jobs were staffed by *dekasegi* 出稼ぎ (seasonal migrant workers), who had been a unique part of the Japanese labor force since the postwar era (Ōkōchi 1980, p. 173-176). When the *dekasegi* supply finally dried up, *nikkeijin* were admitted to the flexible labor market in record numbers. This was reflected in the surveys conducted by the Ministry of Labor throughout the nineties, which showed that upwards of 75 percent of *nikkeijin* worked in the construction and manufacturing industries (Ministry of Labor 1995). A 2008 survey in Shizuoka prefecture showed over 80 percent of the respondents were employed in the manufacturing sector alone, and in 2007 the city government of *Hamamatsu* 浜松 estimated that over 90 percent of *Hamamatsu* residents work in vehicle and electronics factories (Sanchanta 2007). This continuing dependency on manufacturing lays the groundwork for massive layoffs.

The contracting process for *nikkeijin* follows a predictable pattern. *Nikkeijin* are generally enticed by advertisements and word of mouth in their home country. It is through branch offices in Brazil that *nikkeijin* first come into contact with *haken gaisha* (Brody 2002, p. 61).Yet from the outset, the relationship between Japanese contractors and *nikkeijin* is fraught with uncertainty and miscommunication. *Nikkeijin* are interested in Japan for the economic opportunities working in a respected first-world country presents, but the *haken gaisha* are often disingenuous about actual working conditions in Japan. They are very tight–lipped with regard to length of employment and job security (Ibid., p. 62-3). Consequently, many *nikkeijin* arrive in Japan naively expecting a stable job; in reality they become part of a flexible labor system which often leads to job switching and unemployment in a matter of months (Ibid.). *Nikkeijin*’s goal of

monetary stability is rather elusive thanks to the labor market which *nikkeijin* occupy, but their vulnerability to market shifts was abundantly clear.

Once they are lured into the system, as *sakoku* proponents had feared, *nikkeijin* become a part of the secondary labor market for unskilled laborers. The most salient feature of this secondary market is that “migrant workers are the last hired and the first fired” (Tanno 2010, p. 2). The reasons for this instability are manifold. First, the number of non-regular in Japan has been steadily increasing since the early nineties due to the changing labor market demands. In effect, the number of people employed regularly dropped from over 80 percent in 1992 to around two-thirds in 2009 (Ibid., p. 5). Moreover, the percentage of workers employed directly by companies, as opposed to through labor contractors, fell during the same period (Ibid., p.7). This is an ominous trend for foreign workers, as those who are directly employed are more likely to be well cared for in terms of health insurance, pensions and other benefits than those who are not (Watanabe 2005, pp. 97-98).

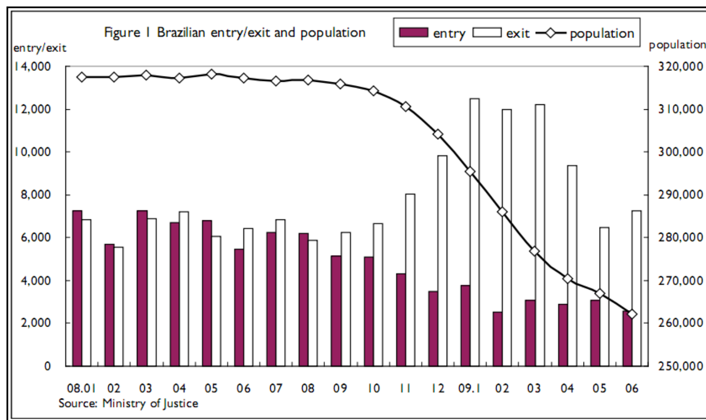
The effects are of this shift are easily demonstrable in the *nikkeijin* population. The vast majority of *nikkeijin* are employed by medium to large size companies, which, in addition to hiring from the non-regular employment sector, are more prone to indirect employment (Higuchi 2009, p. 7). More than 70 percent of the larger companies actually stated that one of their main reasons for hiring was not an acute shortage of labor, but rather the desire for a “flexible & disposable workforce” (Ibid.). In fact, many automotive giants like Toyota, and, to a lesser extent, Suzuki and Honda, likely owe a great deal of their success to their use of such a flexible workforce via secondary and tertiary subcontractors and the manufacturing method called just in time production (Higuchi 2009, p. 7; Makino 2009; Watanabe 2005, p. 94).

Just in time production "synchronizes production activities by gaining an accurate understanding of the quantity of orders and sharing information about orders from the parent company through to the subcontractor at the very end of the chain." By constantly fluctuating manpower according to demand in this fashion, redundancy is reduced and delay is all but eliminated (Tanno 2010, p. 110). In a country where hundreds of thousands of foreign workers are the principal labor pool of such a system, just in time may be the epitomic business model, but it lacks foresight in one key area: the human element. When economic catastrophe struck in 2008, it was the flexible *nikkeijin* who felt the economic shock the hardest.

While the United States suffered significant aftereffects from the Lehman Crash in 2008, the financial disaster was felt even more acutely overseas in countries like Japan whose economies were based on credit-fueled trade. In 2008 Japanese exports, which were doing reasonably well for the first half of the year, plummeted 57 percent between August 2008 and January 2009. They stagnated at 40 percent less than the pre-crash level throughout the first half of 2009 (Newsweek 2009). Japan's industrial production was at its lowest level in 25 years in 2009 (Tabuchi 2009). Japan suffered its highest unemployment rate ever of 5.6 percent in July 2009, but little has improved since then, with unemployment rates approaching 5 percent throughout 2010 (Yamada 2010, pp. 5-6). In many ways, this was a financial meltdown akin to the bubble bust, if not quite so high-profile.

For *nikkeijin*, however, the drop in exports resulted in unparalleled layoffs. As previously noted, they were the first to be fired. The latter half of 2008 through 2009 marked the first time that emigration of *nikkeijin* from Japan exceeded immigration since their arrival, with perhaps as much as 25 percent of the population returning to South America (Figure 1). However, that still left more than 267,000 *nikkeijin* in Japan near the end of 2009, with only around

Figure 1: Brazilian Population in Japan 2008 – 2009 (Higuchi 2009, p. 4)



123,000 of them employed (Hōmushō 2010; Yamada 2010, p. 10). Considering that pre-crash estimates of *nikkeijin* children were just over thirty-three thousand, these numbers imply a post-crash employment rate of around 50 percent. This is corroborated by unemployment estimates of relief agencies (Makino 2009; Messmer 2010).

The economic crisis has left many *nikkeijin* destitute. As many parents lost their jobs, delinquency increased dramatically. Portuguese schools closed, and parents, many on the verge of losing their homes and some surviving off of emergency rations, could no longer afford to support their children (Johnston 2008). Crime increased in areas with large concentrations of *nikkeijin* such as Shizuoka, Aichi and Gunma. Left untended by jobless parents searching for work, large groups of youths gathered in the streets (*Yomiuri Shinbun* 2010). Calling for greater humanitarian efforts in February 2009, *nikkeijin* organized and marched in large numbers for the first time in both Nagoya and Tokyo (Makino 2009). At the same time, the Japanese government called on foreign countries to aid in repatriation and began offering $3,000 towards air fare plus $2,000 for each dependent if *nikkeijin* agree to fly home and never again apply for a work visa (Council for the Promotion of Measures for Foreign Residents 2009; Tabuchi 2009).

Although thousands have left Japan—many before flight assistance was even offered—there is little reason to think that all desperate *nikkeijin* will go home (Messmer 2010). Surveys indicate that, despite current conditions, more than 70 percent choose to stay, and many are applying at local centers for driver's licenses in order to search for work in more distant places

(Gifu International Center 2009; Kyodo News 2011; Makino 2009). While the most facile explanation would attribute the ongoing *nikkeijin* crisis to economic woes, this would be an oversimplification. As is the case with education, language plays a pivotal role in perpetuating the economic status quo for *nikkeijin*; it will also be vital in fixing the problem.

Although *nikkeijin* are often privileged individuals in Brazilian society, those who come to Japan quickly learn that, in the eyes of the Japanese employment system, previous skills are largely irrelevant. For ease of management, the now bifurcated system of labor shunts them to subcontractors specializing in the employment of *nikkeijin* (Watanabe 2005, p. 94). When new *nikkeijin* arrive from overseas, they are given a test, a critical component of which measures Japanese proficiency. Those who do well are often employed as interpreters, where they serve as intermediaries between Portuguese speaking workers and the Japanese managers (Ibid., pp. 83,104). Although relatively few in number, these interpreters have a substantial effect in reifying the disparity between the number of *nikkeijin* and Japanese employed in the flexible, indirect labor market. In placing individuals who might function well in higher-paying direct employment jobs back into the manufacturing sector as overseers, subcontractors concretize the position of other *nikkeijin* in indirect employment (Ibid., pp. 97-98). By making them dependents, a small number of interpreters allow the preponderance of *nikkeijin* to be trapped in the low-paying and unpredictable indirect labor market.

This linguistically imposed isolation into a less desirable job market contributes to more than just job insecurity. One of the most demonstrative differences between Japanese and *nikkeijin* is the rate of participation in health care and pension programs. In Japan all registered residents are required to participate in both systems. Excepting those in specific work-based industries, the social insurance system for salaried workers in companies and factories in Japan

are *kenkō hoken* 健康保険 (Employees' Health Insurance), which is governmentally managed, and *kosei nenkin hoken* 個性年金保険 (Employees' Pension Insurance). For self-employed workers and non-employed people, there are the *kokumin kenkō hoken* 国民健康保険 (National Health Insurance) and the *kokumin nenkin* 国民年金 (National Pension) (Social Insurance Agency 2010).

The laws for mandatory enrollment are quite explicit. Technically, if one is under the age of seventy, must be covered by *kenkō hoken* if one is employed at a company or factory with 5 or more workers and if one's work days or one's work hours are more than three-quarters of those of the regular workers at the work place—30 hours or four days a week—for 2 months or longer (Natsuo 2010; Social Insurance Agency 2010). *Kosei nenkin hoken* registration occurs concurrently under the same conditions. For enrollment in both systems, it is the employer who must submit the application within 5 days of hiring the applicant (Social Insurance Agency 2010). Those who are self-employed, employed by a small firm, unemployed or retired must enroll themselves in *kokumin kenkō hoken* and *kokumin nenkin* at their city ward office. Once enrolled, relatives up to the third degree are normally covered under Japanese health insurance (Ibid.). Should they wish to return to their home country, foreigners can also apply for a lump-sum withdrawal payment—albeit only up to three years worth with a 20 percent charge—if they have been working in the Japanese system for at least 6 months (Social Insurance Agency 2010; Uechi 2009).

Regardless of the laws obligatory nature, many *nikkeijin* are not enrolled in these social systems. According to the Industrial Employment Stabilization Center of Japan, 26 percent of the 1,578 *nikkeijin* they polled in 2002 were not covered by any social welfare. About 54 percent had

health insurance coverage under *kokumin kenko hoken* or overseas travel insurance policies (Nakamura 2004). In a 2009 survey of the city of *Yokkaichi* 四日市 in Mie Prefecture, 24 percent of 473 *nikkeijin* had not enrolled in a health care program. They complained of the expensive fee (Fukue 2010).

There are several reasons for *nikkeijin* might not have medical insurance. One is that they are often excluded from the company option. Subcontractors, well aware of the vulnerability of foreigners, have occasionally refused to enroll entitled workers in *kenkō hoken* by employing rather mendacious means. Logged hours will be altered so that they are just under the thirty hour limit at which the companies are required to enroll their workers in *kenko hoken* and pay half of the premiums, which can amount to nearly a tenth of an employee's wage (Social Insurance Agency 2010; Uechi 2009). The government admits it simply does not have the resources to enforce enrollment into *kenkō hoken* and *kosei nenkin*. As a result, in 2008 over 100,000 companies had not enrolled entitled employees in the system (Uechi 2009).

When they are denied or ineligible for company insurance, *nikkeijin* are often hesitant to enroll in public insurance. They then have to pay the premiums themselves (Social Insurance Agency 2010). This can be prohibitively expensive, especially for those recently laid off. As with every other aspect of their lives, *nikkeijin* are also uncomfortable when dealing with doctors who do not speak their language, so they are reluctant to enroll in a system when not forced to do so. Moreover, they are unwilling to invest in a pension system for which they will not see any returns for twenty-five years, if ever—many plan to return to Brazil before then (Nakamura 2004). These feelings of unease with the Japanese medical system, working in tandem with high

unemployment and loose government oversight, equate to a low rate of enrollment in public insurance among *nikkeijin*.

In many places, the employer is in charge of the workers' housing as well. *Nikkeijin* tend to live in clusters, but this is not always of their own choosing; they are often living in company apartments (Brody 2002, p. 65). Alternatively, because of the significant language barrier, they are forced to secure rental housing though labor brokering agencies (Ibid., p 66.). In both cases this creates a gap between the residents and the employers which only worsens with the inevitable tension arising from unemployment. This is exactly what happened in the wake of the Lehman crash, with many of the protestors at political rallies demanding more secure housing after they were thrown out of their company units (Makino 2009).

Rather than blaming language for the plethora of existent problems with *nikkeijin* employment, however, it is more accurate to say that language is preventing upward mobility. *Nikkeijin* were originally brought here to fill a labor shortage. As the economy expanded the number of jobs in the unskilled labor market increased. When it crashed, many were fired. What is it that prevents all but a handful of well-educated *nikkeijin* from moving out of the indirect labor market? The manual jobs *nikkeijin* work present few opportunities for training or professional development. The best that many achieve with long work experience in Japan and multiple skills is employment in one's choice of the auto companies (Watanabe 2005, pp. 89, 94). In light of the current economic crisis, many *nikkeijin* are trying to hone their skills in the search for better jobs (Chunichi Shinbun 2010), but often as not what employers also want, and what has been held against *nikkeijin* in the workplace, has been the *nikkeijin*'s inability to

communicate effectively with their superiors in Japanese. Their language ability has rooted them to a low socioeconomic status (Yasumoto 2008).

As previously established, the majority of *nikkeijin* are not fluent in Japanese. This equates to a certain degree of alienation in the Japanese workplace. Japanese coworkers typically make no effort at socialization with *nikkeijin*. Instead, they complain about how *nikkeijin*—with whom they barely interact—work poorly in teams, are unproductive and are only motivated by a desire for personal gains at the expense of others (Tsuda 2004). The standard *nikkeijin* recrimination is that while Japanese have more training, *nikkeijin* are actually so industrious that Japanese are jealous (Ibid.). This discrimination is, in large part, due to a language barrier. While even bilingual *nikkeijin* have felt like they were profiled to the point of being inhuman (Brode 1999), the problem is even more severe for those with the lowest language ability, who often describe the workplace in strongly negative terms. In the words of one factory worker, “I think *nikkeijin* Brazilians who don’t speak Japanese are treated badly because of it (Brode 1999). Even worse, *nikkeijin* have little choice when it comes to switching jobs to avoid this treatment. Local companies—as opposed to *haken gaisha*—are reluctant to hire *nikkeijin* in part for the same reason they are discriminated against in their current situation: the majority of them cannot speak Japanese (Yasumoto 2008).

There have been small signs of progress in the workplace. For instance, at the company Bunshodo, which manufactures automatic labor-saving machines and ceramics-related machinery, three highly skilled *nikkeijin*—who are, not coincidently, fluent in Japanese—are now directly employed as assembly or welding engineers (Chunichi Shinbun 2010). The majority of *nikkeijin*, if given the chance, would like to learn Japanese and find better jobs, but

they have neither the time nor the means to do so (Yasumoto 2008). Realizing that a skilled workforce can benefit both corporate and *nikkeijin* needs, some companies have begun sponsoring education. In 2001 Toyota created a school in *Haruhi* 春日, a small town near Nagoya, where twenty Brazilians are being taught in Portuguese to become mechanics. The school is Toyota's attempt at producing mechanics for its South American outlets (Mariko 2008).

As of late, some companies have also started contributing to local Japanese classes. In 2007 an in-house robotics firm of motorcycle maker Yamaha Motor Co. launched a weekly language program for *nikkeijin* workers which included doctors and firefighters lecturing *nikkeijin* on emergency situations. A program supervisor said, "We initially regarded them simply as labor and believed any progress in their ability would help improve our productivity. As the program went along, however, we came to think of them as members of our community" (Mariko 2008). In mid 2008, Aichi prefecture, in conjunction with residents, and, more important, with local companies, allocated seven million yen for Japanese language classes for *nikkeijin* (Ibid.). Ironically, these classes came before any significant contributions from the national government.

Quixotically, while paying *nikkeijin* to fly home, the Japanese government also passed *nikkeijin*-friendly stopgap measures in 2009 to combat the great crash of 2008. The government set up new assistance centers for foreign residents and increased the number of interpreters and counselors in established centers while simultaneously contributing money to the "Emergency Job Creation Program" and the "Emergency Subsidy for Local Revitalization/Livelihood Support." They also extended unemployment insurance benefits to sixty days (Council for the Promotion of Measures for Foreign Residents 2009). The most significant of these ad hoc

measures, however, were the implementation of public housing reforms, skills training and Japanese language courses (Ibid.). Making it easier to acquire public housing slightly loosens the grip the *haken gaisha* have on *nikkeijin*. For self-evident reasons, Japanese language classes and skills training are worthwhile investments (Makino 2009). In conjunction with the Rainbow Bridge program, they represent the government's first serious response to this crisis.

The impact of the recent economic slump highlights the susceptibility of the *nikkeijin* job market to the vacillating whims of the manufacturing industry. *Nikkeijin* still work the same types of jobs they did twenty years, only now there are fewer jobs to be found. It took a crisis to spur the national government into action. Recent advancements have been made, but considering that many of them are only temporary, the effort is still lackluster. As was the case with a foreign women in Oita prefecture denied welfare because she was not a Japanese national (*Mainichi* 2010_a), the system often seems to be moving backwards. Japan must stop treating the situation as ephemeral and implement permanent language and skills teaching programs so that *nikkeijin* can expand their employment opportunities. The more quickly remaining *nikkeijin* can diversify the better. The consequences of this widespread unemployment extend into all other facets of *nikkeijin*. Nowhere is this as evident as in the wave of Portuguese language school closings.

Language and education

When Japan let immigrant workers enter the country in large numbers, the new visa category they created enabled the establishment of a permanent population of somatically and linguistically distinct foreigners. Not only does the long-term resident status permit *nikkeijin* to bring their families, but it also allows them to renew their visas ad infinitum, or change their status to that of a permanent resident at any time (Cornelius 1994). Given this latitude and the economic attractiveness of Japan, it was all but inevitable that, whatever Japan had originally intended, they would soon be dealing with a persistent population of *nikkeijin*, children included.

This is exactly what has happened. In 1987 there were around two thousand Brazilians in Japan. In 1993 there were over 150,000; by current estimates, there are well over 250,000 *nikkeijin* now living in Japan (Hōmushō 2010). Further, over 116,000 of these *nikkeijin* have changed their status to permanent residence. This is a significant increase even when compared to 2006, when there were fewer than 80,000 permanent residents (Hōmushō 2007; Hōmushō 2010). This continued interest in living in Japan is surprising given the relative decrease in the total Brazilian population, which peaked at over 310,000 in 2007 before falling by over 50,000 due to market instability and job layoffs (Higuchi 2009, p. 4). That a large number of *nikkeijin* will choose to remain in Japan despite economic fluctuations is manifestly evident. Yet Japan seems incapable of coping with the challenges supporting such a population entails, including education for the immigrant children.

The typical age of *nikkeijin* coming to work in Japan is between twenty-two and fifty. If one looks at the age demographic of *nikkeijin* in Brazil, the mean age of *nisei* is now around fifty-eight years old, while sansei are around thirty-one years old (Mckenzie and Salcedo 2007, p.

4). Hence, the majority of the potential parents coming to Japan will be of the third generation. As mentioned previously, only a third of these parents are conversant in Japanese, with even fewer capable of reading it—and that number is only shrinking. This poses significant problems when these immigrants want their children to enter the Japanese school system. Japan has historically had a very monolingual stance on education. The government sponsored Japan Foundation responsible for producing Japanese cultural exchange is exemplary of this viewpoint: none of the numerous Japanese language learning textbooks they draft are aimed at foreigners residing in Japan (Nagata 2010).

Nikkeijin traditionally have a very strong desire for their children to be well educated. The best predictor of a child's academic success is the educational attainment level of his parents, and in Brazil, *nikkeijin* have often been referred to as a kind of model minority because of their high educational attainment and their penetration of the upper echelons of Brazilian society (Lesser 2010; Mckenzie and Salcedo 2007, p. 4). Hence, the desire for education for fourth generation immigrants is very strong. Yet, because of the nature of the Japanese language and its role in the educational system, reaping the benefits of Japanese education and the opportunities it presents is difficult for non-Japanese speakers.

Much emphasis is placed on learning the written language in the early years of Japanese education, so learning Japanese with great proficiency is imperative (Ellington 2005). Moreover, the system is less geared towards social interaction than studying and individual academic achievement. Middle school is a training ground which prepares students for high school entrance exams. The testing period at the end of junior high is infamously known as "examination hell" (Ishikida 2005, pp. 82-83). More than three-quarters of middle school students enroll in *juku* 塾 (cram school) to improve their scores on these tests. High school is

often a battleground where students vie for acceptance to the most prestigious universities, not surprisingly, more than 37 percent of students were still enrolled in *juku* in high school (Monbushō 2002). Matriculation from a respected tertiary institution is in turn a reliable ingress to a laudable career.

This nationally standardized system of constant competition and examination is not accommodating to foreign children whose parents do not speak Japanese at home. Children are expected to relinquish their ethnic backgrounds and become mainstream Japanese individuals (Creighton 1997, p. 227). Firstly, *nikkeijin* children are at an obvious disadvantage when they join at an intermediate stage. Like any transfer student, they will have trouble adjusting; the degree of difficulty is simply heightened by the language barrier. Secondly, at the lower levels, even if their conversational Japanese is proficient, they will likely have to catch up on the Kanji already learned by their Japanese classmates (Kobayashi and Yamada 2010). The hurdles foreign students must surmount only get tougher as students progress up the educational ladder.

The substantial amount of material learned in middle school poses an even more difficult problem; students without a good grasp of Japanese can become hopelessly lost. They will "sit through" literature, science or history classes, minds adrift, without learning anything (Brody 2002, p. 79). Even if a child manages to keep up at school, family problems not infrequently interfere with their advancement. The material they learn is not reinforced in the same manner as it would be in Japanese speaking homes. Moreover, learning exclusively in Japanese can stymie progress in the *nikkeijin* children's native language. This leads to strained relationships between non-Japanese speaking parents and their children. Children often begin to identify with not just the Japanese language, but the Japanese way of life, while their parents might still wish to return to Brazil (Brody 1999_c). The problem has actually gotten to the point that some cities like

Hanamatsu, a major manufacturing center outside Nagoya, have begun to offer weekly classes in Portuguese (Yasumoto 2008$_a$).

A family's financial pressures can also drag down those who initially overcome communicative problems. The overwhelming majority of *nikkeijin* children come from underprivileged families. In Toyota, for example, *nikkeijin* earned the equivalent of twelve dollars an hour (Onishi 2008) Expensive auxiliary schooling or tutoring like *juku* to level the playing field is often out of the question. Without this additional—but costly—support, many otherwise good *nikkeijin* students lag behind in reading and writing. In truth, *nikkeijin* must often choose between sending their children to high school and supporting their family (Brody 1999$_c$).When children drop out after junior high, they hit the "glass ceiling" and become trapped in a liminal space; their Portuguese has languished, preventing them from pursuing higher education and more lucrative jobs in Brazil. Yet by foregoing Japanese high school, they are deprived of the same opportunities in Japan.

Many parents instead choose to send their children to private Portuguese schools in Japan. While this is not as likely to further integration into Japanese society, many parents feel that Portuguese language schools provide an environment free from bullying of foreigners and, therefore one more conducive to learning. As a number of these schools are endorsed by the Brazilian government, the hope is that children educated in such schools will be able to succeed should they return to Brazil (Hongo 2007). In contrast, the vast majority of these for-profit institutions are not accredited by the Japanese government, and, until very recently, very few of them were supported by it (Kyodo News 2008). Despite this, of the approximately thirty-three thousand *nikkeijin* children between the ages of five and fourteen in Japan in 2008, over ten thousand were enrolled in Portuguese schools (Kamiya 2008). Considering the sheer number of

students attending these schools, and the increase from 45 to 110 schools between 2001 and 2008 (Ibid.), that there is widespread dissatisfaction with Japanese schooling is undeniable.

Even should they remain open, Portuguese language schools do not offer a perfect solution. In addition to their tuition cost, there are several other negative aspects associated with Brazilian schools. Unless the school is accredited, students are not entitled to discounts on public transportation that normal students receive. They will also not receive regular health checkups available at Japanese schools (Kamiya 2008). Furthermore, depending on their Japanese proficiency, their higher educational opportunities might be more limited than those available to Japanese schooled students.

Another dilemma is that in the traditional Brazilian education system, to which many Portuguese language schools adhere, education lasts eleven years. Even assuming no language disadvantage, the Japanese government still requires twelve years of education before one can attend a Japanese university. Therefore, an additional year of coursework prescribed by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology will be required (Gaimushō 2011). After this additional schooling and the college entrance exams, a foreign student may still not be competitive at the more selective universities because he attended a foreign high school. Moreover, if a foreign student does graduate from a university or professional school, their employment situation is still bleak (Castro-Vázquez 2009, p. 62). Much like the government, companies are less hesitant to accept foreign graduates. According to the recruitment firm Mainichi Communications, in 2008 a scant 11,000 of the 130,000 foreign graduates from Japanese universities and technical colleges were able to find jobs (Tabuchi 2011).

Regardless of their relative merits, or lack thereof, in a situation reflective of the total number of *nikkeijin* in Japan, Portuguese schools have been extremely hard hit by recent financial troubles and layoffs. There were only sixty such schools remaining as of 2009 (*Mainichi* 2010_b; Wakamatsu 2010). With the economic downtown, parents were unable to afford the extra thirty thousand yen (or more) per month required for Portuguese schooling (*Mainichi* 2010_b). This does not, however, necessarily mean the students previously enrolled in the Portuguese schools entered the Japanese schooling system. To the contrary, even before the financial slump, there were over ten thousand children of school age who never attended for various reasons (Wakamatsu 2010).

One of the largest educational hurdles for *nikkeijin* is that while education is mandatory from ages 6 -15 for Japanese nationals, it is not for foreigners. It is entirely up to foreign parents as to whether their children attend Japanese schools. Local school districts in Japan initially provided little more than free tuition and textbooks (Gifu International Center 2008, p. 2). The lack of concern for foreign students by the national government has led to rampant delinquency. For example, according to a 2001 survey conducted in the small town of *Ōizumi* 大泉 in Gunma prefecture, 38 percent of *nikkeijin* children under fifteen years of age were not attending school (Nakamura 2004). Nonattendance only rises after middle school. It was recently estimated that as many as half of *nikkeijin* children drop out at the junior high to high school transition, compared to just three percent of native Japanese children (Higichi 2009, p. 12). Having hit the glass ceiling, these children and young adults have few places to turn other than the same demeaning jobs as their parents or delinquent activity (Sugihara 1999). The plight of *nikkeijin* children has not gone completely unnoticed, however.

Figure 2: References to Migrants in Local Government Guidelines (Higuchi 2009, p. 9)

	Pages related to migrants		Political participation by migrants		Gap in advancement rate		Disadvantages in socio-economic status		Total	
	pages	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	pages	No. of documents
1987-1994	33	6.2	2	8.3	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	535	24
1995-2000	158	16.7	10	45.5	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	946	22
2001-2008	432	57.8	9	34.6	7	26.9	1.0	3.8	747	26
Total	623	28.0	26	29.2	7	9.7	1.0	1.4	2228	72

In recent years *nikkeijin* education has garnered a great deal of attention. From 2001 to 2008 the gap in the advancement rate from middle school to high school quickly came into the spotlight (Figure 2). In response to such increased attention, local governments were all but forced to act. Small quotas for *nikkeijin* were put in place in local high schools (Higuchi 2009, p. 10). Prefectural governments responsible for large numbers of foreign children have also been independently creating more special language classrooms for immigrant children. This began in the early nineties, and has continued to grow in cities with high Japanese populations (Tsuda 2004). Although these are not solely designed for children from Brazil, the impetus provided by *nikkeijin* is obvious; the number of students requiring special Japanese language classrooms grew from 5,463 in 1991to 17, 296 in 1997 (Ministry of Education 1998). Yet from the beginning, these local efforts have been plagued with problems.

Efforts to improve *nikkeijin* education spearheaded by a local government in Japan suffer from an exiguity of personnel trained to deal with non-native speakers. The specific actions taken differ from city to city, so we will use Toyota City East located East of Nagoya in Aichi prefecture as an illustrative example. It was the first area in Japan to incorporate large numbers of *nikkeijin* into the local school district (Brody 2002, p. 77). As of 2008, over half of the students in the elementary school are *nikkeijin* (Onishi 2008). If Toyota city is any indication, however, teachers transitioning from Japanese to *nikkeijin* pupils are often unprepared for the radically different didactic methods they must employ. In the words of one instructor, “We took

it for granted that kids would sit and study as usual. But, when we got foreign students here, we realized that the way that we teach would have to change too. With foreign students, the teachers have a one-on-one relationship with students (Brody 1999$_c$). A difficult prospect when teachers are few and far between.

With the exception of one Portuguese speaking teacher hired by the city, teachers of foreign students in *Higashi Homi Elementary* 東高等小学校 and *Higashi Homi Junior High* 東高等中学校 are self-selected. They work a difficult job to help the struggling students, spending extra time with them and visiting their homes to meet with the parents. At the time of the survey, they had received no training from the Ministry of Education and complained of an utter lack of support (Brody 1999$_c$). While these self-motivated teachers try their best, there simply are not enough of them. There were only three teachers at the elementary school and two in the junior high school (Brody 2002, p. 78). Much of the brunt work therefore falls on volunteers.

Volunteers from the International Center in Nagoya city fulfill the vital role of personal interaction several times a week by assisting with the international classrooms. Yet their presence is a mixed blessing. The volunteers who visit are constantly rotated; they cannot provide consistent instruction. Not only is it difficult for children to develop a rapport with teachers who cannot be there for them on a regular basis, but the schools themselves cannot rely on altruistic non-salaried mentors indefinitely (Brody 2002, p. 80). These volunteers do serve a vitally important function; thanks in part to the supplemental classes, dropouts in the *Homi* district are uncharacteristically rare (Onishi 2008). At 9 percent in 2002, Toyota city had the lowest rate of school non-attendance of any city with a substantial number of *nikkeijin* students (Goto 2007, p. 50). However, volunteers are only a temporary solution for an enduring situation.

The national government has been reprehensibly negligent of the hardships faced by foreign students; it is only under intense pressure that they have acted. One such incident concerned complaints of “unequal access” to higher education for Koreans by a 1998 Human Rights Committee sponsored by the United Nations. At their behest, in late 1999 Japan changed a policy which had required those enrolled in foreign schools to take a university entrance qualification exam before even taking the normal school entrance exams for college. Now one simply has to be 18 and have 12 years of schooling (Ishikida 2005, p. 278). Prior to this change in the law, students who graduated from foreign middle schools—be they Korean, overseas or Brazilian withal—were not considered equal to those graduating from Japanese middle schools, and also had to attend remedial classes at a Japanese high school before applying for college (Ibid).

It was not until the recession at the end of the last decade that the national government was finally stirred into action. Heavily hit by this global recession in the latter part of 2008 and 2009, the population of *nikkeijin* declined rapidly. More than fifty thousand left Japan in a matter of months (MU Higuchi 2009, p. 4). As previously mentioned, this mass exodus had a disastrous effect on Portuguese schools. When living on unemployment insurance, parents could scarcely put food on the table, let alone send their children to Brazilian private schools. Yet, neither could they afford the practically essential *juku* should they send their children to Japanese schools. Moreover, Japanese high school itself, public or private, is not free (Gifu International Center 2008, p. 2). It was against this backdrop that the Ministry of Education passed its first major measures to improve the quality of life for foreign residents, including the education of foreign children.

Entitled the “Immediate (Short-Term) Support Measures for Foreign Residents in Japan,” these provisional support measures were created on January 30, 2009 (Council for the Promotion of Measures for Foreign Residents 2009). Chief among these was the “Rainbow Bridge Classroom.” Under this program, the ministry is obliged to “facilitate smooth enrollment to appropriate public schools” and promote “exchange between the Brazilian community, etc. and local society, particularly among children” (Ibid.) As a result of this provision and the concomitant expansion of “The Projects for Further Acceptance of Japanese Children Returning from Overseas and Foreign Children to Public schools,” public schools are now supposed to offer multilingual instruction. More full-time and part-time teachers will be hired to teach additional classes. Numerous other support staff will be also be added to the payrolls. Incentives will be given to encourage integration into public schools, with special attention paid to those not currently enrolled in a school (Ibid.). If permanently implemented and, more important, continually funded, this would be a step in the right direction.

In conjunction with this pecuniary and material support for Japanese schools, the government also pledged some support for Brazilian schools. It promised to pay up to 20 million yen yearly to thirty-nine of these schools and nonprofit organizations to teach the Japanese language and customs (Kobayashi and Yamada 2010). In a seeming reversal, the Ministry of Education will supposedly approach prefectural governments to get accreditation for Brazilian schools, albeit only as miscellaneous schools (Council for the Promotion of Measures for Foreign Residents 2009).They will also sponsor Japanese Language lessons, health check-ups, school guidance, and, most critically, subsidies for tuition reduction. In accordance with assurances of more teachers for foreigners nationwide, they will also be specifically training teachers to work at Brazilian schools (Ibid.).

As the programs are still in their infancy, the success of this new policy is still up for debate. The Rainbow Bridge classrooms, for instance, started in the fall of 2009, and, as of February, were operating in a dozen prefectures with high concentrations of foreigners (Wakamatsu 2010). At last count in 2009, 1,250 students were participating in the program nationwide, with 210 having transferred to Japanese elementary and junior high schools (New Koumeitō 2010).One example is the Arasse Mirai Sanarudai Japanese class in *Hamamatsu*. This supplemental class for foreign children runs for four hours every afternoon of the school week (Hamamatsu Foundation for International Communications and Exchanges 2011). There is also some evidence of support for Portuguese language schools; in Gifu prefecture, in addition to local donations, students at the local Nova Etapa school began receiving assistance in the form of a school allowance for unemployed foreign residents (Gifu International Center 2009, p. 3). Overall, there are signs of improvement, but whether this is a nominal, temporary reprieve or a substantive undertaking remains to be seen.

It is with the *nikkeijin* children that any hope for a resolution of the current *nikkeijin* situation lies. Deprived of a proper education in the financially troubled Portuguese language schools or the unaccommodating Japanese system, however, they stand little hope of escaping the world of segregation and menial labor their parents endure. Given the recent financial crisis and the high school dropout rate, many appear condemned to it. Many parents are still reluctant to send their children to Japanese schools (Nagata 2010; Wakamatsu 2010). The government took a much-needed step with the Rainbow Bridge Classrooms and other temporary measures. But that is all they are. Temporary. The provisions must be expanded and institutionalized before they run out in 2011(Mainichi 2010_b). Education, however, is but one aspect of life outside of work where social integration is floundering.

Language and communities

While education and labor are unmistakably important, perhaps the best touchstone for the well-being of any population is how its members fare in their everyday community interactions. Similar to aforementioned aspects of life, progress towards cultural assimilation, prosperous coexistence, or any type of social harmony are lacking. *Nikkeijin* congregate together in ethic environs linguistically and psychologically conducive to building relationships with their Japanese neighbors. Yet, until recently, there were signs Japanese and *nikkeijin* children were beginning to erode this social occlusion—in spite of the language barrier. That these culturally and linguistically isolate *nikkeijin* communities are similar to those occupied by immigrants the world over is self evident; what demarcates this tale of attempted “integration” is how the few vestiges of hope are being cut tragically short by the economic crises of 2008.

Although expectations regarding the Japanese characteristics *nikkeijin* born in South America were supposed to possess were doubtless curtailed long ago in all the Japanese who met them, Japan cannot be said to have adapted to newcomer customs. Even prior to complaints of higher rates of crime following the recession, Japanese residents often expressed fear and uncertainty at the abnormal behavior of *nikkeijin*, which included selling goods without licenses out of trucks, improperly disposing of garbage, or not filing tax returns (Brody 2002, p. 68-69; Coleman 2007). Though these acts in and of themselves are not insurmountable, they are symptomatic of prevailing attitudes in areas with high concentrations of *nikkeijin*.

Laws differ between countries, and when any individual, be they foreign or not, violates the law, they are supposed to be informed of their transgression. In the instance of the truck vendors in Homa Danchi, many residents were clearly upset by the *nikkeijin*’s activity. Yet it is

debatable whether or not the violators were ever told to desist (Brody 1999_b). Regardless, they were allowed to continue their illegal activity with essentially no legal repercussions. A similar phenomena occurs when Japanese take fault with how *nikkeijin* dispose of their garbage. There are murmurs of discontent and general resentment towards what seems to be a blatant disregard for Japanese rules, but little to no warnings or reprimands (Ibid., p. 69). The rules for garbage disposal in Japan are relatively complicated compared to those in Brazil, reissuing instructions in Portuguese is troublesome for Japanese and vocally explaining the rules doubly so. However, the reticence for meaningful discourse on these matters reveals a communicative lapse between Japanese and *nikkeijin* that runs much deeper.

The large number of *nikkeijin* in Japan has allowed for the creation of Brazilian communities which are, in many ways, a world apart from Japan. Unlike the first immigrants in the early 1990s, *nikkeijin* now can survive in local circles with almost no knowledge of the Japanese language (Brody 1999_a). Because *nikkeijin* live in these mini Brazils, their interactions with Brazilians are extremely limited (Brody 2002, p. 67). Their social and linguistic isolation in everyday activities like shopping and eating out is only exacerbated by the presence of other *nikkeijin* immigrants who own shopping markets and restaurants, making it feasible for the communities to never cross paths. And unspoken apartheid such as this makes it all the more difficult for *nikkeijin* to adapt to Japanese culture as they are, by default, never allowed to become a part of it.

In many cases, this has led *nikkeijin*, feeling incompatible with mainstream Japanese society, to accentuate previously dormant Brazilian aspects of their identities (Tsuda 2004). This is in turn reifies negative stereotypes Japanese hold of *nikkeijin* being disrespectful nonconformists. Stigmas are most powerful when those who hold them are never exposed to

counterexamples. Unfortunately, this is the case with *nikkeijin*, where those who do try to fit in are frequently profiled, when looking for jobs, homes or other support measures outside their nested cocoons (Brooke 2002, p. 72). Regardless of who is responsible, the separation of *nikkeijin* and Japanese fosters mistrust which only serves to further perpetuate negative stereotypes of *nikkeijin*.

For those *nikkeijin* who brave the integration into Japanese society, cultural differences serve as a constant reminder that they are intruders on Japanese turf, where foreigners are not welcome. One must act, think and speak like a Japanese person in order to be accepted as Japanese—in most ways to be accepted at all (Tsuda 2004). For those who grew up in Brazil, such things are all but impossible. To a degree, integration will be unobtainable until Japanese become more tolerant of foreigners. There is, however, one group who has hope of achieving the simulacrum of acceptance: *nikkeijin* children who associate themselves with Japan, and, can speak Japanese.

There are glimmers of hope for a kind of reconciliation, at least among the younger generations. Children—both *nikkeijin* and Japanese—though still cognizant of social conventions, are less inhibited by them. In the few opportunities presented for *nikkeijin* and Japanese children to mingle, they demonstrated that Japan need not be a land of foreigners and Japanese, and language need not be an insurmountable barrier. In the town of *Oizumi*, *nikkeijin* children expressed their desire to continue living in Japan not for economic reasons or because they felt they had no options—they simply had made friends with Japanese children. They were actually the most popular kids on the soccer team partly because of their *nikkeijin* identity, not in spite of it (Lesser talk). Such cases are not outliers. In Toyota city, in spite of adults maintaining a polite social distance from one another, in the words of a local Japanese community leader, "children

become amigos” (Onishi 2008). If it were not for the economic crisis, ethnographers predicted they would soon ethnically integrate (Tsuda 2004).

Illusions of imminent progress and child-driven multicultural symbiosis were ruthlessly shattered with the financial collapse of 2008. If *nikkeijin* had been an unpleasant but manageable blemish on Japanese neighborhoods before the crash, they quickly became noticeable one after it. Though the mass exodus caused a stir among scholars, it was and will be the *nikkeijin* who remain in Japan that raise many concerns. Where many *nikkeijin* were independent before, they now live on government subsidies and welfare. Even more conspicuous are the increased rates of crime around *nikkeijin* communities, assumed to be caused by large numbers of delinquent, young *nikkeijin* children whose families have been laid off. Groups of impoverished youth roaming the streets are the epitome of all the social malfeasance and crime Japanese fear in foreigners (Coleman 2007; Onishi 2008). Even should the harm they cause be mitigated by police and educational measures, the psychological repercussions may be far greater. While it may have drawn attention to the victims of the Global Depression, it also served to further alienate the *nikkeijin*. It is easy for Japanese to pity these destitute *nikkeijin*, but the delinquent youth make it extremely difficult to relate to them. In the words of one community leader in one of the hardest hit areas, "It's extremely difficult for us to communicate with them because there are so many delinquent children. Living in harmony with foreign residents might be just a dream."

Policy suggestions and conclusion

Although others might argue *nikkeijin* are return migrants, for the purposes of policy decisions, they are largely treated as immigrants. As shown in this work, Japan's disposition toward *nikkeijin* has been mixed at best, with their treatment vacillating from the encouragement of immigration to the financing of permanent return flights to South America. This ambivalent attitude is even reflected in the names the Japanese government assigned to their immigration policies: internationalization and multicultural symbiosis. The former was based on extending hospitality to foreign guests, including foreign workers and immigrants. The latter was dedicated to migrant issues (Higuchi 2009, p. 9). Japan has no coherent policy to deal with foreigners, in particular those who are of a vastly different culture and who do not share a common language. Their decision to allow immigration based on *jus sanguinous* was an attempt to delay the inevitable and substantial immigration Japan must undergo if it wishes to remain competitive in the world market.

It is unclear if Japan really wants immigration at all, let alone complete integration with foreigners. Even local governments are divided between internationalization and the slightly less conservative *tabunka kyōsei* 多文化共生 (multicultural symbiosis) (Compendium of Migrant Integration Policies and Practices 2010, p. 118). *Ipso facto*, Japan's ambivalence has led to the current *nikkeijin* situation. Segregated into a secondary labor market, forced into financially imperiled Portuguese schools or the unaccommodating Japanese school system, at the end of the day the only people they can talk to and ultimately rely upon are each other. Tolerable in times of plenty, this way of life becomes insufferable when *nikkeijin* are fired *en masse*. Though no perfect solution exists, any attempt at sociocultural admixture will be manifestly preferable.

With this in mind, viable alternatives to Japan's failing immigrant policy all include a social contract between the immigrants and the host society (Weiner 1956, p. 52). At a bare minimum, the host country in such contracts provides education and housing for the immigrants. These are the essential means by which subsequent generations of immigrants can advance in society, and they prevent the formation of ethnic neighborhoods which perpetuate a segregated underclass (Ibid.). Given Japan's isolationist tendencies and current economic climate, substantially more will have to be done in order to prevent the relegation of *nikkeijin* to a permanent second class citizen status. The situation mandates a careful response not just to relieve extant problems, but to restrict future inequities. This paper proposes a comprehensive solution which addresses as many of the described problems as is feasible. Language is at the core of this proposal, but it would be woefully negligent to think that ancillary measures will not be required to achieve any resolution.

Foremost is the economic crisis. It has now been over two years since the economic collapse. Tens of thousands have left to try their fortunes at home, but over a quarter of a million *nikkeijin* remain in Japan. The government should be helping *nikkeijin* adjust to life in Japan instead of paying for *nikkeijin* to repatriate. Most of those who were willing to take government money to fly home have already done so. Moreover, funding the repatriation of *nikkeijin* sends entirely the wrong message to *nikkeijin* and the world as a whole. What the government and employers should be doing is looking to create jobs in Japan catered to a stable *nikkeijin* workforce looking for employment.

The irony of the *nikkeijin* labor market situation is that a long-term resident visa should be incredibly desirable, even for foreign professionals. *Nikkeijin* are technically allowed to work any job, and can renew their visa indefinitely. The reality of the ethnolinguistically segregated

labor market is that, excepting a few *nikkeijin* store owners, they are in practice restricted to unstable manufacturing jobs run by unscrupulous *haken gaisha*. This leaves only two options for improving the employment situation. The first is to have the government regulate *haken gaisha*. Alternatively, other employers could be convinced to hire *nikkeijin*.

The purpose of regulating *haken gaisha* is to reduce the control they have over *nikkeijin* and thereby curtail their perpetuation of the physical separation of *nikkeijin* and Japanese workers. One method of regulating their influence would be to impose financial penalties on those companies which try to force *nikkeijin* workers into work environments where they have no contact with Japanese workers. If *nikkeijin* are able to purchase their homes with the help of government sponsored consulting firms who will encourage *nikkeijin* to move outside of their ethnic communities, it will encourage community integration and perhaps alleviate the problem of *nikkeijin* being immediately evicted upon termination of their job contracts. However, this solution is overall less than ideal because *nikkeijin* will still be susceptible to the just in time labor system and will work the same jobs as before, if now—hopefully—with more Japanese compatriots.

A better strategy is to start a public relations campaign with Japanese businesses in areas with high numbers of *nikkeijin*. As Japan's population ages, it is facing a critical shortage of labor in many areas of the primary labor market, but it still maintains a very high wall on foreign labor (Tabuchi 2011). If Japan wants to diversify and maintain a stable workforce, what better way to do so than to employ a population with a surfeit of able-bodied workers currently earning little more than the minimum wage? They will not even need to be relocated or have work visas sponsored. After all, many of these *nikkeijin* worked in primary labor market occupations in Brazil. Trained individuals such as this are in demand, but *nikkeijin* are seen as untouchables, not

candidates. To reverse this trend, the government absolutely must step in and make such workplaces receptive to *nikkeijin* workers.

If education is important for aiding children born and growing up in Japan assimilate, it is equally vital in the melioration of the adult worker situation. Part of the prescribed social contract system involves education to insure the upward mobility of the immigrants. *Nikkeijin* are brought to Japan to work in unskilled jobs Japanese find unpalatable. Hence, language, while an added bonus, is not essential for their work. *Nikkeijin* interpreters only further devalue the relevance of language for the average worker. There is, therefore, no established system for training *nikkeijin* in Japanese. For *nikkeijin* to take advantage of their previous job experience, such a network of training centers is absolutely essential. As mentioned, the government started some vocational programs in 2009, but they are interim and conservative in their scope.

Should a framework for such systematization be necessary, look no farther than network of schools which teach Japanese to foreign students wishing to enter Japanese universities. Alternatively, utilize these schools by subsidizing *nikkeijin* enrollment using money which was allotted for plane tickets. The thousands given for such flights could easily pay for several months to half a year of study at such schools (Arc Academy 2010). Such language training not only provides a requisite skill, but makes employers cognizant of *nikkeijin*s' human capital. Training *nikkeijin* is only half the battle, however.

An oft overlooked aspect of the education involved with integration involves neither the government nor the immigrants, but the population of the host country. In regard to employment, the most suitable candidates for—for lack of a better expression—"diversity education" are the managers of local businesses, hospital heads etc. No matter how much *nikkeijin* improve their

Japanese, it will make no difference if employers are still unwilling to hire them. While there are no guarantees when one tries to reduce social stigma, it would not hurt to give potential employers presentations on the benefits of diversity. Such informational sessions could be given by successful *nikkeijin* such as graduate students, professionals etc. so as to impress upon employers that *nikkeijin* are just as capable as Japanese, if given the chance. This is important because employers must be convinced that not only is having *nikkeijin* in their workforce beneficial for Japan, but that it makes good business sense for their company.

Programs promoting diversity at local businesses should be funded at the national level. Prefecture or community based funding is too capricious. Nationwide support for the business integration of *nikkeijin* would not only that Japan is serious about immigration, but that the country's commitment is long-term. Tax breaks for local Japanese employers hiring *nikkeijin* would do more than attempt to justify multiethnic workforces—they would provide the country's first financial incentive to hire *nikkeijin* over Japanese workers. Although such measures would prove a drastic departure from previous policy, they are evidently necessary; very few *nikkeijin* have been hired by companies outside the *haken gaisha* system at the time of this writing, and this trend will not likely reverse until catalyzed by tangible rewards for employers.

The topic of discrimination is germane to any discussion of *nikkeijin* integration, but is expressly important with regard to the participation of *nikkeijin* in the labor market. Although there have been debates in recent years, Japan still has almost no laws explicitly preventing discrimination against foreigners (Brody 2002, 72). This is a prerequisite for any hope of fair treatment for *nikkeijin* both inside and outside the workplace. The discrimination outlined throughout the rest of this document is tolerated not just because of a negative attitude towards *nikkeijin*, but because *nikkeijin*, even with legal representation, have no hope of combating such

treatment under Japanese law. It is all too likely that *nikkeijin* unable to speak Japanese would continue to be exploited should they work outside *haken gaisha*, if for no other reason than they could.

Antidiscrimination laws would putatively do more than protect the equality of *nikkeijin* wages upon entrance to the primary labor market. Among the other benefits of such laws would be the assurance of social welfare for *nikkeijin*. While every Japanese citizen is mandated to join such a system, that is not necessarily the case with *nikkeijin*, and non-Japanese citizens are not even always entitled to welfare benefits. Moreover, employers are currently not held responsible for enrolling foreigners in social insurance, and reporting such violations is substantially more difficult for people with a language barrier like *nikkeijin*. Stringently enforced antidiscrimination laws should reduce these problems. The only caveat is that while health insurance should be made mandatory, as it is for Japanese citizens, long-term residents should be able to exit the pension system and receive a refund worth more than three years of payment. It is illogical to force people who can ostensibly return to their home country at any time to permanently store money in a Japanese pension system.

Integral to the social contract system is the provisioning of housing for *nikkeijin*. As mentioned previously, due to the language and guarantor issues, accommodation arrangements were traditionally done through *haken gaisha* or middle man companies held unaccountable for their less-than-transparent dealings with *nikkeijin*. Although most *nikkeijin* will now voluntarily choose to live in *nikkeijin* communites, those attempting to live elsewhere meet fierce, legally unconstrained resistance from obdurate Japanese landlords reluctant to rent to foreigners (Brody 1999_e). In addition to having the government secure housing, again, antidiscrimination laws might help desegregate communities by making it possible for *nikkeijin* to live outside the

boundaries of ethnic neighborhoods by imposing legal, if not cultural, freedom on the housing market.

Educational reform is equally pressing. The first revision should be to make education of foreign children compulsory. From there, Japan can develop a unified policy for teaching foreign children, including Japanese language pedagogy and augmentation and institutionalization of supportive measures taken in the wake of the Lehman crash. These measures are of the highest priority, as the longer the wait, the more remedial work children struggling but receiving no support will have in the future. Hope for times to come lies with these children. Deserting them would be disastrous.

The simple act of making school compulsory for all children in Japan, not just citizens, would improve the quality of *nikkeijin* children's education substantially. Rampant truancy and subsequent delinquency among *nikkeijin* children is a hot button issue (Hongo 2007). Mandating schooling should serve to retard such behavior. The Japanese government would also be forced to acknowledge its own inadequacies. When *nikkeijin* children lie outside the traditional educational system, there is not only little pressure to accommodate them, but the means by which they can be helped are limited. If they were subsumed by the Japanese schooling system, they could no longer be treated as *persona non grata*. While in no way degrading them, the function of the few Brazilian schools operating in Japan is to provide an alternative to an uncommitted Japanese school system which is fundamentally failing *nikkeijin* children. Were the Japanese system made obligatory and more inclusive, such as by tailoring remedial materials to *nikkeijin* children, the choice of schools might be unnecessary.

Literature used for teaching foreigners outside of Japan notwithstanding, Japan has no policy for teaching Portuguese to *nikkeijin* children (Nagata 2010). In point of fact, Japan is

considering effectively shutting down the one academic body which studies the extant state of the Japanese language. In so doing, they seriously hinder the construction of accurate language teaching (Ibid.). Dedicated teachers and volunteers are important parts of the process, but compared to the scrupulously regulated and standardized material teachers across the country must use to instruct Japanese children, the lack of a curriculum for Portuguese speakers living in Japan is glaring. Researching this curriculum should be a top priority for Japanese language study scholars.

Compulsory education and improved lesson plans mean nothing if they are given parsimonious support. The employment of additional teachers and the creation of additional classrooms under the Rainbow Bridge should make the transition from provisional to integral in Japanese schools. Where there are volunteers helping with international classrooms, the employment of regular or part-time employees is crucial. Permanent educators are constitutive of any educational program aiming to establish vital relationships between teachers and students. Above all, this spending must be codified to reflect the enduring nature of *nikkeijin* communities, i.e., funds must be allocated for the education of *nikkeijin* for the indefinite future.

Such investments should not preclude accreditation of all Brazilian schools, however. Even if they are not the express goal of bilingual education reform, not accrediting them places their current students in quite a conundrum, leaving them completely incapable of climbing the social ladder in Japan. If Japanese schools had not been so hostile to foreign learners then many *nikkeijin* children would not be enrolled in Portuguese language schools in the first place. It is morally reprehensible to both deny *nikkeijin* a proper Japanese education and fail to recognize the replacement they chose.

At the community level, encouraging communication and interaction between Japanese and their *nikkeijin* neighbors through cultural exchange is the cardinal objective. Towards that end, laws should be enforced and infractions punished based on their severity, whether the violators are Japanese or *nikkeijin*, so as to lessen the stigma of being *nikkeijin*. As law-abiding, taxpaying residents, *nikkeijin* should be given the right to vote in local elections. In a similar vein, if *nikkeijin* are expected to adapt to the Japanese language and culture, Japanese should be given the opportunity to do the same by learning Portuguese and learning about South American culture. The hope is that both sides will realize that living together is a mutual venture in which they share communal responsibility.

Lenient treatment when it comes to law enforcement among *nikkeijin* who perhaps do not understand the rules may initially seem a magnanimous reprieve in a world of slights. To the contrary, in failing to establish culpability for *nikkeijin* who break the law, Japanese society only further dichotomizes *nikkeijin* and Japanese as being intrinsically different. This separation in turn amplifies feelings of distrust, making the communicative barrier between *nikkeijin* and Japanese difficult to broach. The solution lies in regarding everyone as equals and penalizing based on the law, rather than an amalgam of the law and ethnocentric values. Only then can trust in the system and each other conceivably be established.

Political representation is the means through which one can participate in and change one's community. For *nikkeijin* to be deprived of such a right is both disheartening and debilitating. As recently as 2010, overtures have been made by the *minshutō* 民主党 to establish regional voting rights, but nothing has come of it (Fujisaki 2010). Granting these regional voting rights would not only empower *nikkeijin* and make them feel a connection to the place in which

they live, and by extension the other people in it, but it would also be seen as a remarkably progressive move for any country, let alone Japan.

Conventional integration strategies are often restricted to government aid for immigrants, but this paper suggests a more cooperative solution involving both Japanese and *nikkeijin* is necessitated. For Japanese, this could happen in several ways, foremost among which is education. In the short-term, an original method for furthering relations would be for politicians, community leaders, and potential employers to take Portuguese language classes. While by no means mandatory, even if few attended, the mere existence of such classes would show an uncharacteristic—but likely appreciated—interest in Brazilian culture.

Much has been said of the importance of *nikkeijin* children in reconciliation, and the same holds true for Japanese youth. If Japan wants to expose its citizens to "foreign" influences, start with the ostracized people living next door. Take children who have never interacted with *nikkeijin* to Brazilian neighborhoods, have them eat at Brazilian steakhouses, or better still, arrange sporting events with Brazilian schools. Give them a chance to make friends. Although it might verge on iconoclastic, Japanese schools could offer Portuguese as a second language alternative to English. It would easily be as useful in some regions. They will not understand what is happening unless they are exposed to it.

The thrust of this paper has been to provide a potential avenue for better communication between Japanese and *nikkeijin*. Skimped over has been the role the *nikkeijin* will play in shaping their future. While Japan may have lured them, and continues to make their lives difficult, in the end, if there is a choice to be made regarding whether or not to continue living as outcasts,

nikkeijin must make it. This paper suggests that, segregated as they were and are, there has not been one.

Nikkeijin comprise a large proportion of the foreigners in Japan, but they remain invisible to the vast majority of Japanese because of their physical seclusion. Causing a stir with their much-debated arrival, they have largely been left to languish in their ethnolinguistically isolated neighborhoods. The policies herein are merely guidelines. That *nikkeijin* will remain pariahs if bilateral efforts are not undertaken by Japanese and *nikkeijin* is an ineluctable fact. The time left for rapprochement is finite. It is imperative action is taken before *nikkeijin* are eclipsed by the gravity of more recent events.

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