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Japanese-Brazilian Return Migration: Pushes, Pulls, and Prospects

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Abstract

Japan's economic situation and need for foreign labor present challenges when attracting and incorporating an influx of newcomers, which in turn poses questions relevant to previously established theories of migration. By examining public policies and the experiences of Japanese-Brazilians or Brazilian *nikkeijin*—migrants of Japanese descendants born in Brazil—I argue that Japan's immigration policy is a key determinant in their migration to Japan and, subsequently, that this policy plays an integral role in shaping the Japanese-Brazilians' environment in the host society. Building on Portes and Borocz's theory of host country receptivity, I consider how determinants of migration influence the immigrants' incorporation. Japanese immigration policy essentially recruits Brazilian *nikkeijin* for immigration by extending admission to them on the basis of Japanese descent; following their immigration, this policy results in a generally low-level reception of Brazilian *nikkeijin* into the dominant society as evidenced by government policy, public opinion, and Japanese-Brazilian ethnic communities in Japan. Specifically, the Japanese government has created an immigration policy that both supports a perception of Japanese-Brazilians as possessing a high-level of "Japaneseness," and yet continues to view these immigrants as "others" or foreigners (Tsuda 2003). As a result, Japanese immigration policy encourages Brazilian *nikkeijin* to immigrate and meet Japan's needs for foreign laborers, but once in the country, Japanese-Brazilians face political restrictions and negative public sentiment stemming from their emergent cultural and ethnic differences. This case reveals how policy plays a significant role in shaping migration flows and illuminates possible motives behind and inconsistencies between pre- and post-migration policies.

Introduction

Immigration, as a particular form of transnational movement, greatly affects both migrants and various aspects of the receiving host society: politics, economy, culture, and demography (Meyers 2000: 1245). Accordingly, many studies of immigration focus on the relationship between receiving countries and immigrants, who present new elements to the society with their unique cultural and social backgrounds. According to Castles and Miller, "immigration of culturally diverse people presents nation-states with a dilemma: incorporation of the newcomers as citizens may undermine myths of cultural homogeneity; but failure to incorporate them may lead to divided societies" (1998: 39). With greater emphasis on cultural homogeneity, the dilemma becomes more trenchant for a nation-state. The following paper looks at a single host society–Japan–and the immigration of Japanese-Brazilians to consider the factors that motivate their immigration and to examine the conditions that these migrants encounter in a new society.

Because Japanese society greatly values cultural and ethnic homogeneity (Befu 2001), it has become a priority for policymakers to emphasize the "Japaneseness" of Brazilian *nikkeijin* to justify the government's encouragement of this group's immigration. By supporting a notion of Japanese-Brazilians as more Japanese than other foreigners, they are perceived as less of a disruption to Japan's long-standing homogeneity and are therefore preferred over other migrant groups (Tsuda 1998: 319). As a result, Japan's immigration policy—basically providing an "open door" to Japanese-Brazilians immigrants (Sellek 1997)—has led to disagreement over the Brazilian *nikkejin*'s ethnic and cultural identity and how they can come to live in Japan's homogeneous society. I argue that Japan's immigration policy plays a significant role in the Japanese-Brazilians' incorporation within the dominant host society, particularly in affecting

Japanese society's perception of these immigrants. By suggesting that the Japanese-Brazilians are more Japanese than other foreigners, the policy has led to certain expectations about the *nikkejin*'s cultural and ethnic identities. Furthermore, the Japanese government seeks out these migrants as a solution to their labor dilemma, placing Japanese-Brazilians in jobs that Japanese nationals refuse to do; consequently, this also contributes to Japanese society's negative perceptions of *nikkejin*.

I explore the following questions in order to develop my argument: What do prior studies identify as determinants of migration? Do previously identified factors of immigration explain the migratory patterns of Japanese-Brazilians? And, after identifying any determinants, do these impact the incorporation of Japanese-Brazilians in Japan? First, I will survey preexisting literature on migration and its determinants, including the traditional push-pull model of migration and suggested alternatives, the role of immigration policy in migration flows, and the fate of immigrants in their new host society on the basis of what Portes and Borocz term reception or incorporation (1989: 618-620). After constructing this theoretical framework, I will more closely examine Japan's immigration policy and Japanese-Brazilian return migration to determine the factors influencing this specific transnational movement and whether the case fits into preexisting explanations of migration. Finally, I will look at Japan's reception of Brazilian *nikkeijin* to determine whether the factors involved in migration influence the Japanese-Brazilians' incorporation in the receiving country.

Literature Review

A common approach for explaining migration is the "neo-classical economic equilibrium perspective," or what is often and more simply referred to as the push-pull theory (Castles and Miller 1998; Portes and Borocz 1989). This theory determines that

> …the causes of migration…lie in a combination of 'push factors', impelling people to leave the areas of origin, and 'pull factors', attracting them to certain receiving countries. 'Push factors' include demographic growth, low living standards, lack of economic opportunities and political repression, while 'pull factors' are demand for labour, availability of land, good economic opportunities and political freedoms. (Castles and Miller 1998: 20)

From this perspective, hardship in lower-income countries pushes the migration of disadvantaged populations, while promising conditions pull these migrants to more economically advanced countries (Portes and Borocz 1989: 607).

Although push-pull theory provides a general way of understanding some motivations behind migration, both Castles and Miller (1998) and Portes and Borocz (1989) argue that this model has limitations. For one, it is unable to explain the specific movement of migrants, or why groups choose the particular receiving countries that they do (Castles and Miller 1998: 21); additionally, the model best predicts visible factors but fails to see the more subtle ones, such as the propensities of different groups to migrate and the direction of these migration flows (Portes and Borocz 1989: 607). Portes and Borocz propose an alternative: that a preexisting relationship between receiving and sending countries often dictates migratory patterns, such as in the case of the Netherlands, which receives migrants from a number of former colonies (1989: 609).

The following include three additional factors contributing to immigration as described in Portes and Borocz's alternative model: 1) an established relationship between the country of origin and the receiving society, often in the form of "physical coercion," such as conquest or slave trade; 2) "migrant recruitment through economic inducements" offered by the more advanced countries; and 3) the diffusion of the host society's culture amongst potential immigrant groups (1989: 608-9). Portes and Borocz's model emphasizes the history of relations – including differences in power – between sending and receiving countries as influencing an individual's or group's migration (1989). With their model, the authors illustrate the political

and cultural factors involved, implying that differences between nation-states account for patterns in migration. Such differences, however, suggest that immigrants may experience important changes in context with transnational movement and also that states must overcome political and cultural gaps in their attempts to manage migration. These implications highlight the importance of considering both the immigrants' experiences after migrating as well as the ways in which nation-states attempt to control and direct migration on the basis of culture.

From this perspective, receiving countries' immigration policies greatly influence migration (Meyers 2000), and, accordingly, an exploration of immigration policy proves crucial in identifying migratory patterns and in comprehending why migrants choose to immigrate to the countries that they do. Included in policy are the method(s) of immigration control employed by the receiving country. Both quotas, or "ceilings," and preference systems serve to monitor the quantity and nationality of entrants (Meyers 2000). Ceilings limit the number of entrants based on country of origin, whereas preferences determine whether an immigrant is welcomed based on an established set of criteria. An immigrant's region of origin is one such "criterion of a visa applicant's desirability" (Jasso 1988: 930), such as in the United States where immigration policy is comprised of preference classes and quotas, which mainly take into account kinship, profession, and country of origin (Hohl and Wenck 1971: 340-1). Aside from its influence on rates of migration, public policy might also influence the fate of migrants in the host society, particularly to the extent that methods of control emphasize cultural similarities or differences.

While early studies of immigrant experiences focused simply on assimilation, more recent work examines settlement as a multi-dimensional process (Castles and Miller 1998; Portes and Borocz 1989). Although both an immigrant's class origins and the conditions propelling him or her from a country of origin influence settlement, the host society's reception of the

immigrant most relates to the receiving country's immigration policy (Portest and Borocz 1989). Portes and Borocz identify three levels of receptivity: low or "handicapped," neutral, and favorable or "advantaged" (1989: 618-9). An immigrant encounters low receptivity in the case of a host government that limits or prohibits the flow of migrants; additionally, the immigrant experiences prejudice from employers and the larger society and often stays only temporarily, as settlement is unstable, which is evidenced by an impoverished ethnic community. Neutral receptivity is characterized by a response in which the immigrant receives neither encouragement nor discouragement from the host government; likewise, the native population and immigrants compete for employment. Finally, the immigrant experiences favorable or advantaged receptivity in the case of a host government that offers settlement assistance and a native public who sees membership in the ethnic community as "an asset rather than a liability"; furthermore, immigrants who are favorably received have "exceptionally good opportunities to capitalize on their background skills and experience" (Portes and Borocz 1989: 619).

While Portes and Borocz's theory corrects the overly-economic push-pull account, the theory does not fully consider whether the determinants of migration have any bearing on the migrant group's incorporation or reception in the host society. For instance, if cultural diffusion precedes and encourages migration, does this facilitate incorporation on account of shared cultural consumption between immigrants and the host society? Furthermore, do migrants brought over by economic inducements incorporate well as the result of a preexisting niche awaiting foreign workers in the host society's economy? I hypothesize that the reception of immigrants relates to how they are pulled into the host society by a combination of determinants, including immigration policy.

Research Design

To explore connections between determinants of migration, migration policy, and reception, I focus on the experience of Japanese-Brazilians in Japan. This case proves particularly interesting on account of Japan's homogeneous society, which traditionally fails to accommodate diverse individuals such as the Japanese-Brazilians (Kono 1991: 37); however, since many Japanese perceive Brazilian *nikkeijin* as related by way of ethnicity, the Japanese "prefer them to [other] foreigners of non-Japanese descent" (Tsuda 2003: 104-5), and therefore these immigrants encounter a different response from the dominant society. Based on recent revisions to immigration policy, it appears that the Japanese government also prefers Brazilian *nikkeijin*, and as such has actively encouraged the immigration of Japanese-Brazilians, at least much more so than that of other foreigners. Primarily as a result of this preferential treatment—mainly via the institution of a quota that opened entry to *nikkeijin* (Sellek 1997: 202)—Japanese immigration policy has become a significant factor determining the migration pattern of Japanese-Brazilians.

Although the return migration of Japanese-Brazilians has taken place relatively recently, their migratory activities have already encouraged much in the way of research, debate, and deliberation over Japan's citizenship and immigration policy. Studies have focused on an array of topics, from questions of identity and ethnicity (Tsuda 1998, 2003) to the marginalization and stigmatization of this immigrant population (Sekiguchi 2002), the extent to which Japanese society fails to "embrace multiculturalism" as indicated by the social treatment of foreigners (Linger 2001: 313), and how politics and institutions—citizenship laws, immigration policy, education—facilitate and / or hinder Brazilian *nikkeijin* from creating a place for themselves in Japanese society (Roth 2002, Sekiguchi 2002, Tsuda 2003). While these sources provide a

satisfactory overview of the Japanese-Brazilians' migratory history and its social repercussions, these studies generally date from 2003 or earlier and therefore do not take into account more recent changes made to Japanese immigration policy and its effects on the *nikkeijin* population.

My research picks up where previous studies have left off, taking a look at Japanese immigration policy today and how Japanese-Brazilians are faring in Japanese society. Previous studies of Brazilian *nikkeijin* migration have relied on ethnographic methods and fieldwork (e.g. Linger 2001, Roth 2002, Tsuda 2003); however, I use a case study method, examining Japanese-Brazilian immigration as a particular instance to compare with previous models and observations of migration. The case study method allows for an in-depth examination of Japanese-Brazilian immigration, particularly as it relates to public policy. I examine both primary and secondary sources dealing with Japanese-Brazilian immigration and the type of environment that exists in Japan for migrant groups, both with respect to policy and to modes of incorporating foreigners into the host society. A variety of academic sources provide the data for this research; both journal articles and books were used to attain the necessary pieces to construct my argument and present relevant evidence. Additionally, I collected publications from the Japanese Ministry of Justice, describing the duties of the Immigration Bureau and amendments made to the "Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act" in 2006. These texts provide basic information about the history behind Japanese-Brazilian migration and the rights and restrictions experienced by foreign nationals in Japanese society. With these materials, I will demonstrate how Japan's immigration policy is a pull factor in Japanese-Brazilian migration and, subsequently, determines the extent of these migrants' incorporation in Japanese society.

Findings

The following provides a presentation of my findings, outlining first the determinants involved in Japanese-Brazilian migration to Japan and concluding with a discussion of these migrants' incorporation in Japanese society. With these findings, I seek to answer the question at hand: do factors triggering Brazilian *nikkeijin* migration influence the level of receptivity they encounter in Japan subsequent to immigration? I will focus primarily on Japanese immigration policy and how it both pulls Japanese-Brazilians to Japan and shapes their environment in the new host society.

Determinants of Japanese-Brazilian Migration

Using preexisting models of migration, this section examines the immigration of Japanese-Brazilians to Japan to identify the determinants and repercussions of their migration and how this case coincides with the theories outlined above. While push-pull theory neglects a number of influences, these factors generally influence the likelihood of particular populations to experience net in- or out-migration (Portes and Borocz 1989). In addition, I examine cultural factors, the history of relations between Japan and Brazil, and Japanese immigration policy.

Push-Pull Factors. Japanese immigrants first experienced the economic pushes and pulls of migration at the beginning of the 20th century. In Brazil, the government sought workers for its coffee plantations. Initially, however, the Brazilian government preferred Europeans over Asians because of a concern for "assimilability," which they felt Asian immigrants lacked. This soon changed as Brazil learned of the Japanese migrants' reputation for productivity in the nearby islands of Hawaii (Roth 2002: 21). Additionally, in 1894, the Japanese diplomat Sho Nemoto visited Brazil with the objective of discussing the Brazilian upper-class' "hunt for submissive labor," which coincidentally "melded well with the Japanese government's desire to

export its land-based citizens" (Lesser 2003: 5). As a result of agreements made between the governments of Japan and Brazil, Japanese immigrants began coming to Brazil in 1908, filtering into South America as an alternative workforce eagerly welcomed by the Brazilian government.

On top of encouragement from Brazil, the conditions in Japan in 1908 further prompted migration. Like other countries around the turn of the 20th century, Japan began to industrialize, which resulted in a mass migration from rural to urban areas. Consequently, agricultural work fell by the wayside, and even the agricultural labor that did remain was meager and mired in the past traditions of feudalism and landlordism; up until World War II, in fact, "the landlord remained the dominant element in rural society," further decreasing the opportunities for Japanese agricultural workers (Livingston, Moore, and Oldfather 1973: 240-241, 244). As a result, labor opportunities in Brazil became extremely attractive. Moreover, in 1907 the U.S. created the Gentleman's Agreement Act in which "Japan promised to discontinue most Japanese immigration to the United States and Hawaii" (Perez 1998: 125). The result: Japanese immigrants moved south to Brazil as a place to settle and find jobs. Thus, it is evident that Japanese immigration to Brazil in this early stage primarily resulted from economic factors.

Between 1908 and 1924--what Yamanaka identifies as the second period of Japanese-Brazilian migration--the number of Japanese immigrants in Brazil reached up to 35,000; subsequently, many of these immigrants planned to stay temporarily, expecting to acquire money and then return to Japan in a short time (Baxter and Krulfeld 1997: 14). From 1925 to 1941, leading right up to the end of World War II, over 120,000 additional immigrants arrived in Brazil, mainly as a result of "a national policy" by the Japanese government, which "promote[d] emigration to Brazil" (15). Economic hardships and "unrest" in Japan during the 30's explain why the government supported Japanese emigration: manufacturing industries could only

employ a fraction of the growing population, and job opportunities were even more scarce with the increasing use of machinery in the industrial sector (Totman 2000: 374).

Additionally, Japan faced acute overpopulation leading into the 40's. Totman provides astounding statistics to illustrate: in 1914, there were 51 million in Japan, but by 1940 there were over 70 million, a considerable increase (2000: 74). This period constitutes an important episode in the history of Japanese-Brazilian migration; not only did the number of Japanese immigrants in Brazil significantly increase during and following 1925, but also those Japanese who originally planned to return to Brazil after accumulating wealth overseas found that "eventual repatriation became impossible after Japan was defeated in World War II" (Baxter and Krulfeld 1997: 35). In 1945, after the end of World War II, more Japanese migrated to Brazil, primarily as the result "of economic difficulties in war-torn Japan" (Tsuda 2003: 57). Consequently, Brazil became seen as a land of opportunity by the Japanese, a way to escape economic devastation and to make the most of the country's agricultural wealth.

Beginning in the 1980s and continuing to the present day, Japanese-Brazilians have steadily re-migrated into Japan. In the face of a crumbling economy and "prolonged and severe period of crisis," Japanese-Brazilians found the early 1980s prime time for moving to Japan, which was, in contrast, experiencing expansive economic growth (Tsuda 2003: 84-85); this economic growth, accordingly, led to a need for more unskilled labor, which the Japanese hoped to fill with migrant workers (*xi*). While Brazil became "overburdened by foreign debt, hyperinflation, and high underemployment" in the 1980s, Japan offered "an abundance of high-paying factory jobs," further enticing Japanese-Brazilians (back) into Japan (84-85). Japanese immigration policies coincided with this increased entry of Japanese-Brazilian migrants, further encouraging the "return migration."

One such policy was the revision of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Law, a law originally enacted in 1951 that outlined qualifications for residence in Japan in an attempt to (as the title would suggest) control immigration. On June 1st, 1990, the Japanese government adjusted this law in such a way as to encourage more Japanese-Brazilians to re-migrate into the country. The 1990 revision included the following conditions:

1. "Criminal penalties for the recruitment and hiring of unskilled foreign workers"
2. Creation of "a new 'long-term' visa exclusively for descendents (up to the third generation) of Japanese emigrants" (Baxter and Krulfeld 1997:16)

The new visas "granted second (*nisei*) and third (*sansei*) generation Nikkeijin a renewable stay of up to three years with unlimited access to labor markets" (Baxter and Krulfeld 1997: 11); thus, this second revision, in particular, brought a significant number of Japanese descendants back into the country. Presently, the estimated number of Japanese-Brazilians that have returned to Brazil figures somewhere around 280,000, as stated by Tsuda in 2003; this is about one-fifth of the entire Japanese-Brazilian population, which illustrates the significant number of Japanese who have relocated to Brazil over the last century (Tsuda 2003: *x*).

As this overview of economic conditions in Japan and Brazil over the last century demonstrates, labor opportunities and related government encouragement have largely dictated the patterns of Japanese-Brazilian migration. But, as clearly these migrants could have selected other destinations with equally appealing opportunities and incentives, this scenario can only be partially explained by the push-pull theory (Tsuda 2003: 85). The following questions remain unanswered by this theory: why did Japanese-Brazilians specifically choose to migrate to Japan? What other factors besides the economic ones outlined above played into this migration?

Additionally, while the push-pull approach assumes that disadvantaged individuals or groups of a society will most likely migrate (Portes and Borocz 1989: 607), most Japanese-

Brazilian immigrants "are middle class, well educated, and socially integrated in Brazilian society" (Tsuda 2003:58). Since starting out as plantation workers, the Japanese-Brazilians have achieved middle-class status and a majority hold upper-level employment positions in Brazil, and some Brazilians would even consider the Japanese-Brazilians wealthy (Tsuda 2003: 66). Brazilian *nikkeijin* are also highly educated overall, distinguishing themselves in this manner from their Brazilian neighbors (Tsuda 2003: 66). Consequently, the Japanese-Brazilians have emerged as "a socioeconomically privileged positive minority" in Brazil (Tsuda 2003: 67), and not the destitute population that the push-pull approach predicts. Since the push-pull model does not fully describe the case of Brazilian *nikkeijin* immigration—and nor does this case closely fit with the economically-focused push-pull approach—we should examine whether Portes and Borocz's model better explains the determinants behind Japanese-Brazilian migration.

Relationship between Sending and Receiving Countries. Although Portes and Borocz suggest that prior contact between societies usually consists of physical coercion such as colonialism or other forms of exploitation, no such relationship exists between Brazil and Japan. On the contrary, the relationship between the two countries began as the result of an agreement between the Japanese and Brazilian governments regarding the displacement of Japanese agricultural workers, as mentioned in the previous section. The relationship between Japan and Brazil does, however, consist of almost a century of migration, as the following figures illustrate.

Through 1941, nearly 189,000 Japanese migrated to Brazil and took up employment as agricultural workers (Lesser 2003: 5). According to the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Brazil has become home to the "largest ethnic Japanese community overseas" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006). Available data suggest that the number of Japanese-Brazilians in Brazil has risen from 189,000 in 1941 to 1,228,000 as of 2003; in Japan, the population of Japanese-

Brazilians has increased rapidly from fewer than 5,000 to about 290,000 between 1988 and 2006 (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006; Japanese Ministry of Justice 2006; Lesser 2003; Sims 1972; Tsuda 2003). As these numbers indicate, Japanese-Brazilians have actively migrated between Brazil and Japan for nearly a century, explaining why studies of this population refer to their transnational movement as "circular" or "return migration" (Tsuda 2003). Thus, this association grounded in migration provides one example of how the two countries had an established connection before the late 1980's, when Brazilian *nikkeijin* return migration to Japan gained momentum.

Japan-Brazil relations during the last century have also consisted of a series of meetings and discussions, a number of which focus on Japanese-Brazilian populations in the two countries. Aside from relations of an economic nature, representatives of Japan and Brazil have met to discuss a variety of issues, including two recent talks focused on the situation of Japanese-Brazilian immigrants in Japan. In February of 2003, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted a "Symposium on the Brazilian Community in Japan," which involved academics and members of the various ministries, in addition to Brazilian community members and staff from the Brazilian Embassy in Tokyo; this symposium aimed to "exchange of opinions on various issues confronting Brazilian residents in Japan, in terms of work, social security, children's education, immigration control and alien registration" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006).

Additionally, in May of 2005, the Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Katsuyuki Kawai, presented a speech at the "General Assembly of the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas" in Iguacu, Brazil, that focused primarily on Japanese-Brazilian migration; the speech, entitled "Japan's Pororoca: Japanese Migration to Brazil and the Reverse Flow Back to Japan," sought to "introduce [to Brazil] some of Japan's experiences and efforts" with the migration of

Brazilian *nikkeijin* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs). The speech concluded with the declaration that the Japanese and Brazilian governments should work together to ensure a safe and supportive environment for Japanese-Brazilians in Japan, and to avoid "problems in various areas such as education, employment, and cultural succession" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs). As these examples illustrate, Japan and Brazil have both a preexisting and continuing relationship, in which migration plays a significant role; although not founded on one-sided exploitation, Japan-Brazil relations undoubtedly encourage and further spur the migration of Japanese-Brazilians between these two countries.

Economic Inducements. Portes and Borocz also cite economic inducements, such as "labor demand in the wealthier countries," as a means of initiating labor-based migration flows, and argue that, commonly, the objective is to attract labor from neighboring countries (1989: 608). In the case of Japanese-Brazilian migration, significant geographical distance lies between the receiving and sending countries. As will be discussed later in relation to Japan's immigration policy, Japan has a history of encouraging laborers to migrate from neighboring countries, mainly Korea, China, and Vietnam (Weiner 1995: 63); however, in the case of Japanese-Brazilians, distance is less of a concern than is ethnic closeness or similarity. Because Japan wishes to maintain homogeneity, the concern is to find a viable labor source that creates less ethnic and / or cultural tension.

While the case of Japanese-Brazilian migration somewhat diverges from Portes and Borocz's model in the above sense, one can still observe how both the Japanese government and businesses continue to recruit labor by way of economic inducements (1989: 608). One way that Japanese businesses encourage migration is by using labor brokers to seek out employees and accommodate their various needs. In the 1980s and 1990s, Japanese labor brokers actively

sought out Japanese-Brazilians in Brazil by advertisement, both published and non-published; these brokers also provided a variety of services to further draw Brazilian *nikkeijin* workers to Japan:

> Brokers arranged to rent apartments from landlords, to help fill out documents necessary to renew visas, and to look after a multitude of issues that migrants faced in adjusting to work and life in Japan. In order to meet the needs of the workers, brokers generally had on staff at least one Nikkeijin who was conversant in both Japanese and Portuguese. (Roth 2002: 66)

Thus, the combination of settlement assistance—which may include temporary housing provided by employers for foreign workers (Tsuda 2003: 382)— with the incentive of a stronger economy constitutes a primary economic pull influencing Brazilian *nikkeijin* to immigrate (Roth 2002: 66).

Cultural Diffusion. Portes and Borocz argue that consumption patterns in sending societies increasingly resemble consumption from receiving societies (1989: 608), drawing potential migrants closer to the culture of receiving society. As is generally the case worldwide with diasporic communities, consumption of Japanese products does occur in Brazil; however, I argue that, in this case, the Japanese-Brazilians' persisting "Japanese heritage and upbringing" (Tsuda 2003: 65) is more indicative of cultural diffusion than their patterns of consumption.

Although the Japanese-Brazilians in Brazil have become "culturally Brazilian" in many ways, they maintain a sense of their Japanese heritage and ethnicity, both as it gets passed down by older generations and as Brazilians reinforce their "Japaneseness" (Tsuda 2003: 65). At home, Japanese-Brazilians experience a unique environment where Japanese culture and behavior are "actively developed and maintained through family socialization processes and the internal dynamics of the ethnic community"; with parents or grandparents who are first-generation Japanese immigrants, "many nikkeijin children feel considerable pressure from their parents to

learn Japanese and to behave in certain ways worthy of the Japanese" (Tsuda 2003: 78). Thus, Japanese culture becomes diffused in this manner through a process of family acculturation; while many Japanese-Brazilian children grow up exclusively in Brazil, their elders may still introduce them to their cultural heritage, thereby initiating a connection with Japan.

In the public sphere, Brazilian *nikkeijin* develop their Japanese cultural ties by recreating "ethnic traditions such as festivals, rituals, food, music, and dress"; these events allow Japanese-Brazilians to "symbolically reenact and reconstruct their distinctive cultural heritage and traditions" (Tsuda 2003: 79-80). Brazilians reinforce the Japanese-Brazilians' distinct culture by using the term "japonês" to continually "remind…them of their Japanese descent and ancestral roots" (Tsuda 2003: 63). Part of the reason Japanese-Brazilians are able to perpetuate their "Japaneseness" in Brazil is on account of being viewed as a "positive minority," whose "ethnic qualities are favorably regarded in Brazilian society"; thus, Japanese-Brazilians feel encouraged in maintaining and adopting "Japaneseness," as opposed to feeling that this is something they must abandon in a primarily Brazilian society (Tsuda 2003: 65-6).

This kind of cultural diffusion—Japanese culture adopted by Japanese-Brazilians as a result of family acculturation and a society that supports "Japaneseness"—presents one way of explaining Japanese-Brazilian migration flows to Japan. McNichol (2003) proposes that Japan has been most successful at attracting immigrants well acquainted with the Japanese system, mainly in terms of business and schooling; thus, a "Japanese connection" or familiarity with the culture may in fact provide a reason for migration. Moreover, the sentiment held by "a number of Japanese Brazilians [who] feel they are culturally similar to the Japanese" (Tsuda 2003: 82) may facilitate the migration and settlement process.

Japanese Immigration Policy. In addition to the determinants identified by Portes and Borocz, I argue that Japan's immigration policy is a major influence on Japanese-Brazilian migration. Japan's primary position on immigration is to limit the entry of foreigners, particularly those without skills benefitting the labor market; additionally, the policy aims to "keep all immigration purely temporary" (Solinger 1999: 461). The most recent "Basic Plan for Immigration Control" released by the Ministry of Justice maintains this emphasis on the admission of skilled workers, stating that "Japan has adopted a basic policy to openly accept foreign workers in professional or technical fields." The policy continues, "it is therefore necessary to more openly accept foreign nationals who are welcome in Japanese society," meaning those who are "highly-skilled…[and] who have world-class specialized knowledge or technical skills" and therefore the ability to "vitalize Japan's economy and society" ("Basic Plan" 2006). The policy is somewhat vague in defining highly-skilled, simply declaring that workers should possess skills "desirable from the viewpoint of international recruitment competition" ("Basic Plan" 2006); however, McNichol provides a more specific explanation, determining that "to come to Japan, job-seekers need high-level university qualifications from their own country or 10 years experience in their field" (2003).

Initially, Japan resisted importing labor, and instead urged businesses seeking inexpensive, low-skill labor to relocate abroad (Weiner 1995: 62). Unlike European countries, which, after the Second World War, generally supported immigration as a means to boost the economy, "Japan gave a higher priority…to cultural and social factors in determining how to satisfy a structural economic need"; thus, Japan's exclusive and homogeneous self-image dictated the government's reluctance to welcome immigrants to the extent of European countries (Weiner 1995: 62). As labor shortages increased the need for workers, however, the country was

forced to admit more migrants starting in the mid-1970's, allowing entry to newcomers from nearby Korea, China, and Vietnam; the government generally treated these immigrants as "guest workers" and therefore little to no consideration was given to their integration into Japanese society, as their stay was deemed only temporary, in accordance with Japan's primary position on immigration (Weiner 1995: 63).

As a result of pressure from both businesses and the various government ministries representing them (Tsuda 2003: 92), and arising out of apprehension for potential tension between nationals and temporary migrant communities (Yamanaka 1993: 72), the Japanese government modified the immigration policy in June of 1990 with the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, which established a more open policy towards those of Japanese ethnicity, particularly the sizable population of Japanese descendants residing in Brazil (Tsuda 1998: 319). These policy changes included the following three developments: 1) the addition of "ten residence categories," thereby adding to the ways in which "foreigners could enter and remain in Japan legally," 2) the simplification of "visa application procedures," and 3) the institution of "criminal penalties for the recruitment and hiring of illegal unskilled foreign workers" (Yamanaka 1993: 76).

The revised policy sought to maintain restrictions on unskilled workers whilst establishing other measures to encourage and simplify the immigration of *nikkeijin*, or foreigners of Japanese descent. Because the government believed that *nikkeijin* and Japanese share a common culture, they held that an open policy towards this group would not interrupt the homogeneity present in Japanese society, and thus deemed these modifications acceptable and consistent with national ideology and their original policy (Tsuda 2003: 91-3). By attaching ethnic and ideological significance, the Japanese government further validated these adjustments;

as Tsuda asserts, the government concealed policy revisions (which were actually economic in nature) "as an opportunity provided by the benevolence of the Japanese government for those of Japanese descent born abroad to explore their ethnic heritage and visit their ancestral homeland" (1999a: 11-2). Prompted by a need for foreign workers to fill jobs undesired by Japanese nationals, the government thus emphasized ethnicity as a justification for the increased immigration of Brazilian *nikkeijin*.

In specifically recruiting and encouraging Japanese-Brazilians to migrate to Japan, the immigration policy, which allows these immigrants to "qualify for special labor visas" (Lesser 2003: 1) and permits entry of the unskilled under the guise of ethnic connections (Tsuda 1999a: 11-2), constitutes a key factor motivating the immigration of Japanese-Brazilians to Japan. Using ethnicity as justification, the government saw Japanese-Brazilians as a viable solution to their labor shortage dilemma; however, this emphasis on ethnicity has resulted in mixed consequences for the Brazilian *nikkeijin's* settlement in Japan.

Reception / Incorporation of Japanese-Brazilian Immigrants in Japan

Using Portes and Borocz's "contexts of reception" (1989: 618) as a point of reference for evaluating the incorporation of Brazilian *nikkeijin* immigrants in Japanese society, we can observe both positive and negative repercussions of Japan's immigration policy on the settlement of this migrant group. The demand for Japanese-Brazilians as foreign workers, particularly its role as a primary rationale for the development of Japan's immigration policy, would seem to constitute a high level of receptivity, considering the relatively open admittance of Japanese-Brazilians for the purpose of meeting these labor market demands. The following section looks at the situation of Brazilian *nikkeijin* in government policy, public opinion, and ethnic communities, concluding that the Japanese-Brazilians do not encounter (exclusively) any of the

three levels of receptivity, but aspects of each of the three depending on if one examines government, public / societal, or economic reception.

Government Policy. The 1990 policy changes that instituted quotas specifically favoring Japanese descendents suggest that the Japanese government does take an interest in the immigration of Japanese-Brazilians, which would indicate high-level receptivity; however, because Japanese-Brazilians do not "receive active legal as well as material assistance from the host [government]," this is not a case of advantaged reception (Portes and Borocz 1989: 619). Moreover, despite a policy that gives preference to the entry of *nikkeijin*, these immigrants still face legal and political restrictions—including restricted political participation and limited protection in the workplace (Fujii 2004)—since the government recognizes them as foreigners.

Although Japan's policy never intended to encourage permanent settlement (Kashiwazaki and Akaha 2002), as the emphasis on temporary migration in this policy would suggest, the fact that immigrants have started staying on a more long-term basis has forced policy makers to create new laws in response to a growing population of foreigners. Additionally, as more immigrants are settling down in Japan, the issue of nationality becomes a more prominent concern, especially since Japanese nationality has been traditionally hard to obtain and has typically discouraged long-term residence of foreigners (Kashiwazaki and Akaha 2002). Defining citizenship in terms of *jus sanguinis*, or blood lineage, has placed citizenship restrictions on a majority of immigrants, barring them from becoming Japanese by nationality, and, furthermore, has maintained a certain level of homogeneity among Japanese nationals (Weiner 1995: 68-9).

According to Taguchi, considering Japanese society as homogeneous has lead to the creation of a "chauvinistic" immigration policy, as indicated by the Immigration Bureau's

labeling of foreigners as "aliens," or "Non-Japanese"; he explains that the Japanese will consider a foreigner an alien indefinitely, unless the foreigner completely relinquishes his or her ethnicity and becomes naturalized as Japanese (1984: 699). Even when legally recognized, Taguchi points out in the case of Korean and Chinese immigrants, these foreigners may still lack social recognition and the ability to participate in and integrate into Japanese society (1984: 702-3). Furthermore, the "Basic Plan" reinforces the dichotomy of foreigner (or alien) and national by addressing community as the *co-existence* of two groups (Tai 2004: 373). Therefore, the government's strict adherence to *jus sanguinis* and reluctance to recognize foreigners as Japanese citizens demonstrate a relatively low-level of reception in terms of government policy.

Public Opinion. Public opinion of Japanese-Brazilian immigrants ranges from the positive to the negative (Tsuda 2003), and yet is rarely neutral; thus, in this area we see another mix of the three levels of receptivity. The Japanese-Brazilians' cultural and ethnic make-up, the type of labor they perform, and their lifestyle as a community combine to shape Japanese perceptions of these migrants as a group. For one, the government's use of ethnicity to account for extending a more open policy towards Japanese-Brazilians has produced confusion over the identity of these migrants; in part due to the expectation that Japanese-Brazilians possess a shared ethnicity with the Japanese, an assumption of "Japaneseness" has emerged. After Brazilian *nikkeijin* began immigrating, the Japanese discovered that, contrary to the previous assumptions, these migrants are not the "descendants with presumed cultural commonalities" (Tsuda 2003: 91) that they expected.

As Takeyuki Tsuda describes, Japanese-Brazilians "become an ethnic minority" when they come to Japan "because they are seen as…culturally 'Brazilian'" (2003: 103). The Japanese perceive these immigrants as possessing a certain "Brazilianness," as opposed to the

case in Brazil, where the Japanese-Brazilians' distinctions are viewed as Japanese (2003: 158). In Japan, where there exists a more unfavorable opinion of Brazilians as "unprogressive" and of "low[er] socioeconomic status" (Sekiguchi 2002: 204), such labeling of Japanese-Brazilians as more Brazilian than Japanese leads to certain negative feelings towards these migrants. As nationals discover this population does indeed differ ethnically and culturally, the result is that Japanese are disappointed by the Brazilian *nikkeijin*'s lack of "Japaneseness" and further scorn the immigrants' "cultural differences" (Tsuda 2003: 115-188), including considering Japanese-Brazilians as "ex-Japanese" (Sekiguchi 2002: 198) and those whose ancestors failed in Japan and were therefore forced to emigrate (Tsuda 2003: 105-115).

Additionally, there are certain established opinions of foreign workers that influence how the dominant society perceives Brazilian *nikkeijin*; one of these is a general idea among Japanese workers and managers is that migrant workers do not have the same capabilities as Japanese but should nevertheless perform at the same level (Roth 2002: 48). One main difference between Japanese and Brazilian *nikkeijin* workers is the language barrier, which leads to obstacles for foreign workers; Tsuda argues that long hours at the factory combined with living "almost exclusively in a cohesive and enclaved social network of nikkeijin relatives and acquaintances" prevent Japanese-Brazilians from fully learning Japanese and attaining higher employment status (2003: 273). Further, since many foreign workers do not possess citizenship and are not protected as such in the constitution, factory managers do not view immigrants as deserving of protection and as a result, Japanese-Brazilians face unequal treatment and discrimination in the workplace (Roth 2002: 65).

An additional factor influencing Japanese perceptions and public opinion of Japanese-Brazilian immigrants is the type of labor that these newcomers perform. A major discrepancy

between jobs held by the two groups is that the *nikkeijin* hold more unpleasant and dangerous jobs (McNicol 2003). Labor brokers called *empreiteiras* employ a number of Japanese-Brazilians specifically for what is referred to as a "3-K" job, one that is *kitsui*, *kiken*, and *kitanai* (in English they are the three D's: difficult, dangerous, and dirty); these jobs involve a high level of manual labor and risk-exposure, usually in factories (Linger 2002: 50-51), and are precisely the ones shunned by native Japanese whose (generally) higher education levels allow them to search for other employment opportunities ("Japan Watch"). Therefore, since Japanese companies specifically recruit Brazilian *nikkeijin* to fill "3 K" jobs, Japanese-Brazilians also become disdained on account of the labor they perform and their status as foreign workers.

Ethnic community. A fourth aspect of receptivity considered by Portes and Borocz is ethnic community, which also serves as another factor that shapes public opinion for the case of Brazilian *nikkeijin*. In terms of housing, Japanese-Brazilian residences are generally distinct from their Japanese neighbors, both with respect to physical space and atmosphere; these differences cause tensions that further segregate Japanese-Brazilians and Japanese locals, as Kurumi Tsuzuki (2000) explains in her study of a housing complex shared by both foreigners and Japanese nationals. As Tsuzuki describes, Japanese locals complain that their *nikkeijin* neighbors are noisy, dirty, and disruptive, and partake in vandalism and theft, leading to antagonism between the two groups (2000: 330-331). Thus, conflict emerges not only in response to a difference of lifestyles—in this case, a struggle over cleanliness, orderliness, and noise-level—but also as these ways of living clash and create greater tension and distance between the two groups.

Aside from a difference in behavior, segregation also occurs physically when the two groups live in distinct neighborhoods. Largely because labor brokers oftentimes provide housing for recruited workers, Japanese-Brazilians tend to live in designated communities that are

somewhat separated from their Japanese co-workers; consequently, these neighborhoods become strongly "Brazilianized," complete with Brazilian grocery stores and restaurants (Tsuda 2003: 231-232). These "Brazilianized" communities attract negative attention from Japanese neighbors, who associate Japanese-Brazilians and "Brazilianness" with an image of Brazil as poor and underdeveloped; moreover, the Japanese media also portray images that perpetuate negative perceptions in the dominant society (Tsuda 2003: 193-194). While the Japanese-Brazilian ethnic communities in Japan continue to grow and strengthen, their distinction as Brazilian in combination with Japanese opinions of Brazil as "poor and low class" (Tsuda 2003: 193) lead to a somewhat low level of reception by the dominant Japanese society.

Conclusion

Using the push-pull theory of migration, one can observe the primary economic factors behind Japanese-Brazilian immigration to Japan; however, as both Portes and Borocz (1989) and the case of Japanese-Brazilians illustrate, the push-pull approach is not sufficient for explaining the variety of reasons (or determinants) for this pattern of migration. Portes and Borocz suggest an alternative approach that looks at preexisting relationships between the receiving and sending countries, economic inducements, and cultural diffusion (1989: 608). In the specific instance of Brazilian *nikkeijin*, we observe a relationship between Japan and Brazil that began with a focus on migration as a means for meeting labor needs (Lesser 2003: 5). This relationship persists today for mainly the same reason, although the direction of migration has generally reversed; as a result, meetings between Japan and Brazil serve to strengthen this relationship and develop ways to better support the movement of Japanese-Brazilians between the two countries. Economic inducements in the form of labor brokers who provide services for facilitating the entrance and settlement of Japanese-Brazilians as foreign workers further encourage their

immigration. By actively recruiting Japanese-Brazilians and offering services such as housing placement and travel arrangements (Roth 2002: 66), labor brokers present incentives for Brazilian *nikkeijin* to come to Japan. Finally, cultural diffusion—less in terms of consumption and more in regards to the Japanese-Brazilians' persisting identification with their Japanese ethnicity and heritage—serves as a crucial link providing yet another rationale for immigration.

In addition to Portes and Borocz's determinants, I add that—particularly in the case of Japanese-Brazilians—immigration policy serves as a primary pull factor. In order to bring in foreign labor and still maintain racial and ethnic homogeneity, Japanese policy makers created an immigration policy that welcomed the entry of Japanese descendants whilst still denying the immigration of many other foreigners (Tsuda 1998: 319); as a result, this policy considerably eased the immigration of Japanese-Brazilians and specifically targeted them for immigration. With this preferential treatment—including "special labor visas" (Lesser 2003: 1) and an emphasis on welcoming Brazilian *nikkeijin* for the purpose of visiting their ancestors' homeland (Tsuda 1999a: 11-2)—the Japanese government was able to attract Japanese-Brazilian immigrants and motivate their migration to Japan.

This policy had noticeable effects on the Japanese-Brazilians' incorporation, leading to low levels of receptivity with regards to government policy and public opinion. Certainly the Japanese government takes a good deal of interest in this population, as their immigration both meets demands for labor and, more than most immigrant groups, maintains the homogeneity of Japanese society (Tsuda 2003). At the same time, some still argue that the government does not facilitate the settlement of these immigrants as this group still faces legal and political restrictions on account of nationality or restricted citizenship (Taguchi 1984; Tai 2004). Japanese-Brazilians also meet with mixed treatment in terms of public opinion. As laborers, the

host society generally views Brazilian *nikkeijin* as an important asset to the economy; however, simultaneously, they are arguably seen as less-skilled and disdainful on account of the type of work the perform (Kono 1991; Linger 2002). As an ethnic community, the Japanese-Brazilians are perceived as unruly and unclean, and resulting tensions have further segregated them from their Japanese neighbors (Tsuzuki 2000). Segregation also exists in cases where Japanese-Brazilians live in exclusive, "Brazilianized" neighborhoods; as Tsuda explains, this can lead to further separation between Japanese-Brazilians and the dominant society (Tsuda 2003).

Observing the incorporation of Japanese-Brazilians in Japan via Portes and Borocz's contexts of reception may help future researchers determine how to better incorporate Brazilian *nikkeijin* into Japanese society; it may also lead to questioning the ramifications of immigration policy and how the government can avoid creating a policy that supports unfavorable conditions for immigrants in the host country. An examination of the push-pull approach and Portes and Borocz's alternatives reveals how the Japanese-Brazilian case illuminates new ways of comprehending preexisting models of migration. Japan's need for laborers to fill "3 K" jobs and desire to maintain homogeneity led to an immigration policy favorable to immigrants of Japanese descent. In doing so, the policy perpetuated a false identity of "Japaneseness" for Japanese-Brazilians, but once in the country, neither the dominant society nor the Japanese government recognized Brazilian *nikkeijin* as Japanese. This case therefore illuminates the rationale behind immigration policy and the effects policy can have on a targeted migrant population.

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