TURNING JAPANESE:
HOW WILL THE CONCEPT OF JAPANESE IDENTITY SHIFT TO ACCOMMODATE THE
COUNTRY'S GROWING NEED FOR FOREIGN WORKERS?

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Introduction: Karaoke and Connections

On one of my last nights in Kyoto in August of 2011, I visited a karaoke box with three fellow study abroad students, and was informed by the man in charge of the front desk that there were no spaces open. In front of us, there were a number of visibly empty rooms (this karaoke box did not take reservations). One of my friends, an Australian, asked him, in polite, nearly fluent Japanese, why we would not possibly be able to rent one of the rooms we could quite easily recognize as vacant.

The man looked flustered; it was unclear whether he was more surprised by my friend's ability to speak Japanese coherently or embarrassed that his thinly veiled attempt to turn us away had been so easily exposed. After a moment of what appeared to be a fierce internal struggle, the man showed us to one of the empty rooms, and gave us the standard, scripted, and extremely polite explanation that we would be able to stay until the standard closing time, at which point we should be careful not to forget any of our belongings.

This experience, while ultimately inconsequential, was the first and only time I ever felt as if I had encountered outright discrimination in Japan. I had grown accustomed to being stared at on trains, having my appearance discussed openly under the assumption that I did not speak Japanese, and hearing middle school children shout, "Hello!" in a Japanese accent as I rode by them on my bicycle. Yet unlike these relatively harmless and well-meaning encounters, my experience at the karaoke box meant that based on the way I looked, I might have been refused at a business, albeit one that did not have a profound effect on my livelihood.

At around the same time that the karaoke incident occurred, I remember hearing the news that one of my Japanese friends had just acquired Japanese citizenship. His family has been living in Japan since his great grandparents' generation, and while his great grandparents may

have spoken Korean, his only language is Japanese (along with some broken English), his name is Japanese, and until he casually mentioned that he was, in fact, Zainichi (resident) Korean, I was not aware that he was anything other than what I thought of as "Japanese." He is, however, a member of a part of Japanese society that faces discrimination on a regular basis.

My experience as a foreigner in Japan, along with my observation of Japanese society's relationship with existing minority groups, developed ties with some of my formal studies of Japanese society. As I read article after article on the growing labor shortage presented by Japan's low-birthrate and aging population, I began to wonder why Japan had not yet pursued an aggressive campaign to increase the number of educated foreigners in its workforce. It became clear to me that this lack of decisive policymaking likely had something to do with Japanese identity and Japan's apparent reluctance to acknowledge its multicultural past and present; if Japan avoided admitting to multiculturalism in the past and at present, it seemed unlikely that it would encourage a multicultural, multiracial future.

My research explores the question of *how Japanese identity will shift to accommodate the country's growing need for foreign workers*. I believe that whether Japanese identity expands to form a more inclusive and less racially determined definition of what it means to be Japanese, or reacts to a growing population of non-Japanese with increased nationalism and xenophobia, will shape Japanese society and determine to a great extent the future of the Japanese economy. In my mind, the connection between the definition of Japanese identity and Japan's labor shortage will be a vital aspect of Japan's future. My research focuses on the policies facing two separate ethnic minorities in Japan: Zainichi Koreans and Nikkei Brazilian Japanese. If what Zainichi Koreans lack, despite possibly being more culturally Japanese than Korean, are racial ties to Japan, Brazilian Japanese represent the reverse situation. A comparison between these two

groups thus provides a useful way in which to approach Japanese society's idea of what constitutes "being Japanese."

Framing the Labor Shortage

My research into Japanese identity and minorities is relevant in the context of Japan's mounting labor shortage. I argue that it will be vital to the Japanese economy that Japanese society begins to change its views of "Japaneseness" in favor of an identity that is defined not on the basis of race, but instead in a way that is more inclusive to a growing population of immigrants.

A number of scholars have discussed the issue of immigration as a potential solution to Japan's labor shortage. Florian Coulmas' book, *Population Decline and Ageing in Japan – The Social Consequences*, demonstrates the necessity for Japan to accept a larger number of immigrants. Coulmas describes the recent history of Japan's immigration policies, stating:

> The implicit assumption underlying immigration in Japan has always been that undesirable immigrants must be kept out and that, to the extent that immigration is allowed, it benefits the immigrants, who would earn lower wages (if any) in their home countries. It also benefits the low-wage countries themselves, because migrant workers send remittances back home, thus giving a boost to their economies.[1]

However, what Japan needs to do, Coulmas argues, is to concern itself not with how many foreigners it must let in, but rather with whether the country will be able to get the number and type of immigrants needed to combat the impending labor crisis. For this to occur, Japan also must acknowledge that allowing more immigrants into the country will not only benefit the immigrants, but also Japan. Indeed, based on the figures Coulmas presents, it appears that Japan will not only benefit economically from an increased number of immigrants, but will in fact require it. Citing a United Nations study, Coulmas asserts that Japan would have had to accept

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[1] Florian Coulmas, *Population Decline and Ageing in Japan: The Social Consequences* (Florence: Routledge, 2007) 119.

343,000 immigrants ever year starting in 2000 and continuing until 2050 to avoid serious

economic problems. He continues:

> Even more dramatically, for a decline of the working population to be prevented, as many
> as 647,000 migrant workers would be needed annually. Such a massive number of
> immigrants would mean that by 2050 a full third of the Japanese population would be
> foreign born or descendents of immigrants.[2]

Coulmas acknowledges that the above goals are unlikely to be realized in reality, yet the

underlying message is unavoidable: Japan must reform its immigration policies to accommodate

higher numbers of foreign workers for the sake of its own economy and society.

In an article titled "Policy problems relating to labour migration control in Japan,"

Hiroaki Miyoshi discusses the primary problems in Japan's immigration policy with regard to

labor. One of the issues he describes is the 10 years Japan requires of foreigners to acquire

permanent residence; because of this requirement, as he states, "it is very difficult for foreigners

to make a life plan, and for this reason, Japan probably looks less attractive than other

countries."[3] Miyoshi concludes that because immigrants, like the Japanese, will eventually age,

a single wave of increased immigration, while immediately beneficial, will not be a sufficient

long-term resolution to Japan's problematic aging population; this assertion seems, however, to

be a rejection of the idea that non-Japanese could eventually become a permanent, visible part of

Japanese society, rather than simply working in Japan temporarily.

In contrast to Miyoshi's dismissal of immigration as a permanent solution, Ceri Peach

suggests in her work, "Contrasts in economic growth and immigration policy," that Japan may

have to make a difficult choice in expanding its work force. She begs the question, "Could it be

that, in the end, Japanese society will have to choose between advancing the role of women or

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[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Hiroaki Miyoshi, "Policy problems relating to labour migration control in Japan," *Global
Japan*, ed. Roger Goodman, et al. (New York: Routledge, 2003) 61.

accepting the immigration of foreigners?"[4] I would argue that allowing women a more active

role in the labor force, through policies of increased childcare support, would indeed benefit

Japan in a number of ways, but based on the sheer number of workers Japan is likely to require

in coming years, the most effective countermeasure will be immigration reform.

      Much of the existing English-language scholarship regarding Japan's labor shortage

concludes that immigration is among the most viable solutions. In all likelihood, serious reform

of the Japanese government's policies would be required to encourage such immigration. In

order to investigate the potential for immigration reform, this research will examine government

policies toward two minority groups in particular.

Zainichi Koreans

My friend, whom I discussed earlier in this introduction, while culturally and linguistically

indistinguishable from the rest of the Japanese population, belongs to one of several minority

groups in Japan, the Zainichi Koreans. Zainichi Koreans are one of the most populous minorities

in Japan, numbering over 598,687 as of 2004 and making up about 26% of the non-Japanese

population, although due to assimilation issues such as name-changing, the true number is likely

to be much larger.[5] This group, brought to Japan largely during Japan's colonization of Korea in

the early 1900s, continues to be discriminated against in Japanese society today, despite the fact

that many are third- and fourth-generation immigrants, some identifying primarily with Japanese,

rather than Korean, culture (like my friend in Kyoto), and some even with Japanese names. It is

important to note, however, that Zainichi Koreans are not a homogenous group in and of

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[4] Ceri Peach, "Contrasts in economic growth and immigration policy," *Global Japan*, ed. Roger Goodman, et al. (New York: Routledge, 2003) 36.
[5] David Chapman, *Zainichi Korean Identity and Ethnicity* (New York: Routledge, 2008) 3.

themselves; there are distinctions along lines of affiliation with North and South Korea, choosing whether or not to naturalize, and the degree to which Korean culture is actively maintained, which come together to complicate the hazy notion of Zainichi identity.

Because of their cultural and linguistic identification with Japan, one might expect Zainichi Koreans born and raised in Japan to be accepted by Japanese society, yet they are not. In combination with discrimination in everyday life, including housing and marriage, isolated incidents of far-right, nationalist xenophobia have arisen in recent years.

Existing literature reveals a range of interpretations of the Zainichi situation. In *Zainichi Korean Identity and Ethnicity*, David Chapman discusses the various policies the Japanese government has taken with regard to Zainichi Koreans. He ends his discussion with a chapter about "the fourth choice," which refers to a form of Zainichi Korean identity that adds to the "Third Way" (a Zainichi identity shaped by being neither Japanese nor Korean, but a third form of identity) a dimension of "multi-cultural coexistence." The "fourth choice" would involve the right to Japanese citizenship without "association with assimilation;"[6] in other words, the possibility of being both Korean and a Japanese citizen simultaneously.

George Hicks argues in his book, *Japan's Hidden Apartheid*, for the use of a "Korean Japanese" identity, stating, "A symbolic but meaningful improvement would be made if the Korean community in Japan were described as Korean Japanese. Only when the Koreans are accepted as Japanese, as a special type of Japanese, will the path be cleared for a resolution to this problem [the problem of housing, marriage, and employment discrimination]."[7] This new

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[6] *Ibid* 115.
[7] George Hicks, *Japan's Hidden Apartheid: The Korean Minority and the Japanese* (Brookfield: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1998) 165.

definition of identity will only be possible should Japanese society's concept of Japaneseness change drastically to allow the existence of "non-Japanese Japanese."

Nikkei Brazilian Japanese

In the face of labor shortages in 1990, Japan attempted to remedy the problem by making an exception to its stringent immigration laws. The government encouraged Brazilian Japanese, or *Nikkei Burajirujin* (second-generation Brazilians), as they are referred to in Japanese, to come to Japan to work. As Onishi states, "With their Japanese roots, names and faces, these children and grandchildren of Japanese emigrants to Brazil would fit more easily in a society fiercely closed to outsiders, or so the reasoning went."[8]

What is fascinating about this legislation is that the reasoning behind the exception to the immigration law seems to have been primarily, if not solely, based on race. Many of the Brazilian Japanese were encouraged to enter Japan had little to no knowledge of Japanese culture or language, yet were nonetheless accepted by the Japanese government because of their ancestry, unlike many Zainichi Koreans whose families have lived in Japan for generations.

Nikkei Brazilians represent one of Japan's most recent major immigrant populations, with numbers estimated around 366,000, less than one percent of the total population of Japan.[9] However, the number of these immigrants has been steadily increasing since the 1990s, when, as described above, Japan introduced legislation that made an exception to its stringent immigration laws in favor of the descendants of Japanese emigrants who moved to Brazil in the early 20th century.

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[8] Onishi, "An Enclave of Brazilians Is Testing Insular Japan."
[9] Hiroko Tabuchi, "Japan Pays Foreign Workers to Go Home." *New York Times,* April 22, 2009.

This particular population of minorities provides an interesting counterpoint to the experience of Zainichi Koreans in Japan in that Brazilian Japanese were specifically encouraged to return to Japan primarily, if not solely, on the basis of their race, with no apparent importance placed on their familiarity with Japanese language or culture. Brazilian Japanese thus hold the racial ties to Japan that Zainichi Koreans lack.

In his book, *Brokered Homeland*, Joshua Hotaka Roth presents an anthropological analysis of the experience of individual Brazilian Japanese, particularly in the context of those working in automotive plants in Hamamatsu, an industrial city in which in 1997 90% of foreign residents, primarily Brazilian Japanese, worked in manufacturing.[10] He observed individuals in these workplaces and in their communities, ending with a chapter about an event he witnessed in Hamamatsu. According to him, this indicated the potential for a successful incorporation of Brazilian tradition into a traditional Japanese kite festival, and Roth concluded that the difficulties encountered by Brazilian Japanese and other foreigners in being incorporated into Japanese society may lie not in a prejudice against foreigners inherent to Japanese culture, but rather in problems in Japan's political and economic institutions. In reference to these problems, he explains:

> Without membership within local communities, migrants may be excluded from health insurance, due process under law, and other rights taken for granted by citizens of many nation-states… Even if governments are unable to control immigration completely, they have maintained stringent policies restricting the kinds of work migrants can perform, their length of stay, and the possibility of naturalization. In many ways, these policies determine the conditions under which migrant groups live and work.[11]

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[10] Joshua Hotaka Roth, *Brokered Homeland: Japanese Brazilian Migrants in Japan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002) 10-11.
[11] *Ibid* 139.

While the policies of governments certainly affect the working and living conditions of Brazilian Japanese and other immigrant groups, authors like Yamanaka seem to suggest that a bias that exists in Japanese culture plays a greater role than Roth seems prepared to admit.

Japanese Identity

As I explained previously, my research is interested in definitions of Japanese identity and whether changes can be observed in it recently to suggest that it may be moving away from a racial definition and toward a more inclusive form of identity that could foster what John Lie describes as a "hyphenated identity" among a growing immigrant population in Japan.[12] This sort of identity, though commonplace in the United States (e.g., Chinese-American, Mexican-American), is not widely understood in Japan.[13]

In *Nationalisms of Japan*, Brian McVeigh categorizes various forms of nationalism found in Japanese society, including cultural, economic, and educational nationalism, and argues, "The question is not whether Japan's nationalisms will disappear, but how, by an inherently recurrent renovationism, they will adapt and what they will adopt in order to survive."[14] Despite the fact that Japanese nationalism has strong ties to race, McVeigh argues:

> Because Japaneseness shapes so many domains and it is not always clear whether being Japanese is political, ethnic, or racial, one's commitment to the project of national identity is frequently interrogated on an everyday basis. One must not necessarily prove one's Japaneseness in explicit potential terms, but one must demonstrate at the ordinary, mundane level – preparing for exams, workplace, gender-related behavior, manners – one's loyalty to a vague but demanding "national imaginary."[15]

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[12] John Lie, "Ordinary (Korean) Japanese," *Koreans in Japan: Critical Voices from the Margin*, ed. S. Ryang (New York: Routledge, 2000) 197-207.
[13] Hicks, *Japan's Hidden Apartheid* 165.
[14] Brian J. McVeigh, *Nationalisms of Japan: Managing and Mystifying Identity* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004) 283.
[15] *Ibid* 272.

McVeigh's description of Japanese identity – that is, an identity focused on the Japaneseness of one's daily activities – is echoed in Roth's writings on Brazilian Japanese in the workplace. As he puts it, "Shimada and Masaru [Japanese factory workers] both felt that foreigners should be held to the same standards as Japanese workers and that no one should be exempted from the demands of 'Japanese Rules.'"[16] When discussing his own fieldwork, Roth observes that in Japan, his own level of Japanese identity (his mother is Japanese) was often judged on the basis of the mundane. He states, "It was through reciprocating gifts, sending cards, or even just relishing Japanese food when dining together that some Japanese would note appreciatively that 'after all, your mother is Japanese'…"[17]

The importance placed on the mundane in Japanese identity would suggest that it is possible for anyone to become Japanese so long as one can engage in such activities in the same way as the Japanese, but as shown by the experience of Zainichi Koreans, identifying with Japanese culture is not enough to make one "truly Japanese." Moreover, while an appreciation of and, to some extent, an adoption of Japanese culture will be imperative for the successful integration of immigrant communities into Japanese society, complete assimilation is not only impossible, but also defeats the purpose of multiculturalism.

John Lie indicates that perhaps the only way to begin to resolve the ethnic issues of Japan will be to combat the notion of monoethnic ideology. As he puts it:

> Japan has always been multiethnic. Ethnic diversity began neither with the coming of the new foreign workers in the 1980s, nor with the influx of colonial subjects in the early twentieth century, nor even with the arrival of *toraijin* from the Korean peninsula over a millennium ago. Japanese history and multiethnic Japan are coeval; one cannot speak of Japan without speaking of ethnic diversity. Nonetheless, many Japanese continue to believe that they live in a monoethnic society. For them, Ainu, Okinawans, Burakumin, Koreans, Chinese, and others are about to disappear, are really Japanese, or are foreigners.

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[16] Roth, *Brokered Homeland* 49.

[17] *Ibid* 15.

> Non-Japanese Japanese are not granted their place in Japanese society, either in the present or in the past, and they face disadvantages and discrimination in seeking jobs or spouses. Because they don't exist, they can't rectify their place in Japanese society.[18]

The myth of Japanese homogeneity has been central to Japanese national identity since the Second World War, and indeed would appear to contribute to Japanese society's inability to adapt to the idea of a "hyphenated" identity.[19] Perhaps by beginning to view identity in a more flexible way, Japanese society will come to accept the idea of Korean Japanese or Brazilian Japanese in a way that does not categorize these groups as "foreigners." In "Multiethnic Japan and Nihonjin," Eika Tai argues along a similar line, stating, "Only by dissecting the category of 'Nihonjin' [Japanese], I argue, can we effectively challenge both the old ideology of monoethnicity and the new tide of nationalism."[20]

Mark Hudson and Mami Aoyama's study of Japanese university students in "Views of Ethnic Identity Amongst Undergraduate Students in Hokkaido" suggests that, indeed, especially among the younger generation of Japanese, the concept of identity may be in the process of shifting. The authors suggest that based on the fluidity of the concept of ethnic identity and despite the widely believed myth of Japanese homogeneity, "…the results of the surveys we conducted suggest that this Japanese nationality goes hand-in-hand with quite diverse views of individual ethnicity."[21]

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[18] John Lie, *Multiethnic Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001) 171.
[19] Mark J. Hudson and Mami Aoyama, "Views of Japanese Ethnic Identity Amongst Undergraduates in Hokkaido," *The Asia-Pacific Journal* (2006).
[20] Eika Tai, "Multiethnic Japan and Nihonjin: Looking through two exhibitions in 2004 Osaka," *Japan's Minorities: The Illusion of Homogeneity*, ed. Michael Weiner (New York: Routledge, 2009) 159.
[21] Hudson and Aoyama, "Views of Japanese Ethnic Identity Amongst Undergraduates in Hokkaido."

Research Aims

Existing scholarship with regard to Japan's labor crisis often points to increased immigration as one of a number of solutions. Likewise, existing works related to Japanese identity do not address the problems that the limits of this identity pose in terms of the Japanese government's policymaking regarding immigration. My work seeks to develop a clear connection between Japanese identity and the more tangible issue of the need to secure additional labor. I posit that the concept of Japanese identity will have to solidify into a more objective, legally defined form. This research also seeks to contribute to existing scholarship by bringing Japanese-language sources into the discussion, including news articles dealing with pertinent current events.

I seek to answer my research question through a study of Japan's immigration (and assimilation) policies with regard to Zainichi Koreans and Brazilian Japanese. Comparing the Japanese government's approach to these two minority groups will help to illuminate how different concepts of Japanese identity play into immigration policy. In chapter 1, I discuss the labor situation in Japan, focusing on some of the current legal and social impediments to an effective immigration policy. In chapter 2, I explore those policies that have affected the lives of Zainichi Koreans from the colonial period to the present, and evaluate the status of Zainichi Koreans in Japan today. Chapter 3 will focus on the policies that Nikkei Brazilians have faced. I will also discuss the current challenges they face in Japanese society. The content of chapter 4 will come from my survey- and interview-based research, which seeks to show whether university-aged Japanese students' ideas of Japanese identity show signs of a decreased focus on race, and increased inclusiveness conducive to multiculturalism. My research is similar to that conducted by Hudson and Aoyama. Although their study only investigated students in Hokkaido, a unique region of Japan due to its population of Ainu, I hypothesize that my research among

Japanese students primarily in the Kansai region may show a similar shift toward fluid thinking
in terms of Japanese identity.

Chapter 1: Foreign Labor, the Elephant in the Room

The Population Diamond

Perhaps the most straightforward way to grasp the severity of Japan's mounting labor shortage is

simply by looking at its population pyramid. Japan's population pyramid looks rather more like

a diamond than a pyramid, and by 2050, the shape is predicted to become even more striking,

resembling a thin, upside down pyramid. The Statistics Bureau of Japan's Ministry of Internal

Affairs and Communications has compiled the following figure:

Changes in the Population Pyramid
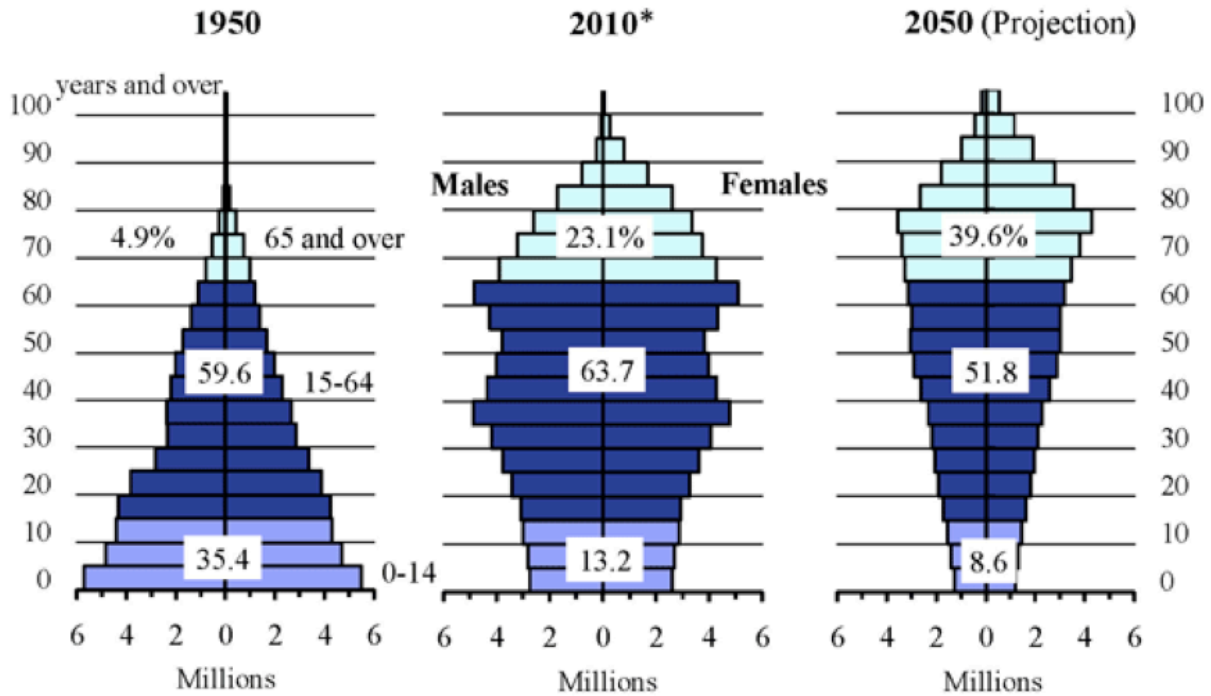
Source: Statistics Bureau, MIC; Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

Figure 1: Changes in the Population Pyramid

The Statistics Bureau's data indicates that as of 2010, the elderly (defined as those individuals

over the age of 65) comprised 23.1% of the total population of Japan; this is the highest ratio of

elderly in the world.[22] What's more, this percentage is growing at a startling rate, projected to

reach 39.6% in 2050. According to data from the Statistics Bureau:

> Although the population of the elderly in Japan accounted for only 7.1 percent of the total population in 1970, 24 years later in 1994, it had almost doubled in scale to 14.1 percent. In other countries with an aged population, it took 61 years in Italy, 85 years in Sweden, and 115 years in France for the percentage of the elderly to increase from 7 percent to 14 percent of the population. These comparisons clearly highlight the rapid progress of demographic aging in Japan.[23]

What this means is that as the population continues to age, with an insufficient birthrate to keep

up, there will no longer be enough working Japanese to sustain the economy in the midst of a

growing population of pensioners.

Rapid aging has thus combined with an extremely low birthrate to produce a difficult

situation. Japan's plummeting birthrate can be attributed to a number of recent changes in

Japanese society, most notably the growing presence of women in the workplace. As Hisane

Masaki explains, "Economic factors are most often cited as the primary reason more and more

Japanese get married in later life or choose - or are even forced to choose - to remain single.

Working women find it particularly difficult to combine employment and child-rearing because

of the poor quality of child-care services available, unfavorable employment practices, and rigid

working conditions."[24] Japanese women, then, have been placed in a situation in which they

must choose between children and a career. The country's low (and shrinking) fertility rate

indicates that increasingly, women are opting for the latter.

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[22] Statistics Bureau, Japan, "Statistical Handbook of Japan 2011," 2011, *Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Statistics Bureau, Director-General for Policy Planning (Statistical Standards) & Statistical Research and Training Institute,* 4 December 2011 <www.stat.go.jp/english/data/handbook/index.htm>.
[23] *Ibid.*
[24] Hisane Masaki, "Japan Stares into a Demographic Abyss," *Asia Times* (2006).

As Masaki puts it, modern-day Japan "stares into a demographic abyss," which threatens the country's future as a manufacturing and crediting power.[25] Maintaining Japan's labor force in the face of this abyss is vital to Japan's economic future, and a number of actors have attempted to address the shrinking birth rate. To encourage the population to have more children, the Japanese government in 2010, in a rather uncommitted move, offered a stipend allowing families a meager 13,000 yen per month (this amounts to about US $160), per child, until the child reaches high school, although in the face of the economic recession, this effort may have to be abandoned.[26] Japanese companies have begun to offer reduced hours for new parents, extended maternity and paternity leave, and even in-company nurseries.[27]

Amusingly, robots have also been presented as a serious solution to Japan's demographic woes; Japan has poured $10 billion per year between 2006 and 2010 into the development of robots, some of which are intended to care for the elderly and replace humans in factories to combat the shrinking workforce.[28] Robot-related efforts have even gone so far as researchers developing robotic babies intended to trigger humans' instinctual drives to raise children.[29] While certainly fascinating and characteristically innovative, the government's funding of robotics can hardly be considered a realistic solution for the country, not least because the spending simply adds to Japan's already enormous public debt (the largest in the industrialized

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[25] *Ibid*.

[26] Kyung Lah, "Can baby 'bot help Japan reproduce?," 23 June 2010, *Cable News Network*, 4 December 2011 <http://articles.cnn.com/2010-06-23/world/japan.baby.robot.population_1_robotic-solution-birth-rate-japan?_s=PM:WORLD>.

[27] Masaki, "Japan Stares into a Demographic Abyss."

[28] Hiroko Tabuchi, "Japanese robots enter daily life," *USA Today*, March 1, 2008.

[29] Kyung Lah, "Can baby 'bot help Japan reproduce?"

world), but especially due to the fact that the impending dangers of Japan's labor shortage are approaching more quickly than technology can feasibly progress.[30]

Yet none of these solutions seems to be having the desired effect. The low birthrate remains low as Japanese society continues to age. According to one study of attitudes toward sex and marriage carried out by the Japanese government, trends in Japanese society predict no probable increase in the birthrate. Not only are women pursuing careers over family, it seems, but young Japanese do not seem to be particularly interested in relationships at all: "The latest found that 61% of unmarried men aged 18 to 34 have no girlfriend, and half of women the same age have no boyfriend - a record high."[31] The survey showed more positive attitudes toward being single than the prospect of marriage, and many Japanese were not even interested in being "on the market."[32]

Despite all of Japan's efforts to combat the labor shortage through financial incentives, support for working parents, or even technological innovation through robotics, it appears that the birthrate will remain low for the foreseeable future, and the population will continue to gray. It is in this desperate environment that Japan must turn to the elephant in the room: the possibility of absorbing foreign workers to combat the inevitable labor shortage.

How Many Foreigners, and What Kind?

According to some figures, holding all other factors, such as birth and death rate, constant, Japan will need to attract more than 600,000 immigrants per year from 2000 until 2050 in order to

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[30] Justin McCurry, "Discounts and time off work: how Japan is battling a birthrate in decline," *The Guardian*, October 25, 2011 < http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2011/oct/25/japan-birthrate-decline>.
[31] Roland Buerk, "Japan singletons hit record high," *BBC News*, November 28, 2011<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-15915118>.
[32] *Ibid*.

avoid a decline in the labor force.[33] More conservative estimates by the United Nations have suggested Japan will need 17 million foreign workers by 2050.[34] Regardless, as of 2011, immigration to Japan has not come remotely close to reaching even the most conservative of these numbers; in all likelihood, it is thought that Japan will probably only be able to absorb a maximum of 200,000 immigrants within a single decade, which, if held constant, would put it at a total of just one million foreign workers in 2050 if rates of migration were relatively constant.[35]

Perhaps what is most shocking about Japan's labor shortage is the extent to which the government has not taken advantage of what appears to be at least a potentially effective solution. While, indeed, there are some concerns as to whether Japan will even be capable of attracting skilled foreign workers to compete with some of the more practiced brain-draining parts of the world such as Western Europe and the United States, the reservoir of people, particularly in Southeast Asia, willing and capable of making better lives for themselves in Japan, appears to be a largely untapped resource. In spite of these realistic possibilities, Japan's immigration policy remains one of the strictest among developed nations, and treatment, legally and socially, of foreigners living in Japan is often discriminatory and unfair.

Japan's immigration policy, up until now, has largely dealt with existing populations of foreigners, including those brought to Japan forcibly before World War II such as Zainichi Koreans. Arudou Debito elaborates, "For much of Japan's postwar history, the majority of "foreigners" here were, surprisingly, born or raised in Japan--the product of immigration, both

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[33] Coulmas, *Population Decline and Ageing in Japan* 119.
[34] Howard W. French, "Insular Japan Needs, but Resists, Immigration," *New York Times*, July 24, 2003.
[35] *Ibid*.

forced and unforced, by former citizens of the prewar Japanese Empire and their progeny."[36]

This compounds Japan's difficulty with immigration, given that for much of modern Japanese

history, the most common "foreigner" one is most likely to run into would actually have grown

up in Japan, unlike those who are starting to come to Japan and the large numbers that will likely

need to migrate to Japan in the next few decades.

Foreigners as Second-Class Citizens

While Japan's labor shortage makes it an attractive destination for those foreigners seeking

employment, a number of aspects of Japan's laws dealing with foreigners are not only

unattractive, but also potentially harmful to Japanese society in the long term. One of the most

glaring of these discrepancies is the fact that while Japanese children are required to attend

school, the children of foreigners living in Japan are not.[37] It follows, then, that because the

children of foreigners in Japan are not required to attend school, they are consequently at a

higher risk of dropping out than are Japanese students. Thus, the chances that the children of

foreigners might not only find themselves unemployed, but potentially involved in criminal

activity would be significantly higher. Increased criminal activity among the resulting

uneducated foreign populations fuels existing xenophobic notions that foreigners are sources of

chaos and criminality. The exclusion of foreign children from mandatory education is prone to

becoming a vicious cycle that is not conducive to successful integration of foreigners into

Japanese society.

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[36] Arudou Debito, "The Coming Internationalization: Can Japan assimilate its immigrants?," *The Asia-Pacific Journal* (2006).
[37] *Ibid.*

In fact, Japanese society appears so prepared to blame foreigners for crime that a widespread fear of foreigners seems to contribute to Japan's reluctance to pursue immigration reform. In reference to Japan's tendency to place malevolent criminals in the same category as otherwise well-meaning, well-educated visa overstayers, Gregory Clark explains:

> Sometimes the rhetoric becomes absurd, with the former Justice Minister using the foreigner crime problem to justify a cruel decision to imprison and then deport a well-educated Myanmar asylum seeker living with his children raised in Japan. The idea that this kind of person, along with most other visa overstayers, would be out there robbing banks and breaking locks is ridiculous. But it is just this kind of talk that alarms the public, with public alarm then used as an excuse not to consider a sensible immigration policy.[38]

Rather than taking a moderate stance on relatively inconsequential crimes, the Japanese government seems to take a more unforgiving, absolutist approach when it comes to foreigners.

A number of other prejudicial policies toward foreigners can be found in the Japanese legal code. Debito cites the Japanese government's failure to allow foreigners equivalent legal protections and job security as that of Japanese citizens, lack of potential rights to work in certain fields, and the exclusion of non-Japanese from being listed with their Japanese spouses or parents in the Family Registry.[39] Such policies further alienate the foreign population, and certainly do little to encourage the immigration, permanent and temporary, that the country so desperately needs.

Japan has failed to sufficiently reconsider its immigration policy and its policies with regard to resident foreigners in a way that will promote a necessary influx of foreigners. One of the only changes Japan has made recently to its immigration policy has been a controversial effort, introduced in 1990, to relax its immigration laws in favor of Nikkei Brazilians on a shaky basis of shared ethnicity. This will be discussed in depth in chapter 3.

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[38] Gregory Clark, "Japan's Migration Conundrum," *The Asia-Pacific Journal* (2005).
[39] Debito, "The Coming Internationalization: Can Japan assimilate its immigrants?"

The Elephant in the Room

By all accounts, because of Japan's restrictive immigration laws and dismissive treatment of foreigners, the labor shortage continues to threaten Japan's economic future and a concrete, immigration-based solution to the problem remains to be found. Yet Japan will undoubtedly be forced to accept an increased foreign presence at some point in the near future.

There are two questions regarding Japan's future with regard to immigration. The first is whether or not the country will be able to acknowledge its necessity and act upon it before it is too late, in other words, before it faces the more serious economic consequences of a declining labor force. The second is how Japanese society will react to a growing presence of foreigners. Even by following the most conservative estimates of the required number of foreigners Japan will need to allow in, the result will be that the percentage of foreigners in Japan will grow from about 1% of Japan's population, at present, to 18% in 2050.

Whether Japanese society will react with xenophobia and heightened nationalism, or begin to expand Japanese identity to encompass a more racially diverse group of people remains to be seen. However, by examining the experience of one of Japan's oldest immigrant populations, that of Zainichi Koreans, and that of one of its newest, that of Nikkei Brazilians, it may be possible to find clues that could point toward a potential shift in identity.

Chapter 2: The Case of Zainichi Koreans

In order to better understand modern-day Japan's policies toward immigration as well as popular Japanese attitude with regard to foreigners, it is critical to examine the experience of Zainichi Koreans, a minority group which, while having made significant progress on the path to acceptance, continues to face serious discrimination in Japanese society even after over a century of continued presence in Japan. This chapter will examine the trajectory of Japanese policy regarding its resident Korean population.

A History in Limbo

The history of Zainichi Koreans in Japan begins with Japan's annexation of Korea in 1910. At the time of colonization, the majority of Koreans were peasants, and economic exploitation through the Japanese appropriation of land was cited as one of the initial "push" forces for Korean migration to Japan.[40] Additionally, Japan's amplified industrial development during World War I caused an increase in demand for labor within Japan, which served as a "pull" factor in Korean migration.[41] This migration remained relatively slow and restrictive, but by 1922 the population of Koreans in Japan had reached 60,000.[42]

Various policies took shape during the 1920s restricting migrants on the basis of Japanese language ability and secure employment upon entering Japan. In 1925, Korean men were included in the General Election Law, which extended suffrage to all men over the age of 25, and within a few years, the first Korean had run for elected office.[43]

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[40] Hicks, *Japan's Hidden Apartheid* 46; Chapman, *Zainichi Korean Identity and Ethnicity* 16.
[41] *Ibid* 17.
[42] Hicks, *Japan's Hidden Apartheid* 48.
[43] *Ibid* 49.

On the outbreak of World War II, Japan initiated a labor draft, which involved not only conscribing Koreans already in Japan, but also bringing Koreans to Japan to participate in war efforts, particularly for hazardous, manual labor.[44] This number amounted to around 990,000 Koreans, out of which 80,000 Korean women or more were forced into military prostitution as "comfort women."[45]

After World War II, Japan relinquished Korea as a colonial territory, and it became clear that Koreans in Japan had been relegated to a position of uncertainty. Because their legal status had never been defined, those Koreans whose families had lived in Japan for many years, those who had previously held voting rights in Japan, and even those who may have run for office in Japan were legally neither Japanese nor Korean citizens. At the time, the Japanese had generally anticipated that the resident Koreans would return to Korea, but having established themselves in Japan and now with no home to return to in Korea, a significant number of Koreans opted to remain in Japan.[46] The Occupation forces took a noncommittal approach, apparently for simplicity's sake in the face of chaotic postwar Japan, and as George Hicks states, "[They] ruled that, pending a peace treaty, Koreans should be treated as Japanese nationals for purposes of food rationing, taxation, education, and land transactions."[47] In the meantime, Koreans in Japan were essentially hovering in a sort of legal limbo, but for all intents and purposes, remained for a short period of time in the same sort of pseudo-citizen position they had occupied during the preceding years. This changed, however, beginning in 1950.

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[44] *Ibid* 50; Chapman, *Zainichi Korean Identity and Ethnicity* 22.
[45] *Ibid*.
[46] Hicks, *Japan's Hidden Apartheid* 50.
[47] *Ibid* 50.

Nationality Revoked: the Fateful 1950s

In 1950, following the Second World War, Japan passed its Nationality Law, which determined the way in which foreign populations could seek Japanese nationality. The law stipulated that Japanese nationality could only be inherited through parents of Japanese nationality, rather than through simply being born within the boundaries of the country or marrying a Japanese national, as is the case in many Western countries.[48] Non-Japanese could seek Japanese nationality by living in Japan continuously for five years, exhibiting good behavior (something that was frequently interpreted as assimilating into Japanese society, which included the assumption of a Japanese name), and the ability to support oneself financially.[49] At this point, the position of any Koreans (or other foreigners) who were to immigrate to Japan after 1950 was legally defined, but the existing Koreans remained in an ambiguous legal position; the law did not appear to directly apply to those who had previously immigrated.

The Peace Treaty following World War II, which went into effect in 1952, did not directly involve Japan as a state party, but provisions within the document made it clear that Korea was no longer a Japanese territory (nor, indeed, the territory of any foreign power).[50] The fact that Japan would relinquish Korea did not, however, have an immediate effect on resident Koreans in Japan. The final blow was delivered in an announcement by Japan's Ministry of Justice, which informed resident Koreans that because of the Treaty, they had lost their Japanese nationality (and all the rights attached to it), and were given the choice to reapply for citizenship in the same way in which a newcomer to the country would be required.[51] This action, moreover,

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[48] *Ibid* 51.
[49] *Ibid*.
[50] *Ibid*.
[51] *Ibid*.

was illegal according to Japanese constitutional law, which states that "nationality is to be determined by law, rather than administrative decision."[52]

Following the Japanese government's declaration, a number of Koreans, primarily those who were employed in the public sector and therefore required Japanese nationality to remain employed, proceeded to apply for naturalization, yet the vast majority did not.[53] Reasons for not applying for naturalization came largely from a sense among the Zainichi Korean population that they might eventually return to Korea; as Michael Weiner and David Chapman explain, "Powerful affinity for the Korean homeland and a determined belief of an eventual return to the united Korean peninsula helped to entrench feelings of temporary residence in Japan."[54]

Since the 1950s, Japan's Nationality Law has remained largely unchanged, save for a handful of provisions, in reaction to impetuses such as developments with regard to the status of women; Japanese nationality can, as of 1985, be inherited from either parent, not solely from the father.[55] Likewise, the legal status of those Zainichi Koreans who did not choose to reapply for Japanese nationality has technically remained ambiguous, as they are legally viewed as Korean nationals living in Japan. Certain legislation, however, has improved their lives in Japan, most notably Law 71 of 1991, which granted those who had previously lost Japanese nationality during the events of the 1950s the status of Special Permanent Residence, which granted South Korean residents access to certain welfare benefits, public education, and the public health

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[52] *Ibid*.

[53] *Ibid* 52.

[54] Michael Weiner and David Chapman, "Zainichi Koreans in history and memory," *Japan's Minorities: The Illusion of Homogeneity*, ed. Michael Weiner (New York: Routledge, 2009) 172.

[55] Masami Ito, "Many angles to acquiring Japanese citizenship." *Japan Times*, December 27, 2011. < http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20111227i1.html>.

system.[56] Further negotiations between Japan and South Korea resulted in abolishing certain officially recognized discriminatory practices, such as the fingerprinting of permanent foreign residents, as well as the requirement of Japanese nationality to teach in the public school system.[57] Yet despite these reforms, Zainichi Koreans who have not naturalized, regardless of their family ties to Japan, lack certain of the most fundamental rights, including the right to participate in the democratic process.

Neither Japanese nor Korean

Zainichi Koreans today continue to face serious discrimination in Japanese society, most notably in terms of rights to suffrage. With the exception of those Koreans who agreed to take Japanese nationality (an act which, as explained previously, often meant strict assimilation), Zainichi Koreans, whose legal status is, with few exceptions, effectively the same as that of any other foreigner who holds permanent foreign residence in Japan, still do not have the basic right to vote in Japanese elections. When the facts of Zainichi Korean history are taken into consideration, this is a particularly shocking fact; imagine a person born in the United States, for example, who grows up alongside American students in American schools, identifies primarily with American culture, speaks fluent English, whose parents likely have little experience with life outside the United States, and whose family has lived in the country for multiple generations. Now imagine that person being denied not only United States citizenship, but also the right to vote. This is the reality for many Zainichi Koreans, a population that is essentially denied the right to a say in the governance of the only country they have ever known.

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[56] *Ibid* 173.
[57] Hicks, *Japan's Hidden Apartheid* 61.

As recently as 2010, the governor of Saitama Prefecture expressed his opposition to extending suffrage to permanent foreign residents. He stated that "he doesn't understand why third-, fourth- or even fifth-generation foreign residents don't just seek Japanese nationality."[58] From a pragmatic standpoint, the governor has a point; were suffrage the only issue at stake, most Zainichi Koreans with a long family history in Japan would likely go through with naturalization. Yet this issue touches more than simply suffrage rights; given the long history of Zainichi Koreans attempting to "pass" as Japanese, simultaneously attempting to preserve their cultural heritage and being ashamed of it, having to use Japanese aliases to conceal their real names, and otherwise experiencing severe discrimination based on ethnicity, a reluctance to naturalize is understandable. As Lie points out, "For some the adoption of a Japanese name resuscitated and reminded them of the 1940 Japanese imperial edict that stripped all Koreans of their ethnic names… Hence, what might strike outsiders as a mere inconvenience or a reasonable accommodation struck ethnically conscious Zainichi as an ethnic betrayal."[59] The governor's comments therefore come across as ignorant at best, and at worst, culturally insensitive. Moreover, they reflect how low a priority Zainichi Koreans' voting rights continue to be today.

It is not simply the governor of Saitama who does not support the extension of suffrage to permanent foreign residents; even English speaking readers of the *Japan Times* who responded to a poll entitled "Wish List: Which one of the following would you like to see occur in Japan first?" overwhelmingly supported the accession of a woman to the imperial throne, a meaningful if purely symbolic gesture, with voting rights for non-Japanese residents receiving only 8% of

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58 The Japan Times. "Ueda Against Letting Foreigners Vote." *The Japan Times* 20 January 2010.

59 John Lie, *Zainichi (Koreans in Japan): Diasporic Nationalism and Postcolonial Identity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008) 78.

the vote.[60] There seems to be an epidemic of unawareness, or perhaps indifference, both within

Japan and among outside observers.

The Unaware "Other"

Even if Zainichi Koreans were to be granted the vote, in a special legislative gesture, their status

as foreign residents would still render them ambiguous with regard to political activity for a

variety of reasons. One example of this is shown by a recent political scandal, in which Foreign

Minister Seiji Maehara was found to have accepted donations from foreigners and foreign-owned

companies, and was forced to resign.[61] Yet the classification of "foreign donations" is a gross

oversimplification. The funds were, in fact, from a Zainichi Korean childhood friend of

Maehara's, who under Japanese law is legally classified as a foreigner. The woman, who

claimed that she was unaware of the fact that as a non-Japanese resident, she was barred from

making political donations, issued a telling apology, stating, "Our relationship is one between

two human beings… He is not one who would try and check whether I was Japanese or zainichi.

He would never do something so impudent. That would prompt the question, 'How long do you

intend to discriminate against zainichi?'[62] Whether Maehara was aware or the woman's ethnicity

or not seems to be an irrelevant question; due to the widespread use of Japanese aliases, many

Zainichi Koreans do not, in fact, discover that they are non-Japanese until their parents or other

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[60] The Japan Times. "Past Poll Results." 21 January 2012. *The Japan Times Online.* 31 January 2012 <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/more_poll.html>.
[61]前原氏、外国人献金計５９万円　４人と１社から、アサヒコム・ホームページ <http://www.asahi.com/politics/update/0827/TKY201108270173.html> (2011 年９月 12 日アクセス)
[62] Asahi Shimbun. "Korean Apologizes to Maehara for 'Causing Trouble'." *Asahi Shimbun,* March 8, 2011.

family members "come out" to them.[63] Thus, this scandal raises important questions in terms of

whether simply extending voting rights is enough to ensure equality. For full equality in the

realm of political participation, it is clear that Zainichi Koreans would also have to be granted the

right to donate to politicians, among other basic rights.

What the Zainichi Experience Says About Foreigners in Japan

Koreans as an immigrant population have been present in Japan in large numbers for nearly a

century. Yet those who did not naturalize either before or after the events of the 1950s continue

to live as second-class citizens today, denied the right to vote. Moreover, Zainichi Koreans

remain frequent targets of racist and xenophobic dialogue, including a 2010 incident in Kyoto,

when a fringe group demonstrated at a Korean elementary school in Kyoto, using bullhorns to

harass students, calling them "cockroaches" and "Korean spies."[64] As Fackler points out with

regard to such extreme rightist organizations, "While these groups remain a small if noisy fringe

element here, they have won growing attention as an alarming side effect of Japan's long

economic and political decline."[65] Furthermore, such isolated incidents, while indeed reflecting

economic and political decline, also have the potential to contribute to such decline, given

Japan's increasing need for foreign labor as I discussed in chapter 1.

Interestingly, as noted in the beginning of this chapter, Zainichi Koreans enjoyed a

certain degree of political participation before World War II (with Korean men over the age of

25 having the right to vote and run for office), albeit in combination with such abuses as forced

labor and coerced prostitution. Japan's reluctance to accept the existence of an immigrant

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[63] Hicks, *Japan's Hidden Apartheid* 62.
[64] Martin Fackler, "New Dissent in Japan Is Loudly Anti-Foreign," *New York Times,* August 28, 2010.
[65] *Ibid.*

population, and to acknowledge its rights without requiring strict assimilation (perhaps acknowledging the mistakes it made in the past in dealing with Zainichi Koreans) appears to stem from its lingering memory of the events of the 1950s.

Were the events of the 1950s to have proceeded differently, and had nationality not been illegally stripped from Zainichi Koreans after the Nationality Law and the signing of the Peace Treaty, the legal status of Zainichi Koreans might have evolved to the extent that retention of Korean identity and culture could have accompanied legal status as a Japanese citizen. It might have been possible to be simultaneously Korean and a citizen of Japan. Yet due to the all-or-nothing approach of the Japanese government, Zainichi Koreans came to form a minority group that is neither Japanese nor Korean; they are not Japanese in that they do not share the same rights as ethnic Japanese citizens, and they are not Korean in that many of their ties to Korean culture have been eroded over time.

Those Zainichi Koreans who have still not naturalized, even after generations, seem unlikely to do so in the future. Thus, the future of Zainichi Koreans in Japan relies on the Japanese government seeking a new approach to citizenship, and an acceptance of multiculturalism. Zainichi Koreans, with the ability to "pass" as Japanese in terms of physical appearance; family histories of residence in Japan for generations; familiarity with Japanese culture (often *only* with Japanese culture) and, consequentially, fluency in Japanese would appear to give Zainichi Koreans a comparative advantage over other immigrant populations. Yet the fact that they are still struggling to achieve equality with ethnic Japanese suggests that until they are able to do so, any other minority group, especially one that may not share culture, language, or similar physical appearance to the Japanese, has little chance.

The example of the Zainichi Koreans in Japan shows that in the face of Japan's modern-day labor crisis, one of the factors that will determine the future of non-Japanese residents' rights will be how Japan chooses to address the issue of suffrage, as well as the discrimination problem, without requiring assimilation, and acknowledging that being Japanese does not necessarily have to mean a purely genetic feature. In other words, it will require the uncomfortable realization that Zainichi Koreans, for the most part, have already become Japanese. In the next chapter, I will explore the Nikkei Brazilian experience, comparing the experience of this relatively new immigrant group to that of the Zainichi Koreans, and making predictions about the future of both in Japan.

Chapter 3: The Case of Nikkei Brazilians

Ittekuru (To Go and Come Back)

Nikkei Brazilian Japanese are the descendants of those Japanese who emigrated to Brazil, often due to lack of economic opportunities in Japan combined with a burgeoning plantation economy in Brazil, starting in the early 1900s and continuing until the early 1960s.[66] Many hoped to eventually return to Japan having accumulated wealth while in South America, but the devastation of Japan during the Second World War made this largely impossible.[67] The Japanese who left Japan in the beginning of the 20th century were largely able to integrate, socially and culturally, into Brazilian society, likely facilitated by Brazil's existing racial diversity.[68] In the 1980s, the economic opportunities in Brazil began to waver as a consequence of inflation, unemployment, and economic stagnation, and previously optimistic prospects reversed.[69] Thus began the story of the people who would eventually become one of Japan's most recent (and significant) minority groups, and its biggest immigrant population today.[70] The population is estimated to be about 1,228,000.[71]

In the wake of Japan's impending labor shortage in the late 20th century, the Japanese government revised its Immigration Control Law, allowing for up to third generation "foreign nationals of Japanese descent" to live in Japan free of the same legal and employment

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[66] Takeyuki Tsuda, *Strangers in the Ethnic Homeland: Japanese Brazilian Return Migration in Transnational Perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003) 55-56.
[67] *Ibid* 56-57.
[68] *Ibid* 58.
[69] *Ibid* 87.
[70] Onishi, "An Enclave of Brazilians Is Testing Insular Japan."
[71] Tsuda, *Strangers in the Ethnic Homeland* 57.

restrictions to which other foreigners are subject.[72] The government also expedited the

processing of visa applications at this time, and the length of visas granted by the government

varied on the basis of how far removed the applicant was from Japan. For example, second-

generation Nikkei tended to be granted visas lasting for three years, and third-generation Nikkei

were given one-year visas.[73] As Roth points out, "Japanese immigration policy implied that the

'Japanese-ness' of Nikkeijin diminished with each generation."[74]

The underlying reasons behind these immigration policy changes are numerous and

complex. Takeyuki Tsuda stresses the advantages reaped by the Japanese government in this

case, stating:

> By thus appealing to an ideology of transnational ethnic affiliation with the Brazilian
> nikkeijin based on common ancestry, the Japanese government was able to acquire a
> much-needed and docile migrant labor force without contradicting, at least at the level of
> official appearances, the fundamental principle of Japanese immigration policy that no
> unskilled foreign workers will be accepted.[75]

This highlights not only the motives of the government at the time of the revision of the

Immigration Control Law, but also suggests that Japan has for some time recognized the

potential benefits of immigrant labor.

It is also important to recognize another idea upon which this legal exception was based:

the fact that, as demonstrated by the case of the Zainichi Koreans, who are not accepted fully by

Japanese society on the basis of racial dissimilarity (and an accompanying historical prejudice),

Japanese identity rests on more than simply cultural and linguistic traits. In order to be

integrated into Japanese society, the precedent for a necessary racial component had already been

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[72] Daniela de Carvalho, "*Nikkei* communities in Japan," *Global Japan: The experience of Japan's new immigrant and overseas communities,* eds. Roger Goodman, C. Peach, A. Takenaka, P. White (New York: Routledge, 2003) 195.
[73] Roth, *Brokered Homeland* 25-26.
[74] *Ibid* 26.
[75] Tsuda, *Strangers in the Ethnic Homeland* 92.

set. Brazilian Japanese, despite their cultural and linguistic dissimilarities, were thought to be more capable of assimilating into Japanese society than other foreigners, perhaps because they would not be ostracized on the basis of physical differences.

Upon arrival, many of the estimated 366,000 Nikkei Brazilians living in Japan began to converge in industrial areas, working at the factories for manufacturing companies such as Honda, Sanyo, and Toyota.[76] Regions that have tended to house the highest concentrations of Nikkei Brazilians include the Gunma and Aichi prefectures and, more specifically, cities such as Ota, Oizumi, Hamamatsu, and Nagoya.[77] Immigration from Brazil has had a significant demographic impact on many of these manufacturing areas. Due to the low birthrate and aging of the Japanese population, as well as the trend of population movement from smaller towns to larger cities, some communities within these smaller manufacturing towns have, in fact, nearly reached equilibrium, exhibiting close to a 50-50 mix of Japanese to Brazilian residents as in the case of Homi Estate in Toyota city.[78] Predictably, this situation has resulted in a complicated relationship between the native Japanese and immigrant populations, which cannot be described simply as a one of harsh discrimination, utter isolation, complete integration, nor indeed of pure cooperation. Rather, associations between the Japanese and this immigrant group appear to have developed in a variety of ways that have converged to create a sense of community seclusion among Nikkei Brazilians.

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[76] Onishi, "An Enclave of Brazilians Is Testing Insular Japan."
[77] Tsuda, *Strangers in the Ethnic Homeland* 99.
[78] *Ibid.*

Distinction, Discrimination, Isolation

Because they have been a significant minority group only since the 1990s, scholars debate whether Nikkei Brazilians in Japan today experience serious discrimination. Unlike Zainichi Koreans, a group that has been present in Japan for over a century in the midst of turbulent political conditions surrounding the Second World War, Nikkei Brazilians have not experienced a long trajectory of systematic discrimination per se. Examples of prejudice appear in many cases, but overt acts of discrimination seem to be relatively few (with the important exception of what is known as the 1997 Herculano case, in which a teenage Nikkei Brazilian was beaten to death by members of a Japanese gang, though even in this case, the motivation behind the killing is not known to have been based upon racial prejudice).[79]

Certain sources suggest that discrimination against Nikkei Brazilians, while not immediately obvious, is a significant problem, especially with regard to immigrants' experiences in the workplace and in schools, where they engage in the most interaction with local Japanese. Roth's accounts of working in a factory in Hamamatsu for the purposes of his anthropological study expose various incidents of everyday prejudice, such as a "Japanese use only" bath, differentiated from the "Foreigners' use only" in a Yusumi Motors company dormitory; not only the baths, but the dormitories themselves are also frequently segregated.[80]

Other issues include the Japanese population's general outlook toward the Nikkei Brazilians; complaints about Nikkei Brazilians in the workplace include such issues as "lacking a sense of responsibility… toward the firms for which they worked," as well as comments such as, "They don't come on time," or "They don't think in terms of the group's responsibility."[81] All

[79] De Carvalho, *"Nikkei* communities in Japan," *Global Japan* 198.
[80] Roth, *Brokered Homeland* 38.
[81] *Ibid* 61.

of these complaints reflect important traits in Japanese customs (Japanese culture tends to place high value on punctuality and group mentality, for example), thus exposing the central problem of integrating Nikkei Brazilians. While they are, indeed, at least in part racially Japanese, they do not necessarily assimilate culturally. The fact that these complaints are openly voiced in Japanese workplaces enhances the sense of "other" imposed on Nikkei Brazilians, fostering a sort of split society. Perhaps as a result of Nikkei Brazilians being criticized for their cultural differences and being asked to use a separate "foreigner" bath, rather than integrating smoothly into Japanese society, Carvalho argues that these groups appear to be becoming more isolated.[82] The implications of this isolation are important for the future of Japanese society. Organization of a population into distinct factions along ethnic lines would indeed make it difficult for a country to prosper.

Eventual Assimilation?

Despite Japanese government legislation to incorporate immigrants who would be able to assimilate more easily into Japanese society, Keiko Yamanaka points out that efforts to assimilate have largely backfired. As she puts it, "For the Japanese state, the policy of embracing Nikkeijin ethnicity was a convenient means to maintain 'racial' purity while responding to the domestic labor shortage [in the late 20th century]. But it has also spawned a populous minority community with a distinct and alien culture and identity, thereby subverting the very purpose of the policy."[83] She argues that the future relationship between Brazilian immigrants and Japanese society lies in the actions that Japanese and immigrants take toward

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[82] De Carvalho, "*Nikkei* communities in Japan," *Global Japan* 199.
[83] Keiko Yamanaka, "Feminization of Japanese Brazilian Labor Migration to Japan," *Searching for Home Abroad: Japanese Brazilians and Transnationalism* (London: Duke University Press, 2003) 192.

one another, stating, "It depends on the Japanese definition of Japanese nationality, citizenship, and membership in Japanese society, and it depends equally on ways in which Nikkei Brazilians define ethnicity and nationality for themselves, as well as for their children."[84]

On the other hand, Tsuda argues that because of their Japanese heritage, Japanese Brazilians will eventually overcome existing forms of discrimination in future generations, having "met both the racial and cultural criteria for being Japanese."[85] While it may be true that by shedding Brazilian cultural identity, Brazilian Japanese will be able to become "true Japanese," other authors seem to suggest that Brazilian Japanese communities will retain their Brazilian cultural identity more strongly. Yet what is important to note is that whether or not Nikkei Brazilians are able to eventually assimilate into Japanese society, the problem of an inflexible society, unfriendly to multiculturalism remains, and there are only so many Nikkei Brazilians. Even if Japan were, hypothetically, to bring every single Brazilian of Japanese descent to Japan to work, this number would only account for about two years' worth of Coulmas' recommended yearly acceptance of foreign laborers.[86] Thus, because it is unfeasible for a population of ethnic Japanese immigrants to assimilate into Japanese culture and fully supply its labor demand, it is clear that Japanese society, including its workplaces, must become more flexible and more open in order to overcome its labor issues.

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[84] *Ibid* 193.

[85] Takeyuki Tsuda, "Japanese-Brazilian Ethnic Return Migration and the Making of Japan's Newest Immigrant Minority," *Japan's Minorities: The Illusion of Homogeneity*, ed. Michael Weiner (New York: Routledge, 2009) 224.

[86] Coulmas, *Population Decline and Ageing in Japan* 119.

Toward a Permanent Future

Nikkei Brazilians, like Zainichi Koreans, are a minority group in Japan for which Japan has made certain legal exceptions. In the Zainichi Korean case, laws were changed as a result of Japanese lawmakers' realization that these foreigners had, in fact, become a permanent part of Japanese society. With no remaining ties to Korea, the Zainichi Koreans had essentially become Japanese for all intents and purposes, save for their racial differences. Thus the law changes with regard to Zainichi Koreans have been based on a realization, whether explicitly recognized or not, that it was possible to be both a foreigner and a permanent resident.

Nikkei Brazilians, on the other hand, remain in a situation similar to that of other foreigners in Japan; they are still seen as temporary workers, on a trip to Japan with the eventual goal of returning to Brazil. This is, indeed, likely the case for some of these migrants. Yet for many Nikkei Brazilians, life in Japan *is* the foreseeable future, while Japanese evaluations of the situation often convey a sense that such immigration is but a temporary fixture in Japanese society, a storm to be weathered and tolerated before it eventually clears, the troublesome cultural differences ceasing to create conflict.

This sense of a transitory period of multiculturalism was perhaps displayed most dramatically in 2009, in the face of the Global Financial Crisis, when Japan responded to economic hardships and high unemployment rates by engaging in an aggressive campaign to encourage Nikkei Brazilians to return to Brazil, less than 20 years after having eagerly invited them to the country to participate in the labor force. This amounted to paying Nikkei Brazilians several thousand dollars to fly back to Brazil, where they may or may not have any economic opportunities, familial connections, or even (in the case of children born in Japan) a direct knowledge of Brazilian culture. The caveat was that these immigrants were effectively required

to agree "never to seek work in Japan again."[87] While this is not explicitly stated, it is implied

by certain unclear terms in the law's language, restricting these immigrants' rights to return to

Japan "until jobs are available in Japan."[88] Yet the "availability of jobs" is not necessarily in

question; while manufacturing, the industry in which the majority of Nikkei Brazilians have

congregated, is facing high unemployment, sectors such as agriculture and care for the elderly

still face serious labor shortages.[89] Hidenori Sakanaka, the director of the Japan Immigration

Policy Institute called the Japanese government's action toward Nikkei Brazilians "a disgrace,"

and observed, "We might be in a recession now, but it's clear [Japan] doesn't have a future

without workers from overseas."[90]

Some figures in Japan have openly criticized the treatment of foreigners as temporary

visitors; an article on the Ibaraki Prefecture International Affairs Division's website gives a

detailed explanation of multiculturalism, or *tabunka kyōsei* (literally, "multiple cultures living

together") in an article entitled "Basic Knowledge of Multiculturalism."[91] It encourages

residents of Ibaraki Prefecture to understand that many foreigners should increasingly also be

recognized as fellow residents, and makes a clear distinction between the goal, *tabunka kyōsei,*

and familiar concepts such as *kokusai kōryuu* (international exchange), which consists of

welcoming foreigners to Japan and ensuring that they have good experiences while in Japan, and

gaikokujin shien (support of foreigners), which consists of helping foreigners when they

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[87] Tabuchi, "Japan Pays Foreign Workers to Go Home."
[88] Coco Masters. "Japan to Immigrants: Thanks, But You Can Go Home Now." *Time*, April 20, 2009.
[89] Tabuchi, "Japan Pays Foreign Workers to Go Home."
[90] *Ibid.*
[91] International Affairs Division Ibaraki Prefectural Government. "Tabunka Kyousei no Kiso Chishiki," 2011, *International Affairs Division Ibaraki Prefectural Government.* Retrieved February 13, 2012, from <http://www.pref.ibaraki.jp/bukyoku/seikan/kokuko/jpn/job/tabunka/kiso.html>.

encounter problems in Japanese society. *Tabunka kyousei*, according to this article, involves a

deepening of relationships between Japanese and foreigners, and a recognition of the important

role of non-Japanese in communities such as Ibaraki Prefecture.[92]

Efforts such as those of Ibaraki Prefecture are noteworthy, and represent a constructive

way of encouraging Japanese society, from the top down, to be more flexible, and more open to

the idea of the "permanent foreigner." After all, the labor shortage is not going to simply require

one generation of temporary workers, but several generations of long-term resident foreigners.

Roth indicates that this process can also work from the bottom up, as evidenced by his account of

the successful multicultural nature of the Hamamatsu Kite Festival:

> … The successful syncretism of Brazilian music and Japanese revelry at Kimpara's house demonstrates that Japanese may be able to internationalize in a fashion that avoids reifying notions of Japanese tradition… The *communitas* achieved between Japanese and Brazilians during the kite festival… may be significant in that it offers an alternative vision of how these two groups may relate to each other. It is a vision of a mutually enriching relationship rather than one in which one group is forcefully incorporated by another.[93]

The idea that multiculturalism can be successfully fostered only by community interaction rather

than government-sponsored "internationalization" (as exemplified by articles like the one

produced by Ibaraki Prefecture) underlies Roth's argument. This is indeed an important

component. For Japanese society to flourish in the face of labor challenges, foreigners will have

to allow their own cultures to harmonize with Japanese culture, and work toward language

acquisition in order to function smoothly in Japanese society, but Japanese society must

simultaneously make steps in the same direction, through such steps as being more culturally

inclusive and accepting in the workplace, and viewing foreigners as more than simply temporary

solutions to economic woes. Whether this will be possible depends on the younger generations

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[92] *Ibid.*
[93] Roth, *Brokered Homeland* 137.

of Japanese who are beginning to enter society; this idea is the basis of the research I conducted

among Japanese university students, which is described in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Observing Opinion Among Japanese University Students

Japanese and the Other

Central to the future of Japan's economy are the foreign laborers who will eventually – and

inevitably – be brought to the country to relieve the mounting labor shortage. Central to the

future of these immigrants in Japanese society are the conceptions of foreignness and

multiculturalism held by the Japanese. And central to those conceptions are both the Japanese

definition of what it means to be Japanese, and how comfortable they feel in the presence of

those they deem not to be.

My investigation into Japanese society's reactions to, and the Japanese government's

policies toward, Zainichi Koreans and Nikkei Brazilians reveals that Japanese society clearly

recognizes neither group as fully Japanese. In the Zainichi Koreans' case, this differentiation

stems from race, while the Nikkei Brazilians, who qualify as Japanese on a racial basis, are

differentiated by cultural and linguistic disparities.

In this chapter, I will discuss the results of a web-based survey I conducted among

Japanese university students in order to better understand how Japanese identity is determined by

Japanese people of this younger generation, a demographic group that will begin to enter the

workforce within the next few years, and that will likely be among the most directly affected by

problems caused by the labor shortage.

Methodology and Hypotheses

I conducted my survey over the Internet, using a snowball sampling style, due to financial

constraints and a limited timeframe, in order to yield the highest possible number of responses.

The limitations of this method of sampling technically render my results statistically insignificant,

but as anecdotal evidence, they nonetheless provide a relevant and significant look into the mindset of one particular group of Japanese students.

I recruited respondents by contacting professors at Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto and requesting that they send the survey on to any Japanese students they may be able to contact, as well as by personally asking Japanese friends of mine attending university (primarily from the Kansai region of Japan, though not limited to this area) to both take the survey and pass it along to other Japanese university students. Originally, I had intended the surveys to be sent anonymously, without revealing that it was a study by a non-Japanese. The motive behind this was originally that I believed respondents were likely to be more candid about their feelings toward foreigners if they felt that they were participating in another Japanese person's survey. However, Ritsumeikan's policy is not to distribute anonymous surveys, so I was compelled to identify myself to the students to whom my professors sent the survey as well.

My sampling method yielded a total of 79 responses, nearly all of which came from university students aged 19 to 25 years old, with female respondents in the majority. I was curious as to whether or not the respondents had personal experience interacting with foreigners, so the demographic information I collected also included a question asking whether the respondents had ever traveled outside Japan or studied abroad. Only seven of the respondents had not.

Interested in the respondents' method of self-identification, I also asked respondents to enter their race; as in the study conducted by Hudson and Aoyama among Japanese students in Hokkaido, I used the Japanese word *minzoku* (people, race, or nation). As in the aforementioned study, my results yielded a wide range of responses, including a large number of *nihonjin* (Japanese), some *ajiajin* (Asian), one *kansaijin* (a person from Kansai), several *Yamato* (a

historical term for "Japanese" with nationalist connotations), and a number of *wakaranai* ("I don't know"). One respondent specified that he or she self-identified as *junkei no nihonjin* (pure-blooded Japanese). While my survey did not yield any responses that referred to Ainu blood, as did the respondents to the survey conducted by Hudson and Aoyama in Hokkaido, my results showed a similar degree of flexibility and, indeed, uncertainty among Japanese university students.[94]

In sum, my survey respondents are primarily college-educated, young Japanese, the vast majority of whom have had personal experience either traveling or studying abroad, and who are largely female. What these demographic statistics suggested to me is that the responses will reflect both a more flexible picture of Japanese identity (as shown by the respondents' varied means of self-identification by race), as well as a more tolerant outlook toward foreigners. Moreover, I expected the survey results to show a certain degree of reluctance to outwardly express a discomfort with interaction with foreigners, partly due to the demographic factors (as indicated above, the vast majority of respondents had experience traveling abroad, for example), but also owed to the fact that survey respondents were aware of the fact that a foreigner was collecting the data.

The survey structure was comprised of demographic questions, as discussed above, along with two sets of multiple choice questions intended to observe the students' ways of thinking about Japaneseness and foreigners. In the following sections, I will describe these questions in depth and discuss the results and their significance; the survey questions in their entirety, translated into English, are listed as an appendix on page 63. While the results as a whole, including some of the questions I included in an effort to make the survey seem less targeted

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[94] Hudson Aoyama, "Views of Japanese Ethnic Identity Amongst Undergraduates in Hokkaido."

toward specific immigrant populations (I asked questions dealing with a wide range of ethnicities), could certainly provide insight into issues such as Japanese perceptions of people of African descent, such issues are beyond the scope of this research, and thus will not be discussed in this section. Likewise, certain famous people I included in the survey were not as widely recognized as others, and therefore in this chapter, I will focus on those celebrities with whom respondents were most widely familiar.

Part One: Who is Japanese?

The first half of the survey asked students whether or not they were familiar with a number of famous people; if the respondents indicated that they were familiar with that particular celebrity, they were asked whether or not they considered that person to be Japanese. I chose those famous people included in the survey based on how well known they are (my aim was for as many respondents as possible to be familiar with each given name), and attempted to include a range of backgrounds, from those which I believed would be perceived as more or less unquestionably Japanese (people who were born and raised there, with Japanese names, like singer Ayumi Hamasaki) to those of celebrities either born or raised in foreign countries (like singer Utada Hikaru, who was born in the United States), or with varied racial backgrounds (like singer Crystal Kay, whose father is an African American serviceman and whose mother is a South Korean national).

Predictably, such figures as Ayumi Hamasaki, who holds Japanese citizenship and who is thought to be racially Japanese, were overwhelmingly considered to be Japanese by respondents. Interestingly, other celebrities with Japanese names and, ostensibly, a Japanese racial background were considered to be Japanese at a similar rate:
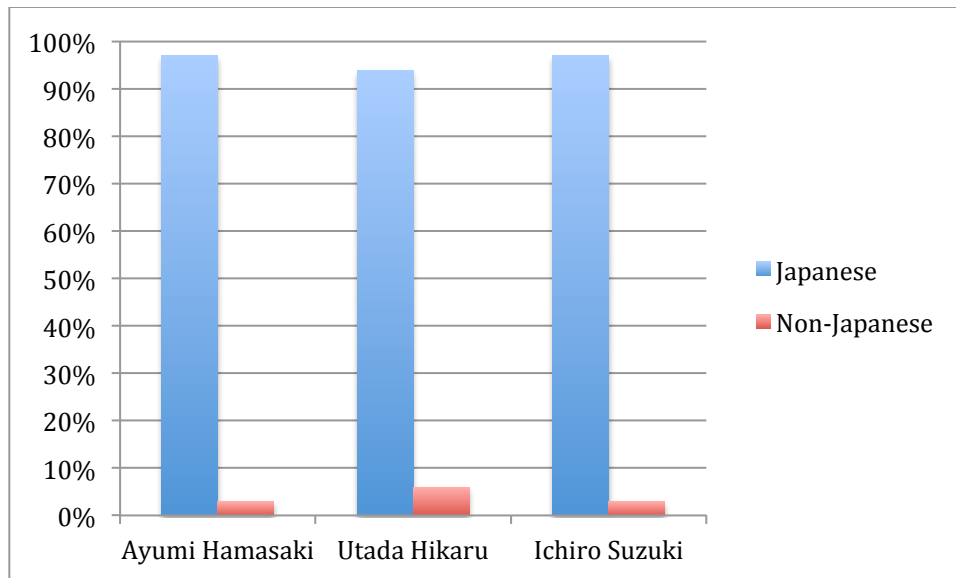
Figure 2: Perceptions of "Racially Japanese" Celebrities with Japanese Names

This underscores the role that racial background plays in determining Japanese identity; in the case of "racially Japanese" celebrities with Japanese names, it did not seem to make much of a difference to respondents where the given celebrity lives, or was born or raised.

The more noticeable discrepancies arose in the case of those celebrities who are known, either from their names or faces, to come from racially diverse backgrounds. A comparison of respondents' evaluations of three celebrities in particular is revealing. Crystal Kay, as mentioned above, was born of two racially non-Japanese parents (an African American and a South Korean), but was raised in Japan. Taiwan-born actor Takeshi Kaneshiro's father is Japanese, and his mother is Taiwanese. Finally, model Anna Tsuchiya was born in Japan to a Polish-American father and a Japanese mother. Both Crystal Kay and Anna Tsuchiya's careers have primarily been in Japan, and both are fluent in Japanese, but there is a significant difference in the degree to which each is considered Japanese; Takeshi Kaneshiro, on the other hand, who speaks Japanese, Mandarin, and Cantonese, is well known around the world, particularly in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, for his roles in such films as *House of Flying Daggers*.
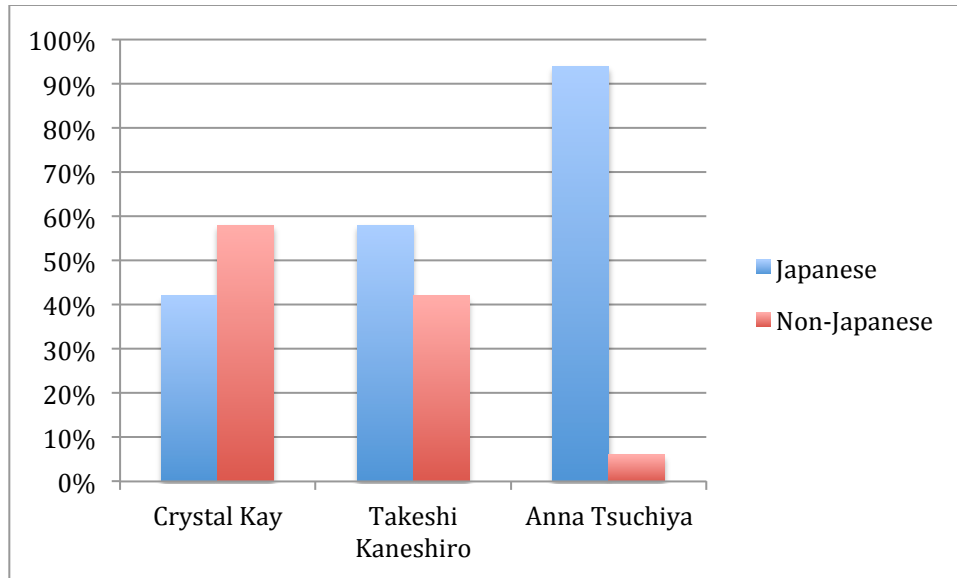
Figure 3: Perceptions of Celebrities with Varying Racial Backgrounds

As the above figure shows, the degree to which these three celebrities were considered Japanese varied significantly. Linguistically, the three celebrities might qualify as Japanese. Takeshi Kaneshiro is the only person whose career has not primarily taken off in Japan, yet he is seen as Japanese by more respondents than Crystal Kay is. Takeshi Kaneshiro and Anna Tsuchiya are equally Japanese on a racial basis. Why, then, is Anna Tsuchiya most overwhelmingly perceived as Japanese?

Above, from left to right: Crystal Kay[95], Takeshi Kaneshiro[96], and Anna Tsuchiya[97]

This difference in perception may have something to do with the racially non-Japanese components of each celebrity; perhaps the acceptance of Anna Tsuchiya stems from the higher level of acceptance of Caucasians in Japanese society as compared to acceptance of African Americans (Crystal Kay) or other Asians (Crystal Kay and Takeshi Kaneshiro). As Adachi points out, "[I]n modern history, the Japanese have also tried to separate themselves from other Asians or East Asians, regarding themselves as equal to, or equivalent to, Westerners and superior to many of their Asian neighbors… Even today it is often said that Japanese treat Asians more harshly than white people."[98]

Moreover, it is important to consider each celebrity's level of identification with Japan. Despite the fact that Takeshi Kaneshiro is racially half Japanese, the path of his career might suggest that he identifies more closely with his Taiwanese heritage. Anna Tsuchiya, whose

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[95] "Crystal Kay." Photo. *Last.Fm*. March 25, 2012. <http://userserve-ak.last.fm/serve/_/165398/Crystal+Kay.jpg>.

[96] "Takeshi Kaneshiro." Photo. *NipponCinema.com.* March 25, 2012. <http://www.nipponcinema.com/tag/takeshi-kaneshiro>.

[97] "Anna Tsuchiya." Photo. NipponCinema.com. March 25, 2012. <http://www.nipponcinema.com/tag/anna-tsuchiya>.

[98] Nobuko Adachi, "Ethnic Identity, Culture, and Race: Japanese and Nikkei at Home and Abroad," *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, 37-4-10, September 13, 2010.

career has taken place almost exclusively within Japanese borders, may self-identify more strongly as being Japanese, and this could translate into popular recognition of this identity.

This part of my survey thus raises important questions in terms of the extent to which the race-based definition of Japaneseness applies; while race clearly plays an important and meaningful role in defining Japanese identity, it is far from the whole story. Moreover, while the exercise in simple categorization that respondents were asked to do in this section of the survey helps to determine how Japanese define themselves, my research also aims to predict how Japanese society might react to an increasing population of foreigners in the future. For this reason, I will now discuss the second set of questions I asked in the survey.

Part Two: Attitudes Toward Non-Japanese

The second set of questions in my survey attempts to measure attitudes toward non-Japanese populations in Japanese society on numerous levels of proximity. Respondents were asked to rate their comfort level, on a scale of one (very uncomfortable) to six (completely comfortable), in a number of situations, from non-Japanese living in the respondent's neighborhood, to non-Japanese asking the respondent on a date or marrying the respondent's sibling. I used a six-point scale in order to encourage respondents to distinguish between, for example, a three, corresponding to a feeling of slight discomfort, and a four, corresponding to a feeling of relative comfort.

Although in English, the wording of comfort versus discomfort is relatively straightforward, expressing this sentiment in Japanese is somewhat more complicated. I elected to use the phrase 気になる (*ki ni naru*), which encompasses feelings of anxiousness, a state of unease, or being bothered. During the course of the survey, I encountered some objection to the

use of this term by one respondent, on the grounds that the term is vague, and does not have a clear definition. While this is certainly true, such vagueness, in my mind, encourages respondents to respond in a more individual, personal manner, which is congruent with the nature of a society's discrimination or prejudice against foreigners.

The survey asked questions about a range of different foreigners, including Americans, Russians, and Thais, in an effort to give the survey a more general feel. However, for the purposes of this research, the responses in which I am most interested are those regarding Zainichi Koreans and Nikkei Brazilians. I argue that comparing attitudes toward these two groups, as in previous chapters I have compared the Japanese government's policies toward them, could aid in understanding whether Japanese society's views toward these groups may be changing.

The results of the survey show that in general, there appears to be a slightly higher level of acceptance of Zainichi Koreans in various situations among respondents as compared to Nikkei Brazilians. This can be observed by comparing responses to the question regarding a sibling's marriage to a member of one of these minority groups:
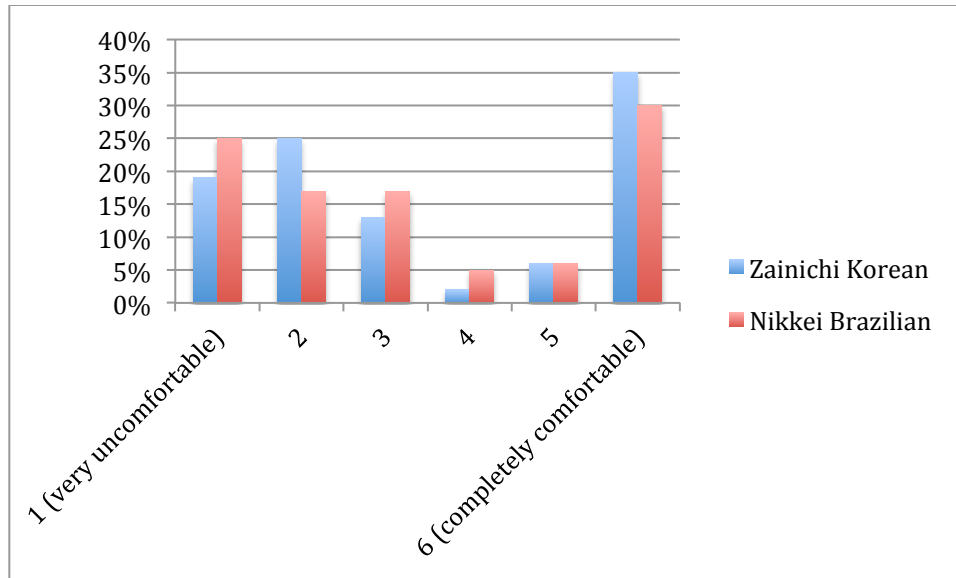
Figure 4: Your Sibling Marries a Zainichi Korean or Nikkei Brazilian

As shown above, the number of respondents who were very uncomfortable with their siblings

marrying a Nikkei Brazilian is somewhat higher than those who were very uncomfortable with

their siblings marrying a Zainichi Korean, while the number of respondents who were

completely comfortable with the situation involving a Nikkei Brazilian is rather lower than the

number of those who were completely comfortable in the event that their siblings were to marry

a Zainichi Korean. The question of marriage is particularly significant, in that the implications

of marriage to a foreigner are substantial. Marriage to a foreigner is potentially accompanied by

raising children who are neither completely Japanese nor completely foreign, and as the

experiences of both Zainichi Koreans and Nikkei Brazilians demonstrates, Japanese society

espouses complicated views toward groups that are perceived to be partially, though not entirely,

Japanese.

What is, perhaps, more interesting are the statistics with regard to physical proximity, as

this is one way, more so than marriage, in which minority groups are likely to interact with the

Japanese population: housing. The following figure shows responses to the situation of a

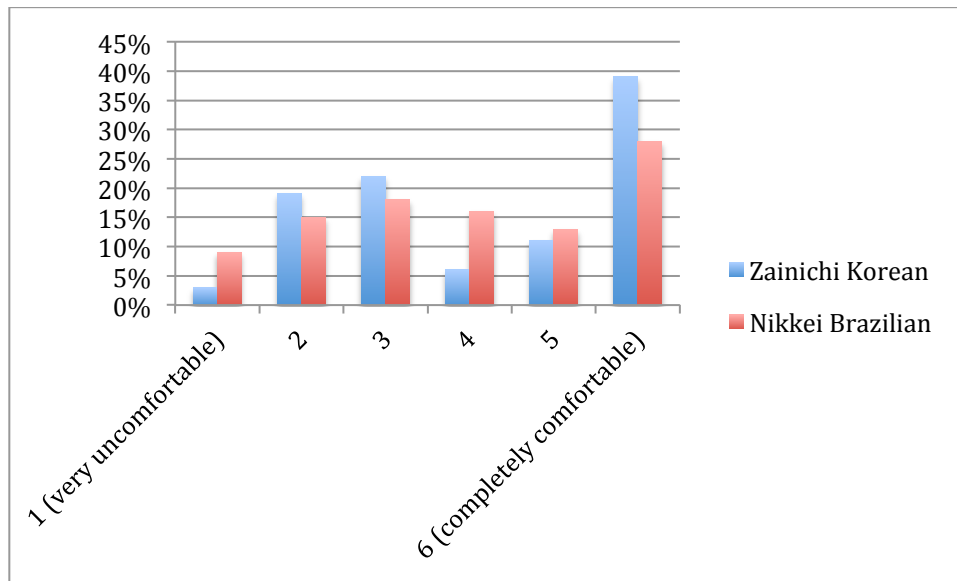Zainichi Korean or Nikkei Brazilian family living next door to the respondent:

Figure 5: A Zainichi Korean or Nikkei Brazilian Family Lives Next Door to You

What seems most interesting about these results is the fact a significantly larger number of

respondents were completely comfortable with a Zainichi Korean family living next door than

were it to be a Nikkei Brazilian family. This suggests several possibilities in terms of the

mindsets of the respondents. First, this could reflect a growing negative feeling in the Japanese

population toward Nikkei Brazilians, particularly when it comes to living in close proximity to

them. Second, the thinking that could be contributing to these types of mindsets might stem

from the fact that Zainichi Koreans are largely culturally assimilated, meaning that they would

be seen as easier to live near, than Nikkei Brazilians, who maintain a distinct culture, and who

are sometimes described as prone to playing loud music and not sorting their trash properly.[99]

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[99] Onishi, "An Enclave of Brazilians Is Testing Insular Japan."

This Survey as a Springboard

While the results discussed above are not necessarily reflective of Japanese university students as a whole, nor are they statistically significant, they provide a useful perspective from which to begin to view the possibility of a changing landscape of Japanese definitions of Japanese identity, and perhaps shifting feelings toward foreigners. While there are limitations to drawing any broad conclusions based on the survey, two especially important ideas are expressed in the results of this particular study. First, for these respondents, race does not appear to be the sole defining factor of Japanese identity; there appear to be more forces at work. Secondly, there are discrepancies in terms of respondents' feelings toward Zainichi Koreans and Nikkei Brazilians. Zainichi Koreans tended to receive more favorable responses than did Nikkei Brazilians, which could potentially indicate a trend in Japanese society to perceive Brazilians as more immediately threatening to social order. Further research that incorporates not only Japanese university students, but also representatives of a variety of social classes, could help to demonstrate differences in opinion between middle-class, educated Japanese with experience traveling abroad and interacting with foreigners, and Japanese with less education, especially those who would be working in factory jobs with foreigners, or those living in rural areas who may not have significant experience with foreigners at all.

Conclusion: Flexibility in Both Japanese Identity and Government?

Recently in 2012, Ikoma, a city in Nara prefecture, began to introduce legislation to allow certain foreigners, including both Zainichi/Special Resident foreigners and standard, visa-holding permanent residents of Japan to vote in local elections, provided that they have lived in the prefecture for at least three months (visa-holding permanent residents must have lived in Japan for five years). Previously, voting in local elections was a right exclusive to those with Japanese nationality. The issue is still being debated in the local parliament, but Makoto Yamashita, the mayor of the city, has expressed that he is awaiting discussion of the proposal, and is interested in setting such a change into motion with regard to these groups' voting rights.[100] Many Japanese are strongly opposed to this bill, but its mere existence as a potential change to the legal code suggests that Japan's outlook toward foreigners is changing, at least on an official basis.

As far as societal views go, the survey discussed in chapter 4 revealed that there was uncertainty among university-aged Japanese respondents as to what qualified a person as Japanese; some respondents even had trouble calling *themselves* Japanese when asked what they considered themselves to be in terms of racial identity. This, in the face of the changing ethnic landscape of Japanese society, which, as I have shown, will likely be forced to accept more and more foreigners in coming years to combat labor issues, suggests that Japanese identity may be headed toward a more fluid definition. As the Nikkei Brazilians' situation proves, simply having Japanese blood, at present, does not qualify someone as Japanese. Moreover, as the Zainichi Koreans' experiences show, being culturally integrated into Japanese society does not necessarily mean automatically being regarded as Japanese.

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[100]定住外国人に投票資格、市民投票条例案を提言　奈良・生駒市の諮問機関　MSN 産経ニュース　<http://sankei.jp.msn.com/politics/news/120117/lcl12011719210003-n1.htm> (2012 年 1 月 17 日アクセス)

Yet perhaps as the makeup of society changes, as non-Japanese become a more visible part of Japan's population, perceptions will shift toward a more distinct, legal definition of Japaneseness. This would be a stark contrast to today's hazy definition of Japanese identity, one of which even people of Japanese heritage, who are fluent in Japanese, attending university in Japan, and have grown up there may not consider themselves a part. If other prefectures, following in Nara's footsteps, continue to pursue legislation to allow foreigners more participation in the affairs of their localities, it is possible that the legal basis for Japaneseness will come to play a more important part in Japanese society's recognition of identity.

The distinction between "in" and "out" groups is extremely important to Japanese culture. Definitions of group identity shift to encompass different spheres of people depending on the situation. In certain cases, a Japanese person may consider his or her family as an "in group," while in a business situation his or her "in group" might expand to include those working for the same company. Such fluidity of "in" and "out" groups can also be seen in certain aspects of defining "Japaneseness." In certain situations, a Nikkei Brazilian will be recognized as part of an "in group" among Japanese; this is clear from Japan's preferential treatment of Nikkei Brazilians during the 1990s (see chapter 3), as Nikkei Brazilians were viewed as "in," while other potential immigrants were "out."

Thus, it appears that a legal definition of the Japanese "in group" could be the key. In each of the case studies highlighted in this research, legal issues such as suffrage and laws regarding education have repeatedly appeared as points of contention, and the fluidity of Japanese identity, as evidenced by the varied responses collected in the survey described in chapter 4, makes it difficult to conclusively describe any person as Japanese on the basis of race, culture, or otherwise. Japanese citizenship, on the other hand, is relatively easily defined. It

involves the possession of a passport, which amounts to material proof of belonging to a

particular country; voting rights; and equal treatment under the law, even if discrimination may

exist in the broader society.

Yet the path to Japanese citizenship, as discussed previously, is long, impractical, and

unreasonably difficult due to various processes involved in Japanese immigration law; it

demands a minimum of five years of continuously living in Japan, and even given that, the

bureaucratic processes involving periodic submissions and reviews of paperwork can extend the

process even more, up to 18 months in some cases.[101] It also requires revoking previous

citizenship, because dual citizenship is not allowed. Citizenship is not, moreover, automatically

acquired by birth on Japanese soil unless at least one parent holds Japanese citizenship. A

country with such stringent requirements can hardly expect that its labor demands will be filled

in the long term. Moreover, Japan's aging population and declining birthrate are not distant

forecasts; as discussed in chapter 1, if the government neglects to address it, the impending labor

shortage has the potential to develop into serious economic problems in the very near future.

Rather than addressing the issue of citizenship directly, Japan has continued to favor a

more roundabout method, making specific exceptions to individual laws on a case-by-case basis;

it granted Special Permanent Resident Status to Zainichi Koreans in 1991, made exceptions to its

usually rigid visa approval policies for the Nikkei Brazilians later on in the 1990s, and as

discussed above, is now attempting to extend local voting rights to permanent residents who

fulfill certain criteria, a rather drastic proposition that has not been offered to visa-holding

permanent residents even in nations with a long history of multiculturalism, like the United

States. Although it is a step in the right direction (that is, in the direction of a higher degree of

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[101] Ito, "Many angles to acquiring Japanese citizenship."

acceptance of foreigners), it would certainly be easier for the Japanese government to initiate a blanket reform of immigration law so that citizenship could be acquired more easily (especially through birth in Japan), and all citizens would consequently hold equal legal rights.

Such reform would have broader implications, not only in terms of legal rights, but also societally. My survey, as described in chapter 4, indicated a lingering sense of discomfort with a variety of non-Japanese populations. Making citizenship more easily attainable would ostensibly increase the number of citizens who are racially non-Japanese. I believe this increase in "non-Japanese Japanese" could solidify the term "Japanese" as a legal concept in the minds of the Japanese population. Going to the polls alongside people who do not necessarily look like oneself would likely make the legal distinction clear between "Japanese" and "non-Japanese" (those who have voting rights *are* Japanese) possibly paving the way to a possible "Korean-Japanese" or "Brazilian-Japanese" identity. Moreover, while bullying and discrimination would absolutely remain (as in the United States today), holding the legal right to "Japaneseness" would give a degree of illegitimacy to such harassment.

Japan, as we have seen, has a real economic interest in fostering a more inclusive definition of "Japaneseness." I have argued that without making steps to reduce xenophobia in both Japanese society and in the Japanese legal code, Japan may not be able to attract the number and type of foreign workers it will need to avoid serious economic problems. Making citizenship a more attainable goal may help in this effort, as it offers a solid, legitimate definition of "Japaneseness" that has the potential to reduce the degree to which inclusion in society is defined on the basis of race. While the reforms, in turn, could help to guard Japan against future economic and labor issues, they may also help heal some of the wounds that linger among some

of the groups that have historically been the target of serious discrimination and prejudice. Japan

must make it easier to "turn Japanese."

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Appendix A: Transcript of Survey Questions (English Translation)

Part I:
Please answer the following questions.
*In the actual survey, the footnotes did not appear; they are presented here to provide detail regarding the famous people included in the questions.

1. Are you familiar with singer Hamasaki Ayumi?[102]
    a. If yes, do you consider her to be Japanese?

2. Are you familiar with singer Miyavi?[103]
    a. If yes, do you consider him to be Japanese?

3. Are you familiar with baseball player Suzuki Ichiro?[104]
    a. If yes, do you consider him to be Japanese?

4. Are you familiar with rapper Verbal from the band M-Flo?[105]
    a. If yes, do you consider him to be Japanese?

5. Are you familiar with Nissin Foods founder Ando Momofuku?[106]
    a. If yes, do you consider him to be Japanese?

6. Are you familiar with singer Crystal Kay?[107]
    a. If yes, do you consider her to be Japanese?

7. Are you familiar with actor Kaneshiro Takeshi?[108]
    a. If yes, do you consider him to be Japanese?

8. Are you familiar with model Anna Tsuchiya?[109]
    a. If yes, do you consider her to be Japanese?

9. Are you familiar with writer Yuu Miri?[110]
    a. If yes, do you consider him to be Japanese?

10. Are you familiar with singer Utada Hikaru?[111]
    a. If yes, do you consider her to be Japanese?

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[102] Japanese
[103] Half Zainichi Korean, half Japanese
[104] Japanese living in the United States
[105] Third-generation Zainichi Korean
[106] Taiwanese who lived in Japan
[107] Born to an African American father and a South Korean mother, raised in Japan
[108] Half Ryukyuan, half Taiwanese
[109] Half Japanese, half Polish-Irish-American
[110] Zainichi Korean novelist
[111] Japanese singer, born and raised in New York

Part II:
Please indicate your degree of comfort with the following situations on a scale of 1 (extremely uncomfortable) to 6 (completely comfortable).

A community of Zainichi Koreans lives in your city or town:
1   2   3   4   5   6

A family of Brazilian-Japanese lives next door to you:
1   2   3   4   5   6

A Zainichi Korean family lives in a house next door to you:
1   2   3   4   5   6

Your sibling marries an American:
1   2   3   4   5   6

A person from Taiwan asks you on a date:
1   2   3   4   5   6

Your sibling marries a Nikkei Brazilian:
1   2   3   4   5   6

Your boss at work is a Thai person:
1   2   3   4   5   6

A Zainichi Korean student is in the same class with you at school:
1   2   3   4   5   6

Your family hosts a Caucasian American study abroad student:
1   2   3   4   5   6

An American asks you on a date:
1   2   3   4   5   6

A Nikkei Brazilian family lives in a house next door to you:
1   2   3   4   5   6

Your sibling marries a Thai person:
1   2   3   4   5   6

Your family hosts an African-American study abroad student:
1   2   3   4   5   6

A Nikkei Brazilian student is in the same class with you at school:
1   2   3   4   5   6

Your roommate is a Zainichi Korean:
1   2   3   4   5   6

A Russian student is in the same class with you at school:
1   2   3   4   5   6

Your roommate is a Nikkei Brazilian:
1   2   3   4   5   6

Your boss at work is Russian:
1   2   3   4   5   6

A Zainichi Korean asks you on a date:
1   2   3   4   5   6

A Russian asks you on a date:
1   2   3   4   5   6

Your boss at work is a Nikkei Brazilian:
1   2   3   4   5   6

Your sibling marries a Zainichi Korean:
1   2   3   4   5   6

Your roommate is Chinese:
1   2   3   4   5   6

Your family hosts a Thai study abroad student:
1   2   3   4   5   6

A Nikkei Brazilian invites you on a date:
1   2   3   4   5   6

Your boss at work is a Zainichi Korean:
1   2   3   4   5   6

Your sibling marries an African-American:
1   2   3   4   5   6

Part III:
Please answer the following questions

1. What is your age?

2. What is your ethnic identity?

3. What is your gender?

4. Where is your hometown?

5. Have you ever studied or traveled abroad?