ALIENATING ETHNIC KIN: ASSESSING IMMIGRATION INTEGRATION POLICIES FOR THE BRAZILIAN *NIKKEIJIN* IN JAPAN AND *JOSEONJOK* MARRIAGE MIGRANTS IN SOUTH KOREA

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INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, Japan and South Korea have become hosts to ethnic return migrants who have returned to their ancestral homeland after once emigrating overseas. Since the 1980s, the Brazilian *nikkeijin*, or members of the Japanese diaspora, have returned to Japan as labor migrants. From 1992, *joseonjok*, or ethnic Korean Chinese, migrant women traveled to South Korea to marry Korean men. Japan and South Korea have targeted these groups for their ethnic affinities—the attraction and kinship between the homeland population and returning migrants—on the presumption that they would integrate well into these two societies, where a “virtual equation between the state, nation, and ethnicity”² exists. However, these ethnic affinities between the diaspora and the homeland population did not materialize.

Academics such as Takeyuki Tsuda and Keiko Yamanaka, who focus on the Brazilian *nikkeijin* case, and Dong-Hoon Seol and Caren Freeman, who

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² John Lie, “The Discourse of Japaneseness,” in *Japan and Global Migration: Foreign Workers and the Advent of a Multicultural Society*, ed. Mike Douglass and Glenda Susan Roberts (New York: Routledge, 2000), 81. Lie’s monograph, *Multiethnic Japan*, offers a discussion on the ‘Japaneseness’ equation and *nihonjinron*, a popular genre of texts that synonymously explores nationality, ethnicity, and culture. For an examination of the parallels between *nihonjinron* and Korean nation identity, see Kyung-koo Han, “The Anthropology of the Discourse on the Koreanness of Koreans,” *Korea Journal* 43, no. 1 (2003): 5–31.

focus on the *joseonjok* case, have provided much anthropological scholarship on the difficulties these ethnic return migrants face upon returning “home.” Unfortunately, English-language scholarship has not followed up on the pivot of both the Japanese and Korean national governments to finally address immigration integration issues that the return migrants face.

In Japan, following the 2008 economic crisis, Cabinet Office issued the *Nikkei Teiju Gaikokujin Shisaku Ni Kansuru Koudou Keigaku* (henceforth the Action Plan for *Nikkeijin* Foreign Resident Policy), in August 2010. In South Korea, the *Damunhwa Gajok Jjiwonbeop* (henceforth the Support for Multicultural Families Act), enacted in 2008, is a broad set of regulations to improve the quality of life of foreign spouses and integrate them into Korean social life. As both countries nominally recognize the importance of multiculturalism in a globalizing world, the narrative of ethnic return migrants and their relationship with the social myths of homogeneity in their ethnic-based understandings of citizenship become lost in a generalized discourse about Japan and South Korea’s embrace towards *all* its foreign-born residents. This is unfortunate, as the shared ethnicity between the diaspora and the homeland population challenges existing conceptions of what is foreign in ethnic societies.

Considering the parallel social histories of both the Brazilian *nikkeijin* and the *joseonjok*, and the broadly similar experiences—powerful visions of ethnic homogeneity, long-term demographic challenges, and a nascent recognition of multiculturalism by the respective national governments—in both country cases, I attempt to assess the national government level initiatives to support their social integration. It also hopes to continue the ethnic return migrants’ narratives that Tsuda, Seol, and others began.

I argue that these national-level policy initiatives to integrate ethnic return migrants are incomplete. As token commitments to multiculturalism, the policies focus on rebuilding ethnic affinities that the homeland nation-state expects them to reproduce as descendants of the same ethnic group. However, the assimilationist ideology behind the policies perpetuate the marginalization of these individuals in a hierarchical nationhood by virtue of their shared ancestry but different cultural behaviors, because the migrants are unwilling to reproduce these expectations to earn their inclusion in their ancestral homelands. The policies also fail to reconcile the challenge to the presumed equation of ethnic identity and cultural behavior that the return migrants create for the homeland

population. Since the policies are skewed in the homeland population's interests, the interests of the return migrants become invisible.

RETURN MIGRANTS AND IMMIGRATION IN ETHNIC NATIONS

Weber defines an ethnic group as one that “on the basis of similarities of exterior habitus, of customs, or of both...[shares] a subjective belief in communality of descent, whether an objective consanguinity exists or not.”³ In the context of ethnic return migration, since both the homeland population and returning diaspora are descendants from the same antecedent ethnic group, the homeland population would believe that the return migrants share ethnic-based similarities. Thus, in countries with an ethnic-based understanding of citizenship, a returning member of the diaspora would be less disruptive to the ethnic organization of their societies than another immigrant with no relationship to that ethnic group. Diasporas respond to the homeland nation's call, because they originate from “massive emigration and dispersal—forced or at least propelled by considerable distress,” and thus innately long to return ‘home.’⁴

In theory, inviolable ethnic affinities would create large return migrant communities under preferential immigration policies. But that is not the case in either Japan or South Korea. Once the third largest group of foreign residents behind the *Zainichi* Koreans, the population of all Brazilian *nikkeijin* resident in Japan peaked at 313,771 in 2007, and fell by over 40 percent from 2007 and 2014.⁵ It fell over 40 percent from 2007 to 2014 (Figure 1). Japan's Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, even announced in a program 2009 to pay unemployed *nikkeijin* JPY 300,000 each to return to their home countries.⁶ According to the

³ Christian Joppke, *Selecting by Origin: Ethnic Migration in the Liberal State* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005), 4.

⁴ Rudd Koopmans and Paul Statham, “How National Citizenship Shapes Transnationalism: Migrant and Minority Claims-Making in Germany, Great Britain and the Netherlands,” in *Toward Assimilation and Citizenship: Immigrants in Liberal Nation-States*, ed. Christian Joppke and Ewa Morawska (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 201.

⁵ Because Japanese census data is based on nationality (*kokuseki*), not ethnicity or race, the numbers cited here technically refer to the number of residents with Brazilian *nationality* in Japan without regard to their ethnicity, *nikkeijin* or otherwise. The Japanese-language literature, however, makes the assumption that *Zainichi* Brazilians refer to *nikkeijin* Brazilians who entered Japan on preferential immigration policies, so I do the same.

⁶ Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Japan, “Nikkeijin Rishokusha Ni Taisuru Kikoku Shien Jigyō No Jisshi Ni Tsuite (日系人離職者に対する帰国支援事業の実施について),” March 31, 2009, <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/houdou/2009/03/h0331-10.html>.

Migration Policy Institute, 12,356 Brazilian *nikkeijin*, representing 93.7 percent of the total applications, applied to leave Japan.⁷ On the other hand, the number of *joseonjok* brides entering South Korea has seen negative growth in recent years, leading some scholars to conclude that studies of the population “captures a moment in time that is now passing.”⁸ Figure 2 shows that in recent years, international marriages have increasingly involved migrant spouses outside of China, especially from Southeast Asia, although *joseonjok* spouses remain in the plurality at 32.1 percent.⁹

Figure 1:

(Source: Ministry of Justice, Japan)¹⁰

⁷ Kristen McCabe et al., “Pay to Go: Countries Offer Cash to Immigrants Willing to Pack Their Bags,” *Migration Policy Institute*, November 5, 2009, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/pay-go-countries-offer-cash-immigrants-willing-pack-their-bags>.

⁸ Yihua Hong, Changzoo Song, and Julie Park, “Korean, Chinese, or What? Identity Transformations of Chosŏnjok (Korean Chinese) Migrant Brides in South Korea,” *Asian Ethnicity* 14, no. 1 (2013): 30, doi:10.1080/14631369.2012.703074.

⁹ Korean Institute for Healthy Family, “Multicultural Information: Multicultural Families Statistic,” *Danuri*, accessed November 29, 2016, <http://www.liveinkorea.kr/homepage/en/multidata/statisticsFamily.asp?language=EN&mc=M0031>.

¹⁰ Ministry of Justice, Japan, “Heisei 28-Nen 6-Gatsumatsu Genzai Ni Okeru Zairyuu Gaikokujin Nitsuite (Kakuteichi) (平成28年6月末現在における在留外国人数について (確定値)),” September 27, 2016, http://www.moj.go.jp/nyuukokukanri/kouhou/nyuukokukanri04_00060.html.

Figure 2:¹¹

(Source: Korean Statistical Information Service)¹²

The above data shows in practice the artificiality and elasticity of ethnicity critical to Weber's definition. A return migrant lacks absolute control over their ethnic identity, regardless of how much kinship they believe they have with the ancestral homeland. Who they are and how they can exist is "externally imposed by dominant society."¹³ The homeland state, as the collective entity with hegemonic ownership of "distinct ancestry and destiny definitions" over the ethnic group that occupies its territory, has the agency to define the expectations of who a legitimate ethnic group member is, and hence whether to embrace or reject its returning

¹¹ Similar to the Brazilian *nikkeijin* case, the statistics in Figure 2 includes Chinese, non-ethnic Korean spouses in international marriage, since discrete statistics about *joseonjok* are not available in the English language. Since the Support for Multicultural Families Act is not a policy that only targets *joseonjok*, the statistics may reflect how the policy neglects the specific interests of *joseonjok* brides.

¹² Korean Statistical Information Service, "Marriages by Foreign Bride's Nationality for Provinces," Statistical Database, April 7, 2016, http://kosis.kr/eng/statisticsList/statisticsList_01List.jsp?vwcd=MT_ETITLE&parmTabId=M_01_01#SubCont.

¹³ Tsuda, *Strangers in the Ethnic Homeland*, 131.

diaspora.¹⁴ Germany stopped its preferential immigration policy for ethnic Germans in 1992, because the Russian and Eastern European ethnic Germans who were “notionally co-ethnic but sociologically [not]” were experiencing “adjustment and integration problems similar to those of ‘normal’ immigrants.”¹⁵ As the German ethnic group’s dominant center, Germany unilaterally denied these ethnic Germans from legitimately staking ownership of their ancestry; they were a “conceptual anomaly.”¹⁶ Return migrants who cannot reproduce the behaviors they should naturally know and should correctly perform, by virtue of their ancestry, face the “exasperation and disbelief” from the homeland population. Their existence challenges the binary classification that either one is part of the ethnic group or not: here is a group of migrants whose shared ancestry does not translate into shared cultural behaviors. Recalling how her Japanese informants judged how well she reproduced the behaviors they expected of a young Japanese woman, Kondo, a Japanese-American anthropologist, succinctly summarizes the homeland population’s ethnically-conditioned puzzle: “How could someone who *looked* Japanese not *be* Japanese?”¹⁷

Seol and Skrentny define this dichotomy of being neither a complete outsider to or a pure member of the ethnic nation as “hierarchical nationhood.” Traditionally, discourse on citizenship, such as Anderson’s “imagined community,” conceptualized citizens sharing “a deep, horizontal comradeship” to the nation.¹⁸ In “hierarchical nationhood,” return migrants “do not share in the rights and opportunities of full members of the nation” because of their association with the second country that they emigrated to, rendering them “generations removed from the kin state.”¹⁹

A nation-state can create hierarchical nationhood through legal and social means. Visas and work permits create structures to block return migrants from receiving the same economic opportunities as ‘pure’ members of the ethnic

¹⁴ Joppke, *Selecting by Origin*, ix.

¹⁵ Joppke, *Contesting Ethnic Immigration*, 95.

¹⁶ Dorinne K. Kondo, “Dissolution and Reconstitution of Self: Implications for Anthropological Epistemology,” *Cultural Anthropology* 1, no. 1 (1986): 76.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁸ Dong-Hoon Seol and John D. Skrentny, “Ethnic Return Migration and Hierarchical Nationhood: Korean Chinese Foreign Workers in South Korea,” *Ethnicities* 9, no. 2 (2009): 150–51, doi:10.1177/1468796808099901.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 151.

group. Social expectations for legitimate ethnic behavior render the returning diaspora in the eyes of the homeland population as cultural disappointments who have become “culturally contaminated abroad.”²⁰ The question then is whether an assimilationist integration policy can address the marginalization of return migrants by dismantling the social structures of ethnic hierarchical nationhood.

THE BRAZILIAN *NIKKEIJIN*: ALIENATION AND DEGREES OF “JAPANESENESS”

Background

The Brazilian *nikkeijin* return migrants are descendants of Japanese citizens who have emigrated overseas since the Meiji period (1868-1912).²¹ Fearing unrest from population pressures, the government provided ample logistical and financial support.²² 188,209 Japanese citizens migrated from 1899 to 1941 to Brazil, whose coffee plantations needed labor following the abolition of slavery.²³ After a brief hiatus during World War II, between 1952 and 1963 a further 46,000 Japanese immigrants entered Brazil.²⁴ The Japanese International Cooperation Agency continued to support emigration to Brazil until 1993.²⁵

By the 1960s, urbanization and rapid economic development produced middle class *nikkeijin* descendants who had “grown up in Brazil, spoke Portuguese and knew little of Japanese language and culture.”²⁶ But hyperinflation in the 1980s threatened the *nikkeijin* professional class. Japan was facing a labor shortage during the bubble economy period.²⁷ Seeing an opportunity, the Brazilian *nikkeijin* began returning to Japan to earn higher wages than they would in Brazil. A network of

²⁰ Tsuda, *Strangers in the Ethnic Homeland*, 131.

²¹ Daniela De Carvalho, *Migrants and Identity in Japan and Brazil: The Nikkeijin* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 4.

²² Michael O. Sharpe, *Postcolonial Citizens and Ethnic Migration: The Netherlands and Japan in the Age of Globalization* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 119.

²³ Koji Sasaki, “Between Emigration and Immigration: Japanese Emigrants to Brazil and Their Descendants in Japan,” *Transnational Migration in East Asia Senri Ethnological Reports* 77 (2008): 54.

²⁴ Sharpe, *Postcolonial Citizens and Ethnic Migration*, 122.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 122.

²⁶ Keiko Yamanaka, “Return Migration of Japanese-Brazilians to Japan: The Nikkeijin as Ethnic Minority and Political Construct,” *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 5, no. 1 (1996): 73, doi:10.1353/dsp.1996.0002.

²⁷ Fukui Chizu, “Nanbei Nikkeijin Ni Kakawaru Mondai To Kaketsusaku No Ichi Kousatsu (南米日系人に関わる問題と解決策の一考察),” *Takasaki Keizai Daigaku Ronshu* (高崎経済大学論集) 52, no. 2 (2009): 74.

recruiters and return migrants formed between Japan and Brazil, encouraging second and third-generation *nikkeijin*, especially those without Japanese language proficiency, to connect to employment opportunities in Japan.²⁸ Despite the “relative absence of close economic or political relationships between the two countries,” according to Tsuda, Brazilian *nikkeijin* kept a Japanese “ethnic consciousness” for socioeconomic status privileges *vis-à-vis* other Brazilians, leading to “feelings of nostalgic longing for the ancestral homeland” and therefore “a desire to visit the country of their parents and grandparents.”²⁹ By 1996, over 200,000 Brazilian *nikkeijin* had settled in Japan, representing 16 percent of the number of people with Japanese descent in Brazil.³⁰ They settled as contract laborers in factories in cities, such as Hanamatsu, Shizuoka and Oizumi, which predominately contained small and medium manufacturing firms that had difficulty attracting enough Japanese citizen laborers since the 1980s, and were employing undocumented workers from Pakistan and Bangladesh.³¹

To simplify admitting the influx of Brazilian *nikkeijin*, the government revised the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Law in 1989. The law created a new *teijusha* (‘long-term resident’) visa status tailored specifically for second and third-generation *nikkeijin*. They could stay for up to three years with no restrictions on their employment activities and renew their status indefinitely.³² The *teijusha* visa effectively created a “side door” for unskilled labor without establishing a formal immigration policy.³³ Ministry of Justice officials tailored the *teijusha* visa for *nikkeijin* because, according to one who spoke with Tsuda, “if people have blood ties or descendants from that nationality, the same nationality then of course it is easier to accept those people.” Admitting

²⁸ Ibid., 73.

²⁹ Takeyuki Tsuda, *Strangers in the Ethnic Homeland: Japanese Brazilian Return Migration in Transnational Perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 90-91.

³⁰ Yamanaka, “I Will Go Home, But When?,” 134.

³¹ Ibid., 138.

³² Yasuki Izawa, “‘Tabunka Kyousei’ no Sogo: Zainichiburajirujin No Genjou to Shisaku No Seigou/Fuseigou (「多文化共生」の齟齬：在日ブラジル人の現状と施策の整合/不整合),” *Toyo Daigaku Ningenkagaku Sougoukenkyusho Kiyou* (東洋大学人間科学総合研究所紀要), no. 15 (2013): 88.

³³ Michael O. Sharpe, “What Does Blood Membership Mean in Political Terms?: The Political Incorporation of Latin American Nikkeijin (Japanese Descendants) (LAN) in Japan 1990–2004,” *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 12, no. 1 (2011): 123, doi:10.1017/S1468109910000253.

nikkeijin aligned with the national interest, not only because the government could discourage firms from employing undocumented workers, but also “ethnic homogeneity and cultural continuity were crucially important to the public.”³⁴

The Nikkeijin Action Plan

The 2008 economic crisis disproportionately hurt the Brazilian *nikkeijin*. As contract workers in factories, they were the first to be fired.³⁵ One survey in Hanamatsu by a local non-government organization (NGO) in January 2009 interviewed 2,773 Brazilian *nikkeijin* and found that 47 percent self-reported that they were unemployed.³⁶ The remaining community was a shadow of its former self. Only one of the four Portuguese-language newspapers survived, sixteen schools for the Brazilian community closed its doors, and mainstream media ran feature reports on Brazilians living in abandoned karaoke clubs.³⁷

In January 2009, the Cabinet Office established the *Teiju Gaikokujin Shisaku Suishin Shitsu* (Council to Advance Long-Term Resident Policies) to address the mass unemployment and poverty faced by the Brazilian *nikkeijin* who remained. To scaffold its policy of integrating the Brazilian *nikkeijin*, the Cabinet Office issued the *Nikkei Teijyu Gaikokujin Shisaku Ni Kansuru Kinhon Shishin* (日系定住外国人施策に関する基本指針, henceforth the Basic Guidelines) in August 2010. One year later, the Cabinet Office released the Action Plan, based on the Basic Guidelines (see Appendix 1). The Action Plan categorizes areas where ministries can enact policies to incorporate *nikkeijin* residents as members of Japanese society.³⁸

³⁴ Yamanaka, “Return Migration,” 76.

³⁵ Michael O. Sharpe, “When Ethnic Returnees Are de Facto Guestworkers: What Does the Introduction of Latin American Japanese Nikkeijin (Japanese Descendants) (LAN) Suggest for Japan’s Definition of Nationality, Citizenship, and Immigration Policy?,” *Policy and Society* 29, no. 4 (2010): 369, doi: 10.1016/j.polsoc.2010.09.009.

³⁶ Higuchi Naoto, “Keizaikiki To Zainichi Burajirujin: Nani Ga Tairyō Shitsugyō Kikoku Wo Motarashita Noka (経済危機と在日ブラジル人: 何が大量失業・帰国をもたらしたのか),” *Oohara Shakaimondai Kenkyūjo Zasshi* (大原社会問題研究所雑誌), no. 622 (2010), 53.

³⁷ Kahori Yamamoto, “‘Tabunka Kyōsei Shisaku’ Ga Miotoshitekita Mono—Keizai Fukyō Shita Ni Okeru Burajirujin (「多文化共生施策」が見落としてきたもの—経済不況下におけるブラジル人),” *Kaigai Ijyu Shiryoukan Kenkyū Kiyō* (海外移住資料館研究紀要) 5, no. 1 (2011): 35–36.

³⁸ There is a fifth category in the Action Plan with regards to raising children (子供を大切に育てていくために) that I will not analyze. It is unfortunately beyond the scope of my analysis to examine the integration of Brazilian *nikkeijin* youth—those born in Japan to the migrant

The Basic Guidelines are the first national policy document that explicitly delineates not only the need for foreign residents to find their place in their local communities, regardless of *where* that community might be, but also a national obligation the government has to the Brazilian *nikkeijin*.³⁹ Acknowledging that many *nikkeijin* desire to remain in Japan for the long-term despite the economic downturn, the Cabinet Office believes that is the “country’s responsibility” to develop policies to incorporate these people as “members of Japanese society” and “not be excluded from society.”⁴⁰ The rhetoric represents a reversal from the status quo. Previously, the Japanese government allowed Brazilian *nikkeijin* to enter without creating the supporting immigration integration infrastructure, because it expected the *nikkeijin*, by virtue of their ancestry, to exhibit Japanese cultural behaviors that would allow for seamless integration. Consequently, the government deliberately maintained a “policy of having no policy (*seisaku teki musaku*)” because the Brazilian *nikkeijin* were never formally laborers by immigration law, merely the children of citizens who wanted to return to their ancestral homeland.⁴¹

Assessing the Nikkeijin Action Plan

One major focus in the Action Plan is language education and access, the lack of which has contributed to the *nikkeijin*’s unemployment post-recession.⁴² In fact, the first visual that visitors see in the Cabinet Office’s online

workers—in the Japanese education system.

³⁹ To reconcile the contradiction created by the Ministry of Justice of having foreign laborers with no immigration policy, local governments such as those in Kawasaki and Hamamatsu autonomously assisted foreign residents by providing them with targeted services and involving them in foreign resident councils. For a discussion of incorporation policies created by local governments, see Katherine Tegtmeier Pak, “Cities and Local Citizenship in Japan: Overcoming Nationality?,” in *Local Citizenship in Recent Countries of Immigration: Japan in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Takeyuki Tsuda (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2006), 65–96.

⁴⁰ The original Japanese reads as follows: “今後もこれらの人々の定住を認める以上、日本社会の一員として受け入れ、社会から排除されないようにするための施策を国の責任として講じていくことが必要である。” See Cabinet Office, Japan, “Nikkei Teiju Gaikokujin Shisaku Ni Kansuru Kihon Shishin.”

⁴¹ Nanako Inaba and Naoto Higuchi, “Ushinawareta 20 Nen: Zainichi Nanbeijin Ha Naze Kyugen Shitanoka (失われた20年: 在日南米人はなぜ急減したのか),” *Ibaraki Daigaku Jinbun Gakubu Kiyō Jinbun Komyunikeshon Gakka Ronshū* (茨城大学人文学部紀要人文コミュニケーション学科論集) 14, no. 1 (2013): 9.

⁴² Cabinet Office, Japan, “Nikkei Teiju Gaikokujin Shisaku Ni Kansuru Kihon Shishin (

portal about policies for *nikkeijin* residents is an image of students learning *kanji* (see Figure 3). Traditionally, “expectations about what will/should come out of a foreigner’s mouth—the pain when these expectations are not met” dictated the Japanese language’s relationship with non-Japanese individuals.⁴³ This social attitude views only people with Japanese ‘blood’ could speak fluent Japanese, and conversely, people without Japanese ‘blood’ are better off with only elementary or no knowledge of the language. The result is a “boundary-maintaining mechanism” which compartmentalizes non-Japanese people in Japan as transient guests viewed from afar.⁴⁴

Figure 3: Prioritizing Language Learning in Nikkeijin Policy

The homepage of the Cabinet Office’s online portal on *nikkeijin* resident policy.
(Source: Cabinet Office, Japan)⁴⁵

日系定住外国人施策に関する基本指針,” August 31, 2010, <http://www8.cao.go.jp/teiju/guideline/pdf/fulltext.pdf>.

⁴³ Chris Burgess, “‘It’s Better If They Speak Broken Japanese’: Language as a Pathway or an Obstacle to Citizenship in Japan?,” in *Language and Citizenship in Japan*, ed. Nanette Gottlieb (New York: Routledge, 2012), 39.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 40.

⁴⁵ Cabinet Office, Japan, “Nikkei Teiju Gaikokujin Shisaku (日系定住外国人施策),” accessed December 11, 2016, <http://www8.cao.go.jp/teiju/index.html>.

If knowledge of Japanese is a prerequisite for ethnic affinities, then language proficiency, or lack thereof, is an especially acute source of pain for the Brazilian *nikkeijin*. In a 2009 Sophia University survey on the living conditions of 683 labor migrants across seven prefectures, of which 583 were Brazilian *nikkeijin*, 46.7 percent said that they could manage only the most basic conversation levels in Japanese, and only 13.8 percent said that they could write *hiragana* and *katakana*, the two Japanese syllabaries.⁴⁶ Seeing the *nikkeijin*'s mismatching ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, the homeland population marginalizes them as 'conceptual anomalies' who cannot be "children and grandchildren of the Japanese" because they do not know their ancestral language.⁴⁷ Broken language bonds discourage the homeland population from including the Brazilian *nikkeijin* in residential and workplace communities.⁴⁸

Furthermore, as a 'positive minority' in Brazil's professional class, the *nikkeijin* had protected their "Japanese cultural characteristics," which draw admiration from "mainstream Brazilians...[for] their affiliation with the highly respected First World nation of Japan."⁴⁹ Thus, language inability becomes a "stigma" that delegitimizes the Brazilian *nikkeijin*'s stake to the Japanese ancestry that they had so treasured.⁵⁰ The greater one held his/her Japanese identity in Brazil, the "more negatively [they react] to their ethnic exclusion as 'foreigners' in Japan, resulting in considerably greater inner conflict and identity dissonance."⁵¹

The government thus recognized the reality for language to be not only an obstacle for accessing social services crucial for the *nikkeijin*'s health and safety but also a tool of social oppression that compartmentalizes the *nikkeijin* as "second-rate Japanese" or "inadequate Japanese."⁵² A language-focused policy can rebuild ethnic affinities and alleviate the Brazilian *nikkeijin*'s status of cultural

⁴⁶ Chiyoko Mita et al., "Gaikokujin Rodosha Seikatsu Jittai Chosa Kekka (外国人就労者生活実態調査結果)" (Tokyo, Japan: Sophia University, October 2009), <http://pweb.sophia.ac.jp/cmmta/NRC091106.pdf>.

⁴⁷ Cabinet Office, Japan, "Nikkei Teiju Gaikokujin Shisaku Ni Kansuru Kihon Shishin."

⁴⁸ Personal accounts best illustrate how the Brazilian *nikkeijin* were "cultural disappointments" to the homeland population. See Tsuda, *Strangers in the Ethnic Homeland*, 157-171.

⁴⁹ Takeyuki Tsuda, "Transnational Migration and the Nationalization of Ethnic Identity among Japanese Brazilian Return Migrants," *Ethos* 27, no. 2 (1999): 147.

⁵⁰ Tsuda, *Strangers in the Ethnic Homeland*, 117.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 177.

disappointment to the homeland population.

The growing age of the *nikkeijin* laborers undermine the efficacy of the language initiatives. The situation is ironic because the government imported the *nikkeijin* laborers to solve Japan's existing aging labor problem. Although Japanese government does not collect demographic data specifically on *nikkeijin* residents, a 2010 report by the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare acknowledged that "unemployment and aging of foreign laborers could add pressure to social security and welfare measures in the future," suggesting that they are aware of the *nikkeijin* population's aging problem.⁵³ Izawa estimates that if most Brazilian *nikkeijin* came to Japan in their 30s when the Diet revised the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Law in 1989, then they must now be in their 50s.⁵⁴ Long work hours also eliminated opportunities for Japanese self-study. It is a burden to ask an aging population to commit hundreds of hours to learn Japanese, let alone participate in job retraining programs. For example, the highest level of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test, an international benchmark of fluency for non-native speakers administered by the Japan Foundation, requires around nine hundred hours of study.⁵⁵ They have already spent two decades in almost linguistic and social isolation from the homeland population, working in factory lines whose peers and supervisors were also Brazilian *nikkeijin* and living in apartments where their Japanese neighbors refused to communicate with them or moved out to avoid them.⁵⁶

Another focus of the Action Plan, "Respecting One Another's Cultures," places the onus on the homeland population to diversify what it means to be a "member of Japanese society" and allow outsiders to assimilate.⁵⁷ In the spirit of

⁵³ Sho Noguchi, "Wagakuni Ni Okeru Gaikokujin Rodosha Wo Meguru Jyokyou Ni Tsuite (わが国における外国人労働者を巡る状況について)" (Presentation, Dai 50kai Rodo Seisaku Foraum (第50回労働政策フォーラム), Tokyo, Japan, December 4, 2010).

⁵⁴ Izawa, "'Tabunka Kyousei' no Sogo," 91.

⁵⁵ Burgess, "It's Better If They Speak Broken Japanese," 47.

⁵⁶ Citing a 1997 survey, Tsuda states: "A third, 33.6 percent, live in apartments where over 25 percent of the residents are other *nikkeijin* and only 12.7 percent of them live in apartments with only Japanese residents." See Tsuda, *Strangers in the Ethnic Homeland*, 162. In the post-2008 recession context, recent surveys on foreign laborers focus more on their employment conditions rather than residential segregation.

⁵⁷ The original Japanese reads as follows: "日系定住外国人のための施策を進めるに当たっては、日系定住外国人自身が日本の文化・慣習を十分に理解することが重要である一方、彼らを日本社会の一員として受け入れることが、将来に向かって社会の活力になること、そのためにはお互いの文化を尊重しながら受け入れていくことが

tabunka kyosei, Japanese citizens must accept that the *nikkeijin* are here to stay and are crucial for Japan's future growth.⁵⁸

Many scholars have extensively studied the discourse of 'Japaneseness' in excluding and including individuals as "members of Japanese society," but a brief review here is worthwhile. It is not an overstatement to argue that the homogenizing characteristics of 'Japaneseness' is diametrically opposed to the homeland population's perception of the Brazilian *nikkeijin*, perpetuating a clear hierarchical nationhood. If Japan is a First World nation of prosperity, then Brazil is the "Amazon jungle, Indians, poverty, crime, drugs, political corruption, and samba."⁵⁹ If all Japanese belong to the middle class, then the Brazilian *nikkeijin* are destitute, holding so-called '3K' jobs (*kiken*/dangerous, *kitanai*/dirty, *kitsui*/difficult) to escape from their poverty in Brazil.⁶⁰ If Japanese culture is clean, quiet, and refined, then Brazilian culture is dirty, loud, and garish. The Brazilian *nikkeijin* cannot separate their garbage, "cluster in the dark and speak loudly," and wear vulgar clothes.⁶¹ If "the construction of the state in Japan was based on the idea of the nation as a family," then the Brazilian *nikkeijin* are not qualified to be part of that body politic.⁶² Although they have Japanese 'blood,' they have become "culturally contaminated and defiled through prolonged contact with an impure and unclean Third World country."⁶³

Once a vicious cycle of fear and discrimination begins, it is difficult for the homeland population to stop asserting their cultural superiority and distrust towards the Brazilian *nikkeijin*. A June 2014 *Asahi* article about Oizumi during the World Cup in Brazil had the ominous sub-headline: "City and Prefectural Police on Alert for 'Overheated' Celebrations (「過熱」には警戒: 町・県警)." ⁶⁴ For an article that supposedly celebrated Oizumi's diversity during a major international event, the qualifying statement drew unnecessary attention

重要であることについて、日本国民の理解を深めていくことが重要である。” See Cabinet Office, Japan, “Nikkei Teiju Gaikokujin Shisaku Ni Kansuru Kihon Shishin.”

⁵⁸ Yamamoto, “Tabunka Kyosei Shisaku’ Ga Miotoshitekita Mono,” 36.

⁵⁹ Tsuda, *Strangers in the Ethnic Homeland*, 193.

⁶⁰ John Lie, *Multietnic Japan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 50.

⁶¹ Tsuda, *Strangers in the Ethnic Homeland*, 124.

⁶² Carvalho, *Migrants and Identity in Japan*, 116.

⁶³ Tsuda, *Strangers in the Ethnic Homeland*, 134.

⁶⁴ Taro Fujita and Ippai Nakada, “Burajiru Ouen, Takamaru Netsu (ブラジル応援、高まる熱),” *Asahi Shimbun*, June 7, 2014, Morning edition, sec. Shakai (社会).

to the worst fears about the Brazilian *nikkeijin*, compartmentalizing them as loud, unpredictable, and dangerous.

For a policy document that ambitiously aims to integrate *nikkeijin* residents as long-term “members of Japanese society,” the Action Plan provides elementary policy details that do not liberalize the membership criteria. It abhors the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications to continuing promoting the “Plan for the Promotion of *Tabunka Kyosei* in the Local Community (地域における多文化共生推進プラン),” an initiative it began in 2006 to encourage local governments to educate residents about the importance of *tabunka kyosei* through autonomous policy initiatives. The Plan’s suggestions for how to do so include symposiums in schools and libraries about creating *tabunka kyosei*-centric environments and “exchange events” that introduce foreign cultures to Japanese residents, and Japanese culture to foreign residents.⁶⁵

Such events are insufficient for Japanese citizens to understand the value that non-Japanese residents bring to their local communities. An “exchange (*kouryu*) event,” for example, is inherently “divorced from the everyday,” because it creates *nikkeijin*-homeland population interactions in artificial, controlled settings. Thus, the homeland population cannot envision non-Japanese residents as ‘normalized’ contributors to society.⁶⁶ Kurimoto and Yamamoto characterize the ideology as the consumerist ‘three Fs’: food, festival, and fashion.⁶⁷ Figure 4 exemplifies this *tabunka kyosei* ideology: Oizumi’s government encourages Japanese tourists to spectate the samba carnival (festival), eat Brazilian *gurume* (food), and admire Brazilian ‘traditional’ dress (fashion). By commercializing non-Japanese cultures, *tabunka kyosei* hides the past and present of the Brazilian *nikkeijin*’s structural inequalities, unemployment, and discrimination.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Japan, “Tabunka Kyosei No Suishin Ni Kansuru Kenkyukai Hokokusho (多文化共生の推進に関する研究会報告書),” March 2006, http://www.soumu.go.jp/main_content/000400765.pdf.

⁶⁶ Izawa, “Tabunka Kyousei no Sogo,” 96.

⁶⁷ Eisei Kurimoto, “Nihonteki Tabunka Kyosei No Genkai To Kanosei (日本の多文化共生の限界と可能性),” *Mirai Kyosei Gaku* (未来共生学) 3, no. 1 (2016): 78.

⁶⁸ Yasuko Takezawa, “Jo: Tabunka Kyosei No Genjou To Kadai (序: 多文化共生の現状と課題),” *Bunka Jinrui Gaku* (文化人類学) 74, no. 1 (2009): 91.

Figure 4: Food, Festival, and Fun in *Tabunka Kyosei*

Fashion, food, and festival on the homepage of Oizumi's tourism website.

(Source: Chiharuya)⁶⁹

Morris-Suzuki further characterizes the situation as “cosmetic multiculturalism,” where “diversity is...a form of exterior decoration that does not demand major structural changes to existing institutions... divorced from politics and the mundane world of everyday existence.”⁷⁰ Indeed, in the two decades that the Brazilian *nikkeijin* have stayed in Japan, they have formed soccer clubs and made Oizumi the city of samba, but have neither created national organization focused on political advocacy, nor elected any Brazilian-born naturalized representatives to the Diet.⁷¹ When *tabunka kyosei* becomes a sterile celebration of the exotic, it no longer serves its original purpose of educating Japanese citizens on the importance of foreign residents to Japan's future growth. When the Japan Center for International Exchange surveyed all 47 prefectures and 20 major cities on *tabunka kyosei* policies in November 2015, all the responding governments said that they had some form of initiative

⁶⁹ Chiharuya, “Oizumimachi Kankyo Kyokai (大泉町観光協会),” accessed December 19, 2016, <http://www.oizumimachi-kankoukyoukai.jp/index.html>.

⁷⁰ Tessa Morris-Suzuki, “Immigration and Citizenship and Contemporary Japan,” in *Japan - Change and Continuity*, eds. Jeff Graham, Javed Maswood, and Hideaki Miyajima (London: Routledge, 2002), 171.

⁷¹ Sharpe, “What Does Blood Membership Mean in Political Terms?,” 131.

that targeted foreign residents. However, none of them agreed that Japan should create an immigration policy, suggesting that as *tabunka kyosei* became mainstream public policy, it has become divorced from immigration integration.⁷² In effect, the homeland population's tolerance of them may remain a veneer, and they are free to harbor ethnic prejudices in private, although further fieldwork on attitudinal values would be required.⁷³

Overall, the Basic Guidelines and the Action Plan show that the Japanese government is changing, albeit incrementally, its approach to engaging its foreign residents. In the 1980s, it tried to “internationalize” the country through foreign exchange: recruiting exchange students to Japanese universities, inserting foreign English language teachers into schools across Japan in the Japan Exchange Teaching (JET) program, and encouraging overseas travel. Yet these interactions, centered on Japanese engagement with the exotic, were temporary, “not meant to diversify Japan, to address the diversity that already existed, or to confront questions of difference.”⁷⁴ The Action Plan and its commentary on improving the post-recession Brazilian *nikkeijin* condition reflect the new paradigm of “multicultural coexistence (*tabunka kyosei*),” specifically, “a shift in perspective from [foreigners as] ‘visitors’ to [them as] ‘residents.’”⁷⁵

However, the Action Plan presents an incomplete vision of the government's newfound responsibility to the Brazilian *nikkeijin*. While ambitious in recognizing the need for a path for them to become “members of Japanese society,” the policy's linguistic assistance to them may merely be a cosmetic measure, and thus the *nikkeijin* languish as cultural disappointments to the homeland Japanese population. By inviting them to reproduce exotic experiences for the homeland population to consume, the Action Plan does not go far enough to challenge

⁷² Toshio Japan Center for International Exchange, “‘Tabunka Kyosei To Gaikokujin Ukeire’ Ni Kansuru Jichitai Ankete (「多文化共生と外国人受け入れ」に関する自治体アンケート 2015調査結果報告書)” (Tokyo, Japan: Japan Center for International Exchange, November 27, 2015), 18.

⁷³ Tsuda argues that *honne* and *tatemae* in the “Japanese self” allows the homeland population to conceal their “true inner attitudes and feelings” in public, making discrimination against Brazilian *nikkeijin* subtle and indirect. See Tsuda, *Strangers in the Ethnic Homeland*, 141-151.

⁷⁴ Petrice R. Flowers, “From Kokusaika to Tabunka Kyosei: Global Norms, Discourses of Difference, and Multiculturalism in Japan,” *Critical Asian Studies* 44, no. 4 (2012): 528, doi:10.1080/14672715.2012.738540.

⁷⁵ Chikako Kashiwazaki, “Multicultural Discourse and Policies in Japan: An Assessment of Tabunka Kyōsei,” *The Gakushuin Journal of International Studies* 3, no. 1 (2016): 7.

structures and attitudes that would otherwise open sociopolitical opportunity structures for the *nikkeijin* to address their marginalized status as a ‘conceptual anomaly.’

JOSEONJOK: MADE INVISIBLE UNDER SOUTH KOREA’S MULTICULTURAL DISCOURSE *Background*

Korean migration to northern China has occurred since the 1200s, but grew substantially in the twentieth century during Japanese colonial rule in Korea. While some fled to plot the overthrow of the colonial government, the Japanese encouraged “entire villages to move” into farming work camps in Manchuria to supply resources for the Sino-Japanese War.⁷⁶ The Korean population in China grew from an estimated 34,000 in 1894 to 2.2 million by the end of World War II.⁷⁷ As a recognized *shaoshu minzu* (minority ethnic group in China), the *joseonjok* were able to maintain a distinct cultural identity in enclaves such as the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, where they have passed on cultural language education to their descendants to distinguish themselves from the Han Chinese majority.⁷⁸

Joseonjok women were the first group to participate in South Korea’s international marriages. In 1992, South Korea and China normalized diplomatic relations. China’s *joseonjok* and South Korea “rediscovered” one another.⁷⁹ Since the 1970s, South Korea suffered from an imbalanced sex ratio where families prefer giving birth to boys, leading to a surplus of men, especially poor rural farmers, were unable to find marriage partners.⁸⁰ Local jurisdictions helping these farmer bachelors looked towards Yanbian, “a specifically Korean geographic space.”⁸¹ The

⁷⁶ Dong-Hoon Seol and John D. Skrentny, “Joseonjok Migrant Workers’ Identity and National Identity in Korea” (Korean Identity: Past and Present, Yonsei University, Seoul, 2004), 3.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷⁸ Choi Woo-Gil, “The Korean Minority in China: The Change of Its Identity,” *Development and Society* 30, no. 1 (2001): 1121.

⁷⁹ Jaeeun Kim, *Contested Embrace: Transborder Membership Politics in Twentieth-Century Korea* (Stanford University Press, 2016), 182.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 235.

⁸¹ Amelia L. Schubert, Youngmin Lee, and Hyun-Uk Lee, “Reproducing Hybridity in Korea: Conflicting Interpretations of Korean Culture by South Koreans and Ethnic Korean Chinese Marriage Migrants,” *Asian Journal of Women’s Studies* 21, no. 3 (2015): 235, doi:10.1080/12259276.2015.1072940.

homeland population thought the *joseonjok* women had “uncontaminated and pure ‘Korean-ness’” and were “compatible with South Korean wifely ideals.”⁸²

Korea’s humiliating past as a colonized nation heightened the homeland population’s attraction to its *joseonjok* kin. To impose its claim that Koreans shared a common, but subordinate, origin with the Japanese, the Japanese empire forged a strong national consciousness of a unitary Korean race with a “common historic life, living in a single territory...[and] sharing a common destiny.”⁸³ The South Korean public saw marriages between Korean farmers and *joseonjok* women as fulfilling “the sacred goal of “restoring ethnic homogeneity” (*minjok dongjilseongdo hoebok halsuitda*) to the nation.”⁸⁴ Since *joseonjok* women shared the same Korean blood, “repatriating them to South Korea through ties of marriage was not simply pragmatic social policy but utterly patriotic.”⁸⁵ *Joseonjok* women also readily married Korean men shortly after meeting them for the first time. They were eager to move to a “wealthy ‘Asian Tiger nation’ where they would be received as equals and have the same economic opportunities and standard of living as South Korean citizens.”⁸⁶ According to qualitative interviews by Quan, for some, the most important element in their initial attraction to Korean men was that they felt “so familiar (*wu moshenggan*)” to one another, since, “after all, [they] shared the same ancestors (*yinwei women bijing shi tong yige zuxian*).”⁸⁷

The first international marriage occurred in December 1990, when a former assemblyman aided the marriage of an old bachelor farmer and a *joseonjok* woman.⁸⁸ In the following decade, agricultural associations and marriage brokering

⁸² Ibid., 235.

⁸³ Gi-Wook Shin and Paul Yunsik Chang, “The Politics of Nationalism in U.S.-Korean Relations,” *Asian Perspective* 28, no. 4 (2004): 122.

⁸⁴ Caren Freeman, *Making and Faking Kinship: Marriage and Labor Migration between China and South Korea* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 43.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 43.

⁸⁶ Amelia L. Schubert, Youngmin Lee, and Hyun-Uk Lee, “Reproducing Hybridity in Korea: Conflicting Interpretations of Korean Culture by South Koreans and Ethnic Korean Chinese Marriage Migrants,” *Asian Journal of Women’s Studies* 21, no. 3 (2015): 236, doi:10.1080/12259276.2015.1072940.

⁸⁷ Xin-zi Quan, “‘Chaoxianzu Xinniāng’ Zai Hanguo—Tongzu Yiguo De Wenhua Zhongtu (‘朝鲜族新娘’在韩国—同族异国的文化冲突),” *Shijie Zhishi* (世界知识), 2006, 54.

⁸⁸ Hye-Kyung Lee, “The Role of Multicultural Families in South Korean Immigration Policy,” in *Asian Women and Intimate Work*, eds. Emiko Ochiai and Kaoru Aoyama (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2014), 296.

agencies created a rapidly growing, and lucrative, international marriage market.⁸⁹ The literature has estimated that up to 100,000 *joseonjok* women have married South Korean men, a considerable number considering that the total Korean Chinese population is only 2.6 million.⁹⁰

The Support for Multicultural Families Act

Domestic violence, cultural tension, and broken expectations have plagued *joseonjok* brides. In 2011, 10 percent of all divorce cases in South Korea involved international couples, and 73 percent of those cases were former unions between Korean males and migrant females.⁹¹ The rural bachelor farmers “who sought wives abroad were those who had more or less failed to do so in the domestic marriage market.”⁹² It is also possible that *joseonjok* women strategically used international marriage to enter the South Korean labor market.⁹³ Either way, the South Korean mass media spread the word about the failure of these cross-border marriages, describing the *joseonjok* either “as victims of abusive uneducated rural men or as manipulative visa-seekers who never intended to remain married.”⁹⁴

Under President Roh Moo Hyun (2003-2008), the South Korean government enacted the “Policy Plan to Support the Social Integration of International Marriage Female Migrants, their Families and Children,” also known as the “Grand Plan,” in April 2006. It was the first policy initiative to address international marriages since *joseonjok* brides arrived in large numbers in the 1990s. The Grand Plan addressed issues from regulating international marriage agencies to providing support for domestic violence survivors and orientations for newly arrived foreign wives.⁹⁵ The Support for Multicultural

⁸⁹ Yean-Ju Lee, Dong-Hoon Seol, and Sung-Nam Cho, “International Marriages in South Korea: The Significance of Nationality and Ethnicity,” *Journal of Population Research* 23, no. 2 (2006): 172, doi:10.1007/BF03031814.

⁹⁰ Schubert, Lee, and Lee, “Reproducing Hybridity in Korea,” 233.

⁹¹ Gyuchan Kim and Majella Kilkey, “Marriage Migration Policy as a Social Reproduction System: The South Korean Experience,” in *Family Life in an Age of Migration and Mobility*, eds. Majella Kilkey and Ewa Palenga-Möllenbeck, Migration, Diasporas and Citizenship (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 151, doi:10.1057/978-1-137-52099-9_7.

⁹² Schubert, Lee, and Lee, “Reproducing Hybridity in Korea,” 236.

⁹³ Lee, “The Role of Multicultural Families,” 298.

⁹⁴ Schubert, Lee, and Lee, “Reproducing Hybridity in Korea,” 237.

⁹⁵ For a discussion of the ‘Grand Plan’ in the English language, see Hye-Kyung Lee,

Families Act, enacted in 2008, is intended to provide the ‘Grand Plan’ with a legal and institutional framework.

Between the ‘Grand Plan’ and the Act, the South Korean government’s immigration integration policy towards marriage migrants had a subtle shift. Instead of supporting marriage migrants as *individual women*, the South Korean government subsumed them under a broader social group. Any immigration integration support the government gave was under the context of on what it called ‘multicultural families.’⁹⁶ The Act’s first clause states the government’s aims: “to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of multi-cultural [sic] family members and the unity of society by helping multi-cultural family members enjoy stable family living.”⁹⁷

The Act enshrines the fact that the marriage migrant is merely a tool for South Korea’s demographic challenges. Many provisions center around supporting family *units*, not individuals: the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, for example, has to conduct a fact-finding survey on multicultural families every three years. The Act also imposes demographic obligations on marriage migrants. Article 2 defines a “multicultural family” as a unit comprised of either a “married immigrant or naturalized citizen” and a Korean citizen.⁹⁸ The prerequisite is that one of the two parents must be Korean. When the marriage migrant enters a union with a Korean citizen, they are able to continue the Korean ethnic bloodline. Article 10, which requires the national and local governments to “prepare measures of educational support to children of multi-cultural families to help them quickly adapt to school life,” hints that underlying aim that Korean children are clearly the desirable product of these ‘multicultural families.’⁹⁹ The faster these children can enter South Korea’s school system, the sooner they can become socialized as a Korean citizen. On the other hand, the definition excludes families in South Korea where both parents are immigrants who are outside the ethnic group, even if such families are multicultural in the sense of adding to South Korea’s ethnic and cultural diversity. They would be irrelevant to the South Korean government

“International Marriage and the State in South Korea: Focusing on Governmental Policy,” *Citizenship Studies* 12, no. 1 (February 2008): 107–23, doi:10.1080/13621020701794240.

⁹⁶ Byoung-ha Lee, “Incorporating Foreigners in Korea: The Politics of Differentiated Membership,” *The Journal of Multicultural Society* 1, no. 2 (2010): 60.

⁹⁷ Ministry of Government Legislation, Republic of Korea, “Support for Multicultural Families Act,” *Korean Laws in English*, accessed December 11, 2016, <http://www.moleg.go.kr/english/>.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

because their offspring does not contribute to the Korean biological bloodline, and therefore cannot be a part of Korean society. In essence, “the multicultural family has been appropriated by the South Korean government...in order to achieve the nationalist project of reproducing Korean families.”¹⁰⁰

Article 9, “Support for Health Management before and after Childbirth,” is most revealing about the ‘nationalist project.’ It states:

The State and local governments may provide married immigrants and naturalized citizens, etc. with necessary services, such as nutrition and health education and provision of helper service before and after childbirth, medical examination, so that they can manage pregnancy and childbirth under healthy and safe conditions.¹⁰¹

Although the Act does not specifically define the gender of marriage migrants, it is clear that the South Korean government primarily desires ‘multicultural families’ of Korean men and foreign women. It is thus demanding the biological reproduction of Korean children in a patrilineal way, deemphasizing childbirths from Korean *women* and foreign men whose marriages fit in the legal, genderless definition of ‘multicultural family.’¹⁰² Sookyung Kim argues that by framing the healthcare of marriage migrants around childbirth, the South Korean government does not “care about the health of a migrant woman unless she gives birth to babies.”¹⁰³ Indeed, the childbirth clause directly contradicts Article 7, which creates government programs for counseling to “help multi-cultural families maintain a democratic and gender-equal familial relationship.” It is, after all, the migrant mother who the government requires to reproduce and bear children for the Korean nation—excluding them from other domains of

¹⁰⁰ Hyun Mee Kim, “The Emergence of the ‘Multicultural Family’ and Genderized Citizenship in South Korea,” in *Contested Citizenship in East Asia: Developmental Politics, National Unity, and Globalization*, ed. Kyung-Sup Chang and Bryan S. Turner (Oxon: Routledge, 2012), 208.

¹⁰¹ Ministry of Government Legislation, Republic of Korea, “Support for Multicultural Families Act.”

¹⁰² Sookyung Kim, “Soft Talk, Hard Realities: Multiculturalism as the South Korean Government’s Decoupled Response to International Migration,” *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 24, no. 1 (March 1, 2015): 65, doi:10.1177/0117196814565165.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 65.

Korean public life.¹⁰⁴

The emphasis on motherhood continues in guidebooks for marriage migrants produced by the Korean government. An early English-language publication called *Let's live a happy life in Korea*, published by the Multicultural Family Support Centers, dedicates just three out of 48 pages to finding employment.¹⁰⁵ The last page of the guide is most revealing in how marriage migrants are to become 'daughters-in-law' of a big national family:

You are a beloved wife.

You are a respected mother.

You are a wonderful daughter-in-law.

You are a valuable new citizen of Korea.

The Ministry for Health, Welfare and Family Affairs will be your reliable friend and we will help you plan for a brighter future in Korea. We love you.¹⁰⁶

The guide's longest section, on pregnancy, childbirth, and childcare, is titled "Congratulations and Welcome to Motherhood!" with the sub-text, "Becoming a mother is *one of the most valuable experiences of a woman* [emphasis added]."¹⁰⁷ In effect, the government refuses to validate marriage migrants' lives, or be their "reliable friend," unless they are mothers. Indeed, the Ministry for Health, Welfare and Family Affairs asserted in 2008 that it only wants growth in multicultural families "to curb the low-fertility and the ageing trend in Korea, especially in rural areas, by increasing the fertility rate."¹⁰⁸ Since marriage migrants are most likely to access these guides in their first days of Korean life to familiarize themselves with the social services available, the government, through such prescriptive messages, demands that they conform to expectations of birthing children and becoming

¹⁰⁴ Ministry of Government Legislation, Republic of Korea, "Support for Multicultural Families Act."

¹⁰⁵ The *Let's live a happy life in Korea* guide refers to "Transnational Marriage & Family-support Centers," which is an early official English-language translation of the Multicultural Family Support Centers.

¹⁰⁶ Ministry for Health, Welfare and Family Affairs, Republic of Korea, "Let's Live a Happy Life in Korea: Guide Book for Marriage-Based Immigrants in Korea," October 2011, <http://www.129.go.kr>.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 18.

¹⁰⁸ Kim and Kilkey, "Marriage Migration Policy as a Social Reproduction System," 150.

mothers from the moment of arrival.

As Figure 5 shows, newer guidebooks have removed the explicitly gendered language, but a gendered target audience remains. The 310-page *2016 Guidebook for Living in Korea: Guidance for Multicultural Families and Foreigners Living in Korea* contains an extensive 58-page section about childbirth and placing children in the Korean education system, and frames information about employment with the possibility of maternity while employed.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, the guidebook documents Korean domestic life in painstaking detail; for example, making sticky ‘Korean’ rice, preventing gas-related accidents in the house while cooking, and creating a savings account to “pay for your child’s tuition.”¹¹⁰ Implicit in the guidebook is that the Korean husband is absent to teach his migrant wife these crucial details, or even to share any of these household duties in the family. The government has to dedicate a ministry to intervene and publish this guide for migrant wives to navigate the demands of domestic life themselves.

¹⁰⁹ Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, “2016 Guidebook for Living in Korea: Guidance for Multicultural Families and Foreigners Living in Korea,” October 2016, <http://liveinkorea.kr/global/guidebook/guidebook.asp>.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

Figure 5: Guiding a Marriage Migrant's Domestic Life

(Sources: Ministry for Health, Welfare and Family Affairs¹¹¹; Ministry of Gender Equality and Family¹¹²)

Assessing the Support for Multicultural Families Act

Idealized, neo-Confucian gender roles and family life form a major tenet of the Support for Multicultural Families Act. In the neo-Confucian family, the breadwinner father is absent because his engagement with work is unending. The mother, as a result, must “take care of every small emergency in the household,” and produce children who are entirely dependent.¹¹³ Instead of accommodating different cultural values or lifestyles, the Act imposes a “matrifocal and child-oriented [structure] that is attempting to preserve the integrity and continuity of

¹¹¹ Ministry for Health, Welfare and Family Affairs, Republic of Korea, “Let’s Live a Happy Life in Korea: Guide Book for Marriage-Based Immigrants in Korea,” October 2011, <http://www.129.go.kr>.

¹¹² Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, Republic of Korea, “2016 Guidebook for Living in Korea: Guidance for Multicultural Families and Foreigners Living in Korea,” October 2016, <http://liveinkorea.kr/global/guidebook/guidebook.asp>.

¹¹³ Kwang Kyu Lee, “Confucian Tradition in the Contemporary Korean Family,” in *Confucianism and the Family*, ed. Walter H. Slote and George A. De Vos (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 257.

the family” in a country that has rapidly modernized.¹¹⁴ Hence, under the Act, “social support for migrant women is conceptualized as a ‘life-cycle service,’” from arriving in South Korea, becoming pregnant, giving birth, and entering motherhood.¹¹⁵ Ignoring their past careers or education, “such imagination on migrant women even justifies discrimination against those who don’t fit into the norm” of knowing their domestic space in the Korean family.¹¹⁶ Migrant wives who face domestic violence, cultural tension, and isolation in their own homes turn to a government support system which coaxes them to remain as obedient wives, mothers, and daughters-in-law.

Gender roles have long been major sources of dissatisfaction with *joseonjok* women and their Korean husbands from the very beginning of the cross-border marriage phenomenon.¹¹⁷ Regardless of whether the family could realistically afford to be single-income households, some urban-based Korean husbands actively discouraged *joseonjok* wives to work because they “aspired to the middle-class ideal of maintaining gendered spheres of work and home.”¹¹⁸ Their Confucian attitudes were fundamentally at odds with how their *joseonjok* spouses viewed gender relations. Under the rule of Mao Zedong, the Chinese education system championed gender equality (*nannu pingdeng*) to encourage women to participate in the public sphere, specifically to advance the Maoist revolution. In the modern day, “the Chinese media still valorize the ‘superwoman’ (*qiangnuren*) for her ability to manage both household and career.”¹¹⁹

Scholars have differing views as to why *joseonjok* women retain strong emotional ties to China. Kim argues that *joseonjok* brides experienced a certain level of socioeconomic mobility that their poorer South Korean male counterparts may not have, because “the expense of the brokerage fees...meant that the poorest of the poor among the Korean Chinese were unlikely” to be in international marriages.¹²⁰ Quan offers a more nationalistic view, arguing that

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 262.

¹¹⁵ Kim, “The Emergence of the ‘Multicultural Family’ and Genderized Citizenship in South Korea,” 212.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 212.

¹¹⁷ For an extensive discussion on gender roles from the *joseonjok* perspective, see Freeman, *Making and Faking Kinship*, 109-152.

¹¹⁸ Freeman, *Making and Faking Kinship*, 134.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 129.

¹²⁰ Kim, *Contested Embrace*, 216.

Yanbian is the *joseonjok*'s true home. The *joseonjok*, she argues, belong in the history of communist China, developing the northeast and joining forces with the communists to drive the Japanese out of Manchuria. Since "*joseonjok* culture has evolved from Korean culture (*chaoxianzhu wenhua you bieyu hanguo wenhua*), Quan finds little reason to doubt why Korean gender roles are alien to *joseonjok* women. Granted, it is impossible to generalize the experiences of *joseonjok* women. Further ethnographic research is needed to confirm or challenge both perspectives.

Nonetheless, *joseonjok* women struggled in a Korean society organized along patriarchal and hierarchical lines. In China, they supported "their families through both paid productive labor and unpaid domestic labor" in China.¹²¹ Some brides came from Chinese factories where they worked, ate, and spent leisure time alongside men as equals. Consciously being male or female was never a part of these friendships.¹²² Interestingly, Freeman found that some parents of *joseonjok* women in Yanbian drew on their diasporic bonds—specifically, their ethnic-based knowledge about the Korean family system and its wifely responsibilities—to discourage their daughters from even entertaining the idea of marrying Korean men.¹²³ The flashpoint for domestic violence in the marital household was precisely the *joseonjok* women's competing construction of gender. According to one *joseonjok* wife informant in Quan's study, her Korean husband believed that verbally contending with him was not behavior fit for a woman, and that she would "definitely be soliciting violence (*najiu kengding zao baoli*)" if she lost her temper.¹²⁴ The Support for Multicultural Families Act, therefore, is unlikely to reverse the alienation and tension *joseonjok* women feel with their partners. Whereas the Korean husband or mother-in-law privately enforced the *joseonjok* wife's demarcated space, the Act now officially endorses such rigid gender roles as a method of immigrant integration into Korean society.

Minjeong Kim provides a cynical view. Marriage is closely related to Korean hegemonic masculinity, which Korean men struggle to fill if they remain

¹²¹ Schubert, Lee, and Lee, "Reproducing hybridity in Korea," 240.

¹²² Xin-zi Quan, "Lun Kuaguo Minzu Rentong De Changjing Yu Chayi—Yi Zhongguo Chaioxianzu Hunyin Yimin Nuxing Wei Li (论跨国民族认同的场景与差异—以中国朝鲜族婚姻移民女性为例)," *Yanbian Daxue Xuebao Shehui Kexueban* (延边大学学报社会科学版) 45, no. 5 (2012): 90.

¹²³ Freeman, *Making and Faking Kinship*, 115.

¹²⁴ The original Chinese reads as follows: "他都嫌我的嗓门大, 若与他解释, 他就说顶嘴, 不像女人, 没有女人味等, 你如果生气与他顶嘴, 那就肯定遭暴力。" See Quan, "Lun Kuaguo Minzu Rentong De Changjing Yu Chayi," 90.

single. Bachelor farmers drew national attention to their suffering by committing suicide in protest in the 1980s.¹²⁵ International marriage compensates for such “disabled manhood” by allowing unmarried Korean men to achieve “adult status by marrying, by fathering children, and by earning enough to provide for his family.”¹²⁶ Therefore, if *joseonjok* women were not obedient wives and reproductive mothers, Korean men stood to lose social acceptance in their families and communities. Thus, the Support for Multicultural Families Act is not so much reconciling the cultural tensions and potential for domestic violence as perpetuating a destructive vision of hegemonic masculinity.

Figure 6: Images of Race in South Korea’s Multicultural Policy

(Sources: Ministry of Health and Welfare¹²⁷; Ministry of Gender Equality and Family¹²⁸)

Another problem the Act poses is that it equates culture and race, thereby marginalizing the *joseonjok* out of the government’s contemporary “multicultural” focus. While the Support for Multicultural Families Act is an integration that applies to the *joseonjok*, it is *not* tailor-made for them. It is for

¹²⁵ Schubert, Lee, and Lee, “Reproducing hybridity in Korea,” 235.

¹²⁶ Minjeong Kim, “South Korean Rural Husbands, Compensatory Masculinity, and International Marriage,” *Journal of Korean Studies* 19, no. 2 (2014): 303, doi:10.1353/jks.2014.0030.

¹²⁷ Ministry of Health and Welfare, Republic of Korea, “A Guidebook for Marriage Migrants,” November 2007, <https://www.scribd.com/document/75867974/2007-Guidebook-for-Marriage-Migrants>.

¹²⁸ Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, Republic of Korea, “Rainbow+ Webzine,” January 2015, http://www.liveinkorea.kr/liveinkoreaData/rainbowpdf/en_2015_1.pdf.

all marriage migrants, regardless of nationality. Korean government publications about multicultural families reinforce the notion that the foreign brides are *not* Korean and have to discard their non-Korean cultures to successfully integrate in Korean families (Figure 6). In the 2007 version of the Ministry of Health and Welfare's guidebook for marriage migrants, the foreign bride has a perceptibly darker skin tone than her Korean husband. The same ideology continues in a 2015 issue of a bilingual magazine on diversity called *Rainbow+* published by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, an article about multicultural families ironically shows seven women in national dress and name tags with country flags to emphasize their *non*-Koreanness. On the same vein, the 2016 *Guidebook for Living in Korea* tells marriage migrants that it takes a week to get used to 'Korean rice,' which is "stickier than Southeast Asian rice."¹²⁹ By emphasizing the differences between 'them' marriage migrants and 'us' Korean citizens, the images reinforce the notion of a distinct Korean race. The multicultural family, in practice, is in reality a *multiracial* family. The Support for Multicultural Families Act and its associated didactic guidebooks are supposed to help these women assimilate into the Korean ethnic nation and lose their distinctive, non-Korean characteristics.

It is unclear where *joseonjok* women fit in an integration policy focused on incorporating non-ethnic Koreans. The following quote in a 2015 study from a Ministry of Justice official is revealing: "Migrants with different ethnicities are enemies of national solidarity...By contrast, there is *no need to worry* about the adaptation of ethnically Korean migrants. They are just Korean like us [emphasis added]."¹³⁰ The remark illustrates not only the depth to which that government official believes in a unified Korean race, but also the continuing reality of the *joseonjok*'s hierarchical nationhood under a supposedly multicultural Korea. Despite extensive anthropological research in the past decade that points to the contrary, the government remains in a cognitive dissonance about the *joseonjok*'s ethnic affinities. Precisely because they are ethnic Koreans, *joseonjok* women do not need any special attention—the Korean families they are marrying to in South Korea are no different than the families in Yanbian by virtue of their common ancestry. In this context, ethnic kinship is oppressive. The homogenizing discourse of the single Korean race is so strong that the homeland population does not even realize that the *joseonjok* have cultural differences.

¹²⁹ Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, "2016 Guidebook for Living in Korea: Guidance for Multicultural Families and Foreigners Living in Korea."

¹³⁰ Sookyung Kim, "Soft Talk, Hard Realities," 69.

Further fieldwork is necessary to answer why the government would introduce a policy that further marginalizes the experiences of *joseonjok* women and international marriages. In the meantime, Hyunok Lee and Sookyung Kim offer a bleak perspective. The Korean government's commitment to multiculturalism is not sincere, because it has an instrumental political goal. Politicians in areas with serious population decline will aggressively promote multicultural families to prevent constituencies from being merged, and therefore, elected positions from being eliminated.¹³¹ Nationally, the multicultural family "has been used instrumentally to project an increased openness of Korean society."¹³² If the union of a foreign bride and a Korean man represents a new, 'open' Korea in a globalizing world, then *joseonjok* brides are irrelevant to that project, since they do not appear 'foreign' in racial terms, and therefore cannot contribute to the national image of an internationalized Korea.

Analyzed holistically, the Support for Multicultural Families Act perpetrates a two-tiered hierarchical nationhood on *joseonjok* women. It first subsumes migrant women's issues into family policy. In creating support structures to support the women through the context of families, the government prescribes that the success of international marriages depends on whether the foreign bride is willing to fulfill the expectations of being a Korean mother for the family and for the Korean nation. Those expectations conflict with how *joseonjok* women view their roles *vis-à-vis* their husbands in a marital household. The Act then obscures their presence in Korean families through a broader focus on multiculturalism, even though the *joseonjok* were targeted as ideal brides with ethnic affinities. Although there remains a plurality of *joseonjok* brides in international marriages, the Act does not address the possibility that a person's ancestry and cultural behavior are unrelated. In other words, the needs of *joseonjok* women are rendered invisible. Political motivations, and not responding to problems foreign brides face in Korean families, perhaps explain why South Korea is interested in protecting and promoting international marriage through the Act. The ethnic return migrants therefore remain in a state of hierarchical nationhood, because the homeland population fails to consider the possibility that *joseonjok* spouses

¹³¹ Ibid., 71.

¹³² Hyunok Lee, "Political Economy of Cross-Border Marriage: Economic Development and Social Reproduction in Korea," *Feminist Economics* 18, no. 2 (2012): 179, doi:10.1080/13545701.2012.688139.

may not necessarily be socially compatible with their Korean husbands even if they are coethnics. As a result, the homeland population continues to create expectations based on beliefs of a Korean race that *joseonjok* women will not fulfill.

CONCLUSION

Two decades after importing Brazilian *nikkeijin* workers and *joseonjok* spouses for their respective national goals, both Japan and South Korea have each created national-level policies to address social problems that both groups of migrants have faced, representing a new chapter in both countries' relationships with their ethnic return migrants. I have attempted to demonstrate that the *Nikkeijin* Action Plan and the Support for Multicultural Families Act do not address thoroughly the structures and attitudes among the homeland population that invited prejudice and isolation when they first returned to their ancestral homelands. The policies set ethnic-based expectations that do not cater to the interests of the migrants themselves, especially when the return migrants no longer feel the ethnic affinities they once had with the homeland population. Barring no further changes to these policies, I predict that in the long run the Action Plan and the Support for Multicultural Families Act will continue to place both populations in a hierarchical nationhood, and they cannot achieve more than a superficial level of social integration.

One shortcoming built into this study is that because the policies are so new, their effects on return migrants are not yet fully stable. My assessment of the integration structures that the policies is based on past anthropological work conducted before the Japanese and South Korean governments made the policy pivot to multiculturalism. Evidently, further fieldwork is necessary to formally measure the degree to which the *Nikkeijin* Action Plan and the Support for Multicultural Families Act have facilitated integration along such dimensions such as civic and political participation, economic life, and the use of social services, which this paper did not have the benefit of accessing. However, I have also shown that discussions about integrating the *nikkeijin* and *joseonjok* require focus on not only socioeconomic indicators but also anthropological perspectives—reconciling intangible, existential questions of identity and belonging stemming from their ancestry and migration experiences. How integration structures affect the return migrants' self-identities, the homeland population's attitudinal values towards the return migrants, and the dichotomy of the return migrant as "conceptual anomaly" require attention in future anthropological research.

If globalization is the antithesis of nationalism, then the two policies present an apparent paradox: given that Japan and South Korea both have low birth rates and declining labor force populations, successfully integrating migrants into Japanese and Korean society is literally a matter of national survival. In addition, the normative question of whether and to what extent should migrant-sending states be responsible for their diasporas. After all, Japan was directly involved in creating the Brazilian Japanese diaspora, and the transborder *joseonjok* community in China expanded during a humiliating time in Korean history. What level of immigration integration is desirable, or even necessary to be considered integration beyond the 'cosmetic'? As both countries seek to attract and import more people from abroad, xenophobia, discrimination, and conflict could embroil these ethnic nations if the government does not work to broaden existing conceptions of citizenship and membership in mainstream society.

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APPENDIX 1: THE CABINET OFFICE'S ACTION PLAN FOR *NIKKEIJIN*¹³³

Category	Reason for Category	Action Plan Policy Examples	Responsible Agencies
Learning Japanese for Daily Life (“日本語で生活できるために”)	In order to be integrated, it is necessary to learn the communication techniques of Japanese society. Language barriers cause obstacles to various facets of daily life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exchange information with organizations promoting Japanese language education • Disseminate guidelines for a language curriculum catered to foreign residents • Publish a handbook of basic Japanese in Portuguese and Spanish, etc. 	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology
Settling Down and Finding	The <i>nikkeijin</i> face a high unemployment rate. To become competitive in a difficult job market, the <i>nikkeijin</i> require assistance in language learning and job retraining.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide skills training and language training • Facilitate multilingual employment consultations • Exchange information and support with the private sector with regards to the employment of foreign residents, etc. 	Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry

¹³³ Source: Cabinet Office, Japan, “Nikkei Teiju Gaikokujin Shisaku Ni Kansuru Koudou Keigaku (日系定住外国人施策に関する行動計画),” March 31, 2011, <http://www8.cao.go.jp/teiju/guideline/pdf/fulltext-koudo.pdf>, translated and summarized by the author.

Resolving Difficult Situations in Daily Life (“社会の中で困ったときのために”)	Considering their limited language proficiency, the <i>nikkeijin</i> require human resources and special attention to access social services such as healthcare, pensions etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disseminate multilingual information about disaster and crime prevention • Provide multilingual information on traffic safety • Provide leaflets encouraging foreign residents to sign up for national health insurance • Publish a guidebook assisting foreign residents to search for housing • Simplify procedures for foreign residents to move into subsidized housing units • Move towards a pilot plan for hospitals to provide translation services when providing medical services to foreign residents, etc. 	Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, National Police Agency, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, Ministry of Internet Affairs and Communications, Cabinet Office
Respecting One Another's Cultures (“お互いに文化を尊重するために”)	While it is important for the <i>nikkeijin</i> residents to “thoroughly understand” (十分に理解する) Japanese customs and cultures, considering their importance to the vitality of society in the future, it is important for Japanese citizens to understand the importance of respecting each other's cultures (日本国民の理解を含めていくこと).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the “Plan for the Promotion of <i>Tabunka Kyosei</i> in the Local Community (地域における多文化共生推進プラン)” to local authorities in meetings • From creating a portal site on policies for foreign residents, recognize NGOs, local governments, corporations etc. that help advance the aim of educating each Japanese citizen about the importance and necessity of incorporating foreign residents in Japanese society. 	Ministry of Internet Affairs and Communications, Cabinet Office