SEARCHING

FOR HOME ABROAD

Japanese Brazilians and

Transnationalism

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KEIKO YAMANAKA

Feminization of Japanese Brazilian Labor Migration to Japan

In January 1998, on a Sunday afternoon in Hong Kong, I witnessed tens of thousands of Filipina housemaids congregated in parks, on sidewalks, and between buildings, celebrating their day off. Clustered in every possible space, they sat on plastic sheets to spend hours picnicking, chatting with friends, and exchanging letters and photos from home. It was a scene both astonishing and saddening. These foreign women are temporary workers on contract, serving Hong Kong's middle-class households as live-in maids who cook meals, clean houses, and tend children for their employers. In exchange they receive wages that are beyond reach in their home country. The personal costs of this work in the alien environment are, however, heavy. As Nicole Constable (1997) reports in her ethnographic study of these immigrant women, lack of personal freedom, exacerbated by separation for extended periods of time from their own families, is demoralizing.

The sight of the Filipina maids in Hong Kong struck me at once with its sharp contrast to the situation, familiar to me, of Japanese Brazilian women in Japan employed in factories, living as they do with their families in small but comfortable apartments.[1] Like the Filipinas in Hong Kong, they are of third-world origin, having migrated to a first-world country where they provide cheap and expendable contract labor. Unlike the Filipinas in Hong Kong, however, they are immigrants with ancestral ties to the host country and are therefore entitled by law to live and work in Japan with their families. That being the case, it remains to be explained why Nikkeijin women in Japan are factory workers accompanied by their families, whereas Filipinas in Hong Kong are housemaids who have left their families behind.

What follows is a case study of the feminization of Japanese Brazilian labor migration to Japan in the context of female migration throughout the Asia-Pacific in the 1990s. Underlying the entire analysis is the fact that Japan's immigration policy prohibits employment of unskilled foreigners which, at the peak of the economic boom in 1990, prompted the government to admit Nikkeijin and their families as legal residents—because they were not regarded as entirely foreign—for up to three years. As a result, by 1996 some 200,000 of these return migrants, 40 percent of them females, had arrived from Brazil, as well as smaller numbers from other Latin American countries. Most of them obtained work in small- to middle-scale manufacturing industries.

FEMINIZATION OF REGIONAL MIGRATION IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC

Migration Patterns

By the mid-1990s the Asia-Pacific, with a migrant population estimated at more than five million, had become one of the most active sites of international labor migration in the world (Yamanaka 1999). This was due to its rapidly developing economy and the increasing regional integration that resulted in growing economic disparity between a few rich countries and their many poor neighbors. The five developed countries with mature economies—Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore—currently import labor, whereas the two countries that developed most recently—Malaysia and Thailand—import labor and simultaneously export surplus labor. Most neighbors of these seven labor importers in East, Southeast, and South Asia suffer from stagnant economies and large populations, and therefore export surplus unskilled labor, while importing none.

The seven labor-importing countries differ significantly from one another in the histories of their nation-states, levels of industrialization, demographic profiles, and ethnic relations. Immigration policies and enforcement mechanisms differ accordingly (Yamanaka 1999). Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan import unskilled labor through an officially sanctioned front-door policy comprising a number of state-run contract worker programs promulgated to benefit labor short industries. Malaysia and Thailand also admit unskilled foreigners on legal contract, but their porous national borders comprise a "loose door" through which a much larger number of foreigners enter unnoticed. In contrast, Japan and Korea officially prohibit unskilled foreigners from being employed, while admitting them through covert back-door practices contrived to facilitate their entry when they are needed. These contrasting immigration policies and practices have resulted in patterns of immigration that vary by industry, occupation, legal status, visa category, nationality, ethnicity, and gender.

During the 1980s economic restructuring accelerated in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, as a result of which dependence on foreign labor in manufacturing industries declined. Meanwhile, the demand for female domestic helpers grew considerably, as an increasing number of middle-class women entered the labor force. Consequently, gender emerged as a critical factor shaping the demographic and occupational profiles of their foreign labor forces (Shah et al. 1991; Filipino Migrant Workers 1994; Cheng 1996; Lim and Oishi 1996; Wong 1996; Yeoh et al. 1999). Table 1 shows occupation and immigration characteristics of *legal* female immigrant workers in five labor-importing countries: Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Japan.

In the 1980s Hong Kong moved much of its production to southern China where abundant, inexpensive migrant labor was available, while the foreign maid population increased within the colony. By the mid-1990s Hong Kong employed more than 152,000 foreign maids, mostly from the Philippines, accounting for 76 percent of its entire immigrant population. The remaining 24 percent were mostly male workers engaged in large construction projects. Likewise, in Singapore during the same period, there were 81,000 female domestics accounting for 23 percent of the migrant workforce. Taiwan employed some 17,000 foreign women in both private homes and convalescent hospitals, which constituted 10 percent of all contract laborers in the country.

Malaysia harbored about 100,000 female migrants working as domestics on contract, mostly from Indonesia, accounting for 14 percent of the legal migrant population. Moreover, Malaysia and neighboring Thailand hosted a large but unknown number of illegal migrants from Myanmar, Indonesia, and other nearby nations (Pillai 1995; Sussangkarn 1995). In both countries, females, most of them engaged in domestic service, sex industries, and other components of the informal economy, comprised a substantial proportion of the illegal, undocumented population (Hugo 1993; Stern 1996; Asia Watch 1993). Despite growing public and international concern for their health and human rights, accurate information is not yet available, nor have effective public policies addressed the dire needs of immigrant women working under substandard conditions in Southeast Asia.

The fact that Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan admit large numbers of foreign women as domestic helpers for household employment, while Japan and Korea admit none, is a result of the official policy adopted by the latter

TABLE 1. Legal Female Immigrant Workers in the Mid-1990s: Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, Malaysia and Japan

Country	Major Occupation	Immigration Status	Number of Females (total N of immigrants)	Country of Origin (% of the total)	Source of Information
Hong Kong	Domestic Helper	Contract Worker	152,000 (200,000)	Philippines (85%), Indonesia, Thailand, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, other	Cheng (1996), Levin and Chiu (1998)
Singapore	Domestic Helper	Contract Worker	81,000 (350,000)	Philippines (62%), Sri Lanka (21%), Indonesia (12%), other	Wong (1996)
Taiwan	Domestic Helper/ Nursing Worker	Contract Worker	17,000 (173,000)	Philippines (95%), Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia	Tsay (1995)
Malaysia	Domestic Helper	Contract Worker	100,000 (700,000)	Indonesia (65%), Philippines (29%), Thailand, other	Pillai (1995)
Japan	Factory Worker	Long-term Resident (Nikkeijin)	80,000 (280,000)	Brazil (83%), Peru (14%), Bolivia, Paraguay, Argentina	Japan Immigration Association (1998)
Japan	Entertainer	Short-term Resident	32,000	Philippines (78%), Russia (9%), Korea (6%), other	Japanese Ministry of Justice (1998)
Japan	Convalescent Attendant	Long-term Resident (Nikkeijin)	Unavailable	Brazil	Yamanaka (1997)

two countries excluding unskilled foreign labor regardless of sex. Nonetheless, a large number of unskilled workers enter through various back-door practices. For instance, 32,000 female entertainers arrived in Japan in 1997 as "skilled" performers, the majority of whom were Filipinas working as bar hostesses (Yamanaka 1993; Japanese Ministry of Justice 1998). Japan was also home to an estimated 300,000 foreigners who had entered the country with valid visas (tourist, student, or other) and had illegally overstayed them to work in the unskilled sector (Morita and Sassen 1994; Lie 1994; Sellek 1994; Yamanaka 2000a). Governmental statistics estimated that 40 percent of those illegal workers were females employed in service and manufacturing industries, of which the majority were assumed to work in the sex industry (Japanese Ministry of Justice 1996).

Likewise, by the mid-1990s Korea hosted an estimated 130,000 illegal visa-overstayers toiling in manufacturing and construction industries (Lee 1997; Park 1998; Kim 1999; Lim 1999). Studies have found that nearly 40 percent of illegal workers in Korea are females engaged in textile, clothing, and other manufacturing industries (Park 1993; Park 1994). Yet, little is reported in the literature about employment and working conditions of these immigrant women in Korea.

Japanese Brazilian Women in Japan

In June 1990, at the height of its economic expansion, Japan opened a major back door, contravening the policy prohibiting foreign unskilled labor, when it implemented the revised Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Law (hereafter "the 1990 Revised Immigration Law") that defined immigrants of Japanese descent as long-term residents. This new ethnic category allowed people of documented Japanese ancestry up to the third generation, regardless of nationality, to stay three years in Japan with no restriction on their socio-economic activities (Yamanaka 1996). Spouses and children of these Nikkeijin were also permitted to stay, usually up to one year. Visas of both the Nikkeijin and their families in this category could be easily renewed, as a result of which many of the immigrants remained beyond the initially designated periods. This liberal policy and the strong demand for labor in manufacturing industries encouraged the immigration of the 200,000 Brazilian Nikkeijin, including their families, who had arrived by 1996 to settle in major manufacturing cities throughout the country, of which Hamamatsu is a good example.

From the beginning of this migration boom, the population included a high proportion of females. In 1990, the year the law changed, 21,145 registered Bra-

zilians in Japan were female, comprising 37.5 percent of the 56,429 total. By 1996 this had increased to 86,760 or 43.0 percent of a total of 201,795 (Yamanaka 1996, 79–82). The estimated 80,000 working-age Brazilian women, most of them engaged in factory labor, form the largest group of females of a single nationality in Japan's population of immigrants who arrived in the 1980s and 1990s. As a result, by the mid-1990s these Brazilian assembly-line workers also constituted the largest female immigrant occupational group in the workforce.

The pattern of utilization of female immigrant labor in Japan (and Korea) that excludes domestic service, differs sharply from that of other labor-importing Asian countries in that all others utilize their women workers primarily in domestic service. Why does Japan import factory women from South America, but not housemaids from Asia? Why does Japan limit passage through its door to Nikkeijin?

International migration theory predicts that the presence of a critical mass of women in an immigrant population, as contrasted with an overwhelmingly male immigrant population, will have significant consequences for both the immigrant community and the receiving society (see Morokvasic 1984). Therefore, it is necessary to examine the nature of these consequences of the large percentage of women in the newly arrived Nikkeijin population of Japan: what are the roles played by Nikkeijin women in the settlement process in their ancestral homeland? What has been the long-range impact of this large percentage of women in the Nikkeijin community and in the local Japanese community?

GENDER, ETHNICITY, AND CLASS IN REGIONAL MIGRATION

Gendered and Racialized Process

Castles (1984, 12) defines the guest-worker system as "institutionalized discrimination, designed to recruit and control temporary migrant workers" of foreign origin. Under this system, all migrants, both female and male, are subject to discriminatory labor practices and oppressive policies because of their class and ethnicity. Immigrant women, however, face problems, and therefore require solutions, unique to their gender and sex. Gender-specific problems are particularly serious in the Asia-Pacific where most females are employed in a narrow range of reproductive labor, including housemaid, entertainer, and sex worker (Truong 1996).

Feminist theory attributes this skewed distribution of occupations among female immigrants to existing gender relations of patriarchal capitalism that

divide the two sexes into reproductive tasks for women and productive tasks for men (Tyner 1999). From early childhood, girls and boys learn socioeconomic roles specific to their sexes—girls to be homemakers and boys to be breadwinners. Girls are socialized to become family caregivers and sex objects with few opportunities to develop other marketable skills. This results in the subordinate position of girls and women in households and labor markets at all levels: local, national, and international. Imbued with patriarchal gender ideologies, agencies of labor exchange practice discriminatory recruitment against female applicants. Women have little choice but to conform to the expectations for their sex by becoming domestic workers, sex workers, and manual laborers at low wages and with low prestige in the host country. The emerging feminization of migration in the Asia-Pacific is, therefore, a socially constituted process of regional labor exchange participated in, and negotiated by, many parties, including the migration industry, state policymakers, employers, migrants' families, and the migrants themselves (Tyner 1999, 673).

From its onset, this gendering of migration is a racialized process as well, linking the local sexual division of labor by gender, ethnicity, and class with the international division of labor by ethnicity and nationality—colloquially, "race"—between labor-importing countries and labor-exporting countries (Nash and Fernández-Kelly 1983; Ward 1990). Colonialism, imperialism in the Asia-Pacific, and global capitalism have historically shaped the international division of labor in trade and production between core and periphery (Lim 1983). In the 1960s and 1970s Japanese, American, and European multinational corporations relocated their production sites to take full advantage of the abundant and inexpensive supplies of natural and human resources in their peripheral sectors, including nations then rapidly industrializing—Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Korea (Wallerstein 1982; Martin et al. 1995; OECD 1998). As the latter nations successfully upgraded their production from labor-intensive to capital-intensive to become the core sectors of their regions in the 1980s, they also exported labor-intensive production to their peripheral sectors, namely to those countries that today are industrializing rapidly—Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, China, and Vietnam.

In all of these countries that have engaged in labor-intensive, export-oriented production, young, rural females comprise a large proportion of the local workforce that mass-produces a variety of goods from textiles, garments, and shoes to electronics. Since the 1970s anthropological and sociological literature has amply documented the economic and social roles of femaleworkers in the growing international division of labor in Asian countries (Kung 1983;

Heyzer 1986; Ong 1987; Lo 1990; Wolf 1992; Brinton 1993; Roberts 1994). Clearly, female workers from rural, "peripheral," or third-world areas are triply vulnerable because of their gender, class, and ethnicity, and are subject to exploitation as inexpensive, disposable, and tractable labor in the process of capitalist expansion.

Class, Gender, Sex, and the State

By the late 1980s full employment, rising living standards, and rapidly aging populations forced Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Malaysia to seek foreign workers for labor-short occupations and industries shunned by local workers. In the meantime, the capital-intensive and information-based economy that increasingly characterized these countries in the 1990s required a large number of highly trained personnel in a wide range of professions, to which young, educated women have been drawn in large numbers.[2] As these women faced conflict between employment and household tasks, they delegated the latter to foreign housemaids. The transfer of foreign women from the "periphery" (e.g., the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and others) to work in reproductive labor in the "core" (e.g., Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Malaysia) has enabled middle-class women in the core to enter the skilled and professional labor force, moving up the occupational ladder.

Labor-importing governments have been willing to administer contract labor programs in order to satisfy the middle-class demand for foreign housemaids (see Chin 1998). Such public policy suggests an ideological agreement between these governments and their householders to maintain the existing sexual division of labor. By allowing massive deployment of foreign maids in private homes, labor-importing governments have avoided a divisive society-wide debate over gender equity, while individual couples have avoided confronting the question of sharing household and childcare tasks between the sexes (Huang and Yeoh 1998). The proliferation of third-world domestics in a few rich Asian countries in the 1990s is therefore a consequence of three confluent forces in the region: rapid economic expansion, patriarchal gender ideology, and relaxed immigration policies.

In addition to the problems associated with their sex, ethnicity, and class, foreign domestics face problems inherent in their occupation. Working and residing in private homes, live-in maids increase the risk of suffering violations of contract terms and abuses by employers and family members (Cox 1997; Shah and Menon 1997; Yeoh et al. 1999). Because hiring legal migrant workers is expensive, incurring not only their salaries but also large financial levies, security bonds, and other fees required by law, employers are motivated to illegally undercut wages, require long working hours, and demand that more tasks be done than was initially agreed (Yeoh et al. 1999; Wong 1996; Constable 1997). If a migrant woman is unwilling to comply with her employer's demands, emotional, physical, and even sexual assaults may be used against her to enforce compliance (Constable 1997).

Moreover, the receiving state often regards immigrant women's childbearing capability as a threat to the integrity of national boundaries and to ethnic homogeneity. Governments usually adopt strict exclusionary policies by which unskilled migrants are prohibited from obtaining social welfare services, establishing permanent residence or citizenship, and integrating socially with the local population (Wong 1997). Migrants are thus prevented from reuniting with their families in the host country and from marrying citizens or permanent residents of the host society. In an extreme form of control of female bodies, some states require immigrant women to take periodic pregnancy tests and to leave the country immediately if they become pregnant (ibid., 161).

CHANGING PATTERNS OF JAPANESE WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

Like other Asian women, Japanese women have contributed significantly to the economic development of their country from the onset of the Industrial Revolution in the 1880s to the "economic miracle" in the 1960s (Nishinarita 1985; Brinton 1993). During the 1950s massive waves of rural-to-urban migration brought hundreds of thousands of girls and boys to the rapidly developing industrial zones on the Pacific Coast following their junior high school graduation. Girls worked as assembly-line operators until they married, while boys became skilled laborers remaining in the stable—essentially lifetime—labor force (Nakamura 1993; Roberts 1994). By the early 1960s full employment and rising wages in the service sector began to shrink the pool of young women willing to work in factories, while completely doing away with those who once supplied domestic service to middle-class households. The rapid spread of electrical appliances drastically reduced manual tasks in most households, virtually eliminating employment of housemaids (Shiota 1994).

Facing looming labor shortages, Japanese manufacturing firms vigorously pursued heavy mechanization to cut redundant labor while recruiting new sources of labor elsewhere (Reubens 1982). This was accomplished in two ways. Outside the country, many firms relocated production to export-processing

zones in other Asian countries where local young women supplied abundant, cheap, and docile labor (Kitamura 1992, 62–68). Within Japan, many firms moved factories from urban centers to semi-urban and then to rural areas where they could tap a reservoir of middle-aged women during the nonharvesting season (Iyotani 1996). To help firms short of labor, the Japanese government encouraged women and the elderly to participate in the workforce (Japanese Ministry of Labor 1991; Goto 1993). The calls for labor, however, met only limited success within the country. By the mid-1980s many firms found themselves left with too few workers, even females or the elderly, to support the kinds of industrial production that could not be exported elsewhere.

Statistics on Japanese women's economic activities clearly demonstrate the stagnant labor supply in manufacturing industries between 1965 and 1990. In 1965, 30.7 percent of women in the workforce engaged in primary industries (e.g., agriculture, fisheries, and forestry), while 41.4 percent were in service industries and 22.4 percent in manufacturing industries (see table 2a). By 1990 the equivalent percentages had changed to 8.5 for the primary industries and 60.1 for service industries, but the percentage for the manufacturing industry remained virtually unchanged at 23.5. In the same period, the occupational distribution of women also showed drastic changes: female farm labor dropped from 29.9 to 8.4 percent and service workers increased from 39.8 to 53.4 percent (see table 2b). However, the women's share remained almost constant for production workers, increasing only from 20.3 to 20.9 percent. During the same decades proportions of skilled female workers doubled from 5.1 to 11.4 percent and among managerial workers, from 0.3 to 0.7 percent. The last statistic demonstrates the steady but very slow growth in female professionals and corporate managers in Japan.

Despite significant changes in the distribution of industrial employment and occupations among Japanese women, their labor-force participation rates have shown little change in recent years. According to published data, by 1970 82 percent of Japanese female students advanced to senior high school rather than entering the labor force. Among all females fifteen years of age and over, 49.9 percent were in the labor force, accounting for 39.3 percent of the national labor force (*Japan Almanac 1999* 1998, 248; Japanese Ministry of Labor 1995, 345–47). By 1990 female students' enrollment in senior high school had reached 94 percent, while rates of female representation in the labor force remained at about the 1970 level—50.1 percent, accounting for 40.6 percent of the national workforce. Breakdown of the statistics for 1990 by age shows that for women who are between twenty and fifty-four years of age, the labor-force participation rate peaks at 75.1 percent among those aged twenty to twenty-four (Japanese Ministry of Labor 1995; see figure 1). This rate drops to 61.4 percent for the twenty-five to twenty-nine age bracket (which is the period of average age at marriage and childbearing) and further to 51.7 percent for the thirty to thirty-four age bracket (child rearing ages). Then it rises to 62.6 percent and 69.1 percent for brackets thirty-five to thirty-nine and forty to fifty-four, respectively.

TABLE 2. Japanese Female Workers by Industry and Occupation, 1965–1990

a. Industry

Year	Number	Agriculture, Fishing, Mining %	Sales, Service, Finance %	Manufacturing %	Other* %
1965	18,780	30.7	41.4	22.4	5.5
1970	20,030	22.7	45.2	25.9	6.3
1975	19,530	17.0	51.7	24.3	7.0
1980	21,420	13.3	54.7	24.6	7.4
1985	23,040	10.6	57.2	24.9	7.3
1990	25,360	8.5	60.1	23.5	8.0

b. Occupation

Year	Number	Agriculture, Fishing %	Clerical, Sales, Service, Transport %	Craft, Operative, Construction %	Professional %	Managerial %	Mining, Laborer %
1965	18,780	29.9	39.8	20.3	5.1	0.3	4.5
1970	20,030	22.4	44.4	23.1	5.8	0.2	4.0
1975	19,530	16.8	49.4	22.4	8.0	0.6	2.9
1980	21,420	13.1	50.9	22.6	9.6	0.5	3.3
1985	23,040	10.5	51.0	22.4	10.6	0.6	4.8
1990	25,360	8.4	53.4	20.9	11.4	0.7	5.1

* Other is the total of those industries in electricity, gas, heat, and water supply; transport and communication; government; and not elsewhere classified.

Source: Government of Japan (1998, 84–85).

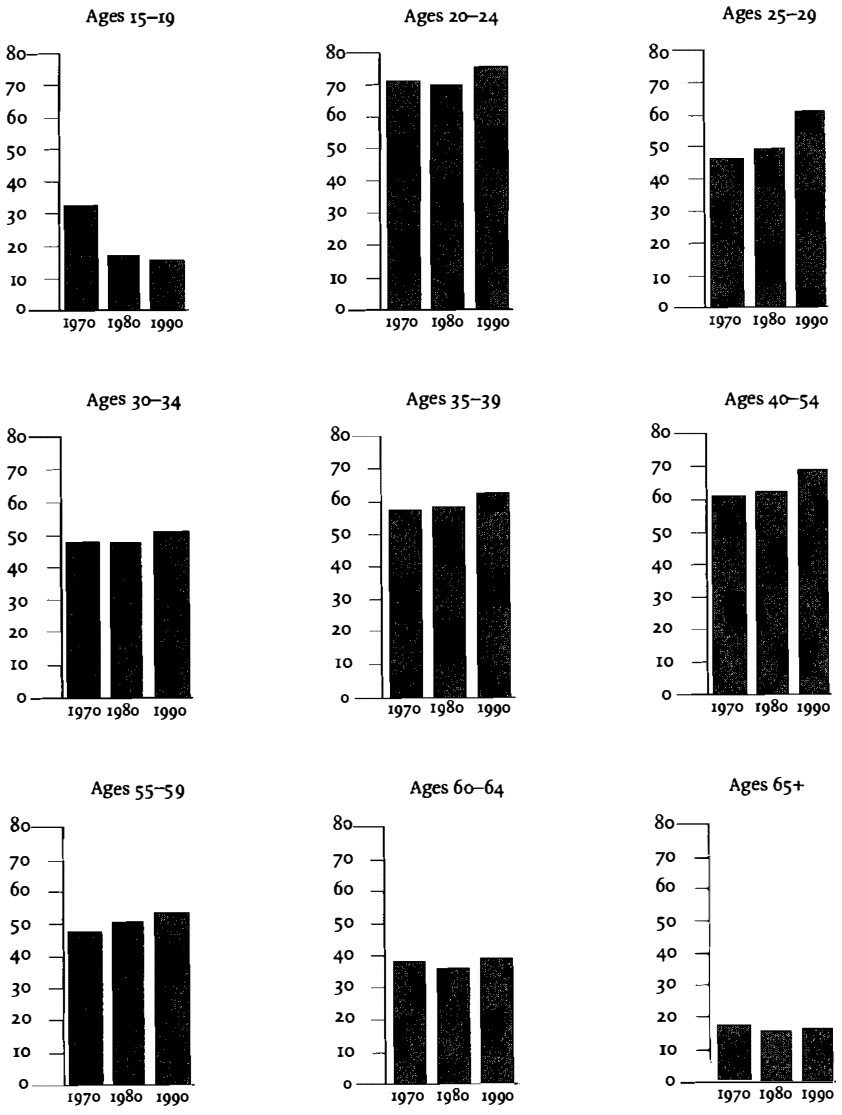

FIGURE 1. Female Labor Force Participation Rates in Japan, 1970–1990 (by percentage)

In sum, these statistics verify the labor shortages widely reported by Japanese manufacturing firms in the mid-1980s. They show that (1) Japanese women's labor-force participation has reached its highest level ever, leaving little room for further increase under the existing institutions of family, labor, and technology; (2) employed women have been drawn massively to the service industries and occupations, as a result of which the percentage of the female workforce engaged in manual jobs in the manufacturing industries has remained unchanged during the twenty-five years from 1965 to 1990; (3) despite increased levels of education and sweeping technological changes, Japanese women have experienced very little professional and organizational mobility during the same decades. This last point contrasts sharply with the occupational mobility achieved by educated women during two decades of "economic miracles" in Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Malaysia, where large numbers of foreign maids are imported to provide domestic service for middle-class households, freeing their women to pursue other occupations.

JAPAN'S "BACK-DOOR" IMMIGRATION POLICY

Legal Nikkeijin

By 1988 the "foreign-worker problem" in Japan had become a national concern. The numbers of foreigners arrested for illegal labor, most of them from Asia, increased while many factories went bankrupt when they failed to recruit sufficient workers. In that year the number of male arrestees reached 8,929, exceeding for the first time that of female arrestees (5,385). Until then, female entertainers, mostly Filipinas, comprised the major unskilled foreign labor force, outnumbering all others arrested for illegal employment (Morita and Sassen 1994; Ito 1992). After 1988, there was a rapid increase in male arrivals from the Philippines, Bangladesh, Pakistan, South Korea, Malaysia, and China in response to a rising demand for unskilled labor in manufacturing, construction, and service industries (Morita and Sassen 1994, 156). Japan's immigration law prohibiting unskilled foreign labor continued to be an obstacle to both foreigners and their employers. To cope with this problem, a variety of organizations, including government ministries, business organizations, research institutions, political parties, and labor unions, drafted proposals for guest-worker programs.

The incumbent conservative government, however, considered ethnic and class homogeneity to be of key importance to Japanese society in the context

of progressive globalization. Faced with the dilemma of how to ameliorate the shortage of labor on the one hand and maintain social homogeneity on the other, the Japanese government came up with a solution. In December 1989 it revised its 1951 immigration law without changing its central provisions, which limited imported labor to skilled occupations. It did so by introducing two measures designed to increase the supply of inexpensive labor, while reducing illegal immigration and virtually stemming the tide of unwanted foreigners (Yamanaka 1993; Yamanaka 1996; Cornelius 1994; Weiner and Hanami 1998).

First, it made employers of illegal workers subject to criminal penalties—two years imprisonment or a maximum fine of two million yen ($20,000). This was clearly designed to reduce the flow of illegal workers, most of whom came from neighboring Asian countries. Second, the Revised Immigration Law established a new "long-term resident" visa category exclusively for Nikkeijin without Japanese citizenship but with documented Japanese ancestry up to the third generation. This new category allowed Nikkeijin to engage in unskilled labor, a step apparently taken with the intention of supplying much-wanted additional unskilled labor from abroad but ethnically "Japanese."[3]

In short, the legal admission of Nikkeijin was a political compromise made by the Japanese government to accommodate labor-starved employers while at the same time maintaining social homogeneity in the face of accelerating transnationalization. By constructing the new category of Nikkeijin, the government could maintain the core principle of its nationality and immigration laws, jus sanguinis (law of blood), which gave the revision process the appearance of beingtechnical rather than political (Yamanaka 1996). The conservative agenda of maintaining ethnic and social homogeneity was thus upheld and, in view of the fact that a precedent for special admission of descendants of former emigrants had been set by European countries, criticism of Japan for being "racially" oriented was deflated.

Nikkeijin and Asians

The "racial" consideration was nonetheless a factor in the government's decision to revise the law. In June 1990, a month after the law took effect, *Kokusai Jinryu* (a journal published by the Japan Immigration Association with the cooperation of the admissions bureau of the Japanese Ministry of Justice) published a special issue on "Return Migration of Nikkeijin," which included discussion of the law change. In an interview for the magazine, a foreign affairs ministry official, Katsunori Toda, emphasized the importance of Japan's blood tie with Nikkeijin in South America, especially the largest group, 1.2 million in Brazil (Gaimusho, Rodosho, Homusho 1990, 11–16). According to him, their remarkable socioeconomic success in their adopted countries would assure their return after a few years of employment in Japan. In his opinion, Asian immigrants would not return to their homelands.

> The number of Nikkeijin workers is not as many as that of workers from Asia. . . . There are not many Nikkeijin first of all, and the majority is very well off. . . . Some Nikkeijin who have grown up in remote Japanese communities of Brazil are more Japanese than contemporary Japanese who have grown up in Japan. The blood tie is so strong that we should regard them as Japanese up to about the third generation. . . . Such [well-off] Nikkeijin will come to work in Japan. Money is not their goal. . . . If they return home with good knowledge of Japan, this would be effective grassroots public relations for Japan. This is why Nikkeijin are different from Asians whose goal in coming to Japan is solely to make money. Another difference is that Asians would not return to their homelands but might settle down here. They would send for their families and have babies. (Ibid., 12)

The Revised Immigration Law has thus opened a golden backdoor of opportunity to ethnic Japanese from South America. The same law, however, closed the door to other unskilled workers, most of whom were Asians without Japanese ancestry. Many Japanese employers, threatened by criminal penalties, discharged their undocumented workers and replaced them with Nikkeijin. Despite its official rhetoric, the Japanese government does not strictly enforce the law banning hiring of the undocumented, but it does occasionally deport foreign workers. The large number of illegal visa-overstayers—a number that has remained at the 300,000 level since the beginning of the 1990s—demonstrates this. This lax implementation of the criminal code is indicative of the important contribution undocumented labor makes to employers who cannot afford to hire documented Nikkeijin workers, who, because of their authorized status, command higher wages than do undocumented Asians.

A CASE STUDY OF NIKKEIJIN WOMEN IN HAMAMATSU

Research for the following findings was conducted in both Japan and Brazil between 1994 and 1998. In March and November 1994 I conducted personal interviews with members of sixty-three Nikkeijin households in Hamamatsu and Toyohashi, in central Japan. I conducted a similar study in July 1995, with members of thirty-three households of Nikkeijin in Brazil who had returned

from Japan to three major southern cities: São Paulo, Londrina, and Porto Alegre. Altogether, these field studies yielded data (here called the Nikkeijin Data) containing information from a total of 171 individuals fifteen years of age and over—81 women and 90 men. This paper draws primarily on the female sample (Yamanaka 1997). Having collected the Nikkeijin Data, I then conducted a study, between September and December 1998, of social changes currently sweeping Hamamatsu and neighboring cities. Intensive interviews with more than fifty Japanese citizens, both Nikkeijin and other foreign residents in Japan, yielded information regarding public responses to the growing foreign populations on the one hand and rapidly developing immigrants' organizations and community activities on the other.

Hamamatsu is a city of half a million located in western Shizuoka Prefecture, 257 kilometers southwest of Tokyo. It and its satellite cities, including Kosai and Iwata, are headquarters for several major automobile and motorcycle companies, including Suzuki, Yamaha, and Honda, together with their thousands of contractors and subcontractors comprising a layered pyramidal hierarchy: companies at the top, large contractors below, with sub- and sub-subcontractors in increasing numbers and of diminishing size toward the base. These subcontractors supply parts to be assembled on the way up the pyramid to ultimately become vehicles. The lower on the pyramid, the poorer are job security, remuneration, and working conditions for employees—with undocumented foreigners at the bottom.

Contiguous to, and west of, these cities lie Toyohashi, a city of 350,000, and its neighbors, Toyokawa, Toyota, and others, in the eastern part of adjacent Aichi Prefecture. This area will be referred to here as Tokai, after the region of which it is a part. These cities host another giant automaker, Toyota, and its thousands of subcontractors. Immigrant workers, both documented and undocumented, are attracted to this industrial area because of the chronic labor shortage there among small-scale employers.

In order to obtain some understanding of the increasingly diverse immigrant populations in Tokai, I also studied a small group of undocumented Nepalese visa-overstayers there and in their homeland on several occasions between 1994 and 2000 (Yamanaka 2000a, 71–72). By 1995 an estimated 3,000 Nepalese nationals were working illegally in the Tokyo metropolitan area, Tokai, and elsewhere. My sample was drawn from the Nepalese population of Tokai, estimated at 500. It comprises 30 females and 159 males of working age. Most are of Tibeto-Burman language-speaking ethnic groups (often described and self-described as "Mongols") of the Himalayan "middle-hills" of western and eastern Nepal.[4] Most of them have entered the country on valid tourist visas, then overstayed them, and when interviewed were working for small-scale employers in manufacturing and construction industries. Data from this study (here called the Nepalese Data) provide information rarely available on the subject of Asian workers illegally employed in industrial production in Japan. They reveal the nature of emerging labor-market inequality (based on legal status, nationality, ethnicity, and gender), resulting from the 1990 immigration reform.

NIKKEIJIN POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT IN TOKAI

Until 1988 few Brazilians lived in Hamamatsu. Some 1,900 Korean permanent residents, descendants of prewar colonial immigrants, had comprised the city's largest ethnic minority (Weiner 1994; Yamawaki 2000). Most of them, particularly those of young generations, adopted Japanese names, language, and behavior, thus remaining almost completely invisible. In response to Japan's booming economy, in 1989 the first wave of Brazilians, 815 in number, arrived to make their way to Hamamatsu. In 1990, with the implementation of the Revised Immigration Law, the Brazilian influx to the city grew suddenly to 3,500 (see table 3). Hundreds and thousands followed each year for the next ten years. By late 1998, 10,000 Brazilian nationals and their families had registered as alien residents, accounting for two thirds of Hamamatsu's foreign population of 16,000, and comprising 3 percent of its total population.[5] As these statistics suggest, by the late 1990s Hamamatsu was spearheading the unprecedented grassroots globalization that is currently sweeping Japan in many nonmetropolitan, working-class locales. Prior to the Nikkeijin influx, residents of these localities rarely saw "foreigners" with their distinctive language, behavior, and physical appearance.

In the first few years of contact, Hamamatsu citizens and Nikkeijin experienced serious miscommunication and conflict based on linguistic and cultural differences.[6] The Revised Immigration Law had been intended and expected to attract Nikkeijin as culturally familiar supplements to the shrinking Japanese workforce and to stem the alarming influx of non-Japanese labor migrants from such Asian countries as Bangladesh, Pakistan, and the Philippines. But these expectations and intentions proved to be ill-fated. On arrival the Nikkeijin immediately found themselves to be regarded not as Japanese but as cultural strangers. They were treated as lower-class migrants from a backward country. Japanese, on the other hand, found the Nikkeijin to be disturbingly alien,

TABLE 3. Brazilian Resident Population in Japan and Hamamatsu City, Shizuoka Prefecture, 1986–1998

	JAPAN			HAMAMATSU CITY						
	Brazilian Population			Brazilian Population			Total HC Population			
Year	N of Residents*	% Female	% Age < 14	N of Residents*	% Female	% Age < 14	N of Residents	N of Foreigners*	% Foreign/ Residents	% Brazil/ Foreigners
1986	2,135	57.0	11.7	12	66.7	—	532,092	2,539	0.5	0.5
1987	—	—	—	26	46.2	—	536,587	2,689	0.5	1.0
1988	4,159	45.9	6.8	91	24.2	—	540,710	2,960	0.5	3.1
1989	14,528	—	—	815	34.5	—	543,759	3,864	0.7	21.1
1990	56,429	37.5	4.8	3,448	41.2	—	547,875	7,022	1.3	49.1
1991	119,333	—	—	5,771	43.5	10.3	549,962	10,973	2.0	52.6
1992	147,803	40.7	8.3	6,313	42.2	11.9	557,881	11,415	2.0	55.3
1993	154,650	—	—	6,288	42.9	11.8	560,660	11,348	2.0	55.4
1994	159,619	42.3	9.0	6,166	44.1	12.1	562,156	11,312	2.0	54.5
1995	176,440	42.4	9.8	7,011	44.2	12.9	561,606	12,327	2.2	56.9
1996	201,795	43.0	11.0	7,714	47.9	14.7	564,422	13,197	2.3	58.5
1997	233,254	43.8	12.8	9,639	44.3	16.7	568,796	15,469	2.7	62.3
1998	222,217	55.3	14.4	9,795	43.8	18.0	565,129	16,079	2.8	60.9

Source: Japan Immigration Association (1987–1999); Hamamatsu City Municipal Office (1987–1999).

* Number of registered foreign residents.

despite the Japanese features of many of them, because of their foreign dress, demeanor, behavior, and Portuguese language.[7]

My interviews and surveys with 81 Nikkeijin women in Tokai and in the three Brazilian cities reveal that nisei (second) and sansei (third) generations Japanese of prime working age (fifteen to forty-four years) constitute the majority (n=57) of the female sample. Many of them are accompanied by their young children (see table 3). Also included in my sample are a small number (8) of older Issei (first-generation) and nisei women aged forty-five and older, as well as a substantial number (16) of Brazilian wives of Nikkeijin men (Yamanaka 1997, 30). As this sample and others demonstrate, the immigrant population is heterogeneous by generation and ethnic background, which adds further complexity to the analysis of identity and immigration experiences (see Kitagawa 1993).

The Nikkeijin Data suggest that young adult nisei and sansei had been well educated in Brazil: half have a high-school education and one third have some years of college or a bachelor's degree. Prior to coming to Japan, most had held white-collar or professional occupations, such as nurse, dentist, teacher, accountant, bank teller, secretary, sales clerk, retailer, or student. In Japan, almost all of them work as temporary machine operators or assembly-line workers producing automobile and motorcycle parts and electrical appliances. For many of these nisei and sansei and their Brazilian spouses, contract labor in Japanese factories therefore represents downward social mobility, however economically profitable it may be. A few have found clerical jobs in labor brokers' offices and sales jobs as clerks in imported-goods stores catering to Brazilian customers. The older Issei and nisei have few marketable skills, but many, being fluent in the Japanese language, have found jobs that require and reward their cultural competence and experience, such as interpreter or convalescent attendant. Some took jobs that do not require physical strength, such as gatekeeper or food processor (Yamanaka 1997).

The guest-worker system embodies institutional discrimination as defined by Castles (1984). For Nikkeijin workers, this is manifest in the labor-contracting system by which they are employed on short-term contracts by job brokers (*ussen* or *haken gyoshu*), who in turn send them to their workplaces in subcontractors' factories. This means that technically they do not belong to the factory workforce, but to the brokers' stables of employables. As a result, they are subject to being hired and fired at will by the brokers. Their jobs generally require physical strength and on-the-job experience but not complex technical or language skills. The Nikkeijin guest-worker system is thus designed to

serve subcontractors (factory owners) as an expendable shock absorber (or "adjustment valve" in the Japanese phrase) between peak and slack periods of the economy so that their Japanese workers' jobs and wages will remain secure during times of recession. In the early period of their settlement, most Nikkeijin and their families rely heavily on job brokers (as their employers) for many other aspects of their lives as well, including obtaining official documentation, children's education, housing, and furniture, for all of which the brokers charge substantial fees.

WAGE ANALYSIS: GENDER, NATIONALITY AND LEGALITY

In Tokai, wages of Nikkeijin workers dropped by some 20 percent in 1992, when the Japanese economy fell into deep recession. Likewise, the available hours of overtime work on which workers depended decreased substantially. During the depth of the recession, hundreds of Nikkeijin were discharged and found it necessary to return to Brazil. Nonetheless, the hourly earnings of full-time Nikkeijin factory workers ranged from 900 to 1,000 yen (about $9 to $10 at 102 yen per dollar in 1994) for women eighteen to forty-four years old, and from 1,100 to 1,450 yen ($11 to $14.50) for men eighteen to fifty-fouryears old (Yamanaka 2000b, 140–42). These rates result in monthly earnings of 216,000 to 240,000 yen ($2,160 to $2,400) for females and 264,000 to 348,000 yen ($2,640 to $3,480) for males (calculated on the basis of eight working hours plus two hours of overtime for four 6-day weeks). From these monthly earnings Japanese brokers deduct the brokerage fee, taxes, rent, utility costs, debt, interest, and other expenses. Yet, the Nikkeijins' monthly earnings equaled more than twenty to thirty times the minimum monthly wages (the equivalent of $100 in 1995) allowed by the Brazilian government at home.

Nikkeijins' high monthly earnings indicate that Japanese subcontractors place high value on their willingness and capacity to engage in arduous, even dangerous, unskilled labor on demand. In order to appreciate the market value of Nikkeijins' labor, however, their earnings must be compared to those of other categories and ranks of unskilled workers in the local labor market, and the collective characteristics by which the 1990 Revised Immigration Law has defined them. These characteristics include legal status (whether legal resident or not), ethnicity (whether of Japanese descent or not), and nationality (whether Japanese or not). Moreover, workers are also defined by sex in two ranked categories with long-established Japanese patterns of wage and social discrimination against women (see Brinton 1993).

Table 4 presents monthly and hourly wages earned by workers of contrasting nationalities, legal statuses (equivalent to ethnicity in this context), and sex employed in the manufacturing industry in western Shizuoka Prefecture. First, it provides information on the average monthly earnings in 1994 for male and female Japanese workers of ages nearest the average age for immigrant workers of each sex (thirty to thirty-four for males and twenty-five to twenty-nine for females) who work for small-scale employers in the manufacturing industry (here the Japanese Data) (Shizuoka Prefecture 1995). Because information on the hourly pay rate for Japanese is not available, it is calculated by dividing the monthly wages for each category of workers by the total of their usual working hours per month. Second, table 4 includes information on Nikkeijin workers' average hourly wages. This was obtained from the Nikkeijin Data and is based on presumed monthly earnings (calculated as eight working hours plus two hours of overtime for four 6-day weeks). Third, it includes similar information for undocumented Nepalese workers based on the Nepalese Data.

In comparing average wages of foreigners and Japanese, it should be noted that there are substantial differences in treatment experienced by workers according to their seniority (age or experience), employment status (whether regular or temporary), and designated working hours (whether full-time or part-time). Regular Japanese workers are entitled to lifetime employment, social security benefits (including pension, medical insurance, and unemployment insurance), dependents' allowance, transportation allowance, annual bonuses, and annual vacations. Japanese temporary and part-time workers (disproportionately women and the elderly) are denied many of these benefits. Most foreign workers are employed temporarily and are usually excluded from such fringe benefits. The earnings shown in table 4 are the average monthly earnings, including overtime income, for workers of all employment categories.

Monthly Earnings

Comparing the average monthly earnings of Japanese and foreigners, a cursory glance may give the misleading impression that foreign workers earn more than Japanese workers. However, foreigners' working hours per month average considerably more than those of Japanese: 240 for foreigners of both sexes; 195 for Japanese men; and 181 for Japanese women, and foreigners are denied valuable benefits taken for granted by Japanese employees. Consequently, some foreigners surpass the monthly earnings of Japanese, but at the cost of significantly more working hours and fewer or no benefits. That is, documented

TABLE 4. Hourly and Monthly Wages (Japanese Yen*) in Manufacturing Industries in the Tokai Area: Japanese, Nikkeijin and Nepalese Workers, by Sex and Age

Nationality	Age	Hours per Month	Monthly Wages (Yen)	Hourly Wages (Yen)	Hourly Wages (%)**		
					Comparison 1	Comparison 2	Comparison 3
Male							
Japanese	30–34	195	291,690	1,496	100.0	100.0	100.0
Nikkeijin	18–54	240	306,000	1,275	85.2	100.0	85.2
Nepalese	22–51	240	265,920	1,108	74.1	100.0	74.1
Female							
Japanese	259–29	181	173,739	960	100.0	64.2	64.2
Nikkeijin	18 –54	240	228,000	950	99.0	74.5	63.5
Nepalese	1 –41	240	201,360	839	87.4	75.7	56.1

* 100 yen = 1 U.S. dollar.
** In comparison 1, hourly wages of foreigners are expressed as % of Japanese hourly wages for each sex.
In comparison 2, hourly wages of females are expressed as % of hourly wages of males for each nationality.
In comparison 3, hourly wages of foreigners of both sexes are expressed as % of hourly wages of Japanese males.

Nikkeijin males earn on average 306,000 yen ($3,060) per month (without benefits), whereas Japanese males earn 291,690 yen ($2,917) per month (for fewer working hours and with substantial benefits). Undocumented Nepalese males are not far behind these other two groups with earnings averaging about 265,920 yen ($2,659) per month. Turning to female workers, Japanese earn on the average 173, 739 yen ($1,738) per month, while documented Nikkeijin earn 228,000 yen ($2,280) and undocumented Nepalese 201,360 yen ($2,104).

It cannot be overemphasized that foreign workers cost their employers significantly less than do Japanese, because employers do not provide them the benefits, entitlements, and job security that they must provide Japanese regular employees. It is the relatively inexpensive and flexible labor that foreign, and especially undocumented, workers offer that motivates employers to employ them at standard wages (Yamanaka 2000a, 88–89).

Hourly Wages

In order to demonstrate the effect that being in each category (nationality/legal status and sex) has on the market value of workers, table 4 also shows hourly wages earned by those in each category of workers and compares its percentage of the wages earned by those in a specified reference category. Three comparisons are made.

Comparison 1 indicates the hourly wages for Nikkeijin (legal workers) and Nepalese (illegal workers) of each sex as percentages of those for Japanese of each sex. This provides an estimate of the effect of nationality and legal status on wages, holding sex constant. Results reveal that documented Nikkeijin males earn 85 percent of the hourly wage earned by Japanese males. Undocumented Nepalese males earn 74 percent of the Japanese hourly wage. Nikkeijin and Japanese females make almost identical hourly wages. Nepalese females earn 87 percent of the hourly wage of Japanese females.

Comparison 2 demonstrates gender effects on wages for workers of the three nationalities. Results include the facts that (1) Japanese females make 64 percent of the wages earned by their male counterparts; (2) Nikkeijin females earn 75 percent of Nikkeijin male wages; and (3) Nepalese females earn 76 percent of Nepalese male wages.

Finally, in order to demonstrate the combined effects of nationality/legal status and gender on wages, comparison 3 uses Japanese males as the reference category. The hourly wages earned by Nikkeijin males, Nepalese males, Japanese females, Nikkeijin females, and Nepalese females are each expressed as a percentage of the hourly wages earned by Japanese males. Results show that (1) Nikkeijin male labor is valued at 85 percent of Japanese male labor;

(2) Nepalese male labor is valued at 74 percent; (3) Japanese female labor is valued at 64 percent; (4) Nikkeijin female labor is valued at 64 percent; and (5) Nepalese female labor is valued at 56 percent.

This wage analysis, based on Nikkeijin Data, Nepalese Data and Japanese Data, sheds light on the systematic ways by which the Tokai labor market ranks sex, nationality, and legal status of unskilled workers. Among all, worker's sex makes the largest difference in determining his or her hourly wage, with females penalized by a 25 to 36 percent loss of earnings. Of the three nationalities of women, Japanese suffer the greatest gender deficit as compared to Japanese men. Foreign nationality reduces market value of Nikkeijin workers by more than 15 percent for males but not for females. When combined with illegal status, foreign status further undercuts wages. Consequently, undocumented males earn 11 percent less and undocumented females 12 percent less than documented workers of their respective sexes.

Without doubt the most striking finding illustrated by this table is that *illegal status is penalized less than gender*, as a result of which *female Japanese citizens earn wages 15 percent lower than illegal foreign males.*

GENDER IN THE BACK-DOOR POLICY

More research is necessary before conclusive statements can be made about wage dynamics. However, it is important for the present analysis to understand that Nikkeijin (legal immigrant) women are rewarded equally to Japanese women, whereas Nepalese (illegal immigrant) women are discriminated against as a combined result of their entirely foreign and illegal status. If this were the rule, one would expect that, for reasons of profit maximization, Japanese employers would be most strongly motivated to hire undocumented females.

But this is not the case. Subcontractors of major manufacturing firms, especially those subcontractors with more than 100 employees, routinely exclude undocumented Asians from their labor force, even though Japanese labor brokers often send these workers to them. This is explained by the fact that subcontractors fear legal sanctions and in addition are under pressure from higher-order companies in the subcontractor pyramid to maintain a law-abiding image. Therefore, it is largely the mini- to small-scale employers at or near the bottom of the pyramid (and thus relatively remote from sanctions from on high) who depend heavily on labor provided by undocumented, mostly male, workers. Under present immigration law, female representation among

undocumented immigrants is inevitably small. For example, I estimate the proportion of females in the Nepalese population analyzed here to be less than 20 percent.[8]

Despite official rhetoric on the criminality of illegal employment, the Japanese government has been reluctant to rigorously enforce the legal sanctions that were put in place to prevent the entry of undesirable foreigners. This laxity of enforcement is in response to employers' dire need for cheap, flexible labor. Occasionally, well-publicized incidents of enforcement are deemed necessary to demonstrate to workers, employers, and the public that immigration officers are alert to the situation and have it under control. Such "ineffective," sporadic implementation of the immigration law has been effective in achieving its dual, latent aims. First, it controls and keeps under surveillance the inflow of undesirable foreigners, preventing them from settling permanently with families. The small percentages of females in the Tokai illegal Nepalese community demonstrate this point. Second, it allows weaker employers access to willing, inexpensive, and tractable labor, which is no longer to be found in the local labor market.

These economic and social contexts of Japan's back-door immigration policy go far toward explaining the increasing feminization of Nikkeijin immigration, a trend that promises significant economic and social benefits for Japanese manufacturers and the government. First, Nikkeijin women are many, young (at least at present), and because of the large wage differential between Japan and their third-world home, are highly motivated to take jobs shunned by young Japanese women. Second, employers regard them as secondary earners in the family because of their gender, as they do Japanese women as well, and therefore pay both only two-thirds of the hourly wages for Japanese men. Third, their legal status (a consequence of their Nikkeijin ethnicity) allows them to live with their families in Japan, which benefits their employers by enhancing the social stability of their work force. Last, as noncitizens, Nikkeijin exempt both employers and the state from responsibility to provide them social welfare, social security, and health benefits. Pregnant women and children under fourteen are especially vulnerable to the withholding of health benefits from their employed family member(s).

An estimated 80,000 working-age Nikkeijin women from Brazil have thus provided the manufacturing industries with an ideal supplement to the dwindling Japanese female labor force of the 1990s. Although other unskilled sectors, such as leisure and entertainment services, are severely short of Japanese labor, the government regards manufacturing as the most important sector for

national economic survival and therefore it attends that sector's every need. Consequently, the 1990 legal construction of Nikkeijin ethnicity enabled many parties to avoid fundamental changes in the institutions of gender, labor, and family, thus contributing to the preservation of patriarchal gender ideologies and practices. By supplementing Japanese women with Nikkeijin women in factories, employers avoided demands for organizational reforms to eliminate gender inequity in the workplace while the Japanese government was enabled to avoid an increase in child-care subsidies and facilities that had been requested by employers and working families. At the same time, Japanese couples and the society at large avoided confronting unequal gender roles that assign women to reproductive roles and men to productive roles. Moreover, the then incumbent conservative government avoided complaints and accusations by one of its most influential constituencies—small- to middle-scale factory owners, many of whom might otherwise have faced expensive mechanization or bankruptcy.

GENDER ROLES AND FEMALE IMMIGRANT LABOR

Traditionally Japanese men have been solely engaged in "public spheres" of endeavor—economically productive activities outside of the home such as wage or salaried employment, artisanship, agriculture, entrepreneurship, professions, and corporate and bureaucratic administration. Women have been confined to the "domestic sphere" (Rosaldo 1974; Caulfield 1981). There they are in charge of meeting household needs, including care and education of children, maintenance of the house, cooking and marketing, managing household finances, and caring for aged parents (Imamura 1987; Uno 1991; Uno 1993).

The rising cost of living and education now drives many middle-class women to economic activities outside the home, often part-time, for additional income (Houseman and Osawa 1998; Wakisaka and Bae 1998). The traditional sexual division of labor in households, however, remains largely unaltered, forcing many women to leave the public labor force in order to fulfill their domestic obligations of marriage, motherhood, household management, and filial piety. As graph 1 demonstrates, Japanese women's labor force participation rates drop sharply between twenty-five and thirty-four years of age, and rise quickly afterward. This pattern of women's labor-force participation rates demonstrates their strong commitment to their homemaker roles.

This pattern also highlights the severe disadvantages encountered by women in building skills and careers in the labor market. The extremely low proportion of managerial positions held by women attests to the personal hard-

ships they face at work and home, together with the pervasive institutional resistance to women's upward occupational mobility within organizations. This deep-seated patriarchal order clearly explains, at least in part, why there is no demand for housemaids among middle-class households in Japan. In casual conversations, Japanese commonly refer to the small size of their houses as the main reason they do not import foreign maids. However, the fact that Japan's population density (867 people per square mile) is much less than that of Singapore (14,425), Hong Kong (16,626), and Taiwan (1,541), all of which import maids, counters that explanation (Population Research Bureau 1996).

The rigid separation of women and men in their public and private roles accounts for the proliferation of entertainment businesses catering to men (Douglass 2000). Dedication to their corporate duty requires "salarymen" to occasionally entertain colleagues and customers at bars (see Allison 1994). By the late 1970s, as young Japanese women were increasingly drawn into skilled and prestigious occupations, the entertainment industry suffered a chronic labor shortage. The industry's solution was to import young women from Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, and recently Russia (Ito 1992). The state accommodated this practice by granting "professional entertainer" visas to these foreign women, whose primary duties were to serve drinks and provide conversation and companionship to male customers. Despite numerous reports of abuse, exploitation, and human-rights violations perpetrated on the entertainers by customers, employers, and brokers, many of whom are reported to be involved in organized crime (*yakuza*), the Japanese government continues to allow them to recruit foreign female entertainers in large numbers each year (International Organization for Migration 1997).

In sum, Japan's deployment of immigrant women as factory workers and barmaids, but not as housemaids, is a phenomenon reflecting the deeply embedded gender ideology of Japanese society and culture, together with its xenophobic immigration policy and rapidly dwindling female labor force (Ito 1996). In the short-run, both foreign and local women profit economically. The foreigners acquire jobs and make more money than they did at home, while the locals derive more money and prestige in newly found skilled jobs than they did in the jobs they left to the foreigners. However, in the long run, unequal labor exchange widens the economic and social gap between the immigrants and the citizens. Noncitizen women will remain in the host society as an underclass of temporary contract workers denied opportunities to rise economically or socially, whereas citizen women will continue to increase their skills and income through training and seniority.

EVOLVING NIKKEIJIN COMMUNITIES

Based on European and North American immigration experience, Castles and Miller (1993, 25) predict the formation of ethnic-minority communities once the number of immigrants reaches a critical mass. According to this model, as the many and diverse needs of the immigrants begin to be met at their destination, their social networks will tend to grow into small-scale ethnic communities with their own institutions and enterprises. Although immigration policies, business cycles, and public attitudes toward immigrants in the host society significantly influence the development of these immigrant populations, their communities tend to remain resilient and flexible. This is because family and community ties sustain the flow of immigrants, while the growing ethnic economy functions to absorb incoming immigrants and their families. The instances of Turkish guest workers in the former West Germany and Mexican workers in the southwestern United States demonstrate that sharp economic downturns and anti-immigration policies do not necessarily lead to drastic changes in immigration flows (Massey et al. 1987; Martin 1994).

A similar situation is rapidly developing in those Japanese manufacturing cities in which a sizable Nikkeijin population has settled. In Hamamatsu, for example, with the arrival of more than 10,000 Brazilians by 1997, this city of 570,000 witnessed rapid growth of Brazilian small businesses attending to the needs of the immigrants and their families (Yamanaka 2000b). These establishments, mostly Nikkeijin owned, include retail stores selling imported Brazilian food, drinks, clothing, cosmetics, books, magazines, newspapers, videos, tapes, and compact discs. There are also a variety of Brazilian commercial services and cultural organizations, including restaurants, discos, banks, travel agents, documentation services, language schools, hobby and sports clubs, day-care centers, and the like. Brazilian Catholic churches provide weekly Portuguese services for their congregations in various locations. Portuguese weekly newspapers and daily radio and television programs report Nikkeijin cultural and social activities and other news and provide important public space for communication and exchange of opinions within the immigrant population. Clearly Nikkei Brazilians in Hamamatsu comprise a lively cultural enclave complete with familiar goods, activities, and symbols.

Nikkeijin women, as well as their menfolk, are at the center of Hamamatsu's expanding Brazilian social and cultural scenes. This finding is consistent with that of recent literature on immigrant women elsewhere that suggests that women characteristically play major roles in uniting families, developing social networks, and thus solidifying ethnic communities and occupational niches (Morokvasic 1984; Gabaccia 1992). By 1998, a few Nikkeijin, usually those most fluent in Japanese, had begun to interact with the main Japanese population. This was most evident in the area of education. As table 3 shows, 18 percent of the city's Brazilian population in 1998 were children under fourteen years of age. One third of these Portuguese-speaking minors attended public elementary and junior high schools while their parents worked. Japanese teachers and the city's board of education were ill-prepared for the sudden increase in Brazilian pupils and experienced great difficulty in coping with it. In response, the city administration and its affiliated organizations hired bilingual Nikkeijin women as advisors, coordinators, and teachers to assist policymakers in the development of multilingual and multicultural programs (Ikegami 2001, 124–39).

At the end of the 1990s, nearly ten years after the Nikkeijin influx, a majority of the Japanese Brazilians in Hamamatsu still express their intention to return to Brazil. Realistically, however, it is clear that as they prolong their stay the possibility that they will do so diminishes. The expansion of Brazilian cultural and social activities is a significant indicator of growing interest in long-term settlement among Nikkeijin immigrants. A recent article in *Veja*, a weekly Brazilian magazine comparable to *Newsweek*, reports that for Brazilians, life in Japan is comfortable as all necessities are provided within their ethnic communities (O Iene Volta 1999, 62–64). Similarly, an article in *Made in Japan*, a Portuguese-language magazine published in Tokyo, discusses the increasing numbers of babies born to Brazilian couples in Japan (Os Novos Immigrantes 1999, 20). In 1994 1,725 Brazilian babies were registered at Brazilian consulates in Tokyo and Nagoya. In 1998 their number more than doubled to 3,820, indicating that on the average ten babies had been born daily among Brazilian couples that year.

> "Today many Brazilians want to establish themselves in Japan for economic reasons. When the first group began to arrive in the 1980s, they worked hard, leaving little time for leisure and diversion," says Etsuo Ishikawa, President of the Brazilian Association. Ten years later, as the Japanese economy has entered recession, Brazilians must change their plans. "Now we earn less money than at the beginning of the migration movement, so it is impossible to collect enough in a few years of labor to return to Brazil," explains Ishikawa. "It is also natural for the Brazilians who have decided to extend their

residence permanently in Japan to fall in love, enjoy themselves, marry, and have children." (Ibid.)

This Nikkeijin view can be contrasted with the opinion of Japanese foreign affairs ministry official Katsunori Toda, quoted above in the discussion of "Japan's 'Back Door' Immigration Policy."

SIGNIFICANCE OF NIKKEIJIN ETHNICITY

The consequences of Japanese Brazilian labor migration to Japan demonstrate that Nikkeijin ethnicity has been a double-edged sword for both the receiving state and the 230,000 immigrants. 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. 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. To the immigrants who took advantage of their governmentally redefined ethnicity, the policy seemed to promise privileged access to economic opportunities and cultural integration in Japan, their now immensely wealthy ancestral homeland. Instead, it has relegated them to the position of a disadvantaged "ethnic" minority in the society. Despite the official definition of Nikkeijin as "Japanese" based on their ancestry, most Japanese citizens regard them as behaviorally strange and culturally inferior as a result of their Nikkeijin ethnicity and their third-world nationality.

The experience of the Nikkeijin ethnic community in Japan is sociologically striking when compared with that of the 700,000 Koreans who have lived in Japan for several generations as permanent residents (Kajita 1998). Like many Nikkeijin, the Koreans are physically indistinguishable from the dominant population, but unlike most Nikkeijin, they have assimilated to Japanese language and culture and are therefore behaviorally scarcely distinguishable from the dominant population. Yet the Japanese state regards Korean descendants as foreigners based on their nationality (or lack of Japanese citizenship), while Japanese citizens treat them as culturally inferior based on their foreign ancestry. As a result, nearly a century after their forebears began to arrive in search of a better life, Koreans remain socially stigmatized and economically segregated by the nation in which they and their parents were born and raised, whose language they speak, and whose culture they largely share.

Whether Nikkeijin will continue to be marginal to Japanese society as an

"alien" population or will become socially integrated depends on the attitudes and actions of both parties to the relationship. It depends on the Japanese definition of Japanese nationality, citizenship, and membership in Japanese society, and it depends equally on the ways in which Nikkei Brazilians define ethnicity and nationality for themselves, as well as for their children. Nikkeijin women will play a major and increasing role in determining the futures of their families and communities in their adopted society. Meanwhile, Japanese and Nikkeijin peoples will continue to interact in their daily lives at work, schools, shopping centers, and other venues, each having a significant impact on the other's beliefs and behaviors, including most importantly those related to issues of identity, nationhood, economic equality, and social justice (Yamanaka 2002).

NOTES

1 In this article, I use the term *Nikkeijin* primarily to refer to those who have "returned" from Brazil to work in Japan since the late 1980s. Returned Nikkeijin from Peru, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, and Mexico are also to be found in Japan, but the Brazilians comprise the vast majority of Nikkeijin there.

2 For example, in Singapore the labor force participation rate of women from twenty-five to forty years of age increased by 17 percent from 1980 to 1990. Among single women, the labor force participation rate increased from 35.6 percent in 1970, to 68.9 percent in 1990, while among married women it rose from 14.7 to 43.2 percent during the same period (Wong 1996: 121; Yeoh and Huang 1998).

3 This widely cited explanation for the creation of Japan's long-term residence visa category has been recently challenged by Japanese sociologist Kajita (2000). According to him, his interviews with high level officials in the Ministry of Justice revealed that the category was created primarily in order to deal with Japan's unresolved problems of Japanese nationals stranded in China after World War II. The officials also explained, Kajita reports, that the long-term residence category was not intended to ameliorate the serious labor shortages prevalent at the time of the Revised Immigration Law.

4 The majority of Nepalese undocumented workers in Tokai belong to ethnic groups that the British designated "martial races"—for example, the Magar, Gurung, Limbu, and Rai—whose tradition of foreign service as Gurkha soldiers in the British and Indian armies produced a culture of emigration and a remittance economy in rural Nepal (Des Chene 1993).

5 In November 1998 other major nationalities registered in Hamamatsu included 1,695 Koreans, 973 Filipinos, 892 Chinese, 876 Peruvians, and 436 Vietnamese.

6 Steven Weisman, In Japan, Bias Is an Obstacle Even for the Ethnic Japanese, *New York Times*, 13 November 1991, section A, pp. 1, 3.

7 As discussed below, the Nikkei Brazilian population in Japan includes an unknown but high proportion of non-Nikkeijin spouses of Nikkeijin and their children (mestiços) who are admitted as family members of legal residents. Consequently, the physiognomy of the Nikkeijin population is heterogeneous.

8 Most Nepalese women working in Tokai are wives or sisters of Nepalese men who have worked in Japan since the early 1990s. They came to Japan to join their husbands or brothers when the latter had saved enough money to send for them.

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