FROM *CARIOCA* TO *KARAOKE*: BRAZILIAN GUESTWORKERS IN JAPAN

Lisa Bornstein

Abstract

This article examines the advent of a new phenomenon — the migration of Brazilian (generally of Japanese ancestry) guestworkers to Japan. In Part I, Japan's 1990 immigration policy is described, and the scope of the migration and the characteristics of the guestworkers are presented. In Part II, the article explores how two social institutions affect the migration process. Based on interviews with guestworkers and recruiters, the author argues that recruiters, and the economics of their operations, are greatly determinant of the types of jobs migrants get, and that the social relationships underlying migration serve to mask the economics of recruitment. Moreover, the experience of the migrants upon arriving in Japan is also a product of social relations, ones in which the ethnicity of these migrants is constructed primarily on the basis of their position in the labor market and their cultural attributes. In Part III, the migration of these Brazilian-Japanese, and the immigration policy permitting it, are shown to be rooted in the failure of alternative policy instruments to resolve labor shortages in Japanese industry and in fears over the impact of widespread immigration.

This paper examines the migration of Brazilian guestworkers to Japan, and the dynamics underlying it. This phenomenon is an instance of a distinctive and surprising shift in the internationalization of Japan; Japan's traditionally closed borders are opening to a wide range of immigrants. While the Brazilian guestworkers are relatively limited in number, the implications of their immigration in terms of industrial development, community, and ethnicity are considerable. This article provides a preliminary consideration of the dimensions and implications of this process. Part I of this paper provides data on the flow of migrants. Part II shows how social institutions affect the migration process and the reception of immigrants in Japan. Part III assesses how the migration and the policy framework targeting Brazilians of Japanese descent have arisen out of the inability of other policy instruments to reduce labor scarcity and widespread social resistance to immigration.

Migration has often been understood as an automatic, virtually inevitable, movement of people from poorer countries to wealthier ones. This, of course, is the intuitive view – Brazilians go to Japan because Japan now has a stronger economy. It is also the approach most frequently taken in the international press. This perspective underlies the central debate regarding immigration: to some, immigration poses a threat to the prosperity, jobs, and social stability of the country's residents, while to others, it adds to the economic dynamism of the country as new skills and capacities enhance existing human resources.

Such approaches, however, neglect the institutional context in which migration occurs. Immigration policy creates semi-permeable boundaries thorough which targeted groups may pass (Appleyard 1989). Recruiters and social networks are critical to the pace and dimensions of labor flows (Portes and Bach 1985, Sassen 1988, Boyd 1989). As research with return migrants has shown, the reception of migrants by host communities may depend on factors other than shared national, ethnic, or religious backgrounds (Appleyard 1989, Boyd 1989). Moreover, the demand for immigrant workers is grounded in particular labor market relationships in the host country as well as in economic and political ties to the labor-sending area (Sassen 1988, Portes and Borocz 1989, Piore 1979, Massey 1990).

The recent migration of Brazilians to Japan provides an opportunity to assess both social and economic dynamics of migration and to explore why Japan – a country traditionally closed to migrants – has adopted a policy permitting selective immigration. This labor market policy of targeting foreign workers is closely linked to wider Japanese industrial policies and practices. It indicates the limitations of these policies, in particular the failure of globalization and modernization strategies to reduce labor shortages. Most important, the legal migration of guestworkers is at the same time a response to growing tensions in Japanese society – tensions due to the growth of inequality – and a source of that tension. While Brazilian migrants serve to cushion the effects of polarization in the Japanese labor market, they also contribute to the process of uneven development in the country.

I. The Scope of Brazilian Migration to Japan

In June 1990, the Japanese government changed its immigration laws, imposing economic sanctions on employers who hired illegal immigrants. Simultaneously, the law eased entry requirements for the one category of unskilled labor allowed to work in Japan – Latin Americans of Japanese ancestry. More than 80,000 Latin American guestworkers, known as *dekasegi*, are currently in Japan. From Brazil alone, an estimated 120,000 to 200,000 workers have made the journey to Japan since the mid-1980s.

Japanese interest in a guestworker policy is relatively recent. Labor importation programs began to be discussed in the early 1970s, when labor shortages grew in Japanese manufacturing. However, with declines in industrial activity following the 1973 oil price hikes, demand for labor fell and so did interest in immigrant labor (Martin 1991). For the remainder of the 1970s, labor shortages were resolved through expansion of domestic labor sources as more part-time, temporary, and casual workers entered the labor market (Japanese Foreign Press Center 1988, Chalmers 1990). Only in the mid-1980s did labor shortages again prompt employers to call for modifications to immigration policy and to look for workers from outside Japan.

Illegal immigration consequently rose throughout the late 1980s. While reliable data on the number of illegal immigrants are not available, one indication is the number of illegal aliens apprehended annually in Japan: 2,000 in 1983; 18,000 in 1988; and 23,000 in 1989 (Martin 1991, Economic Planning Agency 1990: 262). The Japanese Ministry of Justice estimated that there were over 100,000 immigrants working illegally at the end of 1989 (Economic Planning Agency 1990: 262). Many of these immigrants came from other Asian and Pacific countries; the men were largely from the Philippines, Bangladesh,

Pakistan, and China, and the women from Thailand, Taiwan, and the Philippines.[1] Data on the occupations of illegal immigrant workers processed by immigration authorities show that immigrant men continue to be concentrated in construction and factory jobs, while immigrant women are mostly employed as sex-workers and hostesses, and in personal services (see Table 1). Meanwhile, legal foreign workers, aside from the vast Korean majority, have generally come from China, the Philippines, the United States, Brazil, and the United Kingdom (see Table 2). The data on registered foreign residents in Japan provide an indication of the recent growth of Brazilian immigration.

The profile of Latin Americans working in Japan in the 1980s differed from other foreign workers in the country. Many had Japanese nationality (exclusively or in addition to their Latin American citizenship) and were therefore legally permitted to work in Japan unlike many other immigrant guestworkers.[2] Unlike other legal foreign residents, who were generally employed in skilled or professional categories, Japanese-Latin Americans were concentrated in unskilled jobs (PPRD 1991).

The difference between the Latin American workers and the illegal immigrants was heightened by the revised Immigration Control Law of 1990. Latin

Table 1

Activities of Illegal Workers Processed by Immigration Officials, 1989

	Total	Construction	Factory	Hostess*	Shop	Restaurant	Other	%
Philippines	3,740	769	299	2,211	83	124	254	22.5
Pakistan	3,170	1,039	1,898	0	35	18	180	19.1
Korea	3,129	1,660	636	246	74	32	481	18.8
Bangladesh	2,277	521	1,536	0	30	24	166	13.7
Malaysia	1,865	1,337	239	54	9	25	201	11.2
Thailand	1,144	91	174	703	41	39	96	6.9
Taiwan	531	62	27	149	70	70	153	3.2
India	179	70	91	0	4	2	12	1.1
Colombia	152	1	0	145	1	1	4	0.9
Sri Lanka	90	47	33	0	4	0	6	0.5
China	39	4	14	3	3	4	11	0.2
Other	331	56	86	56	14	22	97	2.0
TOTAL	16,608	5,653	5,019	3,564	365	357	1,650	100.0
Males	11,791	5,581	4,696	5	227	260	775	
Females	4,817	72	323	3,559	138	97	875	

* Sex-workers: hostesses, prostitutes, and strippers.

Sources: Daiwa Institute of Research (1992) from Statistical Survey on Legal Migrants, Judicial System and Research Dept., Minister's Secretariat, Ministry of Justice (Management & Coordination Agency, 1991: Table 2-32).

Table 2

Registered Foreigners by Nationality, 1960-1989

Nationality	1960 Number	1960 %	1970 Number	1970 %	1985 Number	1985 %	1989 Number	1989 %
China	45,535	65.5	48,728	46.5	74,924	44.8	137,499	45.4
Philippines	390	0.6	3,035	2.9	12,261	7.3	38,925	12.9
USA	11,594	16.7	21,976	21.0	29,044	17.4	34,900	11.5
Brazil	240	0.3	1,418	1.4	1,955	1.7	14,528	4.8
UK	1,758	2.5	4,051	3.9	6,792	4.1	9,272	3.1
Vietnam	31	0.0	1,041	1.0	4,126	2.5	6,316	2.1
Thailand	266	0.4	1,046	1.0	2,642	1.6	5,542	1.8
Canada	1,182	1.7	1,538	1.5	2,401	1.4	4,172	1.4
Malaysia	58[a]	0.1	718	0.7	1,761	1.1	4,039	1.3
Germany	1,279	1.8	2,740	2.6	3,017[b]	1.8	3,315[b]	1.1
Other	6,976	10.1	18,395	17.6	28,376	17.0	44,109	14.6
Total Non-Koreans	69,309	100.0 (10.7)	104,686	100.0 (13.9)	167,299	100.0 (19.7)	302,617	100.0 (30.7)
Koreans	581,257	89.3	647,156	86.1	683,313	80.3	681,838	69.3
Total	650,566	100.0	751,842	100.0	850,612	100.0	984,455	100.0

Notes:

[a] Sums for Malaysia and Singapore shown under Malaysia

[b] Excluding former East Germany

Sources: Daiwa Institute of Research (1992) from Statistical Survey on Legal Migrants, Judicial System and Research Dept., Minister's Secretariat, Ministry of Justice (Management & Coordination Agency, 1991).

Americans of Japanese ancestry were designated as the only group that could legally obtain temporary immigration documents as unskilled workers. Other foreign workers were given access under a few 'skilled employee' categories. This policy generally excluded people from Bangladesh, Thailand, and the Philippines, among others, who had been employed in unskilled categories. Harsh penalties were imposed on employers hiring illegal immigrants.[3]

Available data on Brazilians going to Japan reflect the changes in immigration policy. Guestworkers from Latin America are now employed as unskilled workers in manufacturing and service industries. Overall, 10.8 percent of all Japanese companies employ foreign workers; 22 percent of these companies employ foreign workers in the unskilled category, "other," in which most Japanese-Latin Americans work (see Table 3).

The number of Japanese-Brazilians working in Japan has soared, with estimates ranging from 150,000 to 250,000 guestworkers since 1985. Estimates of the number of Brazilian guestworkers in Japan vary because, depending upon

Table 3

Occupations of Foreign Workers in Firms Employing Foreigners, 1990

Firms with Foreign Workers in the Following Occupations	% of Firms
Language or other teacher	8.1
Translator	21.1
Technical specialist	24.6
Research and development	20.6
Professional specialist (lawyers, accountants, doctors, etc.)	7.0
Clerical	17.6
Sales	16.0
Licensed cook and other services	15.1
Management	7.4
Other	22.2

Sources: PPRD (1991).

nationality (Brazilian, Japanese, or dual), visas may be obtained in Brazil or Japan, or are not required.[4] Due to the differing entrance and work permit requirements, data on migrants may grossly underestimate the number of Brazilians working in Japan. Japanese embassy and regional consulates within Brazil have processed over 118,000 work visa requests by residents of Brazil with either second-generation Japanese ancestry (*nisei*) or Japanese citizenship, a measure marking the lower limit of estimated Brazilian guestworkers (see Table 4). Other estimates, which include all those of Japanese descent (*nikkei*) who travel to Japan as tourists and obtain work permits there, range as high as 250,000.

Another indication of the flow of these workers is Japanese data that records numbers of entrances and departures of foreign nationals (see Figure 1). The figure portrays a growing gap between the number of Brazilians arriving in Japan each year and those departing. In 1978, for example, for 7,696 Brazilians who entered Japan, 7,592 departed. This correspondence between the number of arrivals and departures remains close until 1988, when there was a dramatic jump in both the absolute number of Brazilians entering Japan and the number by which entries exceeded departures. In 1990 alone, over 67,000 Brazilian citizens arrived in Japan. During that same period, approximately 36 percent, some 24,000, departed.

Although the recruitment of Japanese-Latin Americans has received support in the form of policy revisions by the Japanese government, Latin American governments have been less willing to condone the practice. In Brazil, where recruitment of workers for overseas positions is illegal, government attention to the outward migration of Japanese-Brazilians has been restricted to enforcement of the anti-recruitment law and other routine functions in processing the exit and re-entry of Brazilian citizens. No official policy has been established

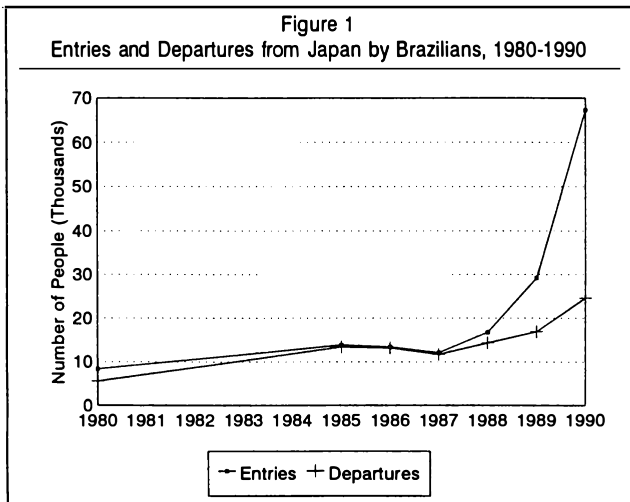
Table 4

Japanese-Brazilians Obtaining Work Permits in Brazil, by Nationality and Location of Visa-Granting Agency, 1985-1991

Source of Visa	With Japanese or dual nationality	*Nisei* without Japanese citizenship	Total
Brasília	194	1,869	2,063
Belém	-	-	3,403
Curitiba	1,580	17,798	19,378
Manaus	-	-	187
Porto Alegre	-	-	1,090
Recife	61	206	267
Rio de Janeiro	241	1,520	1,761
São Paulo	8,734	81,132	89,866
Total	-	-	118,015

Note: "-": breakdown by category not available.

Sources: RPFWJ (1991) from Division of Emigration Policy, Japanese Consulate.



in the area of *dekasegi* migration.[5] This lies in stark contrast to the involvement of the Japanese government and industry in immigration, as is discussed in Part II. Due to the lack of Brazilian government involvement in promoting the migration flow, labor contractors and informal personal networks play critical roles in determining who migrates, into what jobs, and under what conditions.

II. The Institutional Basis of Migration and Social Networks

The previous section provided an overview of the dimensions and characteristics of the labor flow. This section focuses on the institutions, particularly social networks and labor recruitment agencies, that influence the flow of migrants, their characteristics, the types of jobs they occupy, and their tenure in Japan. The role of recruiters in the migration process is frequently overlooked. For *dekasegi*, the characteristics of recruiters and the economics of their operations greatly shape who migrates and into what jobs. Migration mediated by recruiters differs from migration through family and business networks. The latter networks may offer improved employment conditions for the guestworkers. Likewise, the reception of the immigrants depends on the social and economic institutions embodied in their guestwork status and not on shared ancestry.

The data presented below on the characteristics of the migrants and the dynamics of the migration process are preliminary and based on two sources: (1) the author's research with a limited number (115) of guestworkers; and (2) the analysis of 5,000 medical records of migrants conducted by the Research Project on Foreign Workers (*Nikkei*) in Japan (RPFWJ 1991) (see Note on Methodology). The research clearly suggests that the labor flow is conditioned by four factors: (a) the labor market in Japan, especially the generation of jobs considered undesirable by Japanese workers; (b) immigration policy; (c) the economics of recruitment and the types of recruiters; and (d) familial and community networks. While the labor market factor is the focus of Part III, these latter three factors are discussed in greater depth below.

A. The Characteristics of Guestworkers and their Jobs

The 1990 revised Immigration Control Law, recruitment paths, and the economics of guestwork have greatly shaped who migrates and under what conditions. The profile of migrants and their jobs has been marked by increasing diversity. As compared to migrants in 1988, when the migrants were predominantly male and all first- or second-generation Japanese (*issei* or *nisei*), those who intended to migrate in 1991 were both men and women and included a large number of non-Japanese spouses and children (see Table 5). This reflects a shift from individuals to families and an overall jump in numbers of migrants since October 1990. The 1990 (amended) Immigration Control Law directly encouraged the migration of this new group of workers by permitting the migration of accompanying spouses and children, regardless of their ancestry. Additionally, the structure of Japanese wages, in which men receive approximately twice that of women, has prompted many Japanese Brazilian women to migrate as part of a family unit (thereby maximizing earnings) rather than alone.[6] Table 5, based on a passenger list of guestworkers sent on a flight to Japan in 1991, reveals the growing number of Japanese-Brazilian women accompanied by their non-Japanese spouses.

Guestworkers in 1991 generally were younger than those of previous years (see Table 6). They did not differ much in educational attainment (see Table 7).

Table 5

Demographic Characteristics of Migrants Based on Passenger List, September 1991

Japanese Ancestry	Total	Men	Women	Single	Married, Travelling as couple
Second generation	18	9	9	8	10
Third generation	34	15	19	18	16
Fourth generation	4	1	3	4	0
Sub-total (*Nikkei*)	56	25	31	30	26
None (Brazilian)	22	15	7	0	22
Total	78	40	38	30	48

Sources: Research by author.

Table 6

Age Distribution of Migrants, 1988-1991

Age in Years	8/88[a] %	8/89[a] %	8/90[a] %	7/91[a] %	1991[b] Number	1991[b] %
0 - 19	6.2	5.8	9.6	12.1	20	17.7
20 - 29	27.3	37.3	35.8	38.4	56	49.6
30 - 39	16.5	24.6	16.6	18.5	18	15.9
40 - 49	24.2	19.7	13.8	15.1	12	10.6
50 - 59	21.4	9.9	10.8	12.8	6	5.3
>60	4.4	2.8	6.3	3.0	1	0.9
Total					113	100.0

Notes:
[a] based on analysis sample of 5,000 guestworker medical records out of 40,000, as reported in RPFWJ (1991).
[b] based on interviews with guestworkers conducted by the author.

Sources: Research by author.

Most of the guestworkers interviewed (78 percent) spoke only a few words of Japanese. While the migrants were asked in the surveys and interviews about their income levels in Brazil, the data were extremely inconsistent due to rapid devaluation of the Brazilian currency during the period and the resistance of

Table 8

Geographic Factors Affecting the Recruitment of New Employees

Location Factor	R*	Percent Reporting Factor: Not a Factor	Not Very Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Housing Prices	1	20.5	11.3	31.9	36.3
General Cost of Living	2	18.5	10.6	36.3	34.5
Quality of Public Schools	3	22.3	16.8	36.1	24.9
General Economic Opportunities	4	18.0	13.7	48.7	19.6
Traffic Conditions	5	13.5	17.9	49.2	19.4
Climate	6	22.0	19.8	40.2	18.0
Local Income or Property Taxes	7	22.2	23.0	38.1	16.5
Low Crime Rate	8	22.0	20.2	42.8	15.0
Higher Education Facilities	9	25.3	26.0	33.9	14.8
Natural Environmental Quality	10	26.9	18.7	39.7	14.7
Community Appearance	11	21.4	16.6	49.4	12.6
Local Cultural Facilities	12	27.4	31.4	34.2	7.0
Recreational Opportunities	13	31.1	24.3	37.6	7.0
Population Diversity	14	26.7	35.7	32.0	5.6

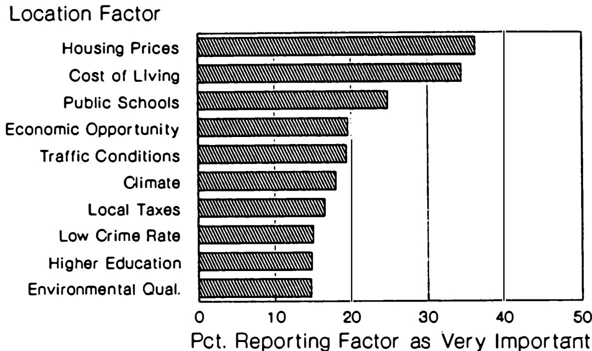
* Rank by percent reporting the factor very important in their current location choice.

Source: Landis and Kroll, 1990.

new employees to move into the area because other factors, ranging from recreational opportunities to good public schools, are also available. Significantly, however, the types of firms that were most sensitive to high housing prices in the recruitment of new employees were the same types of firms most likely to look for new locations when and if they expand operations.

V. Housing Prices and the Movement of Firms: The Good News and the Bad News

For those concerned with the effects of high housing prices on the health of local economies, there appears to be both good news and bad news. The good news is that high housing prices did not appear to precipitate firms to move, and that the moves, when they occur, were likely to be at a short distance. That is, relocating firms generally preferred to maintain their existing connections to their suppliers, to their markets, and to their labor force. Thus, even where a firm was seeking a location close to more affordable housing, it was likely to be seeking such a location within the same metropolitan area.



Source: Kroll and Landis, 1990

Some firms, however, showed a greater sensitivity to housing prices in their location decision. And firms that found high housing prices to be a major problem in their areas were, all else being equal, *more likely to move beyond the county borders when and if they choose to relocate.* Branch firms, located at sites distant from headquarters, were also likely to be particularly sensitive to housing prices and availability. In addition, the firms that formed the core of many of the larger, more expensive metropolitan areas – high-tech firms, larger firms, firms with a high share of executive and professional labor – were also the firms that appear to be most sensitive to housing price issues. This may tend to dampen growth prospects in more expensive metropolitan areas.

Of greater concern are the effects of housing prices on the recruitment of new employees, and thus on the ability of a business to expand at its current location. Based on the responses of firms to the survey, housing prices appeared to play a significant role in the ability of businesses to expand their employment base. Nevertheless, high home prices did not necessarily translate into a firm relocation decision, because of the links between high home prices and other amenities attractive to key elements of the firm's labor force.

On the whole, these findings suggest that industrial recruiters in low-priced housing markets will find it difficult to use their housing price advantages to lure businesses to their areas. Rather, in evaluating potential sites, relocating firms look to balance housing prices and public amenities and services – so-called quality-of-life issues. Finally, these findings suggest that firms in industries in high-priced housing markets will continue to face pressures either to raise wages, or to provide financial assistance to their employees seeking housing.

Table 7

Educational Level of Migrants

Level of Education	Past Migrants	%	1991 Migrants	%	Total
None	1	1.5	2	2.4	3
Primary incomplete	3	4.4	8	9.6	11
Primary complete	9	13.2	16	19.3	25
Secondary incomplete	3	4.4	8	9.6	22
Secondary complete	21	30.9	26	31.3	47
University studies	8	11.8	12	14.5	20
University degree	23	33.8	11	13.3	33
Total	68	100.0	83	100.0	151

Sources: Compiled from RPFWJ and research by author.

respondents to questions about income. While the data gathered do not permit comparisons over time, the majority of those migrating reported earnings between 1 and 10 times the minimum salary in Brazil, which corresponds to low- to middle-income earnings.

Jobs filled by *dekasegi* in Japan have expanded from manufacturing and assembly positions in electronics and auto-parts companies in the late 1980s to include various service occupations. Job advertisements for *dekasegi* in Japanese newspapers indicate that demand has expanded from auto parts manufacture and assembly in 1985 to include a wide range of manufacturing and service occupations, including gardeners, truck drivers, security staff, cooks, hotel receptionists and maids, waitresses, and newspaper deliverers (RPFWJ 1991). Recruitment agencies now send people to work in electrical, food, and packaging industries and hotel, health care, and recreation services (see Table 8). This is partially due to the diminished importance of brokerage fees in total revenues of recruiters, as discussed below, and to the decrease in demand in industrial sectors due to the current recession. Job placements are made throughout Japan, with heavy concentrations in smaller industrial cities of provinces other than Tokyo and Osaka.

Most guestworkers worked extra hours at bonus pay. In addition to the regular work week of 44-48 hours, the guestworkers typically reported an additional 60 hours of overtime per month. Ten- to twelve-hour workdays were the norm. There was some indication among those interviewed of a move away from long days and weeks. This was especially true of those migrants who intended to remain in Japan or those with accompanying family members. Others, whose primary objective was to return to Brazil with money as quickly as possible, continued to seek out those jobs in which overtime work was available.

Employers generally provide housing and meals to single workers and sometimes to couples (if working in the same factory), deducting the cost of these

Table 8

Diversification of Types of Jobs Advertised

Year	New Types of Jobs
1985	assembly and manufacture of auto parts
1987	assembly of electronics manufacture and packaging of food products
1988	construction workers manufacture of electrical wiring nurses machine operators
1989	gardeners truck drivers security guards cooks railroad maintenance assembly of elevators
1990	golf caddies hotel receptionists and maids waitresses staff at "pachinco" houses newspaper deliverers

Sources: RPFWJ (1991).

services from the employee's wage. Health insurance similarly is covered by deductions from wages, employees do not receive end-of-year bonuses or job security, and have few chances for promotion within their place of employment. Other services needed by employees, such as Japanese-language training and schooling for their children, are not provided by employers. Local governments, unions, and Latin American cultural associations attempt to fill this gap.

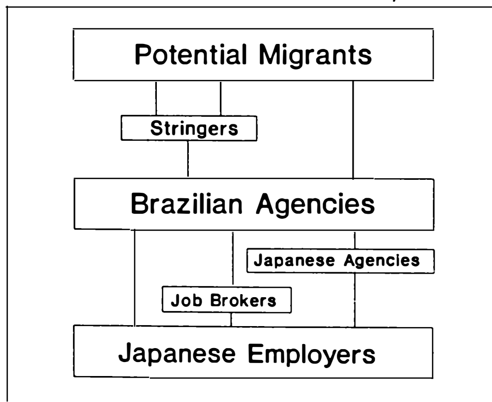
B. Labor Contracting and the Economics of Recruitment

In the analysis of migration, researchers have increasingly focused attention on social networks shaping migration systems (Boyd 1989, Massey 1990, Taylor 1986, Tilly and Brown 1967). Through an examination of social networks, these researchers contend, it is possible to explain seemingly individual dynamics (who migrates, when, for how long, with what frequency); economic relations (who gains, who loses, where gains and losses occur, how much, and at what point in process); and institutional inputs (effects of policy at micro- and macro-level). Such studies add both depth and specificity to analyses based on political and economic relations between labor-sending and labor-receiving countries. This permits a more thorough understanding of both the migration process and the design of policy interventions.

Due to the formal illegality of recruitment for overseas employment in Brazil, government participation in the migration process is limited, and a variety of other institutions have entered into recruitment activities (see Figure 2). The most common avenue for migration is through travel agencies owned fully or in part by Japanese-Brazilians. These travel agencies either have 'stringers' who recruit for them at the local level, are affiliated with Japanese-Brazilian businesses, or rely entirely on referrals made by their clients. They may have a formal agreement to supply employees to Japan-based factories, Japan-based labor brokers (employment agencies), or both. Depending on these agreements, some travel agencies specialize in certain industrial sectors – electronics, automobiles, hotel services – or certain geographical areas within Japan.

The prominence of travel agencies in the recruitment process is not surprising since profits made on airfares for migrants provide a substantial source of revenue. The economics of recruitment in the early 1990s differs greatly from those of the late 1980s, when the migratory flow began to increase. At that time, airline tickets purchased within Brazil were extremely inexpensive (approximately $600) compared to the wages earned in Japan. This had two consequences. For guestworkers, it meant that they could recoup the cost of their airline ticket after a few weeks of work. Migrants could afford to return to Brazil more frequently and save a greater proportion of their wages during their first months in Japan (when most migrants pay back their passage to either the employer or the agency). For agencies, low-cost airfares meant that only a small portion of total income generated through recruitment activities derived from traditional travel agency functions. The majority of income came from placement fees paid by the Japanese employer; a lump fee was paid by the firm for the employment contract, and a fixed sum (typically $100) or proportion of wages was paid on a monthly basis for as long as the guestworker remained in a brokered job. These fees were distributed among the actors formally

Figure 2
Potential actors in the recruitment process



involved in the recruitment process for any individual worker – the Japanese job broker, the Brazil-based agency, and local 'stringers.'[7] Monthly fees for contracted workers generated long-term revenues for many agencies and individual recruiters, providing baseline income independent of fluctuations in demand for more migrants.

More recently, changes in exchange rates have greatly increased airfares to and from Japan ($2,400-3,000). Additionally, travel agencies frequently have been able to take advantage of differences between the official exchange rate (used to calculate airfares) and the parallel exchange rate (used to purchase them). At the same time, Japanese companies have become more active in the recruitment process, and labor demand in Japan has fallen with the recession of 1991. Recruitment agencies also increasingly rely on referrals by past clients, since most potential migrants (in fact, most Brazilian-Japanese) now have a relative who is working or has worked in Japan. This has led to a shift in the revenue breakdown of recruitment activities, away from placement fees and towards travel services. This shift has been partially responsible for an expansion of the range of types of job in which guestworkers are employed. With the diminished importance of brokerage fees in recruiter revenues, there is increased placement of guestworkers in service occupations where monthly brokerage fees are uncommon.

There are additional avenues through which guestworkers obtain labor contracts. While it is rare for individuals to go to Japan without an arranged job or prior contacts with a job placement agency, an increasing number of guestworkers in Japan arrange employment for their relatives through their employers. Although it is relatively rare to find Japanese manufacturers recruiting directly within Brazil, their advertisements can occasionally be found in the Japanese-language papers of São Paulo. Brazilian companies, especially those with financial or technological ties to Japanese companies, may also arrange employment for their workers, often in skilled jobs rather than the unskilled ones that are typical of the travel agency recruiters. Workers may also be sent overseas through company, university, or other training programs. These routes, each involving distinct economic and social relationships, provide possible alternatives to the dominance of intermediary recruitment agencies in the process.

The ways in which recruiting paths mediates who migrates and the types of jobs they obtain is further illustrated by two cases I encountered in my interviews:

i. *The 'travel agent' as recruiter.* A Japanese-Brazilian works in a small travel agency. The company is half-owned by a Japanese and has a partner travel agency, staffed by two, in Tokyo. The company has contracting agreements with manufacturing firms in Japan. The Tokyo-based office provides some placement services as well as support to guestworkers they have placed. Typically the agency receives a few faxes each week announcing the employment needs of Japanese companies. One announcement requests four women for a food preparation factory. Another requests one man for a paper factory. The agency has videos, made in Japan, showing typical work. The recruiter maintains a list of those interested in migrating and tries to match the potential migrants with posted jobs.

ii. *The human resources manager as recruiter.* A metallurgy company in São Paulo has financial difficulties and half of the employees are going to lose

their jobs. The company uses machinery and inputs from Japan and, consequently, the human resources manager maintains a cordial relationship with managers of several Japanese companies. When the Brazilian manager mentions his company's difficulties to one of his Japanese colleagues, he is asked if there are any *nikkei* working there who would be interested in working in Japan. Of the three *nikkei* working at the Brazilian company, two skilled workers go to Japan to work in jobs similar to those they had in Brazil.

The latter case is much less common than recruitment migration and, as is explained below, does not resolve many of the difficulties in Japan that are prompting the recruitment of Japanese-Brazilians. Yet the existence of migration through business contacts, and through family members, suggests that guestworker migration could take place on a different basis. Similar concerns have been voiced by Japanese observers, with some calling for immigration policies that include training as an integral component of Japanese employment (see Shimada 1991).

A common distinction made in social network analyses of migration is between institutional relations (recruiting agencies, government program and regulations, financial systems) and personal networks (family, friends, and acquaintances). In Brazil, recruiters cultivate relationships that blur this distinction. The illegality of labor recruitment for foreign employment further compounds the "personal" nature of the migratory process. Interviews with recruiters and migrants suggest that the recruiters are seen as part of the personal network; because dealing with a recruiting agent is risky and the entire transaction is illegal, potential migrants contact recruiters on the basis of personal relations – family ties or referrals from friends. Migrants exclusively deal with those at the recruitment office whom they know. The travel agent described above stated that he had many people who only trusted the recruiter to whom they had initially been referred. Likewise, in interviews with migrants, they repeatedly explained their contact with the recruiter as, "my cousin went with them" or "he's my uncle's friend." Because of the issue of trust, migrants think of recruiters and their agencies as components of an extended personal network. This relationship masks the economics of recruitment and increases the dependence of migrants on the recruiter.

Of course, the direct familial network remains important. Many potential and first-time migrants eschew the recruiters and travel agencies/placement services; their parents, brothers, or aunts find them jobs, often in the same factory. In these cases, Brazilian family networks play a critical role not only in the spread of information about the migration process – itself a great determinant of the characteristics of the migration flow – but also in adjustment once in Japan. The presence of other family members not only reduces loneliness and feelings of isolation but also helps in finding housing, jobs, schools, and childcare. Perhaps surprisingly, Japanese relatives – and many of the *dekasegi* have relatives in Japan – do not seem to have eased the adjustment of Brazilian guestworkers; the guestworkers interviewed had minimal contact with relatives in Japan.

C. Strangers in Paradise? The *Dekasegi* and the Social Construction of Ethnicity

While the consequences of the migration of Japanese-Brazilians to Japan are only beginning to be felt, there are indications of unintended consequences both within and outside of the place of employment. The employment of non-

Japanese speakers on the factory floor has required modifications of production arrangements, inhibited the functioning of work groups, reduced employee polyvalency, and shifted the communication of production-based learning. The migration of families and the entry of guestworkers' children into local schools has necessitated adaptations such as the hiring of Portuguese-speaking teachers and the provision of language training.[8] There is also a growing gap between the policies aimed at guestworker assimilation and the reality of micro-level tensions and exclusion.

The guestworker flow between Brazil and Japan is unusual in that it involves groups of people with a similar national background; a majority of those going to work as unskilled workers are, in great majority, of Japanese ancestry.[9] In this respect, the flow represents a return migration of Japanese in diaspora, back to their home. Many of the guestworkers have relatives in Japan, some are Japanese citizens, and most have Japanese physical features and at least some familiarity with Japanese cultural traditions. From the Brazilian side, this presents difficult questions of cultural and national identity for many of the migrants. From the Japanese side it poses an equally difficult challenge of how to treat these newcomers, whether as returned relatives (based on kinship) or as temporary guestworkers (as is dictated by their position in the labor market). The immigration policy distinguishes among potential entrants on the basis of national origin, dismissing possible cultural differences rooted in their recent experiences in Latin America. It raises interesting questions about the social construction of ethnicity; government policy has created an ambiguous category in which it is unclear how these immigrants will be viewed and will view their own ethnicity. Are these guestworkers the 'strangers' in paradise, as depicted in the Brazilian newspapers? Or are they returned Japanese, as some of the older guestworkers insist?

The Japanese-Brazilians generally found that their status in Japan was determined by a combination of their labor market status and their 'foreignness'. Kinship, for instance, did not lead Japanese to treat their guestworker relatives as Japanese. Only three migrants out of 60 interviewed had visited their relatives. A few migrants stated that they did not feel welcome, while most explained that their relatives lived far away and they had not had the time to visit. Of those who had visited their relatives, two had done so when they were in Japan as tourists and not when they were there as unskilled workers. Migrants explained that their relatives in Japan would be ashamed because they had gone to Brazil to "make a fortune" and had come back poorer than when they left, to work in low-level jobs. They further explained that receiving guests required too much preparation to justify a visit of a couple of days. Clearly, the guestworkers themselves were ashamed, and this shame prevented many of the migrants from seeking out their Japanese relatives. But there is some truth to their concerns, as is illustrated by the one migrant who had visited his relatives during his holiday; he felt he had been welcomed only because he was *issei*, born in Japan, and he felt uncomfortable with the request that he not bring any Brazilian friends from the factory with him during his visit.

Similarly, some *dekasegi* reported that despite their Japanese physical characteristics, they still walked, talked, moved, ate, and laughed in a non-Japanese way, and they were thus treated as foreigners. Many of the migrants interviewed stated that they felt that they were doubly discriminated against. One guestworker, with repeat work periods in Japan, said that American foreigners

had a different set of social rules applied to them. In contrast, the *dekasegi*, due to their appearance, were held to Japanese behavioral standards, and when they failed to meet them, were treated harshly. One migrant described walking down the street and being unexpectedly kicked by a native Japanese and told to return to the jungle. Another complained of not being able to enter clubs without a jacket and a tie, neither of which he owned, while Americans were allowed to enter wearing blue jeans. Another recalled overhearing native Japanese describing the guestworkers as uncivilized and barbaric. Still others expressed frustration at what they perceived as excessive control over public behavior; they were used to eating and talking loudly in the street, activities not viewed favorably by their Japanese neighbors. Similarly, migrants recounted that shopping habits, such as sampling fruit, when continued by the guestworkers within Japan, led markets to label them thieves and start announcements on store loudspeakers about the danger of Brazilian shoppers. Even limited immigration generates micro-level difficulties of social adjustment and assimilation.

The experience of the migrants suggests that for the Japanese-Brazilians in Japan there is a gap between the formal designation of ethnicity and its social content. Ethnicity, as a social category, is determined more by labor market position and cultural attributes than by kinship or racial attributes targeted by policy-makers. This gap is reflected in the designation of the guestworkers as *dekasegi*, a term with neutral connotations for the guestworkers but one that means 'outsider' and is associated with recent rural-urban migrants among the Japanese urban populations. The jobs in which most Japanese-Brazilians are employed are '3k' jobs – dangerous, dirty, and demanding (*kiken*, *kitanai*, and *kitsui*) – further stigmatizing the immigrants, especially in the eyes of their native-born Japanese relatives.

III. Immigrant Labor in the Context of Transformations in the Japanese Labor Market

While immigration policy, recruitment activities, and social networks are important determinants of the pace of migration – factors often left out of simplified models of migration – attention must also be paid to economic changes occurring at the global level. These changes greatly affect the demand for, and supply of, migratory labor. This section outlines the structure of labor demand in Japan and its relation to uneven restructuring and industrial growth. It provides a preliminary assessment of how the migration process has resolved socio-economic tensions. This assessment focuses on two aspects of economic growth in Japan: (a) labor shortages and their consequences for production, and (b) Japanese concerns regarding the social implications of immigration.

Many theories of migration initially hypothesized that labor flows follow wage disparities (see Massey 1990). Given the clear disparity in wages between the two countries, such explanations for the rise of a migratory flow between Brazil and Japan appear to have some validity. An unskilled worker in a São Paulo factory earned $100 to 200 per month in 1991 (2 to 3 times the minimum salary). A professional, with a university education, frequently earned as little as $400 per month. Either one of these workers, employed in unskilled jobs in Japan, could earn $1,000 to 3,000 per month. This is a clear motivation for migration from the Brazilian point of view. It does not, however, explain Japanese immigration policy.

To understand the opening of the Japanese labor market to immigrant labor, one must address the ways in which Japanese immigration policy fits into wider changes within Japan, and between Japan and Brazil. Three major points can be identified. First, labor shortages are pervasive in Japan, affecting a wide range of locales, industrial sectors, and job categories. Second, government policies recommending the relocation of manufacturing to other countries, the modernization of Japanese-based industry, and the employment of disadvantaged Japanese are incapable of resolving labor shortages. Third, the advent of immigration to Japan reflects growing tensions within the Japanese production system; these tensions are more fundamental than the temporary problem with labor scarcity. As such, targeting Japanese-Brazilians reflects an effort to resolve labor shortages and other socio-economic tensions through immigration while side-stepping widespread Japanese resistance to foreigners, and especially to programs permitting the settlement of unskilled workers in the country.

A. Labor Shortages

The new immigration policy in Japan is most immediately a response to industrial growth and the rising cost and scarcity of labor. Unemployment in Japan remains at about 2.1 percent, and labor market participation rates are already among the highest in the world. Based on 1989 data, the overall labor participation rate was 77 percent and the rate for men of prime working age, 25 to 54 years old, was 97.1 percent, higher than in comparable industrialized countries.[10] Job openings increasingly exceed the number of job applicants; the ratio of opening to applicants rose from 0.8 in 1988 to 1.2 in 1989, to 1.4 in 1990, to 1.5 in 1991.

Labor scarcity has resulted in increased salaries and benefits for Japanese employees. In 1990, the average wage increased by 6.0 percent, 0.8 percent more than in 1989 and higher than in the previous eight years (JEA 1991: 42).[11] The winter bonus, given to regular employees in core firms, rose by 6.8 percent in 1990. Companies are also improving health and welfare packages for employees and granting more vacation days per year. Many large companies have built recreational facilities, or luxury company housing and dormitories for their employees (JEA 1991: 65). Meanwhile, following the 1988 revision of the Labor Standards Law, which legally reduced the working week to 46 hours, employees have decreased the number of hours they work each week. Hours actually worked fell from 175.9 per month to 171.0 per month between 1988 and 1990. The percentage of firms adopting the five-day workweek has also increased, with 66.9 percent of all firms and 86.4 percent of all workers under this regime in 1990 (JIL 1991: 45).

Despite improvements in working conditions, labor shortages have continued to affect a wide range of industrial sectors. Headlines in *The Japan Economic Almanac 1991* proclaim the dampening effect of labor shortages on industrial production; construction, autos and auto parts, petro-chemical products, railway rolling stock, metal molds, and robotics production are featured cases. The *Almanac* reports that "inquiries by the Ministry of Labor . . . show that over half of all enterprises are complaining of labor shortages, with the situation particularly grave among the so-called '3k' industries" (JEA 1991: 33). Small firms and those in the outlying provinces, which tend to offer salaries 40 percent lower than large central firms, are also having greater difficulty contracting labor. In the metal mold sector, for instance, the *Almanac* reports that "a good

many firms have been unable to recruit a single college graduate for several years" (JEA 1991: 121).

These are the jobs that are being filled by immigrant workers (see Tables 1 and 8 above). The jobs are often characterized by dangerous, physically uncomfortable, or physically demanding conditions. Immigrants, both in Japan and Brazil, frequently work in isolation or are occupied in work perceived as menial, such as janitors and personal attendants to the ill or infirm. Many are employed as assembly workers, but of the lowest level, and in companies that do not offer the most modern conveniences or working conditions. While the Japanese government recommends that firms lacking employees hire older or disadvantaged Japanese, or restructure to eliminate low-skill/low-wage work, the reality is that restructuring occurs at an uneven pace and often generating the very types of jobs that the Japanese government hopes to eliminate.

B. Restructuring: Globalization, Modernization, and Polarization of the Labor Market

Globalization

Government recommendations to resolve labor shortages through restructuring of industry are unlikely to prove successful. Restructuring often entails relocation of manufacturing activities, and jobs, abroad. Japanese industrial and labor market policies have directly linked the issue of immigration to that of foreign investment. In terms of manufacturing operations, the export of production activities and jobs is a possible strategy to cope with labor shortages in Japan. However, globalization of production is unlikely to relocate the kinds of jobs that immigrants fill.

Government recommendations to relocate economic activity and jobs abroad have accompanied the export of considerable manufacturing activity. By the mid-1980s, Japan had become the primary source of foreign direct investment in the global economy, reaching $67.5 billion in direct overseas investment in 1989. In the *Forbes* International 500 list of the largest non-United States corporations, Japanese companies accounted for over one-third (187) of the total, for 47 percent of the $6 trillion in revenues, and for 48 percent of the $4 trillion in market value. Over half of all Japanese corporations with more than 1,000 employees had, by 1986, set up production units overseas (Douglass 1988: 455).

This strategy, however, has failed to do away with the need for immigrant labor. First, there are limits to the extent to which production may be globalized. While capital mobility may have led to some homogenization of economic space (Castells 1989, Sassen 1991), it has also involved new forms of spatial differentiation, both in terms of industrial structure and labor markets. A strategy of globalization and relocation of economic activities may not be viable since capital may not be as mobile as previously thought. Geographers have recently refocused attention on how manufacturing activities may be tied to particular production locales, either because of required inputs (scarce labor or raw materials), or because of less tangible externalities, such as reputation, relations with other firms (suppliers, clients), reliance on local governments and regulations, dependence on a local work or business culture, or lack of familiarity with other locales (Storper and Walker 1989). Technological innovation may depend heavily on a particular milieu (Castells 1989), and service

jobs, from restaurant work to hospital staffing, must be performed on-site (Sassen 1991).[12] Additionally, small firms may not be able to afford the costs, in terms of capital investment and uncertainty, of relocation.

Evidence of the difficulties of relocation abound, especially for smaller, poorly capitalized firms. The automotive sector provides a particularly striking example. The system of Japanese automobile production is characterized by dense and stable inter-firm linkages, networks of large and small producers and suppliers, spatial concentration, and stable and flexibly employed workforces. This organization has come to be known as the model for the next era of industrial production (Dore 1986, Sayer 1986, Womack 1990). Globalization of Japanese automobile operations has occurred at a rapid pace, and it has entailed a radical shift in the structure of the industry within Japan. Since the industrial structure was one in which hierarchical supplier relationships were clearly defined, relocation of the operations of larger firms has left many smaller supplier firms without purchasers for their goods. Although transplanting entire networks has been undertaken, this strategy is complicated by the large number of small firms involved, their lack of capital resources, and the heavy reliance (due to narrower profit margins) of second- and third-tier supplier companies on certain work ethics shared by their local labor sources. As a result, many smaller firms have not relocated their operations and remain heavily dependent on the Japanese-based production activities of larger firms.

A globalization strategy may be more generally limited by conditions in recipient countries, as can be shown with a few examples. For instance, there may be local resistance to direct investment from abroad; a case in point is the recent U.S. concern over Japanese acquisitions of high-tech firms, a concern crystallizing in legislative proposals to restrict takeovers and to increase taxes on Japanese-owned corporations in the U.S. (JEA 1991: 33). National content laws in countries receiving direct investment are another barrier to industrial relocation, particularly of supplier companies. There are also a limited number of places in the world in which investments are likely to generate desired rates of return. For instance, Japanese investment in Brazil has had lower and more unstable rates of return than in other countries. Given the constraints on globalization of production activities, it is not surprising that government recommendations to relocate as a way to resolve labor shortages have been unsuccessful.

Modernization

A second alternative to immigration recommended by Japanese government planners is the modernization and restructuring of industrial activities to reduce the need for unskilled labor. Regional planners generally point to industrial structure in Japan, particularly the characteristic relationship between large and small companies, as a major barrier to implementing such a strategy. These relationships are critical to the slow pace and overall inability of small firms to either automate or reorganize production to eliminate low-skill and '3k' jobs. This perspective, while important, misses the more general barrier to restructuring, the relationship of growing demand for low-skill labor to the functioning of global cities and the restructured industry. The increasing need for unskilled labor is a consequence of a particular form of restructuring rather than a signal of its failure to occur.

The industrial structure of such Japanese industries as auto production may inhibit restructuring of smaller firms. As pointed out above, small companies,

especially lower-tier suppliers, are among the most heavily hit by the globalization strategies of the large producers. These suppliers historically have had exclusive sales agreements with a small number of purchasers. Furthermore, these suppliers are companies that, at least in the past, have been used to spread risk throughout the industrial production system. As such, they tend to have a flexibly employed and deployed work force; they must be able to absorb unexpected and dramatic fluctuations in demand, and this is managed, in part, by reliance on labor-intensive rather than capital-intensive industrial practices.

Although there are some indications that larger firms encourage their smaller supplier firms to modernize, such modernization has thus far been observed in relatively few firms (Asanuma 1989, Nishiguchi 1989). This process is at best incipient and uneven, with a significant proportion of smaller firms still relying on labor-intensive production techniques. An additional complication to restructuring among smaller companies and those relying on '3k' work is the inability of the robotics and industrial automation sectors to keep pace with market demand. Ironically, labor shortages in the production of industrial automation equipment have resulted in higher prices and long waits for these products.

Government recommendations to restructure – either through automation or relocation – are highly unrealistic in the short run, since they ask these companies to eliminate the very quality that allows them to competitively fit into the social division of labor. As long as the second- and third-tier suppliers are used to absorb shocks in the primary sector, modernization and automation are likely to be limited.

Polarization of the Labor Market

The emerging labor market structure within Japan further suggests that low-wage/low-skill jobs are unlikely to be eliminated. Contrary to models of industrial development that posit a gradual improvement in the quality of all jobs, recent research into regional development highlights the polarization of jobs as an equally common consequence of economic growth. Within the emerging literature on the labor market structure of world cities, for instance, studies have noted that high-skill/high-pay and low-skill/low-wage jobs proliferate while mid-range jobs have become increasingly scarce (Bluestone and Harrison 1988, Buck et al. 1986, Zukin 1991, Sassen 1991). As manufacturing leaves these cities for sites with cheaper labor, lower land costs, or other requirements, the jobs that remain are at the ends of the spectrum in sophisticated producer services, high-tech manufacturing, and upscale retail activities or in labor-intensive service and downgraded manufacturing activities. Japan's rise to a position of economic power has led some researchers, most notably Saskia Sassen (1991), to question whether Tokyo, as a new global city, will be subject to similar processes of labor market polarization. Such approaches suggest that foreign laborers, in addition to bolstering firms which have not modernized, are also critical to companies that have rationalized operations. Morita (1990), for example, argues on the basis of a study conducted by Iyotani and Naitoh – which found severe labor shortages in those small and medium-sized Tokyo companies that had shifted into high-value-added activities and rationalized production – that immigrant workers may not delay the adoption of new technological innovations. These processes suggest that '3k' jobs are integral to both high-tech and traditional activities in Japan and that industrial growth will contribute to continued demand for immigrant labor.

There may also be factors specific to the socio-economic composition of the Japanese economy that impinge upon or exacerbate polarization. For instance, traditional flat wage structures in which senior employees earn only two to three times that of production workers inhibit wage inequality. However, the continuing importance of small firms in the economy, firms characterized by worse working conditions, lower wages, and less job security than large companies, contributes to a polarized labor-market structure. In the 1986 census, firms with less than 30 employees account for 96.3 percent of all establishments and for 56.8 percent of total employment. Even more significant in terms of a dual labor-market structure is the importance of very small firms as compared to large ones. Establishments with fewer than five employees accounted for 68.2 percent of the total number of firms and for 19.4 percent of total employment; large firms, those with more than 100 employees, represented only 0.7 percent of firms and 23.2 percent of total employment (JIL 1992: 21). Average annual wages of full-time male workers in the largest firms is almost two times greater than wages in small firms (Keizai Koho Center 1992: 68). Similarly, 1990 average monthly earnings in Tokyo Prefecture were 26 percent higher and average manufacturing wages 28 percent higher than respective earnings for the entire country (PPRD 1991: Tables 91-92).

Given the inability of relocation and restructuring strategies to resolve labor shortages, the government and Japanese industries have pursued a third and parallel strategy: expanding domestic labor supply, especially by targeting married women and the elderly. Such strategies have contributed to dualism in the labor market while proving insufficient to satisfy labor demand.

Changing job characteristics provide additional evidence of a widening gap in the labor market. Ministry of Labor statistics document the growth of non-traditional employment terms, recording increases in "non-regular" employment, women's part-time employment, and employment of the elderly. The effects on individual income of non-regular employment can be easily demonstrated. Non-regular employees, part-timers, and those not protected by standard employment rules represented over 25 percent of the Japanese work force in 1990. For women workers, this proportion was even higher, accounting for over 40 percent of women's employment. While less than 1 percent of male workers worked part-time, 27.2 percent of female workers, five million women, were employed on a part-time basis. Even when employed full-time, women's incomes are much lower than those of men. In the largest firms, the average annual wage for full-time female employees is less than half of that of male workers while, in small firms, full-time women earn 58 percent of what men earn (Keizai Koho Center 1991: 68). Part-time workers are also denied the benefits given to full-time regular employees. Labor force data additionally demonstrate that the number of temporary employees (those with a work contract of between one and four months) has increased, from 2,520,000 in 1980 to 3,890,000 in 1990 (JIL 1992: 24). These data suggest that as women enter the labor market and as part-time employment becomes more prevalent, greater disparities in individual income will emerge.

In addition to the rise of immigrant labor, casual work, and temporary and part-time employment, there has been a reduction in the size of the core workforce covered by life-time employment guarantees in the major companies (Kumazama and Yamada 1989). One-quarter of non-student male part-time workers, for instance, when asked why they chose part-time work responded

that there were no companies in which to work as regular workers (PPRD 1991: Table 82).

Augmenting the labor force through employment of married women and the elderly is unlikely to resolve labor shortages, particularly in the short run. First, there are internal limits to increased labor market participation. While the labor force participation of women (aged 25 to 54) is much lower than that of men in that age group (63.2 percent vs. 97.1 percent), women's labor force participation is comparable to rates found in other industrialized countries.[13] Participation rates among the elderly in Japan already exceed those of other industrialized countries, on the order of 30 to 60 percent (JIL 1991: 14). Second, when the available jobs are seen as demanding, dirty, and dangerous – as is the case for many small-scale service and manufacturing operations as outlined above – increased labor market participation is only likely to occur due to economic necessity. While most working elderly (aged 55 to 69) are employed for economic reasons, a significant proportion (over 15 percent of men and 30 percent of women) are employed for reasons other than the desire to earn or supplement their livelihood (JIL 1991: 75). Further expansion of the labor participation rates of these groups is unlikely to occur in the near future.

Other employment trends further suggest that the expansion of the labor market will not, at least in the short run, satisfy demand. Most notably, improved conditions of employment for core-workers, especially reductions in working hours, create new demand for employment even without additional economic expansion.[14] The incorporation of new groups into the workforce also generates employment demand; one example is the need for health-care providers for the elderly as women leave the home and enter formal employment.

Increasing spatial and socio-economic differentiation within Japan has led to a debate over the distribution of wealth and the benefits of growth within Japanese society. Douglass notes, for example, that a discourse of 'haves' (*marukin*) and 'have-nots' (*marubi*), stratified consumption, and divided masses has begun to emerge in the literature (Douglass 1988: 440). More recently, even corporate executives have exhibited concern over labor's share of the benefits of growth. Sony Chairman Akio Morita, for example, states that, in their efforts to improve competitiveness, "Japanese companies may have sacrificed their consideration for their employees, shareholders, and communities" and questions whether "the salaries offered by Japanese companies [are] enough to provide employees with 'quality of life'" (Morita 1992: 66). These are indications that socio-political tensions are emerging from new patterns of growth and inequality.

C. Immigration and Social Order

The rise in both legal and illegal immigration reflects continued demand for labor, demand not satisfied through government-recommended industrial strategies. Government authorization of the immigration of Japanese-Brazilians suggests that this immigration fulfills certain functions and reduces specific social tensions associated with increasing inequality in Japan. These social tensions stem most directly from changing characteristics of the labor market and continued labor shortages. Socio-economic differences have heightened as day laborers and illegal immigrants are increasingly incorporated into the labor market. The rise of immigrant labor, casual work, part-timers, and temporary employ-

ment has occurred alongside the shrinking of the core of lifetime employees in the major companies. Social conflict over reductions in the numbers of core workers and their privileges has been diffused through the incorporation of non-traditional groups among which immigrants figure prominently. Even if Japanese-Brazilians were to stay permanently in Japan, they would be unlikely to demand or receive the same types of worker rights and privileges as native Japanese.[15] Bifurcation of employment conditions is a further element in understanding the new Japanese immigration policy. Social tensions associated with an expansion, rather than contraction, of low-skill, undesirable '3k' work are mitigated by the use of immigrant labor to fulfill these functions.

Spatial differentiation arising out of Japan's economic growth includes polarization within the Tokyo region and between the Tokyo area and the rest of Japan. The rising cost of land in Tokyo, the subsequent decentralization of worker housing out of Tokyo, and the increasing distances over which Tokyo workers commute daily are prominent features of Tokyo's emergence as a global city (Fujita 1990, Douglass 1992). Regional differences in growth and investment have become more extreme, and both large and small companies outside of the major metropolitan areas have had greater difficulty in recruiting labor.

The encouragement of guestworker migration from Latin America needs to be addressed within this context. The rise of Japan as a world power and Tokyo as a world city generates labor demand not only in the center (Tokyo) but also in the smaller industrial areas of Japan. In fact, the immigrants are dispersed throughout the country, with concentrations in such industrial cities as Hamamatsu, Fujioka, and Ohta City as well as Tokyo. A case study of Ohta City, located about 90 km. north of Tokyo, found that immigrant workers were most heavily employed in small and medium-sized firms (Koga 1990). In these firms, immigrants accounted for a substantial share of the labor force: in firms with 10 to 29 employees, they accounted for 48.5 percent of the total; in firms with 1 to 9 employees, made up 37.8 percent of the total; and in firms with more than 30 employees, immigrants were about 16 percent of the total. The smaller firms were generally second- or third-tier subcontractors for one of the two major producers in the area, a transport equipment and electric machinery manufacturer. Production activities conducted by immigrants were those that the larger companies could not automate and therefore subcontracted to these small firms. The study also found that, while prior to 1987 most immigrant workers illegally came from South Korea, North Korea, China, and the Philippines, legal Brazilian guestworkers now comprise the majority of immigrant workers in these firms.

Immigration, in this case, is controlled by government and industry, and operates in opposition to prevailing labor market tendencies towards concentation in Tokyo. Immigration that, through recruitment practices, directs workers to specific jobs and locales thus provides a means to bolster companies that otherwise might not be viable due to non-central locations, shortages of labor, and inability or unwillingness to relocate or modernize. Thus, immigrant labor sustains firms that are located in peripheral areas, rely on labor-intensive production techniques, offer lower wages, or require dangerous, dirty, and demanding work. This is true not only in the service industries renowned in Europe and the United States for their dependence on immigrant labor, but also in traditional manufacturing – auto parts, electronics, and electrical machinery. In

many ways this pattern complements findings of segmentation of production processes in the American garment industry, Mexican food production industries, and Silicon Valley's electronics companies, where immigrant and other peripheralized workers are responsible for routinized, low-skill, and labor-intensive work (Beneria and Roldan 1987, Portes and Sassen 1987). At the same time, the *dekasegi* are immigrants working in industries which are known for a different model of industrial production, one less Fordist, more flexible, less hierarchical, and more humanized. The incorporation of immigrant workers into these industries suggest that either these models were misstated, and never differed as much from Western deployment of labor as thought, or that the prevailing image of production in Japan is greatly challenged.[16]

Illegal immigration is one response to the increased demand for low-skill service workers and to the continuing demand for unskilled manufacturing workers. More important to the government's immigration policy than the actual numbers of illegal immigrants are widespread fears about the social consequences of foreign unskilled workers and the resulting political conflict over revising immigration controls.[17] Shimada (1991) lists undesirable consequences arising from immigration into Japan. These range from exploitation of and human rights abuses against illegal immigrant workers[18] to the formation of an illegal underground involved in recruitment activities. There is also concern over competition with Japan's own disadvantaged workers, the possible formation of a dual employment structure, and the emergence of ghettos with their associated "social problems" (Shimada 1991: 8). Sasaki (1990) reports, for example, that there has been a sharp increase in violent crimes arising out of disputes among foreigners and that the 1990 Annual White Paper distributed by the National Police Agency dedicated a special section to crime by foreigners. The Ministry of Justice, associations of Korean residents in Japan, and many of the unions have opposed expanding the categories of unskilled workers permitted entry to the country (Shimada 1991). Meanwhile, a few employer associations have lobbied heavily for some program of selective immigration.

Japanese government policy towards the immigration of Japanese-Latin Americans grows out of widely held preconceptions about immigrants. Fears regarding the long-term settlement of immigrants from South Asia, East Asia, and the Pacific have led to the creation of an immigration policy favoring those who have, as one migrant stated, "a Japanese face." Yet there is no certainty that Japanese-Brazilians will figure centrally in future Japanese industrial strategies. There is a limited pool of potential immigrants in Latin America if the Japanese government maintains its restriction of Japanese ancestry. If labor demand in Japan continues to grow, a cheaper and more temporary labor source would likely be targeted. In this sense, the recent immigration policy represents a temporary measure to ameliorate tight Japanese labor markets – an intermediate step towards defining a wider immigration policy.

IV. Conclusion

Further growth in the Japanese economy is likely to require creative means of coping with labor shortages. The economic repercussions of scarce and costly labor have already been felt in a wide range of Japanese industrial sectors. However, recommendations by the Japanese government – to relocate, restructure, or hire disadvantaged workers – are unlikely to resolve the problem, at least in the short-run. While relocation and modernization may resolve

labor shortages for large, centrally located companies, these same strategies are likely to exacerbate the difficulties of smaller and peripherally located companies. At best, there will be lag, with continued demand for unskilled workers, until these smaller firms modernize or close down operations. And small service and manufacturing companies are extremely numerous and account for a substantial share of employment. Trends of modernization and the globalization of large firms, when coupled with new functions performed by an increasingly globalized Tokyo, also contribute to labor market polarization by generating large numbers of low-wage or low-skill '3k' jobs. Such trends suggest that efforts to expand the domestic labor force are of limited efficacy in the long run. Since labor force participation rates are already extremely high by international standards, and new employment demand is for undesirable jobs, it is doubtful that additional domestic labor pools will be drawn into the market.

In this context, the arrival of immigrant workers is not surprising. Prevailing concern over the social and spatial consequences of foreign unskilled workers has curtailed full-scale immigration programs. Instead, Latin-Americans of Japanese descent, willing to take on undesirable jobs for wages at least five times higher than those available in Latin America, are targeted for their "Japanese faces." The experience of these migrants is greatly shaped by immigration policies, the economics of recruitment by labor brokers, and the contacts of personal and social networks, all of which channel them into unskilled job categories. These institutions are as important in determining the migration process as industrial demand for employees or the individual priorities of potential migrants.

The new labor flow thus provides an opportunity to reassess our understanding of processes underlying migration. Most theories of migration emphasize either immutable global forces, operating in uniform ways, or individual decisions based on the benefits and costs of relocation. More recently, studies of migration have focused attention on the economic and social institutions generating migration and shaping the dimensions and dynamics of labor flows. This paper builds upon these studies of how migration interacts with other institutional spheres. Legal immigration is seen as emerging not only out of market pressures but also out of the failure of alternative policies to resolve labor shortages and reduce socio-spatial tensions associated with industrial growth. While theories addressing the economic and social consequences of macro-trends are adopted as a framework for understanding the international dimensions of labor flows, this paper suggests that immigration into Japan also grows out of the dynamics of uneven growth within the country.

NOTE ON METHODOLOGY

Information on the demographic characteristics of migrants is based on an analysis of a sample of 5,000 medical fiche for migrants (out of a universe of 40,000+ medical records) conducted by Miyasaki, Kato, and Mori. Information on job characteristics is based on interviews with 60 migrants and surveys of 115 migrants conducted by the author, and survey work with 111 migrants as reported by RPFWJ (1991) and Kato et al. (1992). Total number of cases reported in tables vary due to non-responses to specific questions.

NOTES

[1]Four phases of illegal immigration to Japan can be distinguished: the first, characteristic of 1950 through the mid-1970s, was of Koreans illegally entering Japan (following the forced migration of a substantial number of Koreans) and then working for other Koreans; the second, starting in the mid-1970s, was the migration of women from Korea, Thailand, and the Philippines as wives (arranged marriages), entertainers, hostesses, or sex-workers; the third, growing in importance after 1985, was of men from Thailand, Korea, Thailand, Pakistan, and Bangladesh to work in construction and small factories; most recently, following the 1990 amendment of the Immigration Control Law, the nationalities of illegal immigrants has further widened, with Chinese and Malaysians now entering Japan.

[2]The migration of Japanese-Latin Americans to Japan also grew out of long-term business and social relationships between individuals in the two countries. Unlike the Japanese communities in the United States, for whom World War II entailed a complete break in ties, the Brazilian-Japanese community maintained close ties to Japan. This represents a much more well-established set of links than in the case of recent illegal immigrants from Asia.

[3]It is unclear to what extent the policy and sanctions are being enforced. Illegal immigrant workers are common in small factories (see Koga 1990), and may be found exchanging job information in railroad stations in larger cities.

[4]Brazilians with dual nationality have the right to travel and work in Japan. Second-generation Brazilian-Japanese, *nisei*, are able to obtain one- to three-year work visas from Japanese consular and embassy offices in Brazil. Third-generation Brazilian-Japanese (*sansei*) and non-Japanese spouses of Brazilian- Japanese must enter Japan on tourist visas, receive sponsorship from an employer, and obtain work visas of one to three years to remain in Japan.

[5]Government concern over the migration is growing. In December 1989, Latin American ambassadors to Japan met to discuss concrete solutions to problems associated with the migratory flow. In July 1991, five Japanese-Brazilian local officials in São Paulo provided statements to local newspapers regarding revisions in recruiting laws that they would promote. In October 1991, two panels of a conference on the *dekasegi* were dedicated to government policy and recruiting/immigration law.

[6]Agency recruiters reported receiving many inquiries from non-Japanese interested in working in Japan. One reason for the large number of non-Japanese-descended men as compared to women may be the difference in wages commanded by men and women in Japan.

[7]Stringers also have rights to a small percentage of the fees generated by guestworkers referred by people they had initially recruited. This has meant that stringers encourage recruited guestworkers to recruit friends and relatives.

[8]Schooling needs of the guestworkers' children were not being met by the Japanese schools since the children spoke little or no Japanese. Some local governments, such as those in Hanagawa, Tochigua, Gunma, Mie, Aichi, and Okinawa provinces, have hired Portuguese-speaking teachers for public schools (Horisaka 1991). Relatively few regional governments have provided language training for the adult guestworkers; private groups, often cultural associations, offer some support for the guestworkers in terms of cultural orientation. Other services, from Latin American markets and restaurants to financial services in remittance transfers, have also developed with the growing presence of the guestworkers.

[9]There are two exceptions. The recent law has permitted spouses, regardless of ancestry, to accompany Japanese-Brazilian guestworkers; the numbers of these non-Japanese-Brazilians has grown only in the past year. A second possible exception is that of unconfirmed reports of the practice of "purchasing ancestry"; these reports, repeated in interviews with migrants and recruiters, suggest that it is increasingly easy to obtain false documentation of the Japanese ancestry of a grandfather or grandmother in rural areas of Peru, Bolivia, and Brazil.

[10]Six industrialized countries are used for comparative purposes. These include the United States, the United Kingdom, West Germany, France, Canada, and Italy. Data from Keizai Koho Center, 1992.

[11]Ministry of Labor data on the *Shunto* wage increase, the result of annual spring bargaining by unions, record a rise of 5.17 percent in 1989, 5.94 percent in 1990, and 5.65 in 1991. These are the largest increases since 1982, when a 7.01 percent rise in wages was negotiated (Keizei Koho Center 1992: 68). Other Ministry of Labour data suggest that while nominal wages have increased, the rate of increase in real terms decreased from 3.5 percent in 1989 to 2.1 percent in 1990 (JIL 1991: 16).

[12]The 'Project Silver Columbus' proposal by the Japanese government's Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) to construct retirement communities, complete with golf courses and medical facilities, for elderly Japanese in the U.S., Australia, Argentina, Spain, and other places, suggests that even non-mobile service jobs can be globalized to the extent that the people, or businesses, they serve can be encouraged to relocate.

[13]See note 10 for countries used for comparisons.

[14]There are pressures to improve the quality of life for core workers. Industrial executives and planners are arguing for a gradual transfer of the benefits of economic growth to the average population, incidentally increasing consumption and the domestic market. Tight labor markets have further forced concession of better employment conditions for core workers.

[15]Just in case immigrant workers do consider organizing, rumors circulating in Brazil serve to dissuade them. For instance, I was told by a potential migrant that a group of Brazilians had been sent back from Japan, by boat, due to union-organizing efforts. This story was later repeated to me by two recruiters; the clear message was that union activities would not be tolerated. Nevertheless, within Japan there are a number of unions focusing on the working conditions and concerns of immigrant labor.

[16]Labor shortages are directly responsible for shifts in the structure of Japanese networked production. Toyota, for example, is setting up new factories in Japanese provinces outside of Aichi, the province in which Toyota's network has traditionally been concentrated. Managers directly attribute this shift in policy to the effects of labor shortages in Aichi Province.

[17]The debates over immigration in Japan, including arguments for and against an open-door policy, are reviewed in: Kazuaki Tezuka (1989), *Gaikokujin Rodosha (Foreign Workers)*. Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Shimbun-sha; and Tadashi Hanami and Y. Kuwahara, eds. (1989) *Asu no Rinjin, Gaikokujin Rodosha (Foreign Workers: Neighbors of Tomorrow)*. Tokyo: Toyo Keizai Shimpo-sha.

[18]Studies have found that illegal workers are extremely vulnerable to exploitation. Assistance organizations established to aid illegal immigrant workers report that many women are forced into prostitution, many workers have their passports confiscated by their employees and are thus unable to depart, and that many have difficulty obtaining payment for the work they do (Ohshima and Francis 1989). The situation is better for those who enter as students rather than tourists since students at least have the legal right to remain in the country; it is only their employment that is formally illegal (Shimada 1991).

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