JAPANESE PUBLIC MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS PERCEPTIONS OF JAPANESE AS SECOND LANGUAGE (JSL) LEARNERS: DYNAMICS OF RACIALIZATION

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JAPANESE PUBLIC MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF
JAPANESE AS SECOND LANGUAGE (JSL) LEARNERS: DYNAMICS OF
RACIALIZATION

By

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DISSERTATION
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
Language, Literacy, and Sociocultural Studies

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

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Dedication

To Seichiro and Hiroko Suzuki, my Japanese host parents (1982 – 1983) who when they learned how difficult it was for Chinese exchange students to find host families (unlike exchange students from the U.S.) decided to only host Chinese students. I was so lucky to have learned so much from you.

To my mom, my hero, Barbara Brown Cardoza

I wonder still what would have happened if you hadn’t been forced to quit high school.

Thank you for making sure I got through it.

To all the kids who want to go to school.
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I also wish to thank the graduate students from Akita International University (2009 – 2011), who did transcriptions and translations for the study, but in particular Yoshiko Kimura, who worked above and beyond what she was asked to do. Additionally I wish to acknowledge my former colleague Yoko Nakai, who introduced me to her graduate students and to Ikuo Kawakami of Waseda University, and who kept me up to date on seminars on Japanese language teaching. It was at one of these seminars that I had the pleasure of meeting Takao Yamada, a Kawasaki city official and activist, who continues to include me in his monthly e-mails.

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I cannot thank Kazuhiko Soyama enough. Although we only met once a couple years before I asked him if he might help me locate schools with JSL student populations, he so
generously gave his time to me, arranged for me to send surveys to 6 schools and personally escorted me to several of my interviews. I also wish to thank all the participants who volunteered their time for this study and their principals and colleagues who treated me so kindly on every occasion. Finally, I want to thank Hemmi for keeping it real—always.

To everyone who has been part of this process I offer my gratitude and respect. Thank you.
The purpose of this study has been to apply the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a means for understanding how Japanese as second language (JSL) learners are racialized in Japanese public schools and the degree to which Japanese public middle school teachers support or interrupt these processes.

The approach taken in this study was qualitative; data was collected between December 2008 and September 2009. The data includes an initial survey to middle school teachers, two semi-structured interviews with 16 middle schools teachers, participant-observations in JSL and other subject area classes at four schools—a total of twenty eight 50-minute classes, an observation notebook and reflective journal, and document analysis of official documents from schools, the central and local governments, and the Japanese Ministry of Education, and Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT).

It was found that the JSL policies and curricula of the four schools observed varied: JSL students in two schools with similar JSL populations received strikingly different
education. Furthermore, a number of participants expressed a belief that JSL students from Brazil and Peru, who are of Japanese descent (Nikkeijin), are less studious or care less about education than their mainstream Japanese and Asian ‘newcomer’ classmates.

It is argued that such beliefs may allow teachers to rationalize the problematic educational policies toward JSL students, including the disconnect between MEXT and local governments and schools regarding JSL curricula, and the problematic Fundamental Law of Education (FLE) which mandates compulsory education only for Japanese nationals. Although some teachers in the study worked to disrupt the racialization of Nikkei students in their schools, teacher beliefs about Nikkei students appeared to support a core belief that assimilation is the goal of public education.

The findings from the study suggest that Japanese public school teachers who work with JSL students are cognizant of the discriminatory effects of the FLE. It is argued that by actively working to change the FLE and improve the quality of JSL curricula, they may disrupt the racialization process and improve the quality of education for all students.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

Japanese education is facing a number of challenges in the twenty-first century. From the Meiji Period (1880s) until the post-World War II educational reforms of the 1940s and 1950s, the Japanese government aimed to create a cohesive “Japanese citizenry” through its educational policies (LeTendre, Hofer & Shimizu, 2003, p. 19). In its efforts to ‘modernize’ Japanese society, the Japanese government enacted educational policies aimed at eliminating regional, political, cultural and linguistic differences for the purpose of assimilation.

Education reforms enacted after World War II were created through a series of compromises between those who wanted a democratic, egalitarian, merit-based society, and those who wanted to ensure that “traditional” values were upheld. These positions, however, are not mutually exclusive.

Within the context of increasing globalization, Japanese society continues to re-evaluate and re-examine the successes and failures of its education system. Since the 1980s, a series of educational committees organized by the government and comprised of politicians, corporate leaders, bureaucrats and educators have initiated changes in school curricula and policy. The perceived need for change, however, differs greatly among stakeholders. Some see a need for education to reinsert pride in the Japanese nation, which they feel has been compromised. Some argue that Japan must become more active in the global arena and maintain its position as a global player. Some feel that Japan has made great strides toward an egalitarian, merit-based society and are worried that changes to the educational system will exacerbate growing inequalities, evident since the 1980s (Horio, 1986). Others argue for increased diversification of Japanese schools because they believe that conformity in
Japanese schools has been responsible for a perceived increase in the number of crimes committed by youth in Japan, or because they feel that that although students with average abilities are served by public education, it does not encourage excellence among the so-called gifted (Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999). It is argued that “the dominant cultural dialogue does not sustain minority issues as a legitimate basis for criticizing the educational system” (LeTender, Hofer & Shimizu, 2000, p. 22), but despite this marginalization, a growing number of individuals see the need for recognition and services for Japan’s ethnic minority, aboriginal and immigrant populations within the school system. These are but some of the issues facing Japanese society and its public schools.

Since the 1960s, despite repeated challenges by grassroots and teacher-led civil movements, the educational policy in Japan has changed increasingly from one focused on preparing youth to become full democratic citizens to one focused on education for economic growth (Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999). Moreover, current reforms in Japan have allowed the central government to push local municipalities to do the “real work” of restructuring curricula and educating students, while the central government evaluates “from afar” (Takayama 2008b). These moves have been widely criticized. According to McVeigh: “The calls for more ‘creativity,’ ‘individuality,’ ‘liberalization,’ ‘diversification,’ ‘flexibility,’ and ‘internationalization’ are in large measure demands from business and industry for workers who are more innovative, efficient, open-minded, and skilled in the latest technology needed for Japan’s economic nation-statism” (2000, p. 87). As the pressure on local governments to find equitable ways to work with students increases and as parents have begun demanding specialized programs for their children, local NGOs and NPOs have also become involved. Although for some the activism of local NGOs and NPOs is considered necessary, others
question the increasing inability or disinterest of the central government in meeting the
diverse needs of its citizenry and foreign residents, and find the shift in responsibility further
evidence of a neo-liberal state (Kamat, 2004; Nihei, 2010).

Since the 1990s a number of scholarly and popular books and articles have been
written portraying Japan as a “multicultural,” “multiethnic” and “multilingual” nation in an
attempt to reassess the common perception that the Japanese populace is, and always has
been, homogeneous (see for example, Murphy-Shigematsu, 1993; Maher & Yashiro, 1995;
Maher & Macdonald, 1995; Howell, 1996; Suzuki & Oiwa, 1996; Weiner, 1997; Denoon et
al., 2001; Lie, 2001, Noguchi & Fotos, 2001). Despite these efforts, which may be regarded
as political in nature (Burgess, 2007a), Japanese and non-Japanese insist that Japan is
inhabited by monolingual, monoethnic, and monocultural “Japanese” though the perception
of Japanese homogeneity is in part a post-World War II phenomenon (Oguma, 2002). An
excerpt from a book published by the Japanese Ministry of Education (MOE) in 1942,
clarifies this point:

The Japanese nation did not originally emerge as a homogeneous nation. Rather, it
was formed in ancient times through a fusion and assimilation into the Japanese
nation of aboriginal peoples and those who came from the continent, and was formed
through the cultivation of a strong belief that all were members of the same nation
under the Imperial Family. (Oguma, 2002, p. xxvi)

Japan is, arguably, homogeneous if comparisons are made with nations that have long
invited, or at least accepted, immigration. Official figures put Japan’s foreign population at
just over 1.7% (MOJ, 2010). Thus immigration policy is implicated, both in the general
perception of Japanese homogeneity and in its apparent materialization. Moreover, popular
discourse on Japan’s homogeneity, shaped by and through the government, media, education and community, further establishes homogeneity as ‘reality.’ In discussing Oguma’s (2002) analysis of the Japanese government’s pre World War II belief in its pan-Asian heritage and mission and its post-war silencing of difference, Kobayashi (2011) explains as follows:

Given that any national identity at any era is ‘‘contained in the stories which are told about it, memories which connect its present with its past, and images which are constructed of it’’ (Hall 1996, p. 613), it might not be surprising that within a short period after the war, the then dominant view of Japan as a perpetual multiethnic nation was replaced with the reborn-Japan as a historically unique (mysterious) homogeneous nation: this now appears to be on the verge of being replaced by a new politically and socially favoured view of Japan as a democratic multicultural nation inhabited by a rising number of voluntary immigrants seeking better lives as well as a larger number of old-time involuntary residents and native people (e.g. Korean-Japanese, Ainu, people in Okinawa). (p. 3)

If societies are after all “imagined communities” as Anderson (1991) claims, then it is discourse which helps its members do this imagining. National and local identity/ies are maintained, change and are changed by and through the ways in which they are imagined, spoken about and written about. How a society or group imagines itself becomes its commonsense understanding of ‘what it is’ and what it can or should be. The stories told by its members also explain who ‘we’ are as opposed to ‘them.’

Currently the perception and ‘reality’ of Japanese homogeneity is questioned, as more people acknowledge the effects of globalization in Japan, of which increased immigration is but one aspect. As a result there have been calls for a national identity which embraces
multiculturalism (Yamanaka, 1992; Yamawaki, 2002; Jung, 2004). But multiculturalism or diversity in Japan is cordoned off in particular urban spatial realities or “diversity points” (Tsuneyoshi, 2004) rather than recognized as a reality by the majority of Japanese nationals (Burgess, 2007a; Burgess, 2007b), and so-called mainstream Japanese seem less than optimistic about increasing immigration—even as intra-Asian migration increases.

In addition to the often unacknowledged presence in Japan of indigenous Ainu and Ryukyuan populations (see Siddle, 1995, 1997a, 1997b, 2002; DeChicchis, 1995 on Ainu; see Matsumori, 1995; Taira, 1997; Pearson, 2001 on Ryukyuans and Okinawans; see Hanazaki, 2001 on both) and the descendants of colonial subjects from Taiwan, China and Korea, recently referred to as “old-comers” (see Maher & Kawanishi, 1995; Ryang, 2000; Lee, 2002; Ryang & Lie, 2009), there exists a not insignificant population of bilingual and multilingual, bicultural, and biracial people who reside in Japan, with and without Japanese passports (Sassen, 1994; Morita & Sassen, 1994; Maher, 1997; Shipper, 2002; Shipper, 2005). In Japan, nationality is determined by the principle of *jus sanguinis*, the nationality of one’s parents, rather than *jus soli*, one’s place of birth (Kashiwazaki, 1998). Thus among Japan’s foreign residents are several generations of Korean, Taiwanese and Chinese nationals who were born and have spent much or all of their lives in Japan. The multilingual population also includes recent immigrants, the so-called “newcomer” population, from South Korea, Taiwan and China, countries in South and South-east Asia, and second to fourth generation Japanese-Brazilians, Japanese-Peruvians and other South Americans.

Since the 1980s, legal and illegal immigration has increased in Japan, mostly from Asian countries. It was estimated that in 1991 most undocumented foreign workers came from South Korea, Thailand, the Philippines, Bangladesh and Pakistan (Sassen, 1994).
According to statistics from the Japanese Ministry of Justice Bureau, until 2006 the largest numbers of foreign residents in Japan were North and South Korean nationals, mostly “old-comers.” From 2007, however, Chinese nationals became the largest group of foreign residents at 28% of the foreign population and reaching 31% in 2009. From 2007 Chinese nationals were followed by Koreans, and Brazilians, approximately 14% of the foreign population from 1999 until 2008, were the third largest group (Ministry of Justice, 2010). Since these statistics also include long-term residents of Japan, such as third and fourth generation resident Koreans, the “old-comer” population, they may not accurately reflect most recent immigration. More recent immigration patterns show that Chinese, followed by Brazilians, are the two largest new immigrant groups in Japan (Riordan, 2005). Additionally, there are many short and long term foreign residents from countries in Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand, Japan’s economic partners and competitors. Despite their smaller numbers, and whether they work in multinational corporations or are hired locally, they are for the most part hired as skilled workers, and maintain higher levels of economic and social capital than other migrant groups.

Japan, as an industrialized and former colonizing nation is intimately involved in the global/globalizing economy. Thus, it should come as no surprise to learn that many new immigrants are citizens of nations formerly colonized by Japan as well as countries in which Japanese corporations have built overseas factories. Additionally, Brazilian immigration to Japan increased precisely because of allowances made for the migration of those with Japanese “blood.” As Sassen (1994) reminds us “migrations do not just happen; they are produced… migrations do not involve just any possible combination of countries; they are patterned” (p. 63). Migration to Japan therefore, results from Japan’s strong presence in Asia,
historically and in the present, with its off-shore manufacturing, overseas development aid, and export of Japanese culture and consumer goods (Sassen, 1994). Japan’s active involvement in the global economy has created the flow of migration to Japan, including immigrants from other industrialized nations.

Despite this obvious increase in immigrant labor, the Japanese government has carefully controlled emigration to Japan. In the early 1990s visa exemption agreements with Pakistan, Bangladesh and Iran were revoked, purportedly in an attempt to decrease the number of illegal immigrants from these countries. At the same time the Japanese government provided visas for larger numbers of Brazilians, Peruvians and Bolivians which “allowed” them to work as unskilled laborers. However, not all Brazilians and Peruvians were welcomed; the law provided only for Japanese descendants, up to the third generation (Morita & Sassen, 1994; Sassen, 1994). Howell (1996) writes: “Bringing Brazilians and other Latin Americans of Japanese descent into the country appeared to officials to be a reasonable accommodation of the economic need for manual labourers with the ideological desire to preserve Japanese ethnic homogeneity, as it was facilely assumed that the Latin Americans’ Japanese ancestry would make them readily assimilable” (p. 184). And yet the incorporation of Japanese-Brazilians has been anything but smooth. Many Japanese-Brazilians do not speak Japanese and continue to be treated as foreigners (Tsuda, 2000). For Japanese-Brazilians, many of whom were considered middle-class in Brazil and were proud of their Japanese roots, their experiences in unskilled industry, and their marginalization in Japanese society have generated a renewed interest in their Brazilian identity/ies, and a resistance to Japanese assimilation (Tsuda, 2000).
Statement of the Problem

The fact of Japan’s decreasing birthrate substantiates the argument that Japan will likely need to accept increasing numbers of immigrants and migrant workers in the future (Jung, 2004). It is calculated that in order to support an increasingly aging population, Japan may be required to “accept a total of 33 million immigrants by 2050” or 600,000 per year, or more (Jung, p. 54). According to this argument, it makes sense for Japan to not only improve its policies toward immigrants already residing in Japan, but also to attract increasing numbers of immigrants.

And yet, how are new immigrants and migrant workers to Japan framed by the official discourse and by ‘mainstream’ Japanese in general? Are they welcomed as agents of change who will help Japan “internationalize” so as to successfully compete in world markets? Are they considered an ‘unfortunate’ necessity? On the one hand, in the official discourse and in the minds of many Japanese, issues of immigration are linked with criminal activity. On the other hand there are a number of grassroots and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which perceive issues of immigration in Japan from a human rights perspective. Shipper (2005) finds that “the construction of foreigners’ images [in Japan] is the result of a political struggle between the state and societal actors” (p. 3). According to Shipper, crime data from the Japanese National Police Agency is used extensively in mass media reports on foreigners living in Japan to focus on crimes committed by non-Japanese. He also finds that that Christian groups, NGOs, and medical groups, established by Japanese nationals, have been increasingly successful in presenting to the media the hardships faced by foreigners in Japan, as well as the crimes committed against them.
The newcomer or new immigrant population, both legal and undocumented, includes children. For a number of reasons, though, it is difficult to state exactly how many foreign children live in Japan or how many foreign children attend school. Nor is it clear how many children require Japanese as second language (JSL) support. Yamawaki’s 2007 figures put the number of foreign children attending Japanese public schools at 70,000. He also included in his data 24,000 foreign children who attended “miscellaneous” schools, and 7,000 attending schools not recognized by the Japanese government. In contrast, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) bi-annual survey on foreign children enrolled in Japanese schools requiring Japanese language support for the year 2010 cites 28,511 foreign students requiring JSL instruction, a slight decrease from the 2008 figure of 28,575 children (MEXT, 2011). There may be several reasons for the discrepancies between these figures. First, Yamawaki’s data appears to include Korean, Chinese and Taiwanese foreign nationals whose families have resided in Japan for several generations, and who may be monolingual Japanese speakers or bilingual speakers who do not require Japanese language instruction. Secondly, there are no clear guidelines for determining which students actually require JSL instruction. Thus, students needing instruction may not be included in MEXT’s data. Third, and related to the second point, most mainstream teachers have little or no experience with Japanese language instruction or assessment, and as a result may under-represent their students who need JSL instruction (Vaipae, 2001). Finally, it is possible that Yamawaki’s data includes children of so-called “international marriages” who are Japanese nationals but who have a parent who is not a Japanese national, or Japanese nationals who have spent much of their life overseas, the so-called kikokushijo (returnees) who need JSL support. However, MEXT’s figures appear to
apply only to foreign nationals. Thus, there may be more need for JSL instruction than is
officially recognized: In 2005 Riordan found that although foreign students in need of JSL
instruction were documented in all 47 prefectures, only 21 employed Japanese language
instructors. Similarly only 429 of 1156 cities did so.

More alarming is the lack of government data available on foreign children who do
not attend school. Riordan, for example, cites research that claims that the number of
Brazilian children in Japan may be five times the official number, meaning that the majority
of Brazilian children may not be attending school at all (2005). According to Japanese law,
foreign nationals are not required to attend school though this is in violation the two
international agreements which Japan has ratified, the International Covenant of Economic,
Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Riordan, 2005;
Yamawaki, 2007). Thus, the number of foreign children, who do not attend school is neither
fully understood nor necessarily recognized as problematic. According to Iwasawa (1998):

The Government tends to interpret the scope of the rights [of the Japanese
constitution] limited to nationals broadly, believing that 'the right to participate in
politics (Article 15), the right to livelihood [seizonken] (Article 25), the right to
education (Article 26), the right to work (Article 27), and so forth are by their nature
inherent in Japanese nationals, and not guaranteed to aliens. (p. 125)

Even for JSL learners who attend public schools, access to quality education is not
guaranteed. Vaipae (2001), for example, finds that Japanese schools lack teachers who are
trained in teaching Japanese as a second language and therefore may not understand that
conversational ability in Japanese is not enough to enable students to succeed academically.
It has also been argued that little or no attention is paid to the importance of maintaining the
first language/culture/s of JSL students, so that as was the case with Ainu, Okinawans and
other ethnic and indigenous minorities in Japan, the purpose of public education appears to
be assimilation (Hatori, 2005). When assistance in the students’ first languages is available, it
is used only for the purpose of helping JSL students ‘keep up’ with their Japanese classmates.
The priority is for students to adapt to the Japanese national curriculum (Riordan, 2005), not
for the national curriculum to meet the needs of diverse students. Thus, JSL students appear
to be viewed from a deficit perspective, both by the government as well as by teachers and
administrators (Kanno, 2003, 2008; Tsuneyoshi, 2004; Riordan, 2005). Instead of focusing
on the needs of JSL learners or the ways by which they contribute to the classroom, the focus
is on the problems caused by their presence (Vaipae, 2001; Riordan, 2005). As a result there
appear to be large numbers of JSL children who stop attending school and who are unable to
pass the necessary exams to enter high school (Riordan, 2005, Yamawaki, 2007). In a
credentialist society which values high stakes testing, lack of access to a high school diploma
considerably narrows chances for access to income or social capital (Okano & Tsuchiya,
1999).

**Background to the Study**

Since the 1980s the Japanese Ministry of Education, and now MEXT, has worked to
simultaneously “internationalize” and “Japanize” the educational curriculum (Hashimoto,
2000). It has been argued for example, that the motive for Japan’s efforts at
internationalization is to compete with other ‘developed’ nations in the global market through
the use of English, while simultaneously maintaining “Japaneseness” (Hashimoto, 2000;
Burgess, Gibson, Klapheke & Selzer, 2010). English education has been the acknowledged
arena for internationalization. However, as Maher (1997) reminds us: “language educational
policy in Japan is predicated on the concept of ‘internationalisation,’ but nowhere does internationalisation include support for regional and community or indigenous languages” (p. 124). Thus, language education in Japan refers to standard Japanese or English. No other languages or knowledges are considered.

By defining which knowledge is desirable, important or meaningful, the Japanese government delegitimizes the epistemologies of Ainu, Koreans, Chinese, Taiwanese, burakumin, women, the physically disabled, the poor and newcomer students. From this perspective, minoritized groups, instead of enriching the existing system with their knowledge/s and understanding, should work to assimilate, learn from mainstream, and accept their position(ing) in Japanese society. Maher (1997) claims that as late as the 1990s there was “no acknowledgement” by the Japanese government “that minorities have language rights or that schools might benefit from a mere acknowledgement that minority languages exist” (p. 125). Thus, the terms internationalization or globalization in Japan refer to relationships between mainstream Japanese and citizens of other industrialized nations. These terms as used in Japan assume the study of English; they do not imply the development or use of a critical multicultural education curriculum or bilingual education programs to serve Japan’s multiethnic and multilingual communities.

It is within this context that new immigrants are positioned. However, unlike the situation that has existed in relation to Japan’s ‘traditional’ linguistic, racial and ethnic minorities, the media has at times taken up issues of immigrant hardships and immigrant children’s education, and the fact that MEXT takes official notice of JSL students by publishing guidelines of JSL curriculum for elementary and junior high schools is strikingly different to the ways in which the needs of Koreans and other minoritized groups have been
all but ignored by the federal government (Tsuneyoshi, 2004; Okano, 2006). However, there is a tendency to view immigrants as problematic, rather than a solution to Japan’s decreasing labor force and an opportunity for ‘internationalization.’ I would also assert that JSL students’ needs are not taken up in the media to the degree of other educational issues, such as bullying or the debates over introducing English language instruction in public elementary schools. Thus, public discourse on JSL instruction and the needs of foreign resident children and other language minority children continue to be marginalized.

According to Jung (2004): “Japan needs to create a system that fosters co-existence with foreigners, both within Japanese society and in East Asia, in order to abolish racism and solve the problem of declining population” (p. 54). Jung (2004) also outlines the following objectives that Japan should work toward in order to effectively deal with these issues:

1. Accepting dual citizenship and hybrid identities that go beyond the modern “national” identity.

2. Creating a new concept of citizenship based on residence, again, going beyond the level of nation-states.

3. Sharing a multicultural system for co-existence as a new East Asian Union, and re-interpreting “our multiple-stories”, thus going beyond the notion of national “history” (p. 54, citing Jung, 2001).

It is an open question whether or not, or to what degree the Japanese government will create policies which move in the direction of Jung’s objectives. But the decisions the federal government, local municipalities and individual schools make regarding Japan’s new immigrants are issues of importance. As a result of Japan’s active involvement in the global economy, we may expect the population of Japan to become more obviously heterogeneous
in the near future. But, how will Japan support new immigrants? Will they be expected to work only in unskilled professions, and if not, which immigrants will receive higher social and economic benefits? Which immigrants will be accepted as ‘Japanese’? Will it depend on Japanese proficiency, mother tongue, country of origin or the ways immigrant groups are racialized? Who will be involved in the decision making process? Thus, it is important for immigrant communities and activists not only to monitor federal and local government policies and institutions, but to actively organize to raise public awareness.

Public discourse on immigration affects how immigrants are perceived and what types of education their children will receive. Although it has been argued that Japanese students receive a more equitable education than do U.S. students, there have always been disparities along class, gender and racial lines (Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999). Moreover there are signs that the perceived equality of Japanese schools is disintegrating. With more people of privilege demanding gifted programs or opting for private education for their children, equality in Japanese public schools, even at the elementary school level, cannot be assumed, if it ever could. The existence of new immigrants and other JSL learners in Japanese public schools strains the belief that sameness equals equity, much as the Lau vs. Nichols case did in San Francisco in the 1960s.

Aside from a few notable efforts at the municipal level, there are few instances of multicultural curricula in mainstream Japanese public schools. Although Japanese society is increasingly multiethnic, diversity is only visible in areas where larger numbers of immigrants have created communities, which enables most Japanese to believe they live in a homogeneous society (Tsuneyoshi, 2004). It is in local communities with large numbers of immigrant and migrant families that “internal internationalization” actively, but separately,
occurs. Thus although Japanese multiculturalism is an on-going process, it is one that is more apparent at the grassroots level, in local community centers, and some schools, than at a national level, in the national curriculum or in teacher education programs.

At the same time, the status of public school teachers is changing. Since the 1980s Japanese public school teachers have come to be seen as simply public workers, a position that neither earns respect nor trust from the people they are expected to serve. According to Gordon (2005), “young peoples’ attitudes toward their current education and their respect for teachers is closely linked to what they see as opportunities for their future… As education decreases as the sole means for social mobility, so does respect for teachers” (p. 469). And yet, teachers’ decisions about students continue to influence their students’ access to education and thus, career choices. Additionally, the degree to which teachers have been actively engaged in teachers unions, and other political struggles may influence their pedagogy and practice, as do the teacher education programs from which they graduated. Therefore, considering the controversies over school reforms, the changing demographics and composition of Japanese society, and the ambiguous position of many public school teachers today, it seems more than timely to investigate teachers’ attitudes toward JSL students and to acknowledge the possibility of teachers as “change agents.”

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study has been to examine mainstream Japanese middle school teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about JSL learners and their families, and in doing so better understand the teachers’ pedagogical approaches. I decided on this study for several reasons. First, I believe that Japanese schools, despite claims of meritocracy, ‘sort’ students and prepare them for differentiated positions in society. Acknowledging that social reproduction
occurs in Japanese schools makes it imperative to have a more complete understanding of how this occurs, and how teacher attitudes and practices support or disrupt this process. Because new migrant/immigrant JSL students are ‘visible’ due to (in some cases) phenotype and language, examining the ways teachers talk about and work with JSL may help to shed light on the processes by which students are sorted. Moreover, focusing on attitudes toward JSL students may help to further illuminate teacher attitudes toward ‘traditional’ linguistic, ethnic and racial minorities. Okano (2006) points out that the presence of a large number of new immigrants has forced the Japanese government to acknowledge the existence of multilingual and multiethnic populations. Moreover according to Okano, activists working on behalf of Korean nationals have accepted the cause of newcomers as well, highlighting both the needs of new immigrants and the heretofore “invisible minorities” (p. 339). Thought the focus of this study is on teachers’ attitudes toward JSL students, there is also an attempt to examine teachers’ attitudes toward other linguistic, racial and ethnic minority groups in Japan.

With this study I hope to add to the few studies done to date, but within the context of Japanese middle schools. I believe that studies in middle schools are particularly important because of the tracking that occurs in these years and the roles that middle school teachers play in supporting or disrupting social reproduction. Middle school is a turning point for students: It is where the elementary school curriculum which values constructivism changes increasingly to one of high stakes testing.

Japanese public schools students are not, for the most part, tracked until the end of middle school. Rather, students progress each year with their same-age classmates until 10th grade, the first year of high school. However, in order to enter public high schools and some
private schools, students are required to take entrance examinations, and their teachers influence their decisions over which entrance exams they should take. High schools are ranked in terms of prestige and type of school, and the type and rank of high school one attends has great bearing on future aspirations. Middle school teachers often play a very important part in this process. Based on teacher perceptions of their students’ abilities and of each school’s ranking, teachers steer their students toward taking some entrance exams and away from others. Thus, teacher recommendations and advice help determine which entrance exams students take and which high schools they ultimately attend. Students who are unable to pass any entrance examination may be unable to enter high school, and these practices may put JSL students with limited Japanese literacy ‘at risk.’ Thus it has been my purpose to examine the ways in which Japanese teachers support and/or limit JSL students’ educational aspirations.

I decided to look at public school teacher attitudes primarily because the majority of foreign children attending school in Japan attend public schools. Whereas, some foreign residents, primarily those from ‘Western’ nations, have the economic means to benefit from private schools that maintain bilingual and English-medium programs, most new immigrants from ‘developing’ nations are unable to obtain private education for their children, and may send their children to public schools or keep them at home. In essence I am more concerned about attitudes and policies toward JSL students who have less, rather than more cultural and social capital. However, I do not suggest that middle-class native English speakers necessarily thrive in Japanese middle schools. As Vapae’s 2001 study makes clear, Japanese models of egalitarianism may at times stop teachers from looking too closely at the ‘special needs’ of JSL learners. However, North American and European parents in urban areas may
have other options if Japanese public schools do not serve their children’s needs. More significantly, some English immersion and English-medium schools are places where middle class and elite Japanese vie to send their children. This is an important distinction, because the ability to speak English is considered a skill in Japan, and native speakers of English have received great benefits, both psychological and material, as a result. Furthermore, mother tongue and country of origin may be used as code words for race, and in the literature and in the media the foreign children perceived as ‘problematic’ are rarely native English speakers, are rarely from the U.S. or Canada, are rarely racialized as white. In interviewing Japanese teachers on their attitudes toward JSL learners, it has also been my purpose to discover the mechanisms by which schools and teachers may be implicated in racializing JSL students.

**Significance of the Study**

The significance of the study is that it highlights the relationship/s, or lack thereof, among MEXT, municipal educational boards and policies, teacher education programs, and middle schools teachers. Although MEXT has drafted a national JSL curriculum, I have found little evidence of a commitment to make reforms in Japanese schools or in teacher education program with regard to issues of multiculturalism, social justice, or the rights of linguistic minority children. This is disturbing in light of the efforts by the central government to take firmer control of teacher education programs and to set goals it expects local municipalities to work with. Describing the absence of comprehensive government policy on the education of JSL students in public schools, Maher (2002) states: “Quite simply the government has no policy to deal with this social phenomenon because it has no background framework of what constitutes a multilingual community” (p. 174). In lieu of
clear government directives, do teachers actively create programs and pedagogical
approaches which benefit their JSL students? Does the absence of clear government policy
stimulate teacher agency? Does it demoralize or mobilize teachers, or both? Does lack of
government initiative or support affect teachers’ perspectives of JSL learners, and if so, how?
In lieu of a comprehensive and comprehensible government guidelines regarding the
education of JSL students and the absence of laws requiring schools to educate non-Japanese
nationals, what teachers think about and how they work with JSL students have long-term
effects on individual students and communities, as well as on local policy and social
awareness of the problems faced by JSL students. Thus the study is significant because it
attempts to illuminates the degree to which teachers internalize government policy or lack
thereof and the degree to which government policy impacts their pedagogical practices with
and attitudes toward JSL students.

Secondly, the study is significant because it attempts, through teacher interviews and
observations, to show the connection between teacher attitudes and practice, and to challenge
teachers to work for social change. Although empirical research on the situation faced by JSL
students in Japanese public schools is increasing, the studies conducted (e.g. Vaipae, 2001;
Kanno, 2003, 2008; Nukaga, 2003; Tsuneyoshi, 2004) have focused mostly on elementary
schools, possibly because the largest number of JSL students are at the elementary school
level, which appears to reflect the difficulty faced by JSL students in middle school, and the
stratification of the senior high school entrance examination process. These studies have been
important in partially unveiling teacher expectations and views toward JSL students. Vaipae
found that the teachers in her study either did not notice their JSL students’ lack of
achievement or explained it as a matter of personality or lack of effort. Tsuneyoshi (2004)
found that teachers did not necessarily want to work with JSL students, and oftentimes blamed their families or cultures for their lack of achievement. Nukaga (2003) found that teachers could change their views and learn to be more supportive of JSL children. Kanno (2003, 2008) found that teachers’ views of their students as well as their visions for their students’ futures affected their attitudes and pedagogical practices. She found that although teachers have some capacity to challenge societal expectations, they tended to support social reproduction.

Each study has illuminated important aspects of teacher attitudes toward JSL students. With this study, I have hoped to further the discussion by focusing on the important middle school years and the ways teacher attitudes impact their students’ life possibilities. Understanding how teachers see their students and their role in shaping student options is important and may help clarify the ways by which federal and local policies are enacted or resisted.

Finally, this study is significant because, unlike previous studies it focuses explicitly on how a student’s race, nation and language may factor in a teacher’s judgments regarding the student’s abilities. Kanno, in her important study, missed an opportunity to complicate her class analysis with an analysis of the role played by race in determining teachers’ visions of their students’ futures. What this study adds to the literature is a more explicit discussion on race as it intersects with class, nation and language. Bringing race into the discussion is significant.
Research Questions

1. What attitudes and beliefs do teachers have toward students who have been designated as needing JSL instruction and their families, and what futures do they envision for them?

2. How is the JSL curriculum conceptualized at the national and local levels, and how does it play out in Japanese middle schools? How do middle school teachers make sense of the education of JSL students?

3. How are JSL students racialized through JSL program practices?

Key Terms

Mainstream: For the purpose of this study, “mainstream” refers to Japanese nationals who regard themselves as “Japanese” and who are regarded as such by other “Japanese.” The term Japanese is contested in Japan: The issue of who is and is not Japanese continues to be debated.

Newcomer: I use the term here to refer to foreign residents of Japan, including undocumented individuals. As is the case in recent studies written in Japanese, I will use the term to distinguish more recent migrants (nyukama, in Japanese), those who have migrated to Japan within the last twenty years or so, from third, fourth and fifth generation foreign nationals, long-term residents from Korea, China and Taiwan, who I refer to as ‘old-comer’ or ‘traditional’ minorities. I also refer to long-term residents from Korean as zainichi Koreans or old-comer Koreans.

Japanese as second language (JSL) learners: For the purpose of this study, the term JSL learners refers to the following: 1) children of foreign nationals who reside and work in Japan, including those who intend to live in Japan permanently. This includes all
foreign children who do not speak Japanese as a first language; and 2) children of Japanese and non-Japanese unions, who may or may not be Japanese nationals, and who do not speak Japanese as a mother tongue. *Kikokushijo*, children of Japanese nationals, who have spent several or more years outside of Japan, and who, therefore, require Japanese language assistance, are also included under JSL curricula guidelines. Although I do not focus on this group, I understand from the literature that some of the interest in learning to work more effectively with JSL students has come about as a result of lobbying done by the more affluent and powerful parents of *kikokushijo* (Tsuneyoshi, 2004).

**Minorities:** Although I understand the objections to the use of the term, ‘minority,’ in the U.S. context, I use it here, along with the term ‘minoritized’ communities and individuals, to underline the fact that certain ethnic and racial groups in Japan have been and continue to be seen as “minorities”—both in the terms of their often hidden contributions to Japanese society, as well as their ‘limited’ numbers vis-à-vis the mainstream population in Japan. Although ethnic and linguistic minorities may be somewhere between 1 to 3 percent of the population, they are often “invisible” both because of the ideology of Japanese homogeneity, and due to the fact that they may tend to attempt to “pass” as Japanese in order to survive, socially and economically. Newer immigrants who do not speak Japanese, and who appear phenotypically different to mainstream Japanese do not, of course, have this option.

**Race:** The terms, race and ethnicity, are used somewhat interchangeably in Japanese. As explained by Mannari and Befu:
There is ambiguity in the meaning of the term *Nihon minzoku* (Japanese people). *Minzoku* is often translated as race by Japanese writers, but it also means an ethnic group possessing a distinct culture. The dictionary clearly specifies that race, culture, and language are the defining criteria for *Nihon minzoku*. (1991, p. 36).

Additionally, many studies on traditionally minorities in Japan tend to focus on issues of ethnicity and language. This tendency also seems apparent in more recent studies on JSL students. Perhaps this is because traditional minorities are considered indistinguishable in appearance, and are considered in some contexts (but not all) to be of the same ‘race’ as Japanese. It is also true that many old-comer Koreans and Chinese have become naturalized Japanese citizens, and have changed their names and hidden their ethnic origins in order to ‘pass’ as Japanese *minzoku*. However, this is less true for more recent immigrants, particularly immigrants from South East Asia and immigrants of Japanese descent, *Nikkeijin*, from South America. They are considered phenotypically different from mainstream Japanese, in terms of hair color and texture, skin tone, body shape and so on, in addition to their assumed ‘cultural’ differences.

Both ethnicity and race are socially constructed terms and should be considered as multi-dimensional; ethnicity attempts to account for self-identified as well as ascribed cultural, religious, national traits and practices; whereas, race includes political status, ascribed racial status, and the personal or ‘embodied’ lived experiences and intersections of race and gender. (Trans-disciplinary “Race” Working Group, 2010). The concept of race is premised on a “natural order” in that differences are believed to be not only immutable or unchangeable, but that they are seen as hierarchical, justifying the control of one ‘race’ by
another; physical traits become ‘markers’ that show one’s status in the hierarchical order (American Anthropological Association, 1998). Moreover, Japanese law, not unlike U.S. law (Haney-López, 1996) has through immigration and marital and family law helped to ‘construct’ or shape who is or who can be ‘Japanese.’ It is because race is ultimately about hierarchy and control of certain groups or ‘races’ by other groups or ‘races’ that I use it here.

For this study, I use Omi & Winant’s 1994 definition of race: “a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies” (p. 55). This allows me to acknowledge that racialization is neither static nor uniform: old-comer North Korean residents attending Korean schools may be racialized differently from naturalized citizens of Korean ancestry, particularly if the members of the second group do not reveal their Korean background. At the same time, it allows me to argue that “phenotype matters”: Pakistani and Singaporean nationals are both ‘Asian,’ but may be racialized differently. Moreover, the on-going process of connecting cultural, religious or national traits, which are considered immutable, to particular groups of people considered to ‘embody’ them, is a process of racialization.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation of this study relates to my positionality as a researcher. Having spent much of my adult life in Japan and several years working with mainstream Japanese middle school teachers, I am both a traditional outsider and an insider. When I worked in Japanese schools, I saw and heard anecdotal evidence of discriminatory practices toward working-class and racialized students, and was told certain things in confidence. I maintain strong friendships with several middle school teachers with whom I used to work and have no wish
to add to the growing number of criticisms heaped upon Japanese public school teachers. On the contrary, I believe there is much to admire.

On the other hand, I have approached this study with certain personal and ideological convictions. I believe strongly that many Japanese educators have not fully considered the changing Japanese population nor the deleterious effects which a homogenizing education has on minoritized individuals. As an outsider, a U.S. female working for a Japanese university, I may be seen to represent certain authority. As a white, native English speaker, I also expect that I am seen by some as invested in “international” education, and my participants may at times have tried to anticipate the “right” answers during the interview process. Therefore, I expect that my positionality/ies and the way/s I am perceived possibly limited the kinds of information I was able to elicit and co-construct with the research participants.

Additionally, I need to address the issue of language. I conducted interviews with 14 of the 16 participants in Japanese, according to participant preference. I am a fluent, but not “perfect” speaker of Japanese, and misunderstandings did occur as a result. With the English language interviews, I also needed to be aware of the potential for misunderstandings, for as Seidman (1998) posits, researchers need to recognize that “the thinking of both the participants and interviewer is intertwined with the language they are using” (p. 88).

However, I believe this limitation may also be a strength of the study. Seidman (1998) also tells us that realizing the potential for misunderstanding allows interviewers and participants to negotiate and experiment with language. Because I did at times misunderstand what a participant was telling me (sometimes due to regional differences in language use), I may have recognized metaphors and explanations with new eyes, due to my unfamiliarity
with the context or the rationale from which they arise. Because I sometimes needed to ask participants to make explicit, what for them may have been unconscious or implicit, I believe I had a valuable opportunity for analysis.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

In the literature review I aim to connect empirical research and theoretical writing across disciplines including sociology, linguistics, education, language policy, sociology of education, anthropology and critical studies from scholars in the U.S., Australia and Japan. Although I am aware that historically and more recently Japanese educational institutions and social structures differ in many ways from those of the U.S. and Australia, I believe theory developed in the U.S. and elsewhere may, cautiously, be applied to the Japanese context. This is particularly true within the context of globalization, as educational institutions in different parts of the world embrace or are forced to adhere to global “standards” and standardization. Indeed as Takayama (2009) suggests, there is a danger in treating Japanese education as somehow exempt from the neo-liberal reforms which have taken place in most post-industrial societies. Although the language of reform and the order in which reforms took place may differ, the effects of neo-liberal reforms on teachers and students in Japan sound all too familiar.

First, I include a short history of immigration in Japan and discuss issues related to the racialization of immigrants. I will next include a discussion on the concept of “Japaneseness,” its connection to Nihonjinron theories, and how these beliefs are connected to Japanese nationalism and “race-thinking.” Although, I would agree that explicitly Nihonjinron discourse is no longer hegemonic, it continues to exert a powerful influence on more contemporary discourses, such as the discourse of tabunka kyousei (multicultural coexistence) (Chapman, 2006). Third, I offer background information on issues in Japanese K-12 education, particularly the issue of equal educational opportunities and neo-liberal changes that have occurred. Fourth, I discuss social reproduction theory and its application in
the Japanese context. Next, I explain recent empirical studies which look at the education of JSL students in public schools, and in doing so contemplate the role of teachers. Are they hegemonic or anti-hegemonic actors, or both? Finally, I discuss the types of curriculum which come under the overly-broad label of multicultural education. I consider what is currently known about the education of language minority, ethnic minority and racial minority children in Japan, and consider the possibilities and limitations of multicultural education as it might apply to Japanese public schools.

**Immigration, Immigration Laws & Human Rights**

Japan is not known as an immigrant-receiving nation, nor does its government recognize Japan as such, as is reflected in its policies on citizenship and naturalization (Surak, 2008). Although foreign migrants are increasingly extending their length of residency in Japan, Japan, like Korea, is considered a “country of migrant worker sojourn not true immigration” (Seol & Skrentny, 2009, p. 579). Whereas since the end of the World War II the majority of post industrial nations have regarded immigration as a means to attract so-called (and much needed) “unskilled” laborers, the Japanese government instead encouraged Japanese citizens from rural areas to move to urban centers to do the physical work needed to rebuild the nation. Moreover, it is argued that South Korea and Japan—even after achieving remarkable economic growth and stability—tend to “maintain a developmental state elite culture” which “take[s] restrictionist policy positions, keeping family and settlement rights outside the boundaries of legitimate discourse” (Seol & Skrentny, 2009, p. 611). In 1952, with the end of U.S. occupation and with the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty, resident Koreans and Taiwanese who, despite being subject to flagrant social discrimination, had become Japanese citizens in law upon annexation and colonization of their respective
lands (in 1895 for Taiwan & 1910 for Korea), became foreign nationals in Japan. This meant they were no longer allowed the rights of citizenship such as education, pensions and re-compensation for military service. The 1950 Nationality Law and the 1951 Immigration Control Regulation set the stage for the 1952 Foreign Registration Law, firmly placing Korean and Taiwanese residents of Japan under the control of immigration law and requiring them to register to live in Japan, carry proof of registration, and be fingerprinted. Those wishing to leave Japan to visit family needed to apply for a re-entry permit, and those who resisted fingerprinting were denied re-entry permits, effectively forcing most to comply with the new laws (Komai, 2001). The new laws affected approximately 600,000 people, mostly Koreans, who for a variety of reasons, stayed in Japan after the war. The U.S. Allied Occupation (or SCAP) though fully cognizant that the San Francisco Peace Treaty would deprive hundreds of thousands the right to choose their nationality in violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, decided not to intervene (Morris-Suzuki, 2006). Despite this, as Surak (2008) notes, the decision stirred no controversy in the U.S., Japan or Korea. According to Morris-Suzuki:

post-war nationality and immigration laws were … ‘co-produced’ by an intimate collaboration between the occupation authorities and the Japanese government and bureaucracy. The particular form they took was deeply influenced by the circumstances of the occupation and by the emergence of the Cold War order in Northeast Asia. (p. 9).

SCAP developed a Japanese immigration policy which greatly resembled the U.S. policy inasmuch as it was “characterized by strict border control” (Surak, p. 557). As a result, in the post-World War II period, Japanese immigration policy and immigration law was
constructed primarily for the purpose of controlling the mostly Korean population of Japan; human rights were not a consideration (Komai, 2001). The Japanese Constitution, written in 1947 was interpreted to mean that only Japanese nationals were eligible for full access to civil and human rights (Surak, 2008). Sixty years later, post World War II immigration laws continue to affect the migrant/immigrant populations of Japan. As Komai explains:

“Although Japan’s policy toward immigration as well as toward long-term foreign residents have been gradually relaxed, they are still fundamentally colored by the fact that they are seen as policies for the maintenance of public order” (2001, p. 14).

Not until the 1970s were there any major changes to the composition of foreign residents in Japan. Long term foreign residents who had been Japanese colonial subjects and their descendants are often referred to in Japanese as “old-comers” and those who migrated to Japan since the 1970s as “newcomers.” The earliest newcomer migration was both *gendered* and *raced*; it consisted of women from the Philippines, Thailand, Taiwan and Korea who were hired to work in the sex industry. In the early 1980s the Japanese government, with pressure from the United Nations, accepted refugees from Vietnam, Laos & Cambodia and later signed the International Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees in 1982. This act resulted in some improvements in the treatment and status of foreign residents; a number of legal restrictions were lifted, and national pensions, childcare allowances and national healthcare benefits could now be accessed. (Komai, 2001, p. 17) Also at this time, former Japanese nationals, so-called “returnees” who had been left behind after World War II in formerly Japanese occupied areas of China and who had been erased from their family *koseki*, returned to Japan with spouses, children and grandchildren, the
majority of whom are Chinese nationals. The 1980s also saw migration of Europeans and North Americans to Japan who work primarily as ‘skilled professionals’ (Komai, 2001).

In the late 1980s and early 1990s large numbers of “unskilled” laborers, primarily from countries in Asia, entered Japan on temporary visas and found work in construction and other manual labor, known as the 3 K’s (the 3 D’s in English), *kitsui* (difficult) *kitanai* (dirty), *kiken* (dangerous), individuals who were seen as “labour” rather than “labourers” (Nakano, 1995, p. 68). Partly to stop the large numbers of foreigners who overstayed their visas in order to work in Japan, a new immigration law went into effect in 1990, a year before the Japanese economy went into recession. The new law penalized Japanese companies which hired immigrants without appropriate work visas and allowed Japan to revoke visa entry agreements made with other governments such as Bangladesh, Pakistan and Iran (Morita & Sassen, 1994). In a social climate in which the media portrayed (particularly) Iranians as dangerous criminals, there appeared to be little sympathy among mainstream Japanese (Morita, 2009). Public views toward Iranians became increasingly negative as newspaper reports of crimes committed by Iranians doubled between 1991 and 1994. Noting that some of these reports were sent to the media directly by officials in the National Policy Agency (NPA), Shipper (2008) contends that “amplified critiques of foreigner crime were probably part of a larger set of initiatives or political strategies meant to expand the NPA’s coercive abilities” (p. 182).

While making formerly legal workers illegal, the new immigration law created an opening for Latin Americans, primarily Brazilians and Peruvians, of Japanese descent, *Nikkeijin*, as well as their spouses to hold special long term resident or spousal visas which allow them to work in “unskilled” labor (Komai, 2001; Shipper, 2008). As Surak points out:
This camouflaged worker program for coethnics was carried out in conjunction with restrictions on the entry of other foreign workers... With the increase of Japanese descendants coming to “visit ancestors’ graves,” the government was able, in effect, to successfully substitute *Nikkeijin* for many Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Iranian workers. Yet the government does not officially recognize *Nikkeijin* as “foreign workers.” Because *not* allowing Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Iranian workers to enter may be interpreted as a form of racial discrimination, bureaucrats have repeatedly emphasized that *Nikkeijin* have been admitted for family reasons. (2008, p. 562, italics in original)

Although Surak suggests that the Japanese government carefully constructs policies to camouflage its racialization of migrant labor, Shipper (2002) finds Japan’s immigration and other government policies to be “primarily shaped by a racial typology that associates specific races with specific kinds of labor in Japan” (p. 41). Both Komai (2001) and Shipper (2008) note that prime concern of current Japanese immigration policy is with the control of migrants/immigrants; Shipper makes this clear in the following:

> Japan’s immigration policy focuses on controlling foreigners and lacks an active policy to incorporate them into society or to participate in Japan’s political life... It treats foreigners unpaternalistically and categorizes them hierarchically by race (or nationality), their function in Japanese society, and sometimes, gender. This racialized hierarchy—which produces differentiated jobs, wages, rights, and privileges for different groups of foreigners—is a political construction of the Japanese government, rooted in a cultural view that certain races and nationalities are uniquely qualified for certain kinds of labor. (2008, p. 25)
Shipper further describes the hierarchy as follows: First are the *zainichi* Koreans and Chinese who were born in Japan, speak Japanese and currently have most rights that Japanese nationals have. Next are the *Nikkeijin*, and their families, who have some freedom of job choice and are in general paid better salaries than other foreign workers, though less than Japanese nationals. He also includes foreign-born wives of Japanese nationals and English language teachers near the top of this hierarchy (p. 21). At the bottom Shipper finds predominantly South Asian workers from India, Bangladesh and Pakistan who engage in work that is dangerous and poorly remunerated, many of whom due to the 1990 changes to immigration law, chose to overstay their visas and are now part of the ‘undocumented’ workforce (2008). Piper however, calls into question the assertion that foreign-born wives of Japanese nationals are at the top of the foreign worker hierarchy:

> Contrary to the public image of these women [Asian, and in particular Filipina, wives of Japanese nationals] as “wives of convenience” taking advantage of Japanese men, as portrayed in the Japanese media, rigid immigration policies violate women’s socioeconomic rights, narrowing their options and hence indirectly pressuring them to marry internationally. (2003, p. 736)

For Piper, the idea that foreign-born wives are able to claim higher social capital or rights due to their status as “dependents” of Japanese nationals ignores the conditions under which many Asian women marry Japanese nationals. Moreover, Shipper (2002) also notes that foreign women married to Japanese men are not listed under their husband’s family registries, which creates problems since “with the foreign spouse’s name not listed in the registry, the Japanese spouse publicly remains unmarried and the couple’s children are considered illegitimate” (pp. 45 – 46).
Shipper’s analysis can be confirmed in part by looking at the “types” of resident foreigners in Japan by visa classification. According to Surak (2008) the Ministry of Justice classifies foreign residents by approximately 24 visa types, four of which allow their holders to stay in Japan for an unlimited amount of time and to work in any type of enterprise. These four include “special permanent residents” comprised mainly of zainichi Koreans, “permanent residents” comprised of Chinese nationals, “spouses and or children of Japanese nationals” and “long term residents,” many of whom are Nikkei Brazilians. For Shipper the education and housing support Nikkeijin have received is another indication that their needs are taken more seriously by the government than those of foreigners at the lower end of the scale. He contends that by making plans to hire JSL instructors specifically for Nikkeijin children, the national government has demonstrated its intention to integrate Nikkeijin into Japanese society (2008). However, despite the national government’s original intention to fully integrate Nikkeijin residents of Japan, there is also evidence that suggests there was a change of ‘heart.’ Tsuda (2000) cites a former Ministry of Labor official who makes the following observation:

The nikkeijin that the Immigration Bureau [of the Ministry of Justice] intended to accept were different. We were expecting that they would be more culturally Japanese and speak Japanese more. But those who actually came were not the type we expected. Sometimes, we look at some of these people and say, is this really a nikkeijin? I mean, they have no inkling about Japanese culture, and don’t speak Japanese… If we had known so many nikkeijin would come, we would not have allowed them the freely enter Japan. (cited in Tsuda, 2000, p. 81)
Tsuda states that as a result of government disappointment in the persistence of ‘Brazilian cultural traits’ of the Nikkeijin, the Immigration Bureau came to more strictly control Nikkeijin immigration to Japan.

Surak (2008) finds that rights accorded to foreign residents in Japan are converging with those in other nations of similar economic status and that the Japanese government has made entry into Japan somewhat easier than in the past. This convergence on the issue of rights and, to some degree, entry to the country; however, is argued to be mostly a result of pressure from international rights organizations and efforts by local governments. Komai (2001), Piper, (2004b), Shipper (2008) and Surak (2008) all point to the fact that the changes made in granting more civil and social rights to foreign residents in Japan have come from initiatives from local governments, and civil society political activism by Japanese activists and NGOs rather than the national government; they provide examples and evidence to support the notion that the Japanese national government continues to focus on control of foreigners, whereas it is at the local level, through local governments, NGOs and local activists that progressive political changes positively affecting the lives of foreign residents have emerged. Despite some positive changes; however, nowhere does the Japanese government indicate that it intends for foreign residents to become Japanese citizens (Surak, 2008).

Before continuing with a review on the general state of foreign residents in Japan; however, I should comment on the continued gendering of immigration and immigration policy. Immigrants are not only raced but are gendered, and this intersectionality deserves far more attention than I am able to give it here. Although Shipper (2008) concludes that foreign wives of Japanese nationals are accorded high status among foreign residents; they may work
in any field, they don’t need to reapply for visas every three years, and other such distinctions, it is their married status—their relationship to a Japanese national that matters, regardless of their length of stay or level of assimilation. Hanami (1997) states: “a foreign spouse with such a status will lose it if he or she is divorced or if the other party dies” (p. 223). Unless foreign spouses naturalize as Japanese citizens, they face very real hurdles to remaining in Japan if they and their Japanese spouse divorce. If they have children, they may be allowed to remain in Japan as the parent of a Japanese national, but this “right” is not guaranteed.

Although immigration law affects both male and female foreign spouses, foreign wives with young children continue, in large numbers, to work inside the home without the benefit of wages, and upon divorce their economic situation may be more tenuous than the foreign husbands of Japanese spouses in a similar situation. However, it should also be noted that since the end of World War II Japanese wives of foreign spouses have faced difficulties due to immigration law and the family registration system—the koseki system. Bryant (1991) states that “legal regulation of the family through family registration, the requirement that family status events be registered with the government, has been an important means of generating and maintaining hierarchy in Japanese society” (p. 110). Moreover, Chapman (2011) explains the significance of the koseki system with regard to the definition of Japanese nationals:

[T]he Family Registry Law predates the Civil Code (1896), the Meiji Constitution (1889) and the Nationality Law (1899) and in modern Japan these legislative structures interrelate to constitute a regulatory regime of social control in determining an individual’s status within Japanese society. In the postwar period three other Laws relating to population registration were established to further supplement
regulation and control; the Basic Resident Register Law (1967), the Resident Registration Law (1951) and the Alien Registration Law (1952). Despite this complex and intricate legal network the Family Registration Law remains the foundation upon which other structures are based and still has primacy in defining legal status as a national of Japan. Indeed, as Sugimoto\textsuperscript{67} has described, the present *koseki* is “the cornerstone” of this elaborate system of registration. … During the Meiji period family registration predated nationality in legally authenticating status as Japanese. It was only after 1899 that a national register (*kokuseki*) was recognised. Japanese *kokuseki* however, in most cases, is not possible without *koseki* registration.\textsuperscript{68} Thus, in contemporary Japan national registration remains secondary to household registration in defining the Japanese self. (Contemporary Japan, para 1)

Due to the family registration system, women upon marriage have been considered part of their husband’s family and were registered under the husband’s family name and place of residence. Thus Japanese women married to men who lost their Japanese citizenship and became Korean nationals with the San Francisco Peace Treaty, were also subject to loss of Japanese citizenship (Bryant, 1991).

Although the Nationality Law was revised in 1950 so that marriage would not result in the automatic loss of citizenship, the conflation of nationality and family registration continued to disadvantage Japanese women, more so than Japanese men, when they married a non-Japanese. Under the Nationality Law of 1899 Section 2, which was not revised in 1950, a child could be a Japanese national only "when the father is a Japanese national at the time of the child's birth." (Bryant, 1991, p. 131)
Bryant (1991) also states that until 1985 neither a Japanese man nor a Japanese woman who married a foreign citizen was able to create a new family registry, but this disadvantaged Japanese women more than Japanese men since men could register their foreign national spouse in their parent’s registry. The children of Japanese females and foreign males were considered Japanese nationals only if the mother was not married; thus the child would be ‘illegitimate’ but would have Japanese citizenship. Any children born after marriage would not have Japanese citizenship. According to Bryant (1991), because of this law, many Japanese women made a rational decision to have children without marrying and without naming the father despite strong public disapproval, so their children could receive the right to education and health care. The children of these unions, therefore, most certainly faced difficulties which were more extreme than children of foreign women and Japanese males. Not until 1985 were Japanese females allowed to pass their citizenship on to their children fathered by non-Japanese males (Bryant, 1991).

Immigration law intersects with labor law and works to reinforce Japanese patriarchy at work and at home. Under post WWII Japanese immigration law, both foreign wives of Japanese spouses and Japanese wives of foreign spouses, have had limitations placed on their right to maintain their families, to be permanent residents in Japan (foreign wives) or pass their nationality to their children (Japanese wives). The children of these unions have been affected in different ways yet again. As stated above, children born in Japan of Japanese mothers and foreign fathers were considered foreign nationals or ‘illegitimate’ up until the law changed in 1985 (Bryant, 1991). On the other hand, although children born of mothers who are foreign nationals and Japanese fathers have been able to claim Japanese nationality as long as their parents were legally married, if the parents were not married at the time of
the child’s birth, the child may be considered stateless unless the father recognized his paternity before the child’s birth. It was not until 2008 that children of foreign mothers and Japanese fathers, who were born out of wedlock and were acknowledged by their fathers after birth, would be granted Japanese nationality (Okuda & Nasu, 2008). Chapman (2011) notes that in 2008 “the Nationality Law was amended resulting in a revision to Article 3… The amendment stipulates that, providing fathers recognise paternity, regardless of the timing, children born out of wedlock can obtain Japanese citizenship” (Contemporary Japan, para 5). Thus, the changes allow children of foreign mothers and Japanese fathers to attain Japanese nationality as long as the Japanese father recognizes paternity, yet foreign mothers still have limited decision-making power with regard to their children’s nationality. Neither Japanese wives of foreign spouses nor foreign wives of Japanese spouses are given the right to make certain decisions about their family. This marginalization is a direct result of the intersections between immigration law and the family registration law, which work to maintain patriarchy.

Post World War II Japanese immigration law, it can be argued, has worked both to disadvantage foreign males and foreign females, but in somewhat different ways. In the earlier stages of post WWII immigration, from the 1970s, female migrant workers from the Philippines, Thailand, Korea and Taiwan arrived in large numbers to work in the entertainment and sex industries (Komai, 2000, 2001; Piper, 2003). From the 1980s large numbers of male migrant workers entered Japan, many from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Iran, for the first time to work in the 3-K industries (Nakano, 1995). Moreover, from the 1980s women from Korea, China and the Philippines began to arrive in Japan as marriage partners to Japanese farmers (Piper, 2003; Liaw, Ochiai & Ishikawa, 2010). Immigration to Japan
was, and is, patterned by domestic need. Female migrants to Japan from Thailand, Korea and the Philippines outnumber men from the same countries, while Iranian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani men outnumber women from the same countries (Komai, 2001). Moreover, as Piper (2003) notes, “between 1979 and 1985, women constituted about 90% of the total number of foreign workers, 80% of whom worked in the entertainment and sex industry” (p. 737). The visas on which the first two groups of migrant workers depended were often short term visas, for up to three years. Therefore when the Japanese government decided that hiring large numbers of Latin Americans of Japanese descent as ‘temporary’ workers suited them better than increasing the visa types or number of work visas issued to males from Iran, Bangladesh and Pakistan, their only options were to leave Japan or to overstay their visas.

The 1990 changes in immigration law, thus, created the context under which male migrant workers from Iran, Bangladesh and Pakistan became ‘illegal’ (Komai, 2001; Shipper, 2008). Foreign females entering Japan on ‘entertainment’ visas, which are usually limited to a period of three years, have also had to make certain choices. Japan is one of the only countries in which females, from targeted countries, have been issued visas primarily to work in the entertainment and sex industries, and within the context of their work some foreign women make the choice to marry a Japanese spouse (Piper, 2003). As Piper notes, “there is a clear link between restrictive immigration and visa policies and the rising numbers of international marriages between Asian women and Japanese men” (2003, p. 736). More recently Japan has made agreements with the Philippines and Indonesia to hire female nursing assistants from these countries, who within three years must pass an extremely difficult nursing exam in Japanese in order to continue to work in Japan (Balagtas-See, 2012; Yanada, 2012). The gendered nature of work in public and private
spaces in Japan is explained by Liaw, Ochiai & Ishikawa (2010). For them feminization of migrant labor in Japan can understood through “the concept of ‘globalization of reproduction’” by which they mean “the phenomenon of migrants taking on roles such as housekeeping; care for children, the elderly, and the ill; moral and social cultivations of children; and sex and reproduction” (p. 50). The types of work available to men and women in Japan from countries in Asia, Latin America and elsewhere are both raced and gendered.

Within the context of Asian migration policies, the Japanese government’s treatment of foreign workers is considered neither unique nor extremely harsh (Shipper, 2008). As Piper notes: “In terms of human rights protection in general, Asia is the only region without a specific human rights treaty and without some form of region wide mechanism” (2004b, p. 75). Shipper (2008) finds that countries in Asia neither support immigration nor naturalization, except in the case of foreign spouses. Moreover, East Asian countries such as Korea, Taiwan and Singapore seek highly skilled foreign guest workers, while controlling and/or limiting opportunities for unskilled labor; their foreign residents rarely receive the types of benefits accorded to nationals of these countries. It should also be noted that current migration to East Asian countries continues to be intra-Asian migration with primarily Southeast Asian countries, such as the Philippines and Indonesia sending migrant workers to East Asian countries; migrant labor as mentioned above is also increasingly feminized. (Piper, 2004a, 2004b, 2008). Currently, Japan is the only East Asian country which offers social security benefits, unemployment and national medical insurance to legal foreign residents. It is the only East Asian country to offer public schooling to its foreign resident children—although it is not automatic. According to Shipper, it is the only country in East Asia in which these benefits are equal to those of its citizens (2008).
Racial Nationalism: Japaneseness, *Nihonjinron* & Race-thinking

In this section I define *Nihonjinron*, and review some of the studies which illuminate connections between *Nihonjinron* beliefs, Japanese nationalism and “race-thinking.”

*Nihonjinron* may be considered as a discourse or discourses regarding what it means to be Japanese. Kubota (1999) defines *Nihonjinron* as “theories on the Japanese” (p. 19). Although earlier *Nihonjinron* writing may seem out of date and easy to critique, critiques of *Nihonjinron* may offer insight into some of the ways discourses on racialized others and essentialized notions of Japanese nationals continue to operate within mainstream educational discourse. I would certainly argue that *Nihonjinron* thinking is no longer hegemonic, but this does not mean that notions associated the discourse are irrelevant. Rather they seem to have been reinvented in more sophisticated guises: Racial projects change as needs change (Omi & Winant, 1994).

Mainstream discourse on the Japanese nation, immigration and education may lack the more obvious racism of former Prime Minister Nakasone’s infamous remarks about U.S. blacks or former Tokyo governor Shintaro Ishihara’s comments on Asian immigrants, and yet continue to essentialize Japanese and non-Japanese identities. Moreover, the majority of the participants in this study are in their 40s or 50s, and they can hardly be unaware of *Nihonjinron* arguments, though they may have never used the term, *Nihonjinron*. Although perhaps some of the more ‘outrageous’ comments associated with *Nihonjinron* discourse have disappeared, what has been maintained in popular discourse and imagination is a “quite” homogeneous Japan, despite the popularity of a few obviously *haafu* [half]/biracial singers or baseball players. Moreover, as Burgess (2007a, 2010) reminds us, even when Japanese politicians make statements which refer to Japanese homogeneity (sometimes, but not always
in contrast to “multicultural” nations) that are criticized by foreign media, these comments rarely incite any censure from the Japanese public.

It has been argued that prior to World War II, from the time Japan colonized Taiwan in 1895, Japanese saw their nation as a multi-ethnic one, despite the fact that all groups were not considered equal, and it was after WWII that Japan was recast as a homogenous nation. (Oguma, 1995/2002) The belief that Japan is homogeneous persists within and outside of Japan, closely related to and supported by the *Nihonjinron*, a body of writing on Japan produced in the 1960s and 1970s which represents Japan and Japanese culture as unique (Howell, 1996; Maher, 1997; Kubota, 1998; Kubota, 1999; Kubota, 2002) and “encompasses virtually all aspects of Japanese culture in the broadest sense- from ‘race’ and cultural origins to social structure and psyche” (Befu, 1993, p. 109). Befu maintains that producers of *Nihonjinron* construct Japanese nationals as a racially homogenous group who practice Japanese culture, are native speakers of Japanese, look, speak and act ‘Japanese,’ share Japanese blood and “have done so for thousands of years” with no “significant amount[s] of new blood” (1993, p. 115). For Befu this implies an engagement in “implicit genetic determinism” (1993, p. 116).

Scholars argue that *Nihonjinron* writings contain an implicit racial ideology as well as a nationalistic one (Befu, 1993; Kowner, 2002; Yoshino, 1992). Mannari and Befu (1991) point to this when they state:

The question of being Japanese excludes any middle ground. You either are or are not. The identity of the Japanese resides in an absolute exclusion of foreigners and in a total identification as one race and one culture. Scientific reasoning aside, the conviction of racial unity and cultural homogeneity is unshakable, leading to an
ultimate belief that the unique essence of Japanese culture is transmitted genetically. Because as the belief goes, the Japanese are one race, they are also of one culture. (p. 34)

Critics of Nihonjinron have long noted the troubling notions of race and “blood” which appear in the literature (Yoshino, 1992; Murphy-Shigematsu, 1993; Oblas, 1995; Kowner, 2002). Yoshino (1992) argues that “at the base of the Nihonjinron is an assumption concerning the ‘racial’ nature of Japanese identity” (p. 22) and that Japanese believe themselves to be part of a “Japanese race”. According to Yoshino, “a Japanese expresses the ‘immutable’ or ‘natural’ expression of Japanese identity through the imagined concept of Japanese ‘blood’” (p. 24). Moreover, Robertson states:

“Blood” has been a familiar metaphor in Japan since the turn of the 19th century for “shared heredity” or “shared ancestry,” and even for the essential material imagined to constitute the Japanese race. In Japan and elsewhere in the industrializing world, race was conceptualized both as a mix of discrete biological and cultural characteristics and as the specific group, nation or human type that possessed and manifested those characteristics. …Blood remains an organizing metaphor for profoundly significant, fundamental and perduring assumptions about Japaneseness and otherness; it is invoked as a determining agent of kinship, mentalité, national identity, and cultural uniqueness. (20005, p. 329, emphasis in original)

Robertson acknowledges that Japanese nativist ideas on race and blood were infused at the turn of the 19th century by Social Darwinism and the “science” of eugenics (2005). In this context as well as in recognition that the earliest post-WWII Nihonjinron writings were
authored by U.S. and other Western scholars, *Nihonjinron* writing may be understood as exotification and self-exotification.

Kowner, Befu & Manabe (1999) argue that “by continuously confounding race, ethnicity and nation *Nihonjinron* create a strong source of nationalism uniting society, culture and ‘blood’” (p. 75). Although Yoshino (1992) notes that this thinking is not necessarily racist—Japanese do not necessarily believe that their differences with other “races” imply Japanese superiority—he cautions that it can be racist or potentially lead to racist thinking.

A belief in racial notions is evidenced in *Nihonjinron* writings, though implicit and ambiguous, and intertwined with notions of nation, culture and language. Most critics of *Nihonjinron* literature argue that it ultimately supports the political and economic interests of national and international elites (Befu, 1993, 2001; Kowner, 2002; Kowner et al., 1999; Kubota, 1999; Murphy-Shigematsu, 1993; Oblas, 1995; Yoshino, 1992). Kowner (2002), for example, argues that *Nihonjinron* is in fact the “hegemonic ideology of contemporary Japan” (p. 172). Likewise, Kowner et al. (1999) make the point that not only is *Nihonjinron* supported by political leaders and the elite, but that there are no other competing ideologies in Japan. Befu (1993) writes: “intellectuals write *Nihonjinron* as prescriptions for behavior. Government turns it into a hegemonic ideology. And the corporate establishment disseminates it” (p. 118).

There are questions, however, as to what degree *Nihonjinron* theories have been internalized by mainstream Japanese nationals (Kowner, 2002), or to what degree if any *Nihonjinron* writing influences Japanese nationals’ notions of race. Interestingly, in a study begun in 1987, Kowner et al. (1999) discovered that while the people who had read actively and were most interested in *Nihonjinron* ideas were the elite or intelligentsia, they often did
not subscribe to these beliefs. On the contrary, those with less interest or exposure to
*Nihonjinron* writing, older individuals, male and female, with less education and without
“foreign experience” tended to believe them. As the researchers conclude:

The findings of a gap between consumers with high interest and consumers with
strong belief in *Nihonjinron* tenets indicate that *Nihonjinron* is perceived by a wide
range of the elite and adjacent classes as an agent of social control. Promulgated by a
large number of educated middle class Japanese, *Nihonjinron* reinforces the norms of society. Notwithstanding its descriptive stance, the normative
overtones of *Nihonjinron* writings are rather explicit… Through their knowledge of
*Nihonjinron*, but not necessarily because of their belief in them they [middle-class
Japanese] fulfill their roles as members of a specific social strata, lower in hierarchy
than the thin layer of genuine progenitors of ideas, but much above the gullible
masses [sic] who are more prone to accept *Nihonjinron* tenets. (Kowner et al., p. 91)

Yoshino (1998) argues that the extent to which individual Japanese believe and/or
promote *Nihonjinron* theories fluctuates. He offers several examples of how *Nihonjinron*
beliefs are both expressed and refuted by the same individuals. He also cautions against a
simplistic understanding of how *Nihonjinron* beliefs are disseminated. *Nihonjinron* beliefs,
he finds, are not simply promoted by “ideological manipulation ‘from above’” (p. 25).
Instead Yoshino (1998) illustrates the important role played by “reproductive individuals”
(pp. 25, citing Shils, 1972 p. 22) in making *Nihonjinron* ideas accessible to the general public,
a role that Japanese companies played when they created “cross-cultural manuals” for their
employees stationed overseas (p. 26). Moreover, as Burgess (2007a) notes: “It is crucial to
recognise that dominant ideologies are not something ‘false’ that are separate from the ‘real’
Japanese culture but rather make up a system of thought that reflects and constitutes everyday reality” (1.2.1 para 1).

In the twenty-first century to what degree, if any, are Nihonjinron beliefs implicated in immigration or JSL educational policy? Yoshino (1998) points out that the belief in Japanese racial and cultural uniformity has been partially debunked due to increasing migration from South East Asia and other developing nations, as well as the rising number of Japanese returnees, kikokushijo, who neither speak Japanese fluently nor understand Japanese social organizations. Furthermore, he notes that Japanese elites have become more careful about publicly stating any belief in Japanese uniqueness in order not to offend international business partners and political allies, though this does not necessarily reflect national policies.

On the other hand Burgess (2007a) notes that when in 2007 the top education minister made a public statement in support of Japan’s racial homogeneity, the one political organization the Ainu Utari Kyokai, which criticized his words, received little attention in the mainstream media. Nor does it mean that notions of race, culture and language found in the Nihonjinron writing no longer influence Japanese public consciousness. Burgess also finds that mainstream Japanese, as evidenced by their responses to government opinion polls, are largely opposed to increased immigration and continue to associate an increase in ‘foreigners’ with an increase in crime, and he finds no evidence “of any popular discourse on multiculturalism” (2007a, 1.2.1, para 3, italics in original). Quite the contrary, popular discourse suggests that most Japanese believe Japan is homogeneous and would like it to remain so. Interestingly, when in 2009 as leader of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) former Prime Minister, Yukio Hatoyama made a statement stating that Japan was not only “for the Japanese” he was strongly criticized by the Japanese public (Burgess, 2010), and
when in 2010 former Prime Minister Naoto Kan stated that he wanted to increase skilled foreign labor by 100% in the next ten years, it was reported that 65% of people polled stated they did not want to increase immigration (Harlan, 2010). Citing evidence from a 2003 report, the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), the second cross-national report on national identity, Burgess (2010) finds that more Japanese people (42%) than people surveyed in other countries (33%) believed that ancestry or “blood” was essential in defining national identity.

The question that applies directly to this study then is, to what degree do Japanese teachers subscribe to these beliefs, and how do these beliefs inform their attitudes and teaching of students who neither look nor speak Japanese? What are the educational outcomes for children who are not recognized as Japanese and who are racialized as ‘other?’

**Nationalistic and Neo-liberal Policies in K-12 Education: Struggling with Notions of Equity**

In this next section, I attempt to sketch a short history of postwar K-12 education in Japan from studies written in English, by both Japanese and non-Japanese (primarily U.S.) scholars. First I trace the controversies and changes in the Japanese government’s role in education and discuss who the stakeholders are in the educational system. Later I add descriptions of “mainstream” public schools and school cultures. In the case of junior high schools, I also draw from the five years I worked in middle schools in the 1980s and 1990s, as well as my recent data collection. It should also be noted that these descriptions, though written in the present tense are not meant to essentialize what Japanese education “is” or “has been” or to portray Japanese education as unique in some way. Instead I would like highlight the discourses surrounding Japanese education and note the shifting tensions and changes.
occurring in Japanese education since the late 1940s in the context of increasing globalization.

The Japanese educational system has often been portrayed as heavily controlled and organized by the national government through MEXT. Indeed the central government has had a clear hand in organizing educational policy as well as educational reforms beginning in the 1980s which have “devolv[ed] more responsibility and discretion to individual institutions in the name of flexibility and diversity” (Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999, p. 247). The global neo-liberal agenda, although contested, is as powerful in Japan as in other post-industrial societies.

With the end of World War II, under the Supreme Commander Allied Powers (SCAP), a group of U.S. educators, the United States Education Mission, together with the Japanese Education Reform Council, worked to produce educational documents from which a “democratic” educational system would emerge (Tsuchimochi, 1993; Beauchamp, 1998a; Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999). Despite some strong objections, one result of the discussions was that the pre-war Imperial Rescript on Education was abolished in 1947 (Okano & Tsuchiya). The Imperial Rescript on Education had been a call to all Japanese to be loyal subjects to the Emperor and the country, a moral mandate that each student was expected to memorize and internalize (Cummings, 1980). What also emerged from these discussions was the creation in 1947 of the Fundamental Law of Education (FLE) which increased compulsory education to 9 years and eliminated the former multi-track system to create a unified 6-3-3 system under which all Japanese children would have equal opportunity to attend 6 years of elementary school, 3 years of middle school, and 3 years of high school. (Tsuchimochi, 1993)
There are a number of actors in the debates over Japanese education, who have primarily focused on changing the FLE created by SCAP and the post war Japanese government. The Ministry of Education (MOE)— which later became the Ministry of Education Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)— and the Japanese teachers’ unions have traditionally represented opposing sides (Aspinall, 2001). Additionally, local governments, parent and community groups play their part in this complex and ongoing struggle, between those who believe that the post-war reforms were appropriate, and those who believe the post war initiatives are unsuitable for Japan (Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999). Until 1989, the Japanese teacher’s union, Nikkyoso, continued to be left of center, and “committed to a socialist model of egalitarian society as part of a peaceful world order” (Beauchamp, 1998b, p. 143). In 1989, however, Nikkyoso broke into two separate teachers’ unions, Nikkyoso and Zenkyo (Aspinall, 2001). Nikkyoso has, since this break, maintained a more conservative interpretation of education, more closely in line with that of MOE/MEXT, while Zenkyo continues to support a leftist agenda. The ongoing struggle between Japanese teachers’ unions and MEXT can be said to be essentially “over the use of education in developing national identity” (Parmenter, 1999, p. 455). However, since the 1960s, and despite repeated challenges by grassroots and teacher-led civil movements, the educational policy in Japan has changed increasingly from one with a focus on the democratization of society to one with a focus on education as human capital, on education for economic growth (Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999). These changes are also reflected in government-led educational reforms, including reforms in teacher education (Ota, 2000). As Asano (2000) notes, educational reforms, in themselves, are controversial issues in Japan.
Okada (2002) states that in the 1990s education reform was put on the political agenda by former Prime Minister Obuchi, and upon his sudden death was carried forward by his successor, former Prime Minister Mori. The motivating themes under discussion continued to be ones of patriotism, respect for Japanese tradition and internationalization. Citing the Asahi Newspaper, Okada outlines the recommendations made by the 2000 Education National Reform Council (ENRC) (which was he notes included business leaders, conservative intellectuals and government bureaucrats and politicians, but little to no representation from progressive educators). The recommendations are explained as follows:

1. revision of the FLE; 2. re-examination of history textbooks and introduction of ‘new perspectives’ into Japanese history; 3. introduction of ‘voluntary activities’ for all students from elementary to high school; 4. an increased emphasis on moral education; 5. reform of the 6-3-3-4 system and establishment of a diversified education system which is suited to each individual’s different abilities; 6. recommendation of ‘special educational measures’ that would allow gifted upper secondary school students to experience university-level education research in a scientific field. (p. 427)

Okada points out that although the ENRC did not make this report until 2000, the contents of the report could be traced back to the 1980s proposals advocated by former Prime Minister Nakasone’s Ad Hoc Council on Education. It should also be pointed out that revision of the FLE and Article 9 of the Japanese constitution which renounces war and maintains that Japan will not re-arm and may only maintain a self defense force, have been on the agenda of every post-war conservative Japanese politician. The question then, as Takayama (2008b) states is why did the actual reforms take place when they did?
A number of scholars (Okada, 2002; Takayama, 2008b, 2009; Kariya & Rappleye, 2010) situate the Japanese experience of educational reform within the global context, among the compromises made between neo-liberals and neo-conservatives to maintain or increase their vested interests. According to Takayama (2008b): “The ongoing restructuring of Japanese education, of which the FLE amendment is part, reflects the global trend in educational changes driven by the combination of neo-liberal market fundamentalists and neo-conservative nationalists and cultural conservatives” (p. 132). Although the process or timing of the neo-liberal changes in Japanese education are situated in the specific historical circumstances of post war Japan, they are not ‘uniquely’ Japanese: They arise from the interaction between the Japanese state and the global economy which influences national political struggles (Takayama, 2008b). Although Japanese post war governments have focused on changing the 1947 Fundamental Law of Education since the 1950s, and again in the 1980s, it was not until the 1990s that the language of educational reform began to be accepted by larger segments of the Japanese public. Considering that the 1990s also saw massive change within the Japanese economy –made noticeable by the import of the term “risutora” from the English ‘restructuring’ –it is not surprising that neo-liberal reforms took on more currency. Additionally changes in the immigration law allowing foreign-born ‘Japanese ethnics’ to enter Japan and work in unskilled labor in place of ‘less desirable’ Iranians and Pakistanis seems to suggests a political climate in which neo-conservatives were also positioned favorably. Despite these changes in the 1990s, it was not until 2006 that the FLE revisions were passed by the Japanese Diet.

Takayama (2008b) analyzes the changes by looking at how educational stakeholders have repositioned themselves since the 1990s. As with other post-industrial nations, the
Japanese government represented by the MOE has had to reinvent itself within the neo-liberal discourse of smaller government and choice. Until the 1990s the government managed to provide a seemingly sound model of overall economic development and meritocracy. The government supported corporations which provided their employees with ‘lifelong’ employment and health, housing and education benefits. Although all Japanese did not benefit equally, there was little political pressure to change the system. From the 1980s the U.S. government began putting pressure on Japan to remobilize its armed forces and help pay for increased security for their transnational corporations located where labor was cheap, while domestically the government stopped “intervening” in the economy and corporate welfare dried up. Former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi’s neo-liberal government aggressively privatized public services and increased the economic divide in the general population. Within a neo-liberal context, education is one area through which the government can continue to influence the public; thus, the MOE needed to maneuver itself politically in order to maintain a position of power. Takayama asserts:

The MOE “became the Right” by collaborating with powerful rightist LDP politicians who pursued the inclusion of nationalist language in the revision [of the FLE] and who deemed it necessary to maintain the MOE’s central administrative control over education to sustain national unity and social integration. In so doing, the Ministry redefined the nature of the FLE; the law was no longer the constitution of education, but was instead transformed into an administrative act that gives legal and fiscal backing to the MOE’s new administrative role, and that legalizes intrusive state intervention in education for the purposes of moralizing, nationalizing and responsibilising children. (2008b, p. 141)
Although the MOE/MEXT had been devolving its authority to local prefectures and cities since the 1990s, it was able to reinvent itself and redefine its work in the areas of goal setting, auditing, and assessment (Takayama, 2008b, p. 142), thereby legitimizing both its authority as “the” evaluator. Thus is became the responsibility of local schools and board of education to develop programs and curricula in line with MOE/MEXT goals.

Despite these changes, Japanese public education is characterized as “relatively centralized and dedicated to national goals” (Rohlen, 1997, p. 231). Centralization means that national standards and extensive curriculum guidelines from MOE/MEXT are the norm. However, as Rohlen argues, the guidelines are “goals” rather than mandates. Only textbooks which meet MOE/MEXT approval can be used, and they form the basis for entrance examinations. According to Rohlen, despite centralization, MOE/MEXT uses its authority indirectly and is “generally non-intrusive” (p. 233). As discussed above, however; MOE’s stance could also be seen as indicative of an “outcome based education management model” (Takayama, 2008b, p. 142). As part of centralization, and in order to ensure that teachers will work in poorer or remote regions of Japan, prefectures maintain standard wage scales for teachers in all areas. Additionally, the central government subsidizes education in each prefecture, and poorer regions receive federal funds, as a way of leveling school quality (Rohlen, 1997). According to Rohlen, “uniformity is inherently an outgrowth of administrative mechanism aimed at equity” (p. 234). Teachers and students in Japan are known to spend long hours at school, and indeed teachers are often (especially in elementary and middle schools) very involved in many aspects of their students’ lives (Rohlen, 1997). As pointed out by Shimahara (1998):
The Japanese belief that teachers should inclusively enhance the instrumental, moral, and expressive aspects of their children’s formation has become so deeply entrenched in that tradition that it has become a virtual cultural expression—one that has shaped the evolution of teacher education itself. (p. 247)

According to Okano and Tsuchiya (1999) 99 percent of Japanese elementary schools are government-run, and over 60 percent of teachers are female. It is generally recognized that in comparison with U.S. schools, elementary schools in Japan devote less time to academics, and far more time to socialization. A major part of the socialization process emphasizes egalitarianism and learning to cooperate with others as part of a group or community (White, 1987; Sato, 1996; Beauchamp, 1998b; LeTendre, 1999). As Rohlen and LeTendre (1996) point out, Japanese elementary school teachers tend to follow a constructivist approach in the classroom; they allow for confusion and for students to discover things on their own while actively engaging in group discussions and projects. Students, from the time they are in elementary school, learn to work in small groups, han, designated by teachers to ensure that each group contains students with different abilities. A group leader is chosen whose responsibility it is to encourage all members and report to the teacher (White, 1987).

Within current, mainstream Japanese views of schooling and the culture of the classroom therefore, two points are considered important in the early years. First, while it is acknowledged that students have different abilities, the practice of differentiating students within the early years of schooling (at least until grade 6) is believed to violate the principle of equality; tracking practices common in the U.S. such as ability-based reading groups continue among many educators and the general public to be considered unfair. Secondly,
students’ efforts in the early years are seen as important as, or perhaps more so, than “ability” (LeTendre, Hofer & Shimizu, 2003). And yet as Okano and Tsuchiya (1999) remark: “covert differentiation …occur[s] throughout primary and middle-school years [and] emerges in a concrete form at the high-school entry point” (p. 244).

By the time students are in middle school, about 5 percent will attend private institutions which will allow them to attend their high school without having to pass an entrance examination. Forty percent of middle school teachers are female. In middle school students learn through their participation in school activities and classes how to function in a social hierarchy; they begin being more conscious of *sempai* (their seniors) and *kohai* (their juniors) and to use honorifics when addressing students one or more years ahead of them. Teachers are expected to offer “lifestyle guidance” and take notice of such things as students’ eating habits, manners and dress; At the same time, students are increasingly expected to take on the responsibility and being adequately prepared for all aspects of the school’s highly organized curriculum (Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999, p. 62). In my interviews with teachers, several mentioned that some of their JSL students tended to make excuses for forgetting their notebooks or not doing their homework; they seemed to consider this ‘inappropriate’ behavior to signal, not only a lack of organization, but a lack of honesty. Like students in Japanese elementary schools, students in Japanese middle schools spend far more time on sports and social activities than is common in U.S. schools, and public middle school students continue to be placed in mixed ability classes. Students and teachers are expected to take part in a wide range of activities. Indeed LeTendre (1999) notes that both teachers and students are “subject to a norm of mutually enforced participation” (p. 299). According to Fukuzawa, “middle schools combine a lecture format for academic instructions with a broad
range of ‘nonacademic’ activities that emphasize the development of the ‘whole’ person” (1996, p. 295).

Thus, it is in middle school, where students first experience a division between academic and non-academic subjects. The middle school curriculum more closely adheres to the standardized national curriculum set by MEXT in order to prepare students to take high school entrance examinations in their third year of middle school. Classes tend to be more teacher-centered, with less focus on han activities, and fewer discussions (Fukuzawa, 1996). It is also at this stage in the educational process in which a number of students with the financial means to do so begin attending juku, private cram schools, which prepare them to take entrance examinations (Fukuzawa). According to Refsing (1992), the idea that Japan’s education system is egalitarian is “reinforce[d by] the sense of ‘one-ness’, of similarity and equality” between schools, which have the same texts, exams and overall curriculum. And yet “inequality becomes apparent… when one takes a look at the extra-school activities which play a decisive role in determining a child’s chance of getting on the elite track” (p. 126). According to Refsing, the impact of juku counters the belief that Japanese schooling is equitable.

Although in the first nine years of schooling there is no apparent tracking system in the majority of public schools, middle school students are required to pass entrance examinations in order to enter public high schools. Thus, whereas the first nine years are usually characterized by mixed-ability classes, high school and post-secondary classes are sorted by ability, namely through entrance examinations (Rohlen, 1983). However, approximately 96% of students in Japan attend high school, with the majority graduating. In fact, as Okano & Tsuchiya note, because most students graduate from high school, a high
school diploma is “a prerequisite for the attainment of even modest aspirations” (p. 56). Rohlen (1983) suggests that by age sixteen most Japanese know their ‘place’ in society. “In essence we find the egalitarian and unifying experience of compulsory education juxtaposed to the equally profound experience of being sorted into clear, nearly immutable strata of hierarchically arranged and quite different high schools” (Rohlen, 1983, p. 135). At the high school level only twenty-three percent of high school teachers are female. Twenty-five percent of high school students attend private schools, of which a few are considered elite (Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999).

Okano and Tsuchiya distinguish three types of Japanese high schools; elite academic high schools, non-elite academic high schools and vocational high schools. Students from higher socio-economic status (SES) households disproportionately attend higher-ranking schools and students from lower SES households disproportionately attend lower-ranking schools. In addition there are correspondence high schools, evening high schools, and schools for the deaf and visually impaired. As can be seen in this brief snapshot, the ideals of equity to the extent that they are believed in and practiced at the primary school level, do not extend to secondary or post-secondary schooling. Moreover, Sato (2004) finds three contradictions in Japanese K-12 education:

(1) the contradiction between the broader goals in elementary schools and the narrow range of skills and content on tests; (2) the contradiction between within-school equality and egalitarian beliefs on the one hand and between-school inequalities that strongly correlate with social class and father’s occupation on the other hand; and (3) the contradiction between the ideal image of a well-educated person and the reality of who is securing the “academic pedigree.” (p. 214)
Sato argues that because “schools are set within a structurally unequal system” within-school equality does not ensure that all students have equal access to education (p. 215). As can be seen from the earlier discussion on neo-liberal policies in Japanese education, it is clear that the 2006 revisions to the FLE signify a lack of government concern with equity.

**Conflict Theories of Education: From Social Reproduction Theories and the Hidden Curriculum to Critical Race Theories**

In this section I outline some of the conflict theories of education. In attempting to condense decades of work and thought into a brief section in a literature review, I realize I am unable to capture the complexities and nuances of the work described. However, since many of my (developing) ideas of education have emerged from this literature, I feel I need to outline, however briefly, how this work has influenced my research decisions. In a sense I am also outlining my own shifting and developing ideas regarding schooling inequality.

The idea that schools in industrial societies function as “sorters” of human capital to be invested or used in certain capacities according to perceived “ability” is not a particularly new one. The practice of tracking, despite decades of protests by educators and scholars, continues to occur regularly in U.S. classrooms, and is viewed by many as a commonsense method of classroom management. In Japan, where tracking has been resisted for many years, U.S. tracking practices and “giftedness” programs are cited as success stories; Tracking, it is argued is “kinder” to weaker students, though the subtext is that it will benefit “stronger” students. The ideology of meritocracy has it that sorting is done so that those with the greatest ability (and possibly effort) will achieve based on merit alone, and each person may find a position in society which best suits his or her ability (and possibly interest). Meritocracy would have it that ability based tracking is fair to everyone.
Social reproduction theories have attempted to answer the question ignored by a meritocratic understanding of school achievement: Why, if academic achievement is based on merit alone, do “certain” groups achieve consistently less than others? Social reproduction theories of education may be divided into three types; those which follow a Marxist emphasis on economic reproduction, those which find reproduction resulting from cultural and linguistic capital, and those which focus on the role or agency of students in resisting (as well as reaffirming) the identities that have been ascribed to them (Collins, 2009). Bowles and Gintis’s (1976) work clearly represents the first type: They argue that the aim of formal schooling in the U.S. is to produce workers who will maintain the class positions of their parents. According to them, education, as a system, works both to “produce many of the technical and cognitive skills required for adequate job performance” (p. 129) while it also “helps legitimate economic inequality” (p. 130). Thus, according to Bowles and Gintis (1988) schools train students to work in specific sectors of the capitalist economy by inculcating them with the norms required for the labor they are expected to provide. Schools will, according to this argument, organize their curricula according to the perceived social classes of their students, who thus participate in differentiated forms of learning.

Partly in response to the overly deterministic stance of Marxist-based understandings of schooling, a second type of social reproduction research which focuses on the ways in which language use and cultural expectations affect students’ educational outcomes developed. These studies have developed out of Bourdieu’s work on linguistic and cultural capital. Bourdieu (1986) explains:

The notion of cultural capital initially presented itself to me, in the course of research, as the theoretical hypothesis which made it possible to explain the unequal scholastic
achievement of children originating from the different social classes by relating academic success, i.e., the specific profits which children from the different classes and class fractions can obtain in the academic market, to the distribution of cultural capital between the classes and class fractions. (p. 242)

Bourdieu theorizes that education is not “bought” directly; those with economic capital are able to “purchase” the “right” mode of dress, attend the “right” cultural events and speak the language of power utilized in the classroom. Those with the “correct” or expected cultural capital, are then able to benefit from schooling which values their modes of expression. Thus academic success is predicated on having cultural and linguistic capital. Bourdieu claims further that developing one’s cultural capital is not necessarily a deliberate act, but instead may be an accumulation of unconscious acts. (1986).

As with Marxist explanations of unequal schooling, the idea of cultural and linguistic capital can be critiqued for its determinism. Moreover Bourdieu’s ideas as well as Bernstein’s (e.g. 1964) have been at times utilized to support deficit notions of culture and language (Collins, 2009), i.e., students’ whose home languages and cultures are seen as different, and ultimately, inferior. (please note that Collins separates the literature on linguistic reproduction and cultural reproduction, while I am condensing it here). Bernstein (1964) states:

There is … firm evidence showing a relative deterioration in verbal I.Q. between the ages of eight and eleven years and between eleven and fifteen years for working-class children when compared with middle-class children between the same ages (Committee on Higher Education 1963). Other research shows clearly that the verbal I.Q. scores of working-class subjects, particularly lower working-class, are likely to
be severely depressed in relation to their scores at the higher ranges of a nonverbal test (Bernstein 1958, 1960; Venables 1962; Report 1958; Ravenette 1963). This deterioration in verbal I.Q., discrepancy between verbal and nonverbal I.Q. tests and failure to profit from formal education on the part of working-class children, particularly those of lower working-class origins, is thought to be closely related to the control on types of learning induced by a restricted code. The relative backwardness of some working-class children may well be a form of culturally induced backwardness transmitted to the child through the implications of the linguistic process. The code the child brings to the school symbolizes his social identity. It relates him to his kin and to his local social relations. The code orients the child progressively to a pattern of relationships which constitute for the child his psychological reality and this reality is reinforced every time he speaks. (p. 67).

It is not difficult to imagine this type of analysis being used by educational policy planners to assert that the only way for working class children (and speakers of Black English, as was made clear by the furor caused by the Oakland Board of Education in the 1990s when they suggested the use of Ebonics in the classroom as a way to help children successfully navigate the mainstream curriculum) to succeed is to first rid themselves of their “culturally induced backwardness” –to forget the language of home. In fact Collins (2009) finds that a 1995 study by Hart and Risley, *Meaningful differences*, was used in policy debates for such means:

Although no commentators seem to have noticed, the specific literacy measures they study do not support their claim, nor do their findings show a regular class distribution. Compounding the problem of the flawed analysis of class and language, Hart and Risley subsequently simplified their results and promoted them in policy
discussions as a “catastrophic” linguistic disadvantage for the poor (Hart & Risley 2003), and this version of findings has been used to justify strict pedagogical regimes aimed at the inner-city poor (Brook-Gunn et al. 2003; Tough 2006). (p. 41).

Despite these very problematic associations, theories of cultural and linguistic reproduction have been used to explain the unequal schooling of language minority students in the U.S., and recently in Japan. This is not to say that theories of cultural and linguistic reproduction have no value. I believe they can, in fact, help uncover processes by which schools and teachers devalue the knowledge language minority students bring with them. Kanno’s (2008) ethnography, for instance, takes Bourdieu’s notion of cultural reproduction as part of her theoretical framework. However, there is a difference between suggesting that linguistic systems are biological or unchanging, the classic Sapir-Whorf notion that a person’s mother tongue determines how an individual perceives the world or that individuals are somehow prisoners of their home languages, and suggesting that the language/s individuals use influence them, and that different social groups use different social and regional dialects for different purposes. Ultimately linguistic systems are equal in function, and languages develop in particular cultural and social contexts; when claims are made that suggest that one language or way of being is inferior to another, it usually says more about how the speaker feels about the social group who uses the language or “practices” the culture than it does about the particular social group. As Baldwin (1979) so eloquently states:

The brutal truth is that the bulk of white people in American never had any interest in educating black people, except as this could serve white purposes. It is not the black child's language that is in question, it is not his language that is despised: It is his experience. A child cannot be taught by anyone who despises him, and a child cannot
afford to be fooled. A child cannot be taught by anyone whose demand, essentially, is that the child repudiate his experience, and all that gives him sustenance, and enter a limbo in which he will no longer be black, and in which he knows that he can never become white. Black people have lost too many black children that way. (para 11)

Social reproduction studies which in effect hold a child’s particular linguistic repertoire responsible or a mismatch between linguistic systems as wholly responsible for the child’s school failure assume that if the child learns the language of power, and behaves as his or her teachers want him to behave, the child will ‘succeed.’ This emphasis on a linguistic or cultural mismatch, ultimately blames the child for his or her own failure and fails to interrogate why, in the first place, the child’s language and culture are despised.

A third variation in the social reproduction studies are those which attempt to show the “system” as less determinate than the earlier economic reproduction studies by bringing in the notions of resistance and agency (Collins, 2009) and arguing that the “system” cannot “reproduce” social inequities without the collusion of students and teachers. Bowles and Gintis have been critiqued for their overly deterministic view of schooling, which, it is argued, makes it impossible to see agency on the part of students or teachers. Thus these studies attempt to show how working class youth may (and do) challenge their positioning in the schools, though their resistance, may in fact bring about the desired effect—their continued marginalization in the schools and society at large. Moreover, the notion of agency suggests that it is possible for teachers and students to act against the hidden curriculum in ways that actually bring about social change. According to Cole (1988) social reproductions theory as defined by Bowles and Gintis “necessarily entailed a passive view of humankind, a view epitomized by their assertion that schools are destined to resign youth to their fate” (p. 9,
italics in original). In addition, Carlson (1988) argues that by claiming teachers are merely reproducing the status quo, Bowles and Gintis may have contributed to the demoralization of activist teachers. He also sees this view as potentially undermining public schools, and argues that if parents view public schools as overly-determining their children’s life chances, they may support voucher and privatization schemes. For Carlson, teachers are not merely supporters of the status quo. Instead he sees teachers as “active participants in reproductive processes, who in some ways accommodate themselves to the status quo and in other ways resist the role they are expected to perform in the schooling process” (p. 158). Likewise he argues that “classes, occupational groups, and individuals are not merely analytic abstractions: they are historically-embedded agents of action, and their actions and beliefs have real consequences that cannot be totally determined” (p. 165).

Although social reproduction may not be a “given,” studies suggest that school administrators and teachers do differentiate students along class, gender and racial lines. In an extremely powerful study of five schools, whose students came from different social classes, Anyon (1980) found that students with higher socio-economic status were given a privileged education, in which they learned to become leaders, whereas students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were taught to obey rules and become “good workers.” Some of the early studies pointed to resistance by students as well as collusion with teachers and administrators, but often ignored issues of gender (Willis, 1977; MacLeod, 1995). In a more recent study, Lareau (2000) looked at teacher attitudes toward parents in two elementary schools; one, whose students were predominantly from the middle and upper middle classes, and another whose students came from a primarily working class community. Teachers in the study tended to praise the efforts made by middle class mothers (it was mostly mothers) to
participate in their children’s education, while denigrating the efforts of working class mothers, sometimes effectively limiting working class children’s chances for admission into gifted programs.

What is clearly lacking in the discussion so far are how gender and race are implicated in social reproduction; Bowles and Gintis, it is argued, paid little attention to issues of gender and race. Carlson (1988) notes that is impossible to understand the disempowerment of teachers within the educational system without understanding their gendered domination as women in a patriarchal society. Joseph (1988) argues that by focusing on class, and by not specifically addressing race, Bowles and Gintis have made a “serious omission” (p. 175). For Joseph, a class analysis of schooling is applicable to whites, but basically ignores the fact that “there exists a significantly large body of Blacks and Latinos who are not in the economic work force at all” (p. 175). Other U.S. studies point to how class is intersected with race and gender (Fine & Weis, 2003; López, 2003). Staiger’s 2004 study on an urban magnet school details the effects of within-school tracking and de facto segregation that result from allowing white students almost exclusive access to gifted programs. Her study is important because it illustrates that when tracking procedures based on race become “normalized,” teachers, administrators, parents and many of the students come to believe that whites are “gifted.” While some students, particularly students of color, were critical of this de facto racialized tracking, for others it went unquestioned. López’s 2003 study shows how Dominican, West Indian and Haitian youth are both raced and gendered in New York City schools. In discussing the experiences of students in one public high school, López notes:
Although men and women were members of the same ethnic group, attended the same high schools, and came from the same socioeconomic background, they had fundamentally different cumulative experiences of the intersection of race and gender processes in the school setting. Differing race-gender experiences in the school setting were significant because they eventually framed outlooks toward education and mobility. (p. 110)

The later studies point to the necessity of “complicating” social reproduction theory that takes social class as the basis of analysis. Are attempts at social reproduction premised by class difference? Or might looking at race or the intersections of race and gender provide a clearer analysis?

In relation to these U.S. studies how do Japanese schools compare? Despite a widespread belief that Japanese schools provide an equitable education for all (Japanese national) children, there are many inconsistencies. There are documented differences in educational outcomes for children in Japan, which are rooted in race, gender and class differences. Okano and Tsuchiya (1999) claim that despite the fact that Japanese elementary and middle schools have “insisted on formal equality, providing the same curriculum across the nation and resisting any form of ability-based classes” not all children start off in positions which allow them to take advantage of the “school culture” (p. 242). They argue that poor children continue to be less likely than their middle-class cohorts to continue education past the compulsory stage and that females do not equally benefit from the assumed meritocratic Japanese educational system. It appears that despite efforts at creating an egalitarian education, children’s schooling and career paths follow remarkably similar patterns to their parents’ (Rohlen, 1983). Moreover, Okano and Tsuchiya (1999) contend that
the assumed connection between educational gains and social status are not the same for everyone, and therefore girls, zainichi Koreans, and buraku are aware of the glass ceilings, and make educational decisions based on these realities. Additionally, particularly for zainichi Koreans, mainstream schooling not only denies their contributions to society but teaches a negative view of Koreans in general. Okano and Tsuchiya maintain that although most so-called minority children understand the dominant view of education as a vehicle for social mobility, they cannot see how they can make these gains.

What then is the situation for new immigrants and other language minority students? In the 1990s Hanami found that there were “more than 10,000 children of foreign resident workers in need of Japanese-language instruction” (1998, p. 229). Vaipae’s (2001) study on language minority children in Japanese public schools found that in 1997, 17,296 students in Japan were identified by the Ministry of Education as needing Japanese language instruction, whereas the official figure for 2008 was 28,575 and the figure for 2010 was 28,511 (MEXT, 2011). Vaipae however, argues that the number of children who need support is probably much higher than the official figures because at the time of her study, the Ministry of Education did not take into consideration, for example, children who were conversational in Japanese but who may not have developed literacy skills. Likewise, others point out that the current figures are far from accurate because the number of foreign children residing in Japan is also inaccurate (Riordan, 2005; Yamawaki, 2007).

Kajita (1998) argues that MOE was slow to train teachers or create materials which could be used in teaching JSL. According to Kajita (1998) because of MOE/MEXT’s reluctance to meet this need, local governments have been trying to meet the demands on their own, often through “repeated trial and error” (p. 129). He argues that young children
who have yet to master their first language often have difficulties with Japanese literacy and therefore fall behind in academic subjects. Older students, he argues, are forced to compete with mainstream Japanese students for positions in high schools. Kajita finds that *Nikkei* Brazilian youth are likely to follow their parents into low-skilled labor.

Hirataka, Koishi, and Kato (2001) however, find that unlike Koreans, Ainu and Ryukyuans, for whom no allowances were made, efforts have been made to help the children of immigrants adjust to Japanese schools. In a study on the services available to *Nikkei* Brazilian students in Fujisawa city (Kanto Region), the researchers found that public services were offered by the city to help immigrant children learn Japanese. However, these measures did not appear to focus on academic knowledge or first language maintenance, but only on conversational or survival Japanese language skills.

In her (2001) study, Vaipae attempts to paint a picture of the situation language minority students face in Japanese public schools. The author’s own (English speaking) children were part of the study and their apparent failure in the schools system caused her to send at least one of them to the U.S. for schooling. Even though her children speak a native language which has relative social capital, her children’s failure in Japanese public schools draws attention to the fact that emergent bilingualism is not well understood in Japan. It is assumed that if a person can speak a language he/she can study in it. What Vaipae found was that there were few, if any, teachers in public schools with a background in second language learning or applied linguistics. Even teachers who were asked to teach pull-out JSL classes rarely had any training, and were often chosen because they were “free” to teach, which may mean they were teachers who had retired, or that they had been relieved of their teaching duties for one reason or another. Thus the administrators did not necessarily select teachers

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based on their experiences with or desire to work with language minority students. The study also pointed to the fact that mainstream classroom teachers were rarely able to gauge their students’ Japanese language abilities, and often felt they were fluent enough to be mainstreamed even when they couldn’t follow the curriculum.

Describing second language learners, Cummins (1996) argues that conversational abilities in the second language often develop rather quickly because of both “interpersonal and contextual cues” (p. 58) available to the learner. This type of language use is referred to as Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS). Cummins argues that what is needed for students to succeed in an academic setting, however, is an ability to work with decontextualized or “context-reduced” language, which is also “cognitively demanding” (p. 59). This type of language use is referred to as Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). What the BICS/CALP continuum attempts to explain is that conversational abilities alone are insufficient for academic work, and that the development of CALP skills requires years. This theory suggests that students who have conversational skills do not necessarily have CALP skills and may require active scaffolding to develop these skills. Vaipae argues that Cummins’ distinction between CALP and BICS is especially important to this study, and that the children who fell behind in their class work were those whose “underlying proficiency” in Japanese was at the level of BICS. In other words, students who are described by their teachers as “proficient” in Japanese may not have developed the necessarily linguistic skills with which to be academically successful. Vaipae argues that the lack of attention in developing the students’ first and second languages oftentimes resulted in extremely negative consequences for them.
Moreover, Japan does not allow for the education of undocumented workers (Kajita, 1998), nor are the children of documented foreign nationals required to attend school (Riordan, 2005; Yamawaki, 2007). According to Jacobson’s (2004) study of adult basic education programs in Nara, Japan, it was not uncommon to find school-age immigrants attending adult education classes, because they were not being taught JSL at school, and therefore could not follow the curriculum. Other immigrant groups, with the help of Japanese activists, have recently formed community schools where children can learn in their mother tongue. However, these schools are not recognized by MEXT (Yamawaki, 2007). Living in a society which values credentialism, students who do not attend accredited schools are likely to face severe obstacles in finding stable and sufficient employment, particularly if they do not speak the language of power.

How might teachers’ attitudes towards JSL students relate to educational success or failure? Similar to the circumstances faced by historically minoritized groups, Tsuneyoshi finds that children of newcomers face certain negative attitudes from their teachers and mainstream society at large, attitudes similar to those held toward old-comer groups. According to Tsuneyoshi:

\[\text{Judged on the criteria of Japanese middle-class values, studies of newcomers have shown that the families of these new foreigners are often evaluated negatively, as not providing enough support for their children, and not having ‘desirable’ educational values (Tsuneyoshi 1995a, b). The same type of labelling that happens to other cultural minority groups is being repeated. (2004, p. 77)}\]

In addition, Vaipae (2001) finds that even with the best intentions, the “egalitarian philosophy” of the elementary and junior high schools, as it is played out in Japanese schools...
may actually increase the problems faced by language minority students in Japan. Language minority students’ needs were often left unattended to, in part because teachers did not want to draw attention to any “special needs” which would make them stand out. The idea that equity is achieved by having the same educational experiences it is argued, is rooted in Japanese theories of learning. Pointing out someone as needing extra help is considered unfair, both to the individual and to other students, as they should receive the same treatment. Students who ask for extra help may then be considered troublesome. True egalitarianism therefore, is seriously impeded by an assimilationist model of education which assumes all students need the same kind of schooling.

Kanno’s 2003 work adds important data to this discussion. In an ethnographic study on four schools with bilingual communities or bilingual programs, Kanno found that the ways in which teachers and schools viewed their students, in other words the futures they “imagined” for their students, greatly affected school curriculum and opportunities for educational equality. Although Kanno’s analysis centers on class rather than race, her study offers a glimpse into the different kinds of bilingualism considered appropriate for different groups.

Kanno collected data from two private schools with English-Japanese bilingual curriculum. In one school, the students were mostly middle-class Japanese nationals, and in the other there was a mix of affluent Japanese nationals and foreign nationals, mostly children of elites. A third school was a Chinese immersion school serving the needs of (mostly long-term) Chinese residents of Japan, who spoke Japanese as a first language and may have had little or no Chinese proficiency. This school was not accredited, and as a result closed its senior high school so that its students would be able to attend Japanese high
schools, and be eligible to take Japanese university exams. The last school was a public school which served many Chinese and Southeast Asian immigrants. Most of the students planned to live in Japan permanently and attain Japanese citizenship. There was little or no first language support, and JSL students were, on the whole, unable to follow the curriculum. Kanno found that the teachers accounted for their JSL students’ lack of academic achievement by placing the blame on parents, home instability and poverty.

Ultimately Kanno found that teachers of the students in the two Japanese-English bilingual programs had high expectations for their students, which included university education, and stable and/or high prestige employment. The teachers in the Chinese immersion program wanted their students to reaffirm and take pride in their Chinese identity and heritage language in a context in which it is often denied. The teachers at the public school serving a large number of immigrants wanted their students to survive in Japan.

I would have liked Kanno to bring race into her analysis, as it seems that most of the affluent foreign nationals in her study were white. I would suggest that the teachers’ attitudes toward their students’ perceived national and racial ‘origins’ were possibly as important as their attitudes toward the students’ perceived socio-economic classes. Moreover, I suspect that some teachers may have viewed their students’ class and race as synonymous, thus seeing whites as powerful and intelligent, and South East Asians as impoverished and less suited to academic work. Nevertheless, Kanno provides evidence that suggests that some JSL students are perceived as less problematic than others.

Nukaga (2003), on the other hand, offers some possibly hopeful findings. Despite recognizing that the school personnel in her study had yet to fully understand or implement a multicultural curriculum, she suggests that the efforts of a committed group or even one
individual can improve the school and community atmosphere for non-mainstream children in Japan. LeTendre notes that “when teachers have had the time and autonomy to organize their own curriculum and school activities, they have tended to engage in remarkable experiments in democratic education” (1999, p. 309). But do these experiments extend to students who are not seen as “Japanese”?

**Multicultural Education and Anti-racist Education: Possibilities**

Given rising anxiety around the world, increasingly negative global attitudes towards migration and multiculturalism, plus widely-publicised incidents such as the autumn 2005 ethnic riots in France, media-savvy mainstream Japanese seem highly unlikely to adopt multiculturalist ideology anytime soon (Burgess, 2007a, 1.2.1 para 3, italics in original).

Burgess, as can be seen from the excerpt above, is skeptical about the possibilities of multiculturalism or multicultural education, and with the current climate in Japan with regard to immigration, he is not alone. In 2009 the Hamamatsu city government offered recently unemployed Nikkei Brazilian and Peruvian residents the money to purchase return air fare for themselves and family members if they agreed not to seek work in Japan again (Tabuchi, 2009). Although the Japanese government originally intended for Nikkeijin who qualified for Nikkeijin to return to Latin American indefinitely, criticism of the government caused a policy change, permitting some Nikkeijin to return to Japan under the same visa status after a period of three years (McCabe, Lin, Tanaka & Plewa, 2009). With the unemployment rate of Latin American residents at 40% between the end of 2008 and the beginning of 2009, approximately 50,000 Brazilians or about 17% of the Brazilian population of Japan returned to Brazil between the fall of 2008 and the summer of 2009, presumably some of them under the “pay-to-go program” (McCabe et. al, 2009, para 9 & par 13). In 2010 when former
Prime Minister Kan publicly stated that the government wanted to increase the number of skilled foreign workers, most of the Japanese public (65%) were opposed (Harlan, 2010). According to Kajita (1998) Japan only accepts foreign nationals if they can be “absorbed” “integrated” or “incorporated” into Japanese society. This means that:

- foreigners must understand Japanese language and culture and acquire Japanese citizenship if they want to be incorporated into Japanese society. This leaves little room for a multiple identity that would allow them to become naturalized Japanese citizens while maintaining their own ethnic identity. (p.123)

On the other hand, Kajita also recognizes that:

- Currently, the need for multiculturalism and incorporation without assimilation is being increasingly recognized in Japan; the idea is disappearing that Japanese are only those people who have Japanese citizenship, speak Japanese and hold Japanese identity and culture. (p. 126)

So, to what degree can it be said that Japanese teachers, administrators and MEXT have begun to reconsider education based on assimilation? Before trying to address this question, I will discuss theories and research on multicultural cultural education in the context of the United States. However, I would like to be clear that I am not advocating a U.S. approach to multicultural education for Japan, if indeed there is one. Rather I would like to discuss some of the criticisms of ‘mainstream’ multicultural education, as well as some of the models that exist, in order to compare and theorize about the state of and possibilities for ‘multicultural’ education in Japan.

Sleeter & Grant (1999) contend that there are currently five different approaches to multicultural education in the U.S. with very different social and political agendas. The first
is referred to as “teaching the exceptional and culturally different” (p. 37) which combines human capital theory and a cultural deficit model of education and asks teachers to teach students from lower socio-economic classes and students of color the skills and attitudes necessary for success, since it is assumed they lack both the skills and ‘orientations’ necessary to compete. The second approach, the “human relations” or intergroup education approach generated from general and social psychological theories and attempts to eliminate prejudice and stereotypes about different groups of people so they may “get along”; it tends to look at existing individual and group hostilities without questioning why discrimination and inequalities exist in the first place. Banks (1992) finds it to have been a response by mostly white academics working in white universities to race riots in the 1940s with little connection to the communities they purported to serve. Unsurprisingly, he finds interest to have “largely faded when the heat from the racial crisis faded and special funding for intergroup research and projects dried up” (p. 280).

The third approach, the single-group studies (Sleeter & Grant, 1999) or ethnic studies movement (Banks, 1992) has, according to Banks, greatly influenced the more critical of the multicultural education movements. Unlike the approaches described above, ethnic studies movement advocates “want their group to have greater power and control over economic and cultural resources” (Sleeter & Grant, p. 110); therefore, they teach and validate their histories and experiences to “counterbalance the study of White, middle-class males” (p. 111). Proponents of the ethnic studies movement clearly understand that education is not neutral, but is a tool which can be used to prepare students to work for social change for the benefit of the group. Despite the possibilities for education reform, the ethnic studies movement has been criticized for being merely an add-on which fails to challenge the “main business of the
school” (Sleeter & Grant, p. 144). The fourth approach, or multicultural education approach, it is argued, tries to account for diversity but does not fully confront socially structured inequalities. Instead this approach tends to valorize and essentialize ethnic “cultures.” As such, it doesn’t give students strategies for challenging inequalities. Citing Suzuki (1984) Sleeter and Grant contend: “multicultural education often becomes too much a celebration of differences without acknowledging the social problems that give rise to some of those differences and without dealing sufficiently with issues of social justice” (p. 182).

The fifth approach developed as a result of these criticisms. Sleeter & Grant maintain that multicultural education needs to be “social reconstructionist” (p. 188) in order to celebrate and validate difference as well as work toward social justice. As such, intersections of social inequalities based on race, gender, social class and disability are directly confronted. This approach, they claim, approximates Paulo Freire’s ideas of political literacy, and conscientização, conscientization or critical consciousness, through which people come to understand and fully realize “reality,” and to question this reality. Furthermore, in order to truly approximate Freire’s pedagogical beliefs, they also need to, as social actors, act to change this reality.

Sleeter (2010) writing for a South Korean journal has recently articulated a more “global” description of multicultural education practices which locates them along two axes, a vertical axis with one end referring to culture and the other on equity, and a horizontal axis with one end referring to a global outlook and the other end a national (“nation-bound”) outlook (p. 4). She locates what she refers to as 4 ‘ideal types’ of multicultural education located along these axes: “1) appreciating the nation’s cultural differences, 2) appreciating the international cultural differences, 3) anti-discrimination and social justice, and 4) anti-
discrimination and global justice” (p. 1). The first two are very much like the fourth approach as stated in Sleeter & Grant (1999), whereas the second two more critically examine and confront social injustices within the nation or in a global context. With reference to the third type, Sleeter suggests that although minoritized groups within the borders of a nation may benefit and espouse this type of multicultural education, it may be that the nation-bound view toward social equity ignores the current globalized context in which ethnic, racialized and other minoritized people are not contained in one nation. Furthermore, if educators and communities limit their activism to those living within the nation, they may neglect to take action against the state when it acts as aggressor to other nations.

Notwithstanding the fact that Japan is less culturally diverse than the United States, and that it has its own history/ies of curricula change and innovation, to what degree is multicultural education a goal or a possibility in Japanese schools? From a brief review of the literature on newly immigrated groups in Japanese schools (Hirata, Koishi, & Kato, 2001; Vaipai, 2001; Nukaga, 2003; Tsuneyoshi, 2004; Kanno, 2003, 2008; Takeuchi, 2009) it appears at present that the non-critical approach toward multicultural education, “teaching the exceptional and culturally different,” is most prominent in Japan. Teachers work to assimilate non-mainstream students into Japanese mainstream society, sometimes with a careful respect for their cultural identity, but with the over-all goal of helping them to fit in—without questioning social inequalities or the supposed meritocratic nature of Japanese education. Critiquing the apparent superficiality of discussions on multiculturalism in Japan, Burgess (2007a) notes:

One can speculate that the recent emphasis on ‘diversity’ in Japan, because of the way it is framed in contrast to a dominant mainstream ‘homogeneity’, has merely
served to reify so-called ‘minorities’, tacitly reaffirming the monocultural image of Japan and encouraging further stereotypical generalisations. (1.1 para 4)

Tai (2007) agrees with Burgess and sheds more light on current so-called multicultural practices with newcomer groups:

In Japan, a country in which there has been little immigration since the Pacific War and in which citizenship is based on the principle of descent, the idea of a unifying civic culture is almost absent. The ethnic cultures of newcomer children are labeled as foreign, which deepens their separation from the majority students. Multiculturalist teachers in Japan emphasize, not national unity, but the idea of living together in harmony, kyosei, between Japanese and newcomers. Multicultural education may end up functioning to exclude newcomers as foreign and different and thereby solidify, not destabilize, Japanese national boundaries, while including the newcomers at the margins of society. (para. 8)

Aside from adult education programs (Jacobson, 2004), efforts among local Ainu to keep their language intact (DiChicchis, 1995, Anderson & Iwasaki-Goodman, 2001, Hanazaki 2001), and the recent creation of immigrant community schools (Yamawaki, 2007), there are few instances of ethnic studies movements in Japan as articulated by Banks (1992). The exception may be among zainichi Koreans of North Korean descent. There is a continued history of resistance among the Korean population in Japan, particularly regarding efforts to maintain fluency and use of the Korean language, and through this, a positive Korean identity. In an effort to resist the assimilationist policies of the Japanese schools system, two Korean organizations, Chongryun, affiliated with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea), and Mindan, affiliated with the Republic of Korea (South
Korea), run their own schools (Maher & Kawanishi, 1995; Cary, 2001). Because of the Japanese government’s refusal to accredit Korean schools, however, 86% of Koreans attend Japanese public or private schools (Maher & Kawanishi, 1995). Chongryun schools, which provide education for 92% of the Korean students who choose a Korean ethnic education, provide a Korean immersion program for monolingual Japanese speaking students, and in particular, in the first two years, focus on the teaching of Korean so students may complete their studies using their heritage language.

Education at Korean schools was initially conceived under the premise of repatriation, and therefore, preparing students to live in Korea was the initial goal. But the 1990s brought about a realization that Korean students will most likely continue to live in Japan (Cary, 2001). Therefore there may be a shift in how students and teachers conceive of Korean ethnic education, but according to Cary, the Chongryun “education system appears to foster consecutive bilinguality, a positive view of Korean language and bilingualism and a consciousness of ethnic identity” (2001, p. 127). Kajita (1998) also notes the irony that because students in Korean schools are isolated they are seldom discriminated against, whereas Korean students who attend Japanese schools face discrimination despite the fact that many of them wish to assimilate. Tai (2007) suggests that educators wishing to develop multicultural education practices that will support newcomer children should, instead taking on multicultural education imported from the U.S. or Australia, reconsider Japanese local practices and the history of the Korean movement:

Preoccupied with helping newcomer children adapt to Japanese school environments, most multiculturalist educators in Japan slight issues of political economy and citizenship. While appreciating the imported idea, they do not realize that
multicultural education in the United States, Canada, and Australia is primarily for nationals. It is true that concern with human rights is central to multicultural education policies, as Okano Kaori points out. But such concern is rarely extended to socio-structural problems. It has been pointed out that Japanese teachers do not have the same level of political consciousness toward newcomers as toward resident Koreans, who remind them of Japan’s responsibility for its colonization. Yet, the presence of newcomer foreigners in Japan, which is tied to Japan’s emerging neo-liberalism, is also continuous with its past colonialism. Korean ethnic education, which was directly connected to Koreans’ postcolonial struggles, can help politicize multicultural education in today’s Japan. (para. 11)

Okano and Tsuneyoshi (2011) distinguish three “clusters” of terms for multicultural education in Japan. The first is the term “international understanding education” (kokusai rikai kyouiku), which reflects the nation-state paradigm discussed by Sleeter (2010) in that its purpose is to create an “understanding” between Japan and other nations “Olympic-style” (p. 13). International understanding education tends to focus on international exchange programs, including teacher “exchange” programs such as the former MEF program and the current JET program, and assumes the categories of Japanese and foreigner to be “mutually exclusive” (p. 13). The second group of terms relate to social justice education and includes education for egalitarian purposes or for purposes of equity (douwa kyouiku), education for emancipation or freedom (kaihou kyouiku), “ethnic education” (minzoku kyouiku) and “human rights education” or jinken kyouiku (p. 13). The third cluster are terms that come directly from Western academic writing, which has been translated into Japanese and includes such terms as tabunka kyouiku (multicultural education) and tabunkashugi
Japanese schools and local NGOs working with newcomer populations tend to use a related term such as “multicultural coexistence” *tabunka kyousei* (p. 13). What Okano and Tsuneyoshi wish to clarify is that in the Japanese context, as in the U.S. or global context, multicultural education means different things to different actors. Moreover, the terms are not always mutually exclusive; for example local districts such as Kawasaki and Osaka with a history of supporting *douwa kyouiku* for *burakumin* or *minzoku kyouiku* for *zainichi* Korean populations may explicitly tie human rights beliefs into their usage of the term multicultural coexistence. With a history of creating education programs for long-existing foreign residents, such as Koreans (‘ethnic minorities’ without Japanese citizenship) local boards of education in places such as Kawasaki and Osaka have a wealth of knowledge regarding how to support new immigrant and migrant groups. Conversely, the direct involvement of the central government in creating a JSL curriculum and providing some funding for new programs, including ethnic education programs, has led to more visibility for *zainichi* Koreans who are foreign residents (Okano, 2006).

Unlike the terms *kokusaika* (internationalization) or global which though invested with different meanings are understood, used or ‘imagined’ by large numbers of Japanese, the term *tabunka kyousei* (multicultural co-existence) is rarely used, and many Japanese may not understand its meaning. When the term is used domestically it is usually in reference to geographical areas with large numbers of foreign ‘newcomers.’ Despite ongoing activism toward the creation of critical multicultural education and social justice programs in public schools in Osaka and Kawasaki which have a history of human rights education by/for *zainichi* Koreans and other ‘long term’ minoritized groups, many schools in Japan appear to have little or no experience with (or interest in) this view of education.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Methodology, Epistemology and Theoretical Stance

I came to this study with a basic theoretical stance, one that is critical. I believe that powerful members of societies create hierarchies in which people in positions of power—those who create institutions and those who support them—receive more, and others—those without access to power—receive less. In industrial and post-industrial societies not only do people at the top of the hierarchical structure receive more material goods and services, these relationships between people and groups become normalized and recreated within institutions through language and symbolic goods, such as university degrees from respectable institutions. In effect, I believe that social reproduction can and often does occur, but that because social systems are ultimately created and interacted upon by individuals and groups, they may be changed. According to Carspecken (1996):

Reproduction occurs when people act consistently with respect to broadly distributed conditions. Actors are always free, in principle, to act against such conditions – to challenge them or transform them. This is why the concept of social system must not be thought of as something existing outside of human activity. Social systems are human activities that have become patterned. To exist they must be continuously reproduced. (p. 38).

All research is political, and critical qualitative researchers are not afraid to argue that research needs to be useful in working toward social justice for all groups of people, but particularly those who are marginalized based on race, class and gender, or the intersections between these constructions. Tyson (2003), building in part on the work of Freire, warns us that research needs to be emancipatory, and in order to be so, it must “have a simultaneous
commitment to radical social change as well as to those individuals most oppressed by social
cultural subordination” (p. 23).

Furthermore, I believe that the justification for unequal systems worldwide continues on the basis of racial categorization and that white racism has become globalized (Batur-Vanderlippe & Feagin, 1999; Allen, 2001). Thus, I believe that the focus of this research needed to be on issues of racialization. Allen (2001), arguing through the lens of critical race theory (CRT), states that although useful, one of the problems with class-based theories of social injustice is that they neglect to trace capitalism to the creation of the white race in Europe and the concomitant efforts to control and subjugate people of color. Allen contends that “European ethnics have thrived relative to people of color through the creation of the white race, the legalization of whiteness as property, and the establishment of a system of nation-states to territorialize it all” (p. 477). Allen maintains therefore, that white supremacy is both global and systemic in that it privileges people racialized as ‘white’ in opposition to ‘others’ who are racialized as ‘people of color.’ Allen thus contends that “globalization is primarily about white supremacy and the construction of a global white polity, and capitalism is an intersecting yet secondary modality of the globalization of white supremacy” (p. 476, italics in original).

In the context of Asia and the Pacific where a number of nations have been colonized by European nations, the U.S. and other Asian nations, and where some nations have been both colonizer and colonized, racialization processes have been complex and subject to change through military occupation, defeat and economic expansionism. While on the global level white supremacy is hegemonic, at the regional and local levels there are resistance, complicity and innumerable daily interactions which at times reframe or re-envision what
‘white’ is and who is supreme. Interestingly, Mills (1997) who sees the post colonial world as a “racially hierarchical polity, globally dominated by Europeans” (p. 27), finds in Japan “a shifting and ambivalent relationship with the global white polity” (p. 31). Dikotter (2008) sees “racialization of the globe” as an interactive process:

The interactive model of interpretation …emphasizes the worldviews constructed by local historical agents analysing the complex, cognitive social and political dimensions behind the indigenization and appropriation of racist belief system: put briefly, it highlights inculturation where others see acculturation. (p. 1482).

This interactive viewpoint makes it possible to state that racialization processes in Japan and other East Asian nations do not necessarily “look like” the processes in the U.S. or Australia, nor do they necessarily “look like” each other. Asian nations have their own (multiple) histories shaped by and through racialization processes. At the same time the interactions between global, national and local entities/identities, both currently and historically, continue to influence how racialization is enacted in each context.

In looking at Japanese teachers’ perceptions of JSL students, it may be asked how my theoretical stance relates to a study conducted in Japan, a wealthy nation, but one whose citizens are not racialized as white within the global context. I expect I may also be asked why I focus on race in Japan, since some groups who are minoritized; Koreans, Taiwanese, burakumiu (ethnic Japanese who have long faced discrimination), and some Nikkei Brazilians do not appear “racially,” i.e., phenotypically, different. I contend, however, that these groups have been racialized as different from Japanese in Japan, even though they may be considered by some, particularly by white Europeans or North Americans, to be of the same race. This points to the obvious fact that race is a social construction (Omi & Winant,
1994, Yoshino, 1992). Furthermore, it is important to note that dominant societies “racialize different minority groups at different times” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 8) for different purposes.

Levin (2008) contends that ‘mainstream’ Japanese nationals—ie: those who consider themselves to be ethnically and linguistically Japanese— and referred to by Levin as Wajin from the Ainu word, do in fact see themselves as culturally, linguistically and racially different from Ainu and Okinawans though they may ‘share’ a nation. In the same way that white privilege—privileges and rights maintained by whites in the U.S. whether or not they are aware of it— is an invisible pre-condition for institutionalized racism (although we may say that all racism is institutional by definition), Levin argues that mainstream Japanese privilege is its Japanese counterpart, determining who benefits from Japanese education and law. The term transparency, then, explains the fact that U.S. whites are allowed to remain oblivious (at least outwardly) to their privilege. In the context of Japan, Levin tells us that:

Japan’s Wajin-dominant racial discourse represents the epitome of majority race transparency. Modern Japan’s mainstream racial discourse famously presents a false myth of homogeneity based upon a carefully constructed and maintained conception of a single Japanese race. This social system involves the denial (or virtual denial as de minimus) of the presence of ethnic and racial minorities in Japanese society. Thus denial, enabled by longstanding assimilation and exclusion policies, has been an essential means to subordinate minorities in Japan. Although the conception of Japan as a homogeneous mono-ethnic society is not perfectly incorporated into the national consciousness, it is nearly so. This race project is evidenced repeatedly by public
assertions from political leaders and it is also intricately wound through Japan’s nationalized educational pedagogy. (2008, p. 16)

In the same way Levin uses CRT to reexamine Japanese law, I believe CRT and critical whiteness studies may be employed as tools to examine the privileging of mainstream Japanese nationals in the educational context. Exploring how mainstream Japanese school teachers perceive language minority students and their educational performance may help make visible the means by which these teachers construct and reconstruct privilege. Pillow (2003) states: “Race-based methodologies do not offer an ‘add race and stir’ approach, but offer an epistemological shift in how we know what we know, how we come to believe such knowledge, and how we use it in our daily lives” (p. 183).

Considering the questions I ask in and from this study and my purposes in conducting this particular study, I employed Critical Race Methodology, or the approach to qualitative research based on Critical Race Theory (CRT). This does not mean that I have not continually questioned my understandings of race, racism and racialization. Rather, by continuing to employ Critical Race Methodology, I have, I believe begun to rethink my role/s and my participants’ role/s in the research process. Solorzano & Yosso (2002) explain five tenets, or reasons for employing Critical Race Methodology. First is the acknowledgment the pervasiveness and permanence of racism its interconnectedness with other forms of subjugation, including oppressions based on gender, class, sexuality and national origin: In order to understand the experiences of racialized groups in the context of law and education, we must understand the “intersections of racial oppression” (p. 25). Second is the challenge to status quo and dominant ideologies: “A critical race methodology in education challenges White privilege, rejects notions of “neutral” research or “objective” researchers, and exposes
deficit-informed research that silences and distorts epistemologies of people of color” (p. 26). Third is the intention and commitment to social justice demanded by CRT. Fourth is the emphasis or centrality placed on the stories and experiences as expressed by people who have been oppressed through racialization. Fifth is the importance of the “transdisciplinary” approach to research in education. Utilizing “the transdisciplinary knowledge and methodological base” of fields including law, sociology and women’s allows those utilizing Critical Race Methodology to more clearly understand the symbolic and material effects of racism on individuals and groups (p. 27).

This study focused on four of the five criteria of Critical Race Methodology. 1. Although the focus in the study is on racialization, it became apparent in particular that gender and class intersected with the ways in which individual students and their families were positioned by the participants in the study. 2. I believe that by centering on the racialization of non-Japanese “others” in the context of Japanese schooling, this study helps to deconstruct the dominant ideology of a meritocratic education system. Furthermore by focusing on racialization processes and the degrees to which mainstream teachers maintain or disrupt these processes, rather than JSL student’s language “problems,” this study challenges the notion that the assimilation or integration process of immigrant and migrant children is a product of language “skills.” 3. I am committed to social justice in education. This study has enabled to me to get some understanding of the racialization processes which occur in schooling, and I plan to continue the discussion about issues brought up in/by the study within Japan, with teachers and community workers who actively work to disrupt the racialization of JSL students and their families. 4. There are to date few studies in Japanese education which center on racism and racialization in the schools, which made it necessary
for me to take a transdisciplinary approach in this study. The study has drawn from research and theories in a number of disciplines including sociology, education, anthropology and sociolinguistics. Bringing together relevant theories from different disciplines may allow for a better understanding of the processes of racialization.

What this study does not do, however, is to focus on the lived experiences of JSL students and their families. Although the focus of CRT and Critical Race Methodology is “from the bottom up” I elected in this study instead to consider the points of view of teachers working in public educational institutions, and in doing so, I consciously elected to look at individuals who are privileged and thus complicit with and within the current educational system. Thus, this study also draws from critical whiteness studies. As the point of critical whiteness studies is to examine those who have power in the racialized order to both recognize and confront white privilege, I began the study from this perspective.

**Roles and Positionality/ies of the Researcher**

In examining the views and educational practices of “mainstream” Japanese teachers, I came to more closely examine my own white privilege. In centering race and racism as the object of study in Japan, I understand that I must position myself as a white graduate student in a U.S. institution, who also represents a Japanese prefectural university, an English-medium “international” university. I continue to grapple with the issues that accompany my positionality/ies vis-à-vis those of my participants. Is Japanese privilege a corollary of white privilege? How does Japanese privilege work within a global discourse of white supremacy? If I intend to look at Japanese privilege, surely my racial privilege and middle class status associated with being a graduate student/researcher/teacher is reflected in my research. However, in talking with mainstream Japanese teachers, I believe there is certain congruence.
I am a member of privileged group/s as are the teachers I interviewed. As members of a
dominant group in Japan, mainstream Japanese teachers may have seen me as someone with
more power and privilege as a white academic. At times, my position as an assistant
professor in a university was referenced and my opinions were asked. I was seen by some as
an “expert” in English as foreign language (EFL) pedagogy. During interviews four
participants referred to my U.S. education and asked about the U.S. schooling of immigrant
children. Each participant commented that due to the history of immigration in the U.S., the
U.S. system of educating immigrant children must be far superior to the Japanese system. On
the other hand, participants may have seen me as someone with less power and privilege in
Japan, as the status of foreigners, even white U.S. citizens, is sometimes ambiguous. During
the interviews there were times when participants referred to my position as a learner of
Japanese or the fact that I am a foreigner in Japan. Using Japanese in interviews- a language
in which I am fluent, but am not (and do not sound like) a native speaker of- positioned me as
an outsider. There is also my position as a female to consider, and during interviews with
male participants, I found myself intimidated at times and apologetic, and wondered to what
extent it had to do with my lack of confidence in my linguistic abilities and to what extent I
was playing a “feminized” role in the interview.

Throughout the process of collecting and analyzing data, I have struggled with how to
understand my position and power, both in terms of the research itself as well as in my daily
life in Japan within the context of the globalization of racialized identities. I struggled to best
understand how to “tell the story” of what I perceive as a racial project in which foreign
residents of certain nationalities are through immigration and educational policies being
*miseducated* in order to maintain the necessary lie of that maintaining Japaneseness demands.
Vaught (2008) in writing about her research on the dynamics of racial power and exclusion in a predominantly black high school with white teacher-participants states that, she “participated willingly, though uncomfortably in a White lie” (p. 567). For Vaught, a commitment to social equity and anti-racism could only be upheld through the use of CRT methodology and a reexamination of the concepts of ethics and culture in critical educational research; thus, she asks critical researchers to reexamine their responsibility to racist participants. She asks whether it is ethical for researchers to interpret and write about interactions with participants in ways which ultimately cause them anger or shame. To whom does the researcher owe allegiance? In order to do justice, Vaught has to re-conceive of the participant as more than an individual, as a participating member of a particular culture (or cultures), as a cultural being.

As race (non-White races) and culture have become collapsed (Gotanda, 1991; Omi & Winant, 1994) in the dominant consciousness, culture is a necessary referent or schema for examining racism. To write against racism, whether within dominant or nondominant subjects, we need culture—not only because it is real, but because it is the structure within which people experience and enact and resist racism and other forms of discrimination. Indeed, culture and essentialism need not be read as interchangeable concepts. (2008, p. 576)

Vaught finds that ethical responsibility in research cannot be understood without understanding the aim of the research project which is to work against racism. By recognizing participants as members of dominant or non dominant groups, as cultural beings—who participate in social systems of oppression to varying degrees—rather than only
as individuals, researchers can better understand the workings of these systems. Vaught further explains in the context of her research with a particular participant:

I listened to her stories of racial supremacy and I actively analyzed their significance within the context of schooling; because if I did not, I would have been complicit with racial domination and I would have been condoning the White denial that those narratives exist and that they are part of a collective, systemic, cultural force called racism. Ultimately the research relationship must not be based in empathy, but on a responsibility that extends beyond but does not disregard individuals. Relational responsibility, through the frame of political race, is an accountability to collectives and to the dynamic systems that affect collective, cultural experience. (p. 578, italics in original).

In my engagement with the participants in the study, although I saw them as individuals, with different experiences and stories to tell, not as essentialized ‘mainstream Japanese teachers,’ and although I appreciate the work done by many Japanese teachers on a daily basis, I, nevertheless, brought their narratives together and analyzed them for the purpose of revealing how their stories and actions both support and interrupt the racialization of JSL students.

LeCompte and Schensul (1999) explain that ethical treatment of participants implies a responsibility to disseminate the research results to the “‘communities’ to which the …researcher owes allegiance” (p. 201). In this sense, I feel I ‘owe allegiance’ both to teachers as well as to students and their families. My ultimate goal, however is to directly and positively affect the schooling of racial, ethnic and linguistic minority students, and to help work toward a situation in which teachers, students and parents are involved in decision-making at the local level in ways that benefit all children. While listening to the recorded
interviews with research participants, I was struck by the number of times my utterances were of apparent agreement with their views, even when I did not agree. I thus, found myself complicit and came to question my role as researcher. Yet, I felt then as I do now, that if indeed my purpose is to not only critique, but to engage in a dialogue with teachers in order to challenge the status quo, that my study is unfinished. By not challenging (at least not strongly) some of the assertions and assumptions teachers made, I have not yet fulfilled my commitment to my participants.

**Reciprocity**

Seidman (1998) discusses the fact that issues of reciprocity can be problematic for researchers, because it is usually the researcher who benefits the most from the research. For someone who believes in positive social change/action, reciprocity is therefore, one of the goals of the research. What I have hoped to gain from this research is not only a better understanding of teachers’ racial ideologies and how they lend support to or disrupt the racialization of linguistic minority children, but also what teachers actually do in the classroom with their students and what they teach their mainstream students about “non-Japanese” people. There are organic intellectuals in all areas of Japan doing innovative and important work, with and without help from MEXT, and I would like to lend support to and make known the efforts of these individuals. Several participants told me they felt a complete lack of support from other teachers, local governments and MEXT, and said they hoped I would let others know about the situation faced by JSL students in the schools. I would like to highlight the positive work that is being done as well as the limitations of the current system/s. Additionally, through my work in a public university, I hope to create a space (and funding) for teachers to travel to other localities and conduct workshops at local schools in
order to talk about the work they do. Although I have developed relationships with some of
the participants and may have opportunities to work with a few of them in the future, I may
not meet or work with the majority of participants again. Therefore, I hope they believe the
interviews were beneficial to them in some way.

**Sampling, Data Collection, Participants & Research Sites**

Initially I intended to conduct interviews and observations in three school districts in
the Kanto area and one in a more rural area. Kanto, where Tokyo is located, is a populous
area, in which historically marginalized groups, such as Koreans, and more recent immigrant
groups live. Although I expected there to be fewer immigrant or racial minority groups in
rural districts, I was interested to see how the curriculum and teacher attitudes in a rural
community might compare with those of teachers in more urban areas. Moreover, though
underrepresented in much of the research, the majority of JSL students attend schools where
they may be one of only a few JSL students (Burgess, 2007c).

Gaining access to middle schools proved to be a somewhat slow and difficult process.
Despite having read several studies by foreign scholars stating the same, I had imagined that
I would be allowed access, at least in the locality where I live. As I would learn in the
process of identifying participants and school sites, the help of individuals with contacts to
local schools was essential for gaining access. Although I made direct contact with local
board of education officials in 3 cities, I was unable to conduct interviews or observations in
any of these cities. On another occasion I contacted a prefectural government worker, who
told me he would like to support my research, but that I should not use his name when trying
to recruit since the teachers might feel pressured by him.
In the early stages in the process of identifying participants, through invitation of a university Japanese language professor, I attended a Japanese language symposium where I made the acquaintance of a city government worker well known for his advocacy and work with foreign residents in his locality, an area known for both its ‘old comer’ as well as ‘newcomer’ immigrant groups. Although he put me into contact with school administrators and two teachers in city schools from his district, I was unable to conduct any interviews or make any class observations. As I was informed, there were already researchers conducting ongoing studies in the city schools. I was introduced to several members of a local board of education, who identified local schools with JSL student populations for me. However, although I contacted the principals of all 4 schools, not one responded to my letter.

It was only with the great assistance of a few individuals that I was able to gain access to research sites and participants. With their help I was able to identify several middle schools with students classified as needing JSL assistance and conducted attitudinal surveys of the teachers in these schools by mail to recruit participants. After some initially disappointing results from the surveys, I widened my search. Through the help of colleagues with acquaintances in several universities, and through the use of snowball sampling by participants in the study, I was able to interview sixteen participants, representing ten schools in five regions in Japan—Tohoku Region (1 participant), Kanto Region (3 participants), Kansai Region (2 participants), Chubu Region (4 participants), and Chubu/Tokai Region (6 participants).

From my readings I surmised that although there are pockets of immigrant students in certain cities and schools, the majority of schools which have JSL students, may have only one or two such students and may or may not have any type of pull-out support for these
students. Although my goal was not to generalize this study to the general population, I still hoped to interview teachers from both “types” of schools, and ultimately 9 of the participants could be said to work at schools where between 5% - 10% of the student populations were JSL students, and 5 participants worked at schools with very small numbers of JSL students. In the case of the remaining 2 participants, one participant from the Chubu/Tokai Region responded to my survey when she worked at a school with few JSL students, but was by the time of the interview working at a school in another city in the region with a large number of JSL students. In the last case, although statistically the city in which the participant from Tohoku worked comprises one of the lowest rates of foreign residents in Japan, her situation in which students were pulled out of the schools they attended (or did not attend) and brought together in a downtown educational facility might be said to more closely resemble those of participants who had worked in schools with large numbers of JSL students.

The participants. I interviewed 16 public school teachers. Although attempting to account for gender in my sampling, particularly since the male to female ration among middle school teachers is approximately 60 – 40, ultimately female participants (10) outnumbered males (6), though one participant was able to recruit 2 male colleagues when I said I was looking to increase the number of male participants. I had expected that female teachers might be more willing to speak with a female researcher, and I also surmised that in schools where JSL teachers were hired, the likelihood was that women would outnumber men in this field.

The ages of the participants ranged from those in their 50’s to those in their 20’s, and their years of teaching ranged between two to more than thirty. Fields of specialization included: art, physical education, math, social studies, English, special education, science,
JSL, and Japanese (or *kokugo*). Not including the 2 participants, Nagashima and Kudo whose university coursework qualifies them as JSL specialists, 2 participants, Sasaki and Morita, both from the Kanto Region, had undergone special coursework and/or accreditation to work with JSL students. In fact, Morita was at the time of data collection, beginning to conduct research in Japanese high schools on issues faced by JSL students. Additionally, Kuriyama, who majored in English and taught English for three years prior to working as a JSL specialist in her current school, Sakuragaoka Middle School in the Chubu/Tokai Region, conducted three months of training and observations with the JSL specialist in her municipality’s Board of Education. I also discovered through my interviews that one participant, Morinaka was considered a part-time teacher, in that she had an annual contract which may or may not be renewed: At the time of the interview she had transferred from Taguchi Middle School to teach English at another middle school. Kobayashi, who ran the JSL classroom at Taguchi Middle School also told me that she was working on a yearly contract. Kuriyama, although a full-time teacher, worked at more than one school each week. Kobayashi had been hired as a JSL specialist, although she had never received accreditation or specific training in the JSL studies and at the time of the study had been in charge of the JSL classroom for eleven years.

Interestingly, several participants had more than one teachers’ license. Two participants had previously taught at the high school level and three had taught at elementary schools. One participant, Kamata, had also worked for 3 years at the local board of education. At the time of the data collection Nagashima, had quit her teaching position, was in the process of moving to Australia to work on a master’s degree, and moved there before data collection had been completed, while Morita was working on a doctoral degree. Both
Morita and Ito had other professional careers before teaching. All of the participants had travelled overseas at least one time, whether it was for a ‘honeymoon’ or research trip, two participants, Kobayashi and Morita, had family members who had lived or were currently living overseas, and four participants (Kobayashi, Ito, Kudo and Morinaka) had lived overseas for one or more years.

Of the participants interviewed, 8 (Kobayashi, Morinaka, Nagashima, Kudo, Kuriyama, Yamada, Shimahara and Nakai) had worked with JSL students in either one-on-one situations or in a pull-out JSL “class” which will be described later. The remaining 8 teachers worked with JSL students within the context of their regular classes. Of the first group, four (Kudo, Yamada, Shimahara and Nakai) also worked with JSL students in the context of their mainstream subject classes.

It is typical in the Japanese education system for teachers to work for several years, often 3-5 years in one school and then to switch schools within the same city. All of the participants had worked in more than one school, even Ito who had taught for two years at the time of data collection. If a teacher marries a co-worker, one of them needs to change schools. Two female teachers mentioned that this had happened to them. Although I didn’t inquire about marital status, the majority of female teachers openly discussed this with me, sometimes even after the interviews had concluded, and I ascertained the marital status of 9 of the 10 female participants, with 4 married, 1 divorced and 4 single. All of the single female participants were in their 20s or 30s. None of the male participants discussed their marital status, though at least two mentioned travelling abroad with a spouse or family.

As was explained to me by several participants, there are generally two paths through which one becomes a teacher in Japan. There are those who declare a major at university
such as history or English literature and then take additional courses to prepare for the teachers examination for elementary school, junior high school or high school. In this case, they will have had a two week intensive teaching practicum at a school, oftentimes the school from which they graduated, and will need to shadow a teacher-mentor and conduct a sample lesson which is open to other teachers and their professors. In order to work in the public schools as a full-time teacher must pass the teacher’s examination within the prefecture he or she wishes to work. For those who want to become JSL specialists there are also two paths. One way involves passing the Japanese Language Teaching Competency Test administered by the Japan International Education Association. (MEXT, 1994). Sasaki decided to study and take this exam after working several years as a Japanese language (kokugo) teacher at the junior high school level.

The other way is to become a JSL specialist is to graduate from a teacher training course at a university with a JSL specialization. Currently there are few of these at the undergraduate level. Although at the masters’ level there are universities that offer Japanese language teaching degrees, the majority of them cater to language teaching at universities abroad, with very few, such as Waseda University, focusing on the development of JSL curriculum or JSL teaching in the public schools.

The majority of the participants were in their forties and fifties at the time of data collection and had taught for approximately 20 years. It is perhaps then not surprising that their university study did not prepare them for work with newcomers or language minority students. However, there are some signs that change is happening in universities and teachers’ colleges. Kuriyama, for example, one of the youngest participants, took courses in
cross-cultural communication and had discussions regarding the rights of foreigners living in Japan.

I would often think about the issues of the right of foreigners to vote. There was much debate on such issues in class. Some would say that only Japanese nationals could have the right to vote while others would say that it was wrong that foreign nationals they could not vote even though paid income tax. (Interview Kuriyama 4.24.09)

The large majority of participants stated they did not take any courses during teacher training which helped them work with JSL students, nor did they feel they learned much about minority groups within Japan. However, several stated that their pedagogies were informed by their life experiences of being perceived (or perceiving themselves) as outsiders, whether as bully victims, or as non-native speakers of another language living outside of Japan. Since the participants in the study were self-selected, it is unlikely they are representative of middle school teachers in general. However, as should be apparent even from such a small sample of teachers, there is diversity among “mainstream” teachers in Japanese public schools.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Family Name (Pseudonym) &amp; geographic area</th>
<th>Gender/Approximate Age</th>
<th>Years of teaching experience/School</th>
<th>Field/s of expertise</th>
<th>Subject taught at time of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nagashima/Tohoku Region</td>
<td>F/30s</td>
<td>0 - 5</td>
<td>JSL/working on MA in Australia</td>
<td>JSL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kobayashi/Chubu Region (Taguchi JHS)</td>
<td>F/50s</td>
<td>25+</td>
<td>Special education</td>
<td>JSL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morinaka/Chubu Region (Taguchi JHS)</td>
<td>F/30s</td>
<td>0 - 5</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maruyama/Chubu Region (Taguchi JHS)</td>
<td>M/30s</td>
<td>11 - 15</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanaka/Chubu Region (Taguchi JHS)</td>
<td>M/40s</td>
<td>21 - 24</td>
<td>P. E.</td>
<td>P.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saito/Kanto Region</td>
<td>F/50s</td>
<td>21 - 24</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sasaki/Kanto Region (Nakamachi JHS)</td>
<td>F/50s</td>
<td>25+</td>
<td>Kokugo (JSL certification)</td>
<td>Kokugo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morita/Kanto Region</td>
<td>F/50s</td>
<td>11 - 15</td>
<td>English Working on Ph.D.</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yonezawa/Kansai Region</td>
<td>F/50s</td>
<td>21 - 24</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamata/Kansai Region</td>
<td>M/40s</td>
<td>11 - 15</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yamada/Chubu-Tokai Region (Fujita JHS)</td>
<td>M/50s</td>
<td>21 - 24</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shimahara/Chubu-Tokai Region (Fujita JHS)</td>
<td>M/50s</td>
<td>25+</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>Social Studies/Head Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nakai/Chubu-Tokai Region</td>
<td>M/50s</td>
<td>25+</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Math/Head Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ito/Chubu-Tokai Region</td>
<td>F/50s</td>
<td>0 - 5</td>
<td>English/MA from US</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuriyama/Chubu-Tokai Region (Sakuragaoka JHS)</td>
<td>F/20s</td>
<td>0 - 5</td>
<td>English (JSL training)</td>
<td>JSL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kudo/Chubu-Tokai Region (Sakuragaoka JHS)</td>
<td>F/20s</td>
<td>0 - 5</td>
<td>JSL</td>
<td>Kokugo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Participants’ professional work experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Family Name (Pseudonym) &amp; geographic area</th>
<th>Overseas work/ living?</th>
<th>Learned about Multiculturalism or Minority issues during university/ teacher training?</th>
<th>Professional Work experience outside of Japanese public schools?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nagashima/ Tohoku Region</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kobayashi/ Chubu Region (Taguchi JHS)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morinaka/ Chubu Region (Taguchi JHS)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maruyama/ Chubu Region (Taguchi JHS)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanaka/ Chubu Region (Taguchi JHS)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saito/Kanto Region</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sasaki/ Kanto Region (Nakamachi JHS)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morita/Kanto Region</td>
<td>No, but family living overseas</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yonezawa/Kansai Region</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamata/Kansai Region</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yamada/Chubu-Tokai Region (Fujita JHS)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shimahara/Chubu-Tokai Region (Fujita JHS)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nakai/Chubu-Tokai Region</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ito/Chubu-Tokai Region</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Family Name (Pseudonym) &amp; geographic area</th>
<th>Overseas work/living?</th>
<th>Learned about Multiculturalism or Minority issues during university/teacher training?</th>
<th>Professional Work experience outside of Japanese public schools?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kuriyama/Chubu-Tokai Region (Sakuragaoka JHS)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kudo/Chubu-Tokai Region (Sakuragaoka JHS)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Design

The study utilizes a qualitative research design and focuses on two in-depth semi-structured interviews with each participant (see Appendix A and Appendix B). Bonilla-Silva (2003) argues for the use of qualitative methods, and in particular interviews, in studies which involve gauging the racial attitudes of participants. Although surveys may provide general information about people’s ideas “they are severely limited tools for examining how people explain, justify, rationalize and articulate racial viewpoints” (p. 11). Like Bonilla-Silva, I believe that in order to examine mainstream Japanese teachers’ attitudes toward JSL children, I needed to consider the ways in which the discourses produced and recreated by and through conversations allowed participants to participate in or contest the racialization process. To do this, I needed to talk with the participants and focus my data collection on in-depth interviews with teachers.

Due to time and financial constraints, I did not attempt to conduct an ethnographic study. Living in the northern part of Japan in an area with statistically fewer JSL children
attending public schools meant that much travel was needed to interview teachers in the Kanto, Chubu, Chubu/Tokai and Kansai regions. Being employed full-time did not allow me sufficient time each week to participate in on-going observations. However, for purposes of triangulation I conducted participant-observations in JSL and other subject area classes at four schools, for a total of twenty eight 50-minute classes. Additionally, I kept an observation notebook, and I collected and analyzed official documents, including official internet sites—of schools, local governments and MEXT.

I collected data in the form of interviews and class observations between December 2008 and September 2009. I interviewed each participant twice; the average interview length was about 54 minutes. The interviews took place either at the schools where the participants worked (11) or at a place of their choosing (5).

**Interviews.** When considering how the interviews should be conducted, I looked to Spradley (1979) and Seidman (1998). Spradley sees interviews as speech events, and has carefully constructed different types of questions that should be asked during the interview process. Included are descriptive questions, structural questions, and contrast questions, each of which serves a unique purpose: Descriptive questions are those which enable the researcher to gain samples of the language the participant uses. Structural questions lead the researcher to a better understanding of how participants “organize their knowledge,” whereas contrast questions are used to examine the underlying meaning/s of the terms of phrases a participant uses (p. 60).

Seidman (1998) advocates the use of in-depth interviews, as a means by which the role of the researcher as an instrument of research is clearly articulated, and not disavowed. For Seidman, the researcher needs to acknowledge that “meaning is, to some degree a
function of the participant’s interaction with the interviewer” and that intersubjectivity between the researcher and participant is a way to knowledge (p. 16). Furthermore he argues that through the process of conducting multiple in-depth interviews (he argues for three interviews), the researcher can check for “internal consistency” of what the participants are saying (p. 17). But finally, he stresses “the goal of the process is to understand how our participants understand and make meaning of their experience[s]” and “by interviewing a number of participants, we can connect their experiences and check the comments of one participant against those of others” (p. 17).

Financial and time constraints did not allow me to conduct three interviews per participant as suggested by Seidman. However, in developing my interview questions, I attempted to follow Seidman’s suggestions with regard to interview content and organization. The first interview focused on the participant’s history; his or her educational experiences as a student, awareness of racial, language and ethnic minorities while growing up, teacher training and so on, as well as pedagogical beliefs and awareness of his or her position/ing in the school. In the second interview the focus was on the participant’s experiences with JSL students, expectations of/for their students and their analysis of what could be done to improve the education. The second interview asked participants both to discuss and reflect on their experiences. I also attempted to ask questions which would elicit descriptions and contrasts. During interviews, I used structural questions as follow up to better understand the meanings the participants gave to certain terms and to understand what items were included by these terms. For example, when Kobayashi, stated that JSL students seemed to have anxiety, I asked her follow up questions such as what anxiety “looked like” or how she knew the students were anxious, and from where she thought the anxiety originated. Her
explanation helped me better understand what anxiety meant in this context. The combination of question types made it possible to more fully dialogue with the participants, though admittedly many of my responses were an echo of the participants’ language to confirm my understanding.

Teacher survey data from 7 schools. Although I initially considered the surveys as a means to recruit participants for the study, the surveys reveal interesting patterns. Since it was not my aim to analyze the survey data in depth, the data I discuss here is more description than analysis. As mentioned above, surveys were sent to seven schools in total, out of which I was able to recruit 10 participants from 5 schools, one whom later decided not to be interviewed. Four participants, Nagashima and the three participants from the Kanto Region, Saito, Sasaki and Morita, were recruited by me personally or through connections and, thus they did not complete the survey. In addition 2 participants from Taguchi Middle School, Maruyama and Tanaka, were recruited by Kobayashi after I had begun data collection. Taguchi Middle School was the first survey site, and based on feedback on the survey format, it was modified. There was approximately a 48% return rate from Taguchi Middle School, so I cannot be sure whether or not Maruyama and Tanaka responded to the initial survey. With regard to the other 6 survey sites, I was instructed by a colleague who intervened on my behalf as to how many surveys I should send to each school. In each case, except one, I received back the same number of completed surveys that had been sent, and therefore the return rate is assumed to be close to 100%.

In total I received 147 completed surveys from the seven middle schools. The survey was organized into three sections: All teachers were requested to answer the questions in sections 1 and 3, while only teachers who had experience working with JSL students were
requested to answer the questions in section 2 (see Appendix C & Appendix D). However, it
should be noted that not all respondents appeared to ‘accurately’ fill out the survey, since
only 45 of the 147 stated they had taught JSL students at one time or another, yet in section 2,
which only respondents with prior experience teaching JSL students were expected to answer,
some of the responses exceeded this number. Nor did all 147 respondents respond to all
questions in sections 1 and 3. This may indicate that the survey was not as user-friendly as I
had hoped.

The survey questions were devised based on Vaipae’s (2001) study and her findings
with regard to teachers’ attitudes toward JSL children. The results from the survey suggest
that attitudes of teachers toward JSL children have not changed much. For example, question
2 in part 2 of the survey asks: “In general, how do/did your JSL students perform
academically? Please circle the number of the most appropriate phrase, and explain below if
you want to add a comment.” Of the 56 people who answered this question, 43, or
approximately 76% of respondents placed JSL students at the bottom 10 – 20% of the class.

Table 3. Teacher Perceptions of JSL Students’ Academic Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answers</th>
<th># of People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. At the top 10% of the class</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. At the top 20% of the class</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. At the median level of the class</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. At the bottom 20% of the class</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. At the bottom 10% of the class</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N/A = 2 people
Interestingly, though, when presented with the statement “JSL students currently receive adequate academic support,” only 9 of the 49 respondents, or about 18%, disagreed. The respondents were asked to circle the number on a Likert scale which most closely corresponded with their view: (1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = perhaps; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree.

**Table 4. Do JSL students currently receive adequate academic support?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th># of People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N/A = 2 people

In section 3, when asked: “Who do you feel is most responsible for helping JSL students with their course work,” the largest number of respondents, approximately 60% (75 out of 126) signified that it was foremost the parents’ responsibility: (1= people most responsible; 6= people least responsible)
Table 5. Who is most responsible for helping JSL students with their course work?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Teachers of each discipline</th>
<th>Homeroom teachers</th>
<th>School administrators</th>
<th>MEXT Monkasho</th>
<th>Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>75 people</td>
<td>13 people</td>
<td>6 people</td>
<td>4 people</td>
<td>33 people</td>
<td>4 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9 people</td>
<td>26 people</td>
<td>22 people</td>
<td>22 people</td>
<td>37 people</td>
<td>12 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>18 people</td>
<td>22 people</td>
<td>29 people</td>
<td>32 people</td>
<td>13 people</td>
<td>17 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>8 people</td>
<td>20 people</td>
<td>30 people</td>
<td>48 people</td>
<td>9 people</td>
<td>6 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>11 people</td>
<td>27 people</td>
<td>31 people</td>
<td>16 people</td>
<td>17 people</td>
<td>19 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>5 people</td>
<td>18 people</td>
<td>8 people</td>
<td>4 people</td>
<td>17 people</td>
<td>68 people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N/A = 21 people

At the same time, as was indicated in the interviews, the majority of teachers did not find MEXT’s guidelines to be helpful. Out of 137 respondents, only 6 or 4.3% signified agreement to the idea that MEXT’s guidelines are clear and helpful. Noticeably, 71, or close to 52% of respondents replied in the negative.
Table 6. Does MEXT offer clear guidelines to help teachers teach culturally and linguistically diverse students?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th># of People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>137</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N/A = 10 people

One last response which deserves attention is the following. All respondents were asked how important they believe it is for JSL students to maintain their first language as they learn Japanese. Out of 139 respondents, approximately 52% or 73 respondents signified that they felt first language maintenance to be important, whereas, 26, or approximately 19% found it unimportant (1 = of utmost importance; 5 = not important at all). Vaipae’s (2001) survey results were quite similar in that 50.2% of her respondents believed first language maintenance to be important, though in her findings, 24.5% of respondents chose not to answer, so there were fewer negative responses.
Table 7. How important is it for students to maintain their first language as they learn Japanese?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th># of People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Class observations in 4 schools. Mason (2002) suggests that observational methods benefit researchers who “have an ontological perspective which sees interactions, actions and behaviours and the way people interpret these, act on them and so on, as central” (p. 85). Although this study focused on what teachers said—how they positioned themselves and their JSL students through discourse—I also wanted to gain a clearer sense of what happened in classrooms, and how JSL students were spoken to by teachers, by other students and how they talked about themselves and to others. I cannot say with any confidence that the actions or behaviors I witnessed are “‘naturally occurring’ phenomena” (Mason, p. 85), since my presence in each class may have had a number of effects that I was not aware of as well as those I noticed. However, the opportunity to observe JSL and other classrooms helped me to contextualize statements made by participants. It also allowed me to ask participants to explain how they interpreted an event or what they wanted to achieve in their classes.
I was able to observe classes in 4 schools. In Nakamachi Middle School in the Kanto Region I only observed one class which was taught by a participant, Sasaki. At Sakuragaoka Middle School in the Chubu/Tokai Region, I only observed pull-out JSL classes. At Taguchi Middle School, where I visited on three separate occasions for 2 days each, I had access to the JSL pull-out classes throughout the day interspersed with observations of other classes, which included English, social studies, physical education, math and others. I was able to observe classes during a parent observation day and met family members of 2 JSL students. In some of the JSL classes I actively participated by working one-on-one with students, while at other times I only observed. My role depended on the number of teachers available to offer support. When the student-teacher ratios were quite even, I usually observed, but when students outnumbered teachers, I was asked to lend support. At Fujita Middle School, although it took some persuasion for them to see me as anything other than an English teacher, I was able, on three occasions, to observe and/or participate in the pull-out JSL classes, though the only other classes I observed and/or participated in were 2 English classes with a first year teacher, including one which was for special needs students.

I was treated very well by the teachers and principals of the schools I visited: at the very least I was brought to the principal’s office and treated to tea and snacks. Additionally, at one school I was treated to lunch and ate with faculty in the teachers’ room, at another I was escorted by the principal to each class and informed who the JSL students were. One principal and participant treated me to dinner, and the principal and his wife even arranged for me to stay quite inexpensively at a guest room and drove me to and from the station. Although it took time to gain access to schools, once I had, I was treated with both kindness and patience by faculty and administrators.
Observation notebook & reflective journal. In order to visualize, recall, rethink and reinterpret classroom observation and interview data I kept an observation notebook. I wrote descriptions of class ‘events’, including how classes were organized and where JSL students were seated in classes. To aid my memory, I also drew diagrams of classes, which still allow me to “step back into” the physical spaces of classrooms, of teachers’ rooms and of principals’ rooms and hallways. I kept the notebook with me and recorded my observations of these events on trains, planes, and cafes. Although I typed up my notes, leaving spaces and using different fonts to distinguish between descriptions of events and my interpretations of them, I continued to use the my handwritten notebooks to better recall the sights and sounds of the classrooms.

Official documents from schools, cities and the central government. In order to better understand how the locally situated practices of the participants in the study intersected (or did not intersect) with local and central government policies and laws, I collected a number of official documents. These documents included: a) documents from school sites such as class schedules, information or minutes from teachers’ meetings, school publications made available to me, and official school web sites; b) local government documents such as tourist brochures, pamphlets created to publicize local “international” events and official municipality web sites; and c) central government documents, including the Fundamental Law of Education (FLE), and education and other government policies accessed via the official web sites of MEXT, MOJ (Ministry of Justice) and other government sites.

Analysis. I used inductive and deductive methods for coding and analyzing the data from the interviews and class observations. First, before collecting data I deduced the themes I expected to emerge, based on my research questions and my use of CRT and critical
whiteness studies for my theoretical framework. Before considering the research questions explicitly, I considered the degree to which global, national and local interests overlap and attempted to outline several themes that connected and distinguished them under the overarching theme “Contested Meanings of Japaneseness,” since defining “Japanese” appeared to be vital to understanding the racialization of non-Japanese others.

I looked to my research questions as a way to contextualize my participants within the category of “local interests.” Based on my research questions, I initially considered the following themes: 1. Cultural Deficit/ Poverty of Culture Model, 2. Pedagogy of Survival Japanese & Survival Literacy, 3. Foreigners & Internationalization [kokusaika], and 4. (Lack of) Control. The first three relate to the types of statements I believed participants would make about their JSL students, whereas the last was what I believed they would say about their own position in the school and society.

With these themes and expectations in mind, I coded the data inductively as well. I read the interview and observation data in three ways; literally, interpretively and reflexively. I arranged the transcriptions according to general geographical area and read them through to get a general idea of commonalities and areas of divergence—noting both. As Mason (2003) suggests, in a literal reading of data, the researcher is interested in looking at the particular words and forms used. According to Mason, this is a first reading, and because it is necessarily subjective, other readings should also be undertaken. Looking for the use of metaphors required a literal reading of the data. In addition, in great part, I was interested in how the participants “saw” their students and how they understood their pedagogical and social beliefs, and I attempted to look at the data from this point of view—interpretively—through the voices of the participants.
However, since I came to the study with specific questions I also followed my own interpretations of what I saw, heard, and experienced and thus also looked at the data reflexively. I pulled from each transcription, both by physically cutting them up and by cutting and pasting them on the computer, statements which appeared to answer the research questions. I did this twice. First I organized them by region and question. Then I organized them by question across regions. Each time, I looked for new themes I hadn’t considered previously, guided by the research questions. My reflective journal, written on buses, trains, planes and in bars and hotels, and the observations I made during school visits allowed me to not only “see” what I was thinking at the time, but also to reinterpret it later, once I was no longer so fully involved in conducting interviews, observing classes, talking with stakeholders and travelling so far and so often.

A Note on Translation: Limitations and Opportunities

Despite the idea of researcher and participant co-construction of interviews, it is the researcher—I—who is disseminating and reconstructing “what happened” for the purpose of writing and defending a dissertation. Spradley (1979) cautions the researcher to avoid imposing his or her own “order” on the data; using the participants’ (emic) language is suggested as one way to locate the participants’ voices. Ascribing attitudes to people based on interviews and observations is neither easy nor straightforward, and it is made even more difficult when several people are involved in the process of transcribing and translating. Since my level of Japanese literacy limited my ability to transcribe the Japanese language interviews, I initially hired five graduate students in a Japanese language teaching program to do this work. The students were introduced to me by their professor who had taught a course in discourse analysis. Initially I met with the professor to better understand the particular
style of transcription taught and employed in the class. Then I met with the students and
worked out a simplified numbering and notation system to be used when transcribing in order
to achieve uniformity. In addition to transcribers, I hired graduate students to work as

translators.

Although initially I hired students in an English language teaching program, the work
took much longer than expected, and I eventually included students who had completed
transcriptions. Ultimately, I worked with a total of six translators, of whom two completed
transcriptions as well. This meant working with a total of 9 individuals with different
attitudes and orientations toward education and educational research. In re-reading, analyzing
and coding the data, thus, I was also readjusting for different interpretations of the data. Most
“errors” I noted had more to do with English grammar than a different interpretation of what
had been said, by either me or the participants, and were easily recognizable and accounted
for. However, on a few occasions, I disagreed with the translator’s version, and asked for a
third reading by my partner, a Japanese-English bilingual. In this way, though imperfect,
(and due to my own linguistic limitations) I was actually able to “verify” my understanding
of the data.

Trustworthiness. One advantage of conducting two interviews with each participant
was the opportunity to check for ‘internal consistency’ in a participant’s interviews. In
addition, for me, trustworthiness also implies that the participants feel their views have been
represented accurately and that I have taken adequate steps for them to remain anonymous.
Once their interviews were transcribed, I conducted member checks with the participants so
they could verify their statements. In the course of doing so, only one participant sent me
additional feedback or explanations, which added to but did not contradict earlier statements.
In keeping with the promise to keep participant information confidential, interviews were recorded, but participant names were neither used during the interviews nor recorded on the audio files. All participant names used in the study are pseudonyms, and the names of the schools and municipalities have been changed. During the interviews I referred to all participants by the term sensei, or teacher, and in this text, all pseudonyms are family names, rather than first names, in keeping with the more formal style of address I used with the participants. Finally, triangulation was accomplished through the use of multiple forms of data; the interview data, the survey data, class observations, the observation notebook and reflective journal, and official documents from MEXT and other government websites, the four municipalities and four schools.
Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

This chapter considers how educational law and educational policy influence and are reflected in the teaching curriculum, practices and beliefs within the schools and among the participants of the study who work with JSL students. I will refer specifically to law and policy which most clearly affects JSL students in Japanese public schools, specifically the Fundamental Law of Education (FLE) and the JSL curriculum set by MEXT. However, before discussing the FLE, it should also be clear that the Constitution of Japan, which came into effect in 1947, also addresses the issue of education in Article 26:

All people shall have the right to receive an equal education correspondent to their ability, as provided by law. All people shall be obligated to have all boys and girls under their protection receive ordinary education as provided for by law. Such compulsory education shall be free. (The Constitution of Japan, 1947)

In this English translation, available on the official website of the Japanese Prime Minister and Cabinet, ‘all people’ should be understood as ‘all Japanese nationals.’

The FLE was made law in 1947 while Japan was under occupation by the U.S. According to Mushakoji (2011), the FLE “stated the basic principles indispensible for the democratization of Japanese education” (p. 299). In 2006, former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (2006-2007) and his cabinet revised the law, an act which has been criticized by Japanese and foreign scholars and educators alike. Although the Abe cabinet was responsible for drafting a bill and making it law, it should be understood that practically since the 1947 law came into place, it has been criticized by Japanese conservatives as symbolic of U.S. control over the Japanese government’s right to create educational law to instill national pride in the
general population. Successive governments, notably from the 1980s with the Nakasone cabinet, have been determined to change the FLE (Okada, 2002). The 2006 FLE, modeled on former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s 1988 education reforms (Tawara, 2006), continues to be criticized for its overt calls for ‘education for patriotism’ and its emphasis on moral education and individual responsibility, which substitutes for individual rights to be upheld by the 1947 law, as well as its promotion of increased competition and a neo-liberal and neo-conservative political agenda, possibilities for increased social stratification and fear of further erosions to the Japanese Constitution (see Tawara, 2006; Ouchi, 2007; Takayama, 2008b; Mizushima & Takeda, 2008; Yotoriyama, 2011). Mushakoji states:

At one level the reassertion of the significance of the social reproduction of the Japanese nation, and the subsequent obliteration of individual human rights previously enshrined, can be seen as an ideological reaction of the Japanese government and of the Japanese elite in the face of globalization, which some perceive threaten the homogeneity of the Japanese nation. (2011, p. 299)

Under the globalization of neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism, which for many national governments has strengthened the call for increased patriotism in education, it is not surprising that the 2006 revisions did nothing to improve educational opportunities for children who are not Japanese nationals.

Unsurprisingly, considering the cabinet’s objectives, the revisions did not include educational provisions for children of foreign residents. In fact, whereas the 1947 law referred to the Japanese Constitution, and somewhat vaguely stated that *warera* (we) are entitled to receive compulsory education, the 2006 version actually specifies that it is *wareware nihon kokumin* (we, Japanese nationals) who are entitled to education under
Japanese law (*Kyouiku Kihonhou.* [Fundamental Law of Education], 2006). English versions of the revisions that I have viewed do not take this up, even though the translations differ (see MEXT, n.d.a). However, Lebowitz & McNeill (2007) contend that in the 1947 version, *warera* refers to the Japanese society and ties this to people who are bound together by the Constitution, whereas in the 2006 version, *wareware Nihon kokumin* signifies the Japanese nation and its subjects. According to Kariya (2012) terms such as *kokumin* and *shimin* both translate as “citizen” in English, but they have very different connotations in Japanese: “‘Shimin’ (市民) usually signifies members of a civil society who carry civil as well as human rights, whereas ‘kokumin’ (国民) suggests members of a nation-state who carry the rights and responsibilities of citizenship” (p. 120). From Kariya’s perspective, *shimin* is the preferred term of liberals who wish to stress a more cosmopolitan or universal understanding of citizenship, while the term *kokumin* is preferred by conservatives who wish to stress national ‘values’ or ‘traditions.’ Considering Kariya’s explanation, and considering the amount of controversy caused, it is apparent that changing the wording of the 1947 FLE to include such terms as *Nihon kokumin* marks a clear distinction between those who have and do not have rights to compulsory education. Thus, despite ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1994, Japanese educational law has yet to comply with the mandate to provide all children with compulsory education. Moreover, it would appear that the revised FLE rather than opening up to the realities of migration and immigration in Japan, categorically denies responsibility to and even the existence of children with foreign passports.
That teachers are very much aware of this law and that it affects their working conditions and their commitment to equity in education is clear. In 2005, even before revisions to the FLE were passed, the *Gaikokujin Shuujuu Toshi Kaigi* [Council of Municipalities with Concentrations of Foreign Residents] petitioned the government to legally address the issue of compulsory education for children of foreigners residing in Japan for more than 90 days. MEXT’s response however clarified the government’s commitment to educating Japanese nationals and used the language of choice, stating the government’s reluctance to force foreigners to attend institutions created for Japanese nationals (Nishioka, 2012, p. 4). Again in 2011 the *Gaikokujin Shuujuu Toshi Kaigi* proposed to the MEXT official attending its annual meeting to change the language of the FLE in order to require compulsory education for all school age children residing in Japan, and again the Council’s petition was rejected by MEXT. (Nishioka, 2012, p. 6)

Several of the participants in the study referred to this law on more than one occasion, and one participant, Morinaka exclaimed bitterly that the law allows local governments, principals and teachers to avoid responsibility for the education of non-Japanese youth. At one point when I asked her what type of support from MEXT she and other teachers who worked with JSL students received, she replied “support? Is there support?”

[At my school] there was no support. No one cared. Other teachers were not supportive of the JSL teachers or students, and the Board of Education sent the students to [our school] but didn’t care if there were any teachers who could teach them or not. Some teachers just thought students were lazy and didn’t try to understand the students’ difficulties. When students would take time off, the teachers
wouldn’t try to find out why, and would say “oh they’re Brazilian. They’re just lazy.”

(Interview Morinaka February 2, 2009)

In the second interview with Morinaka, she stated that she had not known anything about the
difficulties faced by foreign children until she had worked at this school, and she supposed
that many or most Japanese teachers are unaware of what is happening in schools which have
large numbers of foreign students. She voiced a hope that more teachers would understand
what is “really” happening in the schools. Like Morinaka, several of teachers voiced their
frustration with the schools, teachers, parents, local communities and the disconnect between
official policies and “real life” at the schools. Although the FLE does not forbid the
education of non-Japanese nationals, it does not require the national government, local
governments or schools to exert themselves on behalf of the children of resident foreigners.
Several participants questioned the official policy and stated quite fervently that they wanted
the local and national governments to do more.

KS: One thing I think about is, this may be the policy by the MEXT after all, that
when a foreigner comes, when a student has come, neither the local municipality nor
the MEXT provides a teacher for the student... So the policy says if they come to
Japan the Japanese school should accept them, but with no need to do anything
special for them, that is MEXT’s policy. So we would like to do various things, but
since we don’t have the personnel or the money, we have no choice but to deal with
the students after school, which is very painful. Seeing them in front of us, we want to
somehow do something, but there are too many limitations against that. I would like
more people and money allocated on them. Their response to those students is too
cold. Schooling isn’t compulsory; they don’t have to come to school, do they?
KK: Yeah that’s right. I didn’t realize that at first. It surprised me.

KS: They don’t have to come to school, so it leads to the system where we essentially don’t have to do anything special for them, which is the real problem.

(Interview Kamata, 8/25/09)

According to Kamata, teachers at public schools face increasing difficulties because, although aware that they do not provide an adequate education for JSL students, they are neither trained not prepared to work with students who do not understand (or benefit from) the Japanese curriculum. He implied that at least some teachers, in fact, do not do anything “special” for the JSL students in their classes. From Kamata’s perspective, allocating funds and teachers is the responsibility of MEXT and the local governments, but the system isn’t working.

Although the FLE does not require children of foreign residents to attend school, in fact local communities with large numbers of foreign residents have, to differing degrees, attempted to gather data on the number of such children not attending school, such as the survey data gathered in 2006 in twelve municipalities (MEXT, n.d.b) to notify parents and guardians about the steps necessary to register their school-age children. Ishikida (2005) believes each local government has since 1991 sent “a welcome-to-school notice” to every household in which a six year-old resides” (p. 289) and that undocumented parents and guardians of school age children also receive this information. One of the cities where I conducted research maintains a website in English, Spanish, Portuguese and Chinese which contains information on how to register children in local public schools. However, since there is little oversight on the part of MEXT, the degree to which foreign residents are aware
of educational opportunities may vary according to the rules and regulations of each municipality.

Ishikida (2005) asserts that since 1991 the Japanese government has “created measures” to assist the children of foreign residents (p. 289). Additionally, since 2001 MEXT began developing JSL curriculum guidelines to be used at elementary schools, and a Japanese language proficiency test and set of JSL band scales have been developed by a university professor working with MEXT since 2002 (Kawakami, 2001). Since 2007, two years before data collection for this study began, MEXT developed a junior high school JSL curriculum, which is available on-line (MEXT, n.d.c). However, that the JSL guidelines are accessible on MEXT’s official website for CLARINET (Children living abroad returnees interNET) may indicate that the intended benefactors of the JSL curriculum continue to be children of Japanese nationals, those currently living overseas (kaigai-shijo) and those who have returned to Japan (kikokushijo), rather than children of foreign residents in Japanese public schools. Here it is worth citing Waseda University Professor Ikuo Kawakami (2009) one of the leading scholars involved in JSL education in Japan, who has been responsible for creating the assessment band scales:

It is true that the Ministry of Education has created some new policies. They have provided financial support for JSL curriculum developments for JSL students who need special assistance in learning Japanese language and held seminars to educate people working with these students. However … the Japanese government still has not established a national policy on the language education of foreign residents and people with different ethnic backgrounds. This is because the Japanese government believes the present policies to be sufficient. For instance, the government insists that
there is no obstacle to foreign resident children entering Japanese schools. The Japanese government also insists that foreign governments should take responsibility in supporting foreign resident children in Japan in the same way that the Japanese government provides educational assistance to Japanese children living abroad in the form of free distribution of school textbooks. In addition, they insist that Japanese companies should take care of foreign resident children in Japan because they employ many foreign worker parents. In summary, the standpoint of the Japanese government is to control foreigners as alien residents coming to Japan from overseas not as local residents that contribute to Japanese society. In this way, the government’s view has not changed since the end of the Second World War. (pp. 9 – 10).

For Kawakami, the lack of a national policy is at the core of the current situation. Moreover, the central government has increasingly devolved its financial responsibility for public education to prefectural and local governments, while maintaining, through MEXT, control of goal-setting and assessment (Takayama, 2008b). Additionally, as can be understood from Kawakami’s comments above, in an environment of increasing neoliberalism the government increasingly expects private organizations, such as corporations and non-governmental organizations to take on the responsibilities of educating children.

Although its role as goal-setter requires MEXT to outline curriculum goals for JSL education, there appear to be no guidelines for implementing the curriculum nor any clear policies regarding which schools should implement the curriculum. Nor are there any penalties for not introducing the JSL curriculum in schools attended by children of foreign nationals. Thus, there is little accountability with regard to whether or not local boards of education and schools actually integrate MEXT’s JSL curriculum into their school curricula.
Aspinall (2011) explains it is not uncommon for MEXT to create a new policy with little or no follow-up: “The seriousness with which MEXT followed up a new policy was one test of its real intentions. Sometimes new initiatives are declared and shortly thereafter forgotten about or reversed” (p. 137). Although Aspinall refers to MEXT’s policy in English language education, his statement appears to ring true in other areas of policy as well, particularly in the case of JSL education. If it is true that MEXT provides follow-up only on reforms and policy changes considered important, and since there has been little follow-up by MEXT concerning JSL education, one may assume the JSL curriculum is not a priority.

With this in mind, I bring in data from four middle schools which, I believe, speak to the devolvement and lack of concern by the central government vis-à-vis JSL education.

**Contradiction, Change, Chaos: A Snapshot of 4 JSL Programs**

In appearance the schools I visited seemed quite similar overall. Japanese public middle schools tend to be sturdy rectangular shaped two or three story buildings made of concrete. Near the entrance of the main building there is usually a small office where non-teaching staff work, and visitors are usually requested to ‘sign in,’ remove their shoes, put on guest slippers and enter the building which contains the large teachers’ room, the principal’s room, perhaps a designated meeting room or two and the classrooms/homerooms of the school’s students. Next to the main building there is usually a large gymnasium which is used not only for indoor sports, but for the entrance ceremony every April, graduation and other large gatherings such as the yearly student festival. Schools are often surrounded by a large dirt grounds for sports, often with white lines drawn for track & field and other sports. The four schools I visited over a period of nine months in 2009 were remarkably similar in
physical appearance to the schools I visited in the 1980s. However, in the 2000s this rather uniform outward appearance masks differences in curriculum and support for JSL students.

In addition to the similarities in physical appearance of the four schools, the municipalities where the schools are located are similar in some respects, although they vary in size and population. Median income of the residents in each of the four municipalities is somewhat below the median household income of the country as a whole, which according to figures from 2005 was approximately US$ 43,700 (Japanese average annual income: Data from the National Tax Agency, 2005 –Estimated annual income and ranking, 2007). Miko City, the most urban of the four municipalities had the highest household median income, at US$ 42,000, and at US$37,700, Miyamura City, the smallest of the four municipalities, had the lowest household median income. (It should be noted that by 2009 when the data was collected, the median income had dropped to about US $40,590, and the median household income in each municipality had likely fallen as well.) The municipalities had foreign populations that ranged between 1.5% and 3.9% of the resident population. Thus, the percentage of foreign residents in Miko City was similar to the nation as a whole (depending on which figures are used), but the percentage of foreign residents in Miyamura was almost double the national average. Despite these differences, the fact that foreign residents tend to live in certain districts in each municipality, or in certain housing projects, such as in Miko City and Miyamura City, combined with the tendency on the part of municipalities to send JSL students to one or a few ‘target’ schools, meant that the percentages of JSL students vis-à-vis the mainstream student population in each of the four schools was somewhere between 5 and 10 percent.
Table 8. Information on Municipalities of 4 Middle Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Middle School</th>
<th>City &amp; Region</th>
<th>City Population &amp; City size</th>
<th>Median Income</th>
<th>Foreign Population/Percentage of general population</th>
<th>Breakdown of Foreign Resident Population (Nationality)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nakamachi</td>
<td>Miko City/Kanto Region</td>
<td>961,749 272 km²</td>
<td>4,240,000 yen (US$ 42,000)</td>
<td>14,394/1.5%</td>
<td>Chinese 42% Korean 20% Filipino/a 9% Thai 2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taguchi</td>
<td>Niida City/Chubu Region</td>
<td>159,597 552 km²</td>
<td>3,780,000 yen (US$ 37,800)</td>
<td>2,906/1.8%</td>
<td>Chinese 28% Brazilian 23% Korean 11% Peruvian 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sakuragaoka</td>
<td>Miyamura City/Chubu-Tokai Region</td>
<td>47,340 10 km²</td>
<td>3,770,000 yen (US$ 37,700)</td>
<td>1,859/3.9%</td>
<td>Brazilian 65% Filipino/a 8.6% Korean 7% Chinese 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fujita</td>
<td>Kamezawa City/Chubu-Tokai Region</td>
<td>372,357 387 km²</td>
<td>4,070,000 yen (US$ 40,700)</td>
<td>8,308/2.2%</td>
<td>Brazilian 38% Chinese 18% Korean 17% Vietnamese 2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Local budgets for education are decided by local governments with guidelines provided by the federal government. The amount and type of support allocated to JSL students in each city or area appears to depend on a number of factors, including history of immigration in the area, length of time newcomer migrant families have been living in the area, the number of newcomer families in the area, where the families are located within the district (e.g. whether in areas with other migrant families or in areas where there are few or no other newcomer families), countries of origin and mother tongues spoken, and the number of each. Importantly, as mentioned by several participants, having a key person in the board of education or someone working with the board of education who is knowledgeable about
language minority students or takes a strong human rights perspective with regard to education greatly affects the level and type of support received. As mentioned previously, in each of the 4 schools where I observed classes, JSL students made up between 5 – 10% of the student population, with as many as 20% in particular classes or class levels. Comparing the 4 schools, I made the following observations.

**Nakamachi Middle School.** Nakamachi Middle School is a school, of about 200 students located in Miko City, a municipality of approximately 970,000 in one of the most urban areas of the country. It is the first of two middle schools built to educate the children living in the neighboring *danchi* [public housing units] but with the decreasing birthrate the number of children in the area has dropped, and the school population is now quite low. When searching the official municipality website to gather information about the city and insight into how foreign residents are framed in the official discourse, I found information on taxes, emptying trash and recycling, immigration and other areas of concern in Japanese, English, Spanish, Portuguese, Korean (Hangul) and Chinese, with links to detailed information (about 37 pages) on filling out medical forms and talking with medical staff in eight languages (including Tagalog, Persian, Thai). Although I did eventually find information in English regarding school registration under a section titled “guidebook for living” in the area, I found the following ambivalent statement: “Children of foreign nationality are not required by law to attend school, but enrollment and admission to municipal elementary and junior high schools is possible.” On the Chinese language site, the connection to information on education was a little more straightforward, with approximately the same information that appeared in English. On the Chinese and English sites, I also found
external links to a local international association where information on Japanese language classes was accessible, although written completely in Japanese.

Although located in a large city, Nakamachi Middle School is quite difficult to get from the city center: In order to get there, I took a local train and then walked for about 15 minutes through winding neighborhoods until crossing a major highway. Once on the other side of the highway, I found several large public housing facilities, and with some directions, I finally located the middle school nearby. The housing project served by the school is known throughout the city for the large number of Chinese ‘returnees’ who reside there. There were 13 JSL students at Nakamachi, about 6% of the school population, 11 of whom have Chinese as their mother tongue, one who is a Korean newcomer and one Japanese national whose mother is a Filipina.

At Nakamachi there was no designated JSL classroom. Instead JSL students received Japanese language support in whatever rooms were available at the time. At Nakamachi where JSL students are mainstreamed, JSL support refers to the following:

1) in class support, by the mainstream teacher;
   a. grouping JSL students with stronger students who can help them with difficult material, and giving opportunities for each student in the group to contribute to the discussion
   b. providing individual explanations of terms or content to JSL students
   c. writing *furigana* (phonetic readings) of kanji

2) additional mother tongue support, by teachers hired by the local board of education who speak the same mother tongue as the students and come to the school twice per week;
a. explanations in the mother tongue about class content  
b. counseling  

3) additional Japanese language support, by Japanese language volunteers who come to the school twice per week.

I visited Nakamachi Middle School only twice, and I met few students and fewer faculty: I was able to interview only one teacher, Sasaki Sensei, and to observe one class, which was an 8th grade (middle school-second year) mainstream Japanese class (kokugo). Out of 36 students (34 present) 5 were newcomers from China and Korea. As I learned from Sasaki, the JSL students at Nakamachi Middle School had lived in Japan for different lengths of time, from almost a year to five years.

Anyone accustomed to the idea that Japanese schools are regimented and controlled or that students are quiet and reserved might have been somewhat surprised by the mildly chaotic class I observed. Several male students ran into class just as the bell announcing the start of class rang, and one boy kept looking at me as I stood in the back of the class asking out loud “dare” [who?]. At the start of class, all students took out their notebooks as the teacher walked down each of the 3 aisles of two desks, checking homework. One student tried to hide his notebook from the teacher, and another complained that he couldn’t do the homework; the boy who had been looking at me stated loudly that he needed to go to the toilet, leaving the room and coming back. I wondered whether the boy had ADHD, then I wondered why I tried to diagnose him. The teacher and other students did not react.

Sasaki gave the class an assignment to begin in class and complete for homework: They wrote their opinions about a story the class recently read in the form of a letter, and they decided to whom they would write, though the addressee needed to be someone older
than themselves. Sasaki wrote on the board the content students were to include in their letters and asked them to get into (their regular) groups of 5 or 6 and to discuss, take notes and organize the content of their letters. Each group worked at a different pace; some students read the text aloud, some looked confused, one girl appeared to be sleeping. Sasaki moved among the groups, first spending about 5 minutes with a girl in the back of the class to whom she explained the meaning of some sentences or parts of the story. She also talked to the girl who was sleeping, and the girl began taking notes. While walking around the room Sasaki asked individual students to tell her what they thought about the reading or what they planned to write. Students in most groups eventually discussed what they thought the story meant, though not many of them appeared to write much. Near the end of the 50 minute class period, Sasaki reminded students to begin their letter with the expected greeting about weather.

Sasaki later told me that she felt it was extremely difficult to organize classes in ways that benefit all students and attend to their needs; thus, the purpose of the group discussion work was to allow students to participate at whatever level they could. I had been able to surmise who two of the JSL students were, including the girl to whom the instructor had explained the meaning of the story. Sasaki questioned whether the girl, who had moved to Japan from China about a year before, received any benefit from attending the class. Sasaki talked in detail about 4 other JSL students. She mentioned a Korean boy who had been in Japan for a year, a Chinese boy, in Japan for five years, who had great difficulties reading and decoding, though the teachers wrote in furigana for him, and another Chinese boy in Japan for five years who read and wrote rather well. She told me the boy who had expressed curiosity about me had lived in Japan for three or four years. Although, as Sasaki told me, he
speaks Japanese well, he often could not concentrate on his work, telling her he was tired or did not want to do the work.

Sasaki is an experienced Japanese language teacher who has spent her own time and money to become certified to teach JSL. She agreed to be interviewed and observed because she wanted to discuss these issues and consider ways to improve the current situation. She told me she asked students to write letters because they need time to develop and discuss their understanding of the stories, but she also wanted them to talk with their parents or guardians about what they read. She hoped, she said, that letter writing might encourage communication:

The students’ reaction has been changing year by year. Students used to be moved [by the stories] and to cry before, but now they don’t feel it. I feel the big difference between generations and generations. Nowadays, students don’t feel anything. If I describe the story and explain it little by little, they can get the idea, but it is not their natural impression of the story. They just understand my explanation, but it doesn’t mean that they receive a message directly from the story.

(Interview Sasaki 9/28/09)

**Taguchi Middle School.** Taguchi Middle School is located in a city of approximately 160,000 residents. Although not a large city according to Japanese standards, and although the foreign population is not large, quite a large number of foreign residents are concentrated in certain areas of the city. In addition to Japanese language, the official website of the city is available in English, Chinese, Spanish and Portuguese. In each of these languages there is detailed information available regarding schooling (a 30 plus page booklet), taxes, legal services, hospitals, and a number of other important items, including the
ubiquitous, detailed information about proper garbage disposal. Unlike in the official website for Miko city, Niida city’s official website contained information on the structure of Japanese education, detailed explanations of how, when and where to register children, information of school holidays and many other items. This suggested to me that Niida city has made an effort to make information on schooling available to foreign residents.

Taguchi Middle School is close to the downtown area of the city, being but two stops on the local train, but it seemed anything but urban. While waiting for the train I noticed the high school students and marveled at their hair dyed in various shades and the changes they had made to their school uniforms—Hello Kitty slippers with thick socks, jackets with gym shorts, untied boots, pants worn low and rolled up, skirts that covered little, and skirts with gym shorts underneath. As someone who has lived in Japan for many years and mentally connects “neat” uniforms to “good” schools, I assumed these students attended schools that are not ranked very highly. After exiting the station and a 10 minute walk, mostly uphill, the school and grounds are visible, seemingly in the middle of several fields.

There were about 560 students at Taguchi Middle School, with a total of 16 classes between grades 7 – 9. Of the four schools I where I observed classes, Taguchi Middle School is where I spent the most time. At Taguchi in addition to classes conducted in the JSL classroom, I observed students in all three grades in a variety of classes—English, P.E., social studies, electronics, home-economics, art, science and math—taught by participants in the study as well as by those who chose not to participate. I visited the school on six occasions, and I was able to interview 4 teachers. At Taguchi Middle School, JSL students made up about 10% of the student population, with the majority of JSL students from Brazil, but also with students from Korea, Thailand, Paraguay, Chile and the Philippines. There was
no Japanese as a second language course per se in the JSL classroom; rather, JSL students according to their level of Japanese language ability left their regular class and brought their study materials to the JSL classroom for support in that subject of study or, for those with minimal L2 ability, Japanese language support, which often consisted of kanji practice, vocabulary and grammar study, and conversation drills.

The JSL classroom was organized by a coordinator, Kobayashi, who was in the classroom at all times except for lunch, meetings or other school events. The classroom was decorated with flags and maps of different countries as well as containing large lists of verb conjugations and adjectives in Japanese, Portuguese and Spanish, and with Japanese greetings displayed prominently. At any given class period there were between 2 – 8 students in the JSL classroom, and from 1 to 3 teachers in the class. Teachers who worked in the JSL classroom included Kobayashi, a part-time JSL teacher, a few content area teachers who, when time permitted, offered extra support in their area of specialization (according to the needs of the JSL students)—such as English or science, and a bilingual Brazilian interpreter hired by the city board of education, who offered individual (heritage) Portuguese language support and bilingual course and counseling support twice per week, for several hours each time. She was also responsible for translating important communications from the school for the Brazilian students’ parents. JSL students from Korea, Paraguay and Chile did not appear to have mother tongue support at school. At the time of the study JSL support at Taguchi Middle School included the following:

1) JSL pull-out support/ individual student plans—Japanese as a second language support and/or course content support

2) Portuguese as a heritage language support/individual
3) Translation and interpreting services for Portuguese speakers

4) JSL classroom as a “free” space/psychological support

5) Both official and unofficial—via individual teachers—financial support for school lunches, notebooks and sneakers (etc).

A typical day in the JSL classroom was a whirlwind of activity, people and concerns. Kobayashi arrived early, looking through students’ folders where they kept their assignments and records about the kanji tests or other markers of individual progress. She, or the Brazilian teacher/interpreter hired by the board of education might be asked by a homeroom teacher to phone a parent about a form a student forgot to bring to class or to call the local government office and ask about the status of financial assistance for a student’s family. The phone often rang in the middle of “class time.” There were usually four periods in the morning followed by a lunch break and one or two afternoon classes, then assigned classroom cleaning.

Each JSL student, like other mainstream students, was assigned to a ‘regular’ class and attended homeroom with these students. When the bell rang for the first class, sometimes two, sometimes eight JSL students were in the JSL classroom according to their ‘regular’ class schedules. All JSL students attended homeroom/moral education, P.E., music and home economics/electronics with their ‘regular’ class and those who had lived in Japan since elementary school went to the JSL classroom during social studies or science class to get extra support in these subjects. On the other hand some students spent much of their day in the JSL classroom, particularly students who had been in Japan under two to three years.

What each student did in the JSL classroom seemed to depend on a number of factors, such as how many teachers there were to work with them. I observed times when there were three or four teachers available and other times when only Kobayashi was on hand. Another factor
might have been the individual aims or the goals their teachers had for them. This could include second or third year students (8th and 9th graders) who wanted specific support to prepare for high school entrance exams, students who wanted support in a specific subject to pass an exam or to better comprehend the textbook, Brazilian students who wanted L1 literacy support and so on. In the case of students who had been in Japan for three years or less, survival Japanese language and ‘behavior’ skills were seen as very important by Kobayashi, and I observed her several times ask students, usually in a humorous way, to repeat their questions or requests until they stated them in an appropriately respectful manner. She also told students to change their clothes when they were not wearing the appropriate uniform. Although the language she used could be quite stern, the students often laughed and joked with her, and seemed to want to arouse her (usually mock) anger. During each period, there were a number of students in the JSL classroom working on different things as the following excerpt from my reflective journal might make clear:

At 8:40 a.m. three of us, the teacher/coordinator, a new part-time teacher and I, waited for students to enter the classroom after their homeroom period. Two students entered, one saying *ohayou* [morning], and Kobayashi reminded him to say it more politely, *ohayou gozaimasu*, which he did. Students entered one at a time until there were 6 students; one from Korea, two from Peru and three from Brazil. The Korean student forgot her shorts for P.E., and was apparently wearing the wrong color t-shirt under her white shirt. The part-time teacher who helped her with English during the first period, tried to get her to tuck in her shirt and get ready for class. One student took a comic book from the shelf, and Kobayashi told him he could read it, but he must ask first. He ‘practiced’ asking and then began to read. A student went to get his
folder, another went outside in the hall to wash his hands. When the bell rang the
students and teachers said the morning greeting. Kobayashi worked on a Japanese
lesson with two students with limited Japanese. Another boy worked on something in
Japanese on his own, perhaps an essay. Later, during the lesson, Kobayashi gave the
two students she was working with handouts and asked them to practice what they
had been learning. Then she worked individually with the Brazilian boy who had
been working on his own, asking him questions about what he wrote and giving
suggestions. On this day, she has asked me to work individually with a Peruvian boy
on social studies. We were supposed to work out the answers to a number of
questions about world geography using the map. It soon became clear to me that my
kanji level was probably lower than his, at least in geography, although I learned (and
quickly forgot) the kanji for ‘equator.’ We read the questions aloud together, trying to
figure out what they mean, and at that moment, I felt I understand how difficult it
must be to study in a language I am not fully ‘literate’ in. In the end, I believe the boy
helped me more than I helped him. (Notes from Reflective Journal, May 29, 2009)

Sakuragaoka Middle School. At a little over 47,000 residents, Miyamura City
where Sakuragaoka Middle School is located is the smallest city among those where I
observed classes, yet neither the city nor the school seemed so different from the others I
visited. This may have to do with the fact that Miyamura City is located fifteen minutes away
by express train from a very large metropolitan area in the Chubu-Tokai Region. At 3.9%,
Miyamura City’s foreign population was the largest among the cities where I conducted class
observations, and the median household income was the lowest. Although Miyamura’s
official website contains information in English and Portuguese, the English site was
apparently created with tourists in mind as it contains no information needed for coping with a new environment. The Portuguese site, although not very extensive, was directed at foreign residents of the city with information on taxes, plastics, pre-natal care facilities, and the availability of Portuguese speaking staff at the city office. Additionally, the Miyamura City Board of Education (BOE) has a website dedicated to JSL, including downloadable texts, curriculum guidelines, information about Portuguese heritage classes and other information aimed at foreign residents with school age children.

Sakuragaoka is located near a river lined with cherry blossom trees. One day I walked around the environs of the school, and found myself in a large public housing facility where, I was told, many of Sakuragaoka’s JSL students lived. Walking through the grounds and in the grocery store adjacent to the grounds, I felt as if I was not in Japan. I could hear Portuguese spoken and see people out in the hot weather, sitting on benches, drinking beers, relaxing. I didn’t feel out of place, but I noticed the presence of police officers, two to three of them, every 15 minutes or so, and though it was afternoon and garbage is picked up in the morning, I also noticed some garbage bags which may have put out on the wrong day, too late or too early, or had not been picked up by city workers for some reason—perhaps they were not in the correctly marked bags.

There were about 420 students at Sakuragaoka Middle School, with 13 classes in total. I was able to visit Sakuragaoka on four occasions during which time I interviewed two teachers, Kuriyama and Kudo. I also spoke at some length with the principal and a member of BOE and briefly observed a number of mainstream content classes. I was able to observe 4 JSL classes in their entirety. The JSL student population at Sakuragaoka was quite similar to that of Taguchi Middle School although there seemed to be more diversity at Taguchi with
regard to country of origin. 65% of Miyamura City’s foreign resident population is Brazilian, which can also be surmised from the information on the city websites, and Sakuragaoka served a JSL student population of predominantly Brazilian students. However, there were also students from Peru, Bolivia, Spain, Pakistan, and the Philippines at Sakuragaoka. At the time of the study there were 30 students designated as requiring JSL instruction, approximately 7% of the student population of 420 students. At Sakuragaoka, like at Taguchi there was a designated JSL classroom, which although not as brightly arrayed as the classroom at Taguchi, nevertheless featured national flags and other markings of “internationalization.”

In Sakuragaoka, placement of newcomer students in JSL classes depended on two examinations, a Japanese proficiency exam prepared by local JSL teachers and a math exam. Additionally foreign nationals who had done all their elementary level schooling in Japan were asked whether or not they wanted JSL support. I was told by Kudo that most JSL students at Sakuragaoka had moved to Japan when they were 10 years old, or during fourth grade in elementary school, meaning that they likely attended elementary school for about two to two and a half years before attending middle school. However, some had attended Brazilian elementary schools in Japan and were unable to converse with classmates. There were also a few students who had been born in Japan, had attended Japanese elementary schools, and who spoke better Japanese than Portuguese. Some of these students requested heritage Portuguese classes rather than JSL classes. At the time of the data collection two such students and other Brazilian students who wished to study Portuguese had a Portuguese language class each week for one hour. Unlike teachers at Taguchi Middle School, JSL teachers at Sakuragaoka Middle School were designated and trained by a coordinator/head
teacher at the local board of education; there was no JSL coordinator among the full time faculty at Sakuragaoka.

At the time I collected data at Sakuragaoka Middle School, 7 teachers in Miyamura City were designated as JSL teachers, and they taught at 2 or 3 schools each, at both elementary and junior high schools. Many schools with small numbers of JSL students reportedly do not provide JSL instruction (Riordan, 2005), nor are they required to do so. Morooka (2010) finds that in public schools “measures to accommodate Japanese language instruction are not taken unless there are 5 or more students who need such instruction” (p. 18), and thus speculates that at least 15% of the children designated by MEXT in 2008 to require JSL support did not actually receive it. However, Kuriyama told me that any school in Miyamura City with even 1 JSL student was provided with a JSL teacher for several hours per week. Sakuragaoka Middle School with a relatively large population of JSL students provided for JSL instruction and support 3 days per week. In addition to the JSL teacher, Kuriyama, I also interviewed a Japanese language (kokugo) teacher, Kudo who was originally hired to teach JSL, but who was in 2009 teaching full-time at Sakuragaoka. Both Kuriyama and Kudo told me that the BOE coordinator, who had been working in the city for 9 years, had extensive training in JSL pedagogy and a passion for improving the education of JSL students. I was also told that he was able to allocate money to buy materials. Unfortunately though I was able to observe his advanced level JSL class, he declined to participate in the study.

At the time of the study JSL support at Sakuragaoka Middle School included the following:
1) JSL pull-out support/ Japanese as a second language support classes and individual course content support

2) Translation and interpreting services for Portuguese speakers

3) Weekly Portuguese heritage language classes

4) Test preparation support for the Japanese as a foreign language exam

5) JSL classroom as a “free” space/psychological support/when open

According to Kuriyama:

So we tell them to go there after school whenever they have a problem. I think their emotions are kept stable. Still, their emotional ups and downs are steep, so when they are doing well they are doing excellent. They attend club activities and work hard in class events, but the kind of issues they have is big at the same time. Sometimes they say they want to return to Brazil, and other times their mother and father say things to them; they want to go to high school in Japan but their parents say that they are going back to Brazil. Their concerns are, they have more concerns than do other normal, I should say general, junior high school students. So they come here frequently, yes. They come to the JSL classroom, have some talk, feel better and go home. (Interview Kuriyama 8.26.09)

Although the JSL classroom at Sakuragaoka was not in use all day like the one at Taguchi, it still appeared to be a “free” space for many JSL students. While at Sakuragaoka, I noticed many JSL students coming in and out of the classroom and spending time in the hallway nearby during breaks between classes. There was a lot of laughter among students, and Kuriyama frequently engaged students in conversation using a mixture of Portuguese and Japanese.
Unique among the schools I visited, Sakuragaoka offered Japanese as second language group classes in addition to individualized course support in the JSL classroom. Students who wanted to study for the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT or Nihongo Nouryoku Shiken) were instructed on kanji and grammar for the exam, and students whose Japanese language skills were at a basic level participated in JSL classes which covered greetings, daily conversation and (reading) survival kanji, as well as grammar and pattern practice and basic school based literacy. The JSL classroom was divided into two class spaces so 2 lessons took place simultaneously. During my observations, I was able to go back and forth between the two classes.

I was able to observe four classes of one of my participants and three classes of the BOE JSL teacher trainer/coordinator who had to leave during period 4 to teach at another school. Both instructors taught a mixture of high, intermediate and basic level JSL classes, and in one basic level class the coordinator worked one-on-one with a student. I watched him engage and interact with the child, keeping him speaking and writing without overpowering him. In another class he taught an advanced level kanji class to five students studying to take Level 2 of the Nihongo Nouryoku Shiken (Japanese Language Placement Test or JLPT). The class was high-paced and the students were actively though unevenly participating.

On the other side of a strategically placed blackboard dividing the room in half, Kuriyama taught an intermediate level JSL class with two students. Though the students tried to push her off topic, and although she did allow for some off-topic discussion, she brought them back to the grammar or vocabulary she wanted them to use. The students spoke some Portuguese in class, and when she understood what they wanted to say, she either repeated it in Japanese or encouraged them to say it in Japanese as well. She did not seem to worry that
students were not following a set curriculum, rather she allowed for students’ questions or concerns to be integrated into the lesson. She told me on one occasion:

In JSL instruction, I try to use pictures and computers… kinesthetic ways of learning, seeing and touching and experiencing. No matter how much they [students] study Japanese on paper… if they go to a grocery store [what they do is] hand over a 1000 yen bill, put down a package of ramen, and receive change. That’s the reality, so I want them to learn the currency and which words to use in a store and in other situations. I finally came to realize that. In the beginning I relied on teaching materials. Gradually though, I went to grocery stores, like I went to a Brazilian grocery the other day, a Brazilian store I didn’t know, and there I realized that [when I tried to talk] the words didn’t come out. So now I want to teach useful daily expressions they will need in banks, grocery and post offices. (Interview Kuriyama 4/24/09)

Sakuragaoka’s JSL teachers tried to strike a balance between supporting the students in their academic subjects, helping them achieve recognition for their Japanese language proficiency via the JLPT and helping them with survival skills such as shopping, going to the hospital, taking trains and so on, particularly students with less fluency in Japanese. Additionally, JSL teachers were also called upon to assist homeroom and other classroom teachers by explaining school rules or even the cafeteria menu:

I prepare materials so they [JSL students] can participate [in classroom and other school activities]. For example, I explain the notices their teachers write and post in the classroom and other things… I let them know as much as possible what we [JSL teachers] know [about what it happening]. For example, I tell them today’s lunch is
curry, and they understand and tell me they had curry for lunch. It seems to work well if I provide them with as much information as I can. (Interview Kuriyama 8/26/09)

Sakuragaoka’s JSL teachers also worked with BOE interpreters to communicate with JSL students’ parents’ who could not speak Japanese in order to keep them up to date in what their children were accomplishing in their classes and to inform them about upcoming school events and notices about special class activities or materials students were expected to bring to school festivals and athletic events.

**Fujita Middle School.** Fujita Middle School is located in Kamezawa, a large city with a population of more than 370,000. It is approximately 40 minutes by train from a major metropolitan area in the Chubu-Tokai Region and 44 kilometers from Miyamura where Sakuragaoka Middle School is located. Kamezawa has 19 middle schools, and although I only observed classes in one of them I interviewed two participants from another middle school in Kamezawa as well.

Considered an important historic area, Kamezawa, like Niida City, maintains a public park on grounds where a castle used to stand. The city’s official website maintains pages in English, Portuguese and Chinese, which ask the reader to click onto links with local community centers and international associations, and it was from one of these links that I found information on receiving consultations in English, Portuguese, Spanish, Tagalog and Chinese and on Japanese language classes, though the latter were not free and all information was in Japanese. On the Japanese site it is possible to find information on the city’s plans and efforts toward building a multicultural society.

Fujita Middle School is approximately the same size as Taguchi Middle School, with approximately 530 students and 15 classes divided between grades 7, 8 and 9. At the time of
data collection, Fujita Middle School appeared to have had a very similar JSL population to Sakuragaoka Middle School; the majority of JSL students are Brazilian nationals, but my participants also mentioned Peruvian and Filipino students. The JSL student population was about 5% of the general population. However, my observations showed me that JSL support at Fujita Middle School greatly differed from JSL support at Sakuragaoka.

Like Sakuragaoka and Taguchi, Fujita Middle School had a classroom which was designated as a JSL classroom, and a schedule was created for JSL students, placing them in the JSL classroom when they could not follow their mainstream classes. This meant that some JSL students were in the JSL classroom for one or two periods per day, while others may have been in the classroom for most of the day excluding P.E., homeroom and music or home economics. Unlike at Sakuragaoka Middle School though, at the time of the study, JSL pull-out support at Fujita was organized by a teacher-coordinator appointed by the principal and rotated annually or bi-annually. JSL support teachers at Fujita Middle School are full-time teachers at the school assigned to ‘staff’ the JSL classroom for a year or two, and assignments are based in part on whether or not they have ‘free time’ in their teaching schedules. Thus the JSL coordinator/s at Fujita Middle School have not necessarily acquired training to work with JSL students, nor are they necessarily interested in doing so.

At the time of data collection, JSL support at Fujita Middle School included the following:

1) JSL pull-out support/ Japanese as a second language support and/or individual course content support

2) Translation and interpreting services for Portuguese speakers

3) JSL classroom as a ‘free’ space/psychological support
Although I visited Fujita Middle School on several occasions and was on friendly terms with the principal and head teacher, who were very supportive of me, it took several requests before I was able observe the JSL classroom, though I had been invited to observe and team-teach English classes.

At Fujita Middle School the two participants, Yamada and Shimahara, were formerly in charge of the JSL classroom though neither was at the time of data collection, and I did not get a chance to observe them teach. As with Taguchi Middle School, there is no Japanese as a second language class provided at Fujita Middle School, but unlike Taguchi Middle School, the physical space of the JSL classroom at Fujita Middle School appeared somewhat transitory. Compared with Fujita Middle School and Sakuragaoka Middle School there were fewer signs that it was a JSL classroom though a few maps—Japan, the world, Brazil—and some pictures from a calendar had been put on the wall. On the two dates I observed the JSL classroom, there were between 1 and 8 students in the classroom.

In one class period I observed one-to-one basic Japanese language support for a student who moved to Japan one month before. The teacher, a Japanese male in his sixties, held up pictures of different objects and told the student the Japanese vocabulary for them. The student was asked to repeat the Japanese words and write the word in Portuguese under the picture. Then, the teacher would then write it in Japanese, either in katakana or hiragana. The child was asked to repeat the Japanese word and to copy the Japanese symbols. This was followed by many sighs from the 1st year student and continued through “umbrella, train, telephone, sunflower and cherry blossom,” decontextualized, random words they appeared to me, though I noted several forms of transportation and three types of flower. Yamada told me that no one at Fujita Middle School had experience working with recent immigrants, and they
did not know what to do or what materials to use. For this reason, he said he downloaded JSL materials from the website of a neighboring city, Miyamura.

In another class period, about a month later, I observed the teacher on duty at one of the two tables in the room working on his computer, while 2 students, the student I met previously and a female student, sat at another table working silently on Japanese language handouts. I watched the girl write the kanji for spring, summer, winter, fall, sunny, snow and so on, copying the kanji one after another. There was no interaction until I asked the teacher about the girl, who I was told had been in Japan for about two years and had recently transferred from another junior high school. During the latter part of the class period, a second teacher entered and the two teachers discussed something together.

From the second class period a sixteen year old Brazilian boy, a graduate of Fujita Middle School, came to ‘help out.’ I learned he had done all his schooling in Japan but that he would be moving back to Brazil at the end of the month, so he had stopped attending high school. He told me that he would come every day for the next couple of weeks to work with the JSL students. Once he entered the classroom, the girl no longer concentrated on the book she had begun reading; she joked with the older boy and watched as he went through a set of vocabulary flash cards with the first year boy, sometimes supplying an answer. The high school boy continued to work with the younger boy, encouraging him and speaking in Portuguese. When the boy incorrectly answered 10 out of the 36 words, the high school boy gently teased him, and they all laughed. During this time neither of the teachers said anything. The teacher who worked on his computer during the first period, was absent much of the second period, coming back after thirty minutes or so, while the other teacher read a textbook. In the third period, three more students entered, including the high school boy’s younger
brother who delighted in saying outrageous things to me in English, “Can you give me some love?” The atmosphere became lively. At one time, the high school boy and two of the JSL students worked with the first year boy, creating what appeared to be a game show. They played with words and spoke in both Portuguese and Japanese and sometimes, for my benefit, in English. One boy, however, although he smiled at what was going on around him, said little and continued to work on his handout.

In an interview with Yamada, I asked how the schedules were made and how it was decided which students would attend ‘classes’ in the JSL classroom:

In total there were 27, that is, the number of the children who needed Japanese [language support] was 27. But then the ones who wanted to study in a Japanese language classroom were 15 to 16. Among those, they came twice, a few times a week, so back then we didn’t have anyone who didn’t speak [Japanese] at all. Children who can’t speak [Japanese] at all come every day, and this year we have some students like that, so some children stay in the Japanese classroom all day but when I worked there, usually they had been in a Japanese language class since elementary school, and in junior high school they didn’t need to do it every day, so a few times a week was sufficient, and [we organized classes] in one hour blocks. We decided in this period, or in that period… that is how we made the schedule.

(Interview Yamada 6/11/9)

He also explained what he did in the JSL classroom:

I myself didn’t know anything at all, so I heard from them about how the previous instructors “did it this way.” The kanji handouts were prepared for 1st to 6th grades were prepared, so I had them do exercises on those, tested them, and depending on
individual’s achievement, well told them for example, “so you can do the 4th grade level, so let’s move on to the 5th grade level.” The class was, as you might expect, centered on kanji mostly. And sometimes, since they had kokugo [Japanese language], elementary level kokugo textbooks in the JSL class, we read them together and had them read the books. And then… before final exams, before exams for the junior high school students, I asked them to bring their textbooks if they didn't understand their classes, as something like a test preparation, and we studied together and did things like that.(Interview Yamada 6/11/9)

From my observations in the classroom and the interviews, there appeared to be no clear JSL curriculum in place; rather, depending on the JSL student population each year or semester, the school principal organized a number of teachers with time in their teaching schedules to work in the JSL classroom. The two participants stated that they did not know how to best work with JSL students, and it appeared that other than possibly a Brazilian counselor sent by the BOE on occasion, there were no faculty at Fujita who considered themselves JSL specialists.

**What JSL Curriculum?**

From this brief description of classes in four schools, I hope to have shown that support for JSL students varied widely, and meant different things to different teachers, schools and local governments. Although MEXT does have a curriculum available on-line, there seems to be little uptake. Of the 16 participants I interviewed, only two stated that they were aware that a MEXT JSL curriculum existed. The difference in the support received at Sakuragaoka Middle School and Fujita Middle School was particularly noticeable since the two schools are quite close geographically and have similar student populations. Whereas,
the Miyamura City Board of Education where Sakuragaoka is located seems to have used MEXT’s lack of leadership as an opportunity to train JSL teachers and create a curriculum to suit the perceived, specific needs of students in their community, students in a middle school in Kamezawa, a large city forty-four kilometers away, did not have access to materials or trained JSL teachers.

From my interviews, I could not determine precisely how middle school children are designated as needing JSL instruction or other types of support; however, some points were clear. The first indicator is nationality. It is assumed that students who are not Japanese nationals will require JSL support. All the JSL students I met were in fact foreign nationals, except for one student from Taguchi Middle School whose nationality I cannot be sure of. He was referred to by teachers as ‘Thai,’ but his father is Japanese, so it is possible he is a Japanese national. In addition, the majority of the students receiving JSL support at the middle schools I visited had either migrated to Japan when they were in elementary school or during middle school. But there were some students the teachers believed had been born in Japan or arrived when they were pre-schoolers. It was not clear whether any students with Japanese nationality were designated as JSL students.

Difficulties at the local level in determining who needs or requires JSL support is exacerbated by the lack of guidance at the national level. The only data collected by MEXT refers specifically to children of documented foreign residents and Japanese children who have returned from living overseas (kikokushijo). Therefore, children of so-called “international marriages,” Japanese nationals who may speak a language other than Japanese at home, children of ‘undocumented’ foreign residents and ‘stateless’ children are not accounted for. Although as Shipper (2008), Okano (2006) and others claim, a number of
local municipalities have for some time subverted national laws and enrolled children of undocumented foreign workers in local schools, this lack of communication between the national government and local governments makes it difficult to thoroughly understand or recognize the number of or differing needs of all children who may require JSL support.

The schools differed regarding how they approached the question of who needs support. In the case of Sakuragaoka Middle School as mentioned above, I was told that in addition to the Japanese proficiency and mathematics exams administered by the municipal JSL teachers, students were given some choice of whether they wanted JSL support or not:

Ah, yes, well we have them come out because they have a foreign citizenship. But they were born in Japan, and some of them can’t use their native language. For those children, we ask them what they want. Still if they use their native language at home and want to study Japanese at school, we provide instruction. Currently at [Sakuragaoka] we have 2 such students. But they were born in Japan and raised in Japan (Interview Kuriyama 8.26.09)

In my study, therefore, I could not determine that the ways in which decisions regarding who receives JSL support had changed much since Vaipae’s (2001) research. In practice at the local level, aside from the example of Sakuragaoka Middle School, there is often no official measurement used to determine who needs JSL support or what type of support is needed. The schools I visited maintained folders for each of the JSL students so that teachers could communicate with each other regarding student needs, but although teachers recognized that students have different needs, the schools were not necessarily equipped to provide specialized support except in cases where there were only one or two students with whom they worked intensively. Nor did teachers necessarily agree on what type of support was
needed—is it survival Japanese, socialization into ‘Japanese ways of doing things’ or preparation for high school and Japanese language proficiency tests, which would best serve the needs of the children? It was not clear that any of the schools where I observed classes were aware of the JSL band scales (or other measures) or BICS/CALP distinctions.

With regard to MEXT and its policies there was a sense of cynicism from several of the participants. Some participants also expressed their frustration with their perceived lack of autonomy. This finding supports the work of Bjork (2011) who has shown that with regard to reforms begun in 2002 to “relax” education (yutori kyouiku) in elementary and middle schools, Japanese “middle school instructors were more likely than their colleagues in the elementary schools to experience difficulty following the Ministry of Education’s plans for change” (p. 156) Bjork’s findings indicated “a combination of unenthusiastic compliance with MEXT directives, confusion, frustration and resistance” on the part of the middle school teachers in his study (pp. 156- 157). He notes that middle school teacher resistance resulted from cynicism toward the central government and MEXT. Middles school teachers, he writes, distrusted the effects of the changes on their role in the classroom. Although Bjork’s study focuses on teachers’ perceptions and uptake of the yutori kyouiku reforms, I was struck by comments made by several teachers in my study which indicated a similar distrust of MEXT and its educational initiatives. The top-down nature of both the yutori kyouiku reforms as well as the JSL guidelines appeared to garner cynical in some teachers who felt MEXT issued demands but did not provide funding to support them. Nor has MEXT, it seems followed up to ensure that schools actually follow its JSL curriculum, so schools are left to act in their own accord or in accordance to the rules/support of the local boards of education.

Yamada from Fujita Middle School discussed the lack of control teachers have with regard to
developing a JSL curriculum. As someone who mentioned on more than one occasion his lack of knowledge of JSL student needs or JSL pedagogy, he seemed to express cynicism toward the top-down manner in which he was assigned to work with JSL children and the situation in which teachers are expected to take on work they are not trained to do:

We do our best to teach children in front of us. We talk with their parents. We just do what the government says to do. We cannot oppose such systematic things. Even though we want to do something, we are like office workers. So we try the best we can to teach children effectively according to what government tells us [to do]

(Interview Yamada 4.23.09).

In comparing teachers to office workers who do what the government demands of them, he appeared to show the frustration and “unenthusiastic compliance” Bjork described.

Assessment

Although some teachers in the study created JSL lessons or made changes in how they taught mainstream classes to meet their JSL students’ needs, there was no consensus among participants on ‘best practices.’ Moreover, the participants in general did not appear to have high expectations for their JSL students’ continued academic achievement. This suggests that at some level, teachers were aware that they were providing more of a ‘stopgap’ than a fully developed educational alternative. Even at Sakuragaoka where the local board of education arguably devoted more time, energy and funds to JSL education than any of the other municipalities I visited, teachers were not sure whether the students’ efforts would result in future academic or professional careers. The coordinator at Sakuragaoka Middle School told me they prepare students to take the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) because 1) students who stay in Japan and pass the level 1 of the JLPT may be able to enter
Japanese universities as “foreigners” if they can pass a high school equivalency exam, and 2) students who return to Brazil can use the use their JLPT scores as proof of their Japanese proficiency which may allow them to work in an embassy or consulate. He said he wanted all students to be able to document their skills.

Kuriyama offered another reason for focusing on the JLPT, that of affect. According to her, when mainstream students are studying for high school entrance exams, some of the JSL students who were unable to pass high school entrance exams due to their lower Japanese language proficiency were able to study for Level 3 of the JLPT, giving them a goal to work toward. She believed they gained confidence from this and they might not have felt ‘left out’ of the system because they had something to work toward. Kuriyama acknowledged that attaining level 3 of the JLPT does not necessarily correlate with entering high school. She told me that two students who had passed level 3 failed to get into a teijisei high school (part-time/ night school). Teijisei high schools, where classes are held in the evenings, allow students to work, and with the economic recession, there is currently more competition for entry to these schools. On the other hand, for a student whose parents have the means to pay for private school, a level 3 in the JLPT, along with a teacher’s recommendations and athletic ability might gain the student entry to high school. So, preparing students for the JLPT appears in this light to be a “productive” way to deal with the inequalities in the system, while it also seems to acknowledge the system’s defects.

**The Research Questions and Emergent Themes**

In the section above, I attempted to show how (or if) the Fundamental Law of Education (FLE) and MEXT’s JSL curriculum played out in the schools that were part of the
study. In this next section, I will discuss themes that emerged from the coding of the participants’ transcripts. First though, it may be helpful to review the research questions:

1. What attitudes and beliefs do teachers have toward students who have been designated as needing JSL instruction and their families, and what futures do they envision for them?

2. How is the JSL curriculum conceptualized at the national and local levels, and how does it play out in Japanese middle schools? How do middle school teachers make sense of the education of JSL students?

3. How are JSL students racialized through JSL program practices?

In the following section I will discuss four general themes which emerged from the interview and observation data: 1. tensions between equity, support and assimilation 2. social reproduction 3. meritocracy, and 4. poverty, wealth, safety and violence. Because of its overall importance to the study, chapter 5 will discuss in greater detail the racialization of JSL students.

Tensions between equity, support and assimilation. The participants on the whole expressed feelings of conflict and inadequacy with regard to schooling for JSL students. As mentioned above, most participants appeared to recognize that the JSL support is inadequate. In the context of junior high school, admission to high school may be considered a measure of success, but most participants acknowledged that few of their former or current JSL students had or were likely to enter high school. The participants’ experiences and expectations appear to match other data. For example, Morooka (2010) estimates the rate of admittance of children of migrant workers to Japanese high schools to be less than 30%, which she compares to the 2008 97% high school enrollment rate of Japanese nationals.
Teachers in the study found it difficult to imagine successful futures for many or perhaps
even most of their JSL students, while they gave several examples of student problems or
issues they expected to arise in the students’ lives, particularly for students who had not
developed or were unable to develop Japanese language skills.

Participants in this study seemed to clearly see the need for additional support for JSL
students. But not all of them felt this support could be achieved in public schools.
Interestingly, three participants had worked in special education at some point in their careers
and stated that this experience had both shaped their pedagogical beliefs and helped them
understand that different children needed different types of support from their schools.
Additionally, among the teachers who worked primarily with JSL students in the pull-out
lessons rather than in the mainstream classroom, there was a clear understanding of the
particular obstacles JSL students face in Japanese public education: In the prefectures where
I conducted interviews, JSL students who had lived in Japan more than three years were
ineligible to benefit from special accommodations which would allow them to take a separate
exam to enter high school and were therefore expected to compete with mainstream Japanese
students for seats in Japanese high schools. As Yamada noted:

In the JSL classes, they [JSL students with only a couple of years of schooling in
Japan] were memorizing kanji, but for typical entrance exams that are given, they had
to read the questions and answer them. They started from a point where they didn’t
understand the question to start with, so if you taught everything from the very
beginning, you can only teach so much in the 3 years of junior high school. Getting
used to life in Japan, starting to speak a few more words, learning the various rules of
life… They only go so far as understanding a little about how Japanese people live…

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To improve their actual abilities and academics… they would have to go somewhere more specialized. Otherwise it would be difficult. (Interview Yamada 6/11/9)

This was an interesting statement in that Yamada acknowledges that there is little he or other middle school teachers without specialized training can do to prepare newcomer students who have been in Japan for only a few years for Japanese high school entrance exams. He suggests limitations on the support JSL students can expect at Japanese public schools.

There seemed to be a tension between the teachers’ experiences and their understanding that some students may need additional support and a discourse that runs through educational circles that pushes educators to treat everyone the same for the sake of fairness. Noiri (2010) citing Ota’s 2000 work with newcomer children explains that public schools attempt to treat foreign students in the same way they treat Japanese students. Historically this approach came into place in the 1960s when the MOE attempted to keep zainichi (old-comer) Korean students from attending Korean ethnic schools. In this context Noiri maintains: “This approach encourages ethnic minority children to stay away from segregated ethnic schools, to speak Japanese, and to behave in the same manner as Japanese children in public schools” (p. 169). On the positive side, she notes that foreign students are able to receive the same benefits as Japanese children, such as free tuition. “On the other hand, the negative side of the approach is forced assimilation and inequality as a result of treating everyone equally” (p. 168). Accordingly, the particular needs of JSL students are not supported under the mantra of equality. It is in this context that perhaps the following excerpt from an interview with Yamada may be interpreted:

To do things as everyone else does, and to be accustomed to the Japanese style, I think there’s a good reason in coming to school. (Interview Yamada 6/11/09)
Yamada, who had earlier in the interview stated that he felt there was little to be done to help JSL students in their academic pursuits, supplies a socializing purpose of middle school education, which suggests that although what is done to support students may not be enough, it is perhaps the best that can be expected under the circumstances.

Teachers, at times, seemed at pains to tell me that they didn’t treat JSL students any differently from the mainstream Japanese students in their classes and that the problems JSL students faced were the same as those faced by the majority Japanese. It is certainly true that mainstream Japanese students as well as JSL students are increasingly under similar pressures and that the educational reforms undertaken by the federal government and the increasing obligations of local governments to fund public education have put, in particular, children of low income families at risk in the public schools. However, it should also be noted that the proportion of low income families per number of JSL students is likely higher than the proportion of low income families per number of mainstream students, particularly in the schools where I conducted data collection. As mentioned in chapter 2, between 2008 - 2009 during the time of data collection, approximately 40 % of Latin American workers in Japan became unemployed due to the recession and many who stayed rather than become part of the pay-to-leave program continued to be unemployed or employed in positions that were often temporary (McCabe, Lin, Tanaka & Plewa, 2009).

With the withering of federal funds for educational expenses, low-income students were less likely to benefit from extracurricular activities that are considered most important by middle school teachers and administrators, such as the yearly school trip for each grade and camping and other activities. This is explained by a participant in the following interview excerpt:
Now foreign children face problems such as not being able to go on school trips because their parents don’t have jobs …because of the recession. And we need to explain those realities to other students. Students might start to talk…[and say] “that family is poor” or something….And that could be a trigger of bullying too. And we have to make sure that kind of thing won’t happen. And there are some students who cannot take baths with their classmates.* There are some in my school. And we Japanese think it is normal. So, [we think they should] just do it and bathe together but… [from their point of view] it shouldn’t be done. It is unacceptable for [some JSL] students to stay overnight somewhere. Because of this, there are some families who cannot participate in some events. So, it is a difficult matter to deal with…
cultural difference and different [ways of] thinking …We need to think how we will deal with this issue from now on. (Interview Maruyama 7/2/09)

*It is common in Japan that students will share large communal bathing facilities during school trips.

This teacher focused not only on the current economic decline and its impact on JSL students and their families but on other issues surrounding different lifestyles and the possible links between difference and bullying.

Some teachers, while noting that low income families were less and less able to provide for their children in this way, nonetheless also appeared to blame the children’s parents or explained the children’s absence from these events on cultural or religious grounds. Some teachers seemed particularly uncomfortable that Brazilian children, whom they identified as Christians, did not attend club activities on Sundays. While understanding the need to respect and accommodate religious beliefs, they nonetheless, seemed to feel that the
parents were harming their children because they did not help them to assimilate to Japanese customs. The following excerpts point to some of these contradictory beliefs. It should be noted that the participants work in different schools in different cities and in different areas of Japan. A participant at Taguchi Middle School made the following observations:

KK: Do you have any worries about your current JSL students?

TS: mmm such as religious matters…Well, as you can imagine, when Judo club has practices on weekends, for example on Sunday, there is that thing… I don’t know but…Well, I say to them that it is all right to skip practices and that family should come first when students wanted to skip practices. That’s about it…. What else? Other than that… maybe the health issue. (Interview Tanaka 7/03/09)

The second excerpt is from a participant at Fujita Middle School:

KK: Well, do you have any specific worries about the JSL students you are teaching now?

SS: Worries… It’s difficult, but I am worried about them going back (to Brazil) due to family reasons. And, what I worry about the most is that they are absent from school with no notification…And, time wise, they do not come if we hold something on Sundays. They think that holidays are holidays, so I can’t push them to come. But, if we do some activities altogether, I really want them to come. I know that they have to attend the service at church. [But, school] activities are fun, exciting, everybody getting together … [So] I want them to feel the atmosphere of making something happen with people around them. (Interview Shimahara 7/09/09)

It was interesting that both Tanaka and Shimahara mentioned religion as a reason for JSL student non-attendance at extra-curricular events. Although they initially explained that they
were worried about this issue, they both appeared to reconsider their comments. Tanaka later stated somewhat ambivalently that “family should come first” and Shimahara explained that he simply wanted JSL students to learn to enjoy activities with Japanese people. The data from this study supports a 2006 study cited by Mushakoji (2011) undertaken in Aichi Prefecture which researched the situation for children from four minority or migrant backgrounds: “old-comer” Korean nations, Indonesian migrants, Filipino migrants and Nikkei Brazilian migrants. In particular, the situation for Muslim children resonated with my data. Mushakoji writes that Muslim children in the educational system are unable to observe their prayers or eat halal meals. Although from the school officials’ perspective, the schools provide nutritious meals, so the fact that Muslim children must bring their own meals creates a situation where they are acting “differently,” which can potentially lead to bullying by other children. Mushakoji writes that “the social reproduction of the Japanese lifestyle, being part of the Japanese educational project, completely (and deliberately) ignores the reproduction of non-Japanese lifestyles” (p. 303). Japanese school culture, upheld and reinforced by the majority of Japanese teachers, appears to be not particularly tolerant about differences in curriculum, appearance and behavior.

An interview with Ito was quite revealing with regard to the contradictions teachers face between the belief that all students should be treated the same and the reality of diverse students with diverse needs in the classroom. In the excerpt below she is responding to a question regarding the strengths and weaknesses JSL students brought to her English class.

IS: I think they do not look special, or they do not stand out in class. I do not treat them differently, either. Basically they cannot communicate with Japanese students. The JSL students who are able to speak fluently are getting along with Japanese
students and making friends with them. On the other hand, for those who do not have academic abilities, I do not know what to do.

KK: What do you think of the JSL students’ academic abilities? Does their Japanese language ability affect this?

IS: Of course I think that it is very effective when parents tell children that studying at home is very important. If they stay in Japan, parents should tell them that they should graduate from high school. If parents have those values on education, then students can always do their best to do anything. On the other hand, if parents think children go to school because teachers at school take care of them while parents are working and they do not care about children, then children cannot have positive values on education, either. Children cannot do their best in anything. Under such a circumstance, no matter how often teachers tell them to do their best they are not going to study at all because they see studying as painful. They might want to study and do their best, but they do not know what to do. They cannot do anything alone. They should make friends in club activities. I cannot force them to join club activities because they are not coming to practice the next day. They do not want to do school activities on holidays and weekends. Therefore, I think teachers should give lessons which children can work hard on during class. Giving specific examples, there are few teachers who are trying to write the phonetic readings above kanji [on homework and exams]. Most of the time, there are no teachers who take care of JSL students.

(Interview Ito 9/22/09)

Though my initial question to Ito was about her overall impression of the JSL students she had taught, she initially stated that she did not treat JSL students differently from mainstream
students, then when I asked about their academic performance, she appeared to show 
frustration with the situation, making statements about the students’ home lives and also 
noting that teachers do not seem to support the JSL students in class.

For many of the teachers in the study, accommodating JSL student’s needs caused confusion and tension as they tried to uphold their ideas of equity. Sometimes teachers felt the need to compromise. Yonezawa, an English teacher, talked about the tension of treating all students equally when a JSL student did not understand class instructions:

When the class started, I gave directions in Japanese after all. Even though it was an English class, we have classes in Japanese. So I couldn’t communicate my directions to him well. However, he didn’t understand them when I gave directions in English, either. Since I didn’t understand Portuguese, after all he ended up following [what] the kids around him [were doing]. He was always behind, so for him I think that was the hard thing… and I didn’t call on him... no calling on him. I felt sorry for him that he couldn’t do the same things as everybody and that must have been stressful [for him]. For me also, it's against my principle not to call on just one student. In my classes everyone has to answer 2 or 3 times. Only that child was skipped. (Interview Yonezawa 8/29/09)

The participants in the study seemed torn between the idea that it is necessary to treat each student the same and the realization that students have different needs. In some cases the result is that teachers do not do “anything” as in the example above. Tsuneyoshi sums up this contradiction well:

In a school culture in which equality is identified with ‘treating everyone the same’, and where doing activities together cooperatively is valued—what I have elsewhere
called ‘collective communalism’ *(issei kyodotai shugi)* (Tsuneyoshi, 1996, 1998)—it is difficult to justify differential treatment of the newcomer children. This presents a dilemma for teachers when they are caught between the special needs of newcomer children and the pressure from Japanese school culture not to treat newcomers differently. (2011a, p. 114).

**Social reproduction, low expectations, and limitations.** In addition to the emphasis placed on treating each child the same and educational policies geared to reproduce Japanese “lifestyles” (Mushakoji, 2011), there were, nonetheless, certain expectations expressed by participants with regard to their JSL students’ imagined futures, and it appeared to affect their views regarding what teachers can and should do in the classroom. As a participant from Fujita Middle School stated:

If they [parents of JSL students/specifically Brazilian] think their child should work at a usual factory then our job would be to teach them normal conversation in Japanese, the rules and manners in Japan. (Interview Yamada 6/11/09)

The participant premised his opinion by stating he is following the parents’ wishes and expectations.

With reference to Anderson’s notion of imagined communities, Norton (2001) and Kanno and Norton (2003) suggest that successful second language learners are successful at least in part because they are able to imagine themselves potential members of a community of speakers of the target language. Kanno (2003, 2008) theorizes that the ways in which school administrators and teachers view students’ (imagined) future possibilities impact the types of bilingualism to which these students have access: Students who are seen as having the potential to become powerful actors in society are able to access an additive bilingualism,
whereas for those seen as less promising in this regard, subtractive bilingualism or second language monolingualism is the goal. Kanno asserts the schools have thus, in part helped to reproduce their expected outcomes for the students. Kanno suggests that even though many of the teachers she observed and interviewed may in fact be caring individuals who want the best for their students, the fact that they imagined their educational attainment to be desultory at best and their futures to be less than bright may in fact cause them to focus on Japanese language survival skills at the cost of their first language (L1) and general academic achievement.

In my interviews with middle school teachers I wanted to know, specifically, how teachers viewed the JSL students and their families and how they imagined their futures. The responses of the participants in this study support Kanno’s study. My participants did not seem to envision a bright future in Japan for most of their JSL students when they considered the unlikelihood of many of them entering high school. There did in fact seem to be a push for survival Japanese, survival Japanese literacy skills (mostly regarding the use of kanji and kana) and much discussion about following Japanese rules. One participant, when asked what she envisioned for the future made this statement:

If nothing changes, well, they [JSL students] will have to work day to day like their parents because they will not be able to graduate from high school. Without a high school diploma, they cannot find any job in society. Or, they have to start their own companies. They need to become hard workers, but females are more likely to be discriminated against because of their gender. When females try to work in society, they have to work more than men do. Since they are not fluent speakers of Japanese language, it will be hard for them to be treated equally like other Japanese. If they
want to stay in Japan longer, then they need to make every effort to learn Japanese. However, I do not want to force them to study Japanese, but I want to support them because I want them to be good citizens in Japan. I am sure they want to become good citizens. Therefore… they have to do their best in all things. (Interview Ito 9/22/9)

According to this participant without changes to the current system it is likely that JSL students will do the same work their parents do or will be unable to work at all in Japan. At the time of the study the participant was working in a city with large numbers Nikkeijin mostly in jobs related to automobile manufacturing, and who, as noted previously, were being laid off or whose contracts were terminated, and this social reality very likely influenced her comments.

Although many participants focused on their JSL students’ need to master Japanese in order to function in Japanese society, at least half of the participants mentioned the importance of L1 maintenance for their students. As explained above, two of the cities where I conducted interviews had hired at least one Portuguese teacher to teach heritage Portuguese classes to students who wanted them. In part the concern with the students’ L1 may also have been recognized as a result of the economic recession and the resulting return of many Latin American families to their home countries at the time of the interviews. Teachers in general expressed regret that many JSL students had or were planning to return to Brazil or Peru, and the uncertainty of whether or not these students would live in Japan permanently affected teachers’ feelings about what can or should be done in the classroom, and how much focus should be placed on Japanese and the students’ first language/s. Additionally, because of the recession many Nikkeijin moved within Japan, and participants expressed confusion about
how to best work with students whom they felt might leave the city, prefecture or country with little notice. When I asked one participant his overall impression of JSL students he said the following:

After all, the children I have looked after are the ones who are motivated to learn, so for those motivated students, I make it so they have goals on which school to go to or where to get a job. I give them advise and I want to let them do as they want, but many of them leave immediately before they settle and go to another school. Just like the one I taught in the first year, just when I thought I could look after him carefully, all of a sudden he switched schools…with no notice. And then when the summer break comes [JSL] students say, “I’m leaving tomorrow.” There are many children like that. So when I see those cases [I think] after all foreign children don’t have the obligation to attend school anyway, so I say to myself, “that’s how it is.” It’s easy to move and some think they could just as easily go to a Brazilian school but when I see parents like that, it’s hard to see the point of doing this. To look after them for a short period of time… you have to see them on a long term basis. Otherwise you can’t do it.

For those who keep moving from one place to another, in a short period of time, we [teachers] can provide little [support]. So we end up thinking, maybe we don’t need to be that deeply involved. (Interview Nakai 8/24/09)

As with other participants, Nakai seemed to feel he was caught in between the uncertainties of the lives of migrant workers and their children, and ended up feeling that he could not or did not want to become “that deeply involved.” A few teachers mentioned that one alternative for some JSL students might be to attend Brazilian schools in Japan for several years so that they could keep up academically with their age group peers.
While some participants veered toward blaming the economic recession or sometimes the parents of the JSL students, others acknowledged that Japanese law itself limited the students’ future possibilities. One participant noted that whether or not the students achieved academically, as foreign nationals they would have fewer chances to participate in Japanese society and would likely continue to face limitations and discrimination in the workplace. He cited a case which he had heard in the news in which an ‘oldcomer’ Korean national, born in Japan, and a graduate of a Japanese university was not promoted to the rank of bureau chief at Tokyo municipal office because of her nationality, even after fighting the case in court:

For example, even if there is a student who wants to become a teacher, s/he needs to be Japanese. Therefore, foreign student choice is somewhat limited with regard to jobs. Was it in Yokohama city or Kanagawa or Tokyo? I forget, but a woman who is a Korean national….Both parents are Korean nationals…and she is also a Korean national…she went to Japanese schools and was fluent in Japanese. She went on to go to Japanese high school and Japanese university. She started to work for a Tokyo municipal office but she couldn’t become chief because of her nationality. Japanese law didn’t allow her to do so. She even went to court, but she lost the case. How many years ago was it… one year ago…maybe last year? There are problems like that….There is a way to change nationality but why would that be [necessary]? The woman grew up in Japan and her Japanese language skills and appearance are indistinguishable from Japanese people but that incident happened and….What will happen later… we still don’t know yet…Maybe those things will [continue to] happen from now on. Besides, when foreign children grow up and start to pay taxes, they neither have a right to vote nor participate in politics. Moreover, there are
problems with pensions and medical support when they get old. There are many unsolved problems with those kinds of issues. It must be tough to continue to live [in Japan] without knowing those things clearly. (Interview Maruyama 7/02/09)

Maruyama was most likely referring to the 2005 case in which a zainichi Korean woman with a special permanent resident status sued the Tokyo Metropolitan government for discrimination based on Article 3 of the Labour Standards Law and Article 14 of the Japanese Constitution (see Martin, 2011). In doing so, he quite clearly points to discriminatory practices in Japan that make it difficult for foreign nationals—even those who follow the rules and are “indistinguishable” from Japanese—to find economic and social equity in Japan.

Another participant was extremely frank with what she saw as the “problem”:

Well, here’s what I hated most. The children of a foreign nationality… in Japan, what do you say, the schoolchildren as defined by the Japanese government, those who have to come to school are… the students with Japanese nationality have the right to go to school and receive education and have an obligation to go to school, while the children with foreign nationality do not. A rather higher-ranked schoolteacher said this. For example, the teacher taught physical education, who said “they do things they like, but they don’t want to do anything hard or what they don’t like.” Of course that is true. When a long distance run in a PE class was hard for them, I don’t know exactly whether they gave up or didn't do it but the teacher said something like, that “that kid doesn’t do what he doesn’t want to do. Education isn’t compulsory for them anyway, and it doesn’t matter whether they come to school or not, so we don’t have to give them a good instruction.” That surprised me a little, as we were both educators.
And I never felt that way. Legally speaking that may be true, but since they do come to school, it’s the teachers’ job to have them do what they should do. (Interview Morinaka 5/30/09)

For Morinaka, both the central government and teachers in the schools were complicit in mis-educating JSL youth. Government regulations that make it clear that schools do not need to do “do anything special” to support children of foreign residents become the “excuse” for social exclusion in the schools.

Social reproduction, thus was taken up by several participants, but there were those who were critical of the tendency of school officials and teachers, with government support, to reproduce the social positioning of the students’ families in Japan, while others seemed to suggest that teachers were at the mercy of parents and the government, and that they could do little else.

**Meritocracy: Hard work = Success.** Despite, at times, what seemed to be a real cynicism about Japanese education and educational policy, the majority of teachers made statements which showed at least a surface level belief in meritocracy. When asked about successful JSL students whom they knew or had heard about, the teacher participants tended to stress the fact that it was the students’ hard work which was responsible for success, and that student achievement is “up to” the individual, even when it was noted that some students who were held up as examples of success benefitted from particular institutional arrangements.

The discourse of meritocracy also seemed to mediate for some teachers the idea that students from certain cultures/nations such as certain Asian cultures, were likely to follow the rules and work hard, whereas students from Latin America were, by nature or by culture, less
likely to be follow rules or work hard and as a result have fewer academic gains than their Asian counterparts.

When Brazilian students were seen as successful, their success was discussed more in terms of assimilation and work success rather than academic success:

Oh, there was a student when I was teaching at elementary school. That child was diligent and tried hard anytime and could become a leader of the student council. I think he is originally from Brazil. He was cheerful and popular among students. He even did what he didn’t like to do. He could say what he wanted to say [speak his mind] unlike Japanese children. Now he is selling cars I heard that he is trusted and doing a great job. So, the key to be successful is to try hard anytime even if it [what we are doing] is not what we like. [We should] try to do a good job on what we don’t like as much as on what we like. If it can be done, even if we have slight disadvantage with language, it will lead to success. (Interview Maruyama 7/02/09)

Even though meritocracy for JSL students was also questioned, as was obvious in the many comments made regarding MEXT’s lack of support, it was still called on by participants to explain the success of individual JSL students. A belief in meritocracy might have helped the participants feel that a bright future in Japan was possible for their JSL students, even if they did not follow the expected educational trajectory. It may have been a coping mechanism that made participants feel they could support their JSL students by teaching them the rules, and that if their students did follow the rules, they would be able to find some type of success in their lives. This theme overlapping as it does with notions of nation and ‘innate abilities’ will be taken up further in chapter 5.
Dichotomies: Poverty vs Wealth; Safety vs Violence. One of the interesting themes to emerge from the interview data relates to notions of safety, wealth, poverty, and violence, concepts organized to create dichotomous views of developed versus developing nations. Participants in the study tended to make statements citing Japan’s wealth and safety vis-à-vis other nations, but in particular in contrast to developing nations such as Mexico, Vietnam, China, Thailand and Brazil.

In discussing these views, it might be helpful to consider what Mushakoji (1992) defines as “development nationalism” and “development racism.” Using the Asia Pacific region as an example, Mushakoji contends that development racism in the region developed due to intense economic interaction among countries in different stages of economic development. Moreover, the fact that nations are in different stages of development creates the conditions of economic interdependence and unfair labor practices and conditions. Development racism can be understood as:

a belief that in the process of national development certain minority ethnic groups can be sacrificed in order to fulfill the national objective of economic growth through accelerated industrialization, and to guarantee the stable development of the world economy. (Mushakoji, 1992, p. 15)

According to Mushakoji, within each state there exist development elites who wish to industrialize their nations: The majority groups in each nation generally benefit from these policies which increase their standard of living. Minority groups within each state are expected to do work considered undesirable by the majority but also necessary. One result is labor migration which “can supplement the mobility of resources in accelerating the national development of both the sending and the recipient countries” (p. 17). Although
discrimination which results may appear to be economic in nature, Mushakoji asserts it is directed primarily against minority ethnic groups and indigenous groups within each nation who are considered to “natural victims” or “primitive” beings, and foreign workers who are seen as “exploitable” because they are nationals of “poor countries” (p. 18). These depictions have certainly informed historical (and ongoing) racial projects in Japan since the Meiji Period, such as the government’s attempts to equate Ainu people/s, language/s and culture/s with “innate and immutable inferiority” and to construct an image of Ainu as a “dying race” among the general population in Japan (Siddle, 1997a, p. 137). As Mushakoji contends, “the structural conditions underlying the discriminatory attitudes are economic but the attitude of the majority is racist” (p. 18).

Considering Mushakoji’s explanation may offer a lens through which to view statements made by participants with regard to their perception of the poverty of JSL students and their families. Teachers on the whole tended to view students through the lens of poverty and economic hardship. Some teachers had first-hand experience with the economic hardships which did exist for children in their classes: A teacher at Taguchi Middle School had been involved helping families locating inexpensive housing and helping them fill out applications for local government support, and several teachers there had paid lunch fees for students whose parents or guardians could not afford to do so.

Again in light of the increasingly difficult economic insecurity faced by many of the families of JSL students at the time of the data collection, it may not be surprising that many participants took this point of view. But it is ironic when considering that many of the Nikkeijin who originally left Brazil and Peru to work in Japan in the 1980s and 1990s, although influenced both by the economic crisis in Brazil, and by the opportunities for
relatively highly paid work in Japanese factories, were in fact college educated, white collar workers in Brazil (Tsuda, 2000, 2001). However, their parents and grandparents who emigrated from Japan to Brazil between 1908 and the 1960s were likely among the many poverty stricken farmers who left Japan to seek work opportunities in Brazil.

The participants’ experiences with the families of JSL students and the economic realities of the recession certainly influenced their assumptions regarding the level of poverty among JSL students. However, not only the specific students who faced these hardships, but JSL students on the whole tended to be viewed by the majority of participants through the lens of poverty. Not only were students and their families seen as impoverished by participants in the study, but students’ parents were criticized, although sometimes indirectly, for moving to Japan “only” for the purpose of earning money. Teachers appeared to believe parents thought more about earning money than their children’s education, and they criticized parents for moving in order to find better opportunities or because of unemployment.

As we can imagine, the economic recession from about a year ago caused some students unwillingly go back to their home country. We want them to study satisfactorily and have an enjoyable experience here even if it is for a short while. However, there were some children who could not do that. Some of the reasons why some students thought they wanted to go home early might have stemmed from the fact that they didn’t enjoy studying here and the failure of their relationships with friends and other people. On top of that, the uncertainty of whether they will live in Japan in the future exists…. and especially since boys have no choice but go back
home in the future, people say that they might as well go to school in Brazil and study.

(Interview Tanaka 7/03/09)

Interestingly Tanaka acknowledges that the recession hurt the families of the JSL students at his school, but then focuses on personal reasons to explain why his students may have “wanted to go home early.” He also clearly mentions uncertainties, but does not explain where they stem from, and he seems to suggest that for Brazilian males, going back to Brazil is expected. In light of the context in which many Brazilian workers were returning to Brazil at the time, it is interesting that he did not discuss the actions the Japanese government took vis-à-vis Brazilian migrant workers due to the economic downturn.

In the next excerpt, another participant, Kobayashi, appears to connect economic hardships affecting JSL students to their parents’ views toward education:

Children who are foreign nationals are not obligated to attend school. The current situation is not like it was a few years ago. However, when some problems occur, they [JSL students and their parents] say that they are not obligated to get education. Brazilian people and parents see the situation like that. They think that their children do not have to learn because they are not obligated to get education and they don’t have enough money. However, I think if they live in Japan, children should have an opportunity to learn Japanese. Once they go back home, they will never study Japanese by themselves. (Interview Kobayashi 5/28/09)

Although initially discussing the effects of the economic recession on the families of JSL students in her community Kobayashi shifts the discussion toward her understanding of the parents’ attitudes toward education. Kobayashi alludes to the FLE and suggests that foreign parents may use the FLE as an excuse not to enroll their children in high schools. Earlier we
had been discussing two Latin American students who had immigrated to Japan during junior high school, and who she doubted would be able to attend a Japanese high school. At that time she had acknowledged the following:

Maybe there is no high school which accepts such students. The high schools which accept them are private. Private schools cost a lot of money. They do not have money.

It is a vicious circle. (Interview Kobayashi 5/28/09)

It was interesting that Kobayashi, although acknowledging the real difficulties for JSL students to gain admittance to high school, connected the educational system’s exclusion of JSL students to the economic status and perceived educational beliefs of their parents. Additionally a discussion of two Latin American JSL students developed into one about JSL students in general. Kobayashi also mentioned that she sometimes gave advice to students whose parents who ‘interfered’ with their studies, telling them to ignore their parents and continue studying.

Not all participants connected the socio-economic status of the JSL students’ parents to their attitudes toward education. Some participants made connections to the Japanese governmental policies:

I’m not familiar with how they [former middle school JSL students] are [doing] after graduation, but my guess is they are in a difficult situation, being in society, in Japan. So, I hear about some of them who got jobs and are working, but as temporary staff they face dismissal. I guess foreign workers are the first to be fired. Really, when Japan went into the recession and some temporary staff people were fired, probably near [a city nearby], I heard on the news that Brazilian people left their Brazilian
schools. When I heard that with the kids [my students], we felt disappointed.

(Interview Morinaka 5/30/09).

Some participants like Morinaka made connections between government policies, foreign migrant workers’ lack of power in the workplace (see Tanno, 2010), and the decisions made by parents of JSL students to return to their home countries or to take their children out of Brazilian schools because of the increasing difficulties to pay tuition. Participants were neither uniform in their responses to issues of poverty among students nor in their explanations for poverty. Whereas some saw it as a greater economic issue related to Japan’s policies toward migrant labor, others looked at parents’ actions or culpability. However, most participants mentioned that local governments should do more to support JSL students’ families, particularly that they should offer more financial assistance to JSL students.

**Japan as a Wealthy and Safe Country**

Participants, in general, characterized Japan as a relatively safe and wealthy nation. However, several participants critiqued this view of Japan, or acknowledged Japan’s wealth as a fairly recent phenomenon. A participant in her early 50s from an urban area in the Kanto Region made the following observation:

I grew up when Japan was developing, so maybe we really wanted to be a ‘strong Japan.’ When I was little we were not so rich. Japanese people were not so rich and we didn’t have a lot of things, so we wanted to be like the United States. Actually my family is not so rich, was not so rich, so we didn’t have anything. So, we didn’t have a TV, telephone, even we didn’t have a telephone, and washing machine and rice cooker, such kind of things, manual things. So my mother did everything by hand.
Once I told these things to an American, and she asked me “what era did you live in?”
but it wasn’t so many years ago. (Interview Saito 4/25/09)

Other participants also made comments about their own economic hardships and how it
affected their schooling. For some it meant they needed to wait to attend school or work to
pay school fees. Others, like Saito, suggested that the national goal of development and the
U.S. as a model for development influenced their decision to study diligently in order to
become prosperous. Education was linked to development and economic prosperity even
though it was acknowledged that despite hard work “not everyone can achieve that, so it’s a
problem” (Interview Saito 4/25/09). Saito also mentioned that women of her age in particular
studied hard so they could work outside of the home. However, many of her friends were
forced to stop working after the birth of their children, because they found it difficult to
combine motherhood with careers. When discussing the economic situation of recent years in
Japan, she also acknowledged that recent university graduates might have great difficulty
finding work, suggesting that the pay offs for education are no longer as assured as they once
were thought to be.

In the interviews participants both critiqued and upheld the notion of Japan as a
wealthy nation, but when participants were asked about their experiences in other countries,
comparisons of wealth and education levels as well as issues of safety emerged. Tanaka came
to realize the relatively positive experience he had as a Japanese national and educator after a
trip to Mexico:

[when travelling in Mexico] I saw little children who were really poor selling things
with their mothers on the street, probably without even going to school. Since I
majored in education, I knew I would become a teacher [but] these poor children
could not study or go to school. We would be given text books …without paying after going back to Japan… thanks to the compulsory education system in Japan. I came to realize the difference between countries. (Interview Tanaka 5/28/09)

Seeing Mexican children working alongside their mothers led Tanaka to compare the relative wealth and educational systems of Japan and Mexico and to conclude that he felt “lucky” to have been born in Japan, where he and his students had access to education and books and where education is compulsory. The comparison between Japan is Mexico is both implicit and explicit; the poor in Japan have access to compulsory education while the poor in Mexico do not. As a result poor children in Mexico, as this participant sees it are forced to work from young age without the benefit of education.

Another participant stated:

When I traveled I thought that in Asian countries there are many problems with education, with paying for education and so on. I felt I was lucky to be in Japan, to be Japanese. I wondered what they can do without money. (Interview Morinaka 2/02/09)

Her travels caused Morinaka to also feel “lucky” about being Japanese due to her understanding that education is not freely available to all in “Asian countries.” Another participant, Kudo, perceived the “power” of being Japanese in Vietnam:

When I lived in Vietnam, I was glad to be Japanese. It was not because Japan was an advanced country or anything like that but because…well….because I was Japanese, people in Vietnam trusted me or were helpful to me…It happened often. ..And the people at the customs at the airport were kind. Yes, I realized a power of Japanese passport at that airport. People didn’t suspect me and the luggage check was not strict.
I came to realize the power of a Japanese passport. Nobody suspected me. (Interview Kudo 9/24/09)

Interestingly Kudo did not perceive Japanese wealth as directly affecting her position in Vietnam, but she perceived that (in an age of terrorist alerts and strict immigration control) having a Japanese passport was an advantage because Japanese are not among the usual suspects, those whose passports cause them to go through severe immigration screening processes. The power of a Japanese passport, according to this view is not necessarily the economic power the nation holds, but its current image as a peaceful nation. However, the relationship between Japan’s image overseas and its economic power are likely connected. Moreover the privileges Kudo experienced in Vietnam seemingly correspond with white or *Wajin* privilege, privileges unearned and most of the time unremarked.

For some participants, “outsiders’” images of Japan made overseas travel risky. One participant mentioned being cheated out of money by an Australian taxi driver and related it both to a lack of English skills and to his perception that Australians view Japanese as weak.

Well, [in Australia] I had thought most people would understand me even if I spoke English in my own way and I also found out that Japanese were easily cheated once local people knew that they were Japanese. There are a couple of stories I still remember. Well, we were ripped off by a taxi driver. (Interview Kamata 6/5/09)

Kamata implied that in Australia there was an image of Japanese, both as rich and easily conned. Kamata’s interpretation was informed both, I believe, by his personal experience as well as the “stories” that are told in Japan and elsewhere and the large number of books and newspaper articles written about the vulnerability of Asians and Japanese vis-à-vis both white and black “Westerners.” These “stories” overlap with my experiences of the
intersection of cons and Japanese “businessmen” that played out when I worked for a Japanese firm in Manhattan in the late 1980s as well as the writing of Kumashiro (1999) and others who describe the particular racisms which are enacted on Asians and Asian-Americans.

Despite these dangers, the U.S., Australia and New Zealand were often described positively with an abundance of food (which could also be read as a critique) and images of middle class schooling. In the case of Kamata, despite his recollection of negative experiences in Australia, he mentioned a positive experience with a German couple who gave his wife medicine when she was seasick. When discussing the experience he focused on his inability to understand the English word “seasick” and his admiration for the German tourists’ English language skills. Thus, he ultimately critiqued himself.

In general, the participants experiences in the U.S., New Zealand and Australia contrasted with their experiences and perceptions of developing nations they travelled to as is revealed in the following interview excerpt:

I had a study trip to China once. I went to see a school. And I guess I went to Vietnam, too, to see a school as part of study. And when I went to New Zealand, I remember going into an ordinary private house. We had a dinner there, a very large one, which I couldn’t imagine [seeing] in Japan… New Zealand was like that. So, I saw classes in China and Vietnam, saying “oh it’s different.” They were very dirty and I thought Japan was blessed. It [school room] was dark and hygienically questionable. So Japanese people or, Japanese schools are blessed, I felt so very much. What they did [in class] wasn’t understandable … So, [I felt] Japanese people are happy…I guess I may have visited two Vietnamese schools. In Vietnam they were doing dictation. I didn’t understand well what they were doing, though. It was something like
arithmetic, or was it social studies…? They had two one-story buildings, with no second floor. There was nothing around and it was dark… I watched them saying “mmm”. They were studying hard and they [the students responded] in loud voices. I guess there were more voices responding to the teacher one would hear in a Japanese class. I felt such things. (Interview Shimahara 6/11/09)

Shimahara though possibly critiquing the (large) portions of food served at the dinner party he attended in New Zealand, nevertheless appears to express admiration for the “plenty” he observed. In contrast, when discussing China and Vietnam, he focuses on the dirt, lack of lighting, “questionable” hygiene. Despite expressing a somewhat favorable view toward “responsive” Vietnamese students, he reiterates his belief that Japanese people, *in comparison* with Chinese and Vietnamese people, are quite lucky. The image of plenty in New Zealand, a developed nation, is further held up against the images of dirt in the developing countries of Vietnam and China, with Japan placed as intermediary, a modern developed nation, but without the excess.

In the interviews with participants, themes of poverty and educational crises also overlapped with ideas about violence and crime, both within and outside of Japan. Although participants did not necessarily state directly that other countries were more prone to violence than Japan, Japan was characterized by several participants as a safe country, with the implication being that some other countries were not so safe. Although there were certainly critiques by a few participants, Japan tended to be characterized as safe, a country of low crime rates where a “typical person” can walk down the street at night without fear. Shimahara, when asked what he thought it meant to be Japanese stated the following:
What it means to be Japanese… What does it mean? Anyway being Japanese, you have to be proud of that yourself. I think we have to be happy that we were born here. I reckon there’s no other country as blessed as Japan, where we can walk outside freely during the night and where we have a lot of (material) things. We are not poor, that is, aside from the homeless. If you live normally you can make a living. You can make a living even working part-time in this country. This country is materially wealthy and although general safety is decreasing, it’s safe during the night. You can do anything if you wish to in this country, with many convenience stores. Materially I think the country is really rich. That’s something I appreciate so much. Compared to other countries… what should I say? It may be surprising, if you see this from another country’s point of view. We shouldn’t take this for granted. Because we are happy, we have to think of other situations. If we think this could last forever… we should think that it may not. We must feel that this country is blessed. We have what we have now because of what our ancestors have cultivated. This is not something that happened just recently. I think we have to live thinking about that. (Interview Shimahara 6/11/09)

Though poverty exists in Japan, it is considered by Shimahara as something far from what the “average” Japanese experiences, and Japan is characterized by its apparent safety “at night” which is manifested in the ability to enter shops at any time during the day or night; images of safety, wealth and convenience interact and are mutually supportive. At the same time, he notes that the situation in Japan is changing and that Japan is not as safe as it used to be. He cautions Japanese to appreciate and uphold the safety of the nation. Another,
participant, Maruyama explains how the “stories” told by parents and teachers created a particular image of Japan that contradicted his experiences:

Being born Japanese, I was taught by teachers and my parents that Japan was such an advanced country as well as a rich country. I was told that there were many people who were starving to death or who were fighting each other in wars in the world. In this sense, I was happy to be Japanese. I was also told that Japan had a low crime rate as compared to other countries and therefore Japan was a safe country [in which] to live. Influenced by the stories from my parents and teachers, I like Japan and I am very satisfied with being Japanese. As I get older though, I feel a contradiction in my mind. Even though Japanese people say that Japan is such an endowed country, people actually living in this country go to work without enough sleep and keep working. They believe that they deserve to live in luxury after their [years of] hard work, but this never happens… I hear lots of people complain about their jobs and about how stressful their lives are. (Interview Maruyama 5/29/09)

In both of the excerpts it is interesting to note that although Japan continues to be viewed by the participants as “safe” as well as comparatively wealthy, they have their doubts about what they were taught or believed in their childhood, or they acknowledge that their experiences in Japan may not meet this idealized vision. Shimahara informed me that his experiences growing up poor and having to work to pay for his schooling shaped his views toward education, and Maruyama told me that he was a bully victim as a child. Both of these participants, thus, experienced poverty and/or violence in their youth.

Moreover, this opens up the question of perspective; from the perspective of mainstream Japanese middle school teachers, both male and female, Japan may appear
relatively safe, but from the perspective of a female migrant worker things may appear more sinister. According to Piper (2003) with regard to female migrant workers in Japan and other “developed” Asian countries:

In the context of the receiving state, violence consists of oppressive application of immigration laws whereby employment (Abrera-Mangahas, 1998) and are not treated as workers worthy of protection (Chin, 1998). Thus, a situation is created where violence against women becomes part of the employment itself, as in trafficking and sex work, but also enabled by a state-sanctioned, or constructed, context that allows, and probably even furthers, the violence. (pp. 724 – 725)

Until laws were changed in 2004 and 2005 trafficking was not a criminal offense in Japan, at least not for the traffickers (ILO, 2005; Ito, 2005; MOFA, 2008; United States Department of State, 2011). Instead the victims of trafficking were often criminalized and deported as “illegal immigrants.” Undocumented workers, including parents of Japanese nationals who have lived in Japan for years without receiving health care benefits may also not feel safe. Komai (2000) explains that although illegal immigrants pay taxes, they “have almost no legal protection” (p. 323). “Since they cannot join a health insurance system, illegal immigrants must pay all their medical expenses themselves” (Komai, 2000, p. 323). Thus, many immigrants delay seeking medical attention, sometimes until it is too late to treat the illness or disease. Women seeking support and safety for themselves and their children in NGO supported shelters may also question Japan’s image of safety.

However, with regard to the overall perception among participants that Japan is a safe country, it should be noted that this perception is pervasive among many Japanese and non-Japanese alike. I have certainly added to this particular discourse when talking to friends and
relatives in the U.S. and in Japan. While in Japan, influenced by media reports of shootings or other violent crimes I begin to feel the “dangers” of life in the U.S. and have on several occasions cautioned young women form my university not to walk alone at night when they study abroad in the U.S., though I have rarely cautioned them against this in Japan. Not only did participants add to the Japan’s discourse of safety, but the one parent with whom I was able to have a short conversation, a single mother from a rural area in Brazil, told me she felt safe in Japan and added that she believed if she walked around in urban Brazil wearing earrings, someone would “rip them out of her ears.”

Crime and violent behavior appear to be seen by many in Japan, not only Japanese nationals, as non-Japanese phenomena, despite reports and experiences of bullying in schools. And yet according to Fujimoto & Park (1994) rather than being an exception, “Japanese crime patterns are consistent with those in many other advanced countries. They are equally characterized by a very small number of violent crimes, with property crimes predominating” (p. 120). Moreover, like the participant above several of the participants in the study referred to physical violence they had experienced or witnessed in the schools. Three teachers stated that they had been bullied as students—in either elementary or junior high school—and three teachers mentioned they had witnessed violent acts in schools they had worked at or had attended, although only one participant stated that there was such trouble at her current workplace. According to some participants, despite or perhaps because of these experiences, they had decided to work in the schools:

I became a teacher because I liked English very much. I wanted to tell children what was happening in the world through English. And because I went to a junior high school which was in complete disorder, [and] I did not want children to have the same
schooling experiences I had to go through…My school, where people suffered violence…not only against teachers but also classmates…was plagued by violence.

(Interview Yonezawa 6/05/09)

The violence in Yonezawa’s junior high school [by students in the school] was such that according to her, it was difficult to consider her classes as “education” though she praised her teachers for their attitudes that helped her to “take courage from a bad situation” (Interview Yonezawa 6/05/09). Like Yonezawa, Maruyama stated that his experiences as a bully victim allowed him to feel empathy and understanding for weaker students, including JSL students, in his classes:

As an elementary student, I was a weak child and felt nervous all the time, which led to bullying. I was teased by my classmates and older students. It was a harsh experience. Now as a teacher I have been looking after students who were teased and came to feel sympathy for them. (Interview Maruyama 5/29/09)

For Maruyama, it is possible to have experienced violence and yet still believe that Japan is a country of relative safety. Though the discourse of safety does not completely jibe with the experiences of my participants, it persists.

While Japan is viewed as a relatively safe country, crime in Japan is sometimes uncritically associated with foreign crime. Shipper (2008) explains this:

While the number of penal offenses by foreigners increased 17 percent between 1993 and 2005, the population of visiting foreigners (including illegals) during this same period increased 36 percent. In contrast penal code offenses by Japanese nationals increased 30 percent, 298,000 people in 1993 to 387,000 people in 2005, although the total number of nationals increased by less than 2 percent. More important, serious
crimes by Japanese increased 87 percent, while those of foreigners rose 44 percent.

Most crimes committed by foreigners are of a less serious nature (e.g., fraud and petty theft). p.160

Although Shipper states that data suggests undocumented foreigners are more likely than Japanese to commit crimes (1 in 145 to 300 undocumented foreigners versus 1 in 330 to 400 Japanese), he argues that this is at least in part related to demographics: The majority of crimes are committed by people in their 20s and 30s, and most undocumented workers are in this age group, whereas the median age of Japanese nationals is approximately in the mid 40s. Finally, he explains that crimes committed by foreigners are reported in the Japanese media more often than those committed by Japanese nationals (2008).

Although two participants from Taguchi Middle School mentioned crimes committed by former JSL students, participants in the study on the whole did not “criminalize” JSL student behavior. The exception to this was the notion that JSL students had a tendency to lie. Two participants from two different schools pointed out to me that JSL students they had taught had lied to them about homework or other small matters, which will be discussed in the next chapter. However, participants did not single out JSL students for violent behavior. In fact the Japanese media was criticized by Kuriyama for creating false and harmful images about non-Japanese others:

The fixed images of Brazilians have stuck in Japanese students’ minds for a long time because of the media featuring only Brazilians related to crime. Many Japanese students are afraid of Brazilian students. (Interview Kuriyama 4/24/09)

Kuriyama criticized the media for distorting images of Brazilian residents in Japan and for creating fear among Japanese about Brazilian criminal behavior. She noted, however, her
belief that through their experiences from elementary school with Brazilian classmates mainstream Japanese students at Sakuragaoka Middle School would not succumb to these media images.
Chapter 5: Discussion:

Racialization in Japan and Racial Nationalism

When I began this study, I was primarily interested in understanding how Japanese middle school teachers perceived the JSL students they worked with. Although studies done to date by Nukaga (2003), and Kanno (2003, 2008) had given me a clear indication of teachers’ attitudes toward the children in their care, I wanted to focus on an area I felt had not been thoroughly examined by these studies, namely the degree to which essentialized notions toward particular racial and/or national groups affected teachers’ perceptions of their students, and how teacher discourse and actions may, despite (oftentimes) good intentions, help ensure the continued racialization of language minority students and immigrant families.

According to critical race theorists Delgado and Stafancic (2001), racialization refers to the “process of creating a race” or “injecting a racial element into a situation” (p. 154). Martinot (2003) tells us that:

It is not enough to recognize that race is a social construct. Refutations (again and again) of the idea that race is inherent in people neither pursue nor challenge racism’s tenacity. If race is socially defined, and racism manifests a system of interrelated social categorizations, the social effects of that system—the feelings, opinions, or antipathies that it generates in people and leads them to impose on each other—only inform the existence of that system. (p. 75)

Martinot goes on to state that it is precisely the racialization process which creates the social construct of race, that “racism produces race (as social categorization) through a process of racialization” (p. 76). Racialization is thus a process, a system through which certain categories of humans, races, are created and naturalized through the noticing of physical
characteristics which are given hierarchical social meanings through discourse. Because racialization is an ongoing social process, individuals are thus implicated in it. It is not something which simply happens “out there.”

Martinot’s explanation supports Omi & Winant’s (1994) explanation of racial formation which they define as “the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed and destroyed” (p. 55). They assert that racial formation occurs through the creation of racial projects, which “connect what race means in a particular discursive practice and the ways in which both social structures and everyday experiences are racially organized, based upon that meaning” (p. 56, italics in original). The formation of racial categories, racialization, is the process/es by which individuals or groups are defined as belonging to a particular racial group, not only based on phenotype, but on the basis of cultural difference—difference from the group/s creating the definition. Through the process of racial formation, racial categories are not only produced, but also “lived” and contested and changed (Omi & Winant, p. 55).

Racial formation, thus, is both key to understanding how societies are organized and the nexus of power structures, and it is aided through representations of racialized individuals and groups, which do the ideological work, imbuing racial categories with cultural (essentialized) meaning, creating “loud, black girls” in U.S. classrooms and “Brazilians who don’t take education seriously” in Japanese classrooms. The essentialized images of ‘loud, black girls” or “lazy Brazilians” become naturalized, and in this process the images become a common sense understanding of black girls in the U.S. and Brazilian students in Japan. Collins (2000) refers to essentialized images as controlling images and argues that the ability to construct and manipulate these images underscores the power of the manipulator/s.
Moreover, it is not only the fact that controlling images are created that is important. Rather it is important to understand why certain controlling images are used at specific historical moments. In other words, it is important to understand the purposes these controlling images are meant to achieve (Collins, 2000). Thus, the question that needs to be asked is what purpose is served by creating an image of Brazilian children as underachievers.

From a conflict theory of education perspective (Collins, 1971), racialization may be understood as a means to create status groups.

Education may thus be regarded as a mark of membership in a particular group (possibly at times its defining characteristic), not a mark of technical skills or achievement. Educational requirements may thus reflect the interests of whichever groups have power to set them. (Collins, 1971, p.1008).

It is important to note that racialization is a process and that racial categories are not static; they are constructed at particular sociohistoric moments, to serve particular purposes, to create a particular hegemony of a group or groups. Thus, when discussing racialization, or perhaps, racializations, it is necessary to acknowledge that a) different groups have been racialized at different historical moments in different ways, and b) individual and group actors are involved in these processes.

That Japanese middle school teachers’ opinions about their JSL students’ characters, abilities and future prospects matter is understood. But in what ways teachers’ understandings are produced by and subsequently reproduce racialized images of JSL students is not well understood. There has been a reluctance to discuss race or racial issues in the context of JSL education in Japanese schools, with one researcher noting that although government approved educational materials attempt to represent diversity in Japan with
regard to gender, able-bodiedness and region, racial and ethnic differences appear to be non-existent (Tsuneyoshi, 2007, 2011a).

But the fact that an awareness of race is seldom acknowledged does not mean that Japanese do not engage in “race-thinking” or that racialization is somehow unJapanese behavior. Although explicitly racial language was not often used in the interviews, the similarities in the depictions (controlling images) of Nikkei Brazilian students by teachers in different schools and in different parts of Japan point to racialization, in that these assumed characteristics, whether defined as ‘culture-based’ or ‘nation-based’ are considered unchanging or unchangeable. Moreover, Japanese are not immune to the discourses on race that have permeated the globe. In the 1880s Social Darwinism and eugenics were very much part of the discourse of Japanese intellectuals (Terazawa, 2005). In the late 1870s, American zoologist Edward Morse, as visiting professor at Tokyo Imperial University introduced the evolutionary theories of Edward Spencer and Charles Darwin, and by the 1880s Japanese intellectuals were actively discussing and disseminating these ideas. As Terazawa (2005) explains:

A version of Social Darwinism that many Japanese intellectual adopted postulated the state as a natural organism and people as individual cells. Based on this thinking, these scholars argued for the importance of protecting the state, which presumably constituted the core of this living organism, even when it meant sacrificing the well-being of individuals. Furthermore, they used Social Darwinism to justify economic, political, and social inequality among individuals as a natural outcome of the theory of natural selection with its need for continuous struggle to ensure the ongoing improvement of the race. Japanese thinkers also extended the notion of individuals
competing with each other in a “struggle for existence” to nations and racial groups, which they envisioned as going through a similar process. (pp. 84 - 85)

During this time, many Japanese scholars saw the Japanese ‘race’ as inferior to ‘European races,’ and there was intense discussion about whether or not to promote interracial marriages with Europeans or whether such marriages would cause the extinction of the Japanese race, since the message received from Spencer’s work was that the ‘advanced race’ would dominate the ‘weak race’ (Terasawa, p. 85). In the 1880s Japanese anthropologists, influenced by anthropologists in the U.S. and elsewhere tried to distinguish the races of East Asia and South East Asia, sometimes recognizing similarities among various Asian ‘races’—oftentimes dependent on the particular political project in which they were involved. At the turn of the 20th century and up until the end of WWII, different Japanese anthropologists, at different times, attempted to classify the racial differences between Japanese and Ainu, Taiwanese, Koreans, Chinese, Taiwanese aborigines, and Ryuukyuans (people of Okinawa and other Ryuukyu Islands) (Terasawa, 2005).

In discussing ‘history’ here, it is not my intention to claim that the participants in my study are necessarily aware of the race studies conducted by Japanese scholars or the different racializations of Asian groups. I point instead to the fact that racialization processes were and are enacted at different levels of Japanese society. In contemporary Japan, the words for ‘white person’ (hakujin) and ‘black person’ (kokujin) are certainly used in Japan, but it has also been my experience that the word ‘American’ (Amerikajin) often denotes ‘white American,’ with white the unmarked norm. Japanese are certainly not unaware, as a couple of participants in the study made clear, of the racialized hierarchies that exist in the U.S. and elsewhere. However, there is a tendency to understand race as something that exists
outside of Japan. However, simply because explicitly racial terms are not often used, does not signal an absence of racialization in Japanese schools.

In the process of interviewing Japanese middle school teachers, explicitly racial categorizations came up only on a few occasions, and they invariably had to do with the teachers’ positive images of U.S. whites during their childhood, feelings about English and globalization, or their impressions or reactions to racial justice (or injustice) in the U.S. One participant was explicit:

When I was in college, I would often long for life in a foreign country. It is strange to say, but all I longed for was to live in a foreign country. I had an aunt who lived in Seattle when I was in elementary school. Have you heard of the movie, Melody Fair? It was a love story of young boy and girl. I went to see the movie with my friend without my parents’ permission in junior high school. Since then, I started longing for life in a foreign country. It was beautiful anyway. And I asked my parents if I could be adopted into my aunt’s family. It is a funny story, isn’t it? In college, I wanted to go overseas to study and live there. Talking about the Ainu, I did not have any particular feeling about the Ainu. When I went to Hokkaido, I became interested in their culture. I visited the center for the Ainu culture. I do not have prejudice against foreign people. I would long for how foreign people live and want to know about them. I think most of Japanese people are like this. We tend to think that people from the Europe or the USA are good-looking when they are just walking down the street. However, if black people are walking down the street, Japanese people do not think the same as they do about white people. If Chinese people are walking down the
street, we do not [notice at all.] I thought white people were better than black people.

I do not feel that way any longer. (Interview Kobayashi 1/30/09)

I had asked Kobayashi, specifically about minority groups in Japan and had mentioned Ainu as an example, but the focus of the conversation began with a look outward as if race was perceived to be something “foreign,” before the gaze was brought back to Japan. Clear cut race-talk was not common in my interviews, but Kobayashi felt comfortable enough to be somewhat explicit, perhaps because of my status as a white U.S. female. Kobayashi contrasts three groups here; Europeans & U.S. nationals, who are perceived to be white, blacks, and Chinese, seemingly defining ‘Chinese’ as a racial category—even though they may not be ‘visible.’

Participants often mentioned national origin rather than race to discuss processes which, I would argue denote racialization. Race thinking can be expressed without using specific racial terminology. Moreover as stated by Tsuneyoshi (2011b):

In present-day Japan, the counterpart of “race” in this sense is nationality, and “ethnicity” is also used. States are powerful social categorizers, as they can impose their categories on other agents, and the official discourse influences policymaking as well as the allocation of resources (p. 129).

Tsuneyoshi is discussing the fact that government statistics in Japan do not distinguish ethnic or racial groups but rather national groups. One is not, according to government statistics a Korean-Japanese or a Japanese of Korean ancestry but a Japanese national. Nationality subsumes ethnic or racial identity in that one who is classified as a Japanese national is assumed to be culturally, linguistically and ethnically Japanese. In part because of this rejection of hybrid identities at the state level, generations of old-comer Korean residents
have rejected naturalization. This may also mean that the commonsense notions that Japanese have about *differences* may often be expressed through the terminology of nationhood, although this isn’t always the case.

Another analytical tool I have used in this study also draws from the CRT literature, namely Bell’s (1980) interest convergence theory. Bell, in seeking to explain the emergence of widespread support for desegregated U.S. schools and upheld by the courts in the 1954 Brown v the Board of Education decision as well as the realities of ongoing racism in post-Civil Rights education, concluded that U.S. institutions, only support the interests of U.S. blacks when they converge with white interests. White interests in this sense need not be political or economic in nature, but may also be psychological, wherein whites receive some psychological benefit by appearing to be benevolent or “fair.” Moreover, from this point of view, if institutions are believed by whites and blacks alike to be meritocratic and benevolent, whites, who benefit most from them, receive the added advantage of feeling justified in their continued success.

Looking at the data through a conflict model, allowed me to consider how the success of individual JSL students may work to both consolidate a public belief in meritocracy, thus allowing Japanese people to feel benevolent toward immigrant families, while mainstream Japanese students of means are able to continue to benefit most from neoliberal educational measures. When analyzing the interview data, I found it helpful to consider in what ways “mainstream” Japanese interests were supported when JSL students appear to benefit from the system. It should be noted that although newcomer Asian students from China, Thailand and Korea were often represented by the participants in the study as “serious” or “hard working” students, this in no way guarantees they will receive economic or social benefits
equal to mainstream Japanese. Rather, as may be understood from the ongoing struggles of minoritized groups in Japan such as burakumin and zainichi Koreans, newcomer Asian students may, despite efforts to assimilate, be marginalized when competing for positions with mainstream Japanese, through application of the family registration system or other legal means.

**Dichotomous Identities – Japaneseness/Foreignness and Racial Hierarchies**

Despite the commonly held belief that all students should be treated the same, the participants in the study, when asked specifically about similarities and differences among students they taught, had few difficulties to locate differences between Japanese and foreign students or among JSL students of different nationalities, though when I asked the questions about differences among Japanese students, there was often some difficulty in answering, with some teachers stating they did not understand the question.

The following “difference” however, were noted by the majority of the participants and may be characterized as follows: 1. differences between Japanese and foreigners, 2. differences between Asians and Latin Americans, 3. differences between Nikkeijin and Latin Americans who were phenotypically “foreign-looking,” 4. differences between JSL students based on age of arrival in Japan, and 5. differences between JSL students who planned to stay in Japan and JSL students who planned to return to their country of origin. At times the last two categories overlapped.

**Differences between Japanese and foreigners.** In general participants had little difficulty responding to my questions about differences they perceived between Japanese and JSL students. It should be noted that many of the teachers spoke specifically of Brazilian students and to a lesser degree, Peruvian students because for the majority of the teachers (12
out of 16), Brazilian students outnumbered other JSL students. Of the teachers interviewed, only 2 teachers worked primarily with Chinese and/or Korean newcomers.

The most common descriptions made by teachers working with Brazilian students were as follows: fun-loving, talkative (or noisy), eager, and cheerful; they were seen to enjoy individual attention and be able to express their opinions clearly. Additionally, they were also characterized as being unable or unwilling to abide by school rules, acting (too) sensitively, being (too) proud, not telling the truth, and acting out physically, including in sexual ways. In contrast Japanese children were characterized as quiet or calm, honest, caring and careful about (how to act around) the people around them, and disliking attention. They were also characterized as narrow-minded, naïve, irrational and childish.

As should be apparent, some of these characterizations may be considered in both positive and negative ways, depending on the context; Teachers often said they enjoyed working with (particularly) Brazilian students because they were fun or were unafraid to answer questions. One participant, Kuriyama, stated that Brazilian students were *kind enough* to realize other students wouldn’t speak out and did so themselves out of consideration for others, effectively making the class more interesting for everyone. On the other hand Latin Americans students were also seen to be disruptive, and unable to distinguish between when to talk in class or study quietly. With reference to student motivation, Brazilian and Peruvian students were characterized by most participants as “relaxed” or lacking interest in study, which was contrasted with the model Japanese student, even when admittedly Japanese students were also seen as not adhering to the cultural model.

An interesting statement which came up was a view that foreign nationals might have a tendency to lie. Although only a couple of participants made this statement, it struck me
because of an encounter I had with a real estate agent twenty years ago who refused to help me look for an apartment because as he told me: “Foreigners lie. They say they will rent an apartment for one person, but they bring others.” In the context of the schools, the participants who mentioned lying appeared to be speaking of very specific encounters they had with students:

KK: What similarities/differences do you see between JSL and mainstream students?
IS: Well, depending on each student, there are differences and similarities, but I think that 国民性 (kokuminsei) [national characteristics] maybe determine similarities/differences between JSL and mainstream students.
KK: For example?
IS: I am not sure, but I see some JSL students telling me something that is not appropriate in a certain situation and I believe it is not a lie. I really cannot tell whether it is a matter of language proficiency or of inborn personality. Many teachers thought inability of Japanese language proficiency caused them [JSL students] to use inadequate Japanese language. However, as time went on teachers found out that one JSL student was telling a lie by saying that s/he left homework at home even though s/he had not done it. When the teacher told him/her to go and pick it up from home and hand in, s/he did not hand it in. I believe that JSL students are trying to tell teachers true stories, but they are not telling the truth. On the contrary, other JSL students do homework every day. Those examples of two [types of] JSL students show the differences of personality. Such surroundings around them as home and family will determine who they are, so that is why there are similarities/differences among JSL students. I am currently taking care of a small number of JSL students and
I cannot generalize my experiences in order to explain other situations. (Interview Ito 9/22/09)

Although the participant seemed to backtrack a bit by saying there were different types of JSL students—those who did their homework and those who lied and didn’t do it—and she hesitated to state whether or not (she felt) the student intended to lie, she seemed to tie differences to *kokuminsei*—or a national character/culture which determines along with family background and inborn personality some JSL students’ capacity for lying. Although this sentiment was not reiterated by the majority of participants, that two participants working in different schools in different parts of Japan felt a sense of distrust toward some of the JSL students they worked caught my attention.

Another participant had the following to say about JSL children:

Well, like I said they are very lively….They tend to overact and express things, like they say things or act as soon as they think of it. I don’t think they are basically that different. But they are minorities, especially compared to the Japanese children, so they tend to stick together. Then that makes it harder for other [Japanese] children to talk to them, and they step back a little. If Brazilian children stick together, that’s natural given their small numbers, and Japanese do the same abroad. So we [teachers should] talk to them and have them become friends with Japanese children to make sure things like that won’t happen. (Interview Yamada 6/11/09)

Compared with the Japanese children in his school he perceived that JSL children were somewhat “livelier” and spend time with each other, effectively excluding Japanese children. For Yamada, it appeared entirely “natural” for JSL students to stick together and he characterized this as stemming from the fact that there were not so many of them in the
school—naturalized as a behavior one can expect from minority groups. That the Japanese or majority students’ behavior was seen as resulting from the perceived exclusionary behavior of JSL students reminded me of complaints/observations made by white U.S. educators in mostly white schools who believe that the African-American students in their schools exclude whites.

In discussing their attitudes toward different groups of JSL students, participants at times offered an implicit critique of Japanese students and society. Although participants discussed how they tried to treat all students in the same ways, they, nevertheless, acknowledged that they noticed differences between their Japanese students and JSL students, or that their Japanese students noticed differences. The following excerpt is from an interview with a teacher who worked mainly with Chinese immigrant students:

SS: Let me think of the difference…. I would say… Japanese students think that they belong in [to] the school, but the JSL students are outsiders. I don’t think there is a big difference as children.

KK: mm, I see. Do you mean Japanese students think that they are ‘number 1’?

SS: It is not that strong… but Japanese students don’t realize that JSL students came from different countries… They just feel the difference. Japanese students in my school don’t know about cultural difference yet, so they tend to say to the JSL students, “you are wrong,” or “you are strange.” It happens sometimes. They don’t understand the cultural difference at all. They think what they are doing is what is “common” in the world. But because the JSL students don’t follow their “common” sense, they feel the difference from them. (Interview Sasaki 9/28/09)
Sasaki went on to say that it was the job of teachers to explain cultural differences to mainstream students and to help them recognize what they think of as “common” may considered strange or different in other countries. For Sasaki, behavioral differences were perceived as cultural differences or national differences such as when she stated that “Japanese students don’t realize that JSL students came from different countries,” rather than possibly stemming from the situation newcomers find themselves in as “foreigners” in Japan.

**Differences between Asians and Latin Americans.** Throughout the interviewing process, I often had the sense that participants substituted region, nation, national origin for the word (and concept) race, and that somewhat essentialist views of nations and their nationals were not uncommon. A particular region or nation was often associated with particular cultural or religious views or beliefs. Confucian or Buddhist beliefs for example were explained as “Asian” or Chinese, or Thai, and Chinese and Thai nationals were considered to understand and embody Confucian and/or Buddhist knowledge and knowing.

In my interviews I became conscious of a tendency to distinguish between JSL students based on regional and national origin: Teachers seemed to portray certain characteristics as being *essentially* “Latin,” “South American” or “American” (meaning the U.S. in most cases) juxtaposed against characteristics defined as “Japanese,” “Asian,” “Buddhist” or “Confucian.” Although at times participants differentiated between Japan and other Asian nations, when discussing Latin Americans, cultural congruence between Japanese and “other Asians” was stressed by some participants.

I don’t see anyone who doesn’t want to study Japanese. Sometimes, students such as Latin Americans, tell me that they don’t need to study Japanese…It depends on the
educational background. Korean and Chinese students are taught by their parents to
study Japanese well, and to follow other students. (Interview Sasaki 9/28/09)

Although at the time of the study Sasaki worked primarily with Chinese students, she
appeared to believe that Latin American students felt learning Japanese was less important to
them and that they had not been taught by their parents as newcomer Chinese and Korean
students had been that they need to “follow” Japanese students and study hard.

Another participant made a similar observation:

MS: Differences. They are different from country to country. Like I said, I would say
the Asian children are more studious… I shouldn’t say stuff like this. Latin American
kids don’t like it [to study] as much, when you look at the whole.

KK: When you say they don’t like to study, why do you think they don’t like it? In
class, do they show it [that they don’t like it]? How do you know they don’t like it?

MS: In class, I never saw them take a class with everyone so I can’t tell, but there’s a
difference between volunteering to do it themselves and doing it because they are told
to do it. “What’s this? What’s that?” The Chinese girl we had back then asked an
enormous number of questions like ‘what’s this, what’s this?’ But a Peruvian student
I think, in the same grade looked absent-minded. It was the difference in such a
frequency. (Interview Morinaka 5/30/09)

Although Morinaka mentioned that she “shouldn’t say stuff like this” perhaps feeling she
shouldn’t notice differences, her perception was that Latin American children did not like to
study as much as Chinese students did. However, not all participants viewed Latin American
children as disinterested in study. Tanaka, another participant from Taguchi Middle School
made the following observations:
TS: There are differences between the students who are from Brazil, Peru, and Bolivia and the students who are from Korea, China, and South-East Asian countries.

KK: The way they study?

TS: Yeah, but the reason why they have to study in the future. So, in the end, students from Brazil have parents who are in a difficult situation and they don’t know if they can go to high school and are anxious about their future. Thus, those students are in a relatively somber mood. (Interview Tanaka 7/3/09)

For Tanaka, it was not their cultural background or lack of parental support, but the difficult economic situation faced by Brazilian, Peruvian and Bolivian students which was perceived as the reason for their attitudes in school.

When I asked participants about a student or students they felt had been particularly successful, though there were exceptions, the students whom teachers considered *academically* successful were more often than not Thai or Korean students. Participants at Taguchi Middle School where Brazilian students far outnumbered students of other nationalities, and where teachers were at the time working with students from Brazil, Peru, Bolivia, Korea, Thailand and Indonesia also stressed the academic success of their JSL students from Asian countries. Kobayashi accounted for a student’s success in the following way:

The most successful student is a girl from Thailand. She came to Japan when she was in the second grade of junior high school. Thailand is a Confucian country. Do you know [about] Buddhism? Buddhism is believed in Thailand, China, and Japan. Confucianism is believed in Korea. Children from these countries are earnest and
humanistic. Like Japanese, they are not reluctant to grind [work hard]. (Interview Kobayashi 5/28/09)

The story told was that although this child came to Japan with little or no Japanese ability, she was able, with Kobayashi’s assistance, to take the entrance exam of a Japanese high school and be admitted. She graduated from high school with high grades and eventually graduated from a university in Thailand. Now, she comes back to Japan to visit her mother and stops by the local junior high school to show her appreciation. When explaining the student’s success, what was communicated was not only a belief in Japanese meritocracy where an individual student’s hard work led to success, but a belief in “cultural congruence”—Thais, like Japanese, are Buddhists who believe in education. A belief in educational excellence is considered a Buddhist trait by Kobayashi. The girl’s mother was also praised for her willingness to pay the school fees:

What made me happy was that her mother who worked at bar allowed her to take full-time course. It is not part-time course at night. Her mother paid for bus fare to go to school even though the high school was far from their house. …And her mother allowed her to do many things. It was hard for her mother to pay, but her mother said that money would return after [her daughter began] working. Her mother said “Her chance to study would never return if she does not study now.” It is the idea of a Buddhist country. (Interview Kobayashi 5/28/09)

I was particularly interested in this statement because this student’s mother was seen as a model parent/mother, despite working in a bar, through her Buddhist “culture.” I found Kobayashi’s comments interesting in light of the fact that Japanese teachers, like teachers elsewhere, have been criticized for middle class bias or outright discrimination against
children from working class and working poor families (see Kanno, 2003, 2008; Lareau, 2000), and because when I worked at middle schools in the 1990s I heard numerous negative comments made by teachers toward the working poor and working mothers.

I also heard Kobayashi disparage the mother of a Nikkei Brazilian student. A single mother whom Kobayashi said had given birth to her daughter at age 15 and was currently unemployed, was criticized for wearing a sleeveless tank top when she came to conference with the participant about her daughter. I felt uncomfortable with this exchange since I had not perceived anything inappropriate with her clothing. To me she was dressed casually, and her clothes were neither tight nor revealing, so I wondered why the participant commented on her clothes, and I was reminded of the comments of other participants regarding their perceptions of their female Brazilian students’ “sexy” clothing. I felt a contrast between her perception of this Brazilian woman and the Thai mother of the “successful” JSL student. It appeared the ‘cultural congruence’ of the Thai mother’s Buddhist culture with Japanese culture allowed her to “overcome” her perceived class-based inadequacies, whereas the Brazilian mother was considered lacking, due to perceived class and cultural ‘traits.’

Interestingly, Kobayashi acknowledged that the Thai student was able to attend high school due to the fact that student numbers at the school were low that year, and the school administrators needed to fill seats, and once admitted, the school hired an interpreter to work directly with the student. However, Kobayashi narrates the student’s success as resulting in part from her (and her mother’s) national culture of diligence and the students’ own efforts. However, seen through the lens of CRT and Bell’s (1980) interest convergence principle, the school’s initial decision to admit the student may have resulted more from the need to fill a seat than to support her educational goals. In other words, the Thai girl’s admission to the
school suited the school’s purpose of maintaining student numbers. Therefore, rules were
changed or disregarded. Additionally, by heeding MEXT’s call to schools to internationalize
through the admittance of ‘international students’ the school may have benefitted in a
number of ways. According to Kobayashi, the student’s high school teachers said they were
happy with the outcome and had benefitted greatly from working with a foreign student,
which may have included a feeling of benevolence. This too may be viewed as supporting the
notion of interest convergence.

Differences between Nikkeijin and Latin Americans who are phenotypically
“foreign-looking.” With regard to the participants’ perceived differences between Nikkeijin
and Latin Americans who were phenotypically “different” it should be pointed out that the
majority of participants did not refer to the Brazilian, Peruvian or Ecuadorian JSL students as
Nikkeijin, but as Brazilian, Peruvian, ‘Latin’ and so on. Although it was the case that there
were quite a number of JSL students whose physical appearance differentiated them from the
mainstream students—several students mentioned their Italian or Portuguese heritage to
me—the majority of Latin Americans in Japan are those who entered Japan under a special
agreement with the government and are officially Nikkeijin.

This suggests a couple of things to me: First, when the law was created in 1990 the
image the lawmakers had of the Nikkei population was that there had been little if any
interracial marriage, but the fact is that Nikkeijin have married Latin Americans of diverse
ethnic and racial backgrounds. Lesser (2003) cites the number of “interethnic marriages”
between Nikkeijin and other Brazilian nationals at about forty-six percent and as high as sixty
percent in some regions of Brazil (p. 13). As a result, the children or step-children of
Nikkeijin do not fit the ‘ideal’ image the lawmakers had presupposed: They both looked and
acted “differently.” Many children I met had physical features, such as hair, eye and skin
color that may, in a U.S. context mark (or unmark) them as white, such as green or hazel eye
color, light brown hair and light to medium skin tones. Other students had features, including
eye color and shape which might mark them as Asian-white bi-racial, or as *mestiços*. I did
not meet children with phenotypes that would mark them as Afro-Brazilian or Afro-Peruvian,
which may suggest that the *Nikkeijin* in Brazil and Peru chose to align themselves with
powerful whites rather than less powerful blacks in their home countries. It may also suggest
that immigration to Japan for *Nikkei*-African-Brazilian partners may be more strictly
controlled, though I have no evidence of this. Although he never mentions Afro-Brazilians,
Lesser (2003) suggests that *Nikkei* Brazilians, many who are now part of the middle and
upper classes in Brazilian society have not wanted to “marry down” and because of the
model-minority stereotype, they may have been seen by other Brazilians (possibly racialized
as white) as “good marriage partners” (p. 13). Lesser also suggests that *Nikkeijin* in Brazil are
divided by such strategies as plastic surgery and intermarriage and that *Nikkei mestiços* in
Brazil tend to play down their Japanese heritage in social situations, but stress it when they
see economic benefits. Thus, *Nikkeijin* in Brazil are far from being a unified group.

Although there were certainly numbers of Latin American students in the schools
whose appearances differed from the mainstream Japanese students, large numbers of Latin
American students were phenotypically indistinguishable from their mainstream Japanese
classmates in terms of hair color and texture and other markers, and they likely made up the
largest percentage of JSL students. So the fact that teachers tended to refer to students as
Brazilians rather than *Nikkeijin* suggested to me that some teachers tended to view the
children more as foreigners than as Japanese descendants, despite official labels. This
corresponds with Tsuda’s (2001) discussion regarding his Japanese participants’ tendency to refer to their Nikkei co-workers and neighbors as “gaijin san” (Mr./Ms. Foreigner), which acted to socially distance themselves from Nikkeijin.

Tsuda (2001) comments on a ‘tendency’ among Japanese to assume cultural traits based on the way someone “looks”:

Racial descent is of primary importance in the definition of Japanese ethnic identity (see Kajita 169-170; Kondo 76. Yoshino) and takes precedence over culture as the first and foremost criterion determining who can be considered Japanese. This is because those of Japanese blood (nihon no chi), who therefore have a Japanese face (nihonjin no kao), are assumed to be culturally Japanese as well (see Kondo). This underlying ethnic assumption that correlates Japanese racial descent and appearance with Japanese culture is partly a result of a “perceptual association” (Yoshino 120) between the two that develops in nations, such as Japan, in which an ideology of ethnic homogeneity is maintained. In other words, because Japanese people are seen as the same race and perceived as culturally similar in thinking and behavior, the Japanese mind [sic] perceives a close correspondence between race and culture. (p. 62.)

Although I find Tsuda’s notion of “the Japanese mind” troubling, he draws attention to the tendency I found among participants in the study to connect phenotypical differences in students to cultural differences. Nikkei students who were perceived to look less ‘Japanese’ were associated with Brazilian ‘cultural traits’ more readily than Nikkei students whose physical appearance made them indistinguishable from other Japanese students.
The use of the Brazilian to identify *Nikkei* children may also denote an unstated assumption that the children were of “mixed” race. There is some evidence that Japanese media portrayals of Brazilians tend to emphasize their “mixed race” appearance. This tendency is evident also in educational materials. A MEXT-approved middle school English textbook used in Japan at the time of data collection, for example, features several ‘white’ Americans, Jim, Sam and Mike, and Paulo a ‘brown’ Brazilian with light colored-hair. (Sunshine English Course 2, 2006) In Japanese, children of white-Japanese parentage and of black-Japanese parentage are referred to as *haafu* for ‘half’ (see Noiri (2010) for a discussion about Amerasians in Okinawa) but I have not heard these terms used to talk about *Nikkei* children, so I wonder if the use of the word Brazilian itself denotes “mixed race.”

I should note here that during interviews I often used the word “Brazilian” myself on many occasions which may have reinforced its use among the participants. The following exchange is perhaps interesting in this regard:

KK: Are there any points of similarity or difference between Japanese students and JSL students?

KS: Mmm, could you give me some examples?

KK: Anything is fine. For example, classroom behavior, social relationships, friendships…

KS: The points of similarity or difference…Well, there are many points of similarity. There is no difference between Japanese students and JSL students. They feel sad when fighting with their friends, and they are happy when the teacher praises them. The biggest topic for them is boys and girls. Who is dating who? That kind of thing. There are so many points of similarity. The difference is…JSL students who come to
this school adopt the Japanese culture and style pretty well. They might want to wear earrings, necklaces, rings, and so on. Japanese junior high students don’t use hair wax [products] at school, but because they want to look cool, they put water on their hair to style it instead. I think Brazilian students look more mature than Japanese. During the summer break, I saw Brazilian girls wearing very sexy clothes. They didn’t even notice that, but they looked too sexy. I was worried. I guess that is the only difference.

KK: I see. How about the points of similarity and difference among Brazilian students? Are there any?

KS: Yes, there are. Everyone is different. I think students who look more like Japanese behave like Japanese students; students who don’t look like Japanese, well… [with] such as white skin color, [have] more character. It might apply to this school only... For example, in terms of food, students who have similar looks [whose appearance is more “Japanese”] eat their school lunch better than students who look European. (Interview Kudo 9/25/09)

In addition to Kudo’s claim that Brazilian girls wore “sexy clothing,” contrasting this possibly with her image of the clothing worn by Japanese teenagers, she went on to state that there was a tendency among the Brazilian students who were new to Japan, and particularly those who “looked European,” to put salt or sauce on their white rice, which appeared unusual to their Japanese classmates and teachers. Putting flavorings on white rice, like wearing “sexy” clothing, clearly marked these students as ‘different’ and was considered un-Japanese-like behavior. In this instance, however; when the participant revealed this preference for salt on rice to me, I laughed. When reviewing the transcriptions later, I questioned my reaction. Was I trying to appear more culturally appropriate than the Brazilian
students about whom she was talking? Was I trying to distance myself from this display of unJapaneselike behavior? My laugh implied agreement with the participant’s comments and implicated me in the othering and racialization of Nikkei students who do not “look” Japanese.

Differences between JSL students staying in Japan and JSL students returning to their country of origin and differences between JSL students dependent on age of arrival in Japan. The most common statement type regarding differences between the JSL students who planned to stay in Japan and those who were planning to return to their home countries was that students who planned to stay in Japan were more willing to learn and abide by rules and to work hard to learn Japanese.

Among foreign students there is a difference between the ones who try to fit into the Japanese way of living, thinking that they will have a life in Japan from now on, and the ones who want to go back to their home countries. Some think they want to get along with many Japanese children and others think they can just hang out with only foreign friends. (Interview Maruyama 7/02/09)

I do not doubt there were behavioral differences among the JSL students at Taguchi Middle School, particularly between those who felt some security in the present situation and those who were unsure whether or not they would be moving back to their home country in a month, a year or not at all. However, I got the feeling through my interviews, and from listening again and again to similar comments, that some participants perceived these behavioral differences to stem not only from the students’ position of uncertainty but were rather cultural or national traits, or they were related to their parents’ ambitions as in the following statement:
Parents’ attitudes are important. The worst thing is children who do not have dreams. Children who decide to live in Japan work hard. Children who are going to go back to their home countries in the future do not work hard. I think the purposes in coming to Japan and parents’ purposes influence the success and failure of their children. Even though a child says that he or she wants to stay in Japan and work part-time, there is nothing the child can do if his or her parents decide to go back to their home country. It is not easy to save money by himself or herself. There are no Brazilian students [from Taguchi Middle School] who go to university. (Interview Kobayashi 5/28/09)

Kobayashi sees the parents’ role as all important and has noted this on more than one occasion. Nevertheless the parents who are identified as (negatively) influencing their children’s futures are eventually identified as Brazilian.

Most participants in the study characterized JSL students who had lived in Japan the longest to be successful socially; they had Japanese friends, ate Japanese food and understood and obeyed the rules of the school and community. There was some acknowledgement that these students were not as academically successful as their Japanese peers; their grades were considered poor to average by most participants. There seemed to be some confusion in the part of teachers regarding this difference between these student’s social and academic ‘success’ which was at times accounted for by connecting it to their cultural or familial backgrounds. This seems to suggest that many of the participants were unfamiliar with the different levels of linguistic competence required for academic study at the middle school. As mentioned previously and as Vaipae (2001) found in her study, BICS/CALP distinctions were unacknowledged by the majority of participants in the study. Some participants seemed genuinely surprised by the realization that JSL students who had lived in
Japan for all or most of their lives had language problems which could impede academic success. However, there were a few participants who expressed their understanding of this issue. When I asked about the academic success of her JSL students, Sasaki made the following observations:

Academically? Well, it is tough for the students who came to Japan when they were still little [young]. This is definite. Students who came to Japan recently [at an older age] are able to study more effectively although it takes time to speak Japanese. For example, if they have knowledge of math in their language, they can understand the basics. They have the abstract concepts already, so it is easy for them to understand. They know what to say in Chinese. So, it is easier to study. Students who came to Japan when they were still little don’t understand the abstract concepts at all, so it takes them much longer to understand the concept. (Interview Sasaki 9/28)

Sasaki was aware that being unable to learn concepts in one’s first language and, thus, not having a clear idea of these concepts in the second language could cause serious issues for JSL students who were perceived to need little or no JSL or first language support. However, she was the only participant who discussed in any detail the positive effects of strong first language maintenance on second language acquisition in academic subjects. As mentioned previously a number of participants were surprised to realize that the longer a child lived in Japan did not necessarily correlate with stronger academic performance, and seemed to make sense of it by assuming the parents did not adequately help their children prepare for school or that the parents and children did not value education.
Following the Rules and Separating the Trash

Several times during interviews with participants, the issue of proper disposal of trash was brought up as a concern for the communities which had (or which felt they had) large numbers of migrant workers. On at least 5 occasions, with different participants, this matter was brought to my attention. For the participants the topic came up mostly as an example of what they considered foreign communities to be doing well—as in the 2 participants who mentioned that the foreign families and JSL students in their towns were noted for separating and throwing out their trash in the proper manner. In one interview, a former JSL middle school student, whom I had met when he came to the school to volunteer in the JSL classroom, was cited as a model citizen for explaining these rules to new Brazilian residents. Other participants mentioned how issues of trash disposal were or had been a problem in their communities, reasoning that this was why some Japanese disliked or were uncomfortable having foreigners live nearby. Even Tsuneyoshi (2011d, p. 146) mentions that the proper way of throwing away trash is seen as a major issue by the Japanese public, possibly on par with learning survival Japanese. In another article Tsuneyoshi writes: “it is interesting to note that one of the first things that happened in localities experiencing an influx of ‘newcomers’ was that directions of how to throw out the trash were translated into English and into several Asian languages” (2011c, p. 154). To understand the significance attached to the proper disposal of trash I include a description from Roth’s (2002) study:

One of the most persistent criticisms Japanese had of Brazilian residents was that they did not properly separate their trash for disposal…The rules for sorting garbage were quite complicated in many Japanese cities. The three broadest categories in Hamamatsu (city in Shizuoka Prefecture) were burnable \((moeru gomi)\), non-burnable
(moenai gomi) and recyclable. Certain types of plastics were burnable, others non-burnable, and still others recyclable. Most glass bottles were recyclable but had to be separated according to the color of the glass—brown, green, and clear. Aluminum cans and tin cans had to be thrown into different recycling bins. The pickup schedules for the major categories of garbage were different. Burnable items were picked up two or three times per week, non-burnable items just once a week, and recyclables once every other week or so. (p. 107)

Roth’s description captures much of the confusion I have had over the years, living in different cities and neighborhoods with different rules. In order to better understand local rules for trash disposal and recycling, it may be helpful to consider the following web page from the official website for Hamamatsu City, a city with a large number of foreign residents:

**Table 9. Recyclable Rubbish**

**Bottles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colorless Bottles / Brown Bottles</th>
<th>Bottles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Juice bottles / Jam jars / Liquor bottles</td>
<td>![Image of bottle with instructions]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remove cap</td>
<td>![Image of bottled with instructions]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rinse out with water</td>
<td>![Image of recycling bin]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 9 Continued

Cans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food tins /Aerosol Cans</th>
<th>Cans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Empty the spray can and pierce a hole in the bottom</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PET Bottles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items with this mark</th>
<th>PET Bottles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remove all caps and labels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rinse out with water</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crush and dispose</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Hamamatsu City, n. d.)
Foreign residents of Japan seemingly all have stories about the time/s they were chased or yelled at by an overzealous neighbor for putting their trash in the wrong bag or in the wrong space. Interestingly, the zealousness with which local rules for the separation and disposal of trash are followed is brought into stark contrast when considering the amount of trash that is often visible at public beaches or in ravines in rural areas where one might easily find an old appliance dumped. Control, it appears does not extend to these spaces.

Although I hesitate to draw uncritically on the concept of *uchi/soto* [inside/outside], one way to interpret this language and concern with ordering people (and refuse) spatially may be to discuss it in terms of *uchi/soto*. However, it should be clear that the tendency to order people and places into inside/insider versus outside/outsider is not peculiar to Japanese social order; it continues to be very much part of the current political discourse in western nations on issues of immigration and migration—both within and between national boundaries. (Sibley, 1995) Moreover, within Japan, there is a history of limiting the physical spaces where certain groups of people may live or work, such as the *burakumin*, who, to some degree, continue to live in segregated spaces. Although it is not the purpose of this study to examine *burakumin* minoritization in detail, the following information is included to contextualize the current control of physical space by mainstream Japanese and to perhaps link the racialization of newcomer migrant workers and their families to past (and continuing) racializations of other minoritized groups. Although there are some mainstream Japanese who continue to question whether or not *burakumin* are ethnically or racially Japanese (Neary, 1997, Saito & Farkas, 2004), “the *burakumin* of today are undeniably described as no different, ethnically, physically or in any other way, from the major segment of Japanese society” (Mutafchieva, 2009). The contemporary marginalized status of
*burakumin* in Japanese society is instead usually attributed to their ancestors’ work with meat and with human burial and the associated impurities (Mutafchieva, 2009). As Mutafchieva (2009) explains:

> During the seventeenth century, the status of those categorised as outcasts was made hereditary and they were forbidden to leave their places of birth. Despite the 1871 emancipation edict of the Meiji government, which abolished the derogatory use of the terms *eta* and *hinin* and stated that — “henceforth the people belonging to these estates shall be treated in the same manner both in occupation and social standing as the common people”, there was little change in the situation of the community members (Ninomiya 10). On the contrary, they were now officially grouped together into a single category, namely *burakumin*. They were also officially stripped of their monopoly on the meat and leather industries and were thus obliged to seek employment elsewhere. The prejudice they encountered forced them to stick together and seek alternative occupations. The multiplicity of paths *burakumin* have trodden and the struggles they have surpassed ever since their status was delineated is rarely delved into. In contrast, the negative images associated with their past have been a major concern for more than a century now. This is indeed why the people residing in *buraku* areas in contemporary Japan are still immediate categorized as a class apart. However, it is important to acknowledge that areas labelled *buraku* or outcast ghettos have expanded, shrunk, moved, transformed in space and time as have the people within them. (pp. 8 – 9)

The family registration system, by connecting one’s family to a particular residence, usually that of the husband’s parents (through the *honseki*, or record of one’s ancestral home),
connects burakumin who have moved out of a buraku to their family’s home and their stigmatized status (Bryant, 1991). And though there have been government efforts to prevent access to personal information, access to an individual’s family registration may allow potential employers and the families of potential spouses to ascertain whether or not an individual is from a buraku community. This information has been used as a means to prevent hiring burakumin and to prevent marriage between mainstream Japanese and burakumin (Bryant, 1991). Thus, the control of public and private space by mainstream Japanese through Japanese law impacts minoritized groups differently than it does mainstream Japanese, and the laws may provide means for continued segregation.

With regard to the current treatment of non-Japanese residents in Japan, Tsuda (1998) citing Lebra’s 1976 work explains that treatment of non-Japanese residents in Japan (in this case, Nikkei Brazilians) may differ according to context within “four domains of situational interaction”; uchi-ura (within one’s group- in private), soto-ura (outside of one’s group- in private), uchi-omote (within one’s group-public), soto-omote (outside one’s group-public), with each situation creating s somewhat different social response (p. 356). Although Tsuda’s study, which took place in the 1990s, did not find overt discrimination against Nikkeijin, he states that outward displays of politeness are not to be understood as acceptance. He also notes that his Japanese informants feared an increase in non-Nikkei foreign workers whom they associated with an increase in crime and other social problems as well as “a source of cultural and racial impurity and pollution” (p. 339).

Writing of the binary which associates “inside” with cleanliness and “outside” with filth, Tsuda writes:
When a protective spatial barrier is created through the social separation of immigrant workers, the individual's negative affective reaction toward their contaminating presence can be controlled by rationalizing their presence as an unavoidable consequence of domestic and international economic conditions. However, when impure foreigners enter more private and personal domains, the physical proximity of and direct contact with the source of pollution makes the danger and threat of contamination much greater and the psychological reaction of revulsion stronger. (1998, p. 340)

Contamination, according to Tsuda’s informants might take the form of inter-racial marriage and children without “pure” bloodlines, as well as the use of public baths by foreigners.

Again, it is important to clarify that this process of othering the culturally or racially ‘different’ is neither a particularly ‘Japanese’ phenomenon, nor is it totalizing: Neither the processes of social control nor the results are unchanging or unchangeable. Sibley (1995) discussing links between space and social control and interactions between individuals, social groups and the constructed environments of cities and towns in western societies claims:

We can envision the built environment as an integral element in the production of social life, conditioning activities and creating opportunities according to the distribution of power in the socio-spatial system. For some, the built environment is to be maintained and reproduced in its existing form if it embodies social values which individuals or groups have both the power and the capacity to retain. For others, the built environment constitutes a landscape of domination. It is alienating, and action on the part of the relatively powerless will register in the dominant vocabulary as deviance, threat or subversion. (p. 76)
Sibley does not suggest that individuals are necessarily conscious of their power or lack thereof to change the environment. Instead social control of space—in urban and rural neighborhoods and in schools— is maintained with very little overt exertion of power. In the Japanese case, considering the comments of Tsuda’s (1998) Japanese participants as well as those of the participants in this study, a correlation can be found between the perceived threat of impurities, and laws and rules instituted at the local or national level to ‘retain’ the perceived purity of Japanese cities, towns, schools and blood. Tsuda contends that “Japanese-Brazilians, as Japanese descendants who have been born and raised abroad, have acquired a certain connotation of cultural impurity” (1998, p. 337). insistence that Nikkei Brazilian and Peruvian students should not wear perfume or have piercings, should tuck in their shirts and conform to ‘commonsense’ notions of what is appropriate for their age group may be connected to the control exerted by local communities to stop immigrant and migrant families from gathering and speaking in Portuguese or Spanish outside their apartments at night or to enforce proper trash disposal.

In the early 1990s the large gatherings of Iranian males in public parks in Tokyo sparked extremely negative comments in the press, which certainly informed and were informed by the changes in Japanese immigration law resulting in the migration of large numbers of Nikkei South Americans to Japan. Kura (2003) analyzing popular magazine accounts of Iranians in Japan between 1990 and 2003 found that negative images of Iranians increased as national projects to prohibit Iranians from settling in Japan, through such measures as the revocation of the ‘No Visa Agreement’ between Japan and Iran, were being made law. He argues that once the laws were in place, images of Iranian criminal behavior and violence became more entrenched. On Sundays, from 1990 – 1993, Yoyogi Park in
Tokyo was a gathering place for migrant workers, mostly Iranians. Farsi-language newspapers, food items and music were sold in the park, as well as the ubiquitous illegal telephone cards which could be used to make long-distance phone calls (Machimura, 2000; Sellek, 2001). Local businesses and residents complained about the presence of migrant workers, and in 1993 before the royal wedding of the Japanese Prince, the Tokyo government closed the park for three months in order to “beautify” it (Machimura, 2000). The groups who had been meeting there began to gather in front of Harajuku Station. Police began patrolling that area as well as Ueno Park and began rounding up and deporting mostly Iranians (Sellek, 2001). Machimura (2000) suggests that excluding foreign workers from public spaces has been a “typical reaction of Japanese society” (p. 187). Sellek (2001) notes Japanese society found Iranians “too visible” (p. 108) and a “disturbance [to] public peace and order” (p. 109). So much so that “it was considered necessary for the Immigration Bureau and the police to carry out round-up operations to protect national prestige” (p. 109).

However, years later South Americans are criticized for similar ‘abuses’ to public and private space. In Tsuda’s (1998) study, he mentions that Machida city (Tokyo) residents complained that Nikkei Peruvians who rented soccer grounds from a local university were ‘frightening’ because they played music and drank until 10 p.m., prompting the university’s refusal to allow them further use of the grounds. Looking back at Tsuneyoshi’s (2004) claim that multiculturalism exists in “pockets” in Japan, separation and segregation may be argued as strategies for keeping the majority of Japanese away from foreign impurities, while the majority Japanese nationals who live in these “multicultural” enclaves persist in controlling local spaces in ways, even through the control of trash separation, which privilege their claim to spatial purity.
Racialization of Brazilian Students in Japanese Schools

The majority of the participants in the study perceived differences between Latin American and Asian JSL students, in their attitudes toward study, in their parents’ values toward socialization and childrearing, and in their expected future paths. In many cases, likely because of the comparatively large number of Brazilian students in public schools, the students the participants visualized when they made their comments were more often than not Brazilian nationals.

In comparing the social positioning of Nikkei Brazilians in Brazil and in Japan, Tsuda (1998) characterizes the status of Nikkeijin in Brazil as that of a “positive minority” while their positioning in Japan is one of “negative minority” status. Tsuda defines “positive minority groups in the following way:

[P]ositive minorities are numerically smaller and are not the dominant power holders in society, but enjoy a generally higher socioeconomic status than the majority populace and are respected and admired for their distinctive cultural qualities and social position. (p. 321)

In contrast, Tsuda sees Nikkeijin in Japan as occupying a negative minority status, defining them as a “group that suffers from low social status, cultural disparagement, and discrimination” (1998, p. 321), and he argues that this ascribed negative minority status has several characteristics. Among these is a characterization of Japanese Brazilians as “failed” Japanese; individuals who were unable to make it in Japan and therefore, emigrated.

Additionally, he argues that because they emigrated, not to the U.S. a “first-rate” country, but to Brazil which is seen by many Japanese as a crime-ridden, poor nation, further characterizes Nikkeijin as “failed” Japanese. It has also been suggested that since many of the
Japanese who emigrated were both of low-socioeconomic status and of Okinawan heritage, they experienced both racial/ethnic prejudice and class prejudice before emigration (see Sellek, 1996; Mori, 2003). The second cause Tsuda (1998) discusses is class bias, which he explains both in reference to the Nikkeijin’s recent experiences as unskilled laborers as well as their pre-emigration low socioeconomic status. Tsuda further explains that Japanese tend to disparage Nikkeijin based on bias toward Brazilian ethnic and “cultural” characteristics, but claims that although individual Japanese may hold these biases, they rarely act on them in any discriminatory way.

In fact, as Tsuda found in his research among factory workers in the 1990s, the Japanese workers he observed and interviewed did not treat Nikkeijin with any obvious disrespect even though they may have expressed negative views when interviewed. As Tsuda explains, the cultural biases toward the Nikkeijin stem from the “disappointment” felt when Nikkeijin do not speak Japanese ‘correctly’ (as when not using keigo—the language form denoting respect— when speaking to superiors) or persist in “un-Japanese-like behaviors,” such as not working as diligently as their co-workers. The final cause given by Tsuda (1998) results from what he refers to as the Japanese “psychocultural” tendency to put foreigners at a distance. An anthropologist, Tsuda is familiar with the (essentialized?) cultural constructions of uchi/soto or inside/outside, in which the inside is constructed as pure and the outside as impure. According to Tsuda (1998), it is through this framework that foreigners are viewed, which results in an ambiguous feeling of both revulsion and attraction. There is a contradiction in that Nikkeijin are seen both as sharing Japanese cultural traits and as being unable to embody them. Tsuda makes the following observation. He states that Japanese maintain:
an ideology in which racial descent and blood ties are the primary basis for the
definition of Japanese ethnic identity and feelings of ethnic commonality. "Japanese
blood" takes precedence over "culture" as the first and most fundamental criterion
that determines who can be considered "Japanese." This is shown in the case of the
Korean-Japanese and other foreigners of non-Japanese descent, who can never be
considered ethnically Japanese even if they are born and raised in Japan and have

What Tsuda describes as cultural notions or ethnic biases, to me are instances of
racialization: Of the 13 participants who worked with and talked about their Brazilian
students with me, only one participant identified the students as Nikkeijin, other participants
identified JSL students primarily by nationality. One participant noted the following about
foreign students, but specifically referred to Brazilians:

Foreign children are in high spirit unlike Japanese children. There are many talkative
children. When such children gather, especially Brazilian children, they romp. I
wonder whether I should scold and quiet them or I should practice harmoniously. I
worry about it by myself. (Interview Yamada 4.23.09)

Yamada voiced his concerns about foreign children, specifically Brazilian children, by
stating that they were talkative. Although he does not mention Japanese nationals in the same
sentence, he nevertheless compares the foreign children with Japanese children, who are
quiet or ‘well-behaved’ by contrast. He also seemed to naturalize ‘romping’ and ‘talkative’
behavior as Brazilian, and he mentioned his worries about how he could control these
students. Like Yamada, at times participants appeared to present deficit notions about
Brazilian students’ families and their “cultures,” as defined by their nationality. In particular,
as several of the interview excerpts suggest, Brazilian students and their families were seen as less interested in education. Thus, there seemed to be a question in the minds of some regarding what teachers could do to support students whose families were not willing to invest in their children’s education. Latin American students were characterized as easy-going, fun-loving, talkative and not-so serious by some in contrast to “Japanese” students.

Again it should be noted that several participants mentioned the enjoyment they felt working with JSL students or having JSL students in their mainstream classes, because they were envisioned as willing to put themselves forward. Japanese students were described as lacking confidence and needing to be “trained” to “stand out” unlike Latin Americans who were described as “naturally” able to participate. Interestingly the students who were seen to be successful were also characterized in this way. Students who were seen as “failures” (although there was hesitation to use this word) were, on the other hand, characterized as withdrawn, introverted or unmotivated, doing only what they “liked” not what they did not want to do.

Not all participants made these types of statements, though, and some were critical of what they viewed as discriminatory behavior on the part of many Japanese. One participant explained clearly the majority (deficit) view toward Brazilian and other foreigners and their families when relating what happened in a rural area ten years earlier when migrant workers began to live there:

Well, back then, I heard about the local community. It was the time when the number of foreign people increased, the time when they started to increase their number gradually. So for example, about the disposal of garbage, they [municipalities] have a rule that tells residents on what days of each month to throw away garbage, but
foreign people expectedly, didn’t know about those rules. And also about the time that children are out of the house, in Japan they don’t stay out until too late, but foreign people for example stay out until 9 at night, 10 o’clock, which gave an impression to Japanese people that “this community has become a worse place to live after they came here.” I guess that was also a negative factor for her [a JSL student]. So the whole community found it troublesome when foreigners came and didn’t do this or that correctly. The community felt so and in short they had a discriminatory mind, I think. (Interview Kamata 8/25/09).

Although Kamata did not name them as such, the foreigners in this town were predominantly Brazilian nationals. Noticeably, he is discussing other people’s opinions, from the point of view of someone who heard the story, but had not been present. Kamata was, thus, explaining to me commonsense notions of this Japanese community and labeling them as discriminatory.

Racialization, as has been noted by a number of scholars, is a process. It can be carried out through discourse, through the language used to describe individuals of particular nationalities in particular ways. Although the participants in the study may not have recognized their involvement in the racialization process, every time they confirmed what another teacher said about individual Brazilian, Korean or Thai students, they became part of the process: They were helping to create and recreate an essentialized image of particular nationals, oftentimes in contrast to Japanese (Japanese versus foreigners) or other foreign nationals (Brazilians versus Koreans). On the other hand, teachers also worked to disrupt this process: When Kuriyama explained to her mainstream students that some of their Brazilian classmates, whom they regarded as lazy or immature, worked at home to help their parents or
volunteered on weekends to coach younger siblings or neighbors, she helped change
perceptions and create new understandings among students. The racialization process is
uneven and the same individuals may work simultaneously to both engage in and disrupt
racialization.

Discourse is not only a part of the process but a result of it as well, and discourse
alone does not account for differences in educational attainment. However, discourse helps
create an atmosphere in which differentiated educational attainment can be understood as
common sense. If the racialized images of children of Brazilian migrant workers are
pervasive enough, the idea of the truant Brazilian child and the notion that “Brazilians are not
good at math,” or “Brazilians do not care about education (as we Japanese do)” become
expected outcomes.

Certainly, as Tsuneyoshi (2011b) explains, the construction of JSL student categories
is interactive: JSL students are not merely “receivers” of an identity that is constructed from
the outside, but they are actively involved in constructing or deconstructing their identities
within the social contexts in which they live. But at the same time, there are constraints as to
how JSL students are able to identify themselves in Japanese society; they are constrained by
the categories that are being used, shifted and shaped by the powerful actors in a given
society at a particular time. (Nagel, 1994; Tsuneyoshi, 2011b)

Using Collins’ notion of the “dialectical analyses of power” (2000, p. 274) allows me
to consider that it is not simply one group (majority Japanese) oppressing another group
(Brazilian immigrants and migrant workers). Rather, the relationship is far more complex;
Brazilian migrant workers find ways to resist domination and redefine themselves vis-à-vis
and in comparison to Japanese nationals or other foreign nationals. As Collins states: “the
notion of a dialectical relationship suggests that change results from human agency” (2000, p. 274). Within the “category” of Brazilian migrant worker or majority Japanese are also competing groups and individuals who may or may not be in the same side of a particular social issue such as education. Old -comer Korean communities may support newcomer Koreans in one area and then work against their interests in another. Mainstream Japanese public school teachers may work to support individual JSL students, while not believing they will be able to enter an accredited high school or be “employable” in Japanese society.

Interestingly participants did not make any connections between old-comer minoritized populations and the current JSL students, perhaps because of the fact that Koreans, Chinese and other former colonized groups were not given any special recognition with regard to education. They were expected to simply sink or swim within the mainstream system. As foreigners by way of nationality, they, like the newcomer children are not by law required to attain compulsory education, although in practice as long as the parents or guardians of a non-Japanese children make requests to the local government for their children to attend school, all children are able to attend. They are upon attendance to be treated as other Japanese children. Thus assimilation remains the goal of Japanese education: it is also the process by which educators sort the students who can fit into the system and those who cannot. Racialization may after all work to justify the sorting out of those who by behavior and inability to speak and write Japanese “properly” are considered unsuitable to be educated and socialized as Japanese. Connecting the JSL students’ difficulty in managing their academic work and developing their Japanese linguistic competence to national/cultural traits may allow Japanese educators to both critique the Japanese education system while nevertheless upholding it. Ultimately, though the majority of the participants
believe that the schools could do a better job of supporting JSL students and that MEXT’s policies are incoherent or nonexistent, the tendency was to see student success as “up to” the students and their families.
Chapter 6: Conclusions

The situation faced by JSL students and their teachers in Japanese public schools in the 21st century needs to be understood within the broader context of political, economic and educational globalization, in the interplay between international agreements and national laws and policies on such issues as immigration, labor and education, and in the increasingly neo-liberal policies of the Japanese government (see Takayama, 2008a, 2008b). With public elementary and junior high schools unable to meet the demands of an increasingly diverse student population, NGOs, and other volunteer and community groups have attempted to fill in the gaps. While MEXT reinvents itself as an overseer of educational quality, volunteer groups are not bound by testing or other assessment measures, and thus may enjoy curricular freedom in a way public schools cannot. However, despite the real needs of language minority children which volunteer and other community groups try to meet, the question that is being asked is whether volunteers can and should meet these needs. Seen from the perspective of the state, volunteer organizations relieve it from the responsibility of educating children without Japanese passports. In other words, if certain needs of foreign residents, including the education of their children, are being met by volunteer organizations, pressure on the government to meet these needs diminishes (Nihei, 2010). It is possible then, that the efforts of the volunteer organizations may then be used by the neo-liberal government to suggest its participation is not necessary.

So, although I certainly do not deny the efforts of NGOs and volunteer associations which support non-Japanese residents and undocumented migrant workers, I do not think that real change can come for JSL students who are not recognized by the central government or the population in general as having the right to an equitable education, one that does not put
them “at risk” and one that does not force them to assimilate to particular notions of what it means to be Japanese, or not Japanese.

**Race as Constructed by Law**

Haney-López (1996) explains how U.S. law has been used to construct race, and in doing so he provides a framework through which to consider mechanisms by which Japanese law accomplishes similar objectives. Haney-López points to two functions of law which allow race to be produced and reproduced; one is a controlling function through which ‘every day’ decisions are regulated, such as whom individuals are allowed to marry, where individuals and groups are allowed to live and so on, and the other is an ideological function, through which law “shape[s] and constrain[s] how people think about the world they inhabit” (p. 86).

Within the context of Japan, immigration law has constructed race in various ways. The controlling function of immigration law is perhaps most clear: In contemporary Japan, immigration law is used to restrict access to Japan by groups considered ‘undesirable,’ by limiting entry for unskilled laborers, through the maintenance of visa distinctions (privileges) along a racial hierarchy (Shipper, 2008) and other means. The *Koseki* or the Family Registration System though not controlling the birth of non-Japanese or stateless individuals, has placed limitations on who can or cannot be Japanese. These are a few examples of the ways in which law controls behavior in ways that construct race.

The ideological function of law is more difficult to discern, but one way to understand may be to consider how law *legitimates* certain beliefs as correct or true and others as incorrect or false. “The images and categories embedded in law are accepted as the way things are at the same time that they *limit conceptions of the way things might be*”
(Haney-López, 2005, p. 87, emphasis added). Restrictive immigration practices have in part created the Japanese ‘race’: Japanese ‘look’ a certain way, by which they ‘embody’ the nation, and this comes to be understood as how Japanese should look.

**Immigration and education law as racial projects: The 1990 changes to immigration law as a “failed” racial project.** In considering that the current number of Nikkei Brazilians and Peruvians in Japan and in public Japanese schools is a direct result of the changes in immigration law in the 1990s which allowed those who qualified under the newly created “long-term resident” visa (available only to Nikkeijin up to the third generation) to work without restriction in Japan, it seems possible to consider this a failed racial project. Yamanaka asserts:

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 being technical 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, criticisms of Japan for being “racially” oriented was deflated. (2003, p. 176)

Despite these disclaimers Yamanaka finds that the “‘racial’ consideration was nonetheless a factor in the government’s decision to revise the law” (p. 176). In explaining this she cites a former foreign affairs ministry official, Katsunori Toda, who in a 1990 interview in a journal
published by the Japan Immigration Association, discussed the importance of the “blood ties” between *Nikkei* Brazilians and Japanese. According to him, *Nikkeijin* unlike other Asians, were relatively wealthy and “more Japanese than contemporary Japanese” (p. 177), thus their motivation in working in Japan was to reconnect with their cultural roots rather than—in contrast to “other” Asians—migration only for the sake of earning money. Furthermore, Toda stressed that since *Nikkeijin* were not motivated solely for economic reasons, *they were likely to return to Brazil*, unlike other Asians whom he did not expect to return to their home countries (Yamanaka, pp. 176 - 177).

Regardless of how the 1990 revision of the immigration law was explained in the days before and after it was put into effect, it seems rather clear that the underlying intention of the law’s creators was to “preserve” an image of the Japanese nation as homogeneous with respect to race, culture and language. Chapman (2006) suggests that “the definition of what it is to be Japanese is … central to the problematic of homogenisation of Japanese national identity” which he compares to the importance of whiteness in ‘Western’ national identity discourses (p. 91). Tsuda notes: “Undoubtedly, the introduction of ethnic diversity through immigration threatens the efforts of the Japanese state to consolidate national unity by maintaining an ideology of ethnic homogeneity” (2001, p. 82). The fact that the majority of mainstream Japanese, both in this study and elsewhere such as in Tsuda’s work, appear to stress the differences between themselves and the *Nikkeijin* they work with or teach, signals a failure to socially integrate *Nikkeijin* and their families. Although the act of noticing differences may not clearly indicate that the majority Japanese population wish to exclude *Nikkeijin*, the fact that these perceived differences were (and are) oftentimes considered problematic by the groups and individual actors engaged in this discourse suggests that
difference or diversity, in and of itself, is not valued. The government’s 2009 decision to offer financial compensation to *Nikkeijin* families to leave Japan was but the latest of a number of indicators that the Japanese government wished to decrease the number of unassimilable *Nikkeijin* and their families. Moreover, that many *Nikkeijin* understand they are not part of the social fabric of Japan is attested to again and again.

Before I continue, however, I should note that Omi & Winant (1994) assert that not all racial projects are ‘racist.’ Laws which are created to redress past injustices, though they may be racial projects in that they are used to redistribute resources to a particular ‘racial’ group, are not constructed to create or recreate inequality based on race, and are, thus, not racist. If the purpose of the 1990 changes to the Immigration and Refugee Control Act was to maintain a racially homogenous Japan and to make it increasingly difficult for groups that are constructed as ‘unassimilable’ to live and work in Japan, it may be considered a racist racial project.

There is, as stated above, evidence that this particular racial project failed since a great many *Nikkeijin* are currently seen as ‘unassimilable.’ However, despite the surface failure of this racial project, there appears to have been no intention to fully incorporate *Nikkeijin*, if we can believe Toda’s words as cited by Yamanaka. Thus perhaps the project has not failed, but rather has been reconfigured: the *Nikkeijin*, no longer seen as having the cultural qualities to be (considered) Japanese, and having married non-Japanese Brazilians, are now seen as fully foreign. Though *Nikkeijin* who are considered suitable may continue to work in factories under less than stable conditions, the ‘foreignness’ of the *Nikkeijin* eliminates the need for the central government to demand compulsory education for their children. Furthermore, the government does not risk being criticized for treating *Nikkeijin*
better than migrant workers from other nations: Since social integration is no longer expected, the need to provide an equitable education is considered unnecessary. Like their parents, the children of Nikkei migrant workers and immigrants who ‘behave as Japanese’ may benefit from Japanese educational policies, but those who continue to ‘behave as Brazilians,’ who cannot use appropriate Japanese at the appropriate times, or who use public spaces in ways that are not approved by the local community will find they cannot benefit from Japanese public education.

Tsuda argues that with Nikkeijin permanently residing in Japan, rather than developing a multicultural identity, the “discourse and consciousness of self-sameness” among mainstream Japanese will be revitalized, “enhancing the ethnic control of the nation-state” (p. 82). In a sense the failure of the racial project –that of bringing Nikkeijin into the fold of Japaneseness—however temporary—now acts to reinvigorate the sense of sameness among ‘real’ Japanese and to distance them from those who have been corrupted by and through association with other cultures. This process appears to substantiate a basic tenet in Said’s (1979) notion of othering. In defining and explaining the impact of Orientalism on the ‘West,’ Said explains the necessity of creating an/the other in defining self. In order to define and clearly articulate self it must be contrasted with an/the other whose cultural beliefs and knowledge are different (and inferior). As Burgess (2004) explains: “self is defined less by what one is and more by what one is not, through a process of ‘Othering’” (The push and pull of identity, para 4.). In the context of Japan, the post-1990 central government othering/racialization of Nikkeijin and other Latin Americans produces a reinvigorated sense of what Japanese are and who they can be (and who can be Japanese).
The FLE as a successful racial project. Unlike the failure of the 1990 changes to Japanese immigration policy, the 2006 changes in the Fundamental Law of Education (FLE) appear to successfully limit educational opportunities for non-Japanese children living in Japan, and thus may be considered a successful racial project which supports Japanese racial nationalism.

In essence, although the 2006 changes have been heatedly discussed in Japan, with regard to the education of the children of foreign nationals, the 2006 revisions did little to change the intent of the original law. As in 2006, compulsory education under the 1947 FLE did not include non-Japanese children. Considering the FLE as a racial project makes it possible to understand why it was not amended in 1951 to reflect the immense changes brought about by the San Francisco Peace Treaty. When in 1951 Koreans and Taiwanese in Japan lost Japanese citizenship rights, the Japanese government no longer assumed responsibility for their children’s education; compulsory education was the right of all Japanese, and the duty of the Japanese government. The 1965 United Nations Treaty between Japan and Korea made it possible for Korean residents who received permanent residency under the agreement to receive “equitable” treatment in Japanese schools. Article IV of the ‘Agreement on the legal status and the treatment of the nationals of the Republic of Korea residing in Japan (with agreed minutes and records of discussions) between Japan and the Republic of Korea, signed at Tokyo, on 22 June 1965’ states that Japan will carefully consider: “matters concerning education, livelihood protection and national health insurance in Japan for the nationals of the Republic of Korea who are given permission for permanent residence in Japan in accordance with the provisions of Article I” (United Nations ILC, 1972, p. 19). With this agreement, Korean resident children, children or grandchildren of former
colonized subjects who had lost their status as Japanese nationals with the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty, were to receive the same education as Japanese nationals.

What this meant in practice was that Korean permanent residents, zainichi Koreans, would be allowed to enroll in Japanese schools under the condition that they assimilate. In practice this meant until recently, the use of Japanese names, rather than their Korean names, and a number of other measures to make them indistinguishable from the majority Japanese population. Although there has been continued activism on the part of zainichi Koreans in certain areas of Japan, the FLE on the whole succeeded in keeping Japanese education for the Japanese.

In 1990 Japan signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Since then, Japan has issued periodic reports which detail how the nation is responding to issues which affect the health and safety of children within its borders. Twenty years later, the Committee on the Rights of the Child responded to Japan’s third report with a detailed explanation of progress made by Japan as well as recommendations (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2010).

Among its concerns the Committee expressed concern that Japan had not yet passed a Human Rights Protection Bill nor established an independent national Human Rights Commission to ensure implementation of the Convention. Furthermore it was noted that although the Japanese government has gathered much data on children, there is a “lack of data in relation to some areas covered by the Convention, including on the school enrolment rates of children living in poverty, children with disabilities and non-Japanese children, as well as on violence and bullying in schools” (p. 4). Further the Committee noted that children whose parents are not married, children of ethnic minorities, children without Japanese
nationality, children of migrants and refugees, as well as children with disabilities continue to face discrimination, and that article 5 of the 1947 Fundamental Law of Education which stipulated gender equality in education had been removed. Further recommendations include that Japan:

(a) [a]mend its nationality and citizenship laws and regulations in accordance with the provisions of article 7 of the Convention so as to ensure the registration of all children and protect children from de jure statelessness; and

(b) [c]onsider ratifying the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. (p. 8).

Finally the report specifically mentioned the lack of financing for ethnic Korean and Chinese schools by the Japanese government, the lack of a “balanced view of historical events in the Asia-Pacific region” in official school textbooks (p. 14), the detainment of refugee children, and the lack of legislation to support children of historically marginalized groups including ethnic minorities and indigenous people.

Despite pressure from international agencies including the United Nations, the 2006 changes to the FLE can be understood as a refusal on the part of the Japanese government to allow interference in its national education program. Not only was the language of exclusion made less ambiguous by the insertion of Nihon kokumin (Japanese nationals) as the benefactors of compulsory education in the 2006 amendment, the addition of phrases under the objectives of education, Article 2, make it clear that Japanese education should foster respect and love of Japan (MEXT, n.d.a). The FLE may be understood as a racist racial project which has succeeded in reconfirming that Japanese education is for Japanese nationals, and Japanese nationals are linguistically, culturally and ‘racially’ Japanese.
Teachers Who Support and Disrupt Racialization Processes: The Issue of “Caring”

Racialization processes are uneven and inconsistent. As became apparent during interviews with participants in the study and in reflecting upon my own role/s and participation in the interview process, the same individuals may act both support and disrupt the racialization of individuals and groups. Scheurich (1995) reminds us that the language a participant uses may mean one thing to the researcher and another to the participant, and moreover; that the connections between language and meaning are ambiguous and shifting. Although the participants in this study may have believed they were explaining their feelings and experiences to me clearly, the questions I asked and the fact that I coded the data in particular ways in order to ‘answer’ my particular research questions mean that I can neither hope to fully comprehend nor address the possible meanings attached to the participants’ words. That I focused on racialization of student identities meant that I represented certain aspects of the participants’ words and not others. When I consider which excerpts I have included and all of the ones I did not include, I also begin to see how my research has positioned these participants in certain ways.

I consider several of the participants, but in particular, Kuriyama, Kobayashi, Sasaki, Nagashima and Morita as advocates for JSL students, though perhaps for different reasons. I’d like to discuss a couple of them here. Nagashima’s teaching situation, as she explained it, is particularly memorable although she had quit teaching to pursue a Master’s degree by the time of the data collection. JSL students, mostly Chinese nationals, who had stopped attending classes at schools in different parts of the city, were invited to attend a JSL class at a downtown location. Although a certified teacher and JSL specialist, Nagashima was paid approximately US$70 per month to create, organize and teach the JSL classes. As such she
was treated as a volunteer by the local board of education who asked her to undertake this project. Nagashima showed a great deal of respect toward the students who came to the center where she taught and to the volunteer who had been working with individual students. Although she had quit the position due to the isolation she felt, she decided to continue working with the students individually because she felt she could better support them outside of the ‘system.’ She told me that what bothered her, aside from complete lack of support the students had received at their middle schools, was that the Chinese students tried to hide their national identity from others. They didn’t want others to know they were not Japanese. When I last spoke to her, sometime after the second interview, she told me that she still kept in close contact with a few of her former students, even when she was outside of Japan.

Kobayashi is quite outspoken, which, aside from the hours I spent in her company, may be one reason so many of her comments were reproduced in this text. Despite some of the troubling statements (I felt) she made about individual parents and students, and despite what I saw as a tendency to racialize Brazilian students in particular ways, I do not want to misrepresent Kobayashi as uncaring or ineffective. She mentioned once that she felt Nikkeijin, because of their visa status were taken better care of by the Japanese government but that students from Southeast Asia often suffered. Although she prided herself on being strict, I heard her engage in verbal play with students, and she joked that she really enjoyed “juvenile delinquents” because at heart she was one too. Kobayashi’s relative marginalization at the school she worked for should also be understood. Despite being a special education teacher, not a JSL specialist, she had been in charge of the JSL classroom at Taguchi Middle School for 11 years at the time of the data collection. In that time, she received little or no financial support and used her own money to buy and make appropriate teaching materials. Once,
when I asked her whether she attended seminars on JSL teaching held by universities or the local board of education, she replied that the [university] people who organized these programs acted as if they had all the answers, and yet they didn’t understand what happened in the schools on a daily basis. She had studied Portuguese and Spanish in order to help the Nikkei students she worked with, and she tried to learn at least a little of the other languages spoken by JSL students with whom she worked. She worked individually with students to help them prepare to take high school entrance exams, she seemingly went out of her way to let students’ parents know how to apply for financial aid, and she paid, with the help of colleagues, the lunch fees of some of the students whose parents or guardians couldn’t afford to pay. Although her work was recognized by some of her colleagues, she worked on a yearly contract basis, and thus did not have job security. Although she sometimes made negative comments about JSL students’ parents’ she also harshly criticized colleagues, the school, MEXT, the local government and she told me that she wanted me to tell others what was ‘really going on’ in the schools.

What this study suggests is that effective classroom teaching and caring relationships between teachers and students do not negate the racialization process. In other words, racialization processes operate through “good” people as well as through the more obvious of racists. In writing this it is not my intention to ignore the positive work that is done on a daily basis by teachers in schools. Nor do I write this to deny responsibility for racialization, because “good” people who are in the majority group also benefit from racialization, whether or not they/we acknowledge their/our privilege. Despite the apparent marginalization of teachers in public schools, and in particular JSL specialists and those who work primarily with JSL students, they are more privileged than most of their JSL students: The actions of
public middle school teachers—the ways they talk about students, the decisions they make with regard to their students’ linguistic and academic abilities and the type of futures they imagine for their students—materially affect their students’ lives. This also suggests that if teachers develop awareness of the racialization processes they participate in, they may act to interrupt them. Kuriyama, for example made it a point to interrupt when she saw the potential for bullying among students. She ‘interrupted’ conversations, and she told her JSL students that she noticed their everyday ‘kindnesses.’ Thus, she helped co-construct a positive, alternative identity for Nikkei Brazilian students that might help them position themselves in their daily interactions with Japaneseness.

**Implications and Tentative Suggestions**

Although the discourse of a homogeneous Japan, which constructs the racial category ‘Japanese,’ continues to be reinvigorated at the government level, in laws and educational policies, there are signs that competing discourses such as multicultural co-existence have some influence at the local level, at least in the areas Tsuneyoshi (2004) refers to as ‘diversity points.’ However, the discourse of multicultural co-existence, or *tabunka kyousei*, can also be used to further oppression, particularly when it is being used to “manage” migrant workers or old-comer minoritized populations. According to Chapman (2006):

> [T]he imperative for Japan to take a closer look at how it could better accommodate diversity has taken place under an ideology of homogenized national identity. These two conflicting forces have thrust together through a number of discourses that ostensibly recognize diversity but also work to contain and exclude it. (p. 90)

Chapman here draws attention to the ways in which governments may use discourse to achieve a variety of objectives. He problematizes the use of the word *kyousei*, noting that it is
used by a variety of people for various purposes. Originally a biological term for ‘symbiosis,’ it began to be used in the 1970s in educational circles in order to positively introduce the ‘integration’ of able-bodied children and children with disabilities (kyousei kyouiku) and was expanded in the 1980s to introduce the idea of (mainstream Japanese) living together ‘harmoniously’ with migrant workers as well as to introduce discussions of gender disparities (pp. 98 – 99). As Chapman notes, in mainstream newspaper articles the notion of co-existence was used to describe and explain very complex situations simplistically, in that diametrically different people—able-bodied and people with disabilities, men and women, and Japanese nationals and foreign migrant workers—were seen as attempting to live together in harmony. Moreover, in the same newspaper an examination of how a community worked to co-exist with foreign workers might be closely followed by an article on foreign crime in Japan (p. 99). The use of kyousei by governments and powerful social groups can be used to further assimilation and reinvigorate the notion of homogeneity, in that under co-existence differences may be muted and harmony maintained.

Moreover, despite the use of such discourses in areas with large numbers of old-comer and newcomer populations, Burgess (2007a) notes that in rural areas, assimilation of newcomer children is the end-result of their education in Japanese schools. Discussing the research he conducted with foreign wives in Yamagata prefecture, Burgess notes that whereas the foreign wives were extremely active in promoting awareness of multiculturalism in the communities in which they lived, their children became monolingual Japanese speakers who were fully assimilated. This suggests the strong influence of a national and nationalizing curriculum, particularly in areas where newcomer children have fewer interactions with other newcomer children. It also may reflect an understanding by the
children that being different may be cause for bullying. Several participants in my study linked bullying of JSL students (or the perception of such bullying) to differences between the individual who was bullied and the ‘rest’ of the class or group. Though the idea of multicultural co-existence has not replaced the general belief in homogeneity, however; there are lessons to be learned from the struggles of the old-comer minoritized groups and other oppressed people in Japan.

The creation of multicultural education objectives and curriculum has been considered by some to be one way for Japanese public schools to encourage multicultural co-existence. However, as Tai (2007) explains, in Japan, not unlike in the U.S., multicultural education has been critiqued in that it is seen as limited and limiting. Where ‘culture’ is simplistically understood and teachers attempt to introduce mainstream Japanese children to cultural difference through the “‘three-F’ approach”—food, fashion and festivals (Debates on Multicultural Education in Japan, para 2) the result may be an essentialized/essentializing and unchanging view of foreign people and cultures. Additionally, she notes that although in the U.S., multicultural education is intended to unite U.S. nationals of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, the focus on multicultural education policies in Japan are often on newcomer children, foreign nationals in Japan, rather than on diversity of Japanese nationals.

In Japan, a country in which there has been little immigration since the Pacific War and in which citizenship is based on the principle of descent, the idea of a unifying civic culture is almost absent. The ethnic cultures of newcomer children are labeled as foreign, which deepens their separation from the majority students. Multiculturalist teachers in Japan emphasize, not national unity, but the idea of living together in harmony, kyosei, between Japanese and newcomers. Multicultural education may end
up functioning to exclude newcomers as foreign and different, and thereby solidify, not destabilize, Japanese national boundaries, while including newcomers at the margins of society. (Debates on Multicultural Education in Japan, para 4)

Since the focus is on the very ‘foreignness’ of newcomer children, multicultural education does not necessarily critique the notion of Japaneseness; foreign children are made (more) visible, and the existence of Japanese nationals of diverse backgrounds is not acknowledged. Moreover, since political and economic structural inequalities are oftentimes not part of the multicultural education curriculum, the majority’s role in oppressing minoritized groups is neither acknowledged nor challenged. Tai (2007) notes that although human rights’ discourse is often considered important by Japanese multicultural educators, there is a tendency to ignore or not fully appreciate the connection between Japan’s neo-liberal policies, its history of colonization and post-colonial policies in Asia and the existence of newcomer children in Japan. Thus, Tai suggests that in order to create a multicultural education curriculum with an emphasis on social justice for all children, Japanese educators need to draw from the experiences of Korean ethnic schools.

Tai (2007) suggests that tabunka kyousei as reinvented by old-comer Korean activist residents might offer a way out of the Japanese/other binary. Tai believes that by combining and adapting two approaches to Korean education—the ethnic-culture approach and the anti-discrimination approach—developed by zainichi or old-comer Korean activists and Japanese teachers in Osaka over the past sixty years, Japanese educators may be able to engage themselves and their students in a process of kyousei. Tai argues that the ethnic-culture approach, although problematic in that it can be criticized for assuming one Korean identity, might lead educators to fight for the right to maintain one’s own culture and language in
order to resist assimilation. On the other hand, an anti-discrimination approach would allow teachers to bring together *zainichi* Koreans, *Nikkei* newcomers, Chinese newcomers, *burakumin*, children with disabilities and other minoritized children who, despite their different experiences have been oppressed in Japan, and who can learn to develop a political subjectivity and work together to change social institutions. For Tai, although both approaches can be problematic in that one’s identity is essentialized—either as a national of a particular nation (ethnic-national approach), or as a minority in Japan (anti-discrimination approach)—if used strategically, these approaches may allow teachers insight into how they may contest the assimilationist experience of mainstream education.

Although I am hopeful regarding the possibilities for Japanese education as outlined by Tai (2007), my interviews with teachers in Japanese public schools, in areas of Japan without a history of social activism by old-comer immigrant groups suggest that teacher activism is not guaranteed. While some participants did note the connection between Japanese political and economic policies and the presence of some newcomer children, there did not appear to be a strong consciousness of the role of the Japanese government in creating the current situation. This differs from the consciousness on the part of Japanese activist educators in Osaka who are very much aware of Japan’s colonization of Korea and the history of Korean oppression in Japan. The approaches taken by teachers in this study with regard to the education of the children of newcomer groups appeared to be uninformed by political struggles. Rather, JSL students were seen as individual students or as students from a particular cultural background requiring Japanese language and academic skills, which would allow them to participate in Japanese society or return to their respective homelands. Though teachers did feel that MEXT marginalized their work and their JSL
students, and most teachers stated that they believed MEXT and/or the national and local
governments needed to offer clear guidelines and financial support for JSL students, there
was little interrogation of the school culture/s or socializing function/s of the Japanese school
curricula which prepare students to become Japanese.

This study suggests that currently mainstream Japanese public school teachers who
work with JSL students, despite their own marginalization, have yet to develop their own
political subjectivities, and thus are at this time unable to help their students develop theirs.
However, there is some promise in light of the criticisms teachers made regarding the
Fundamental Law of Education. Working to change the language of the FLE to provide
compulsory education to all children living in Japan could possibly politicize and empower
teachers who work with JSL students. Teachers in the study showed that they cared about
individual JSL students in many ways, by supporting them in their efforts to learn Japanese,
by trying to help them conform to the school rules so they wouldn’t stick out or be bullied,
and by trying to help them get accepted to Japanese high schools. Their support, however;
did not at the time of the study lead these teachers to challenge the institutions where they
worked, at least not yet.

There is a question as to whether or not it is possible to help create real change for
newcomer children and their families within public schools. As mentioned previously, NGO
workers in many municipalities are engaged in working with newcomers and other
minoritized groups in Japan, but due to lack of funding and other issues, they face limitations.
With regard to the education of newcomer children, Japanese government financial support
of ‘ethnic’ schools for Nikkei Brazilians, Filipinos and Vietnamese in areas with large
populations of these groups, though not a solution to the issues brought up in this study with
regard to mainstream public schools, may offer a way for these students to fully develop a hybrid identity. For example, the Japan Federation of Bar Associations (JFBA) makes the following recommendations for the education of foreign children of Latin American descent:

In order to guarantee the rights of children to receive an education, national and local governments must promptly implement the following policies: 1) license as “miscellaneous schools” schools for South Americans of Japanese descent, 2) provide financial support to unlicensed schools or to the parents of children that attend them, 3) augment with public funds the tuition of households that have lost income due to unemployment, and 4) provide supplemental lessons and deploy teachers so that the children of South Americans of Japanese descent who attend public schools can improve their Portuguese or Spanish ability while they study Japanese. (2009, Chapter 3, Education Issues, D. Position of the JFBA, para 4)

At the very least, zainichi Koreans who attended ethnic schools were found to have developed an additive bilingualism and pride in their Korean heritage. However, Japanese government funding of such schools would not solve the issue of how to best support JSL students in areas in which they may be the only newcomer student or where newcomer families were from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, if JSL students stop attending Japanese schools, would this mean business as usual—that Japanese public schools are for Japanese only? It may be that anti-discrimination education as explained by Tai (2007) offers a way for Japanese public school teachers to re-conceive Japanese education. Ultimately then this points to teacher education and the curriculum of the universities which prepare teachers to work with students. Further efforts and research into Japanese teacher education programs as well as further research that invites a greater
understanding of how JSL students and their families feel about their experiences with Japanese public schools, such Burgess’s (2007c) study, appear to be crucial at this time.
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Appendix A

Interview Questions – English

Interview 1: Interview questions

About background/teaching background/pedagogical beliefs

Teaching/Pedagogy:
1. How long have you been teaching? Can you tell me about how/why you became a teacher?
3. Tell me about your university’s teacher training program. Tell me about any current teacher training you are involved in.
4. Can you tell me about an experience you had in the past which you believe may have helped you shape your current teaching beliefs?
5. How do you currently feel about teaching?
6. What concerns you most about teaching (in general) or your own teaching at this stage in your career?
7. What kind of support do you get from: a) your school/, b) parents in the community, c) your local government, d) Monkasho (the Ministry of Education)? How do you feel about each of these?
8. What is a strong pedagogical belief that you have? For example… how might you finish the sentence “All children should………….” “All teachers should………..”
9. Can you talk about experiences which you believe illustrate your feelings about: a) teaching, b) students and c) colleagues?
10. Have you received any specific training that was aimed at helping you teach JSL students? Can you talk about it? How do you feel about the training you received?
11. How would you describe the educational system under which Japanese teachers currently teach? How do you feel about it?

Background/Education about cultural diversity:
12. When you were younger/in school what types of knowledge did you have about people from other countries or minorities in Japan? Can you explain?
13. Have you ever experienced traveling or living in another country? Explain.
15. How do you feel your personal/social experiences (as described above) impact your teaching beliefs?
Interview 2: Interview Questions

Views toward students:

1. How long have you been teaching JSL students, how many students do you currently teach, and what are their first languages?
2. What is your overall impression of the JSL students in your classes? What are their strengths and weaknesses?
3. How academically successful are the JSL students you teach? How successful are they socially? Can you provide examples?
4. What type of support do you get from the a) federal government, b) local government c) administrators d) other faculty, and e) parents to help you teach JSL students? How do you feel about it?
5. What issues do you see with the teaching of JSL students? How are these issues being addressed by you, other faculty at your school? Can you give some examples?
6. What types of conversations, if any, do you and your colleagues have about teaching JSL students? Can you tell me about some of them?
7. Do you have any specific worries about the JSL students you are teaching now? If so, what are they?
8. Describe a successful JSL student. What accounts for his/her success?
9. Describe a failing JSL student. What accounts for his/her failure?
10. What similarities/differences do you find among mainstream students in your school?
11. What similarities/differences do you find among JSL students?
12. What differences/similarities do you see between JSL and mainstream students?
13. What measures do you think a) teachers, b) administrators c) parents d) local governments and e) the federal government should do to improve teaching and learning at middle schools in Japan?
14. What do you think a) teachers, b) administrators c) parents d) local governments and e) the federal government should do to help JSL students attending public schools?
15. Are there some questions you want to address which I haven’t asked?
Appendix B

Interview Questions – Japanese

Interview 1

教育背景及び経験、教育方針について

教育/教授法
1. 今までの教育指導経験はどのくらいの長さですか？なぜ教師になったのですか？

2. 自分の勤務先の学校での経験についてどのように感じますか？（否定的、または肯定的にとらえていますか？それはなぜですか？）

3. あなたの出身大学の教育実習について教えてください。現在関与している教育実習についても教えてください。

4. 現在あなたの指導方針に役に立っている過去の出来事があれば教えてください。

5. 現在の教育指導についてどのように考えていますか？

6. 一般的な意味において教育について考慮していることがあれば教えてください。もしくはあなたの職業について、現時点で考慮していることがあれば教えてください。

7. あなたは現在どのようなサポートを得ていますか？それらについてどのように感じていますか？
   a) 勤務先の学校 b) 地域の父母 c) 地方自治体 d) 文部科学省

8. 教授法について強く信じていることは？例えばこれらの文にどのような言葉を入れるべきだと思いますか？
   「すべての子供たちは________べきである」
   「すべての先生たちは________べきである」

9. あなたの以下に対する感情を端的に表している経験があれば教えてください。
   a) 教育指導 b) 生徒 c) 同僚

10. 今までに日本語教授法を学んだことがありますか？そのプログラムについてどのように感じていますか？
11. 日本の教育システムについてどのように説明することができますか？またどのように感じていますか？

教育、文化的背景

12. あなたが学生のとき、外国人・日本の少数民族についてどのような知識をもっていましたか？

13. 今までに外国旅行や海外での生活経験があれば教えてください。

14. 今までに日本人であるということはどういう意味なのか考えたことがありますか？どのような状況でそのように考えたのですか？

15. 12-14で述べた経験があなたの現在の教育方針に影響を与えたか？
Interview 2

生徒に対する見解

1. JSL 教育指導経験の年数を教えてください。現在何人の JSL 生徒を指導していま

すか？生徒の第一言語は？

2. あなたが指導している生徒について、全体の印象を教えてください。
生徒たちの長所、短所は？

3. あなたが指導している生徒の学業の成果は？社会的には成功していますか？実例を聞かせてください

4. JSL 生徒を指導するために学校や文部科学省などから、どのようなサポートを受
けていますか？そのサポートについてどのようにお考えですか？
   a) 政府 b) 地方自治体 c) 学校管理職 d) 同僚 e) 父母

5. JSL 生徒を指導するうえでどのような問題がありますか？これらの問題点にど
のように対処していますか？（先生ご自身は？同僚、学校は？）

6. JSL 生徒を指導するうえでどのような会話を同僚としていますか？
いくつかの例を聞かせてください

7. 現在指導している JSL 生徒について何か特別な懸念はございますか？

8. 成功した JSL 生徒について聞かせてください。その生徒が成功した根拠は？

9. 失敗した JSL 生徒について聞かせてください。その生徒が失敗した根拠は？

10. 一般生徒の類似点、相違点を聞かせてください

11. JSL 生徒の類似点、相違点を聞かせてください

12. JSL 生徒とそれ以外の一般生徒との類似点、相違点を聞かせてください

13. 中学校教育を良くする為に以下の団体や人たちはどのような方針をとるべきと考
えていますか？
   a) 教師 b) 学校管理職 c) 父母 d) 地方自治体 e) 政府

14. 公立学校に通う JSL 生徒に以下の団体や人たちはどのようなサポートをするべ
きと考えていますか？
   (ア) 教師 b) 学校管理職 c) 父母 d) 地方自治体 e) 政府

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15. あなたの JSL 生徒にどのような将来が待っていると思いますか。
Appendix C

English Survey

To the Teacher:

Thank you for participating in this survey. I am planning to conduct research on teachers’ experiences with Japanese as second language (JSL) students. Even if you have had no direct experiences with JSL students your answers will be very helpful.

Please answer the following questions as accurately as you can. Please try to answer each question in parts 1, 3 & 4. Only answer questions in part 2 if you are currently teaching, or have taught JSL students in the past.

All information is confidential, and you will not be contacted unless you wish to be. Thank you again for your time.

**PART 1: All faculty should answer questions in part 1.**

What subject/s do you teach ________________________________?

How many years have you been teaching? 0 – 5  6 – 10  11 – 15  16 – 20  25+

1. Are you currently teaching any students designated as Japanese as second language (JSL) learners?  Yes  No

If so, how many of your students (percentage) are so designated? __________

2. Have you ever, in the past, taught students designated as JSL students?
Yes  No

What percentage of your students have been JSL students? __________

3. Have you ever taught students who were not designated as JSL students, but whom you thought should/could have been?  Yes  No

If yes, which of the following best describes why you felt this way? Circle any letters that apply.

a. student had difficulties speaking Japanese
b. student experienced difficulties reading and writing Japanese
c. student had poor academic performance
d. student didn’t fit in with other students socially
   e. student seemed to need extra help

**PART 2: Please answer questions in part 2 if you currently teach or have taught JSL students in the past.**

1. What is/are the first language/s of the JSL students you have taught? Circle any that apply, and add any if missing.

   Chinese          Portuguese         Korean          Spanish
   English          Vietnamese

2. In general, how do/did your JSL students perform academically? Please circle the number of the most appropriate phrase, and explain below if you want to add a comment.

   1. At the top 10% of the class
   2. At the top 20% of the class
   3. At the median level of the class
   4. At the bottom 20% of the class
   5. At the bottom 10% of the class

   For the following statements, please circle the most appropriate response from 1 to 5.  
   1= strongly disagree 
   2= disagree 
   3= perhaps 
   4= agree 
   5= strongly agree

   3. JSL students currently receive adequate academic support.

   1    2    3    4    5

   4. JSL students currently receive adequate social support.

   1    2    3    4    5

   5. JSL students make important contributions to their class.

   1    2    3    4    5

   6. JSL students make important contributions to this school.

   1    2    3    4    5
PART 3: All faculty should answer questions in part 3.

1. How important do you think it is for students to maintain their first language as they learn Japanese? Please circle a number between 1 and 5. 1= of utmost importance and 5= not important at all.
   1 2 3 4 5

2. Who do you feel is most responsible for helping JSL students with their course work? Please number the following 1 – 6 accordingly. 1 = the people most responsible and 6 = people least responsible
   _____ parents
   _____ teachers of each discipline
   _____ homeroom teachers
   _____ school administrators
   _____ MEXT/Monkasho
   _____ community

For the following statements, please circle the most appropriate response from 1 to 5.
1= strongly disagree
2= disagree
3= perhaps
4= agree
5= strongly agree

3. My university courses prepared me to work with culturally and linguistically diverse students.
   1 2 3 4 5

4. The Ministry of Education offers clear guidelines to help teachers teach culturally and linguistically diverse students.
   1 2 3 4 5

5. I am interested in teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students.
   1 2 3 4 5

6. I actively attend community and school-sponsored events to help me improve my teaching of linguistically or culturally diverse students.
   1 2 3 4 5

7. It is necessary for Japanese junior high school teachers to receive special training to help them work with JSL students.
   1 2 3 4 5
Part 4: Please answer the following questions but only leave your information if you are interested in participating in this study. Thank you!!

1. Would you be interested in being contacted by me to discuss and participate in individual or group interviews regarding any of the issues brought up in this questionnaire? If so, please write your name and contact information (e-mail address, postal address or telephone number)

Yes                                          No

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

2. Do you think it will be possible for me to visit your school, possibly up to 10 times during the school year, to observe classes and interview you?

Yes                                    No

3. If you are interested in participating in this study, in which language/s would you prefer to discuss these issues? Please circle one or both.

Japanese                                     English

Thank you for your time.

Best regards,

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先生方へ

この度はアンケートにご協力いただきまして誠にありがとうございます。私は帰国子女、外国人生徒に対する日本語教育に携わっておられる先生方の教務経験の実態調査をしております。直接学生に日本語を指導した経験の無い方でもご協力ください。

下記のパート1、3～4の質問に出来るだけ正確に答えてください。パート2の質問に関しては、日本語教育に携わっておられる先生方、もしくは過去に指導経験のある先生方のみお答えください。

すべての情報は内密に処理いたします。また、希望された方以外の先生方には、後日当方より連絡を取ることもございません。ご協力ありがとうございました。

PART 1: すべての先生方に対する質問です

担当教科を教えてください？（複数可）

指摘経験年数を教えてください

0 – 5  6 – 10  11 – 15  16 – 20  25+

1. 現在日本語教育が必要な生徒に対しての指導をおこなっていますか？

   はい  いいえ

はいと答えた先生方にお聞きします。現在担当しているクラスのうち何人の生徒が日本語教育を必要としていますか？
（複数の教科を担当している場合は全教科の人数を書いてください）

例  数学40人中 5人、社会38人中 6人

_________________  人中_________________  人

_________________  人中_________________  人
2. 過去に帰国子女、外国人生徒に対し日本語教育指導をおこなっていましたか？

はい  いいえ

はいと答えた先生方にお聞きします。当時担当していたクラスのうち何人の生徒が日本語教育を必要としていましたか？
（複数の教科を担当していた場合は全教科の人数を書いてください）

例  数学40人中5人、社会38人中6人

______________人中______________人
______________人中______________人

3. 過去に学生生活を円滑に進めるために日本語の教育が必要だと思われた帰国子女、外国人生徒に対し指導をおこなっていましたか？

はい  いいえ

はいと答えた先生方にお聞きします。その生徒に対して日本語教育が必要だと思われた理由を選んでください（複数回答可）

f. 日本語の発話能力が十分ではなかった

g. 日本語の読み書きに問題があった

h. 学力が他の生徒と比べて劣っていた

i. 他の生徒との交流に問題があった

j. 特別指導を必要としていた

PART 2: 現在帰国子女、外国人生徒に対しての日本語教育に携わっておられる先生方、もしくは過去に指導経験のある先生方のみお答えください

1. 現在、または過去に日本語教育指導した生徒の第一言語を教えてください

中国語  ポルトガル語  韓国語  スペイン語  英語
ベトナム語  タガログ語  その他__________________
2. その生徒たちの成績はどのように評価できますか。下記選択肢より一つ選び、もし必要であれば追加説明をお願いします

1. クラス上位から10%の位置（例40人クラス中4番以内）

2. クラス上位から20%の位置（例40人クラス中8番以内）

3. クラスの平均レベル（例40人クラス中20番以内）

4. クラス下位から20%の位置（例40人クラス中8番以下）

5. クラス下位から10%の位置（例40人クラス中4番以下）

下記選択肢より、適当と思われる数字で評価してください

1=全く不同意わない
2=同意しない
3=可能性はあるが確実性はない
4=同意する
5=強く同意する

3. 帰国子女、外国人生徒は適切な学力のサポートを受けている、または受けていた

1 2 3 4 5

4. 帰国子女、外国人生徒は適切な学生生活のサポートを受けている、または受けていた

1 2 3 4 5

5. 帰国子女、外国人生徒はクラスの中で重要な貢献をしている、またはしていった

1 2 3 4 5

6. 帰国子女、外国人生徒は学校に対して重要な貢献をしている、またはしていった

1 2 3 4 5
PART 3: すべての先生方に対する質問です

1. 帰国子女、外国人生徒が第二言語である日本語を学ぶ上で、生徒自身の第一言語能力を保つことに対しての重要度を数字で表してください
   (1: 非常に重要〜5: 不必要)
   1  2  3  4  5

2. 帰国子女、外国人生徒に対する学力指導において、誰が一番責任を持つべきか適切な数字(1~6)で順位をつけてください
   (1: もっとも責任がある〜6: 責任はない)
   ______ 生徒の両親
   ______ 各教科の指導教員
   ______ 担任教師
   ______ 学校管理職教員
   ______ 文部科学省
   ______ 生徒の居住地域社会

下記選択肢より、適当と思われる数字で評価してください
1= 全く同意しない
2= 同意しない
3= 可能性はあるが確実性はない
4= 同意する
5= 強く同意する

3. 大学在学中に異文化と言語の多様性について研究した
   1  2  3  4  5

4. 文部科学省は帰国子女、外国人生徒に対し適切な指導要項を提供している
   1  2  3  4  5

5. 帰国子女、外国人生徒の指導に興味がある
   1  2  3  4  5

6. 関係地域社や学校で企画するセミナーや研究会などに参加し、帰国子女、外国人生徒に対する指導法の向上を図っている
   1  2  3  4  5
7. 日本の中学校教員は帰国子女、外国生まれに対する指導法を研究する、特別研修を受講する必要がある

Part 4: 本調査に参加することに対し興味のある先生方のみお答えください

1. このアンケートのトピックについて、後日グループ、または個別インタビューに協力していただけますか？

はい  いいえ

同意していただいた先生は下欄に連絡先のご記入をお願いいたします

名前

住所

電話番号

電子メール

2. クラス見学、インタビュー実施のため私が御校に10回ほど訪問することは可能でしょうか？

はい  いいえ

3. もしこの研究に参加していただけるとしたら、使用言語はどちらをご希望ですか？

日本語  英語

ご協力誠にありがとうございます

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