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Ethnic Boundary Enforcers: Conceptualizing Japanese Teachers' Treatment of Migrant Latino Parents

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Like teachers elsewhere, Japanese elementary school teachers are charged with the education and socialization of children in their classes, teaching academic subjects and instructing children in the norms of social life. Teachers also describe themselves as partners with the parents in promoting the well-being of the children's minds and bodies. This instruction is especially important for the second-generation Latino children, for the Japanese school is the primary site where they acquire the linguistic and cultural tools necessary for them to prosper in Japanese society. While the children's home lives often follow the customs of their parents' home countries, at school the children learn to speak and act like their Japanese peers.

However interactions between Japanese teachers and Latino parents are often fraught with tension, as parents struggle to effectively interact with teachers, and some teachers criticize the parents for their alleged cultural deficiencies. In these critiques, Japanese-ness serves as the positively framed, normative category that children and parents are expected to follow. Being "foreign" in general, or "Latino" or "Peruvian" in particular, serves as a negative trait that causes people to violate Japanese social norms, particularly the norms of punctuality, cooperation with the school, and dedication to children's education. These critiques also appeal to an idealized notion of Japanese-ness as embodying the avoidance of problems and the maintenance of group harmony, a metanarrative that explains the relations between Japanese and Latinos over-

all.

Based on field work at a public elementary school in central Japan, this analysis focuses upon the work of teachers who have the most contact with the foreign students and their parents. I argue that these teachers act as "ethnic boundary enforcers" who strengthen the boundary between Japanese and Latinos by framing school problems as being caused by Latino parents' foreign status and resistance to acculturating to life in Japan. Included in this group are the school's remedial language teacher and language counselor, who are specifically charged with assisting the foreign students.

In enforcing the boundary between Japanese and Latinos, teachers employ various strategies, including positioning Japanese and Latino as polar opposites and defining particular behaviors as Japanese, such as cooperating with others and following the rules, and other behaviors as foreign, such as arriving late and roughhousing. Teachers also demand that the parents act more Japanese, and call in the community for support in monitoring the parents' behavior. This analysis also explores the connection between these teachers' actions and their professional interests within the school.

The actions of this select group of teachers do not necessarily represent the views or approaches of all the teachers at the school, however the predominance of complaints about the school's growing foreign population indicates, at best, mixed feelings about the challenges of working with this new minority population. In contrast to the efforts of the ethnic boundary enforcers, other teachers routinely make sincere efforts to socialize and instruct the foreign students and to

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effectively cooperate with the foreign parents. The success of these attempts to minimize the ethnic boundary is often limited by the school's poor language support, frustrating teachers and parents alike. Parents who have limited Japanese language skills rely heavily on the school for interpreting and translation, yet the poor quality of this support impedes communication and further strengthens the boundary between Japanese and Latinos. That the only resource for this language support is the school's language counselor adds to parents' feeling of helplessness and exclusion, as the counselor's episodic appearances at the school are punctuated by his poor Spanish and Portuguese skills.

I begin the presentation of my research by reviewing the relevant theoretical perspectives on peoplehood, and by describing the field site and research methods. I then explore teachers' efforts at minimizing the ethnic boundary between Japanese and Latinos, and others' strategies at enforcing that boundary. I conclude the paper by discussing the impact of teachers' efforts on parent-teacher relations, and on the children's ethnic identity formation.

Categories of Peoplehood

The literature in sociology and anthropology is replete with debates on the ways in which race, ethnicity, and nationality intersect and are embedded in particular structurations (See Bonilla-Silva 1997; Calhoun 1993; Balibar and Wallerstein 1991; Lie 2004). The case of Japan is particularly intriguing, as these three categories are often elided into a singular frame that depicts a people who share a common genetic and cultural heritage, as well as a common nationality (Denoon et al. 1996; Lie 2001; Oguma 2002; Morris-Suzuki 1998; Weiner 1997). As Lie (2001: 148) notes, "Japanese tend to conflate distinct categories of peoplehood into a singular one (*jin*) [people]. The dominant mode of ethnoracial or ethnonational classification posits homogeneous categories of peoplehood." This notion of peoplehood shapes the language available to Japanese to describe people from other countries, often erasing ethnic and racial distinctions within nations in favor of broad references by national origin. Japanese can refer to ethnic origins using the suffix *-kei*, as in the case of *nikkeijin* to refer to a person of Japanese ancestry, or *kankokukei amerikajin* to refer to a Korean American. However, the use of such ethnic notations is rare, as Japanese more commonly refer to the foreign status of non-Japanese, with terms such as "*gaikokujin*" (foreigner), or to their nationality, such as "*perūjin*" (Peruvian) or *burajirujin*" (Brazilian). These "permanent and homogeneous" categories (Lie 2001: 145) elide racial and ethnic differences within nations, depicting one's racial/ethnic/national status as immutable.

In this analysis, I am portraying the barrier between Latinos and Japanese as an ethnic boundary for several reasons. In describing Latinos and their differences from Japanese, teach-

ers in my field site refer to cultural and not racial differences, noting, for example, supposed differences in values toward education, work, and family. Moreover, the Latinos in question are a racially diverse group. Some are the direct descendants of Japanese emigrants with no family history of out-marriage, others have no Japanese ancestry, and many are *mestizos* (of mixed ancestry). The primary factor in shaping the outsider status for this diverse group is their being foreign, with their racial or ethnic difference as secondary factors. Like a racial status, this foreign status permanently marks Latinos as foreigners no matter how long they may reside in Japan.

While foreign status may be key in Japan, this is not to say that race and ethnicity do not matter. Japan has long been connected to global discourses of race and ethnicity, as reflected in racialized mass media depictions of whites as modern and sophisticated, and blacks as athletic and sexual (Kelsky 2001; Russell 1998). Despite their growing presence in Japan, Latino migrants are largely absent from Japanese mass media, other than in references to crimes committed by foreigners. While many Japanese have limited contact with Latinos, Japanese stereotypes of Latinos as impoverished, less educated, and less refined are informed by dominant Western stereotypes (Linger 2001; Roth 2002; Tsuda 2003).

The construction and deployment of categories such as Japanese, foreign, and Latino necessitate "a dialectical process of construction; that is, the creation of a category of 'other' involves the creation of a category of 'same'" (Bonilla-Silva 1997: 471). To the extent that teachers define Japanese as the positive, normative category, foreigners in general, or Latinos in particular, are defined as negative and potentially deviant. Nagel (1994: 156) notes the tension between the ascription and assertion of ethnic identities, describing ethnicity as a "dialectical process involving internal and external opinions and processes, as well as the individual's self-identification and outsiders' ethnic designations—i.e., what *you* think your ethnicity is, versus what *they* think your ethnicity is" (emphasis in original).

This dialectical process is firmly connected to structure, as competition for resources can encourage the construction and enforcement of group boundaries (Barth 1969; Bonacich 1972; Hechter 1978; Olzak 1992). The depiction of particular ethnic or racial identities explains group stratification in cultural terms, as a matter of values, defending the dominant group's advantaged position and disguising class or status conflict as ethnic conflict (Jackman 1994; Steinberg 1981). In response to this othering, subordinate groups may seek to redefine their racial or ethnic status (Roediger 1991) or to organize along new panethnic lines (Espiritu 1992; Okamoto 2003; Padilla 1985).

Tsuda (1998: 334) terms Japanese stereotyping of Latino migrants "ethnic attribution"—the propensity to simplisti-

cally explain and interpret the behavior of those from a different ethnic group as a cultural and ethnic characteristic and ignore possible individual or situational explanations for their behavior.²⁹ However, I argue that this labeling is more than an act of attribution against Latinos, but rather is an entrepreneurial act that seeks to create particular definitions of Japanese and Latino as opposite categories and to strengthen the boundary between the two groups. In the case of Japanese teachers, this labeling is connected to teachers' authority in the school and their professional interests.

Field Site and Methods

Located in central Japan's industrial heartland, Shiroyama¹⁾ is a mostly working class district of a city of 75,000 people. Its auto parts and electronics factories employ thousands, including the district's foreign population of roughly 700 people. This foreign population is largely Peruvian, with smaller numbers of Brazilians, Bolivians, Chinese, and Filipinos²⁾. Many of the district's Latinos are the third-generation descendants of Japanese emigrants who settled in Latin America in the early to mid-twentieth century. Following the Japanese Immigration Control Act of 1990, which eased restrictions on long-term resident visas for people of Japanese descent, or *nikkei*, hundreds of thousands of Latino *nikkei* have left Brazil, Peru, Bolivia, and other countries, to live and work in Japan. (See Table 1.) Each Latino family in Shiroyama has at least one parent with some family connection to Japan, however marriages between *nikkei* and other Latinos have weakened this connection for many families. As noted previously, this pattern of intermarriage has also produced a population that is racially diverse. Phenotypically, some migrants have Latino facial features that clearly mark them as foreign while others are indistinguishable from native-born Japanese. For those who may visually pass as Japanese, their accents quickly reveal their *gaijin* (outsider) status.

Many of the school's Latino parents have lived in Japan for approximately 15 years, possess permanent resident visas, and plan on remaining in Japan for the foreseeable future. This desire to stay is often driven by what parents describe as

the greater relative stability of life in Japan compared to their home countries, including lower crime rates and the greater availability of employment. After arriving with plans to return to South America after several years of work, parents have settled in Shiroyama, attracted by low-cost public housing and the presence of other family members in the area³⁾. With at times more immediate family in Japan than in South America, parents delay plans to return to their home countries. The children's declining Spanish skills, and growing Japanese skills, further complicate parents' future plans. Long working hours in local factories leave parents little time for mastering the Japanese language, thus most remain functionally illiterate in Japanese, and many have only minimal to moderate Japanese-speaking skills. Japanese law awards citizenship at birth only to children with at least one citizen parent, thus, with few exceptions, the Latino children of Shiroyama are resident aliens.

Shiroyama Elementary School is among the largest in the region, with more than 850 students in 30 classes. During the period of my field work, the school's foreign student population increased from 43 students in 2005 to 56 students in 2007. 50 of these 56 students' families come from Latin America, with 38 from Peru, seven from Bolivia, and five from Brazil. (See Table 2.) Nearly all of these children were born in Japan, and all but a few attended Japanese pre-school or kindergarten prior to starting elementary school. Nonetheless, in the 2006–07 academic year, 24 students were scheduled to attend remedial Japanese classes at the school each week.

Compared to schools in neighboring cities, Shiroyama Elementary offers limited language support for foreign children and their parents, including fewer remedial language teachers, less frequent and lower quality translations of school materials, and no classroom volunteers. The remedial language program is minimal and weakly tied to regular classroom instruction, offering students little more than worksheets to practice their reading and writing skills. These drawbacks are compounded by Shiroyama Elementary's disconnection from other schools in the region that also have large numbers

Table 1. Registered foreign residents from South America (1985 to 2005)

	Brazil	Peru	Other	Total
1985	1,955	480	1,173	3,608
1990	56,429	10,279	4,787	71,495
1995	176,440	36,269	9,156	221,865
2000	254,394	46,171	12,356	312,921
2005	302,080	57,728	16,540	376,348

Data are based on foreign resident registrations at the end of each year. Sources: Japanese Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (2007, table 2: 14); Japan Immigration Association (2006)

Table 2. Foreign and Japanese children at Shiroyama Elementary School (2005–2007) by parents' countries of origin

Parents' Country of Origin	2005	2006	2007
Total Foreign	43	48	56
Peru	33	34	38
Bolivia	5	5	7
Brazil	3	5	5
Philippines*	2	1	4
China	0	3	2
Japan	749	772	804

* These totals include two children who have one Filipino and one Japanese parent and who possess Japanese citizenship.

of foreign students and from the public discourses on the education of foreign children. This disconnect, in turn, keeps the school uninformed of various teaching strategies, current research, and available language resources, such as multilingual school documents that other school districts have posted online. For oral interpreting and written translations, the school relies on its language counselor, a Japanese man with a poor command of Spanish and Portuguese. During my field work, the counselor was scheduled to be at the school three times per week, however he was frequently absent for various, often unexplained, reasons, leaving the school with me as the only Spanish language support and with no one to provide Portuguese support.

Similar to many other Japanese schools, Shiroyama Elementary's curriculum avoids a discussion of cultural diversity within Japan or even within the district of Shiroyama. Currently politically popular discussions in Japan of "*tabunka kyōsei*" (multicultural coexistence) are conspicuously absent, and, as Ōta (2000: 7) notes about Japanese schools in general, teachers treat children's ethnic differences as "either nonexistent, inconsequential, or a block to assimilation." Thus, cultural diversity is not tapped as an educational resource, but concealed as a potential source of complications that can interfere with the smooth operation of the school. Lastly, while some teachers at Shiroyama Elementary have five or more years experience working with foreign students in their classes, like most teachers in Japan they have had no formal training in second-language acquisition or in working with foreign children and their parents.

From November 2005 to April 2007, I conducted participant observation at the school full-time, volunteering as a Japanese-Spanish interpreter and translator for the school. Filling these roles placed me in the middle of nearly all contact between teachers and Latino parents. I interpreted during parent-teacher meetings, translated written messages between teachers and parents, and often fielded direct calls to my cell phone from parents who needed to contact the school. I also led free Spanish classes on Saturdays to local Peruvian and Bolivian children, and accompanied families in social gatherings. In addition to taking detailed field notes of these encounters, I also conducted intensive interviews with 27 Peruvian and Bolivian parents, and informal interviews with 16 teachers and school administrators. I recorded and later transcribed these interviews, with a research assistant helping me with the Japanese transcriptions.

Teachers as Agents of Socialization

In meetings between parents and teachers, a recurring element was the authority Japanese teachers possess to enter the normally private world of children and parents. Relative to their American counterparts, Japanese teachers have a greater responsibility for the socialization of their students. In the

American case, this social training is ostensibly the parents' responsibility, and teachers must tread lightly when inquiring about a child's home environment to avoid overstepping their bounds. In the Japanese case, teachers' authority extends beyond the school environment and outside of class hours, into the home and the community.

In parent-teacher conferences with Japanese and Latino parents alike, teachers routinely go beyond commenting on students' academic performance to give parents child-rearing advice that often includes suggestions ranging from homework completion to monitoring television and computer time. Teachers also inquire as to how long the Latino parents plan on staying in Japan, their plans for visiting Latin America, and other details about their lives at home and at work. Teachers further expect parents to provide detailed information on the child's home, including the names, ages, occupations, and places of employment of all the people living in the household. Teachers justify these intrusions into the private sphere of the family on the grounds that such details are related to the children's well-being, and thus fall under the teachers' purview.

White (1987: 73) describes the Japanese family, school, and employer as sharing "interlocking, overlapping, mutually reinforcing responsibilities" in the socialization, education, and overall welfare of the individual child. In the case of Shiroyama Elementary, this collective responsibility manifests itself in calls to former Latino students who now work at a local labor broker that employs many of the foreign parents. Teachers call upon these helpers to relay messages, to explain school practices to parents, and to help the parents request time off for school and private matters. Through these efforts, the school benefits from the helpers' familiarity with the challenges facing Latino parents and with the practices of Japanese schools and businesses. Importantly, the school is also "spreading involvement and invoking indebtedness" (White 1987: 72) by calling upon a sense of collective responsibility in the raising of the children. As I note later, this act of calling in the community for assistance also opens the door to involving others in private matters, in violation of school policies.

An additional aspect of teachers' assumed responsibility for foreign children is the children's acculturation to Japanese social life. While few of the Latino children at Shiroyama Elementary were born overseas, and even fewer have attended school outside of Japan, teachers often frame Latino children's problems at school in terms of the students' lack of acculturation. If students do not complete their homework, or arrive late to meet their morning group to walk to school, teachers claim that this behavior is related to the students' being Latino. Similarly, if the parents raise concerns, complaining, for example, that the leaders of a child's walking group are harrasing the younger children, teachers routinely dismiss these concerns, describing them later as a sign that the parents

are not yet accustomed to Japanese school practices.

In this sense, the Japanese school synecdochically represents the broader Japanese society. In teachers' eyes, violations of school rules represent violations of broader Japanese social norms and reflect Latinos' resistance to assimilation into Japanese society. This resistance, in turn, prompts teachers to stringently enforce school norms. While some Japanese students also experience problems with forgotten homework and tardiness, because these children are Japanese, teachers do not explain the children's problems in terms of cultural differences or acculturation. Instead, teachers present more individualized explanations of the children's behavior. However, for Latino children, their ethnic difference often becomes an *a priori* explanation for their behavior.

While all the teachers have a vested interest in their students' welfare, the school's remedial language teacher and language counselor have an even greater interest in the foreign students' academic and social adjustment. With the creation of their positions coming in response to the growing presence of foreign students, these teachers gained a professional interest in framing the foreign students and their parents as problems which these teachers are uniquely positioned to solve. These interests, in turn, shape how the teachers interact with foreign parents and others (See Becker 1963: 162; Bustamante 1972: 173).

The aforementioned problems with remedial language instruction and the language counselor's job performance lower the status of these positions within the school. These teachers are thus eager to prove their worth to colleagues, school administrators and the broader local community. By routinely labeling Latinos' behavior as "foreign" and thus a problem, the teachers ensure not only the value of their positions within the school, but also they gain the prestige of acting as benefactors to the Latino families. In a self-introduction to a group of local business leaders, government representatives, and heads of schools, the remedial language teacher described her experience in working with the Latino families as a success, and referred to the challenges the school will face with growing enrollment.

There are currently 45 [foreign] kids [at the school], and next year more than 50 are coming. ("Heh!" the audience responds.) That, well, everyday, well, the kids come to school very happy every day, and there are no children out of school. They say, "I love school!" "I love Shiroyama!" ... Every year, we have several problems with the foreigners. ... When I first came three years ago, well, the parents were not cooperating, um, to be honest, we were having problems like they weren't paying their school fees. And, well, regarding the rules, they didn't care, they didn't follow the rules, they showed up late for meetings, they didn't keep their appointments, those kind of problems. ... Then, finally, now we're on track, the

mother's ... manners have become very good. ... The mothers and fathers truly understand the school.⁴⁾

This depiction presents the teachers as motivating the Latino children and skillfully managing the Latino parents' uncooperative ways, especially in the face of a growing Latino enrollment. Ingratiating herself with the local school leaders, the teacher also credited the school's principal for this positive outcome, saying his support of her efforts have contributed to their success.

Minimizing the Ethnic Boundary

In the classroom, teachers at Shiroyama Elementary use a variety of strategies to meet the needs of the foreign students. These strategies include re-explaining assignments one-on-one with the students, consulting an electronic Japanese-Spanish dictionary, pairing the students with particular Japanese classmates who can assist them, and sending the students to the remedial language class. In meetings with the foreign parents, teachers also often take steps to more effectively communicate, including speaking more slowly and simply in Japanese and arranging for an interpreter to be present. In these steps, we can see that some teachers are attempting to minimize the ethnic boundary that divides Japanese and Latinos.

Teachers also attempt to build productive relationships with Latino parents, and to alleviate parents' concerns about their children's academic performance. In parent-teacher conferences, teachers note when the children's foreign status is impacting their school work, as when their limited Japanese reading comprehension is hindering their academic performance. In this case, teachers propose measures to address the problems and attempt to reassure the parents. Teachers also emphasize that all students are being treated equally, and individualize children's academic or social problems as the result of particular learning styles or personalities. They praise the children's efforts when they are performing at or above the level of their Japanese classmates, and note when the children's academic problems are the same as those experienced by Japanese students. In stressing, for example, that *all* children, foreign and Japanese alike, struggle to learn *kanji* (Chinese ideographs), teachers are explicitly trying to alleviate Latino parents' concerns about their children's ability to integrate into the Japanese classroom. As other scholars have noted (Ōta 1996; Shimizu 2002; Tsuneyoshi 1995, 1996), these individualistic and seemingly egalitarian approaches often sidestep an examination of the relevant structural forces and negatively impact students' long-term academic performance. However, despite this negative outcome, teachers' intent in these cases is to build trusting relationships with the parents and contrasts strongly with others' efforts to enforce the ethnic boundary.

Parent-teacher relations are often stymied, however, by

the ineffectiveness of the school's language support. Few Latino parents speak Japanese well enough that they are able to conduct parent-teacher conferences without the aid of an interpreter. When conversations between teachers and parents go through the language counselor, communication often breaks down, as the counselor speaks in sentence fragments with incorrect grammar and nonwords to produce a barely intelligible message for the parents. The counselor's written translations are similarly problematic. After straining to understand the counselor, parents often leave meetings feeling helpless, quietly complaining to me that they could not understand anything he said and were unsure how well he conveyed their concerns. Parents strongly depended on me to try to bridge the language gap by providing more competent Spanish-Japanese interpreting and translation, however the end of my field work simply reminded parents of the vulnerability of their position at the school.

Enforcing the Ethnic Boundary

Despite some teachers' efforts to minimize the ethnic boundary, other teachers take steps to strengthen that boundary. Drawing on stereotypes of Latinos, teachers contrast what they negatively define as Latino values and behavior against the positively framed, normative status of Japanese.

Latinos and Japanese as Polar Opposites

Combining condescension with empathy, teachers describe Latino parents as poor and unemployed in their home countries, and as less educated and less refined than Japanese (See Linger 2001; Roth 2002; Tsuda 2003). Some teachers go further in depicting Latinos as shirking work, arriving late, immorally valuing work over their children's education, and generally living at odds with what the teachers identify as the properly strict and rule-based Japanese existence. In parent-teacher conferences, teachers routinely ask parents about their future migration plans, and parents, with few exceptions, respond that they plan to remain in Japan, for the foreseeable future, if not permanently.⁵ Despite these expressed desires, teachers often explain Latinos' presence in Japan as solely to earn money to send back to their home countries, where they will eventually return. Following this description, teachers expect parents to live frugally in public housing and to avoid the luxuries that many Japanese enjoy, such as electronic games and cell phones for their children.

This contrast that teachers have constructed foregrounds differences between Latinos and Japanese, making the parents seem even more "foreign." It also expresses both disdain and affection for Latinos by depicting their lives in Japan as *kawaisō* (pitiful), *taihen* (difficult), and in desperate need of help. This framing positions teachers as kind benefactors who provide humanitarian aid to the *kawaisō* Latino migrants. It also combines the moral authority of that humanitarian frame with the authority already granted to teachers. In the process,

the teachers "add to the power they derive from the legitimacy of their moral position the power they derive from their superior position in society" (Becker 1963: 149).

In meetings with parents, teachers who act as ethnic boundary enforcers often precede discussions of problems with elaborate praise for even the most meager attempts by parents to speak Japanese. This praise smoothes relations between parents and teachers, while subtly reinforcing the fact that the parents are just beginning to master a language that the teachers natively speak. This approach also makes it difficult for parents to offer any opposition to teachers' criticisms without appearing ungrateful or resistant to assimilation to life in Japan. Rather than resist, parents politely nod and thank the teachers for their concerns. By "befriending or at least emotionally disarming those whom they subordinate" (Jackman 1994: 2), teachers are able to avoid conflict and to reinforce their dominant position. This "velvet glove" approach (1994) expresses concern for the family's welfare in ways that are "persuasive rather than alienating" (p. 364) and emphasizes the binding ties between Japanese and Latinos. It also avoids the resistance that might come from more direct critiques, and softens the blow of parents' subordinate status.

Teachers explicitly define many school norms and customs as particularly "Japanese." Some school customs and events are not common to Latin American schools, such as *shūdan tōkō* (having the children walk to and from school in groups led by other children), *kyūshoku tōban* (having the children take turns serving lunch in the classroom), and the summer *undōkai* (sports festival) and fall *happyōkai* (performances). However, teachers also define the general school *seikatsu* (lifestyle) as particularly "Japanese," including norms such as collaborating with classmates and following the teacher's instructions. To the extent that non-Japanese follow these norms, teachers often describe their behavior as acting Japanese, "*Nihonjin mitai*" ("they look Japanese"). This depiction frames Latinos' positive traits as somehow Japanese and denies them praise as Latinos *per se*. It also conflates school customs with Japanese ethnic identity and presents being foreign as an opposite or deviant case that contrasts with good Japanese behavior. While teachers frequently praise Latino students as *atama ga ii* (intelligent), *akarui* (bright, cheerful), and *genki* (energetic, lively), this praise is disconnected from students' ethnic difference. Thus, being Latino is a topic of discussion only when it is framed as a problem.

This pattern can be seen in the ways in which Mr. Nakamura, a veteran teacher, describes the behavior of a Peruvian girl and her mother. Using terms like *richigi* (honest), *kinben* (diligent), and *majime* (serious), Mr. Nakamura describes these Peruvians as resembling feudal Japanese of the late Meiji era (late nineteenth and early twentieth century) in their hard work and honesty:

Second and third generation Japanese came from Peru

carrying a sense of Meiji-era Japan. That is, when they immigrated, they transplanted a sense of the late Meiji era. Then they came back to Japan, back from Peru. They came back with the air of Meiji settlers, of feudal Japan's hierarchical social order. That kind of mother, honest, serious, diligent, that's what they're like. The children of that kind of mother are very serious, aren't they?

The positive effects, which Mr. Nakamura sees as Japanese, are limited by the family's Peruvian background. As he explains:

But, ... these women are also part Peruvian, of course, but, it's not just that, the fathers are a little unrealistic, sort of "let's seek our fortunes in Japan," unrealistic families. The mothers also have that Peruvian influence. So, you wonder if the mothers finished elementary school. It's a little unclear, their educational level seems really low. The children of that kind of mother, that diligence, they can't make it in Japan's hierarchical society. So, in those kids, you can really feel the gap [between them and the Japanese children].

Mr. Nakamura further describes another Latino girl as lacking the honesty and diligence of feudal Japan, adding, "She just likes playing around and having fun, but I feel she lacks that [honest, diligent] sense about her." The gap between Japanese and Latino children that Mr. Nakamura refers to is exacerbated, he feels, by defects in Latino cultures. As he says, "Do you know '*hasta mañana*' [until tomorrow]? Peruvians and Brazilians are Latino, so they don't work, and they don't value time. It's always *hasta mañana*. It's because they're Latino."

Defining acting "foreign" and acting "Japanese"

Becker (1963) notes the entrepreneurial nature of the labeling of deviance, arguing that the labeling of particular acts as deviant is independent of the nature of the acts themselves, but rather emerges from their being labeled as such by a socially powerful group. In this case, Japanese teachers, in a position of authority within the Japanese school, are able to define and enforce notions of normative and deviant behavior. Some acts by Latino children, such as putting sugar in their milk and disliking Japanese school lunches, are labeled as relatively minor deviance and the result of cultural differences that will gradually dissipate as the children adapt to life in Japan. However, other supposedly "foreign" behaviors, such as physical play and tardiness, are defined as representing stronger threats to school norms. This, in turn, calls for instrumental enforcement to prevent future violations and an eventual erosion of the norm, especially in the face of growing numbers of foreign children (See Gusfield 1975: 91).

In one case, Hikaru, a 7-year-old Peruvian boy in the school's special education class, has had repeated problems interacting with other children. Walking to school, on the playground, and at the afterschool childcare center, Hikaru

often hangs on his teachers' legs, chases and grabs children, strongly embraces them, kisses them, and wrestles them to the ground. As the children protest with name-calling and physical responses, Hikaru counters with more physical behavior, at times spitting at the children. School tests indicate that he suffers from hyperactivity, however teachers dismiss clinical explanations of his behavior. Instead, they define his behavior as the result of being raised according to Peruvian social norms, especially what teachers call "*hagu hagu*" (hugging), a decidedly non-Japanese cultural practice.

Teachers describe Japan as a "*kichinto shita*" (proper or precise) country, where children are taught at an early age the importance of order and organization and of acting properly, including avoiding touching each other's bodies. While this particular definition of children's behavior is at odds with the common Japanese boys' game of grabbing and poking each others' genitals, as Hikaru has done, teachers repeatedly insist on defining Hikaru's behavior as an example of *hagu hagu*. "It's a difference in customs," the school's language counselor explains to me. Teachers also cite the fact that only Japanese mothers are complaining about Hikaru's behavior as evidence that the behavior must be foreign in nature. This depiction of Japanese-ness as "proper" also serves as a form of racial code (Omi and Winant 1994; Bonilla-Silva 2001) that enables teachers to criticize Latinos without any explicit references to the students' ethnic difference.

Demanding the Parents Act More Japanese

In meetings with parents to discuss problems with the children's behavior, teachers often claim that problems are occurring because the foreign parents lack Japanese-style customs. That is, unlike the *kichinto shiteiru* (proper) Japanese families, Latinos are unaccustomed to completing homework or arriving on time. In cases of repeated problems, teachers respond more aggressively, calling the parents to the school and sternly addressing them. With each successive meeting, teachers challenge the parents more on their childrearing and their adherence to Japanese social norms. Calling on parents to raise their children *kichinto*, teachers frame their concerns in terms of the parents' outsider status to Japanese society.

Hikaru continued to have problems throughout his first year of elementary school. As these problems refused to abate, teachers increasingly question his mother's childrearing and repeatedly call her to the school, for a total of six meetings during the school year. In private, teachers complain frequently that the relatively young single mother, who is in her mid-twenties and has lived in Japan for two years, is not acting like the *kichinto shiteiru* Japanese mothers and is not raising her child to fit into Japanese society. Instead, they claim that she is resisting acculturating to life in Japan, and is teaching her son "*Perū no koto*" (about Peru). In meeting after meeting, teachers increasingly chide her for the persistence of the problems. As the teachers demand faster compliance, they

instruct her to discipline him, to teach him to behave more *kichinto*.

Repeatedly, teachers preface their critiques with the phrase, "if you're going to stay in Japan," implying that the family's ability to stay in Japan depended on the mother properly disciplining her son. "Mother, are you hoping to permanently live in Japan, to live here forever," a teacher asks before starting an increasingly harsh critique of how much the child has been bothering the *kichinto shiteiru* Japanese children and parents who follow the rules. As the school's vice-principal tells the mother:

If you're going to live in Japan, if you're going to stay in Japan, Hikaru absolutely cannot do these things. Hitting other people's bodies, grabbing them, of course kissing them, you cannot do these things, you have to be careful, I want you to understand this properly, you have to discipline him. By discipline I mean, make him really understand this. This is about Hikaru becoming a big problem, that's what I want you to understand.

Turning to me to interpret their comments, the teachers explain their views of the mother's seeming resistance to following Japanese social norms. As the mother sits in her factory uniform, having just left work to come to the school, a teacher refers to the mother's attire:

In Japan, when you meet someone, the first thing you do is take off your cap. But the mother seems to not yet understand this rule. She's not teaching this rule to Hikaru. These especially Japanese manners, this greeting. She doesn't have common sense. That's a cultural difference, isn't it? That kind of thing is a cultural difference, right? First, the mother has to teach these things to the child, but there are a lot of things the mother doesn't understand, she's has to study about these things. About living in Japanese society, social rules, common sense.

Teachers further complain that the mother is not cooperating with the school's efforts to socialize and educate Hikaru, especially after the teachers took extra steps to help her, including having documents translated into Spanish. In making these references, teachers are "invoking indebtedness" (White 1987: 72), attempting to impose a sense of responsibility in the mother to acquiesce to the teachers' demands. "I want her to cooperate more. She comes to a Japanese school . . .," a teacher mutters to herself during the meeting, leaving the end of her sentence unspoken.

The teachers' barrage of pointed critiques and complaints cause the mother to physically retreat in her seat, with her faced turned downward, and eventually to cry. She later admits to feeling scared of her son's teacher, that she cannot discuss her son's problems with the teachers, and instead has to conceal information from them.

With the teacher acting like that, it doesn't make feel that I, um, I can trust her, to tell her more, to talk more, as

they say, um, about Hikaru's situation. What it does is it, it doesn't make me trust her, it made me, her way of acting, it makes me scared. Hide things. Don't say anything. Shame. That's how it makes me feel.

As noted previously, the framing of teachers as benefactors justifies the teachers' treatment of the parents, including behavior such as yelling and complaining at the them for acting "foreign" when their Japanese benefactor is trying to help them. In one instance, a Bolivian father mistakenly thinks that a meeting with teachers has been cancelled because his son's return to Japan from Bolivia has been delayed. When the father does not appear at the school for the meeting, the school's language counselor calls the father at work and loudly challenges him, yelling angrily in Spanish, "I am waiting at the school! . . . You, what's important, more important, school [or work]?" The comments draw on teachers' often-stated complaint that the Latino parents value work over school. Without asking why the father is not at the meeting, the counselor complains that the father's absence is a sign that the father, as a Latino, does not value his child's education. The counselor demands the phone number of the father's employer, whom he then calls to complain further that the father has missed his appointment with the school and needs time off for a second appointment.

Calling in the Community

As in the above case, when parents do not comply with teachers' efforts, teachers often resort to contacting others in the community to solicit their assistance in gathering information about the family and in supervising the family's behavior. As noted previously, contact between the school and an employer is not unusual, and school policies ostensibly prohibit teachers from sharing confidential information with third parties. However, teachers often violate these policies by discussing Latino families' private matters with employers, neighbors, and others in the community. These matters include patterns of truancy, unfounded allegations of child neglect, and academic problems. In one instance, the language counselor contacts Hikaru's mother's employer to say that the Hikaru told his teacher that his mother was pregnant and to request that the employer look into this.

The child, Hikaru, says his mother is pregnant. Now, the father isn't there, and Hikaru is a first-grade student, so this is a school matter. Is she getting married, is she getting divorced, that kind of thing, it has to do with the child. This is important, and I want information. Is it true, it has to do with the child, I don't understand it. Can I talk directly with the mother, can you check on that for me?

Arguing "The neighborhood raises the child together [with the school]," teachers claim that they are acting in the best interest of the children and that they are involving the community so that others can help in the raising of the children. However,

during my fieldwork, teachers took these steps only when dealing with Latino parents. Hikaru's mother also describes these calls as becoming fodder for gossip within the factory, as staff members and co-workers share jokes over her son's struggles at school and her private life. "The things that reach the office, everyone in the factory knows them. Whatever happens, everyone knows about it."

Involving the community in these matters reinforces the teachers' position of power over the Latino parents. Parents' options are further restricted by the fact that they cannot choose the public school in which they enroll their children. Rather, their children can only attend the one school that serves the district of Shiroyama. Hemmed in by limited language skills, calls to their employers and neighbors, and the inability to change schools, parents often have little choice but to acquiesce to teachers' complaints. As Hikaru's mother explains:

Here, I can't speak [Japanese], I don't even have the chance to say that I don't like the teacher, how she treats the kids, because I don't know the language, one, also because I can't change schools because I live in Shiroyama, so I have to take [my son] to that school. There's nothing I can do about it. So, as they say, I have to put up with it.

There have been several instances of parents challenging teachers, loudly calling into question the treatment of the foreign children and their parents. In one instance, a mother angrily asked, "Teacher, do you hate foreigners?" However, these exchanges merely reinforced the parents' deviant "foreign" status, as in the days and weeks following these heated exchanges, teachers complained that the parents had not yet adapted to life in Japan and that foreign parents are scary when they get angry.

Conclusion

In the eyes of many teachers within the school, the primary defining characteristic of the foreign students and their parents is their status as foreigners. This Japanese-foreign dichotomy is a wedge that maintains the boundary between teachers and foreign parents. As a Peruvian mother explained, "Here, it doesn't matter what your face looks like. If you're *nikkei*, Latino, *mestizo*, or Brazilian, it doesn't matter. Here we're all *gaijin* (outsiders)." The permanence of this *gaijin* status irks many foreign parents, especially in the face of the constant reminders from teachers that the parents, as *gaijin*, do not measure up to Japanese standards. That these foreigners are Latino further lowers their status, as teachers negatively stereotype Latinos as poor, lazy, and coarse. "There's nothing you can do about it. You have to keep *gambateando* (fighting)," says Hikaru's mother in a creolized mix of Spanish and Japanese.

Conceptualizing the teachers as ethnic boundary enforcers

sheds light on teachers' efforts to impose definitions of Japanese and Latino onto the behavior of children and parents. Acting as ethnic boundary enforcers not only provides the teachers professional legitimacy in their efforts to "Japanize" the foreign children, but also serves to reinforce teachers' self-presentations as benefactors and mentors to their subordinates. This self-presentation adds to the power and prestige teachers already possess as Japanese natives and educators. With a "velvet glove" approach (Jackman 1994) of framing criticism in terms of concern for the children's well-being and giving glowing praise for parents' efforts to learn Japanese, teachers are able to reinforce the status quo and restrict how parents can respond. Calling in the community for additional support further isolates parents and limits their ability to challenge their positioning.

Moreover, in contrasting "proper" Japanese behavior with the "foreign" behavior of Latino children and parents, Japanese teachers are constructing and imposing particular notions of self and other, of Japanese and foreign. This dialectical process elides distinctions in favor of singular, homogeneous categories (Bonilla-Silva 1997; Lie 2001; Robertson 1997). Drawing on a metanarrative of Japanese-ness as an idealized notion of commitment to the harmony of the group, teachers position "Japanese" as the positive, normative category, and the category of "foreign," or "Latino," as a source of problems. The key force in Latinos' supposed deviance is not the "foreign" nature of their behavior, but the teachers' act of labeling them as deviant (Becker 1963).

While the actions of the ethnic boundary enforcers have a significant impact on parent-teacher relations, they do not represent all teachers at Shiroyama Elementary. Many teachers strive to minimize the ethnic boundary by attempting to attend to the needs of their Latino students and to collaborate with the parents, however the success of these efforts is often thwarted by the school's ineffective language support system, which operates as a disconnected node, disengaged from networks of support, unaware of available resources, and isolated from the active discourse on the education of foreign children in Japan. Instead, Shiroyama Elementary relies heavily on its language counselor, who lacks the necessary language skills and is at the school only episodically. Rather than providing a conduit for cross-cultural communication, the work of the language counselor frustrates both parents and teachers alike, and leaves parents feeling further excluded, thereby strengthening the ethnic boundary. In this dysfunctional environment, defining problems as the result of foreign parents' actions, and not of the school's dysfunction, places the burden for addressing those problems on the parents, and not on the teachers.

The combination of teachers' efforts to enforce the ethnic boundary and the school's dysfunction complicates the second generation's assimilation by creating an environment in which being Latino is seen as a problem (See Lewis 2003). While

this may encourage Latino children to quickly acculturate, becoming Japanese is easier for some children than for others. Foreign children with Japanese phenotypical features and Japanese names are often able to pass as native Japanese, however children with Latino faces and names continue to be marked as foreign even as they acculturate. As the children tell their parents that they are Japanese and not Peruvian, and plead with their parents to speak to them only in Japanese in public, the children may be simply following their teachers' lead.

Notes

- 1) To protect the confidentiality of my informants, all names in this paper are pseudonyms.
- 2) City population statistics list the total number of foreigners, by country of origin, in the city, but do not list the numbers by country of origin in each neighborhood. Citywide statistics show 400 Peruvians, 320 Brazilians, 140 Chinese, and 35 Bolivians.
- 3) For an analysis of Latino parents' migration strategies in Japan, see Kojima 2006.
- 4) All translations in this paper are my own. For the sake of brevity, I am listing only the translations of the extended quotes.
- 5) School attendance patterns support the parents' depictions, at least in the short term. During the 2005–08 academic years, 66 foreign students attended Shiroyama Elementary School. Of these, four have left for South America and 62 remain in Japan.

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Ethnic Boundary Enforcers: Conceptualizing Japanese Teachers' Treatment of Migrant Latino Parents

Robert MOOREHEAD

As Latino workers increasingly migrate to Japan, their children are attending Japanese public schools in growing numbers. This article examines Japanese teachers' efforts to socialize these Latino parents and children into the Japanese public school setting. Drawing on interviews and participant observation in an elementary school with a growing number of Latino students, this analysis conceptualizes some teachers' actions as those of "ethnic boundary enforcers" who frame violations of school customs as caused by foreign parents' resistance to Japanese norms. This framing strengthens the ethnic boundary between Japanese teachers and Latino parents by defining the category of foreign as potentially deviant and in contrast to the positively framed, normative category of Japanese. This analysis also explores the connection between these frames of the issues and teachers' professional interests, including the use of their role as custodians of the children to justify their critiques of the parents. Negative stereotypes of Latinos also legitimize teachers' actions by framing teachers as benefactors and the parents as low-status, migrant factory workers in need of help to overcome the difficult task of living in Japan.

民族的境界を強めるもの

——日本人教師たちの外国人保護者たちに対する扱いをめぐる——

ロバート・モアヘッド

南米からの労働者の流入が増加するにつれて、日本の公立学校に在籍する子どもたちの数も増加している。本稿では、教師たちが南米からの子どもたちとその保護者たちを日本の公立学校という場で社会化しようとする試みについて考察している。

外国籍の子どもたちが増加しているある公立学校におけるインタビュー調査と参与観察をもとに、本分析では、ある教師たちの行為を「民族的境界を強めるもの」(ethnic boundary enforcers)として概念化している。それは、日本の規範に対する外国籍の子どもたちの保護者の抵抗を学校文化を壊すものとして枠づけている行為である。この枠づけは、日本の規範を肯定的なものとし、外国の規範を否定的なものとして定義してしまうので、日本人教師と南米の子どもたちの保護者の間にある民族的境界を強める働きをするのである。

また、南米に対する否定的なステレオタイプは、教師の役割を「恩恵を施す人」そして外国籍の子どもたちの保護者たちを、日本で生活していくのに助けが必要な低階層の工場労働者として位置づけることによって、教師の行為を正当化していくのである。

* ロバートモアヘッド氏は現在カリフォルニア大学デービス校において社会学を専攻する大学院生(博士課程)である。2005年8月より2006年11月までフルブライト奨学金を受けた。そして、2005年11月から2007年3月まである公立小学校において参与観察を行った(日本滞在は2007年7月まで)。本学で受入れを行い、私が local advisor として研究のサポートを行った。今回、日本での研究を終了するにあたって、本学科紀要に投稿を依頼、掲載となった。(文責:山本 かほり)