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# Immigration Discourses in the U.S. and in Japan

Chie Torigoe

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**IMMIGRATION DISCOURSES IN THE U.S. AND IN JAPA**

by

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**DISSERTATION**

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

**Doctor of Philosophy  
Communication**

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**July, 2011**

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation to the memory of Dr. Tadasu Todd Imahori, a passionate scholar, educator, and mentor who encouraged me to pursue this path.

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# IMMIGRATION DISCOURSES IN THE U.S. AND IN JAPAN

by

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## ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate how systems of racial inequality and dominance produced at macro-institutional level discourses are reproduced and/or challenged in micro-interpersonal everyday discourses regarding immigration/foreign workers in the U.S. and in Japan. To establish a link between the discourses at these two levels, I employed a combination of critical and interpretive theoretical perspectives, and analyzed how racial ideologies were reproduced and/or challenged through participants' use of various interpretative repertoires (i.e., discursive themes and specific rhetorical moves therein) and positioning of self and *Others*. Interpretative repertoires and discursive positioning of self and *Others* are major analytical frameworks of discursive psychology that were developed by Wetherell and Potter (1992), and I employed their discursive psychological analysis as the methodology for this study.

The present study included 14 pairs of self-identified white Americans in the U.S. and 17 pairs of self-identified Japanese in Japan. I provided each pair with a discussion guide and asked the participants to record their 30-60 min long private conversations regarding immigration/foreign worker issues using the discussion guide that I provided.

The analysis of the participants' interpersonal discourses demonstrated the existence and significance of the dialectical relationship between macro and micro level discourses regarding racial ideologies. In addition, the juxtaposition of discourses of countries with different historical and sociopolitical contexts indicated the importance of taking historical and sociopolitical contexts into account to understand the process of reproducing systems of inequalities and dominance. Although similar discursive patterns were recognized, such as erasure of race and positioning of positive-self and negative-*Others*, the analysis showed that different backgrounds provide unique kinds of interpretative repertoires as resources to maintain and/or challenge dominant racial ideologies. The present results imply that successive studies on racialized discourses about immigration/foreign workers in the U.S. and Japan are necessary. Given the rapidly changing immigration policies and racial dynamics in the U.S. and Japan, it is important to track the reproduction of systemic racism and changes over time.



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## **Chapter I: Introduction and Theoretical Perspectives**

Immigration has become an important issue because it affects virtually every aspect of life in America. With more than a million legal and illegal immigrants settling in the United States each year, immigration has an impact on education, health care, government budgets, employment, the environment, crime and countless other areas of American life. It is evident to most Americans that large-scale immigration is not serving the needs and interests of the country. (FAIR, n.d.a)

In 2007, Southern Poverty Law Center released a list of 14 anti-immigrant organizations as active U.S. hate groups on its website (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2007). The quotation cited above was retrieved from the website of one of the listed organizations called “Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR: <http://www.fairus.org>).” This non-profit organization with more than 198,000 members across the nation calls for a temporary moratorium on all immigration, both legal and illegal, to “regain control of our borders” (FAIR, n.d.a). As can be seen in the quotation, FAIR attributes multiple problems in society to an increasing number of immigrants and creates immigrants as threats or burdens to the nation. Given the demographic composition of the current immigrant population in the U.S. that includes a high percentage of immigrants from Mexico specifically and Latin America in general, it can be assumed that their negative attitudes and exclusionary practices are geared toward Mexican/Latin American immigrants. While being explicit about their anti-immigrant position and nativistic attitudes, FAIR emphasizes equality under the law. One of the seven principles of the “true” comprehensive immigration reform that FAIR suggests is

that “there should be no favoritism toward or discrimination against any person on the basis of race, color, or nationality...we should abolish special preference such as the Cuban Adjustment Act.” (FAIR, n.d.b, p.2)

The discursive pattern or strategy that renders immigrants as negative elements to the nation occurs alongside a denial of being “racist.” For example, FAIR creates immigrants as threats to the U.S. job market and economy.

Because many of today’s immigrants are low-skilled, mass immigration brings competition for entry-level jobs, harming American low-skilled workers.

Because most of today’s immigrants are poor, they are a drain on our fiscal resources and our economy. (FAIR, n.d.b)

This discursive pattern is not exclusively employed by extremists or radical right wing groups such as FAIR; it is actually a common discursive practice evident in public texts as well as everyday discourses that serves a hidden racist agenda of the nation and society. In contrast to the traditional concept of racism or racist practices during the period of colonization, slavery and Jim Crow, contemporary racism and racist practices are less blatant, more ambiguous and covert (Billig, 1988; Every & Augoustinos, 2007).

Discursive practices of contemporary racism can be also observed in Japan, the nation where there still is a pervasive notion of racial/ethnic homogeneity. With an increasing number of foreign workers in the nation, similar discursive patterns have emerged in immigration discourses in Japan. In similar ways to how immigrants are characterized in FAIR’s discourses, foreign workers/ residents in Japan are likely to be rendered as potential threats to the nation. One example is the statements made by the Ministry of Economy, Trade & Industry of Japan (hereafter METI). Recognizing that

accepting foreign workers as one possibility to deal with the need to increase the labor force, METI presents their reluctance toward admitting foreigners due to a concern about increased criminal activity.

More and more people are concerned about conflicts based on different cultures and customs in communities and about increasing criminal cases such as robbery. In recent years, due to rapidly increasing admissions of foreign exchange students and trainees, we have witnessed more cases including illegal labor and criminal offenses (Ministry of Economy, Trade & Industry, 2005, translated by the author).

In addition to constructing foreign workers in Japan as a cause of troubles in communities and as criminals, they are positioned as an economic and social burden in METI's statement.

Generally, they [foreign workers] are employed as low-wage workers, and because of their needs to send their money back home, there is a gap in economic affluence between them and neighboring Japanese. Especially, a sense of distrust caused by a lack of communication due to [their] low Japanese language level prevents the unity of local communities. In addition, there are issues regarding unpaid social security insurance fees....local governments are bearing a heavier burden. It is possible that this leads to an increase of social costs including pensions and welfare services (Ministry of Economy, Trade, & Industry, 2005, translated by the author).

Such discursive patterns also emerge not only in these governmental discourses in Japan. A public poll conducted by the Cabinet Office of Japan (May, 2006) regarding

admission of foreign workers also reflects negative attitudes toward increasing foreign workers in Japan. Of those who expressed their opinion that “Japan should admit foreigners with professional skills, techniques, and knowledge, but should not admit foreign workers for menial jobs” (537 people); 74.1% expressed their apprehension about “deteriorating public safety;” 49.3% said that it might trigger “more troubles in local communities;” and, 40.8% of them thought that admission of foreign workers may “increase the unemployment rate among Japanese.” (p.2). Though there is a color-line between Japanese and foreign workers, and also between foreign workers in professional fields and those with menial jobs, issues of “race” never appear in Japanese discourses on immigration/ admission of foreign workers.

Various discourse analytical studies on contemporary racism have demonstrated that negative discursive presentation of immigrants as racial “Others”, along with denial of racism, are pervasive strategies that construct and perpetuate dominant racial ideologies as well as sustain the status of elites in various western societies, including the U.S. (e.g. Bonilla-Silva, 2001, 2006; Flores, 2003; Santa Ana, 1999), the U.K. (Billig, 1998; Lynn and Lea, 2003; van Dijk, 1995; 2000), and the Netherlands (e.g. van Dijk, 1992; 1995). These studies reveal the function of macro-level institutional and public discourses, such as governmental discourses or media discourses, that produce, maintain, or challenge the dominant racial ideologies: The dominant racial ideologies rationalize and justify hegemonic social systems of racial inequalities and domination (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; 2006).

One understudied area in terms of discursive reproduction of racial ideologies and racist social systems is the arena of interpersonal discourses. I believe that



interpersonal discourses, as well as macro/institutional-level discourses, play a key role in reproducing, maintaining, or challenging the racial status quo. Since macro-level institutional discourses and micro-interpersonal level discourses are interdependent (Essed, 1999), it is imperative to examine the connection between the discourse at the two different levels to understand how contemporary racism is discursively produced and reproduced and what kinds of roles do these discourses play (Halualani, Fassett, Morrison, & Dodge, 2006). Therefore, this study investigates how racial ideologies that sustain and justify systems of racial inequality and dominance in society are reproduced in dyadic interpersonal discourses regarding immigration/foreign workers in the U.S. and in Japan.

There are several reasons why I chose these two countries. First of all, the U.S. and Japan are the two nations with which I affiliate as a Japanese Ph.D. student in the U.S. As I learned the connection between immigration discourses and racism in the U.S., I started questioning the lack of recognition and research on the same issue in Japan. Since scholars have given attention to how institutional/public discourses construct and sustain a racial hierarchy and inequality in the U.S., I believe that comparing U.S. and Japanese discourses allows me to demonstrate the existence of racist systems in Japan. This is important because the myth of Japan as a race-less society is pervasive. Second, juxtaposing discourses from different nations allows me to understand how the discursive processes of reproducing racial ideologies are influenced and constrained by particular historical/socio-political contexts. It is beneficial to investigate how discursive practices in nations with different historical and sociopolitical contexts regarding immigration to identify what kinds of racial ideologies are reproduced and perpetuated in both nations, and what these discursive practices achieve in the respective societies. Lastly, given the

relationship between immigration and globalization, it is useful to examine how the different nations and their citizens attempt to deal with the dilemma of economic needs and nativism, and how they discursively justify or legitimate their attitudes and opinions regarding immigration and foreign workers.

Specifically, the primary goals of this study are: 1) to establish a link between the reproduction of the systems of racial inequality at macro-institutional levels and micro-interpersonal-levels by combining critical and interpretive theoretical perspectives, 2) to investigate how specific language use in dyadic interpersonal discourses reproduces, maintains or challenges dominant racial ideologies, and 3) to examine how positioning of self and Others in interpersonal dyadic discourses recreates and sustains systems of racial inequality in the U.S. and in Japan.

Below I discuss the theoretical rationale of combining a critical and an interpretive approach in investigating dyadic interpersonal discourse regarding immigration/foreign worker issues in the U.S. and in Japan. First, I refer to the major tenets of each perspective. Then I outline why I focus on the social construction of racial ideologies and positioning of “self” and “Others” in dyadic discourses. I also define several important concepts and describe theoretical frameworks and key constructs for this study including “racialized social systems” (Bonilla-Silva, 1996; 2001; 2006).

### **Combination of Critical and Interpretive Perspectives**

As researchers who investigate racism and racial inequality through analyzing discourses argue (e.g. Essed, 1991; van Dijk, 1992; 1993; 1995; Wetherell & Potter, 1992; Moss & Faux, 2006), I believe that systems of racism and racial inequality in society are reproduced and sustained at both macro-institutional levels and at

micro-interpersonal levels, and there is a “dialectical relationship” between the processes at these levels (Fairclough, 2003; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). In other words, the systems of inequality and domination created at the macro-level are reproduced, perpetuated, or challenged in dyadic interpersonal discourses, but at the same time, the discursive practices at micro-interpersonal level are constrained and enabled by social structural forces, institutional practices, and ideologies produced at the macro level (Fairclough, 2003; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). Therefore, to understand hegemonic systems of racial inequality and domination regarding immigration issues/foreign worker issues in the U.S. and Japan, it is imperative to pay attention to both macro-institutional and micro-interpersonal contexts.

To analyze the process of discursive reproduction of the systems of domination, Potter and Wetherell (1992) delineate the three steps. First, researchers should analyze the social and historical contexts and macro-level institutional practices. Second, detailed analysis of linguistic and rhetorical moves in interpersonal discourses and patterns of discourses should be conducted. Lastly, it is necessary to connect the first process and the second process. In order to establish the links between the practices of reproducing racial ideologies that sustain and reproduce hegemonic social structure at macro and micro level, I believe that taking both critical and interpretive approaches is appropriate.

The major tenets of a critical perspective and a theoretical framework that uncovers “a racialized social system” guide me to understand systemic and hegemonic aspects of systems of racial inequality. Also, theoretical assumptions of an interpretive perspective allow me to focus on dyadic interpersonal discourses, relational dynamics, and discursive positioning.

### **Major Tenets of a Critical Perspective in Current Study**

The major concern of critical research is to uncover hegemonic social structure by focusing on different degrees of agency, ideologies, and systems of dominance and exploitation in specific contexts, with an underlying goal of bringing about possible change into society (Collier, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 1998; Martin & Nakayama, 2004). Hegemony is defined as the process in which dominant group's ideas, rules, and practices are consolidated as "common sense" through consent instead of coercion (Gramsci, 1971; Omi & Winant, 1994). Based on a combination of social constructionist and materialist ontology and historical realist epistemology, critical researchers assume that realities and identities are socially, historically, and ideologically constructed, while the construction of realities and identities are constrained and enabled by social, political, and historical contexts (Giddens, 1976). Therefore, critical research mainly focuses on macro-contexts, such as historical and political backgrounds, socio-economic conditions, or institutional practices and discourses including legislative documents and mass media texts.

Though my primary analytical focus is specific language use and positioning process in interpersonal dyadic discourses, I believe that it is impossible to detach discursive practices at the interpersonal level from the macro contexts in which the discourses are situated. Specifically, macro-contexts are important for understanding the issues of immigration/admission of foreign workers, because these issues are deeply embedded into national and international history, politics, and socio-economic conditions and other institutional practices in the U.S. and in Japan. By taking these macro-contexts into account, I am able to identify how specific discourses of immigration/foreign workers are constructed, reproduced, naturalized, or resisted in certain sociopolitical and

historical contexts, as well as how structural and institutional forces enable or constrain certain ideologies and positioning of self and Others in interpersonal dyadic discourses.

To understand the reproduction mechanism of systems of racial inequality and domination at the macro-level, the concept of a racialized social system theorized by Bonilla-Silva (1996; 2001; 2006) is central. The idea of racialized social systems is a helpful framework from a critical perspective because it incorporates many significant concepts that critical scholars focus on, such as hegemonic systems of dominance in society, ideologies, and agency. The theory of racialized social systems explains well the process in which hegemonic social structures regarding race relations and the concept of “race” keep reproducing themselves through various mechanisms, how ideologies act in the process, and how the systems determine, protect, and constrain levels of agency of different racial group members.

### **Racialized Social Systems**

Bonilla-Silva (1996) defines racialized social systems as “societies in which economic, political, social, and ideological levels are partially structured by the placement of actors in racial categories” (p.469). The notable aspect of this framework is that it brings “race” into the center. The centrality of race in various social issues is oftentimes problematically blurred, obscured and made invisible through various institutional and individual practices in the current society which regards race-related topics as taboo. This framework delineates the invisible mechanisms (especially to the dominant group members) that reproduce the structures. Based on Bonilla-Silva’s literature about racialized social systems (1996; 2001; 2006), I selected the following three mechanisms as relevant to the current study because they are the primary ones that

keep reproducing the system itself: 1) constructing the concept of race and racial hierarchy, 2) providing different amounts of rewards to different racial groups, and 3) generating racial ideology.

**Construction of race and racial hierarchy.** As seen in the definition of racialized social systems cited above, a racialized social system categorizes people into different racial groups, but at the same time, the racial categories are also constructed by the racialized social system. Of importance here is that the process of categorizing people into different groups cannot be neutral; racial categories are arranged hierarchically. Racial categories are not static entities, because they have been constructed and transformed historically, socially, politically, and ideologically (Omi & Winant, 1994). The dominant racial group is always constructed as “normal and standard” at the top of the hierarchy, while “non-dominant” racial groups are constructed as “abnormal” or even “unhuman” below the dominant racial group(s) (Mills, 1997). The construction of and qualification of dominant race are constantly shifting in the practices of constructing “opposing,” “deviant,” and “exceptional” races in society (Mills, 1997; Omi & Winant, 1994; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). “Race,” thus, is not a biological concept, such as skin colors and hair textures, but a sociopolitical concept (Mills, 1997).

Another important aspect of the construction of race and what makes this framework fit in a critical perspective is that this framework regards race not as a mere social identity construction. Once created, racial categories become “real” and they influence actor’s life chances, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Mills, 1997). For example, in U.S. history of categorizing race groups, a criterion of the “one drop rule” used to be employed to construct the black race. On the other hand, however, a blood quantum

system was utilized to define Native Americans (Sturm, 2002; Snipp, 2002). These practices produced more lower-caste blacks to be exploited and fewer Native Americans who claimed their land back from the dominant white group. Thus, the U.S. racialized social system provides the dominant group(s) a right to define racial Others, and to sustain their white position and status in society. It also reifies socially and ideologically constructed racial categories that act to constrain Others' life chances and practices.

**Providing different amounts of rewards.** Based on these racial categorizations that are historically, socially, and ideologically constructed, a racialized social system provides different amounts of material, as well as psychological, rewards to different racial groups (Bonilla-Silva, 1996; 2001; 2006). Since the system is hierarchical, it institutionally provides more rewards to dominant racial groups (Mills, 1997; Bonilla-Silva, 1996; 2001; 2006). The different amount of rewards can be observed in the differences of income level, educational attainment, political representations, social mobility, and disparity of wealth among others (Bonilla-Silva, 1996; 2001; 2006). In the U.S., for instance, the median income of black households is 60% as much as non-Hispanic white households; furthermore, 25.8% of blacks and 25.3% of Hispanics live under the poverty line, while 9.4% of non-Hispanic whites do; also, 32.4% of Hispanics are without health insurance, while 12% of non-Hispanic whites are (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010a). The 2009 unemployment rate for blacks is 12.3%, while it is 7.3% for whites; additionally 12.5% of Hispanic males, 14% of Hispanic females, 17.8% of black males, and 20.6% of black females have bachelor's degree, while 30.6% of white males and 29.3% of white females do. Finally, 36% of blacks' home purchase loans were denied, while 17% of white's were denied (U.S. Census bureau, 2011).

Though detailed statistics across different racial groups are not available in Japan, data shows that the Japanese average income is higher than that of non Japanese. While the average monthly income of Japanese workers in manufacturing is ¥358,000 (approximately \$3500), *Nikkeijin* (Japanese who migrated from Brazil or Peru) male workers' who work in manufacturing have an average monthly income of ¥293,000. Technical trainees in manufacturing, mostly those from other Asian countries, earn ¥145,000 per month (Bank of Japan, 2008).

Thus, as Mills (1997) argues in his book, *the Racial Contract*, all whites (Japanese, in the Japanese case) are structural beneficiaries of this racial contract, though not all of them are willing to sign it. This concept illustrates that a racialized social system structurally and systemically provides the dominant racial group unearned privileges and “wages” that “non-dominant” racial groups are not allowed to have (Jackson, 2002, McIntosh, 1988; Roediger, 1991). This system represents that the system of racial inequality and dominance is hegemonic – the dominance is not achieved by force or coercion but by making different racial group members consent to their position and different amounts of rewards that accompany the position (Gramsci, 1971).

In addition to the different amounts of rewards, a racialized social system provides different degrees of agency to dominant group members and non-dominant group members. Agency refers to the intersection of the contextual factors that enable and constrain, and freedom of choice and the capacity to act (Hegde, 1996). Scholars working within a critical perspective assume that people have a different degree of agency and various social contexts and ideologies, which are oftentimes invisible or hidden, privilege and/or constrain certain group member's agency over others (Collier, 2006).



The different degrees of agency a racialized social system provides determines whose interests are normalized or institutionalized in society. The idea of racialized social systems assumes that different racial groups develop different group interests based on the different rewards that the system provides: The dominant group's interest is to sustain their privileges and non-dominant racial groups' interests are changing their position in society (Bonilla-Silva, 1996; 2001; 2006). However, since a racialized social system provides different degrees of agency to dominant and marginalized racial groups, the dominant group's interests become institutionalized and naturalized as "normal" and "universal" interests, while marginalized racial group's voices are restricted and diminished.

Derrick Bell (1980; 1992) argues that marginalized racial groups' interests are recognized or accommodated only when they match those of dominant white members; he refers to this as "interest convergence" (Bell, 1980; 1992). In U.S. history, for example, desegregation of schools was achieved because it benefited both whites and non-whites: After the law of segregated schooling was abolished, maintaining a segregated school costs more than desegregating because whites-only schools would receive less governmental funding than integrated schools (Bell, 1980). Not only these material interests, but also psychological interests – not appearing as a "racist school," for example – were met by desegregating.

**Generating racial ideologies.** The third mechanism of a racialized social system to reproduce itself is generating racial ideologies. Racial ideologies are constructed and employed by dominant group members to justify and legitimate their domination and racial status quo, and they are used by marginalized members to resist the domination

(Bonilla-Silva, 1996; 2001; 2006). Thus, any racial groups can construct racial ideologies, but due to the different degree of agency that a racialized social system provides them, the dominant group's racial ideologies become "common-sense" in society. A critical perspective is appropriate to understand how the dominant group's ideology becomes "common-sense" through various macro-institutional level practices, for instance, through media representation of racial Others (Hall, 1997; van Dijk, 1992; 1993; 1995), educational discourse that reproduces color-blind ideologies in the U.S. (Du Bois, 1965; Bonilla-Silva, 2001), in the UK and in the Netherlands (van Dijk, 1992; 1995), and immigration policy that reproduces racial purity and xenophobia in Japan (Shipper, 2002; Shikama, 2005).

From a perspective of racialized social systems, such a systemic ideological process is considered as racism, that is, racism can be defined as ideological dimension of a racialized social system. As Bonilla Silva (1996; 2001; 2006) and Omi and Winant (1994) critique, racism is often treated as free-floating ideology, a psychological phenomena, prejudicial attitudes or extreme overt discriminatory behavior, and also researchers tend to study it as a static phenomena from a functionalist perspective by using measurements developed in the 1950s or 1960s (Bonilla-Silva, 2001). On the contrary, racism has structural roots yet is flexible. For example, during the slavery or Jim Crow era, the dominant U.S. ideology was biological inferiority of blacks and superiority of whites that justified owning slaves and the segregation policy. However, in the contemporary period, the dominant ideology is less blatant and overt; racism has transformed into being more covert and hegemonic in the U.S. (Bonilla-Silva, 1996; 2001; 2006, Omi & Winant, 1994). Hence, a critical perspective is appropriate in

capturing the fluid nature of the systems of racial inequality and dominance due to its emphasis on the macro-level contexts.

Although the macro-level institutional discourses and practices are not the major analytical focus of this study, it is important to incorporate the macro-level aspects of the system of racial inequality and domination in order to situate interpersonal discourses in historical, political, and economic contexts of respective countries to uncover how the system of domination functions to sustain and reproduce itself at micro-interpersonal level. As has been noted, a critical approach allows researchers to situate immigration/foreign worker discourses in historical and socio-political context and to understand how hegemonic racial hierarchies and systems of racism are produced and sustained at macro-level. Of importance here is that the systems of dominance/racial inequality are not only reproduced at macro-level, such as through governmental policy, education, or religious institution, but also at micro-interpersonal level; interpersonal discourses are the location in which dominant ideologies are reproduced, sustained, perpetuated, transformed, and challenged (Essed, 1991; van Dijk, 1992; 1993; 1995; Moss & Faux, 2006; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). In addition to the studies of macro-level discourses, therefore, investigating the specific process of reproducing systems of racial inequality and domination at the interpersonal micro-level is necessary. To pay attention to these specific discursive practices, rhetorical and semantic components of the process, an interpretive approach is appropriate.

### **Major Tenets of an Interpretive Perspective**

The primary purposes of interpretive research are to understand and describe intersubjective meanings, rules, identities, and social positioning that are constructed

through interpersonal interactions, and also to investigate the construction process (Collier, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 1998; Martin & Nakayama, 2004). Thus, this perspective is appropriate in investigating the specific process of constructing realities and meanings and making sense of them through interpersonal discursive practices. For this study, an interpretive perspective guides me to put focus on the specific process of constructing, perpetuating, or challenging the dominant ideologies by analyzing the specific rhetorical moves individuals take in their interpersonal dyadic discourses, as well as those in positioning themselves and “Others.” Taking an interpretive perspective, I can demonstrate the important role that interpersonal dyadic discourses play in reproducing dominant ideologies and sustaining hegemonic systems of racial inequality and domination in conversations that are more private and less public.

**Importance of investigating interpersonal discourses.** In her book, *Understanding Everyday Racism*, Essed (1991) defines “everyday racism” as a process of integrating macro-level racist practices into everyday practices that reinforce the underlying power dynamics in society, and she claims the significance of everyday conversation in the reproduction of a social system of racism. Essed (1991) and other discourse analysts whose concern is racial inequality and dominance focus on the interpersonal discursive reproduction of social systems, especially the process of reproducing and perpetuating dominant racial ideologies. They examine various “interpretative repertoires,” which are resources of symbols and meanings that individuals can use to justify and legitimate their version of realities (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). For example, Bonilla-Silva’s study (2006) demonstrates that there are four major themes that people draw on in reproducing color-blind ideology,

a dominant racial ideology of contemporary U.S. society: 1) abstract liberalism, which is a combination of economic and political liberalism that values equal rights, equal opportunity, freedom of choice, and meritocracy, 2) naturalization, which allows individuals to construct racial phenomena as natural, 3) cultural racism, which attributes racial problems to marginalized groups' cultures, and, 4) minimization of racism, which denies the significance of race, and constructs racism as either a thing in the past or practices of groups of racist individuals (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). In a similar light, Wetherell and Potter (1992) found three different interpretative repertoires (culture as therapy, culture as heritage, and culture as ideology) that Pakeha New Zealanders, the white dominant group, use to justify their racist attitudes or practices against Maoris. Also, Dixon, Foster, Durrheim, and Wilbraham (1994) propose that white South Africans drew on "ecological discourse" when they justified their opposition against governmental plans to expand the boundaries of a black squatter camp into white areas of residence.

The studies cited above demonstrate that interpersonal discourses play an important role in reproducing and perpetuating dominant racial ideologies that sustain and protect systems of racial inequality and dominance in society. Given the importance of discursive reproduction of ideologies, van Dijk (1995) contends that discourse analysis is actually an ideological analysis. Ideology is not a mere reflection of social structure; it constitutes the social structure through discursive practices (van Dijk, 1995). Therefore, through investigating what kind of interpretative repertoires and rhetorical tools people use in reproducing racial ideologies in the U.S. and in Japan regarding immigration/foreign workers issues, my research can contribute to the body of research on discursive reproduction of racism. In addition to the focus on interpretative repertoires

(outlined in more detail in the next chapter), I emphasize the discursive positioning of self and “Others” in dyadic discourses as a mechanism of reproduction of racial inequality and domination in society.

### **Negotiation of Intersecting Multiple Identities**

An important aspect of my interpretive and critical perspective is that I assume that individuals construct multiple realities and multiple identities and also that these identity positions are historically, politically, and ideologically constrained and enabled by various social structural forces (Miller, 2005; Martin & Nakayama, 2004). This assumption is important in this study because of the following reasons. First, given the goals of my study, I believe that individuals’ cultural identities should not be essentialized nor are monocultural approaches that isolate race or nationality appropriate. I cannot reduce people’s cultural identities into one racial identity that I ascribe to them. Individuals’ cultural identities are multiple and intersecting, representations of Others produce material consequences, and people negotiate different identities across different situational and sociopolitical contexts (Collier, 1998; 2005). Therefore, it is necessary to give attention to how participants discursively negotiate intersecting identities such as race, nationality, ethnicity, gender, and class.

Second, negotiation of cultural identity positions and hierarchies that occur through ascription and avowal is contingent upon the context of immigration/foreign workers (Shome 2003; Flores, 2003). In postcolonial and critical media studies, scholars demonstrate that immigrants’ bodies and border spaces are racialized and gendered through the practices regarding sovereignty and territoriality (Flores, 2003; Root, 1996; Shome, 2003). Also, given the fact that immigrants/ foreign workers are positioned into

different racial categories and provided different opportunities for and material rewards from these categories such as jobs and income, these categories encourage different degrees of agency. Therefore, it is obvious that race and class positioning are intertwined. Thus, in understanding dyadic interpersonal discourses regarding immigration/foreign workers in the U.S. and in Japan, it is important to pay attention to how dominant group members in the respective country avow and negotiate their own intersecting identities, as well as what kind of identities they ascribe to racial “Others.”

### **Positioning of Self and Others**

In the previous section about dyadic interpersonal discourses, referring to the concept of racialized social systems, I argue that systems of racial inequality and dominance are sustained and protected partly through the process of discursive reproduction of dominant racial ideologies. People achieve this by drawing on certain interpretive repertoires or themes. Another mechanism that sustains the social system of racism is the positioning of “self” and “Others.” These positionings construct and perpetuate dominant ideologies, while the dominant ideologies constrain the process of positioning; this dual structure keeps reproducing hegemonic systems of racial inequality.

It is important to investigate the positioning of self and Others in understanding the reproduction process of the system of racial inequality and domination due to the hegemonic nature of the systems. As Bonilla-Silva (1996; 2001; 2006) argues, contemporary racial domination and control is achieved in a hegemonic way, that is, by consent rather than coercion or violence (Gramsci, 1971). In order to maintain hegemony, social structures require people to accept their positioning in the system (Bonilla-Silva, 1996; 2001; 2006), which is not a neutral process but a hierarchical one. Namely,

hegemonic social systems of race relations always produce “positive us” and “negative Others” and they reinforce dominant ideologies in society.

As well as the reproduction of racial ideologies, positioning is also practiced at both macro and micro level. In terms of macro-level positioning, van Dijk (1992; 1993) contends that the strategy of constructing “positive self” and “negative Others” is commonly used in various institutional discourses. For example, in his study of “elite discourse” in Great Britain, van Dijk (1992; 1993) argues that in media messages favorable terms are mostly used for whites, while foreigners are represented as strange, dangerous, and criminals. It is because elite groups in society have a social/political position that allows access to the process of meaning making and gives the right to make institutional decisions, whereas marginalized groups do not have access to the institutions and resources to represent themselves (van Dijk, 1992; 1993). In a similar light, van Dijk (1995) argues that Dutch educational discourses produce whites as positive, tolerant, and normal, while immigrants are portrayed as conducting criminal activities and deviant in society. This occurs through the production and selection of textbooks, educational TV programs, children’s books, and school curriculums designed predominantly by white educational administrators. In another study, van Dijk (2000a) investigated political debate on immigration and asylum seekers at British House of Commons in 1997, and his analysis revealed that “positive us” and “negative Others” was a common form in use. While asylum seekers were constructed as “bogus, illegal, criminal, parasites that cost ‘us’ and break ‘our’ norms,” British people were constructed as “poor old taxpayers” (p.104) and any British behaviors that could be considered negative were blurred with euphemisms or legalism.



The research of van Dijk (1992; 1995; 2000a, 2000b) demonstrates that it is a common strategy to position self as positive and Others as negative in public institutional levels, such as political discourses. However, this strategy is also employed at the micro interpersonal level to justify and legitimate the racial status quo and to maintain social systems of inequality and domination. For example, Bonilla-Silva's (2006) interview study reveals that many white U.S. participants use the strategy of "blaming the victim" in explaining the racial inequalities, in which speakers argue that "we" are tolerant and understanding "non-racists" and "they" are the ones who make up racist issues, which actually do not exist. This finding corresponds with the finding of Wetherell and Potter (1992) that white Pakeha New Zealanders position themselves as "non-racists" and "positive" by using the disclaimers such as "I'm not a racist but..." or "I have nothing against Maoris" while constructing Maoris as negative by saying they are the actual racists or "alcoholics," "backwards," or "welfare dependents." In the same vein, Moss and Faux (2006) in their study on discourses of 34 paired white U.S. American college students, demonstrated that when students talk about scholarships for minority students, they constructed themselves as "intelligent and qualified" while producing minority students as "unqualified but the system privileges them."

The studies cited above not only demonstrate how dominant racial group members position themselves and racial Others at both macro and micro levels, but they also reveal the consequences of the use of "positive-self" and "negative Other" strategy in discourses. Namely, by positioning the dominant group as "positive" and Others as "negative" in everyday interpersonal discourses as well as institutional discourses, the dominant group members can remain unnamed and invisible (Billig, 1988). By keeping

the dominant position as unnamed, naturalized, and invisible in society, dominant group members can maintain their unearned privileges (McIntosh, 1988).

In investigating the positioning of “self” and “Others,” it is important to pay attention to the intersecting multiple identities. As Essed (1991) argues, individuals negotiate intersecting positions in certain discourses, and power is exercised in the negotiation of multiple positions. For example, a white male U.S. American who is from an upper-class family may position himself differently from a white female U.S. American who is from lower-class family. Therefore, it is reductionist to lump together all white U.S. Americans or Japanese in investigations of their views of self and Others. Though there are group categorizations that are positioned as more dominant given that these result from being structural beneficiaries of a racialized social system (Mills, 1997), essentializing the dominant group (or the subordinate group) might make researchers fail to find discursive points of resistance, or moments of reification of the status quo. Further such essentializing may pre-empt identifying contested and contradictory discursive positions based on multiple categorizations of immigrant or naturalized status, level of professional status, race, and sex.

It is important to note here that I recognize the need to connect the findings regarding discursive construction and reproduction of racial ideologies and positioning of self and Others at the dyadic interpersonal micro level to the reproduction of the system of racial inequality and dominance at macro-institutional level. I give attention to macro-level discourses of immigration/foreign workers in the U.S. and in Japan as contextual features to situate the interpersonal dyadic discourses into macro-contexts. Also, given my role as an interpretive/critical researcher, I articulate and critique the

negative consequences of particular discursive practices in terms of immigration/foreign workers in the U.S. and in Japan. In this way I can contribute to knowledge that may destabilize academic discourse that has not sufficiently established the link between macro and micro discourses regarding immigration/foreign workers.

## **Chapter II: Contexts of Immigration/Foreign Workers in the U.S. and in Japan**

In order to connect interpersonal dyadic discourses regarding the issues and the contexts to which the discourses belong, it is imperative to understand the social and historical contexts of immigration and admission of foreign workers. Therefore, I first summarize the contexts of immigration/admission of foreign workers in the U.S. and in Japan in this section. More specifically, I describe the current situation of immigration/admission of foreign workers, historical background of today's immigration, and immigration policies in both countries. In doing so, I show the applicability of the concept of racialized social systems to each society regarding its immigration issues.

### **Social and Historical Contexts of Immigration**

In this section, first, I describe the current situation of immigration/admission of foreign workers in the U.S. Then, I put focus on the history of the U.S. immigration policy, while discussing how immigration in the U.S. has been racialized in dominant institutional discourses. Second, I delineate the history and current social conditions regarding immigration/admission of foreign workers in Japan, and then I argue how immigrants/foreign workers in Japan are actually racialized in a “race-less” society by applying the framework of a racialized social system.

#### **The United States**

**Current immigration demographics in the U.S.** Since the first arrival of Puritans from Europe in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, the U.S., as a country of immigrants, has opened its gates to immigrants who are seeking freedom and opportunity. However, it does not mean that the U.S. has welcomed all immigrants from different racial groups equally (Martin, 2003). While many U.S. Americans are proud of the fact that their nation

is built upon immigration, it is the earlier wave of immigration from Europe which is considered as “preferred” immigration (Leonhardt, 2008; Martin, 2003). The later immigration waves, including Irish immigrants and Chinese immigrants during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, became threats to national/racial identity and sovereignty.

Currently, the U.S. is facing one of the biggest waves of immigration since records of immigration began to be kept in 1820 (Congressional Budget Office: CBO, 2004; Martin, 2003; Pantoja, 2006). Approximately, 1.1 million immigrants on average are admitted annually (the U.S. Census Bureau, 2006), and 1.13 million immigrants were admitted as permanent residents in 2009 (Department of Homeland Security, 2009). According to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service records, the U.S. legally admitted 5.7 million immigrants during the 1990s, and more than 7.4 million people were admitted during the last decade (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010b). The population of immigrants in the U.S. increased from 31.1 million to 38.5 million or 24% between 2000 and 2009. This corresponds with 12.5 % of the entire population of the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010b). This rapid expansion of immigrant population in the present period has become a central issue related to national identity, sovereignty, security and the national economy.

The legal status of foreign-born residents in the U.S. can be categorized into five groups: Legal permanent residents (LPRs), naturalized citizens, legal temporary residents, refugees/asylum seekers, and unauthorized/undocumented immigrants (Fortuny, Capps, & Passel, 2007): Legal permanent residents are those who are legally admitted to stay in the U.S. permanently by being issued immigrant visas abroad and obtaining green cards later in the U.S. For legal permanent residents to become naturalized citizens, they need

to be in the U.S. for more than five years (three years for those who marry U.S. American citizens) and to pass the citizenship test and background checks. Those who are admitted to enter the U.S. for a temporary period as workers or as students without attaining permanent residency are called temporary legal residents. Refugee status is granted to individuals who are under persecution or a fear of persecution in their home countries, while asylum seekers, who are also under persecution or fear of it, usually enter the country without authorization and claim asylum. Unauthorized/undocumented immigrants refer to those who enter the U.S. illegally or overstay after their temporal visa expired (Fortuny et. al, 2007).

One of the reasons why the U.S. regards the current wave of immigration as “problematic” is the fact that the majority of current immigration population is from non-European countries or non-white racial groups. As Irish and Chinese have been excluded due to their race in past centuries, Mexican and Latin American immigrants are often constructed as criminals or terrorists in newspapers (Flores, 2003) and in public blogs (Collier & Mudambi, 2010), they are likely to be regarded as “problems” to the nation in the present period. Among legal permanent residents in 2009, the largest number of immigrants were born in Mexico (29.8%) followed by those from China, (5.2%), Philippines (4.5 %), India (4.3 %), El Salvador (3.0%) among other countries (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010b). In terms of the entire legal foreign-born population in 2010 including LPRs, naturalized citizens, refugees, and temporary resident immigrants, 53 % of the foreign-born population came from Latin America, 28 % from Asia, and 12.7 % from Europe (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010b). Regarding unauthorized immigrants, the Pew Hispanic Center estimates that there were approximately 11.5 million to 12 million

unauthorized/undocumented immigrants in the U.S. in 2006, which is almost 30 % of all immigrant population (Passel, 2006). The Urban Institute estimates that 57 % of all unauthorized immigrants came from Mexico, and the majority of them arrived in the U.S. in the past decade (Fortuny et al, 2007). The same study indicates that the population of unauthorized immigrants is highly concentrated in the metropolitan areas, such as Los Angeles (1 million), New York (520, 000), Dallas (460, 000), and Chicago (400,000). The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2010) estimated that there were 10.8 million unauthorized immigrants in 2009. They also reported that the unauthorized population increased by 250,000 annually in the last decade (Department of Homeland Security, 2010).

The rapid increase of immigrants, both legal and illegal, from Mexico and Latin American countries in the last decade has located the U.S. immigration politics in the dialectical tension between the desire to meet national economic needs and the desire to protect its border and sovereignty (Martin, 2003). As mentioned earlier, U.S. Americans tend to be less favorable toward current immigration, while they tend to regard the early waves of immigration as positive (Martin, 2003; Pantoja, 2006). For example, a Gallup survey in 1993 indicated that 59 % of respondents answered that immigration was beneficial for the U.S., while 60 % believed that it is bad for the country today (Pantoja, 2006). In a similar light, the 1994 General Social Survey demonstrates that 83 % answered that continuing immigration would cause high unemployment rates and 63 % said it would prevent the country from uniting (Pantoja, 2006). More recently survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2011 shows that 40% of 1,385 participants answered that their biggest immigration concern is that illegal immigrants are a drain on

government services, and 20% said that they threaten the employment rates of American citizens (Pew Research Center, 2011). The existence of anti-immigration organizations at grass-root levels across the U.S. reflects such negative attitudes toward current immigration. For example, FAIR, a large anti-immigrant organization, contrasts past immigration and present immigration in the following way:

Immigration in the past did bring benefits – in the past, the U.S. needed large numbers of people to settle the frontiers, cut forests, build railroads, mine gold, and much more. Today’s priorities are preserving our remaining wilderness areas, conserving our natural resources, and ensuring a better quality of life for future generations (FAIR, n.d.)

Implicitly, this statement constructs the present immigrants as contributing to environmental pollution, scarce natural resources, and worsening quality of life in U.S. society. Not only public opinion, but also the U.S. government has shown its ambivalent or even negative attitudes toward immigration. The ambivalent attitudes toward immigrants and immigrants’ rights and underlying nativistic racism that confirms an anti-immigration political agenda are manifest in the past and present U.S. immigration policy (Cornelius, 2005; Demo, 2005; Martin, 2003; Pantoja, 2006).

**History of immigration policy in the U.S.** Immigration policy in the U.S. has been always a racialized process; it has been underpinned by white supremacist ideology and practices (Muwakkil, 2006). The decisions about who can be admitted, who can be citizens of the U.S., and who can have the same rights as citizens have been made based on the immigrants’ racial categories, while the racialized aspects are often hidden under



the guise of cultural or religious differences, moral issues, and economic crisis (Cornelius, 2005; Flores, 2003; Martin, 2003; Pantoja, 2006).

Martin (2003) describes four perspectives to immigration based on her analysis of past U.S. immigration policies. In the next section I overview these perspectives. Then, I introduce four past political movements regarding immigration, which have relatively explicit white supremacist, nativistic racist orientation: the 1790 Naturalization Act, Know Nothing Movement during the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Chinese Exclusion act at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the Johnson-Reed Act in 1924. Then I point out the similarities between these past movements and the current U.S. immigration policy that is primarily geared toward controlling immigrants from Mexico and Latin American countries.

***Four political perspectives regarding immigration.*** In her analysis of the politics of U.S. immigration policies, Martin (2003) describes four different actors characterized with their attitudes toward immigration and attitudes toward the rights of immigrants: advocates, free-marketeers, restrictionists, and integrationists. Advocates refer to the groups of people who favor a large numbers of immigrants and are willing to bestow legal immigrants with full rights and access to public services and benefits. Though they are against illegal immigration, they support policies that make the legalization process easier if the immigrants meet the criteria. When the U.S. was in its infancy, the majority of the discourse on immigration might have been rooted in the idea of Advocates.

The slogan of free-marketeers is “Immigration Yes, Welfare, No” (Martin, 2003. p.136). They are not against admitting foreigners as temporary workers for their contribution to the U.S. economy, but they are unwilling to provide full rights to

immigrants. For example, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, prevented Chinese laborers who were engaging in rail-road construction from gaining U.S. citizenship (Demo, 2005); this is a policy that reflects the free-marketeers' beliefs. Also, the Bracero program that admitted Mexicans as temporal workers due to the labor shortage after the war (Demo, 2005; Martin, 2003), as well as President Bush's guest worker program, are consistent with the free-marketeers' opinions (Martinez, 2004).

Restrictionists oppose admitting large number of both legal and illegal immigrants as well as oppose their access to benefits and legal rights. Thus, restrictionists are likely to regard immigration as problematic, and they support strict restrictions on illegal immigration with reasons such as the need to prevent crime, concerns about the labor and economic market, the fiscal cost of immigration, and so on (Martin, 2003). Therefore, the popular U.S. discourses on immigration in recent years and the government immigration policies reflect and recreate the idea of restrictionists.

Integrationists support full rights, benefits, and permanent admission for legal immigrants, leading to full economic, social and political integration. This group is strongly against illegal immigration as a violation of the law and as a negative influence on legal immigrants and unskilled native-born residents (Martin, 2003). The number of US permanent-resident visas shows that the U.S. immigration policy is against the integrationists' idea: Though approximately 100,000 low-skilled temporary workers receive their visas annually, only 10,000 of them receive a permanent-resident visa, which is merely 6 % of the total number of permanent-resident visas (Cornelius, 2005).

In terms of the past immigration policies in the U.S., free-marketeers and restrictionists seem to be the dominant voice. In the following sections, I summarize how

these political perspectives are reflected in the specific immigration policies as well as how they are racialized.

*The 1790 Naturalization Act.* The very first Naturalization Act which was implemented in 1790 clearly indicates that the legislation back then privileged white racial groups by limiting citizenship to free white persons. The 1790 Naturalization Act states that “any alien, being a free white person” who is of “good character” and who has resided in the U.S. for at least two years is eligible to apply for American citizenship (The Library of Congress, n.d.). This act prevented Africans who were brought as slaves and Asian immigrants who came later to work in the country from becoming U.S. American citizens and having the same rights as white citizens, including voting and owning property. African Americans were not eligible for U.S. citizenship until the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution was enacted in 1868, and Asian immigrants were ineligible for American citizenship until the McCarran-Walter Act in 1954 abolished racial restriction in naturalization process (PBS California Newsreel, 2003). In his article about the construction of American national identity, Thomas Ricento (2003) argues that the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, when this Naturalization Act was implemented, was the time in which white U.S. Americans with British ancestry, who were a numerical minority, were striving to maintain their powerful status by establishing shared “American” identity with other white European Americans. By doing so, British Americans persuaded other white European Americans that their needs and interests represent the national needs and interests. Therefore, even though British Americans were numerically a minority in the society, they could maintain their access to political power (Ricento, 2003). However, one of the racial groups among non-British European Americans were Irish immigrants, who

were mostly Catholic. Though they were once regarded as one of “good” immigrants who were eligible for citizenship, the U.S. reduced them into a “threat” to the nation when the number of Irish immigrants exploded. In the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, the anti-Irish immigrant movement, called Know Nothing movement was born (Phillips, 2007).

***Know Nothing movement.*** This nativist, anti-immigration political movement during the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century was accelerated by the sudden increase of Irish immigrants in the U.S. in the 1840s due to the famine caused by the severe drought in Northern Europe (Holt, n.d.; Phillips, 2007). Know-Nothing is the semi-secret organization of the American Republican Party, which was originally formed as the Order of the Star Spangled Banner in New York in 1843 (Holt, n.d.). Its members were required to be native-born and Protestant (Holt, n.d.). The primary aim of this anti-immigration, anti-Catholic party was to prolong the naturalization period for Irish immigrants from five years to twenty-one years and to exclude Catholic Irish from public offices (Holt, n.d.). They claimed that the Irish immigrants had a negative impact on the U.S. economy by lowering American workers’ wages by being involved in low-wage jobs with bad working conditions (Phillips, 2007). Their accusation toward Irish immigrants was rooted in the public discourses that constructed the Catholic Irish immigrants as cultural and religious invaders, who would not accept “American” values, based on the fear that they would overtake the country if levels of immigration continued (Phillips, 2007). The fact that Irish was not considered as part of the white race then indicates that this political movement was not only a national economic issue but a racial issue.

***Chinese Exclusion Act.*** Similarly, Chinese immigrants who came to the country as construction workers to build the transcontinental railroad during the 19<sup>th</sup> century

became another threat to the nation, and the political reactions toward the increasing number of Chinese immigrants was racist practices. The massive import of Chinese laborers was deeply rooted in the anti-Irish and ant-black racism in the U.S. (Wu, 2002). After the Civil War, plantation owners in the South brought over thousands of Chinese workers, called “Coolies.” Its true aim, however, was to prevent hiring freed black slaves (Wu, 2002). To make this “punishment” process legitimate and non-racist, media discourses constructed Chinese workers as more obedient and industrious than blacks (Wu, 2002). In the northern and western part of the U.S., Chinese workers were evaluated as morally better compared with Irish workers; the media emphasized that Chinese did not drink as much as Irish and they were not as violent as Irish (Wu, 2002). Such racial comparison among Chinese, Irish, and blacks, thus accelerated the immigration from China. By 1860s, 41,000 Chinese had arrived in the U.S. (Zia, 2000).

Although Chinese immigrants were welcomed in the beginning, they were not treated well in the U.S. in the end. On the contrary, Chinese workers suffered from institutional discrimination as well as discrimination at the interpersonal level due to the racial hierarchical system in the U.S. In California, where majority of Chinese immigrants first settled, the state legislature employed overtly racist practices and policies toward Chinese immigrants by singling out Chinese immigrants for a foreign-miners tax, prohibiting Chinese to testify in court, and not admitting them into public schools (Zia, 2000). The transcontinental railroad construction is another site in which the American nativistic racism manifested. Though 90 % of the company’s workforce was Chinese, their working condition and wages were worse than those of white workers: One in 10 Chinese died during the construction and they were paid 60%

as much as white counterparts (Zia, 2000). These cases indicate how a racialized social system in the U.S. provided more rewards for whites than other racial groups.

Once the railroad was finished, Chinese immigrants, who were treated as a disposable workforce, were fired (Zia, 2000). After the completion of the railroad, Chinese workers in low-wage jobs became a threat toward other European white and black workers. In the late 1870s, anti-Chinese “Yellow-Peril” movement spread across the nation (Zia, 2000). Houses and shops owned by Chinese were burned down, Chinese workers were lynched and killed, women were molested and killed, and many Chinese immigrants were expelled from the cities in which they had settled (Wu, 2002; Zia, 2000). The media constructed Chinese as uncivilized and filthy opium-smokers who were a negative influence on the people and economy of the nation (Zia, 2000). This anti-Chinese movement led Congress to pass the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, which suspended immigration from China and prevented legal Chinese residents to become American citizens (Zia, 2000).

***The 1924 Johnson-Reed Act.*** Another exclusionary immigration act which barred non-white immigrants was implemented in 1924. This act limited the number of immigrants admitted into the nation based on the national census in 1890; the government issued visas to two percent of the total population with each national origin (Jacobson, 1998; U.S. Department of State, n.d.). One of the goals of this act was excluding immigrants from Asian countries, and another one was limiting the immigrants from eastern and southern Europe, while maintaining those from “favorable” nations such as England and Germany in order to enhance the homogeneity of white-America (Jacobson, 1998; Roediger, 2005). Going back to the 1890 census, the government erased

unwanted racial groups from the history and demography of the nation (Roediger, 2005).

Italian immigrants are one of the groups that this act targeted. Though Italian Americans are currently categorized as white Americans both in legal and common discourse (Roediger, 2005), they were associated with nonwhites for a long time. First, Italian immigrants were racialized in relation to Africans. The term “Guinea,” which was originally used to refer to African-born slaves, started to be applied to Italian immigrants, especially southern Italians whose skin tone is darker, around the 1890s (Roediger, 2005). Italian immigrants’ children were sent to black schools in some southern education systems, and Italian mining workers in western states were actually “Jim-Crowded” (Roediger, 2005, p.45). They were also targeted for violent hate crime—eleven Italian Americans were killed in Louisiana in 1891, and mass media blamed Italian Americans for their “southern Italian biology and habits” (Roediger, 2005, p.52). Later on, Italian immigrants were also racialized as the Chinese of Europe, and the Chinese Exclusion Act was considered to be an appropriate model to control and expel Italians from the nation (Lee, 2003).

As briefly summarized above, U.S. American political reactions toward increasing numbers of non-white immigrants have historically been exclusionary ones based on nativistic racism underpinned by white-supremacist ideology. In recent decades, the target immigrant group of such racist practices in the U.S. is Mexican immigrants. The number of Mexican immigrants has rapidly increased since the Immigration Act of 1965, which is also known as Hart-Celler Act, was implemented. Under the influence of Civil Rights Movements and liberalism in the U.S., the Immigration Act of 1965 abolished the nationality/race-based quota system employed in the Immigration Act of 1924 (Roger,

2008). As a result, more and more non-white immigrants, especially those from Mexico, emigrated to the U.S., and they have been constructed as threatening “aliens” to the nation.

*Immigration policy toward Mexican immigrants: Past and present.* Since the Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty was signed in 1848, which established the U.S.-Mexican border and provided Mexican residents in New Mexico and California U.S. citizenship, the U.S-Mexico borderland has been a problematic space (Beckham, 2005). Among the three aspects of immigration policy, i.e. reduction in the number of immigration, immigrants’ eligibility and access to public services, and border enforcement (Pantoja, 2006), the U.S administration has put major focus on border enforcement in terms of immigration from Mexico (Cornelius, 2005).

Since regulation of immigration became a federal responsibility in 1875, the U.S. has deployed various policies to control the border and people crossing the border to maintain its sovereignty (Demo, 2005). For example, the passage of Immigration Act of 1917 required Mexicans to pass a literacy test and pay a head-tax when they crossed the border, though they could cross the border without any restriction before this act (Demo, 2005).

One of the border enforcement policies and practices the U.S. government has employed is the Border Patrol. The United States Border Patrol was established in 1924, four year after the Prohibition law was implemented, to control the people who attempted to smuggle liquor in the “dry” U.S. from “wet” Mexico (US Custom and Border Protection; CBP, n.d.). The early Border Patrol was a small group with 450 officers in Texas (CBP, n.d.). As the number of immigrants from Mexico, both legal and “illegal,”



increased, the number of officers has dramatically increased and their roles as agents have expanded. There were 1,531 officers during WWII (CBP, n.d.), 4881 agents were deployed in 1995, and 9,200 agents were on duty in 2000 (Nevins, 2002), more than 13,000 border patrol agents were deployed along the U.S. border in 2006 (CBP, n.d.) and the number of agents is now more than 20,000 at the end of Fiscal Year of 2009 (CBP, 2011).

In addition to protecting the border, the U.S. has implemented various immigration projects to limit the number of immigrants from Mexico and to exclude those who already reside in the nation. As Chinese immigrants were imported as a labor force, Mexican immigrants were imported due to the labor shortage during WWII, when many farmers were working for military or the war industry. To maintain domestic food production, the U.S. and Mexico had an agreement in 1942 that allowed Mexicans to work in the U.S. (CBP, 2007). Along with this agreement, not only legal workers but “illegal” workers from Mexico increased. To deal with this issue, the U.S. administration launched projects such as Operation Wetback, which sent back over 100,000 Mexicans living in the U.S. in 1958 (Demo, 2005); Operation Hold the Line in 1993 and Operation Gatekeeper in 1994 that increased Border Patrol agents along the U.S.-Mexico border. These were followed by Operation Safeguard in Arizona and Operation Rio Grande in Texas in 1997 (Cornelius, 2005); and Operation Jump Start in 2006 that constructed miles of pedestrian and vehicle fencing to arrest illegal border crossing immigrants (CBP, 2007). The annual report of the U.S. Immigration and Custom Enforcement initiative (ICE) indicates that 276, 912 illegal immigrants were deported (ICE, 2007). In addition to these border enforcement projects, the immigrants’ access to public service has been also

controlled institutionally. For example, in 1994, California state legislature passed Proposition 187, also called as “Save Our State (SOS) initiative,” which denies “illegal” immigrants’ access to all public services, such as public education and medical care. This proposition was later ruled unconstitutional by a District Court (Cornelius, 2005; Demo, 2005; Pantoja, 2006). Also, the immigration bill signed by Arizona in 2010 allows law enforcement personnel to stop anyone suspected of being undocumented.

These immigration practices and policies regarding Mexican immigrants also demonstrate how a racialized social system justifies and legitimizes racist practices as non-racist ones. Similar to the case of Irish immigrants and Chinese immigrants in the past, the U.S. political discourses emphasize economic aspects of immigration (i.e. “Mexicans take jobs away from native born workers”) (Passel, Capps & Fix, 2004) and they also construct Mexican immigrants as “threats” to the nation by emphasizing the need to control illegality, criminality and immorality of Mexican immigrants (Cornelius, 2005; Demo, 2005; Flores, 2003).

As has been noted, recent immigration policies and legislative practices geared toward Mexican immigrants are mainly aiming at enforcing the border and protecting sovereignty of the United States by controlling and limiting incoming population from Mexico. As immigration policies and practices have always been in U.S. history, this is also a racialized process. Evidence of the racialized aspects in recent immigration politics is the contrast between visibility of Mexican immigrants and invisibility of white immigrants. Almost exclusive focus on Mexican immigrants is manifested in the increasing budget for the border patrol guarding along the U.S.-Mexico border, numbers of operations and propositions across many states regarding illegal immigrants from

Mexico, and immigration reform plans explicitly pointing out Mexican immigrants as problematic. On the other hand, immigrants from European countries are rarely subjected to the heated debates on immigration in the U.S. According to the U.S. census in 2000, the number of non-U.S. citizens born in Latin America is almost five times as many as those who were born in Europe. However, I am not referring to the mere numbers, since racial stratification and positioning of immigrants has little to do with whether they are numerical majority or not. In fact, “free white persons” who were eligible for full citizenship in the 18<sup>th</sup> century were a numerical minority.

As scholars argue, U.S. history of immigration is also a history of rewriting “whiteness,” which is almost identical with “American-ness” (Jacobson, 1998; Roediger, 2005). Therefore, restrictive and exclusionary practices against Mexican immigrants in the past decades accompany construction and positioning of white immigrants. The positioning of recent white immigrants and their whiteness are apparent in their invisibility compared to Mexican immigrants who are considered threats to the nation. White immigrants’ existence and their bodies are rarely contested in society, and their privilege lies in the fact that they can “blend in” to the white-centered society as “normal” members without their morality or cultural discrepancy with the U.S. standard being questioned (McIntosh, 1988).

**Public discourse on immigration.** U.S. society as a racialized social system has been maintained and reproduced by public discourses regarding immigration. In the previous chapter, I described Bonilla-Silva’s argument that one of the mechanisms of a racialized social system to reproduce itself is generating racial ideologies that are constructed and employed by white dominant members as “common sense” to

legitimize and justify their domination and racial status-quo (Bonilla-Silva, 1996; 2001; 2006). Institutional discourses play a significant role in constructing and perpetuating these racial ideologies, because it is the dominant racial group that has access to political, administrative, and media discourses that can reproduce a racialized social system (van Dijk, 1995, 2000a, 200b). Such racist “elite” discourses produce, maintain, and reinforce systemic power relations, and they are used to justify racist practices which sustain power and domination (van Dijk, 2000a; Wetherell & Potter, 1992).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the dominant ideologies and racist discourses that produce and sustain the ideology in this contemporary period are less blatant, and less overt, but still hegemonic (Bonilla-Silva, 1996; 2001; 2006, Omi & Winant, 1994). Such new or contemporary racism is characterized by the negative representation of “Others” and discursive denial of being “racists” (Billig, 1988; Every & Augoustinus, 2007). One of the contemporary racial ideologies in the U.S. is color-blind ideology. Color-blind ideology reproduces and sustains the white racial group’s dominance first by erasing the concept of race by employing a non-racial focus, such as labor market, economy, class and cultural differences, so that white group can openly express their prejudicial world views without appearing as “racists” (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; 2006). Over the decades, the U.S. has legitimized its racist treatment toward non-white immigrants by diverting its focus from race to the labor market and economy, and secondly by positioning immigrants as negative racial “Others” and “us” as positive.

***Focus on non-racial factors.*** Due to the rapid increase of Mexican immigrant population, both legal and illegal, since the 1990s, much of the political and public debate on immigration has centered on its economic costs and benefits. Specifically, immigrant

workers in low-wage jobs and their influence on the U.S. economy, which is intertwined with illegal immigration, have captured national attention (Capps, Fortuny & Fix, 2007). From 2007- 2011, while I was conducting this study, low-wage immigrant labor force and illegal immigration from Mexico were some of the central issues in the Comprehensive Immigration Reform bill and temporary worker program during the Bush administration, and also during the Obama administration. Comparing the exclusionary and racist immigration history and the present immigration situation, it seems that the current public discourses are repeating the past immigration discourses. As well as Irish and Chinese immigrants, Mexican immigrants are being constructed as having a negative influence on the U.S. American economy by lowering wages and taking jobs away from citizens, though their labor force is necessary to meet national economic needs.

The data released by Congressional Budget Office (CBO) (2010) shows that immigrants represent 16% of the U.S. labor force population in 2009, and 40% of them are from Mexico and Central America. The data clearly shows that immigrants, especially those from Mexico and Central America, are likely to have low-wage jobs that require minimum educational attainment. For example, 53% of those immigrants between 25 to 64 are employed in low-wage sections such as construction, food services and manufacturing, landscaping and agriculture, while 14% of native-born U.S. Americans had these jobs in 2009 (CBO, 2010). Also, the average annual growth rate of the foreign-born labor force (4.2%) between 1994 and 2009 is greater than that of native born labor force (0.7%) (CBO, 2010). Thus, immigrants' share of the labor market has been increasing. However, the decline in the number of U.S. born workers in low-wage jobs cannot be attributed only to immigration; other factors such as educational

attainment of native born workers, economic growth, and job creation also play a significant role in terms of this issue (Capps et al, 2007). Of importance here is not the increasing number of immigrants in low-wage labor, in fact, these numbers negatively affect the employment of citizens, but the fact that institutional discourses have constructed immigrants, especially those from Mexico, as economic threats to the nation. This discourse functions to benefit the dominant group in two ways: avoiding the criticism of the current exclusionary immigration policy as racist by focusing on the economic aspects of immigration, and creating the negative image of Mexican immigrants to justify the policy to expel “Others” out of the nation. As a result, the dominant racial group can maintain their status and position as “normal” and keep reproducing a hierarchical system.

This strategy of putting focus on non-racial factors is common in public discourses about “Others” not only in the U.S. but also in other countries. For example, Dixon, Foster, Durreheim and Wilbraham’s (1994) discourse analysis study demonstrates that white South Africans emphasized ecological aspects in letters to the editor protesting expansion of a black squatter camp. Dixon and his colleagues (1994) analyzed the arguments against expansion that were founded in ecology as well as destructions of beautiful scenery. Given the history of apartheid in South Africa, overt segregationist/racist remarks or practices were not acceptable. Therefore, whites argued that a larger black community could have an ecologically negative impact on the natural landscape, and showed their concern for increasing crime rate and the possibility that the value and price of their land would decrease (Dixon et al, 1994). By using these

discourses, white South Africans avoided appearing racist and perpetuated color-blind ideology as well.

In a similar way, Every and Augoustinos' (2007) discourse analysis of the written record of the Australian parliamentary speeches about asylum seekers reveals that politicians tended to use "national sovereignty talk" or "cultural difference talk" to legitimate their new stricter asylum policies. National sovereignty talk functions to express exclusivist positions toward asylum seekers as "patriotic," not racist. In cultural difference talk, they construct their objection to asylum seekers by talking about the core cultural differences, not racial differences. For example, an Australian Senator said that the asylum-seeker issue is not about a question of color but a question of "difference in civilization." He clearly stated that he is afraid that Australian civilization will be "permanently injured by contact with a large number of persons of races belonging to a different civilization" (Every & Augoustinos, 2007, p.427).

These discursive strategies of a "new" racism can be observed in political discourse in the UK, also. Van Dijk's discourse analysis (2000a) on a debate in the British House of Commons in 1997 about asylum seekers illustrates that political discourses about racial "Others" reproduce the ideology of legalism (van Dijk, 2000a). Legalism focuses on the belief that the law, including immigration rules and restrictions, must be respected, whatever happens (van Dijk, 2000a). In addition to color-blind ideology, legalism in the British political discourses (as well as U.S. discourses) divert attention from race to non-race factors and to normalize racist practices without appearing racist.

*Negative "Others" and positive "us."* Another common discursive strategy of institutional racist discourses that reproduces and maintains power relations in society is

negative positioning of racial “Others,” accompanied with positive positioning of “us” (van Dijk, 1992, 1995, 2000a, 2000b). The relationship between a racialized social system and the positioning of self and Others is a dual structure. Positioning of self and Others constructs and perpetuates dominant ideologies, while dominant ideologies constrain the process of positioning. This system keeps reproducing a hegemonic system of racial inequality. It is hegemonic, because positioning of self and Others in institutional discourses becomes “common sense,” which perpetuates the dominant ideology, and both privileged and disadvantaged groups internalize and accept their position established in the discourses as “normal” (Bonilla-Silva, 1996; 2001; 2006).

Numerous discourse studies have proved that this discursive strategy is commonly used in institutional discourses in the Western countries, including political and media discourses that keeps reproducing contemporary racism. For example, van Dijk’s (1992; 1995) study about elite discourse in the UK reveals that favorable terms are mostly used for white British people, while immigrants, asylum seekers and resident minorities are represented as strange, dangerous and criminals who are the source of the national problems in news media. He attributes this positioning to the fact that media is dominated by white elites and minority racial groups have much less control over representations in media (van Dijk, 1992; 1995). In a similar vein, van Dijk (1995) argues that educational discourses also reproduce and maintain hegemonic racism by connecting “Others” to immigration, cultural differences, crime and deviance in society, as well as by blaming minority groups for discrimination and racism, rather than the white dominant group.

In terms of the parliamentary debates on immigration in the UK, van Dijk (2000a) identifies several discursive strategies and rhetorical moves that are typical for debate on



immigration. For example, immigrants and asylum seekers are positioned as illegal-criminal-parasites who cost “us” and break “our norms,” while British people are positioned as “good taxpayers” who are “victims” of the problems that immigrants and asylum seekers cause to the nation (van Dijk, 2000a). Such positive-us and negative-Others positioning is accomplished by deploying extreme case formulation, national self-glorification, a numbers game and self-victimization (van Dijk, 2000a). Similar discursive patterns were found in other studies on the British newspaper media representation of asylum seekers (Lynn & Lee, 2003), and also in the political discourse on asylum seekers in Australia, in which immigrants/asylum seekers from Asia and the Middle East have become the central political issues (Every & Augoustinos, 2007), as well as in the right-wing parliamentary discourse on immigration in France, which emphasizes the superiority of French nationality and political system (Van der Valk, 2003).

Exactly the same phenomena can be observed in U.S. dominant discourses, including media and political debates, on Mexican immigrants. Mexican immigrants, especially those who are undocumented, are negatively positioned as racial “Others” through the overemphasis on illegality and criminality, negative metaphors, and negative media representation (Demo, 2005; Flores, 2003; Santa Ana, 1999). Though the reverse is the case, strong public and media emphasis on illegal immigrants as a national problem constructs the pervasive belief that the majority of immigrants, specifically those who entered through the U.S.-Mexico border, are illegal or unauthorized immigrants (Martin, 2003). According to the estimate reported by the Department of Homeland Security, there were approximately 10.8 million illegal immigrants in the U.S. in January 2009 (CBO,

2010). It is also estimated that as much as a half of unauthorized immigrants were admitted legally and overstayed after the visa expired, while the other half entered the U.S. without proper visas or border crossing cards (Pew Hispanic Center, 2006). Since the free-marketeters' approach toward immigrants is pervasive in the contemporary U.S. (Martin, 2003), there are popular myths that undocumented immigrants came to the U.S. for welfare without paying taxes (Capps & Fix, 2005). However, undocumented immigrants are not eligible for national welfare including food stamps and most of public benefits, even though they pay the same sales taxes as native born residents (Capps & Fix, 2005). Additionally, the U.S. Social Security Administration reports that they estimate three quarters of unauthorized immigrants pay payroll taxes (Porter, 2005). Immigrants from Mexico have been constructed as racial "Others" in various forms of dominant institutional discourses, which functions to maintain and justify such biased assumptions.

In her rhetorical study on media representation of Mexican immigrants in 1920s and 1930s, Lisa Flores (2003) argues that Mexican immigrants' bodies and the symbolic national border became the rhetorical space in which racial Others have been ideologically positioned. This is actually the first time that the term "illegal alien" became widely used, and she points out that rhetorical construction of Mexicans has changed over time (Flores, 2003). Based on the rhetorical analysis of over 200 texts from the regional and national presses from 1920s to 1930s, she found a trend of representing Mexicans as docile workers interested only in temporary jobs in the U.S. to Mexicans as diseased and criminals who threaten the national border (Flores, 2003). Flores (2003) claims that dehumanizing metaphors frequently used for immigrants from Mexico are powerful rhetorical and ideological forces that establish and sustain hegemonic

domination. As Flores's (2003) study shows, everyday metaphors are not merely a reflection of the common world-view; they function to establish a conceptual framework that is widely shared, and the use of certain metaphors reproduces and maintains the racial status quo (Flores, 2003; Santa Ana, 1999).

In his metaphoric analysis, Santa Ana (1999) analyzed 107 articles about immigration that were published in *Los Angeles Times* from 1993 to 1994, when the Proposition 187 campaign was held in California. He catalogued over 1900 metaphors of immigrants and found the patterns that describe immigrants as animal, criminal, weed, burden, disease, dirt, and natural disaster such as flood. He claims that the current covert and hegemonic racism is constructed in public discourses through the use of these metaphors (Santa Ana, 1999). The racist metaphorical mapping of immigrants, which can be seen in Flores's (2003) and Santa Ana's (1999) studies, has become common sense, and the users of these metaphors and readers rarely notice the consequences; they achieve perpetuation and reproduction of racist ideology in a hegemonic way.

Another example of the negative positioning of Mexican immigrants is Anne Demo's (2005) study that shows how institutional discourses scapegoat illegal immigrants. She examines how Mexican immigrants and the U.S.-Mexico border are represented in the eight videos produced by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to promote border enforcement funding and INS's border enforcement initiative, such as Operation Hold the Line and Operation Gatekeeper (Demo, 2005). One video that demonstrates the effectiveness of the border enforcement by INS shows the borderland before and after the plan was implemented. The borderland before the INS's border protection plan is depicted as chaotic, lawless ground (Demo, 2005). Undocumented

Mexican immigrants are represented as undesirable criminals who are “transvestites,” “gang members,” “prostitutes,” “drug smugglers,” and “border bandits” in the videos (Demo, 2005). Demo (2005) claims that the representation of illegal Mexican immigrants constructs a “ready-scapegoat for social problems that plague many urban areas” (p.300). It is scapegoating, because the crime rate is actually lower on average in the borderland compared with other U.S. metropolitan areas according to the U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform report (Demo, 2005). It is important to note here that such negative positioning of illegal Mexican immigrants as racial “Others” simultaneously positions native-born U.S. residents as positive or at least neutral. In terms of this specific case of INS’s videos, the U.S. and its people are positioned as victims of pollution and contamination that illegal immigrants bring into the nation, and also the border patrol agents and INS are portrayed as heroic figures that protect the nation from the flow of “criminals” and “epidemics” (Demo, 2005).

The negative “Others” and positive “self” contrast is also evident in President Bush’s plan for comprehensive immigration reform, which is documented in the 2007 State of the Union Policy Initiatives ([http://www.whitehouse.gov/stateofthe union/2007 initiatives](http://www.whitehouse.gov/stateoftheunion/2007/initiatives)). In the immigration reform initiative, illegal immigration and undocumented workers are the central issue. Under the section titled “We must bring undocumented workers already in the country out of the shadows,” it is described that “Illegal immigration causes serious problems, putting pressure on public schools and hospitals and straining State and local budgets” (The White House, 2007, p.3). This corresponds with van Dijk’s findings of British parliamentary discourse on immigration that constructs immigrants as the national “costs” and the sources of problems (van Dijk,

1995; 2000a). Also, in the discussion of border security, the President Bush states, “there are many people on the other side of our borders who will do anything to come to America to work and build a better life” (The White House, 2007, p.2). This statement indicates that immigrants are the ones who would break the law, while the U.S. is the place for a “better” life. Such nativist “elite” discourses sustain hegemonic power relations.

Pantoja (2006) argues that there are three ideologies that underpin the restrictive U.S. American immigration policies: economic individualism, egalitarianism, and humanitarianism. Economic individualism refers to the belief that individuals should manage their lives based on the distribution of rewards in society without any government assistance (Pantoja, 2006). This ideology can be employed to justify the discourses that blame immigrants for their poverty and low-wage occupations, as well as racist policies such as Proposition 187 which was intended to restrict illegal immigrants’ access to any public welfare system, education and healthcare. Though the latter two ideologies on the surface seem to relate to pro-immigration attitudes and practices, Pantoja’s study (2006) shows otherwise. Egalitarianism advocates for equal opportunity for all racial groups (Funk, 2000), and more specifically, this ideology claims that all individuals should be equal. This focus on individuals allows inequalities across racial groups to be unquestioned, neglects contextual factors, and results in maintaining a racist social system. Humanitarianism is also an individual-centered ideology, which puts emphasis on the responsibility of individuals to help those who are in need (Pantoja, 2006). Employing humanitarianism allows people to overlook power imbalance across racial groups, status differences, historical/socioeconomic contexts, and existence of

institutional discrimination. Therefore, these two ideologies may also serve to justify and legitimize racist discourses and practices.

In summary, the history of the U.S. immigration policies and political movements regarding immigration, specifically those from non-white racial groups, demonstrate their roots in white-supremacist, nativistic racist ideologies that reproduce dominance and racial hierarchical system in the U.S. (Cornelius, 2005; Demo, 2005; Pantoja, 2006). The rapid increase of a non-white immigrant population has been often referred to as economic or moral threats to the nation in the U.S., and its racial aspects are manifested in dominant institutional discourses about immigration and immigrants. Unauthorized immigration is overemphasized in media and public discourses (Martin, 2003), negative metaphors are frequently used for Mexican immigrants (Flores, 2003; Santa Ana, 1999), and the contrast between negative “Others” and positive “self” representation is obvious in U.S. political and public discourses on immigration (Demo, 2005; The White House, 2007).

These discourses act to protect the dominant white elite group’s status and position in society, to maintain racial status quo, and to produce and reproduce racial ideologies (Bonilla-Silva, 1996; 2001; 2006). Discourse analysis of FAIR’s (Federation for American Immigration Reform) website reveals that nativist ideology and protectionism are repeatedly produced; these ideologies are employed in justifying and rationalizing their anti-immigration perspective without creating the appearance of racism (Torigoe & Collier, 2008).

## **Japan**

**Current immigration/admission of foreign workers in Japan.** In the following sections I lay out the historical and sociopolitical contexts of immigration/admission of foreign workers in Japan, while arguing the transitivity of the concept of a racialized social system to Japanese society, as well as reviewing the literature on public discourses about Japanese immigration/admission of foreign workers. Compared with the number of foreign-born residents in the country and the number of visas that are issued annually to immigrants in the U.S., Japan is a much more closed society to foreign born individuals with a very small percentage of foreign-born residents in the nation. On top of that, there is a pervasive myth of ethnic homogeneity in Japan and that constructs Japan as raceless. However, I argue that Japanese society is as racialized as U.S. society, and the issue of immigration/admission of foreign workers manifests the racial aspects of this so-called “race-less” or “monoracial” country.

The distinct difference between the U.S. and Japan regarding immigration is that there is a persistent belief that Japan is a nation without any history of immigration, whereas the U.S. is a nation of immigrants (Douglas & Roberts, 2003). Actually, when I talked with my family members and friends in Japan about my dissertation topic, most of them said “I know that there are some foreign workers, but are there immigrants in Japan?” Douglas and Roberts (2003), scholars who conducted a critical study on past and present immigration in Japan, attribute this wrong assumption to the Japanese ideology of racial purity. Based on the mono-racial myth and racial purity ideology, Japanese immigration policies have been designed to control foreign-born workers as a temporal labor force rather than immigrants who reside in the nation permanently (Douglas & Roberts, 2003; Hirowatari, 1998). The exception may be *Nikkei-Imin* or *Nikkeijin*,

foreign-born Japanese descent mostly from Latin American countries. Due to their “Japanese blood,” the Japanese government and citizens consider them as “immigrants” in Japan. Thus, the criteria for naturalization or permanent residence are based on Japanese blood line or racial/cultural proximity with the Japanese race. I believe this primordial assumption is a key to understand Japanese immigration policies and public discourses about immigration.

**Demographics and categories of foreign born residents in Japan.** The Japanese Immigration Bureau reported that there were 2,186,121 people who registered as foreign residents in Japan at the end of fiscal year of 2009, and this comprises 1.71% of the total population in Japan (Immigration Bureau of Japan :IBJ, 2010). Among all the registered foreign residents, the largest national group is Chinese (31.1%) followed by Koreans (26.5%), Brazilians (12.2%), Filipinos (9.7%), and Peruvians (2.6%) (IBJ, 2010). These foreign residents in Japan can be divided into five categories: *Zainichi gaikokujin* (Japan-residing Koreans and Chinese), *Nikkeijin* (foreign-born Japanese), technical trainees, entertainers, and undocumented workers (Ishikida, 2005; Shipper, 2002; Shikama, 2005). Though I will offer in later sections more detailed historical and sociopolitical contexts behind each group, I briefly describe each category here.

Although they are likely to be considered as non-immigrant population in Japan (Douglas & Roberts, 2003), I regard *Zainichi gaikokujin* as immigrants in Japan. Among other groups of foreign residents, they have the longest history in Japan. When Japan colonized the Korean Peninsula and a part of China under the imperialism of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Japanese government displaced a significant number of Koreans and Chinese by force as a supply for the labor during the war. Though they were liberated



when WWII ended in 1945, many of them did not have a choice to go home due to the Japanese governmental restriction on the currency and belongings they could bring outside Japan (Matsunaga, 2007; Paku, 2005). Those who were brought from China and Korea and stayed after 1945 are the first generation of *Zainichi* Koreans and *Zainichi* Chinese, and they were provided legal status of “permanent alien” that gives them a permit to work but not full rights of Japanese citizens (Yamanaka, 1993).

*Nikkeijin* immigrants or workers are the descendants of Japanese who migrated to Latin American countries during the population control implemented from 1924-1931 and 1953-1973 (Shipper, 2002). When the Japanese economy started rising in the 1980s, many of them came to Japan to work (Shipper, 2002). The stream of “Japanese blood” in them privileged them to work almost without any restriction, but due to the lack of language ability, more than 80% of *Nikkeijin* worked in low-wage occupations with 3D working conditions, that is, demanding, dangerous, and dirty (Ishikida, 2005).

Most technical trainees are from East and Southeast Asian countries, including China, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines. The training program allows them to learn the skills in public and private organizations and bring the skills and knowledge back to their home countries (Ishikida, 2005). Though this program was officially started in 1981, similar practices have been done in private since the 1960s (Bartram, 2004; Ishikida, 2005).

Entertainers, those who reside in Japan with an entertainer visa, are mostly women from Philippines and Thailand (Douglas, 2003). The majority of these women work in the sexual service industry as hostesses at a bar, strip dancers, and prostitutes. In his historical analysis of migration of women in Japan, Douglas (2003) argues that

Japanese patriarchy has legitimized and institutionally integrated the sex industry into Japanese society by using the euphemism “entertainment” (Douglas, 2003).

The topic of undocumented workers started appearing as a national concern since the late 1980s, when the number of foreign-born workers increased along with the economic development (Yamanaka, 1993). As well as undocumented workers in the U.S., most undocumented workers in Japan are those who overstay after their short-term visa expires. The country of origin of these undocumented workers includes Korea (21.4%), China (16.3%), Philippines (15.3%), and Thailand (5.3%) (IBJ, 2010a). Another survey by the IBJ (2010b) shows that almost 80% of illegal foreign residents have short term visas, and 32,471 undocumented workers have been deported from the country.

It was during the 1980s when the first wave of foreign workers hit Japan due to the rapid expansion of its economy called the “bubble-economy” (Yamanaka, 1993; Shikama, 2005; Taki, 2005). Due to this wave of immigration, the population of foreign residents in Japan has doubled in 20 years, from 0.78 million in 1980 to 1.68 million in 2000 (Ministry of Justice, 2000). Even after the economic recession in the late 1990s, there has been a consistent number of foreign workers and their families from various countries in Asia and South America to fulfill the labor shortages in Japan (Ishikida, 2005; Shikama, 2005). The Ministry of Health, Labor & Welfare (hereafter MHLW, 2009) reported in 2009 that there were 486,398 foreign workers from China (43.3%), Brazil (20.4%), Philippines (8.3%), and Korea (4.2%), and more than a half of these immigrants were working in manufacturing.

Upon this increasing number of foreign workers in Japan, the Japanese government has struggled with the dialectical tension between their concern about labor

shortages due to the worsening economic condition with the aging population and low birth rate and the desire of excluding foreign workers from the country to maintain Japanese national sovereignty and identity. *Shoshika* (low birth rate) and *Koreika* (aging population) are the two underlying factors for the continuing need for the foreign workers (Douglass & Roberts, 2003). As of 2008, 13.2% of total population is children below 15 years old (Statistic Bureau of Japan, 2011), and The National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (hereafter NIPSSR) (2002) estimated that the percentage of people aged over 65 years will become 36 % by 2025 (NIPSSR, 2002). Given the size of the labor force and the problem of working age population, the percentage of foreign workers in Japan is strikingly small (Bartram, 2004). The United Nation Population Division once reported that Japan need to admit 600,000 foreign workers annually for the next fifty years to sustain the economic level in the mid 1990s (UN Population Division, 2000). However, the number of foreign workers accepted annually in Japan is far from the number that the UN suggested. Moreover, the Project Team Regarding Future Acceptance of Foreigners, which was the committee established in the Ministry of Justice in Japan in 2005, announced their plan to limit the maximum number of foreign residents in Japan to 3% of the total population (Ministry of Justice, 2006). Thus, even in the desperate economic needs for foreign workers as labor forces in the nation, Japanese society hesitates, or refuses, to admit as many foreign workers as it actually needs.

I attribute the reluctance of Japanese government and society to admit foreign workers and immigrants to the nativistic racism that is hidden but prevalent in Japanese society. It is hidden, because the dominant popular discourse and the majority of academic discourse regard Japan as a race-less or mono-racial society, and the myth of

racial/ethnic and linguistic homogeneity is pervasive among Japanese people. However, I believe that Japanese society is a racialized social system and Japanese society maintains the system by hiding and mystifying the existence of “race” in the nation. One reason that the dominant discourse constructs Japan as a race-less society is based on the fact that Japanese rarely use the term “race” when they talk about themselves. However, as Dikotter (1997) claims, the existence of race or racialized nature of society should not be reduced to the use of the word “race” in discourse.

My main argument in this section is that Japanese society is also a racialized social system as some scholars insist (Bartram, 2004; Douglass & Roberts, 2003; Jung, 2004; Lie, 2003; Shipper, 2002). More specifically, I discuss below how Japanese society constructs, reproduces, and locates itself in the two different systems, that is, a global white supremacist racialized social system and *Yamato* racialized social system.

**Japanese society as a racialized social system.** In his book, *the Racial Contract*, Mills (1997) argues that “whiteness” is not an actual color but relations of power. Based on his argument, Japanese are yellow in the white supremacist racial contract but “white” in the local Japanese supremacist racial contract. The concept of racial contract overlaps with that of a racialized social system. According to Mills (1997), a racial contract is the “real” exploitation contract that creates the “white” race as superior and “non-white” race as “sub-human.” It determines the distribution of wealth and rewards according to the racial category, and justifies and legitimatizes conquest, subordination, and exploitation. On the other hand, the social contract is an ideal and unreal one that is employed to establish the nation state and national identity based on the assumption of equal rights, equal agency, and meritocracy. Since the “real” contract that constructs and reconstructs

the social system is a racial contract, not a social contract, it “races” the spaces – both macro level spaces such as nations or regions and micro level spaces such as immigrants’ or non-whites body – and it also determines distribution of rewards that systemically benefits the “white” race at global level (Mills, 1997). Based on Mills’s (1997) concept of a white supremacist racial contract and Bonilla-Silva’s (1999, 2001, 2006) concept of a racialized social system, I argue that Japanese society is partially a global white supremacist system.

***Global white supremacist system in Japan.*** A global white supremacist system refers to the system that globally privileges white races in terms of allocation of resources, mobility, wealth, and poverty (Mills, 1997). Japan was first exposed to the global white supremacist system when it opened the country to the West in 1853 after the 200 years of closure. Soon after opening the country, Japan was introduced to scientific racism represented by social Darwinism through interactions with Western nations. Japan internalized the racial hierarchy that places whites on the top and blacks on the bottom, which is the European imperialist perspective on “race.” People learned the position of the yellow race as “non-white” in this system (Dikotter, 1997; Weiner, 1997). One example of such internalization of the white-supremacist racial categorization was the article called “Transformation of Japanese Race [*Nihon jinshu kaizou ron*]” written by Yoshio Takahashi in 1883. In his article, Takahashi argues that Japanese should intermarry with Westerners to improve their intellectual and physical abilities (Weiner, 1997). This shows how Japanese internalized the yellow race’s inferiority and white race’s superiority as the dominant global ideology that is enforced in a hegemonic way. On the other hand, however, Japan has developed a local supremacist system alongside

the global white supremacist system. I refer to the local system as *Yamato* supremacist system.

***Emergence of Yamato supremacist social system.*** Until the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century or the very beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, the global white supremacist system was predominant in Japanese society. Japanese internalized their racial position as “yellow” and accepted their rewards according to their position in white supremacist social system. Based on this racial categorization originated in the West, Japanese did not differentiate themselves from other yellow races such as Chinese and Koreans with whom Japanese have interacted for thousands of years throughout history (Sato, 1997; Young, 1997). When Japan was engaging in the Russo-Japan war in 1904, Japan even attempted to unite other yellow races to fight against “white races” (Sato, 1997).

However, the position of Japanese as one of the yellow races in Asia and its inferiority were gradually replaced by the new concept of “*Yamato minzoku* [*Yamato ethnicity*]” (Weiner, 1997). Construction of *Yamato minzoku* is actually derived from the global white supremacist system. After opening the country to the West, Japan had developed the desire to be recognized as civilized a nation as Western countries (Sato, 1997). Even though Japan had been historically and culturally influenced by China for thousands of years, when the U.S. expressed their prejudicial attitudes toward Chinese people through the implementation of the Chinese Exclusion Act in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Japanese public discourses took the side of the U.S. and started expressing their contempt toward Chinese that they were uncivilized, immoral, and inferior (Sato, 1997).

It was during the 1910s to 1930s when Japan started establishing *Yamato* identity and its superiority among yellow races in Asia along with development of nationalism

and imperialism (Dikotter, 1997; Weiner, 1997). During this time period, Japan colonized the Korean peninsula and a part of China, as acts of imperialism. At this time the construction of *Yamato* supremacist social system fulfilled two major purposes: 1) perpetuation of nationalism and imperialism, and 2) justification of colonizing other yellow races by establishing a “superior” *Yamato minzoku* (ethnic group) (Dikotter, 1997; Weiner, 1997).

“*Yamato*” is the name of the first imperial period in Japanese history, and it is deeply embedded in Japanese local religion, *Shintoism*. In *Shintoism*, it is believed in Japan that the first emperor was a descendant of a god. Construction of the *Yamato* ethnic group contributes to the perpetuation of nationalism and imperialism because it ideologically constructs that all Japanese people have common ancestry with the imperial family, referred to as “*Kazoku Kokka* [family nation].” It also established strong ties among Japanese people and national identity based on the racial/cultural homogeneity of the Japanese people (Dikotter, 1997; Weiner, 1997). To sustain the strong national identity and sovereignty of Japan during the colonial era, nationalism supported by imperial power was vital (Weiner, 1997). Thus, the construction of *Yamato minzoku* was a mixture of religion, nationalism, and imperialism, and it was why the term “*minzoku*” is often used as a synonym for Japanese ethnicity, race, and nation state (Weiner, 1997). Ideologically, Japanese people and nation have been racialized by the construction of *Yamato minzoku* since this time.

The use of the term “*minzoku* [ethnicity]” instead of “*jinshu* [race]” was also purposeful. The word “ethnicity” was more convenient to differentiate Japanese from other yellow races, including Chinese and Koreans who were categorized in the same

race group according to the Western system (Dikotter, 1997; Weiner, 1997). Japan attempted to justify colonization and exploitation of Chinese and Koreans not only by using the term “*minzoku*” to differentiate Japanese from other yellow races in Asia, but also by attempts of scientifically proving the superiority of *Yamato* *minzoku*. The differences in economic and political condition of China and Korea were attributed to biological laws such as social Darwinism, and a number of scientific studies were conducted to demonstrate the genetic and physical superiority of *Yamato* *minzoku* (Dikotter, 1997; Sato, 1997; Weiner, 1997; Young, 1997). Both public and academic discourse rejected the racial or genetic resemblance between Japanese and Chinese/Koreans, and there was even an argument that Japanese were racially closer to the Caucasoid race than to the yellow race in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Sato, 1997). Such a construction of *Yamato* *minzoku* and its superiority were used to produce the dominant ideology of “the fittest survives” (Dikotter, 1997; Sato, 1997; Weiner, 1997), and it results in the common belief that *Yamato* *minzoku* is a leading race, and non-*Yamato* people are backward groups. Young (1997) contends that Japanese colonization as an expansion of imperial territory was actually a racial expansion to try out the superiority of Japanese race. By the late 1920s, the contrast between “civilized and modern” Japanese and inferior “colonized” races became a part of popular discourse (Dikotter, 1997). Since the colonial era, cultural/racial homogeneity of the Japanese people, a pure shared blood line among Japanese, and *Yamato* supremacy in Asia became the dominant ideology that operates in constructing national identity and sovereignty of Japan.

As briefly summarized above, Japanese society has located itself in two different racialized social systems, that is, a global white supremacist social system and a *Yamato*



supremacist social system. Though *Yamato* supremacist social system seemed to be more predominant than the global white supremacist social system during the colonial period in Japanese history, both systems have been reproduced and sustained through various practices that define and establish racial/national identities and sovereignty of Japan. Not only post-1853 and during the colonial period, can these racialized social systems also explain the systemic and structural process in which contemporary Japanese society locates themselves and racial “Others.” The history of Japanese immigration policies and the literatures about dominant discourses of immigration/admission of foreign workers in Japan illustrate how these systems have been maintained in Japanese society.

**Japanese immigration policies in a racialized social system.** Although Japanese immigration policies and governmental regulations against foreign-born residents and workers reflect and reproduce more of *Yamato* supremacist racialized social system that places Japanese on the top rather than the white supremacist system that privileges white racial group, it is important to understand the existence of whiteness in Japan to grasp complex race relations in Japan. Though the number of studies that focus on whiteness in Japan is limited because it is still an understudied field, I briefly review several of them to present the evidence of the white supremacist racialized social system in contemporary Japanese society.

***Whiteness in contemporary Japan.*** After World War II, the high regard for European countries since the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century was replaced by extremely high regard for the United States (Lie, 2003). For many Japanese, the image of foreigners was equivalent to English speaking Americans with blond hair and blue eyes, and they were the target of admiration and respect. Perpetuation of global whiteness in Japan has been fostered by

the media representations of white people as attractive and desirable (Darling-Wolf, 2003; Hagiwara, 2004; Lie, 2003). In her analysis on Japanese internalization and whiteness ideology, Fujimoto (2002) argues that Japanese media has internalized and reproduced U.S. race relations through globalization of media. Positive media representations of white people and negative representations of other racial groups are echoed in Japanese media (Fujimoto, 2002). In accordance with Fujimoto's study (2002), some research findings indicate Japanese media's tendency to portray foreign models, mostly white models, in advertisements (e.g. FCT, 1991; Hagiwara, 1994; 2004; Hiyoshi, 2001; Ramparasad & Hasegawa, 1990; Yasutake, 1983). The first TV commercial that portrayed a white American model was the advertisement of a beauty product for men: In 1969, the advertisement that employed the U.S. American actor, Charles Bronson, became a big hit in Japan (Yasutake, 1983). Since then, it became popular to use white models in TV advertisements. FCT's (Forum for Citizen's Television) (1991) research reveals that among 2,219 TV commercials that were aired between 7pm and 9pm in 1991, more than 80% of the foreign models in the commercials that portrayed foreign models (19% of the total TV commercials) were white models. A similar study conducted 10 years later had almost the same results that more than 70% of the foreign models used in the TV commercials were whites (Hiyoshi, 2001).

Not only TV advertisements, but also Japanese print media shows a similar tendency. Darling-Wolf's (2003) ethnographic study of white representation in Japanese print media and Japanese women's reactions demonstrate the omnipresence of media representations of white females as the standard or ideal beauty. Since media discourse is considered as one of the elite discourses according to van Dijk (2000b),

over-representation of white as positive, attractive, and desirable by Japanese media plays a significant role in constructing and reconstructing the system of racial relations in Japan.

Thus has been noted, due to the globalization of media and the historical/political relationship between Japan and the U.S. after WWII, Japanese society keeps internalizing and maintaining a global white supremacist racialized social system via dominant discourses. Fujimoto (2002) contends that Japanese favoritism toward the white racial group has hegemonic force to make Japanese internalize and justify their discriminatory practices toward non-white foreign residents in Japan. I believe that not only has there been an internalization of a white-supremacist racialized social system but also the production and reproduction of its own *Yamato* supremacist racialized social system from Japanese nativistic practices, both at the macro and micro levels, toward non-white foreign workers and immigrants, acts to stratify different racial groups in Japan. The systems of racial hierarchy in Japan are manifested in the histories and discourses of Japanese immigration policy.

*Yamato supremacist system and history of immigration in Japan.* Though many of Japanese people and institutions may deny it, some scholars who focus on Japanese immigration history and policies agree on the racialized aspects of Japanese society. They posit that the Japanese xenophobic immigration policy is deeply rooted in racial purity ideology in Japan (Bartram, 2004; Douglass & Roberts, 2003; Jung, 2004; Lie, 2003; Shipper, 2002). In similar ways to the U.S., Japanese government and public discourses have focused on national economic needs, costs of immigrants/foreign workers to society, and Japanese sovereignty.

Japanese government policy explicitly states that highly skilled workers in professional and technical fields and highly educated individuals are welcomed, while unskilled low-wage laborers are not allowed to enter the country (Ministry of Justice, 2006; Shipper, 2002). However, looking closely at the past immigration policies and practices toward foreign-born residents and workers in Japan, a color-line in Japanese society manifests itself. First, I summarize the history of immigration policy and practices toward four different groups of foreign-residents in Japan, i.e., *Zainichi* Koreans and Chinese, female “entertainers” from Asian countries, Trainees, and *Nikkeijin* workers.

*Alien registration law and Zainichi foreigners.* The first immigration policy in Japan was designed to control Korean migrants. As mentioned above, the Japanese government forcefully brought people from Korea as a labor force after Japan colonized the Korean Peninsula in 1910. To make this massive kidnapping process smoother and legal, the Japanese government established a labor migration policy in 1939, and by the end of WWII, more than two million Koreans were relocated by the Japanese government to work as a military force or in the war industry (Taki, 2005). Two years after the war ended, the Japanese government enacted the Alien Registration Law in 1947. This law was established to control Koreans and Chinese workers and their families who were brought during the colonial period by placing them under strict surveillance and forcing them to assimilate into Japanese society. However, assimilation of Koreans and Chinese to Japanese society does not mean that Japanese integrated them as members of society. On the contrary, this law legally mapped them as “outsiders” in society. The Alien Registration Law was revised in 1952, and the foreign status of *Zainichi* Koreans and Chinese were formally declared. This new law required them to register their fingerprints

and to carry an alien registration card at any time in Japan (Shipper, 2002). Though the fingerprint system was abolished, *Zainichi* foreigners are still required to carry their alien registration card. Due to the *Yamato* supremacist racialized social system that was established during colonial times, *Zainichi* Koreans and Chinese are still regarded as inferior to Japanese and they struggle with their racial status and institutional discrimination against them in Japanese society (Fukuoka, 1993; Fukuoka & Kim, 1997).

***Female migrants from Asia.*** When it comes to Japanese colonization and imperial expansion throughout East and Southeast Asian countries, one of the most controversial topics is the issue of “comfort women.” During World War II, the Japanese government forcefully brought more than 200,000 “*Ianfu* [comfort women]” from Asian countries including Korea, China, Taiwan, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines to serve the Japanese military (Douglass, 2003). The term “comfort women” is actually a euphemism for sexual slavery (Douglass, 2003). Even after the end of WWII, the majority of foreign workers from Asian countries to Japan were female until the late 1980s, and the vast majority of these women were hired in the sex industry (Douglass, 2003; Taki, 2005). Currently, Japanese government issues an “entertainers visa,” and Filipino and Thai women comprise the large percentage of foreign workers who come to Japan with the entertainer visa.

***Technical training program.*** As mentioned earlier, the Japanese immigration policy clearly demarcates skilled workers and low-skilled/low-wage laborers with an explicit rejection against the entry of low-wage foreign workers (Shipper, 2002). However, gradual economic development from the 1960s required many companies to hire laborers in low-wage jobs that Japanese people did not want anymore, including

construction, mining, and manufacturing (Bartram, 2004). Many small companies already started employing foreign workers as “trainees” with low wages in the 1960s, even though the government did not officially allow the entry of low-wage laborers from overseas (Bartram, 2004). When Japanese society faced the severe labor shortage in the 1970s, Japanese financial organizations, such as Japanese Chamber of Commerce, requested Japanese government’s permission to legally import cheap labor from overseas (Bartram, 2004; Terasawa, 2003).

In response to their request, the Japanese government established a training program and granted legal status to trainees in 1981 (Ishikida, 2005). This program was designed to promote international collaboration by allowing trainees to obtain knowledge and skills while they are working in Japanese companies for a relatively short period of time (Ishikida, 2005). However, as the social context behind this policy indicates, this is legal exploitation of a low-wage labor force under the guise of a “training program.” Japanese companies take advantage of these trainees because they are not protected under Japanese labor law. It is not illegal for Japanese employers to pay lower wages than the minimum wage that is set by the labor law (Bartram 2004; Ishikida, 2005; Lee & Park, 2005; Shipper, 2002).

The racial composition of trainees in Japan reflects the color-line that exists in Japanese society. Most trainees are from East and Southeast Asian countries, such as China, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines (Ishikida, 2005). In *Yamato* supremacist racialized social system, the Japanese race is considered as better and superior to other Asian yellow races. Lie (2003) argues that many Japanese even in the present era still consider Japan not to be a part of Asia; the word “Asia” used to be written in *kanji*

(Chinese letters that Japanese use for domestic things and phenomena) before the colonial period, while it is now written in *katakana* (Japanese alphabet used for foreign words and names). The institutional exploitation of Asian trainees by the implementation of the training program reproduces this racial domination in Japan.

*New Immigration Control Act and Nikkeijin.* One of the immigration policies and practices that obviously reproduces Japanese racial purity ideology may be that toward *Nikkeijin* workers. As briefly introduced in the previous section, *Nikkeijin* workers refer to the descendants of Japanese who migrated to Latin American countries due to the population control during the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Shipper, 2002). Most *Nikkeijin* workers are second or third generation who were born and raised in South America, and most of them are from Brazil or Peru (Shipper, 2002).

In the late 1980s, the need for more low-wage laborers became a national concern. Along with economic expansion, there was a dilemma due to the possibility that the increasing foreign residents may threaten the Japanese mono-racial myth. As a remedy for this issue, on the one hand, the Japanese government accepted Asian trainees as a temporary low-wage work force; and on the other hand, the Japanese government decided to allow foreign workers who have a Japanese bloodline to work as unskilled workers for a longer term than the Asian trainees (Yamanaka, 1993).

In order to accept *Nikkeijin* as unskilled, low-wage workers, the Ministry of Justice suggested revising the original Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, which was implemented in 1951 to exclude unskilled low-wage foreign workers from Japan (Lee & Park, 2005; Shikama, 2005; Yamanaka, 1993; 2005). This plan was passed in 1989, and the New Immigration Control Act was enacted in 1990 (Yamanaka, 1993;

2005). The New Immigration Control Act established the new legal status of “long-term residence” and set the new rule that *Nikkeijin* workers, regardless of their skills and education, were legally admitted in Japan with unlimited access to labor markets (Yamanaka, 2005; Shikama, 2005). To attract more *Nikkeijin* workers, the new law also simplified the process of visa application for *Nikkeijin* workers (Yamanaka, 1993). While the amendment of the Immigration Control Act in 1990 relaxed the regulations against *Nikkeijin* workers in unskilled low-wage jobs, however, it tightened the policy against other unskilled low-wage laborers by implementing criminal penalties for Japanese employers who hire illegal unskilled foreign workers (Yamanaka, 1993).

Because of the new Immigration Control Act, there was a rapid increase in *Nikkeijin* population during the 1990s (Yamanaka, 2003). As had been originally planned, the majority of *Nikkeijin* workers were in low-wage occupations such as manufacturing and construction due to their lack of Japanese language skills (Ishikida, 2005). Thus, by the reform of the Immigration Control Act, Japanese society succeeded to keep the supply of low-wage laborers, while maintaining its racial purity (Douglass & Roberts, 2003). The selective inclusion based on Japanese bloodlines institutionally privileged the Japanese race over other races, and it systemically perpetuated and keeps reproducing Japanese racial purity ideologies.

Japanese racial purity ideologies are also manifested in the recent governmental initiative about the admission of foreigners in Japan. In the statement made in September 2006 by the Japanese Ministry of Justice, it is suggested that the admission policy of *Nikkeijin* workers should be revised (Ministry of Justice, 2006). This initiative claims that the special admission of *Nikkeijin* workers based on bloodline should be abolished and



*Nikkeijin* workers should be admitted as normal, middle-skilled laborers (Ministry of Justice, 2006). I believe that this suggested amendment, which intends to eliminate the race-based selection, was actually a race-based decision. Since the blood connection between Japanese and *Nikkeijin* working population is getting weaker over generations, *Nikkeijin* can be a threat to Japanese racial purity. Roth (2002), who is a *Nikkeijin* himself, wrote in his anthropological field study on *Nikkeijin* in Japan, “Japanese immigration policy implied that the ‘Japanese-ness’ of *Nikkeijin* diminished with each generation” (p.26). In the procedure of visa application, Roth (2002) witnessed that the application process for the second generation *Nikkeijin* is much simpler compared with that for the third generation. Both the initiative for the new admission policy for *Nikkeijin* and Roth’s (2002) case demonstrate that Japan has tried to protect its racial purity by defining *Nikkeijin* as racial “Others.”

**Institutional racism against foreign workers in Japan.** Thus far, I have reviewed Japanese history of immigration policies and practices and discussed how these institutional processes construct racial “Others” in Japanese society, as well as how these practices maintain and reproduce the *Yamato* supremacist racialized social system. In the next section, I delineate how the *Yamato* supremacist racialized social system provides different rewards to different groups to sustain and perpetuate racial relations and domination in Japanese society.

One of the functions of a racialized social system to maintain the society’s racial status quo and the domination of the white group in the unequal distribution of rewards to different racial categories; members of the dominant racial group receive more rewards than members of disadvantaged racial groups in society (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; 2006).

Japanese society, as a *Yamato* supremacist racialized social system, institutionally privileges the Japanese racial group over other racial groups in society. However, of importance here is that there is a racial hierarchy among non-Japanese racial groups in Japan, which has been established and perpetuated to maintain the dominance of Japanese race.

Japanese policies and practices regarding foreign workers have established the racialized hierarchy that places *Zainichi gaikokujin* and *Nikkeijin* below Japanese, while locating other Asian workers on the bottom (Shipper, 2002). Usually, foreign workers' wages are 30%-70% less than those of Japanese and the working conditions for foreign workers' and legal protection for them are generally less adequate compared with those for Japanese workers (Terasawa, 2003). Several studies illustrate that many foreign workers face institutional obstacles in employment, housing, and social services (e.g. Komai, 1995; Itoh, 1996; Tsuda, 1997). However, among all foreign workers in Japan, *Zainichi* Koreans and Chinese and *Nikkeijin* workers have been more privileged due to their racial/cultural proximity and Japanese bloodline. For example, due to their permanent resident status, *Zainichi* Koreans and Chinese have full access to the Japanese labor market (Shipper, 2002). However, many *Zainichi* foreigners report that they have faced institutional discrimination related to employment, marriage, and housing (Fukuoka, 1993; Fukuoka & Kim, 1997). Such discriminatory practices oftentimes force them to use a Japanese alias and pass as "Japanese." Since most of working age *Zainichi* foreigners were born in Japan and speak fluent Japanese and their physical features are similar to that of Japanese, they have a choice to "pass" as Japanese. Japanese institutional discriminatory practices that force *Zainichi* foreigners to pass actually reproduce and

maintain Japanese racial dominance – being a Japanese is constructed as a desirable standard.

In a similar way, *Nikkeijin* workers have been privileged by receiving “long-term resident” status that allows them to work without any restriction despite the fact that many of them are unskilled workers without an adequate level of Japanese language skills (Yamanaka, 1993; 2005). Their blood connection with the Japanese race allows them to work in the low-wage jobs that are not allowed for other foreign workers. Though they are privileged in entry to Japan, their working conditions and income level do not evidence privilege. Between 1997 and 2001, there was 20% decrease in the number of *Nikkeijin* employed (Kashiwazaki, 2000). According to the governmental survey in 2001 on *Nikkeijin* workers (Japanese Brazilian workers), one quarter of them were unemployed and 40 % reported that they were not receiving appropriate social welfare, including health insurance (Matsubara, 2002).

The most disadvantaged racial group is trainees from East and Southeast Asian countries. As mentioned earlier, they are allowed to stay in Japan for a limited amount of time, and their wages are usually much lower than the legally set minimum wages. It is common that these trainees are forced to carry an illegal work load without any payment (Asahi Shinbun, 2008). Due to the maltreatment from Japanese employers, an increasing number of trainees tend to quit their jobs and disappear from their workplace. In 1999, 513 trainees could not be accounted for and the number increased up to 2,200 in 2006 (Asahi Shinbun, 2008).

Another disadvantaged group is undocumented workers in Japan. Since economic expansion in the 1980s, the increasing number of illegal immigrants has

become a national concern. Importation and employment of undocumented workers in Japan have become more intertwined with the international crime syndicate in Asian countries or/and Japanese mafias (Cornelius et al, 1994). Due to this fear, not only Immigration Control Act established by the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Health and Welfare (hereafter MOHW) also established a policy to exclude illegal immigrants by making it difficult for them to sustain their safety and health in Japan (Shipper, 2002). In 1990, MOHW prohibited illegal immigrants to have any access to public welfare system, including medical assistance and medical insurance. This policy is almost the same as the Proposition 187 in California, which was abolished due to its unconstitutional nature.

As has been noted, there is a clear color-line in Japanese institutional practices toward foreign-born residents and workers in Japan. Shipper (2002) calls this Japanese policy hierarchical because it is based on racial purity ideologies, “state-sponsored racism based on a xenophobic idea of mono-ethnicism” (p.59). In addition to these institutional policies and practices toward foreigners, public discourses regarding foreign workers and immigrants in Japan play a significant role in constructing and sustaining Japanese racialized social system.

**Public discourses on foreign workers and immigrants in Japan.** Even though Japan and the U.S. are very different in terms of the number of foreign-born population in the nation and historical background of immigration/admission of foreign workers, Japanese public discourses regarding foreign workers are surprisingly similar to U.S. discourses about immigration. In both countries, public discourses often divert their attention from race to non-race factors in society and they construct immigrants/foreign workers as racial “Others” by negatively positioning them. Although not as many studies

have been done on Japanese discourses about foreign workers as those of the U.S., below I review literature that demonstrates how Japanese society discursively reproduces and perpetuates the Japanese race's domination and its racialized social systems.

*Focus on non-racial factors.* As well as in the U.S., a pervasive discursive strategy is to put focus on the economic influence of foreign workers in Japan. Foreign workers play a key role in the Japanese economy by engaging in unskilled low-wage jobs, such as operating electric machinery, working in chemical processing industries, and construction, which Japanese workers now try to avoid. However, Japanese public discourses construct low-wage foreign workers as threats to the national economy (Douglass & Roberts, 2003). Even though it is the positions vacated by Japanese workers that most low-wage foreign workers take, mainstream labor union discourses construct foreign workers as “job stealers” who negatively influence the Japanese economy by taking away jobs from native Japanese workers and lowering wages (Asahi Shinbun, 2001; Douglass & Roberts, 2003). The focus on the economic costs of foreign workers in Japan corresponds with that of the U.S.

*Non-white foreigners as negative “Others.”* Another similarity between the U.S. public discourses about immigrants and Japanese public discourses regarding foreign workers, specifically non-white workers, is that they both create racial “Others” by associating them with social problems such as high crime rate and disease. Douglass and Roberts (2003) argue that increasing numbers of foreign-born residents in Japan have been constructed as the cause of the increasing criminal cases. However, the analysis of the cases of foreigners' crimes does not prove that foreigners are more likely to commit crimes than Japanese citizens. Further, violating visa status is viewed with a large share

of apprehension among foreigners in Japan (Douglass & Roberts, 2003). Contrary to these negative representations of non-white foreigners in Japan, public images of white foreigners are mostly positive. As I mentioned before, white people are frequently represented as attractive and desirable in Japanese media (Darling-Wolf, 2003; Hagiwara, 2004), and it is quite common that TV commercials portray white models (FCT, 1991; Hagiwara, 1994, 2004; Hiyoshi, 2001). Thus, there is a clear distinction and contrast of “good white foreigners” and “bad non-white foreigners” in Japanese discourses and society.

I believe that Japanese media contribute to the production and perpetuation of the negative positioning of racial “Others,” in addition to positive positioning of whites. The negative positioning of “Others” may be achieved in two different ways; there is an absence of non-white representation in Japanese media, and there is a media emphasis on foreign worker’s illegality and criminality. While the white racial group is overrepresented in Japanese media, *Zainichi* Koreans and Chinese, *Nikkeijin*, and other non-white foreign residents are rarely portrayed in Japanese media. The overrepresentation of whites and Japanese and under-representation of non-white foreign residents in Japanese media reproduce and maintain the white supremacist racialized social system and *Yamato* supremacist racialized social system.

The exception to the under-representation of non-white foreigners in Japan is the media’s emphasis on the criminal cases committed by foreigners. For example, Chinese exchange students killed a Japanese family, including their children, to rob them of a small amount of money in 2003. This homicide case was highly showcased by Japanese news media, and many Chinese students living in Japan faced various cases of

institutional discrimination in employment and housing, in addition to hate crimes. In a similar way, criminal cases of trainees and *Nikkeijin* workers have caught Japanese people's attention. In August 2008, a trainee from China who was working at a pig farm killed his employer because of the maltreatment he experienced at the farm (Asahi Shinbun, January 2008). This incident became a turning point that sparked questions about the existence and the realities of the training program (Asahi Shinbun, January, 2008). However, at the same time, this case has been employed to create a negative image of foreign workers in order to justify Japanese exclusionary and restrictive immigration policy and practices.

For example, "Crusade against Foreigners' Crimes: CFC [*Gaikokujin Hanzai Tsuihou Unodou*]" (<http://www.geocities.jp/gaitsui/page006.html>), a Japanese non-profit organization that appeals to the Japanese government for stricter immigration control policy, justified their exclusionist viewpoint toward immigrants/foreigners by emphasizing illegality and criminality of foreigners in Japan in the following way:

In most cases, foreigners' crimes are committed by illegal residents, who are not supposed to be in Japan. Namely, foreigners' crimes have increased due to the increase of illegal residents, and this causality is new social fear which did not exist in Japan before. (CFC, n.d.)

Though the racialized aspects of Japanese immigration/admission of foreign workers are still understudied, the studies and cases reviewed above demonstrate Japan has a racialized social system with underlying ideology of racial purity (Bartram, 2004; Douglass & Roberts, 2003; Jung, 2004; Lie, 2003; Shipper, 2002). I also argue that Japan has established and maintains two different racialized social systems, that is, a global

white supremacist racialized social system and *Yamato* supremacist racialized social system. These systems have been reproduced by institutionalized policies and practices, and are reinforced by public discourses regarding foreign residents and foreign workers in the nation.

### **Summary**

Thus far, I have summarized historical and sociopolitical contexts of immigration/admission of foreign workers in the U.S. and in Japan, and I argued how racial ideologies that sustain the system of racial dominance are reproduced and perpetuated through public discourses including governmental discourses and media discourses in both countries. Researchers who study discursive reproduction of racism argue (Essed, 1991; Moss & Faux, 2006; van Dijk, 1992, 1993, 1995, 2000a; 2000b; Wetherell & Potter, 1992) that reproduction of the system of racial inequality and domination is practiced at both macro-institutional and micro interpersonal levels. As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, practices at macro and micro contexts are interdependent (Essed, 1991). A racialized social system is reproduced, perpetuated, or challenged through micro level interpersonal discourses, and micro-level practices are constrained by social structure. Therefore, the major theoretical goal of this study is to establish a connection between macro-level discourses and micro-interpersonal level discourses about immigration/admission of foreign workers in the U.S. and Japan by taking both critical and interpretive perspectives.

### **Discursive Reproduction of a Racialized Social System in Interpersonal Discourses**

In understanding the discursive process of reproducing the system of inequality and dominance, discursive patterns and specific rhetorical moves in interpersonal



discourses should be analyzed in addition to the historical and social contexts in which these interpersonal discourses reside (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). As Essed (1991) claims, it is everyday interpersonal discursive practices that reproduce and reinforce systems of inequality in society. Thus, interpersonal discourses work to recreate and perpetuate dominant racial ideologies through various interpretative repertoires (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). An interpretative repertoire is a set of images, symbols and rhetoric that individuals can use to justify and legitimate their version of reality (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell & Potter, 1992) and is a key construct in the present study.

**Racist interpretative repertoires in the U.S.** A part of Bonilla-Silva's study (2006), which is based on in-depth interviews with 66 whites and 17 blacks living in Detroit area, demonstrated that whites in the U.S. tend to draw on four interpretative repertoires in reproducing color-blind ideology in the U.S.: abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism, and minimization of racism. Abstract liberalism is the interpretative repertoire in which individuals employ the concept of political liberalism and economic liberalism in an abstract manner. Participants who draw on this theme are likely to refer to the value of equal rights, equal opportunity, freedom of choice, and individual meritocracy in explaining racial issues in society (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). Statements such as "I am against affirmative action because I believe in equality" is an example of this repertoire. Bonilla-Silva (2006) argues that this theme is based on the false assumption that all racial groups in the U.S. have the same level of agency.

Naturalization as an interpretative repertoire allows individuals to construct racial phenomena and inequality/disparities as "natural" (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). Interview responses that are categorized into this theme include statements like "residential

segregation is natural, because similarity attracts,” or “blacks have a choice and freedom to move into whites’ neighborhoods, but they choose to live where they live. It is natural that people like to live with others of their own racial group.” Bonilla-Silva (2006) contends that it is “natural” that whites make these comments, because racial segregation in society is one of “the natural consequences of a white socialization process” (p.39).

The next repertoire, cultural racism, attributes racial problems in society to the marginalized group’s cultures (Bonilla-Silva, 2006), namely, whites can avoid referring to race by focusing on or blaming minority groups’ cultural values or norms. This “blaming the victim” repertoire is reflected in the statement such as “Mexicans have the highest school drop-out rate because their culture does not value education” (Bonilla-Silva, 2006).

The last repertoire, minimization of racism, denies the significance of race in social problems and constructs racism as a thing of the past or the extreme practices of radical right wing or white supremacist groups such as KKK (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). This repertoire may also produce discourses that blame victims, such as “it is black people who are actually racists. They make things racial even though they are actually not” (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). This interpretative repertoire corresponds with the findings of van-Dijk (1992; 1995) and Essed (1991) that white people reproduce their dominant position through the interpretative repertoire of “denial of racism.”

In addition to these four interpretative repertoires, Bonilla-Silva’s study (2006) also illustrates that whites are likely use specific rhetorical strategies that allow them to express their racist opinions without appearing to be racists. Bonilla-Silva (2006) lists strategies such as avoiding direct racial references, using disclaimers such as “I’m not

prejudiced but...,” “I’m not a black so I don’t know but...,” or using diminutives (using “just” “a little bit” etc). He also refers to the common story lines that white people follow to justify and defend current racial discourses. The story lines are diverse and include “the past is past,” “I don’t own any slaves,” “if other minorities made it, how come blacks have not?” and “I didn’t get a job because of a minority.”

In a similar light, Moss and Faux’s study (2006) revealed that dominant ideologies are reproduced in interpersonal discourses and they are employed by people to justify their biased opinions in the U.S. Moss and Faux (2006) collected conversational discourses from of 34 dyads and one triad of college students about hate crimes, immigration, and scholarship for students of ethnic minority groups. Their findings indicated that whiteness ideologies and meritocracy are reconstructed in white respondents’ conversations through the use of the interpretative repertoire that is similar to abstract liberalism in Bonilla-Silva’s study (2006). For example, respondents demonstrated their assumption that ethnic minority students are generally less-qualified for scholarships compared to white counterparts. They argued that these students are given scholarships because of their ethnicity not their accomplishments. They argued for an ideology of individual meritocracy and claimed that race-based preferences are not fair (Moss & Faux, 2006). In terms of reproducing dominant ideologies in interpersonal conversations, Moss and Faux (2006) also discuss contrastive positioning of positive-self and negative-other. Their findings showed that racial Others are positioned negatively by relying on stereotypes and prejudicial images in society, while white groups are positioned positively by identifying themselves as “well-qualified” students who “worked

hard” for their status. Such self/other comparison clearly demonstrates how racial ideologies and unearned privileged status are reproduced in interpersonal conversations.

### **Research Questions**

The studies cited above set an important foundation for this study. Given the conclusions listed above, there is a need to investigate if and how current interpersonal discourses regarding immigration/foreign workers in the U.S. and Japan reproduce the same ideologies by employing similar interpretative repertoires or people draw on different interpretative repertoires or use unique rhetorical strategies regarding self-other positionings. Since the process of reproducing racial ideologies that sustain racialized systems of inequality and domination is context specific and fluid, I believe it is important to explore the interpretative repertoires and discursive strategies employed in the current period in both nations.

Given the fact that interpersonal discourses have not attracted much attention from researchers as a site of reproduction of racial ideologies even in the U.S. where a plethora of studies have been conducted on racial inequalities and racist practices, it is not surprising that it is also an understudied area in Japan. Though more and more researchers have recognized and problematized the racialized nature of Japanese society and offered insights into how racist hierarchies are constructed in non-U.S. contexts, the majority of studies focus on macro-contexts of Japanese society (e.g. Dikotter, 1997; Fujimoto, 2001; Ishikida, 2005; Shikama, 2005; Shipper, 2002; Weiner, 1997; Yamanaka, 1993; Young, 1997) or aim at gaining ethnographic understandings of non-Japanese racial groups in Japan by conducting interviews (e.g. Lie, 2000; Roth, 2002; Yamanaka, 2000). Only a handful of studies put emphasis on how Japanese people communicate their

opinions about foreigners or how they position themselves and others at an interpersonal level (e.g. Darling-Wolf, 2003). Therefore, more research is necessary to understand how interpersonal discourses reproduce, maintain, and challenge racialized systems of inequality or domination in Japan as well as in the U.S.

Broad questions that are essential to the current study include the following. How do interpersonal discourses in Japan and the U.S. reproduce racial ideologies? What kinds of racial ideologies are reproduced in interpersonal dyadic discourses in Japan, as well as in the U.S.? What do these discourses accomplish? What are the consequences of these discourses? What interpretative repertoires are evident in interpersonal discourses in these countries? These questions should be answered to understand the connections between macro-institutional and micro-interpersonal level discourses in Japanese and U.S. societies regarding immigration/foreign workers issues.

Therefore, the following research questions are posed for this study.

RQ1. What kinds of interpretative repertoires emerge in majority members' (i.e. whites in the U.S. and Japanese in Japan) dyadic interpersonal discourses about immigration/foreign workers in the U.S. and in Japan?

RQ2. How do these interpretative repertoires work in reproducing, perpetuating and/or challenging dominant racial ideologies and social systems of dominance in the U.S. and in Japan?

RQ3. How do majority group members position themselves in relationship to racial "Others" in their dyadic interpersonal discourses about immigration/foreign workers in the U.S. and in Japan?

RQ4. How do these discursive relationships between self and Others reproduce, reinforce and/or challenge dominant racial ideologies and social systems of dominance in the U.S. and in Japan?

### **Chapter III: Methods**

In the previous chapter, I delineated the primary objectives of this study: investigating how racial ideologies are reproduced, maintained, and/or challenged in dyadic interpersonal discourses regarding immigration/foreign workers in the U.S. and in Japan. I specifically put focus on interpretative repertoires and discursive positioning of self and Others that sustain the hegemonic system of dominance and inequality in respective societies. In this chapter, I outline the use of Potter & Wetherell's (1987) discursive psychology as my methodology by describing the conformity between this paradigm and my theoretical perspectives in this study. First, I briefly summarize discourse analysis in general. Second, I describe the theoretical assumptions of discursive psychology, as well as explaining the unique characteristics of Potter and Wetherell's (1987) discursive psychology. Lastly, I outline the procedures of this study.

#### **Discourse Analysis in General**

Based on its interdisciplinary nature and origins, there are various approaches to discourse analysis. For example, ethnomethodology and conversational analysis are derived from sociology, ethnography of speaking from anthropology, critical discourse analysis from the combination of structural linguistics and critical theory, and discursive psychology from social psychology (Wetherell, Taylor & Yates, 2001). Though "discourse" is oftentimes defined as a specific way of speaking and writing, it has a more specific definition in discourse analysis. Discourse is a set of texts, as well as processes of production and consumption of them, that construct social realities and positionings (Phillips & Hardy, 2002; Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002; Wetherell et al. 2001). As can be seen in this definition, the basic assumption that most discourse analytical approaches

share is that discourse is not a mere reflection of pre-existing realities or pre-determined identities. On the contrary, discourse constructs realities, meanings, and identities (Gergen, 1985; Phillips & Hardy, 2002; Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002; Wetherell et al. 2001). Therefore, discourse analysis aims at investigating the process of constructing intersubjective meanings, identities and realities through the detailed analysis of specific language use in certain contexts; whereas many interpretive analyses investigate how specific language use reflects realities, meanings, and identities (Phillips & Hardy, 2002; Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002).

Of importance here is that discourse analysis is not just a method or tool to analyze language use. Discourse analysis is both theory and method at the same time (Phillips & Hardy, 2002; Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). Discourse analysis includes philosophical assumptions regarding the relationship between discourse and reality, discourse and subjectivity, discourse and knowledge, and discourse and power, while it provides theoretical guidelines for researchers to approach their research subjects and a set of tools to analyze discourses (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). Thus, researchers are required to follow the theoretical assumptions of the selected approach in conducting discourse analysis.

### **Common Theoretical Assumptions in Discourse Analysis**

Although the extent to which each discourse analytical approach emphasizes constitutive aspects of discourses and macro-structural contexts may vary, most approaches in discourse analysis share the assumptions that discourses are constitutive and contextual. In other words, discourse analytical approaches share the foundations of social constructionism and poststructuralism.



**Social constructionism and poststructuralism.** Social constructionism assumes that realities, meanings, and individuals' positionings are constructed through the use of language. As Kenneth Gergen (1985) argues, social constructionism is based on the rejection of; objective truth, objective/authentic self, totalistic concepts, essentialized notions of self and determinism. Thus, most discourse analysts dissent from traditional social scientific research and universal theories, such as Marxism, about the relationship among language, society, knowledge, and self. Poststructuralism is a subcategory of social constructionism, and it is developed from the critique against structuralist linguistics that is represented by Saussure (Kress, 2001; Phillips & Hardy, 2002; Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). Poststructuralists argue that the structure of meanings is constructed in actual language use in interaction.

Foucault defines discourse as production of knowledge and subjectivities in relations of power (Hall, 1997). Many discourse analysts do not agree with his idea that only one "regime of truth" exists in one historical period and that determines what is true or not/ what is meaningful or not. However, Foucault's theorization of the relationships among discourse, knowledge/power, and history had a large impact on many discourse analytical approaches (Phillips & Hardy, 2002; Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). Specifically, many discourse analytical approaches are informed by Foucault's conceptualization of power; power is pervasive in social structures and institutional discourses, and it is both productive and oppressive (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). Thus, social constructionism, poststructuralism, and Foucauldian notions of the relationship between discourse and power are the assumptions that most discourse analysts share.

### **Differences among Discourse Analysis Approaches**

Sharing social constructionist and poststructuralist theoretical assumptions, what makes various discourse analytical approaches differ is their relative focus along the two axes: the dynamics of power relations in society and the process of constructing meanings and realities, and texts or distal contexts (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). The approaches with relative focus on the power dynamics in society and macro contexts are considered as more critical, while those with relative focus on the constructive process and texts are regarded as constructivist paradigms (Phillips & Hardy, 2002).

**Constructivist paradigm.** The major purpose of research in this paradigm is to understand the lived experiences and situated meanings in specific contexts from the actor's point of view (Shwandt, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1998). With its assumption that realities, meanings, and identities are constructed through discourse (Gergen, 1985), discourse analysts in this paradigm put focus on the process of generating intersubjective meanings, realities, and individual/group positioning. Despite its assumptions, constructivists do not necessarily reject realist ontology, because one can still assume that processes of constructing meanings, realities and identities are constrained by the social structures that are previously constructed (Shwandt, 1998; Miller, 2005).

**Critical paradigm.** The major concern of this paradigm is the dynamics of power relations in macro-contexts rather than in micro-interpersonal contexts (Martin & Nakayama, 2004). Thus, discourse analysis from this paradigm often focuses on, ideologies, exploitation, and domination (Collier, 2005; Martin & Nakayama, 2004). Since this paradigm contains constructivist and materialist ontology, as well as historical realism (Guba & Lincoln, 1998), researchers from this paradigm assume that realities, meanings, and positioning are socially, historically, and ideologically constructed, and the

process of construction is constrained by social structural forces, such as ideologies, hierarchy, and differing degrees of agency.

One of the approaches that represents this paradigm is critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis has a strong basis in a critical paradigm. The focus is on the discursive reproduction of a hegemonic social structure that protects inequality in society (Fairclough, 1989; 1992). What makes this approach “critical” is its clear distinction between discursive and non-discursive practices in society (Fairclough, 1989; 1992). This approach assumes that there is a dialectical relationship between discourse and non-discursive (social) practices; that is, discursive practices reproduce non-discursive practices or structures, while non-discursive practices and social structures constrain discursive practices (Fairclough, 1989; 1992).

The discourse analytical approach I employ must be consistent with the objectives of this dissertation research. One of the primary goals of this study is to identify links between the reproduction of systems of racial inequality at macro-institutional levels and micro-interpersonal-levels through analyzing specific language use and positioning of self and “Others.” Namely, I investigate the relationship between informal dyadic discourse about immigration and social structural forces. I am interested in the process in which interpersonal discourse generates meanings, realities, and positioning of self and others, as well as how the dyadic discourses are constrained by and/or reinforce existing dynamics of power relations in institutional policies and discourses in the U.S. and Japan. Therefore, this research requires a discourse analytical approach that entails both constructivist and critical paradigms. The analytical approach that fulfills the need is Potter and Wetherell’s (1987) discursive psychology.

### **Potter and Wetherell's Discursive Psychology**

Discursive psychology is strongly informed by a constructivist paradigm, and some approaches do not take macro contexts or power dynamics in society into account (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). However, the discursive psychology of Potter and Wetherell (1987) is critically informed, while it maintains a strong foundation in constructivist paradigm. I believe Potter and Wetherell's (1987) discursive psychology is a helpful approach to investigate discourses at an interpersonal level, while focusing on the connection between interpersonal discourses and macro-level discourses and social structures.

Discursive psychology was developed in the 1980s in the UK with its rejection of a cognitivist approach, which was the predominant perspective in social psychology (Wetherell, 2001). A cognitivist approach assumes that language use is a true reflection of individuals' psychological states or realities. On the other hand, discursive psychologists take a social constructionist perspective, assuming that realities, meanings, identities as well as psychological phenomena are discursively constructed, rather than pre-existing or pre-determined (Wetherell, 2001). With the influence of Wittgenstein's concept of "language game" and Kenneth Gergen's rejection of an essentialist notion of self (Potter, 2001), discursive psychology investigates how individuals use discourses as resources that are available to them to construct and negotiate their realities and positionalities by analyzing specific language use in everyday situated contexts (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Discourse in this approach is thus defined as specific language use in context that constructs realities and identities (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). One

unique feature of Potter & Wetherell's (1987) discursive psychological approach is that it recognizes the importance of structural forces outside the situated discourse in addition to that of specific texts. This approach thus focuses on how interpersonal discourses in everyday life reproduce hegemonic social systems of inequality and domination (Wetherell & Potter, 1992), and produce inclusion and exclusion.

The two primary analytical focuses in Potter & Wetherell's (1987) discursive psychological approach are interpretative repertoires and positioning. An interpretative repertoire is a set of images and language that individuals use to construct, justify, and legitimize their version of realities and positioning (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Potter and Wetherell (1987; 1992) argue that dominant ideologies are reproduced through various uses of interpretative repertoires. To understand the interpretative repertoires that people draw on as resources to justify and reproduce hegemonic social structures, discursive psychology provides a tool to analyze specific rhetorical moves in these patterns of discourse. For example, Wetherell and Potter (1992) contend that ambivalence, contradiction, and specific kinds of variation in the same discourse are signs of interpretative repertoires people use to construct their views and reproduce dominant ideologies. They found that ambivalence and inconsistency in positioning of Others in the same discourses can be seen in comments that describe Maori as an important cultural heritage of New Zealand on one hand, and Maori as radical, irrational activists on the other hand. Based on their interviews with Pakeha (white) New Zealanders, Wetherell and Potter (1992) contend that liberalism as an ideology, which is actually illiberal, emerges from the use of different interpretative repertoires and allows whites to justify their racist positions toward Maoris.

The other analytical focus of Potter and Wetherell's (1987) approach is positioning. Positioning theory (Davis & Harre, 1990) explains that positioning is a process in which individuals construct and negotiate their identities in interactions with others. According to this theory, individuals' identities and positionings are constructed through the use of language, and the discursive positioning of self and others is constrained and limited by the discourses that are available to different positions in the specific contexts (Davis & Harre, 1990; Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). Therefore, individuals' positioning is relational, contextual, and ideological. Given this assumption, Potter and Wetherell's (1987) discursive approach recognizes that individuals' discursive positioning of "self" and "Others" in society emerges as discursive practices in which power relations are constructed or challenged. Researchers in this approach thus focus on the specific rhetorical moves or the use of metaphors in discourses that position "self" and "Others." For instance, Wetherell and Potter's interview study (1992) illustrates that Pakeha New Zealanders position Maori as racial "Others" by reducing them to a commodity of "cultural heritage." The Pakeha can consume or appropriate this heritage in learning the Maori language or buying their artifacts, while Pakeha position themselves as a "culture-less" group. This invisibility of the white group in discourses positions Pakeha a "normal" and "standard" in New Zealand (Wetherell & Potter, 1992) in similar ways to how whites in the U.S. become un-named and invisible in public discourses (Martin & Nakayama, 1999).

In summary, Potter and Wetherell's (1987) discursive psychology is based on a combination of constructivist and critical paradigms, and its primary objective is to reveal ideological functions of interpersonal/everyday discourses, that reproduce and sustain

hegemonic social systems of inequality/dominance. To achieve the goal, this approach specifically focuses on interpretative repertoires as discursive resources, as well as discursive positioning of “self” and “Others.” Potter and Wetherell’s (1987) approach perfectly fits my theoretical approach, a combination of interpretive and critical theoretical perspectives, as well as my focus on dyadic interpersonal discursive forms and their functions that reproduce hegemonic systems of domination and inequality in the U.S. and in Japan.

### **Procedures**

In this section, I describe the specific procedures of recruitment of participants, production of texts, and coding and analysis. I also refer to issues of reliability and validity in the study.

### **Participants**

The participants of this study were fourteen pairs of White U.S. American college students and their conversational partners who also identified as white / Caucasian adults, and seventeen pairs of Japanese college students and their conversational partners who were also Japanese adults. The participants' racial group, ethnic group and nationality were determined by their self-report of the categorization they wrote on the demographic information sheet that I provided with the consent form of this study.

The U.S. American participants were recruited from several undergraduate communication courses at a public university in the southwestern part of the U.S. during fall semester 2008. The participants consisted of 17 females and 11 males, ranging from 18 to 68 years old (see Table 1). Japanese participants were recruited from undergraduate

communication/ English courses at a private university in the southwestern part of Japan in the summer of 2008. Twenty six females and eight males participated. Their ages ranged from 18 to 39 years (See Table 2).

### **Procedures**

In conducting discursive psychological research, naturally occurring texts are most appropriate (Cameron, 2001; Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). The following procedures have been used successfully by Moss & Faux (2006). In their research, students who volunteered to participate were instructed to meet with a friend or a classmate of their choice and to record their conversations. In order to obtain interpersonal, naturally occurring discourses, I asked participants to talk about the issue of immigration/foreign workers for 30 to 60 minutes in a site they chose. Participants were asked to tape record their conversation with a tape recorder I provided (for instructions to students, see Appendix A and B). Both students were required to sign an informed consent form (See Appendix D). I asked instructors in the U.S. and Japan to assign the dyadic discussion as an extra credit activity. I also asked them to design a comparable alternative activity for students who declined to participate in the study so that participation was fully voluntary.

First, I asked participants to discuss three points of view listed below related to immigration/foreign workers, in a quiet place where they felt comfortable. The three statements were constructed from predominant views reflected in public discourses about immigration/foreign workers. For the U.S. participants, the following three statements were provided:

- I. Immigrants are harmful to the U.S. They take jobs away from U.S. citizens, and illegal immigrants exploit our welfare, healthcare, and educational systems



without paying taxes. Also, when there are high numbers of immigrants, the crime rate often goes up and cities become overpopulated. High numbers of immigrants may threaten our traditional American values because most do not learn to speak English and they do not want to assimilate to the U.S. culture or lifestyle.

- II. Immigrants contribute in many positive ways. The U.S. has a long history of opening its doors to immigrants. They help our economy by taking jobs that many U.S. citizens are unwilling to do, and they provide a much needed labor force in U.S. companies and in the field of agriculture. Many immigrants have knowledge and specialized training that is needed in fields like higher education. Immigrants also help the U.S. participate more effectively in a global economy and add to valued diversity in our country.
- III. Immigrants are both good and bad; it depends on what they contribute to the country. Legal immigrants who learn English and make efforts to adjust to U.S. culture and lifestyle might be able to contribute in a positive way. Our economy can't support too many immigrants though, so it would be best for the country if only the most qualified, in small numbers, were allowed into the country.

In a similar way, Japanese participants were asked to discuss based on the following three statements written in Japanese (translated by the author):

- I. We have been facing various issues due to the recent increase of foreign workers in Japan. For example, the increasing cases of theft, robbery, assaults, homicide, over-staying, illegal labor, and false marriage are noticeable. Also, employing a low-skill cheap labor force from foreign countries may lead to an increasing number of unemployed in Japan. Given these issues, the Japanese government should set a limit on the number of foreign workers to protect the Japanese nation and its citizens.
- II. Due to the low birth rate and aging population in Japan, the demand for a young labor force has been rising. Immigrants and foreign workers play an important role to support Japanese economy by filling the void and they also accelerate internationalization of the country. For example, foreign workers are absolutely necessary in areas lacking in the labor force such as nursing care. Also in academic or technical fields, fruitful and successful international exchange can be achieved by inviting skilled people including engineers, instructors, or foreign students to work together. In order to achieve national advancement and internationalization, the Japanese government should implement policies that facilitate the admission process of foreign workers.
- III. Though Japan should not accept an unlimited number of immigrants and foreign workers, we should actively accept foreign workers with knowledge, talent and skills that our nation needs. In order to achieve that, Japan should reconsider the

treatment of foreign workers: They should not be regarded as merely unskilled labor force but should be eligible for some protection, such as Minimum Wage Act, Labor Standard Act, and labor insurance. In addition, the Japanese government should implement stricter policies to punish Japanese companies that hire illegal immigrants, in order to reduce the number of illegal workers and illegal residents.

These statements were constructed in a systematic way. During spring term 2008, students in communication classes in the U.S. and communication/ English classes in Japan were asked to participate in an activity to identify common views on immigration/ foreign workers. First, in groups they were asked to agree on the three most common views they had heard on immigration/foreign workers. Second, the students were asked to read the list of factors, such as financial needs, economic issues, labor market, environment, etc, and add to the list of three views. Based on their suggestions I synthesized these into three different views (See Appendix A and B).

I provided these three competing views as suggestions for discussion regarding immigrants/foreign workers, because I believe participants' dyadic conversational talk about common views might reveal similar interpretative repertoires, positioning and also dialectical tensions of inclusion and exclusion as macro-level discourses do. Along with these views, I also provided a few suggested open ended questions to help individuals elaborate on their views (For the specific questions, see Appendix A and B).

At the end of the conversation, both participants were asked to fill out a short demographic survey about their age, gender, racial/ethnic identities, and their parents' occupations (See Appendix C). I transcribed each tape-recorded conversation. In terms of the Japanese version, I transcribed them first in Japanese, and then translated them into English. To establish translation equality, I asked a Japanese-English bilingual student to

check my translation. To protect participants' privacy, I assigned pseudonyms for all participants.

### **Coding and Analysis**

In order to grasp the interpretative repertoires that participants draw on to justify and perpetuate or challenge dominant ideologies in dyadic interpersonal discourses, I started with reading and re-reading all the transcripts of the discourses. From an interpretive point of view, it is important to look for general themes and categories of discourse that emerge from the data. First I identified broad categories such as views, claims, stories/narratives and discussion of significant factors affecting immigrants/foreign workers. I also looked for cultural identity avowals and ascriptions and noted us-them comparisons. Since I employed both interpretive and critical perspectives, next, I looked for discursive patterns that have been identified in past research to be indicators of racial ideologies and positioning, including abstract liberalism, naturalization, color-blind ideologies, and so forth. Identifying themes that corresponded with those, as well as being open to new themes in the conversational discourses, I attempted to capture how and what kinds of ideologies were reproduced across the discourses. During the coding process, I made files of examples of different themes by copying excerpts from the transcripts, and I went back to the original transcripts again to look for more examples to develop or redefine the themes. Wetherell and Potter (1992) argue that this cyclic coding process is imperative.

Once I identified some primary themes across the discourses, I put focus on the specific rhetorical moves frequently used by participants. For example, Wetherell and Potter (1992) contend that variability is one of the key elements in identifying

interpretative repertoires. Variability here refers to the situation in which people describe the same event, processes, or group of people in different ways to achieve different effects (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). For example, people may express racist opinions or attitudes and later they may use the terms or statements that appear anti-racist. In a discursive psychological approach, such inconsistency is considered natural and also a rich resource. Investigating the patterns and forms of variation on the certain topics or issues in discourses, such as ambivalence of views, allow researchers to grasp the patterns of interpretative repertoires (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). After identifying interpretative repertoires and specific patterns, I analyzed the discursive practices and what these discursive practices achieved. Specifically, I examined how interpretative repertoires in interpersonal dyadic discourses reproduce and perpetuate systems of racial inequality and dominance that are also evident in institutional and public discourses.

In terms of examining discursive positioning in the dyadic discourses, I put focus on the use of pronouns, metaphors, and other rhetorical moves that constructed the speakers' identity positions and those of "Others." To make the connections between macro-level discourse patterns already identified and these micro-interpersonal level discourses, I looked for "positive-self" and "negative-Other" positioning in the participants' conversations regarding immigrants/foreign workers in each country. I then analyzed the ideological role of such positioning in interpersonal discourses. For example I explored how these relationships between self and Others contributed to and/or challenged the maintenance of systems of racial hierarchy and inclusion/exclusion.

In writing up the findings of this study, I gave attention to the issues of reliability and validity. While reliability and validity are criteria of quantitative/ social scientific

research, qualitative research also includes these issues. In qualitative research, reliability can be established by describing the process and context of the study in detail so that readers can follow the same trail of the study (Kirk & Miller, 1985). In discourse analysis, it is also important to include a sufficient amount of excerpts from actual texts (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002) in order to allow other researchers to assess the validity of interpretations. Potter and Wetherell (1987) describe two dimensions of validity: coherence and fruitfulness. To establish coherence, in the following chapters I included multiple examples of discourse to illustrate themes and analyzed consistency with others' findings regarding discursive reproduction of systems of inequality/dominance (e.g. Essed, 1991; Dixon et al, 1994; Moss & Faux, 2006; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Fruitfulness, on the other hand, refers to the ability of the study to produce new knowledge and interpretation of the phenomena under study (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). I add new insights into the literature about conversational themes and the discursive reproduction of hegemonic social systems of race relations in the U.S. and in Japan.

### **Reflexivity**

Given the constructionist/poststructuralist assumptions about the relationship between discourses and realities, as a researcher, I am also participating in constructing these particular dyadic discourses. Therefore, in the process of analyzing and interpreting the data for this study, recognizing my position and its influence on this study is important. Though I did not physically converse with participants and did not co-produce the conversational texts with them, my role as a researcher still makes me an actor interacting with the texts. Specifically, in interpreting and analyzing the dyadic discourses and writing up the analysis, I entered into a “dialogue” with the texts and produced

discourses (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). As Wetherell and Potter (1992) argue, it is impossible to detach researchers' knowledge, perceptions, opinions, and positionalities from their research, especially in research attempting to capture ideological practices and functions. To make my positioning clear, I briefly describe my background here.

I am a Japanese female Ph.D. student in communication at a university in the southwestern part of the U.S. Until I left the U.S. in December 2008, I had lived in the U.S. for almost three and a half years to study intercultural communication in a graduate program. Currently, while working on this study, I am back in Japan and teaching English as a foreign language to non-English majors at the college from which I graduated.

I was raised as an only child in a middle-class family from the southwestern part of Japan. After finishing my compulsory education, I went to a private high school, obtained bachelor's degree and a master's degree at a private college. Thinking of myself as a "typical" Japanese woman from a country where common views are that "there exists one single ethnic group" and "everybody is middle-class," I did not question my racial/ethnic and class identities while I was in Japan. Though I felt that being a woman was not as privileged as being a man in patriarchal Japanese society, I viewed my identities as "standard" and "normal" in society.

When I moved to the U.S., it did not take long to notice that I was not "standard" anymore. I suddenly became a "foreigner" and a racial "Other" in society. Gradually, I developed interests in communication issues related to racial "Others" in the U.S. and then I encountered the concept of systemic racism. As I learned about systems of racial inequality and dominance in the U.S., I started seeing that similar systems also exist in Japan.

Becoming aware of the existence of the hegemonic systems of racial inequality and domination in the societies where I have lived and belong, I felt the need to study how we, as individuals, perhaps unconsciously, contribute to the reproduction and perpetuation of hegemonic systems through our everyday discourses. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, racial ideologies, such as color-blind ideologies, whiteness ideologies, and racial purity ideologies are constructed and sustained at macro-level practices, and the same ideologies are reproduced at micro-interpersonal level discourses. This assumption, therefore, is a key element of the framework that I hold when I approach the interpretation and analysis of participants' discourses about immigrants/foreign workers.

#### **Chapter IV: Interview Discourse on Immigration in the U.S.**

In chapter three, I discussed why I believe Potter and Wetherell's (1987) discursive psychology is an appropriate analytical approach for this study. This particular methodology is rooted in the combination of a constructivist and critical paradigm, and its major goal is revealing the ideological role that specific language use in interpersonal relationships has in maintaining social systems of inequality and dominance. Therefore, this approach is suitable for my focus on both dyadic everyday discourse and its ideological relationship with discourse on the institutional/societal level. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Potter and Wetherell's (1987) discursive psychological approach has two primary analytical foci: interpretative repertoires and positioning. In this chapter, I demonstrate my analysis of dyadic discourse on immigration in the U.S. regarding interpretative repertoires and positioning of self and Others. First, I briefly summarize the concept of interpretative repertoire and positioning that I reviewed in the previous chapters.

An interpretative repertoire is considered a set of language and images that people use to construct, justify, and legitimate their version of realities and positioning (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). The set of language and images people use in their talk are the ones that are made available to them culturally, historically, and ideologically (Billig, 1997). Potter and Wetherell (1987) argue that people draw on certain interpretative repertoires to express their views on specific topics, but at the same time, ideological force makes certain interpretative repertoires available to people to use as resources so that the system of inequality/dominance can be justified and maintained in a hegemonic way. Thus, exploring what kind of interpretative repertoires people use as



their resources in discussing race-laden topics may reveal pervasive ideologies in society and how systems of inequality are reproduced or challenged.

The concept of positioning is closely related to that of interpretative repertoires, and it is also a key to reveal discursive production and maintenance of inequality and domination. Positioning is a discursive process in which cultural groups (e.g. identifications and representations based on race, ethnicity, gender, class) are constructed and positioned in relation to others in different contexts; positioning can be practiced in public/media discourse or by selves through interpersonal conversations (Davis & Harre, 1990; Harre & Langenhov, 1999). As well as any other discursive practices, positioning of selves or others is constrained by social forces. Since people use specific terms and images that are available to them within certain discourses, the positioning process is limited by the discursive resources in certain cultural, historical, and ideological frames – that is where power operates discursively (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2004). Since the cultural, historical and ideological frames that provide discursive resources to people usually work for dominant group members in society, certain types of positioning of self and Others become common and “normal” in society. Discursive positioning of self and Others, therefore, also constructs and maintains power relations in society. For example, as I reviewed in chapter one and two, it is common that dominant white group members are positively positioned while non-white group members tend to be negatively positioned in discourse at the macro-institutional level, including media, educational, and political discourse (e.g. van Dijk, 1992, 1993, 1995, 2000). In addition to these macro-level discourses, positive-self and negative-Other positioning is also a common strategy employed at the interpersonal levels to protect the system of dominance (e.g.

Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Moss & Faux, 2006; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Investigating what kinds of discursive resources participants of this study use to position themselves and racial Others thus may reveal how racialized social systems are reproduced or challenged in discourses at the interpersonal level.

In the following section, I illustrate some prominent interpretative repertoires that participants of this study employed, as well as how participants positioned “us” and “them.” I would like to note here that some of the repertoires are overlapping: some examples can be categorized under two repertoires. In many cases individuals drew on multiple repertoires, or multiple repertoires could be intertwined in one discourse. Though I tried to showcase examples that can highlight one specific repertoire, each category of interpretative repertoire is not mutually exclusive. With multiple examples of each repertoire and positioning therein, I also examine what these repertoires/positionings achieve in reproducing, perpetuating and /or challenging dominant racial ideologies and social systems of dominance in the U.S.

Before moving on to the analyses of participants’ accounts, however, I need to clarify that my intention in this study is not about criticizing individuals’ characters, personalities, or intentions in their accounts. With my theoretical point of view, individuals’ racial accounts are not manifestations of their personality or personal racist attitudes; on the contrary, I consider these accounts to be the outcome of ideological processes in social systems of racial inequality/dominance. Namely, the system of domination/inequality produces and perpetuates racial ideologies that make certain discursive resources (discursive themes, styles, vocabularies, metaphors among others) available to people, and these resources act to protect the dominant racial group’s position

and privileges. The dominant group members are thus more likely to construct race-laden events or racial groups (including themselves) with the discursive resources that conform to the dominant racial ideologies. My research interest here is what kinds of discursive resources are made available and are engaged by the dominant racial groups in the U.S and Japan, and how their discourses recreate, maintain, or challenge dominant racial ideologies in the respective society. The intentions of individuals, their personalities and attitudes are rather insignificant in this study. Lastly, as mentioned in the previous chapter, all participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their privacy. The demographic terms (e.g. race, ethnicity, occupation, etc) used in the following sections are based on the labels or categories each respondent used in their dyadic conversation or wrote on the demographic information sheet that they turned in with their recorded audio tape.

### **Interpretative Repertoires and Positioning in the U.S. Interview Discourse**

In chapter two, I reviewed past and present immigration practices and policies in the U.S., and argued that U.S. political/institutional discourse regarding immigration has justified and legitimized racist practices by emphasizing non-racial factors such as the economy or immigrants' culture, as well as positioning white members positively and non-white immigrants members negatively. This discursive erasing of race from the issue reinforces dominant racial ideologies, including color-blind ideology, and helps maintain the ideologies as "common sense" or "normal" frameworks (Bonilla-Silva, 1996, 2001, 2006; 1995, 2000). Positive-self and negative-Other comparisons in macro-level discourse enable dominant racial group members to remain unnamed and invisible, which protects their unearned privilege (Billig, 1997, Flores, 2003; van Dijk, 1992, 1993). Such a mechanism ensures that the system of inequality and domination maintains itself in a

hegemonic way, and this can be observed in interpersonal, everyday discourse (see Moss & Faux, 2006; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). As Essed (1991) argues, racist practices at the macro-public levels and micro-interpersonal levels are interrelated; macro-social structures constrain and enable everyday interpersonal practices, while the interpersonal practices reinforce or challenge the underlying power dynamics produced by the social systems of inequality and domination (Essed, 1991).

In the following section, I describe four major interpretative repertoires that participants employed as their discursive resources when they talked about immigration in the U.S. The four interpretative repertoires are 1) we are a nation of particular/ select immigrants who have benefited from the melting pot, 2) the American dream can be achieved only by qualified and hardworking individuals, 3) being American means speaking English, and 4) we should consider the context of racist policies and practices and what's "normal" and expected, when thinking about immigration. In addition to providing multiple examples of these repertoires, I examine how each repertoire, positioning of self and Others, and specific language use, therein facilitate or challenge ideological tasks of reproducing and maintaining racialized social systems. Finally, I list some examples of discourse that challenge dominant racial discourses and the white-centered social system.

As I explained in chapter three, participants carried on their conversations based on the three discussion statements provided on their discussion guideline. Briefly summarized, each statement offers following views: 1) Immigrants are harmful to the U.S. and they cause various social problems, 2) Immigrants contribute to U.S. society in many positive ways, and 3) Since immigrants are both good and bad, only the most qualified, in

small numbers, should be allowed into the country. . For the complete scripts of these three statements, please refer to Appendix A.

### **We are a Nation of Paricular/Select Immigrants who have Benfited from the Melting Pot**

Participants drew on this repertoire most frequently among others; out of 14 pairs, 13 pairs employed this repertoire, and most participants used this resource more than once in their conversation. This repertoire can be spotted by the phrases such as “the United States is an immigration nation,” “everyone in the United States besides Native Americans are immigrants,” “this country is a melting pot,” and “the melting pot makes this country unique and strong.” By employing these phrases, individuals can positively present themselves as pro-immigration and tolerant of diversity. Closely examined, however, it is evident that participants use these resources to justify, rationalize, or buffer their not-so-positive construction of immigration/ immigrants. This view of immigrants both endorses and is restrained by restrictionist or assimilationist ideology but valorizes the myth of pluralism. In fact, there emerges a clear demarcation between immigrants who are on “our side” and others on “their side,” and this discourse may try to keep those on “their side” out, or expect “them” to be like “us.” For example, some individuals insisted that everybody should assimilate into “the American culture” because this is a melting pot; or they also stated that “we are all immigrants and this country is a melting pot” while later negatively positioning non-white immigrants as criminals or welfare dependent who destroy the unity of the melting pot. Since many cases of this interpretative repertoire are characterized by ambivalence, and praise and criticism of immigrants emerged in participants’ discourse, I roughly categorized examples into four

sub-groups. In the first group, participants positioned themselves as “standard,” “normal,” or a “culture-less” group that lost their past culture and assimilated into “the American culture,” while expecting immigrants to do the same. In the second category, participants constructed immigrants as groups with cultures that can be consumed or enjoyed by “us.” The third group exemplifies rather blatant negative positioning of immigrants as racial Others; specifically, criminality and illegality are emphasized in participants’ conversations. The last category is comprised of examples of discourse that support color-blind ideology by focusing on individual meritocracy.

**“We” assimilated and lost our past culture; immigrants should do the same.**

The following statement was made by Peter, a 53 year old accountant who identified himself as White Roman catholic. He was asked by his daughter, Illiana, with which of the three statements on the discussion guideline he identified.

**Peter:** Um, I think there are some valuable points in each one of them. The whole topic of immigrants and immigration, especially in this country brings a different light to everything. I think this country was formed essentially from a good number of immigrants. People from all different countries coming here and the country building up and growing stronger as a result of many different people from different backgrounds. That’s what makes this country so unique...Um, immigrants from different societies, from different countries that help contribute by forming small communities throughout this country.

Though Peter employed this “nation of immigrants” frame and constructed immigration in general in a positive matter, a couple of minutes later, he mentioned that this melting pot was malfunctioning because a lot of people were not willing to melt in the pot together.

**Peter:** ...it’s more a country, that has to be a united country. And this country has to pull together and it’s gonna bring a lot of ideas together. The fact that they come from different ground, backgrounds and different countries or different thoughts, or different, you know, different ways of doing things. It’s good. It

creates a new perspective and looking that how you solve the problem or how you move forward in society. So, I think that part of it could be positive, if everyone is pulling together. Unfortunately, it looks like a lot of people are pulling apart, wanting to create and make their home individual culture, their own individual country, or background becomes the only thing that, in that particular area.

According to van Dijk's (2000b) study on parliamentary debates on immigration, expressing a wish for a unified nation or claim the country is a unified nation is a common discursive strategy that justifies racial accounts without appearing racist. He calls this strategy "consensus" (van Dijk, 2000b), and Peter's statement exemplifies that "consensus" is used at the interpersonal level. Drawing on this repertoire, Peter cushioned his negative view that there are a lot of immigrants who refuse to assimilate into American culture and they are not the ones that contribute to make the country unique and strong. Who was not included in the group he had referred to as "a lot of people who are pulling apart" becomes apparent in the later conversation. When Illiana said, "I think, in a way, everyone here is an immigrant...because we came over on the Mayflower...and I would guess that after one or two generations, we become Americans no matter what," Peter agreed and then replied:

**Peter:** From a cultural standpoint, the further, the more generations that passed, the more they tend to lose that wherever the founded country or where you come from. You lose that, um, that insight and, or cultures and, or the, whatever types of practices...they become less and less, um, part of your life. Certain people like us, like I mean, our culture is completely gone. It's been too many years, I think. Since our great grand grandparents [came] so far back that I can't even associate anymore with where we come from... and it's really hard to try to distinguish that. But I think that's natural for anyone who immigrates to this country.

As can be seen above, "we" are the ones who assimilated and melted into the unified culture as Americans, but "they" in the previous statement are the ones who were pulling

apart and threatening the unity of the nation by maintaining their cultures. Discursive comparison between an assimilated “us,” and a resisting “them,” reproduces an assimilationist ideology in society. This conveys that it is natural, beneficial, and required to assimilate into “the American culture,” which actually is *white* culture. This is demonstrated in multiple examples and subsequent analysis. Also in this example, “certain people like us” were positioned as “culture-less” and it is a “natural” process to lose one’s own culture and “become Americans.” The discourses in which “we” were positioned as culture-less, while “they” were positioned as the ones that bring and maintain cultures in the U.S, were common among participants in this study. Such a discursive positioning not only clearly demarcates “us” and “them” but also maintains white members’ invisibility and normativity. The maintenance of whites’ unnamed position can be recognized more clearly in the following example, a conversation between Kathy and Brittney, two classmates who identified themselves as White/Caucasian. They were reading the three statements on the discussion guideline sentence by sentence.

**Brittney:** Oh, “they don’t want to assimilate into the U.S. culture or lifestyle.” Do they not want to?

**Kathy:** Do we, do we necessarily have, like, culture?

**Brittney:** I doubt we do, ‘cause everyone doesn’t think they have an accent or something.

**Kathy:** That’s true.

**Brittney:** I don’t know, so maybe we have culture. I just don’t know what it is.

**Kathy:** Our culture is just normal. Like, nothing-ness.

Brittney’s first statement, “do they not want to [assimilate into the U.S. culture or lifestyle?]” reproduces the myth of assimilation as Peter’s does; and at the same time the assumption that “they” must want to assimilate to “us,” positions “us,” white Americans,



as the standard and the norm for “them.” Their following comments also demonstrate the typical pattern of whiteness in discourse. Brittney’s doubt of the existence of “our” culture, and Kathy’s comment, “our” culture is just normal. Like, nothing-ness” constructs the essence of whiteness: Whites are the norm, standard, and invisible (McIntosh, 1988). They can claim their invisibility and “nothing-ness” because the social system of dominance produces the racial consensus that white group members are the standard and thus the system and its ideological processes are “natural” for them. As Billig (1997) argues, white identity possesses an “absent center” and whites can be an “unnamed standard” in positioning of self and Others.

**Some consumable cultural products offered by immigrants are acceptable.**

In contrast to the positioning of “us” as standard and invisible in the discourse of a nation of immigrants, immigrants were constructed as agents that deliver either “good” consumable cultures or different language to the “culture-less” country in Kathy & Brittney’s discourse.

**Brittney:** I think it’s good to see other cultures and experience them.

**Kathy:** I think it’s awesome. Like, how can we, like, I can’t even imagine this country without different cultures.

**Brittney:** Yeah, I don’t [overlapping]

**Kathy:** Like, so many of our foods are from other places.

**Brittney:** Oh, I love food. Food is good.

**Kathy:** [laughter] yeah. So many foods are from other places, like, we all, well not all, but I guess we do, we have different languages. I guess we don’t learn it, but...

In the previous excerpt, Kathy said that their culture was just “normal” and “nothing-ness”; in this example, she said that she “can’t even imagine this country without different cultures.” Therefore, “cultures” for Kathy are something that non-white groups brought/bring into the country. Also, according to Brittney’s statement, non-white

cultures are something to “see” and “experience,” like food “from other places.” Britney and Kathy positioned immigrants as carriers of cultures; constructing immigrant culture as something consumable was common in the participants’ discourse. The following excerpt is from Meg, a 29 year old Anglo<sup>1</sup> American student.

**Meg:** Um, as far as immigrants moving to the U.S., and changing their lifestyle and things like that, that’s not really important to me. I’m actually kind of glad that, like, first generation immigrants who move here bring their culture with them, and kind of share with their community. Um, if that didn’t happen, we would be, it would be pretty boring to go out to eat. Because it would be slim pickings and um, I really enjoy the fact that there are foreign restaurants available. It would be sad not to have that, you know, so especially, oh boy, I can think of how many our dietary, um, our diet would be just horrible if we didn’t have immigrants here to kind of spice things up.

As Kathy and Britney did, Meg’s discourse also positioned immigrants who move here as useful to “spice things up” with their exotic foods. Another example is from Steve, a 22 year old White/Irish/Catholic student, and his best friend Betty, an 18 year old White/Spanish student, who also talked about culture as food that immigrants introduce.

**Steve:** All I know is, burrito is delicious.

**Betty:** [laughter]

**Steve:** I’m serious [laughter]. No, no, that’s true. Think about it. If we didn’t have the cultural influences, we wouldn’t have the varieties in our cuisine, and that’s just one contribution.

**Betty:** And they could do it, legally.

Betty’s last comment, “they could do it, legally” may be interpreted as a negative positioning of Others, because her comments imply that immigrants tend to engage in illegal activities except bringing a variety of food to the country. These statements of constructing immigrants’ cultures as a commodity that whites can enjoy may be viewed as examples of positive-Other positioning, because these participants say they like the foods brought into the country by immigrants. However, reducing immigrants’ cultures

into one commodity also can be considered as exoticizing and subjugating racial Others (Hall, 1997; Said, 1978). As Sorrells (2003) argues appropriation and consumption of Pueblo and Navajo women's artifacts is a form of exercising dominant white power over them. Therefore imposing limited stereotypical cultural representations on immigrants as producers of particular food positions them in a limited way and constrains their agency and their voices.

**Immigrants are illegal, criminals, non taxpayers, and non contributors; these are not acceptable in the U.S.** Compared to the excerpts cited above, the following examples of discourse position immigrants negatively in a relatively explicit way. By employing this interpretative repertoire, however, participants can soften their rather straightforward negative statements about immigrants and immigration, while being able to claim to be non-racist. In his discussion of elite discourse and systems of racism, van Dijk (1995) contends that elites strategically protect their positive self-image as tolerant citizens while positioning "others" negatively and denying racism in a variety of discourses such as media, political, and educational discourse. As he further argues, interpersonal talk also plays an important role in enacting and reinforcing what elites institutionally implement (van Dijk, 1995). Examples of interpersonal-versions of elite discourse are reported below. The first example is Brandon and Jake's conversation, where their assimilationist view is justified by this repertoire, and contradiction and ambivalence are clearly demonstrated. Brandon is a 42 year old Caucasian male who is working in the field of computers, and his friend Jake is a 23 year old White/ Caucasian college student.

**Brandon:** I identify mostly with statement number three. I see both good and bad points of immigration, Some immigrants, if they get benefits of the United

States without contributing, they for sure are a drain on us. But a lot of immigrants, the diversity they provide, their special skills, and just creating a better relationships with the United States is important.

**Jake:** I agree with that statement for the most part, and a little bit in the middle. I tend to believe that an open immigration policy is pretty dangerous. You shouldn't let a mass to flood in and there's a lot of reasons for that. Mostly due to population control, and other reasons like that. But at the same time, it is also important that our country is founded almost exclusively upon immigration, and that's the heritage that we need to continue, and we should not prevent. It's definitely important that if we are going to continue with immigration, people need to be able to meld into the society, and be contributing members, pay taxes if they expect to be granted the same access to health care and all the facilities that normal tax payers have build, like using public transportation, roads, things like that in nature.

This example describes that participants cushion their negative positioning of immigrants (e.g. some immigrants can be a drain on "us" or the implication that "they" reap the benefits from "us") by inserting phrases taken from this repertoire and juxtaposing positive and negative positioning of immigrants. For example, Jake's statement can be interpreted as an implication of immigrants not paying taxes while being granted the same access as "us." At the same time, this statement thus positions "us" as good taxpayers who obey the rules. Such a positive-self and negative-other comparison and his rather assertive, restrictionist/assimilationist views on immigration are softened by the statement such as "our country is founded almost exclusively upon immigration, and that's the heritage that we need to continue, and we should not prevent." Thus, this interpretative repertoire serves to provide a discursive buffer to make contradicting and ambivalent articulation possible and unquestioned (Billig et al., 1988).

In this example, it is also noticeable that the concreteness of the statements is different between the phrases from the repertoire and the negative positioning. The statement such as "that's the heritage that we need to continue, and we should not prevent" is more abstract compared to "pay taxes if they expect to be granted the same access to

health care and all the facilities that normal tax payers have built, like using public transportation, roads, things like that in nature.” It is actually the abstract nature of the repertoire that allows people to use this resource in various different ways to achieve different effects. Because the interpretative repertoire is abstract in a consistent manner, people can draw on it in order to weave the same issues, events, actions and groups of people in different but justifiable ways. Wetherell and Potter (1992) contend that this variability is important signal of the existence of an interpretative repertoire.

Another example that demonstrates how interpretative repertoires allow people to make ambivalent or contradicting statements is the exchange between two friends, Allen and Ed, who are both 20 year old Caucasian undergraduate students.

**Ed:** I could see, I could see immigrants being sort of harmful to our system, you know. Just taking that social security and stuff, without giving back. ‘Cause I mean you have to give back. If you’re gonna be a part of America, you gonna put in something. That’s the whole idea.

**Allen:** That’s America.

**Ed:** Yep.

**Allen:** It’s a collective conglomerate. We’re definitely showing that. And honestly, our melting pot has made us the strongest nation.

In the beginning, Allen and Ed’s discourse positioned immigrants as “harmful to our system” because they commit crimes and do not contribute (or give back) to the U.S. However, the positive image of “the strongest nation” described as a collaborating conglomerate and the melting pot alleviate the impact that negative positioning of “Others” may have.

The next example is Sarah’s discourse. Sarah is a 21 year old college student, and she identified her race as Caucasian and her ethnicity Irish/ Scottish. She talked with her friend Victor, who identified his race as White and his ethnicity as Italian. They were

following the list of the potentially significant factors of immigration in the U.S., which was provided on the discussion guideline.

**Sarah:** Um, let's see. Race, as far as race, ethnicity and culture, we all know that America is the melting pot, and I think that's why a lot of people love it and wanna come here. And in that sense, I think it's amazing to open up to different races and different ethnicities as long as they are willing to go through the long process of getting into the country and really becoming a citizen, not just coming here to send money back to their family or um, whatever they are planning on doing. Um, I think that the reason crime, crime rate goes up when there's immigrants because a lot of them do fly under the radar and untraceable and can just be free. Because they are all, I mean, sorry, not all of them [are], but some of them, use different social security numbers. I mean, I've seen it first-hand.

Sarah started her statement regarding race factors with a metaphor of the melting pot. Given the pervasiveness of the myth of multi-culturalism/pluralism in the U.S., her comments reproduce that it is natural that the participants in this study positioned themselves as tolerant toward diversity. Sarah's statement, "I think it's amazing to open up to different races and different ethnicities" demonstrates this tendency. However, after that statement, She added a contingency, "as long as they are willing to...really becoming a citizen," which shows that the "they" she was talking about are people who have a different race or ethnicity from hers, and only particular immigrants are welcome. Her statements also positioned her own whiteness as the standard in comparison to "different races and ethnicities" who "wanna come here." Sarah's discourse also constructed immigrants as ones that do not obey the law and commit crimes. Even though Sarah did not specify the race of the people she was criticizing, it is probable that she was talking about immigrants from Mexico. "Just coming here to send money back to their family," "a lot of them do fly under the radar," and "some of them use different social security numbers" are some of the widely circulating representations of Mexican immigrants as racial others, which often emerged the participants' discourse in this study. Studies of

macro-discourse on immigrants also demonstrate that it is a common strategy to construct immigrants as a threat to the nation by focusing on criminality and illegality (e.g. Demo, 2005; Flores, 2003; Santa Ana, 1999; Torigoe & Collier, 2008; van Dijk, 1992; 1995; 2000).

Among participants' comments in which immigrants were positioned negatively as illegal or criminals, there emerged evidence of ambivalence; compassionate or empathetic comments often accompanied negative positioning of immigrants, especially those from Mexico. Such comments work to protect dominant racial members' self image of being non-racist and having compassion. This discursive pattern corresponds with a strategy called "empathy", that emerged in political debates on immigration in UK (van Dijk, 2000b) and is also found in interpersonal discourse on race (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; 2006). For example, Julie, a 23 year old White/Caucasian graduate student, said, "I know that they are coming from poor countries." Showing her empathy toward economic conditions in Mexico, however, she later continued:

**Julie:** Some people that are coming from other countries grow up with a whole different set of values and morals and circumstances that they were brought up in. Um, you know, that's not just saying that everybody is like that, but a lot of people are. There's a lot of, you know, gang wars and crimes and the way that they treat each other. Um, you know, they bring that over here. And they don't adapt to our laws, um, you know, I think that a lot of people that come over here cause problems because they bring their culture and their morals here and they don't fit, you know, a lot of times.

In Julie's statement, immigrants were constructed as the source of various negative problems in the U.S. by saying "they bring that over here," and, "they" are also positioned as ones that "don't adapt to our laws." These statements negatively positioned immigrants' morality and cultures, and at the same time they positioned an "us" as

victims of immigrants' criminal acts and "our country" as a crime-less, morally good, nation.

Various critical analyses of discourse and representations regarding immigration at the macro-institutional level have revealed the use of discursive scapegoating (Demo, 2005; Flores, 2003; Martin, 2003; Santa Ana, 1999; van Dijk, 1992, 1993; 2000). Immigration discourse at the macro-level often includes attribution of social problems to immigrants and blaming them as if immigrants are a major source of the social problems in the nation. Specifically, in the U.S., a major target of scapegoating has been Mexican immigrants (Flores, 2003): Mexicans' relocation to the U.S. has often been equated with various criminal activities that range from illegal entry to the country, stealing Americans' jobs, sending money back home without using it in the U.S., to drug and gang activity (Collier & Mudambi, 2010). The same discursive process can be also seen in interpersonal dyadic discourse in this study.

Damon, a 25 year old Anglo undergraduate student, also negatively positioned immigrants within this framework.

**Damon:** Because things are so bad there and people illegally immigrate to America, make some money, send it back home, their family can continue to survive just above the starvation [level] or whatever...And I don't know if we are doing Mexico any favors by sort of enabling them to continue on the path that they've been on.

Showing some empathy for poor economic conditions in Mexico, nevertheless, Damon positioned Mexico as "so bad" with "starvation," an extreme overgeneralization.

Immigrants in the U.S. were positioned as "illegal" and Mexico was also negatively positioned as a nation that is not pursuing a positive economic policy. Additionally, statements such as "I don't know if we are doing Mexico any favors," protects whites'



positions, because they can express restrictionist views, as if these views are for the benefit of both countries.

**Race/ ethnicity/cultural difference shouldn't matter, but...**In response to Sarah's statement listed under the previous sub-category, her conversation partner, Victor, offered a relatively straightforwardly negative view of the influence that immigrants have on the nation, including political, economic, and labor market aspects. He expressed his views against immigrants' voting rights, saying, "That's the bottom line. If they are not a U.S. born or U.S. citizen, um, legally, then there should be no reason for them to be able to vote." He also stated that he did not believe in amnesty for immigrants who had been already in the country, and his view that immigrants took jobs away from "homeless people, the less fortunate people, lower income people." When he referred to the factor of race however, he employed the melting pot metaphor as Sarah did.

**Victor:** Um, race, ethnicity, culture and lifestyle, like Sarah said, America is a melting pot. We need to accept everyone who they are, no matter, black, white, whatever race. I mean, Hispanic, Asian, European, whatever.

In his reluctant view on immigration, this statement seemed to stand out, because he abruptly addressed his attitude of the "need to accept" different racial groups. This move from unwelcoming opinions toward immigrants to accepting ones of different races, which emerged in quite a few dyadic discourses in this study, can be explained by the role of interpretative repertoires. When some participants talked about political, economic, or labor market factors of immigration, they were likely to express criticism or negative views rather explicitly, because these are the discursive resource factors that are provided for people to express their negative view on immigration. However, when discussing that the topic of "race" was printed on the discussion guideline as one possible factor related

to immigration issues in the U.S., they sounded careful about their views, drawing on the “safe” repertoire that allowed them not to appear racist. One of the safe repertoires is this repertoire emerged with a frame of color-blind ideology, the ideology that enables people to openly express their view that everybody has the same opportunities, color does not matter, and we all can assimilate into one culture. Employing this repertoire thus sustains the racial status quo by denying the role of “race” in immigration issues while subjugating racial “Others.”

We can clearly see this process of relying on a color-blind frame when talking about race, in the conversation between Allen and Ed below. The following excerpts are their responses to the question that asked them to talk about important factors of immigration. In their conversation, they both claimed that they grew up in a liberal household and they were taught acceptance and tolerance. The conversation started with Allen’s statement, “Honestly, race and ethnicity have never been an issue in my life.” He then continued that people become nervous when they see “homeless or gangsters roll up...whether they are Hispanic or whether they are black.” Then Ed responded and the conversation continued.

**Ed:** Yeah. And um, like, if they are immigrants, you know, they are most likely not gonna be...you know, white or Caucasian or whatever, if they are immigrants. So, like, you know, it shouldn’t be an issue. Immigrants are immigrants. Let them in, no matter where they are from, as long as it’s legal.

**Allen:** Yeah, I agree.

**Ed:** You know, wherever they are coming from

**Allen:** Yeah.

**Ed:** It’s even disappointing that it’s even on there[listed on the discussion guide]. Because it shouldn’t be a topic. Sort of racist.

Their conversation cited above exemplifies two participants’ reactions when they saw the term “race” on the discussion guideline and how their discursive moves reproduced

color-blind ideology. Even though Allen said race had never been an issue for him, Allen and Ed's discourse reproduces a racially stratified social system. Their discourse constructed non-white groups as racial Others by associating Hispanics and blacks with "homeless or gangsters" and immigrants. However, they avoided sounding "racist" by employing color-blind discourse, such as "immigrants are immigrants" and "it [race] shouldn't be a topic. Sort of racist."

The last example of this repertoire with a frame of color-blind ideology, is slightly different from others I cited above. In the previous discourse, there was a clear storyline that claims "race does not matter because people are people," which is an obvious reproduction of color-blind ideology. However, the following example supported and recreated color-blind ideology more subtly based on an argument of individual meritocracy. As Bonilla-Silva (1996, 2001, 2006) contends, focusing on individual meritocracy in a system that provides race-based rewards, allows dominant racial group members to maintain their invisible privilege and to justify their racist accounts and behaviors. The following example was offered by Amanda and her romantic partner Rachel. They are both undergraduate students, and Amanda identified herself as White/Russian/British, and Rachel identified herself as White/German/Italian. Throughout the discourse, they rather explicitly addressed their view that immigrants could be more harmful than good. Rachel said, "I don't really understand how they can be good, I mean, I guess." As well as other participants, however, they explained their belief that immigration is the foundation of the nation. Amanda noted, "I mean, we certainly wouldn't be America, the way we are, if we didn't have immigration." Rachel

replied, “America definitely wouldn’t be America without immigration.” The following conversation further demonstrates their ambivalent construction of immigration.

**Amanda:** But, yeah, it is really good to have that diversity. I mean, they used to say that America was the big melting pot or whatever, but now they say it’s the tossed salad.

**Rachel:** Really? I’ve never heard of that.

**Amanda:** Yeah, they say, because, um, you can still recognize the individual pieces in the salad, as opposed to the melting pot where they are like, maybe they get melted together. And um, I mean, it’s... yeah.

**Rachel:** That’s really interesting what we are talking about right here. So, it would be best for the country if only the most qualified and small numbers are allowed into the country.

**Amanda:** Um, yeah, that’s exactly what we are talking about. Um, I mean, it has to be small numbers, has to be controlled. Can’t, we can’t just let anyone who wants to come in come in. Because too many people would and we would not have the opportunities to offer.

**Rachel:** Yeah, it wouldn’t be beneficial to anybody, not to us, not to them.

When they drew on the interpretative repertoire of “we are a nation of particular/select immigrants,” they constructed immigrants as an essential portion of the country, saying “we certainly wouldn’t be America if we didn’t have immigration.” However, later in the conversation, they noted, “only the most qualified and small numbers” should be allowed into the country. This is an example of discursive contradiction and ambivalence (Billig et al., 1988). Wetherell and Potter (1992) argue that it is interpretative repertoires that enable ambivalent, competing, and contradicting statements to exist in the same discourse at the same time, and yet they sound reasonable. The abstractness of this interpretative repertoire provides plenty of room for discussion that justifies the existence of a system of domination, and maintains benefits for “us” and “them.”

In Rachel and Amanda’s case, contradicting statements that claimed immigration is an essential part of the nation, yet also only the most qualified and small number should be allowed into the country, are normalized by the use of a “tossed-salad”

metaphor, which endorses individual meritocracy in a color-blind society. The tossed salad metaphor “recognize(s) the individual pieces,” in contrast to the melting pot that implies everyone “get(s) melted together.” Despite this difference in its appearance, the ultimate goal of each metaphor is almost the same: recreating and supporting a color-blind ideology. On the one hand, the melting pot metaphor allows individuals to construct immigration as a race-less matter or to justify their assimilationist/ restrictionist view on immigration without appearing as racists. This is consistent with “minimization of racism” that Bonilla-Silva (1996, 2001) suggests as one of the discursive themes that perpetuates and recreates color-blind ideology.

On the other hand, the tossed salad metaphor enables people to legitimize their construction of immigration with an argument of pluralism and individual meritocracy. With this schema, even a restrictionist view can be justified because the tossed salad metaphor could imply that if you are the cream of the crop or work really hard for it, you can get into the country, and it is not a race-based selection. Bonilla-Silva (2001) argues that individualism and meritocracy are major components of the discursive theme called abstract liberalism. Supporting individual meritocracy and equality without admitting racial inequality in society, dominant members can protect their privilege by reproducing color-blind ideology, while sounding totally reasonable (Bonilla-Silva, 2001).

As seen in the examples of discourse cited above, this interpretative repertoire was frequently employed by participants of this study, and what the repertoire actually achieves is justifying, buffering, and reconstructing the racial accounts that also exist at the macro-level. More specifically, drawing on the phrases such as “the U.S. is the nation of immigrants,” “we are all immigrants,” or “this country is a melting pot” allow people

to soften their restrictionist/ assimilationist views on immigration manifest in their negative positioning of immigrants and positive positioning of “us.” Such a discursive move reproduces false assumptions of equal access to power among different racial groups, and constructs immigration as a race-less matter. The discourse within this frame ideologically works to construct normal and standard “(White) Americans” with good morals and tolerance for diversity, while positioning immigrants, especially those from Mexico or Central America, as exotic racial Others who may hinder the unity of the nation with their bad morals and criminal behavior, unwillingness to assimilate and illegality. Consequently, “we” are the nation of “good” immigrants, but those from Mexico, for instance, are not included in the “good immigrants.” Collier and Mudambi (2010) also found that undocumented immigrants from Mexico were positioned as immigrants that commit crimes and take rather than giving back to the U.S. system in *Liberty post.com* blog postings.

The discourse about who can enter the nation is thus highly racialized, but the fact that the selection is race-based is hidden by different racial ideologies such as color-blindness and assimilationist/restrictionist ideologies. The interpretative repertoire I introduce in the next section is also constituted by and constitutive of color-blind ideology. As well as the last example of the tossed salad, the next repertoire justifies restrictionist views on immigration based on individual meritocracy, which is a part of abstract liberalism (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; 2006).

**The American Dream can be Achieved Only by Qualified and Hardworking  
Individuals**

In chapter two, I referred to the President Bush's plan for Comprehensive Immigration Reform where he stated that "there are many people on the other side of our borders who will do anything to come to America to work and build a better life" (The White House, 2007, p.2). Because this claim was in the section on Security, I argued that this is an example of elite discourse that sustains hegemonic power relations by constructing immigrants as law-breakers, "who will do anything to come to America" and the U.S. as the place for a "better life." Similar discourse may be also recognized at the interpersonal dyadic level. The basic concept of the American Dream is that anyone can be successful in the U.S. regardless of his/her class, race, or nationality. It is related to the Horatio Alger myth, that any immigrant who works hard has the opportunity to be successful. In most cases, success in the American Dream is equalized with economic success, and so it was in this study. When I collected all the statements revolving around the American Dream discourse together, I noticed both variability and consistency in its use; which is an important indicator of interpretative repertoires (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Close analysis reveals that this interpretative repertoire enables the users the following three discursive practices: 1) erasing race with the focus on economic aspects of immigration, 2) negative positioning of immigrants and positive positioning of U.S. Americans in terms of class and economy, and 3) blaming immigrants for their economic standing based on individual meritocracy. Storylines cited below represent respective discourses.

**Immigrants who are drain on the economy do not deserve the American Dream.** In the macro-level discourse on immigration, racialized aspects of immigration and immigrants are often disguised as economic or class aspects (Cornelius, 2005; Flores,

2003; Martin, 2003; Pantoja, 2006). As I reviewed in chapter two, non-white immigrants in the U.S. have been racialized while the centrality of race is kept hidden throughout U.S. histories of immigration. The Know Nothing Movement demonstrates that Irish immigrants were constructed as having a negative impact on the U.S. economy by lowering wages and taking jobs away from U.S. Americans in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Phillips, 2007). In a similar light, Chinese immigrants, who were welcomed at first to prevent the hiring of freed black slaves and Irish workers, were later turned into a “Yellow Peril” after the railroad project was accomplished (Wu, 2002; Zia, 2000). Similar positioning of immigrants, especially those from Mexico, was apparent in participants’ conversations. Mexican immigrants were often constructed as economic threats; their presence was viewed to lower wages and take jobs away from U.S. American citizens; they were viewed as taking advantage without paying taxes; and speakers said they send U.S. dollars back home to Mexico without spending it in the country. Some of the examples of the negative positioning of immigrants are listed below.

**Alice:** I wouldn’t say they are completely harmful, although I do think they tend to take advantage as a generalization, they tend to take advantage of the welfare system and they tend to exploit the United States in terms of taxes not paid.

**Betty:** ...they can be harmful because they don’t pay taxes and they don’t contribute to the society and therefore the other regular taxpayer has to carry that dead weight, you know.

**Brandon:** ...those people get pay checks [and] they should get the money back before the border. And one thing you have to definitely consider is that it’s not really promoting growth in the country. Maybe it’s promoting growth in another country.

**Sarah:** I also believe that many think that they take jobs that many U.S. citizens don’t want, such as hotel, housekeepers and things like that. But I think that, if immigrants weren’t there to take the jobs, um, that maybe wages would be higher and other people would want to take the job.



Positioning immigrants as economic burdens or threats as can be seen in the examples cited above is a common discursive strategy also used in public discourse on immigration (van Dijk, 1992; 1993). This type of discursive practice positions immigrants as “Others” while maintaining the race-less-ness of immigration issues and safeguarding citizens and whites’ position in society. Also, due to the dialectical nature of positioning, “we” is positioned as the victim of economic exploitation by immigrants or at most, neutral and invisible tax payers (van Dijk, 1992; 1993). Though these examples are not within the frame of the American Dream per se, such a discursive practice allows dominant members to recreate and perpetuate the racial accounts and practices that construct immigrants as undeserving of economic success and the American dream. This justifies the discourse at the macro-public level. In a similar, yet more invisible and subtle way, this interpretative repertoire makes it possible for the racially dominant members to express their exclusionary views while focusing on class and economic aspects of immigration and positioning a positive “us” and negative “them.”

The following excerpt was made by Tom, who identified his race as White and his ethnicity as German American in the conversation with his daughter.

**Tom:** But anyway, there’s people, immigrants perceive that there’s better life to begin in the United States. Although, with the economy going down, too, supposedly immigration rate is going down, from what I’ve read. Economy being down hinders everybody...Maybe better off staying home with your family.

As in President Bush’s statement in the Comprehensive Immigration Reform plan, Tom also constructed the U.S. as a place for a “better life” and immigrants’ countries as economically worse off than the U.S. Though I would not go so far to say that Tom’s statement supports a restrictionist view on immigration, he does argue that immigrants

are “maybe better off staying home with your [their] family.” A restrictionist view was evident in the statement below from Julie, a 23 year old graduate student, who identified her race as White and her ethnicity as Caucasian.

**Julie:** It kind of worries me because we can't even take care of the people that have been born here and have problems that legitimately can't find work. There're homeless, elderly, you know. I mean, we are having such a hard time taking care of those people and that's a burden on our economy and we have people that are coming from all over the place.

Another example of positioning of self and Others regarding economic standing in the frame of the American Dream is evident in comments by Sonia, a 55 year old White Christian female, who had been to Mexico with her daughter Nancy, a 19 year old White Christian undergraduate student.

**Sonia:** It's just in my opinion, they're just, they are coming here because it's a better life. Like you, especially taking a mission trip down to Mexico, see how they live and stuff. They are really in a bad spot, and they really don't make a lot of money there, and the money that they do make doesn't, can't, take them to other places. I mean, cause it's basically, the pit of the world, I guess. From seeing the United States and seeing Mexico, or wherever else, just like, they are just trying to get by, just like we are. They just have a different way of doing it. And in their country, they can't.

**Nancy:** Yeah,

**Sonia:** So, they come here and try to step up the ladder just like the rest of us. But they just started at the lower level because they don't, they are not accustomed to like we know in the United States.

Clear contrasting positioning of Mexico and the U.S. emerged in Sonia's statement: The U.S. is the place for “a better life” and Mexico is “a bad spot/ the pit of the world.” Not only are two countries positioned in this way, a superior-inferior relationship between “us” and “them” was recreated in the statement such as “they just started at the lower level because they don't, they are not accustomed to like we know in the United States.” As Tom and Sonia did, many of the participants attributed immigrants' intentions to come to

the U.S. to economic mobility, while recreating the power relations between “us” and “them.” For example, Kathy, a Caucasian/White undergraduate student said, “I know if I was, like, in a third world country, I would feel like I wanna go to America.” Another white student, Allen, who believes “American dream is not what it’s lived up to be” also thinks, “it’s strange when you think about it. We looked at a map, pretty much a lot of countries, most immigrants, if they have a choice, they probably go to America” because of its economic prosperity. Generating economy as the central issue of immigration in the U.S., the American Dream repertoire allows white members to construct “us” as an economically superior country that draws on an economically inferior “them;” and this becomes an assumption that it is natural for them to come to “us,” and for Others “there,” to come “here.”

In addition to re-construction of power relations between white Americans and non-white immigrants without naming race, the American Dream interpretative repertoire is a strategic and powerful tool to reproduce and sustain the system of racial inequality and domination in U.S. society. The discursive tool this repertoire makes available is “blaming the victims.” This is actually a common discursive strategy in racist accounts at both the macro-institutional and interpersonal levels (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; 2006; van Dijk, 1993; 1995; 2000). It is useful in sustaining the racial status quo, because by attributing the problem to racial Others’ culture, lack of morals, or characteristics, white members can maintain their positive self-image and remain in the privileged position.

In the American Dream discourse, such a hegemonic reproduction of the racialized system of domination is achieved by the artful use of two storylines; success in the U.S. is based on: “individual responsibility and effort,” and noting “so many have

been successful so why can't you?" Both storylines support individual meritocracy, which is a significant component of color-blind ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 1996; 2001; 2006).

**Individuals who come to the U.S. have to work hard and prove themselves as worthy of the American Dream.** The common theme of the first storyline is that the American Dream can be achieved by only those who are qualified and work hard for it. As well as the melting pot metaphor, the American Dream is a convenient discursive resource to justify the false assumption of equal power relations and agency across different racial groups. However, as statistics show, there is a clear indication that race and income level correlate in U.S. society. For example, the median income of black households is 60% as much as non-Hispanic white households; also, 25.8% of blacks and 25.3% of Hispanics live under the poverty line, while 9.4% of non-Hispanic whites do. Since this concept of the American Dream itself strongly embodies individualistic meritocracy in which individual success depends on individual's quality and effort, it is rather easy to hide racial factors of immigration and to attribute immigrants' economic and social standings to their own effort and qualifications. Thus, the American Dream repertoire allows dominant group members to assume, "immigrants expect too much of American dream without making any effort" or "working in low-wage jobs over generations is due to the lack of effort." By drawing on this repertoire, dominant members can remain invisible with their "normal" economic and social standing and believe their standing is due to individual effort in a color-blind society.

The following example is from Damon, a 25 year old Anglo undergraduate student. He insisted that it was wrong to prioritize the admission of refugees over people

from first world countries just because the refugees' countries had "issues." He said, "Europeans or people from first world countries want to move here. Should we restrict that? So that we have more space for more refugees?" In his argument, he employed the American Dream repertoire.

**Damon:** So, I, I personally think, kind of ideal America is that, it is, it is a place we can go and get a new chance, new opportunity and start over. But I think what the factors that influence whether or not people should be allowed to enter this country should have to do with whatever qualities that individual has and whatever needs this country has, not whatever is going on in another country. Because I think we have a problem with opening the doors of first world countries to refugees from third world countries.

His basic argument was that admission of foreigners should be based on individual qualities and the needs of the U.S. Therefore, the government should not prioritize admission of refugees from third world countries over Europeans or people from first world countries. This argument positioned refugees or people from third world countries as less qualified and less wanted in terms of getting into the U.S. compared to people from Europe or other first world countries. In this way, people from third world countries were blamed for their lack of qualities that "we" need. Despite his exclusionary view with a clear demarcating positioning of "people from first world countries" and "people from third world countries," his statement can appear reasonable because he structured his argument around individual meritocracy. As mentioned before, individual meritocracy can reproduce the false assumption of equal rights, equal opportunity, and equal access to socio-economic mobility across different racial groups, and it also turns immigration into an individual matter, not race/group based one. The American Dream interpretative repertoire thus allows people to apply this concept internationally in immigration

contexts. Damon's comments also ignore structural factors such as histories, intercultural human rights laws, and the global economy.

In a similar vein, the discourse between Brandon, who said "those who excelled could follow the American dream," and his friend Jake who described immigration as an individual issue, demonstrated views that others should work hard for the American Dream.

**Jake:** If you want to get something out of life, I think you need to work for it. There shouldn't be such a thing like a free lunch. If you are capable of earning it, I think you should work for it...I guess, in the, in the case of immigration from Mexico, people are coming here because they see the opportunities for a better life. And I understand that. I understand why they want to do that, and I fully agree that they should be able to do that. But if they want to come into this country, and rip benefits off the system, they should have to contribute fully.

**Brandon:** And I agree with you about individual responsibilities. And there're a lot of immigrants who are, or potential immigrants who would gladly contribute fully, and work very, very hard. And they are not necessarily granted visas.

Addressing that it is individual responsibility to achieve the American Dream, this kind of discourse ends up blaming immigrants from Mexico saying that they do not contribute fully and they "rip benefits off the system," get "a free lunch," and they are not successful because they do not "work very, very hard." As they are negatively positioning immigrants, whites can maintain their positive-self image without appearing racist due to the mask of individual meritocracy that sounds perfectly normal in conversations where color-blind ideology circulates. This standpoint that the American Dream can be achieved based on individuals' quality and effort corresponds with that of economic individualism (Pantoja, 2006). According to Pantoja (2006), it is one of the ideologies that supports exclusionary U.S. immigration policies. Economic individualism assumes that individuals should manage their lives based on the distribution of rewards in society

without any government assistance (Pantoja, 2006). Using the frame of this ideology, people can openly address their opposition against government policies that support immigrants or discount discourse that challenges inequality between non-white immigrants and white Americans, because within this framework, the economic inequality between “us” and “them” is “their” fault. As long as there is a shield of “equality for individuals,” the system of inequality can remain stable and racist accounts and practices remain rational. Again, “blaming the victim” is a common discursive strategy that dominant racial group members employ to maintain their unnamed position and their privileges (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Moss & Faux, 2006; Wetherell & Potter, 1992).

Another example that reifies economic individualism is the conversation between Amanda and Rachel. They stated that the government should limit the number of immigrants “because the American Dream can’t support everyone in the world.”

**Amanda:** Yeah, I mean, the American Dream is not that magical. We don’t hand you this and give you a thousand dollars when you move there, but um, yeah, you have to start off from something. And I think, I think a lot of people kind of don’t consider that.

**Rachel:** Um-hum.

**Amanda:** They think that this is gonna be answered, all their problems, coming here. It’s really not. You still have to, there is a lot of stuff you still have to figure out.

Economic individualism is recreated in their interpersonal discourse in order to justify blaming the victim for not considering their individual responsibilities.

I have thus far listed examples of discourse that described the American Dream as that which could only be achieved if individuals are qualified and try hard. These discourses also implied that immigrants, mostly those from Mexico, were not qualified and not working hard. Such a focus on individual meritocracy enables people to blame

immigrants from Mexico for their economic standing, while maintaining the speaker's white invisibility in society. Another way to blame the victim in the framework of the American Dream interpretative repertoire is comparing recent immigrants from Mexico to examples of successful immigrants from the past (for example, ancestors of participants) or immigrants from other regions.

**Some immigrants have achieved the American Dream; why can't you?** In the 1960s, the U.S. witnessed the construction of a "model minority" Asian Americans. Although they had been discriminated against as the "Yellow Peril," suddenly they became the proof of the American Dream and disappearance of racial discrimination (Wu, 2002; Zia, 2000). There was influx of media coverage of Asian Americans' success stories and they were praised for their hard work and high academic achievement (Wu, 2002). Despite the fact that many Asian ethnic group members, including Vietnamese and Cambodians that were lumped all together as Asian, were living in poverty, media reports kept producing the image of rich, highly-educated, and successful Asians who overcame racial discrimination and economic challenges they faced (Tatum, 2003). The positive façade of the model minority portrait worked as a macro-level discourse blaming other racial groups' economic and social standings as their own doing. What this discourse came to imply was the argument that "Asian Americans, regardless of their race, are achieving their American Dream because they worked hard for it." Their race did not prevent them from being successful. Therefore, the failure of other racial group members to achieve is not due to race or racism. So the question asked by whites of non-Asians is, "Why can't you try as hard as Asian Americans?"



This type of discourse was also common and reconstructed at the interpersonal level. Bonilla-Silva's interview study (2006) demonstrated that many white participants used the storyline that implied blacks' economic, educational, and social status are due to their own doing, because other racial group members, such as Asians, Italian and Irish immigrants, achieved despite experiences of racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). In a similar manner, participants of this study also employed this storyline. In addition to referring to the model minority myth, participants sometimes mentioned "exceptional" Mexican immigrants and their own ancestors' stories.

The following example is from Tricia, a White undergraduate student of German descent, and her father, Tom. They were discussing that a lack of ambition in the younger generation might be one reason why people complained about immigrants taking jobs away from them.

**Tom:** Certainly there are ambitious people from your generation that are really trying [to climb] the social and economic ladder. But on the other hand, talking about the immigrants, the people coming over here to do those jobs from India or China, Taiwan, are ambitious people.

**Tricia:** Yeah, very ambitious.

**Tom:** Yeah, exactly. They would go with whatever it takes. Is that the easy way out?

**Tricia:** No.

**Tom:** You know what I mean. They can probably stay where they are and do what they are going to do. Maybe they perceive the United States as once again the land of opportunity and that's why they are doing it.

If this conversation ended here, I would have overlooked what this discourse was actually capable of achieving in reinforcing a color-blind society. I might have assumed that this discourse positively positioned immigrants from Asia in the American Dream repertoire. However, Tom later added the following statement when he and his daughter were talking about what kind of jobs immigrants from Mexico could do,

including “picking fruit or vegetables, or some of the construction around here, roofers, that’s the kind of thing, for example.”

**Tom:** ...they would seem to me to have been setting low standards for what you hope to accomplish as far as, um, making much money. Once again, that’s maybe the way their job, picking crops, is so much more than what they would be able to get in their homeland. Maybe they are not thinking about it.

Combined with this statement, the aforementioned discourse on Asians reveals a great deal. On the one hand, people from India, China or Taiwan are positioned as people who do whatever it takes and establish themselves with their ambition in the land of opportunity. On the other hand, Mexican immigrants’ are blamed for their lower economic/social standing due to the “low standards” for jobs they set for themselves without “thinking about it.” Therefore, this sort of discourse suggests that “Mexican immigrants could have succeeded, but they chose not to” while ignoring racial lines that clearly correspond with economic levels in the U.S. By referring to examples that imply comparisons with the model minority, the false assumption of equal opportunity and equal access to resources and status, which inherently accompanies whites’ invisibility, was further reproduced and reinforced.

Another reference to a model minority, in order to blame immigrants for their economic standing as their own doing, is “exceptional” immigrants. Mentioning “exceptional Others” in racial accounts is quite common, according to Bonilla-Silva’s (2006) interview study. In his interviews, white participants shared a number of stories of their own “black friends” or “some” blacks who are not as bad as “most of them.”

Teresa, a 68 year old retired teacher, of French/Russian descent, mentioned the story of a doctor she recently saw on TV.

**Teresa:** The foremost brain surgeon in that area [U.S.] is a man who came here illegal with his family from Mexico. He was a little boy, yet he's grown up in our system, was given our education. Now he's giving back.

She referred back to the brain surgeon later in the conversation with her son's fiancée, Mary, who is an 18 year old White undergraduate student.

**Teresa:** This doctor that I was telling you about, I was so impressed. His mother and father were migrant workers. They worked in the fields in California. And yet, here he is, the foremost brain surgeon at John Hopkins. That's one of the most amazing things. And that's what this country is all about.

**Mary:** Working up from nothing to something?

**Teresa:** Exactly. He could have been a migrant worker in, wherever he's from, Mexico, Guatemala, San Salvador. He would have been a migrant worker. But here, this country gave him the opportunity...

What was prominent in Teresa's talk, as well as others', was her patronizing positioning of self and Other. Her discourse positioned immigrants as those who need help and guidance, while positioning the U.S. as the land of opportunity that helps, provides, and enables them to be exceptional. She also shared multiple narratives that she or her family members convinced their maids from Mexico to get an education and they eventually gained social mobility. She said "they are not getting any benefits if you don't educate them. Then, what are you gonna have? You're gonna have poverty you might have never seen. You're gonna have a class of people that have no chance to move upwards." Such discursive positioning of racial Others as helpless and inferior, who need to be controlled and taken care of by whites, was pervasive during the Jim Crow era. Asserting blacks' physical and intellectual inferiority, whites justified their position of control and dominance during that time (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; 2006).

Positioning Mexican immigrants in general as helpless and inferior, the success stories of some exceptional Mexican immigrants act to blame those who are not willing

to accept what the U.S. generously offers them to obtain economic success. In fact, Teresa also shared another story of illegal Mexican woman who once worked for her, and she expressed her resentment toward her lack of willingness to get an education and get off of welfare. Patronizing positioning of self and Others with some exceptional success story thus maintained unequal power relations: It allowed the dominant group members to blame immigrants for not trying hard enough, and enabled the speakers to maintain superior white positions by constructing themselves as “helper/ provider/ caretaker.” Additionally, the contrast between “good exceptional immigrants” and “helpless and uneducated immigrants” reproduced the myth of equality in society, addressing “everyone can be successful as long as they are willing to get educated.”

Immigrants in the past were also described in ways that blamed immigrants for their lower economic standing in the American Dream interpretative repertoire. These references included participants’ own ancestors. Positive positioning of past immigrants in the American Dream repertoire ideologically constructed recent immigrants, especially those from Mexico, negatively. I already cited a pertinent example of the contrast between the past and present immigrants, Illiana and Peter’s discourse within the frame of “We are a Nation of Immigrants.” Illiana said “everybody here is an immigrant...because we came over on the Mayflower...and I would guess that after one or two generations, we become Americans no matter what.” And Peter replied, “certain people like us, like I mean, our culture is completely gone...but I think that’s natural for anyone who immigrates to this country.” Recall that Peter believed that recent immigrants brought their cultures and maintained their cultures in the U.S. and that hindered the unity of the nation. Thus, white immigrants who came over on the Mayflower were positioned

as “good immigrants” who assimilated into “the American culture” and contributed to the unity of the nation, whereas recent immigrants were constructed as “bad immigrants” who refuse to assimilate and thus threaten the unity of the nation.

Similar contrasting positioning of “our ancestors” versus “them” also emerged in other discourse within the frame of the American Dream repertoire. One of the examples is the conversation between two family members, Julie and Cody, who are both 23 year old White/ Caucasian graduate students.

**Julie:** Yeah, America is the land of free

**Cody:** Yeah, the land of opportunity and things like that.

**Julie:** I understand what you are saying and I think that originally when people came to this country as immigrants, um, they came in and they brought stuff with them. I mean I don’t think they came here dead broke. I mean, they had something. They brought something to get started with. And they busted their butts to make something. And I think what’s happening, I mean, not in all cases, but in a lot of cases, people are coming over here, sneaking across the border

**Cody:** Um-hum

**Julie:** you know, and filing for food stamps and, I don’t know, whatever kind of program.

In Julie’s statement, those who came to the U.S. originally were positioned positively: They were constructed as well prepared and hard working people because “they brought something to get started with” and “they busted their butts to make something.” In contrast, however, new immigrants were negatively positioned “not in all cases, but in a lot of cases” as unprepared, illegal, and lazy, through comments such as, “they came here dead broke,” they are “sneaking across the border,” and they exploit “whatever kind of program” the country has. Given the color of “original” immigrants and “new” ones, the color line clearly demarcates these two groups. However, by employing the American Dream interpretative repertoire, the discourse lumps them together as “immigrants.” Ignoring unequal power relations between the two groups due to their racial

categorization, the discourse allowed dominant members to blame recent immigrants' economic standing and their lack of willingness to work harder for it.

Yet another example of the contrast between past and present immigrants is from Alice, a 22 year old Caucasian college student. She talked with her best friend John about how important learning the language is for success in the U.S.

**Alice:** If you look just at the history of the United States, when we had immigration as this paper mentions, back in 1820, and immigration was at a high. At that point, people coming over to the United States were more than willing to learn the language, to learn the customs, everything they could, [to] get into the country. Because they saw the United States as an opportunity and privilege. And I think that is getting skewed nowadays where more and more people are expecting our country to conform to their needs. And I think it should be vice versa.

As well as Julie's, Alice's statement constructed "good" past immigrants and "bad" new immigrants. To achieve the American Dream, past immigrants "were more than willing to learn the language, to learn the customs." On the other hand, recent immigrants "are expecting our country to conform to their needs." Since Alice thinks "it should be vice versa," which means "they" should conform to "our" needs, this discourse blamed new immigrants for not learning the language by referring to the group that was "more than willing" to do it. Once again, such a discursive strategy ignores the color line, and it protects white's invisibility and power relations between whites and non-whites in society.

In summary, the interpretative repertoire revolving around the American Dream primarily includes three different mechanisms: erasing race with its focus on the economy and labor market; positive-self and negative-Other positioning; and blaming immigrants for their lower economic standing based on individual meritocracy and references to "exceptional" models. As well as other interpretative repertoires outlined in

the earlier part of the chapter, this interpretative repertoire provided participants with various discursive strategies and tools. These discursive strategies and moves are constrained by and reinforce racist ideologies, and white interactants retained their superiority in society and articulated what is “normal” in a hegemonic way.

The next interpretative repertoire reproduced and supported the myth of assimilation. I start the next section with Alice’s statement that came right after the one cited above, that discusses the necessity for immigrants to learn the English language in the U.S.

### **Being American Means Speaking English**

After Alice said that more and more immigrants nowadays “are expecting our country to conform to their needs. And I think it should be vice versa,” she continued:

**Alice:** It is a privilege and honor to live in this country, and to be able to say you are a citizen of this country, you should be willing to learn the language, to learn the customs, and somewhat conform, but not lose your cultural identity at the same time. But I think you need to, you need to learn those things before you become a true citizen. I think it’s important.

I started this section of interpretative repertoire with her comments, because they illustrate how this interpretative repertoire was used as a discursive resource and what this repertoire achieved. This short statement evidences superior positioning of self and subjugating Others, and “Americans” are entitled to decide what it takes to become a citizen and how to deal with “your cultural identity” *for* “them.” In addition to these comments, discourse from a lot of participants showed frustration and complaints about immigrants’ not learning the English language and the necessity of learning the language to be admitted into or to become a citizen of the United States. Addressing what language should be spoken in the nation, participants engaged in language negotiation; these

language negotiations, either at the individual or macro level, are oftentimes controlled by power-relations in society (Martin & Nakayama, 2008) as can be seen in Alice's statement. Therefore, I believe this interpretative repertoire plays a significant role in reproducing and perpetuating a system of inequality and domination.

The analyses of various discourses within this interpretative repertoire revealed two primary discursive patterns. The first one was reinforcing assimilation by equalizing American citizenship or eligibility/criteria for admission into the country with the acquisition of the English language. The second one was claiming that when "we" U.S. Americans are the ones who are accommodating or conforming to "them" in terms of language issues; this is objectionable.

**Assimilation means speaking English.** At the macro-institutional/ political level, language policy and assimilation are closely related. Multilingual nations sometimes establish a language policy that sets one national/official language to promote people's assimilation into the "national" culture (Martin & Nakayama, 2008). Institutional/ political discourse constructs the English language as "the language of the U.S." Specifically in immigration contexts, the nation's motivation to promote assimilation through language acquisition is evident. For example, President Bush's Comprehensive Immigration Reform Plan posted in 2007 on the homepage of the White House (<http://www.whitehouse.gov>) explicitly addressed assimilation through English acquisition as one agenda of immigration reform (Torigoe & Collier, 2008).

We Must Promote Assimilation Into Our Society By Teaching New Immigrants English and American Values. Every new citizen has an obligation to learn the English language and the customs and values that define our nation, including liberty and civic responsibility, and appreciation for our history, tolerance for others, and equality. When new immigrants assimilate, they advance in our society, realize their dreams, and add to the unity of America (p.3)



In this statement, there is a clear distinction between “we” and “new immigrants.” Every new immigrant “has an obligation to learn the English language” to assimilate into “our society.” Therefore, “our society” was positioned as the one and only standard, that values liberty, equality, and tolerance for others. Assimilation was also constructed as beneficial for both “us” and “new immigrants” here, reflecting the assumption that, by assimilating into “our society” by learning the language and “our” values, “they advance” and “realize their dreams” and “we” can maintain “the unity of America.” Such a myth of assimilation granting equality recreates the false assumption that race has no influence on immigrants’ social mobility, and it may silence the voices that challenge the racialized social system that grants different amounts of rewards to white American citizens and non-white immigrants (Torigoe & Collier, 2008).

Advocating for learning English and assimilating into “our society” as indispensable conditions to be American, and to “advance” in “our society,” were also common discursive practices in participants’ interpersonal discourses. The following excerpts are examples.

**Sarah:** I also strongly believe that English should be, they should definitely have to learn English to become a citizen, because it’s a part of America, not to discount the fact that we should learn other languages, but they should definitely learn English.

**Tom:** I think that it would be helpful for immigrants to try to learn, um, learn the language that’s spoken by most people. Just try to blend in, um, [or] you are not going to, you are not going to raise yourself above picking fruit or vegetables or some of the construction around here, roofers ...for example.

**Julie:** I think that it [learning the English language] should be a requirement, because instead, I mean, that’s great that everybody is diverse. I mean, I have Latina friends who speak multiple languages. But I think that this country, um, is America. We speak American. We speak English.

**Cody:** If they were to meet the criteria and they haven't learned the English language and they haven't done anything to support the community and economy within the certain amount of time period that they should get deported.

As can be seen in the examples above, English was constructed as the language “we speak” and “a part of America” and it is a necessary condition to be a citizen, to “blend in” to “our” society, to “raise yourself above” low-wage jobs, and to avoid being deported.

Similar to the language policy discourse at the macro-political level in terms of immigrants' assimilation, participants' discourse most frequently positioned Hispanic immigrants, especially those from Mexico, more negatively compared to other immigrant groups. Mexican immigrants were most likely to be described as a group that failed to assimilate into “our” society by adapting “our” language. Hence, these discussions of assimilation and English created distance between “aliens” and “us,” and contrasted “us” to “Others” who cannot be part of “us.”

The following conversation was between Jack, a 24 year old Caucasian/White graduate student, and his best friend Alice. What is notable in Jack's statement is that different kinds of arguments were used for different groups of immigrants to justify his restrictionist/ protectionist view on immigration. The first part of the conversation was on past immigrants including Irish, German, Italian and Polish, though Alice originally asked him about Spanish speaking immigrants.

**Alice:** Well, do you think some of the, our, culture is changing because they, in a sense, refuse to assimilate into our culture, so they are bringing a lot of their culture? Like, I know a lot of things are, you have to press one for English, you know. This is America, and a lot of them speak Spanish and all that. Um, what do you think of that?

**Jack:** Well, it's hard to say they are failing to assimilate because our country was founded on the principle of immigration and freedom of speech. When the country was founded, you had different ethnic groups, Irish, um, German,

**Alice:** Italian

**Jack:** Italian. All were speaking in different languages. Polish. And in big cities like Chicago, New York, still today, there's separate communities, where all they do is speak in Polish, all they do is speak in Italian. And I think, I think, in a way, yes, America as a whole, is English speaking. Um, but, the country itself is still deeply embedded in the principle of, you know, bring who you are into the country. It's a melting pot. I think it is still a melting pot, and we will always be a melting pot— different cultures and ethnicities—that what makes it great.

Jack's statement positioned immigrants from Western and Eastern Europe, who are now considered as members of the white race in the U.S., as a positive addition to the "melting pot." They are not "failing to assimilate" even though they speak their own languages, because "our country was founded on the principle of immigration" which allows people to "bring who you are into the country." However, later in the conversation, Jack articulated a view that contradicted what he had said before.

**Jack:** The United States is built strongly around English, although I guess we start to see more of a fifty-fifty split between English and Spanish. Um, but again, that's some of the immigration problems, I think. We let too many, too many, numbers in. I think it needs to be controlled. Um, I think, I guess I agree with the statement that only the most qualified should get in. I don't think immigration should be just um, wait six months and, "here's your citizenship." I think there should be testing, um,

**Alice:** More testing, you mean.

**Jack:** More testing. And I do think the language, I think you should have English, maybe not the primary language, but I think you should know English before you come to this country...I don't think it's right to see our country try to change its ways for some ethnicity, and pointing one out, um, Spanish speaking. I think more and more you see, um, Spanish speaking societies expecting our country to conform to their needs. I don't think that's right. I think most importantly, you have to understand it's a privilege and honor to live in the country...I'm not saying, deny these people's right to be able to live here. I'm just saying these people need to put more of their effort on their end to conform [to] American ideals.

According to Jack, though past immigrants were allowed to speak their language and make their own communities because that conforms to the principle of the country, Spanish speaking immigrants should not be allowed to do the same. The U.S. is suddenly

positioned as a nation “built strongly around English,” and Spanish speaking immigrants are positioned as a group that do not “understand it’s a privilege and honor to live in the country,” and who need to “put more of their effort...to conform to American ideals.” In Jack’s statement, perpetuation of the Spanish language and accommodation toward Spanish speaking populations were represented as threats or even a linguistic invasion, and he offered a view of the need for protecting the nation.

As I reviewed in earlier chapters, it is common to position migration of different racial groups into “our space” as a threat or invasion (Demo, 2005; Dixon et al., 1994; Flores, 2003; van Dijk, 2000). Along with the construction of immigration as invasion, Spanish speaking immigrants are positioned as aliens who refuse to assimilate to “our” society and destroy the unity of “our” country. Such negative positioning of “them” justified comments such as, “We let too many, too many numbers in. I think it needs to be controlled.” Also, the myth of equality in the nation legitimated the opposition against government assistance for Spanish speaking groups, and enabled the claim that special treatment for one specific ethnic group is against the principle of equality. Bonilla-Silva (2001, 2006) shows that it is a common strategy to use the argument of equality to openly express opposition against policies or practices whose aim is fixing inequality embedded in racial stratification in society (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; 2006).

Another example of contrasting positioning between Spanish speaking immigrants and other immigrant groups that adopt the English language, was evident in the conversation between Tricia and Tom, daughter and father.

**Tricia:** You know, it’s kind of interesting to me that we don’t really run into a lot of people, well, I’ve never run into anybody from any other country, except for Mexico, that doesn’t speak English.

**Tom:** That's true. For example, um, people from India...coming to the United States to go to the medical schools, and um, becoming doctors, obviously. So that's a heck of a good job as far as making a lot of money goes. Now, you couldn't just, you couldn't do that in the United States by just speaking Hindu or,

**Tricia:** whatever they speak.

In the discourse above, Mexicans, in particular, were positioned as the only cultural group in the U.S. who do not speak English. Also, in contrast to Indians, who speak English and are economically successful, the comments implied that Mexican immigrants' economic standing can be attributed to their unwillingness to learn the language.

Teresa, a 68 year old Caucasian retired teacher, also specifically referred to Spanish speaking groups when she expressed her frustration toward them.

**Teresa:** If you're gonna come to this country, this is America. Americans speak English. They can speak other languages but the working language is English.

**Mary:** Um-hum.

**Teresa:** And if you're gonna come here, then you need to learn the language of the country. And we don't, we shouldn't be printing ads in English and Spanish. We should not be printing menus in English and Spanish.

English again constructed as "the language of the country" and she had a rather assertive opinion that "we" should not accommodate other languages in the nation.

When Mary, Teresa's grandson's girlfriend, suggested that the U.S. could accommodate two main languages, Teresa employed the argument of equality as Jack did, by talking about everyone speaking and reading English.

**Mary:** So, a lot of countries accommodate us, so it seems like we should have, like, two main languages. One Spanish and one English.

**Teresa:** Well, what about, you said your teacher is Japanese. What about Japanese? Should we print in Japanese because we have Japanese people? Or Vietnamese because we have Vietnamese people? French or German? I mean, if we start thinking about the melting pot we have, are we gonna print it in all those languages? And you know, I think, I do, if you are gonna come here, you need to make an effort. You may not become a lawyer but at least be able to have a working knowledge of it [English].

Teresa's statement demonstrated that the melting pot metaphor is also a discursive resource within this repertoire. The metaphor was used to reinforce the myth of equality across different groups in the nation, and it was used to justify and legitimate oppositional views against the practices that accommodate Spanish speaking immigrants.

While not many participants expressed explicit opposition against bilingualism or multilingualism in their discourse, some participants argued that "we" were conforming to "them" in terms of language, where it should be vice versa. This is the second mechanism of this interpretative repertoire.

**"We" Americans should not have to accommodate other languages.** In the previous section, I listed examples of discourse that equalized American-ness with the English language, constructed assimilation through the acquisition of English as a natural and beneficial process, and positioned Spanish speaking immigrants negatively in particular. The following examples show discourse in which participants positively positioned "us" as frustrated and willing to speak and learn another language if living in another country, in contrast to "them" as reluctant to assimilate into "our" society and expecting "us" to accommodate "them." The first example is the conversation between Kathy and Brittney.

**Kathy:** Well, it's kind of frustrating. People come here and they don't speak English.

**Brittney:** Yeah...If I were to move to Germany or something

**Kathy:** Yeah, you would have to

**Brittney:** I probably wanna learn German.

**Kathy:** I think people who come here, especially people who speak Spanish, just assume that we need to know Spanish...in order to accommodate them, when it should be the other way around.

In the example above, “people who speak Spanish” were accused of imposing their language on “us” to accommodate “them.” On the other hand, “I” was constructed as the person who is willing to learn and accommodate to another language when living in a country outside of the U.S. In a similar vein, Amanda and Rachel also said that “we” are accommodating, so we expect “them” to do the same.

**Rachel:** If you go into the government offices, they have the most crazy languages I have ever seen. They have a big poster on the wall, they’re like, we have translators. So at least they offer that.

**Amanda:** Yeah, at least they offer that. So you have to come expecting that we’re going to expect you to know English. Because as America, we’re a very egotistical country.

**Rachel:** We are.

**Amanda:** And we think that, um, we are, you know, you should conform to our language more than the other way around.

**Rachel:** Yeah, like you are coming to America, we are not going to your country kind of attitude.

**Amanda:** That’s right.

In the conversation, “America” is phrased as an “egotistical country,” “we” are the ones who offer translators, “their” languages are “crazy” and “you should conform to our language.”

The last example of this kind of discursive practice is from Teresa and Mary.

They were talking about the national anthem being translated into Spanish.

**Teresa:** I heard the other day that they want the national anthem translated in Spanish.

**Mary:** Like, what do you mean?

**Teresa:** For the Spanish speakers...why would it be translated into Spanish? It’s our national anthem.

**Mary:** Yeah, that’s too much.

**Teresa:** So, we are going too far.

**Mary:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** We are going too far, and [being] too accommodating, you know.

In these statements, the positioning of “us” as accommodating and “them” as demanding is evident. Teresa’s comment, “Why would it be translated into Spanish? It’s our national anthem” is an example of discursive marginalization of Spanish speaking Americans. Naturally being able to sing the national anthem in English as “our national anthem” excludes Spanish speaking Americans from “our” group. Such discursive practice is embedded in the assumption that the English language is a de facto condition of being American, and at the same time, this type of discourse reproduces assimilationist ideology, which places (White) English speaking U.S. Americans and their language on the top, and (non-white) immigrants and their language on the bottom. Assimilation through the acquisition of the language was constructed as positive and beneficial to both immigrants and the nation; the dominant group members can therefore maintain not only their language, but also their position of being entitled to decide how to be, and thus who can be, American and what is expected, “normal” and “accommodating.”

Thus far, I have exclusively listed the examples of discourse and positioning that serve to reproduce and sustain a system of racial inequality and domination. I examined what kind of discursive resources are available, how the resources were used by participants in my study, and what they achieved in interpersonal discourse on immigration issues in the U.S. As Wetherell and Potter (1992) claim, the abstract nature of interpretative repertoires enables people to use various resources in different ways: People use multiple and even contradicting resources at the same time which act to protect dominant members’ privilege, and they can also draw on different repertoires to challenge as well as reinforce dominant discourse on immigration. Some participants in this study did employ discourse that challenged the system of inequality by unraveling



the myth of race-less-ness, mentioned their usually unquestioned levels of privilege, and problematized their “normal” position in contemporary U.S. society. In the following section, I list examples of participants’ discourses.

### **We Should Consider the Context of Racist Policies and Practices and What is “Normal” and Expected, When Thinking about Immigration**

The first two examples below include discourse that acted to challenge color-blind ideology and a presumption of race-less-ness in contemporary U.S. Along with the more common discourses in which participants diverted their attention from race to the economy, or valorized individual responsibility, two examples below are rare cases in which participants problematized the racialized system of immigration.

Peter, a 53 year old White/Caucasian male, demonstrated his concern that border security issues might revolve around racist attitudes and racist behaviors.

**Peter:** I can’t help but feel like the border patrol is more of um, of a racist type of action.

**Iliana:** So, border patrol is kind of racist?

**Peter:** It seems like that...standing at the border, trying to make your point and the only point they are trying to make is that somebody is different than them. Um, they are using the excuse of 9/11....they are using that excuse to try to keep somebody else from coming in for no valid reason other than the fact that they just cite homeland security or something.

**Iliana:** That’s nothing [overlapping]

**Peter:** There’s nothing real about it. That’s what’s troubling about that. That’s what makes it seem racist cause racist is ignorant.

Later Peter also mentioned that “you can’t eliminate people and hold them for prejudiced reasons or because you are afraid of something.” Though his earlier comments on the melting pot imply a color-blind ideology, these statements revealed recognition that some political actions by border patrol staff are actually race-based. Read together with his later comment, Peter’s discourse articulated his recognition that the border patrol’s

actions are based on national fear and his comments raised questions about these protectionist views.

Meg, a 29 year old Anglo American student, offered another example of discourse that challenged the myth of race-less-ness in the U.S. She critiqued racist immigration policies and practices by citing examples from U.S. histories.

**Meg:** I can't remember what year was or what the legislation was, but I know that there was a time period in the U.S. when there were a lot of immigrants coming from, um, Eastern Europe and Southern Europe, and oh, they gotta put a block on that, you know. Clearly, just horrible, because we had a flood of um, Italian immigrants and, I can't remember, Polish, etc. And the U.S. put a cap on immigration at one point, and that was lifted. Back then, you couldn't just call it racist or pigheads making those laws, etc. But um, it's always funny how, when you look at U.S. history which [is] convenient for the U.S. When um, Chinese immigration was coming in, and ohhh, we needed, we needed *them* to, um, lay down train tracks, help build up to the West, etc. But then, as soon as that was completed, oh gotta put a cap on Chinese immigration. And it's like, *how convenient*. You like to think nowadays that the United States has changed its mentality, and I think it has to a point. But you still have people here that are just so ridiculous.

As I reviewed in chapter two, the Know Nothing movement and Chinese Exclusion Act that she referred to in her statement, exemplified how immigration policies in the U.S. have been racialized in a way that is convenient and safe for the dominant white racial groups. Though this discourse does not use the term "race," pointing out that those immigrant policies are always convenient for "us" problematized hegemonic policies and practices that maintain white privilege.

The next three examples show how dominant discourse was contested. Below, Allen and Ed discussed what is "normal."

**Allen:** Honestly, there's only one way to learn about the world. That's interacting with people who are different. I mean, different is good. When you realize, you know, there are more people in your life that are different than normal, or like *normal* as same as you, I don't wanna call it normal. It's such a horrible word.

**Ed:** You put *normal* in quotes.

Throughout this part of the conversation Allen and Ed, 20 year old friends, emphasized that “normal” means difference. As examples of discourse cited in the previous sections imply, dominant discourse in the U.S. is more likely to enable White group members to assume that they are entitled to decide what “normal” is; “normal” often stands for being White, assimilating to White U.S. culture, working as hard as “us,” and/or speaking “our” language. In the conversation between Allen and Ed above, however, such an unquestioned status of “normal” was problematized.

The next example comes from Steve, a 22 year old White/Irish undergraduate student. In his conversation with his best friend, Betty, he challenged Betty’s position that immigrants should learn English.

**Betty:** I agree that they should allow them to be in, but they should learn to speak English, just to understand

**Steve:** Why do they have to learn English?

**Betty:** Because, if there’s only one language. It’s kind of hard to communicate with them.

**Steve:** Then why don’t we learn Spanish?

**Betty:** Because what do we speak in America? We speak English.

**Steve:** Yeah, but it’s not mandated by the federal government.

**Betty:** [intelligible]

**Steve:** What? Just say it.

**Betty:** Well, I’m just saying that I think English is a positive thing.

In this conversation, Steve employed questions that contested the dominant discourse that Betty drew on. Her comments implied that assimilation of immigrants through the acquisition of the English language is natural and positive and an entitlement that the dominant group has on American-ness. Steve questioned this entitlement.

In a similar fashion, Cody, a 23 year old White graduate student, questioned his conversation partner's privileged assumption that immigrants were less qualified compared to Americans.

**Julie:** There would be like, maybe they are offering the job for twelve dollars an hour and both of you are applying for it. But they are willing to work for seven. So, who are they gonna give it to? You know what I mean?

**Cody:** What about it's more, a talent? They just happen to be more, more talented in terms of the jobs that they are looking for? Would, would you put that in any factors? Even if they are from a different country?

**Julie:** Um, I don't know. I mean, I kind of have a problem, um, with that whole situation. Because I think that most of, most of the people that are coming over are dependent on us for their survival...

Discourse that naturally positions racial Others as less qualified for some jobs is pervasive in U.S. racial discourse (e.g. Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Moss & Faux, 2006). With this assumption, dominant racial group members may claim that they could not get a position because racial Others will work for less money, or there is special treatment for underrepresented groups, rather than constructing Others as more talented or qualified. In the example above, Cody employed a challenging discourse that questioned the assumption that immigrants will work for low wages and are dependent on the U.S. for survival.

In sum, in this section, I selected examples of discourse that challenged assumptions of dominant discourse. The aim of this particular section was to demonstrate what kinds of discursive strategies and resources participants used to challenge or question dominant racist discourse, which they might also draw on in addition to offering discourse that reinforced the status quo. As I have shown, individuals' comments revealed multiple interpretative repertoires and they used available resources in both constrained and creative manners (Wetherell & Potter, 1992).

## Summary

This chapter described what kinds of interpretative repertoires study participants employed in their dyadic interpersonal discourse on immigration in the U.S. I examined how they positioned “us” versus immigrants as “them” within each repertoire, and what their discursive practices accomplished in terms of the mechanisms of racialized social systems. Four primary interpretative repertoires emerged: the idea that the U.S. is a nation of selected immigrants; valorizing of the American Dream and individual meritocracy; equalizing American-ness and assimilation into the U.S. with speaking the English language; and questioning the normality of white privilege and racial status quo in the U.S. Positive self and negative Other positioning was evident in the first three interpretative repertoires.

Within the first interpretative repertoire, phrases such as “we are a nation of immigrants,” “we are all immigrants,” and referencing a melting pot metaphor, seemed to work as discursive buffers that allowed ambivalent statements to remain unquestioned and to pre-empt ascriptions of being racist. This interpretative repertoire was enabled by participants following four discursive practices: expressing assimilationist views that propose immigrants should assimilate into “our” culture as “we” did; describing appropriation of immigrants’ consumable cultures as acceptable; using criminalization of immigrants to justify restrictionist views; and supporting a color-blind ideology. In each practice, a contrast between “us” and “immigrants” was evident. This corresponds with past research on macro-level immigration discourse (e.g. van Dijk, 1992, 1993, 2000b). In this study, “us” was positioned positively as groups whose ancestors assimilated and brought unity to the nation, while recent “immigrants”, most likely immigrants from

Mexico, were described as groups that refuse to assimilate and cause various social problems. Additionally, positioning “us” as “culture-less” and “normal” worked to protect dominant group members’ unquestioned levels of privilege; and assumptions that individuals’ race or ethnicity does not matter supported a color-blind ideology.

The second repertoire is closely related to individual meritocracy, which is a significant part of abstract liberalism (Bonilla-Silva, 2001, 2006). With the use of this interpretative repertoire, the existence of racial difference was erased due to the focus on economic aspects of immigration. Though the American Dream referred to the assumption that everybody has the same opportunity for success, this interpretative repertoire justified blaming immigrants for their own economic standing. Negative positioning of immigrants, mostly those from Mexico, was also evident in this interpretative repertoire. Immigrants were likely to be described as non-taxpayers who take advantage of U.S. systems and therefore do not deserve the American dream; participants attributed immigrants’ lower social/ economic status to immigrants’ lack of willingness to work hard; and such views were additionally justified by pointing out some exceptional cases of immigrants’ success. These discursive practices supported individual meritocracy and acted to position “us” or “our” ancestors positively as hardworking taxpayers who deserve their economic standing while positioning “them,” Others, negatively.

The third interpretative repertoire equalized being American and assimilation with learning the English language. Participants’ interpersonal discourses within this framework constructed assimilation into “our” culture through the acquisition of the English language as natural and beneficial. Within this interpretative repertoire,

participants were most likely to refer to Spanish speaking immigrants. Spanish speaking immigrants were positioned negatively as a group that: refuses to assimilate into “our” society, destroys the unity of “our” nation, and asks “us” to accommodate “their” language, instead of learning “our” language. Participants’ claims that learning the English language was beneficial for both “us” and “them” also protected their entitlement to decide what is necessary to become “U.S. American” and what is “normal.” Language negotiation in these interpersonal discourses thus reconstructed and reinforced power relations between “us” and “Others” (Martin & Nakayama, 2008).

Participants’ use of these interpretative repertoires indicated that ideologies implicated contributed to the mechanism of hegemonic reproduction of racist systems in society. These interpretative repertoires, discursive resources, and discursive moves therein were limited and constrained by racist ideologies produced at the macro level; but at the same time, employing these discourses reproduced these ideologies and maintained and reinforced systems of inequality.

In addition to these interpretative repertoires that sustained dominant discourse, there emerged discursive practices that pointed out the role of racial difference in immigration issues, described racist practices in U.S. immigration histories, and questioned white privilege and normality. It should be noted that participants who drew on resources that dominant racist ideologies offer also challenged dominant discourse. As Wetherell and Potter claim (1992), the abstract nature of an interpretative repertoire enables contradicting and ambivalent statements; I also believe that the same repertoire can provide individuals with resources that both conform to and challenge dominant ideologies.

## **Footnotes**

<sup>1</sup>Anglo is the term frequently used to refer to White Americans in the Southwest.



## **Chapter V: Interview Discourse on Foreign Workers in Japan**

This chapter discusses what kinds of interpretative repertoires participants employed and how they positioned themselves and “Others” in their discourse on immigration/admission of foreign workers in Japan. As I described in chapter two, Japan and the U.S. have different sociopolitical/historical contexts regarding immigration and race-relations. One prominent difference between Japanese and U.S. immigration contexts is the existence of the myth that Japan is a mono-racial/ mono-ethnic nation in contrast to the concept of the melting pot in the U.S. Another difference is that a smaller number of foreign residents (approximately 1.57% of the total population) live in Japan compared to the U.S. Also, an assumption that Japan’s history does not include immigration is pervasive in Japan, while the U.S. is known as a nation of immigrants. How these differences in socio-political/historical contexts between Japan and the U.S. influence people’s discursive practices will be described through the analysis of interpretative repertoires and positioning that Japanese participants drew on in their immigration discourses.

In chapter two, I discussed the transitivity of the concept of racialized systems to Japanese society. I suggested that Japanese racialized social systems consist of a combination of a global white supremacist system that privileges white races and the *Yamato* supremacist social system that privileges the Japanese ethnic group over other Asians. The global white supremacist system has been perpetuated since the time Japan opened itself to the West in 1853, and the *Yamato* supremacist system emerged around the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century out of the development of nationalism and imperialism and the need to justify Japanese colonization of other Asian race groups. Embedded in these

two racial systems, the Japanese have internalized their racial position as Asians that are inferior to White racial groups and as a *Yamato* ethnic group that is superior to other Asian cultural groups. Even though there has been a widely spread myth of race-less-ness or Japan as a mono-racial/ethnic nation, the society has been racialized; and the very absence of the concept of race in society is an evidence of a racial purity ideology and the existence of nativistic racism in Japan (Douglas & Roberts, 2003, Shipper, 2002).

Past and present immigration policies are examples that clearly demonstrate how racialized Japanese society actually has been. Various laws and regulations regarding immigration and admission of foreign workers have justified processes that are based on Japanese-bloodline or racial proximity, and their criteria of admission have been constantly re-written to meet the national need for low-wage laborers and maintenance of racial purity. Scholars in the field of critical cultural studies claim that reluctance of the Japanese government to admit foreign workers and xenophobic immigration policy are deeply rooted in a racial purity ideology and nativistic racism (e.g. Bartram, 2004; Douglas & Roberts, 2003; Jung, 2004; Lie, 2003; Shipper, 2002). Shipper (2002) calls Japanese immigration processes “state-sponsored racism based on a xenophobic idea of mono-ethnicism” (p.59). Therefore, Japanese policies of immigration and admission of foreign workers have contributed to recreate and maintain its racialized social systems, especially the *Yamato* supremacist system that values racial purity.

Although the background of immigration/admission of foreign workers widely differs between Japan and the U.S., mainstream racial discourses at the macro-political/institutional levels are similar to those in the U.S. As I reviewed in chapter two, public discourse in Japan also diverts its focus from race to non-race factors, and it constructs

low-wage laborers as threats to the national economy (Asahishinbun, 2001; Douglas & Roberts, 2003). White racial groups are positioned positively through media representations (Darling-Wolf, 2003; Fujimoto, 2002; Hagiwara, 1994, 2004; Hiyoshi, 2001), non-White foreigners are often positioned as negative Others by associating them with various social problems (Douglas & Roberts, 2003). These discursive practices are consistent with the findings about racial discourses in the U.S. (e.g. Bonilla-Silva, 2001, 2006; Demo, 2005; Flores, 2003; Santa Ana, 1999), UK (van Dijk, 1992, 1995; 2000), Australia (Augoustinos & Everm, 2007; Wetherell & Potter, 1992), and South Africa (Dixon et al, 1994).

Analysis of interpersonal dyadic conversations on immigration/foreign workers in Japan revealed that Japanese discourse at the interpersonal level has both similarities with and uniqueness when compared to U.S. discourse. General discursive patterns, such as focus on non-racial factors and positioning of positive-self/negative others, are similar to those of the U.S. discourse. However, interpretative repertoires and positioning that participants employed are different due to Japanese social and historical contexts regarding immigration/admission of foreign workers. In the following section, I describe four emergent interpretative repertoires and positioning of self and Others therein. The four interpretative repertoires that Japanese participants drew on in their conversations were: 1) *Sakoku* and *Shimaguni*: foreign worker issues can be explained by the historical and geographical insularity of Japan, 2) foreigners are scary, 3) foreign workers are threatening our national economy and labor market, and 4) Japan is a monolingual nation and Japanese language therefore is required to live in this country.

As I mentioned at the end of the previous chapter, although I compare discursive patterns in Japanese and U.S. discourse, I do not seek to generalize and essentialize Japanese and U.S. Americans through their racial discourse. On the contrary, I attempt to demonstrate what kinds of discursive resources are offered in different sociopolitical and historical contexts in order for individuals to justify or challenge dominant racial ideologies. I frequently refer to the discursive themes, strategies, and patterns that emerged in the U.S. discourse in the analyses of Japanese discourse, but the aim is to highlight how different macro-contexts enact different or similar discursive resources and strategies.

Regarding excerpts listed in the following sections, Japanese participants' discourse was translated into English from Japanese by the author, and another Japanese-English bilingual student checked the translation to establish translation equivalence. As well as for U.S. participants, I assigned pseudonyms to Japanese participants. For those who may not be familiar with Japanese names, I put (F) next to female participants' names and (M) for male participants.

### **Interpretative Repertoires and Positioning in Japanese Interviews**

Perhaps due to the prevalence of a racial purity ideology, xenophobic immigration policies, and a small number of foreign residents in the nation, the topic of immigration/admission of foreign workers does not seem to be a familiar topic for most participants in this study.

**Rika(F):** [The term]“Immigrants” doesn’t come across clearly to me.

**Yuko(F):** I know.

**Rika:** The term, I mean.

**Yuko:** I understand “foreign workers,” but not “immigrants.”

**Rika:** “Immigrants” sounds like something in the U.S. or in Brazil.

**Yuko:** I don't feel like Japan has any immigrants. But this says 1.57% of the total population is foreign residents, here.

**Rika:** Really?

**Yuko:** That's a lot. 1.57% means...

**Rika:** I don't know.

**Yuko:** But that's a lot. I thought it might be much less, like 0.0 something...It's not familiar [issue] at all. It sounds like a story of different countries.

**Rika:** I agree. Maybe because there is no immigrant around us, or we just don't care?

**Yuko:** Yeah, I guess we don't care. Immigration issues never come up as a topic in our conversations.

This is an exchange between friends, Rika and Yuko, 18 year old female college students who both identified their race as *Oshokujinshu* (yellow race<sup>1</sup>) and their ethnicity as Japanese. A lot of Japanese participants in this study expressed their lack of familiarity with the topic as Rika and Yuko did, and many of them attributed the lack of familiarity to a small number of foreigners in Japan or a lack of first-hand experience with foreigners. Japanese people in general are less likely to question why they have such a small number of foreign residents, and one possible answer to this is Japanese history of *Sakoku*, which means national isolation in Japanese. This is the core of the first interpretative repertoire in Japanese immigration discourse.

### **“Sakoku” and “Shimaguni”:** Foreign Worker Issues can be Explained by Historical and Geographical Insularity of Japan

As I briefly mentioned in chapter two, Japan closed its borders and banned exchanges with any foreign countries except China and the Netherlands from the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. This historical event of closing off the borders over 200 years served to reinforce a sense of identity and pride that “we could make it just by ourselves.” Even though the borders were re-opened more than a century ago, the image of Japan as an insular island nation still lingers in Japanese people's views. While

histories of open borders and cultural diversity are symbols of the United States, those of closed borders and insularity are symbols of Japan. In Japanese discourse on immigration and admission of foreign workers, in fact, phrases such as “Japan has had *Sakoku*” (national isolation) and “Japan is a *Shimaguni*” (an island nation) frequently appeared. The analysis of discourses that revolved around these concepts of *Sakoku* and *Shimaguni* revealed that this interpretative repertoire justifies three main practices. The practices are 1) keeping the small number of foreign residents in Japan unquestioned, 2) reluctance to accept other cultures, and 3) commodifying foreign cultures or foreigners who enact Japanese traditions. Respective discursive practices are described with examples below.

**It is natural to have few foreign residents because Japan has been historically and geographically isolated.** As seen in Rika and Yuko’s conversation, they are surprised by the fact that 1.57 % of the total population is foreign residents; not because this number is too small, but because it is more than they thought it would be. The participants did not describe globalization, increased human exchange among nations, nor a growing number of foreigners in Japan. Many of the participants did not describe that 1.57 % is a small percentage compared to other industrialized nations, or did they question why the number was so low. The interpretative repertoire of *Sakoku* and *Shimaguni* allows people to assume that having such a small number of foreigners is justified. Having few foreigners is considered historically natural because the country closed its border for more than 200 years; and it was also described as geographically natural because the country has been isolated due to the surrounding ocean. Even in this era of globalization and internationalization, this kind of discourse still works to maintain

Japanese exclusive immigration policies and leaves foreign worker programs unproblematic.

The next three excerpts are examples of discourse in which *Sakoku/ Shimaguni* interpretative repertoire allows participants to construct Japanese government's and society's reluctance to accept foreigners as natural and normal.

**Kenji (M):** You know, I think there are not so many foreign workers in Japan.

**Fumio(M):** Because it is a *Shimaguni*...I think the biggest factor is the fact that Japan is a *Shimaguni*. To me, at least. Countries, like the U.S. have borders with Mexico and Canada. Not just borders but that's one continent, so they widely accept [foreigners]. However, Japan is a totally insular *Shimaguni* and moreover regulations are stricter. So, not like Europe, America, China, or any other countries, people have lived in *Shimaguni*, so there is a sense of strong camaraderie. Even more than other countries.

**Kenji:** We are independent, culturally.

**Fumio:** Yeah, that's right. So, like, we've been by ourselves. We have 2000 years of history. Right? So, the historical background is a big factor, I guess.

Fumio and Kenji are classmates and both identified their race and ethnicity as Japanese. Repeating the term *Shimaguni* and emphasizing its geographical and historical factors, Fumio's discourse justified numbers of Japanese condition and practices. Geographical factors justified statements such as "there are not so many foreign workers in Japan"; Japan does not accept foreigners as widely as the U.S., European countries, and China because Japan is not a continental nation like them; and Japanese "regulations are stricter" because "there is a sense of strong camaraderie" due to the historical background that "people have lived in *Shimaguni*." As can be seen in Fumio's last statement, "we've been by ourselves. We have 2000 years of history," the concept of *Shimaguni* is strongly tied to Japanese national identity and pride, even though Japan closed its door only for 200 years, not 2000 years.

The next example is from Takeru, a 21 year old male student, and his friend, Megumi, a 23 year old female student. Both of them identified their race and ethnicity as Japanese.

**Takeru (M):** But, you know, because it [Japan] is a *Shimaguni*, I guess people from overseas feel hesitant to come in. Cultures don't mix that much, you know, values don't mix either.

**Megumi (F):** It's totally a *Shimaguni*, not like continents, like Europe. So, it's not so easy for us to go abroad, and on the other hand, it might not be that easy for foreigners to come to Japan, either, even today.

In Takeru and Megumi's conversation, geographical boundaries legitimated and reproduced the myth of a mono-cultural nation. The statement, "cultures don't mix that much...values don't mix either," generated Japanese culture and values as the one and only standard. Also, their conversation makes it look like foreigners' reluctance may be one reason for the low percentage of foreign residents in Japan, and it is normal given the geographical location of Japan. The fact is, however, Japanese government deliberately controls and limits the number of incoming foreign residents through various policies and regulations as reviewed in chapter two. This interpretative repertoire therefore works to keep institutional authority and dominant positions of Japanese invisible. The invisibility and normativity of Japanese-ness created in this discourse is similar to that of whiteness (McIntosh, 1988) in discourses in the U.S.

Ai and Akiko, female college classmates, who both identified their race as yellow and ethnicity as Japanese, addressed that it was more of a historical matter than a geographical one.

**Ai (F):** You know, given the historical background, like we had a period called *Sakoku*, right?

**Akiko(F):** Yes.

**Ai:** Well, it's my personal opinion, but that is a rather big factor, anyhow. You know, like, I don't know. It may be a remnant of that, but Japan still has that



kind of tendency. Compared to the U.S. or European countries, I can't picture foreigners coming in and out frequently in Japan.

**Akiko:** I agree. I don't know, but that's true. Well, it says we accept foreign workers, but do we really accept them? I mean, I've never heard of anyone hiring them.

In addition to justifying Japanese reluctance to accept many foreigners due to the history of long-term closure, their discourse justified the absence of foreign workers' existence in the nation. Failing to recognize the presence of underrepresented groups leads to silencing their voices in society. In Japanese contexts, this may also contribute to perpetuating the myth of homogeneity.

**Our reluctance to accept foreigners is natural because their cultures and communication styles are so different from ours.** In Takeru's statement cited above, a small population of foreigners was attributed to foreigners' "unwillingness" to come to Japan. Referring to Japanese histories and geographical location, the absence of foreigners was created as natural and Japanese immigration policies and regulations were made invisible. On the other hand, some participants recognized Japanese unwillingness and yet they justified it drawing on this interpretative repertoire. The following two excerpts are examples of this kind of discourse. The first one is the conversation between Yuri, an 18 year old undergraduate student, and her boyfriend Yusuke, who is a 19 year old college student. Both identified their race as yellow and ethnicity as Japanese.

**Yuri (F):** I think Japanese are not used to *Gaijin*<sup>2</sup>.

**Yusuke(M):** You know, the U.S. is filled with immigrants, I know there used to be discrimination against blacks in the past, but they [U.S. Americans] are accustomed to foreigners. But Japan had *Sakoku*, and people were startled just by the appearance of the Black Ship<sup>3</sup>, well it's not "just", but anyway, I don't think we are immune to them.

**Yuri:** Right, I agree. We even get scared of people who speak in a foreign language, don't we?

**Yusuke:** Yeah, we do.

In their conversation, Japanese unwillingness to interact with foreigners was justified by the reference to the history of *Sakoku* and Japanese people's reaction to the first encounter with the West. Their discourse implied that after more than 150 years have passed since the Black Ship came, Japanese still have a right to "be startled" by "*Gaijin*" and position them as a threat to the nation. The use of the term "*Gaijin*" itself positioned foreigners negatively as outsiders, and they were also described as people to be scared of. Yusuke mentioned discrimination against blacks in the U.S. when he was comparing Japan to the U.S. In his statement, black discrimination was constructed as something in the past. This might imply that racial ideologies generated in a global white supremacist system are also enacted within this interpretative repertoire.

The next example is offered by Yuko and Rika. They both identified their race as yellow and ethnicity as Japanese. They were talking about difficulties foreign workers may face in Japan.

**Yuko(F):** Many Japanese are reluctant to accept foreigners, don't you think?

**Rika(F):** We keep just a little bit distance away from them.

**Yuko:** I don't know why. Maybe because we are surrounded by the ocean?

**Rika:** Because [Japan is] *Shimaguni*.

**Yuko:** We are isolated from others.

**Rika:** You know, personality-wise, Japanese cannot become very close to someone you meet for the first time. Even among Japanese.

**Yuko:** Then, we don't think we should have a policy that increases foreigners in Japan.

**Rika:** No, we don't.

**Yuko:** We want to keep it at minimum.

As can be seen in their discourse, Japanese participants expressed Japanese unwillingness to accept foreigners or their own awkward feelings toward them rather openly within this interpretative repertoire. In this exchange, "we" were positioned as

restrictionists who are openly against accepting a large number of immigrants. The same kind of positioning of one's own group was not common in the U.S. discourse. In the U.S. discourses, since the myths of multiculturalism, melting pot, and pluralism are pervasive, dominant group members were likely to position themselves as open toward diversity and to express their willingness to accept people with different backgrounds. On the contrary, in Japan, a nation where mono-racial ideologies supported by the historical and geographical condition are perpetuated, these discursive resources enabled people to articulate their exclusionary attitudes and practices as natural and normal. Even though *Sakoku* was brought to an end many centuries ago and the ocean surrounding the nation is not really an obstacle against international interactions anymore, the symbolic insularity of the nation seemed to be maintained and protected through these interpersonal discourses.

In reproducing the concept of national insularity, Japanese participants' discourse constructed a clear demarcation between "our culture" and "other cultures" by positioning self and Others. As well as examples in the U.S. contexts, Japanese participants also employed positive-self and negative-Other positioning, and most participants assigned negative cultural differences to Others, and justified Japanese unwillingness to accept "them." Thus, this interpretative repertoire enabled interactants to argue that they are not willing to accept foreigners because of the cultural differences highlighted by the historical and geographical isolation of Japan, not because of fear of different racial groups, xenophobia.

**Yumiko (F):** I think culture, culture is a big factor.

**Hiroko (F):** You mean, cultural difference?

**Yumiko:** It may be a typically Japanese way of thinking, like "when in Rome do as Romans do," but you know, something like high-context communication

**Hiroko:** Oh, you used what we just learned.

**Yumiko:** Because I really think so.

**Hiroko:** It's maybe difficult for those who are not familiar with it [Japanese communication styles].

**Yumiko:** Yeah

**Hiroko:** I mean, there are differences even among Japanese. If they ask us to understand them, well, it's difficult.

**Yumiko:** Because our culture and values are different.

Yumiko and Hiroko are junior level students who identified their racial and ethnic identities as Japanese. Cultural differences and differences in communication style between “us” and “them” were emphasized in their discourse. Unwillingness or difficulties in understanding “them” is justified or normalized by the statement “because our culture and values are different.” Citing “when in Rome, do as Romans do” implied that Japanese culture and communication styles are the standard and accommodating to them is inherently required in Japan.

Although “they” in Hiroko and Yumiko’s discourse seemed to refer to people from different cultures in general, quite a few participants in this study specifically mentioned Chinese as a group with a “different culture” that “we” often have problems with.

**Miho (F):** Japanese are extremely scared of foreigners or immigrants because [Japanese] cannot understand why they do certain things, and when, in what timing, they act in a certain way. You know, they are people from different cultures. So, in the end, because of cultural differences, we don't know what makes them upset or what hurts them. The reason why I know that we don't know about these things is that I've gone through a culture shock, so to speak. People from different countries, different cultures hurt me in a weird way and startled me. For example, if a Japanese person is suddenly yelled at by a Chinese, the Japanese will be perplexed. So, unconsciously we all know that. So, we have some sort of a negative image toward immigrants, and try to protect ourselves. That's maybe why some people treat them badly, but they do it unconsciously.

Miho is a 20 year old undergraduate student, who identified her race as Asian and ethnicity as Japanese. Her discourse attributed Japanese people's awkward feelings and maltreatment of foreigners to their unconscious fear and self-defense mechanisms triggered by cultural differences. Basically, this statement constructed Japanese xenophobic practices as a natural matter because "they do it unconsciously." Though she started with a general statement about foreigners in Japan, toward the end, she singled out Chinese culture as an example of different cultures. Chinese people were positioned as those who might "suddenly yell at Japanese" and startle Japanese. Her statement implied that it is natural for Japanese to have negative views against Chinese and treat them badly in order to protect themselves. Thus, Chinese people were positioned as threats, while Japanese were positioned as their victims. This subjugating of immigrants or Others can also be seen in political debates on immigration in UK (van Dijk, 1992; 1995), and emerged in the conversations of participants in the U.S.

In a similar manner, Chinese people were positioned negatively as an example of different cultures in Kenji's statement, below. Kenji is a college student who identified his race and ethnicity as Japanese.

**Kenji (M):** For example, Chinese people come to Japan. Chinese are culturally, they have a culture of not apologizing so much. But Japanese apologize a lot. So, that kind of difference may cause problems when Chinese come to Japan. If a Japanese person thinks a Chinese person is wrong, but if the Chinese person doesn't apologize, then there's cultural difference, you know. Cultural difference emerges and [the Japanese person] thinks, "What's wrong with this guy?" I guess.

In this discourse Chinese were described as a group of people who would not apologize when they are in the wrong, and this is a cause of problems "they" bring to Japan. This description of cultural difference positioned Chinese as "wrong" and Japanese as setting the standards of what should be expected.

Chinese have been *the* racial Others for Japanese throughout recent history, and this relationship is deeply rooted in the development of the *Yamato* supremacist racialized social system. As I briefly summarized in chapter two, construction of *Yamato* race was derived from the global white supremacist system. As a member of “inferior” yellow race groups, Japan has tried to differentiate its people from other Yellow race groups to be recognized as a civilized country by the West (Sato, 1997). When the Chinese Exclusion Act was implemented in the U.S. during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Japanese public discourse mirrored and recreated a similar racial ideology (Sato, 1997). Then, the perpetuation of nationalism and imperialism in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century required identifying inferior racial groups to bolster Japanese superiority. Japan claimed the physical and intellectual superiority of *Yamato* race (Dikotter, 1997; Weiner, 1997) which justified colonizing the surrounding Asian countries. Though not many Japanese are willing to employ this social Darwinist type of discourse anymore, the racial hierarchy constructed back then still maintains itself through negative media representations and interpersonal discourse such as those examples cited above.

The next example demonstrates how the *Yamato* supremacist system and the global white supremacist system interact and position Japanese and foreigners.

**Kyoko (F):** You know, Fukuoka<sup>4</sup> city is called “the gate of Asia,” so there were a lot of foreigners, and many of them worked at or owned a restaurant in the town that I used to live in. They used to come back late at night and talk really loud.

**Sora (F):** They don’t seem to have a common sense.

**Kyoko:** Well, they don’t follow “when in Rome do as Romans do.” If they come into a different culture, I expect them to know about the culture. It would be better if they know about good manners.

**Sora:** I agree. I don’t like Chinese because they are rude. Well, I shouldn’t say like that but I feel they are a little bit rude.

Kyoko is a 39 year old employee. She and her daughter Sora, an 18 year old undergraduate student, both identified their race as yellow and ethnicity as Japanese. Since working at a restaurant or owning a restaurant is a stereotypical profession of Chinese workers in Japan, it is fair to assume that “they don’t seem to have a common sense” refers to Chinese, and it is Chinese who are not willing to assimilate into Japanese culture or who do not have good manners. Sora later openly expressed her dislike of Chinese by describing them as rude. Also, the statement, “I expect them to know about the culture,” and linking that to good manners rather than rudeness, set up a clear hierarchy.

Later, Kyoko and Sora continued their conversations on the difference between Asians and Whites:

**Sora:** Maybe I shouldn’t say this, but I feel Whites, and Koreans or Chinese,

**Kyoko:** Asians, you mean.

**Sora:** Asian immigrants or workers seem to be different to us, even they are all foreigners.

**Kyoko:** You know, in Europe, men have an aesthetic sense and gentlemanship, and that makes their culture. Western cultures are like that, right? But Asians don’t have, I don’t know, gentlemanship. It seems like that.

**Sora:** I don’t know, maybe. Women are kind of oppressed in Asia.

As can be seen in their conversation, Japanese did not seem to be included in the category of Asians. Lie (2003) argues that most Japanese do not consider Japan as a part of Asia even today. This tendency has lingered since the colonial era. Chinese people are positioned as Asians who are rude and treat women badly, but Japanese are different; European culture is glorified with a stereotypical representation of Whites, which is also different from Japan but in a positive way. Such a contrasting positioning of Japanese, “Asians,” and Whites, is constrained by intertwined *Yamato* and White racialized social

systems. At the same time, this kind of discursive positioning supports the existence of these systems. A similar type of discursive positioning was also apparent in the third group of practices described below.

**Foreign workers are acceptable as long as they have something we can learn from them or they carry on our traditions.** This discursive pattern is similar to commodifying and exoticizing racial Others' cultures, which also emerged in U.S. context. The symbolic boundary around the nation in participants' discourse justified Japanese unwillingness to accept foreign "others," and it maintained non-Japanese cultures as forever-foreign. Without mixing with these cultures, however, Japanese people seem to be entitled to "consume" or to enjoy these foreign cultures, or to assign foreigners cultural missions or roles in Japan. In U.S. interpersonal discourse on immigration, immigrants' food was sometimes constructed as material culture that Whites can consume and enjoy, and immigrants were positioned as agents who bring cultures to the "culture-less" nation. Japanese participants' interpersonal discourse also commodified and exoticized other cultures in similar ways. A unique positioning of foreigners emerged in Japanese discourse, however, participants also positioned foreigners as agents to carry on Japanese traditions. The following excerpts below are examples of commodification and positioning of racial "Others" in Japan. Haruka and Shiho are juniors in college, and both of them left the race column blank, though Shiho identified her ethnicity as Japanese. Mana is also a junior in college and she identified her race as yellow and ethnicity as Japanese.

**Haruka (F):** We had some foreign teachers at schools. What do we call those who teach once in a while?

**Shiho(F):** Um, "A" something [She might refer to ALT: Assistant Language Teacher].



**Haruka:** Anyway, I met people like that, and they are the most familiar ones. They are close to us, and they are harmless, and it's rather fun to have them, and we're interested in them. So, I think we should allow qualified people to come in.

**Mana (F):** People from foreign countries have something we don't have in Japan and something we can learn from. Like, English teachers can definitely teach something Japanese cannot. In terms of language, foreigners have better skills, so it's important to admit foreigners who have those kinds of knowledge or skills.

The two excerpts above show that participants constructed foreign English teachers in Japan in a positive way. They were positioned as “familiar,” “harmless,” “fun,” “interesting,” “qualified” “skilled,” and “desirable.” This kind of positive positioning, however, did not apply to all racial groups. Of importance here was the color of those who teach the English language and those who speak it in Japan. Due to overrepresentations of Whites as attractive and desirable in Japanese media (Darling-Wolf, 2003; FCT, 1999; Fujimoto, 2002; Hagiwara, 1994; 2004; Hiyoshi, 2001), English is considered as Whites' language and thus Japanese are willing to accept English speakers who are White, as Haruka, Shiho, and Mana said above. This can be considered as a reproduction of whiteness at the interpersonal level. At the same time, however, Whites were exoticized in this kind of discourse, because construction of English as the White's language commodifies and freezes Whites' culture in Japan. In fact, it is often said that English language schools are likely to hire more White English speakers as their instructors than non-White English speakers. This means that White English speakers have higher marketability or commodity value. Therefore, as well as Whites' bodies, their language is also racialized in Japan.

In addition to assigning the cultural role of English teachers to Whites in Japan, Japanese discourse positioned foreigners residing in Japan as successors to Japanese culture. This is an interesting contrast with the positioning of immigrants as deliverers of cultures to the culture-less U.S. Another interesting aspect of this positioning is that culture and labor/work were closely linked, if not equalized, in this particular discursive practice. For example, Haruka referred to an U.S. American *Enka* singer, Jero, who became popular in Japan during the past few years.

**Haruka (F):** What about Jero. Well, it's not labor, but the popularity of *Enka* was going down and then Jero revived it. Well, it's kind of weird that was [achieved by] a foreigner, but anyway that pleased Japanese, and they got excited. In that aspect, I think it's good, if it is in the fields that do not have sufficient workforce.

*Enka* is a genre of Japanese traditional music, which is often associated with blues in the U.S. Its major target audiences are elderly Japanese; young Japanese rarely listen to *Enka*. However, Jero attracted an audience beyond the elder generation. Jero is one-quarter Japanese American who has a black-rapper-like appearance, and he sings *Enka* without any accent. In Haruka's discourse, Jero was constructed as a successor or even a savior of Japanese traditional music. Thus Jero was positioned as a foreigner who fulfills the needs of Japan. Also Haruka's short statement leaked ambivalent feelings toward foreigners – as Haruka said, if this fulfills the needs of Japan it is fine, but still, “it's kind of weird” to have foreigners to do “our” jobs. These kinds of ambivalent feelings are actually intrinsic to the dialectic tension between Japanese needs for a labor force and its desire to keep racial purity (Douglas & Roberts, 2003). For example, Hiroko and Yumiko's discourse demonstrates such ambivalent feelings toward the balance between labor force and racial purity. They are 21 year old classmates and they both identified their race and ethnicity as Japanese.

**Yumiko(F):** I never thought that foreigners come, support Japanese economy, and foster internationalization.

**Hiroko (F):** Well, it's happening, I guess. Because of a low birth rate or something like that. When there is no one who provides care for the elderly, maybe foreigners will become our caregivers. It's scary, though.

Recognizing the needs of labor force from overseas, having foreign care-givers is something "scary" for the "mono-racial" nation.

Another similar example is the conversation between Erika and Reiko, 20 year old best friends who identified their race as yellow/Mongoloid and ethnicity as Japanese.

**Reiko(F):** It's not really about foreign workers, but I feel that Japanese traditional culture is being carried on by foreigners, not Japanese, in a lot of cases. Like, Sumo, for example.

**Erika (F):** I see.

**Reiko:** and Kimono.

**Erika:** Kimono?

**Reiko:** Well, just a little bit, though.

**Erika:** I agree that foreigners cherish our culture more than we do, or we are kind of driving them to cherish it, in a way.

**Reiko:** You know, younger generations are not really interested in Japanese traditional cultures, unless they are from foreign country.

**Erika:** Yeah.

**Reiko:** Like, carrying on our traditional culture, or engaging in the fishing industry as foreign workers, or there are many foreigners who do pottery, like professional potters.

**Erika:** Yeah, well, it is because foreigners are interested in those, Japanese can make business out of it, and that maintains the tradition or something like that. Like, maintaining Japanese tradition for foreign audiences.

**Reiko:** Even if they do that for money or jobs, we need someone who carries on our culture. Otherwise traditions will end, and also there are professions that need people from foreign countries to maintain them.

**Erika:** I see. I agree with that.

In Erika and Reiko's discourse, foreigners were assigned their role to cherish and maintain Japanese traditional culture. Imposing cultural roles may constrain foreigners' agency and freeze their cultural identity avowal. By positioning foreigners as those that keep traditions alive, this discourse also positioned "our" culture as more "cherishable"

or “valuable” than foreigners’ cultures, while providing Japanese the rights to decide what foreigners should do in Japan. Though the race of the musicians, potters or those who fish was not as clear as that of English teachers, those who are “engaging in the fishing industry” are usually trainees from Southeast Asian countries. In addition to these discourses, other interactants also mentioned foreign workers in fishing and agriculture, and their discourse constructed these as low-wage jobs that Japanese from young generations rarely want to engage in. This discursive pattern, therefore, positioned foreign laborers as low wage, low status workers, as well as artists who may earn higher wages and hold higher status, while both are employed in service to Japanese cultural traditions. Disguising labor as a cultural activity, which is “our” culture but not “theirs,” may soften the damage to the myth of *Shimaguni*, the national pride based on the false assumption that Japanese have made it by themselves without foreigners’ help until today.

Thus far, I have described how Japanese participants used discursive resources provided by interpretative repertoires that revolve around *Sakoku* [national isolation/closing borders] and *Shimaguni* [an island nation]. The analyses of Japanese participants’ discourse revealed that this interpretative repertoire allowed them to construct the proportion of foreigners to Japanese and Japanese unwillingness to accept foreigners and foreign cultures as natural and normal, to divert its attention from race to cultural differences, to commodify foreigners’ cultures, and assigning particular roles, such as keepers of selected traditions, to them. Just as there was some negative positioning of foreigners in Japan (e.g. positioning of Chinese people) within this interpretative repertoire, negative positioning of foreign workers also emerged within the next

interpretative repertoire. Within the next interpretative repertoire, immigrants/ foreign workers, especially those who are not White, were constructed as threats to the nation.

### **Foreigners are Scary**

In racist discourse, it is a common discursive strategy to position racial Others as threats to the nation and its people. For example, van Dijk's studies (1992, 1995, 2000a) demonstrate that political debates on immigration position immigrants or asylum seekers as illegal, criminals, and economic burdens. In a similar vein, U.S. public discourse on immigration constructs immigrants negatively by emphasizing illegality and criminality. In this study, U.S. participants' interpersonal discourse negatively positioned immigrants from Mexico in particular. Sometimes immigrants were constructed explicitly as economic threats/ burdens (i.e. exploiting the system without contributing or stealing jobs from American citizens), and sometimes participants' discourse disguised negative positioning of "criminal Others" with compassionate and empathetic statements for the poverty and challenges in Mexico. Additionally, in most cases in U.S. discourses, negative positioning of "Others" eluded appearing racist by focusing on non-racial factors, such as economy and class.

As I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, Japanese participants also engaged in negative positioning of foreigners as "Others." However, their construction of foreigners, especially those who are non-Whites, was less covert and more explicit compared to those in U.S. discourse. In general, foreign residents in Japan were likely to be described as a source of fear in participants' interpersonal discourse. As illustrated below, "they" were regarded as "scary" for participants. This tendency was more evident in positioning of non-White foreigners than Whites. Also, when foreigners' criminality

and illegality were described, compassionate statements were frequently employed as they were in U.S. interpersonal discourse in this study. In this section, I list examples of discourse in which foreigners were positioned negatively in an explicit manner.

**I know I'm biased, but I'm scared of foreigners.** In the next couple of examples, Japanese participants expressed the vague sense of fear for foreigners in Japan.

**Ai (F):** You know, they tend to commit crime, so if they ask us to be friends with them, I don't know. At my workplace, I have some male foreign customers who often come and ask me out for a drink. Those men who come to the restaurant alone are really friendly, and they casually ask me out for a drink. But honestly, it's scary. I don't think I would ever hang out with them. They are friendly and nice when they come to the restaurant, but it's just scary. If I tell my parents that I go out with that kind of people, they will frown on that. You know, I wanna keep some distance from them just because they are foreigners. I think I have a bias.

Ai is 21 year old undergraduate student who identified her race as yellow and ethnicity as Japanese. She was working at a restaurant in a big shopping mall at the time of this study, and she said many foreigners dined at her restaurant. Though she said those male customers were “friendly and nice,” she was scared of them “just because they are foreigners” and she stated that “they tend to commit crime.” Her discourse demonstrates that the overemphasis on criminal cases committed by male foreign residents by media is recreated, and her statement also constructed foreigners as “that kind of people” “we” should stay away from. At the end, she admitted that she has a prejudicial attitude against foreigners. Admitting one's prejudice was not a common discursive practice in U.S. discourse in this study. On the contrary, declaring one's bias or prejudice, and/or admitting to being discriminatory were actually common discursive strategies in Japanese participants' discourse. When people talked about negative aspects of immigration/admission of foreign workers, they often used phrases such as, “I may be

prejudiced, but...,” “I know I am biased, but...” or “I may be discriminating, but...” This strategy is similar to the discursive pattern that White U.S. Americans are reported to employ to deny their prejudicial attitudes, saying, “I am not racist, but...” or “I am not prejudiced, but...” (Bonilla-Silva, 2001). Culturally speaking, Japanese people are likely to make themselves look worse than they think they are, because it is considered as modesty or humility. Therefore, addressing their being biased or prejudiced does not necessarily mean they actually think they are biased or prejudiced; rather it can be also a kind of discursive buffering. For example, another college student, Yuri, who identified her race as yellow and ethnicity as Japanese, used this strategy as following:

**Yuri (F):** I must admit that when it comes to foreign workers, I don't have a good impression or feeling. I guess I'm prejudiced. I know this is prejudice, so I try not to think that way, though. Well, my foreign friends are all good people.

As the use of phrases such as “I have a black (or any other non-White racial groups) friend” can be a discursive strategy to protect one's own image in U.S. discourse (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; 2006), both “I have foreign friends” and “I'm prejudiced” also work to save one's positive image in Japanese discourse.

Keiko and Saki, 20 year old best friends, who both identified their race as Japanese but put “I don't know” under their ethnic label, also positioned foreigners as a cause of fear and trouble.

**Keiko (F):**To tell you the truth, I would feel safe if my co-workers were all Japanese.

**Saki (F):** Right. But I don't think I care that much, though.

**Keiko:** Well, some people definitely mind that. People may be afraid that they [foreigners] will do something bad, or something like that.

**Saki:** I see. I guess my grandmother might be like that. I guess the elderly tend to, [overlapping]

**Keiko:** Yeah, old people may [overlapping]

**Saki:** mind that.

**Keiko:** Concerning that they might do something wrong or cause some troubles, people decided not to hire them, I guess.

**Saki:** Yeah.

Keiko's first statement that she would feel safe in an all-Japanese working environment implied that the existence of foreign workers ruins the workplace safety. Such an anxiety geared toward foreign workers in this discourse, positioned foreigners in Japan as "harmful" and "dangerous," while positioning Japanese as "safe."

As well as Keiko and Saki's discourse, Keisuke and Kengo's discourse constructed foreigners, in general, as inherently dangerous. They are 20 year old college classmates, and they were talking about their selection of the three discussion statements with which they most agreed.

**Keisuke (M):** I didn't know that there are so many [foreign residents]. If there are that many, I kind of agree that admission should be controlled sooner or later.

**Kengo (M):** I mean, If I listen to the voice of my reason and think with my head, the third statement [the most qualified should be allowed] is right, or I want it to be right, ideally. But honestly, foreign worker issues in Shizuoka prefecture, you know, like [there is] Toyota. There are many Brazilians in Shizuoka. Even though they commit various crimes, once they go back to Brazil, Japanese police cannot do anything about it. So that kind of thing happens. Also, we hear bad news about American military base in Okinawa. I mean, as Japanese, I agree with the first statement [immigration should be controlled].

**Keisuke:** Right. I mean, foreigners are scary. We don't know what they are capable of doing.

**Kengo:** Um, I don't think I can deny that.

I believe their discourse represents Japanese dominant discourse on immigration/admission of foreign workers and the need for a foreign labor force in their heads but fear and concern in their hearts. Both Keisuke and Kengo agreed with exclusive policies and practices against foreign workers in Japan, and this argument was justified by positioning foreigners in general as naturally dangerous by saying "we don't know what they are



capable of doing,” and by focusing on criminal cases highly showcased in Japanese media. Thus, xenophobic immigration policies and a racial purity ideology were reproduced and perpetuated in these interpersonal discourses on foreigners, the source of fear and troubles. In a lot of cases, participants’ vague fear and anxieties were reified and solidified in discourse that positioned foreign workers as not just being inherently dangerous, but as criminals.

**I understand they are under stress, but illegal and criminal foreigners are unacceptable.** The analysis of interpersonal discourse on immigration in the U.S. illustrated that compassionate phrases often accompanied negative positioning of Mexican immigrants. Some U.S. participants expressed their sympathy toward Mexican immigrants’ economic status or their living environment in Mexico, while addressing that it is thus natural that they commit crimes. A similar discursive practice was also employed by Japanese participants, and quite a few of them referred to the stress foreign workers might undergo in living in Japan. The following excerpts are from conversations in which participants positioned immigrants/ foreign workers as criminals while expressing compassion for them.

**Chika (F):** You know, there are criminal cases where foreign workers became burglars or murderers lately.

**Yukie (F):** That’s right.

**Chika:** I think it may be because they are under a lot of stress, working in Japan. You know, there is an image that Japanese are rich. So, for the burglars, they may think “Why we are the only poor ones when Japanese are rich?”

**Yukie:** I see, you’re right.

**Chika:** So, I believe Japanese government should limit the admission of foreign workers to protect Japanese nation and its safety.

**Yukie:** Right. Otherwise, the crime rate will go up.

**Chika:** I mean, admitting good ones sounds really nice, but if you do that, you know, what should we do if we end up having more murder cases?

Chika and Yukie are both 18 year old friends, who both identified their race as yellow and ethnicity as Japanese. Their discourse legitimated Japanese xenophobic policy. Though they show their sympathy for “poor” foreign workers who are “under a lot of stress working in Japan,” these foreign workers were constructed as potential burglars and murderers that destroy the safety of Japan. Therefore, “Japanese government should limit the admission of foreign workers.” In this argument, foreign workers were used as a scapegoat for violent criminal cases that spoil domestic security, as if there was no crime in Japan before admitting foreign workers. This discursive pattern is consistent with public discourse that claims foreigners are likely to engage in more violent crimes than Japanese, though the reverse is actually the case (Douglass & Roberts, 2003).

In a similar fashion, other participants also expressed their sympathy for foreign workers’ stress and lower economic status. Some other examples are below:

**Megumi (F):** Well, because they are foreigners, so there are many cases [of crimes], but Japanese also steal, so that’s not limited to foreigners. If we have proper laws and regulations, that kinds of things will decrease. I mean, they are under stress, stress of living in Japan, so there are more and more criminal cases, I think.

**Kenji (M):** There is an increasing number of foreign workers in Japan from various different countries, but foreign workers are, well, their salaries are low, and their living costs are limited. I guess their crimes and illegal activities are triggered by their dissatisfaction or stress.

**Miho (F):** I think the reason why foreign workers commit crimes is, honestly, they are not admitted legally. Because of their illegal residency, and they are suffering from harsh living condition because of that, right? So, they try to search for the means to get some money and step into the dark side.

These statements positioned foreign workers as illegal or criminals, but showing sympathy toward their living and working condition buffered the negative positioning while maintaining Japanese participants’ positive self image.

Thus far, I have listed examples of Japanese interpersonal dyadic discourse in which foreigners or foreign workers in general, were positioned as a source of fear or criminals that ruin “our” safety. These interpersonal discourses reflected and reproduced those at the macro-institutional levels in Japan. For example, the public statement made in 2006 by the Japanese Ministry of Justice (Ministry of Justice, 2006) constructed foreigners as potential criminals and Japan as a safe nation if “we” do not admit “them.”

We should not accelerate the admission of foreigners without controlling crimes committed by foreigners or illegal foreign residents. It is essential to grossly reduce the number of these illegal foreign residents in order to dispel Japanese citizens’ anxiety regarding safety and to bring back “the world’s safest nation, Japan.”

Such a discursive positioning of self and Others justified Japanese exclusive and xenophobic policies and regulations regarding admission of foreigners. As well it reproduces the *Yamato* supremacist racialized social system that generates a racial purity ideology, which places Japanese on the top of the racial hierarchy. Additionally the following examples demonstrate the discursive process of racial stratification not only between Japanese and non-Japanese, but among different racial groups.

**I am not scared of White people, but I am scared of Asians and Blacks because they are criminals.** As I have argued, Japanese society is organized by two racialized social systems, i.e. global white supremacist racialized social system and *Yamato* supremacist one, and these two systems affect race relations in Japanese society. If there is only *Yamato* supremacist system, Japanese would be placed above collective non-Japanese. However, due to the mechanism of the global white supremacist system, racial stratification in white-centered society is also recreated and perpetuated in Japan, even though Whites are not “elites” in terms of political status or institutional access

within Japan. These intertwined racialized social systems were reproduced and reinforced by Japanese interpersonal discourse as seen in the following conversation between Shiho and Haruna, two best friends.

**Shiho (F):** If I'm talked to by someone who speaks Japanese with an accent, like Chinese, I would feel scared.

**Haruna (F):** Scary. I would feel scared, too.

Shiho: I don't know why but [it is] scary.

**Haruna:** You can tell [Chinese] by their appearance. They are also yellow race and we look alike, but we can tell they are, you know, by how they dress and stuff. If they come to me, I feel scared.

**Shiho:** I would be panicking

**Haruna:** If the person is American, White, you know? If it is a Black person, I would feel a little scared, though. But if I'm talked to by a white person, I would be like "what should I do?" but not being scared.

**Shiho:** I would try to think about how to interact with them.

**Haruna:** But if a Chinese or Asian person comes to me, I would go like "help me! Somebody!"

**Shiho:** wondering "what they are gonna do to me."

**Haruna:** Right. We have that kind of image. Well, I guess I would feel the same for Blacks.

**Shiho:** Yeah, me, too.

Discursive positioning in Shiho and Haruna's discourse blatantly drew a color-line between foreigners in Japan. Whites were positioned as a group that Japanese are willing to interact with, while Asians (not including Japanese) and Blacks were positioned as "scary" foreigners that "we" do not feel safe with. Such a positive positioning of White people as attractive and desirable showed reproduction of whiteness perpetuated by Japanese media (e.g. Fujimoto, 2002; Hagiwara, 1994; 2004), and contrasting positioning of Whites and non-Whites evidenced that white supremacist racialized social systems were at work in Japanese interpersonal discourses. In addition to that, singling out Chinese as an example of "scary" ones also demonstrated how the *Yamato* supremacist racialized social system is entangled with the white supremacist one.

The following two excerpts are other examples of discourse that contributed to reconstruction and perpetuation of these two racialized social system in Japan. The first statement is from Ai, a 21 year old college student who identified her race as yellow and ethnicity as Japanese.

**Ai (F):** Again, this may be a prejudicial attitude, but if I become an employer and need to hire foreign workers, you know, I may be willing to hire Anglo-Saxon Whites, because you know, they seem to behave and have good manners, and they can speak English. But I would feel scared of blacks, and I would doubt educational levels of Arabs or Asians, you know. I think that is why there are more White teachers at English language schools compared to black teachers.

Ai's statement positioned Anglo-Saxon Whites as a group of people who "have good manners," Blacks as scary, and Arabs and Asians as groups with lower educational levels. Such explicit racist positioning was more likely to be avoided in the U.S, because the color-blind era discourages people to make blatant racist remarks (Bonilla-Silva, 1996, 2001, 2006; Omi & Winant, 1994). However, discursive resources of racial ideologies enabled such an obvious positioning of racial Others. Positioning of Whites as "honored guests" (Lie, 2001, p.172) was enabled by a whiteness ideology, and negative positioning of non-White Others was endorsed by a xenophobic racial purity ideology, which reproduced the myth of a mono-ethnic nation. Another example of explicit positioning of non-White foreigners in Japan was offered by Yusaku, a 22 year old senior college student who identified his race as Japanese.

**Yusaku (M):** Speaking of crimes, well, I guess I am prejudiced, but when I hear the news that a foreigner commits a crime, I would automatically think maybe a black person did it. Maybe it is true that more crimes are committed by blacks. Well, they have a job and earn their living, right? So, maltreatment toward them or their dissatisfaction forces them to commit crimes or do something that does not conform to Japan, and I guess that's why they [foreign workers] are considered problematic.

As I mentioned in chapter two, racial positioning of blacks as lower in the status hierarchy was introduced when Japan was exposed to the Jim-Crow type of racism in white-centered racialized systems. Black Americans have been and still are differentiated from the category of “Americans” in Japan, because “Americans” connotes White Americans, while Blacks historically have been positioned as a physically and intellectually inferior racial group (Lie, 2001). In recent years, due to global media, not only positive images of Whites but also negative images of Blacks, are reconstructed in Japanese society. For example, Blacks are more likely to appear in the news as perpetrators than as reporters or anchors (e.g. Dixon et al., 2004), and images of Blacks as criminals are reinforced in U.S. media. Such media representations of Blacks also provide certain discursive tools and resources for Japanese people to recreate the same images. Construction of Blacks as scary in Haruka, Shiho, Ai, and Yusaku’s discourse was a reproduction of similar discourses in global media.

Thus as illustrated by participants’ interpersonal discourse, this interpretative repertoire worked in three different ways. First, the repertoire enabled Japanese people to discursively construct foreigners in general as a source of fear. As collective racial Others, foreigners in Japan were dehumanized as if they are threatening creatures in this way. Second, a vague sense of fear that Japanese hold for foreigners became concrete in positioning of foreign workers as criminals. Combined with sympathetic statements, foreign workers were blatantly positioned as potential criminals as they are in a macro-institutional discourse. Lastly, this interpretative repertoire provided Japanese with a color-line that categorized acceptable and unacceptable foreigners. Constrained by both a White supremacist racialized social system and the *Yamato* supremacist racialized

social system, Japanese participants positioned non-White foreign workers negatively compared to White ones in an explicit way. The discursive resources and tools this interpretative repertoire offered to Japanese people evidenced the very existence of “race” and racial stratifications in Japan where the myth of race-less-ness is pervasive. Race-relations among Japanese, Whites, and non-Japanese Asians were also reproduced within the next interpretative repertoire that averts individuals’ focus from race to the economy.

### **Foreign Workers are Threatening Our National Economy and Labor Market**

In immigration discourse, it is common that racist discourse disguises itself as economy/ class discourse: immigrants are frequently described as threats to the national economy or an economic burden (Cornelius, 2005; Flores, 2003; Marin, 2003; Pantoja, 2006). In this study U.S. participants also positioned recent immigrants, most often those from Mexico, as economic threats and burdens that took away jobs, lowered wages, and exploited the welfare system without paying taxes. Japanese public discourse on immigration also considers foreign workers, especially unskilled laborers, as economic threats who lower wages and increase unemployment rates in Japan (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2009). This is one reason why the Japanese government policy explicitly stated that unskilled low-wage laborers are not allowed into the country and only highly skilled and educated workers in professional and technical fields should be admitted (Ministry of Justice, 2006). However, as I argued in chapter two, the categorization of immigrants/foreign workers in Japan and government policies regarding admission of foreigners, stratify racial groups in Japanese society and allocate different rewards according to a racial hierarchy.

Restrained by and reproducing public discourse on immigration/admission of foreign workers, quite a few Japanese participants expressed their opinions against accelerating the admission of foreign workers into the country. In order to justify advocating for exclusive admission policies and to maintain race-less-ness in society, this interpretative repertoire provided three primary story lines that Japanese people can employ: 1) Foreign workers take our jobs away, 2) foreigners from advanced countries are acceptable, but those from developing countries are not, and, 3) foreign workers should not be allowed to stay in Japan for a long period of time; this would prevent them developing their own countries.

**We should not accept many foreign workers because they take our jobs away.** As well as Japanese governmental discourses, Japanese participants' discourses demonstrated concern for the influence that foreign workers may have on the Japanese economy, including lowering wages and eventually leading into lower employment rates among Japanese workers. The following excerpts are from a conversation between Shogo and Yuta, who identified their race and ethnicity as Japanese; and a statement by Yusaku, a 22 year old undergraduate student who identified his race as Japanese.

**Shogo (M):** If we take employers' perspectives, being able to get the labor force for low wages must be positive, from their standpoint. But for us, people looking for a job, to find a job maybe, jobs will be--

**Yuta(M):** gone?

**Shogo:** difficult to find, I guess. I'm afraid that could happen.

**Yusaku (M):** I agree with the opinion, or I think it's a proper argument that Japan should limit foreign workers because admitting workers who would work for lower-wages may increase Japanese unemployment.

Given that these three participants are juniors in college, when most Japanese students start job hunting, their concerns are understandable. In these discourses, however, foreign



workers were positioned as threats and at the same time as less qualified than Japanese job applicants; this discourse implied that Japanese companies are willing to hire foreign workers because it is cheaper, not because they are more qualified. This positioning is consistent with Japanese public discourse that equalizes foreign workers with unskilled low-wage workers. Such a positioning of foreign workers employed in interpersonal discourses used this resource to justify Japanese exclusive admission policies that attempt to keep unskilled laborers, especially those from Asian countries, outside of the nation.

Discursive practices of constructing Asian workers as unskilled laborers who lower the employment rate in Japan were evident in the following conversation between romantic partners, Yuri and Yusuke.

**Yuri (F):** I don't know. I think we should not stop admitting [foreign workers] completely, but if we accelerate the admission, if we do it suddenly, it may damage Japan. Well, it may not damage, but more people might lose their jobs. After all, foreign workers can be employed for cheaper wages.

**Yusuke (M):** I think Chinese and Indians work for so little money lately.

**Yuri:** Yeah, I think their wages are really low. Because they work for really cheap wages, *Freeters* cannot find a job, or it may create a situation where *Freeters* have difficulties in finding jobs. I think that's not good for Japan.

“*Freeter*” is a recently fabricated term that refers to part-time job-hoppers in Japan. An increasing number of “*Freeters*” has become a social issue along with the economic downturn. Many Japanese young people who gave up their hope for regular employment need to make their living by having multiple part-time jobs or temporary jobs. In the conversation between Yuri and Yusuke above, foreign workers, specifically Chinese and Indians, were blamed for causing the problem affecting opportunities for *Freeters* and an increasing number of unemployed Japanese. This discursive pattern of scapegoating that attributed social problems to immigrants, also emerged in U.S. discourse in this study.

Another pair of participants also scapegoated Asian workers as the cause of economic/ labor market issues.

**Erika (F):** Do you think we should admit more [foreign workers]?

**Reiko (F):** Well, if we admit too many, Japanese, you know, Japanese would be considered as people who would work only for higher wages, and Japanese wouldn't get hired anymore.

**Erika :** There will be no jobs for Japanese, then. Because in the field of fishing or nursing-care, foreign workers work for low wages, and you know, maybe foreigners are really earnest.

**Reiko:** I think so, too.

**Erika:** I saw on the news that at some workplaces, like factories, Japanese young people are not willing to work there anymore lately, but [foreign workers] work really earnestly. But I don't know, if that's good or not.

**Reiko:** Um, yeah.

**Erika:** I wonder.

**Reiko:** If we hire a lot of foreigners, because of low salaries, if we hire too many of them, Japanese employment rate would go down, you know.

Reiko and Erika are 20 year old best friends and they both identified their race as yellow/Mongoloid and ethnicity as Japanese. Although they did not specify racial groups or nationalities of foreign workers in their conversation, it is apparent that they were referring to Asian laborers. Foreign workers working in the field of fishing are mostly Southeast Asians, who come to Japan for training programs. After their training, only those who pass the exams can officially work for the Japanese fishing industry (Japanese Fisheries Association, 2006). Also, foreign workers in the field of nursing-care are mostly Indonesians and Filipinos, because Japan made an official arrangement with these two countries in 2008 to admit nurses/ care-taker candidates up to 500 a year (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2009). Therefore, the foreign workers in this discourse are likely to be Asians.

This conversation contained common discursive strategies frequently used in racist discourse. The first one is extreme case formulation. Erika's statement, "there will

be no job for Japanese, then” illustrated this strategy. This trend also emerged in interpersonal racist discourse in Moss and Faux’s (2006) interview study. The second strategy is ambivalent positioning of Others (Billig et al, 1998). Even though both Reiko and Erika explicitly advocated for stricter admission policies, their discourse positioned foreign workers as both good and bad— they are earnest workers, but if there are too many, Japanese workers cannot get jobs. As van Dijk (1997b) posits, racist discourse is often accompanied by such ambivalence and buffer statements.

The two examples cited above thus negatively positioned Asian low-wage laborers as the cause of Japanese unemployment, and Japanese as the victims of “them.” These discourses, therefore, reproduced a *Yamato* racialized social system that demarcates Japanese and non-Japanese. However, there are some additional examples of discourse that stratified racial groups into more than two groups of Japanese and non-Japanese.

**Foreigners from advanced countries are acceptable, but those from developing countries are not.** This storyline allowed people to locate foreigners into a racial hierarchy as if the categorization is based on the economic status of each country, instead of race. I argue that when participants employed a *Yamato* supremacist racialized social system, the categorization was usually made between Japanese and non-Japanese Asians; when they employed a global white supremacist racialized social system, however, the stratification addressed Whites. Within this interpretative repertoire, however, participants were more likely to stratify foreign workers into two different groups instead of using racial categories as they did within the previous interpretative repertoire that mainly positioned all foreigners as “scary.” The two different groups were

those from “developing countries” (which often refers to Asian countries) and those from “advanced countries” (which is often equated with the U.S. and European countries). Categorizing foreign workers into Asian or those from advanced countries deleted the concept of race from the discourse, and it thus legitimated Japanese xenophobic admission policies. The conversation between Kengo and Keisuke, 20 year old classmates who identified their race as Japanese, demonstrated this process.

**Kengo(M):** Because of economy, because of economic disparity, many people from Southeast Asia and China come to Japan. On the contrary, I know this is prejudicial, but I feel American people come here just out of their curiosity or because of their interests in Japanese culture.

**Keisuke (M):** I feel the same way, too. But this category, foreign workers who have skills and knowledge Japan needs, does not apply to those who reluctantly came to Japan for earning money. It refers to people from Europe or advanced countries, right?

**Kengo:** Well, Indians I know are intelligent, though.

**Keisuke:** India is not an advanced country.

This discourse explicitly distinguished those from advanced countries, including U.S. Americans and Europeans, and those from Asian countries, including China and India. In this conversation, “American people,” which in Japan almost automatically refers to Whites from advanced nations, were described as harmless to Japanese economy or labor market, because they do not come for getting jobs or earning money; they come to fulfill their cultural interests. Even if they come to Japan as workers, they fall into the category of highly-skilled, desired workers. On the contrary, those from Southeast Asia and China come to Japan due to economic disparity – they can earn more money in Japan than in their homeland. Thus, foreigners from Asian countries were positioned more negatively as low-skilled, unqualified workers in contrast to Whites regardless of their immigration status. The next excerpt offered a similar example.

**Haruka (F):** For example, we would respect or have positive feelings toward Americans or workers from advanced countries, but you know, we tend to feel that people from developing countries are scary or dangerous. I think that happens, you know.

**Shiho (F):** I think so.

**Haruka:** Because of how they look.

**Shiho:** I mean, if they come here as elites, then we would think they really tried hard, but if we see foreign workers doing heavy labor, we would pity them or have different impressions, right? I know they tried hard to come to Japan, though.

While this discourse also illustrated the previous interpretative repertoire that positioned foreigners as “scary,” it also positioned foreign workers based on class level and economy. Who should be respected and who is scary and dangerous is decided based on the economic advancement of countries; what kind of impressions “we” have depend on the foreign workers’ class, whether they are elites or physical laborers. This discourse thus constructed economic and social class as the central factor of admission of foreigners in Japan. Nevertheless, “American” almost automatically refer to “white Americans” in Japan, and those from “developing countries” usually means non-Japanese Asians; discourse regarding foreign workers is therefore racialized. In addition, Haruka said it was possible to tell if foreigners were from developing countries by “how they look.” Therefore, this discourse, without any explicit reference to racial categories, actually maintained a clear racial hierarchy in Japanese society; White Americans/ Europeans were given immediate respect and thus were positioned as equal or perhaps higher status than Asians.

The last example is a conversation between Yuta and Shogo. It is more blatant than the other two, and it indicates how racist discourse can be disguised as class/ economy discourse.

**Yuta (M):** I agree with statement number one [admission should be limited], because, for example, I would feel awkward if a person from a developing country became my boss.

**Shogo (M):** You would?

**Yuta:** Yes. I know this sounds discriminatory, but I would feel that way. So, if I think about this, I don't think I agree with the third statement, which says we should not treat them just as laborers.

**Shogo:** So, for you, they are just guest laborers.

**Yuta:** Something like that. I know I have pride that Japan is an advanced nation.

**Shogo:** I see.

**Yuta:** I know this is prejudicial.

**Shogo:** Have you ever had a boss, who is a foreigner?

**Yuta:** No, or I avoided that, but no. I can't even imagine. If they are at the same level as me, or working at the same level, then that's ok. I won't complain. But if they tell me what to do, then--

**Shogo:** like, "who do you think you are?"

**Yuta:** I would feel awkward...when I work for a company in the near future, I don't want to play up to bosses from outside, honestly. I know this is prejudice, and discriminatory, but I don't want to do that. But I'm all for admitting them as physical laborers.

Repeatedly using discursive buffers, such as "I know this is prejudice," Yuta's statement negatively positioned foreign workers from "developing countries" or "outside" as unqualified for higher management positions in "an advanced nation." People from developing countries can work at the same level as Yuta, if not lower as physical laborers, but he "can't even imagine" having a boss from a developing country. His discourse sounded as if the home country's economic advancement decides foreign workers' class status in Japan. However, this class/ economy discourse was a camouflage for racist discourse. In a later conversation, in fact, Yuta asked Shogo, "don't you think it's different, say Americans and Filipinos? Don't you feel that way? Those who are from the U.S. would look good in a suit." Descriptions of race or color were implicit in these particular comments about foreign workers in Japan.

The excerpts cited above are examples of positioning foreign workers from developing countries, i.e., Asian countries, negatively as threats to the Japanese economy and labor market, in contrast to desirable foreigners from “white” advanced countries. Such a discursive practice acted to justify Japanese xenophobic admission policies. In the third storyline, participants’ discourse justified the same exclusionary policies with a humanitarian argument.

**Foreign workers should not be allowed to stay in Japan for a long period of time; this would prevent them developing their own countries.** Wetherell and Potter’s (1992) analysis of public discourse on Maori reveals that humanitarianism plays a significant role in maintaining racial status quo in society. In colonial contexts, Pakeha (White New Zealanders) have been positioned as kind and caring individuals whose interests are protecting and supporting the welfare of Maori people (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). However, this patronizing discourse actually constructed Pakeha as an advanced race and Maori as inferior who need help from Pakeha, and it thus reproduced colonial discourse and hierarchy between Pakeha and Maori (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). In addition, humanitarianism in Pakeha’s public discourse masked their actual interests of “controlling the political and economic agenda to retain a position of dominance” (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, p.25).

Japanese society also has developed similar humanitarian discourses regarding foreign workers. In chapter two, I briefly mentioned about the technical training program that Japanese government established in 1981 as a solution for the severe labor shortage Japan has struggled with since the 1960s (Ishikida, 2005). The basic principle of the training program is allowing trainees from Asian countries to learn “advanced” skills,

knowledge, and techniques in Japan for a limited amount of time and to bring the learned skills back home to contribute to the improvement of their home countries. However, the embedded intention of this policy was to enable exploitation of cheap labor imported from Asian countries legally (Ishikida, 2005), without changing the racial composition of society. The technical trainee program is still considered a humanitarian program in which Japan, an “advanced” nation, helps “developing” countries. I consider this to be a remnant of colonial history of Japan in the early 1920<sup>th</sup>, which is the backbone of *Yamato* supremacist racialized social systems.

Such humanitarian and patronizing discourses were reproduced in participants’ comments, and this indicates ways that that public and private discourses are interrelated (Essed, 1991). The following excerpts exemplify discursive strategies that position “us” as people who care for the best interest of foreign workers, which creates a subjugated position for “them” and supports xenophobic admission policies. The first example is from Erika, a 20 year old student who identified her race as yellow/Mongoloid and ethnicity as Japanese.

**Erika (F):** Rather than letting them to work in Japan and earn a lot of money, we should support them in a way that enables them to make their living in their own country. You know, there are some cases that, not just sending stuff to developing countries, but teaching them skills and techniques so that they can get by there. So we should support the country so that people won’t work illegally in Japan. You know, it is illegal so they will get caught.

This statement came right after the conversation cited in the previous section, in which Erika and Reiko were expressing their concern for foreign workers’ taking over Japanese people’s jobs. Her argument that Japan should support the countries of workers so that they do not have to work in Japan might sound humanitarian. However, this discourse implied that Japan should support other countries so that Japan can keep foreign workers



from developing countries outside. Also, as Wetherell and Potter (1992) posit, this discourse can be a reproduction of colonial discourse; the “advanced “*Yamato* race educates other “inferior” race groups for “their” own interests. Historical evidence, economic conditions between Japan and other Asian countries, and the *Yamato* supremacist racialized social system offer discursive resources to justify exclusion of foreign workers, and these kinds of discourse then ensure that the current status hierarchies can be maintained.

The next two examples are excerpts in which participants supported training programs for a short period for the sake of foreign workers’ nations. The first one is a conversation between Saki and Keiko, 20 year old college students who identified their race as Japanese and said they did not know what their ethnicity was. The second example is the one between Yuko and Rika, 18 year old college students who both identified their race as yellow and ethnicity as Japanese.

**Saki (F):** When we talk about poor countries, you know, we talk only about assistance. But if we help them too much, these countries will be depending on us. They should reach the point where they can manage by themselves. They should work and earn money there.

**Keiko (F):** Someone said that education is important. The reason why Japan has developed even though it was damaged badly during the war is that people took education seriously. We should not just assist them, but we should assist them so that they can help themselves. So, they can learn skills and techniques [in Japan]. Well, not forever, because this country is not their homeland. So, we can have some policies to admit them for a limited time period.

**Yuko (F):** You know, there are some people who come to learn skills and techniques, to work at factories for one year or so and go home, like manufacturing techniques.

**Rika (F):** Skills and techniques are really advanced in Japan.

**Yuko:** It’s good to use these [skills and techniques] for improving their countries, but if they stay here too long, they may end up not feeling like going home at all. So, I’d like them to learn those in a limited amount of time and go home.

Both pairs' discourses have a humanitarian façade; their concerns were the development and improvement of foreign workers' nations through offering skills and techniques in Japan. However, their statements also subjugated foreign workers by positioning them as "the saved" and Japanese as "the savior." This discourse not only perpetuated particular power relations with Japanese having higher status than outsiders, but this discourse also served Japanese, dominant members, enabling them to cushion and cover their interests of protecting the racial purity in the nation. The limited duration of the training programs designed for Asian foreign workers is thus convenient for Japanese to obtain a cheap labor force and to protect its racial insularity myth at the same time. Wrapped in economic discourse with a hint of humanitarianism, a racial purity ideology and xenophobic practices were kept unnamed and unquestioned.

As demonstrated in the examples above, this interpretative repertoire put focus on the economic, educational and technological disparities between Japan and other Asian countries. Constructing racial factors in immigration/admission of foreign workers as due to economic or class factors was actually a common strategy both at public and private discourse in the U.S. In the Japanese context, the Japanese government's discourse positioned foreign workers as threats to the national economy and labor market, and participants in this study reconstructed the discourse in their conversation.

The analyses of their discourse revealed that this interpretative repertoire offered three storylines. In the first one, non-Japanese Asians were positioned as threats, unskilled, and unqualified for higher status, while Japanese were described as their victims. In the second theme, foreign workers were stratified into a racial hierarchy: Whites from advanced nations are harmless but those from non-white developing

countries are damaging Japan. In the last storyline, humanitarian discourse was employed to positively position “us” while reproducing a colonial racial hierarchy in Japanese society and the myth of a mono-racial nation. The next interpretative repertoire also sustained and recreated race relations in Japan hierarchically, and supported a widely accepted assumption of mono-lingual nation which reinforced the mono-racial myth.

**Japan is a Monolingual Nation; the Japanese Language therefore is Required to Live in This Country**

As well as U.S. participants, Japanese participants constructed the national language as a key concept in the context of immigration/admission of foreign workers. In both cases, the dominant language represents naturally privileged positions of dominant racial groups in society, while equalizing the language with success and advancement in society (Torres, 1997). The difference between U.S. and Japanese discourse may lie in what national language symbolized in each nation; while the English language symbolized unity of the nation and assimilation among people from different racial and cultural backgrounds, the Japanese language embodied mono-racial-ness of the nation. It is widely assumed in Japan that Japan consists of only the Japanese race and people that only speak the Japanese language. Kawai (2007) contends that Japan has been strongly influenced by the essentialist view of national language, nation, and race. In the essentialist view, it is assumed that one nation is comprised of only one racial group and the nationality therefore is equal to the racial group; hence, national language of the nation becomes the symbol of the nation and the racial group (Kawai, 2007).

This close connection between the Japanese language and Japanese-ness enables discourses that construct the status of the Japanese language as natural, neutral, and

standard and discourses that bar non-Japanese speakers from the society. These discourses thus allow institutional imposition of the Japanese language on non-Japanese speaking immigrants/ foreign workers. For example, Japanese government required *Nikkeijin* immigrants, descendants of Japanese immigrants from Latin American countries, to have Japanese language ability in order to stay in the country, stating:

Regarding *Nikkeijin* who are already residing, financial stability (regular job) and certain level of Japanese language ability will be set as the conditions of continuous residing. (Ministry of Justice, 2006, p.3)

Also, the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare required Japanese companies that employ foreign workers to implement training programs on Japanese language, lifestyle, culture, and customs (Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare, n.d.). These governmental discourses reinforced the status of the language, which is identical with the status of Japanese speaking Japanese, as the only standard in society.

Reproducing and being constrained by these discourses at the macro-institutional levels, Japanese participants constructed race relations between Japanese and non-Japanese at the dyadic interpersonal levels within an interpretative repertoire regarding Japanese mono-lingualism. The primary mechanism of this interpretative repertoire was camouflaging Japanese xenophobic and racist treatment against foreign workers as a problem of a language barrier. This interpretative repertoire offered two storylines for Japanese participants: It is the language barrier that bars them, and non-Japanese speakers are scary.

**Japanese are not willing to hire foreigners because they cannot speak Japanese.** This storyline enables Japanese participants to attribute foreign workers' social and economic standing to their Japanese language ability and lack thereof. In this

storyline, Japanese can say that foreigners cannot get a good job or cannot “blend in” because they do not speak the Japanese language well enough.

In the following two excerpts, participants mentioned that, if they were business owners, they would consider foreign workers’ language ability as an important criterion for hiring. The first example is from Yumiko and Hiroko, 21 year old classmates who both identified their race and ethnicity as Japanese.

**Yumiko (F):** If I’m asked whether I’m willing to hire them [foreign workers] or not, then I don’t know. You know, when we were elementary school kids, weren’t we asked in class which we, as business owners, want to hire, people with disabilities or without disabilities? It’s the same thing. If I’m asked to choose between Japanese and foreigners, I mean, people from foreign countries, I guess I would choose Japanese. I don’t know.

**Hiroko (F):** I guess it’s easier. I mean, management-wise.

**Yumiko:** Right. Communication is easier.

**Hiroko:** Yeah, communication-wise.

In this discourse, Japanese participants justified their potential choice of Japanese workers over foreign workers not as their racial preference, but based on language ability. Foreign workers were subjugated as people who cannot speak Japanese and are more difficult to communicate with. In their statement, lack of fluency in Japanese language was equalized with disabilities; Yumiko stated that the choice between Japanese workers and foreign workers was the same as the one between people with and without disabilities. Given pervasive essentialist views on the Japanese language and race in public discourses in Japan (Kawai, 2007), Japanese people’s reluctance to hire non-Japanese speakers also demonstrated xenophobia. However, unnamed positions of the Japanese language, as the standard, mask racial components with these kinds of discourses. In a similar vein, Keiko and Saki also talked about a hypothetical situation of hiring foreign workers. Keiko and

Saki are best friends and they identified their race as Japanese and said they did not know their ethnicity.

**Keiko (F):** If we need to work with foreign workers, if you are an employer, and they come to have an interview. What would you do?

**Saki (F):** Well, I think they need to have Japanese language ability in order to work.

**Keiko:** Right. They will have trouble if they cannot speak the language.

**Saki:** I would roughly check that to some extent. Other than that, it's the same as normal Japanese people. If they are responsible or not, or

**Keiko:** or their personalities.

**Saki:** But I don't know what I would do when that actually happens.

**Keiko:** I don't know either. Maybe I would see them with a biased eye.

**Saki:** If I find some minor things that I don't like about what they do, I may get really upset. I might also get irritated that they don't understand what I'm saying.

**Keiko:** I think so, too.

Saki's statement, "I think they need to have Japanese language ability in order to work...other than that, it's the same as normal Japanese people" showed the assumption that foreign workers usually cannot speak the language, and not speaking the language is constructed as "abnormal" and "irritating." In contrast, the Japanese language was positioned as "standard" and "normal," as well as people who speak the language.

The previous two conversations were about the hypothetical situations of hiring foreign workers. A similar example came from describing the actual employment of foreign workers at a Japanese company. The example was offered by a mother and a daughter, Kyoko and Sora.

**Kyoko (F):** By the way, there have been some foreign part-timers in my company, since last year or two years ago. But they don't understand the language.

**Sora (F):** Really?

**Kyoko:** The company hired them even though they don't know the language.

**Sora:** That's ridiculous.

**Kyoko:** It's also the company's fault.

**Sora:** Right.

**Kyoko:** I guess there're some kinds of subsidies, for hiring foreigners, like subsidies for paying them. Otherwise, they wouldn't hire foreigners.  
**Sora:** That's true.

In their conversation, foreign workers who do not understand the Japanese language were positioned as unqualified to work in Japanese companies; they were hired only because there were financial rewards for the company, not because they were qualified for their positions. This discourse implied that language ability is equal to work ability—foreign workers who are not fluent in Japanese were automatically positioned as “incompetent.”

Chika, an 18 year old freshman who identified her race as yellow and her ethnicity as Japanese, also offered a similar example that equalizes language ability and work ability. She described an experience of working with Chinese people, and also equalized language ability and work ability.

**Chika (F):** When I was working at the hotel, we had many Chinese employees. Japanese workers can understand instructions once they were told to do this and that. But, you know, even though Chinese people could understand some Japanese, it was not perfect. So they were assigned different jobs.

**Yukie (F):** I see.

**Chika:** Japanese were assigned complicated tasks, but for Chinese, “put this there, one by one” or something like that. They were made to do simple tasks. There was nothing else to do because they don't understand the language, but I guess it's discrimination.

**Yukie:** Language is an important issue, in that kind of aspect.

Though Chika seemed to recognize it as discriminatory treatment, she said, “there was nothing else to do because they don't understand the language.” This comment naturalizes the assumption that speaking and understanding the Japanese language perfectly is required and normal in order to be treated equally as Japanese-speaking Japanese, whose “normal” position remained unquestioned. Such an assumption was also used to justify people's exclusive attitudes toward foreign workers. One example is a

conversation between Yuko and Rika, freshmen friends who identified their race as yellow and ethnicity as Japanese.

**Yuko (F):** When I was a high school student, my teacher said in class that in the field of nursing care, we import a lot of nurses from Southeast Asia and Philippines.

**Rika (F):** I've heard of that, too.

**Yuko:** In fact, I feel bad, because I have this weird feeling, but nurses deal with sanitation, right? I have a feeling that people over there don't care that much about it, so I'm a little worried about it.

**Rika:** I see. And what about the language?

**Yuko:** Yeah, exactly. Moreover, it's not that nurses and care-takers just do their tasks. They need to communicate with Japanese patients, right?

**Rika:** What if something urgent happens and they need to handle it in Japanese?

**Yuko:** I think there are many people who want to be nurses.

**Rika:** I think so. Many of them.

**Yuko:** So, I don't think we need to bring that many [from foreign countries].

In order to justify opinions that Japanese do not have to admit foreign nurses and care-takers, cultural arguments and language arguments were employed. In Yuko and Rika's conversation, people from Southeast Asian countries were negatively positioned in that their cultures were not as sanitary as Japanese culture, and then they were constructed as incompetent and unqualified, due to an assumed lack of language fluency. Racial preferences for Japanese nurses and care-takers over non-Japanese ones evidence racist practices, but this was obscured by using this interpretative repertoire.

In most cases, this storyline was employed to justify the argument that foreign workers are less desirable because they cannot speak the language. Moreover, some participants mentioned that foreigners' social isolation in Japanese communities is also due to the lack of their Japanese language ability. For example, Megumi considers "*kotoba no kabe* [a language barrier]" is one of the core factors in immigration/foreign worker issues in Japan.



**Megumi (F):** I saw it on the news, but teachers at public schools, they are called ALT<sup>5</sup>, right? Some ALTs cannot get along with people in their community because they cannot speak Japanese. You know, there are some rules in every community, like how to take out your garbage. But they cannot follow the rules, well, it's not that they cannot follow, but they cannot understand, because they don't understand the Japanese language. Since you cannot communicate with them, you know, others would think they don't observe the rules. Neighbors would think "what's with those foreigners" and complain about them. ALTs belong to the Ministry of Education, so complaints also go to the Ministry of Education. So, I heard on the news that they deal with this issue by prioritizing ALTs who can speak Japanese and extending their stay in Japan.

**Takeru (M):** I think the problem is communication. If we can [communicate], the laws don't have to be that strict.

**Megumi:** I agree. I'd like them to try to conform to us.

Megumi is a 23 year old senior student and Takeru is her friend. They both identified their race and ethnicity as Japanese. Their conversation constructed the problems some ALTs may face in Japan as if they would be solved if they could speak Japanese, because "the problem is communication." Additionally, in many cases, the language issue is just a part of bigger challenges foreigners in Japan are likely to face. Personally, I have had some opportunities to talk with ALTs who came from the U.S., U.K., and Australia, and what they usually complained about was not the language issue but a sense of otherness that stalked them whenever they go. Some of the ALTs I know are not very fluent in Japanese and others are pretty fluent. However, all of them mentioned to me that they will never be able to become in-group members of Japanese society however long they stay in Japan. They often get stared at, Japanese people avoid contact with them, they said that some Japanese even look scared when they approach, or strangers talk to them just to practice their English. Many foreigners think they cannot be fully accepted in the Japanese community because they are foreigners and they "look" foreign, not because they do not speak perfect Japanese.

**Non-white foreigners who do not speak Japanese are scary.** The second storyline that this interpretative repertoire offered to participants is similar to the interpretative repertoire which revolves around the concept that foreigners are “scary.” However, this storyline demonstrated the pervasiveness of Japanese essentialist views on language, nation, and race (Kawai, 2007), and how mono-lingual and mono-racial nation myths are closely intertwined. Within this repertoire as well, foreigners were positioned as a source of fear. One difference between this storyline and the other is that “foreignness” was defined by the language they speak in this framework. The following excerpt is from a conversation between Yuri and Yusuke.

**Yuri(F):** You know, there are relatively many foreign workers in the neighborhood, like in the Chūō Park.

**Yusuke (M):** Yeah, they are there at night.

**Yuri:** When many of them get together at night and talk loudly in the language we don’t know, don’t you feel scared? I feel scared. I do.

**Yusuke:** Ok, I understand.

**Yuri:** And they are all men, those people who are talking like that. So, I feel scared.

Since race and language are closely related, if not identical, in these essentialist views (Kawai, 2007), people who speak in non-Japanese languages were positioned as racial Others, a group of people to be scared of. In addition, this example shows how language, race, and gender intersected in the positioning. In the nation where there is a clear demarcation between Japanese-speaking and non-Japanese-speaking races, foreign language speakers were positioned as threats to racial purity in Japan. Therefore, the fear of foreigners was equalized with the fear of foreign language speakers, especially males.

Another participant also expressed his fear of people who speak foreign-languages. Keisuke, 20 year old college student who identified his race as Japanese, was talking with his classmate, Kengo, about his experience when he visited

the U.S. He was on the bus and he was in between two Middle Eastern men who were talking in their language. He said, “I was clutching my bag. I know this is prejudice or a stereotype...I don’t understand their conversation and that made me feel like they are plotting something bad.”

**Keisuke (M):** I just feel scared in that kind of situation. If they are Japanese, I don’t think I would feel scared.

**Kengo (M):** I kind of understand, if you are in the U.S. or abroad.

**Keisuke:** Whether it is abroad or in Japan, if I get sandwiched between two Japanese, it’s not a big deal, but even in Japan, if foreigners stay on both sides of me and speak in a foreign language, I would feel tense.

**Kengo:** What if Americans who are fluent in Japanese are at the both sides of you?

**Keisuke:** Well, then, I can understand their conversation, you know.

Keisuke said his anxiety came from the language foreigners speak, because he said he would not feel awkward if two Americans, most likely White Americans, were talking in Japanese. However, it does not mean that he was scared of the language per se; the source of fear was people who speak foreign languages. I also believe that Japanese would not feel tense even if two Japanese are talking in a different language, though it would be a rare case. Due to the false assumption of a mono-racial nation and monolingualism in Japan, non-Japanese languages are racialized and so are non-Japanese speakers. More specifically, comparing Middle Easterners, Japanese, and “Americans who are fluent in Japanese” in their conversation demonstrated a racial hierarchy in a racialized social system. Among these racial groups, Japanese-speaking Japanese were positioned on the top; Japanese-speaking Whites in the middle, and Middle Easterners who do not speak Japanese or English at the bottom.

As can be seen in the examples in this section, the discursive framework of the Japanese language and monolingualism played a significant role to reproduce and

maintain the myth of a mono-racial nation. By standardizing and naturalizing the status of the Japanese language in society, Japanese people who speak the Japanese language remained at privileged positions, while foreigners who lack Japanese language ability were constructed to be harmful outsiders. Japanese language ability was thus a convenient tool to demarcate Japanese and non-Japanese and to justify racial preferential practices such as race-based employment.

Thus far, I have listed examples of interpersonal discourses in which Japanese participants employed interpretative repertoires that reproduced and reinforced dominant racist ideologies in Japanese society. In these discourses, foreigners were often negatively positioned as criminals, economic threats or unqualified, diverting the attention from race to non-racial factors. In so doing, Japanese xenophobic and exclusive practices against foreign workers were discursively legitimated. Although the number is small, some participants, in contrast, drew on discourse that challenged these dominant racist ideologies.

### **Japanese Media Overemphasize Foreigners' Criminality**

Across Japanese participants' interpersonal discourse on immigration/foreign workers, a negative construction of foreigners as criminals was prominent. As can be seen in the excerpts listed in this chapter, foreign workers were likely to be assumed to be potential criminals. In some cases, however, participants recognized and questioned this tendency of negative positioning of foreigners in society, and they attributed a criminalization of foreign workers to media representations. The following two examples challenged assumed criminality of foreigners. The first one is a conversation between

Erika and Reiko, 20 year old best friends who identified their race as yellow/Mongoloid and ethnicity as Japanese.

**Erika (F):** Crime cases committed by foreigners are highlighted more than Japanese cases

**Reiko (F):** Yeah.

**Erika:** If one person, for example, if one Chinese commits a crime in Japan, then the images of entire Chinese people are created. People think that Chinese people are from the country of criminals, so if Chinese people come for job interviews after that kinds of incidents, nobody would hire them.

**Reiko:** I see. That's gonna be an issue.

**Erika:** Ethnocentrism.

**Reiko:** Ah, we just learned that.

**Erika:** I think this is Ethnocentrism. I guess we become like, we prefer Japanese people.

As I previously mentioned, Chinese have been the very target of racial Othering in Japan, and Japanese participants rather explicitly positioned Chinese negatively in their conversation. Reiko and Erika, however, considered that negative images people have about Chinese are created in media, and media representations support Japanese ethnocentric racial preferences. There was actually a highly showcased homicide case committed by Chinese exchange students in Fukuoka, a few years prior to data being collected. Because of the hostile media coverage, a number of Chinese workers were laid off or forced to move out from their apartments without any recourse. Reiko and Erika's discourse challenged dominant racist discourse that Chinese people are intrinsically criminals.

Similarly, Chisato and Kimi, 21 year old classmates who identified their race as yellow and ethnicity as Japanese, also problematized the role Japanese media play in constructing the images of foreigners as criminals.

**Chisato (F):** Well, foreign workers are only 2% or 1.5 % of Japanese population. I wonder how many of them commit a crime.

**Kimi (F):** I read that it's rather small. It was in the newspaper, and it was much smaller than I thought.

**Chisato:** It's because their cases are emphasized. I think the total number is not that many.

**Kimi:** It is how mass media cover their cases.

**Chisato:** Don't you think so? So only that part is focused on, or it stands out, because we only see that part. Of course there are more crimes committed by Japanese.

Instead of reproducing dominant discourses that position foreigners as criminals, they questioned why criminal cases committed by foreigners were more featured compared to Japanese ones.

In addition to questioning negative positioning of foreigners in Japan, a couple of participants also pointed out that race actually matters in terms of immigration/foreign worker issues in Japan. The following excerpt is from a conversation between Misato and Mana, 21 year old college classmates who identified their race as yellow and ethnicity as Japanese.

**Misato (F):** You know, because of ethnicity or because of racial difference, we see them differently, as outsiders and insiders. You know, when a foreigner commits a crime, it is highly showcased. There are many Japanese cases but only because it was committed by a foreigner, it is highlighted.

**Mana (F):** I saw in a documentary that a person from China, working at a printing company as a foreign worker, was bullied by his boss. When I saw that, I thought it's just because his race is different, you know, he speaks a different language, and when he couldn't do what he was expected to do, it's wrong to attack him, focusing on his race. Since racial differences are, because you automatically notice the differences, so they can be the core [of immigration issues].

Though it is widely believed by Japanese people that racism cannot take place in Japan because it is a mono-racial nation, Misato and Mana seemed to recognize that race demarcates "outsiders and insiders," and "it can be the core" of immigration issues. Kenji

is another one of a few participants who pointed out the existence of race and racism in Japan. He is a 21 year old student who identified his race and ethnicity as Japanese.

**Kenji (M):** It's about my experience I had when I visited the U.S. but, you know, whites always wear a suit, and blacks and Hispanics, like Mexicans, are always, for example, working in a kitchen at a restaurant, or you know, they do background work. Namely, whites are on the top. That kinds of racial issues may play a role here. Well, in that sense, Japan has few immigrants, but maybe because there are small numbers, you know, Japanese people may have a sense of superiority over minority groups, that kind of thing. I think that is also an issue.

Referring to the racial stratification in the U.S., Kenji stated that a similar system is also in operation in Japanese society. It was not very common to see such a discourse that challenged the unnamed privileged position Japanese have in society.

Given the fact that all of these participants listed in this section have taken or were taking an intercultural communication class, in which they learn about racism, or a mass media class where they are taught the power of media, I cannot deny the possibility that they were just paying "lip-service" to these ideas. However, if these participants received discursive tools and resources that can challenge dominant racist discourses in their classroom, it can demonstrate that classroom discourses in these classes have a potential as a discursive space for social change.

### **Summary**

This chapter discussed what kinds of interpretative repertoires emerged in Japanese interpersonal discourses on immigration/admission of foreign workers, and what kinds of discursive resources were offered, how participants used them, how they positioned themselves and "Others," and what these discursive practices could potentially achieve in both *Yamato* supremacist and global white supremacist racialized social systems. Though the general pattern of negative/positive positioning of Others and self

and discursive focus on non-racial factors were common both in the U.S. and Japanese discourses, interpretative repertoires participants drew on varied, due to the differences in socio-political and historical backgrounds between the two nations.

The most prominent interpretative repertoire in Japanese participants' discourse revolved around the concept of "*sakoku* and *shimaguni* [national isolation and island nation]." Referring to the history of closed borders and geographic isolation of the nation, participants could justify various racist practices, such as the Japanese government's reluctance to accept foreigners, people's unwillingness to interact with foreigners, rejection of non-Japanese cultures, and commodifying and exoticizing foreigners' cultures.

Within the second interpretive repertoire, foreigners were negatively positioned in a more blatant way compared to negative positioning of Others in U.S. contexts. With blatant descriptions that foreigners are potential criminals, they were positioned as a source of fear. Positioning of different racial groups within this framework also revealed racial stratification in Japan: Japanese are on the top, while whites are better than non-Japanese Asians, and Middle Easterners and blacks are on the bottom.

The third interpretative repertoire which constructed foreign workers as threatening our national economy and labor market, was similar to the positioning of immigrants as an economic burden in U.S. contexts. Within this interpretative repertoire, participants were enabled to express their restrictionist attitudes explicitly by camouflaging racist discourse due to economic or humanitarian concerns. Racial stratification was also disguised as class differences in this repertoire so that Japanese myth of racial purity and racial preference remained unquestioned.



The last interpretative repertoire offered participants discursive resources to erase the concept of race from unequal treatment toward foreign workers. Within this discursive framework, Japanese were enabled to attribute social and economic problems that foreign workers face in Japanese communities to the (assumed) lack of Japanese language ability. Discourse in this repertoire also demonstrated that race and language were closely intertwined in construction of “us” and “them.” Foreign languages were racialized and othered, and so were foreign language speakers. This repertoire thus maintained and reproduced Japanese ideologies of Japan as a mono-racial and monolingual nation.

In general, analysis of Japanese participants’ interpersonal discourses revealed that they were both restrained by and reconstruct Japanese xenophobic institutional policies that are embedded in a racial purity ideology. Foreigners were likely to be positioned negatively in contrast to “normal” and “standard” Japanese, and the systems of racial inequality in “mono-racial nation” were kept invisible. However, a few participants’ comments showed that they also used some discursive resources that questioned the Japanese racial status quo, though the number was very small.

#### **Footnotes**

<sup>1</sup>I use the term “yellow” or “yellow race” here because participants (and Japanese in general) used the term “yellow race (*Oshoku jinshu*)” more often than “Mongoloid.”

<sup>2</sup>“*Gaijin*” is a derogative term that refers to foreigners, literally meaning “outsiders.”

<sup>3</sup>When Commodore Perry came to Japan in 1853 to demand Japan to open its

borders, he brought four black ships. Japan called the fleet “*Kurofune* (the Black Ship).”

<sup>4</sup> Fukuoka is the city where this study is conducted. It is located in the southwestern part of Japan.

<sup>5</sup> Assistant Language Teachers are native English speakers primarily hired by the Ministry of Education.

## **Chapter VI: Conclusions and Implications**

During the last several years while I have been working on this study, sociopolitical dynamics in the U.S. and Japan have been changing. The Bush administration ended and Barack Obama became the president of the United States in 2008. Japan has failed to maintain a long-term and stable administration in the last several years. The present Kan administration is already the 5<sup>th</sup> one since 2005. Along with the shifts of power and the trend of globalization, both countries have proposed and/or implemented new immigration laws, policies and acts to deal with the dilemmas between the needs for a labor force and national security. The more immigrants and foreign workers that flow into the nation, the more exclusive and more restrictive immigration policies in both countries seem to become.

One of the recent and most heated debates in the U.S. during the time of this study was the immigration bill signed in Arizona in spring 2010. The bill required all immigrants to carry their authorization documents all the time (which was already enforced in current Japanese immigration law), and it allowed police officers to investigate immigrants' status whenever they seemed "suspicious." This bill was blocked by a federal judge as unconstitutional right before it was enforced, but several states are still considering constituting similar immigration bills (Immigration and Emigration, 2011, February 11). The Secure Community Act implemented by the Obama administration as a major means to deal with illegal immigration, is another example of exclusive immigration policy. It is reported that approximately 58, 300 immigrants were deported with criminal charges since 2008 (Preston & Semple, 2011).

Though it did not attract as much attention as these immigration policies in the U.S., the Japanese government also launched several immigration acts and laws that restrict non-Japanese workers' or residents' access to public benefits or certain immigration status. One example is a newly introduced immigration policy that encourages *Nikkeijin* workers to return to their homelands in exchange for 300,000 yen (approximately 3,000 dollars). According to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Wealth of Japan (March, 2009), this policy was implemented for the sake of *Nikkeijin* workers because they think it is a more realistic option for them to return to their home countries and find jobs there than seek a position in Japan<sup>1</sup>. This is explained as being due to their "lack of Japanese language fluency" and their "unfamiliarity with Japanese employment practices" under the unstable economic circumstances that Japan is facing (Ministry of Health, Labour and Wealth, March 2009). By calling this a "supporting project" for *Nikkeijin* workers, however, this policy does not allow them to re-enter Japan as *Nikkeijin*, which is a less restricted immigration status compared to other ones. This policy, therefore, is designed to lock out *Nikkeijin* workers who are not "Japanese-enough."

These exclusive policies, of course, can be attributed to the severe financial crisis that both countries have gone through during the recession. However, these latest immigration movements are also as racialized as any immigration policies and laws have been throughout each country's history. Racialization of both societies through immigration issues has been demonstrated both in institutional discourse on immigration and interpersonal, everyday discourses. The intersection of these two discourses is a site where systems of racial dominance sustain themselves in a hegemonic fashion.

In order to synthesize the results of this study, in this chapter I summarize the

analysis of participants' discourses illustrated in chapters four and five, and then elaborate on my interpretations. I also discuss the limitations and implications for future research.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to investigate discursive processes in which systems of racial inequality produced at the macro-institutional level discourse are recreated and/or challenged in interpersonal dyadic discourses regarding immigration and foreign worker issues in the U.S. and Japan. The link between institutional discourse and descriptions of lived communicative experiences has been called for in the intercultural communication field from those advocating for the utility of a paradigmatic trend or turn toward critical perspectives (Flores, Orbe & Allen, 2008; Halualani et al., 2006; Starosta & Chen, 2005). In order to establish the link between institutional and interpersonal discourses, I analyzed how racial ideologies were reproduced and/or challenged through participants' use of various interpretative repertoires and positioning of self and "Others" in their dyadic conversations in their respective countries.

The participants in this study were 14 pairs of self-identified white Americans in the U.S. and 17 pairs of Japanese residing in Japan. I asked each pair to record their 30-60 minute long private conversations at the site of their choice following the discussion guide I provided. The discussion guides contained three different points of view regarding immigration/admission of foreign workers in each country. Roughly these views were: admitting immigrants/foreign laborers is positive; it has both good and bad sides; and it should be controlled or restricted (See Appendix A for U.S. American version and Appendix B for Japanese version that I translated into English).

The set of procedures to solicit dyadic conversations worked well in capturing

naturally occurring texts that are considered a preferred source of data for discourse analysis (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Due to the social constructivist theoretical foundation in discourse analysis, research interviews are often categorized as “researcher-instigated discourse” (Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p.72). This study demonstrated advantages of asking participants to have private conversations instead of face to face interviews in order to investigate their “natural” discursive practices. From the content of the conversations it was evident that individuals expressed a variety of views, conversed in an informal manner, and asked questions of one another. Thus the quality of situated, unfolding conversations, which was desired, was obtained. The frequency of critical comments also demonstrated the lack of “demand characteristics,” or following norms to perform in socially appropriate or instructor approved ways. Consequently the utility of using this kind of course activity for both research and educational purposes was demonstrated as well.

The analysis and interpretation of participants’ discourses were guided by the methodology called discursive psychology (Wetherell & Potter 1992). This methodology is based assumptions that evidence both critical and interpretive paradigms. As I summarized in chapter three, Wetherell and Potter’s (1992; Potter & Wetherell, 1987) discursive psychology is designed to investigate the way in which individuals use everyday discourses as resources that are available to them by social/ideological forces to construct their social realities and identities. This methodology, thus, was well suited to the aim of this study, which was to interrogate the relationship between institutional discourses and every day interpersonal discourses.

The two primary analytical frameworks used in this study were interpretative

repertoires and positioning. An interpretative repertoire consists of images and languages that are made available by social structures for individuals to use to negotiate their social realities and identities. Wetherell and Potter (1992; Potter & Wetherell, 1987) insist that hegemonic social systems and dominant ideologies are maintained by the use of certain interpretative repertoires. Therefore, investigating what kinds of interpretative repertoires are employed and how individuals position themselves and “Others” enabled me to uncover what kinds of ideologies are prominent and what kinds of roles their discursive practices play in sustaining systems of racial inequality and dominance in society.

### **Summary of U.S. Discourses**

In chapter four, I delineated my analysis of U.S. participants’ discourses on immigration. In their discourses, four major interpretative repertoires emerged. The major themes in these four repertoires were: 1) the U.S. as a nation of immigrants, 2) the American dream, 3) being American means speaking English, and 4) the context of racial policies. The repertoire that was most frequently referred to by U.S. participants revolved around the notion that the U.S. is a country built upon immigration and immigrants. As multiple excerpts in chapter four demonstrated, many participants showed their pride in the long histories of immigration and diversity in the nation, and expressed benefits of being a big “melting pot.” However, such celebratory discourse enabled participants to demarcate “our” type of preferred immigrants and “Others” who were dis-preferred. In this repertoire, “we” were constructed as a unified group of immigrants (or descendants) who assimilated into “the American culture” and lost “our past cultures” to contribute to the unity of the nation. On the other hand, recent immigrants, i.e. “Other” immigrants, were negatively positioned as outsiders who resist assimilation, break the unity of the

melting pot, who are illegal, criminals, non-taxpayers, and non-contributors. Only in aspects of their consumable cultural products, such as their food and languages, were recent immigrants positioned positively.

The second most frequent interpretative repertoire that emerged in U.S. participants' discourses was based on the idea of "American Dream." Strongly embedded in meritocracy ideology, this repertoire allowed participants to justify their criticism against immigrants' economic standing and social status in the U.S. The core concept of American Dream is equal opportunities for economic success. Drawing on this repertoire, participants positioned immigrants, especially those from Mexico, as groups of people who do not deserve the American Dream because "they were not working hard enough." This repertoire allowed participants to express that immigrants' economic standing is caused by the lack of their effort. Participants also referred to exceptional immigrants who succeeded financially, and immigrants in the past, to make their point, "they achieved their American Dream; why can't you?" Such a "blaming the victims" move became justified in this repertoire.

The third interpretative repertoire that U.S. participants employed frequently equalized being "Americans" and speaking English. This repertoire is strongly related to assimilation ideology. As can be seen under other interpretative repertoires employed by U.S. participants, recent immigrants, especially those from Mexico and Latin American countries, were categorized as groups who refused to assimilate into "our" cultures. Immigrants' native language, i.e. Spanish, was also constructed as a symbol of diversion from the "unity" of the nation. Participants frequently argued that immigrants should learn to speak the English language if they want to stay in the U.S. and expressed their



frustration toward Spanish speaking groups specifically. In this interpretative repertoire, Spanish speaking immigrants were negatively positioned as non-accommodators who refuse to speak “our” language, and “we” are the ones who accommodate to “their” language.

This repertoire, thus, allowed participants to decide who can be or cannot be “real Americans.” This feeling of entitlement and construction of “our” language as the standard in participants’ discourses demonstrated and reconstructed white U.S. Americans’ racial standing as “normal” and “desirable.” The language negotiation issue in these participants’ interview discourse seemed to reinforce power relations and established a status hierarchy between English speaking-white U.S. Americans and Spanish speaking Mexican immigrants in the U.S.

The previous three interpretative repertoires acted to sustain and recreate dominant racial ideologies such as color-blind ideology, meritocracy, and assimilation ideology. The fourth interpretative repertoire, on the other hand, allowed participants to challenge these dominant discourses. Instead of erasing the concept of race from their discourse on immigration, some participants focused on the contexts of racist policies and practices. Some also confronted the normativity of “whites” in the U.S. and a widespread tendency of negative positioning of immigrants by referring to racist practices in U.S. immigration histories and practices. These discourses sometimes were included in a combination of ambivalent views, however, illustrating the value of uncovering the complexities of discursive repertoires in interpretations.

### **Summary of Japanese Discourses**

Regarding Japanese participants’ discourses on immigration/foreign workers,

five interpretative repertoires emerged. The key concepts in each repertoire were: 1) historical and geographical insularity of the nation, 2) scary foreigners, 3) foreigners as economic threats, 4) Japan as a monolingual nation, and 5) Japanese media's overemphasis on foreigners' criminality.

The one that participants most frequently drew on revolved around the concept of Japanese historical insularity, "*Sakoku*," and geographical insularity, "*Shimaguni*." Under this interpretative repertoire, there emerged mainly three storylines. The first storyline allowed Japanese participants to leave small numbers of foreign residents in the country unquestioned. By referring to the histories of "*Sakoku*" and geographical isolation from neighboring countries, participants could express that it is natural that there are not many foreigners residing in the nation. The second storyline allowed participants to express their reluctance to accept foreigners as normal. "We" were positioned as restrictionists and yet justified as "normal," while "they" were positioned as "different" and "unacceptable." A clear demarcation between "our culture" and "their culture," showing that the cultures are not commensurate, was created, and this demarcation legitimated Japanese people's unwillingness to accept large numbers of foreigners. As well as in the case of U.S. participants' discourses, foreign workers were positioned as acceptable only when they could offer something "we" could learn or if they acted as purveyors of Japanese traditional cultures. This is the fourth story line. Overall, the interpretative repertoire about "*Sakoku*" and "*Shimaguni*" allowed participants to justify their ignorance toward foreigners in the nation and legitimate generally restrictive attitudes and practices toward immigrants and foreign workers.

I named the second interpretative repertoire "Foreigners are Scary" based on

what participants frequently stated in their actual conversations. In this repertoire, foreigners in general, but especially those of color, were the target of more blatant negative positioning. Illegality and criminality were focused upon and foreigners were often described as a source of fear. Racial stratification in negative positioning of foreigners was also observed: some participants mentioned that they were not afraid of white people but Asians and blacks were “scary” for them because “they are criminals.” Among these rather crude racial remarks made by Japanese participants, what caught my attention were phrases such as “I know I’m prejudiced but...” and “I know I’m biased but....” This discursive strategy of admitting one’s prejudicial and biased attitude toward different racial/ethnic groups presented a striking contrast to the one often pointed out in U.S. racial discourses, which includes the use of qualifiers that showcase individual openness and lack of prejudice such as “I’m not prejudiced, but...” and “I’m not racist, but....” These qualifiers are often followed by racist statements (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). My analysis, however, demonstrated that preceding explicitly negative views with descriptions acknowledging personal bias or prejudice employed by Japanese participants also served as a discursive buffer in similar ways as did the opposite kind of comment, a denial of bias, in the U.S.

While foreign workers’ criminality and illegality were focused upon in the previous repertoire, they were also positioned as threats to the national economy and labor market. Foreigners, most likely people of color, were described as fearful because they might take “our” jobs away; foreigners from advanced countries could be acceptable but not those from developing countries; and speakers said that foreigners should not stay in Japan too long because they need to develop their own countries. By relying on these

storylines, racial aspects of immigration/ foreign worker issues were erased and colonial/patronizing discourses were naturalized.

The fourth interpretative repertoire was based on the pervasive notion that Japan is a monoethnic/monolingual nation. While English was constructed as a symbol of unity in U.S. discourses, the Japanese language was created as a symbol of “homogeneity.” Non-Japanese speakers were, therefore, considered as threats to Japanese ethnic/linguistic homogeneity. By expressing that foreigners should be required to speak the Japanese language to stay in Japan, Japanese xenophobic practices, both institutional and personal, toward foreigners could be camouflaged as a problem of a language barrier.

Though the number was small, some participants made some references to Japanese media that overemphasized criminal cases committed by foreigners. As previous interpretative repertoires showed, interpersonal discourses of Japanese participants were likely to position foreign workers, especially non-white ones, as potential criminals. Though most of them drew on dominant Japanese discourses in other aspects, some participants of this study pointed out how mass media perpetuates the image of criminal foreigners. A couple of participants also recognized the role race plays in a supposedly “race-less” nation.

Thus far, I summarized what kinds of interpretative repertoires both U.S. and Japanese participants of this study drew on and how they positioned themselves and immigrants/ foreign workers therein. In the next section, I discuss my interpretations of these findings to answer what and how these discourses achieve, for whose interests, in systems of inequality and dominance, in each respective country. In addition, I present scholarly contributions of this particular study regarding critical analysis of interpersonal

dyadic discourses and intercultural communication.

### **Interpretations of the Findings**

As described in earlier chapters, there is a plethora of studies on race relations and immigration in the U.S. which have been conducted from various perspectives in different fields of study. In terms of racial discourses, scholars within a critical paradigm have mainly focused on discourses related to macro structures, such as government, politics, media, and educational institutions. With increasing attention to critical perspectives in the study of culture and communication, scholars in intercultural communication could contribute to the interdisciplinary discourse by building links between macro-institutional discourses on race and discourses from everyday interactions at interpersonal levels (Halualani, Fassett, Morrison & Dodge, 2006). The interface of these two levels is the very space where power relations become evident in positioning of self and other, and hegemony and dominance are produced, reproduced and/or challenged. Interrogating practices in the discursive space of two nations with different historical and sociopolitical backgrounds, nations which act to limit the numbers and rights of immigrants and foreign workers, contributes to the scholarly investigation of the importance of the linkage.

### **Hegemonic Ideologies and Dialectical Relationships**

Exploring the interplay between interpersonal discourses and macro-institutional discourses on immigration/foreign workers in the U.S. and Japan, this study demonstrated the value of approaching hegemonic ideologies and systems of inequality as products of dialectical tensions in what discourse analysts call the, “dialectical relationship” of discourses (Fairclough, 2003, Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). As past research on

immigration histories, policies, media coverage, and race relations has been showcasing, as described in previous chapters, hegemonic ideologies that fit specific political/ economic/ social conditions and dominant group members' interests often have been born out of dialectical tensions. For example, policies, acts, operations, programs of immigration and foreign workers in the U.S. embody dialectical tensions between the desire to maintain the face of an "open and welcoming nation" and the need for a labor force on the one hand, and restrictionist and nativistic concerns on the other. To maintain racially dominant group members' levels of privilege and status positioning, ideologies such as color-blind ideology and meritocracy have been deployed (Bonilla-Silva, 2001, 2006).

One of the major findings of this study is that the analyses of participants' discourses on immigration/ foreign workers demonstrated the existence and significance of the dialectical relationship (Fairclough, 2003, Fairclough & Wodak, 1997) between these ideologies and everyday interpersonal discourses. Namely, these ideologies at the macro-institutional level constrain individuals' everyday discourses by making certain discursive resources available to use, while everyday interpersonal discourses reproduce or challenge these ideologies. Therefore, sustaining racialized social systems of inequality and domination relies partly on this interrelated nature of macro and micro discourses.

Also, by juxtaposing discourses of similar themes in two nations with differing historical and sociopolitical backgrounds, this study indicates the importance of taking these contexts into account when studying immigration discourses that are racialized. The dialectical relationship between structural and interpersonal discourses emerged both in

U.S. and Japanese participants' discourses. Though general patterns of ideological reproduction were similar between the two nations acting to reinforce the status quo and restrictionist policies in each country, available discursive resources and characteristics of positioning were unique to each society.

### **Reproduction of the U.S. Racialized Social System**

Analyses of U.S. participants' discourses on immigration reified the dialectical relationship between dominant racial ideologies, and interpretative repertoires and positioning therein. Though they were not mutually exclusive, there emerged three major ideologies that maintain racial status quo that privileges the white racial group over others. These ideologies are color-blind ideology, meritocracy, and assimilation ideology.

Color-blind ideology was implicated in the first interpretative repertoire including such phrases as, "we are all immigrants," "we are a nation of immigrants," "the U.S. is a melting pot." Color-blind ideology is then maintained by individuals' use of this repertoire, because the repertoire confirms a false notion of equality in society and erases racial aspects in the issue of immigration. As various researchers insist, discursive erasure of race achieves to protect whites' normativity which leads to their dominance in society (e.g. Dixon et al, 1994; Durreheim & Wilbraham, 1994; Every & Augoustinos, 2007). Whites' dominance can remain unquestioned in this repertoire because this repertoire endorses hegemonic nature of racialized social systems. It is hegemonic because color-blind ideology enables whites to remain on the top of the racial ladder in the U.S. through consent, not coercion (Gramsci, 1971). In other words, since color-blind ideology is so pervasive through multiculturalist and pluralist discourse praised at the institutional level, non-white group members also buy into the logic. They are convinced to agree on

erasing race from their discourses (Bonilla-Siva, 2006) and erase their racial positioning. Although immigrants were positioned as racialized Others who jeopardize the unity of the nation, as harmful, or were commodified through their food and languages, discursive resources made available for dominant members to use worked as discursive buffers to both cover up discrimination (the U.S. is an immigrant nation and therefore color-blind) as well as excuse discrimination (the U.S. must not tolerate those who enter illegally and do not contribute to the nation). These discursive resources thereby enable maintenance of the racial status quo in the U.S.

In a similar vein, individual meritocracy works to protect the white group's racial standing and privilege in the U.S. One of prominent discursive resources made available by this ideology was the concept of American Dream. First of all, storylines of American Dream lead participants to focus almost solely on economic aspects of immigration. The focus on economic aspects then erased the concept of race in immigration; and erasure of race and the false assumption of equal power relations and agency across different racial groups automatically make white U.S. Americans invisible and normal. This repertoire also ideologically demarcated "us" and "them" in terms of economic standing and economic success, and there exists a clear color-line in this practice. The American Dream story constructs good immigrants as those who deserve American Dream and bad immigrants as those who do not. Those who are qualified for the American Dream, according to the participants, were mostly white immigrants, such as ancestors or past immigrants from Europe. On the other hand, those who were not qualified are mostly those from Mexico. As such, an ideology of individual meritocracy maintains the color-line in economic standings in the U.S. by allowing individuals to



“blame the victims” with the concept of race erased. That leads to sustaining whites’ privileged position and leaving the position unquestioned and unchallenged. As well as the previous interpretative repertoire, the American Dream repertoire also reveals hegemonic mechanisms of racialized social systems. Since the American Dream is believed to be available and possible for every individual regardless of race or class, it can be a very useful and powerful discursive resource to erase race from immigration discourses. Even though a clear color line emerged in participants’ positioning of immigrants who are deserving and those who are not, this division was justified and legitimated by the assumption of the American Dream as open to all.

The third ideology, assimilation ideology, is another wheel of white supremacist systems in the U.S. As I reviewed in the first chapter, assimilation ideology was implicated in the comprehensive immigration reform plan from the Bush administration. That particular institutional discourse constructed “America” as a highly desired place and learning “American culture” and English as necessary to be accepted in society. Similar discourse was observed among U.S. participants of this study. “We” were positioned as “immigrants who assimilated into American culture and lost our original cultures and languages,” and “they,” mostly immigrants from Mexico, were positioned as “those who refused to do the same.” As described in participants’ discourses, “our” American culture was talked about as if there was only one, it was the highest standard, and it was also constructed as a “better” culture as compared with all others. In such a discursive process, whites’ normativity and invisibility in the U.S. remained unchallenged: “American culture” was white culture, and it was constructed as the norm in the U.S. Combined with color-blind ideology and meritocracy, assimilation ideology

provided individuals with discursive tools that allowed them to racially divide superior “us” from inferior “them” without appearing to be racist.

Such discursive relationships between positive/superior “us” and negative/inferior “them” in U.S. participants’ discourses not only reify aforementioned racial ideologies, but they also reproduce and solidify the dominant status of whites in the U.S. and maintain the racial status quo. U.S. participants’ discourses demonstrated that their discursive positioning of immigrant Others simultaneously constructed white U.S. Americans (both European American ancestors and current citizens). The reproduction and maintenance of white supremacist social systems in the U.S. was mainly achieved through constructing whites as invisible, standard, and entitled to the dominant voice that decided who can be “Americans,” who are “good” immigrants, what immigrants should do, and what language they should speak.

Invisibility of whites and their privileged positions also emerged in U.S. participants’ racial/ethnic identifications. Although most participants identified their race as White or Caucasian and some of them listed multiple ethnic identities on the demographic survey (see Table 1.), they rarely claimed their racial/ethnic identities in their conversations. They usually referred themselves as “we,” “us,” “our country/nation,” and/or “American” when discussing immigration issues. This demonstrates that they are in relatively privileged positions where they do not have to claim their identities. In other words, “Americans” were equalized with being white, and they were constructed as “normal” and “standard.” Such a discursive construction of whites in U.S. participants’ discourses was enabled by and reproduced color-blind ideology.

The white supremacist systems in the U.S. thus were maintained though the

dialectical relationship between institutional discourses and everyday interpersonal discourses. Racial ideologies emerged in macro-institutional discourses and these constrained social actors' discourses on immigration by providing particular discursive resources. The resources included concepts and phrases that facilitated fixation of the false assumptions of equality and color-blindness. They also offered a foundation and justification for a general tendency of positive self positioning and negative Other positioning. With these discursive tools, dominant racial group members' dyadic discourses recreated dominant racial ideologies. Reconstruction of dominant racial ideologies, then, acts to sustain invisible privilege that is intrinsic to whites' standing in society, and that leads white oriented systems of inequality to be reified. Similar discursive mechanisms of a racialized social system also were observed in the interplay of Japanese institutional and interpersonal discourses.

### **Reproduction of the Japanese Racialized Social System**

In chapter two, I posited the transitivity of white supremacist racialized social systems in Japanese society, and I named the system *Yamato* supremacist racialized social system. I also proposed that both global white supremacist systems and *Yamato* supremacist racialized social systems operate together in Japanese society. I believe the results of this study support my arguments. In this section, first I discuss the relationship between primordial construction of "Japanese-ness" and racial stratification of different racial groups in Japanese discourse on immigration/foreign workers. Then I talk about what kind of role the racial stratification plays as a part of mechanisms of *Yamato* and white supremacist racialized social systems that permeate Japanese privilege and dominance in Japan.

In exploring how a *Yamato* supremacist system is reproduced in Japanese participants' discourses, I noticed that a primordial definition and construction of "Japaneseness" plays a key role in maintaining the racial status quo in Japanese society. Primordialism is a paradigm to define ethnicity. According to Geertz (1963), primordialism holds the notion that an ethnic group in the present era can be defined with a shared historic lineage to the past, and their collective belonging is based on "naturally" given factors, including blood, race, language, and region. Such a construction of "Japanese-ness" was apparent in Japanese participants' self positioning in their discourses on immigration/ foreign worker issues in Japan.

As various scholars contend, national, ethnic, and racial identities are conflated in Japanese identity (e.g. Dikotter, 1997; Kinefuchi, 2009; Lie, 2003; Weiner, 1997). The demographic data of this study illustrated the conflation. Out of 34 participants, 15 of them answered their race is Yellow (or Mongoloid), while another 15 participants answered that their race is Japanese. Only two of them identified their race as Asian. Those who identified their race as Japanese, on the other hand, either identified their ethnicity as Japanese also or answered "I don't know." Therefore, Japanese participants of this study identified themselves racially through a mixture of nationality, ethnicity and race. Among these three categories, I found Japanese as an ethnic identity, through references to genetic ancestry, was significant in participants' discourse, as other scholars of Japanese identity argue (Kinefuchi, 2009; Weiner, 1997). I believe the emphasis on ethnicity is a means of racialization of supposedly "race-less" Japan.

In chapter two, I delineated how the purposeful use of "*minzoku* (ethnicity)" instead of "*jinshu* (race)" when defining Japanese as "*Yamato minzoku*" actually

racialized Japanese nation and people in the era of imperialism. By employing an “ethnic” label, Japanese constructed themselves as a different and genetically/physically superior group compared to those in other Asian nations (Dikotter, 1997; Sato, 1997; Weiner, 1997; Young, 1997). Excluding themselves from membership as an Asian racial group was useful to justify and rationalize Japanese colonization of East Asia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although more than a century has passed since then, this study demonstrated that participants’ discursive construction of “Japanese” still relied heavily on an ethnic boundary. As can be seen in participants’ discourses, shared histories of insularity, national borders, and language were prominent markers for their Japanese ethnic identity. This way of identification achieved racial stratification endorsed by *Yamato* supremacist social system and a white supremacist social system.

Compared to U.S. participants’ discourses, rather blatant discursive demarcation of positive “us” and negative “Others” was observed in Japanese interpersonal discourses. While Japanese people were constructed as “normal,” “standard” or a “more preferable choice for employment,” foreigners in Japan were likely to be positioned as scary, dangerous criminals or economic threats to the nation. Strikingly, participants of this study admitted their biased attitudes toward foreigners, stating, “I know I’m prejudiced, but...” I believe it is primordialism of “Japaneseness” that enabled dominant Japanese members to openly position “Others” negatively while admitting their exclusive attitudes. The primordial notion of Japanese-ness plays its ideological role and provides Japanese people with historical storylines of the image of the Japanese nation as insular and a set of secluded islands. As a result, Japanese were likely to admit their own exclusive attitudes and agreed with institutional practices that bar non-Japanese, as if there was no

choice or as if it was the way things are/the way things have always been. Since it is created as “natural” for Japanese to be different from “Others,” social, political, economic, and demographic disparities between Japanese and non-Japanese remain unquestioned and Japanese people’s privileged positions are kept secure. In this way, the *Yamato* supremacist social system can maintain itself.

This is how Japanese were put on the top of the racial hierarchy in Japanese society through the structure of *Yamato* supremacist systems, but as demonstrated in participants’ discourses, non-Japanese “Others” were also racially stratified in Japan. I argue that the racial stratification of non-Japanese “Others” is influenced by global white supremacist systems – whites were at the top of the status hierarchy over non-Japanese groups, “Asians” except Japanese were next, and Middle Easterners and blacks were positioned with lowest status.

The major purpose of *Yamato* supremacist system is to maintain Japanese unearned privileged status in society. As long as there are racial “Others” in society, Japanese-ness can be defined and secured. However, Japanese-ness is not limited to the dichotomy of Japanese and non-Japanese. Construction of “Japanese” or “Japanese-ness” also constructs “American-ness,” which is equalized to “whiteness” in Japanese society (Kinefuchi, 2009).

Whites are generally positioned and perceived positively in Japanese society. They are considered aesthetically and physically superior to Japanese (Darling-Wolf, 2003), and white people are often represented positively in Japanese media as desirable and attractive (Fujimoto, 2002; Hagiwara, 2004; Lie, 2003). As this study demonstrated, Whites and Americans were oftentimes equalized, and this is a common tendency among

Japanese. Therefore, Japanese participants' frequent references, mostly positive ones, to Americans or the U.S., positioned "whites" positively as good "Others" or honored guests in Japan. Such a construction of whiteness was then related to discursive positioning of "Asians" and "blacks."

Discursive construction of "Asians" seemed to be a platform where *Yamato* and White supremacist systems were intertwined, in which speakers negotiated positioning and hierarchy of different racial groups. The *Yamato* supremacist system allows Japanese to separate themselves from "Asians," who are both racial and economic others in a race-less, class-less image of Japan (Fujimoto, 2002; Kinefuchi, 2009). In the current study whites were constructed as Others, but superior to Asians. Also, blacks and Middle Easterners, in this study, were discursively constructed as scary Others who were positioned at the bottom of a racial hierarchy.

Such a racial ladder remains invisible and unchallenged in Japanese society, in similar ways to exclusive and xenophobic immigration policies and laws related to admission of foreign workers in Japan. As reviewed in chapter two, Japanese governmental discourse and its highly exclusive practices, implicate the desire to maintain racial purity in society in order for Japanese to maintain their privilege and normativity. Xenophobic institutional discourses on immigration/foreign workers in Japan were reproduced in Japanese everyday discourses and they were justified and legitimated as "normal" practices in an insular nation.

Reproduction of Japanese institutional discourses in everyday discourses enabled the maintenance of the Japanese racial status quo in a hegemonic way. The primordial notion of "Japanese" erased race from society, and turned xenophobic immigration

policies and practices into “natural” products in Japan. This was achieved by providing discursive resources that emphasize shared histories of insularity, closed borders, and one standard language, all of which constituted “Japanese-ness.” Thus, the primordial construction of “Japanese” legitimated institutional practices that were reinforced by racial purity and xenophobia. It also provided dominant members in Japan with discursive resources that made possible for them to seclude themselves from other races, as well as racially stratifying other racial groups with the concept of race kept invisible. This is how the Japanese racialized social system sustains itself in a hegemonic way through the dialectical relationship between Japanese institutional discourses and everyday discourses. Pervasive construction of primordial Japanese ethnicity can be considered as a type of racism in Japan, which serves the interests of racially dominant Japanese in Japan (For a similar argument about South Africa, see Blommaert & Verschueren, 1996). Positioning of dominant members’ identity, therefore, is a hegemonic process that sustains systemic racism, even in a nation defined as race-less (Kinefuchi, 2009), and it is the interplay between institutional and interpersonal discourses where ideologies, hegemony, and power relations are constructed (Halualani et al. 2006).

### **Limitations**

There are several limitations of this study. The first limitation is a lack of some categories of cultural diversity among participants. Because I recruited participants of this study in college classrooms in the U.S. and in Japan, most participants were university students. Though some of them chose partners who were not college students, participants were not diverse in terms of age, class, and profession. However, since my



goal was to build critical understanding of dyadic discourses rather than generalizing to wider populations, analyzing the comments from 62 respondents in 31 conversations is certainly sufficient data for the critical discourse analysis.

The second limitation was the location of the study. In terms of the U.S. data, location of the study and racial diversity therein might have influenced participants' discourses. The area where I conducted this research is one of the states that has a relatively high percentage of Latino residents and there is attention to immigration issues given proximity to the U.S. –Mexico border. It is important to acknowledge that the U.S. dyadic conversations occurred in this social and political context. Berg's study (2009) on White opinions toward unauthorized immigrants demonstrates that Whites who live in areas with a higher percentage of Latinos tend to favor stricter restrictions against "illegal" immigrants. Most participants of the U.S. portion of the study lived in a city where more than half of population is Latino. Some participants mentioned in their conversations that they knew immigrants who were working in the U.S. illegally. Such proximity and familiarity that participants have with immigrants and immigration issues might have affected how they perceived and constructed immigration in the U.S.

As well as the U.S. data, the selected location might also have had some effect on Japanese discourses. The city in which this study was conducted is one of several big metropolitan areas in Japan. However, compared to other cities, such as Tokyo or Yokohama, the number of foreign residents is much smaller. Therefore, participants in this study may have had less first-hand experiences of interaction with foreigners. In this study, many Japanese participants constructed immigration/foreign worker issues as something unfamiliar and distant; however, that might have been different if I had

collected data in another city where people have more interactions with foreigners.

The third limitation is insufficient examples that showed intersecting aspects of identities other than race, nationality, and socioeconomic class. I consider discursive positioning as involving multiple cultural identity categories, including nationality, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, religion, gender and others. The dyadic discourse revealed positioning of self and others related to intersecting national identity and immigrant/foreign worker status, and explicit as well as implicit references to race. Additionally, socioeconomic class positioning was implicated generally through discussions of types of jobs and status hierarchies based on income from the jobs. However, there were few references that pointed to additional categories of age and generation, and to sex. While the speaker's sex was noted to see if males and females views and repertoires differed; there was no evident difference between the responses of male and female interactants. Since most of the participants identified cultural groups positioned by each society with dominant status, I was not able to examine hybridity of participants' positioning, or contradictions that might have emerged across those positioned as different based on ethnicity or generation.

### **Implications and Directions for Future Research**

Including these limitations, the results of this study suggest several directions for future research. First, more diversity among participants in each country is necessary to further explore if and how different demographic factors including age, socioeconomic class, and education level influence their discourse. It would be preferable to recruit larger number of participants, especially those who are not college students. It may be possible to add additional topics and views as well as add additional probes about

demographic categories such as gender to the three positions on immigration/admission of foreign workers. For example, in the U.S., adding information on the topics of “anchor babies” to spark conversation on gender, or the topic of the Dream Act to spark conversation on age and student status, might prove useful.

Secondly, it would be helpful to collect discourses in different states and regions. In Japan, for instance, individuals who have more chance of interacting with members of different racial groups on a daily basis may participate in discursive reproduction of racialized social systems in different ways from those who are not living in diverse communities. Frequency of contact with different racial groups could be added to a list of demographic questions or as one of the discussion questions.

The result of this study also made me curious about the role played by subordinate racial groups in each country in terms of discursive reproduction of and resistance to racialized social systems. Consider the Japanese “support project” that deports *Nikkeijin* workers; hegemony is maintained because hegemonic discourses sound like serving racially subordinate groups’ interests; while they actually serve dominant members’ interests. To maintain hegemony, consent from subordinates is necessary (Gramsci, 1971). In order to prove scholars’ arguments that racially subjugated group members reproduce discourses of white domination (e.g. Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Woodson, 1990), it is necessary to obtain non-dominant group members’ discourse on the same issue, i.e. immigration/foreign workers. I did not include non-dominant members’ dyadic discourses in this particular study, because it was out of the scope of the study. To extend and make more profound arguments on the hegemonic nature of discursive reproduction of systemic racism through interpretative repertoires and positioning of “self” and

“Others,” I could analyze non-dominant members’ discourses on immigration/ foreign workers in a future study.

Another implication of the current study is the need for successive studies on racialized discourses on immigration/ foreign workers in each respective country. Juxtaposing analyses of U.S. and Japanese immigration discourses revealed that different historical and sociopolitical contexts set a stage for different discursive practices to maintain racialized social systems of domination. Histories of race-relations in the U.S. also illustrate that when racial dynamics change, different racial ideologies are created to provide particular discursive resources to maintain white dominance and privilege (Flores, 2003). Therefore, given the rapidly changing immigration politics and racial dynamics in both nations due to globalization, it is important to track construction and reproduction of systemic racism and changes over time.

With regard to theoretical and methodological implications of the study, the use of discursive psychology in general, and the focus on interpretative repertoires and relative positioning of self and other in particular, offer promise for scholars committed to integrating interpretive and critical approaches to intercultural communication research. The emergence of critical intercultural communication (Halualani et al., 2006) as an area of research of culture and communication also could benefit from more attention to everyday discourses through which group positioning and hierarchies, along with ideologies, are constructed. Finally, the results of the current study demonstrated the value of approaching discourses on immigration as a site through which salient national/racial/ethnic cultural identities are negotiated (Collier, 1998; 2005) in the context of broader discourses of privileged citizen and immigrant (Other) relationships.

The final implication of this study is an educational one. I believe this study can make a contribution to academic discourse in the field of intercultural communication by demonstrating the significance of examining the interplay between institutional discourses and interpersonal everyday discourses as a site of challenging and reconstructing dominant ideologies and racial status quo in the U.S. and in Japan. However, it does not fully achieve what the critical paradigm is aiming for, which is social change. Analyzing people's discourse on immigration per se does not increase awareness of the realities of race-relations in the U.S. and Japan, nor lead to race-conscious practices. What is necessary to contribute to social change is to provide alternative discursive resources that challenge and resist the racial status quo, and I believe intercultural communication education and research can be the means to fulfill this task.

This idea came to my mind when I reviewed Japanese participants' comments. One person referred to the term "ethnocentrism," which is barely known to most Japanese people, and her discussion partner said that they just learned the concept in their intercultural communication class. Various institutions, including educational ones, have constructed dominant racial ideologies and that facilitate the maintenance of racial status quo, which means Japanese invisibility and privilege in Japan. However, I believe educational institutions can be the sites where students are taught to recognize their multiple positions and levels of privilege and marginalization, are taught to recognize the work of various "isms" and storylines, and are provided with or share discursive resources that challenge inequality and domination. Advancing alternative and transformative interpretative repertoires will require that those positioned into positions

of dominance and privilege engage in self-reflexivity about their positioning. This is the first step of what instructors and trainers utilizing critical pedagogy call, “praxis” – the dialogic process in which social agents de/reconstruct invisible social systems of oppression with critical reflection about self-positioning (Freire, 1973, Giroux, 1983). Though critical pedagogy was originally designed to enable subordinate social group members to enact social change (Freire, 1973), I believe it could be expanded to include those positioned into both dominant and subordinate locations as some scholars argue (e.g. Allen, 2004; Allen & Rossatto, 2009). In so doing, dominant members become aware of their positions and unearned privilege, and they can gain a “language of criticism” which is necessary to critically restructure oppressive society and create a “language of possibility” which allows dominant members to participate in social change (Giroux, 1983).

Although the number was small, some participants’ comments exemplified the power of the “language of criticism” (Giroux, 1983). As this study demonstrated, dyadic discourses are as powerful as institutional discourses in maintaining the systems. Everyday interpersonal discourses equipped with transformative interpretative repertoires, then, can be a strong means for social change. This study reminds me that researchers and educators in intercultural communication have opportunities to make their research and classroom into sites to invite and share alternative, resisting discursive repertoires.

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> MHLW(2009, March) states that “under the current social and economic circumstance, it is quite difficult for *Nikkeijin* workers with unstable

employment status, such as those on temporary status, to find another job once they are unemployed because of their lack of Japanese language fluency and their unfamiliarity with Japanese employment practices, as well as their insufficient working experiences in our country” (Translated by the author).

## **Appendix A**

### Instructions for Discussion

Steps to Follow:

1. Please select a friend/ classmate/ family member/ partner, who is older than 18 years old and identifies herself/himself with the same racial group or category that you identify yourself with. She or he needs to be someone with whom you feel comfortable talking about the issue of immigration/foreign workers in the U.S.
2. Meet with your conversation partner in a quiet location where you can audiotape your conversation. The conversation will take approximately 30-60 minutes.
3. Each of you please read and sign the consent form provided.
4. Make sure there is an audiotape inside the tape recorder, you are at the beginning of the blank audiotape, and test the volume and recording performance.
5. Turn on the tape recorder and first say your name so that I can distinguish your voice.
6. Follow the instructions for your conversation provided below.
7. When you finish your conversation, stop recording and fill out the demographic survey.
8. Bring the signed consent form, demographic survey, tape-recorder, and audio tape to your instructor by the assigned date. Remember you will receive credit for this assignment **ONLY** when you turn in the signed consent forms, completed demographic surveys, tape recorder, and audio tape with a completed conversation.

#### **Instructions for Discussion of Topics:**

\* *First, please record your name so that I can distinguish your voice.*

Please read the following statements and then discuss the issue of immigration/foreign workers with your partner. Suggested questions to answer during your conversation are listed below, but you are welcome to add your own questions and comments and talk about whatever you wish.

Please remember that you are not expected to reach agreement or consensus. The idea is for both of you to talk about your views. You may have similar or different opinions about immigration/foreign worker issues.



Appendix A, continued  
U.S. Discussion Questions

Currently, the U.S. is facing one of the biggest waves of immigration since records of immigration were kept in 1820. Currently, the population of foreign-born residents in the U.S. corresponds with 12% of the entire population of the U.S.

- I. Immigrants are harmful to the U.S. They take jobs away from U.S. citizens, and illegal immigrants exploit our welfare, healthcare, and educational systems without paying taxes. Also, when there are high numbers of immigrants, the crime rate often goes up and cities become overpopulated. High numbers of immigrants may threaten our traditional American values because most do not learn to speak English and they do not want to assimilate to the U.S. culture or lifestyle.
- II. Immigrants contribute in many positive ways. The U.S. has a long history of opening its doors to immigrants. They help our economy by taking jobs that many U.S. citizens are unwilling to do, and they provide a much needed labor force in U.S. companies and in the field of agriculture. Many immigrants have knowledge and specialized training that is needed in fields like higher education. Immigrants also help the U.S. participate more effectively in a global economy and add to valued diversity in our country.
- III. Immigrants are both good and bad; it depends on what they contribute to the country. Legal immigrants who learn English and make efforts to adjust to U.S. culture and lifestyle might be able to contribute in a positive way. Our economy can't support too many immigrants though, so it would be best for the country if only the most qualified, in small numbers, were allowed into the country.

Discussion Questions

1. Which statement, if any, do you identify more with? Why?
2. What values, beliefs, or past experiences influence your position on this issue?
3. What are the most important factors to consider when discussing immigration in the U.S.? These might include: financial needs, economic issues, political factors, labor market, environment, race, ethnicity, culture, life style, illegality, crime, personal safety, border security, etc.
4. When you look at the other statements and views that you didn't select, are there any aspects of the other views that you might see as valid? Please explain.

**Appendix B**  
Japanese Discussion Questions [Translated in English by the author]  
Instructions for Discussion

Steps to Follow:

1. Please select a friend/ classmate/ family member/ partner, who is older than 18 years old and identifies herself/himself as Japanese. She or he needs to be someone with whom you feel comfortable talking about the issue of immigration/foreign workers in Japan.
2. Meet with your conversation partner in a quiet location where you can audiotape your conversation. The conversation will take approximately 30-60 minutes.
3. Each of you please read and sign the consent form provided.
4. Make sure there is an audiotape inside the tape recorder, you are at the beginning of the blank audiotape, and test the volume and recording performance.
5. Turn on the tape recorder and first say your name so that I can distinguish your voice.
6. Follow the instructions for your conversation provided below.
7. When you finish your conversation, stop recording and fill out the demographic survey.
8. Bring the signed consent form, demographic survey, tape-recorder, and audio tape to your instructor by the assigned date. Remember you will receive credit for this assignment **ONLY** when you turn in the signed consent forms, completed demographic surveys, tape recorder, and audio tape with a completed conversation.

**Instructions for Discussion of Topics:**

\* *First, please record your name so that I can distinguish your voice.*

Please read the following statements and then discuss the issue of immigration/foreign workers with your partner. Suggested questions to answer during your conversation are listed below, but you are welcome to add your own questions and comments and talk about whatever you wish.

Please remember that you are not expected to reach agreement or consensus. The idea is for both of you to talk about your views. You may have similar or different opinions about immigration/foreign worker issues.

### Appendix B continued

Immigration Bureau of Japan reported in 2006 that 2,011,555 foreign residents are currently registered. It corresponds with 1.57% of the entire population of Japan. Most foreign workers residing in Japan can be categorized into one of the following categories: *Zainich* foreigners, *Nikkeijin*, trainees, entertainers, professional/technical laborers, or illegal workers.

- I. We have been facing various issues due to the recent increase of foreign workers in Japan. For example, the increasing cases of theft, robbery, assaults, homicide, over-staying, illegal labor, and false marriage are noticeable. Also, employing low-skill cheap labor force from foreign countries may lead an increasing number of unemployed in Japan. Given these issues, Japanese government should set a limit on the number of foreign workers to protect the Japanese nation and its citizens.
- II. Due to the low birth rate and aging population in Japan, the demand for young labor force has been rising. Immigrants and foreign workers play an important role to support Japanese economy by filling the void and they also accelerate internationalization of the country. For example, foreign workers are absolutely necessary in areas lacking in the labor force such as nursing care. Also in academic or technical fields, fruitful and successful international exchange can be achieved by inviting skilled people including engineers, instructors, or foreign students to work together. In order to achieve national advancement and internationalization, Japanese government should implement policies that facilitate the admission process of foreign workers.
- III. Though Japan should not accept an unlimited number of immigrants and foreign workers, we should actively accept foreign workers with knowledge, talent and skills that our nation needs. In order to achieve that, Japan should reconsider the treatment of foreign workers: They should not be regarded as merely unskilled labor force but should be eligible for some protection, such as Minimum Wage Act, Labor Standard Act, and labor insurance. In addition, Japanese government should implement stricter policies to punish Japanese companies that hire illegal immigrants, in order to reduce the number of illegal workers and illegal residents.

#### Discussion Questions

1. Which statement, if any, do you identify more with? Why?
2. What values, beliefs, or past experiences influence your position on this issue?
3. What are the most important factors to consider when discussing immigration in the U.S.? These might include: financial needs, economic issues, political factors, labor market, environment, race, ethnicity, culture, life style, illegality, crime, personal safety, border security, etc.
4. When you look at the other statements and views that you didn't select, are there any aspects of the other views that you might see as valid? Please explain.

**Appendix C**  
Demographic Survey

1. Your age: \_\_\_\_\_ years old
  
2. Your Gender (Please check)  
Female \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Your conversation partner is your: (Please circle)  
Best friend  
Friend  
Classmate  
Romantic partner (boyfriend/girlfriend)  
Spouse  
Sibling (brother/ sister)  
Parent  
Child  
Other family members  
Co-worker  
Other (please indicate) \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. If your conversation partner is NOT your family member, how long have you known her/him?  
\_\_\_\_\_ year(s) \_\_\_\_\_ month(s)
  
5. Your background information: (Please describe.)
  - a. Labels you prefer for your race(s)  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Labels you prefer for your ethnic background(s)  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Labels you prefer for your religious belief(s)  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Your householder's occupation  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - e. To which annual income bracket does your family belong: (Please circle)

Less than \$30,000  
\$ 30,001- 40,000  
\$ 40,001- 50,000  
\$ 50,001- 60,000  
\$ 60,001- 70,000  
More than \$70,000

f. Educational level: (Please circle)

High school student

Undergraduate student

Graduate student (Master/ Doctorate)

Other (please indicate) \_\_\_\_\_

Please leave your email or contact information below if you would like to receive a copy of the transcription. Thank you for your input and cooperation.

**Appendix D**  
**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

- **INTRODUCTION**

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Chie Torigoe, from the Department of Communication and Journalism at the University of New Mexico. The results of this study will contribute to her dissertation project, titled "*Immigration discourses in the U.S. and in Japan.*" You were identified as a possible volunteer in the study because you identify yourself as a white U.S. American citizen, who is older than 18 years old.

- **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:** This study investigates how people talk about immigration/foreign worker issues in the U.S. and in Japan by analyzing interpersonal dyadic conversations about the issues. More specifically, this study attempts 1) to establish the connection between political/institutional/public discourses and interpersonal everyday discourses about immigration; 2) to investigate what kinds of themes and factors commonly emerge in interpersonal dyadic conversations about immigration; and 3) to examine how people position themselves and immigrants in their dyadic conversation about immigration.

- **PROCEDURES AND ACTIVITIES**

If you choose to participate in this study, first, you will be asked to select a conversation partner who also identifies herself/himself as a white U.S. American. She or he needs to be someone with whom you feel comfortable talking about the issue of immigration in the U.S.

You and your partner will choose a quiet location where you can talk and audiotape your conversation. Noisy places such as a crowded cafeteria or a café that plays music loud should be avoided. You will be asked to discuss the issue of immigration in the U.S. with your partner based on the three brief statements and suggested discussion questions on the sheet provided in class with this consent form. The conversation will take approximately 30-60 minutes. When you finish your conversation, each of you will be asked to complete a demographic survey.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will receive extra-credit as outlined by your instructor. You may choose not to participate without any penalty whatsoever; your instructor will provide alternative options for extra credit.

- **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

The risks to participants in this study are minimal. You may feel some degree of discomfort in sharing your views and opinions about immigration issues due to the political and social aspects of this issue. However, you can skip any questions provided when you feel uncomfortable, or withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty. Your responses will only be used for academic purposes, and your responses will be kept strictly confidential.

- **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

There are at least two benefits of this study. You will have the opportunity to reflect on the world-wide issue of immigration/foreign workers through your participation in this study. By sharing your views regarding immigration/foreign workers with your conversation partner, you may be able to learn more about the issues of immigration. Additionally, discussion and sharing your opinions may enhance your understanding of your conversation partner's views.

- **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. All your responses will be confidential. To secure your privacy, I will be the only one who is allowed access to the tape-recordings and interview transcripts. The data will be kept in a locked cabinet in my locked office. In writing up the findings, pseudonyms will be used and all identifying information will be deleted. Once the transcriptions are completed, the audio tapes of your conversation will be destroyed by cutting the magnetic ribbons of the tape.

- **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You can choose whether to participate in this study or not. If you volunteer to participate, you may withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled. When you begin your discussion, you may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

- **IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS AND REVIEW BOARD**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact:

Chie Torigoe, Ph.D.student University of New Mexico Department of Communication and Journalism MSC03 2240 Albuquerque, NM 87131 <a href="mailto:ctorigoe@unm.edu">ctorigoe@unm.edu</a> Office: 505-277-2106	Dr. Mary Jane Collier, Faculty University of New Mexico Department of Communication and Journalism MSC03 2240 Albuquerque, NM 87131 <a href="mailto:mjc@unm.edu">mjc@unm.edu</a> Office: 505-277-5305
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If you have other concerns or complaints, contact the Institutional Review Board at the University of New Mexico, 1717 Roma NE, Room 205, Albuquerque, NM 87131, (505) 277-2257, or toll free at 1-866-844-9018.

**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT**

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I understand that the discussion with my conversation partner will be tape-recorded. I have been provided a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR**

In my judgment the participant is voluntarily and knowingly providing informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Investigator or Designee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator or Designee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



**Table 1.**

Demographic Information of U.S. Participants							
Name	Sex	Age	Rel. Type	Race	Ethnicity	Religion	Income*
Tricia	F	23	Parent	White	American/ German	Agnostic	6
Tom	M	-	Child	White	German	-	-
Illiana	F	19	Parent	White	White/Hispanic	Roman Catholic	6
Peter	M	53	Child	White	White/Hispanic	Roman Catholic	6
Alice	F	22	Best friend	Caucasian	Caucasian	Spiritual/ Christian	3
Jack	M	24	Friend	Caucasian/ White	Caucasian	Episcopal ian/ Christian	5
Amanda	F	20	Romantic partner	Caucasian/ White	Russian/British	Jewish	1
Rachel	F	22	Romantic Partner	Caucasian/ White	German/ Italian	Non denomina tional	1
Allen	M	20	Friend	German Italian Caucasian	American, German	Independ ently spiritual	6
Ed	M	20	Friend	White	-	-	-
Kathy	F	18	Classmate	Caucasian/ White	American	Not affiliated	-
Brittney	F	18	Classmate	White/ Caucasian	American	Non-affili ated	2
Teresa	F	68	Grand daughter to be	Caucasian	French/ Russian	Jewish	-
Mary	F	18	Boyfriend' s grandmoth er	White	Polish/ Russian	Agnostic	1
Brandon	M	42	Friend	Caucasian	-	Atheist	6
Jake	M	23	Friend	Caucasian	-	Agnostic	-

Betty	F	18	Best friend	White/ Spanish	Czech/ Spanish	Catholic	-
Steve	M	22	Best friend	White	Irish	Catholic	-
Meg	F	29	Romantic partner	Anglo	American	Agnostic	3
Cecilia	F	27	Romantic partner	Caucasian	American	Agnostic	-
Judy	F	24	Best friend	Caucasian	No preference	Atheist	1
Damon	M	25	Best friend	Anglo	American	Non-relig ious	1
Victor	M	21	Best friend	White	Italian	Catholic	6
Sarah	F	21	Best friend	Caucasian	Irish/ Scottish	Christian	6
Cody	M	23	Family member	White	White	Christian	2
Julie	F	23	Family member	White	Caucasian	Christian	6
Nancy	F	19	Parent	White	Irish, Dutch, Indian	Christian	3
Sonia	F	55	Child	White	Irish, Dutch, Indian, German	Christian	3

\* Less than \$30,000=1, \$30, 001-40,000=2, \$40,001-50,000=3, \$50,001-60,000=4, \$60,001-70,000=5, More than \$70,001=6

**Table 2.**

Demographic Information of Japanese Participants							
Name	Sex	Age	Rel. Type	Race	Ethnicity	Religion	Income*
Akiko	F	20	Classmate	Yellow	Japanese	Buddhist	2
Ai	F	21	Classmate	Yellow	Japanese	Shintoist	2
Keiko	F	20	Best friend	Japanese	Don't know	Nothing special	3
Saki	F	20	Best friend	Japanese	Don't know	Nothing special	3
Reiko	F	20	Best friend	Yellow/ Mongoloid	Japanese	none	4
Erika	F	20	Best friend	Yellow/ Mongoloid	Japanese	Atheist	3
Yuko	F	18	Friend	Yellow	Japanese	Buddhist	-
Rika	F	18	Friend	Yellow	Japanese	Buddhist	-
Yukie	F	18	Friend	Yellow	Japanese	None	3
Chika	F	18	Friend	Yellow	Japanese	Jyodo-Sh inshu	2
Yuri	F	18	Romantic partner	Yellow	Japanese	-	-
Yusuke	M	19	Romantic partner	Yellow	Japanese	-	-
Keisuke	M	20	Classmate	Japanese	-	Buddhist	2-3
Kengo	M	20	Classmate	Japanese	-	Buddhist	4
Yuta	M	20	Acquainta nce	Japanese	Japanese	Family is Jyodo-Sh inshu, but I'm not religious	4
Shogo	M	21	Acquainta nce	Japanese	Japanese	None	4
Shiho	F	21	Best friend	-	Japanese	Buddhist	6

Haruka	F	20	Best friend	-	-	-	6
Miho	F	20	Friend/ classmate	Asian	Japanese	Atheist	-
Mariko	F	20	Friend/ classmate	Asian	Japanese	Atheist	2
Yumiko	F	21	Classmate	Japanese	Japanese	-	-
Hiroko	F	21	Classmate	Japanese	Japanese	-	-
Sora	F	19	Parent	Yellow	Japanese	Atheist	-
Kyoko	F	39	Child	Japanese	-	Buddhist	-
Yusaku	M	22	Friend	Japanese	-	Buddhist	-
Kenta	M	23	Classmate	Japanese	-	Nothing special, but my family is Buddhist	-
Mana	F	21	Classmate	Yellow	Japanese	Buddhist	-
Misato	F	21	Classmate	Yellow	Japanese	Buddhist	-
Kimi	F	21	Classmate	Yellow	Japanese	None	6
Chisato	F	21	Classmate	Yellow	Japanese	-	6
Takeru	M	21	Friend	Japanese	Japanese	Shintoist	5
Megumi	F	23	Friend	Japanese	Japanese	Buddhist	5
Fumio	M	21	Classmate	Japanese	Japanese	-	-
Kenji	M	21	Classmate	Japanese	Japanese	-	-

\* Less than ¥3,000,000=1, ¥3,000,001-4,000,000=2, ¥4,000,001-5,000,000=3, ¥5,000,001-6,000,000=4, ¥6,000,001-7,000,000=5, More than ¥7,000,001=6

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