

**Japanese and American  
University Students' Perception  
Towards Japanese-American Identity**

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# Outline

- Significance of the Study
- Research Questions
- Research Background
- Research Method
- Research Findings
- Conclusion
- Limitations of Study & Future Studies
- Bibliography

# Significance of the Study

- We are both half-Japanese Americans
- Having both studied in Japan, we were left with the impression that there is a shallow understanding of Japanese-Americans by Japanese university students. We both thought it seemed interesting and wanted to investigate more about our own identities
- Due to our experiences studying Japanese language, in combination with our own family history, we are really interested in the perceptions that exist about *nikkeijin* in both Japan and the United States.
- So, through this study we hope to find out...
  - What perceptions exist about Japanese-American identity
  - How those perceptions are made

# Research Questions

1. How do Japanese and American university students view Japanese -American identity?
2. What are the main factors that influence Japanese and American university students' image of Japanese-Americans?

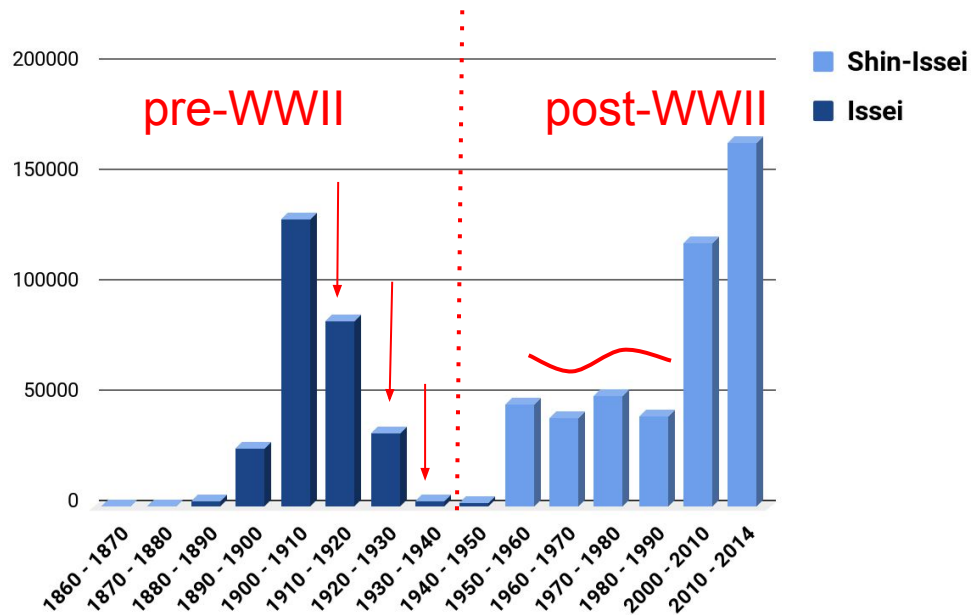
# Research Background

- Definition of Relevant Terms
- Numbers of Japanese Migrants into the U.S.
- New Japanese-American Migrants
- Generational Differences
- Assimilation (U.S.)
- Stereotypes and Discrimination (U.S.)
- Japanese-American Population (U.S.)
- Migration and Assimilation (Japan)
- Stereotypes and Discrimination (Japan)
- Japanese-American Population (Japan)
- The Image of Japanese-Americans
- Culture Values and Characteristics
- National Identity vs. Ethnic Identity
- Japanese-American Identity

# Definition of Relevant Terms

<b>Nikkeijin</b>	Japanese descendants born and raised abroad (Tsuda, 2009)
<b>Issei</b>	1st generation Japanese immigrants who (migrated to U.S. <i>before World War II</i> ) (Niiya, 2001)
<b>Nisei</b>	2nd generation <i>nikkeijin</i> , the children of <i>issei</i> (Niiya, 2001)
<b>Shin-issei</b>	new-issei “new” 1st generation Japanese immigrants (who migrated to U.S. <i>after World War II</i> ) (Tsuda, 2009)

# Numbers of Japanese Migrants into the U.S.

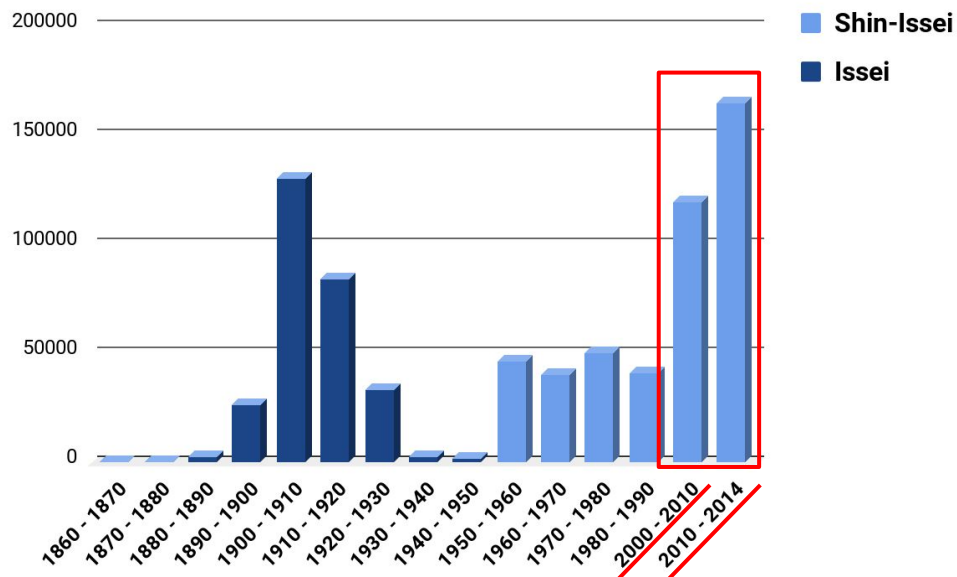


- Sharp *decline* of *issei* immigrants *before and during* WWII
- *Steady* influx of *shin-issei* immigrants *after* WWII

(Spickard, 1996; Japan Census, 2017)

# New Japanese-American Migrants (USA)

- Since 2000, sudden *increase* of Japanese migrants
- *Shin-issei* population is *larger* than older population of *issei*



(Spickard, 1996; Japan Census 2017)



# Generational Differences

pre-World War II  
(1860 - 1945)

Issei

Shin-Issei

post-World War II  
(1945 - present)

Nisei

Shin-Nisei

Sansei

Shin-Sansei

- Did experience internment
- Strong familiarity with almost *exclusively American* culture
- *Blue* collar workers

- Did not experience internment
- Strong familiarity with *both American and Japanese* culture
- *White* collar workers

(Tsuda, 2015; Yamashiro, 2017)

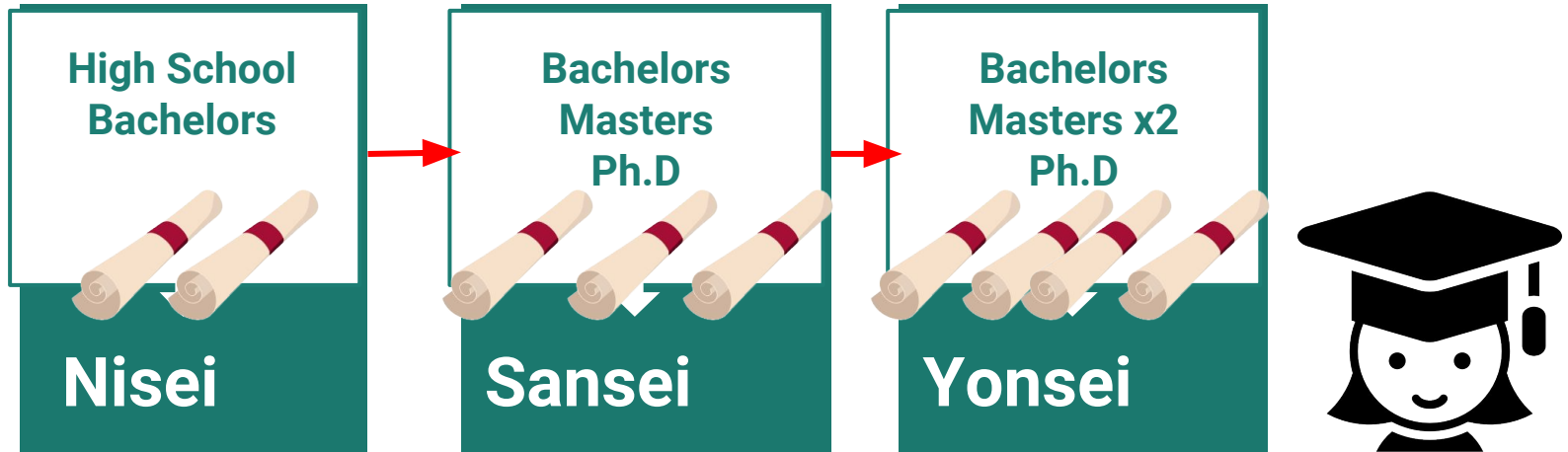
# Assimilation (U.S.) 1

- After World War II, high importance placed on assimilation into mainstream American society
  - They did so by:
    - Promoting *academic success* (Kitano, 1962; Masuda, 1970)
    - Marrying into White-American families\*
      - more *American* offspring (Hall, 1997)
- Many of the *issei* already had high school or college level education (Masuda, 1970; Matoba-Adler, 1998)

\*interracial marriage illegal until 1967

## Assimilation (U.S.) 2

- The more assimilated Japanese-Americans are...
  - *less likely to yield high academic performance*
  - *more likely to move into higher education*



(Kitano, 1962; Masuda, 1970; Matoba-Adler, 1998)

# Stereotypes and Discrimination (U.S.) 1

- Viewed as part of the **Model Minority**
  - Asian-Americans are the ideal minority in the U.S.
    - Japanese Americans had high *academic achievement & financial success* post-World War II (Bolaffi, 2003)
    - Japanese American students as “ideal” students
      - *studious*
      - *quiet*
      - *well-behaved*

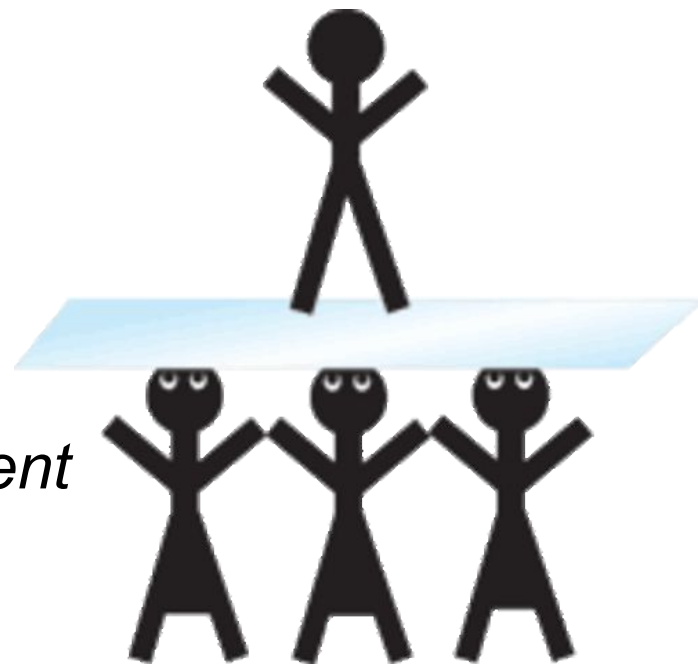


(Kitano, 1962; Niiya, 2001; Shim, 1998)

# Stereotypes and Discrimination (U.S.) 2

## Model Minority

- Unrealistic stigma for achievement
  - Students who need additional support are *disregarded*
- *Glass ceiling* at work
  - Professionals *denied advancement* to positions of higher power

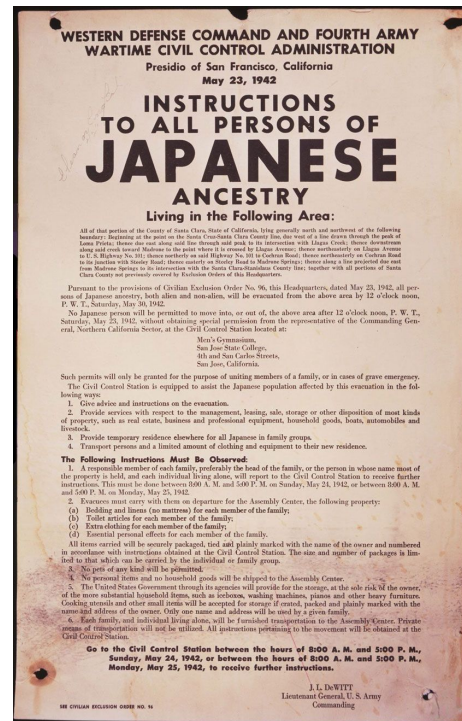


(Niiya, 2001; Matoba-Adler, 1997)

# Stereotypes and Discrimination (U.S.) 3

## Executive Order 9066

- February 19, 1942
- President Franklin D. Roosevelt
- Incarceration of 120,000 Japanese-Americans
- 10 permanent Relocation Centers



(Niiya, 2001)

# Stereotypes and Discrimination (U.S.) 4

## Korematsu V. United States (1944)

- Defy executive order 9066
- Arrested May 30, 1942 in San Leandro, CA
- Convicted in federal court for violating military orders on September 8, 1942
- Appealed case to U.S. Supreme Court
  - December 1944
  - 6 to 3 against Korematsu



(“Lifetime,” n.d.)

# Stereotypes and Discrimination (U.S.) 5



**Japanese American Citizens League** is a national organization:

- secure and safeguard the *civil* and *human rights* of Asian Americans
- *preserve the heritage* of the Japanese American Community.
- **Advocates and allies to all marginalized groups.**



# Stereotypes and Discrimination (U.S.) 6

## Loving V. Virginia (1967)

- Landmark civil rights decision of the U.S. Supreme Court
  - *invalidated* laws prohibiting interracial marriage
  - Strongly supported by JACL

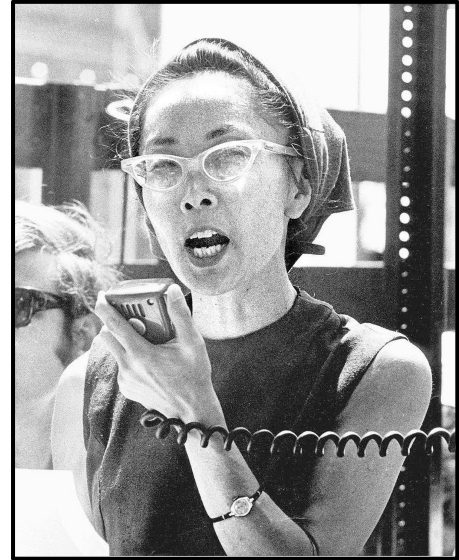


Before, it was *illegal* for Japanese Americans to marry Whites

# Stereotypes and Discrimination (U.S.) 7

## Civil Liberties Act of 1988

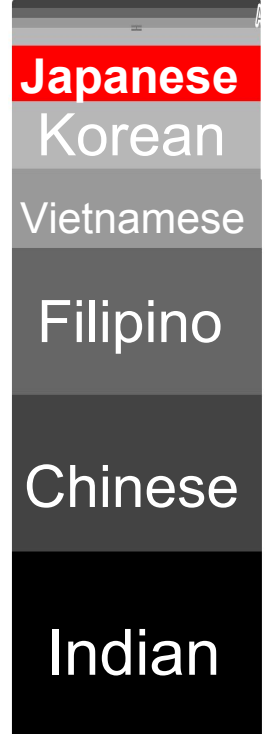
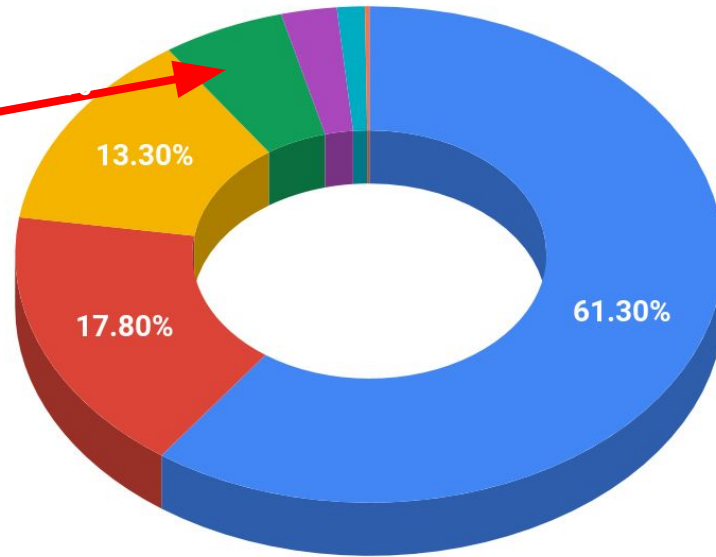
- United States federal law
  - granted *reparations* (\$20,000) to Japanese Americans interned by U.S. government during World War II
- Pioneered by JACL lobbyists



Yuri Kochiyama, activist

# Japanese-American Population (U.S.) 1

- White
- Latino
- Black
- Asian
- Mixed-Race
- Native American
- Pacific Islander



- Population of the U.S.A.: 5.7% Asian American
- Japanese Americans are *6th largest Asian minority*

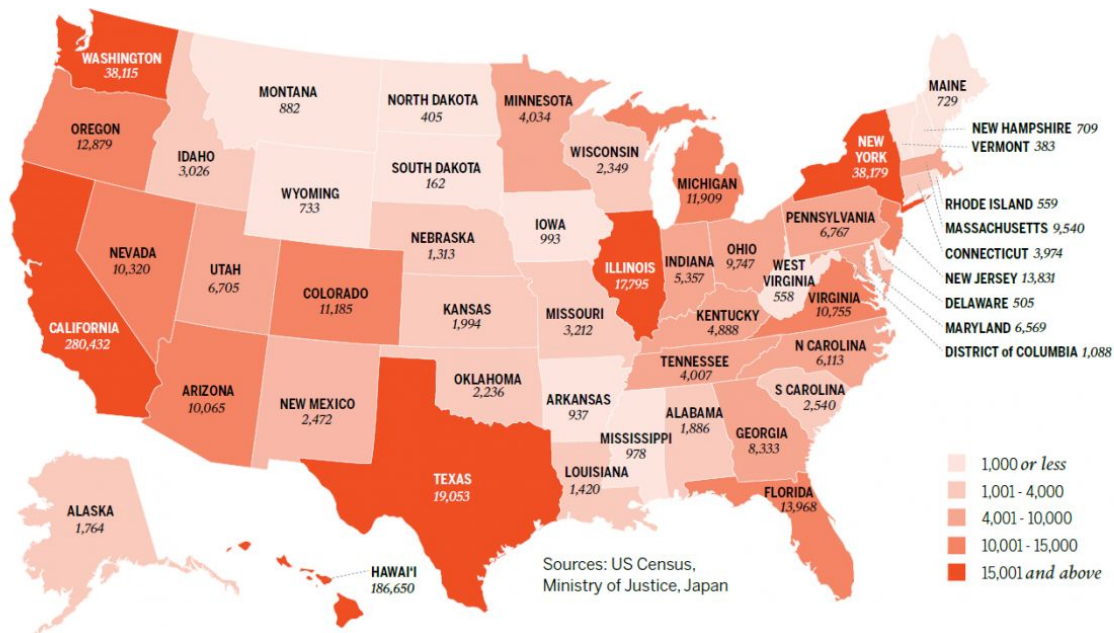
(US Census, 2016)

# Japanese-American Population (U.S.) 2

## Most Populous States:

- California
- Hawai'i
- New York
- Washington

(Yamashiro, 2017)



# Migration and Assimilation (Japan) 1

- *Regardless* of language ability or knowledge of Japanese culture:
  - Japanese Americans are more widely *accepted* than other *nikkeijin* (Japanese-Brazilians, etc.)
  - Japanese Americans in Japan, regard their “American-ness” as an *asset* rather than a setback (Tsuda, 2009)
    - Japanese have strong familiarity with the U.S.
    - U.S. generally seen in a positive light

(Tsuda, 2009; Yamashiro, 2017)

# Migration and Assimilation (Japan) 2

- Japanese-Americans *living* in Japan
  - Tend to come for:
    - Study Abroad (High School, University)
    - White-collar work (Teaching English, etc.)

(Tsuda, 2009; Yamashiro, 2017)



# Stereotypes and Discrimination (Japan)

- Ijime = bullying
  - Based on:
    - Lack of Japanese language skills
    - Lack of Japanese cultural knowledge (Yamashiro, 2017)
- Hiring White Americans > Japanese Americans (Lie, 2001)
  - White Americans better fit *image* of “Americans”
  - White Americans more *natural* English speakers (Tsuda, 2009)

# Japanese-American Population (Japan)

- The percentage of Japanese Americans living in Japan has *risen* in the last 15 years

	American Population in Japan	Percentage of Japanese-Americans
<b>2000</b>	<b>44,856</b>	<b>12.50%</b>
<b>2005</b>	<b>49,390</b>	<b>13.15%</b>
<b>2010</b>	<b>50,667</b>	<b>13.92%</b>
<b>2014</b>	<b>51,256</b>	<b>15.04%</b>



# The Image of Japanese-Americans

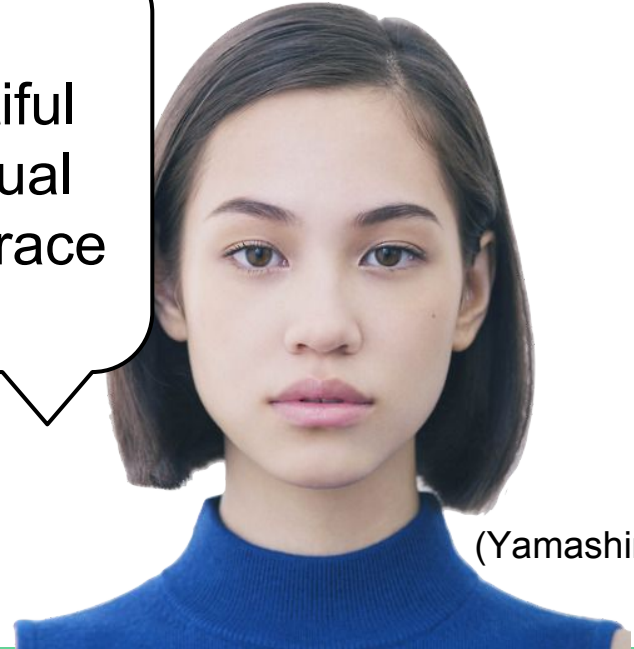
**USA:**

Polite  
Hardworking  
mono-racial



**Japan:**

Beautiful  
Bilingual  
mixed-race



(Yamashiro, 2017)

# Culture Values and Characteristics 1

<b>Japanese</b>	<b>American</b>
Duty	Individualism
Obligation	Equality
Hierarchy	Rights and Privileges
Deference	Self-reliance
Dependence	Self-assertion

(Matoba Adler, 1998)

## Culture Values and Characteristics 2

- Japanese concepts affect child-rearing
- Strong influence on *identity* and *perceptions* of Japanese Americans
- Root of *Model Minority* stereotype?

我慢 GAMAN Patience tolerance	
頑張れ GANBARE Perseverance “Do your best!”	
遠慮 ENRYO Restraint modesty	

(Kendis, 1989; Matoba-Adler, 1998)

# Culture Values and Characteristics 3

- *Gaman*, *Ganbare* and *Enryo* are all aspects of **Self-Discipline**
  - Japanese cultural *norms*
  - Promote:
    - *strong work ethic*
    - *politeness*
    - *compliance*

(Kitano, 1976; Matoba-Adler, 1998)

# National Identity VS Ethnic Identity 1

## National Identity

- Sense of belonging or identifying with one's nation in which they are a citizen
- Strong identifiers are more likely to hold an in-group, *ethnocentric view* of national identity

(Bolaffi, 2003; Theiss-Morse, 2009)

## Ethnic Identity

- Sense of belonging or identifying with an ethnic group
- Important factor in *behavior, attitudes, values and acculturation* of Japanese-Americans

(Bolaffi, 2003; Masuda, 1970)

# National Identity VS Ethnic Identity 2

## Perceptions of Identity

<b>American</b>	<b>Japanese</b>
White	Homogeneous
Christian	Well-mannered
Speak English	Harmonious
Native born	Respectful

(Theiss-Morse, 2009)

(Hendry, 2006)

# Japanese-American Identity 1

## Key factors affecting Japanese American Identity:

1. Physical Appearance
2. Generational Distance from Japan
3. Knowledge of Japanese Language and Culture

(Yamashiro, 2017)

# Japanese-American Identity 2

- **Identity Crisis**

- Common with *bicultural* people
- *Unsure* which culture to identify with
- Feeling **alienated** and **isolated** from *both* cultures

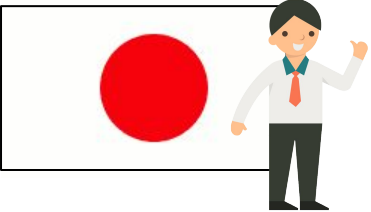
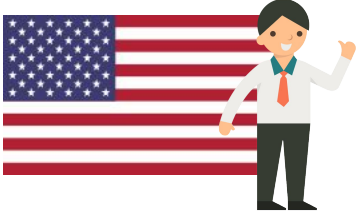
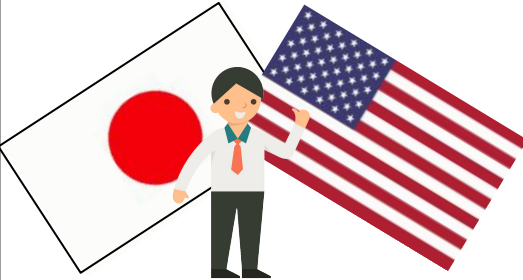


(Sue & Sue, 1971; Sue & Sue, 1972)



# Japanese-American Identity 3

Three ways Asian American identity is categorized:

<b>Traditionalist</b>	<b>Marginal 'Man'</b>	<b>Asian-American</b>
<p>Conforms to <i>Asian</i> values only</p>  An illustration of a man in a white shirt and tie standing next to a large Japanese flag (white field with a red sun).	<p>Conforms to <i>Western</i> values only</p>  An illustration of a man in a white shirt and tie standing next to a large American flag.	<p>Integrates <i>both</i> value systems</p>  An illustration of a man in a white shirt and tie holding both a Japanese flag and an American flag.

(Sue & Sue, 1971; Sue & Sue, 1972)

# Research Method

Subject/participants of the study

Total of 62 University Students

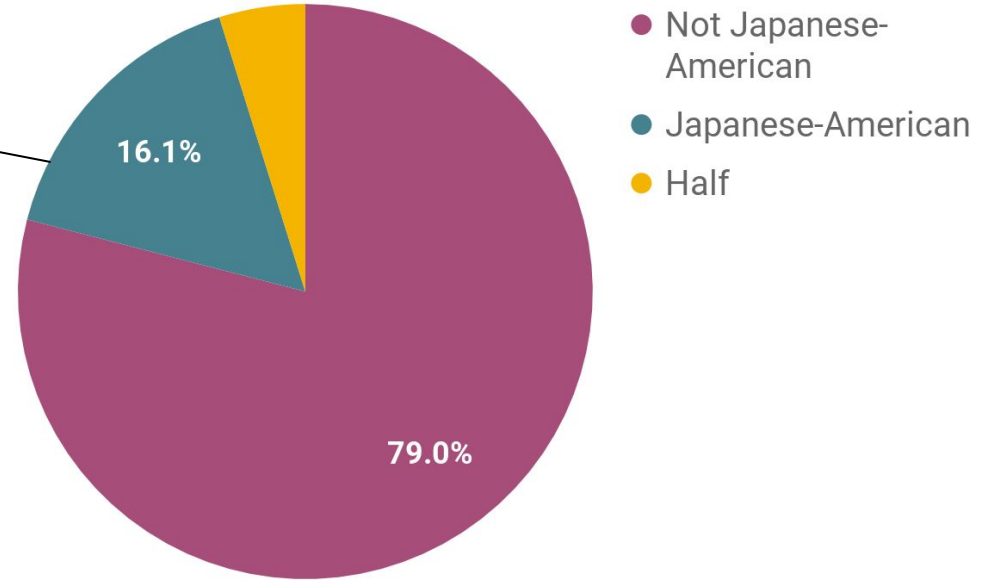
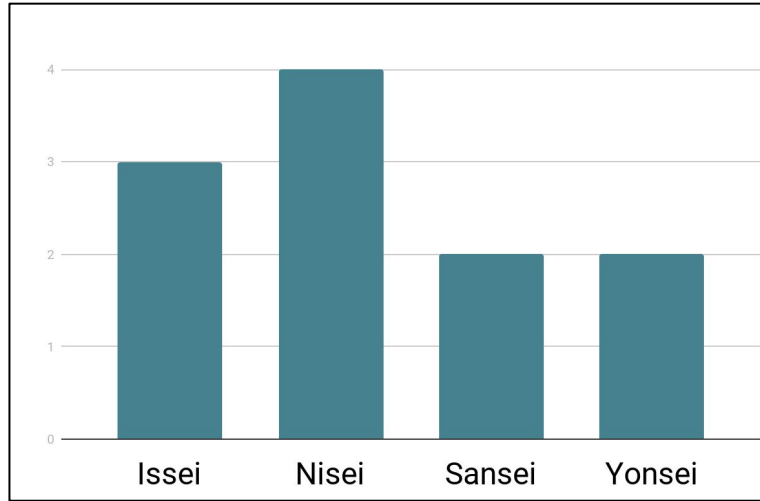
- 30 Japanese (18 female and 12 male)
- 32 American (20 female, 9 male, 3 non-binary)

Research Instruments

- Google Forms ( [English](#) / [Japanese](#) )

# Japanese-Americans Study Participants

## Generations:



Out of a total of 62 participants, 10 identified themselves as Japanese-American while 2 identified as half-Japanese.

## Research Findings 1

How do Japanese and American university students view Japanese-American identity?

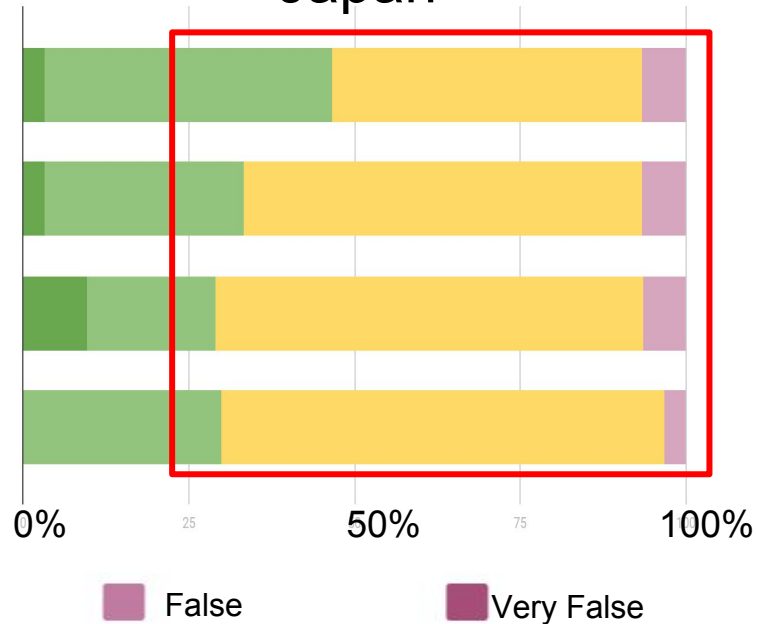
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# Stereotypes

## American



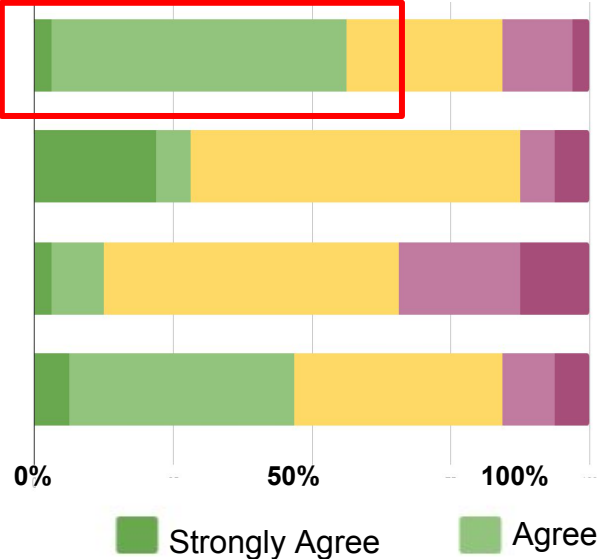
## Japan



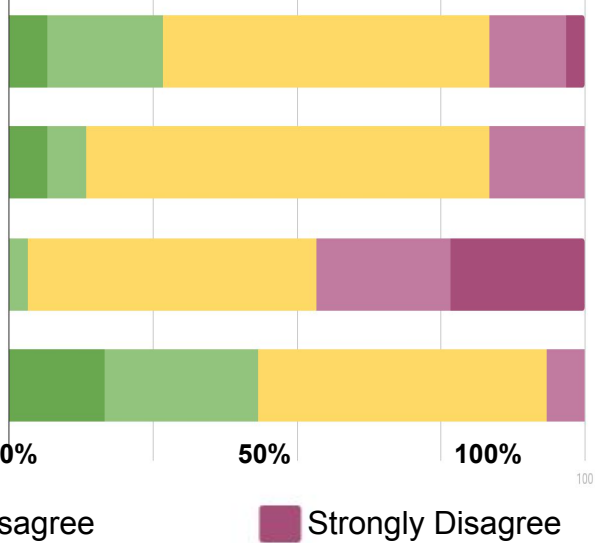
**Over 50% of American students** answered it is *true* that Japanese-Americans are *hardworking and successful in both academics and their careers*.

# Stereotypes & Discrimination

American



Japan



More well mannered than other Americans

More assimilated into American culture than other Americans

Marry within their race

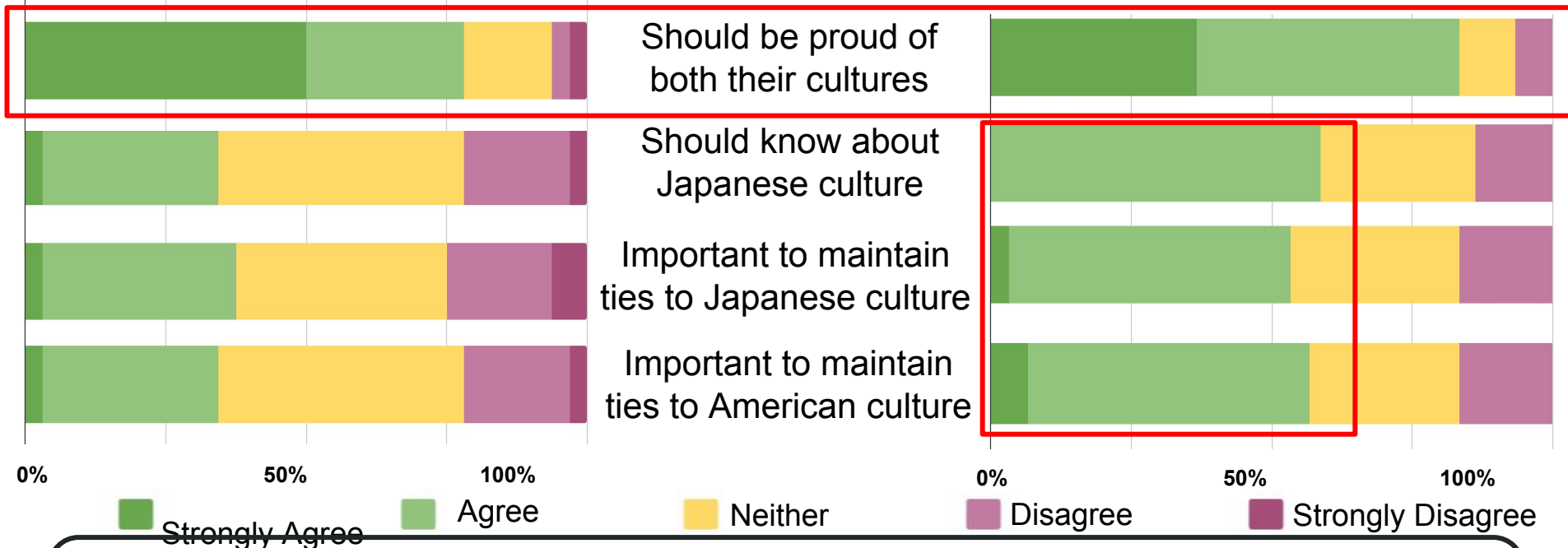
Face discrimination based on their heritage

**Only Americans**, with more than 50%, agreed that *Japanese-Americans are more well-mannered than other Americans*.

# Culture

American

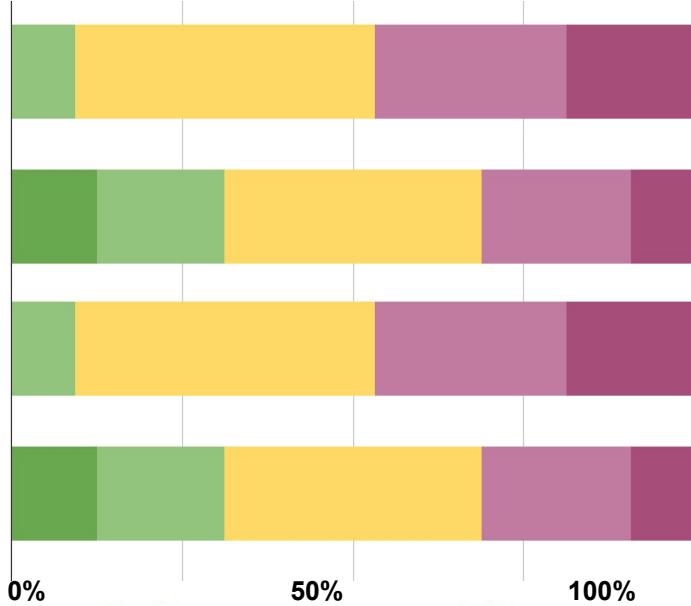
Japan



**Both** Japanese and American students thought that Japanese-Americans should be proud of both their cultures. **Only Japanese students** felt that Japanese-Americans should maintain strong ties to both cultures.

# Language

## American



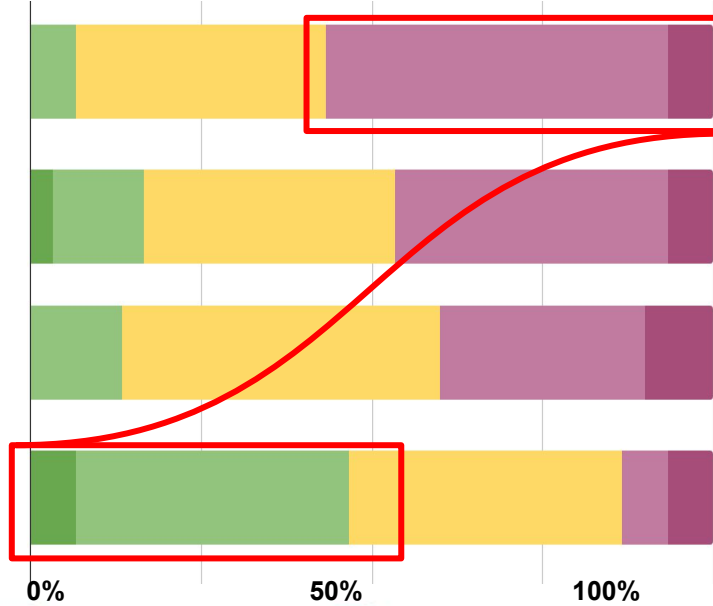
It is important to speak Japanese fluently

It is important to speak English fluently

Should be fluent in Japanese

Should be fluent in English

## Japan

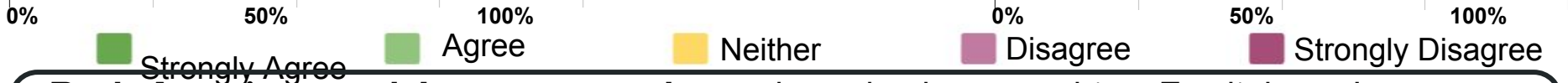


It is important to speak Japanese fluently

It is important to speak English fluently

Should be fluent in Japanese

Should be fluent in English



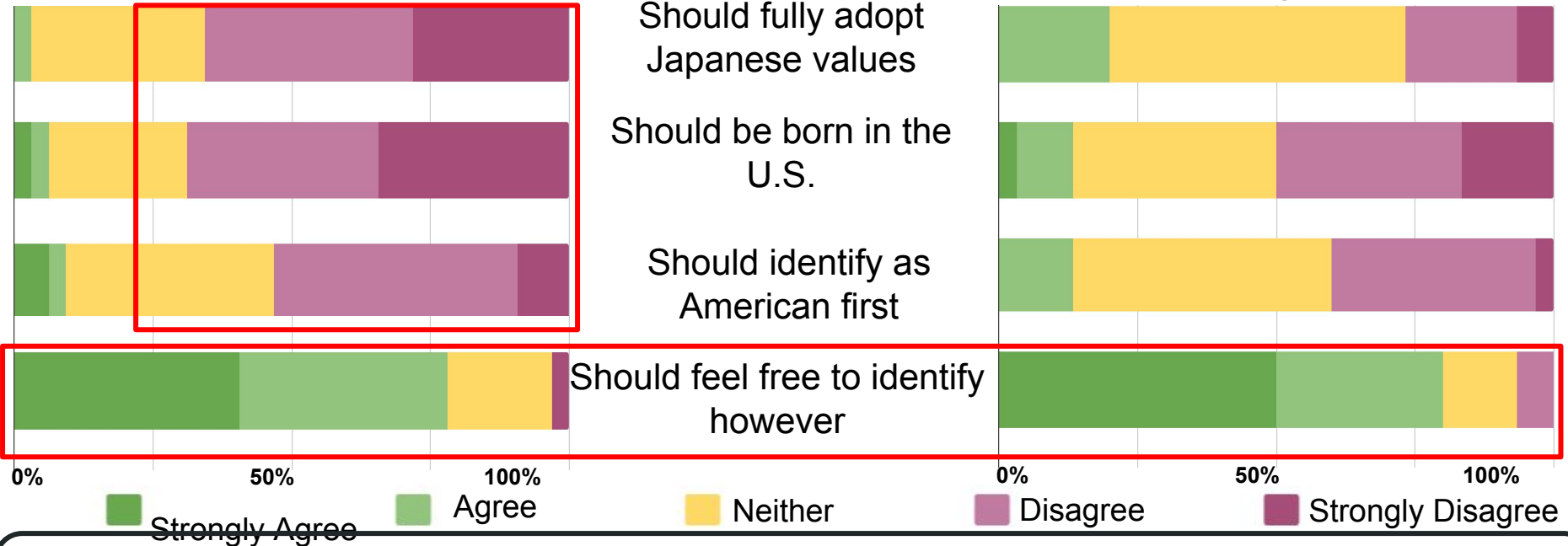
**Both American and Japanese students** thought that speaking English or Japanese fluently was not important. **More Japanese students than Americans students** thought that Japanese-Americans should speak English fluently.



# Identity

## American

## Japan



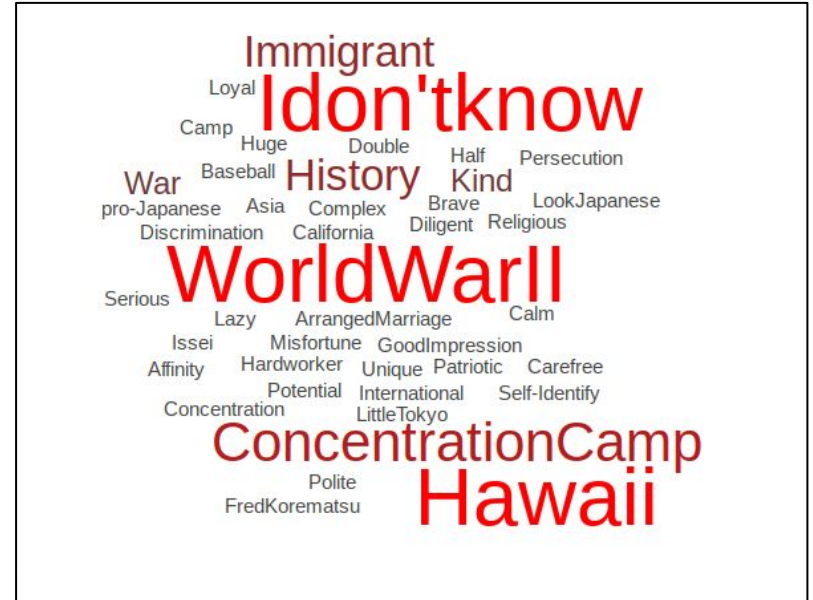
**Both Japanese and American students** agreed Japanese-Americans should feel free to identify however they choose. **Over 50% of American students** disagreed that Japanese-Americans should to identify only as American.

# Please write 3 words that you think best describe Japanese-American people

American



Japan



American students' top 3 words were "Diverse", "Kind" and "Hardworking"

Japanese students' tops 3 words were "I don't know", "World War II" and "Hawaii"

# Findings Summary 1

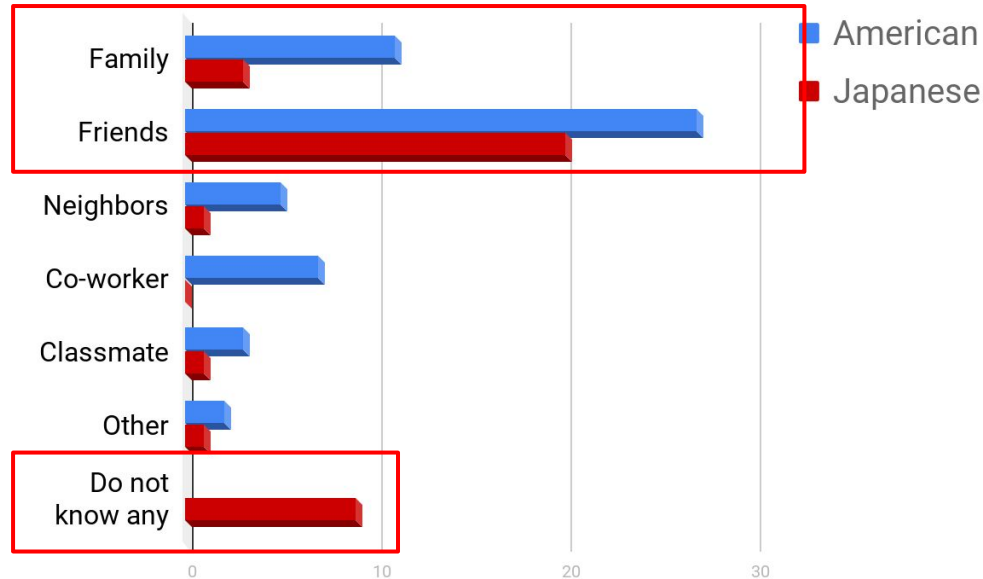
- Both Japanese and American students responded that Japanese-Americans should be proud of both of their cultures.
  - Additionally, both students thought that each person should freely choose their own identity.
- Japanese students thought that it is important for Japanese-Americans to maintain ties to both Japanese and American culture, while American did not agree.
- American students had a positive view of Japanese-Americans. However, Japanese students did not know much about Japanese-Americans except things related to World War Two.

## Research Findings 2

How are those views shaped?

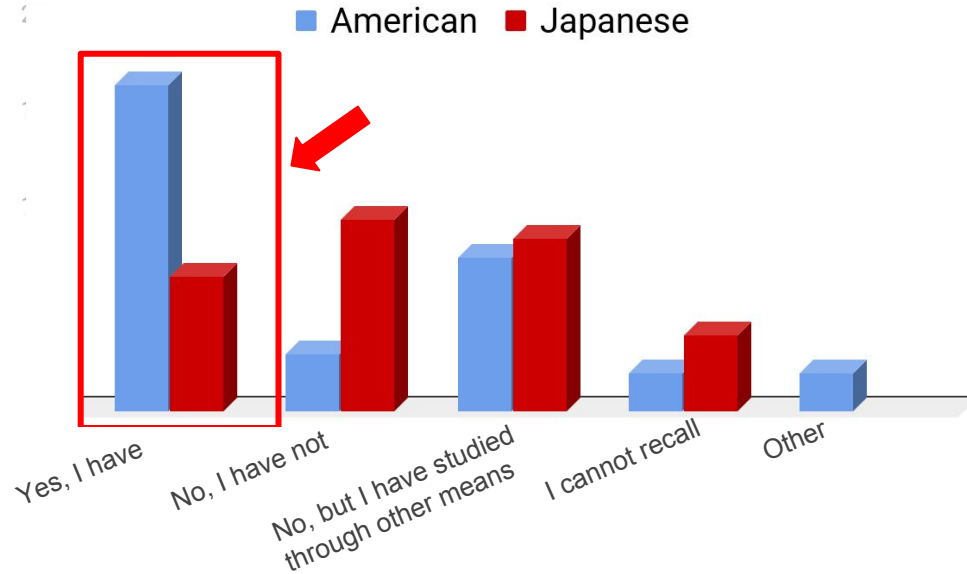
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# If you know any Japanese-Americans, what is your relationship with them?



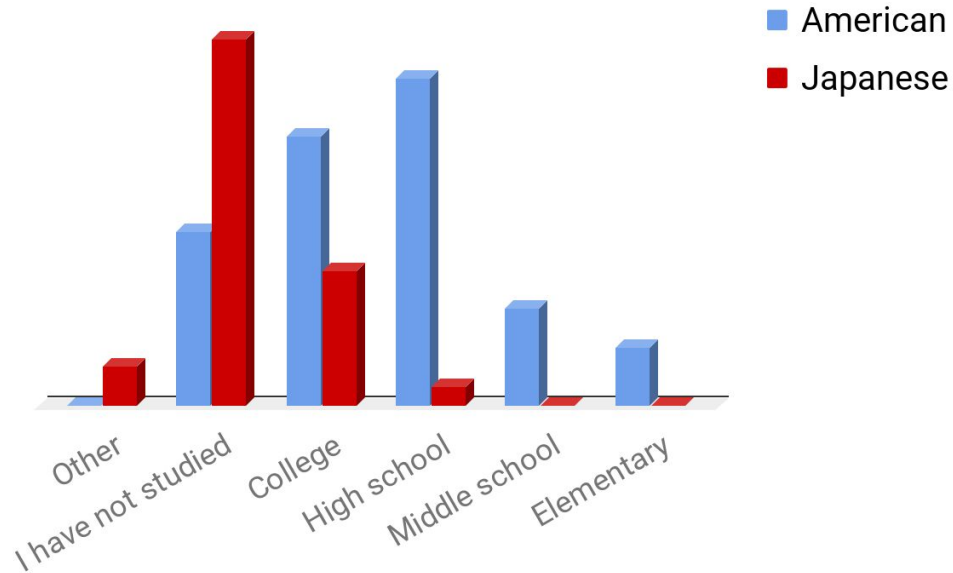
**All American students** responded that they knew a Japanese-American.  
**Some Japanese students** responded that they did not know any.

# Have you attended a class that included learning about Japanese-American history, issues, or identity?



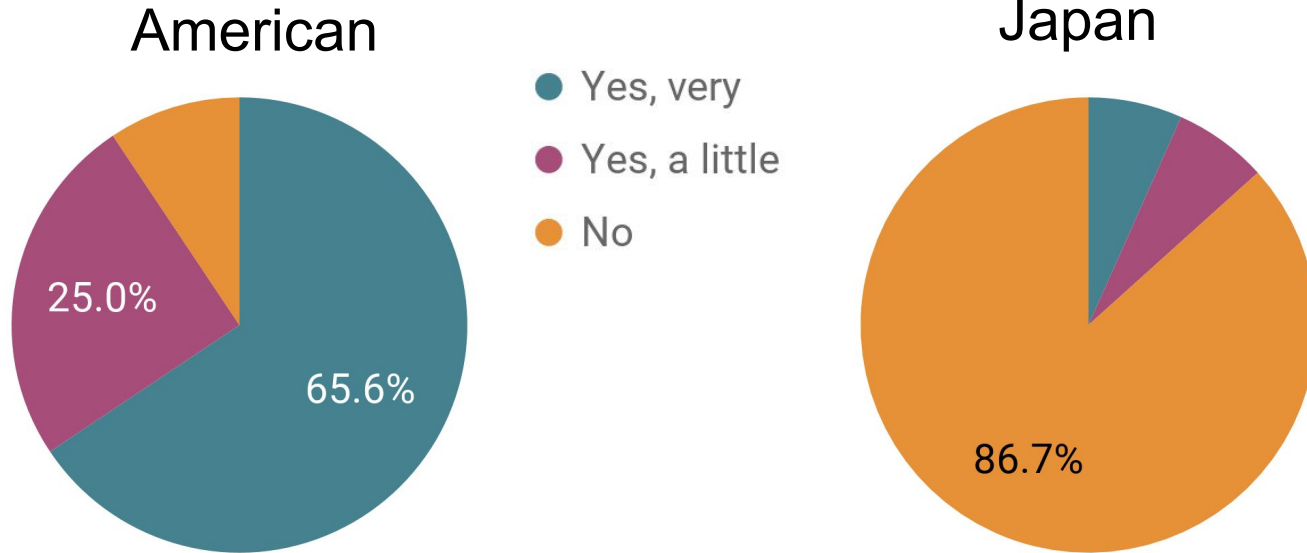
**Most American students have studied about Japanese-Americans.  
Most Japanese students have not.**

# If you have taken a class that included learning about Japanese-Americans, when did you take it?



**American students** have taken a class about Japanese-Americans in either high school or college, but **most Japanese students** have not take a class.

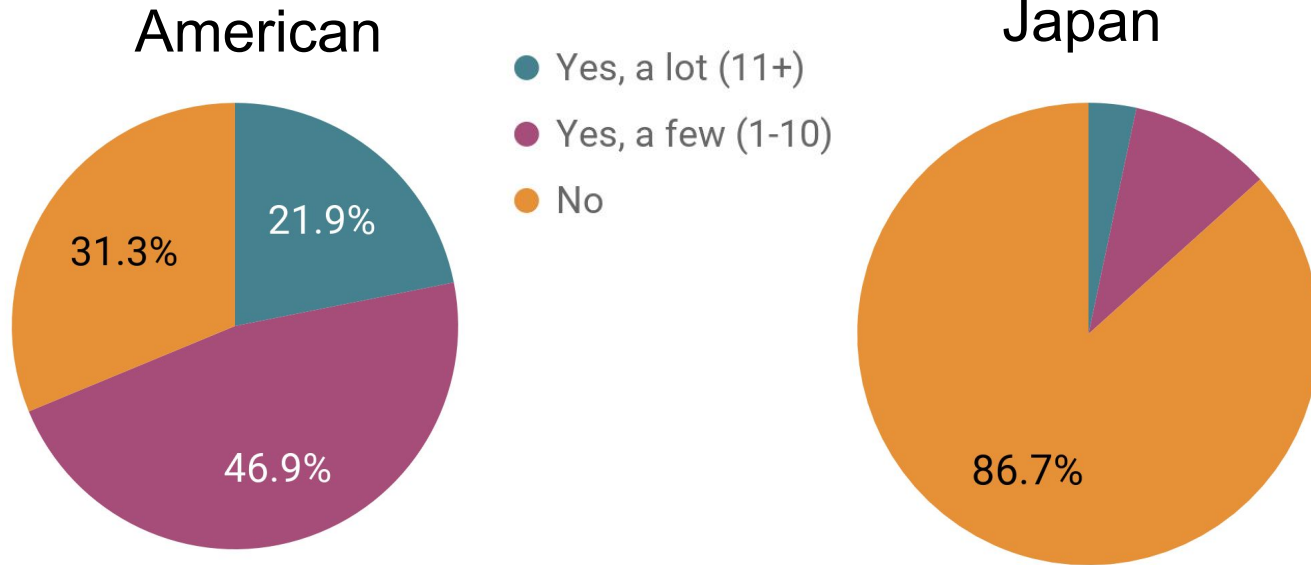
# Were you raised in ethnically diverse community?



**Majority of Japanese students** were not raised in a diverse community.



# Were you raised around Japanese-Americans?

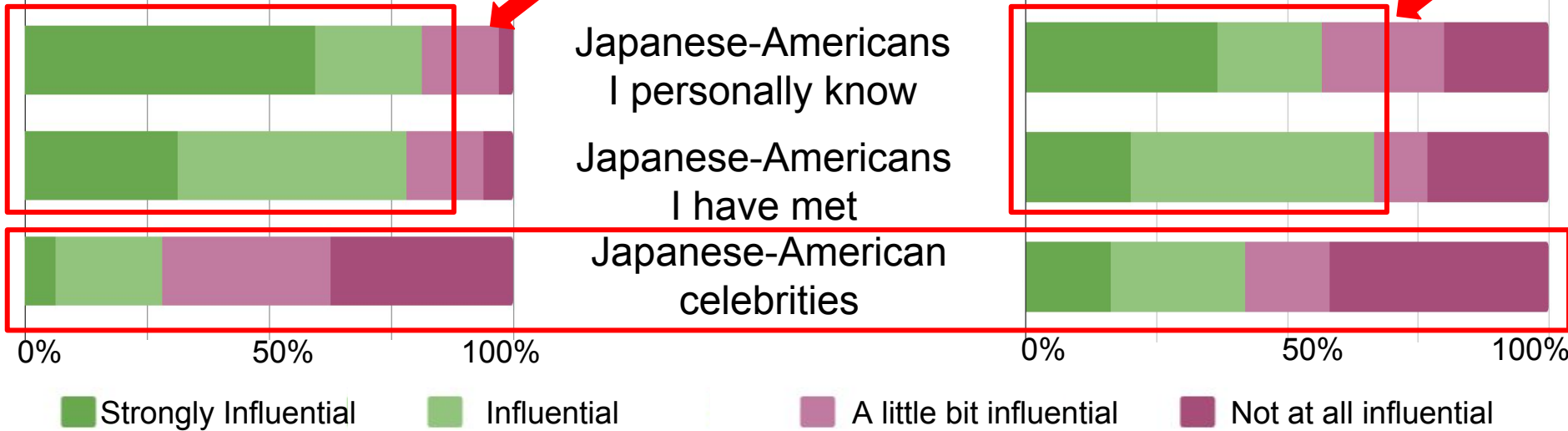


**Majority of Japanese students** were not raised around Japanese-Americans. **Approximately 70% of American students** were.

# What things do you think have influenced your views on Japanese-Americans?

American

Japan

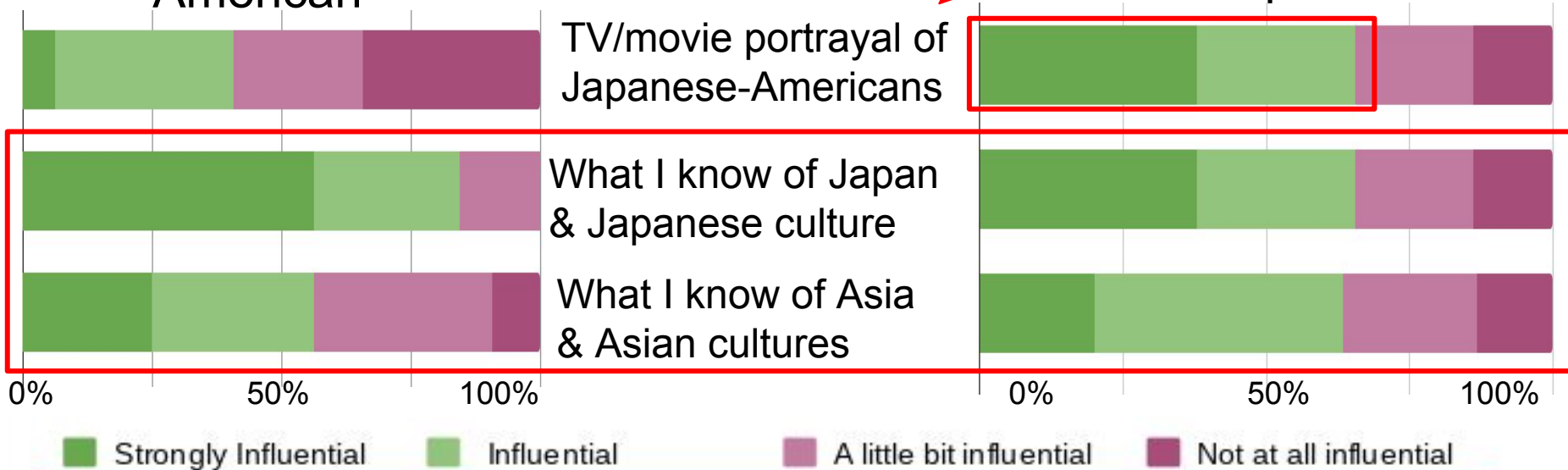


**Both American and Japanese students** image of Japanese-Americans has been formed from Japanese-Americans they personally know or have met. **Neither** have been influenced by famous Japanese-Americans.

# What things do you think have influenced your views on Japanese-Americans?

American

Japan



**Both groups of students** answered that what they know about Japan and Japanese culture influences their views on Japanese-Americans.  
**Only Japanese students** found TV/movie portrayals influential.

## Findings Summary 2

- We found that **both American and Japanese students'** perceptions are influenced by the people they know and what they know about Japan and Japanese culture BUT:
  - **American students** are more likely to know a Japanese-American person, and are more likely to have learned about Japanese-American people and/or history
  - **Japanese students** are more likely to also be influenced by media, such as TV programs or movies.

# Conclusion and Discussion

- **American Students** have a more flexible view and are more knowledgeable about stereotypes & issues regarding Japanese-American identity
  - Direct history involving Japanese-Americans
  - The United States is multicultural society
    - cross-cultural understanding is important
- **Japanese students** thought that Japanese-Americans should maintain ties to both Japanese and American culture
  - They know about Japanese-American history, however they have few opportunities to deepen their knowledge
  - Japanese students tend to focus on the experiences of the issei, but we would like for them to create more multicultural opportunities, deepen their cross-cultural exchange and understand the diversity of *nikkeijin*.

# Limitations of the Study and Future Studies

Therefore this research cannot be generalized

Majority of **American respondents** from California

- there is a large Japanese-American population

We would like to broaden our study from only Japanese-Americans to other Nikkei such as: Japanese-Mexicans, Japanese-Peruvians, Japanese-Brazilian, Japanese-Korean, etc.

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