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## HOW HISTORICAL CONTEXT MATTERS

**How Historical Context Matters for Fourth and Fifth Generation Japanese Americans**

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Loyalty, citizenship, and *Americanness* are questioned throughout immigrant history in the United States (Myer, 1944; Nagata, 1998; Pierce, 2019; Taylor, 1991). When immigrants are seen to pose an economic threat, "race-based laws are enacted to disrupt present and future immigration, land ownership, and rights as a citizen (Nagata, 1998; Paik, et al., 2014; Pierce, 2019; Pierce & Selee, 2017). For Japanese Americans, this was particularly true upon their arrival in the 1800's and before, during, and after their incarceration in the 1940s (Myer, 1944; Suyemoto, 2018). With apologies by the U.S. government and reparations decades later provided to those still alive, it also questioned the monetary value of intergenerational trauma of Japanese Americans" not only being forcibly and unjustly placed into a U.S. prison, but also losing their loved ones, livelihood, communities, and pride (Yamamoto, 1998; Takezawa, 1995). While an abundance of literature exists on the first three generations of Japanese Americans, as well as on the incarceration experience, little is known about the current fourth and fifth generations in scholarly work and how the overt discrimination faced by their ancestors resonates with them in our current turbulent society (Connor, 1975b; Fugita & O'Brien, 1991; Kitano, 1993; Nagata, et al., 2015; Spickard, 2009; Takahashi, 1997; Takezawa, 1997; Tsuda, 2016).

**Purpose**

This study of ethnic identity of fourth- and fifth-generation Japanese Americans in the U.S. extends beyond simply looking at generational status as an indicator of *Americanness* but rather to pursuing ethnic identity enmeshed in historical, cultural, and sociological factors. The individual stories investigate how the ethnic heritage of Japanese Americans of both current and future generations perpetuate the continuance of their ethnic identity. The initial study focused on several aspects: (1) historical context and societal reception; (2) culture (3) generational status and location; (4) school; and (5) community within fourth- and fifth-generation Japanese American adults. However, for the purpose of this paper, the historical context and family histories of fourth- and fifth-generation Japanese Americans are highlighted, and their impact on ethnic identity and generational status will be addressed. The conclusion will provide suggestions for practitioners and educational researchers as well as raising questions for consideration.

**Research Question**

The research question for this study is "How does history influence the ethnic identity of fourth and fifth generation Japanese American adults?"

**Theoretical Framework**

The *Ethnic Identity & Generational Status Model* (Figure 1) is based upon the earlier work of Phinney (1990), Handlin (1951), Mannheim (1927/1972), and Matsuo (1992) and states the following: (a) ethnic identity is shaped by the interactions and experiences between the individual, family, schooling experiences, community, society, and culture (Matsuo, 1992; Phinney, 1990); (b) ethnic group relations with the U.S./generational status influence ethnic and cultural

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identity (Mannheim, 1927/1972; Matsuo, 1992); and (c) historical events and culture shape the experiences and perspectives of consecutive generations (Handlin, 2002; Matsuo, 1992).

Figure 1

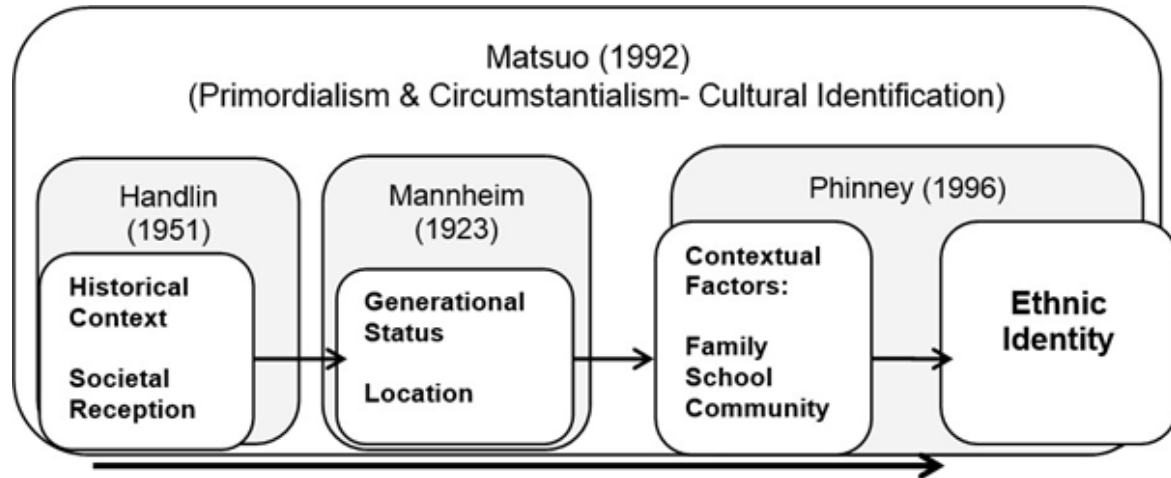


Figure 1. *Ethnic Identity & Generational Status Model*. This figure illustrates how history, culture, generational status, family, community, schooling experiences, and society impact ethnic identity.

Conceptual frameworks of ethnic identity of Japanese Americans following World War II are largely built upon former theories that center on the European immigrant experience (Fugita & O'Brien, 1991; Takahashi, 1997; Takezawa, 1995). In contrast, Japanese American ethnic identity is tightly connected to history, generational status, and processes of assimilation and acculturation. Oftentimes these theories in connection to identity are separated within the literature. The disciplines of psychology, history, education, and sociology are utilized within the *Ethnic Identity & Generational Status Model* in order to address the needs of this multi-generational group. The historical connection of Japanese American ethnic identity is central to fourth and fifth generation Japanese American identity.

Karl Mannheim's theory of generations (1927/1972) is adapted in this study to fit within the larger framework of the *Ethnic Identity & Generational Status Model*. Mannheim (1927/1972) includes the following characteristics:

- the continuous emergence of new participants in the cultural process;
- the continuous withdrawal of previous participants in the process of culture;
- members of any one generation can only participate in a temporally limited selection of the historical process;
- the necessity of constant transmission of cultural heritage;
- the uninterrupted generation series.

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Mannheim (1927/1972) claims that a shared context can bond a generation. Further, Mannheim suggests social class connects a generation because they share the same level of income and may more likely have shared experiences. Understanding a generation is more than just being born within the same time frame; it is a shared experience that helps shape their understanding of the world. Younger generations tend to pick up cultural from older generations and pass on their understanding of culture to the next generation. With this is a shift in culture. Missing from the explanation of context and generations, however, is the addition of ethnicity and how ethnicity within a particular generation can also impact the experience an ethnic group can have when interacting with dominant society.

### Historical Experiences & Generational Status

For Japanese Americans, generational status and their historical experiences are closely linked. United States history has created defined lines of generational status for Japanese Americans based upon the discriminatory laws prohibiting their immigration and citizenship. Immigration from Japan into the United States began in the late 1800's through Hawaii and the recently acquired U.S. state of California. Yet the majority of the first Japanese immigrants entered through the mainland heading to the east coast as college students from wealthy families (Daniels, 1962; Kitano, 1993; Sakamoto, et al., 2012). By 1920, Japanese were the largest ethnic minority population in California (Kurashige, 2002; Paik, et al., 2014). The Immigration Act of 1924 cut off the first wave of immigrants, making a single wave of first generation Japanese immigrants, identified as *Issei*, meaning first generation. They comprised a majority male population; however, unlike the Chinese population, who were barred from entry into the U.S. due to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, Japanese nationals were able to send over their wives and children (Paik, et al., 2014).

The Issei offspring created the second generation, or *Nisei*, who were born prior to World War II (Caudill & Mixon, 2012; Kitano, 1962; Spickard, 2009). During the pre-war era, it was common for Japanese families to send their children back to Japan to receive their education. The term *Kibei* (*ki*=return; *bei*= America) was created by Japanese Americans to identify them separately from the other generations of Japanese Americans living and educated in the U.S. This presented concerns during World War II, according to the War Relocation Authority, who presented *Kibei* as, "The 'Kibei problem'" and questioning their American citizenship and loyalty (Myer, 1944). The terminology extended into half generations as well as mixed generations for in-group identification. *Kibei* returned to the U.S. and tended to have more in common with other Issei vs. their Nisei peers. Some Japanese Americans may identify the differences between their parents' generational status as half. For example, someone whose mother is third generation and father is fourth generation may identify as *San-han*, which means three and a half (Takezawa, 1995). A separate term also identifies and separates Japanese Americans whose parents arrived after World War II, the *Shin-Issei* or *Shin-Nisei*, which translate into the new first generation or new second generations. The Shin immigrant groups did not experience the war or incarceration camp experience in the U.S. (Tsuda, 2016).

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The day after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the FBI compiled a list of what they proclaimed to be Japanese leaders living on the west coast, with their names, addresses, occupations, and involvement with ethnic organizations (Federal Bureau of Investigations, 1941). Once the leaders were interrogated, some were separated from their family members and placed in separate camps until the end of the war (Takezawa, 1995). In the months following, Executive Order 9066 forced over 100,000 Issei and Nisei to evacuate the west coast and placed them into incarceration camps (Roosevelt, 1942). The largest of these camps were set up in remote areas of California, Arizona, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, and Arkansas (Kitano, 1993). Other, smaller prison and FBI camps were set up in areas such as Lordsburg, New Mexico, and Crystal City, Texas (Soga, 2008).

Post-war resettlement for the Issei and Nisei following their release from the incarceration camps was challenging. They were asked not to recreate an ethnic community, stay away from the west coast and instead, become assimilated as much as they could into mainstream society (Nagata, et al., 2015; Taylor, 1991). This meant silencing their stories, even within family spaces, and separating from the communities they had built, with little to no support. Initially, many Japanese American families resettled along the east coast and the Midwest as directed by the War Relocation Authority. As the Issei returned, they discovered a majority of personal items, homes, and businesses they had left with a friend or neighbor had been sold or stolen. Re-starting was a challenge, especially with intensified post-war discrimination and limited resources. Some Nisei were able to regain their finances with startup businesses, while others turned to education to further their careers (Niiya, 2001; Kitano, 1993; Spickard, 2009; Tsuda, 2016).

The third generation, or *Sansei*, were born post-war with many being actively involved in the Asian American Movement and Third World Strikes of the late 1960s-1970s (Fry, 2016; Takezawa, 1995). Kitano (1962) and Connor (1975a, 1975b) both examined the third-generation Japanese American college students and adults along with their respective academic achievement and acculturation. Both Kitano (1962) and Connor (1975a) found that as Japanese Americans became more acculturated into American society and gained acceptance into clubs and social activities, there was a decrease in the focus of academics. Pre-war Nisei focused on academics as a way to attain success since they had been denied access to mainstream social groups and activities. Post-war, however, Japanese Americans began to form their own social groups paralleling those in mainstream society.

The War Brides Act of 1945 and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 opened doors into the U.S. from Asia (Villazor, 2011). This created a distinctly separate group of *Shin* generation, or *new* Japanese nationals. Japanese immigration into the U.S. increased due to war brides' being eligible for citizenship and current Japanese residents' obtaining citizenship and bringing family members into the U.S. These immigrants were referred to within the Japanese American community as the *Shin-Issei* because they arrived post-war and did not endure the same hardships that were experienced by the Issei or Nisei. The Shin-Issei were generally the same age as the growing Sansei population (Tsuda, 2016; Yoo & Azuma, 2016).

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Nisei parents and Issei grandparents' experiences during the war began to emerge as the fourth generation, or *Yonsei*, were born, leading to the Redress Movement of the 1980s and reparations that followed by the U.S. government. Many fourth-generation Japanese Americans were also born or raised when the Japanese economy rose, and trade between Japan and the U.S. became rocky (Regan, 1990). Today, the descendants from the initial wave of Japanese immigrants from the late 1800s and early 1900s are in the fourth-, fifth-, or even sixth- generation.

Separate from Japanese American generational terminology are the terms developed for generations of the general population living in the U.S. The silent generation are considered to be those born between 1928-1945 and align with the Nisei, or second-generation, Japanese Americans and end at the brink of World War II. The generation of the Baby Boomers were born post-war (1946-1964) around the time of the birth of the third generation (Sansei) and just before the Immigration Act of 1965. Generation X, those born between 1965-1980, parallel the Shin-Issei wave of immigrants and the beginning of the fourth generation (Yonsei). The most recent generation, the millennials, born between 1981-1996, cross between both fourth- and fifth- generation Japanese Americans (Dimock, 2018).

The most influential periods in Japanese American history that help explain the relations between the U.S. and the Japanese American community can be divided into six major time periods: (a) early immigration historical acts (including the Immigration Act of 1924, Alien Land Law) (b) of Japanese Americans in the 1940s; (c) post-war resettlement of Japanese Americans by the War Relocation Authority; (d) Asian American Movement in the 1960s-1970s; (e) Redress Movement in the 1980s, (f) Japan bashing in the early 1990s impacted the ethnic identity of Japanese Americans (either becoming more assimilated on the surface or displaying more ethnic pride).

### Methods

Purposive and snowball sampling were utilized in this qualitative study to address the research question. A structured interview protocol with open-ended questions on significant historical events in Japanese American history and how family history is passed through each generation was asked in connection to the persistence of Japanese American ethnic identity. The questionnaire was deemed exempt from institutional review board (IRB) oversight.

### Participants

The researcher interviewed fourth- and fifth-generation Japanese Americans (N=40) over the age of 25. The participants in this study ranged in age from 25-59. This includes being fourth-generation either through the mother or father, and a fourth-generation Japanese American does not have to be fourth-generation on both sides of the family. Similarly, a fifth-generation Japanese American refers to being the fifth-generation of Japanese descendants living in the United States, with the first generation being born in Japan and may also include being fifth-generation either

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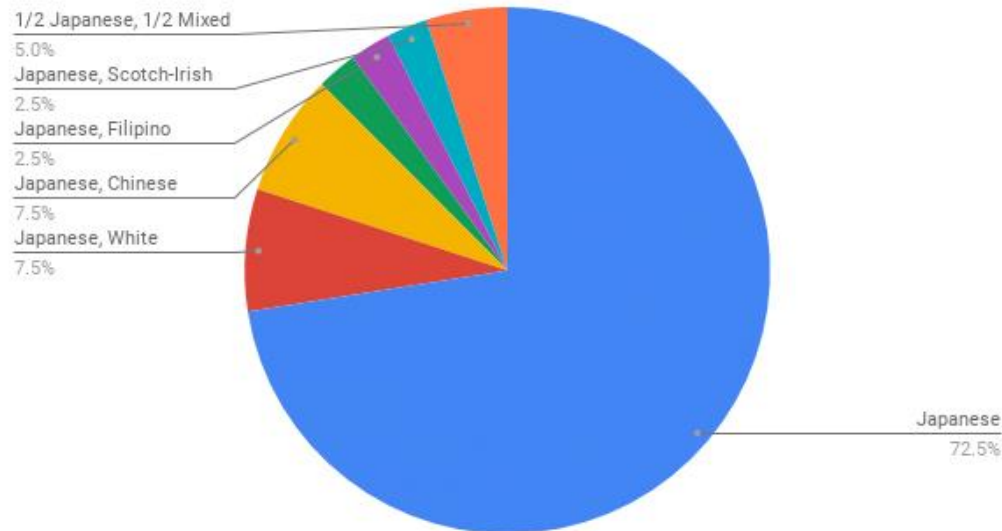


Figure 2. *Participant Ethnicity Breakdown*

through the mother or the father or both sides.

Forty participants (21 identified as female and 19 identified as male) responded and were interviewed following their signed informed consent form. Six identified as fifth-generation on one side of the family, while 34 identified as fourth-generation. Ten of the participants identified as being ½ Japanese and ½ other ethnicities (see Figure 2). Other ethnicities include: Scottish, Irish, Chinese, Mexican, Filipino, and Caucasian. Participants' residence at the time of the study include 30 residing in California, two overseas, and seven out of state (two in Chicago, and one each in Washington, Oregon, Hawaii, Spain, and Japan).

Participants were asked to select a pseudonym in order to protect their anonymity and confidentiality throughout the study. For those who did not change their names, letters and numbers were selected for them. Interviews were conducted in the fall of 2017 through the spring of 2018, when a total of 40 participants were reached.

### Data Analysis

Each interview was recorded, numbered, and transcribed into a template where verbatim responses were copied and pasted into a spreadsheet by question number and color-coded by question. Each question was then hand-coded for emerging themes into a separate table, including a representative quotation for each theme. This study will showcase the results and analysis from the historical context of fourth- and fifth-generation Japanese Americans.

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### **Limitations**

Japanese American organizations were identified through the internet with an introductory email. This may also skew the types of responses, since many of the social media applications and Japanese American groups formed online are for those actively seeking participation in ethnic organizations and learning about the diaspora community. In addition, technology also posed restrictions for a few participants who declined once they learned the interviews required either a voice recording, face-to-face interview, or completing the interview via internet using a camera. Further, informant feedback was not provided.

### **Results**

#### **What do you feel are the most important events in Japanese American history?**

The responses are categorized into three major time periods: Immigration, World War II, and post-war. Figure 3 shows a more detailed breakdown with the number of participants who responded in each category. All forty of the responses included a connection to World War II. The responses during the immigration period included Gentlemen's Agreement, immigration into Hawaii, and the impact of the Chinese Exclusion Act on immigration from Japan. The World War II period included the incarceration camp experience/incarceration of Japanese Americans, 442nd, 100th Battalion, bombing of Pearl Harbor, and Executive Order 9066. Two major areas within the post-war responses included the resettlement and the Redress Movement, and Asian American Movement. Other responses also included the Shin community post 1965, the spread of Buddhism, and farming (see Table 1).



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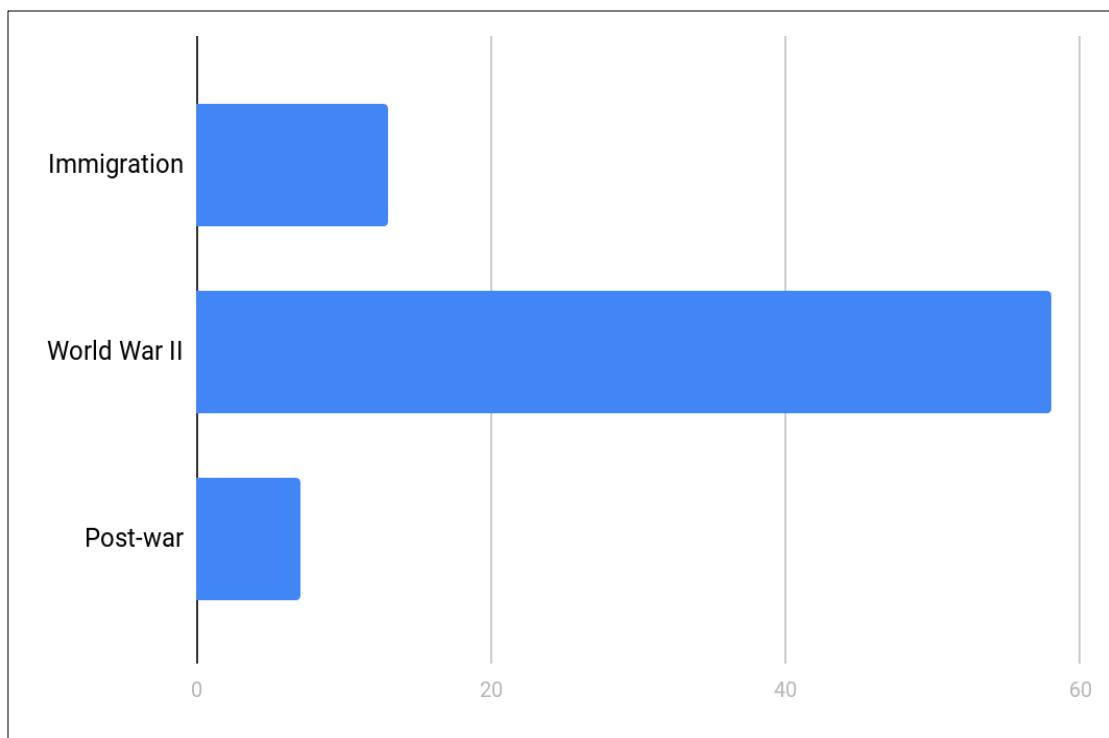


Figure 3. Most important events in Japanese American history by time period

Category	Themes	N	%	Representative Quotes
Immigration				
	Immigration to Hawaii	3	8	With the plantation camps, personally for me, like that was served as the main avenue for people of Japanese American ancestry people I know in my personal life through Hawaii because that's where I grew up
	Early Immigration /Gentleman's Agreement/1965	5	13	Definitely be the opening of Japan in the mid 1800's umm.... which I think, you know, allowed Japanese immigrants to leave Japan and come to the United States
	Chinese Exclusion Act	3	8	I think certainly closing the Chinese Exclusion Act which increased demand for Japanese labor on the west coast

Table 1: Most important events in Japanese American History.

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	Buddhism	2	5	Buddhism and also the immigration of that religion through Hawaii—interesting to me how people arrived through the islands
World War II				
	442nd Battalion	6	15	My grandfather was part of the 442nd division...
	100th Infantry	2	5	Internment and then the associated things with it that came out of that...442nd and the 100th battalion
	Executive Order 9066	5	13	I guess the obvious first answer would probably be Executive Order 9066 and the subsequent internment
	Pearl Harbor	9	23	Um for me it would be the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7th. I was born and raised in Hawaii and my family had to endure that.
	Incarceration	37	93	I think the internment is a huge influence because I think that's the most truly Japanese American thing if that makes any sense
	WWII	9	23	Definitely World War II and what came about that in terms of JA incarceration. I would say that's the goal/focus in my family, I think it was always a point of ...history in terms of our relationship with the United States.... it was how we defined ourselves in terms of our ethnicity.
Post-War				
	Reparations/Redress/Asian American Movement	17	43	The Redress Movement of the 1980s I think that was pretty important for our community
	Resettlement	3	8	As a Japanese American who grew up in Chicago, I think resettlement out of the west coast from the 40's....the late 40's to 45 really shaped how I see the Japanese American community.
	GI Bill	1	3	The GI bill helped them to recuperate and helped them to get property to get loans and before that they had their little credit unions and that wasn't enough so that kind of organized the generations.
	9/11	1	3	I don't know if this is super important but the 9/11 experience and partnering with the Muslim communities.

*Table 1, cont.: Most important events in Japanese American History.*

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*Incarceration*

The most prominent response for the important events in Japanese American history was the incarceration camp experience of Japanese Americans (93%). Participants describe the incarceration camp experience as significant for the following reasons: (1) the experience connected Japanese Americans even several generations later; (2) it divided families (generationally and politically) for those who joined the military and those who stayed in the camps; (3) it reflects an important part of American history that is often ignored; (4) it shaped the identity of Japanese Americans; (5) it created a stronger Japanese American community; (6) for some, it is seen as a shameful experience to endure, so therefore it is not discussed; (7) it impacted American perceptions of Japanese Americans.

The incarceration camp experience is acknowledged as an injustice by the U.S. government, yet forcing Japanese Americans to endure this traumatic event, which included co-habiting in close quarters with strangers, connected many Japanese American families--a bond that continued even two to three generations later. JT #7 stated, "No matter how many generations you're away from it, people still relate to that, 'your parents were at Poston?' you know, were your...maybe I knew your uncle, was he in Jerome?'etcetera." The connection of family members including extended family connects people through conversations of the shared incarceration camp experience.

Conversely, the incarceration also caused some to question American allegiance and define what it means to be Japanese American. Family members who served in the military during WWII, and for Nisei in particular, wanted to prove their loyalty to the U.S. and to citizenship as an American. For those who were in the camps, it showed a connection to the Japanese American community, perceived ties to Japan, or complacency for those living on the mainland. This resulted in a generational divide between Issei parents who were not U.S. citizens and had limited in English, and their Nisei sons who were U.S. citizens and wanted to enlist in the U.S. military to fight out of loyalty to the U.S. (Nagata, et al., 2015). V #17 states:

I guess the obvious first answer would probably be Executive Order 9066 and the subsequent incarceration during WWII. Umm...well it was specifically a... uh racially driven um Executive Order and it uh really drew a line through the... uh Japanese American community. Especially I guess for the generations.... especially...my grandparents, for instance, felt some betrayal and um my uncles and their children, for instance, felt it was their responsibility and their duty to serve their country, um and I know in other families that kind of created a conflict between the parents and the children.

For the Yonsei, they are aware of the Executive Order, loyalty oath, and recruitment to the U.S. military, which further divided nuclear family relations. By joining the U.S. military, it represented allegiance to the U.S. over their parents and turning against their heritage country (Suyemoto, 2018).

VO #22 describes the incarceration as part of not only family history but also American history that adds to American identity. In addition, it is a significant part of American history that is often overlooked:

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Internment is such a uniquely Japanese American experience, so for me, as I identify as an American, knowing that my family endured this very specific and painful experience, centered to that identity, it's something that is part of the legacy of being Yonsei/ Japanese American. Umm I think yea, historically it's just, it needs to be highlighted more in American history because it's a time that like we imprisoned American citizens and people and so historically, from a general American standpoint it's super important for us to study... especially as we look at the stuff going on in the country these days. Um and then as a Japanese American specifically, the unique and painful experience is something that people want to be remembered.

The political climate during the time of the interview raised concerns for many of the participants about the need for Japanese American incarceration to continue to be included within the framework of history. In addition is the intergenerational trauma passed down from Issei to Yonsei (Nagata & Cheng, 2003). For some, the incarceration camp experience defines what it means to be Japanese American as an ethnicity--separate from being Japanese. AN #13 states:

I think the internment is a huge influence because I think that's the most truly Japanese American things.... if that makes any sense.... um at least for that when I started really.... um connecting to being Japanese American-- because I didn't grow up in Japan and I've been to Japan a couple times but I'm also not a typical "American" so I think that moment in history really solidified a lot of things if that makes sense.

The war created a dichotomy of both separation and community among Japanese Americans. It forced Japanese Americans to share the same physical space and separated the group from those who joined the military. A participant also connected the post-war displacement in rural areas within the U.S., a reference to the War Relocation Authority's forced resettlement in the Midwest (Taylor, 1991). As MM#21 describes:

World War II it kind of...made the Japanese Americans band together more because there was a common threat and they had common grievance, and then you know when they were incarcerated, they had a common experience, and so it was so widespread and kind of uniform in its nature. Everyone got displaced and everyone got put in a rural area and everyone you know....and then they were organized very militarily and I believe that the families were organized not so much by family unit but more by age. And so, then that the generations became I believe pretty separate. They developed their own sub-cultures.

MM #21 raises several important points: the shared experience of the war, shared experience post-war, and development of the Japanese Americans as a subculture.

### *Redress Movement*

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The second most commonly mentioned event in Japanese American history was the Redress Movement and reparations issued by the U.S. government in the 1980s. Most who described the importance of redress connected it to (1) motivation for present day social activism; (2) the Sansei identity and consecutive generations; (3) the U.S. government admitting and apologizing for their racially motivated discriminatory act; (4) providing a small monetary repayment for those who survived; and (5) a step in assisting in the healing process of Japanese Americans who went through the incarceration camp experience. EchN describes:

the Redress Movement because I think that it was a significant movement in that it was launched by a very small population in the United States umm and yet was able to win on the federal level, which is pretty incredible, and um in a lot of ways really addressed maybe not addressed but healed a lot of the damage that was done as a result of the internment camps for those who went through it. And I think it inspired a new generation of Japanese Americans to look to the future and consider activism and social issues pushing forward.

Although monetary reparations would never fully recuperate the loss of pain, intergenerational trauma within the family, health, home, occupation, and sense of citizenship, it provided consolation when the U.S. acknowledged Japanese American incarceration as wrong and unconstitutional (Takezawa, 1995; Yamamoto, 1998). Additionally, participants saw the Redress Movement as instilling a sense of moral obligation within the present generation to prevent future discriminatory acts from occurring to Japanese Americans or any other ethnic group in the future.

RT #10 explains:

following up with the internment, is the 1980s Redress Movement was a big turning point as well and shaping my generation and for the government to say that's not o.k, and carry the guard to make sure stuff like that doesn't happen again. Unconstitutional and prevent that in the future.

Despite research claiming that there was a loss of ethnic identity at the third generation, participants perceived the Redress Movement as a time to reclaim their ethnic identity. KH#6 explains why it might be important:

I guess redress, not so much for my family, just because it's the next step after internment that's why it's such an important in the social justice and the ethnic identity for Japanese Americans I think that was the time when the Sanseis got that final sense of identity so that's why I think it's so important in our...in the JA history.

The two most common responses about Japanese American history are inter-connected, although they occurred at two different points in time: incarceration camp experiences of Issei and Nisei in the 1940s, and the Redress Movement in the 1970s and 1980s that involved the Sansei (Takezawa, 1995). These two events were stated as the most important events in Japanese American history for Yonsei in this study; however, their reasons for choosing these events vary based on their personal experiences.

**In what ways has your family shared your family history with you?**

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After participants described the important events in Japanese American history, the

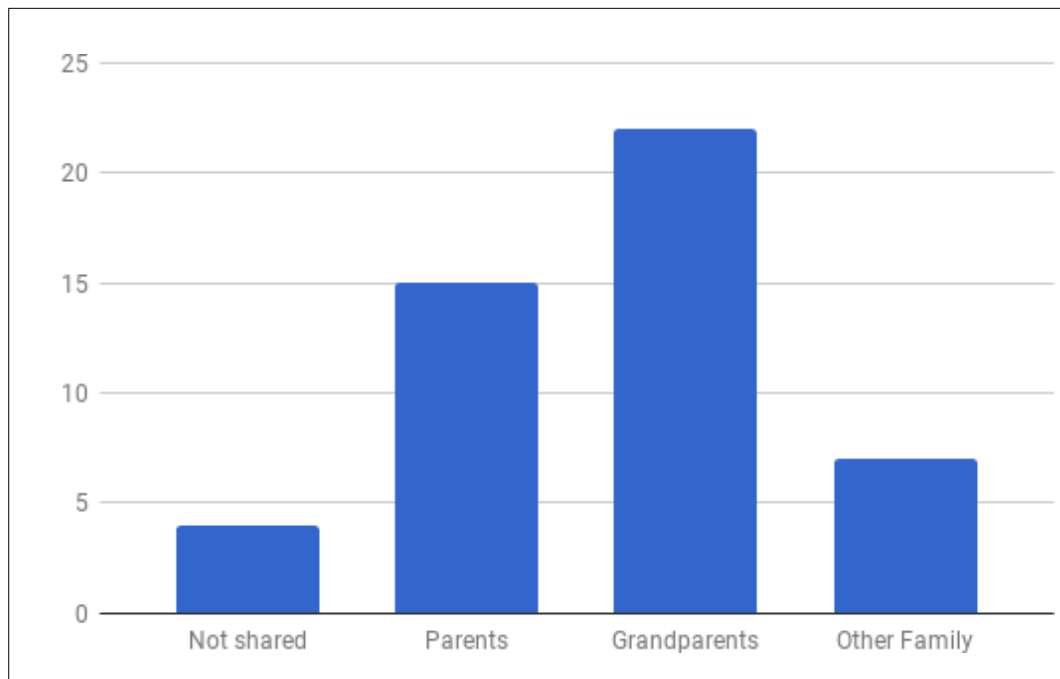


Figure 4. How family history is shared.

responses about family history were divided into four response types: (1) grandparents; (2) parents (3) other family members; and (4) not shared (see Figure 4). Twenty-two of the participants mentioned grand-parents as the family member who shared their family history the most. The second top response were parents at 38% (15 responses), and the third was through other family members 18% (7 responses). However, there were 4 participants who stated their families did not share their history with them.

Themes		N	%	Representative Participant Quotes
How family history is shared				
	Not shared	4	10	I didn't learn much of that until after I graduated from school and learned it on my own.

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	Parents	15	38	So, both were actually really open about sharing their experiences about the camps throughout my childhood un- like you know, a lot of Nisei parents who were really reluctant to talk about it.
	Grandparents	22	55	I did do in 8th/7th grade an oral history report with my grandmother, she and I had a lot of conversations
	Other Family (i.e., siblings, cousins)	7	18	We have a distant cousin who is a historian and an artist and she's done a lot of research on our family

Im- portance of Fam- ily His- tory				
	Future Gen- erations	4	10	I think that generations to come, you know like...I have three daughters....so I think it's important for me to share my family story with them, where their place is in this world and American history
	Resilience	4	10	My grandparents, they came over from Japan to work in the fields in Kauai and just hearing how they persevered that gave me a sense of pride that they were so strong and resilient and knowing those things I guess are in my family blood and makes me more likely to try to embody those things as well. I grew up with "shikataganai" so when I study it and understand it more like the facts of what his- tory my family lived--it just kind of helps affirms these things that might already exist inside of myself and kind of helps me understand why am I so pent up on justice.
	Identity/Sense of self/Confidence	20	50	I think it's important because it gives a sense of who you are, not just as an individual or as a family but also your connections to your larger history to your larger community your larger cultural roots so it gives you that sense of ethnic identity and belonging to those who share the same narrative as you and also a sense of pride and confidence in yourself

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	Social Responsibility	3	8	As Japanese Americans we have more of a social responsibility to help other minority groups since we have the organizational experience
	Medical	2	5	Personally, I feel like on a level of like medical history, it's important to know what diseases are in your family so you can adequately provide like those yourself.
	Mannerisms/JA Cultural norms passed down	9	23	I think it's important to know where you came from and why you do what you do...a lot of people thought it was weird when I ate peanut butter and sugar and I found out they didn't have jelly in the internment camp so they ate peanut butter and sugar instead
	Appreciation of Ancestors	11	28	I inherited that spirit from them and I definitely try to take the history and virtues and values that my ancestors have brought with them to America and I try to live that life now because they worked so incredibly hard to make sure that future generations would have those opportunities that they didn't have.

Table 2. Family: History &amp; Importance

**Grandparents**

Within the grandparent responses, the World War II experiences, whether they were interned or fought in the 100th Infantry Battalion and 442nd infantry, stories were mostly prompted by middle-school or high-school assignments and research reports. The direct and explicit connection for Japanese Americans to learn about their history through school assignments provides family members the opportunity to interact and discuss the events as an educational experience, which has helped many of the Yonsei and Gosei learn about their own family histories and bring out some of the emotions tied to the events. These conversations help in the process of healing (Hunter, 2020; Nagata, 2003). VO #22 describes the experience of the horse stables being used as a home for interned families in Los Angeles:

I um...I used to do school reports when you have to do a biography and I always interviewed my grandfather because I was really close to him and um I...and I think it's such a compelling and important story...and there it was-- the Santa Anita racetrack, and the mall, and people go there every day, and he lived in a horse stall there, and lived there for months, and he always made it a point to share that our country and his country--that he was a citizen of...really turned his back on him for a period of his life and that really left a mark.



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The feelings of citizenship and loyalty the Japanese Americans held towards the U.S. during World War II were returned with unjust and inhumane treatment (Nagata, 2003). KH #3: When I was in elementary school...umm [my grandparents] shared their stories of their background and their histories, and they would come to my classrooms when I was younger. My grandma, she was pretty active in a number of different projects in the community as well as, you know, throughout the state of California.... umm and so she was relatively open, she didn't overshare but she was open about answering questions. Umm... I think especially, at least my generation of cousins were pretty interested and so she never held back, which I think is great because I think some of my friends and their family members weren't necessarily as open.

Grandparent engagement in their educational experience held a lasting impact on many of the participants. Openly sharing these experiences for the next generation keeps the history alive and serves as a reminder of how the Issei paved the way for consecutive generations (Sakamoto, et al., 2012). Consequently, school projects allowed Yonsei to ask questions that they may not have otherwise asked their parents or grandparents unless prompted by an outside source. For students to rely only on information in school textbooks are limiting in depicting the history and treatment of Japanese Americans (Hawkins & Buckendorf, 2010; Ogawa, 2004; Romanowski, 1996).

### **Why is it important to know your family history?**

The responses were divided into eight categories. The top three responses included: (1) identity/sense of self/confidence; (2) appreciation of ancestors; and (3) explanation of the mannerisms and Japanese American cultural norms that are passed down. The most common response with 20 out of the 40 participants expressed that knowing their family history is connected to their identity, sense of self, and confidence. When they further explained their response, it was commonly connected to their family and the Japanese American community (see Table 2).

Identity, sense of self, and self-confidence are interrelated. Knowing one's family history helps reinforce or strengthen one's own ethnic identity (Sakamoto et al., 2012). PM #14:

I think it's important because it gives a sense of who you are, not just as an individual or as a family but also your connections to your larger history-- to your larger community, your larger cultural roots, so it gives you that sense of ethnic identity and belonging to those who share the same narrative as you and also a sense of pride and confidence in yourself because you have a better understanding of who you are. You have a better sense of where you come from and so it's not something to be ashamed of.

The second most common explanation with 11 out of the 40 referred to honoring their ancestors when describing the importance of knowing their family history. KH #6 describes:

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I think it's important because it gives you a sense of identity. I'm very proud... I inherited the [surname] side of the family that's my mom's side...that's very proud of their history. I inherited that spirit from them and I definitely try to take the history and virtues and values that my ancestors have brought with them to America and I try to live that life now because they worked so incredibly hard to make sure that future generations would have those opportunities that they didn't have.

KH#6 also reflects a sense of pride and thinking about how the actions of ancestors shape consecutive generations by paving the way and taking on the hardships faced when entering a new land. Understanding the history provides an explanation for some of the mannerisms present within Japanese American culture:

I think it helps explain why JAs (Japanese Americans) have their own idiosyncrasies and why they develop their own culture within the family structure--it seems like--I didn't understand why they did things a certain way--like 'Mottainai'-don't waste anything...It seems like without knowing that kind of history and what each generation has gone through it kind of fills in the blanks to explain why they do what they do or think the way they.... there are definitely patterns of behavior that I recognize that don't necessarily translate to other families unless they're an immigrant family. Again, like that transition of assimilating right away or holding on to like Japanese holidays but it's the American version of the Japanese holiday. It's the flux between both worlds and if I didn't understand that they went to camp or that Pearl Harbor happened or all the Civil Rights Movements—it would be difficult to understand why they do what they do. It helps me understand their perspectives into place. It's a shame when people don't know their family history especially with millennials. They want to belong to a community or know their roots. It's an innate human thing to want to know where they came from.

Knowing one's family history provides the individual a better sense of who they are, where they came from, and helps to explain the mannerisms and traditions that are passed down through each generation. The significance of Japanese American history is reiterated in different ways across the responses, demonstrating the need for a more thorough approach in understanding injustice. Many of the Yonsei and Gosei in this study learned about their family histories through their grandparents, who were willing to share their experiences during World War II. They described how the suffering of their grandparents and great-grandparents being in the incarceration camps was wrong and that history should not repeat itself. Some of the participants mentioned that their grandparents felt more comfortable sharing the information with them more so than their own children--the Sansei (Nagata, 2003). The Sansei parents who shared their family histories with their children were often actively engaged within the Japanese American community. Several Japanese Americans in this study felt a strong appreciation towards their ancestors for leaving their homeland and facing intense discrimination, in order to provide a better future for their children.

### Conclusion

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The results of this study indicate that ethnic identity is a conscious choice for most fourth- and fifth-generation Japanese Americans who are well-informed of their family history, continue to participate in ethnic organizations, serve within their communities, are social activists, and understand the impact their history has on future generations as well as on other ethnic groups. Family history plays a large role as individual Yonsei and Gosei responses indicate. Questions of citizenship, loyalty, and acts of discrimination towards Japanese Americans throughout their history in the U.S. were highlighted within each of their responses.

Despite the majority of the participants expressing the importance of their families' stories being heard alongside the history of Japanese Americans before and after the war, a question that resonates throughout the study is, "Where does this fit into the K-12 curriculum?" Education was raised as a key not only to learning about the Japanese American incarceration for some of the Yonsei and Gosei, but also to opening the discussion about World War II with family members who were incarcerated or served in the 442nd or 100th Battalion. Moreover, how are these important areas within Japanese American history being taught—if at all? Teachers should also be aware of their roles within these discussions and to combat potential biases. To this end, it takes a conscientious effort to include the Japanese American narrative into educational curriculum. History textbooks that include curriculum on Japanese Americans still raise concerns about how they are being portrayed (Hawkins & Buckendorf, 2010; Ogawa, 2004; Romanowski, 1996). While most would assume that this curriculum would be required in the History-Social Studies Content Standards and Framework in California, where the majority of Japanese Americans resided prior to and after their incarceration, the term *Japanese American* is used just once in the K-12 California History-Social Science Framework, and just once in the K-12 History-Social Science Content Standards reserved for 11th grade, out of the total 855 and 65 pages, respectively (California Department of Education, 1998, 2017). The context for both references in the framework and standards are listed among other injustices taking place during World War II. With such a list of events, teaching about the Japanese American incarceration can unfortunately be avoided altogether. This is an area that needs redevelopment not only in K-12+ curriculum, framework, and standards, but also within teacher education programs, textbook reviews by professionals in Japanese American history, and professional development.

The voice and presence of Japanese Americans specifically, and of Asian Americans as whole, are underrepresented outside of their own educational/ethnic organizations. This, along with continued Asian American invisibility in teacher preparation programs and faculty positions in higher education, raises a stronger need for Critical Race Theory (CRT), specifically AsianCrit in teacher education programs and curriculum development. It offers a critical lens specific to examining the experiences of race and racism within Asian American populations (An, 2016; Han & Laughter, 2019; Museus, 2013).

The change in U.S. administration starting with the 2016 election brought forth a change in legislation and increased anti-immigrant sentiment, which is loosely referenced within some of the participant responses. The forced separation by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security

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between parents and children resonated across the Japanese American community as a repeated historical and inhumane act. The parallel between Japanese American incarceration and present issues regarding immigration bans and citizenship status are timely. In 2019, Japanese Americans protested using the site of a former incarceration camp during World War II as an undocumented detention center for children, which displays the activism and the voice of Japanese Americans that did not exist during WWII (Acevedo, 2019; Pierce, 2019).

In 1998, Eric Yamamoto reflected upon the 1988 Redress and questioned the “political role Japanese Americans might play in future struggles for racial justice in America.” Race certainly plays the central role of this paper. The study facilitated interest in participating in hopes that it would provide further insight to educators and researchers not only of Japanese American history and the impact it has on generations later, but also on how the discriminatory acts of injustice in the past should not be repeated again, now or in the future. Incarceration of Japanese Americans happened as a result of racial discrimination. We need to understand that. In our current devastation, where race again plays a significant role in the police brutality against Black lives, the accusations and blame assigned to Asian Americans for COVID-19, it would be shameful for anyone, particularly Yonsei and future generations, to be complicit.

The following questions are for practitioners and educational researchers to consider, discuss, and reflect:

- In what ways do you support your students’ diverse family histories in the K-12+ classroom?
- Where does the incarceration of Japanese Americans fit in your curriculum?
- In what ways can you engage your students in democracy across history and content areas?
- How do you develop yourself as an educator to be culturally responsive to students’ needs that are different from your own?
- How does generational status of Japanese Americans inform other longstanding ethnic groups in the U.S.?
- How will you stand against injustices?

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