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Publication Date

2012

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Analysis of the Correlation between Language Attitudes and

Identity Perceptions among Japanese-American

Heritage Language Speakers and Learners:

An Examination of a Student Focus Group

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts

in Applied Linguistics

by

Joanna Yuka Metoki

2012

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Analysis of the Correlation between Language Attitudes and

Identity Perceptions among Japanese-American

Heritage Language Speakers and Learners:

An Examination of a Student Focus Group

by

Joanna Yuka Metoki

Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics

University of California, Los Angeles, 2012

Professor Susan J. Plann, Chair

This exploratory study examines the identity perceptions and language attitudes of seven Japanese-American university students. In order to extend the existing research done on heritage language development and ethnic identity formation, the students engaged in critical discussions regarding their identities and attitudes in a series of focus group meetings. The results supported the literature concerning the strong positive correlation between the students' views toward their heritage language and their ethnic identities. However, the results also suggested that their prior attitudes and perceptions may be altered when the students are allowed to critically analyze these topics while coming in contact with various perspectives held by other Japanese-Americans.

The thesis of Joanna Yuka Metoki is approved.

Shoichi Iwasaki

Olga Kagan

Susan J. Plann, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2012

DEDICATIONS

This study would not have been possible without the generous support of numerous people. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all of them.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my advisor, Susan Plann for her words of wisdom and encouragement. I know that if it would have been any other professor, they may have felt apprehensive about this project. Susan never doubted my abilities and always supported me in my decisions, even when I was a bit unsure. When I felt like I was overwhelmed and did not know which step to take next, Susan was always there to remind me to simply "breathe" and take things one step at a time.

I would like to thank Olga Kagan for the inspiration. I would not have thought of conducting this study if it were not for Olga's comment that she made about heritage language learners that day in class. Her words pushed me to continue questioning and developing my interests in heritage language education and development.

I am grateful for Shoichi Iwasaki for his advice and making suggestions that guided me towards the right direction.

I am very thankful for every single one of my participants. I could not have done this study without their continued commitments. I am still amazed at the amount of determination these students demonstrated even during the busiest times of their quarter. One student even came to a focus group meeting when he was sick with a cold.

I would like to thank my parents, Nobuko and Tsuyoshi Metoki, for giving me life and the opportunity to do what I strongly believed in, my sister Patty, thank you for being so understanding, my friends for always reminding me that I am doing the right thing.

Last but not least, I would also like to thank Lucy Tse for her kindness, support, and guidance. Lucy's advice and feedback have inspired me and encouraged me immensely. Her passion for the topic of heritage language education strengthened my own interests and motivated me to continue exploring. I do not know how to thank her for being so supportive of my ideas since the moment we met. I cannot say that this project would have been the same if I was not able to meet Lucy that day at the coffee shop.

Once again, I would like to thank everyone for their support and encouragement.

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1. Introduction

Colleges and universities across the country are beginning to incorporate language courses which are specifically geared towards heritage language speakers. But as these courses become more popular, educators are finding problems that are specific to these classes. Especially with the less taught heritage languages in the United States such as Japanese, research (Kanno, Hasegawa, Ikeda & Ito, 2005) has shown numerous issues specific to these heritage language learners that still need to be addressed. Researchers find that low student enrollment and the high probability of student drop-outs to be major challenges within this field. Many educators are calling for better methodology and reevaluation of pedagogy, but simply addressing these problems is not going to help encourage enrollment. A bigger issue which needs examination lies in discovering ways of motivating the students to learning or maintaining their heritage language(s). Fishman (1994) states how important a language is in defining one's culture, and he proposes that countless factors within one's culture can only be expressed through the language. Fishman emphasizes the significance of a language by demonstrating what would be lost if one stopped speaking the language:

> When you are talking about the language, most of what you are talking about is the culture. That is, you are losing all those things that essentially are the way of life, the way of thought, the way of valuing, and the human reality that you are talking about. (p. 72)

Fishman's observations are at the macro level but can also be applied to the individual language learner. Those who lose their heritage language also risk losing connections to their own roots and a large part of their own identity.

Numerous studies (Chinen, 2005; Oriyama, 2010; Tse, 1998; 2008) have examined the relationship between heritage languages and the identities of the heritage language speakers and

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learners. Tse (1998; 2000) showed how learners' positive or negative attitudes, experienced during the different stages of ethnic identity formation, can either motivate or discourage learners to acquire their heritage language(s). Studies such as these illustrate the significance of learner identities to heritage language development and also language attitudes in general. However, research on this topic is still limited, and even less research has been done with Japanese-American heritage language learners. Existing studies usually examine the language learners using a case-by-case perspective and fail to illustrate the holistic nature of the "socially constructed" identity (Val & Vinogradova, 2010, p. 1)

This study examines the identity perceptions of various Japanese-American heritage language speakers and learners and how the attitudes they hold towards their heritage language – Japanese – shape those perceptions. This research builds upon previous research by examining the changes to these identity perceptions and language attitudes brought upon by the students' involvement in a focus group activity. In the focus group meetings, learners critically analyzed topics and themes related to identity and Japanese and Japanese-American cultures.

The outcomes of this study contribute to the field of heritage language development and education. Through exploring the language attitudes of these Japanese-American subjects, we are better able to understand who our learners are and how to effectively motivate them and teach them their heritage language. We may also find ways to make our classrooms less intimidating for learners who feel self-conscious and embarrassed about using their heritage language in front of others. This can also lead to a higher probability that students who are already enrolled in the heritage language classes will continue to take them. The results can offer insight into how

teachers can encourage the heritage language learners to recognize the values of their heritage language and the benefits of bilingualism in their classrooms.

2. Literature Review

This section will discuss previous research dealing with heritage language education and development, identity formation theory, and Japanese-Americans in the U.S. The first section will define the terms heritage language, heritage language speakers, and language learners. The second section will identify how Japanese as a heritage language is currently taught in educational settings within the country. The third section will discuss the relationship between heritage language and identity through the perspective of identity and ethnic identity formation theories. The final section will briefly touch upon the importance of learner identities within the language classrooms.

2.1 Defining Heritage Languages and Their Speakers and Learners

By the start of the twenty-first century, heritage language development and education had garnered much interest within fields such as language teaching and pedagogy, second-language acquisition, bilingual education, theoretical linguistics, and experimental linguistics. Within the past 15 years, many researchers have proposed various definitions for what constitutes a "heritage language." According to Kelleher (2010), the term heritage language refers to "languages other than the dominant language (or languages) in a given social context." (p. 1) Before this term heritage language was used, researchers describe them in multiple ways. Many people called them "minority languages," while others (Baker & Jones, 1998; Corson, 1999; Wiley, 2001; 2005) called them "community languages" and some researchers (Yeung, Marsh & Suliman, 2000) used the term "home languages" (as cited in Kelleher, 2010, p. 1).

Kagan and Polinsky (2007) define heritage languages through a broad and narrow perspective. Broadly speaking, heritage languages "emphasize possible links between cultural heritage and linguistic heritage" (p. 369). Many people may have heard the language being used in the home by their relatives or members of community, but their proficiency in the heritage language is usually similar to that of a second-language learner. The most commonly used definition was introduced by Valdes (2000) and takes a more narrow perspective. She discusses heritage language as the language used by "individuals raised in homes where a language other than English is spoken and who are to some degree bilingual in English and the heritage language" (as cited in Kagan & Polinsky, 2007, p. 369). Valdes further emphasizes that the heritage language is usually "first in order of acquisition but was not completely acquired because of the individual's switch to another dominant language" (as cited in Kagan & Polinsky, 2007, pp. 369-370).

For the purpose of this study, the broad definition given by Kagan and Polinsky (2007) will be used. Also, the participants who are described as heritage language learners are "namely heritage speakers who wish to regain, maintain or improve their home language through classroom instruction," (Kagan and Polinsky, 2007, p. 29) while the participants who are currently not enrolled in the language courses are simply described as heritage language speakers.

2.2 Japanese as a Heritage Language in the U.S.

According to Potowski (2010), the average life-span of a heritage language in this country is three generations. It is very common for children of immigrant families, who were initially heritage language dominant, to shift to becoming English dominant. Japanese is no exception to this trend. According to Jorden & Lambert (1991), "Japanese [was] the first Asian

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language that has been mainstreamed in American formal education from the elementary school level through college level" (as cited in Kondo-Brown, 1998, p.51). Although Japanese is one of the most popular foreign languages, it is still one of the less commonly taught languages (Lee, 2005).

In America, Japanese as a heritage language was traditionally taught within two settings: community language schools and Saturday Japanese Schools or *hoshuukous*. The main difference between these two types of schools is in their institutional goals. Community schools are usually operated by the parents of the students and community members, while the Saturday schools are sponsored by the Japanese Ministry of Education. The students at the community schools are mostly Japanese-Americans who attend the school in order to maintain their heritage language for use with immediate family members in America. At the Saturday schools, most of the students are Japanese natives who hope to maintain and further develop their first language so they can easily join their peers in school when they return to Japan. Kondo-Brown (1998) found that many community language schools in Hawaii lack the monetary stability that the Saturday schools possess and have been suffering decline, making it difficult for Japanese-American families to find community support for heritage language maintenance.

Although many schools are beginning to offer heritage language courses, this is still a recent trend and the numbers of such programs are still low. Even within California and Hawaii, where large numbers of Japanese immigrants and their children live (The Japan Foundation Language Center, 1995 as cited in Kondo-Brown, 1998, p. 51), often times the heritage language learners have no choice but to enroll in regular foreign language classes with the second-language learners. This is often a problem since research demonstrates (Kagan & Polinsky,

2007) that heritage language learners, unlike their foreign language learner counterparts, usually possess knowledge of the language when they come into the classroom. This means that educators must address the linguistic needs that are particular to the heritage language learners in order to teach them effectively. Heritage language learners often have a narrow inventory of vocabulary, and they may possess high levels of oral and aural proficiency but lack skills in reading or writing. They may have inconsistencies in their grammatical knowledge, and they may be less knowledgeable of pragmatic conventions connected to the language.

Recent studies done with Japanese-American heritage language learners (Kanno et al., 2005; Kondo-Brown, 2005) have found while it is clear how heritage language learners differ from the foreign-language learners, these learners are actually not a homogeneous group in terms of their linguistic knowledge. These studies demonstrated how "their degree of connection to [the] Japanese heritage" (Kondo-Brown, 2005, p. 564) and the "kind of prior exposure to Japanese" (Kanno et al., 2005, p. 1141) also proved to be major factors in the learners' prior knowledge. These results also emphasize the complexities of the Japanese heritage language learners which teachers must be aware of when interacting with them in their classrooms.

2.3 Japanese-Americans and the Categorization of Various Generations

Members of the Japanese-American community utilize specific terms to describe the various categories of generational groups (Schaefer, 2008). These terms are significant to the Japanese-American community since they symbolize the distinctive histories and experiences of each generation due to situations involving immigration. Most Japanese-Americans, including the participants of this study, referred to these categories when they defined their identities. The

exact origin of the taxonomy is not certain, but the participants of this study agreed that these terms are used only by members of the Japanese-American community.

The first group is called "Issei" （一世）or first generation, and these are the people who were born in Japan and immigrated to America before the Immigration Act of 1924, which banned immigration from Japan. The next group is called "Nisei" （二世）or second generation, who are the Japanese-Americans who have at least one Issei parent. The "Sansei" or the third generation are Japanese-Americans who have at least one Nisei parent. The "Yonsei" （四世）or fourth generation are the Japanese-Americans who have at least one Sansei parent.

Recently, this taxonomy has been adapted to include a category that defines a new generational group. This group was part of the second wave of Japanese immigrants who arrived after the 40 year ban was lifted by the Immigration Act of 1965. These people are called "Shin-Issei" (新一世) or the new first generation and their children are called "Shin- Nisei" （新二世）or new second generation. At least for the participants of this study, this restructuring of the generational categories illustrated a clear dichotomy between the older generation Japanese-Americans (the X-sei) and the new generation Japanese-Americans (the Shin- X-sei.)

2.4 Heritage Languages and Identity

Many researchers ascribe the process of identity formation to adolescents. For example, Phinney (1990) describes it, through the definition proposed by Erikson (1975), as "a process of crisis (exploration of alternatives) and commitment (a decision reflecting personal investment)."(p. 171) In other words, identity is a state of mind which is often first experienced by the youth who will usually experience some form of disorientation pertaining to their concept

of self. They begin to question what their options are, and this is followed by a stage where they discover which one of the previous options is most suitable for their own lives.

Norton (2010) through a poststructuralist perspective describes the inextricable connection between language and identity. She describes language as "discourse" where there is a presence of struggle but it is also a way to achieve truth and power. She states that "language is thus theorized not only as a linguistic system, but as a social practice in which experiences are organized and identities negotiated." (p. 351) This process of negotiation within an individual's identity is discussed by Bordieu (1977). He states that the meaning of what is said by an individual can never be separated from that individual who spoke it. Also, the individual can never be considered separately from society.

> Every time we speak, we are negotiating and renegotiating our sense of self in relation to the larger social world, and reorganizing that relationship across time and space. Our gender, race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, among other characteristics, are all implicated in this negotiation of identity. (as cited in Norton, 2010, p. 350)

Erikson's (1968) definition of identity mentioned earlier illustrates a broad idea and it does not take into account the complexities of society or the experiences specific to ethnic minorities in the United States. Numerous minority authors (Aplipuria & Phinney, 1990; Chavira & Phinney, 1992) explore the topic of ethnic identity formation to expand on Erikson's (1975) definition.

Instead of taking the perspective of Erikson's (1975) ego-identity formation, Phinney (1990) emphasizes ideas introduced by social identity theorists such as Tajfel and Turner (1986), and defines ethnic identity as "a subjective sense of belonging to an ethnic group and the feelings and attitudes that accompany this sense of group membership" (as cited in Phinney, Romero, Nava & Huang 2001, p. 136). Further studies done in 2001 by Phinney et al. found how the heritage languages used by the youth of three minority groups (Armenians, Mexicans, and

Vietnamese) played a significant role in the process of ethnic identity formation. They cite Giles et al. (1977) to conclude that "ingroup speech can serve as a symbol of ethnic identity and cultural solidarity. It is used for reminding the group about its cultural heritage, for transmitting group feelings, and for excluding members of the outgroup from its internal transactions." (p. 137)

Val and Vinogradova (2010) note that the identity of a heritage language speaker is highly complex in nature since identity is "dynamic and socially constructed," and also "linguistically constructed." (pp. 1-2) The identity of a heritage language speaker is constantly exposed to multiple communities and multiple languages. They emphasize the heritage language speakers' efforts at discovering their place within society through the language(s) they decide to speak.

> By positioning themselves as insiders or outsiders in relation to heritage and mainstream cultures, heritage language speakers engage in the process of constant becoming and negotiation of their fluid and multilayered heritage language identities. This process demonstrates the complexities and challenges involved in subject positioning that influence language choices and expression of agency. It is the process of constant negotiation with self and the other. (p. 7)

Tse (1998) presents a model of ethnic identity formation by adapting ideas from Phinney and Marcia (1980). Tse's model includes four stages: unawareness, ethnic ambivalence and evasion, ethnic emergence, and ethnic identity incorporation. In the first stage of the model (unawareness), the ethnic minority does not conceive of their minority status. This stage usually occurs before one begins attending school and is a brief phase within the development. The second stage (ethnic ambivalence and evasion), marks the period where the ethnic minority displays a strong desire to assimilate into the majority culture. This stage is particularly significant for heritage language maintenance since ethnic minorities often find their heritage

language proficiency a barrier against assimilation. They usually begin to associate negative

attitudes to their heritage language. This stage can last for a long time and causes heritage

language loss for many ethnic minorities. In the third stage (ethnic emergence), the ethnic

minority begins to accept their status as a minority. Sometimes, they will find their ethnic

heritage more important than the dominant culture. In this stage, the ethnic minorities will

usually begin to display interest toward their heritage. In the final stage (ethnic identity

incorporation), the ethnic minority becomes comfortable with their hybrid identity. They no

longer display feelings of uncertainty or confusion and are usually able to accept their minority

identity.

Tse's model presents how identity is conceived in stages and how the heritage language

plays a significant role in each of the stages. In a later study, Tse (2000) also explores how the

learners' positive or negative attitudes toward their ethnic identity are a major factor which

affects the learners' levels of motivation for acquiring their heritage language. She states,

> [Heritage language] is closely associated with the ethnic group so that attitudes toward
> the ethnic group and its language speakers also extend to [their] own language ability and
> their interest (or lack of interest) in maintaining and developing their [heritage language.]
> (p. 185)

In this qualitative research on first-person narratives of ten Asian American groups (Chinese,

Japanese, Korean, Hawaiian, Samoan, Vietnamese, Laotian, Cambodian, Indian and Pakistani)

Tse demonstrated the significance of learner identities to heritage language development. She

also argued that learners' language attitudes are in large part connected to perceptions of identity.

2.5 Relevance of Learner Identity in the Heritage Language Classrooms

The most important reason for addressing learner identities within the heritage language classroom is for the teachers to be better informed about their students. This may seem trivial but it is vital information that can help educators to effectively teach their learners. Research has shown how incorporating learner identities into classroom pedagogy can aid in developing the students' language skills both formally and functionally (Duran-Cerda, 2008). Taylor and Wright (1995) also found that teaching young children in their heritage language will also increase their self and collective esteems. Studies such as these illustrate how identity can influence how much the students feel motivated to learn and to engage in classroom activities. Understanding the students' identity will also shed light on what connections they have to their heritage language(s). This will also affect the students' specific needs and reasons for wanting to learn their heritage language and give the teachers an idea of what their students expect from them.

As Tse described with her model, the heritage language plays a crucial role in the formation of ethnic identity. Heritage language education is also cultural education and by incorporating learner identities into the classroom, the students will be less likely to experience negative attitudes toward their ethnic identity and will recognize the importance of learning and maintaining their heritage language.

3. Methodology

In this section, the specific research questions that guided this study will be introduced, followed by a detailed discussion of the various methods used to collect and analyze the data and the theories that justify using such methods.

3.1 Introduction of Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to distinguish any correlations between the identity perceptions and language attitudes of various Japanese-American heritage language speakers and learners. The following research questions were asked in order to understand the identity perceptions and attitudes toward the Japanese language of the Japanese-American students.

1) How do Japanese-American heritage language speakers and learners perceive their own identities?

2) Does heritage language proficiency affect the identity perceptions of the Japanese-American heritage languages speakers and learners?

3) What attitudes do different Japanese-American heritage language speakers and learners hold toward their heritage language of Japanese?

4) Would these individual identity perceptions and language attitudes be affected if the Japanese-American heritage language speakers and learners discussed them in a group setting? If so, how?

3.2 The Use of a Multi-Method Approach

In order to adequately answer the research questions proposed above, multiple methods of data collection in multiple settings were utilized. A multiple methods approach was adopted in order to gather as much meaningful data as possible and also to strengthen the validity of the collected data and ultimately the research findings by making observations through various angles. Researchers such as Denzin (1970; 1978) define this kind of approach to qualitative research as "methodological triangulation" (as cited in Flick, 2007, p. 177). Denzin (1978) explains that with methodological triangulation, one must consider three things:

First, the nature of the research problem and its relevance to a particular method should be assessed(..). Second, it must also be remembered that each method has inherent strengths and weaknesses (..). Third, methods must be selected with an eye to their theoretical relevance" (as cited in Flick, 2007, p.177).

Just as Denzin so clearly summarizes, through triangulation the researcher was able to collect data through methods best fitting for the context of this study.

There were three main methods of data collection for this study: a questionnaire, a face-to-face interview, and a focus group or group interview. First, prospective participants were recruited from various settings such as cultural interest groups on campus and the Asian American Studies Department. Second, these prospective participants completed a questionnaire inquiring about their general background, their heritage language proficiency, and their attitudes toward their heritage language and the Japanese and Japanese-American cultures. Third, the researcher conducted a face-to-face interview with the prospective participants. Fourth, focus group meetings were conducted for four sessions and participants discussed issues involving their heritage language and the Japanese and Japanese-American cultures. Fifth, after completing the focus group meetings, the participants completed an exit questionnaire. Finally, the researcher met with the participants for an exit interview. The following sections will discuss each phase in detail.

3.2.1 Recruitment

Recruitment of participants began in the beginning of the winter quarter of the 2012 school year and continued for a total of two weeks. Participants for this study were found through three settings within the UCLA environment, 1) Nikkei Student Union, the Japanese-American cultural interest club, 2) the Asian American Studies Department, and 3) personal acquaintances of prospective participants found through snowball sampling. All prospective

participants were over the age of 18, and were of Japanese heritage. The students were informed that this study was being conducted to examine issues involving the Japanese and Japanese-American cultures.

3.2.2 Initial Questionnaires

Students who showed interest in participating in the study were asked to complete an initial questionnaire. This questionnaire gathered information about 1) the student's background such as their age, their hometown, the place of their birth, and where their parents were originally from, 2) their daily language use (both English and Japanese), 3) their proficiency in Japanese, 4) their perception of their own identity, 5) their attitude toward their heritage language, 6) and their attitudes toward the Japanese and Japanese-American cultures. These initial questionnaires gave the researcher an impression of the various prospective participants. The questionnaire also revealed any similarities and/ or differences among the views of the participants that might aid in creating an engaging group setting for the focus group meetings.

3.2.3 Preliminary Face-to-Face Interviews

Questionnaires are a useful tool for gathering information from numerous sources in a short amount of time. With a carefully constructed questionnaire, a higher response rate from the target population can be expected. But there are also obvious drawbacks to this method. One drawback in using data collected solely through a questionnaire is in the validity of the participants' answers. The face-to-face interviews were a way to compensate for any gaps that may have been created in the data due to simple misinterpretations of the questions. Also, with the follow-up questions, the researcher was able to more fully explore the context of the participants' responses: what did they mean when they answered one way over another? What

kinds of life experiences are connected to their responses? The preliminary face-to-face interviews were a way to hear the participants' "complete response."

During the interview, each participant's heritage language proficiency levels were verified. To ascertain their oral proficiency, the participants were asked to answer questions that were adapted from the ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) oral proficiency guidelines. The first section of the assessment elicited short answers, and the second portion involved three role-play activities. The short-answer questions ranged from casual topics, such as their personal opinions regarding their surroundings and information about their family, topics which are usually considered to be easier for heritage language speakers to converse about. The more difficult questions called for speaking about more abstract concepts, and topics related to politics or socio-economic issues. The role-play activities also ranged from elementary level conversations, such as coming up with a self-introduction, to an activity eliciting the honorific forms in a very specific context, such as the office environment, which is usually considered very difficult for heritage Japanese speakers.

Another reason these face-to-face interviews were conducted was to gain some perspective on what issues the participants were interested in discussing. Although the researcher had a clear idea of what topics were going to be addressed in the focus groups, there were many benefits to examining the types of issues the participants were also interested in. Through the interview, the researcher was able to determine if participants demonstrated interest in the topics that this particular study was addressing. If the participants were genuinely interested in the topics to be addressed in the focus group meetings, there would be a high chance for them to be an active contributor during the discussions.

Finally, an important part of the face-to-face interviews involved a very human quality which was essential to this study, and that was to help all of the prospective participants to feel comfortable with the researcher and with the purpose of the study. Because the topic of the study was dealing with the participants' identity and language attitudes, the researcher did not want to assume that every participant was prepared to share their opinions and experiences in their entirety. The face-to-face interviews helped to gauge each participant's comfort-level with each topic.

3.2.4 The Focus Group Meetings

This section will discuss the main method that was used for this study, the focus group meeting. First, the method of the focus group or the group interview will be defined. Next, the reasons for using the focus group method will be explained. Lastly, the discussion questions used during the meetings will be presented.

3.2.4.1 Defining the Focus Group (Group Interview)

Focus groups, or as some call it, the group interview is a "nondirective" (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992, p. 225) method of data collection. Krueger (1994) describes the focus group as "a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, nonthreatening environment." (p. 6) In the 1930s, researchers within the field of social sciences began questioning the accuracy of the data gathered through traditional methods such as the individual interviews and close-ended questionnaires. They realized that with these traditional methods, there was a greater chance that researchers might generate biased questions that could influence the respondents. The focus group method was one

"nondirective" approach for social scientists to combat problems like these, which were prevalent within traditional one-on-one interviews.

3.2.4.2 Reasons behind the Use of the Focus Group for this Study

There were several reasons why the focus group (the group interview) was chosen as one of the methods of data collection for this study. The focus group meetings were a distinct environment which gave the heritage language speakers and learners the opportunity to:

1) Critically analyze their identity perceptions.

2) Critically analyze how their heritage language may affect their identity perceptions.

3) Interact with others who have similar life experiences in order to critically analyze their own thoughts and opinions about their heritage language and identities.

As mentioned earlier in this paper, many of the studies done on heritage language speaker and learner identities base their observations on individual cases. These studies reach conclusions about the nature of these individuals' identities through an analysis of the views and opinions explained solely by the individuals themselves. Though one's identity seems like a very private concept, many define a person's identity as being "socially constructed." Because an individual's identity is affected by countless factors within our environment, and not established by the individual in isolation, it would be difficult to conclude that simply examining the individual can suffice to reveal their identity.

The researcher found that the focus group (group interview) to be the most perfect method to utilize for this study. As Krueger (1997) explains:

> The focus group interview works because it taps into human tendencies. Attitudes and perceptions relating to concepts, products, services, or programs are developed in part by

interaction with other people. We are a product of our environment and are influenced by people around us(..). People may need to listen to opinions of others before they form their own personal viewpoints(..). Evidence from focus group interviews suggests that people do influence each other with their comments, and in the course of a discussion the opinions of an individual might shift. (p. 10)

This focus group environment provided the participating heritage language speakers and learners the opportunity to interact with others, who Merton and Kendall (1946) would have described as "[people] who have experienced some 'particular concrete situation'" (as cited in Rook, Shamdasani & Stewart, 2007, p.9) in order to critically analyze how their heritage language may affect their own identity perceptions.

3.2.4.3 The Discussion Questions

After the preliminary face-to-face interviews, seven participants were selected to take part in the focus group meetings. The first meeting occurred during the fourth week of the winter 2012 quarter, the second and third meetings were consolidated into one longer meeting which took place during the sixth week, the fourth meeting occurred during the seventh week, and the fifth and final meeting took place on eighth week of the ten-week quarter. Each meeting was one hour long and was audio and video-recorded.

The following is a list of all of the discussion questions that the participants examined during these four meetings. All of these questions were developed in order to guide the participants to reflect on their identity perceptions and the degree to which their heritage language of Japanese may be influencing or even shaping their lives. Some of the questions handled the obvious topics, while others proved to be more challenging because they concentrated on issues that are usually not thought about. The discussion questions were in variety of forms to keep the participants engaged.

At the first meeting, the participants were introduced to the most important question. This question became the overarching theme for these focus group meetings, and the participants were informed that they would be asked this question at the end of all of the meetings. The question was:

"As a _____, what does the Japanese language mean to you? Where does it fit in your life?"

The questions listed below were asked during each meeting to ultimately lead the participants towards the answer to the final question. The bolded questions indicate which responses were included in the analysis section.

1. Did your parents give you a Japanese name?

    a. Is it your first or middle name?

    b. Which name do you prefer that people call you? Please explain.

2. **What does it mean to be a Sansei, Yonsei, Shin-Nisei?**

3. Do you believe that there are certain words or concepts that can only be explained in either Japanese or English? Please explain.

4. When did you start referring to yourself as Sansei, Yonsei, or Shin-Nisei?

5. **Do you think there are similarities and or differences between a "X-sei" and a "Shin- X-sei?" Please refer to the "You know you are…" lists.**

6. Think about the many "pieces" of your own identity that create who you are as a person and complete the "I am…" handout.

    a. After completing the handout, try to think about how language might affect these "pieces" of your identity.

7. **What is your opinion on interracial relationships or marriages?**

    a. **What is your family's view on interracial relationships or marriages?**

    b. **Do you want to be in an interracial relationship/marriage? Why or why not? Are you dating somebody now? What is their ethnicity?**

    c. **If you identify yourself as "X-sei," would you marry somebody that is "Shin-X-sei?" Vice versa, please explain.**

8. **Would you like your children to know Japanese? Please explain why or why not.**

9. Was there any time in your life when you did or said anything that made you think,

    a. "Oh, it's because I'm American."

    b. "Oh, it's because I'm Japanese."

    c. "Oh, it's because I'm Japanese-American."

10. **Before we answer the final question, please create a "mind map" with the other participants to help us connect all of the topics and issues we have been discussing.**

11. **As a _____, what does the Japanese language mean to you? Where does it fit in your life?**

3.2.5 The Exit Questionnaire and Exit Interviews

After completing the four focus group meetings, the participants were once again asked to complete a questionnaire. This questionnaire was an abbreviated version of the initial questionnaire. The exit questionnaire did not have the background information section and the project specific questions. These exit questionnaires were used to analyze if there were any changes in the participants' views or perceptions compared to before they took part in the focus group meetings. For the final phase of the study, the researcher held another interview with each

of the participants in order to discuss their responses to the exit questionnaires. Also, in order to determine how the focus group meetings may have directly affected their responses, the researcher prepared questions specifically pertaining to their experiences with the focus group meetings.

4. Analysis

Qualitative methods were used to analyze all transcripts of interviews and focus group meeting interactions. The discourses of the seven participants were analyzed in order to find similarities and differences to distinguish any commonalities among their perceptions and attitudes. Not every discussion question from the meetings will be included in this analysis section since not all of the questions yielded a significant response from the participants.

4.1 The Participants

This chart incorporates information the participants provided to the researcher on the questionnaires and during the initial interviews. The question mark following some of the identity perceptions are used to represent the participants' ambiguity.

Table 1. Participant Information (Pre-Focus Group)

Name	Identity Perceptions	Heritage language Oral Proficiency	Currently Enrolled in Japanese Course	Will Enroll in Japanese course in the Future	The Japanese language is very important to me
Stacy	Nisei Japanese-American?	Intermediate-Low	No	Strongly Disagree	Neutral
Ryan	Shin-Nisei Japanese-American	Advanced-Mid	No	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Kimberly	Shin-Nisei Japanese-American	Superior	Yes	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree
Christine	Sansei Japanese-American	Novice-Low	Yes	Strongly Agree	Neutral
Matt	Nisei Japanese-American?	Superior	No	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Agree
Mary	Nisei Japanese?	Intermediate-Low	No	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
Linda	Yonsei Japanese-American	Novice-Mid	Yes	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree

4.2 Summary of the Initial Interviews

With the initial interviews, segments which emphasized the participants' identity perceptions and attitudes toward their heritage language were closely examined. As the chart above illustrates, four of the students (Stacy, Matt, Mary and Christine) were not able to clearly define their own identities during these interviews. These four students' situations may be indicative of them experiencing the third stage in Tse's ethnic identity formation model, Ethnic Emergence. The other three students (Linda, Ryan, and Kimberly) were much better able to describe their own identity perceptions and seemed closer to Ethnic Identity Incorporation, the fourth and final stage of Tse's model.

Although at first the students who appeared to be going through Stage 3 seemed unaware of their identities, as they continued to discuss their thoughts during the interview, it became clear that all of the participants were actually very aware of their identities and perceived who they were as ethnic minorities living in America. The main distinction between the stage 3 and stage 4 students revolved around how the students recognized the concept of identity itself.

Students were given the choice of conducting the interviews in English or Japanese. Matt was the only participant who preferred to conduct the interview in Japanese.

4.2.1 Identity Perceptions

During the interviews, many of the participants voiced a different definition of their identities from what they have initially marked on their questionnaires. When they were asked to clarify this discrepancy, they confessed that their answers on the questionnaires were not completely accurate. Many of them shared that they had not been sure what they wanted to mark,

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so they eventually chose the option that they believed was the most accurate. One participant, Matt, even claimed that his answer was not what he personally believed was true but he marked the answer based on how he thought society perceived him.

> Well, if anything I thought of this question as how the general public sees me as. Since I really don't know how I would categorize myself, so I thought the best way to answer this question was to look at it from everybody else's perspective, and I guess I thought they'd see me as a Nisei (second-generation Japanese-American) so I put that.

(Matt)

With Mary, though on her initial questionnaire she marked that she would consider herself a Nisei (second-generation Japanese-American), she was not sure if she would be considered a typical Japanese-American. With a Japanese mother and an Irish father, many would traditionally call her a "hapa," or in the Japanese term, "haafu." (half).

> I sort of didn't really understand what I am though just because I mean like I was born there (Japan) but like I'm half, my mom's first generation so like I've never gotten that explained to me like exactly what I would be considered.

(Mary)

4.2.2 Ethnic Purity and its Importance to Identity

Much of this conflict of not being able to clearly explain their identity perceptions seemed to be rooted in the students' notion of identity itself. During the interviews, the students emphasized the significance of ethnic purity when it came to legitimizing one's membership within a community. They felt that being neither "pure Japanese" nor "pure American" greatly reduced their right to be associated with a group or claim that identity, which left them with feelings of "being in between" or as Matt put it, "feeling ill at ease, and feeling like I'm floating." Below is a segment from his interview illustrating his struggles of trying to distinguish

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which group he identified with and ultimately being left with no choice but to give up trying to find any answer.

> I'm neither Japanese nor American. When I place myself into either of these groups, and try talking to people in these groups, well I mean I can communicate with people from both groups, but that doesn't mean that I feel totally comfortable there, you know. It's not because of any language barrier or anything like that I don't think. My values are strangely mixed up inside of me for some reason. I have some parts that are Japanese and other parts that are American and they're all mixed together and how do I say it, some people tell me that I'm so American, and some people tell me that I'm so Japanese. Now I just think that I may not be any of those things, so I just stopped thinking about it altogether. I decided that I'm not going to subject myself to any of those labels anymore because if I keep thinking about it, I feel so trapped. I mean, I just figured it's useless to worry about it so I just gave up trying to figure it out.
>
> (Matt)

For some participants, their heritage language proficiency played a significant role in determining their ethnic purity. Ryan and Linda mentioned that they were especially reminded of this reality when they would visit Japan. Linda explained that her experiences of seeing Japanese people in Japan had really reminded her of how different she is from a "pure Japanese" person and Ryan mentioned how he was reminded of his assimilations to American culture when he had trouble communicating with the train conductors at the station.

> 'Cause I'm definitely not pure Japanese. And going to Japan I think it kinda reminded me of that…[pure Japanese people] speak Japanese.
>
> (Linda)

> I just felt like less. I mean I felt less Japanese more Japanese-American? If that makes sense. Yeah, so I definitely felt more like an American tourist.
>
> (Ryan)

When Kimberly was asked if she was able to explain exactly what attitudes were behind this concept of being "pure Japanese," she attributed it to the general feelings of prejudice that

many Japanese people have against Japanese-Americans, which were also similar to her own views of Japanese-Americans before she joined the Nikkei Student Union (NSU).

> I was like you know they're not really Japanese was my impression at first so I came in at first to college with a prejudice that I thought that I was more Japanese and that you know Japanese-American is not Japanese…I think they [people in Japan] feel like they are, well I think basically pride towards their culture? Saying that this is our culture and, you know having half of that is not really a full culture and I feel like that's what makes them feel like you know, oh I stand a little bit of a higher place because you only have half of what we have, kind of thing? I think that that might be the reason why, I feel like that's how I used to think?

(Kimberly)

4.2.3 Observing Identity through Disassociation

Though many of the participants were not able to clearly define their own identities, many had a very clear picture of what identity they did not associate with, and this was usually linked to their concept of ethnic purity which was revealed when they compared and contrasted their own identities with the supposed prototype of a Japanese person or an American person. Most of these observations were connected to their language proficiency, their history, and their cultural values. With some of the participants, observing these differences inspired them to begin exploring their own identities.

Christine shared that she cannot see herself ever relocating to Japan for a career. Though she has visited Japan many times to see her family, she feels that because of her strong American values, she would not be able to tolerate some of the Japanese customs.

I think living there and just visiting is different jus- I don't think I can handle their culture I- because I'm American and um my manners and my like the way I view things are totally different from the Japanese point of view…and they're still very um what's the word, gen- they still have the gender hierarchy there and I don't think I can handle that like I know that I will face a lot of sexual discrimination and I can't, I can't handle that especially here in America where it's I never have to face those problems and I don't think I can handle that.

(Christine)

Due to her upbringing by her Japanese mother and the strong connection she feels to her hometown of Shimonoseki, Japan, Mary came to realize that many of her cultural beliefs and values emphasized her Japanese identity and disassociated her from the Japanese-American culture. This is why she does not consider herself to be like an average Japanese-American who she comes into contact with through her membership in NSU (Nikkei Student Union).

I think the Japanese-American culture is more like the Yonsei and after generations who don't know that much about Japan meaning that they're genetically Japanese but they lived in America and are so immersed in American culture that they don't really know about Japan so I think that like the Japanese American culture is like learning about Japan as opposed to like if you're from Japan, like you just you know like you're immersed in it so you already know it…what I'm realizing is that Japanese-American culture is like getting in touch with your like genetic roots as opposed to like cultural ones.

(Mary)

Linda used the term Yonsei (fourth-generation Japanese-American) to identify herself and she viewed this status as being greatly related to her low proficiency in the heritage language, adding that this perception fits the general image people have of them.

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Usually, it's an excuse as to why I can't speak Japanese. That's usually. In the sense that you know people say oh do you know Japanese and I'm like no no no I'm Yonsei and they go oh ok. People who are within the JA community and they speak Japanese and they're like wait you don't speak Japanese and I'm like no I'm Yonsei and they go oh ok so you're pretty much assimilated. So I think there's a connotation that as you get further down the generations that you don't learn Japanese so you know it's kinda like people ask oh do you speak Japanese I'm like no I'm a Yonsei and they go oh ok that makes sense. So you didn't go to J-school and I said no no no.

<div align="right">(Linda)</div>

Ryan clearly stated during his interview that being surrounded by Japanese-Americans who identified themselves as Sanseis and Yonseis while growing up emphasized how his knowledge of the heritage language defines his identity as a Shin-Nisei Japanese-American.

I don't feel like a Sansei, I don't feel like a Yonsei. That's my main thing, I can speak Japanese. I could speak it like a Japanese person would. And uh- as well as possible I guess. It's what separates me from the J-basketball leagues, it's what separates me from everybody else. And it makes me feel special.

<div align="right">(Ryan)</div>

Kimberly spoke about the different experiences each generation within the Japanese-American community faced due to differences in their histories. While she associated the Sansei and Yonsei generations with the struggles created by their experiences with the internment, she explained that the Shin-Nisei like herself are also living through the struggle of trying to find their place within the larger American society.

I would say a lot of it because there's not like internment or anything big in terms of history wise, I would say a lot of identity like who do you identify yourself as? It's a lot of internal struggles I would feel like. As well as kind of a battle between your [Shin-]Issei parents maybe.

<div align="right">(Kimberly)</div>

4.2.4 The Ambiguous "Middle" Identity

Being able to associate fully with neither the Japanese nor the American culture, the students usually seemed to come to the conclusion that the Japanese-American identity constituted this ambiguous middle position between being purely Japanese or purely American. The participants who were going through ethnic emergence seemed to express a pessimistic view in which being Japanese-American meant you were neither of the two groups. Stacy described herself as being a typical Japanese-American since she embodied a much undetermined personality which even affected her language proficiency.

> 'Cause I mean I do kind of speak Japanese and I do kind of speak English. I'm like I don't dress like Japanese and like I dress Americanish. And like I'm like ::sigh:: what's that word like I eat like I eat both like culture's foods like I'm not like no I can't eat this kind of food 'cause I don't like it like I mean I open myself to everything you know…I'm like in the middle of both languages pretty much. I feel like 'cause I'm not really good at English as well as Japanese so it's like uh I sh- I know I feel like one should be more dominant but it's not ::laugh::

> (Stacy)

Matt, who after much struggling identified himself as a Japanese-American, described this feelings so accurately in Japanese as "どっち付かず" (*docchi-tsukazu*) which can be translated literally as "not touching either."

> Well, I know personally that I'm actually not really Japanese. The me now is kind of in an unclear area, you know.

> (Matt)

When considering the identity of a Japanese-American, they faced another major problem. Because they all knew that Japanese-American culture places considerable emphasis on events surrounding World War Two and the Japanese-American internment experience, participants who did not have any connections to those events felt hesitant to identify themselves as purely

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Japanese-American. Christine said that she does not usually think about her own identity and although she tells people that she identifies herself as a Sansei (third-generation Japanese-American), she does not feel like she is truly a part of the Japanese-American culture.

> Just because my family didn't have to go through all the internment camp stuff like that so I don't have like personal connections to them, which is not very good 'cause it should be part of my culture but so like Sansei sometime- I never really thought of who I was of a-as like a Japanese-American like I am Sansei or I am Nisei…my mom just recently she just said oh just consider yourself Sansei so that's what I've been saying to people.

> (Christine)

Students like Ryan and Kimberly who seemed to be entering the stages of Ethnic Identity Incorporation found a way around this dilemma by identifying themselves as Shin-Nisei instead of traditional Nisei. They both agreed that a Shin-Nisei is different from a Nisei in terms of their historical connections to the Japanese-American community. The following quotes describe their definitions of what a Shin-Nisei identity is.

> Well, um I think the way I learned it was I think Niseis were a term that they added or like they've given to like those who were like during the war or before the war? A b- it was before the war and once '45 hit, everyone else who were Niseis after that were considered Shin-Niseis? So I'll be considered a Shin-Nisei.

> (Ryan)

> Someone told me, I really don't remember who though. Uhm, they told me that when I say I'm Nisei, it sounds like I'm an old grandma or grandpa. So I feel like Shin-Nisei is just a term to those people who migrated to the U.S. after world war two so all those generations that didn't experience the internment camps. So that's my distinction but I didn't know until people told me about it.

> (Kimberly)

It was clear from the interviews that both Ryan and Kimberly, who now strongly identifies with the Shin-Nisei identity, did not know of these terms until they were exposed to them through their association with their respective ethnic organizations and actively explored the definitions.

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Stacy and Christine are also members of NSU but Christine mentioned in her interview that she had never heard of this term, and Stacy shared that she did not clearly associate herself with that term although she heard about it in the club.

> I don't know, it doesn't mean anything to me. I just thought it was interesting. Like, oh that's a good logic thinking I guess. I don't know, I don't really remember I just thought it was, at that point I was like oh, that's really interesting.

(Stacy)

4.2.5 Growing Up as a MINORITY

One very interesting fact that was touched upon during these initial interviews concerned the kind of community the participants grew up in. Of the participants who mentioned growing up in communities that did not have a large population of Japanese-Americans, Stacy and Linda were the ones who emphasized how this affected their view of their own identities. Stacy grew up in a community where the majority of the population was Hispanic and African-American. During the interview, she was not sure if she could clearly express her feelings of pride toward belonging to the Japanese ethnic group due to the complicated situations she faced before coming to college.

> Well, it's like it's hard 'cause it's like growing up with like, not to be racist or anything, like Hispanic people and it's hard to be like Asian and like a minority group whereas majority is everybody like is like this Hispanic and like it's hard to be yourself it's hard to like, what's that word open yourself up…I was proud I guess you could say that, but it's just hard 'cause like people call you 'chink' and like I don't know Asian and 'chicana' and so like they would just because you're Asian they would just assume that you're Chinese or whatever but I wasn't.

(Stacy)

It seemed that for Stacy, her experiences with her community until high school had made it somewhat difficult to explore her own identity as a Japanese-American. Like Stacy, Linda also

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grew up in an environment where most of her schoolmates were Hispanic. But unlike Stacy's

case, the environment strengthened Linda's desire to learn about her Japanese-American roots.

The difference between Stacy and Linda's attitudes may be due to how their families approached

the subject of family history. Linda was surrounded by a family who strongly emphasized the

importance of their Japanese-American heritage, and she was well-informed of her roots. Linda

remembered her feelings of frustration when finding discrepancies between accounts in her

school textbooks and what she learned from her family.

> There was nothing in the history books that talked about Japanese-Americans
> before internment camp. And so that unsettled me quite a bit because I'd heard
> my grandpa's story because I had talked to you know my grandparents before I
> was kinda like well does that mean I don't exist? Does that mean that their stories
> are irrelevant in the larger American history…I can still remember someone in
> fourth grade turned around and looked at me and said hey you bombed Pearl
> Harbor didn't you and I was like what are you talking about and they
> automatically associated Japanese and Japanese-American as to one conglomerate
> thing.

<div align="right">(Linda)</div>

4.2.6 Organizational Support Reinforcing the Progression to Ethnic Identity Incorporation

During the initial interviews, Linda, Ryan and Kimberly had much clearer perceptions of

their identities. Although they did describe similar attitudes about ethnic purity and

disassociations to some groups initially, all three of them stated that being associated to an ethnic

organization enabled them to further explore their identities and to some extent come to terms

with them.

Kimberly described her involvement with NSU as a major factor in coming to terms with

her identity. Although she strongly identified as Japanese before coming to college, she still felt

some displacement from the Japanese culture, especially when she visited the country. She

mentioned that she had experienced a change in her own perception after coming to college and

being exposed to various types of Japanese-Americans. This led her to conclude that there was

no need to be only Japanese or only American.

> I used to identify myself as Japanese but because I really learned about the
> Japanese-American community and the fact that you know you don't have to say
> you're Japanese or I'm American, fact that you know people come from different
> backgrounds you know, you grew up in a different situation. Just meeting those
> kinds of people really led me to the conclusion that I am also Japanese-
> American… you can kind of have that fuzzy kind of mix of both? And so that
> eventually led to me that oh I guess I do like you know when I go to Japan I do
> feel like that I'm a bit different from others and so I do have I do feel more
> comfortable if I'm here.

(Kimberly)

Ryan has been an active member of the JACL (Japanese-American Citizens League)

since he became a college student. He feels fortunate to be a part of a group which strives to

contribute to the Japanese-American society worldwide. He also explained how the JACL was

different from the cultural clubs such as NSU and JSA (Japanese Students Association) on

campus.

> If I had to compare it to NSU or JSA, they're both social clubs. But I feel like I
> wanna club that really, I feel like I can do something, and I feel like I'm making a
> difference in, and I feel like they're giving me something back. I think through
> JACL, they gave me a lot of different connections and I get to meet a lot of
> famous people. I guess like I feel a lot more I guess I feel proud of being part of
> this club, this organization.

(Ryan)

Ryan also shared that if he were not part of the JACL, he would have identified himself as just

American and not as a Japanese-American. He believed that he was able to learn a lot about the

Japanese-American community and culture, to which he had no exposure while he was growing

up, through the JACL. Although he expressed feelings of ambiguity toward his identity, through

participating in JACL, he began to see that he could be a part of both of the communities.

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I feel like I don't fit in either or I feel like I don't fit in Japanese group nor the Japanese-American group but I guess because I do think Japanese-American is strongly Sansei and Yonsei people and beyond. Um, but yeah I mean like whichever group I'm in I feel like I'm able to jump in between both groups so that's why I kind of feel a lot of pride for that.

(Ryan)

Instead of viewing his dichotomous identity through a pessimistic perspective of not being either, Ryan was able to learn about the Japanese-American community through his membership in the JACL and consider his identity as having both.

Linda believes that her family has aided in her deep understanding of both the Japanese and Japanese-American cultures. But she also believes that this process was very subtle so although she subconsciously possessed these cultures within her, before coming to college she still considered herself being American. After she decided to major in Asian American Studies, and she joined the AAPISUA (Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies Undergraduate Association), she became better informed about not only the Japanese-American community but the Asian-American community as a whole. When Linda was asked which culture (Japanese or Japanese-American) she identified with stronger, she emphasized that both cultures worked together to conceive her identity and she could not consider them to be mutually exclusive.

I feel like I have both. Yeah…I think because my parents. They weren't consciously saying oh this is a Japanese tradition but it's something they grew up with and they just taught me the way that they grew up with it. It kinda just carried down subconsciously. It's not like I look at myself and say oh well this is my Japanese side, this is my American side. It's just kind of well, molds together and I can't really separate the two.

(Linda)

All three participants who seemed to be progressing towards the final stage within Tse's ethnic identity formation model described their identities as being a harmonious hybrid. While participants who were experiencing ethnic emergence saw this same situation as sort of a curse,

the students progressing towards the final stage saw it as a blessing that allowed them to be associated with both cultures. For Linda, Ryan and Kimberly this attitude may have been caused by their strong connections to ethnic organizations that aided in their ability to reflect on their own identities.

4.2.7 Attitudes Toward their Heritage Language

As table 1 illustrates, the seven participants' oral proficiency varied in level from novice-low to superior. How important the participants considered their heritage language to be seemed to correlate with how much they used it daily and with whom. For example, Matt said the heritage language was very important to his life since he used it in a daily basis at a high rate. He believed that if he lost his skills in the Japanese language, it would take away a large part of his identity and he would become just an American. Although he did mention that his skills in English are equally important for his life, with Japanese he spoke about having a stronger feeling of passion towards the language, dating from when he was very young, because of the complex nature of the language itself.

> I think it's because it's much more complete than the English language? How would I say it, Japanese has such a large variety in vocabulary. And it has such a deeper history, or actually there is so much tradition connected to it. I feel like even in that sense Japanese is much more deep. Well, more than anything what is important is how I just simply enjoy it.

(Matt)

4.2.7.1 The Desire to Improve their Heritage Language Proficiency

Regardless of their current level of proficiency, most participants stated that they would like to improve their heritage language skills. Some students were currently enrolled in either a Japanese as a foreign language course or a heritage language class. While some of the

participants were clear about why they considered their heritage language to be important to them, some of them did not state a particular reason why the language was so valuable to them. Matt, who was already at a superior level, still believed that his skills could be improved if he studied it on his own. This was related to his hopes of becoming a writer in the future.

At the time of the interview, Christine was enrolled in the second level of the Japanese as a foreign language course. For her, the most important reason for learning the language was to stay connected to her family in Japan. She believed that without a language barrier she would be able to feel much closer to her sisters in Japan.

> It might sound cheesy but I really dream about being able to speak to my family my younger sister especially. There's times when uh I get phone calls from her or I call her and I'm just stuck not being able to ask her like oh what are you doing now or you know like how everything I mean I could ask her oh are you d- are you having fun but it's just basic things that I just don't feel like I don't know her I don't know like my grandparents as well as I real-cou- as I could and as I should so I really wanna.
>
> (Christine)

Although Mary seemed mostly satisfied with her knowledge of the Japanese language, and considered this skill as one of the key elements that disassociated her from the typical Japanese-Americans she came in contact with, she also believed that she needed to improve her reading and writing skills, especially with writing kanji (the Chinese characters). She hoped to enroll in a language class at UCLA in the future in order to gain a "more well-rounded knowledge" of her heritage language.

Kimberly, who was also at the superior level was currently enrolled in the highest level course within the heritage language track. She mentioned that her initial reason for enrolling in

these classes was to take easy courses. But she had come to realize that these courses were helping her obtain new information about the language, which she found very interesting.

Linda is currently enrolled in the second level of the Japanese as a foreign language course.. She shared that she had always hoped to learn Japanese but never had the chance to until college. She also mentioned how her life would have been very different if she did not know any Japanese, which also kept her connected to her heritage.

> I think especially because Japan is a place that I enjoy going to. The Japanese, because Japanese roots are part of my identity? Or how I identify myself I think I'd feel alienated if I didn't know the language and because we did use some Japanese phrases in our house? It's kind of like I couldn't really kind of like I wanted to know more.

(Linda)

Ryan's situation was a fairly complicated one since his initial plans of enrolling in a language course had been thwarted due to his background as a heritage language speaker. Even though he strongly wished to learn the heritage language in college, his scores on his initial placement exam were too high for him to enroll in the foreign language track, but too low to enroll in the heritage track courses.

> I really wanted to learn Japanese here. I wanted to study Japanese here. I wanted to get everything. I wanted to get the grammar down, I wanted to get the writing and speaking and I wanted to graduate from my undergrad being a full competent Japanese speaker, writer, reader, but then um. When I took the placement test, my speaking was so high. My writing and reading were fairly ok. It's a multiple choice test so I was able to do it. I was able to guess well enough…they told me there's a heritage Japanese class and I didn't know what that meant…when I asked them do you think I can actually hang in there, and they're like no, they told me I can't that you probably couldn't…I tested out of the 6 level requirement at which point I was like ok oh I guess I'm done here. So I never took a Japanese course, though I really wanted to.

(Ryan)

Out of the seven participants, Stacy was the only one who during the initial interview did not feel that she needed to improve her heritage language skills. Although she mentioned that her heritage language proficiency was "not really good," and "choppy," and she was "kind of losing it." She considered her skills to be adequate for her current lifestyle and saw no reason for taking a course while she was in college.

> Well, 'cause like I already know Japanese. Like if I maybe, if I use it in a career maybe I might take a language course but I already know Japanese like it's not really like I need it like I understand it so, so why would I need to take it?

> (Stacy)

4.2.7.2 Negative Consequences due to Heritage Language Proficiency

While most of the participants shared having positive experiences with their heritage language, some participants spoke about negative consequences brought on by their knowledge of the heritage language. These stories usually illustrated how knowing Japanese sometimes impeded their learning of English when they were younger. For example, Ryan spoke about his fear of developing an accent in English if he learned Japanese at a Saturday Japanese Language School.

> The one thing I did not want and the one thing I was afraid of when I was growing up is having a Japanese accent. So I knew that the kids who had- went to Asahi (a Saturday Language School) had Japanese accents when they went to these schools and that wasn't as cool as everybody else. And I didn't want that accent. I wanted to have an American accent, I wanted to be an American. I wanted to be American.

> (Ryan)

Because Japanese was her first language, when Stacy started attending her American school, she was placed in a remedial program. Stacy described in great detail her feelings of frustration at being separated from the rest of her class and her peers.

Knowing not that much English and stuff, like that affected my educ-like academic skills I guess? "Cause I don't know I had to go to tutoring like at school and like I was kind of behind in everything and then like I had to go like to these reading programs just to like improve on my English and be on everybody's level.

(Stacy)

When the teachers finally realized that Stacy had reached the level considered as Native English equivalent she was in middle school. Stacy expressed how relieved she felt when she passed her assessment and was placed in the GATE Program.

4.3 Summary of the Focus Group Meetings

Many of the discussion questions introduced during the meetings were based on the topics and issues in which the participants expressed interest during their initial interviews. Because many of the participants said they hoped to explore these issues further with other Japanese-American students, the focus group meetings seemed to be the perfect environment for these seven participants to critically analyze and reflect on their identity perceptions and language attitudes.

4.3.1 Being Given a Label

When the group was asked to answer the question, "What does it mean to you to be a Sansei, Yonsei, or a Shin-Nisei? Please tell us what you identify yourself as right now and why," many of the participants remembered certain times during their life when they began referring to their own identities through these labels. Some participants, like Kimberly, Ryan and Christine mentioned how the labels were not something that they personally decided to give themselves but rather, they were given to them by others. Kimberly described how her initial perceptions of her own identity had shifted after being questioned by her peer.

One time somebody told me, well when you say Nisei I just think of old people and I was like ok so then that's how I learned Shin-Nisei. I don't remember where I heard it but that's how I heard it so then from then on I was like oh I guess I'm Shin-Nisei.

(Kimberly)

Ryan described the time he learned about the term Shin-Nisei from a fellow JACL member at the national convention.

But he's also in JACL. He's a sub-division in Nor-Cal. And then he was telling me about oh Shin-Nisei this and Shin-Nisei that and I'm like what's a Shin-Nisei? And he was like you're a Shin-Nisei and I'm like oh man am I? Are you? And he's like yeah.

(Ryan)

Christine, who was still exploring her own identity, spoke to the group about her own experience of feeling confused when her mother gave her a label she did not expect.

Um, for the longest time I just thought I was Issei just because I was born in Japan. But then like I moved here when I was 2, and I was raised by an American culture. Well, actually Japanese too but um recently my mom was like no you're Sansei…Well, I was born there and you're Nisei but how- that doesn't even work but I guess that's not what I'm saying. But I think-I think that that's more fitting? Because I don't really know. Well I just think that's more fitting.

(Christine)

4.3.2 The Importance of Being Able to Identify Oneself

When the students were asked to explain their thoughts and opinions toward the act of defining one's own identity through labels, most of them agreed that it was important for them. Some said they felt a certain comfort at having the ability to define who they were. Stacy spoke about how her experiences with identifying herself had changed since coming to UCLA, where there is a bigger population of Asian-Americans.

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Well, for me I don't know growing up in a Hispanic-black community, I usually say I'm just Asian and they don't ask me anything else. They're like oh and then they just assume I'm Chinese, but it's ok. I mean I was used to that stuff but I mean I guess I like, I'm just like oh I'm Japanese and not Chinese and there's a difference so. And then, so I just from that I grew up being oh I'm Asian. But then coming here, oh what Asian ethnicity are you and just say I'm Japanese, it's kind of different. Because I'm surrounded by different Asian people so it's like oh you can't just be like Asian.

(Stacy)

Linda stated it was a way to connect with certain groups of people and also a way of

distinguishing herself from other groups. She agreed with Stacy's comment about growing up

surrounded by other ethnicities made her want some way to identify herself.

You know you're different but you wanted a definition to define yourself as different. So I think it kind of also um helps you identify well with what community do I identify with. Where do I get 'cultural experience?' Where do I hang out with people? Like who do I hang out with? That might have some influence in or your definition of yourself may have some influence on who you define yourself with.

(Linda)

Ryan made a very interesting comment after Linda's explanation. He believed that his need to

identify himself was caused by the society surrounding him.

It's true. I feel definitely like she was saying. Oh I'm general Asian. Like when they look at you oh you're Asian. No, I'm not Asian, I'm not just Asian I'm Japanese. Are you sure you're not Korean? No, I'm not Korean I'm Japanese. Are you sure you're not Chinese? No I'm Japanese. Like, I think that's when it really hit me 'cause the kids at school, oh you're Asian and I'm like no not just- you know what I'm saying…Because they put it on us. I think that's why, that's a good way to put it. I feel like they made me. Like that's why I have to identify as something.

(Ryan)

When Ryan made this comment, the rest of the group agreed that it is important to distinguish

among the different Asian cultures. Kimberly attributes this trend to cultural pride for each group.

Linda added the importance of the "stories of what got us here to this moment in time."

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4.3.3 Similarities and Differences between X-sei and Shin- X-sei

The following discussion question was one of the most engaging questions the participants examined: "do you think there are similarities/ or differences between a X-sei and a Shin- X-sei?" The idea for this question came from a comment by Ryan in a previous meeting about how his colleague in the JACL showed him a "list of Shin-Nisei prideful things." This list, which is referred to the "You Know You're Shin- Nisei/Issei When…" list, was compiled by members of a youth leadership group from San Francisco's Japantown called nihonmachiROOTS. According to Ryan, this list was a response to the original "You Know You're Japanese American If" list, which had been circulating within the community for some time. For this discussion, the students were given a copy of both lists to compare and contrast these two groups within the Japanese-American community.

Before the participants saw the lists, they mentioned that X-sei and Shin- X-sei "look the same," and that both groups had "ties to Japan in some way." All of the participants were fascinated by the lists and found many of the things listed to be humorous, especially when they found something they were able to relate to. There were many instances of the participants teaching one another while they examined the two lists. If a student was not familiar with a certain reference, usually there was another student who knew about it and they would share their personal experiences to clarify the meaning. As the students went down the lists, most of them began to realize the differences between the two groups. Linda, who strongly identifies with the X-sei group, expressed her shock at how little she was able to relate to the Shin-Nisei/Issei list.

I only apply to three on the first page…yeah and everything else I don't fit.

<div align="right">(Linda)</div>

Her statement of "I feel so un-Japanese right now," after she had to repeatedly ask the group members for clarifications on topics mentioned on this list, may illustrate the differences between these two groups. But Linda proved to be a ready source of information when the students needed clarifications for topics that were on the X-sei list.

Mary brought up a very interesting issue during this discussion involving the definition of a Japanese-American. When the students were examining the X-sei list, Mary commented that the characteristics on the list described American people who had exposure to Japanese influence instead of Japanese people who are Americanized. She wanted to clarify the definition of a Japanese-American person with the rest of the group. Mary thought that what was on the X-sei list described a very Japanese person in terms of culture, but Matt did not agree. For Matt, the X-sei list described a very different culture than what he perceived as being Japanese. Below is part of the transcript where this interaction occurs.

> Mary: Wait, I have a question. This list pertains to people who are like, like ok they are American with Japanese influence as opposed to Japanese with American influence. You know? 'cause, I mean like, a lot of these apply to people who's Japanese. So I mean-
>
> Matt: No, I think they are Japanese-Americans.
>
> Mary: Well I think there's a difference between like being an American who's like Japanese influenced, that's what this is, and then being like a Japanese who's Americanized, like white-washed. And I think this one, I don't know I feel like a lot of this is just I- I- don't know I feel like this is pretty like strictly Japanese.
>
> Matt: Um, but it's not actually. Like it's kinda, well there is like Japanese culture embedded but it's kinda-
>
> Mary: Like all the stuff on like manners and stuff-

<div align="center">43</div>

Matt: Oh, manners yeah. Manners, language, words is Japanese but-

Mary's comment raises a very important point in terms of how the students perceive the Japanese-American community and identity. It is very difficult to answer her question and clarify if one should consider Japanese-Americans as either Japanese with American influences or as American with Japanese influences.

But as far as comparing these two lists, it seems clear that the X-sei list emphasized how this group retained some of the Japanese language and culture while they adapted to an American lifestyle. This is demonstrated by the inclusion of archaic terms that are usually only used within the X-sei community and the X-sei tendency to embody very traditional Japanese aesthetics. Since not many of the X-sei have direct ties with Japan anymore, the language and culture have a static nature. The X-sei list also demonstrates the mixture of cultures, due to their longer exposure to American ways. This is demonstrated especially through their foods. In contrast, , the Shin- X-sei list described a more modern Japanese culture that seemed to have been carried down by the recent immigrants from Japan who are still very much connected to the contemporary Japanese culture such as modern T.V. programs, music, and even slang, all of which illustrated how this group is greatly influenced by current Japanese culture. It will be very interesting to see how the children of these Shin- X-sei change as they get further down the generations. Would a Shin- X-sei who has been Americanized be considered a X-sei instead?

4.3.4 Interracial Relationships and Marriages

Recent studies on the marriage patterns indicate that there is a significantly high probability of out-group marriage for Asian-Americans in the U.S. According to Asian Nation, a website dedicated to discussing current issues involving Asian Americans, after comparing

census data from 2006 to 2010, they have found that out of the six largest Asian ethnic groups in the U.S., Japanese men were the least likely to marry endogamously and Japanese women were most likely to marry somebody who is Asian other than Japanese. With this in mind, the students addressed the next topic: "What is your opinion on interracial relationships and marriages? What is your family's view on interracial relationships and marriages? Do you want to be in an interracial relationship or marriage, why or why not? Are you dating someone now, and what is their ethnicity? If you identify yourself as 'X-sei', would you marry someone who is 'Shin- X-sei?' Visa versa. Please explain." None of the participants presented a strong preference for a specific ethnicity for their prospective partners and all of them believed that their families share these views. Some participants displayed very positive attitudes toward interracial relationships while the rest had no any opinion towards the issue. But the participants who demonstrated a positive view of interracial relationships agreed that it was very important for their partners to be culturally understanding people who respect and share their views of their Japanese heritage. Another important factor was being able to keep their connection with their families, and for some of the participants this meant that proficiency in the Japanese language would be necessary.

> I identify myself as Shin-Sansei and I would consider marrying someone who is gosei (fifth generation) or any X-sei. I just feel that marriage wise I would lean towards spending the rest of my life and raising my children with a man who shares the same traditions, customs, and values as I do.

> (Christine)

> I don't really care about race. However, it would be better to have Japanese language skill to communicate with my parents… I'm currently dating a girl who is half Filipino, quarter Korean and quarter Japanese. She was born in Japan so her cultural background is Japanese, and she speaks both Japanese and English.

> (Matt)

I would appreciate it if my future wife would embrace and if not even attempt to learn my language as it would mean getting to know my mother. I would in turn try to learn her's. I believe that the parent-in-law relationship is an important one and I want to honor that side of marriage.

(Ryan)

As long as they are willing to learn about my culture/customs/lifestyle, and share that part with me, I'm fine.

(Kimberly)

4.3.5 Passing the Heritage Language Down to their Future Children

Concerning their attitudes are toward having their own children learning their heritage language, the participants answered the following questions: "would you like your children to know Japanese? Please explain why or why not. How important is it for your children to know Japanese? What do you think are some advantages/disadvantages for your children to know Japanese? What do you think are some advantages/disadvantages for your children if they didn't learn Japanese? How would you see to it that your children learn Japanese?" All of the participants expressed their hopes for their future children to learn the heritage language. Matt mentioned that it was important for him that his children maintained the culture which is connected to the Japanese language. Ryan wanted his future children to learn the heritage language so that they will be able to communicate with his mother. Mary believed that there are cognitive advantages for children who are multilingual. From her own experience as a bilingual, she believed that it made it easier for her to learn other languages. Although all seven of the participants agreed that they want their future children to learn Japanese, their opinions varied as to what kind of methods they would employ to make this possible.

4.3.5.1 Japanese Language School (J-School)

Most of the participants agreed that having their future children attend a Saturday Japanese language school would be beneficial for their heritage language development and maintenance. But some students felt hesitant about having their children attend these institutions against their will. Matt and Ryan both said they would not want to impose on their children to go if they wished to do otherwise. Ryan said, "if you don't wanna learn it, then it's like well shit then I guess that's that," and since his parents did not force him when he was younger, he did not see it necessary for him to be stricter with his own children. Christine also believed that it would be much more important for children to learn the language naturally, instead of being forced to learn it and ultimately hating the language.

> Uh my ideal situation would be like Mary's situation where I would just speak it to them and I think with that they're not really force you but it's just it becomes like second-nature to them to be able to um converse? And I think that's the best way to learn to like hear it and to be constantly surrounded by it as opposed to going to school like, like having that break for a week and then oh I need to rush to do this homework I hate Japanese oh my god and yeah that was my problem like I just hated it so I um I think if my mom had spoken to me like Mary's mom did I think um that would have been the best um situation but like the problem is like I can't speak Japanese fluently so um I don't know I think that I would try to send my kid to Japanese school but maybe like um send her or him with a friend? Or make sure that they're having fun.

(Christine)

Stacy shared her own experiences with Japanese school and emphasized that she appreciated her parents for forcing her to attend because she finds her skills as a bilingual beneficial now.

Well like for me I was kinda like forced to go so but then like in the end like even though like I didn't- I really did not wanna go I think it was a good thing that I went just 'cause like now like I don't know it's like I know how to speak Japanese and like I don't know the opportunitity like even though I didn't really didn't like it that time it's like well I get to speak Japanese wheras like some of the people are having a hard time time now like understanding it and so.

(Stacy)

Kimberly and Matt said they would probably force their children to attend Japanese school until sixth grade, but after that they would let their children make their own choice whether they would like to continue or not. In response to this statement, Mary shared her experiences of quitting her Japanese studies when she was younger, reminding the group that children may not be able to make a well-informed decision about these issues when they are too young.

That's what my mom did with me like um you know those very handy Japanese um like hiragana workbooks like with all the pictures in them and stuff? Ok, my mom like made me do this every weekend til sixth grade and then she said you can decide and I was like fuck that I'm not doing anymore. And like now I wish she had forced me to do it because my kanji is terrible and it's like second grade level.

(Mary)

Mary's comment was typical of what most participants said during their initial interviews when they were asked about their attitudes toward attending Japanese school as children. Almost all of the participants said they held a negative attitude towards attending to these schools when they were younger, but they also said they currently felt thankful their parents had made them go or regretted not attending at all. After Mary made the above comment, Ryan agreed that he had a similar experience when he was young. He described the time when he told his mother that he did not want to learn Japanese, which he still regrets to this day, and reconsidered his previous response to the question.

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I said that to my mom once. She was uh- She was pretty sad. I mean like granted like I don't know, it's 'cause she kept dogging me on to go to Asahi? But I was like mom I don't, I just don't wanna, like I'm not Japanese I don't wanna go to Asahi like I don't need to. And then like I said that. I don't wanna-Well I've always said no I just wanna watch Saturday morning cartoons. I was in elementary school, I was still a little kid. A little brat you know, like saying bratty kid things. But I always felt bad about it. And like I think because of that like I know at first I said like oh I wouldn't force it on but I think, I think I would.

(Ryan)

4.3.5.2 Other Methods of Heritage Language Development and Maintenance for Future Children

The participants had varying opinions about alternatives to Japanese school for promoting their future children's heritage language development and maintenance. They all said they would want their children's proficiency in the heritage language to be better than their own. Matt said that he would like his children to be near-native and better than him because that would give them many more opportunities and choices in life. He strongly believed that motivating the children to feel interest toward the heritage language would naturally lead them to learning the language.

Set the environment. Like manga, anime, and dramas or whatever that's Japanese so they if they have interest, like they could access to it immediately? And if they don't have interest then that's it, like parents can't impose them to do it so. So if they have interest like it was for me like you'll start reading it or watching it like automatically? And if you like it, you just get into it and learn it, learn more and read more watch more and yeah, that's it.

(Matt)

Like Matt, most of the participants felt that creating an environment that encourages the children to use the heritage language was the best approach. Linda also hoped her children would be able to learn Japanese better than her. She believed that her greatest obstacle to acquiring the Japanese language was the lack of an environment where she can use Japanese. She hoped to expose her children to settings where Japanese is required.

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’Cause if they don’t see the need for it, they’re not gonna want it I guess…I mean there’s times when I overhear people speaking Japanese and I’m like I wish I can join in but I can’t. Or I’m embarrassed by how bad my grammar is and so I don’t try and I just say oh I can only speak English.

(Linda)

Mary and Ryan mentioned that they hoped to get their mothers involved in the heritage language education of their future children. Mary strongly believed that surrounding the children in the language from an early age would greatly increase their chances of acquiring the heritage language.

I would want my mom to be like a big part of it? ‘Cause like my mom obviously has like a greater knowledge of Japanese culture and language so I want her to be involved too.

(Mary)

4.3.5.3 Disadvantages for Knowing the Heritage Language

When the students considered if they were any clear disadvantages for their future children if they learned their heritage language, some participants mentioned their own experiences of being labeled an “English learner” student or being placed in ESL classes during elementary school. This was briefly mentioned during their initial interviews but new information was shared while the students discussed this issue in the focus groups.

Ryan talked about how he was placed in an ESL class when he entered elementary school simply because his parents marked on his survey that his first languages at home were both English and Japanese. He mentioned that he was not allowed in programs such as GATE as long as he continued to have ESL standing, which was not removed from his records until he entered the fifth grade. After Ryan shared his story, Mary, Stacy, Christine, Kimberly and Matt all

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mentioned that they had had similar experiences. Kimberly described the difficulties she and her

mother had when trying to do English homework together.

> There was no teacher around so then it'll take me and my mom forever to like solve a problem because we were so used to Japanese that it's like I don't know what they're asking us to do for this assignment kind of thing.

<div align="right">(Kimberly)</div>

Matt said that if his children were not forced to learn the heritage language, it might be beneficial

since then they may be able to concentrate on learning just one language.

> Like concentrating on one language so you can learn like more deeper. Maybe… because like you know I- my grammar was kinda Japanese so like um although my schoolwork was all English so it's kinda like mixed up I get kind of mixed up between Japanese and English and some terms and some um grammar and shit so sometimes it was hard for me to like distinguish between Japanese and English like for certain words and stuff.

<div align="right">(Matt)</div>

4.3.6 Mapping the Connections

For the final meeting, the students reflected on the topics that were addressed during the

four focus groups through a mind-map activity before they went on to answer the final question.

The students started from the center of the board, where the words "The Japanese Language"

were written. The students were asked to create the mind-map by writing down words that

described things in their lives which they believe are connected to the Japanese language.

Figure 1

The students seemed to enjoy the collaborative effort in creating this mind-map and had no trouble filling up the whole poster board with their ideas. As each student wrote their words down on the poster-board (as shown in Figure 1) the rest of the group usually expressed their agreement through their "uh-huhs" and "oh yeahs."

As the number of words on the board increased, the students also began to realize how these words would connect to each other through smaller branches (as seen in Figure 2). It was very interesting to see how the students cooperated with one another when each word was added on to the map. If a word written by one of the participants was related to another word that was already there they would point out, "oh, doesn't that connect to this?" Each new word led to another word and the map continued to grow. When the students were finished adding words on to their mind-map, they were asked to mark the words that illustrated the main branches coming out of the center. The students circled the words "food," "Japanese-American," "sports," "family," "identity," "media," and "heritage" to indicate, how those words described the main categories of their lives which were related to the Japanese language.

Figure 2

Next the students marked the words "history," "interracial," "manga," "Little Tokyo," "J-school," "NSU," and "tradition" as the significant subcategories.

4.3.7 Answering the Final Question

After the completion of the mind-map, the students were given time to think about how they would answer the final question of the meeting, which was equivalent to the overarching theme of the four focus group meetings: "As _____, what does the Japanese language mean to you? Where does it fit in your life?" After writing their answers, each student discussed their response with the rest of the group. Below are each of their responses.

> I, even after all this do not understand the difference between Shin-Nisei or Nisei so I just put double because thats what I grew up beliving I am. So I said as a double the Japanese language is another way to express myself, it is a way for me to communicate with more people, than if I only spoke English being bilingual provides me with the opportunity to participate in several cultures and having a Japanese mind set gives me different and better perspective in various experiences

> (Mary)

As a Yonsei Japanese American I said Yonsei because I think it became more clear to me that there are still like generational differences or just even generational interest differences especially when we were making like this map or like the things of like you know you're Shin- Nisei when um or you know you're fourth generation when like that kind of made it clear to me that there still like I guess interest differences or just cultural things that are different? That for me as a lower or as a person who's family has been here ummm years before that I'm not exposed to so but I also said that I'm Yonsei Japanese American so I do see myself as part of a community with Shin- Nisei, like I think its silly to alienate that but I think it's there are differences in generations. So I said as a Yonsei Japanese American, the Japanese language is an important cultural and historical asset. My paternal great-grandfather and great grandmother's tongue. My mode of connection to the larger expanding JA community, something that I wish I knew better or had grown up with, um it's a barrier at times, it's beautiful, distant and alienating at times, um difficult to learn at a later age and the course of connection with my historical roots.

(Linda)

So Japanese language has always been a struggle for me to understand or to fully underst- to fully get and I don't know its always been a big portion of my life so I could never really define it in one sense I guess? So I like listing things so I listed things. So as an only-child Shin- Nisei, teacher son grandson Bruin student future father Hawaii born So Cal raised Japanese American, the Japanese language is what has/ is/ and always will keep me connected to my dad, my mom, my grandma, my grandpa, ojjichan, obaachan, cousins, my future children, my teaching career, my major applied linguistics, my minor language teaching and education, my future family, my taste in music, food, WWII, my dreams and aspirations, my accent, my friends, whether they be Shin- Nisei Nisei, Issei, Sansei, and on, Kinpachi Sensei, the JACL, my travel plans, my identity, my love for manga anime and games uh my future friends and most importantly myself.

(Ryan)

I wrote as a Shin- Nisei Japanese American, kind of similar to what Linda said. I didn't put just Shin- Nisei because I feel like Shin- Nisei is part of Japanese American but theres a distinguish you know there's some distinctions so I said Shin- Nisei Japanese American. Um the Japanese language is it's part of my identity or even more than like half of my identity um that's the foundation for who I am and what I do, what I can do and what I will do in the future, it's something that will become of use and lead me to the future with opportunities um it will also be the tool or platform to which will c- um connect the Japanese speaking community to the larger Japanese American community Japanese languages is the glue that keeps me together to many things that I cherish.

(Kimberly)

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As a Shin- Nisei Japanese American, yeah well, as we looked at the definition of Shin- Nisei I think myself as Shin- Nisei also so I just put Shin- Nisei. And I'm kind of grew up here so I'm American but I know Japanese culture so I'm Japanese American. And as a Japanese American, the Japanese culture- language is essential to my life and can be communication tools to family friends and can be other people's too and it is identity that proves me that I'm Japanese. And something that I want to master it even further and something that entertains me like manga, anime and games and something that give me more choice of like living and job opportunities and yeah that's it.

(Matt)

As a Shin- Nisei Japanese, I didn't put Japanese American just 'cause um when we talked about like Japanese American what attributes to Japanese American it didn't relate to me so I just put Japanese. Um the Japanese language is important to me part of my (oh I did it as bullet points I didn't write like a whole sentence) it's important to me part of my identity part of who I am um expresses my food choices, um love, chances of more communication like to my parents as well as like other relatives like my grandparents and cousins um job opportunities, um it allows me to meet more people um with the Japanese language um I was able to grow up with like Japanese media like kohaku and dramas and variety shows.

(Stacy)

I put I'm a Shinsei American Japanese, um Shin- Sansei, Shin- Sansei American Japanese uh ok I don't know if I could explain this but oh I well Shin- Sansei that's self explanatory but American Japanese because I don't think I'm Japanese American really when we discussed what it means to be Japanese American like it didn't really apply to me I don't know like anything about the Jap- Japanese history and America just because my family didn't go through it so I don't really apply to it. Um, not not that I'm saying I'm not willing to learn about it but anyways so I just put American Japanese um so the language to me is a means of connecting with uh my family, my t- my various worlds that I have UCLA, church, family, ph I just said that. But um and it's a means of connecting the past with the present and the future um the past with like learning what my family went through and what they did to leave me to where I am today. Um and that leads to understanding and gratitude for everything that they did and um yeah the language is just a something that I hope to learn better and to honor them by learning to better communicate with them.

(Christine)

From these final responses, it was clear that all seven of the participants felt that their heritage language was important to them. Some of their reasons for finding their heritage

language important were similar and some were different. All of the participants mentioned how they considered the language as a means of "communication." This may have been with their families, their community members, their peers, and even other people who they do not know yet. Many participants said that the heritage language gives them better opportunities in life.

One very significant difference in language attitude may have been greatly affected by their identifies either as an X-sei or a Shin- X-sei. Linda, who was the only one in the group who identified herself as part of the X-sei group, emphasized that the heritage language provided a way for her to maintain her connection to her past. She used the words "historical asset," "historical roots," and "great-grandparents." The others, who identified as the Shin- X-sei group, spoke mostly about their language being connected to present and future topics. They wrote about "future careers," and their "tastes in food, music, and modern media." Only Christine clearly mentioned how she believed the heritage language worked to bridge both her past and present and leads her toward her future. In other words, Japanese-Americans who are further down the generation may not possess a strong connection to Japan. Therefore they connect their heritage language primarily to the past as opposed to the present or future like the Japanese-Americans of the new generation. However, despite these differences, both groups still found their heritage language to be important.

It was very interesting to see that all of the participants were able to somehow identify themselves by the end of the focus group meetings. Four of the participants, Ryan, Kimberly, Stacy and Matt specifically used the word "identity" when talking about the heritage language.

4.4 Summary of the Exit Questionnaires and Interviews

For the exit interviews, the participants talked with the researcher in person or by telephone to discuss any differences in their responses between their initial and exit questionnaires and their overall experiences with the focus group. All participants described change in their identity perceptions, or attitudes toward their heritage language, or towards the Japanese-American community. Some participants described a significant change while some talked about only demonstrating minor developments.

4.4.1 The Significance of Contrastive Perspectives

All of the participants reacted positively to the life stories of the other participants. Many described a feeling of connection and a strong bond when the participants shared their common views and experiences with each other. They also believed that it facilitated a shift in perspective or reevaluation of preconceived notions toward certain issues. Matt said that hearing other people's stories led him to consider how participating in religious or ethnic community groups may affect one's identity perception.

> Well, I thought maybe being part of like a religious organization or some specific group would help in maintaining a very firm sense of your own identity? I think I'm starting to think that.
>
> (Matt)

Stacy shared how her interest for the focus groups were initially low but the open atmosphere created by the members' sharing of personal experiences motivated her to continue attending the meetings.

I mean getting to see other people and like just listening to what they have you say is really open like I feel, yeah…oh we have that similarity like that's how we view people, as like the same perspective it's like oh my god, like I could relate to that too! It just got me more bumped up.

(Stacy)

Christine mentioned how listening to the other participant's views and sharing her own story helped her to define her own opinions toward the heritage language. She believed that being given the chance to critically analyze her perspectives contributed greatly to this change in her attitude.

Because I don't really talk about this. Like, ever. And just listening to what everybody else had to say I realized that's how I felt too. And it helped me see that like yeah the language is very important…like listening and talking and discussing with other people it-it really not-it doesn't-it brings out those opinions that you don't realize you have?

(Christine)

Linda also believes the focus group made it easier for all of the participants to "open up." Though she had experience critically analyzing many of the topics that were brought up in the meetings through her major, Asian American Studies, she had not had the chance to examine her own experiences in the same way.

In terms of um, what it brought up, it brought up a lot of perspectives that I hadn't really thought about? 'cause I've been under the notion that you know a lot of being Japanese-American is associating oneself with um different labels. Because historically and whatever that's like that's kind of what I've been taught so that was kind of cool just to kind of turn that notion upside down and really critically think about it 'cause my major is kind of like oh, question everything or like critically think about stuff so it's kinda like oh I haven't really gotten a chance to really critique my own I guess Japanese-Americaness? If that's a term or whatever.

(Linda)

For Kimberly, the stories she heard at the focus groups reinforced what she learned through her membership with NSU and participation in group discussion provided a great opportunity to contextualize the different perspectives.

> I would say it helped me to know a little better at you know who I am in respect to the rest of the community or like everyone else. I think it added a- added new perspective or like new stories for me to know about like how people grow up, how Shin-Nisei grow up or how unique people's stories are.

(Kimberly)

4.4.2 Shift in Identity Perceptions

Among the four participants who demonstrated signs of Ethnic Identity Emergence, the third stage in Tse's model, Stacy and Christine demonstrated a significant shift in their identity perceptions after their initial questionnaires. Both Stacy and Christine affirmed that participation in the focus groups had motivated them to explore their identities further. It was clear in their initial interviews that they were not well-informed about their options for defining their identities, or life experiences. Christine seemed to subscribe to the ambiguous "middle" identity, while Stacy simply did not consider the notion of exploring one's own identity to be important. Now, after they have been better informed about possible ways to perceive their identities, they are both actively exploring their options.

Christine initially identified herself as Japanese-American but on her exit questionnaire, marked American-Japanese. She continued to experience difficulty in deciding on this answer.

I was just thinking well what am I first, am I Japanese or if I'm American and so I- I was thinking like I'm more American. Like I can't go to Japan and just live there. But then, going through the focus group, I realized that I don't identify with Japanese-American culture. Um, even like going through the list like I identified more with the Shin--Nisei, or yeah the Shin- Nisei list? Um and I realized that being American Japanese doesn't mean that you have to be like purely Japanese. I do have the both American and Japanese ideals and um, yeah I- I feel like this it probably fits me better.

(Christine)

It was very interesting to see how Christine was beginning to move away from her previous ideas of ethnic purity and beginning to believe in the hybrid nature of her identity.

Stacy's previous feelings of apathy and hesitation toward discussing her views on her own identity was clearly demonstrated in her initial questionnaire and interview. She at first showed little interest in analyzing her identity, but during the exit interview she admitted that the focus group meetings sparked her interest. She changed her identity perception from Japanese-American to both Japanese and American-Japanese.

I wanted to say 'cause because I'm born in America, I wanted to say I was Japanese-American but then yeah I don't know the list that you gave us it re- it didn't really apply to me and then but then the Shin-Nisei did so I was kind of confused. Well, I didn't know which one to pick.

(Stacy)

Stacy seemed much more comfortable and interested in discussing her views about her own identity now. She also mentioned that she hopes to continue exploring the issues addressed in the focus group meetings.

4.4.3 Shift in Language Attitudes

Another shift which was prominent among the participants was in their language attitudes. Many of the participants stated that the focus group helped them to understand how much the heritage language was relevant to their lives.

Stacy initially held a neutral stance toward the questionnaire statement, "the Japanese language is very important to me," but for her exit questionnaire she changed her stance to strongly agree. She said she saw that the language is not limited to the linguistic aspect and came to realize that it encompassed a very wide spectrum of the Japanese culture which is highly relevant to her.

> Doing that web thing (the mind-map), I think 'cause Japanese language I thought of just like initially when I did the survey I think I thought of like the writing and like just like linguistic stuff whereas like when we did the web it made me um, realize like it's not just like the linguistic it's also like the cultural, it's about like the food, it's about like the sports, um like everything pretty much about like Japanese culture and like Japanese stuff.
>
> (Stacy)

Christine also changed her response to this statement from neutral to strongly agree. She believed that she was able to realize through the focus group how the language related to her current life with her family and will also come to play a vital role in her future. This realization also led Christine to feel more motivated about learning the Japanese language.

Before I was thinking, I think when I wr- first chose my answer um, I was thinking like in my daily like and the use and like how it fits into my future kind of a thing. And it's like oh it's if I were to rank things it wasn't very important. Um, but going through the focus group I feel like I realized that it is important to me. It's like especially with communicating with my family and um like what I wanted. How I wanna raise my children too. I do want Japanese language to be part of their lives so I realized that I do, it is strong, it is very important to me…just because I can't really speak it very well or understand it as well as a native speaker, it gives me that motivation to learn it better.

(Christine)

Linda came to believe that knowledge of the heritage language is essential when trying to connect to the greater Japanese-American community. She also felt more motivated to learn the language.

I think because through the focus group I was noticing just how much or how much more knowing Japanese is important to relating to um the wider community. Yes, for myself I wouldn't say it's essential, but I wouldn't say it's not something that I don't care about…It made me realize how much I need to learn about Japanese. And how much I really want to learn it.

(Linda)

Ryan changed his attitude toward specific skills in his heritage language. In the initial interview, he believed his skill in reading was of low importance level but now it is at a medium level. Also, listening and speaking skills both went up to high importance. This change was also accompanied by his change in response to the statement, "I intend to enroll in a Japanese language course in the future" from somewhat agree to strongly agree. He was excited to share during the exit interview how he recently found out that he may be able to enroll in a heritage language course next school year.

4.4.4 Effects of the Focus Group Experience

All of the students said their participation in the focus groups led them to learn something new. For many, it gave them a deeper understanding of the Japanese-American community.

Some learned about the concept of identity in general while others were able to add new ideas to their own definitions. Every participant was able to broaden their perspectives.

Ryan was glad that he learned about NSU through his interactions with other participants in the focus group who were active members of this organization. His perspective toward the group changed from a more negative one to a more positive one. He hopes to become a member of NSU in the future.

> Mostly I learned about NSU. Which I never knew about. And if there's anything I wanted to get out of it, it was that. It was having this chance to interact kinda see the Japanese-American community at UCLA which I always thought was a weaker commu-weaker side compared to all the other culture communities. But it's not, you know? And it's well-established and that's the way it should be.
>
> (Ryan)

For Christine, the greatest benefit from participating in the focus group was her ability to clearly define her own identity.

> I think the biggest thing is uh being able to define my identity? Uh I never, I never really thought of like what mm not who I am but I guess like relation to the cultural identity, I did I just always thought ok, I'm Japanese, whatever. But it's good to know like exactly what or like how to explain who I am maybe?
>
> (Christine)

Kimberly also spoke about being able to further solidify her own definition of her identity through the interactions with other participants who have similar experiences and different experiences in life.

Even though everyone's Shin-Nisei, some people identified themselves Japanese whereas other people identified themselves as Japanese but they can't write or you know speak as well or like um or even you know, how Christine said she, her sister doesn't speak English and so I thought that was really interesting story so yeah it was I would say those I guess, I heard different stories that um, it's not very uh I would say not everyone grew up like me and even though I'm a Shin-Nisei. So it was kind of interesting to see that well I guess I kind of wanted to, I kind of wanted to learn more about what a typical Shin-Nisei is when you look at the big demographic kind of it interested me more to learn about that I guess.

(Kimberly)

Matt, who shared his struggles about trying to find a way to define his identity in the initial interview, came to the conclusion that people may not need to subject themselves to labels and should simply live life as honestly as they can.

Well, I thought maybe there is no real definition. There is no line that perfectly separates what a Shin-Nisei is and even if we made tens and thousands of those labels, it all comes down to just living your life as yourself, I think. You really don't have to think of it like as a Japanese person or as an American person.

(Matt)

Matt's last statement illustrates his shift away from ethnic purity which he strongly emphasized in his initial questionnaire and interview.

Mary, who seemed to have trouble recognizing the differences between the various categories within the Japanese-American community that the other participants saw, said she was beginning to see why these differences are relevant to the greater community.

I feel like I possibly understand a little bit better now not only what the different classifications mean but why people feel it's important to classify themselves in the first place. 'cause that was the first thing I had the hardest time like just because I think as being Half and like traveling a lot I just always accepted that I was Half and that I was never questioned and here everyone's like oh like are you Shin-Nisei and I was like why does that matter at all?

(Mary)

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Stacy said she was beginning to feel much more comfortable about exploring such topics as language and culture that she did not demonstrate before. She was very positive about being able to broaden her perspectives.

> Just my view of like Japanese and Japanese culture and Japanese language I feel like just like I said like with the Japanese language I like it's like a broad sense. It's not specifically this certain category you know, and like what it means to be like I guess Japanese but I'm still not sure. But I mean it just like it opens up my mind I guess like 'cause living everyday and just going through life you never like think about these things you know. But going through the focus group I feel like it made me like o- like I don't know I just realized some of the things that I never really pay attention to.

<div align="right">(Stacy)</div>

Linda's experience with the focus group was unique compared to that of the other participants. By the end of the meetings, she began to realize how difficult it was for her to relate to the others since as the meetings progressed most of them came to identify themselves as Shin-Nisei. Linda was the only Yonsei among the group. This led her to reevaluate her own definitions of a Japanese-American. In the initial questionnaire, Linda responded to the statement, "I clearly understand what it means to be a Japanese-American" with strongly agree, but in her exit questionnaire this response was changed to somewhat agree.

> I'm reconsidering a lot of what I was thinking about and just for me the focus group was kind of tough because I felt almost like ok I don't know if I really belong in this group because um there was or I was the only non Shin-Nisei? I guess, or non Shin-Issei? So I had no ties to Japan whatsoever. So some of the conversation was a bit over my head or just I didn't, I didn't get it? So I think for me it was kinda like well I think I need to reconsider what I think of or how I view myself in light of others that a gr- that called themselves Japanese-American.

<div align="right">(Linda)</div>

Linda still strongly associates herself to the Yonsei culture, but she learned how difficult it can be to define a whole community. She also mentioned that her experience with the focus group made her realize how her perspective was much narrower than she initially believed it to be.

<div align="center">65</div>

Linda also spoke about learning how much one's identity, language, and culture are closely related.

> The idea of identity and how it is I think it is linked to language or just how we identify with culture and how culture and language negotiate and just you know, form discussion between each other. Um, I thought that was intriguing and it really made me think about a lot of stuff and how I define my own self…I think it's all linked together because the way that we can define our culture or the best way that we can define our cultures is in our language. So Japanese culture can best be described in Japanese, American culture can best be described in English. Being Japanese-American can be described I think in both or with terms from both words or from both languages.

(Linda)

Linda's final comment alludes perfectly to what Fishman described in his speech mentioned earlier in this paper (see p. 1). It is difficult to say whether Linda's comment resulted from her participation in the focus group, but this does suggest that the heritage language learners and speakers who were part of this study may have come to realize why it is important for them to study and maintain their heritage language, and this was the ultimate goal of this study.

4.4.5 Post Focus Group Participant Attitudes and Perceptions

This table presents the information participants provided on their exit questionnaires, at the final focus group meeting, and in their exit interviews.

Table 2. Participant Information (Post- Focus Group)

Name	Identity Perceptions	Will Enroll in Japanese course in the Future	The Japanese language is very important to me
Stacy	Shin-Nisei Japanese and American-Japanese	Neutral	Strongly Agree
Ryan	An Only-child, Shin-Nisei, Teacher, Son, Grandson, Bruin, Student, Future Father, Hawaii-born, So-Cal Raised Japanese-American	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
Kimberly	Shin-Nisei Japanese-American	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree
Christine	Shin-Sansei American-Japanese	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
Matt	Shin-Nisei Japanese/American	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Agree
Mary	Double Japanese	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
Linda	Yonsei Japanese-American	Strongly Agree	StronglyAgree

5. Concluding Discussion

This study began by examining the identity perceptions of Japanese-American heritage language speakers and learners and how those perceptions correlated to their heritage language proficiency. After the students engaged in critical analysis of their identities and language attitudes in a focus group environment changes in these perceptions and attitudes were examined.

The results support claims presented in the literature that ethnic identity is inextricably connected to one's heritage language. However, the results contribute to these previous findings since the focus group made it possible to gain a more comprehensive view of the students' identities. If heritage language speakers and learners are placed in an environment which encourages discussion of diverse identity perceptions and language attitudes held by others, they may further develop their identity perceptions and alter their language attitudes. Some of the results bring into question current approaches in defining heritage language proficiency, which do not take into account individual differences in the relationship between the learner's identity and the heritage language.

The seven participants of this study, regardless of which stage of the ethnic identity formation model they were experiencing, all agreed that their identity was a way of representing their own life experiences. This description of their life experiences extended through their past, their present, and even into their futures. The participants felt a sense of security when they were able to describe these life experiences using certain labels and categories which established their association to a group as legitimate. For some, being part of the American society as an ethnic minority made it difficult to find the labels that best defined their particular experience, leading them to experience an "identity crisis." This identity crisis for most of the participants seemed to center on concerns with the idea of ethnic purity. The students in this study who were in the Ethnic Emergence stage dealt with this situation in one of two ways. The first was to give up on finding a label and to abandon the idea of membership with any group. The second was to reluctantly categorize themselves as part of an ambiguous "middle" identity viewed from a pessimistic perspective.

The participants who were in the Ethnic Identity Incorporation stage demonstrated that exposure to and further exploration of issues pertaining to identity through organizational support may play a vital role in aiding the students to view their identities through a more positive perspective. Instead of viewing it as lacking features of either cultures, the students who were progressing to Ethnic Identity Incorporation were able to view their identities as a perfect hybrid of both cultures.

Although all of the participants accepted that they were "Americanized" to some degree due to living in the United States, they also said that their knowledge of the heritage language equated to the degree of connection they felt to the Japanese culture. This was especially apparent when the students distinguished between the X-sei and the Shin- X-sei identities. Because the X-sei have been in America for several generations, their more "Americanized" culture embodies a successful elaboration of the multiple elements of American culture while also maintaining traditional aspects of the Japanese culture. Members of this culture usually have a lower proficiency in the heritage language. In contrast, the members of the Shin- X-sei community still displayed a strong connection to Japan and related to the contemporary culture through their higher proficiency in the heritage language.

In terms of general language attitudes among the participants, it was clear from the beginning that they all associated the languages to their respective cultures. This idea also greatly contributed to their concept of ethnic purity: the more proficient one is in the heritage language, the stronger the affiliation to the Japanese culture and higher level of ethnic purity. The interesting thing about this course of thought was that they usually equated proficiency with the speaking skill and not with any of the others. There was a general consensus among the

participants that Japanese-Americans, especially with the Yonseis and the generations following them who did not speak Japanese, were more "Americanized" than the earlier generations and the Shin- X-sei. There was also a strong desire, indeed almost a sense of to improve one's skills in the Japanese language regardless of current proficiency.

Through the focus group, the students were able to critically analyze their own identity perceptions and language attitudes in a comfortable, non-invasive atmosphere. The group was comprised of participants seemingly experiencing either stage 3 (Ethnic Emergence) or stage 4 (Ethnic Identity Incorporation) of Tse's ethnic identity formation model. The focus group setting proved to be beneficial for participants in both stages. Students in stage 3 were given the opportunity to explore the topics and themes they previously had little or no chance to examine. The students in stage 4 were able to broaden their understandings of the topics. Both groups were reminded of their own relationship with the heritage language and how it affected their identities and language attitudes.

Further research should be conducted in order to examine how a focus group activity can be incorporated into the heritage language pedagogy. If these focus group activities were used to supplement regular language lessons, it may bring great benefits in terms of student motivation and language acquisition. By emphasizing individual identity, the teacher is able to create a nonjudgmental space where no student feels uncomfortable about actively participating and effectively learning the language.

Most of the students in this study agreed that a focus group would be a very useful tool for a heritage language class. They thought it would be highly effective if the focus groups were similar to their discussion sections they are usually required to attend in order to create a more

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intimate atmosphere. One student mentioned how discussing the language in a focus group will help her learn it better by giving it a context. Another student believes that a focus group component to the class will aid in promoting political activism

The results of this study call into question the ways in which proficiency is viewed within the field of heritage language education. Throughout this study, students regularly discussed the relationship of their proficiency with their current lifestyles. For example, with students like Linda, the heritage language was used to pass on the history of her great-grandparents. Unlike the Shin-Nisei, who emphasized that the heritage language was essential to aspects of their current lives such as food, music, books, and television programs, for Linda the heritage language is somewhat in the background and does not have very high level of relevance for her current life. Linda recognizes that the heritage language is valuable because it keeps her connected to her roots, and this strengthens her identity as a Japanese-American who will continue to search for her place within the greater American society. For her current identity perception, the heritage language is at a low level of relevance, and this affects her proficiency.

In contrast, for Matt the heritage language is highly relevant to his current identity perceptions as a Shin-Nisei, which may be one critical factor in his level of heritage language proficiency. Through the traditional perspective of proficiency, for students like Linda, , proficiency may be described as low. However, this may not be an accurate description since her linguistic knowledge is actually adequate for her identity and lifestyle as a Yonsei Japanese-American, This illustrates how important it is for the field of heritage language education to consider including the students levels of heritage language relevance along with their linguistic skills when defining their proficiency.

This study illustrates that every heritage language student is different, and educators must remember they cannot assume that all of their students are in their heritage language classrooms for the same reasons. Each student has a different experience with their heritage language, which also shapes their attitudes and perceptions of their identity differently. If we come to understand our students' identities, this can become a very powerful classroom tool that may aid in facilitating a more meaningful language learning experience. It is important to be able to recognize what is important not only for educators but also for our students when choosing a teaching method. We must approach our profession with a sense of responsibility and passion since heritage language educators are not only teaching their students a language, they are also assisting in their development of ethnic identity.

6. Limitations and Implications

There are several limitations to this study that must be acknowledged. Due to constraints on time and support, this project was a small-scale exploration. Therefore, the results presented here cannot be generalized to the entire Japanese-American population. Though the study is not sufficient to address all of the questions surrounding the topic of heritage language education, these results can still assist in clarifying the language attitudes of Japanese-American students toward their heritage language. This may also lead to discovering ways to motivate more Japanese-American heritage language learners to maintain their heritage language. Further research is needed on this topic in order to enhance our understanding of the Japanese-American heritage language learners and to advance the development of Japanese heritage language education.

INITIAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Japanese and Japanese-American Cultural Focus Group Questionnaire (Winter 2012)

Background Questions

1. Name:_____

2. Age: _____

3. Gender: Male   Female

4. Please circle your class standing:

    a. Freshman   b. Sophomore   c. Junior   d. Senior   e. Graduate

5. Were you born in the United States?

    a. Yes   b. No

6. If not, which country were you born in?

    _____

7. How old were you when you moved to the U.S.?

    _____ years old

8. Are you second-generation (Nisei), third-generation (Sansei) or other?

    _____

9. Do you visit Japan? How often do you visit?

    _____

10. Would you consider relocating to Japan in the future for your career?

    a. Yes   b. No

11. Are you a member of a Japanese-culture related club or do you practice a Japanese sport? (NSU, JSA, kendo, judo, etc.) If yes, please list them.

    _____

Language Background Questions

1. What language(s) do you use when speaking to your parents?

    _____

2. What language(s) do you use when speaking to your siblings?

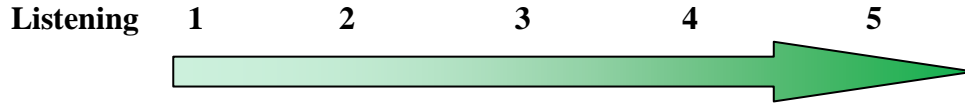3. What language(s) do you use when speaking to your friends?

_____

4. Have you ever attended a Saturday Japanese language school? If yes, which school did you attend?

_____

5. Are you currently enrolled in a Japanese language course at UCLA?

    a. Yes b. No

6. What percentage of your day do you use Japanese?

    a. 0%-20% b. 21%-40% c. 41%-60% d. 61%-80% e. 81%-100%

7. Do you read Japanese books, magazines or newspapers in your free-time?

    a. Yes b. No

8. Do you watch any Japanese media? (TV, Movies, Dramas)

    a. Yes b. No

9. Do you listen to Japanese music? (J-pop, Enka, etc.)

    a. Yes b. No

Japanese Proficiency Questions

Please rate your Japanese language proficiency on a scale of 1-5 where 1 is very low (no knowledge) to 5 is very high (fluent/near-native) for each skill.

Reading   **1**   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

   I cannot read Japanese   **Near-native/proficient (e.g. I can read a Japanese newspaper)**

Writing   **1**   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

   I cannot write any Japanese   **Near-native/proficient (e.g. I can write an essay in Japanese)**

Speaking   **1**   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

   I cannot speak Japanese   **Near-native/proficient (e.g. I can discuss the latest political news in Japanese)**

Listening   1   2   3   4   5

I cannot understand Japanese when I hear it   Near-native/proficient (e.g. I can understand a
Japanese news program)

1. How important are these skills for you? Please rate the skills from above (reading,

    writing, speaking and listening) by level of importance.

    **EXAMPLE: If you believe that having Japanese listening skills greatly aids you in
    your day-to-day activities, then you would mark HIGH.
    Japanese listening skills: LOW   MEDIUM   (HIGH)**

    a) Japanese reading skills :   LOW   MEDIUM   HIGH

    b) Japanese writing skills :   LOW   MEDIUM   HIGH

    c) Japanese speaking skills :   LOW   MEDIUM   HIGH

    d) Japanese listening skills :   LOW   MEDIUM   HIGH

2) Out of the skills mentioned above (reading, writing, speaking, and listening), which, if

    any, would you like to improve?

    _____

3) Did you have any difficulties when you were learning Japanese?

    a. Yes   b. No

4) What do you think was the most helpful in learning the Japanese language?

    _____

Japanese/Japanese-American Culture Questions:

1) I identify myself as:
    a) Japanese   b) American   c) Japanese-American   d) American-Japanese   e) other

For the next section, please circle the answer that best describes your opinion.

2) I am interested in the traditions, the history, and customs of Japan.

    Strongly disagree   Somewhat disagree   Neutral   Somewhat agree   Strongly agree
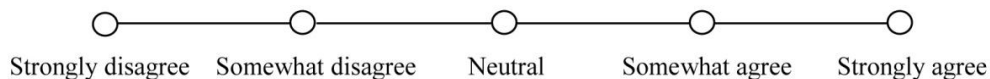
3) I think a lot about how being able to speak Japanese may affect my life.

○————○————○————○————○
Strongly disagree   Somewhat disagree   Neutral   Somewhat agree   Strongly agree

4) I believe that being able to speak Japanese will aid me in my career search.

○————○————○————○————○
Strongly disagree   Somewhat disagree   Neutral   Somewhat agree   Strongly agree

5) The Japanese language is very important to me.

○————○————○————○————○
Strongly disagree   Somewhat disagree   Neutral   Somewhat agree   Strongly agree

6) The people in my circle of friends are mostly of Japanese heritage. (Please circle)

YES   NO

7) I believe that it is important for youth of our community to have contact with the older members of our community to learn about their heritage.

○————○————○————○————○
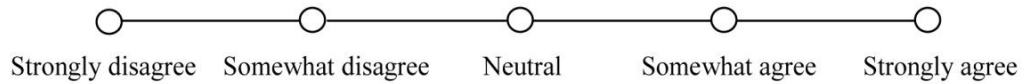Strongly disagree   Somewhat disagree   Neutral   Somewhat agree   Strongly agree

8) I intend to enroll in a Japanese language course in the future.

○————○————○————○————○
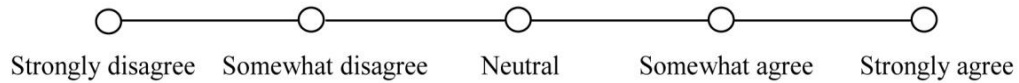Strongly disagree   Somewhat disagree   Neutral   Somewhat agree   Strongly agree

9) I feel pride in belonging to the Japanese ethnic group.

○————○————○————○————○
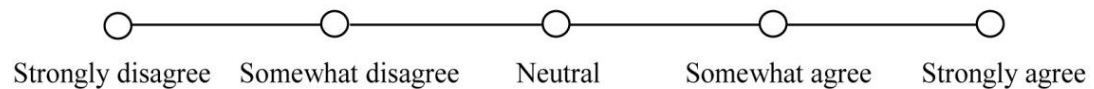Strongly disagree   Somewhat disagree   Neutral   Somewhat agree   Strongly agree

10) I believe that there are many opportunities for students like myself to discuss issues involving Japanese/Japanese-American cultures on campus.
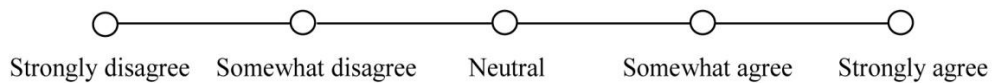
Strongly disagree   Somewhat disagree   Neutral   Somewhat agree   Strongly agree

11) I clearly understand what it means to be Japanese.

Strongly disagree   Somewhat disagree   Neutral   Somewhat agree   Strongly agree

12) I clearly understand what it means to be American.

Strongly disagree   Somewhat disagree   Neutral   Somewhat agree   Strongly agree

13) I clearly understand what it means to be Japanese-American.

Strongly disagree   Somewhat disagree   Neutral   Somewhat agree   Strongly agree

14) I enjoy participating in Japanese or Japanese-American cultural events and festivities outside of school. (Nisei Week Festival, Tofu Festival, Cherry Blossom Festival,

Strongly disagree   Somewhat disagree   Neutral   Somewhat agree   Strongly agree
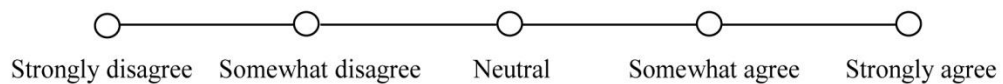
etc.)

Project Specific Questions

1) How did you hear about this project?

_____

2) Why are you interested in participating in this project?

_____

3) What topic(s) do you wish to discuss in the focus group?

_____

APPENDIX 2

INITIAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Japanese and Japanese-American Cultural Focus Group Project

Interview Questions (Winter 2012)

The majority of these interview questions depend on how the student answered their questionnaires administered prior to the interview.

Background Information Questions:

1) What are you studying/ what is your major at UCLA?
2) Where is your hometown?
3) Where is your father from originally?
4) Where is your mother from originally?

If the student answered that they were not born in the U.S, ask #5-7, if not skip to #8

5) Was it difficult adjusting to living in the U.S.?
6) Did you have any difficulties when you started attending American school?
7) What helped you to adjust to your new lifestyle?
8) Were you familiar with the terms Nisei (second-generation) and Sansei (third-generation) on the questionnaire?
9) How did you learn about these terms, Nisei and Sansei?
10) Do you think many people know about these terms? Who do you think uses these terms?
11) Do you think these terms have the same meaning when said in Japanese (Nisei and Sansei) versus if it was said in English (second-generation and third-generation)?

If the student answered that they visit Japan, ask #12-15, if not skip to #16

12) When was the last time you visited Japan? How long did you stay?
13) What was the purpose of your last visit to Japan?
14) What did you enjoy about your visit to Japan?
15) What did you not enjoy about your visit to Japan?

If the student answered that they would consider relocating to Japan for a future career, ask #16-18, if not skip to #19

16) You answered that you would consider moving to Japan for a career. For what type of job(s) do you think you would relocate to Japan?

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17) Have you ever worked in Japan, or do you know anybody that works in Japan?
18) Do you think anything would be different if you had a job in Japan versus a job in the States? Please explain.
19) You answered that you would not consider moving to Japan for a career. Can you tell me why not?
20) Would you consider working for a Japanese company in the States? Why or why not?

If the student answered that they are part of a Japanese culture-related club, ask #21-24. If not, skip to #25.

21) You answered that you are part of a Japanese culture-related club. Can you tell me what this club is about?
22) What made you decide to be a part of this club?
23) What do you enjoy the most about being part of this club?
24) Do you think you learned about the Japanese/Japanese-American culture by being part of this club? If so, what did you learn?
25) How is this club different from the other student organizations on campus?

If the student answered that they practice a Japanese sport, ask them #26-32, if not then skip to #32.

26) You answered that you practice a Japanese sport. If you were explaining this sport to a person who had never heard of it, how would you describe it?
27) What made you decide to practice this sport?
28) What do you like about practicing this sport?
29) Do you think you learned about the Japanese/Japanese-American culture by practicing this sport? If yes, what did you learn?
30) Do you practice any other sport that is not specifically related to the Japanese culture?
31) If yes, do you think that sport is different from the sport that is related to the Japanese culture? Please explain.

If the student answered that they use different languages depending on who they are speaking with, ask them #32. If not, skip to #33.

32) You answered that you speak a different language depending on if you are speaking to your parents/grandparents/siblings/ or friends. Can you tell me exactly which language(s) you speak with whom? What do you think makes you do that?

If the student answered that they used to attend a Saturday Japanese language school, ask them #33-39, if not skip to #40)

33) You answered that you used to attend a Saturday Japanese language school (J-school). For how long did you attend this school?

34) Why were you attending this school?
35) If it had been up to you to decide whether to attend J-school or not, would you have gone? Why or why not?
36) What did you do at this J-school?
37) What did you like about attending J-school?
38) What did you not like about attending J-school?
39) Did you think anything was different at J-school from American school? Please explain.
40) Do you think you learned about the Japanese/Japanese-American culture at the J-school? Please explain.

If the student answered that they are currently enrolled in a Japanese course at UCLA, ask them #40-48. If not, skip to #49.

41) You answered that you are currently enrolled in a Japanese language course here at UCLA. What is the class's title?
42) What made you decide to take this class?
43) What do you enjoy the most about this class?
44) What do you enjoy the least about this class?
45) What kinds of topics are addressed in this class? (What are you learning about?)
46) What were some of your initial expectations about this class before you started the course?
47) After you started the course, did it meet your initial expectations? Please explain why or why not.
48) Did you have to take a placement exam before enrolling in the course?
49) What did you think about the placement test?

If the students answered that they use Japanese for any percentage of time during their day, ask them #49. If not, then skip to question #50

50) You answered that you use Japanese in your daily life. Can you tell me in which situations you use Japanese?

If the student answered that they read Japanese books, magazines, or newspapers, then ask them question #50. If not, skip to #54.

51) What kind of Japanese books do you like to read in your free-time?
52) What kind of Japanese magazines do you like to read in your free-time?
53) What kind of Japanese newspapers do you read in your free-time?
54) What do you usually read about in the Japanese newspapers?

If the student answered that they watch Japanese media, ask them #54. If not, skip to #56.

55) What kind of Japanese TV programs do you like to watch?

56) What kind of Japanese movies do you like to watch?

If the student answered that they listen to Japanese music, ask them #56.

57) What kind of Japanese music do you like to listen to?
58) Do you have a genre of Japanese music that you least like to listen to? Please explain.

Japanese Language Proficiency Questions:

The questions in this section will depend on what the students answered on their questionnaire. The questions will try to clarify what the students' answers entail. For example, we must get a clear idea of what the student meant when they answered that their proficiency in Japanese reading is at level 2 since other than level 1 and level 5, there is no clear classification of what their level entails.

The student would have answered 2, 3, or 4 for this section. Questions will be different depending on their answers.

1) You answered that your proficiency in Japanese reading is 2/3/4. Can you explain in more detail what you mean by this?
2) You answered that your proficiency in Japanese writing is 2/3/4. Can you explain in more detail what you mean by this?
3) You answered that your proficiency in Japanese speaking is 2/3/4. Can you explain in more detail what you mean by this?
4) You answered that your proficiency in Japanese listening in 2/3/4. Can you explain in more detail what you mean by this?

The following section of the interview is to confirm the participants' self-assessed speaking proficiency using questions adapted from the ACTFL proficiency guidelines.

1) ＿＿＿＿＿さんは UCLA が好きですか？どういうところが好きですか？
   Do you like UCLA? What do you like about UCLA?
2) ＿＿＿＿＿さんが高校生の時一番好きだった科目は何ですか？
   Which subject did you like the most when you were in high school?
3) ＿＿＿＿＿さんはよく旅行をしますか？どんな所へ行ったことがありますか？
   Do you travel often? What kind of places have you been to?
4) ＿＿＿＿＿さんはどんな食べ物が好きですか？
   What kind of food do you like?
5) ＿＿＿＿＿さんの家族は家ではよく日本食を食べますか？
   Does your family often eat Japanese food at home?
6) ＿＿＿＿＿さんのお母さんはお料理が好きですか？
   Does your mother like to cook?

7) ＿＿＿＿＿さんのお父さんはどんなお仕事をしていますか？

What does your dad do for a living?

8) ＿＿＿＿＿さんはご兄弟がいますか？何人いますか？

Do you have any siblings? How many do you have?

9) ＿＿＿＿＿さんはアメリカ人と日本人とどちらの方が働き者だと思いますか？どうしてですか？

Between Americans and Japanese, which do you think are more hard-working?

10) ＿＿＿＿＿さんはベジタリアンの人を知っていますか？ベジタリアンの人をどう思いますか？

Do you know any vegetarian people? What are your opinions on the practice of vegetarianism?

11) ＿＿＿＿＿さんは日本の「お見合い結婚」とは知っていますか？＿＿＿＿＿さんはお見合い結婚をしたいと思いますか？

Do you know the Japanese tradition of an arranged marriage? Would you ever consider having an arranged marriage?

12) ＿＿＿＿＿さんは今アメリカのあちらこちらで起こっている「Occupy」運動のことをどう思いますか？

What are your opinions on the "Occupy movement" that is occurring all over the country right now?

The following three scenarios are role-play activities where the researcher will play one character and the participant the other.

シナリオ１

あなたは日本の大学に留学生として来ています。初めて会うクラスメートの皆さんに自己紹介をしてください。

Scenario 1:

You are an exchange student attending a Japanese university. Please introduce yourself to your classmates that you are meeting for the first time today.

シナリオ２

あなたが学校からアパートへ帰ろうとしていると、隣のアパートに住んでいる田中さんの娘さんの花子ちゃんが一人で道の真ん中で遊んでいます。花子ちゃんはまだ５歳くらいの女の子で、いつもならばお母さんと一緒にいるはずなのに今日は何故か一人で遊んでいます。花子ちゃんに話しかけてみてください。

Scenario 2:

When you were coming home from school, you see your neighbor's daughter Hanako playing by herself in the middle of the road. Hanako is 5 years old and usually when she is outside her mother is with her, but today it seems like she is alone. Talk to Hanako.

シナリオ３

あなたはとある日本の大企業の秘書です。あなたの上司はその会社の山本社長です。社長は今会議に出ていて忙しいです。そこに社長宛に大事なお客様から電話がかかって来ます。社長は３時まで会議に出ています。その後も今日はとても忙しいです。たぶん今日中にはこのお客様には電話が出来ません。お客様に失礼のないようにお断りしてから用件を聞き出してください。

Scenario 3

You are working as a secretary at a prestigious Japanese company. You work directly under the company director, Mr. Yamada. Mr. Yamada is currently in a meeting when you receive a phone-call from a very important client. The client is calling to speak to the director but you know that he will not be out of this meeting until 3pm. Even after the meeting, he has a very busy schedule today. He will probably not be able to call this client back today. Please inform the client about the president's busy schedule without offending them and try to take a message.

The student will have answered low, medium, or high for this section. Questions will be different depending on their answers.

5) You answered that your Japanese reading skills are **not important** for you. Please explain.
6) You answered that your Japanese reading skills are **somewhat important** for you. Please explain.
7) You answered that your Japanese reading skills are **very important** for you. Please explain.
8) You answered that your Japanese writing skills are **not important** for you. Please explain.
9) You answered that your Japanese writing skills are **somewhat important** for you. Please explain.
10) You answered that your Japanese writing skills are **very important** for you. Please explain.
11) You answered that your Japanese speaking skills are **not important** for you. Please explain.
12) You answered that your Japanese speaking skills are **somewhat important** for you. Please explain.
13) You answered that your Japanese speaking skills are **very important** for you. Please explain.

14) You answered that your Japanese listening skills are **not important** for you. Please explain.
15) You answered that your Japanese listening skill are **somewhat important** for you. Please explain.
16) You answered that your Japanese listening skills are **very important** for you. Please explain. Students may have chosen one or more out of the list of skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) for this section. The question will differ depending on their answers.
17) For what reason(s) do you want to improve your Japanese reading/writing/speaking/listening skills?

If the student answered that they had some difficulties when they were learning Japanese, ask them #18. If not, skip to #19.

18) What were some of the difficulties you faced when you were learning Japanese?

If the student listed some things they believed were helpful while they were learning Japanese, ask them #19.

19) You answered that these things were helpful for you when you were learning Japanese. Can you please explain your answer in detail?

Japanese/Japanese-American Culture Questions:

The student should have chosen one of the answers (Japanese, American, Japanese-American, American-Japanese, or other) from the list. These next questions will clarify their choice.

1) Can you explain what it means to you to identify as **Japanese**?
2) Can you explain what it means to you to identify as an **American**?
3) Can you explain what it means to you to identify as a **Japanese-American**?
4) Can you explain what it means to you to identify as an **American-Japanese**?
5) Can you explain what it means to you to identify as **other**?

The next set of questions will clarify the student's answers on questions #2-14 of the Japanese/Japanese-American Culture Questions of the questionnaire from Winter 2012.
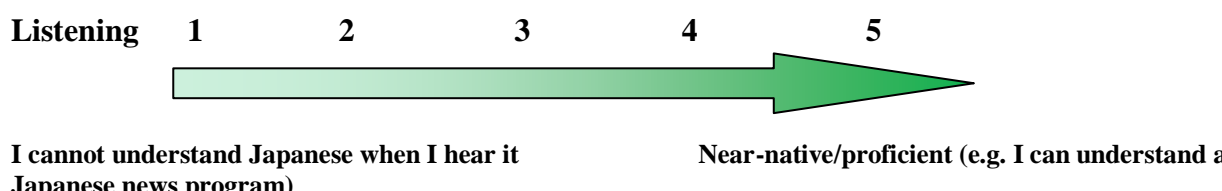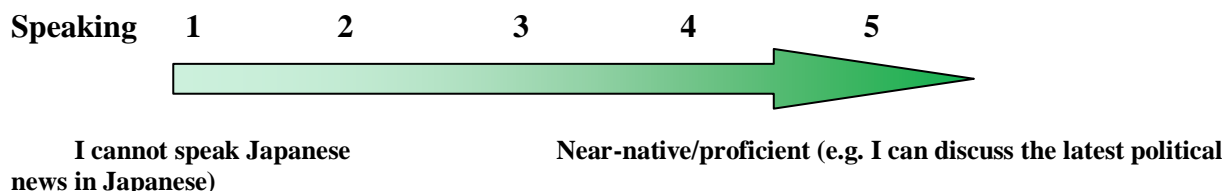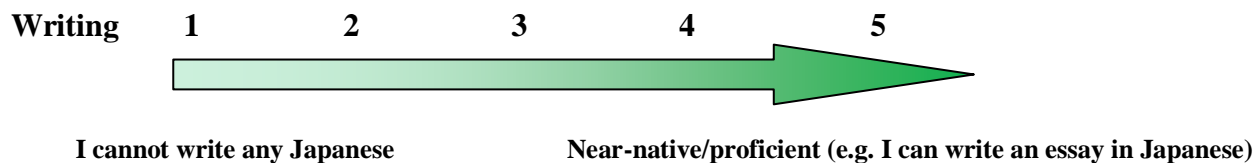
6) Can you please explain why you strongly disagree/somewhat disagree/ feel neutral/somewhat agree/ agree that you are interested in the culture, the traditions, the history, and customs of Japan?
7) Can you please explain why you strongly disagree/somewhat disagree/ feel neutral/somewhat agree/ agree that you think a lot about how being able to speak Japanese may affect your life?

8) Can you please explain why you strongly disagree/somewhat disagree/ feel neutral/somewhat agree/ agree that being able to speak Japanese will aid you in your career search?

9) Can you please explain why you strongly disagree/somewhat disagree/ feel neutral/somewhat agree/ agree that the Japanese language is very important to you?

10) Can you please explain why you strongly disagree/somewhat disagree/ feel neutral/somewhat agree/ agree that most of the people in your circle of friends are of Japanese heritage?

11) Can you please explain why you strongly disagree/somewhat disagree/ feel neutral/somewhat agree/ agree that it is important for youth of the community to have contact with the older generation of the community to learn about the Japanese-American heritage?

12) Can you please explain why you strongly disagree/somewhat disagree/ feel neutral/somewhat agree/ agree about feeling interested in enrolling in a Japanese language course in the future?

13) Can you please explain why you strongly disagree/somewhat disagree/ feel neutral/somewhat agree/ agree about feeling pride in belonging to the Japanese ethnic group?

14) Can you please explain why you strongly disagree/somewhat disagree/ feel neutral/somewhat agree/ agree that there are many opportunities for students to discuss issues involving Japanese/Japanese-American cultures on campus?

15) Can you please explain why you strongly disagree/somewhat disagree/ feel neutral/somewhat agree/ agree about having a clear idea about what it means to be Japanese?

16) Can you please explain why you strongly disagree/somewhat disagree/ feel neutral/somewhat agree/ agree about having a clear idea about what it means to be American?

17) Can you please explain why you strongly disagree/somewhat disagree/ feel neutral/somewhat agree/ agree about having a clear idea about what it means to be Japanese-American?

18) Can you please explain why you strongly disagree/somewhat disagree/ feel neutral/somewhat agree/ agree about enjoying participating in Japanese or Japanese-American cultural events and festivities outside of school?

Project Specific Questions:

1) Can you tell me why you are interested in participating in the project?
2) Can you tell me about the types of topics you hope to discuss in the focus group?
3) Did you have any questions for me?

STUDENT RESPONSES TO DISCUSSION QUESTION 6

THE MIND MAP

EXIT QUESTIONNAIRE

Japanese and Japanese-American Cultural Focus Group Questionnaire #2 (Winter 2012)

Background Questions

12. Name:_____

Language Background Questions

10. What language(s) do you use when speaking to your parents?

_____

11. What language(s) do you use when speaking to your siblings?

_____

12. What language(s) do you use when speaking to your friends?

_____

13. What percentage of your day do you use Japanese?

a. 0%-20%   b. 21%-40%   c. 41%-60%   d. 61%-80%   e. 81%-100%

14. Do you read Japanese books, magazines or newspapers in your free-time?

a. Yes   b. No

15. Do you watch any Japanese media? (TV, Movies, Dramas)

a. Yes   b. No

16. Do you listen to Japanese music? (J-pop, Enka, etc.)

a. Yes   b. No

Japanese Proficiency Questions

Please rate your Japanese language proficiency on a scale of 1-5 where 1 is very low (no knowledge) to 5 is very high (fluent/near-native) for each skill.

Reading   **1**   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

I cannot read Japanese   Near-native/proficient (e.g. I can read a Japanese newspaper)

Writing   1   2   3   4   5

I cannot write any Japanese   Near-native/proficient (e.g. I can write an essay in Japanese)

Speaking   1   2   3   4   5

I cannot speak Japanese   Near-native/proficient (e.g. I can discuss the latest political news in Japanese)

Listening   1   2   3   4   5

I cannot understand Japanese when I hear it   Near-native/proficient (e.g. I can understand a Japanese news program)

2. How important are these skills for you? Please rate the skills from above (reading, writing, speaking and listening) by level of importance.

> **EXAMPLE: If you believe that having Japanese listening skills greatly aids you in your day-to-day activities, then you would mark HIGH.**
>
> **Japanese listening skills: LOW   MEDIUM   (HIGH)**

e) Japanese reading skills :   LOW   MEDIUM   HIGH
f) Japanese writing skills :   LOW   MEDIUM   HIGH
g) Japanese speaking skills :   LOW   MEDIUM   HIGH
h) Japanese listening skills :   LOW   MEDIUM   HIGH

5) Out of the skills mentioned above (reading, writing, speaking, and listening), which, if any, would you like to improve?

_____

6) What do you think was the most helpful in learning the Japanese language?

_____

Japanese/Japanese-American Culture Questions:

15) I identify myself as:

b) Japanese   b) American   c) Japanese-American   d) American-Japanese   e) other

For the next section, please circle the answer that best describes your opinion.

16) I am interested in the traditions, the history, and customs of Japan.

Strongly disagree   Somewhat disagree   Neutral   Somewhat agree   Strongly agree

17) I think a lot about how being able to speak Japanese may affect my life.

Strongly disagree   Somewhat disagree   Neutral   Somewhat agree   Strongly agree

18) I believe that being able to speak Japanese will aid me in my career search.

Strongly disagree   Somewhat disagree   Neutral   Somewhat agree   Strongly agree

19) The Japanese language is very important to me.

Strongly disagree   Somewhat disagree   Neutral   Somewhat agree   Strongly agree

20) The people in my circle of friends are mostly of Japanese heritage. (Please circle)

YES   NO

21) I believe that it is important for youth of our community to have contact with the older members of our community to learn about their heritage.
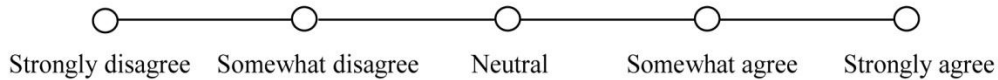

Strongly disagree   Somewhat disagree   Neutral   Somewhat agree   Strongly agree

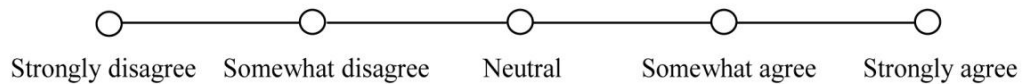22) I intend to enroll in a Japanese language course in the future.

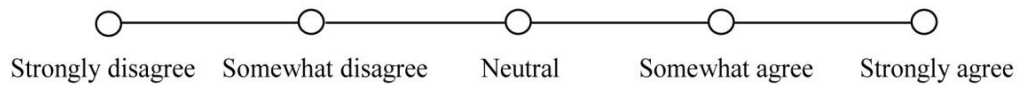Strongly disagree   Somewhat disagree   Neutral   Somewhat agree   Strongly agree

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23) I feel pride in belonging to the Japanese ethnic group.

○————————○————————○————————○————————○
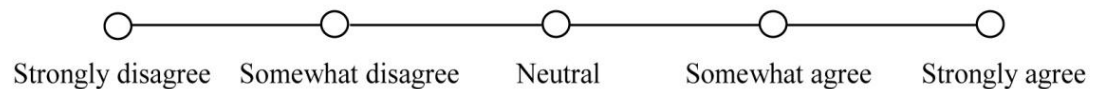Strongly disagree　Somewhat disagree　Neutral　Somewhat agree　Strongly agree

24) I believe that there are many opportunities for students like myself to discuss issues involving Japanese/Japanese-American cultures on campus.
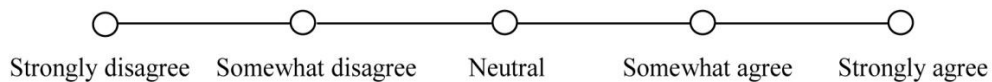
○————————○————————○————————○————————○
Strongly disagree　Somewhat disagree　Neutral　Somewhat agree　Strongly agree

25) I clearly understand what it means to be Japanese.

○————————○————————○————————○————————○
Strongly disagree　Somewhat disagree　Neutral　Somewhat agree　Strongly agree

26) I clearly understand what it means to be American.

○————————○————————○————————○————————○
Strongly disagree　Somewhat disagree　Neutral　Somewhat agree　Strongly agree

27) I clearly understand what it means to be Japanese-American.

○————————○————————○————————○————————○
Strongly disagree　Somewhat disagree　Neutral　Somewhat agree　Strongly agree

28) I enjoy participating in Japanese or Japanese-American cultural events and festivities outside of school. (Nisei Week Festival, Tofu Festival, Cherry Blossom Festival,

○————————○————————○————————○————————○
Strongly disagree　Somewhat disagree　Neutral　Somewhat agree　Strongly agree

etc.)

APPENDIX 6

EXIT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Japanese and Japanese-American Cultural Focus Group Exit Interview

The first part of the interview will depend on what the participant answered on their second questionnaire.

1) If there were any changes in their language use questions, ask them why they answered differently.
2) If they answered differently about their Japanese language proficiency, ask them why they answered differently.
3) If their answers for Japanese language importance, then ask them why they changed their answers.
4) If they changed their identity perception, ask them why they changed their answer to that question.
5) If they changed their answers on any of the Japanese/Japanese-American Cultural Attitudes questions, ask them why they have changed their answers.

The second part of the interview will ask specific questions about their experiences in the focus group meetings.

1) What did you think about the focus group meetings?
2) What were some things you enjoyed about the focus groups?
3) What were some things you did not enjoy about the focus groups?
4) What are some things you learned from the focus groups?
5) Which question was the most memorable for you? Please explain why.
6) Did you have any initial expectations about the focus groups? Please explain.
7) Did the actual focus group meetings meet your initial expectations? Please explain.
8) Do you think anything changed since you participated in these focus group meetings? Please explain.
9) Did you feel like you were able to relate to all of the participants in the focus group? Please explain.
10) Do you think these focus group meetings would be a useful instrument for a Japanese class? Please explain.
11) Do you have any issues that you wanted to discuss at the focus groups that we did not touch upon?

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