



Use of Memes: A Comparison Between Japan and America

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Outline

- Significance of the Study
- Research Questions
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 - Meme Examples
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Significance of the Study

Quenton

- I am interested in Japan's types of social media & user generated content
- I am interested in Japanese cultural associations & sense of comedy
- I am curious about why things become popular in social media

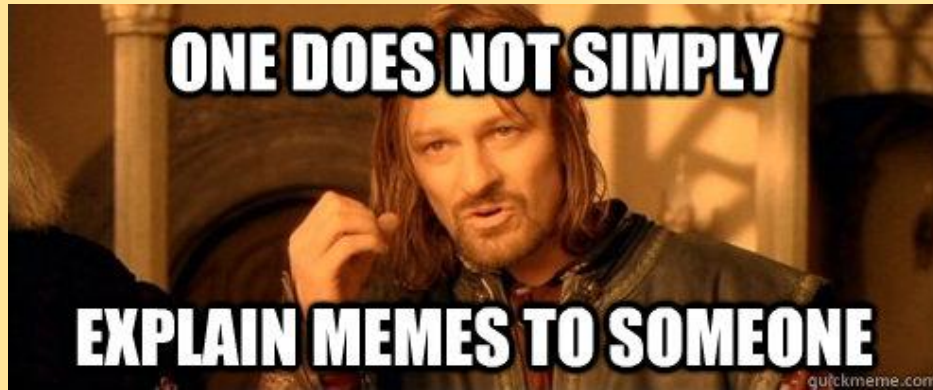
Heather

- I have been interested in development of internet memes for a while
- During study abroad, unique Japanese designs often caught my attention
- As a Japanese and CD major, I am interested in design similarities/differences between Japan & America

We would like to find the differences and similarities in meme culture between Japan & America in order to understand why they became popular.

Research Questions

1. What are the differences in Japanese and American students' perceptions and opinions on memes?
2. What cultural differences influence the variety of memes created in Japan versus America?



Definition of a Meme



Origin of Word = Ancient Greek "mīmēma"
Meaning "something imitated"

(Börzsei, 2013)

Pronunciation = /mi:m/

Broad Definition = the posting, sharing, and remixing digital content to communicate jokes, emotions, & opinions

(Rosa-Carrillo, 2015)

Definition of a Meme: Original Materials

Memes are created from:

Unique phrasing



Personal photos



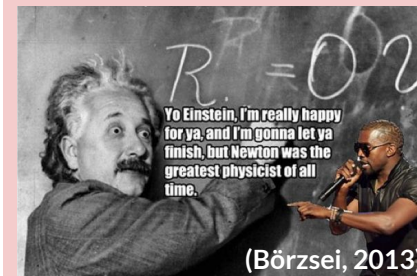
Famous images



Events in news



memesample



Definition of a Meme: Successful Memes

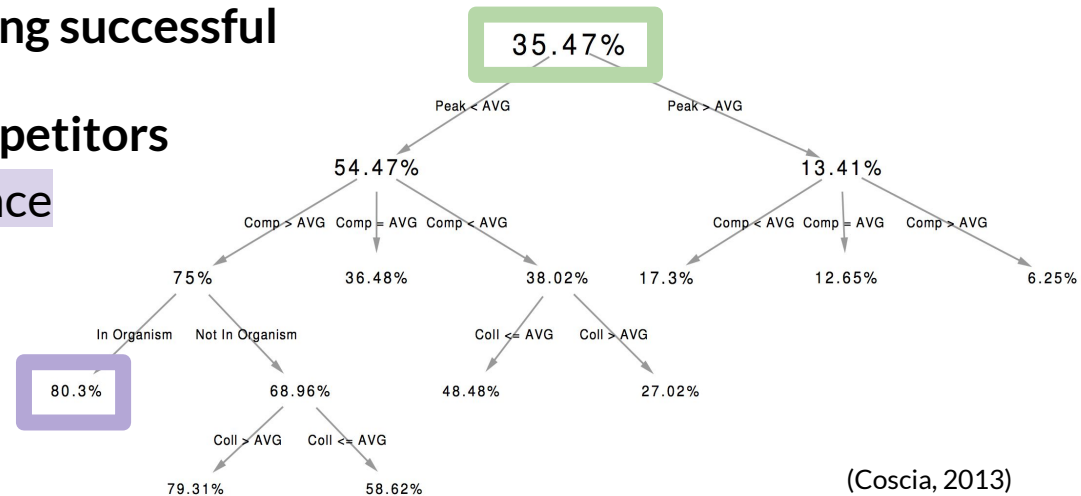
Successful memes = 'meta-memes' (aka memeplexes)

Construct the **overall belief system** & fall within a currently acceptable set of norms, standards, beliefs, or practices for a given context

(Waddock, 2015)

A meme has a **35.47%** chance of being successful

A meme with a **high number of competitors** and a **low peak** has the **highest chance** of being successful



(Coscia, 2013)

Meme Examples: Main Types

Two main types of memes:

High-fidelity static memes

Replicated with very little variation



Remixed memes

Replicated via evolution, adaptation, & transformation of original



Meme Examples: Most Used Type

Most widely used type of meme = image macro (Börzsei, 2013)

Image macro = An image with superimposed text containing a witty message or catchphrase (Rosa-Carrillo, 2015)



more examples

ライス頼んだはずなのに半ライスがきた

お題 by シモン photo by シモン



Meme Examples: Evolution

Meme evolution example: “Qi Attack” aka “Hadokening”

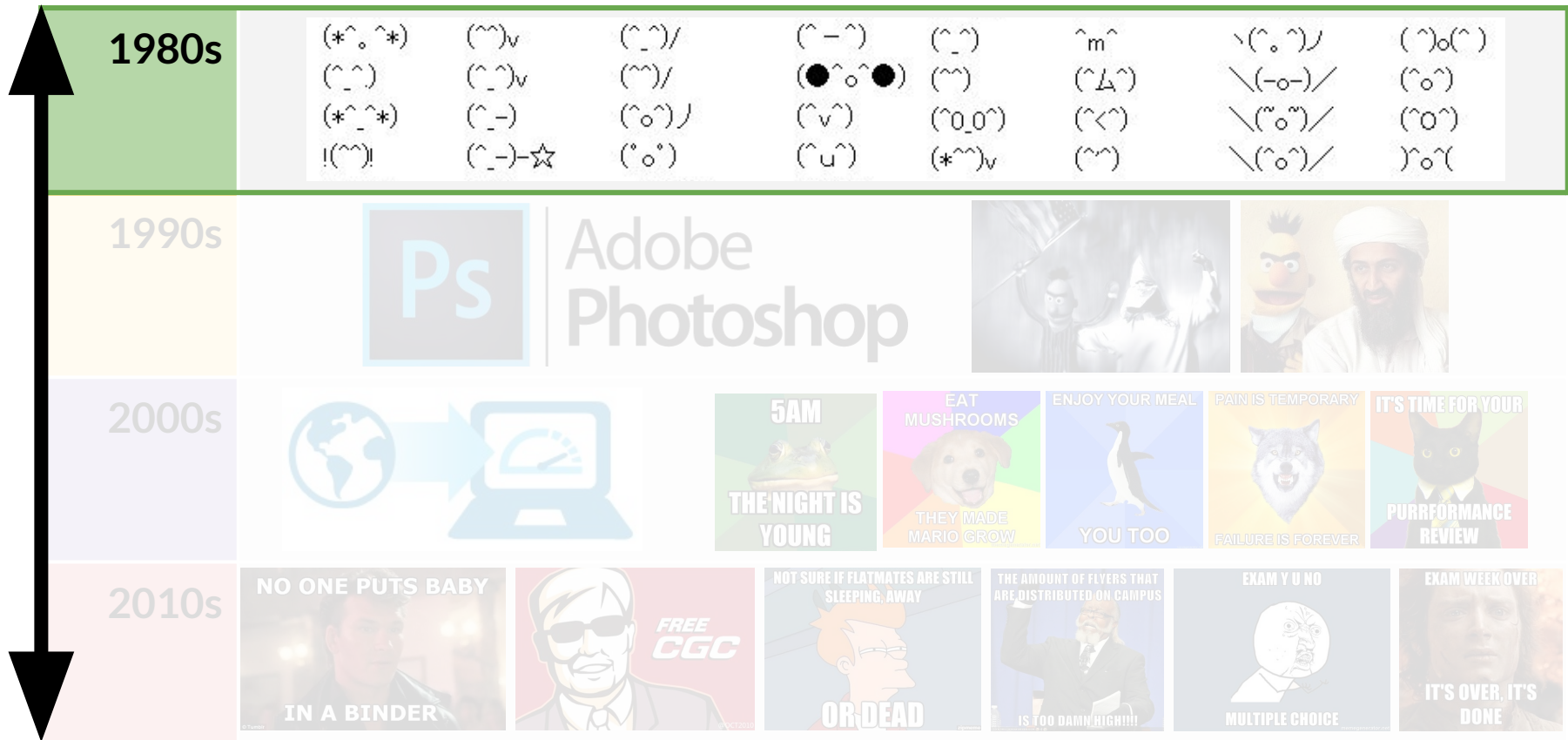
Based on the invisible qi-force attack used by characters in the game *Street Fighter* and anime *Dragonball Z*.



History of Memes



History of Memes: 1980s



1980s

(*^.*^*)	(^v)	(^_)/	(^-^)	(^_)	^m^	\(^.^)/	(^o(^)
(^_)	(^_)v	(^)/	(●^o^●)	(^)	(^Δ^)	\(-o-)/	(^o)
(*^.*^*)	(^_-)	(^o^)/	(^v^)	(^o_0^)	(^<^)	\(^o^)/	(^o)
!(^)!)	(^_-)-☆	(^o^)	(^u^)	(*^)^v	(^)	\(^o^)/)o^(

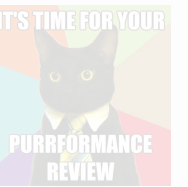
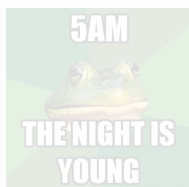
1990s



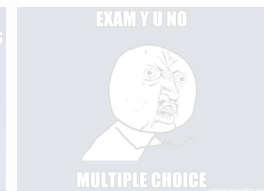
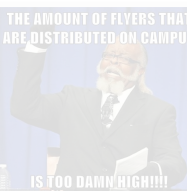
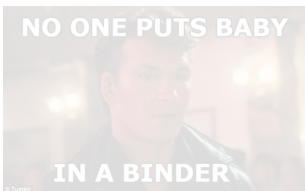
Adobe
Photoshop



2000s



2010s



History of Memes: 1980s

1980s

1982

First meme = emoticons created by Scott Fahlman (Börzsei, 2013)
Entertain as well as convey complex ideas & emotional states

:DD Happy smiley face

+<||-) Knight

:-F Bucktooth vampire

5:-) Elvis Presley

1986

Emoticons first used in Japan by Taishi Wakabayashi & binbou (Suzuki, 2007)

(^ω^) Cheerful

(≥▽≤) Anticipation

(/Д\) Fearful

(¯Д¯) Antipathy

1989

Richard Dawkin's *The Selfish Gene* = first use of the word "meme"

Meme = Units of culture hosted in minds of more than one person and can reproduce itself, therefore jumping from mind to mind

History of Memes: 1990s



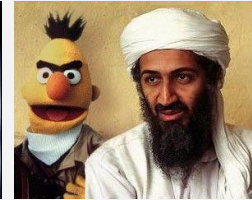
1980s

(*_.**) (m)v (._)/ (.-) (._) ^m^ \(.)/ (.)o(.)
 (._) (._)v (m)/ (o.) (m) (\(-)/ (o)
 (*_.**) (._-) (o.) \ (v) (m_0) (<) \(")/ (o)
 !(m)! (._)-☆ (o.) (u) (*m)v (m) \(.)/)o(

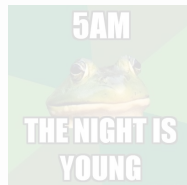
1990s



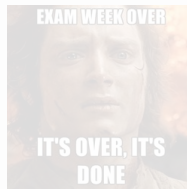
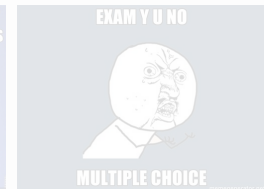
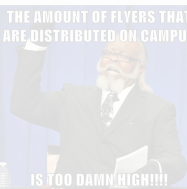
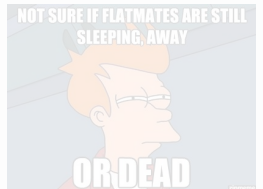
Adobe
Photoshop



2000s



2010s



History of Memes: 1990s

1990s

1990-4

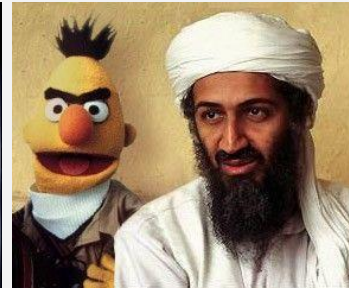
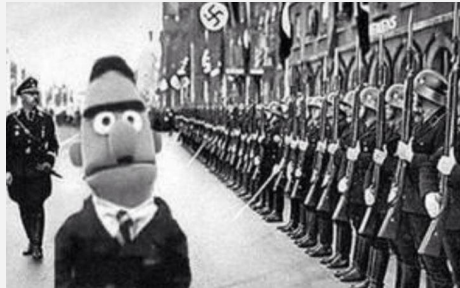
Adobe Photoshop released
Layers make **manipulating images easier**



Adobe
Photoshop

1997

First modern remixed meme = “Bert is Evil” by Dino Ignacio






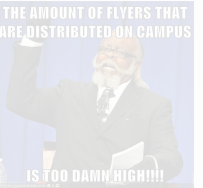
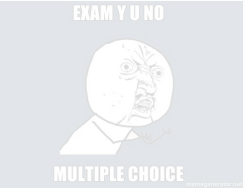



1998-9

Easily add text to images in Photoshop
“**Save for Web**” **adjusts image size & quality** for Internet use (Börzsei, 2013)

History of Memes: 2000s



1980s	(*^o^*) (^_^) (*_~*) !(^^)!	(^^)v (^_^)v (^_-) (^_-)-☆	(^_)/ (^^)/ (^o)/ (^o^)	(^-^) (●^o^●) (^v) (^u)	(^_) (^^) (^0_0) (*^^)v	^m^ (^Δ^) (^<^) (^^)	\(^o^)/ \(-o-)/ \(^o)/ \(^o)/	(^^o^^) (^o) (^o))o(
1990s	 Adobe Photoshop							
2000s								
2010s								

History of Memes: 2000s

2000s

2000 Improved Photoshop interface = easy for anyone to make a meme
Widespread access to Internet begins (Börzsei, 2013)

2006 Large number of pet photos leads to animal based memes
(Börzsei, 2013)



2009 Word "meme" emerges in mainstream language (Rosa-Carrillo, 2015)

History of Memes: 2010s



1980s

(*_.**) (^^)v (._)/ (^-^)
 (^^) (._)v (^^)/ (●^o^●)
 (*_.**) (._-) (o^)/ (^^)
 !(^^)! (._)-☆ (o^o) (u)

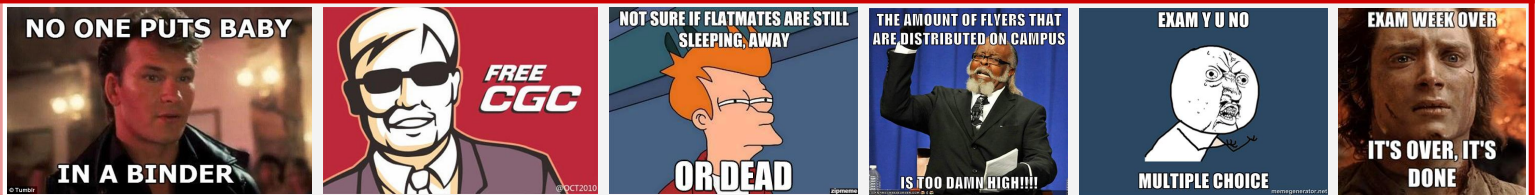
1990s



2000s



2010s



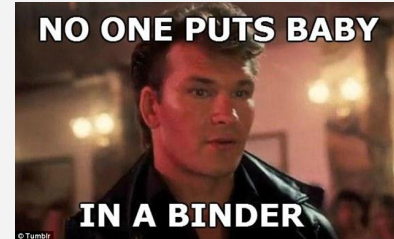
History of Memes: 2010s

2010s

2010

Use of memes to address societal issues:

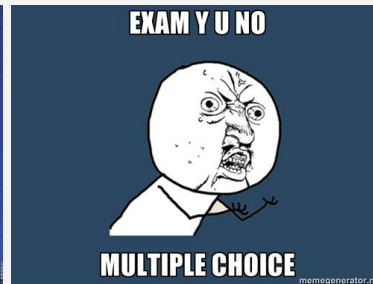
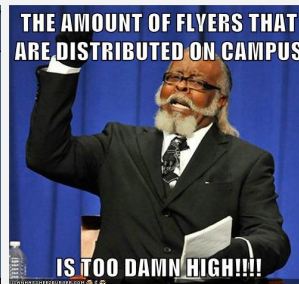
- Express opinions
- Encourage participation
- Stand up for a cause



2012

Webpages for community-specific memes arise

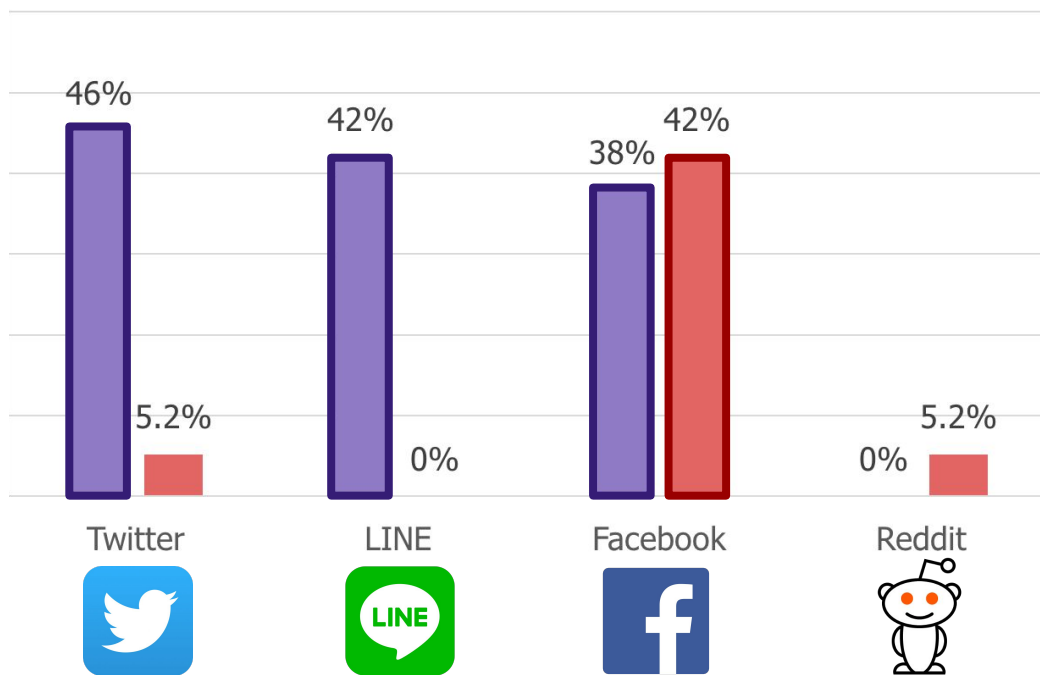
University
Example



Mememes & Social Media

Top 3 Social Media Platforms

■ Japan ■ America



Americans use:

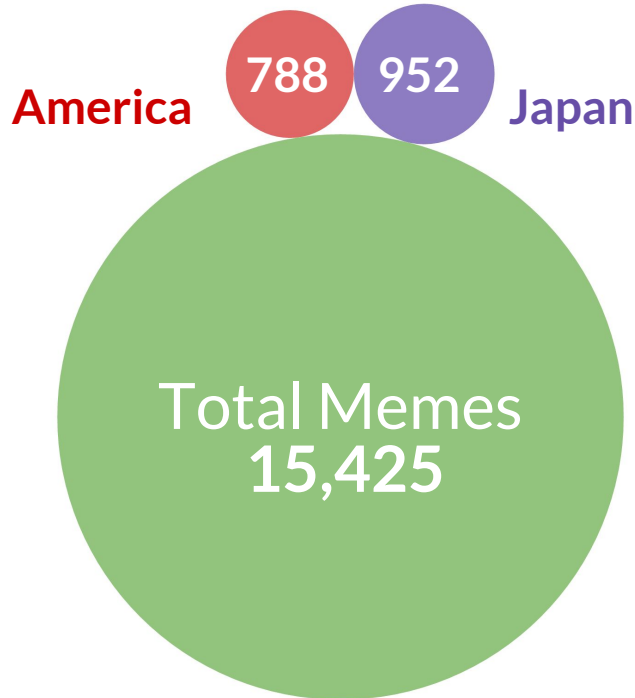
Facebook

Japanese simultaneously use:

Facebook, Twitter, & LINE

Mememes & Social Media (cont.)

Mememes Tagged “Japan” & “America”



Of 15,425 documented mememes, only a small percentage are acknowledged as “Japan” or “America.”



Where mememes originate is largely unknown.

The Study



Research Method

Respondents

- Total: 80 University Students (ages 17-32+)
 - 40 Japanese
 - 18 Male
 - 22 Female
 - 40 American
 - 18 Male
 - 20 Female
 - 2 Other

Research Instruments

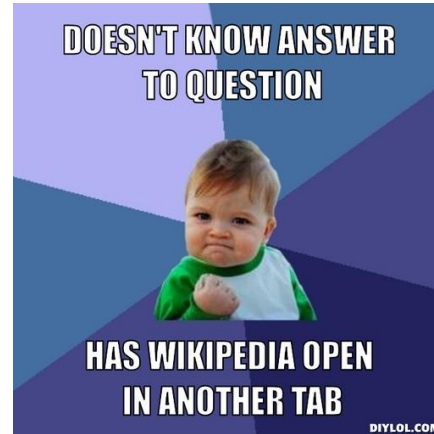
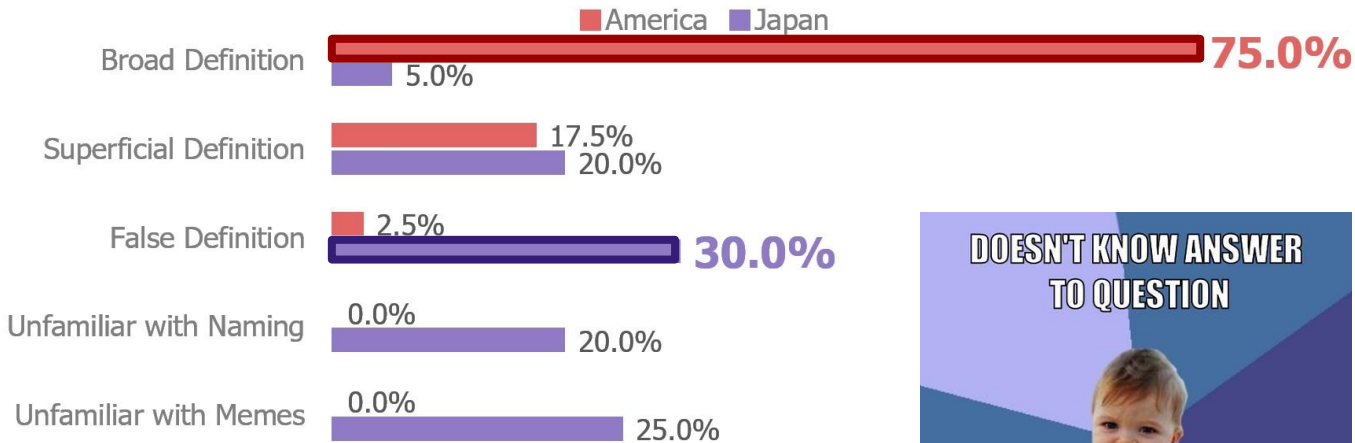
- Google Forms survey
 - [English survey](#)
 - [Japanese Survey](#)
- 23 questions each

Research Question 1 Findings

What are the differences in Japanese and American students' perceptions and opinions on memes?



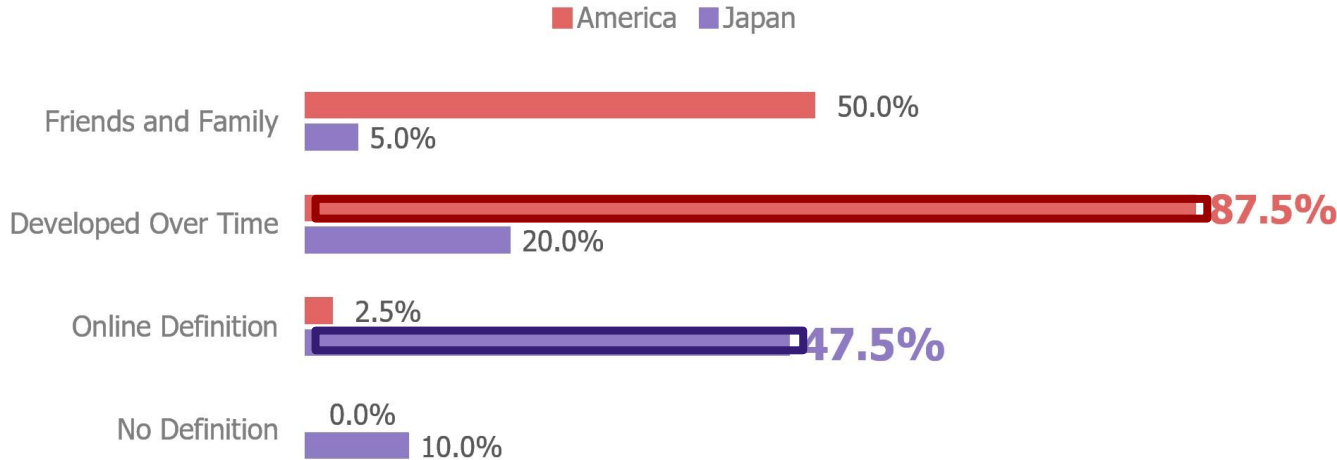
What is the best definition of an “internet meme”?



All **American students** knew memes & most chose broad definition

Of 55% **Japanese students** who knew, only $\frac{1}{4}$ chose broad definition

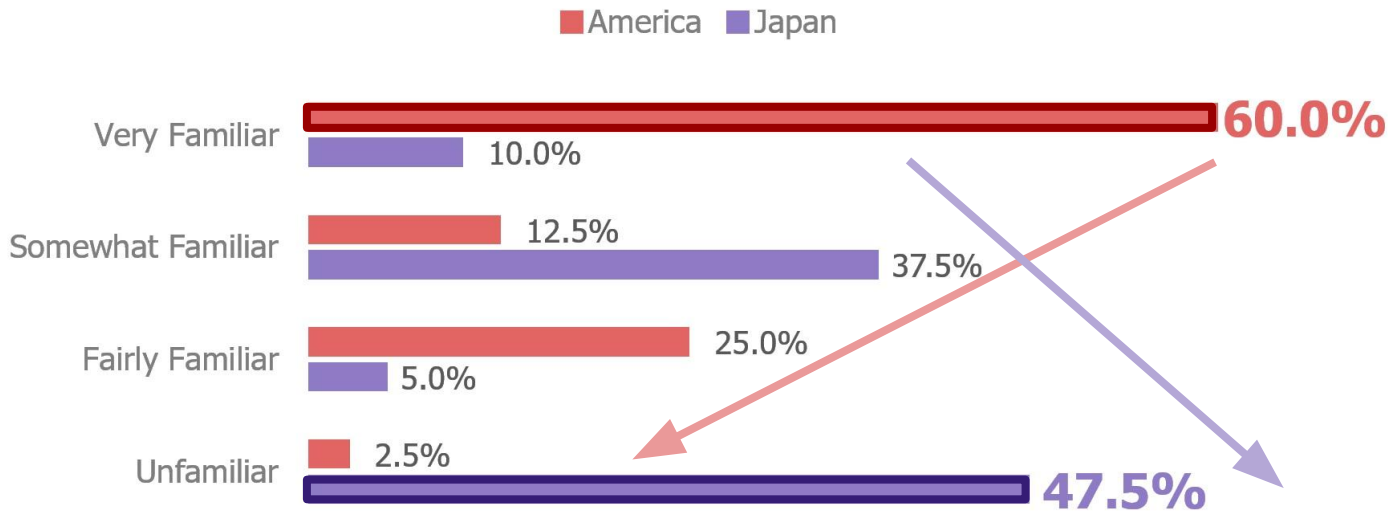
Where did you get your definition of “internet meme”?



Most **American** students developed a definition over time

Nearly half of **Japanese** students saw a definition online

How familiar are you with internet memes?



60% of the **American students** answered they are **very familiar**

Nearly half of the **Japanese students** answered **unfamiliar**

How many of these memes do you recognize?

American Memes



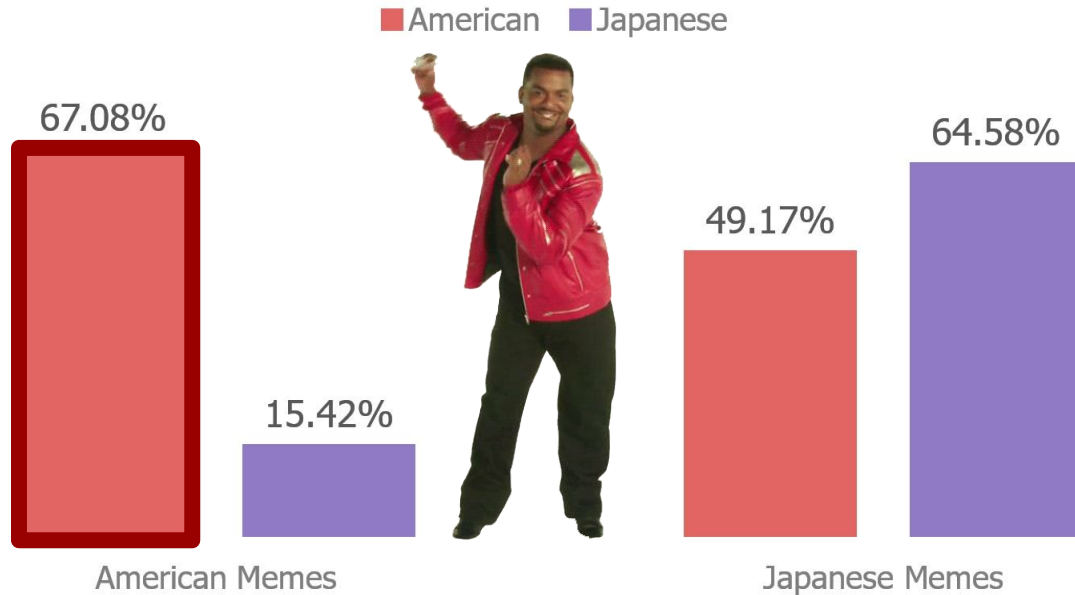
Japanese Memes



First one is, American football player, butt naked.

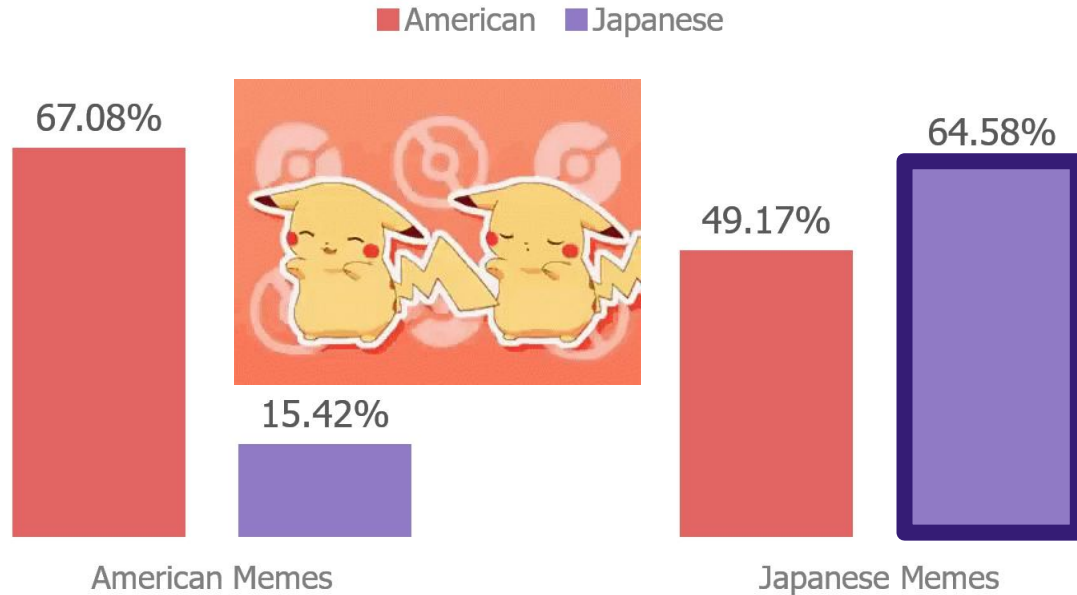


How many of these memes do you recognize?



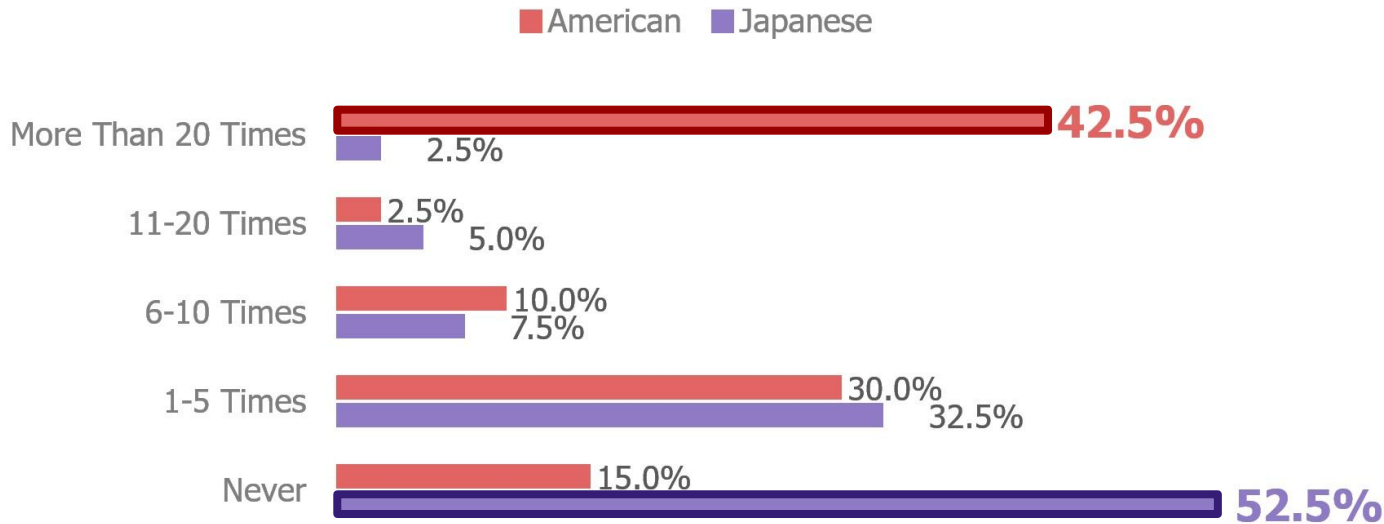
American students recognized memes more frequently with emphasis on **American-based** memes

How many of these memes do you recognize?



Japanese students recognized memes less frequently with emphasis on **Japanese-based** memes

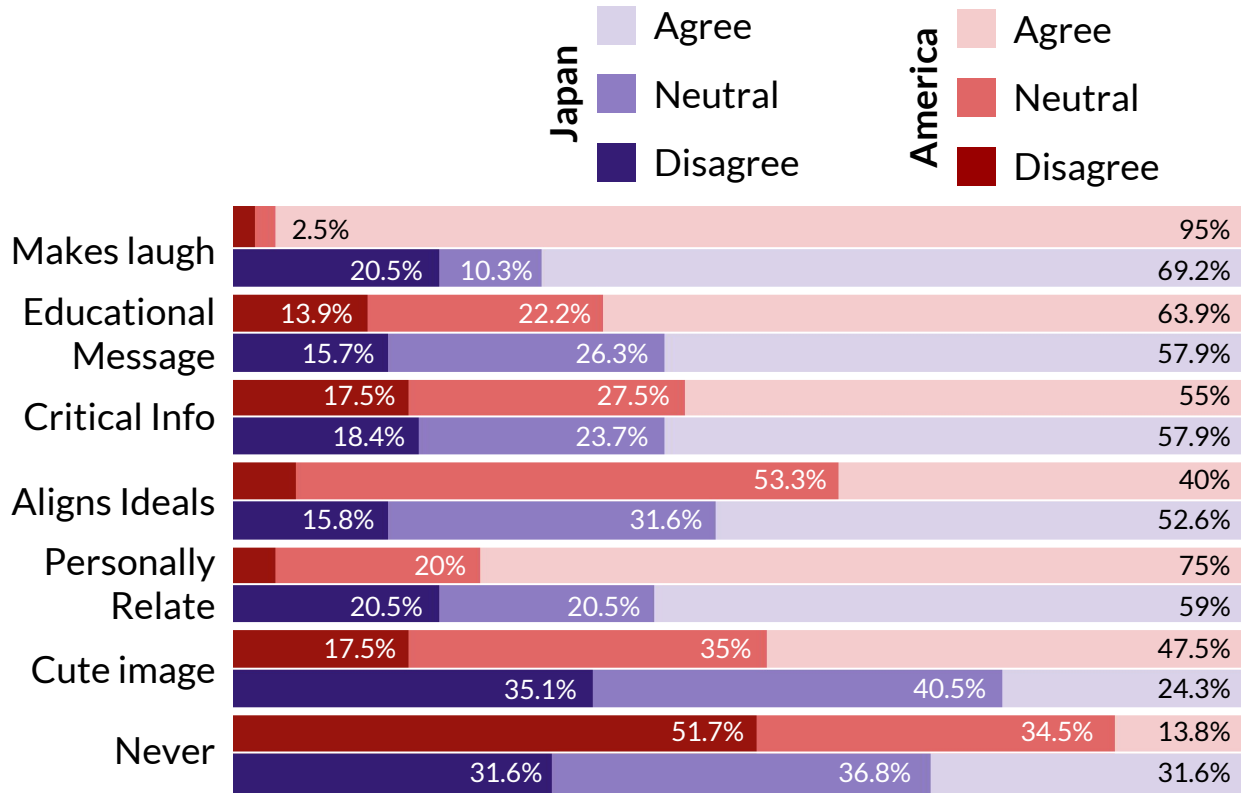
How many times have you shared internet memes?



About 43% of **American students** have shared memes over 20 times.

About 53% **Japanese students** have never shared a meme.

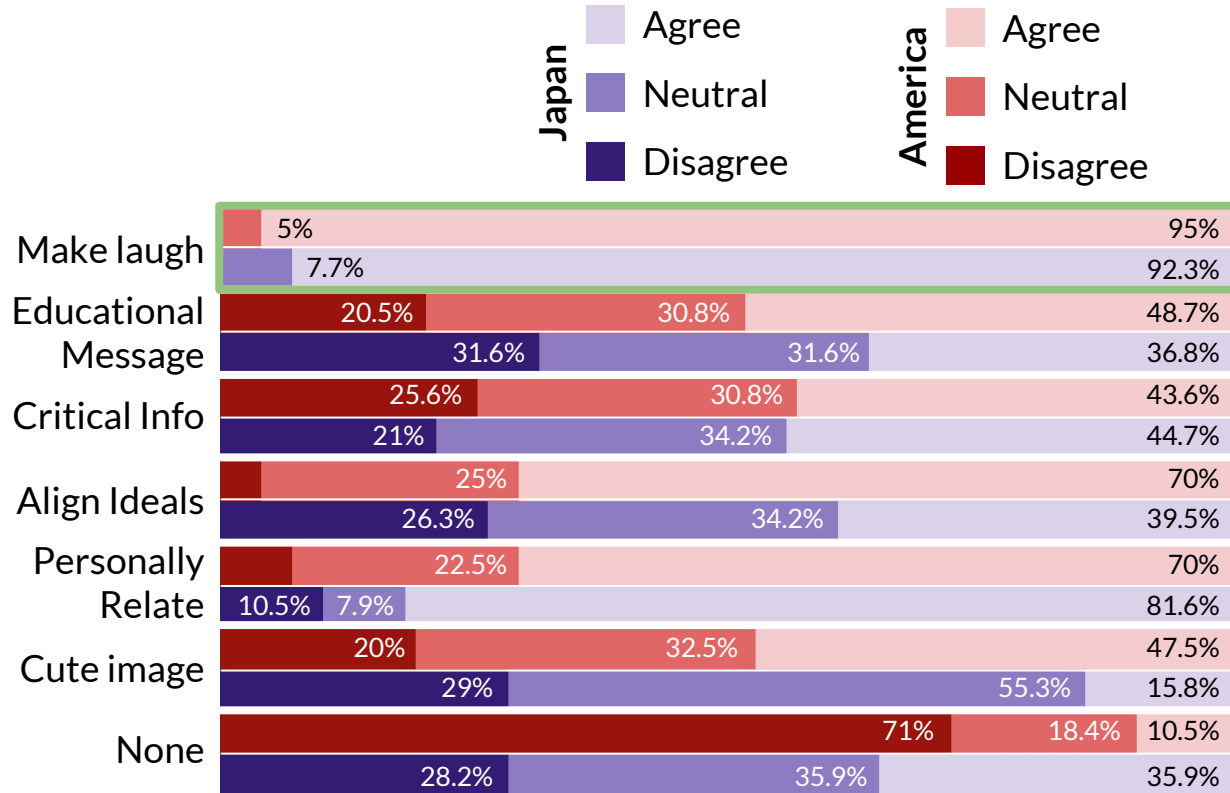
I would share an internet meme if it...



Both Japanese & American students like to share memes that make people laugh most.

American students are generally more willing to share memes.

What do you think is the purpose of internet memes?

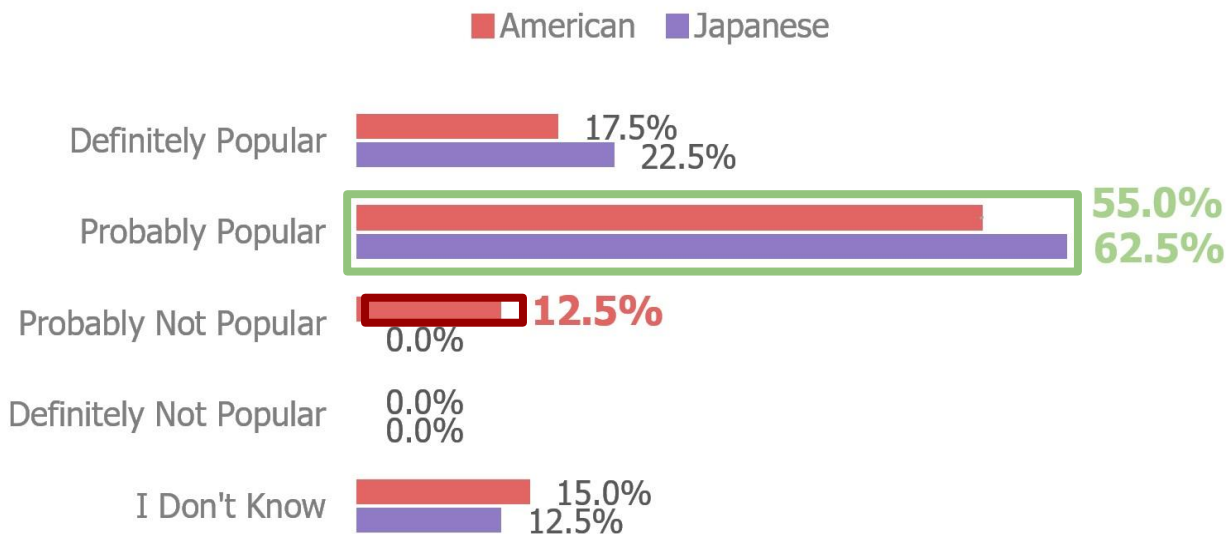


American students think memes have multiple purposes

Both American & Japanese students answered “**Make laugh**” the most

Do you think internet memes are just as popular in Japan/America?

(Americans asked about Japan, Japanese asked about America)



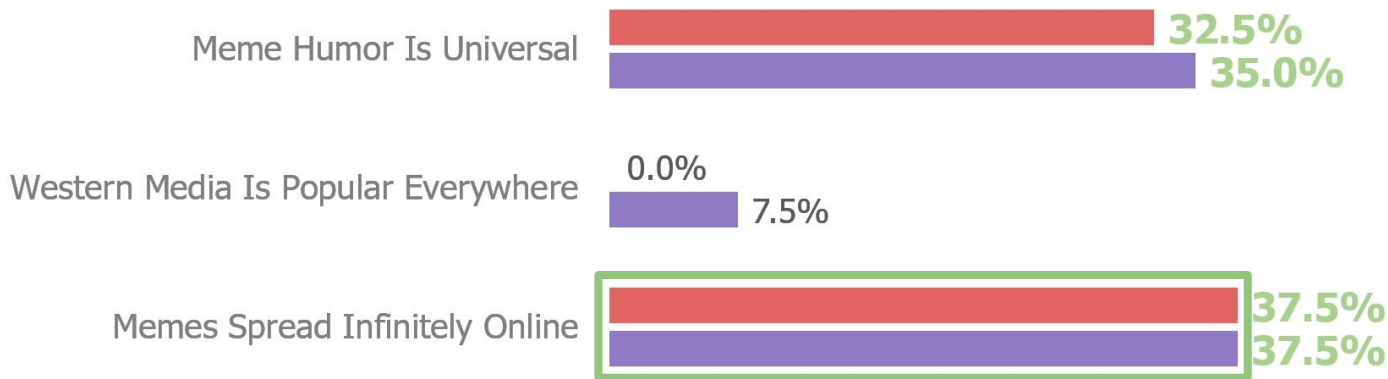
Both Japanese & American students agree—memes are popular.

12% of American students disagree—memes are not popular.

Why do you think memes are popular in Japan/America?

(Americans asked about Japan, Japanese asked about America)

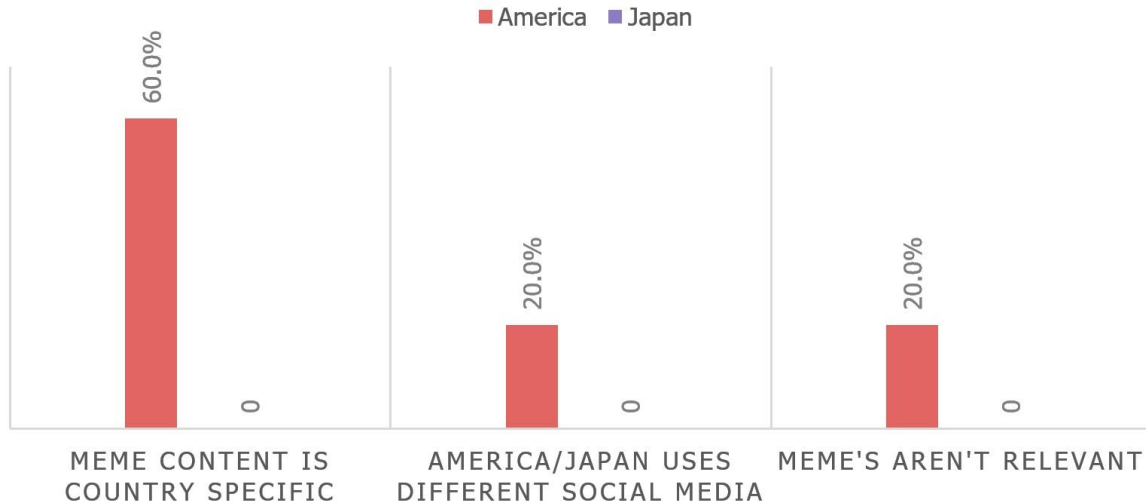
■ American ■ Japanese



Both agree that memes can spread infinitely online & humor is universal.

Why do you think memes aren't as popular in Japan/America?

(Americans asked about Japan, Japanese asked about America)



Five **American students** answered

60% because meme content is country-specific

20% each because “Japan uses different social media” & “memes aren't relevant”

No **Japanese students** answered

Summary of Research Question 1 Findings

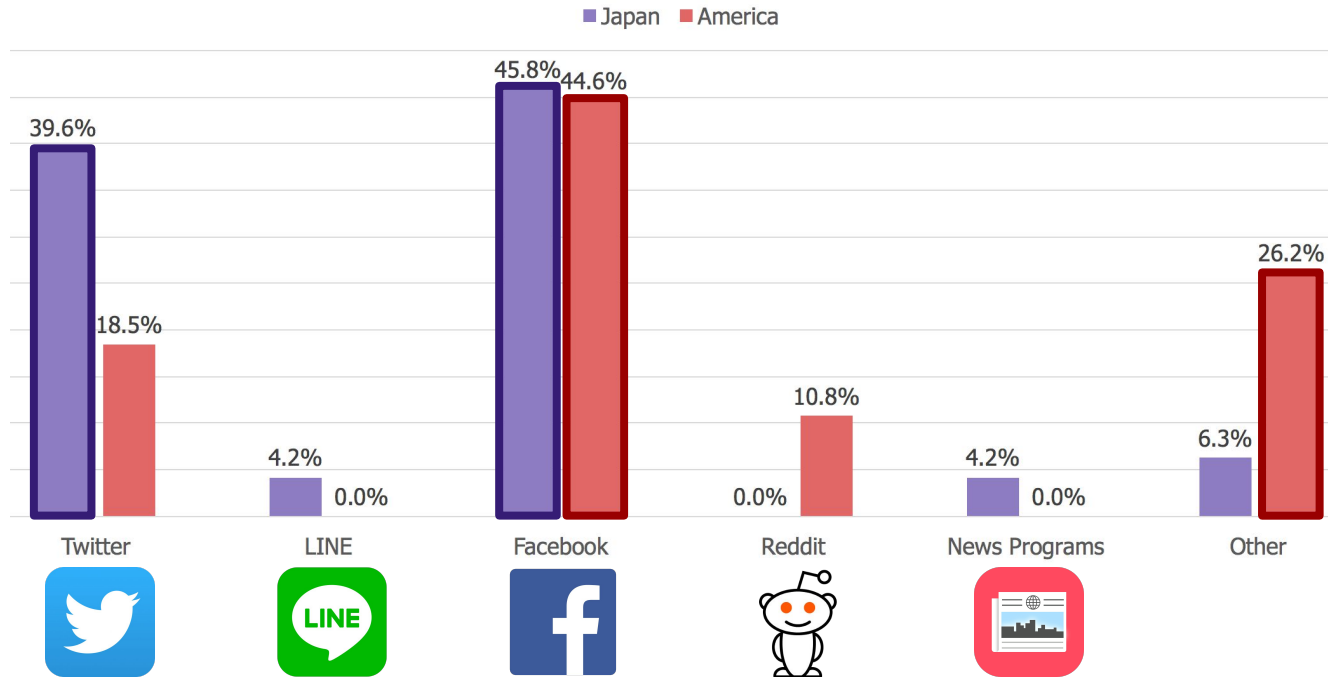
	Japan	America
Chosen Definition	False definition	Broad definition
Definition Development	Saw online	Developed on own over time
Memos Recognized	More familiar with own country's memes	
Willingness to Share	Willing to share memes	
Purpose of Memos	Particular purposes	Various purposes
Why Popular	Memes spread infinitely online	
Why Not Popular	Meme content is country-specific	

Research Question 2 Findings

What cultural differences influence the variety of memes created in Japan versus America?

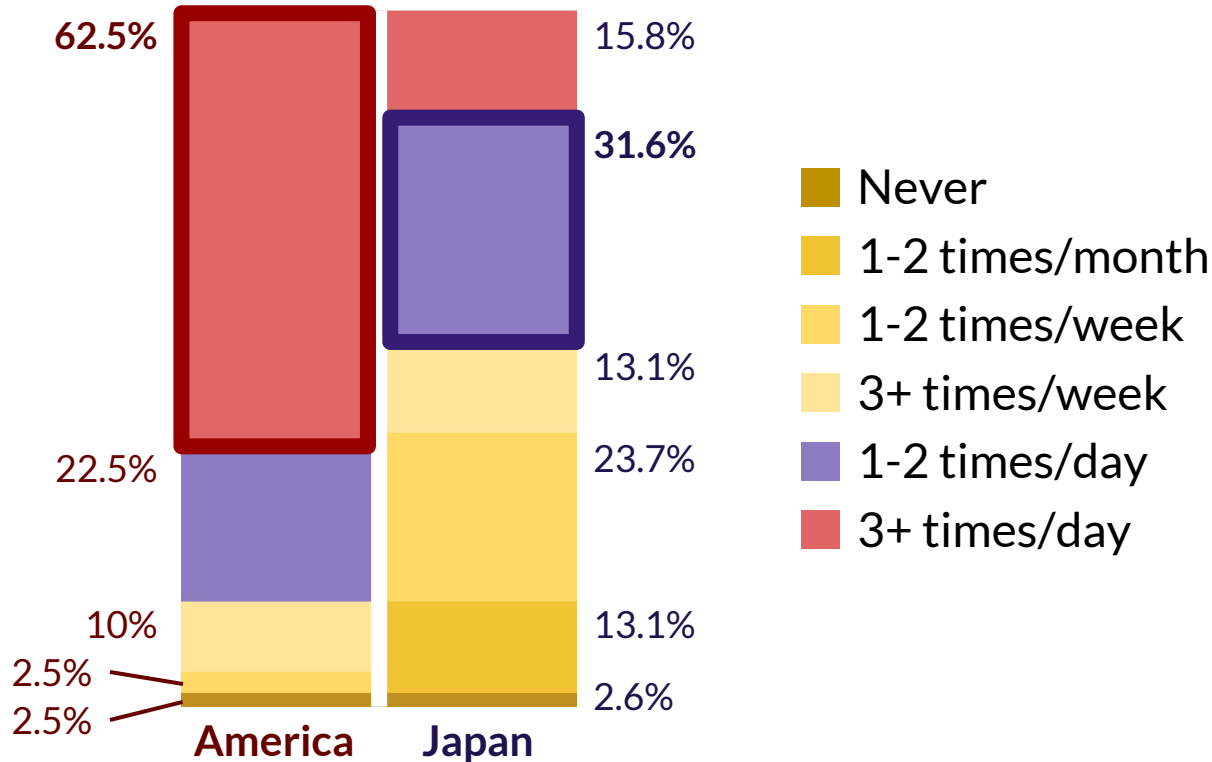


Where do you see internet memes most often?



Both Japanese & American students mainly see memes on **Western-based social media sites** popular around the world

How often do you see internet memes?



American students see memes **more often** than **Japanese**.

Americans replied “3+ times/day” **4 times more** than **Japanese**.

What types of memes do you see most often? What types of memes do you like/dislike?

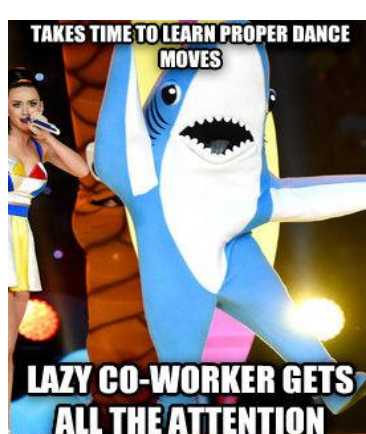
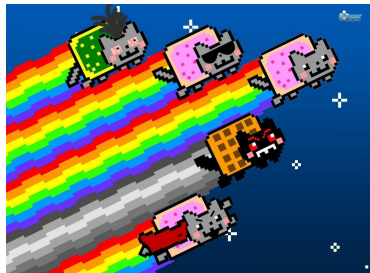
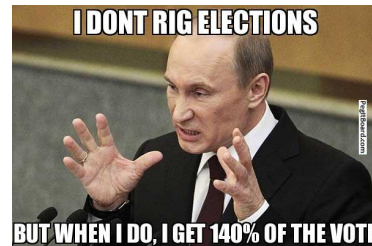
Animals

Viral Media

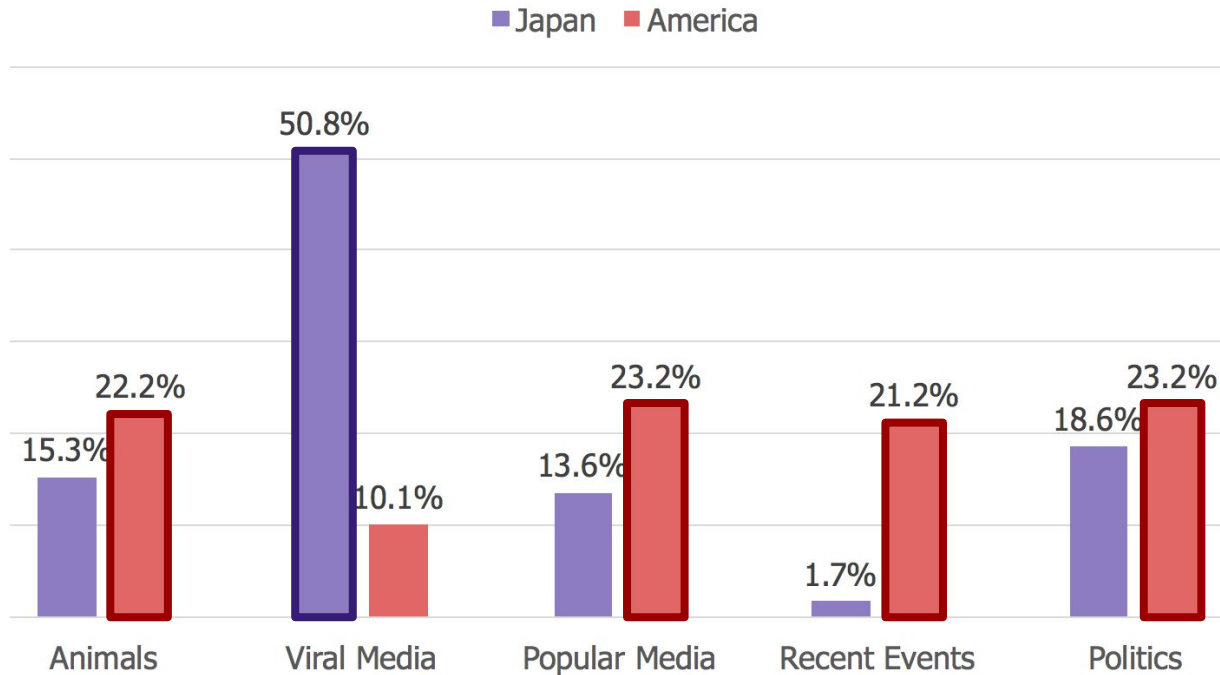
Popular Media

Recent Events

Politics



What types of memes do you see most often?



American students see a **wide variety of memes** at a near even split

Japanese students mostly see **Viral Media memes**

What types of internet memes do you like/dislike?

Japan

America

Like

Dislike

Like

Dislike

Animals

Politics

Animals

Viral Media

Viral Media

Popular Media

Popular Media

Recent Events

Popular Media

Animals

Recent Events

Politics

Politics

Recent Events

Politics

Animals

Recent Events

Viral Media

Viral Media

Popular Media

What types of internet memes do you like/dislike?

Japan

America

Like

Dislike

Like

Dislike

Animals

Politics

Animals

Viral Media

Both countries like Animal memes

Recent Events

Politics

Politics

Recent Events

Politics

Animals

Recent Events

Viral Media

Viral Media

Popular Media

What types of internet memes do you like/dislike?

Japan

America

Like

Dislike

Like

Dislike

Animals

Politics

Animals

Viral Media

Viral Media

Popular Media

Politics

Recent Events

Viral Media

Viral Media

Popular Media

Viral Media memes are **most disliked** in **America**,
but **least disliked** in **Japan**

Why do you like those types of memes?

Japan

America

Make laugh	Make laugh
Personally relate	Personally relate
Educational message	Educational message
Critical Info	Ideals Align
Ideals Align	Cute Image
Cute Image	Critical Info

Same trend for top 3
in **both countries**

Cute image is least
popular reason in
Japan despite “cute
culture”

Why do you dislike those types of memes?

Japan

America

Don't personally relate

Don't personally relate

Don't align ideals

Don't make laugh

No critical info

Don't align ideals

Don't make laugh

No critical info

No educational message

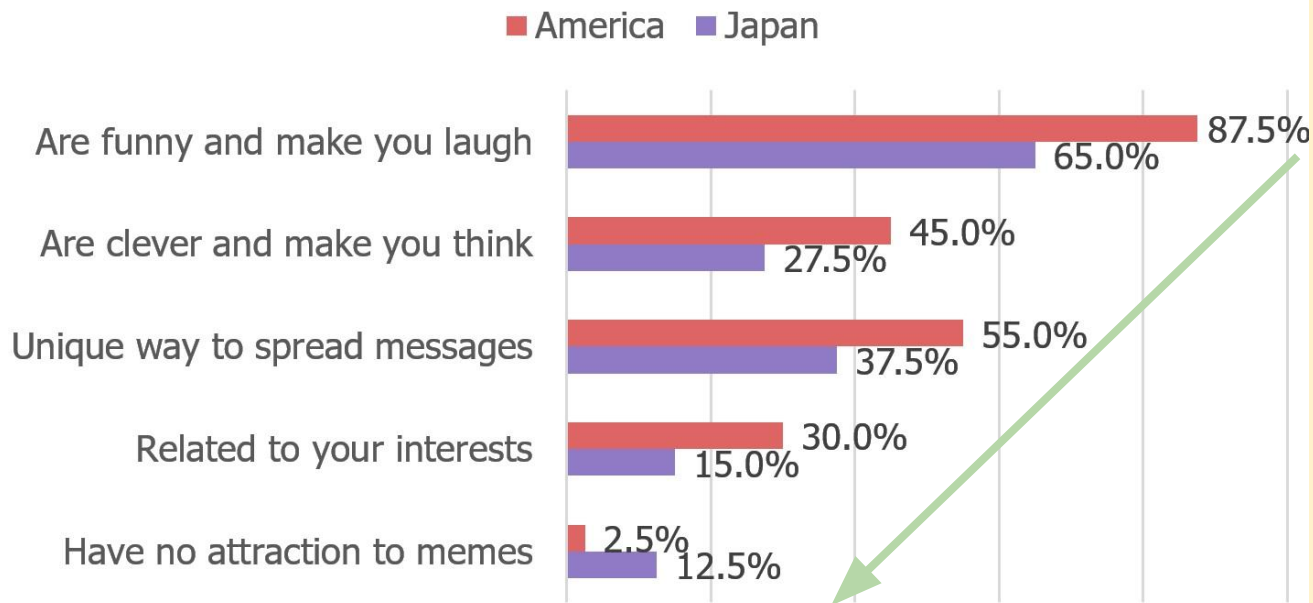
No educational message

No cute image

No cute image

Inability to **relate on a personal level** is foremost reason for dislike

What is the overall attraction of memes for you?



Both countries follow
same trend



Reasons for attraction
are shared between
America & Japan

Summary of Research Question 2

	Japan	America
Social Media	Western-based social media	
Frequency	Not as often	More often
Most Viewed	Mainly Viral Media memes	Wide variety of memes
Most Liked	Animal memes	
Most Disliked	Political memes	Viral Media memes
Reason Like	Make laugh, relate personally, have an educational message	
Reason Dislike	Don't relate personally, don't align with ideals	

Conclusion

- **Japan** is still becoming familiar with memes, while **America** already has a history with internet memes as well as clearly defined likes and dislikes.
- **Both Japanese & American students'** shared reasons for liking memes, but the types of memes they liked varied between countries. **Japanese students** disliked political memes, while **American students** tended to express their own opinions. This may be a reflection of Japan's culture of **consideration toward others** and America's culture of **emphasizing personal opinion**.
- This cultural influence is also reflected in the **contents of shared memes**.
- Memes can instantaneously spread anywhere in the world via the internet, simultaneously **broadening shared world perspectives** and **making similarities more pronounced**. This means that memes may be a gauge that reflects global society.

Limitations & Future Studies

Limitations

- We only surveyed students from a few universities, so data cannot be generalized
- Limited existing research on memes in Japan made collecting research materials difficult

Future Studies

- We would like to know more about origin of memes in Japan
- We would like to research similar image macros such as Japanese stamps and their correlation with memes
- We would like to find out what cultural values influence entertainment preferences

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Questions?

