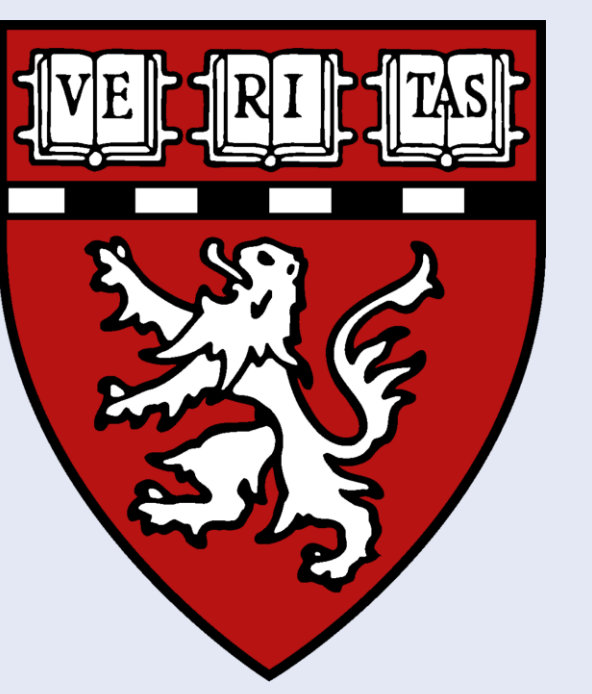




Are Asians Better at Math? A Qualitative Analysis on Conversations between Asian American Parents and Teens about Academic Stereotypes



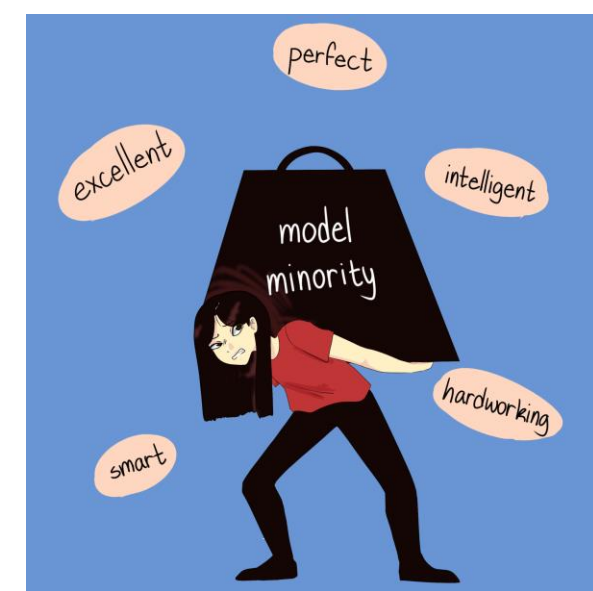
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BACKGROUND

The "Model Minority Myth" includes the stereotype that Asian American children are hard-working "whiz kids" and that parents are "tiger moms" that encourage their children to succeed academically.

These stereotypes invalidate concerns regarding racial inequity, lead to mental distress among Asian American communities, and contribute to increased divisiveness among marginalized groups in the U.S.^{1,2}



However, Asian American communities themselves may hold cultural values that overlap with features of the Model Minority Myth, including the importance of success in academics. These beliefs have impacted policies on affirmative action.³

AIMS

- Compare how Asian American parents and teens respond to a hypothetical scenario regarding a teacher's expression of the racial stereotype that Asians are superior at math.
- Characterize discussions about race between parents and teens to inform future studies on racial socialization.

METHODS

Data: Analyzed from the on-going Building Our Bonds Authentically (BOBA) Project (R01MH129360, MPIs: Liu & Yip)

Sample: 30 Asian American parent-teen dyads. 6.7% of teens and 66.7% of parents immigrated to the US (average time in US: 26 years). Teens were in 6th-10th grade.

Procedure: Dyads discussed the following scenario:

"You're the only Asian student in your math class this year. Your teacher is looking for a student to try out for the upcoming Math Olympiad competition. You do not want to participate, and you know that other students are more interested in competing. However, your teacher announces in front of the class that they hope you will try out, saying Asians do better in math competitions."

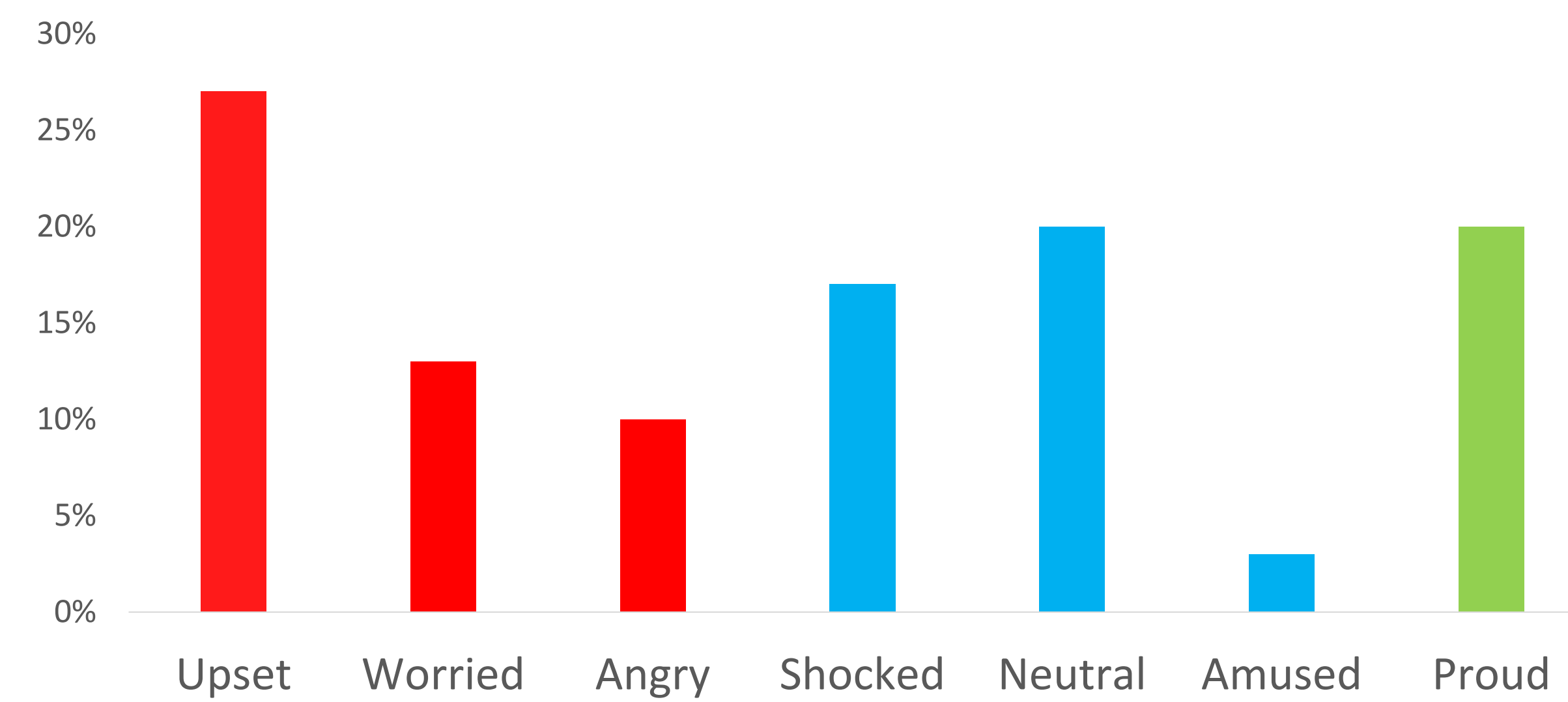
Dyads were asked how they would feel and what they would do.

Three coders independently created a list of codes. A final codebook was created after three consensus meetings and thematic saturation was reached. Codes were combined into overarching themes.

RESULTS

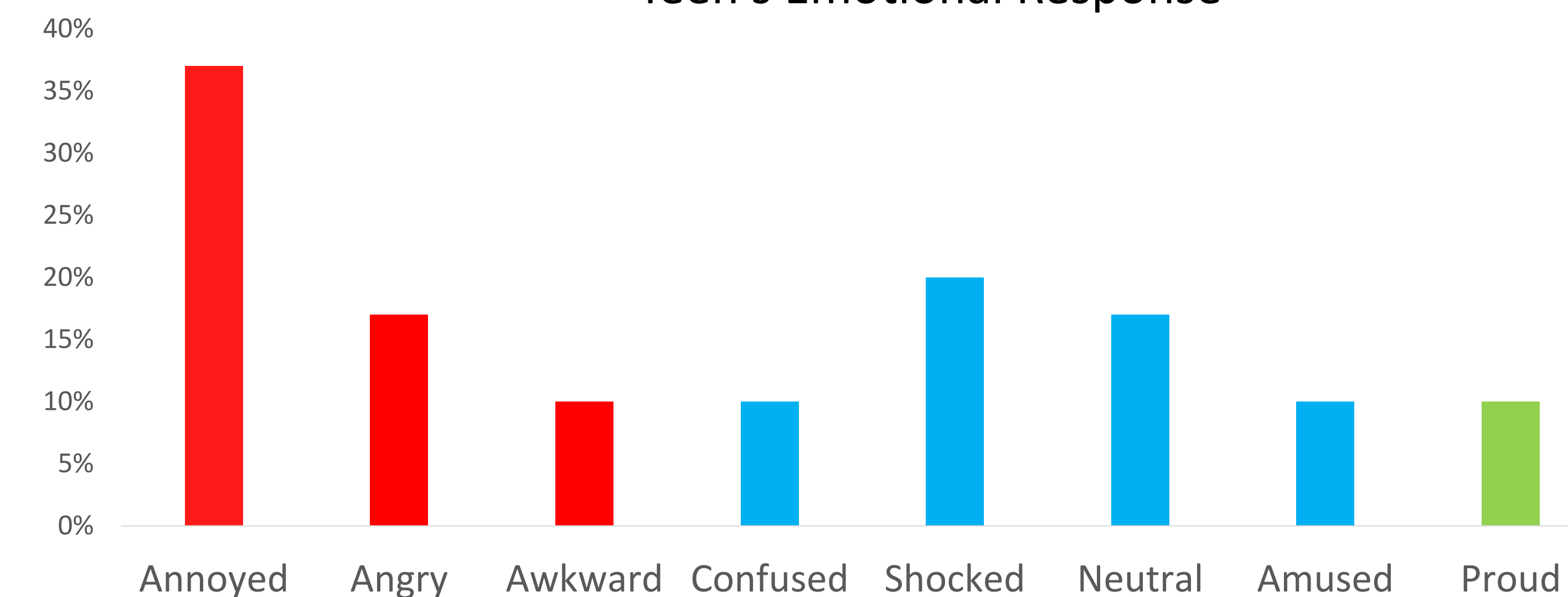
A teacher says that Asians do better at math competitions, how would you respond?

Parent's Emotional Response



"I worry if they think, oh, you're only good at math, are you not good at other things? Why aren't they encouraging you to do well in theater or art or writing?"
"Well, I would feel proud because the teacher thought that you were good at math."

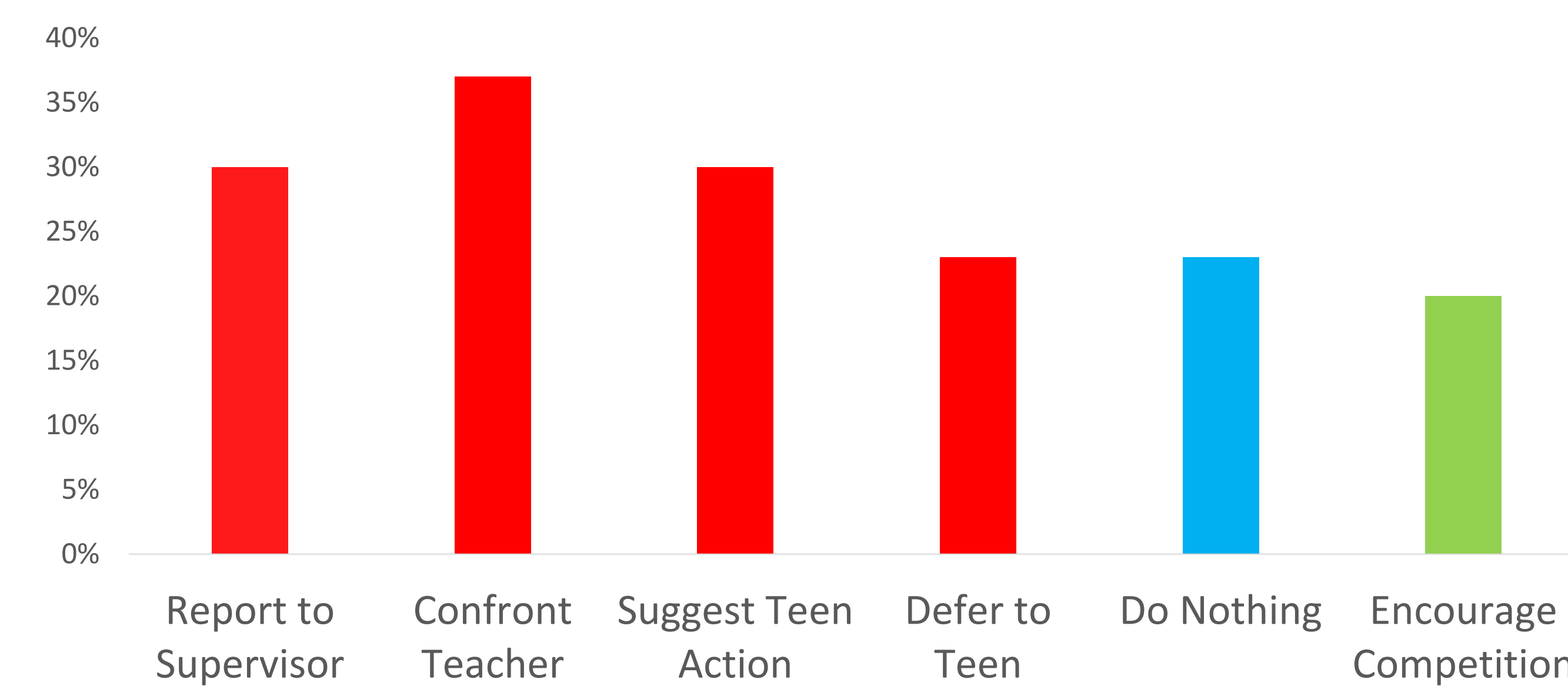
Teen's Emotional Response



"I would just be shocked that my teacher would say such a blatantly wrong thing.."
"It's racist and it's not ok."
"Because it's not a negative stereotype, I wouldn't feel particularly upset."

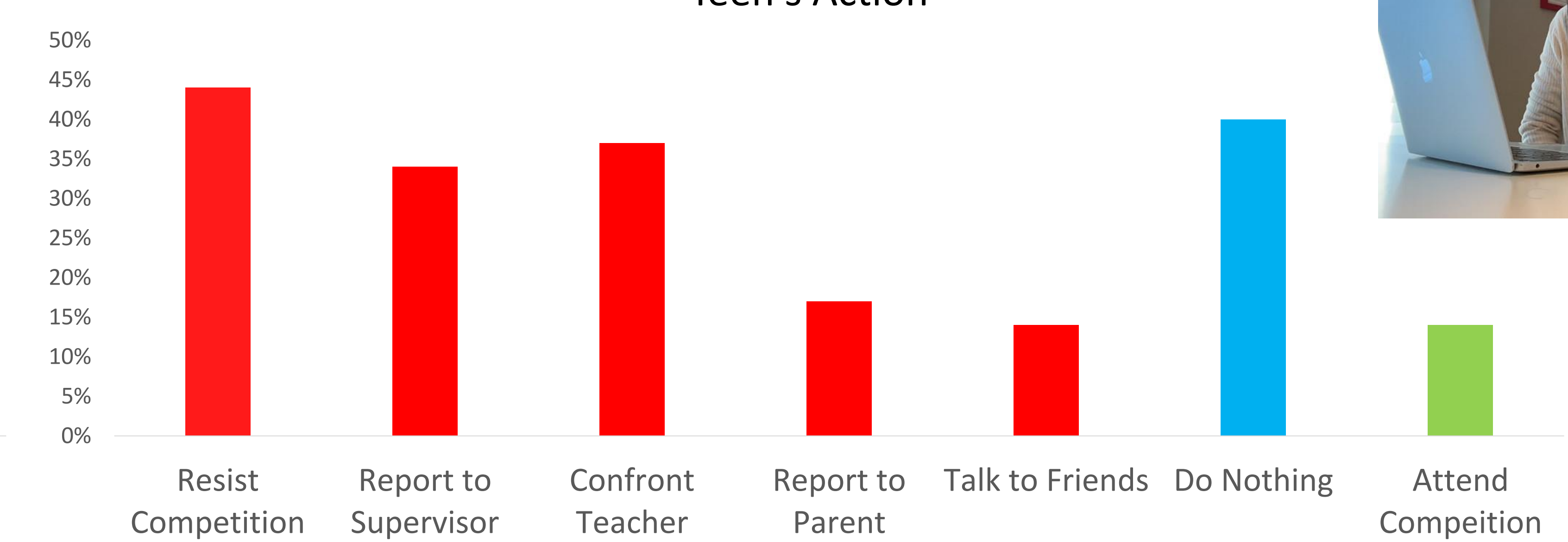


Parent's Action



"I would ask for a meeting with the teacher or principal. This definitely demands some kind of response from the school."
"I would follow your lead. I love that you would advocate for yourself."

Teen's Action



"I would tell the principal and get them fired."
"This is a comment that people would very easily brush off, so I don't know. I'm not interested in taking action if nobody's going to respond to it."



Most dyads experienced negative emotions in response to the vignette, saying it was a false, harmful stereotype, rather than a compliment.

Most dyads will take action to address the microaggression, with parents being more willing than teens. Examples include confronting the teacher and informing the principal.

Parents valued their teen's autonomy. Most parents did not give advice on what actions their teen should take.

DISCUSSION

A limitation of this study is that interview questions were close-ended, potentially impacting the depth of discussion between parents and teens.

Future studies should explore how parents and teens discuss strategies to address microaggressions, such as specific language they would use to discuss a racial incident with school officials.

Teens expressed distress in response to this vignette, and future studies should continue to explore how Asian American parents support their teens in navigating emotions related to their racial identity.

References
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