

Outline for SASSI: Signs in International Media:  
The Image of the Journalist in Anime  
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B.A. Sociology and B. A. Communication Studies, Northeastern State University, 2016  
University of Colorado Boulder 16 March 2020

**I: Introduction**

- A. What is anime? Well, in short it is animation--a cinematic art form. In Japan, manga and anime are a basic transmission of culture through media spanning the past three generations. Anime is either an original or more often than not adapted from a popular manga, which can be more easily understood as comic books or graphic novels.
- B. This medium will likely be seen by many viewers of younger generations as audiences become increasingly international and transglobal. Because of this, it feels important to examine the symbolic impact the mediated culture could have on individual and social lives.
- C. This presentation positions anime as relevant to current personal, historical, cultural, and political perspectives towards discerning the view of the journalist in popular culture, given the growing trend of anime media within the United States.

**II. Research Question-How can popular culture be used to represent journalists and their subjects, and why does this matter?**

- A. Research on the topic of anime has often been focused on education and teaching methods but is lacking in other areas, such as journalism.
- B. The ultimate purpose of this research is to explore mediated messages, visual and textual, within anime through a journalistic lens.
- C. Matthews relates that there exists a gap in the literature concerning contemporary news media coverage of Japan, but there is a “sizeable body of recent work” considering the

“representations of Japan through popular culture, including mass media products such as film and television” (2019, p. 376).

- D. Considering the rising influence of current transnational media, the artistic representation and real-world connotation within such works can be explored to expand an understanding of how global relationships and cultures interact.

### **III. History and background of anime within the US**

- A. Amy Shiron Lu (2008) argues that “de-politicized internationalization has made anime more ‘open’, allowing for more participation.... What audiences see is not any specific cultural characteristics but a blend of different cultures” (p. 173).
- B. In her interviews, “one fan even said that it was the racially ambivalent anime characters that propelled him to see more anime” (p. 173). It is worth mentioning the diversity of anime also includes depictions of real social or physical disabilities, such as hikikomori (social recluses) in *Welcome to the NHK*, or characters with prosthesis, such as Edward Elrich from *Fullmetal Alchemist*.
- C. Lu also says that anime “remediates classical Hollywood films’ continuity editing styles, paintings, video games, comics, and multicultural elements and turns itself into a product without cultural boundaries” (2008, p. 175).
- D. By design, anime is often intended to represent communities or groups of individuals with different characteristics, and so carries a nearly boundaryless appeal such as that of Hollywood in terms of accessibility and empathy from viewership.

### **IV. History - How the Media Views Anime and Japan**

- A. Anime itself has often been a target of media attention. Kaichiro's work is translated by Washburn and notes that the term otaku (or nerd) gained wide usage in a discriminatory sense in August 1989.
- B. Between 1988 and 1989, the police discovered that four small girls who had been murdered, and the perpetrator of these crimes was a plump, timid-looking 26-year-old man named Miyazaki Tsutomu. The mass media searched for an image to explain this criminal as well as his motives and thus turned their cameras on Miyazaki's room (2013, p. 60).
- C. Research by Galbraith (2010) supports that the word otaku "was largely unknown up to this point - Miyazaki himself was not even aware of it" and "this sociopath was for many Japanese the only image of otaku" (p. 216). Galbraith cites "that otaku came to represent in the media everything that was wrong with Japanese society in the 1990s" and "in Japan, NHK and Asahi Shimbun deemed otaku a discriminatory word and banned it" (p. 217).
- D. Galbraith states that in spite of this tension regarding the otaku image within Japan, "it was flourishing overseas as a way to describe fans of the burgeoning supply of import anime and Japanese popular culture." He also mentions that "Frederik L. Schodt ties the spread of the word in the United States to sci-fi and anime conventions in the early 1990s" (p. 217).

## **V. Significance - Journalism in Popular Culture: Portrayals of Reporting**

- A. Research on the image of the journalist in popular culture exists, but mostly for works such as superhero comics that have been long-standing cultural icons within the U.S. This

area of research has not yet taken into consideration the progression of anime into the mainstream since the developments in the 1990's.

- B. Katherine Foss notes that, though “they are not always portrayed as superheroes, comic narratives often feature reporters, publishers, and editors” (Spring 2016-Spring 2018, p. 1). It is also well-known that “Superman (Clark Kent) and Spider-Man (Peter Parker) serve dual roles as heroes and journalists.”
- C. In spite of this “celebration of journalism in comic books and their adaptations, public confidence in the profession has been steadily declining since the heyday of journalism in the 1970s” (p. 2).
- D. Stevens says that “comics have presented portrayals of working journalists from every era since 1938” and though they have been “historically marginalized, the increase in recent scholarship should continue to open a relatively accessible but largely untapped resource of cultural significance” (p. 63).
- E. Considering the rising influence of current transnational media, there are also many productions of anime that have gone unexamined.

## **VI. Methodology**

- A. The plan for analysis will include a comparison and description of how papers in the U.S. have researched journalism in popular culture.
- B. To further and honor semiotic research, analysis of ideas will relate to “Representation” by Stuart Hall, Jessica Evans, and Sean Nixon, as well as Hall’s work on encoding/decoding.

- C. Yoshiko Okuyama's Semiotic Approach to Reading Japanese Film and Anime will be used to supplement research. Gillian Rose's Discourse Analysis 1 also has many overlapping themes worth integrating into this work.
- D. These will be applied to interpret and reflect on persons within the fictional context of anime and discuss how it can be representative of current events or perceptions.
- E. This especially will concern female or LGBT representation and journalists depicted within the medium.
- F. The main visual and textual analysis of reporters will concern the Japanese anime Hataraki Man (2007) and Banana Fish (2018), considering that the first work has female representation in the profession and this second work is based entirely in the U.S.

## **VII. Discussion of Limitations/Conclusion**

- A. Limitations: Too much personal knowledge about the topic. Time constraints. Semiology has methodological drawbacks, according to Rose (2006), as its preference for detailed readings of individual images raises questions about the representativeness and replicability of its analysis.
- B. Topics for further research: \*Journalism in popular culture \*Animated depiction of sports, education, fan culture, disability, and LGBTQ representation.
- C. Research considering artistic representation and real-world connotation within anime can expand an understanding of how global relationships and cultures interact. This could reinforce, exaggerate, or challenge the meaning of the journalist in new, transformative ways that are relevant to current personal, historical, cultural, and political perspectives.

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