

A CLASH OF CULTURES: CULTURAL DIFFERENCES WITHIN
AMERICAN AND JAPANESE ANIMATION

by

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ABSTRACT

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This research examines the Japanese cultural phenomenon of anime, and the cultural values that allow issues deemed more suitable for adults to be included in anime and viewed by all ages in Japan, but not in the United States. This study used five focus groups: two consisting of Non-Asian participants, one with Japanese participants, and two with Amerasian participants. Each focus group was shown clips from the anime films *Spirited Away*, *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind*, and *Princess Mononoke*. Geert Hofstede's intercultural value dimensions were used as a guide to find greater meaning of the impact of anime among the different groups and cultures.

Analysis of the focus group discussions showed that cultural differences was an overarching theme with the categories of exposure, usage, parenting styles and teaching ideologies as dominant sub-themes.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Anime

Anime, a term borrowed by the Japanese from the French referring to the entire medium of animation, is deeply imbedded in all aspects of Japanese society including folklore, legends, history, religion, morals, and aesthetic standards. It is primarily created with the Japanese audience in mind (Price, 1996) and was originally born from Japanese comics or *manga*.

1.1.1 Manga

According to Ito (2005) manga is immersed in a particular social environment including history, language, culture, politics, economy, family, religion, sex, and gender, education, deviance, crime, and demography. Traces of manga caricatures were found in the sixth and seventh century temples in Nara and Kyoto Japan. Primitive forms of manga were called “serial art”, because they were stories told in sequences of pictorials written on scrolls (Schodt, 1986). In the 1600s now world renowned Japanese woodblock artist Hokusai Katsushika, most famous for his series of thirty six depictions of the sea and Mount Fuji, was the first to use the name manga for these serialized pictorials or cartoons (Schodt, 1986).

Today, manga are classified by market niche: shojo manga for girls, shonen manga for boys, seinen manga for young adult men, seijin manga for adults that is

composed of mostly erotica for men, and *redi komi* or *redisu* romantic erotic manga drawn by women for adult women readers (Kinsella, 2000). Manga is read by all people in Japan which has one of the highest literacy rates in the world (Ito, 2005). In Japan manga cafes are more popular than karaoke bars. And in 1997 1.7 billion copies of manga comic books and magazines were sold, the equivalent to \$4.75 billion (U.S.) (Misaka, 2004). In Japan, manga sales are fifteen times that of France and over one hundred times that of the United States (Kishinami, 1999). Manga magazines and trade paperbacks account for 30-40% of Japan's annual print output (Schodt, 1996) with some of the more popular manga comics selling millions of copies weekly. In 1998 there were 278 comic magazines published in Japan, and the estimated number of copies published was almost one and a half billion (Ito, 2005).

Tezuka Osamu made it acceptable for grown adults to read manga and take it seriously as an entertaining art form (Schilling, 1997). This famous manga writer, had an ability to portray characters wrestling with issues such as shame, faith, death, rebirth, responsibility, and self-doubt which helped manga, and later anime, to become dominant forces in modern Japanese culture (Schilling, 1997).

1.1.2 An Overview of Anime

In 2003, anime accounted for 60% of all broadcast animation worldwide (Ridout, 2006). In Japan, 40 % of all films are animated and animated films account for 50 % of all movie ticket sales (Napier, 2001). The Brand Japan 2006 survey conducted by the Nikkei BP Consulting Inc., found that the anime production company Studio Ghibli Inc., ranked number one concerning brand image and recognition among

Japanese consumers ahead of the Toyota Motor Corp., and companies such as Seven-Eleven Japan, Honda Motor Co., and Sony Corp (Nihon, 2006). According to the Japanese External Trade Organization, royalties from Japanese anime in America reached a record \$4.35 billion in 2003, three times greater than Japan's steel exports to the United States, (Faiola, 2004, p. 3-8). Anime conferences in Japan draw as many as 300,000 attendees (Schodt, 1996). In short, anime is a multi-billion dollar industry with fans all over the world.

In recent years Japanese anime has gained tremendous popularity in certain markets in the United States. Sean Atkins, Creative Director for the Cartoon Network said, "About 40% of the network's programs are Japanese anime or anime inspired," (Faiola, 2004, p. 3-8). Atkins added that

Cartoon Network's late night Adult Swim segment, which heavily features Japanese anime is now the most watched cable block in its time slot for men between 18-34, beating out Jon Stewart's Daily Show, the Tonight Show, and Late Show with David Letterman (Faiola, 2004, p. 3-8).

According to the Nielson ratings system, ten years ago no Japanese anime program ranked in the top ten children's programming in the U.S. Today, Yu-Gi-Oh ranks at number three, and Pokemon ranks at number six (Faiola, 2004).

Price (1996) notes that anime transcends race, culture, language, and communicative barriers, because it allows the viewer to step outside him or herself and experience new culture. One of the most unique traits of anime is how animators can

incorporate ancient Japanese legends, myths, and history into their animation with a modern twist.

Miyazaki Hayao head of the Japanese animation company Studio Ghibli helped convince the general public that anime was a unique and extraordinary medium capable of limitless possibilities for any gender or age. With approximately 440 anime studios, Studio Ghibli is the most important and largest animation studio in Japan with over 150 staff members (Napier, 2001). Miyazaki has been nicknamed the Walt Disney of the East (Miyao, 2002).

In July, 1996, Walt Disney Studios and Studio Ghibli became strategic and formal corporate partners. Disney bought the theatrical and video distribution rights to all of Studio Ghibli's movies to be produced and released domestically in Japan and internationally on DVD in the U.S. and region 1 DVD coding market¹. The Japanese animation and video game industry became a global player with the distribution aid of western media industries. Mergers acquisitions, and partnerships such as Japan based Sony and Columbia pictures built bridges for Hollywood. Then, the British and American company, Manga Entertainment merged with Polygram to bring the major anime hit *Ghost in the Shell* to western countries. Next, the Pokemon anime success was distributed by Warner Brothers. After that, Walt Disney Studios distributed Studio Ghibli and Miyazaki anime films worldwide (Iwabuchi, 1998).

¹ There are five DVD formatting regions globally. DVD's are marketed within a certain region to fight piracy and promote strategic marketing. Thus DVD's that are purchased in Asia aren't compatible with DVD players in the U.S.

In 1997, the most expensive anime production out of Japan was Miyazaki's *Princess Mononoke* with a budget of \$20 million. The film made an unprecedented \$130 million and was the all time box office grossing film in the Japanese film industry's history (Napier, 2001). This can be compared to most of the Disney produced animated films have budgets that are around \$100 million. *Princess Mononoke's* financial success in Japan was striking, because it contained explicit violence, the sexualization of young female characters, non traditional gender roles, wild animal gods, and Shinto from Japanese culture. When *Princess Mononoke* debuted in U.S. theatres in 1997 it crashed with only \$2.3 million in box office revenues. It was considered a failure in the U.S. market, because it had too much violence, sexuality, and was unsuitable for family audiences. However in January of 1999, *Princess Mononoke* aired on television in Japan and drew a 35.1 % audience share. Napier (2001) noted that this film would not have been allowed to air on prime time in the U.S. without being edited, and it would have not equaled the Nielson ratings of the popular television drama ER at that time.

Other Studio Ghibli films such as *Nausicaa Valley of the Wind*, which contained elements of westernization and post apocalyptic nuclear meltdown, were considered family favorites in Japan (Napier, 2001). In 2003, Studio Ghibli released its epic *Kamikakushi*, literally translated as "hidden by kami" otherwise known to westerners as *Spirited Away*. It also had a budget of \$20 million, and it became the highest grossing film in Japan. *Spirited Away* was the first non-American film in history to have brought in approximately \$260 million at box offices worldwide. With Disney Studios global

production and distribution muscle, *Spirited Away* won an Academy Award Oscar for best animated film in 2003. A study on *Spirited Away* argued that the film was a representation of ‘cultural boundedness,’ a reaction to globalization where cultural products are used to reinforce local culture (Napier, 2006). It was argued that outside threats such as globalization and westernization were the catalyst for using cultural products such as anime to return to the Japan of the past (Napier, 2006). Researchers explained that Japan was purifying itself, and the film *Spirited Away* showed vivid portrayals of a nostalgic Japan with luxurious spa and bathhouses, and lost connections with spirits of Shinto. The main characters in the film were a young boy and girl who became entrapped in ancient world that no longer existed. Napier (2006) found that the Japanese producers of the film wanted to reconnect children and adults with their cultural past through cultural products.

As Price (1996) notes, anime is not the Disney animation with fairy tales and happy endings and sidekick animal buddies where the characters are never confronted with difficult situations and almost never die. Japanese anime often features real life issues such as death, sexuality, and violence. Characters do not live happily ever after, bad things happen to good characters, and villains often go unpunished and escape. This thesis examines the intercultural variables that allow these ‘adult issues’ to be communicated to audiences of all ages through anime films in Japan, but not in the United States. The next section looks at some more of the literature on anime and cultural values.

1.2 Literature Review

1.2.1 Anime: An Historical Overview

Anime is made in Japan, by Japanese artists within a Japanese context. Prior to World War I and II the anime industry in Japan was considered weak, copying elements mainly from the west. In a study conducted about the pre-war anime, researchers found early anime films in Japan were short in length, usually about ten minutes that accompanied feature films (Miyao, 2002). Demand for anime was limited, and costs of production were expensive. The celluloid animation cels that were drawn on were used and then recycled by Japanese animators (Miyao, 2002). Cel-animation started in 1929 in the United States and then was adopted by the Japanese in 1939 (Miyao, 2002). Walt Disney Studios became the epitome of cel-animation with the likes of *Steamboat Willie* that also debuted in Japan in 1927 (Miyao, 2002). Japanese animation techniques changed and by the 1950's Japanese anime hit its stride. New techniques for drawing and movement in animation were developed helping to make Japanese anime more distinct. During the production of animation cartoonists draw the cartoons and they are transferred to a cartoon cel that is used to create the illusion of movement. There are two kinds of movements common in cel-animation, known as drawing movements and moving drawings. Drawing movements is common in traditional cel-animation that strives for full animation. The latter has limited animation techniques common in anime (Driscoll, 2002)

1.2.2 Anime & the West

Anime has gained popularity in the west, and according to Schodt (1996) is a mainstream escapist entertainment form. Miyazaki (1997) says,

Japanese animation is a vast communicative vehicle that has been transcending language barriers and national boundaries for years. Those who love to watch anime, whether they know it or not, are participating in a widespread global exchange that may just have greater implications than they could ever have thought (Ledoux, 1997).

Miyazaki Hayao hopes that western fans can view anime and say, “There’s something else out there other than the place where I live, things that I’m familiar with, there is something else out there that has value to it” (Miyazaki 1997). Gerbert (2001) noted that the perceptions of anime in the United States during the 80s and 90s were negative due to lack of exposure, lack of in-depth research of the anime genre, and lack of cultural understanding of Japan.

Kasa (2005) researched anime and its assimilation into the U.S. and found that the spectatorship of anime was a problem, due to viewership being superficial and stereotypical. Once American viewers watched anime and saw the cultural differences of violence, sex, etc., they stereotyped all anime in that fashion without full comprehension of the medium.

1.2.3 Anime & Adult Content

Manga and anime have been rooted in Japanese culture for centuries, but in the past five years, readership of manga in the United States has soared. Reid (2004) noted

that 50 % of manga readers in the U.S. are female. Perper (2005) found that many of the popular manga and anime sold to females in the U.S. were homoerotic and gay or lesbian in content nature. The study found that young Americans were viewing portrayals of sex and gender that were quite different from what their parents viewed, because manga and anime stepped away from Christian sexual traditions (Perper, 2005).

In a more popular anime program in the U.S., *Sailor Moon*, women changed into men and vice versa. Researchers discovered the Japanese notions of “yaoi”, “bishonen”, and “shonen-ai” (McHarry, 2003; Solomon, 2004). These were stories of male-male love and explicit sex, written by women for women readers (Perper, 2005). “Yaoi” was not written by gay men for other gay men. Then, researchers found the notion of “yuri” female-female love found in a popular anime called *Revolutionary Girl Utena*.

Researchers continued by explaining that they found themes of rape and sexual assault in anime and manga. They found that in anime and manga rape was often followed up by unearthly medieval revenge (Perper, 2005). In 2001 Perper & Cornog (2002) examined 110 manga titles and 53,000 pages, and found that 92 % featured violent resistance and or revenge against rapists. They said the women in manga and anime were not just victims; they modeled unfrightened women who knew how to fight back (Perper & Cornog, 2002).

Breshnehan et al.’s (2006) study on sex stereotyping of anime in Japan and the United States examined responses of 194 Japanese and 199 American participants about the depiction of gender in popular anime program called *Dragonball Z*. They found that

Japanese respondents and males agreed more with sexual stereotyping in the depiction of characters. They were able to connect more with characters, because male anime characters were independent, active, noisy, muscular, and dominant. Their research showed that American females did not like the characters, especially female characters, significantly more than other participants. Female anime characters were depicted as dependant, submissive, sexual, emotional, and incompetent.

1.2.4 Anime & Children

Chandler-Olcott & Mahar (2003) studied how anime was spreading into educational settings through a media frame called a fanfiction or fanfic for short. They found that informants were watching their favorite anime programs, reading their preferred manga, and writing fanfictions. Students would take the original story of an episode and write new interconnected stories of their own based on the original anime or manga story, thus giving birth to the fanfiction. Then, students would email or instant message these fanfictions to their friends and classmates, who in return would edit the fanfiction and add their own part of the story to it. Researchers found that the students enjoyed writing about anime, because it was creative and imaginative. They also noted that especially the female students enjoyed viewing the adult nature of anime, and writing their own promiscuous twists to the plots via fanfiction.

Poerschke (2005) conducted a study in 2005 in a Southeast Texas suburban school district. Nearly 46 % of students reported that they chose to read comics, cartoons, comic books, graphic novels revolving around anime and manga. Students

chose to read manga and anime related graphic novels due to their adult content, interesting stories, and amazingly unique characters.

By comparison, a study was conducted on the reading patterns and preferences of Japanese adolescents and examined how they learned to read manga (Allen & Ingulsrud, 2005). Researchers surveyed 500 junior high school students in three schools in the Tokyo metropolitan area. Researchers found that there was an importance of belonging to a community of readers, since the community allowed readers to share ideas and provided a resource for developing reading skills (Allen & Ingulsrud, 2005). Researchers found that 40% of their participants read manga in pre-school, twenty-seven percent in grades one through three, 32% in grades four through nine, and 39% in junior high school. Researchers also discovered that participants often reread the same manga several times a day, especially if they had difficulty with reading and comprehension. Pre-school participants had an average of fifty preferred manga reading titles, grades one through three, forty three, grades four through six , sixty seven, and junior high had one hundred and sixty preferred manga reading titles (Allen & Ingulsrud, 2005). These skills were self-taught and developed away from the classroom, because reading manga in classrooms and Japanese schools is looked down upon due to its non academic content nature. Allen & Ingulsrud (2005) argued that teachers would benefit by understanding how frequently their students read manga and the educational skills needed to comprehend these texts would give them better insight into their students' reading abilities, competencies, and personal reading literacies. In essence, researchers concluded that politicians and academics should know their

audiences reading preferences and abilities better in order to enhance reading overall rather than throwing money at their problems.

Japanese children's products and media have penetrated all regions of children's consumer markets with lucrative success (Cross & Smits, 2005). During the late 1990s and early millennium the perceptions of Japan and its cultural products began to change in the west. This change in perception, ideals, and images would play a significant role in the future success of the anime medium in western cultures.

In 1996, Pokemon or Pocket Monsters became a huge international success. The Pokemon success was due to its media-mix configuration of products, a brilliant marketing campaign, and the play concept itself (Allison, 2003). The initial product was a comic book manga. Soon came an anime cartoon that spawned into a card game. The characters within the cartoon performed dueling battles with the cards. Then, the cards and the games were introduced to the children's market. After that, the video games came out on all console stations, mainly Nintendo and Playstation 2, which were also a Japanese based video game company. Finally, in 1999, there was a full-featured animated film released in the U.S. It played on more than 3000 screens, in contrast to the 2000 in Japan. Pokemon, the movie, grossed closely to the newly released Star Wars Episode I in the first week of sales. Then, it surpassed the sales of Disney's The Lion King (Allison, 2003).

A study was conducted on the popularity of Pokemon, to find out how the anime television show and its media related products reached world renowned fame (Allison, 2003). Results showed the products of Pokemon and anime movies were able to create

a relationship with its target audience. Allison, (2003) argued that the Pokemon products attracted children's attention, because they were cute and likeable. Younger audiences were unaware of the negative images previously produced, and they embraced a new pop-cultural product that came from Japan. American youth bought into the branding of Japanese products of Pokemon and began a new era of acceptance of Japanese cultural products that were considered cool and imaginative. Many children who grasped the Pokemon rage said they could relate more to the characters within the anime of Pokemon, despite being from another culture. They said they could relate the games and themes to their lifestyle (Allison, 2003).

Radford & Bartholomew (2001) conducted another study about how Japanese children anticipated and related to the Pokemon anime television program series. Researchers examined a breakout of illness on over twelve thousand Japanese children after having viewed an episode of Pokemon, and found that children were also diagnosed with epidemic hysteria and anxiety in anticipation of watching the new episode of Pokemon. Radford & Bartholomew (2001) found that with the combined levels of anxiety to view the popular new Pokemon episode, photosensitive and epileptic illnesses triggered, and a collective thought within society, Japanese children became so excited to view Pokemon that they went into seizures in craze of their favorite anime character and program.

An additional study found that there was a concept of Otaku or nerd culture or combination of comics, anime, and video games in Japan (Okada, 1996). Researchers explained that Otaku believed that living in the anime world had more meaning, than

living in the real world. Otaku often dressed like their favorite anime characters and coordinated hairstyles in anime fashion. They felt more accepted in a fictional context, and thus retreated from cold, everyday society and life. Otaku created relationships with anime characters and often find them more real and attractive than people in the real physical world around them. Otaku were obsessively devoted fans of Japanese animation; being a part of the Otaku culture made them wish they had been born in Japan.

1.2.5 Anime in Education

Manion (2005) researched how people learned about Japan through anime. In this study 143 college students who were studying Japanese and 150 anime fans were surveyed, and from these two groups sixteen were interviewed. Researchers argued that anime could encourage the public to learn about Japan. Also, anime would be a useful teaching and learning tool, particularly for future generations of anime viewers. Researchers were able to find a correlation between age and awareness of anime among Japanese language students. Many Japanese language students were studying Japanese language in order to learn about Japanese popular culture such as anime and manga. Therefore, researchers argued that anime was an effective learning tool for education students and young Americans about Japan (Manion, 2005).

1.2.6 Japanese Culture, Society, & Anime

In many ways Japanese culture can best be described as being formal and traditional. It is historically profound and has a written and documented history lasting more than 2,000 years. In Japanese culture men have often dominated society, and their

reign has ranged from governmental power, politics, the fine arts, and even language usage (Hofstede, 1980). In Japanese society, language is a defining attribute to its culture. In times gone by there were even two phonetic alphabets that were used one by each gender. There are many registers and levels of speaking in different cultural contexts. There is a lexicon that males use and a distinct lexicon that females use as well.

One of the more interesting assets of the language is that it is based upon levels of politeness in order to communicate respect to the listening audience. The ideas of respect, politeness, and harmony are very important in Japanese culture. These ideas have links with history, nature, religion, and societal norms. Most of the 'Erai' or most polite registers of speech were made for women to speak to men. This level of politeness is easily found in the verb used when speaking. If one were speaking to a common person and wanted to use the verb 'to be', it would be normal to use the form of the verb 'desu' if one were to talk to someone of higher status, or respect, it would be culturally appropriate to use the same verb 'to be', but a different form 'degozaimasu'. This level of politeness can go all the way to the top, meaning there are different forms of the same verb 'to be', even if one were speaking to the emperor of Japan. There are also 10 different registers denoting the word 'you' according to the level of politeness desired by the orator. In past history, it was most pertinent for the females to always speak to the males in the correct level of politeness or otherwise be reprimanded. Also, when speaking Japanese language it is common for the orator to speak in first person plural. Instead of always using 'I', Japanese people often speak using 'we'. This is

important. Staying true to the collective and not disrupting the peace of the society is apparent even in speech. Using “we” is a way of not calling attention to oneself. Also, since there is a level of politeness maintained during discourse, Japanese often use the third person singular subject form of speech when talking about his or herself. For example, if Aiko a female was speaking, rather than saying ‘I’ think that the earth is round, she may say ‘Aiko’ thinks that the earth is round, when expressing her own opinions about the issue. This form of indirect speech is used to soften the perspective of the orator, in case there are others in the group of people to whom she is communicating to who do not agree. Aiko was trying to maintain politeness and harmony within the collective and it was apparent even within her choice of words.

After one has lived the life of a Japanese person, cultural constraints become normal and a natural part of daily routines. Rules, protocols, procedures, and the process of cultural interaction are often just as important as the actual content of the communicative message being sent. To the Japanese the form, process, and struggle to reach the objective is more important than actually obtaining and achieving the desired outcome. When one always struggles, does his or her best, but ends up unsuccessful, to the Japanese this is alright if the form, presentation, and honor of the effort were present. Reardon (1985) said, in a study conducted about gift giving practices, that in Japanese culture the form and presentation of the act of giving and receiving were more important than the actual gift’s contents from the Japanese perspective.

Adult manga often contains explicit sexuality (Dixon & Dixon, 1999; Schodt, 1986; Smith, 1991). Researchers reviewed the 1947 Japanese constitution that

prohibited censorship, and Japanese laws regulating the depiction of sex. They found that these laws were very liberal. Manga and anime animators had great freedom to imagine and draw sexual subjects. Until the 1990s it had been illegal to depict pubic hair and genitals in public media, yet overt copulation was allowed. Recently, enforcement of the pubic hair and genitals depiction laws has diminished (Diamond, 2000). In effect, manga and anime were allowed to become more realistic.

Researchers argued that sexuality had always been a legitimate subject for earlier art forms that lead to modern day manga, and then manifested itself into the anime of today. The themes of sexual content which included heterosexual courtship and consummation, female and male homosexuality, sadomasochism, transvestitism, incest, and bestiality surfaced (Perper, 2000). Researchers explained that it was pertinent to understand Japanese ideology on sex, men, women, and relationships in order to understand the sexual depictions and portrayals in manga and anime (Perper, 2000).

Researchers said these ideologies resided in Japanese religious historical past which derived from Shinto, Buddhism, and Taoist erotology (Perper, 2000). Buddhism came to Japan through Korea from China. Buddhist monks emphasized spirituality, meditation, and rituality (Hirota, 1999). Buddhist monks considered homosexuality acceptable and normal, which was unacceptable to Christian missionaries who were celibate (Hawkins, 2000). Then, in 1600s Christian missionaries were ousted from Japan, and thenceforth the Buddhist monks were sexually liberated (Perper, 2000). Later, researchers noted this sexual liberality allowed the all male Japanese art of

Kabuki to have gender bending. In theatrical Kabuki all roles were played by men. Also, in Takarazuka Revue, which was an all female theatre, all roles were played by women. Thus, manga inherited many of the ideologies of sexual liberalism such as homoeroticism and gender role switching (Perper, 2000).

Researchers argued that westerners must understand more about Shinto to fully grasp the ideology of animals and demons often portrayed in Japanese manga and anime. Westerners, primarily Christians were often critical of manga and anime due to lack of education on the medium. Christianity is monotheistic, built around a Christian trinity, and has saints and angels. On the other hand, Shinto has no primary deity, yet has 800 myriad of kami, or living supernatural force or principle often embodied in a spirit, person, animal, place, or thing, and inspires awe and respect (Ono, 1962; Ueda 1999). Kami can range from benign tree spirit to lethal karma demon. Researchers explained that these kami are often visualized and referred to in manga and anime, and upon first glance could be misunderstood (Perper, 2000).

Researchers in this study concluded by explaining inexperienced Christian westerners often misinterpreted sexuality in manga and anime, due to inexperience, sexual stereotypes, molested images of Japanese coed onsen or Japanese spa-bath houses, and no exposure to the art form. Researchers argued that manga and anime exhibited the purest erotic art being produced in the world due to power, elegance, and drama (Perper, 2000).

1.2.7 Geert Hofstede & Intercultural Value Dimensions

It is helpful in attempting to understand cultural differences to use a lens by which to examine cultural values. Intercultural researcher Geert Hofstede provides such a lens with his taxonomies created to analyze major behavioral patterns apparent in every culture. Hofstede's cultural values and dimensions theory assists in better understanding how intercultural values and variables can affect intercultural communication. His taxonomy has been used in varying intercultural research arenas.

In Hofstede's seminal research, he studied the corporate world of IBM and its multinational managers. He analyzed 117,000 questionnaires from 88,000 respondents in over twenty languages. He surveyed over sixty six countries and explored fifty different occupations (Hofstede, 1980). Hofstede's major research consisted of exploring the differences in thinking and social action that exists among members of more than 50 modern nations. It argued that people carry 'mental programs' developed in the family in early childhood and reinforced in schools and organizations. Also, these mental programs contain a component of national culture, and are often expressed in the values that predominate among people from different cultures (Hofstede, 1980).

Hofstede identified five value dimensions that are influenced and modified by culture: power distance, individualism/collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity/femininity, long-term/short-term orientation.

Hofstede defines the value dimension of *masculinity and femininity* by the degree to which masculine or feminine traits are valued and revealed. Masculinity is the degree to which the dominant values in a society are male oriented. Masculine

cultures use the dichotomy of the two genders to define very different roles for males and females. Men should be assertive, ambitious, and competitive (Hofstede, 1980). On the other hand, cultures that value femininity stress the importance of nurturing behaviors and sexual equality.

Hofstede explained that the value dimension of *individualism* can clearly be exemplified in cultures such as the American culture. Key components of individualism are: the individual is the single most important unit in any social setting, independence rather than dependence is stressed, individual achievement is rewarded, and the uniqueness of each individual is of paramount value. In Hofstede's study he found that America was ranked at the summit regarding the value of individualism (Hofstede, 1980).

In the value dimension of *collectivism* Hofstede explains that in Asian societies and countries such as Japan, Taiwan, and China collectivism is a strict social framework that focuses on in-groups and out-groups to characterize collectivist societies. People rely on their in-groups, such as families, friends, and organizations, to look after them, and their loyalty is for the group before the individual (Hofstede, 1980). Often, in collectivist societies, cultural acceptance of new trends, ranging from fashion to high technology, and items of popular culture are integrated into society faster than individualistic cultures. Thus, if the cultural item is regarded in a positive manner by the majority and in-groups, then it ostracizes the out-groups to conform to the collective and its thinking.

Another value dimension is called *uncertainty avoidance*. High uncertainty-avoidance cultures, such as the Japanese, try to avoid uncertainty and ambiguity by providing stability for their people. These societies have more formal rules of engagement, little tolerance for non-conforming ideas and behaviors. They often seek consensus during decision making processes, believe in absolute truths, and strive for the attainment of expertise. Societies with high uncertainty-avoidance have higher levels of stress and anxiety. They often believe that life is filled with unpredictable hazards. Thus, there is a great need for written rules, regulations, planning, ceremonies, rituals, and ritualized communication protocols, which give structure to daily life communicative engagements (Hofstede, 1980). At the other end of the spectrum, low uncertainty-avoidance cultures such as the U.S. are more tolerant of the unforeseen communicative exchanges in life and thrive on the spontaneity of the future.

Hofstede's value dimension of *power distance* explains that a characteristic of a culture defines the extent to which the less powerful person in society accepts inequality in power and considers it as normal. Also, it deals with the extent to which a society prefers that power in relationships, institutions, and organizations, be distributed equally or unequally. Countries and societies are ranked high and low on power distance taxonomies (Hofstede, 1980).

Hofstede completed his taxonomy with the value dimension of *long-and short-term orientation*. The long/short term orientation dimension appears to be based on items reminiscent of the teachings of Confucius, on both poles. It opposes long-term to short-term aspects of Confucian thinking: Persistence and thrift to personal stability and

respect for tradition. For example, societies such as China, Hong Kong, and Japan, which rank high on long-term orientation, would have employees who reflect strong work ethic, honor, and show great respect for their employers (Hofstede, 1991).

Other significant works by Hofstede include *Masculinity and Femininity: The Taboo Dimension of National Cultures* (1998), and *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the mind: Intercultural Cooperation and its Importance for Survival* (2004). In relation to this study, he categorized the following ranking results on a scale of 0-100% for the country of Japan: power index 55%, individualism index of 41%, masculinity index 95%, uncertainty avoidance index 94%, and long term orientation index 78% (Hofstede, 1980). These rankings show that in Japan masculinity is the highest characteristic. The lowest characteristic is individualism, which also coincides with the level of uncertainty avoidance. This means Japan is a collectivist country by nature and that the Japanese avoid taking risks, and think of the benefit of the group before individual freedom. Also, Japan is primarily a Shinto and Buddhist country which helps to explain the Confucian ideology and alignment with collectivism and uncertainty avoidance characteristics of its inhabitants (Hofstede, 1980). In comparison with neighboring Asian countries such as Hong Kong, China, and South Korea, Japan has similar indices aside from the masculinity index to its Asian neighbors (Hofstede, 1980). This allows researchers to assume similarities among ideology in terms of thought in culturally communicative arenas.

Hofstede's cultural indices rankings for the United States were as followed: power distance 40%, individualism 91%, masculinity 59%, uncertainty avoidance 41%,

and long term orientation 23% (Hofstede, 1980). This indicates that the United States is an individualistic culture by nature. It is also masculine in societal structure. There is relative equality among power equality among social levels. Also, the United States has a low uncertainty avoidance ranking that means the society has fewer rules and does not attempt to predict and control outcomes and have looser relationships with others (Hofstede, 1980). The dominant religion in the United States is Christianity with 84%.

Japan and the United States have some similar and contrasting rankings in Hofstede's cultural indices. The main similarity is that both societies are masculine in nature; however, current research shows that the U.S. is becoming more feminine. The largest differences are the characteristics of individualism versus collectivism, and high versus low uncertainty avoidance characteristics (Hofstede, 1980). These two cultures ideological and societal differences can affect the thoughts and communicative interpretations of their indigenous cultures. It truly is a difference of eastern and western ideology and perception.

Many studies have been conducted on a variety of topics and across a variety of disciplines using Hofstede's dimensions. Hogan (2005) in sociology conducted research on how Australian and Japanese television advertisements reinforced national identities particularly in terms of gender. Also in sociology Swami et al (2006) examined the perception of attractiveness among eastern and western women in the United Kingdom and Japan. Milner (2000) explored the sex role portrayals and the gender of nations. Hofstede's value dimensions were applied as a framework to show how countries could be ranked as more masculine or feminine. Zinkhan (1998)

examined consumer confidence in advertising as a valid source of information and found that Hofstede's value dimensions of uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, and individualism were valid predictors in advertising confidence. Wurtz (2006) applied Hall's high and low context dimensions and Hofstede's value dimensions to examine McDonald's international websites. Callahan (2006) researched the cultural similarities and differences in the design of university websites using Hofstede's value dimensions. Researchers compared graphical elements of university home pages from Malaysia, Austria, Ecuador, Sweden, Greece, Denmark, the United States, and Japan using content analysis. They were analyzed on the basis of organization and graphical design. Researchers found correlations between Hofstede's value dimension rankings of countries and frequency, organizational style, and graphic design. Researchers found in the high context cultures, higher levels of animation, less text, and simple visuals portraying collective activities of students.

In social psychology French (2005) conducted research on friendship across cultures focusing on the friendship of Indonesian and United States youth. Researchers argued that people in collectivist cultures tend to limit their interactions to small groups of people they know well, whereas individualistic cultures move easily through multiple social groups (Triandis et al., 1988).

Nisbett (2003) examined how and why Asians and westerners think differently in relation to cross cultural marketing. Researchers determined that westerners (mainly Americans and Europeans) tend to categorize ideas. They focus on objects and ideas and isolation from their context. They believed that if they knew the rules that govern

the objects, they can control the object's behavior. On the other hand Asian cultures such as China, Korea, and Japan are more broad and contextual. They think that events are extremely complex and cannot be properly interpreted without thinking taking into consideration the underlying context. Therefore, they believe many factors determine events and are difficult and impossible to control.

In a cross societal experiment of Australians and Japanese Markus & Kitayama (1991) looked at ingroup and out-group behavior in a Prisoner's Dilemma game focusing on the variable of nationality. Hofstede's value dimension of individualism and collectivism was applied. Researchers found that knowledge that the partner had about the nationality of the participant only had an effect when the partner was an ingroup member. An outgroup-favoring pattern was observed, but was a result of positive stereotypes of Australians by Japanese participants.

A study conducted on the gift giving practices of international businessmen applied Hofstede's value dimensions by exemplifying his idea that other cultural perspectives are as valid as our own (Hofstede, 1980). In this study, 122 business executives with an average of eighteen years of international business experience in five regions of the world participated (Reardon, 1985). The gift giving practices of the United States and Japanese participants were examined. Americans tended to give gifts that were distinctively American, useful, of conversational value, and brand named items under \$25.00. Japanese participants tended to give gifts that had no apparent use for the recipient. Reardon (1985) noted that from the Japanese cultural perspective the act of giving the gift was more significant than the contents inside. Thus, illustrating

how individualist societies categorized the Japanese gifts as individual objects. The gifts were rated on functionality. Collectivist societies valued the act of giving, the act of receiving, the process, and presentation of the gift more than the contents of the gift. In this study it was observed that the Japanese were meticulous in how the gifts were wrapped, presented, and opened. All a part of a holistic and collectivist appreciation for the act of gift exchange. On the other hand, American participants did not account for how they gave, received, and opened gifts which embodied a more singular and individualistic appreciation for the gift as an object (Reardon, 1985).

Researchers based their analysis on Claudill and Plath (1996). They explained that there was a difference in the parenting styles of Japanese and Americans (Rothbaum et al., 2000). American parents encouraged their children to develop social skills and self expression, whereas Japanese parents stressed the importance of emotional control, constraint, conformity, and politeness (Azuma, Kashiwagi, & Hess, 1981).

Recently, researchers found a similar contrast among Asian American parents and European American parents (e.g., Huntsinger, Jose, Larson, & Shari, 1998). In regards to Confucian teaching, Chinese American parents who are also collectivist culture by nature think approach education from the standpoint that the teacher or parent is the possessor of knowledge and the children are to absorb knowledge. In contrast, European American parents preferred the approach that the teacher or parent was the facilitator and engaged children in learning (Jose, Huntsinger, Hunstinger, and Liaw (2000).

Asian American students reported their parents would be angry if they came home with less than A minus. Asian Americans reported higher levels of depression and hopelessness than European Americans. This was because Asian Americans had higher levels of perfectionism, parental criticism, and concerns for parental expectations for perfectionism (Chang, 1998). In essence the parenting style of Asians and westerners differed and related to Hofstede's individualist and collectivist value dimension. Japanese and Asian parents expected more mentally and academically from their children than western and American European parents (Oishi, 2005).

In relation to the current study, Asian and Asian-American parenting styles and teaching ideologies differ from those of their western counterparts. Many of the cultural differences can be exemplified through Hofstede's cultural value dimensions such as individualist and collectivist characteristics. A study was conducted on the sexuality and its null curriculum in Asian and Asian American faith communities which also incorporated Hofstede's value dimension of individualist and collectivist characteristics. The study examined pedagogical strategies for bringing sexuality discourse into the mainstream of Asian-American communities (Lee, 2006). The study analyzed the Confucian ideology of the body, and the demystification of the body. Researchers argued that demystification of the body was pivotal to fostering discussions about sexuality in Asian-American communities which are heavily Confucian and collectivist in nature (Lee, 2006).

Researchers noted that in most Asian-American cultures, sexuality was a taboo subject. Sexuality could not be discussed in public except for purpose of procreation

(Lee, 2006). In Asian-American communities, sexuality is taught through the null curriculum (Lee, 2006). This cultural perspective also shaped the research of Asian-American studies and theology on sexuality. In general, sexuality and specifically homosexuality in the field of Asian-American studies are spoken about through whispers (Takagi, 1996). Researchers found that the variable of sexuality is rarely studied and discussed explicitly. If it is discussed it is done so in a round about way through feminist studies and theological studies through discourses of women's sexual labor and victimization (Kwok, 2004).

In addition, researchers noted that in Asian-American communities the discussion of sexuality and exposing one's homosexuality could be perceived as a characteristic of westernization (Hom, 1996). Asian Americans embraced certain aspects of Americanization to better assimilate to the dominant culture. Yet, extreme assimilation such as free discussion of one's sexuality or the promotion of being openly homosexual could be considered as a loss of one's Asian heritage and cultural identity. This would result in shame upon the family as a collective and communal unit (Lee, 2006). Thus, Asians and Asian-Americans had difficulty discussing sexuality in open discourse due to cultural variables such as collectivist and Confucian upbringing.

In essence, Hofstede's intercultural value dimensions have opened up avenues for exploration. The value dimensions created understanding, through research into numerous mysterious unexplored academic disciplines, and unique cultures. There have been critics of his research, but there have been many more supporters of his

findings. In relation to the current study Hofstede's intercultural value dimensions clarified and exemplified themselves in the culturally communicative medium of anime.

In light of the impact of anime in Japan and its diffusion into the United States, and in light of the cultural differences between the two countries, two research questions were formulated:

RQ1- What attributes of Japanese culture allows adult oriented issues; to be communicated to audiences of all ages through anime films in Japan?

RQ2- Is anime an appropriate medium for communicating mature issues in animated films to all age groups and audiences in the U.S.?

Having reviewed the literature on anime, this next chapter explains the methodology used in the study, chapter three examines the results of the focus groups, chapter four discusses the results and chapter five offers conclusions including limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

2.1 Methodology

2.1.1 Focus Groups

Focus groups were used due to the exploratory nature of the study. Morgan (1997) explains that the simplest test of whether focus groups are appropriate for a research project is to ask how easily and willingly the participants would discuss in-depth the subject of interest. Since, many of the cultural, adult, and mature issues that are discussed in Japanese anime are considered taboo in Japanese and Asian cultures, it was felt the best way to answer the research questions was to conduct focus groups that allow for discussion about anime.

Morgan (1997) articulates a number of ‘rules of thumb’ in conducting focus groups. These include: use homogeneous participants, use relatively structured interview with a lot of moderator engagement, use six to ten participants per group, and use three to five focus groups per project.

Under normal circumstances, Japanese and Asian participants would not discuss the polemic issues portrayed in anime. By conducting focus groups researchers have the potential of gathering rich data about a topic that would otherwise may not be accessible to them. Morgan (1997) explains that choosing to use focus groups as the

method of research gathering over other qualitative methods allows researchers to expand options in respect to matching research questions to qualitative methods.

In addition, focus groups can be a self-contained research method and a technique that can be used with other qualitative methods to help expand research options (Morgan, 1997). In the past other researchers have argued that focus groups could only be used as preliminary research gathering methods. Morgan (1997) argues the main characteristic of using self-contained focus groups is that the results of the research can stand on their own and can give researchers the option of exploring new research areas or examine already established research questions from the participant's perspective.

Intercultural qualitative researchers are concerned with the interaction among and between the members of the different intercultural focus groups (Martin & Nakayama, 1999). Also, intercultural qualitative researchers are more interested in comprehending specific and localized concepts and ideas versus general obscurities (Morgan, 1997). Adding to that, qualitative researchers look for meaning and understanding of concepts rather than numerical, empirical, and statistical data. Interpreting texts, in the case of this study focus groups, is the key to finding meaning.

There are a number of advantages to using focus groups to collect data. For example the focus group method is socially oriented, meaning that researchers are able to make note of all verbal and nonverbal communication cues from the participants. The moderator can interact with participants, ask further questions, clarify meaning, and gain immediate feedback. Morgan (1997) argues that the flexibility of focus groups is

its biggest advantage, because they can be adjusted and modified to fit the particular focus group participants' needs. The focus group method is highly exploratory and allows for open-ended responses to questions and discussion that create access to more data gathering. Focus groups have high face validity and researchers can understand more quickly the responses and data that were collected.

Morgan (1997) argues that strengths and weaknesses of the focus groups flow directly from their two defining features: the reliance on the researcher's focus and the group's interaction. A strength of relying on the focus group is the ability to produce localized amounts of data that is concise to the topic of interest (Morgan, 1997). Focus groups not only open access to a wide variety of subjects that may not be observable but also ensure that the data will be targeted to the researcher's interests (Morgan, 1997). This strength is why focus groups are known to be 'quick and easy' for data gathering. The other advantage is their relative efficiency in comparison to individual interviews, in relation to gathering equivalent amounts of data (Morgan, 1997).

Next, an additional strength of the focus group is their reliance on interaction in the group to produce the data. Morgan and Kruger (1993) note the comparisons that participants make among each other's experiences and opinions are valuable source of insights into complex behaviors and motivations. Focus groups are relatively fast for data collection, and are very cost efficient. Consensus and diversity are interests to social scientists and researchers. The discussion groups themselves can provide direct data on these exact issues (Morgan, 1997). This may also be a corresponding weakness, because the group itself may influence the nature of the data it produces.

Some of the disadvantages that were noted in this particular study were that there is less control in questioning and discussion versus in-depth and individual interviews. Also, while using focus groups researchers must be aware of conformity to say what others may expect, rather than what a participant may say if certain others were not present (Morgan, 1997). The data can be difficult to analyze because of the volume of material and the different nature of each focus group. It is also important to have a moderator who is able to maintain control over the groups. Focus groups can be difficult to assemble, and language barriers among focus group participants may also cause issues. Overall, the advantages of implementing the focus group methodology outweighed the disadvantages.

2.1.2 Research Procedure

Five focus groups were used: two Non-Asian focus groups, a Japanese focus group, and two Amerasian (American Asian) focus groups. The open discussions in focus groups facilitate analyses that highlight differences in perspective among groups (Morgan, 1997). Participants in all five focus groups were shown video clips from the following Studio Ghibli films that were produced and distributed by Walt Disney Studios for western markets: *Spirited Away*, *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind*, and *Princess Mononoke*. These specific anime films and clips were chosen because each exemplified cultural, adult, and mature issues that would be deemed acceptable for viewing by all ages in Japan, but not in the United States. Participants of the focus groups were aware of the general nature of the study, but were unaware of the cultural issues and content that would be viewed in the video segments.

When the session began, the moderator explained to the focus groups that video segments would be viewed. Then, participants were told that after watching all segments from each video they would be asked questions about anime and what was observed in the video film segments. Questions are important tactics for commencing discourse. Questions can be used to open up a shy participant, or to persuade a verbose participant to speak less frequently (Lindlof & Taylor, 1995). In this particular study some Japanese participants and some Amerasian participants were asked probing questions to help guide them into answering the main research questions. Many of the research questions were open-ended in nature in order to let free flow of discussion among participants. These questions followed the ‘funnel technique’, meaning the questions were asked from general to more specific questions which helped to better moderate groups’ responses (Morgan, 1997). Participants were asked not to discuss what was seen in the video segments with each other until the moderator opened the discussion.

As mentioned earlier there were three films used, each containing various cultural and adult issues. In the film *Spirited Away* participants were shown video segments containing issues of religion, supernaturalism, death, violence toward children, violence performed by children, and bloodied animals. In the film *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind* participants were shown video segments including issues such as nuclear holocaust, the destruction of mankind, violence towards animals, and mild nudity. In the last film, *Princess Mononoke*, participants were shown clips containing polytheism, children in violent situations, political gender and societal stereotypes,

violence toward animals, the destruction of nature, male and female gender role reversal, violence performed by male and female genders, and the sexualisation of young female characters.

After viewing the clips, the participants discussed and responded to the moderator and each other for a minimum of fifty minutes to a maximum of sixty minutes. All focus groups participants were made aware that they were being video recorded in order to facilitate data analysis after the focus groups were completed. Most participants had no reactions to being video recorded. The discussion from all of the focus groups and in-depth video recordings were transcribed and the Japanese focus group's discussion was translated and transcribed from Japanese into English. It was felt that the Japanese participants would be able to respond better to the research questions in their native tongue due to limited English proficiency. It was also felt that conducting the group in Japanese would create a more comfortable environment for participants. The author of the study moderated each of the groups. He is fluent in Japanese and English and has lived in both the United States and Japan. All other focus groups and questions were conducted in English since it was the common language among participants.

All subject members signed Institutional Review Board (IRB) forms in order to participate in the study voluntarily. All IRB forms, video tapes, video tape transcriptions, and camera equipment were returned to the supervising faculty member in order to comply with IRB data storage requirements upon completion of the study.

2.1.3 Non-Asian Focus Groups

There were two focus groups (A and B) consisting of Non-Asian participants. This group was made up of six Non-Asian American participants. The participants were either born in America or lived more than ten to fifteen years of their lives in the United States. Focus Group A consisted of four subject members, and Group B consisted of two subject members. Even in the small focus group rich data was gained from participants' responses. In fact, as Morgan (1997) explains, small focus groups work best when participants are highly interested in the topic and respect each other and, because each participant's responses are longer and they have more time to disclose and explain the meaning of their responses.

In the current study the smaller focus group participants had more time to speak and gave detailed responses to research questions. In contrast the large focus groups were slightly more difficult to moderate due to the number of participants. Also, not all participants would share their thoughts due to what the majority of others may have said. In this particular study the larger focus groups meant less response time from certain respondents because some participants talked much more than others. The same research questions were asked of both of the Non-Asian focus groups. See Appendix A for a list of questions asked in this focus group.

2.1.4 Japanese Focus Group

The focus group consisting of Japanese participants was conducted at a meeting center of a regional Japanese Society. The location for this group was important because as Morgan (1997) argues, location sites of focus groups should promote

comfort of participants, ease of using technical equipment, and take cost of using the facility into consideration. This group was made up of five Japanese participants who were born in Japan and had an deep understanding of anime and animation culture. See Appendix B for a list of questions asked in this focus group.

2.1.5 Amerasian Focus Groups

There were two focus groups consisting of Amerasian (American Asian) participants were held at a university building and at a Taiwanese restaurant café. Group A had two participants and Group B had four participants.

These groups consisted of American-Asian participants. American Asians were defined as Asians that were born in the United States, or United States territories. Or, they were Asians that were born in Asian countries, but immigrated to the United States and lived in America for more than ten to fifteen years of their lives giving them enough time to become enculturated into the American way of life. All participants had exposure and understanding of anime and animation culture. Participants within these two focus groups were exposed to anime in such Asian countries as Japan, China, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Vietnam, South Korea, Taiwan, and the United States. This consistent exposure endured even into adulthood, as most participants in both Japanese and Amerasian focus groups continue to be exposed to the anime medium.

With this particular focus group's RQ1 and RQ2 were combined to read:

Given the cultural distinctness of Japan and other Asian countries, what do you think it is that allows cultural, adult, mature issues; to be communicated to

audiences of all ages through anime films in Japan and Asia, but not in the United States?

The questions were combined because the Amerasian focus group had exposure to both Asian and American cultures and so because of their cultural backgrounds and experiences were able to provide insight into both questions. The moderator asked questions from both the Non-Asian focus group, and the Japanese focus group in order to fit these particular focus group participants.

After completing all focus groups and the in-depth interview, all focus group video recordings were viewed multiple times, transcribed, translated, and analyzed. The average time for video transcription was six hours per video recording. The Japanese focus group recording took eight hours to transcribe and translate from Japanese language to English language.

2.1.6 Methodological Analysis

In qualitative studies researchers try to develop three areas in relation to analysis: data management, data reduction, and conceptual development (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). The goal of data analysis is conceptual development (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Concepts and themes develop in abundance early on in research projects (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Later the development of concepts and themes taper off, but the links among them become more dense and ornate (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). In this particular study thematic analysis was the primary method of analysis. When each focus group discusses the same topics in relatively the same order, the primary object is to address these topics (Morgan, 1997). Knodel (1993) describes the analysis as a grid

system that summarizes what each group said in response to each question. This method of analysis is very useful if segmented and homogeneous groups were conducted, because the grid promotes making and notating comparisons across the different segmented focus groups easy. All transcriptions of all focus groups were analyzed by comparing and contrasting responses to research questions.

Moreover, codes allow researchers to locate specific data more quickly (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). In this study every response was recorded, coded, and was organized according to the initial perceived dominant theme of the response. Morgan (1997) says the three most commonly used ways of coding focus group transcripts are to note all mentions of a given code, whether each individual participant mentioned a given code, or whether each group's discussion contained a given code. All three strategies work in a symbiotic fashion, because coding all notations of a topic will also denote if the topic was mentioned by certain participant or specifically a certain focus group (Morgan, 1997). For example, if the participant said "I'm not used to anime, and I did not grow up watching it," the response was coded and categorized under the theme of exposure, or lack of exposure. Then, researchers compared coded responses between focus groups and participants and looked for saliency among responses, which in turn helped to develop the categorical themes in what Morgan (1997) calls a 'group to group validation'. For a specific topic such as anime, group to group validation means that whenever a topic arises, it generates a consistent level of energy among participants nearly through all focus groups.

Owen (1984) says that repetition, recurrence, and forcefulness of themes are essential in thematic analysis. For example recurrence occurred when both the Japanese and Amerasian groups mentioned the same specific themes. Repetition is the frequency of a word or theme, and forcefulness has to do with the emotion behind a specific theme or idea. Morgan (1997) says that it is critical to note the difference in what focus group respondents remark as important themes versus themes that they like to discuss. Usually if themes consistently resurface in discussion or across focus groups, it is important. If a recurring topic became salient among participants and across groups it was labeled a theme during the analysis. After organizing and labeling all responses of each participant of every focus group, there was one overarching theme, cultural differences, with three major sub-categories emerging: exposure, usage, and parenting styles and teaching ideologies.

Similarities and differences were noted not only in responses to the research questions but there were also similarities and differences in the discussions that took place. Researchers not only looked for salient responses, but also used more interpretive levels of analysis. It was noted that many Non-Asian participants felt uncomfortable and unknowledgeable about anime, as opposed to their Japanese and Amerasian counterparts who showed excitement and enthusiasm in discussing the questions and cultural issues. Verbal and nonverbal communication among groups varied during querying. Interested participants focused and responded well to questions, while less interested participants watched the clock and checked text messages. Also, the moderator noted that Japanese and Amerasian focus group

members, while speaking, were more likely to give responses using the first person plural subject form of speech. Japanese and Amerasian participants used the collective 'we' use, see, etc which promotes a collective harmony in speech. Japanese participants less frequently used the first person singular subject when responding. Using 'I' think, believe, and feel is more characteristic of western and individualist speech patterns, where the individual's perceptions are the focal point. Thus, Non-Asian focus group members used more frequently the first person singular form of speech 'I' when giving responses emphasizing individualist characteristics.

Using focus groups allowed for the gathering of rich and relevant responses to research questions and data for analysis. All focus groups regardless of size aided in the research gathering process. Using video to ensure proper documentation was advantageous and helpful during data analysis. The moderator was able to watch and analyze discussions numerous times in order to derive thematic and qualitative meaning from the texts and participants.

In writing up the results in the next chapter, the author followed Morgan's (1997) advice which says using too many quotations leaves the write up in a chaotic stream of consciousness, but too much summarization of the data is boring and does not allow the reader the indirect contact of rich verbatim texts given by participants. Upon completion of the write up of the manuscript, the author tried to balance the important direct quotation of participants among focus groups as well as interjecting insightful summarization and interpretation of what was said. The rich quotations facilitated deep summarization and analysis.

CHAPTER 3

DATA ANALYSIS

3.1 Themes

After conducting the study, one overarching theme became apparent: cultural differences. There were three primary sub-themes used by participants in all focus groups to describe cultural differences: exposure, usage, and parenting styles and teaching ideologies.

In the analysis section of this thesis, participants' responses to questions and quotes were organized as follows: Non-Asian Focus Group Male/Female was listed as NA-Male/Female; the Japanese Focus Group was listed as JA-Male/Female; and the Amerasian Focus Group, was listed as AA-Male/Female.

3.1.1 Exposure: Japan & Asia

For the purpose of this study, exposure is defined as the consistent viewing of anime television program series and films, and purchasing of anime related marketing media i.e. toys, video games, and manga throughout childhood and adolescence. Most of the Japanese and Amerasian focus group participants said they had watched anime on a daily basis since childhood. In addition, four out of five Japanese focus group participants said they still currently watch anime. Five out of six Amerasian focus group participants said that they still currently watch anime. Also, for the purpose of this study, high levels of exposure to anime is defined as the consistent

viewing of anime television program series, films, and the purchasing of anime related marketing media i.e. toys, video games, and manga throughout the childhood and adolescence into adulthood. Overall, exposure to the anime medium was lower in the Non-Asian focus group. As for the Amerasian focus group, they had been exposed to a lot of anime, but less than the Japanese focus groups, since they lived a long time in the United States. In addition, in this study cultural issues are defined as content found in anime or animated films that are adult and mature in subject matter, i.e. violence, sex, religion, and politics that are explicitly visualized and portrayed, and are deemed more suited for adult viewers.

Participants in the Japanese focus group and the Amerasian focus group said that from as early as three years old, they were exposed to vast amounts of anime within their respective cultures and countries.

Question: Who is watching anime films in Japan and why?

JA-Female replied, “Junior High students, Elementary students, and High school students.” All the participants agreed and noted that adults as well watch the films. In fact anyone watches them and any content or subject matter they want.” AA-Male explained, “Some of the anime in animation here, they are sensitive to the age group. In the Japanese anime that I was used to growing up, and for me living in a different country, it’s pretty much for every age group.”

A Japanese focus group participant exemplified this matter by saying that in America there was a rating system for films. The subject thought it was easier for American parents to decide on whether or not to allow the child to view the anime films

because of the system that was in place. On the other hand the rating system in Japan was not strictly enforced. Thus, the Japanese parents may have had more difficulty in telling their children they cannot watch the anime films. JA-Female said,

America is stricter with films. In Japan, the parents spoil their kids more and show them films more than in America. There is no rating system on films in Japan. Over here, there is a rating system, G, PG, and PG13. American parents can decide easier, because there is a rating system.

3.1.2 Attraction of Anime

Question: What about Japanese anime appeals to U.S. audiences?

The Japanese and Amerasian focus groups discussed initial characteristics of anime that attracted them to the medium as children. Both focus groups noted that the aesthetic value and quality of the anime television programs and films led them into viewing anime as adolescents. Participants explained that anime was visually stunning to watch. The colors and the speed of the animation intrigued them. One subject said that anime cartoons looked like fun, and they were pretty to watch. AA-Female said, “But they take fantasy to the next level. It’s a whole new fantasy world where you think of every little detail.” The backgrounds and visual settings that were incorporated into anime films were fantasy-like and exotic. Some Amerasian participants explained that access to anime was limited for them in America, compared to accessibility of anime in Asian countries where they used to live. Amerasian participants told researchers that in Asian countries there is a lot more exposure to anime through television programs, television commercials, and films. AA-Male said,

I grew up with it. I like it. Most of the anime I watched growing up is a little bit more complex, especially how the Japanese write it. In some of the Japanese anime that I've seen, and like today, it's a little more cleaned up.

Anime was accessible to them through anime related media such as toys, figurines, manga comic books. They observed teenagers and adults browsing through manga books in bookstores, on trains, and at school. Thus, the usage of anime was more integrated into some Asian cultures and countries than in the United States. AA-Male said,

I grew up in Hong Kong watching all Japanese animation. There is a lot more imagination. The story lines appeal a lot more to the Asian culture over there. There is a lot of imagination going on. So, for a child, it's like fantasizing what's going on in a child's head. It's very creative and very imaginative. Doesn't go on with every day life. It's like a fantasy.

Some Amerasian participants explained that anime took us as children to planes of existence that were unimaginable until viewed through anime. AA-Male said, "It's like a train. I remember when I was watching cartoons there was a train that would go everywhere. It would go over the universe flying everywhere. It's like taking it to the next level".

The Japanese and Amerasian focus group participants said they appreciated the medium of anime because of the realistic story lines and plots. As previously discussed cultural issues were often visualized through anime. Amerasian participants indicated that they liked anime, because there were elements of real life such as death, emotional

attachment, and relationships. Amerasian participants appreciated the fact that the stories did not always have happy endings. Amerasian participants agreed that they learned about many cultural, adult, and mature issues through viewing anime as children.

Question: What about Japanese anime appeals to U.S. audiences?

AA-Male replied,

For one, the fact that it's not cut and dry, and hunky dory. Like Disney pictures everyone's happy. Someone's sad, and then everyone's happy. These are a little more adult, and they don't undermine the intelligence of their audience. They enjoyed the drama and suspense of the story lines that continued in the anime series. Amerasian participants said that unlike Disney animation, villains often escaped, and good characters committed malicious crimes, and sometimes main characters passed away. AA-Male explained,

At the same time they don't sugar coat it. When you watch American animation versus the Japanese one, no one ever dies. No one ever gets hurt. At the end of the day everyone is fine, everyone is okay. But even in this fantasy world they keep these aspects of reality. There is sadness. Someone does die. Someone does get hurt. It's a true thing. It's not just fantasy. At the same time you do get the reality part put in it. You have to understand. Like [AA-Male] said, we watched a lot of stuff when we were younger. I think one of the first animes that I saw was Robotech, and it was just an amazing aspect, they had a main character in Robotech pass away. Tragically, in the show every character in the

show was affected by it. Versus like in GI Joe or something where no one dies. Everyone just gets captured. You kill the thing, and the bad guys escape, and the good guys win. It just continues, and there's the end of it.

Amerasian participants explained that anime plots did not insult the intelligence of the audience.

The Japanese and Amerasian focus group participants said that within the anime medium relationships with anime programs and characters were more easily formed than with Disney animation. Due to heavy exposure of anime in various media, participants said it was easier to engage in anime. Amerasian participants said they had toys, video games, cards etc. that helped them form a relationship with the anime programs and characters. Anime television program series continued episodically and seasonally. Thus, there were always new stories and relationships with the characters to be explored. Japanese and Amerasian participants explained that characters in the anime programs expressed emotions more than American animation. AA-Male said,

I think there is more emotion involved when you are watching Japanese anime. For American animation there is a happy ending, that's pretty much it. But when you look at Japanese anime there are different emotions that come up. Inside they are happy, or people die, and it causes you to be sad. It depends on what kind of situation it is.

The Japanese and Amerasian focus group participants said that anime characters were more interesting, because they were not one-dimensional as many of their Disney counterparts were. Amerasian participants noted that Disney characters often

represented one major theme such as good, evil, and helpless and lost females.

Amerasian participants explained that main characters in anime films often had internal conflicts such as emotionally bound to other characters, strong females characters that committed as many bad acts as good ones, and young children who were perpetrators of deviant actions. Amerasian participants explained that along with more interesting stories and plots, characters that were complex and unique, added to the allure of watching anime versus Disney films. AA-Male said,

Overall it's more fantastic. It deals with gods, demons, animals, nature, and history. It's well fleshed out. It's an entire culture. It's an entire other world.

As opposed to Snow White and the seven dwarves. She's in the hills. She finds some short people. It's very, here are some buddies and here's a pretty picture.

Whereas that is clearly not. They paint a more vivid picture. I think it translates better.

The Japanese and Amerasian focus group participants discussed being heavily exposed to Studio Ghibli films and anime media. Most participants within these two focus groups had seen at least one or more of the Studio Ghibli films. Many participants indicated that they were familiar with Studio Ghibli films since they were adolescents. The Japanese and Amerasian participants explained that Studio Ghibli films had a large impact on Japanese anime culture as well as their own culture.

Question: Given the cultural distinctiveness of Japan, what do you think it is that allows cultural, adult, mature issues to be communicated to audiences of all ages through anime films in Japan?

Most Japanese participants were familiar with Studio Ghibli's executive producer Miyazaki Hayao. Japanese participants explained that Studio Ghibli films had credibility and were perceived as being family movies. JA-Female said, "For example, Kiki's Delivery Service is completely European in style and descent". JA-Female asked, "That was Scotland wasn't it?" Japanese participants said that Studio Ghibli films took them to foreign countries in Europe, and introduced them to new people and cultures. Studio Ghibli films were very popular among all audiences in Japan and Asian countries. Studio Ghibli films taught Japanese participants about their historical past. They explored their multiple gods in Shinto. JA-Female said, "I think Christian people would hate Miyazaki's movies, because there are a lot of ghosts, spirits, and multiple gods". JA-Female replied, "That is Shinto. There is a lot of Shinto in his films. Japan has many nature gods". Studio Ghibli films emphasized teaching Japanese and Asian cultures to live harmoniously with nature, and not to fight against it. JA-Female explained, "In Japan we believe that we live with nature and that is the base of Shinto".

In Japan and other Asian countries anime was more than niche programming. It was the popular medium of choice when seeing movies. One Japanese subject said that in Japan going to the movie theatre in Japan was expensive. On average it would cost close to twenty U.S. dollars for one admission ticket. Therefore, many Japanese people did not go to the theatres and pay admission fees for non-animated films. JA-Female said, "Japanese films are expensive to go and see in the theatre. Unless it's an anime film we won't go. Why would we go to something that is so expensive unless it was

anime?” The subject said that at least if we were going to see an anime film, we could take the entire family, including the children. Non-animated films were often not suitable for children from the Japanese perspective. Anime films were suitable regardless of the cultural issues portrayed in them.

According to Japanese participants, Studio Ghibli films was a household name, and attributed to the exposure of the anime medium. It became evident that Studio Ghibli’s films and brand name were comparable in Asia to that of Walt Disney Studio’s films in the United States. Both Japanese and Amerasian focus group participants were familiar with Walt Disney Studios and some of their films, yet they expressed that they were able to connect and become more engaged in the Studio Ghibli films.

Question: What is the cultural acceptance and integration of Japanese anime in Japan?

The Japanese and Amerasian participants explained that anime and manga were integrated into their daily lives since childhood and on into adulthood. JA-Female in talking about how easy it was to become involved in the content of the films said “You can get into anime films more easily, because of the visuals. Hollywood movies are difficult to get into. Japanese anime is easier to get into than normal Japanese movies.” JA-Female said, “The visuals get into your head easily”. JA-Female explained, “What I think about anime is let’s watch it one time, I think. That’s about how far it’s integrated. Everyone gets into it that way.” JA-Female said, “Everyone likes looking at and reading manga. Adults as well as kids, everybody likes it.” JA-Female said, “Salary man Kintaro is a popular manga comic book, and my husband even reads it.” JA-Female explained, “My mother used to use anime as my reward or punishment. If I

wanted to watch anime, then I had to do something for her in return. It was my carrot in front of the donkey”. Other members of the group all had the same experience.

In the Japanese focus group participants explained that anime was heavily integrated into their culture. JA-Female said, “They teach history and religion, so it’s integrated.” JA-Female said, “It’s more or less heavily integrated into our culture”.

The Japanese participants said they had always watched anime as did their parents and they remembered anime television programming dating back to the early 1950s such as Astro Boy and Speed Racer. JA-Female explained,

In America Speed Racer was really popular wasn’t it? My [American] husband used to watch it too. In Speed Racer when they would have explosions they would parachute out of the cars and no one died. So, it was okay to watch.

When my husband watched a different anime program and they really showed someone die, my husband was shocked, because people really die, and in American anime they didn’t die.

Also, the Japanese participants said that since anime had always been there, they did not think about its existence or integration much. They just accepted it. JA-Female said, “Watching anime for me was natural; I didn’t have to think about it, it’s normal”. Then, the Japanese participants said that their parents had been exposed to anime, as did they themselves, and now they expose their children to anime. Therefore, anime has been integrated into their culture for a long time.

Another Japanese participant, JA-Female, gave insight into the integration and exposure of anime and its relatedness to manga or Japanese comic books. She said her

parents had purchased a particular children's manga for her called Mebae. JA-Female said, "When I was little my mother used to buy me a kid's manga called Mebae. It has changed a lot since then, but I think kids still love it". This company had been in existence for over thirty five years. This participant said this was one of many companies that made comic books for children. Within this manga comic book called Mebae, one could find comic book stories about popular children's anime stories and characters. These were the same characters that the children would see in anime television programs and films. JA-Female explained that children loved these Mebae comic books, because within these comic books there were stickers, cut outs, and visuals of their favorite anime characters. She continued by saying that not only were there anime stories, stickers, and cut outs, but there was the potential to get more of her favorite anime related products. She said that within each Mebae comic book there was incentive deals marketed at children. The subject remembered one deal specifically. If the child had bought this month's and the next two month's editions of Mebae, they could cut out the proof's of purchase and then mail them into the company. Then, they would receive by mail, a bag, a pencil case, or a T-shirt of their favorite anime character, television program, or film. Shipping was not included, but they wanted the supplemental items, so they had to buy the Mebae comic books to get the items. JA-Female continued by saying,

I liked looking at the manga, but the main reason I liked to get the manga was because I knew I could get the other anime stuff. I don't know why, but I just had to collect them and have them.

Many of the other Japanese participants agreed that they had at one time or another received supplemental items of their beloved anime characters through this marketing promotion.

The Japanese participants explained their parents often helped them to get these supplemental items. They said their parents had done the same as children. Also, as the participants grew older, they were able to get these items by saving their own money. They would remind their parents that a new edition of Mebae was coming out soon, and beg their parents to take them to the bookstands and bookstores to get their manga comic books. JA-Female said, “I used to nag my mother so I could get the Mebae manga, until she used to just tell me to shut up, and then she would take me to get it if I bothered her enough.” She said that they or their parents had bought Mebae manga books from the age of two all the way to the age of twelve years of age.

She explained that at an early age they were being exposed to printed anime related media that also had Japanese language text. At ages two and three they could not yet read, but they were being exposed to the Japanese language through manga comic books. The stories were about anime characters from television programs and films that they enjoyed viewing. As the Japanese participants grew older and learned how to read, manga was a large inspiration for learning to read about their favorite anime characters. All of these manga books were serialized and came out monthly and bimonthly. As the Japanese children were being exposed to anime television programs and films their parents could purchase for as little as two and three dollars manga comic books such as this one.

JA-Female said that all of her friends had purchased this Mebae comic book, as did their siblings, because they wanted their own copies. They could talk about this month's manga story. The Japanese participants could trade stickers and cut outs with their friends. The Japanese participants were able to wait with their fellow classmates for the next month's issue to be released. Then, they could take and wear their supplemental items that they had ordered to school and be the envy of their friends. The participants friend's would understand who was a real Mebae fan by what kind of supplemental item they had brought to school, because different items took more proofs of purchase to obtain.

Amerasian focus group participants said they had also purchased manga comic books, targeting children, as adolescents from varying Asian countries. Japanese participants were exposed to American animation while living in Japan. JA-Female said, "Flintstones is an American anime and it was fun for kids and adults". JA-Female replied, "I saw the Flintstones in Japan as well. I watched a lot of American anime when I was little, like Tom and Jerry, I really liked it."

Question: What is the cultural acceptance and integration of Japanese anime in the U.S.?

As noted in the literature review, anime is becoming popular in the United States, but it is hardly mainstream. One Amerasian participant said he had been to anime conventions. AA-Male said,

Huge, Japanese here in the U.S. for us growing up here right, you can go to any Japanese anime convention. Like I've gone to some in San Francisco. Not only Asians are there. It's multicultural. They even dress up in anime characters and

just go to those conventions. It's huge. I mean not just anime, it's everything else. It's like me growing up in Asia watching Japanese animation, but the generation here, the kids are growing up here watching Japanese anime and dubbed in English.

Most Amerasian participants indicated that anime was still an avid part of their leisure activities, and highly regarded and accepted even into current adulthood. AA-Male said,

Just to see how much it's grown look at Cartoon Network. When Cartoon Network started out maybe six or seven years ago it showed mainly American cartoons. Bugs Bunny, whatever they could get. Now, probably half the lineup of Cartoon Network is anime. If you turn it on at night its anything that's anime that they can get that they can show to kids. And kids seem to like it much more, probably just for the same reasons we like it. It's very realistic fantasy, but at the same time it's detailed and you can get into it.

Amerasian participants said that since the marketing and sales of video games had expanded, so had the relationship between the two mediums. In the past, popular anime television programs were being turned into video games. Recently, there had been popular video games that have been turned into anime television programs and films. One subject exemplified such movies as Tomb Raider and Final Fantasy. These were originally video games that had anime characters in them that sold so many copies that movie producers made them into movies. The platforms have been reversed and in a sense interchangeable. AA-Male said,

I think so, the point was made about Cartoon Network. You look on TV and its everywhere you go, and it's going to be there. Back in the 80's we were lucky, some of us to grow up with that show. Now, it's out there. You've got the movies now made out of Japanese cartoons. You've gone from TV to mainstream movies. Like Transformers the new movie, it's coming out. It came from the Japanese but they way it's being filmed in the U.S. That's how much they spend on movies now, and that's how far anime has come. I mean making a full feature movie with special effects and real actors. Look at how much the U.S. and how much they spend just to create a movie out of an anime cartoon. It's pretty big.

Other mediums have even crossed over. Movies such as the Matrix were spawned from a very popular anime film called Akira. In essence, Non-Asian participants explained as the mediums of anime, video games, and computer graphic based films merged, there would be more need for American parents to enforce more carefully sheltered parenting.

Most Japanese and Amerasian participants said that anime had been integrated in their leisure time since they could remember, but as they grew older it was viewed less. Growing up in the United States also meant they were exposed less to the anime. AA-Male said,

A lot of people I know they don't really watch it that much, and there are some people I know watch it. I would have to say it's more accepted than I would

think. I got into anime a little at first, and then when I turned twenty two I stopped caring.

AA-Female said,

I didn't watch much anime because I grew up here, but I'm around kids a lot at daycare. They get so excited over Japanese anime. They get excited to go to Barnes and Nobles to buy the books from there. I'm surprised that they carried that kind of stuff there. So, I'm surprised it's so prolific. It's getting pretty popular. It's just surprising seeing white kids jumping up and down, going crazy over these anime books. I haven't watched that much anime so I don't have the same feelings, but when I see it I'm just in awe.

In Japan and other Asian countries anime programs, films, and related marketing media were easily accessible. Amerasian participants noted that when they were young they had toys, figurines, robots, models, trading cards, and video games that were related to their favorite anime programs and characters. Amerasian participants said they enjoyed collecting robot characters that looked very much like the characters in their favorite programs. Toys such as the lion robots Voltron were popular among participants. They could watch the show, purchase the robots individually and then connect all of them together to form one giant robot and fantasize the same adventures in a distant imaginative galaxy of their own.

Popular anime cartoons such as Robotech offered fans across Asia an array of models that ranged from robots to battle ships, and jets. They came in various sizes, snap-tite form models, traditional glue models, key chains, VHS videos. The

participants pointed out that these toys and anime related media were easily accessible in Asia, but when they came to America accessibility was much more limited. In America, Amerasian participants noted that Disney products for kids were VHS videos, costumes, and plush stuffed animals. Japanese and Amerasian participants were exposed and used to products that were more complex, were collective and team-like in nature, and could change appearance from car or spaceship to robots, and be combined with other robots to form larger more powerful robots. Amerasian participants noted that the Disney toys and related media were inferior in design, aesthetic quality, and functional capability. Thus, Amerasian participants yearned for toys and anime related media once they moved to America, because they had been exposed to products that they thought were more culturally engaging.

Question: What cultural issues are unsuitable for all age group audiences in U.S. to be exposed to?

Since many of the participants in the Japanese and Ameriasian focus groups had viewed anime from child through adulthood, most participants agreed they had a high acceptance level for the medium and the content contained. They had no problem with anime containing content such as violence, sex, religion, and politics. Some participants referred to having been exposed to cultural, adult, mature issues as “practice.” Participants said they had a lot of “practice” watching anime, and since they had a lot of “practice” they were used to it.

AA-Male said, “I’m pretty sure what got me into anime as a kid is a lot of the adult stuff, well its not like for kids, and its not Disney like, and its mature, and its for older

people, and it kind of seems that way.” AA-Male said, “I’m not opposed to showing kids violence, because that is a part of life.”

AA-Male said, “In America the general public was more conservative. There is a paradox in how many Americans sheltered their children from certain cultural issues and did not shelter and teach about others.” AA-Male gave the example of what he called good old American fun.

American parents would take their children to a Dallas Cowboy football game or the beach where women are scantily clad. On the other hand, once the cultural issue such as nudity was expressed in an artistic medium such as film, art, and anime, it had to be scrutinized and regulated. If the cultural issue were presented in person, then American parents would allow it. Yet, when the cultural issue is in an art form then, it becomes inappropriate for children. I do not agree with the hypocritical and prude ness of American parents.

Question: Is anime a valid means for communicating any and all issues to any age group?

In both Japanese and Amerasian focus groups most participants said that in Japan and other Asian countries anime was a valid medium for communicating any and all issues to any age group. Most participants in both Japanese and Amerasian focus groups had already seen some of these films used in the study either in the theatre or on DVD. Most participants from these two focus groups were familiar with the Studio Ghibli Corporation, or had at least heard of and or seen one of its films. The Japanese and Amerasian participants said that they had seen cultural issues in anime ranging from war and rape, to homosexual relationships in the anime medium.

Since participants had seen and been exposed to these cultural issues from an early age they said that the medium was valid, because anime dealt more in reality than western animation. Also, most participants from the Japanese and Amerasian focus groups agreed that anime was okay for all audiences and all ages. Most Japanese and Amerasian participants said that graphic cultural issues were alright. There were some Amerasian participants who disagreed and thought that some explicit cultural issues should not be shown to children, but explicit cultural issues could be shown to adults. Overall, most Japanese and Amerasian participants thought that anime was fine for all target audiences.

Within the Japanese and Amerasian focus groups participants noted that in Asian countries many of the anime television programs and films that they watched came to them without ratings. Japanese participants said that in some Asian countries they had ratings on movies, such as PG, PG13, R, or some equivalent, but some Asian countries did not use a rating system on their films. If there was a rating system in place many participants were unaware of the system, or said that it was not heavily enforced in their country like it was in the United States. JA-Female said, “Sixteen years and over in Japan is not really enforced in Japan. I haven’t ever heard of it being enforced.”

The Japanese and Amerasian participants added that rating or no rating system did not deter them from watching anime television programs and films. JA-Female said, “If there is fighting and violence the parents must choose whether or not to show

the kids. The parents must make the decision whether or not to have fun watching the movie, because there is no rating system in Japan with movie.”

Since most participants viewed anime from any early age, they did not consider the importance of any rating system until they came to America and lived in a society where rating systems were common in many public communication mediums. JA-Female said, “The first time you watch a movie you don’t know what content is in the scenes, and we just watch it, and don’t let it stop.” Participants in the Japanese and Amerasian focus groups said that living in Japan and other Asian countries where rating systems are either nonexistent or not enforced allowed them to be more exposed to anime, and that they had never really thought about why there was not a rating system in their own respective countries. JA-Female said, “Adult movies maybe the only ones strictly enforced.” JA-Female added,

I got Princess Mononoke on DVD from an American friend here in Texas. She watched it with her seven year old girl, and in the movie from the very beginning people were getting their heads chopped off and there was too much violence. Therefore, she gave it to me. American parents are stricter. They couldn’t show it to their kids. I showed it to my own kids. It’s no big deal. It’s the parent’s choice. When they’re five years old they don’t know or understand. My daughter and I, we watched together.

3.1.3 Exposure: United States

Question: Keeping in mind the anime clips that were viewed; is anime a valid medium for communicating cultural, adult, and mature issues in animated films for all age groups and all audiences in the U.S.?

In the Non-Asian focus group most participants had been exposed very little to anime and the anime medium. NA-Male said,

I don't look at cartoons period, and I'm not necessarily into anime either. I kind of consider myself too old for that. But anime was something that really wasn't around twenty years ago, fifteen years ago. A lot more people are growing up with it now, so I guess you could say it will probably be more effective for them.

Four participants said that they had viewed some anime, but not consistently and two participants said they did watch a couple of anime television programs as a child consistently such as Tranzor Z, and Pokemon. Only one subject from this focus group had seen and was familiar with one of the movies viewed in the study.

The Non-Asian participants said they thought anime had a low acceptance level in America. NA-Female said,

So, are you asking if this is going to be suitable for all ages in the U.S.? I don't know if it is suitable, because we sat here looking at it going oh my gosh, look at this, oh my gosh look at that, and we weren't really getting the main point. I probably couldn't really tell you what really happened in all of that, but I could tell you about the things that I wasn't used to. So, I think I paid more attention to that things that were not normal to me than I did the message.

NA-Female said,

I think when you go to see a big picture like Braveheart you are mentally prepared to see that. And when you see a cartoon you're not prepared to see that and there is the shock value. You are not expecting to see that.

Many Non-Asian participants said they were not into anime, animation, and cartoons. Participants said they watched cartoons as children, but they did not watch anything that looked like the anime that they saw in the Studio Ghibli segments. Some participants said it was extremely weird and unentertaining. NA-Female said,

I don't know if I really understand the messages though. Cause that was all...like not real stuff. So, I don't know what kind of messages we were trying to communicate to people in the U.S. I don't understand. I don't even understand anything. That was just the weirdest thing I've ever seen.

Non-Asian participants rationalized that since anime has been a more niche audience in America that it has not had much exposure for parents and legislation to address. Non-Asian participants continued by saying now that anime had become more popular, it may enter the mainstream popular culture. Anime companies such as Studio Ghibli joining American animation companies such as Walt Disney Studios may expand this diffusion into the mainstream. Non-Asian participants explained that parents would have to exert more sheltered parenting styles with more exposure and growing popularity of anime in American culture.

Non-Asian participants explained that exposure of anime had grown in recent years. They thought that anime's relationship with video games was a factor in its growth. NA-Male said,

I mean I think you could use it for adult issues yes. I don't see why not.

Because a lot of older people are now into video games and that kind of stuff. I don't see any problem with that. I guess the violence is what you have to be careful about. Because, a lot of older people are now into video games and that kind of stuff.

Since they had not been exposed to the anime medium much as children, the American focus groups did not think many Americans would accept the anime medium.

The Amerasian group said that they thought anime had a low level of acceptance among Americans. They said that unless one had Asian heritage, anime may not be viewed as much. AA-Male said,

I can tell you right now I'm going to show my kids anime from the time they can see straight. I learned from it as a small child. It teaches. I learned that the earth had a spirit before I learned that Jesus Christ existed. And that was from anime. I learned that from cartoons and anime alike. I understood that before I understood much else. It came from something I saw. I think you can't just integrate it right now. You have to start with a generation and show them from when they were little all the way up, for it to become widely accepted in this country, because we don't like to accept change. Say you got all these movies released all over the country at the same time. Nothing would happen, but if

you start anime shows that are of this nature that teach not, where people go “oh” and drive a Speed Racer car from a child. You could have it be accepted across the board by the time that generation is grown. I don’t think it could work right now for our entire culture. No one is going to watch a cartoon. Also, it is probably not as valid, maybe some people may not want to get into it. They haven’t been exposed to it as much, and won’t get it as easy or accept it, as opposed to someone who started at five. As soon as they get old enough, they don’t have to worry about watching it on network television. You can order DVD’s from internationally or anywhere. These are specialty stores. If you accept it, you can always find those places.

Non-Asian participants discussed the film rating system in America and explained that legislation and complaints from the public influenced what children were allowed to view in films. NA-Female said,

I would say the media plays an important role, but ultimately legislation tells you whether it is PG13 or PG. You bring a film that shows nudity or strong sexual content, language, or something, it’s ultimately legislation that says you can show it to minors or not.

They told researchers that since many of the cultural issues that frequented Japanese anime could not even enter the United States. They said that the United States was more stringent than some countries as far as which films they allow to enter the American mainstream. The cultural difference of censorship was greater in America than in some Asian countries.

Question: How does American culture affect the appropriateness of the anime medium in the U.S.?

American participants said that since they had not been exposed to anime, or Studio Ghibli films they were not used to seeing those kinds of issues in cartoons. NA-Female said,

I think that if I had kids, I would not want my kids watching that. Mostly because maybe I wasn't allowed to watch things like that when I was a child, and it still catches me off guard, and you know the thought of a cartoon seeing someone's dupa or booty, I don't know maybe it's just the way I was raised, but I don't think it's appropriate in a cartoon.

NA-Male said,

Well I agree with them that it's going to be a little bit harder to communicate those types of messages to the Americanized culture. Just because I don't think these types of ideas are traditionally accepted in the U.S. I definitely agree that these ideas are going to be a little bit harder, but I also think that in the U.S. there is a certain type of target audience within the U.S. that would appreciate this type of film. I think it is identifying this type of audience that would be receptive to this type of showing is important. I think it's going to relate to what an individual's norms, beliefs, and values are and what they can relate to and what they've been accustomed to throughout their life. What's interesting to her may not be the same thing interesting to this person over here. I definitely think though that if some person can relate to that through what they have become accustomed to. Just because some of the things that they were shown in this

video weren't socially accepted or within their culture doesn't mean that in the right context it couldn't be adapted and socially acceptable in a U.S. culture versus like a Japanese culture.

Some participants said that they were scared while watching the video segments, and thought that if they had seen those kinds of cultural issues as children they would have been frightened. NA-Female said,

Well, if those are adult issues, I don't think those are suitable for children, because that was scary for me. Yeah, we keep going back to the violence and stuff, but aside from the violence like the scary factor. I don't think that a lot of parents want their kids to see that. I was serious about being scared of it, but I think that when I was six, seven, eight years old that would have scared me, you know. Give me nightmares and stuff, and I don't think that parents would want their kids to see it.

Most participants said that their parents did not let them watch those kinds of issues in non-animated films, much less in anime. Some participants said that they watched cartoons that did not have explicit violence, nudity, or anything about gods and demons. They said that they would not let their own children watch some of the issues presented in the anime segments, because it was inappropriate for children. NA-Female said,

Stuff that you saw in that, in movies that aren't cartoons made in the U.S. Stuff that you saw in that would lead them to be rated R and unsuitable for children. Then, again the cartoon version doesn't mean that it makes it better.

NA-Male added, “Japan is like a collectivist society. They don’t have to be so money hungry, if they saw a child in an adult anime theatre, they would say where is your parent? You don’t have to be in here.”

Thus, in the Non-Asian focus group most participants agreed that they had a low level of acceptance for cultural, adult, and mature issues in anime and cartoons. The Amerasian subjects said they had been exposed to those types of cultural issues, so their acceptance level of cultural issues was higher than Non-Asian subjects.

Question: Is anime a valid medium for communicating cultural issues to any age group and any audience in America?

Most Non-Asian participants said that it was not a valid medium, because the American society had not been exposed to anime for very long. NA-Female said,

But what I’m thinking is, the question you are asking is it an effective medium for communicating issues and concerns to adults in the U.S. I don’t think it would be very effective. Solely, because the mentality of what cartoons are geared toward here in the U.S. Cartoons are geared toward children, and it has been, since the current adults were young. Now, they are not thinking that let me go look at cartoons and what is shown in cartoons. Maybe the generation that are viewing anime now as children, maybe as adults it will be more effective because they will be more exposed to it, but currently I don’t think it would be very effective.

Many of the cultural issues found in anime would be considered inappropriate for children in American culture. NA-Male said, “in other cultures in Asia, those cultural issues may be perfectly fine, but American viewers are more Republican and

conservative as a whole than viewers in Asia.” NA-Male said, “I think that for some of us we think that it is traditional to be targeted at children. Now, in their culture that may be more of an acceptable medium, you know to communicate those types of messages.”

The Amerasian participants agreed that in America many cultural issues would offend the Non-Asian viewers, because they did not grow up with the medium. AA-Male said,

Any showing of skin and everything that was not go to church, go to work, go to sleep, wake up and do it again was bad. If our society started like that it's going to take an extremely long time to change. Issues I've seen in anime where it's about two gay detectives. Have you seen a gay cartoon in America? Gay characters in movies are risqué enough. They were blown away by Broke Back Mountain, because it had two gay cowboys. This anime had two gay detectives. This anime movie was probably a decade old when it came here, much less over there in Japan. I'm saying our society is very close minded, whereas theirs is more liberal in certain cases. Also, we have a way of sheltering our kids to a point where we don't need to. For instance, we don't start teaching a foreign language until high school, whereas in Japan they start in elementary. That has nothing to do with moral obligation. We just shelter our kids, because we think they can't handle it. So, if we do that in one instance, we do it across the board. On top of that, As an art form, it's taken to another level than our animation. There is so much production value that's in it, whereas animation although

good, we've only had one animated film nominated for best picture. That was Beauty and the Beast. That was one of the best animated films ever made, but it still didn't win. It's still not up there on the rung. We don't care as much about anime, about animation in general. That's for kids. That's not for adults, not for elderly, not for everyone. It's meant for kids.

Question: What variables or factors would affect the acceptance of anime within a culture?

Non-Asian participants explained that Washington D.C. would have something to say about the regulation of foreign movies that enter the United States. Participants noted that it was interesting to learn that many of the cultural issues in anime actually penetrate the system, because they were in an animated format. Non-Asian participants reasoned that if parents were to bring the issue of inappropriate anime films entering the United States to congress, anime would be more scrutinized. NA-Female said,

If somebody comes out and speaks out and says if there was a whole campaign launched against these cartoons and said this is evil, and pointed out every reason why, as a society they would say yeah. There's too much blood, and they show her butt and they were killing people, and the arrow knocked off two arms and a head. But, if that doesn't happen, they would be kind of like me, oh a cartoon. That's kind of interesting, but then when you start asking questions about appropriate for children, I started thinking about it in a different light. So, I guess the media sets the agenda.

The Non-Asian focus groups had little exposure to anime, therefore the participants said that the level of integration of anime in the United States was low compared to many

Asian countries. NA-Male said, “I think it all just goes back to family values and stuff. Who is going to accept it and who is not?” Non-Asian participants did say that children these days may be more accepting of the anime medium, and as adults their generation may be more integrated into the anime medium, but not currently. Non-Asian participants said anime was not integrated into the mainstream of American culture. Both Non-Asian and Amerasian focus groups said that anime was niche programming and had very specific target audiences in America. NA-Male explained,

I think it goes back to what was already said. What makes it interesting to one person particularly in the U.S. culture isn’t going to be the same as somebody in a Japanese culture, just because that isn’t what they are socially accustomed to. Non-Asian participants understood that anime may be growing in popularity, but it is not to the level of Japan or other Asian countries where one may see anime television programs and films on American prime time television.

NA-Male said,

Right, sure, what I mean is what certain people hold as values and ideals or what they believe in and what they find socially acceptable is going to differ in a U.S. culture compared to a Japanese culture just on a basic level versus an individual, versus a collectivist type culture. Furthermore, along that thought just in these scenes jus the ideas presented you could make them more acceptable in the U.S. or Japan, or wherever else anime might be shown.

Question: What cultural issues are unsuitable for all age group audiences in America to be exposed to?

Non-Asian participants made comparisons to the legislation that had been established for video games that have entered the United States. In the early 1990s video game rating and regulation had to be implemented, because many of the video games that came from foreign countries such as Japan and Taiwan were extremely violent, and also very popular with American youth. NA-Male said,

Too much violence, which is something they can hammer out in Washington DC. They're trying not to get too much violence with kids. They are always talking about sex on TV, or this or that, which I think they kind of lost the fight with sex on TV. Now, they're talking about violence in video games and kids being able to get them. What is the name of the one where you just kill everyone? It's the one where you can actually rob someone, Grand Theft Auto.

Question: What cultural significance does Walt Disney Studios play in American culture?

The Non-Asian focus group and Amerasian focus group told researchers that instead of high exposure to anime, they grew up watching Walt Disney Studios' films. NA-Female explained,

I think it plays a big role, because I think if I did not know better and I had a nine, ten year old child come to me and say they mom I want to see *Spirited Away*, it's a Disney movie. I would say okay. Because I know Disney, Disney doesn't do that. But if I actually sat down and saw it I might actually rethink it. So, I think that Disney holds a strong something with the American culture

where they think they're family focused. Yes, they are geared towards family.

It's appropriate whether I've seen it or whether I haven't. Because, you know everyone knows traditional Disney movies. Everyone knows Disney World, Mickey Mouse, and all those things. When they hear the words Disney, they are thinking it is age appropriate for my whatever age child that it would be fine.

But I guess that since we haven't been exposed to it yet that it can have a more adult themed or age appropriate shows that we may not want our children to see.

Both groups said that they had high levels of exposure to Disney films and cartoons. Non-Asian participants said that they had watched Disney films from as early as two years old. Non-Asian participants explained that their parents had exposed them to Disney, as did their parents' grandparents. Many participants said they could remember growing up decorating their rooms in Disney themes. NA-Female said,

Yeah, that gives it credibility, because the Disney name is on it. I remember when I was eight or nine when Little Mermaid came out. I lost my mind. I made my dad paint my room blue and a big 20x 30 picture of her over my bed. I had the sleeping bag, purse, backpack, toothbrush, t-shirt, my whole room was like the Little Mermaid. I had it.

They had birthday parties that were themed in the Little Mermaid and Cinderella. NA-Female continued by saying, "Disney has a huge impact, because children's heroes are usually developed by this corporation. And based on those children's heroes, they influence how they think and see." Most Non-Asian and Amerasian participants had been to a Disney theme park at some point in their lives.

Participants in both the Non-Asian focus group and the Amerasian focus group agreed that since Disney films were family orientated and targeted for children their parents allowed them to see Disney films. Most of their films are rated G and PG. Their parents grew up with Disney, and went to Disney theme parks as children. AA-Male explained,

Because it's been in our society as long as it has been cohesive. It's been in our society for over fifty years. It raised our parents. It raised a lot of us. I was raised by Disney films. It is the premier name of animation in this culture, even with CG (computer graphic) characters and cartoons now. Even the ones that aren't made by Disney are emulating Disney and what Disney has done. It is the benchmark. In the 1940s he [Walt Disney] was competing, because animation was new. He was competing with Fleischer studios that made Betty Boop and the original Superman cartoons and Popeye. That was the other big name and then there was Disney. Fleischer studios no longer exists. Disney is the name. It is the one and only name in animation. I would be challenged to think of another animation studio off the top of my head, just the studio, not like Warner Brothers production, but their studio. Like that is nearly impossible, but Disney, that's them.

So, it was only natural for them to go to Disneyworld as well. The Amerasian participants said that they too had been allowed to watch Disney films as children. AA-Male said, "It is the culture. The second you say animation, the first thing that pops in your head is Disney." Since at least one of their parents were American, Non-Asian, or

grown up in American society they too had spent family vacations traveling to Disneyland and Disneyworld.

Non-Asian and Amerasian participants stressed the fact that in America, Disney's films were synonymous with family fun and entertainment. They explained that Disney had been the name that they had known for animation since they were children. Disneyland and Disneyworld have been marketed extremely well in American culture. Whenever the participants thought of animated feature films, Disney was the first and foremost name that entered their minds. NA-Male said,

It's been there for so many years. You think Disney, and you think fun, playful, and in some way you think that transcends into the movies that they produce.

You're thinking Lion King and all that stuff. That's what I think about when I think of Disney. It's like the heart of American family entertainment, especially for kids. They've been doing a lot of movies getting adults into movies now, but it's kind of really catered for kids. You're thinking Disney, yeah okay the child can watch that because it's Disney. They are kind of a household name.

It was interesting that Non-Asian participants thought that even though Walt Disney Studios was producing Studio Ghibli Japanese anime films that contained cultural, adult, and mature issues that trend of Disney dominance in the American culture and society would continue. Participants explained that as long as Disney did not place great emphasis on the fact that they marketed and produced Japanese anime, there would probably not be a problem with the partnership of the two studios for Americans.

NA-Female said,

I think it depends on how big they present it. Like *Spirited Away* by Disney, Woohoo, yeah okay we know it's by Disney. Or, it is by Disney, but we aren't really going to promote it so much. Parents might be more hesitant, and I don't want to take my kids to go see Disney or Disneyworld anymore. Because there might be things from *Spirited Away* that I don't want my kids to be exposed to, but if it is more of a behind the scenes thing, I don't think it will affect it as tragically.

Non-Asian and Amerasian participants concluded by saying the American public would not care as long as Walt Disney Studios films still produced traditional Disney films, products, and made money. NA-Female explained,

Kind of like what I was talking about with Pixar. They are owned by Disney, but when they put out movies I don't see the Disney name all over it like classical Disney films. I don't associate them as much.

NA-Male said,

If Disney is distributing this stuff than they can legally use it and make money. If they can legally use this, market this, and there is an audience for this, it is up to the individual to say I am going to let my child watch this stuff.

3.1.4 Usage: Japan & Asia

The second theme that emerged from the focus groups was that of usage. The usage of anime and the animation medium within each culture of each focus group was different. The term usage was defined as how the anime or animated television

programs, films, and anime related media were used by people in each culture. Under usage there were two sub-themes: education and connectedness. These sub-themes manifest themselves in different ways depending upon whether the participant was Asian or Amerasian. Education included education about cultural issues and education about ones heritage.

3.1.4.1 Education

In Japan, participants said that anime was used as an educational tool. JA-Female said, “Miyazaki Hayao movies are known for teaching history, culture, and internationalism.” As previously discussed, within the anime medium cultural, adult, and mature issues are discussed. The Japanese focus group participants said that as children, there were many cultural issues they had heard of from adults. Yet, they did not really understand them well until they viewed cultural issues such as war, rape, and polytheism in anime. Several Japanese participants said that when they were in public primary school they watched an anime film called *Grave of the Fireflies*. This anime film was about World War II. They saw vivid images of nuclear war, adults and children being incinerated by nuclear bombs, and infanticide. These participants said they gained a greater understanding of what war, death, and how war was bad for humans through this anime film. JA-Female explained, “Through anime I was able to visualize more what war meant. I didn’t really understand war until I saw it in the anime film *Grave of the Fireflies*.”

Japanese and Amerasian participants continued by saying that there are many difficult concepts and ideas that their parents teach them about through anime. In

Japanese culture and many Asian cultures taboo subjects such as domestic violence, sexual issues, and religion are first shown in an anime film. Asian parents are uncomfortable bringing up the subject, since they are not supposed to talk about them with each other as adults. Participants said that if cultural issues are brought up in anime, than they themselves did not bring up the taboo subject. They saw it in the anime film, and then explained it to the children through the anime format. Anime then became a vehicle for communication about cultural issues. JA-Female said, “The anime films are beautiful. The backgrounds and backdrops aren’t Japanese culture. For example, in Europe, Italian houses and western countries, but they’re speaking Japanese, so we watch. Until you see them through anime, we don’t know about these places.”

Also, since Asian parents did not really talk about taboo subjects, it was easier for the Amerasian participants to learn about these issues through anime. AA-Male said,

In certain situations I still think it is a learning tool, not as an instruction but like the anime movie Ninja Scroll. For instance, the woman is beaten unconscious and then raped. It’s graphic, but so is rape. You should be afraid of rape. It’s not a good thing. So, I don’t think it is uncalled for in certain situations.

3.1.4.2 Connectedness

Amerasian participants said they used anime as a means of connecting to their Asian heritage that they had trouble accessing because they lived in America. Participants said that it was difficult to learn about their own Asian culture, due to the

fact that one parent was not Asian, or both parents had been enculturated into American society so much that their Asian descent was no longer the focus in America. AA-Male said,

Basically, I was born and raised here, but that is still a culture that I'm a part of that I really don't have access to. Because, I've never been, I've been to Japan once, and that was it. It gives me access to a culture that I'm a part of that I don't really have access to. I've learned different things about Asian cultures through it. I've watched the video game ones like Fatal Fury, and Street Fighter that are culturally oriented, and they are teaching tools for me.

Amerasian participants explained to researchers that anime was their cultural teaching tool and tutor. AA-Male explained, "It's basically a teaching and reinforcement tool, the subject matter that they pick its religious teachings that these are good things that are in your world, and you need to embrace them or accept them".

Japanese and Amerasian focus group participants explained that anime was used to reinforce their own culture. Japanese participants said that certain anime television programs and films teach Japanese children and adults about Japanese culture. JA-Female talked about the anime television program called Sazaesan. In this program there is a depiction of the ideal Japanese family. She explained that when Japanese people watched this kind of anime program they understood what the ideal Japanese family culture was supposed to be. JA-Female said,

For example, Sazaesan is the ideal warm loving traditional family in Japan.

That is the way we want to be. When we see things we don't have, we get

pulled in and want to watch more, and learn more. For example, in this anime they show cultural items such as boy's day goldfish, we know that that holiday or cultural event will be soon, because they show seasonal programming that is in sync.

She continued by saying that “we yearned to be like that family, because they were traditional and warm as we should be.” She added, “The life they show in Sazaesan was the family life the way it used to be, and what I agree with and accept.” Then, she said in the program Sazaesan they coordinated the syndicated programs seasonally to match the real season in Japan. Therefore, when they watched an episode of Sazaesan and if they discussed a cultural holiday such as boy's or girl's day, then Japanese people knew that that cultural holiday was upon them. This was the way the programming had always been, at least since the subject was a young child. Thus, anime taught Japanese audiences about cultural issues and it could teach and reinforce Japanese culture.

The Amerasian focus group participants explained that anime reinforced social skills and manners. They explained that many anime programs that they viewed as children were from Japan, but there were indigenous anime programs within their own countries too. Many Asian cultures had cultural skills that were similar. Amerasian participants explained that they understood better the importance of taking off their shoes before entering someone's house. They visualized how they were supposed to act in certain social interactions like bowing, lowering eyes, eating all rice grains from the bowl, listening to parents and not arguing. AA-Male said, “It's discipline. In Asian culture we are more disciplined. Where you listen to your parent and you don't talk

back.” Anime taught them various social skills and mannerisms that were more uniform in Asian cultures. They explained that Japanese anime and the culture that was observed in it was much closer to their own respective Asian culture than American cultures.

Amerasian participants said that since their own cultures could not express feelings and thoughts easily and openly, they were able to connect with the anime characters. AA-Male explained,

There are a few Japanese animes that I watched, like you finish watching a movie, and most movies end in a good story. There are some animes that it leaves you in a state where it wasn't a happy ending. It was sad, and what happened ending. It's not all the time that it ends in a happy ending. You are going to be where the person who created it wanted, where the writer wants to leave you at.

Japanese and Amerasian participants envied them and could relate to them, because they could express themselves about issues that the participants themselves could not. Amerasian participants thought that characters in anime programs expressed their thoughts and feelings in the anime medium, because in day to day life Asian people and cultures had difficulty expressing themselves. Through anime characters Japanese people were expressing their culture through an artistic medium. The bi-product was that other Asian cultures also took part in anime, and shared the discourse and applied these inexpressible thoughts and feelings to their own situations and cultures. AA-Male explained,

I think it's like Asian culture. It's very strict. So, for them to alleviate some of that, you know, emotions down, they express it through art. And there is a bond in animation here, and that's how they express it. I mean within us, we don't talk about sex. We don't talk about death.

3.1.5 Usage: United States

The theme of usage also surfaced in the Non-Asian and Amerasian focus groups. Usage was previously defined as how the anime or animated television programs, films, and anime related media were used by each culture. According to focus group participants' responses, the usage of animated television programs, films, and related media in the United States was different from the usage of anime and animated related media from Asian and Japan. Within the United States, animated films were primarily used to entertain. Also, within the United States animated films were intended primarily for children audiences.

Question: What cultural significance does Walt Disney Studios play in American animated film and culture?

Moreover, Non-Asian and Amerasian participants explained that animated films in America were simply there to entertain their children. AA-Male said, "It is entertainment for an hour and thirty minutes. It's a cartoon". Amerasian participants emphasized that animated films and television programs were not intended for teaching their children about cultural, adult, or mature issues. Amerasian participants said American animated films are supposed to be feel good and happy movies. AA-Female explained,

No, maybe it's just because I grew up in America. I think cartoons for children are supposed to be light, cheery, and cartoonish. I don't think that you should lighten up something as war or rape or whatever, and like it was said there might not always be someone there to interpret or explain the cartoon. I don't think children should...I just disagree. Children may watch the cartoon and they may not understand and get confused. We have to worry about copy cat kids in America. They see it and try to reenact what they see. I think that's why we have PG and PG13, and that is why American society has gotten ready for that kind of thing.

American animated films were supposed to avoid difficult concepts and ideas.

Amerasian participants told researchers that the animated films were supposed to entertain and make children laugh.

In addition, Non-Asian and Amerasian participants explained that American animated films did reinforce western morals through characters, but characters were not multi-dimensional. They said usually there was a good character, a bad character, some jokes, and action. Amerasian participants said they did show hints of some mature issues such as death, but it was often not the focus as in Japanese anime films. A mature issue was not explicitly explored and graphically visualized as in Japanese anime. Amerasian participants explained that often if a mature issue such as death occurred in American animated films it was accidental or of no fault of the main characters good or bad. Also, if they showed a mature issue such as death the portrayal

of the incident was panned away from, so as to de-emphasize the importance of the issue. AA-Female explained,

Like in America if you are watching a movie or a cartoon and there is something bad going on they'll kind of like pan away, and you won't see the actual thing happen. But like in here you see all the details, they focus on it. You see heads flying off, blood and all that stuff. I think that is inappropriate. That's too much for me. Next thing you know you'll see some kid on the news doing that, or even an adult. That's just American society. I don't know what it is, too much freedom, I just don't feel that is appropriate.

Amerasian participants said that they had never seen murders, decapitations, disembowelment, any graphic violence, sex, and realistic religious affiliations in American and especially Disney animated films. They explained that those cultural issues could not be in American animated films, because their purpose and intention was to entertain and amuse children, rather than entertaining all audiences. Amerasian participants said cartoons in America were for kids.

Non-Asian and Amerasian focus group participants said that Walt Disney Studios films had a large impact on American culture. Disney films were credible and good for children and family viewing. Disney films and products inspired fantasy and exemplified high appreciation levels with American children and families. Some participants said that their parents had used Disney films in their households to entertain them when their parents were busy. Disney films were safe and could be trusted. AA-Female said, "It's perfect for my son. I look for Disney. It's innocent. It's appropriate.

It's okay. I don't have to worry about him watching it that much." Disney films were often used as time passers by their babysitters as children. Non-Asian and Amerasian participants said that the films did not make them think about issues like world famine, homosexuality, or same sex marriages. Disney films were just fun. Non-Asian participants explained that sometimes their parents would sit down and watch Disney films with them, but in essence they did not have to, because they were perceived as trustworthy and the parents could go on about their business while the children kept themselves busy in front of the television. NA-Male said, "The brand since I have been able to watch TV and understand what's going on, it's always been there." NA-Female replied, "Yeah, Disney is synonymous with fantasy. Disney is a symbol of fantasy." American parents knew that Disney films were okay for their children to watch because they had been exposed to them as children. So, they used the Disney film and animated medium the same way that their parents exposed and used it on them.

Non-Asian and Amerasian focus group participants explained that Walt Disney films and products were well marketed in American society. NA-Female said, "That's going to give it credibility, because if Disney is on it, it's automatic." Non-Asian participants explained to researchers that in America, the Walt Disney films means family entertainment and culture. They explained that the Disney brand recognition brought to mind images of fantasy, fun, and perfectly fine for American children to watch and consume.

They continued by saying that everybody knew Disney. Everyone knew Mickey Mouse. They know Mickey through cartoons, films, and especially theme parks. Non-

Asian participants said that as children their parents either took them to Disney theme parks, or at some point promised to do so. Non-Asian and some Amerasian participants explained that the reason their parents promised to take them was because they thought it would be a fun family vacation. Researchers thought that was a powerful statement. Parents used the lure of a Disney vacation to promote what they thought would be a fun family vacation. Researchers noted that the Non-Asian participants said their grandparents had used the same lure on their parents as children as well. Thus, the Disney brand name in America is associated with entertainment and fun.

3.1.6 Parenting Styles & Teaching Ideologies: Japan & Asia

Thus far the key elements of exposure and usage of anime have helped to define several cultural differences between the Non-Asian, Japanese, and Amerasian focus groups. The next theme of parenting styles and teaching ideologies helps explain further cultural differences between Japan and United States. It was discovered that Japanese and Amerasian focus group participants used different parenting styles and teaching ideologies from that of Non-Asian participants in relation to the anime medium.

The Japanese participants explained that they used anime as a teaching tool to bring up and explain cultural, mature, and adult issues. Researchers noted that this phenomenon to be partially educational use, and in addition wanted to emphasize the Confucian parenting styles and ideologies. The Japanese participants said that they used anime as an icebreaker. JA-Female said,

They use anime to teach and promote ideas. Through anime we can teach and explain difficult ideas to people more easily. If you first show and explain difficult ideas through anime you can remember and understand better.

Then, they explained the cultural issue after it had been presented. Since the cultural issue was presented through anime, anime acted as a third party. This difficult cultural issue was brought to the child by means of an arbitrator. That way through no fault of the parent, the issue had been mentioned, and could then be discussed. For the Japanese parent there is less loss of face which is a Confucian concept, because it was mentioned by an inanimate third party. Afterwards, the parent could teach the cultural issue, and be considered more wisely revered to the child.

In addition, Japanese participants said they understood that difficult cultural issues may be exemplified easier through a visual explanation that was also entertaining. Some Japanese participants explained that children could understand the cultural issue easier and remember the issue more if it were first explained through anime. JA-Female explained,

In anime it's really easy for kids to get into it. For example, if I want to teach my kid about culture, if there is a choice between me teaching him or anime teaching him, he learns and remembers better through anime.

She added it was more difficult for the adult if not first presented that way.

Question: Keeping in mind the anime clips that were viewed, is anime a valid medium for communicating cultural, adult, mature issues in animated films for all age groups and audiences in America why or why not?

Amerasian participants told researchers that once the cultural issue had surfaced, regardless of the issue it would be explained to the child in totality and with realism. AA-Male said, “There would be no hiding aspects of the issue, or sugar coating it.” That is where parenting style came into the picture. It would be necessary to teach children about the issue, and explain to him or her as an adult rather than use euphemisms. AA-Male said,

Yeah it is a valid medium, but you need an interpreter with you. It’s not as if you flop someone down and you say play the tape and you walk away. It’s like anything you watch, you should experience it with the person or whoever it is, because there’s going to be questions. And any type of medium is not going to answer the question flat out right.

Question: Given the cultural distinctiveness of Japan, what do you think it is that allows cultural, adult, mature issues to be communicated to audiences of all ages through anime films in Japan?

Another Japanese participant explained while watching anime films such as *My Neighbor Totoro* and *Spirited Away*, it became easier to explain and teach children through complex cultural issues such as religion. In *My Neighbor Totoro*, the main character Totoro was a tree and forest spirit. He inhabited the forest harmoniously with nature, and it is said to be extremely lucky for humans to encounter the tree spirit. This idealism of tree spirit was a direct reflection of Shinto, which was the dominant religion in Japan. Shinto is derived from Buddhism and Confucianism. The Japanese participant explained to her children about the different spirits that reside in the forest.

She would have had a much greater task doing so, if not for anime and its ability to aid her teaching and parenting capabilities.

Another Japanese subject explained that she and her daughter were watching the film *Spirited Away*, and there were more examples of Shinto and polytheism in the film. JA-Female said,

Western culture fights with nature. In Japanese society we try to live harmoniously with nature. In any of Miyazaki's movies you will see lots of polytheism. In western culture there is usually one god. So, they might not like Miyazaki's films. My five year old daughter saw a dragon in *Spirited Away*, and I told her it was a river spirit, a river god. I taught my daughter there are many dragons, but there is one river spirit dragon. Right now I take my daughter to mother's day out Christian preschool program. They teach her that there is only one god. So, she was wondering why I told her that there were many river gods and dragons. I think she was thinking about that question, because her training of thought is becoming more American.

She concluded by saying that they still watched many more anime films and she still taught her daughter about the cultural issues and answered her questions the best she knew how.

Another Japanese participant said that since there were so many difficult cultural subjects in regular television programs and films, that she needed anime. Anime was an outlet for explaining, teaching, and guiding children into becoming more mature. JA-Female asked, "If there isn't teaching materials like Miyazaki's movies, what would we

do? We'd be in trouble wouldn't we?" Many other Japanese participants agreed, and no one had an answer.

Question: Keeping in mind the anime clips that were viewed, is anime a valid medium for communicating cultural, adult, mature issues in animated films for all age groups and audiences in America why or why not?

One of the Amerasian participants told researchers of an example of this unsheltered parenting style and teaching and how it exemplified the validity of the medium, its realistic nature, and its usefulness to his parents. The way the participant learned from his father was the same unsheltered and direct method of the adult content often portrayed in anime. The Amerasian participant said that their family had visited downtown in Shanghai. They saw street performers doing magic shows. The subject asked the father about magic because it looked like fun. The father explained that it was not real. The father told the subject that there was a trick to how they were performing the optical illusion. The father did not take into consideration that the subject thought it was fun. He just truthfully explained the trick of how the magic was performed. AA-Male said,

In Asia, they would explain it. That's really not magic. It's a trick. There's a way he's doing it. You can learn how you could do that. It's just how you raise your child. I think it's the same for the basis of anime is. If you sit there and they see it and you explain it to them, its not as if you just flopped your child in front of the TV and just walked away. The child is just curious, and they don't know what it is. And you're not there answering the questions as they ask them. Then, there's that lack of understanding. There's difficulty of trying to figure

out whether this is reality or this is fantasy. How do I relate this to what's occurred? It's like showing that movie Saving Private Ryan. It's a great historical World War II movie, but even when they aired it on TV they censored it. There was like a long debate. Should we air it uncut? Or should we air it with as much censorship as possible? Because, do we want to show this kind of graphic violence, this kind of reality to kids? Because, it's going to start at 8:00 pm and kids are still awake. But see, that's the thing, it's history.

He said this was the type of teaching ideology that was used on most occasions even in anime. The father said that was not real. It is fantasy. Other Amerasian participants concurred that this unsheltered parenting style was how their parents taught them too. Anime was just a means to bring up the issues that parents did not know how or want to discuss.

Question: Given the cultural distinctness of Japan and other Asian countries, what do you think it is that allows cultural, adult, mature issues; to be communicated to audiences of all ages through anime films in Japan and Asia, but not in the United States?

The Ameraisan focus group participants added more cultural insight into the theme of parenting styles and teaching ideologies. They agreed that Asian parents had great difficulties bringing up taboo participants and cultural issues. Amerasian participants also confirmed that once the cultural issue was mentioned, then it would be okay for the parent to discuss the cultural issue, because they did not bring it up, it was presented through anime. The Amerasian participants unveiled a new perspective. They explained that at a certain age there should be a cut off. Children should be educated and have cultural issues taught to them with all reality at a certain age. There

was no certain age defined, yet the age for Japanese and Amerasian participants was much earlier than Non-Asian focus group participants. Also, Amerasian participants explained that there was a large gap between the cut off age of Asian parents and Non-Asian parents. AA-Male said,

There's definitely an age gap of when you should start explaining, but I think that when a kid reaches a certain age he understands enough. You should sit down and you should explain it to him. Like it was said about the Japanese, they are trying to show that war is bad. War is not good. It's the same thing that we need to show over here. Versus here where we're saying nudity is bad and horrible.

The age was earlier, because they used anime to teach children about the cultural issues.

In western animation those issues were less frequent and not as explicit.

Westerners did not use anime to educate children about cultural, adult, and mature issues. The Amerasian focus group participants also agreed that once the cultural issue was mentioned, it would be explained in detail and with truth. AA-Male explained,

In Asia, when you sit down they don't shelter anything. Everything is there. You see it, and parents explain it to them. It's almost as if you are aloud to be a baby to a certain point. And then, after that you are treated like an adult almost. Everything is explained to you.

Amerasian participants said that this method of unsheltered parenting through anime was how their parents taught them. They further explained that anime may look

like a cartoon, but the issues that the participants learned and talked about from anime were mature in nature.

In addition, the Amerasian participants explained to researchers that once the parent had explained the cultural issue and holistically guided the child through the reasoning of the explanation and the entirety of the issue, the child would not question the parents' responses. Therefore, the cultural issue had been brought up. The issue had been clearly explained. Questions had been answered, and the responses and logic of the parent could not be questioned further. That was the end. The child needed to accept it, because they explained the issue to the child with realism and totality. AA-Male explained,

You don't question and you don't talk back. But here in America they fight with each other. With the parent and the child, they talk back. They don't care. So, I think it's more subtle for us to know what is right and what is wrong. And we are more disciplined in a way where we know we are not going to act out, or do stupid things. I would never pull a gun in the middle of school.

As the Japanese-Asian and Amerasian focus group participants became older anime had a new function for teaching Amerasian participants. Amerasian participants explained that as they became older and teenagers, their parents discouraged them from watching anime as much as when they were younger. Once again, Amerasian parents used an unsheltered parenting style, and did not want their children to watch anime that was fantasy like to the parents, yet real to the participants. AA-Male added, "I think part of it is there, and you know watching it and having my parents as some type

of firm foundation saying you know that this is all fantasy and this is not real. What you live and do in life is what is real.” Parents used anime as an educational tool when they were children, but since they were getting older they no longer needed anime as much to teach and guide them. Through anime the participants had learned about many cultural issues that had been explained in depth. As teenagers often had trouble communicating with parents, anime became an outlet for even more mature issues such as sexuality. They could relate with the awkwardness, because anime characters talked about sexuality in their programs.

Amerasian participants explained that sexuality was just an issue that even through anime parents still had trouble bringing up, let alone teaching it. AA-Male explained,

Asians don't talk about sex. And for them to act it, it's a fantasy for some people, and they express it through art. And that is suppressing the sexual fantasy. I don't know. Asian cultures need to talk more about that kind of issue amongst each other.

In fact, many Amerasian participants explained that Asian parents just did not talk about it. They expected their children to learn on their own at a certain point. Once again the Amerasian participants had reached a cut off age. This form of non-parenting was normal. Many Amerasian participants explained that there were many times as teenagers that they wished they could have brought up, talked about, and asked about sex. The Amerasian participants said they could not bring themselves to asking their Asian parents about sex. By this age, their parents assumed that the issue had already

been taken care of, but no one knew because it was taboo to talk about sex. Therefore, many participants turned to the outlet that they were used to being educated by from childhood. Amerasian participants were self-parenting themselves through anime. Once again, anime became a teaching tool for the participants as teenagers. AA-Male explained,

I guess for relating it depends on the subject matter or what it is. Take for example *Spirited Away*, the girl is genuinely concerned about her parents' well being. Although, she's doing everything she can to get them back. She's concerned about that. You can relate, it makes you relate." They watched anime that had teenage and high school situations in them.

They explained that it was easy, because many popular anime television programs revolved around High School life.

Their parents did not parent them as much as teenagers about sex and relationships. This form of non-parenting rationalized their viewing of anime television programs about relationship issues. The Amerasian participants explained that they knew their parents had just as much embarrassment about talking about relationships, expressing feelings, and emotions that their parents too probably used anime as an outlet. Amerasian participants explained that they learned how to approach discreetly the members of the opposite sex. They said that they learned situational mannerisms through anime, because their parents could not teach them. They learned and mimicked how far away to stand from one another. They learned how to express their feelings through a written letter and to give it to the other person, and keep their eyes down in a

possibly embarrassing rejection or elation of acceptance, which could also be embarrassing. Anime in a way parented them through teenage scenarios, when their parents were not able to apply their own teaching ideologies. AA-Male said,

I do have feelings about my parents. I am concerned about my parents and what happens to them. It sort of reinforces family values. Family is what is important to you. That's one of the things you relate to, at the same time all the violence and whatever else that goes on around. You know that's not true.

That's not reality.

Amerasian participants said that they thought that their parents would like to help them with these taboo issues, but they never tried to ask them, because it just was not possible for the participants to do so.

Many Amerasian participants explained that there were so many times when they should have had a talk with their parents about the opposite sex and relationship issues, but they did not, because their parents had their own hush-hush issues about sexuality and relationships. Therefore, their parents would not be sufficient teachers. AA-Male said,

Because the reality of is mom and dad don't talk about any of these things at all. In fantasy, we all talk about it. It's great, and we're all friends, and we're best friends. And I think that is how you learn about it. I can escape through this, and at the same time also have these, but it helps me deal with whatever issues I may have inside, that I can't speak to my parents about it.

Instead, the participants watched anime programs about relationships and gained some understanding, because participants were able to relate to the situation of the anime program story lines, characters, and acting similarly to the way the characters did in those programs in teenage and High school situations. One Amerasian participant explained that anime had helped him get through some personal issues that he had about relationships with the opposite sex. The stories and the ability to relate to the situations and characters in anime television programs that dealt with relationships enabled the subject to cope. The Amerasian participant's parents were not available, or unreachable due to unwritten cultural rules. The Amerasian participant explained that Asian people were not like Americans. Asians could not always express themselves and their feelings directly and openly. AA-Male explained,

I think it's just they state and they make it firm that it is fantasy. It's not true. Their society understands that, and sometimes it's a little bit better. Their kids do watch it, and they might act out, but they know it is fantasy. It's not something that is reality, they don't do it. It's part of our cultural upbringing. Like it was said, in our Asian upbringing we don't discuss certain sensitive things, and we see that on television we realize that they are discussing some of these things, that's something we don't do. And part of it, we say oh, and detach ourselves instantly from it. We enjoy it, but this isn't true and reflective of us. We're not that type, versus you could say American culture where everyone is expressive and everyone says their feelings.

Asians did not always tell the other person what they were thinking. They could not do that. They were not like that. Amerasian participants said they were used to anime teaching and guiding them, and they could not relate with American television shows as well. So, anime was where they found what they needed during those adolescent and teenage years.

3.1.7 Parenting Styles & Teaching Ideologies: United States

The Non-Asian focus group participants used different parenting styles and teaching ideologies from that of Japanese and Amerasian participants in relation to the anime medium. Their parenting styles and teaching ideologies were more western, individualistic, and sheltered. Good parents must individually choose what is best for their children. In many cases Non-Asian and some Amerasian participants said that they believed American parents tended to be more sheltering and conservative. It was noted that this notion was more common and accepted by Amerasian participants that had grown up primarily in America. In the Non-Asian focus group participants explained that anime and animation in the United States was used as entertainment. In America, anime was described as a fantasy world and was used for escaping from reality for about an hour and a half. Americans did not use anime and animated movies to educate children about cultural, adult, and mature issues. In America, Non-Asian participants said there had been a lot of exposure to the Disney brand for generations of Americans. Non-Asian participants thought of the Walt Disney Studios brand as family friendly and safe for children.

Non-Asian and Amerasian participants confirmed that they thought American parents sheltered their children much more than other cultures did. Both focus groups made this point, which is interesting because their cultural backgrounds were culturally diverse from each other. Yet, both groups perceived more sheltered parenting from American parents than Japanese participants' parents.

Question: What about Japanese anime appeals to U.S. audiences?

AA-Male said,

Some of the animes in animation here they're sensitive to the age group. In the Japanese anime that I was used to growing up, and from me living in a different country, it's pretty much for every age group. How it's written you knew whether you were young or old enough or whatever. I'm a good example. Since I'm an adult I can watch all that stuff, but if I had kids than I wouldn't want them to watch what I watched growing up as a kid. Raising a kid here versus in Asia, no I will not. I would probably shelter them a little bit more, but we are in a different situation. Anime here in the U.S. you have to watch what you show in anime. Would you have to do that in Asia? No. Just watch it and find out the reality for yourself. It's just a different playing field, a different set of rules.

Cultural differences and pressures were different.

Question: What cultural, adult, mature issues are unsuitable to be viewed in the anime medium by all age group audiences in America?

Thus, Disney films were great for entertaining their children. Disney films rarely engaged children in cultural, adult, mature issues. If they did they were not the

focus, and often not explicitly visualized in the films, whereas their Japanese Studio Ghibli anime counterparts did explicitly show graphic violence, nudity, etc.

Amerasian participants explained that Disney films may have shown an animal or villain fall from a cliff, but they did not show their remains bloodied upon the ground that they fell upon. Also, participants explained that in Disney animation these scenes are often panned back from, and also may have obscured views that softened the cultural issue. In Studio Ghibli films one did see human anime characters being shot, decapitated, and physically maimed and bleeding. Therefore, many Non-Asian and Amerasian participants explained that the American parents would shelter their children away from the issues. AA-Male said,

I guess you could say it's a cultural thing or an upbringing thing. Here I see parents tend to shelter their kids more. They want to keep them as innocent as long as possible. In their mind innocent is in lack of knowing about the world. Innocent as in this is my baby, this is my child. And they are always going to be my baby and my child. No matter how old the child gets, they are still going to shelter the child away from it.

Non-Asian participants preferred a more sheltered parenting over unsheltered parenting. They sheltered their children more by showing them Disney animated films. By showing their children Disney animated films, they avoided and sheltered their children and themselves from having to discuss the cultural issues that Japanese and Asian parents discussed in reality.

Question: Given the cultural distinctness of Japan and other Asian countries, what do you think it is that allows cultural, adult, mature issues; to be communicated to audiences of all ages through anime films in Japan and Asia, but not in the United States?

Both Non-Asian and Amerasian focus groups stressed that they also felt uncomfortable about bringing up cultural issues with children. The difference was that in American culture, if cultural issues such as death, sex, or religion came up, American parents often glossed over the cultural issues. AA-Male said,

I think it's in our founding. We are founded by puritans. Our moral code of ethics is drastically lower than that half of the world. Swearing is minimalistic. Nudity is minimalistic, and violence is very shunned upon. Many themes that are in anime are socially unacceptable to be shown in this society, whereas over in Europe there is nudity in commercials, and that is not an uncommon thing. I think we as a society we are raised to think that these things are not okay. That means that you aren't supposed to watch them as a kid. Once you are an adult you are not supposed to watch cartoons anymore. The only people it is socially acceptable to watch it is from junior high school and high school age, whereas in Japan it's taught from birth this is the way things can be, or are all the way up. So, I think it reaches every age group in that sense.

On the other hand some Amerasian participants said that Asian parents would have realistically explained and talked the children through the issue. They would not soften the issue. They didn't have to, because they did not bring it up. It was already presented to them through anime, so they had to explain it truthfully and logically.

Non-Asian and Amerasian participants told researchers that they thought American

parents also sheltered their children to older ages than Japanese and Asian parents. In essence, they believed that American children did not have to grow up as fast, because they were so sheltered.

The following culturally unique research question was asked to the Amerasian focus groups because they had dual perspectives on anime having both Asian and American roots.

Question: How does your Amerasian culture and heritage affect your perspective and how you think about anime in the U.S. or in Asia?

AA-Male said,

I will use religion for a standpoint. My father is Baptist, and my mother is Buddhist. I've got polytheism and monotheism. I haven't figured out what I personally believe, but it makes me question the fact that these two cultures are conflicting while they are still integrating in me. I guess it allows me to keep an open mind and figure things out for myself. Whereas a lot of people they just, this is the way it is, and keep going. It contributes to my inquisitive nature. Anime lets me explore a side that I have few connections with. Being of split descent makes me curious about other cultures. If I could go out and rent every Bali wood movie there was, I would do it just to learn about Indian culture. Every distinct culture has a story to tell, and if you close yourself off from it, I think that is closing yourself off from worldly experience that can make you a better person.

AA-Male explained,

I don't know that is a tough question to answer. I think growing up in Asia you didn't have as many of the luxuries and freedoms as over here. I think I probably spent more time in school doing everything else and anime was a luxury item. Versus over here, where you can wake up on Saturday mornings and you can spend the whole Saturday morning watching anime and other cartoons and silliness, play your video games or whatever. Over there you didn't have that type of luxury. Monday through Friday you go to school. You may not see your parents at all during that time, and then at night time you went to your second school. On the weekends you were too busy catching up doing whatever. And anime became a luxury and it also became an outlet. And you can escape through it, and a lot of times the issues that you want to talk about that you don't get a chance to are brought up. And you get it. You're like okay. So, I understand. This is what it is like. There are good lessons and there's bad from it. It just depends on what is shown.

AA-Female finished up by saying,

Yeah, I grew up more here and I haven't seen that much anime, but I think what I watched right now is the most I've seen in years. I think my Korean background makes me more accepting to watching it. I'm sure if I were watching it with a bunch of American people they might look at it and think that these things were so weird. Even for me as a Korean. Because, there are a lot of strange things in anime. Like all those worms coming out of the thing. They

show masks and then the people and ghosts show up later. There's just a lot of strange... There's so much fantasy in those things, but I think my Asian background makes me just a little bit more accepting of it. It doesn't seem so foreign to be crazy. Even though a part of me, the American part of me is still kind of surprised.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

4.1 Meaning, Implications, & Analysis

Prior to this study, and as noted in the literature review, studies of anime and its cultural, adult, and mature content have been conducted in disciplines such as: gender studies, film theory, global marketing and sales, education, social psychology, Japanese cultural studies, anthropology, and art. This study, rooted in the discipline of communication, used focus groups to examine the attributes of Japanese culture that allows adult oriented issues to be communicated to audiences of all ages through anime films in Japan but not in the United States. This study expands our understanding of aspects of Japanese and American culture and the influence of anime particularly on Japanese culture.

4.1.1 Hofstede

Geert Hofstede's intercultural value dimensions provided a framework for understanding the acceptance of anime in eastern cultures but not in western cultures. The value dimensions were used as a lens by which to analyze the findings. Hofstede identified five value dimensions that in varying degrees represent cultures of various countries. These dimensions are power distance, individualism/collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity/femininity, and long-term/short-term orientation. Within this particular study, the value dimensions of individualism/collectivism, masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance were exemplified with more frequency by each of the focus

groups. For example the Non-Asian focus groups responses were more individualistic, western, and rooted in Judeo-Christian values. The participants did not find anime to be a appropriate medium for communicating adult issues to all audiences in the United States. NA-Female said, “I don’t know maybe it’s just the way I was raised, but I don’t think it’s appropriate in a cartoon.” In terms of the non-Asian participants, there was a lack of exposure to cultural issues shown in the anime clips, particularly as children. Animation aimed at children in the U.S. was seen an entertainment medium and was deemed to be fun and wholesome.

On the contrary, the Japanese and Amerasian focus groups gave answers that were more collectivist, eastern, and rooted in Confucian, Buddhist, and Shinto teachings. AA-Male said, “It’s basically a teaching and reinforcement tool, the subject matter that they pick its religious teachings that these are good things that are in your world, and you need to embrace them or accept them.” The Japanese and Amerasian focus groups revealed they had been exposed to adult oriented material from an early age and, cultural issues that in the west would be seen as more suitable for adults.. Usage of anime for the Japanese and Amerasian groups was educational; it took the place of direct parental guidance and input, particularly regarding issues such as sex. From the Asian perspective, many of the cultural issues discussed in anime are unspeakable in public arenas. Therefore, many Asian focus group participants learned of these cultural issues through anime. The Japanese and Amerasian focus group participants could relate to these taboo and unspeakable issues of adolescence such as sexuality. Their parents did not discuss these issues with them, so they turned to anime

to entertain, educate, and connect with other parts of the unspoken collective. As illustrated in the literature review, many Asian cultures are collectivist by nature and it is important to keep social balance and harmony.

The Amerasian groups were unique in using anime for cultural connectedness. It seemed important for many of the participants to establish a relationship with the Asian culture through anime and in doing so they were exposed to the various cultural values and customs.

The acceptance of cultural phenomena diffuses faster within collectivistic societies than individualistic societies (Hofstede, 1980). Issues such as striving for social harmony within the collective allow popular cultural items such as anime to establish and integrate itself within the culture. As demonstrated in the literature review, the subjects discussed within anime have always been a part of Japanese culture, but often in other art forms. Since it has always existed, the Japanese culture, being collective and wishing for 'wa' or harmony, would not need to question the existence of anime or any of its adult issues.

4.1.2 Cultural Differences

After analyzing the data from the focus groups the overarching theme of cultural differences emerged. Under this theme there were three sub-themes: exposure, usage, and parenting styles and teaching ideologies. It became apparent that the longer a person had been exposed to anime, the more accepting they were of it as a communicative vehicle for all types of cultural issues. The Amerasian participants

provided a unique perspective as they had ‘a foot in both cultures’ and were able to provide insight into conflicting values and cultures.

Most of the non-Asian focus group participants had seen some anime, but were not that familiar with it. They saw it more as something for sub-cultures within the United States and as inappropriate for the general public. Their frame of reference in terms of animation was Walt Disney where they felt the material was safe for children and suitable for family viewing. They could trust that there would be no inappropriate content or cultural issues discussed that in western culture is more suitable for adults.

On the other hand, the Japanese and Amerasian focus groups were intimately familiar with anime and were very comfortable with it as a communicative medium for all types of issues and content. They had viewed anime since they were children. It almost seemed that the Japanese and Amerasian participants had been desensitized to these cultural issues as well .

Furthermore, Non-Asian participants had been using anime differently from Japanese and Amerasian participants. Non-Asian participants used anime and animation for entertainment and fun. They honestly believed that animation was for children and cultural issues should be absent. On the other hand, Japanese and Amerasian participants used anime as an educational tool, and to reconnect with their Asian heritage that may not have equal access to living outside of Japan or their respective Asian countries.

The final sub-theme within cultural differences was parenting styles and teaching ideologies. Non-Asian participants had been raised in traditional western

Christian families and households. The Non-Asian participants said that the cultural issues found in anime were inappropriate. Many argued that since their own parents did not let them view such cultural issues as children, then they did not think they would allow their children to view them. They explained that cultural issues such as sex, violence, and religion should be explained by the parent. Non-Asian participants explained that the choice to allow or not allow these cultural issues to be viewed was up to the 'individual' and their teaching ideologies reflected an individualistic culture. They argued that viewing such issues and parenting through a cartoon was unacceptable.

By contrast, Japanese and Amerasian participants accepted anime as an educational tool. Japanese and Amerasian participants explained that their parents were primarily Shinto and Buddhist. Thus, they had been raised under collectivist parenting styles and Confucian teaching ideologies. These participants said they believed their parents were the teachers. They had to respect what their parents said or did not say. Historically, in Confucian ideologies many cultural issues had been part of their artistic and written documented pasts. These issues were accepted, but not discussed. Their parents could not be questioned about cultural issues, because they did not speak about these taboo issues amongst themselves. Taboo subjects such as relationships and sex were not to be discussed. Therefore, the Japanese and Amerasian participants explored these cultural issues through anime.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusions

Anime is no longer just an eastern art form, it is spreading across the world and is a multi-billion dollar business. Corporations such as Walt Disney Studios and Studio Ghibli are helping to proliferate this global diffusion of anime, because they reach vast audiences around the world. However, as revealed in this study, anime contains cultural, adult, and mature issues that many western audiences are not used to viewing with their children. Therefore it may take some time before anime is integrated and accepted by mainstream western audiences. It is possible that its content will mean it is never fully accepted by the west. In much the same way as the west has been accused of cultural imperialism in the past, it is possible that same label may be placed on anime as its content conflicts with traditional western values.

After having completed this study and applying Hofstede's intercultural value dimensions to Non-Asian, Japanese, and Amerasian focus group participants it is obvious that cultural differences such as exposure, usage, parenting styles and teaching ideologies affect the perspective of each culture. Individualist and collectivist cultures are fundamentally, historically, and ideologically different from each other, so it makes sense that they have cultural differences in regards to anime.

In reflection, each focus group exemplified significant cultural differences that enabled the discovery of meaningful themes in their responses.

The Non-Asian focus group explained the western, individualist, and American perspective on cultural differences that define American thinking. The Japanese focus group exemplified eastern, collectivist, and Confucian perspectives. The Amerasian focus group was beneficial in assessing the responses that both the Non-Asian and Japanese focus groups gave. The Amerasian focus group explained with great insight about both cultures and the cultural differences in American and Japanese animation.

5.1.1 Limitations

One of the major limitations to the study was the usage of smaller than anticipated focus groups. It was also difficult to find participants who were willing to talk about the issues and had sufficient knowledge of anime. As Morgan (1997) notes, 6-10 participants is the preferred size range for a successful group discussion. Smaller groups may not generate enough discussion, and larger groups may not allow everyone to participate fully and contribute. Smaller groups are shown to work best when participants are interested in the topic and when the moderator allows each group member more time to talk (Morgan, 1997).

For this study focus group participants were over-recruited 10-20 percent to account for participants who did not attend the focus group. However, there was still a small turn-out. In the two smaller Japanese and Amerasian focus groups the participants who did participate were highly involved in the discussion, and all participants had the opportunity to discuss their experiences and knowledge of anime in depth. After having transcribed and translated video recordings it was apparent that the

smaller focus groups had equal amount of discussion transcription pages as the largest focus group, and in some cases more.

In retrospect, after the data analysis was completed, and in addition to the research findings in the literature review about the Japanese and Amerasian cultures and focus group participants, the lack of volunteering of participants further exemplified the cultural differences among the focus groups. The study and the research questions were intended to foster discussion about anime and its cultural, adult, and mature issues. Many of these issues Japanese, and Amerasian participants have difficulty discussing and sharing thoughts and opinions with close confidants, much less unfamiliar research moderators in a public forum. Therefore the lack of volunteering made sense, and thus the smaller focus groups and in-depth interview occurred. On the contrary the Non-Asian focus groups were the easiest to recruit participants and confirm attendance due to the direct communicative styles of the participants, open willingness to discuss and share opinions, and their cultural makeup.

5.1.2 Future Research

This study highlighted cultural issues within the medium of anime. It can serve as a platform for much more fruitful research in this area. It would be interesting to examine if the high levels of Walt Disney Studio's films and media exposure and usage correlated to low levels of anime exposure in American culture, and also examine if high levels of anime exposure and usage in Japanese cultures correlated with low levels of Walt Disney Studios films.

Japanese participants implied that many children watched large quantities of anime in Japan due to loneliness. Thus, it would be interesting to design a study that examined the time and frequency of anime programs viewed by children that are “latch-key kids” or have parents that work late and no one is home when the child returns from school.

In addition, since two of the last Studio Ghibli-Disney produced and distributed films earned recognition with Academy awards and nominations, it is would be good to construct a study that would examine the financial impact and communicative exposure that Walt Disney Studios will have on new Studio Ghibli-Disney produced films over a twenty year time period. Another area of research would take a marketing approach to examine how Walt Disney Studios and Studio Ghibli’s corporate images, marketing, and branding of the partnered entities will affect the anime and animation industry.

APPENDIX A

NON-ASIAN FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What about Japanese anime appeals to U.S. audiences?
2. What is the cultural acceptance and integration of Japanese anime in the U.S.?
3. Keeping in mind the anime clips that were viewed, is anime a valid medium for communicating cultural, adult, mature issues in animated films for all age groups and all audiences in the U.S. why or why not?
4. What variables or factors would affect the acceptance of anime within a culture?
5. How does American culture affect the appropriateness of the anime medium in the U.S.?
6. What cultural issues are unsuitable for all age group audiences in America to be exposed to?
7. What cultural significance does Walt Disney Studios play in American animated film and culture?

APPENDIX B

JAPANESE FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Who is watching anime films in Japan and why?
2. What is the cultural acceptance and integration of anime in Japan?
3. Given the cultural distinctiveness of Japan, what do you think it is that allows cultural, adult, mature issues to be communicated to audiences of all ages through anime films in Japan?
4. What makes anime a valid medium to communicate cultural, adult, mature issues to all ages and audiences in Japan?
5. What variables or factors would affect the acceptance of anime within a culture?
6. What cultural issues are not communicated in anime films in Japan?
7. What are the differences between communicating cultural issues in animated and non-animated films in Japan?

APPENDIX C

AMERASIAN FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

The moderator asked questions from both the Non-Asian focus group, and the Japanese focus group in order to fit these particular focus groups participants.

1. What about Japanese anime appeals to U.S. audiences?
2. What is the cultural acceptance and integration of Japanese anime in the U.S.?
3. Given the cultural distinctness of Japan and other Asian countries, what do you think it is that allows cultural, adult, mature issues; to be communicated to audiences of all ages through anime films in Japan and Asia, but not in the United States?
4. Keeping in mind the anime clips that were viewed, is anime a valid medium for communicating cultural, adult, mature issues in animated films for all age groups and audiences in America why or why not?
5. What cultural, adult, mature issues are unsuitable to be viewed in the anime medium by all age group audiences in America?
6. What cultural significance does Walt Disney Studios play in American animated film and culture?
7. How does your Amerasian culture and heritage affect your perspective and how you think about anime in the U.S. or in Asia

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