

## Japanese Anime: Factors Leading to Acceptance or Rejection

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### Abstract

Anime has grown to be a worldwide cultural phenomenon over the past couple of decades. With the assistance of the Internet, its popularity has only increased through social platforms which has enabled fans to share their interests around the world. Through its popularity, anime has grown to the point that it has built a community globally that appreciates the art form. Social scientists have started to explore the growth and significance of anime as an aspect of culture that crosses borders. In some countries, however, anime has also encountered resistance, or at least a lack of enthusiasm. Various social scientific models enable us to conceptualize the extent of growth in popularity of anime in various cultures and subcultures. One aspect of this research explores barriers to growth in popularity. In some cases, limitations can be caused by a stigma surrounding anime or even with the fans who support it. The goal of this study is to increase our understanding of the cultural perceptions of anime and also to identify the factors bearing on its popularity. The study examines, among other things, the visual appeal of anime as well as cultural, sociological and historical perspectives. An empirical component of the study will assess – in a pilot study – how potential viewers think and feel about anime. We will use Qualtrics to conduct the study supplemented by a sample of respondents recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk. Based on the results of the survey, we hope to construct a preliminary model of how individuals decide to partake or not partake of anime.

### Literature Review

#### *Abbreviated background of anime entrance into the global market*

As early as the 1960s, American children became aware of Japanese anime through such television series as “*Astro-Boy*, *Speed Racer*, [and] *Gigantor*” (McKevitt, 2010, p.898).

Interesting enough, these programs were not in the same form as our Japanese counterparts were experiencing. Instead, they were edited and denationalized from the original Japanese version for the American community (p.898). For example, *Speed Racer* and the early version of *Pokémon* “had references to Japan that were carefully erased” (Darling-Wolf, 2015, p.111) for the U.S. market. There were two main reasons why this occurred. The first one being that anime distributors had to make changes that agreed with the Federal Communications Commission’s

(FCC) standards, which were different from regulations in Japan. This was done by “edit[ing] out the blood, [changing a cigarette] into a lollipop...[and] covering up the cleavage in someway,” (Crawford, 2019, 17:52). Additionally, “American distributors often underestimate[d] the intelligence and [open mindedness] of [those interested in anime],” as they try to “cater to the lowest common denominator of American consumption,” (Price, 2001, p.164). One of the famous examples known by anime fans are the “doughnuts” that took the place of Japanese rice balls in the 4kids Entertainment version of the *Pokémon* anime, even if they do look like rice balls (Crawford, 2019, 18:56). The CEO of 4kids even mentioned the modification was important in his view so that the Western and English-speaking audiences can understand it better (19:35). However, the anime fandom (die-hard fan community) wanted to watch the content in its original version. To understand its global popularity, one must understand its history and origins of its creation.

Japanese animation programs, commonly referred to as “anime”, were developed not only for children, but also adults, showing different themes that affect one’s life. These themes explored “love and death, war and peace, the historical past and the far future” (Drazen, 2003, p.viii). It was inspired by one of the world’s most influential animators in history, Walt Disney. The “artistic technique and the humanist philosophy [of Disney influenced the] study as well as entertainment for...Osamu Tezuka,” (pp.4-5). His initial focus through Japanese comics, also known as “manga”, lasted more than forty years as a cartoonist with influence “not only by Disney, but also by [the] French New Wave [of] cinema.” (p.5), which was a film movement in the 1950s and 60s dominated by filmmakers that rejected traditional film conventions. This brought his cartoons, which depicted emotion in an art form from still-images on paper to animation. In the 1960s in the U.S., such animated characters as Mickey Mouse, Bugs Bunny,

Tom, and Jerry were popular on television and film. During the same time period, Tezuka created Japan's first animated superstar, Astroboy. Prior to this time, he was published as Tetsuwan Atomu (The Mighty Atom). This robot that looked like a young boy became very popular with both Japanese and American audiences. Through the *Astro Boy* series, Tezuka showed the viewers that Atom dealt with his civil rights. Unlike Disney features at the time, Tezuka "consciously and deliberately mirrored the American civil rights struggles of the day" (p.6) into Astro-boy. He showed that anime expresses concepts that are not typical child-oriented as his Western counterparts developed in animation.

As anime evolved in the decades following, it included an important trait of "ancient Japanese legend, myth and history...with a contemporary twist," (Price, 2001, p.156). Shinto, which even though it is not an actual religion in Japan, has thousands of stories and ancient myths that the Japanese population becomes familiar with when they are young. While Shinto has worshippers that believe in the supernatural, this is more a form of practicing Japanese rituals and is mainly viewed as "an aspect of Japanese life. This has enabled Shinto to coexist happily with Buddhism for centuries...something that can't be done with more exclusive religions like Christianity or Islam," (Religions - Shinto: Is Shinto a religion?, 2009). Many Japanese animators took stories from Shinto as their basis for creating their anime series. They included examples from their culture that Western counterparts would find surprising as they did not meet with their Japanese stereotypes. One example included "many wild, strong female characters in anime" as Shinto culture has represented female deities while Japanese history has its fair share of "empresses, priestesses [and even] artisans" (Price, 2001, p.157). These traits can be expressed in many shōjo series, since the demographic sub-category is "typically written by

female authors and features relatively empowered heroines,” (Ramasubramanian & Kornfield, 2012, p.190).

There is also a large amount of different genres that anime tends to tackle. A quick search into “Anime Genres” from TV Tropes, a wiki that documents different kinds of plot devices and character descriptions in any form of media, shows the vast amount of genres listed on the web page. While some categories are named based on the main demographic reach—shōnen and shōjo—there are a vast amount of different genres that feature specific topics such as military and warfare, gaming and sports, and comedy. In modern Japanese pop culture, erotica anime or their version of porn is called “hentai” (literally translated as “abnormal” or “perverted”) (Drazen, 2003, p.60). With so many different anime genres to choose from, one can expect a significant variety of programming for the different kinds of anime.

Anime is also unique in sound. Western animation has strong orchestrations in the background to stress dramatic effects and actions. On the other hand, “anime often uses Japanese instruments [such as the samisen and wood clappers] to invoke feelings of tension and impact” (Price, 2001, p.158). These sounds are similar to the sounds heard in Bunraku Theater. Anime also brings in other symbolisms from the Japanese culture such as zen garden and the tea ceremony (p.156). While these sounds have a symbolic, historical significance to the Japanese audience, this cultural effect might not be commonly understood by Westerners. Through the unique qualities anime holds, viewers from the U.S. and other countries have a strong interest to

partake in this art form.

*Studies on the growth of anime as an aspect of culture.*

Anime brings together the Japanese culture, other cultures and the fantasy aspect by considering race/ethnicity and gender characteristics of the characters in their stories. As mentioned earlier, in its initial distribution stage outside of the local market, “creators/producers sometimes minimize cultural references for marketing purposes for the global market” (Fennell, Liberato, Hayden, & Fujino, 2012, p.441) However many feel before any cultural editing, anime is tied to the Japanese culture (Azuma, 2009, as cited in Fennell et. al, 2012). For example, some characters of Tezuka Osamu’s anime have unrealistic large eyes to represent cuteness and innocence and others with blond-haired and light skin (Poitras, 1999, p.102). Interpretations from this look is that anime is showing characters from other cultures that look “‘Western’ or ‘White’” (Fennell et. al, 2012, p.442).

Another cultural focus in anime has been the shift of how Japanese women are shown differently from their “real” gender roles in society. While Japan is ranked as having the third highest industrial outputs in the world (according to Worldatlas.com), it is ranked only 101 among 134 countries in the level of women’s empowerment (Saito, 2014). Magical girl anime, also called *majokko*, targets pre-adolescent girls contesting the gender roles and identities that they are familiar with since childhood. *Majokko* or *Majo shojo* has been a genre that began in the late 1960’s with much influence from the American live-action programming such as *Bewitched* (p.147). Since its inception this genre has shifted from the magical freedom of adolescence prior to the gendered stage of marriage to motherhood to more recently in the 21st century of girl characters having a “female friendship ... which forms a pseudo-lesbian community in which girls enjoy a carefree everyday life,” (p.159). “In Japan homosexuality is neither well accepted or looked down upon but something to keep private and not too open but in anime a few gay and lesbian characters do crop up.” (Poitras, 1999, p.87) There are also new

programs where boys are transforming into magical girls, thus considering those who are gender crossing. Overall this genre has challenged the Japanese culture of not only a woman's role (defiance to marriage and domesticity) but more recently male gender roles.

While anime is an ideal way of story-telling bringing together characters, graphic art, and cinematography, it also challenges culturally relevant topics such as homelessness, economic, environmental, and mental health issues. For example, in *Tokyo Godfathers*, according to Napier (2006), three homeless people find an abandoned baby in a trash can on Christmas night. Throughout the story it exposes the viewer to different themes of mental health, poverty, and gender identity as one of the homeless is a transvestite. It brings attention to society's neglect in these areas and the need to take action. People can also develop emotional connections with anime characters. MudanTV (2017) has noted that when he grew up with *Naruto*, the show really resonated with his teenage life. He can connect the titular main character with his personal life, as they both grew up figuratively and literally. Anime has put into effect the use of identifying and sharing with the perspectives of these characters and "internalizing their view of the world" (Cohen, 2009, p.229; Cohen, 2001, pp.247-248; as cited in Ramasubramanian & Kornfield, 2012, p.193).

The main customers of anime are the Japanese citizens. These have played a significant role in ensuring that anime does not lose its origin due to mass distribution. These types of fans are called "Japanophiles". They have "organized email or letter writing companies, advocate particular stay likes or relationships, ... take out ads in Japanese trade journals, or hire billboard trucks to drive...in front of Japanese studios bearing signs demanding that their favorite series be continued," (Levi, 2006, p.49). At the same time, these fans have taken opportunities to mount campaigns at American networks to keep their favorite series going by utilizing international

distribution buying power. One of the most successful campaigns was “SOS (Save Our Sailors), which took place in 1996 when *Sailor Moon*...was cancelled due to low ratings,” (p.49). After a series of events, the Cartoon Channel picked up the series and dubbed 17 more episodes in English to increase distribution to not only the U.S., but Australia and Canada. In fact the success of *Sailor Moon* motivated the creation of similar programming such as *The Powerpuff Girls* and *Totally Spies* in the U.S. and Europe (Saito, 2014, p.144). The cultural acceptance of Japanese fan input for anime has had a significant impact on both local and foreign markets.

*Growth in anime acceptance globally.*

When anime became popular in the U.S., people started to associate anime as its own unique style. There were even anime that were considered to make big breakthroughs. Throughout the mid to late 90s, *Sailor Moon* had “hundreds of Web pages sprang overnight” with “legions of devoted fans;” *Dragon Ball* had released a “three linked [animated] series” (Drazen, 2003, p.11), to which its second series (*Dragon Ball Z*) has also nearly defined and inspired many shōnen anime to this day (Super Eyepatch Wolf, 2018); and the *Pokémon* anime series, which according to Condry (2013) “has become one of the most widespread TV anime in history, airing in more than sixty countries” (p.165). While these shows have been introduced to American audiences through their legal exports, Americans wanted to see more. Since these shows were far overseas, as well as being in a foreign language, fans relied on an unconventional method to get their anime. Through the late 1980’s and early 1990’s before the Internet became widely available, anime made its way through college anime clubs, who formed tape-trading networks and expanded anime’s availability and popularity (Cook & Smagorinsky, 2016). With the help of the Internet, “not only did it allow for much easier communication between [anime] fans...[but] it allowed for unofficial subtitled anime...to be distributed very easily” (Yergin,

Ferris, Rodger, & Walther; 2017; p.3). Fansubbers, enthusiastic fans who translate the Japanese language of anime and provide subtitled versions for other fans, are motivated from the fondness of anime, being part of the community, and helping promote the anime industry through widening its accessibility (Lee, 2011). Through these services, they were even able to “discuss current content without having to wait until a company decided to license a series, which often took months before the first episodes were available,” (Yergin et al., 2017, p.4). However, it can create a significant threat to the distribution of the product, as it loses its original content for mass-distribution because the copying is uncontrolled and unprotected (Lee, 2011). To gain global exposure, anime creators need to consider utilizing distributors that will adopt their work to gain global acceptance without drastically changing its original message. Currently with the availability of streaming services such as Crunchyroll, reliance on fansubbing has decreased from previous years (Yergin et al., 2017). However, these services will not prevent that there are still a significant amount of shows not provided through legal streaming, thus fansub will continue to have an influence on the global distribution channels of anime until new choices are available in the future.

One of the most early recognizable examples of globally accepted anime was *Heidi, Girl of the Alps* by the famous Hayao Miyazaki. He was considered as “Japan’s greatest animation creator” (Patten, 2004, as cited in Darling-Wolf, 2016, p.500) for many of the famous animated movies from Japan. His other highly acclaimed works included *My Neighbor Totoro* and *Spirited Away*. As mentioned previously, anime as a whole utilizes a variety of different genres and demographics. Miyazaki goes as far as challenging “many of the shōjo (young female) stereotypes [by having his] girl characters [be] notably independent and active, courageously confronting the variety of obstacles before them” (p.504), and Heidi fits this characterization.



The series “became a global success...broadcast[ing] in more than 35 countries throughout Europe, Asia, and Latin America,” (p.501). *Heidi* was also released as part of Nippon Animation’s *World Masterpiece Theater* series. A primary reason why this was accepted globally with the exception of the US is that it was considered cheap animation import in countries that had lacked some animation industries domestically.

*Resistance and challenges of anime.*

China has taken extreme steps to ensure foreign animation programmes are minimally allowed on national television. Since the late 1970’s, China has undergone an economic, political, social and cultural transformation (Ishii, 2013). The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has sought to control the inflow of all foreign media, including books, newspapers and satellite television and the internet. It views anime as having negative effects on teenagers and portrays unhealthy amount of violence and obscenity (p.227). Foreign animation is not allowed on prime time hours when only Chinese animation is being broadcasted. Consequently, China has encouraged a strong and competitive international animation industry by investing an enormous amount of money in domestic companies. Their goal is to “help companies to create, develop, and communicate animation products which are practical, true to life, geared toward the Chinese cultural spirit,” (p.228). While a great amount of companies exist in China that make domestic animation, there is still a significant amount of the country’s population that is more interested in externally developed animation including anime. Studies have shown that older age groups who tend to be more patriotic preferred Chinese animation. While the younger age groups who have access to the internet rather watch Japanese anime (p.238). As internet usage increases in China, the CCP will continue to have more difficulty controlling the influence of external media.

One of the most stigmatizing ideas that can lead to people not watching anime is the stigma of animation itself. According to Lamarre (2002), there is apparently a larger adult audience for live-action based on the “reality bias that...photography-based cinema inherently has greater reality effect than the drawings used for animation” (p.332). This makes animation feel secondary or inferior to movies or shows that are shot with live people acting out from the view of the camera. Animation is considered so inferior that it has been notably referred to as a genre. Rozanski (2018), a YouTuber who has studied Western animation for over half a decade, argues that people who appreciate the animation medium have a problem with those that consider it as a genre because it seems “limiting at both what is done with animation and how audiences receive [its content],” (1:02). The stereotypes made by the so-called “genre” often points that animation is mostly intended to be made for children and not meant to be taken in a serious manner. This stigma can be exemplified, as he argues that “the biggest animation companies in the world feel like it is trying to bury animation” (9:43) with repetitive formulas, as well as the Oscars making a “Best Animated Picture” category so they “would never have to nominate...animated film[s] for Best Picture” (13:05) against other live-action films. Although this argument tends to be more in-line with the perception of Western animation, it can also affect why certain people, especially those from the United States, do not like Japanese animation as well. When anime was introduced in U.S. rental stores, they were stocked in the children’s section, despite the graphic content it displays (Price, 2001). Going forward in time, criticism exists predominantly on social media. Andrew Tate—a professional kickboxer—has posted a few Tweets, even though they are deleted now, claiming how the anime community is full of losers (Gasai, 2017). With the use of social media, negative criticism about anime and its

fans will reach out to a significant audience. Thus, it is not surprising why a stigma exists and more sadly the increase of bullying arising to those who just enjoy this medium.

Another problem that the anime community has experienced is the toxicity in its own fandom. This kind of destructive activity happens in different types of fandoms, and anime is no exception. Lefler (2018), a blogger who has studied anime for at least a decade, has mentioned three signs of how fandoms can be toxic. They are represented by possessiveness, entitlement, and superiority. Possessive fans act as if they own the content that they enjoy, and see it as their own property. Entitlement takes it a step further, as the fans feel that the creator of the content must do whatever they demand. Toxic fans who feel superior to other fans, those who are less intent or obsessive, have the tendency to call out “non-fans” through phrases such as ‘normies’ for not being part of this elite or exclusive group. This behavior of superiority is predominantly known to the anime community as many people online have mentioned many elitist picking fights with those casual, less obsessive fans on their choices of anime through the Internet. As people do have different ways of viewing anime, this can lead to constant bickering based on disagreement with each other without respect. The argument between those who prefer mainstream, popular, or non-mainstream anime is a prime example of this conflict (The RPG Monger, 2017). Through these signs, certain fans can feel as if they own the content, have the ability to change it, and feel superior to those who are casual fans. This kind of argumentative behavior that can spread across the Internet can factor into others perceptions of whether to participate in the anime community.

Craftsdwarf (2019), an anime YouTuber, has pointed out another issue with anime as its portrayal of sexual activity is considered disturbing by some, especially through hentai. The fear can be seen in Western culture who enact censorship and have been known to blame new forms

of media as motivators for violent and sexual acts of crime. One of the major fears is how a perverted male character in anime would “spread [the message] across the Internet and [make] some think this [kind of] behavior is okay,” (10:07). He mentions that the pervertiness of the male characters is meant to display fantasy that the viewers would not express in a real life scenario. They are not supposed to be rewarded for such behavior that can harm others in a physical or mental way, hence the wrongness of the pervertedness becomes comical when people laugh at them (1:07). However, having limited knowledge of the concept can lead to confusion of how to interpret the message. To further understand why these concerns exist, one must consider the difference between the Japanese and Western cultures. Using bathing as an example, Japan takes this act as a ritual for relaxation and can be a social public affair, while Americans take it more as a form of privacy and intimacy where the only public bathing is of a professional manner with the same sex (5:50). The difference in perception of how one culture displays a certain topic can lead to a misunderstanding with someone outside of it. This would mean that with anime showing a new perspective that may not have been perceived well with another culture, thus people from that arena may not take it too kindly of the different messages in the anime community. With anime being considered countercultural media that tackles topics many may not be ready for, this can result in the concern of what it could lead to, possibly in the form of demonization.

Caffrey (2008) has noted that an area of challenge for anime is audiovisual translation (AVT). DVD technology has the possibility to include over 30 subtitle tracks per DVD, thus not only supporting those who are hearing impaired, or need several language options, but in regards to anime it also provides the opportunity for “personal subtitling” (p.164). This would allow a same language viewer to choose to learn more about cultural specific references that would pop

up and provide them an experience with a higher awareness of the story-line. When focusing on the AVT to written text (subtitles), this is where the challenge begins. Nevermind if some of the storyline is “lost in translation” but there is also a concern on the perception of nonverbal items in translated films. For example, one must consider the nonverbal communication and the cultural meanings for a gesture and idioms. These visual nonverbal cues (VNC), defined “*as a nonverbal item appearing in the image of an audiovisual text which has an intended secondary, connotative meaning,*” (p.165) can be confusing to a foreign viewer who is not familiar with its cultural origin. As a subtitler, one has the challenge of what should be addressed depending on the anime’s final distribution destination. If the anime will be distributed to a foreign culture who has very little exposure to the source language, then the subtitler will have more freedom as the viewer will be fully dependent on the subtitles to understand the dialogue of the film. The challenge is that this role must also consider the cultural signs that exist in the anime that affect the storyline and decide whether to include or ignore these items. The translation strategy the subtitler uses can affect the acceptance of the anime in foreign market thus great importance is placed in this role to gain greater positive exposure in the international community.

Anime has existed for over one hundred years in Japan, capturing much of its cultural aspects with its viewing audience consisting of both adults and children. Over half a century ago, American children were made aware of Japanese anime from televised programs that were edited to take out the “Japaneseness” . In the 21st century, anime has gained recognition by viewers of all age groups around the world through modern distribution channels, including the Internet. While it is considered an entertaining art form to many, there are those who consider it as childish and want no part of the stigma it may carry. There have been great strides to continue

its growth through fandoms, as well as studies from social scientists bringing out its increased awareness of its content and popularity.

### **Empirical Study Design**

The goal of this study is to increase our understanding of the cultural perceptions of anime and also to identify the factors bearing on its popularity. To gather updated information of the general public, this study utilized a survey from the survey distributor Amazon Mechanical Turk to help gain access to the survey created in Qualtrics. An attempt was made to locate those that live in the United States and are eighteen years of age or older. Two hundred of the respondents received 25 cents each while the remaining were not paid. The following questions were addressed:

- What are the major contributors that can influence people to like or dislike anime?
- For those who partake or not partake in anime, to what extent is their general view of anime?
- For those who partake in anime, to what extent has it influenced their ways of life?
- To what extent do they partake in anime and how does it compare with other animated content?
- To what extent does the viewer's demographic affect his/her perception of anime?
- Are there any concerns of stigma from anime and its community?

The survey was formatted into two sections. The first part of the survey focuses on the respondents' anime experience on a monthly basis. In this section, individuals were requested to provide feedback on the frequency of how many times they had watched anime in a given period. This provides an understanding of how many of the respondents are serious fans or just have a casual interest in anime. In addition, they were requested to respond on how they were

introduced to anime in order to find out if there was a consistency of origin among the respondents considering anime is a foreign form of entertainment.

Another item of interest was what certain anime programs are the respondents most familiar with out of 22 possible choices and do they have any positive or negative feelings about them. These choices consisted of works in a variety of genres, with most of them being adaptations of other works. There are a few exceptions, as I also incorporated a few Studio Ghibli movies, considering it is a well known film studio by the anime community. To mark their perception of anime in general, a bipolar scale was created that categorized their opinions. Among the categories that were reviewed included how cool, entertaining, and readily available anime is, as well as how intelligent people have to be to associate with this style of media.

As the way we view entertainment evolves overtime, we consider what type of source individuals use to view anime and how often. The survey also considered pirated websites in case people are not paying extra for a subscription. The next set of questions dealt with what genre and features in anime they have interest in. Out of the twelve different genres of anime that respondents would choose, they were requested to list their top three choices. From there, they were asked about potential aspects of anime that appeal to them. These included plot, quality of animation, relatable themes, soundtrack, and a few others.

Consideration related to any signs of negativity was also included in the survey, for example, if people have been ridiculed or criticized for being a fan of anime. Those who have agreed that it can happen, were then asked if they themselves have been ridiculed or criticized and provided in a short response as to how they would have reacted to such negative behavior. On the other hand, respondents were asked what other activities anime has led them to do and their viewing experience with animated content outside of anime. These two questions were

optional to answer as it is possible that anime does not have an influence with other activities such as learning Japanese language or understanding its culture. Those who did not respond to any choice from the optional questions are assumed to not participate in any of the choices given, and it is possible to choose more than one item.

If a respondent did not watch anime, before moving onto general questions, they were asked if they have heard of anime. It is important to note that if a respondent had never heard of anime, the respondent would skip the anime questions all together and move straight towards their experiences with Western Animation. This was a way of filtering those individuals who are unaware of anime, in order for them to not fully participate in the survey due to their lack of experience with this medium. However, all participants were required to answer the second part of the survey. Overall there were eighteen questions in total. The first fourteen questions relate to anime and the respondent's experience in other forms of animation. The last four questions ask for the respondent's demographics; age, race, gender and education level (note that there was the availability of choosing more than one race). The survey concluded with the option for the respondents to add any additional comments.

## Results

Figure 1: Gender

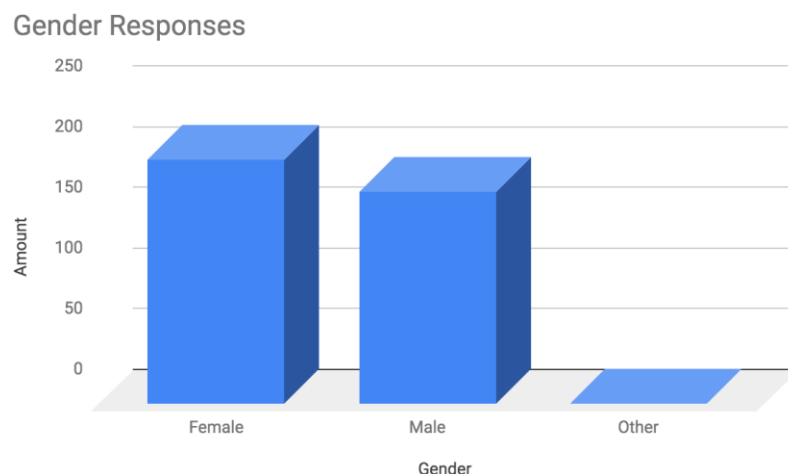




Figure 2: Race

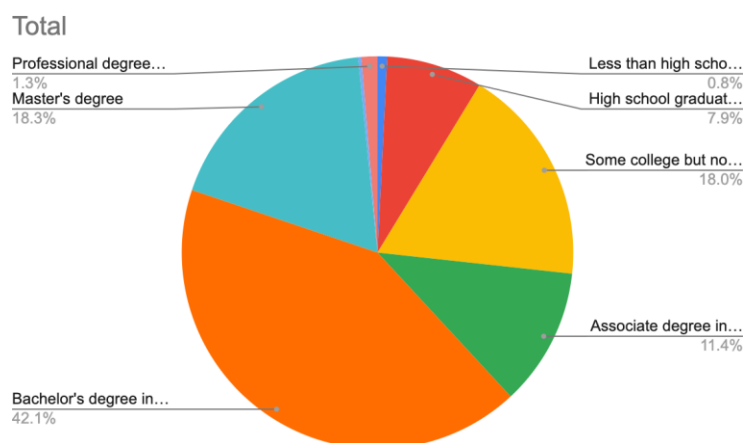
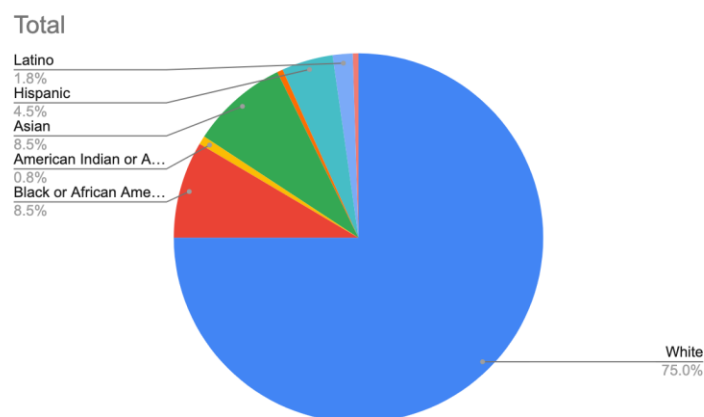


Figure 3:

## Educational level

Within 24 hours after the survey was available on Amazon Mechanical Turk, there were a total of 378 complete responses, which had greatly surpassed the target of obtaining 200 responses. When reviewing the responses, there were more females (N=202) than male (N=175) respondents with one being labeled trans. As for their education level, the majority of the respondents had some college or above, which included approximately 42% of respondents who had completed their bachelors' degree (N=159). Regarding race, the majority of respondents classify themselves as white (N=300). Out of everyone who have completed the survey, 117 of the respondents do not watch anime, and seven of them were not able to participate in most of the questions (see Figure 4), dropping the total respondents for the anime section to 371.

Figure 4 (see below) shows a table that compares the amount of times the respondents watch anime in a month with other activities anime has led them to do. There is even a noticeable decrease based on how much content there is with how many respondents view a degree of anime. Out of the 378 total respondents, 37.3% of respondents (N=141) watch anime 1-5 times a month, 18.5% (N=70) 6-10 times a month, 5.3% (N=20) 11-15 times a month, 4.8% (N=18) 16-20 times a month, and 3.2% (N=12) watch anime at least 21 times a month. Another section of this chart shows that 26.5% of the respondents (N=100) buy merchandise related to anime. Of those who purchase merchandise, 65% of them (N=65) watch anime from 1-10 times a month. Another area with strong results was that 29.4% (N=111) learn the Japanese culture, this includes 61.1% of respondents who watch anime 16-20 times a month (N=11). Even 28.1% of total respondents (N=106) also showed strong interest in reading manga or light novels, as well as 25.4% of them (N=96) of them. Higher percentages in named activities also tend to be more on those who watch anime at least 16 times a month as opposed to those who only watch up to ten times a month.

Figure 4 Amount of times watching anime and other activities

		Q1: Approximately how many times during the past 30 days have you watched (an) anime program(s)?						
		Total	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21+	None
			A	B	C	D	E	F
Q10: Has anime led you to do any of the following? (check all that apply; if none apply, skip) - Selected Choice	Total Count	378	141	70	20	18	12	117
	Buying merchandise relating to anime	100	40	25	9	7	8	11
	Cosplay	22	12	4	2	0	2	2
	Create art based on the design of anime.	54	27	13	3	6	4	1
	Learn Japanese culture	111	41	29	10	11	5	15
	Learn Japanese	52	17	15	3	8	5	4

	language							
	Others	29	8	1	1	0	0	19
	Participate in anime conventions	55	21	16	4	4	5	5
	Read manga or light novels	106	41	29	9	7	8	12
	Talk on Internet social platforms with those of common interest	96	45	30	3	5	6	7
	Buying merchandise relating to anime	26.50%	28.40%	35.70%	45.00%	38.90%	66.70%	9.40%
	Cosplay	5.80%	8.50%	5.70%	10.00%	0.00%	16.70%	1.70%
	Create art based on the design of anime.	14.30%	19.10%	18.60%	15.00%	33.30%	33.30%	0.90%
	Learn Japanese culture	29.40%	29.10%	41.40%	50.00%	61.10%	41.70%	12.80%
	Learn Japanese language	13.80%	12.10%	21.40%	15.00%	44.40%	41.70%	3.40%
	Others	7.70%	5.70%	1.40%	5.00%	0.00%	0.00%	16.20%
	Participate in anime conventions	14.60%	14.90%	22.90%	20.00%	22.20%	41.70%	4.30%
	Read manga or light novels	28.00%	29.10%	41.40%	45.00%	38.90%	66.70%	10.30%
	Talk on Internet social platforms with those of common interest	25.40%	31.90%	42.90%	15.00%	27.80%	50.00%	6.00%

		Q1: Approximately how many times during the past 30 days have you watched (an) anime program(s)?						
		Total	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21+	None
Q14: We're also interested in your other viewing habits. When thinking			A	E	B	C	D	F
	Total Count	378	141	70	20	18	12	117
	Adult TV programming	193	77	32	7	9	6	62

about animation, which of the following do you watch? (check all that apply; if none apply, skip)	Disney Movies	250	95	42	12	12	8	81
	Illumination Movies	186	66	35	10	8	7	60
	Kids TV programming	136	59	17	10	12	4	34
	Other movies	138	55	24	5	9	5	40
	Warner Bros. Movies	211	83	42	11	10	5	60
	YouTube content	176	69	30	8	8	10	51
	Adult TV programming	51.10 %	54.60 %	45.70 %	35.00%	50.00%	50.00%	53.00%
	Disney Movies	66.10 %	67.40 %	60.00 %	60.00%	66.70%	66.70%	69.20%
	Illumination Movies	49.20 %	46.80 %	50.00 %	50.00%	44.40%	58.30%	51.30%
	Kids TV programming	36.00 %	41.80 %	24.30 %	50.00%	66.70%	33.30%	29.10%
	Other movies	36.50 %	39.00 %	34.30 %	25.00%	50.00%	41.70%	34.20%
	Warner Bros. Movies	55.80 %	58.90 %	60.00 %	55.00%	55.60%	41.70%	51.30%
	YouTube content	46.60 %	48.90 %	42.90 %	40.00%	44.40%	83.30%	43.60%

Figure 5 Amount of times watching anime and other animated programs

Figure 5 compares anime and non-anime viewers if they watch other animated programs. Results consistently showed that 66% watch Disney movies (N=250), which is more than any other animated content. Following Disney were Warner Bros. (N=211) and Illumination movies (N=186). Watching anime seems to have very little effect in what other animated content others may watch, and can vary very little from the average percentage. For example, viewers who watch anime 21+ times a month, 66.7% (N=8) watch Disney and 58.3% (N=7) watch

Illumination movies among other types of programming. Of the 117 who do not watch anime, around 69% (N=81) of them watch Disney movies, making its percentage higher than the average percentage of those who watch Disney. However, only around 29% of those who do not watch anime watch kids television (N=34), which is a lower percentage compared to the 36% of total participants who do watch kids television (N=136). There is not much Figure 6 (see below) shows a comparison between viewing habits and different aspects of anime that appeals to viewers most. This analysis considers the following aspects of anime: storytelling, plot, quality of animation, artwork of characters, artwork of setting, personality of characters portrayed, relatable themes, notable voice actors, and music/soundtrack. These aspects were ranked by respondents who have watched anime anywhere from none in the last 30 days to over 21 times. After running this report, there is a statistical significance between times viewed and the aspect of storytelling. The more an individual watched anime, the more interested they were in storytelling. From those who viewed anime 1-5 times a month, 53.2% (N=75) found it very important. The percentage increases as the amount of times increases in watching anime during the course of the month. In the grouping of those who watch anime at least 21 times a month, the high interest in storytelling increased to 58.6% (N=7). On the other hand, there is less concern for notable voice actors. Out of the 371 anime respondents, 44.7% of them (N=166) do not find that notable voice acting as an important aspect for anime, comparing that with the 35.3% (N=131) who find it somewhat important and the 19.9% (N=74) who find it very important. To reemphasize, it is the only category where the highest majority of total respondents think it is not important.

Figure 6 Amount of times watching anime and aspects in anime

Q1: Approximately how many times during the past 30 days have you watched (an) anime program(s)?							
Total	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21+	None	

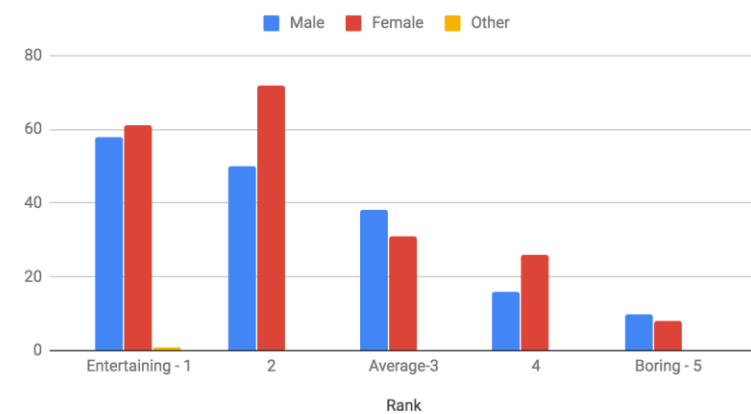
		A	B	C	D	E	F
Total Count	371	141	70	20	18	12	110
Missing Count	7	0	0	0	0	0	7
Somewhat important (Variety of storytelling)	142	57	22	9	5	5	44
Not important (Variety of storytelling)	47	9	7	2	3	0	26
Very important (Variety of storytelling)	182	75	41	9	10	7	40
Somewhat important (Plot)	100	41	20	4	7	1	27
Not important (Plot)	43	10	9	2	2	3	17
Very important (Plot)	228	90	41	14	9	8	66
Somewhat important (quality of animation)	130	44	27	9	9	5	36
Not important (quality of animation)	40	14	5	1	1	1	18
Very important (quality of animation)	201	83	38	10	8	6	56
Somewhat import (Artwork of characters)	143	54	23	10	11	8	37
Not important (Artwork of characters)	49	17	10	1	1	1	19
Very important (Artwork of characters)	179	70	37	9	6	3	54
Somewhat important (Artwork of setting)	177	68	37	9	7	4	52
Not important (Artwork of setting)	50	14	7	1	5	4	19
Very important (Artwork of setting)	144	59	26	10	6	4	39
Somewhat important (Personality of characters)	122	47	26	3	8	5	33
Not important (Personality of characters)	47	14	9	3	2	1	18
Very important (Personality of characters)	202	80	35	14	8	6	59
Somewhat important (Relatable themes)	163	65	40	10	9	4	35
Not important (Relatable themes)	74	22	10	1	3	3	35
Very important (Relatable themes)	134	54	20	9	6	5	40
Somewhat important (Notable voice actors)	131	53	28	9	11	6	24
Not important (Notable voice actors)	166	55	28	3	4	3	73
Very important (Notable voice actors)	74	33	14	8	3	3	13
Somewhat important (Music/Soundtrack)	189	83	31	10	7	5	53
Not important (Music/Soundtrack)	81	25	12	3	4	4	33
Very important (Music/Soundtrack)	101	33	27	7	7	3	24

The following charts analyze various factors comparing how each of the genders responded to each area. The first analysis was related to how individuals view what level of entertainment is anime. It was ranked from Entertaining with a score of 1 to Boring with a score of 5. The majority of male respondents found it highly entertaining 33.72% (N=58) while females were somewhat similar with 30.81% (N=61). Females highest ranked in the #2 category with 36.36% (N=72) and males at 29.07% (N=50). As for the other side of the spectrum, only a small portion of the respondents felt it was boring from both genders with males 5.81% (N=10) and females 4.04% (N=8).

Figure 7

Rank	Male	Female	Other
Entertaining - 1	58 (33.72%)	61 (30.81%)	1
2	50 (29.07%)	72 (36.36%)	0
3	38 (22.09%)	31 (15.66%)	0
4	16 (9.3%)	26 (13.13%)	0
Boring - 5	10 (5.81%)	8 (4.04%)	0

Entertaining vs. Boring



Considering the social acceptance of anime, a question was asked if the respondent felt anime was considered cool (score of 1) or uncool (score of 5) to enjoy anime. Results showed that women responded more favorably to men that anime is more cool than uncool. In the first ranking 29.8% of the females (N=59) while 27.91% of males (N=48) reported that anime is cool. As for the lower end, where the ranking is related to how uncool anime is reported, 8.14% of the males (N=14) and 4.55% (N=9) of the females considered this to be the case.

Figure 8 Coolness vs. Gender

Rank	Male	Female	Other
Cool - 1	48 (27.91%)	59 (29.8%)	1
2	47 (27.33%)	60 (30.3%)	0
3	46 (26.74%)	49 (24.75%)	0
4	17 (9.88%)	21 (10.61%)	0
Uncool - 5	14 (8.14%)	9 (4.55%)	0

Cool vs. Uncool

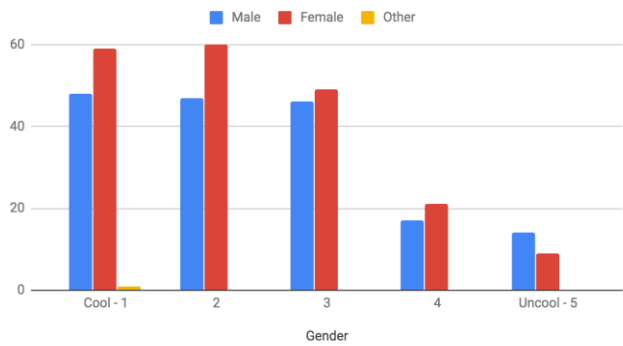
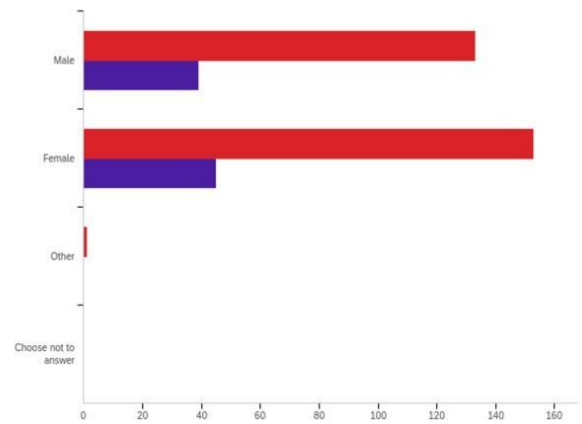


Figure 9 Gender vs. Ridicule

Q11 - Do you think some people get ridiculed or criticized for liking anime?



Opinion	Male	Female	Other
Yes	133 (77.3%)	153 (77.3%)	1
No	39 (22.7%)	45 (22.7%)	0

Have you been ridiculed or criticized?			
Ridicule Frequency	Male	Female	Other



Yes, frequently	22 (16.54%)	19 (12.42%)	0
Yes, from time-to-time	26 (19.55%)	25 (16.34%)	0
Yes, unfrequently	21 (15.79%)	12 (7.84%)	0
No, definitely not	12 (9.02%)	19 (12.42%)	1
Unknown	54 (40.6%)	78 (50.99%)	0

Focus was also placed on whether individuals who enjoy anime are known to be ridiculed and have the respondent themselves been put in this situation. Regarding the first point, both men and women strongly feel that anime viewers do get ridiculed with results of each gender at 77.3% ( male N=133 and female N=153). As for the next question if the respondents have been ridiculed, excluding the responses that were unknown due to a glitch in the system (N=132) , the majority were ridiculed at various frequencies for watching anime.

Figure 10 Correlation of general views and toxicity

		How would you perceive anime in general based on the following descriptions? - Popular	How would you perceive anime in general based on the following descriptions? - Cool:Uncool	How would you perceive anime in general based on the following descriptions? - Associated with unintelligent people	How would you perceive anime in general based on the following descriptions? - Inclusive	How would you perceive anime in general based on the following descriptions? - Entertaining:Booring	How would you perceive anime in general based on the following descriptions? - Mature:Childish	How would you perceive anime in general based on the following descriptions? - Readily available:Hard to access	How would you perceive anime in general based on the following descriptions? - Confusing	Do you think some people get ridiculed or criticized for liking anime?
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g descrip tions? - Associ ated with smart people: Associ ated with unintell igent people										
	N	371	371	371	371	371	371	371	371	371
How would you perceiv e anime in general based on the followin g descrip tions? - Inclusiv e:Exclu sive	Pearson Correlati on	.319**	.352**	.291**	1	.296**	.201**	.315**	.342**	0.039
	N	371	371	371	371	371	371	371	371	371
How would you perceiv e anime in general based on the followin g descrip	Pearson Correlati on	.475**	.665**	.448**	.296**	1	.396**	.381**	.538**	0.007

tions? - Entertaining:Boring										
	N	371	371	371	371	371	371	371	371	371
How would you perceive anime in general based on the following descriptions? - Mature:Childish	Pearson Correlation	.264**	.416**	.328**	.201**	.396**	1	.160**	.349**	-0.02
	N	371	371	371	371	371	371	371	371	371
How would you perceive anime in general based on the following descriptions? - Readily available:Hard to access	Pearson Correlation	.420**	.303**	.308**	.315**	.381**	.160**	1	.336**	0.056

	N	371	371	371	371	371	371	371	371	371
How would you perceive anime in general based on the following descriptions? - Clear: Confusing	Pearson Correlation	.394**	.491**	.373**	.342**	.538**	.349**	.336**	1	-.104*
	N	371	371	371	371	371	371	371	371	371
Do you think some people get ridiculed or criticized for liking anime?	Pearson Correlation	-0.032	-0.027	0.018	0.039	0.007	-0.02	0.056	-.104*	1
	N	371	371	371	371	371	371	371	371	371

Figure 10 shows a correlation between different general views of anime, as well as if they view it as something. The only two factors with a Pearson Correlation of at least .5 is the correlation between how cool and popular they view anime (.54), and the relation between coolness and entertaining (.66). Other correlations that are close to .5 are the relation with how cool and the view of how intelligent have to be (.49), the relation between how cool and clear anime is (.49), and the relation between how popular and entertaining anime is (.48). Otherwise,

there are no other factors that correlate above a .45. The highest absolute correlation coefficient with those who think people can get ridiculed or criticized and any general view on anime is at around  $|-0.1|$  with how clear or confusing anime is.

## **Discussion**

The quick response to the survey was appreciated considering that the respondents were being paid 25 cents for 5 to 10 minutes of their time. The payment is fairly high compared to many other Qualtrics surveys, which might have contributed to the high amount of responses within a day. It was interesting that results showed a fair amount of both genders who mainly have obtained at least some college education.

Based on the negative correlation between respondents who watch anime and the amount they watch monthly, it seems one can measure dedication to anime by how often they watch it. This can also be shown when those who watch anime more frequently tend to do more activities associated with it than those who watch less often. Two-thirds of those who watch anime at least 21 times, buy merchandise related to anime, and read manga and light novels as a result of watching anime. Considering a lot of anime are adaptations to manga and light novels, these results show consistency with frequent anime viewers.

Many people tend to watch anime for its uniqueness of storytelling, including its plot. Considering how anime has a variety of genres to choose from, storytelling should be highly considered when Americans watch anime. The focus on the story can imply how audiences who follow anime can memorize different events that happen in the anime they watch, as it is a very important aspect to them. This can also explain how voice actors do not highly contribute with an American audience, as only their voices would be recognizable when watching, which would only play a minimal factor in storytelling. Also, these actors would most likely be living in

Japan, and possibly not as well known to the American viewers as compared to actors who live in the United States. It seems as though watching anime has a minor effect on what other animated programs they tend to watch. This style in a medium seems to be more of an additional choice for people to view that does not directly affect the viewing experience of another. Anime can be enjoyed as its own entertainment choice, yet that does not mean it influences or detracts people from watching other animated programs. The decision to watch animation such as American cartoons seems to have its own factors that could be explored.

Additionally, anime seems to be mostly viewed in a positive light, as both associated genders agree that it is more on the cool and entertaining side rather than uncool and boring. There is a moderate correlation with the perception of how cool anime is, and how popular and entertaining anime is considered to them. However, it is not a perfect relationship as they can be considered two different factors. So while some people may consider anime to be popular and entertaining because of how cool it is, there are some others who may view just because of how cool anime is does not mean that it is popular or entertaining. There is less relation in other factors, including if people can be ridiculed or criticized for watching anime. This implies that these are entirely different factors that do not have contribution with one another and should be accounted for differently. Even if people were ridiculed or criticized for watching anime, as agreed to a noticeable majority of respondents, there can be a variety of factors that can contribute to such negativity.

## **Conclusion**

Anime has grown to be a worldwide cultural phenomenon over the past couple of decades. With the assistance of the Internet, its popularity has only increased through social platforms which has enabled fans to share their interests around the world. Through its

popularity, anime has grown to the point that it has built a community globally that appreciates the art form.

After my study, I can conclude that anime is indeed a worldwide phenomenon that has increased in popularity due to the internet and social platforms. Anime has grown to a point that it has created an international community of supporters who watch anime almost everyday and talk about it in everyday life. Many viewers own anime merchandise, engage in online chat platforms with other viewers, and even learn the Japanese language.

Also watching anime programs is considered to be separate from watching other animated content like Disney movies or those from Nickelodeon, which are made for a primarily U.S. audience as opposed to a Japanese one. It was very pleasing to see the response volume and results of my survey. I found that the majority of perceptions toward anime were positive with a strong appreciation of the Japanese culture. Most respondents watched anime one to five times per month and were most interested in the plot and storytelling aspects that anime has to offer its viewers. Viewers were least interested in the soundtrack of the episodes and the artwork of individual characters. Overall, it was satisfying to see the strong acceptance level and appreciating of anime.

### *Limitations*

The survey was suffering from some technical difficulties when reviewing the results. There was a lack of awareness when utilizing the Qualtrics survey in relation to the minimum character requirement on text entries thus resulting with unexpected answers. With 5 characters being the minimum requirement to respond, it led to some examples where people were adding extra zeros for their age or providing very short responses about what anime they are most familiar with. Another misfortune was that a glitch had prevented me from seeing certain



answers. For example, there was a glitch in the question that prevented me from seeing if some respondents have been ridiculed or criticized for liking anime. Despite how it was supposed to be limited down to certain responses, there were fewer responses than the amount that were excluded. However, the one with the worst amount of error was the question that requested respondents to relate their familiarity with the 22 anime listed. The glitch was so severe that it had to be ignored, as the responses aren't visible.

Other than certain technical problems with the survey, there were other limitations in the structure of the survey. For example, even if the question that asked about certain anime were to work, the specific works of anime included were based on limited information of what might be recognizable around the time. Some anime titles were added based on how relevant it was when implementing the survey, such as when *Interspecies Reviewers* was added in due to its attention in the news on the internet. Thinking about individual works of anime is a project on its own merit. While this survey considered the broad perspective of anime. The list of anime would be different from the one laid out in this survey as time goes on, which might make the results slightly varied. This can be similarly said when talking about different genres. For example, a lot of isekai, anime about characters being transported to a different world, take place in a fantasy world. The survey, however, places them as two different types of anime. There were also some factors that were not thought of before the survey was distributed. For example, there was not any inclusion of perverted or corrupt thoughts on Anime as it was not considered before the distribution of the survey. It can also be possible that certain fans of anime can play a part into negative perception towards anime, but that was not taken too much into consideration.

A major goal of this research was to have a better understanding of how people viewed animation in the United States. When trying to find academic journals in this area, it felt

difficult in obtaining a perception on certain mediums, especially with the American view of its animated content, for example the cartoons that are created in the States. This would have been an effective point to make as many forms of media are viewed differently from each other in the public, especially cultural wise. This can also affect animated content in the U.S., which is considered an inferior medium compared to live action movies there. This kind of perception on animation can shift how executive producers think about how to produce animation including the structure of a show, the length of the show, and the way they advertise. The limited view of what animation can do based on what's shown to the public can create a biased opinion on this form of media.

Since this is a survey directed to those living in the U.S., citizens who are at least 18, the paper excludes those who are considered minors or live outside in the US, such as Japan. This survey was meant to take a look at the perspective of how people view a piece of foreign media. Dedicating this survey to U.S. citizens would be a way to test this knowledge. However, having a survey similar to this outside the U.S. can alter the results of it. Depending on the country and the culture of people in it, the answers may alter based on these conditions. Also, the reason for the survey to dedicate to those 18 and over is mainly for convenience. There are certain phrases such as "hentai" that may be viewed as unsuitable for all ages. A survey that would be suited for it may be recommended to be altered in a way to exclude such data.

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