In 2009 Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie said that if you show people as only one thing Over and over again, that is what they become. She called this the danger of a single story People from other countries such as China, Korea and Japan are consistently portrayed by Western media.

The Japanese in my opinion have been the most subjected to western tropes, stereotypes, and cultural appropriation in American films with subjects like samurai ninja and the Japanese mafia frequently depicted in modern day Western cinema. Through this research I investigated the portrayal of Japanese people and their culture in contemporary media, guided by my research question: 'How has Japanese cultural identity been portrayed within the American film industry since 2000?'

In 2018, Kesuke Kimura suggested that the powerful mass media often produce misrepresentations of culture and identity, including stereotypical images that do not fully express reality. Similarly, Branson and Stafford also suggest that however realistic or compelling some media images seem, they are always a construction or representation of the real world.

These each support the notion that films can perpetuate misconstrued ideas and beliefs within society, and with this in mind it can be argued that the major presence of Japanese popular culture in western media can potentially lead to racist stereotyping. This is especially significant in countries like the United States which, according to Parrot analytics, is the world's most enthusiastic international market for anime, a crucial export of Japanese popular culture. the perpetuation of negative and stereotypical screen portrayals of Japanese people. as stated by Isabel Paneer in 2018, leave detrimental and social consequences by bleeding into how Asians are perceived outside of the media.

The primary method for my research involved the application of a framework to eight Japanese orientated films, with the framework I created combining aspects from three previously devised research ideologies. By doing so, I was able to overcome their individual limitations of only emphasizing specific themes and ideas within films, rather than observing them holistically. Firstly, I used Sean M. Tierney's strategic rhetoric of whiteness from 2006 which includes the super ethnic viability of whiteness and the necessary defeat of Asians - both connecting to the notion of white characters demonstrating adeptness in surpassing the skills of Japanese people at their own traditional practices.

Next, orientalism, which was defined by Edward Said in three ways: As a study of the orient; as a style of thought dividing the orient and occident into contrasting or opposing worlds; and as a Western style of domination by creating and controlling the identity of the orient; and finally the theory of cultural imperialism as defined by Wanwarang Maisuwong in 2012 as a domination of a more recognised culture over other cultures - a soft means of colonisation.

Alongside these ideologies I incorporated the theme of violence as an additional feature. This was prompted by my observations of the relatively high level of violence in many Japanese orientated films despite the country's low crime and murder rates. This framework acted as a scoring system for the films, with the number of points given to each acting as an indication of their potential for misrepresentation of Japanese cultural identity. The six criteria device in the framework were as follows. The films selected for the research were deliberately chosen because of the following principles they had range in their level of popularity amongst audiences and critics, address various themes, and also include a number of different genres such as drama, action, crime, and romance.

The selected films deliberately comprise of 4 from the 2000s and 4 from the 2010s, and range from a 16 to 95 percent critic score, and a 48 to 85 percent audience score on the review site rotten tomatoes. After applying these parameters these were the selected films. I initially planned to conduct a subjective analysis of these films in the portrayal of Japanese cultural identity hoping to draw some connections to past studies which discuss similar themes and ideologies. However I concluded that this method would likely incorporate unavoidable personal bias, thus prompting the creation of the objective research framework just described. So instead I planned two viewings of each film.

Firstly an initial screening which allowed for a general viewing of the film following this a second screening which then focused on applying the research framework specifically to each film, to see if any connections would appear between them. Despite this adjustment I ultimately changed direction of how I interpreted this data. The concept of comparing films for their objective score, although in some ways useful, further highlighted a major flaw of inherent subjectivity in the analysis of films. It also made me reconsider my research question which was focused on how Japanese cultural identity was portrayed something that this data didn't directly highlight.

Therefore, I decided that alongside this information I would conduct a second analysis into the most prominent themes and ideologies present within the films based, on the framework results. To further enhance and contextualize data from the media analysis, I also created a survey to draw connections between the portrayal of the Japanese and films, and how people's perceptions may be influenced by these portrayals. I used a randomized sample of 441 participants, gained through Facebook sharing, in a number of community groups that reached across the state This sample, though, showed a significant imbalance in the participant gender ratio with a far greater contribution from a female demographic, and the majority of participants coming from the 10 to 19 age bracket.

These factors meant that the survey data obtained was not representative of the entire population, thus decreasing its validity. However, although the survey was not as revealing as originally anticipated, I was able to use some of the trends revealed to reinforce aspects of qualitative data gained from the media analysis. From the eight selected films five key recurring themes were identified after acknowledging the likely inaccuracies of my research framework, due to the subjective nature of films, from most prevalent to least, these key themes included violence, the presence of white characters, the dominance of Japanese males, otherness and cultural differences, and finally the power of English in films.

For example, in five of the films I found evidence that suggested the overwhelming dominance of men in Japanese society, and the subsequent submissiveness of Japanese women. In films like the 'Outsider' and 'Memoirs of a Geisha', a number of scenes depict men committing acts of gendered violence, sexual assault and the sexualisation of women, for instance, being forcibly undressed, slapped, and sexualized at strip clubs. Data from the survey actually reinforced my findings, and provided them with greater objectivity. Participants of my survey were asked to select the three words from a list of 18, which most describe Japanese men and then Japanese women.

From those who had seen at least one of the selected films, I found that 32 percent had selected Japanese men as dominant. However, only 0.4 percent saying the same about women. The same trend was also clear when looking at the selections of the word submissive. 35 for Japanese women while only 2 percent for men.

Although there's still a level of uncertainty in the claim, I think it's reasonable to assume that films play a pivotal role in shaping the values and beliefs of people and societies. this actually supports Maisuwong's statement that films conduct a two-way communication process which influences or alters human behaviour.

When a film portrays Japanese cultural identity in a specific way the idea that people actually absorb these pieces of information is often overlooked. In 2020 especially, we have seen how rapid globalization has put the effects of racial-based stereotyping at the forefront of a number of public conflicts. Therefore, I think these are essential considerations in the production of all films. With this I believe that my research has only just reached the surface of analysing representations of Japanese cultural identity in American films.

Of course, further research could be conducted on the topic, but in reality it may be more beneficial to conduct similar studies regarding the portrayal of other ethnic groups in westernized American films. I do understand that films are an art form, which often blur reality and use fantasy to create engaging stories for audiences. After all, all films have to make money just like any other business. But considering you wouldn't walk into a public space and start shouting offensive and stereotypical things about Japanese people, why do we continue allowing films to present these ideas and beliefs to millions of people around the world, with no consequence? Thank you. [Applause]

Thanks Callum, what an excellent final provocation. I would like it very much if a lot of the American filmmakers out there applied the same level of thought and rigor to their filmmaking. And hopefully this is a start in that direction. Tell me what was the most enjoyable part of your research?

I think the most enjoyable part was probably, although it didn't turn out as significant as I intended, looking and using the survey that I conducted because it really gave an insight into how people actually viewed my subject area and some of the things I found were quite surprising. In how they related to people who had seen films compared to those who had not seen any of the films. And it kind of solidified some of my thoughts and initial interpretations of what may happen regarding and the influence these films have on people.

Yeah fantastic, it sounds like a really fascinating process. Thanks so much Callum.

[Applause]

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