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Carolyn Whittingham   April 15, 2015

Japanese Identity in Manga:

Race and Representation in *Cyborg 009* and *Afro Samurai*

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Abstract

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This paper uses the medium of manga to explore how race, ethnic difference and the Japanese perception of the self manifest in Japanese media. To do so, this paper examines two manga series, *Cyborg 009* and *Afro Samurai,* published approximately three decades apart to examine how the perception and representation of "otherness" has evolved throughout Japan's post-war history.

Using an anthropological lens for analysis, this paper focuses its discussion on identity based on a spectrum of cultural integration rooted in the notion of "hybridization." The paper explains that due to Japan's long history of appropriating and indigenizing aspects of other cultures that Japanese society inherently exists as a product of multiple generations of cultural fusion. Based on evidence in the primary sources, the paper addresses how this fusion is problematized and sometimes stigmatized, but ultimately symbolizes increasing tolerance for cultural diversity in Japan.

The paper also addresses representation in media, namely how the graphic art of manga relates culturally integrated information, and how identity-based meaning is imbued through caricature. Furthermore, the paper examines the function of racial stereotypes and stereotypical iconography in both series, and how these culturally specific markers of difference can serve to both belittle and glorify the character in question.

Finally, this paper touches on how the values communicated in the two series have impacted modern-day Japanese mentalities, and what the future holds for cultural integration and acceptance of human difference in today's Japan.

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Introduction

Since the beginning of its recorded history Japanese society has developed based on foreign codes and ideologies. Early historical records dating from the 8th century, such as the *Kojiki* or the *Nihon Shoki*, show evidence of Chinese and early Korean influences,[1] and 7th century documents like Prince Shōtoku's "Seventeen Injunctions" incorporate concepts of Buddhism and Confucianism that were foreign to Japan.[2] Though this openness to foreign (particularly Asian) civilization continued into Japan's middle ages (the proliferation of Chinese poetry and fables in Japanese literary works such as Murasaki Shikibu's *Genji Monogatari* serves as one such example), by the Edo era the perceived threat of Western religious influences, namely Christianity, caused the shogunate to issue the *Sakoku* (closed country) Edict,[3] essentially limiting Japanese exposure to outside cultures. In addition to the edict, widely circulated documents such as Aizawa Seishisai's *shinron* ("new theses") professed the preeminence of the Emperor for his lineage from the sun goddess, and discouraged Japanese contact with foreigners, and thereby encouraged the isolationist agenda that lasted until the Meiji Restoration era (1868).[4] It was this sense of pride and superiority outlined in such records that, "educate[d] the masses in Japan's unique spiritual essence (*kokutai*),"[5] and helped imbue the sense of nationalism that promulgated the desire to establish a strictly 'Japanese' identity. However, as a further overview of Japan's history shows, the notion of a uniquely Japanese identity is problematic, since Japan has always borrowed heavily from systems of thought and sociological as well as technological innovations from other nations.

For instance, despite the nation's isolation until the end of the Edo era, the beginning of the Modern period signified a return to the adoption and incorporation of foreign goods and technologies, with the most significant waves of modernization

(usually in the form of Westernization) occurring in the first decade of the Meiji Period,[6] and during the post-World War I[7] and post-Korean War[8] economic booms. For instance, in the decade that came to be referred to as the 'roaring 20s,' Japan experienced the formation of a new middle class whose increased literacy and purchasing power encouraged an individualistic modern identity.[9] However, beginning in the 1930s, Japan's desire to establish itself as a major economic and political global player analogous with the major Western powers caused yet another reevaluation of the Japanese identity, [10] this time focusing on the nation's Asian pride rather than adapting aspects of Western civilization. This shift in political agenda informed the nation's violent and somewhat dictatorial imperial crusade for regional sovereignty during the 15 years of the Greater East Asia War.

Although the ultra-patriotism borne during WWII fanned the flames of national pride in Japan, the nation's defeat, the subsequent psychological impact of the loss, as well as the Occupational presence of the U.S. in Japan all caused a sense of vulnerability to creep into the Japanese identity. By the early 50s, the Japanese sense of self once again made an about-face when the nation began experiencing a period of economic prosperity in the wake of the Korean War. As Japan gradually became wealthier in the post-Occupation years, materialism and consumer culture began dominating the social sphere to the point where identity became inseparable from consumption practices. The value of material life manifested in the re-emergence of the middle class and the family unit's possession of modern technology, such as the "three sacred treasures," or the television, washing machine and refrigerator.[11] As a result, Japan's rapid consumption of commercial, and often foreign, products led the nation to become increasingly cosmopolitan. Additionally, the increase in the purchasing power of the general populace also led to the

consumption and popularity of media, especially film. With the recent presence of the

U.S. troops on its native soil, the majority of media consumed in Japan was of

American origin, but the 1950s also saw a "Golden Age" of Japanese film, spear-

headed by prolific directors such as Kurosawa Akira and monumental films like

Godzilla (1954).[12] Furthermore, the same close proximity to the U.S.A. also resulted

in a mutual, two-way exchange of media that ultimately impacted how the U.S. and

Japan received and were respectively influenced by the works of the other. The post-

war receptiveness of the Japanese to international commodities as well as the

profusion of Japanese cultural and commercial exports therefore helped propel the

nation into international prominence as a major economic power, and encouraged the

development of a globalized society.

Given the tumultuous back-and-forth nature of Japan's acceptance and

dismissal of foreign cultural influence and the various periods where the nation has

posited itself as superior to other countries, any attempt to clearly define the Japanese

identity produces ambiguous results. In one school of thought that addresses what is

considered to be traditionally Japanese, or alternatively, the concept of

'Japaneseness,' proponents of the *nihonjinron* (theories of the Japanese people)

discourse[13] assert an essentialist framework within which they place Japan's 'unique'

identity. According to Ishibashi Mari, who is a critic of the *nihonjinron* discourse,

there are three "critical assumptions" central to this "widely held belief on

Japaneseness," which are: "a classless society, cultural superiority, and ethnic

homogeneity."[14] Yet due to the ever-fluctuating nature inherent in the Japanese

identity, many scholars, like John Lie and Ishibashi who reviewed Lie's work

Multiethnic Japan, are in opposition to these highly generalized views. Much like

Ishibashi and Lie, I also believe that the pervading notion behind the *nihonjinron*

discourse that Japan possesses a fixed and immutable identity characterized by the above qualities is false. Instead, I posit that identity is a flexible and fluid construct and, as the earlier examples from Japanese history prove, changes based on societal and temporal contexts. However, one model of identity formation that has remained consistent in defining the Japanese experience of "self" is in the nation's constant comparison to its "other." I therefore argue that Japan not only views its identity in terms of established, albeit imaginary, binary relationships with other nations, but also, and specifically, through its borrowing and adoption of aspects of life from the cultural other.

In terms of understanding this notion of "borrowing" as it relates to the Japanese identity, Joseph J. Tobin states that, "The Japanese are known to themselves and to others as an imitative people. The way this story goes, the Japanese, unable or unwilling to create, borrow. The genius of the Japanese lies not in invention but in adaptation…"[15] In other words, it is in the recreation or rebranding of a foreign innovation that Japan truly establishes its sense of self. Tobin elaborates on this notion of "imitation" by providing a series of binary relations to explain what he refers to as "an ongoing creative synthesis" in Japan's self and global image. Namely he suggests that Japan imagines itself as one half within a greater framework of parallel arrangements, namely: "the exotic with the familiar, the foreign with the domestic, the modern with the traditional, the Western with the Japanese."[16] In his 2002 book *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism*, Iwabuchi Koichi describes this practice as "Japanization." Iwabuchi describes Japanization as "Japanese indigenization or domestication of Western (primarily American) cultural influences."[17] This theory encapsulates Japan's historical penchant for taking a product or idea from another country, altering

and often improving upon it, and redistributing the modified product for export as an item of Japanese origin.

This notion of Japanization was and continues to be instrumental in the development of a modernized, and by extension, Westernized Japanese national identity, in that such processes encourage the appropriation and amalgamation of foreign commodities, behaviors and social practices into Japanese daily life. The reason this practice is unique to Japan, and differs from the general concept of globalization lies specifically in the recreation and rebranding portion of the definition. For in the booming post-Occupational era, the Japanese identity existed in a delicate impasse, where many Japanese strived to re-establish an identity that was neither xenophobic nor tainted by the Occupational influence. The solution thereby lay in the recreation of foreign products, as it was Japan's way of expressing their need to reclaim a sense of Japaneseness from the powers that subjugated it. Furthermore, Japanization helped revitalize and diversify industries that had collapsed due to wartime deficits. Though Japanized industries such as motor vehicle production, computer development and toy/figurine manufacturing thrived most significantly, and played some of the most prominent roles in the Japanization discourse, for the purpose of this particular paper, I will be examining Japan's reproduction and distribution of animation.

One of Japan's most recognizable cultural exports is its animation, marketed in the form of cartoons, comic books and most recently, video games. However, although Japan's animation has such a distinctive style that is immediately-recognizable as Japanese, many of the conventions of Japanese animation came about based on adaptations of existing innovations in Western media. Using clever integration strategies, contemporary animation features "borrowed" artistic elements

that are then fused with original components in ways that obscure any foreign cultural origins and make the subsequent product seem wholly conceived and developed by Japanese creators. This fusion ultimately leads to the creation of products that are marketed and internalized as Japanese, but which simultaneously possess foreign characteristics.[18] As these and similar innovations compound upon each other, Japanese society and the goods it produces continue to purport a culturally superior and ethnically homogenous façade of Japaneseness, while the culture and its products become globalized by the indigenization of foreign elements.

In this paper, I intend to use the medium of animation to show how Japan's concept of its own race and racial relations with other ethnic groups develop and change as a result of the normalization of cultural fusion. I shall examine two series, published three decades apart, and illustrate how over time, the hybridization of Japanese and Western cultures becomes a more widespread and accepted practice, while certain problems with racial portrayals, such as the use of stereotypical iconography, nevertheless endure. In doing so, I shall highlight the specific patterns of stereotypical representation that persist throughout the two series, in order to explain why offensive stereotypes persist in Japanese animation, and why Japan continues to polarize cultural difference in lieu of accepting and integrating foreignness with Japaneseness.

Although this medium has received a significant amount of criticism over the decades as an alleged form of low brow entertainment reserved for socially withdrawn *otaku,* or even as a solely pornographic genre,[19] animation should not be disregarded as a negligible form of media, because, as is true for all forms of media, it serves a vessel through which important cultural information is imbued and relayed. Animation therefore offers a window into the Japanese psyche. Patrick Drazen argues

as much when in the preface of the revised edition of his 2003 book *Anime Explosion:*
The What? Why? & Wow! Of Japanese Animation, he states that, "Anime are, after
all, Japan talking directly to itself, reinforcing its own cultural myths and preferred
modes of behavior."[20] Additionally, since the vast majority of Japanese animation
targets native rather than overseas audiences, animation tends to reflect Japanese
lifestyles, fantasies, beliefs and values. This premise holds true even though not all of
the worlds and scenarios projected in animation reflect real world or even realistic
events. Furthermore, although the views expressed by a series creator do not
necessarily reflect the feelings of all of his or her fellow compatriots, I argue that the
critical success of the two highlighted series suggest that the values underlining the
racial dynamics in each series resonate with Japanese audiences. For these reasons, I
will treat the content and views expressed in the source material as representations of
the Japanese populace at the respective times of publication. I draw on
anthropological perspectives regarding hybridity and identity discourse to investigate
how animation evokes discourse on race, ethnicity and how these constructs affects
the conception of identity.

      With regard to how Japanized identity manifests in animation, Iwabuchi
suggests the theory of hybridization. In his nuanced treatment of the topic he provides
two separate definitions to differentiate between the terms "hybridity" and
"hybridism." He claims that "hybridity" suggests a(n often imbalanced) amalgam of
cultures in that it "emphasizes the incommesurability of cultural difference," whereas
his theory of "hybridism" suggests a form of assimilation, that "assumes that anything
foreign can be domesticated."[21] In other words, "hybridity" implies a partial mixing
where the combined elements are still independently recognizable, whereas
"hybridism" suggests a complete integration of two separate identities that are so

tightly interweaved that a new distinct identity is borne.

However, further complicating the discourse on hybridization is the idea of dualism, or the concept of two seemingly opposing aspects existing simultaneously within the same body. Dualism suggests a contention or opposition between the two elements at question within the subject. Furthermore, the concept echoes the "us vs. them" binary within which Japan positions itself against its other in the ever-changing formation of its national identity. I present dualism in this context as an original idea not backed by any specific ongoing academic discourse. However, the inclusion of the terminology is imperative, since I argue that in the grand scheme of defining Japanese identity politics from the post-war period onwards, the three concepts of dualism, hybridity and hybridism, exist on a spectrum ranging from the least to the most amount of foreign cultural integration. In this sense, I differentiate this idea of dualism from Iwabuchi's concept of "hybridity" above, in that dualism merely suggests the existence of two features (in this case, ethnicities) coinciding within one body without any integration, whereas "hybridity" implies that some integration exists, but the coinciding elements are unbalanced and still distinctly recognizable.

Hybridization in Japanese media forms and cultural exports is therefore essential to the discussion of Japanese race relations and identity, because it functions as a means through which Japan navigates its role in the post-war world. According to Tobin: "in a changing Japan, what people consume may be as important as what they produce in shaping a sense of self." In other words, by the mid-1950s, a renewed commitment to capitalism caused a proliferation of cultural borrowing and commodity consumption/production, which in turn led to a resurgence in the aforementioned practices of Japanization. Thus, the purpose of consumption was not necessarily to become more foreign, but to assert pride in being the Japanese who

could take foreign innovations and improve upon them. Therefore, precisely due to the Japanese domestication and rebranding of Western products or conventions, hybridization occurred as an unintentional albeit unavoidable consequence.

As shall be evidenced in the textual analysis to come, by the 1960s when cosmopolitanism was not quite a mainstream mentality, Japan still dealt with the acceptance of ethnic other in terms of creating a dualistic dynamic between "Japanese" and the "other." While by the 1990s, cultural mixing was not only more widely practiced than it was three decades prior, but it was seen as 'cool' in many regards, and the notion of "hybridity" played out prominently in contemporary media as well as in scholarship, like Iwabuchi's, on defining identity. Finally, the concept of "hybridism," or a perfect fusion of two or more cultures, does not present in either series, because the Japanese have yet to consider the complete integration of the self and other as a means of legitimate identification. In terms of the three points on the spectrum, I claim that the gradual shift from the least foreign integration (dualism) to the most (hybridism) directly correlates with how the amount, and acceptance of foreign commodity consumption and Japanization increased over the years. In other words, the concept of the contemporary Japanese self is inherently tied to its history of accepting and not accepting the creeping impact of the other, and if the trend of integration continues to positively increase, soon Japan will be recognized as a nation comprised of hybrids rather than of homogeneity. Therefore, using the two specific texts I will show how this sense of identity moves from least integrated with the foreign other to most integrated as a result of Japan becoming more cosmopolitan in the three-decade period between the 1960s and the 1990s.

Through this three-point spectrum model, I propose a new way of thinking about identity and cultural integration and suggests that there is a considerable margin

for mobility among these categories. Furthermore, this paper looks at not only the adverse impact of stereotypical representation but also at its objective and positive functions. (i.e. as a means of authentication). In doing so, and by highlighting the historical relevance of the primary sources, this study shows that a nation's media products provides an accurate snapshot of the country's political and social history at the time of the product's publication. Ultimately, in juxtaposing these two works that have never been studied in tandem before, this paper shows how despite any ostensible disparities, both relay important information about the Japanese identity.

Structurally, chapter 1 consists of a review of the literature on race and hybridity, and discussions of the historical context and use of animation techniques incorporated throughout this paper. In addition, this first chapter also includes relevant definitions of the theoretical tools and terminology used to frame the arguments within, as well as information other scholars in the field have contributed to similar topics and how this project with enrich the existing well of scholarship on Japanese media and race dynamics.

Chapter 2 provides a critical analysis of Ishnomori Shōtarō's series *Cyborg 009* and the impact of its politically charged messages within the tumultuous Cold War backdrop of the 1960s. Within this chapter, notions of hybridity come into question in terms of how the series' main character battles with his listless feeling of inadequacy and anger towards his mixed heritage, and how the relationships among the cast of nine ethnically diverse soldiers reflect the greater scenario of Japan's cultural relations with the represented nations.

Chapter 3 examines Okazaki Takeshi's series *Afro Samurai* and how hybridization manifests in the form of the main character who happens to be a black samurai. Furthermore, this series shows how by the late 1990s, though the Japanese

seem to have a widespread acceptance of Western culture, rampant use of stereotypical imagery proves that absolute East/West hybridity still remains problematized.

Lastly, the conclusion addresses how the mediation between the self and other manifest in modern day Japan, and highlights how the final point on the spectrum, hybridism, still eludes Japanese society. In addition, I reiterate the importance of this project to the overall field of Japanese cultural studies, as well as my limitations in composing a paper of this scale, and how future permutations of this research may develop.

<u>Chapter 1: Literature Review</u>

In order to craft this project on the basis of an argument of hybridity, I relied on the works of mostly American scholars who addressed specific interaction with Japan and its ethnic others, and how the points where the cultures intersect might inform the Japanese conception of the self. Within this framework, three especially noteworthy thematic threads arose and proved to be rather engaging in terms of how the models of thought impacted the emergence of cultural fusion. Namely, the scholastic discussions of the black male body, the artistic portrayal of race in animation, and Iwabuchi Koichi's work on consumerism and commercial cultural exchange in Asia, all informed the direction of this project significantly.

DICUSSIONS OF THE BLACK MALE BODY

An understanding of the treatment of the black body in Japanese society is crucial to the discourse on the fused ethnic identity of Afro, the main character of *Afro Samurai.* I framed my discussion of race in the series based considerably on the hybridized figure of the main character, that is, a black samurai. One scholar who has done a considerable amount of work examining the conundrum of blackness in Japan is an anthropologist named John G. Russell, who has a particularly keen interest in African American/African diasporic studies and their manifestation in Japan. In three of Russell's works[22] he discusses the presence of stereotyping and othering of the black body, and specifically notes the ambivalence, and to some extent ignorance, of the Japanese population towards the appropriation and caricaturization of black culture. He claims however, that many Japanese are not at fault for their seemingly unconscious bigotry, but that the meanings, both pejorative and spectacular,

associated with blackness come from the adoption of socialized Western bias. In one article Russell states that the negative and/or sensationalized impression of blackness widely held throughout Japan stems from "images derived from Western ethnocentrism and cultural hegemony," and that "the position blacks have come to occupy in the Japanese hierarchy of races not only echoes Western racist paradigms but is borrowed from them."[23] This notion of appropriated and domesticated foreign mentalities links back to Iwabuchi's notion of Japanization referenced in the introduction, (in that the Japanese adopt Western discriminatory beliefs and internalize them) and offers a place for my own analytical interjection. For what Russell aspires to prove in all three of his articles is how the Japanese appropriation of black culture serves in many cases to stigmatize black otherness and alterity, while this paper goes beyond Russell's critical and negative approach to acculturation, and uses the same ideas to examine the presence of and potential for a Japanese acceptance of ethnic hybridity. Furthermore, what Russell's arguments regarding acculturation fail to acknowledge is the notion that this adoption is distinct from practices of globalization in other cultures, in that Japanization played and still plays a significant role in reaffirming the Japanese identity vis-à-vis its position as a major global superpower.

Other scholarship that focused on the role of blackness in Japan positioned the black struggle for equality, and black people's tendency for rebellion as a comparable experience to Japan's desire to gain recognition and respect during WWII.[24] Scholars like Ian Condry discuss the sense of dissatisfaction with Japanese selfhood, particularly as it relates to the youth in the aftermath of Japan's burst economic bubble. His 2007 article "Yellow B-Boys, Black Culture, and Hip-Hop in Japan: Toward a transnational cultural politics of race," particularly focuses on the influx of

hip hop culture in Japan and how blackness is seen as a cool and desirable spectacle. In addition, Condry also addresses how in an attempt to achieve this "coolness" or in some cases, in an effort to reproduce hip hop music/lifestyle authentically, many Japanese distastefully appropriate and caricature black behavior. Nina Cornyetz also addresses the idea of black spectacle and the desire towards possessing facets of a black identity in her 1994 article, "Fetishized Blackness: Hip hop and racial desire in contemporary Japan." The works of these two scholars introduce the concept that Japanese youths (especially in the late 1980s and early 1990s) struggle to establish their own individualism and identity, and therefore they desire the promise of coolness innate in black body. These two articles therefore provide examples of how certain Japanese attempt cultural fusion by adopting practices belonging to a different ethnic group. Specifically, both authors cite "imitation"[25] and "borrowed expression"[26] as the primary means of creating a unique sense of self, but argue that any attempt to pay true homage to the black body is lost due to apathy towards their historical struggle for equality and/or a lack of understanding towards the history of the black frustration that led to their rebellion. Finally, both also highlight this misunderstanding of intent behind the imitation as the primary obstruction in achieving perfect hybridity, namely, crossing the border of imitation into the realm of authenticity. In this regard, I agree with both scholars as my project also aims to show how "borrowing" serves as a significant means through which to define oneself. However, what these sources lack and this paper provides, are discussions on how these notions of borrowing blackness challenge the construction of selfhood depending on the amount by which any individual subject is willing to integrate the foreign into their sense of Japaneseness.

Another critical aspect of my project is how the historical contexts of both

Cyborg 009 and Afro Samurai impacted the narrative content and the ways in which the characters within each tale interacted with one another. In this regard, the works of three scholars each provided nuanced arguments about racial perception while simultaneously painting vivid historical backdrops within which to frame the primary sources. Namely, Wagatsuma Hiroshi's 1967 article: "The Perception of Skin Color in Japan," Koshiro Yukiko's 2003 article: "Beyond an alliance of color: The African American impact on modern Japan," and Michael Molasky's chapter "A darker shade of difference" in his 1999 book *The American Occupation of Japan and Okinawa: Literature and Memory.* Wagatsuma's article provided specific examples of how the Japanese perceived skin color (and the races attached to them) from as early as the pre-Modern era, and even more interestingly, what practices they engaged in to emulate the most socially desirable coloring depending on the specific time in history. Evidence from the primary sources, especially *Cyborg 009*, positively correlated with the claims made in Wagatsuma's article, however, given than Wagatsuma framed his argument based on a simple black-white-yellow skin color triad, his work fails to articulate any preferential treatment that the Japanese may have felt for specific ethnicities under the overarching category of "whiteness." Since *Cyborg 009* deals specifically with the treatment of individual identities, Wagatsuma's generalized survey of skin color politics failed to address the multi-faceted, nuanced construction of the self that this paper provides. Similarly, although Molasky's article provided examples of the portrayals of the black other in post-war and post-Occupational media, and therefore provided a framework within which to discuss media published during the 1950s and 60s, the reduction of his discussion on race to a simple black-white binary only addresses a small fraction of the loaded and politically charged messages that I argue *Cyborg 009* attempts to convey about race. Koshiro's article

covered a wider swath of time and geography and was thus best suited to see where Japan and its racial perceptions and relations lay on a global scale, from the pre-war era straight through the end of the Cold War. In particular, Koshiro's take on Japan's crusade in Asia during WWII as analogous to African American struggle to achieve equality in the U.S. prior to the Civil Rights Movement shed light on the manner in which Japan felt victimized and inferior to the "superior" white other. Additionally, Koshiro also argues that WWII caused some Japanese to experience the sense of a "dualistic identity"[27] where they felt both modern (and therefore white) but simultaneously Third World (or colored). Though Koshiro's set up demonstrated the malleability of the Japanese perception of their national identity, my take on dualism differs in the sense that my definition does not single out one specific dualistic relationship that emerges in the Japanese identity discourse.

THE ARTISTIC PORTRAYAL OF RACE IN ANIMATION

In addition to the scholarship specifically covering the treatment of the black body in Japanese society, my research also included the examination of broader works addressing the treatment of race in Japanese animation. In particular, I came across an article specifically examining how race is depicted linguistically in *Afro Samurai*. Though Frank Bramlett's 2012 article focused on an analysis of linguistic codes in English rather than the potential variations in Japanese language uses among black and non-black characters, his article outlined field-specific methodology to discuss language choice and the prevalence of offensive stereotypes in animation.

Bramlett's main argument is that, "Characters who are authentic use authentic language."[28] In attempting to prove this claim, he addresses issues of characterized

identity, and how the use of stereotypical visual and linguistic portrayals impacts the believability of a character. He suggests that linguistic variations can have potentially good outcomes as well as poor ones, and that these differences "[function] within the political context as both a stigmatizing sign and as an authenticating style."[29] He believes that if the intention is to fuel negative stereotyping and to create grotesque caricatures then the use of non-standard to dialectical language will be demeaning. On the other hand, if the intention is to portray a genuine experience, using contrasting linguistic styles to indicate disparities among different races of characters can help establish realistic and authentic characterizations. Based on the evidence Bramlett provides, his arguments about authenticity are not only believable but quite apparent in the *Afro Samurai* series. The relevance of his discussion manifests in my arguments about the hybrid nature of the main character, especially with regard to how his linguistic style suggests behaviors that are both Japanese and representative of African American males. Therefore the fusion of the main character, Afro's, linguistic coding helps prove the how he embodies a mixture of multiple cultures. However, where Bramlett disappoints is in his solitary examination of English language sources, and his complete failure to address the existence of the same or similar linguistic codes in Japanese.

In terms of critically discussing otherness in graphical art, Bramlett quotes scholar D. P. Royal and writes that, "comic artists 'may expose, either overtly or through tacit implication, certain recognized or even unconscious prejudices held by them and/or their readers.'"[30] This point ties into the prior discussion of idiosyncratic consumption and production habits, and shows for every individual creator or consumer, it is difficult to deduce whether bias is deliberate or involuntary. He also claims that with regard to historical discourse on the other, "in comic art, there is

always the all-too-real danger of negative stereotype and caricature, which strips others of any unique identity and dehumanizes by means of reductive iconography…"[31] This idea suggests that in order to convey a desired meaning, artists are often forced to glean details from established (and often negative) generalizations. Also with regards to artistry, Bramlett references scholar Marc Singer who says that the art styles in comic books and animation "can 'perpetuate stereotypes, either through token characters who exist purely to signify racial clichés or through a far more subtle system of absence and erasure that serves to obscure minority groups even as the writers pay lip service to diversity.'"[32] Singer's point here touches upon the problematic issue that ambiguity has the potential to serve just as much good as bad. As I prove in chapter 2, these simplified and often-caricatured character models also present in manga like Ishinomori's and both stigmatize and authenticate the ethnicities of certain characters by perpetuating the stereotypes associated with them.

Finally he concludes that although the discussion of intention is crucial, in the end, how characters are perceived depends on the subjectivity of the consumers. He believes that audiences respond to the representations of certain characters "through their understanding of linguistic authenticity, their expectations – stereotyped or not – of linguistic performance."[33] In other words, consumers project their own personal knowledge and experiences onto each character and pass judgment on them according to their own belief systems.

Upon delving into the scholarship surrounding race in animation, the influence of Iwabuchi's work became apparent. For among the scholastic work focusing on racial representation and identity politics in animation, many scholars cited Iwabuchi and his concept of *mukokuseki* or "statelessness." According to Rayna Denison, who discusses the transcultural consumption and commodification of Japanese anime in

her 2011 article, "Transcultural creativity in anime: Hybrid identities in the production, distribution, texts and fandom of Japanese anime," the term functions in two ways, namely, "to suggest the mixing of elements of multiple cultural origins, and to imply the erasure of visible ethnic and cultural characteristics."[34] She argues that although anime is created primarily for the domestic Japanese market, more recently, anime has been created, or re-created globally, as a transcultural commodity. As a result, in order to make anime more marketable on an international scale, many anime now feature characters and settings that have been constructed with elements that either hybridize or erase identifiable characteristics associated with specific cultures. Chapter 3 shows how the innovations that Denison discusses manifest completely in *Afro Samurai*, which was such a bold undertaking in terms of its attempt to seem culturally neutral, that it was never even originally intended for a Japanese release.

Another scholar, Amy Shirong Lu performed a study and published her findings about whether or not the intended race of anime characters was distinguishable by their facial features. Though her study did provide some key insights into how individual psychology plays into one's perception of race in a highly simplified artistic rendering, the fact that Lu's study focused on the perceptions of American audiences rather than of Japanese audiences diminished the overall worth of her paper to this project. However, Lu's scrutiny of Iwabuchi's idea of anime as a "culturally odorless commodity,"[35] and her suggestion that the influence of Western culture and Disney-inspired animation style led to the phenomenon of "ethnic bleaching"[36] among anime characters was an interesting take on Iwabuchi's idea, and in chapters 2 and 3 I demonstrate how this notion presents in characters within the two franchises that this paper addresses. Furthermore, her analysis of what it means to portray a

human through art was relevant in terms of discussing the medium of animation in general. She states that the faces of anime characters "share many similarities with caricatures: an exaggeration of differences, distinctiveness, simplification of lines and borders, and abbreviation,"[37] and this is so because artistic portraits are "graphical representations and not indexical images."[38] In other words, due to the essential fact that anime and manga are art forms, it is inherently impossible to portray characters with the analogous detail a photograph might convey, and so stereotypical association is almost inevitable.

Additionally, she included and cited a considerable amount of information on what cognitive psychologists have deduced about innate human reactions to interpersonal difference. For instance, she cites that "cognitive scientists have shown that people spontaneously stereotype others based in race whether they intend to or not."[39] She states that this social perception – this process of forming an impression of others – affects how "certain traits will influence how an object is perceived."[40] As in, there are certain physical characteristics that will automatically mark difference in the minds of viewers. Therefore, Lu illustrates that though perception is subjective, there are specific markers that are understood universally. This discussion of the potential linkage between perception and stereotypical association are relevant to both series in this paper, but most specifically in my examination of how physical features denote race in *Cyborg 009*.

Finally, a third set of scholars, Dana Fennell et al., reference Iwabuchi's notion of *mukokuseki* in their research on how race and gender are portrayed in anime. These authors discuss that the stripping away of cultural signifiers, implicit in Iwabuchi's concept of a product being "culturally odorless," causes anime characters to establish their own race – one that is separate from anything existing in the realm of human

existence – or cause them to lack a notion of race entirely. This claim was especially ambiguous in that this mentality merely creates a façade of racial transcendence, which is misleading because nowhere in the world has managed to create a post-racial society. Therefore I posit the idea that a creation of an entirely new race serves as an extension of my three-point cultural hybridization theory.

IWABUCHI ON CONSUMERISM AND CULTURAL EXPORTS

Despite the other scholars' employment of Iwabuchi's theoretical tools to discuss anime and racial perception based on American audiences, Iwabuchi's writing actually focuses primarily on the nature of Japanese product distribution in East and Southeast Asia. This innovation was therefore quite disappointing, since records of a Japanese scholar's perspective on the intersections of race, media, and globalization are few and far between. However, Iwabuchi nevertheless provides compelling arguments regarding his stance on the Japanese self-identity on an international scale, and the theoretical tools referred to by other scholars still remain relevant to this project.

Within his discussion of the booming success of Japanese commodities and media in Asia, Iwabuchi attempts to drive home with a criticism of the way in which Japan has approached the construction of its modern identity. Harkening back to the *nihonjinron* discourse, he states that Japan has always had an "obsession with the uniqueness of its own culture,"[41] and it is precisely this pride and intense nationalism that fueled the country's wartime expansionist mentality, but has also caused the country to strictly monitor and selectively export its commodities in an attempt to create the most suitable and ideal global image of Japan. Iwabuchi's stance is that

Japan is less concerned about representing itself genuinely, but instead prioritizes the conception and marketing of a specific, tailored image. The goal of this carefully constructed image is to improve the country's overall reputation for the sake of mitigating feelings of Japan as an oppressor, and to ensure maximum success in global markets. However, I found this insincerity to be somewhat problematic, because it invalidates the façade through which Japan expresses its identity. This notion therefore causes me to doubt the validity of Iwabuchi's claim, since evidence in the primary sources and other scholarship suggests that Japan does indeed struggle with its projection of the "self," rather than the careful manipulation of the nation's image that Iwabuchi suggests. Furthermore, even though I buy that every industry aspires to secure the maximum profit by just about any means, this method of active image manipulation ultimately cultivates a discrepancy between a "real" Japan and a "fantasy" one.

Regardless of motivation, Iwabuchi argues that it is in this very attempt to achieve success in the global markets that the concept of "Japanization" mentioned in the introduction comes into play. He uses the term to refer to the fact that Japan circulates Japanized products that are appealing in Asia due to their simultaneous combination of American novelty and a familiar Asian touch. He associates the success of Japanese exports to this hybrid nature, in which "the appeal of Japanese popular culture lies in its subtle indigenization of American popular culture, making it suitable to "Asian tastes,"" and that in doing so, "Japan has had a special leading role in constructing the sphere of Asian popular culture."[42]

Japanization not only proves the strength of Western influence, but it also explains how early American exports such as the beloved work of Walt Disney and other cartoonists have had a significant impact on the artistry seen in modern Japanese

comics and animation. In fact, many noteworthy authors and artists, like the revered "Godfather of Manga" Tezuka Osamu, have even cited Disney's work as a source of inspiration. With this knowledge, my research topic becomes exceedingly pertinent because domestication of a foreign product does not necessarily equate to the understanding of the roots, history or specific cultural significance of imbued imagery to the culture of origin. Therefore, just as Iwabuchi mentioned previously, cultural commidification becomes less about a substantiative representation of an actual culture but more focused on creating a certain image or achieving a specific aesthetic that best suits the global markets. Iwabuchi goes on to explain this aesthetic in terms of what he describes as "cultural odor."

According to Iwabuchi, "The influence of cultural products on everyday life…cannot be culturally neutral," because, "Any product has the cultural imprint of the producing country, even if it is not recognized as such."[43] He refers to this imprint as the "cultural odor" of a given commodity. In refining his definition of this specialized jargon, he states: "I use the term *cultural odor* to focus on the way in which cultural features of a country of origin and images or ideas of its national, in most cases, stereotyped way of life are associated *positively* with a particular product in the consumption process." (author's emphasis)[44] However, Iwabuchi then goes on to claim that while products cannot ever really be culturally neutral, they can lack a specific or recognizable "odor." Based on this notion, Iwabuchi subsequently introduces his belief that the products most widely and successfully disseminated from Japan all possess an "odorless" quality. More specifically, the culturally odorless products to which Iwabuchi refers are the "three C's: consumer technologies (such as VCRs, karaoke, and the Walkman); comics and cartoons (animation); and computer/video games."[45] This declaration relates back to the idea that the most

popular cultural forms produced by Japan are affected by the impact of foreign indigenization, and due to the appropriation of Western elements, these products no longer have a distinct nor definite Japanese "fragrance." Iwabuchi believes that this connection to odor and Japanization accounts for the popularity and widespread success Japanese products have seen in all global markets, and particularly in Asia.

To further hone his explanation of the "odor" terminology, Iwabuchi is careful in noting that, "The cultural odor of a product is also closely associated with racial and bodily images of a country of origin."[46] And in using this clarification, he also specifically points out that the three C's he mentioned earlier, "are cultural artifacts in which a country's bodily, racial, and ethnic characteristics are erased or softened."[47] In other words, he specifically highlights that a lack of Japaneseness is a defining characteristic of Japan's major categories of cultural exports. Once again, this leads me to consider my own research critically, and contemplate what impact a cognizant effacing of characteristic and corporeal identity has on the conception of specific character designs in anime and manga. To contemplate the potential ramifications of ethnically-disassociated portrayals most effectively, it is important to touch upon Iwabuchi's introduction of another key piece of vocabulary: the concept of *mukokuseki*. He defines this term as: ""something or someone lacking any nationality," but also implying the erasure of racial and ethnic characteristics or a context, which does not imprint a particular culture or country with these features."[48] He presents this idea to express his belief that the foundation of the global identity Japan has constructed for the sake of marketing itself and its products internationally is based on a hybrid dynamic where the cultural products are at once Japanese yet lacking in "Japaneseness." He articulates a certain contention with this issue of hybridized values where he appears to be conflicted by a euphoria concerning the

global popularity of the mukokuseki products while simultaneously lamenting that their acclaim cannot be separated from an expression of non-Japaneseness. Iwabuchi thus presents an interesting conundrum in which he ponders: "If it is indeed the case that the Japaneseness of Japanese animation derives, consciously or unconsciously, from its erasure of physical signs of Japaneseness, is not the Japan that Western audiences are at a long last coming to appreciate, and even yearn for, an animated, race-less and culture-less, virtual version of "Japan"?"[49] Given than the focus of his writing does not truly revolve around Western consumption habits, Iwabuchi leaves this question open for contemplation.

I approached Iwabuchi's work hoping to find answers, from Japanese perspective, on how the concepts of "cultural odor," "Japanization" and "mukokuseki" might inform the nature of racial expression in anime and manga. What I gleaned was many apparent contradictions within the various ways Iwabuchi has suggested that one might discuss the nature of Japan and its other. For instance, the term "mukokuseki" implies an erasure or lack of a specific cultural presence within a certain product. If one were to apply this notion to anime or manga, that would suggest that the characters cannot be aligned with any given race, or that racial indicators are significantly nullified, or that a geographic setting is indistinct. So then what if these characters happened to be drawn with offensive, racially-charged features, like say, an afro with a 3 foot circumference? Are consumers meant to assume that no harm has been done since the character in question has not been explicitly associated with a known race or ethnicity, and in the absence of a confirmed connection between physical or behavioral features and an ethnic origin the portrayal cannot be considered subversive? For if that were the case, what would stop me from taking an extreme standpoint, and assuming that a "culturally odorless" label is

merely a clever way for the Japanese to mask racism without having to worry about negative backlash? Or alternatively, if "culturally odorless" is the goal, I would then question why artists would create ethnic-looking characters in the first place. Perhaps the goal is merely to erase the Japaneseness that big marketers feel is so unappealing, and in doing so fill the gap with arbitrarily exotic depictions of a cultural other. Therefore, in the following chapters, I hope to highlight how cultural hybridity and the erasure of offensive stereotyping might be the solution to Japan's apparent issue with racial depiction and acceptance.

Chapter 2: Cyborg 009

Cyborg 009 is a manga series created by the late Ishinomori Shōtarō and originally published in 1964. Ishinomori was a prolific artist in his time, and his legacy continues today. He was a disciple of Tezuka Osamu, who was given the moniker of "God" or "Father of Manga," and produced numerous genre-defining and highly influential works over the course of his life. In addition to the renowned *Cyborg 009*, Ishinomori is also responsible for creation of *Kamen Rider*, one of the most prominent household names in Japan's superhero franchise, and *Super Sentai*, a series that cemented the superhero team genre in Japan and which served as source material for the American *Power Rangers* franchise. Ishinomori's contribution to the world of manga was so monumental that he was even posthumously awarded the Guinness World Record for the most comics published by one author.

Within all of his science fiction works, Ishinomori was committed to conveying his passionate stance against communism, war and wartime atrocities, and his bold position towards the dangers of scientific advancement in the hands of self-serving world leaders and business conglomerates. Quite notably, Ishinomori treats each of these issues in a nonpartisan manner, pointing out flaws in the ideologies of various nations, including his own.[50] This work in particular was groundbreaking in the 1960s for Ishinomori's attempts to break down and challenge Japanese and worldwide notions of racism, corrupt power structures through portrayal of an ethnically diverse cast of characters working together towards a greater good.

Cyborg 009 features nine cyborg soldiers who each represent a specific and different ethnic background, namely: a child from Russia, an American street gangster, a French ballerina, a blond haired, blue-eyed German, a Native American, a Chinese farmer, a British drunk, an African about to be sold into slavery and a half-

Japanese rebel ostracized for his otherness. Each character was abducted, and converted into cyborgs against their wills to serve as weapons for an evil organization attempting to start a third world war. The nine cyborgs wrestle to maintain their humanity despite the cruel experiments they have undergone, and instead find solace in their common grief despite their dissimilar backgrounds, and band together to thwart the organization that exploited them. By examining the visual elements of Ishinomori's illustrations, how race is characterized as politically motivated in the narrative, and the historical context surrounding the work's publication, I intend to reveal the ways in which *Cyborg 009* addresses Japan's perception of global racial relations and their own national identity.

ARTISTIC INNOVATIONS AND PROBLEMATIC DEPICTIONS

Ishinomori's art (along with that of many of the artists mentored or inspired by Tezuka) features simplistic yet highly stylized illustrations, and often reduces the depiction of characters to crude, and occasionally offensive caricatures. In *Cyborg 009* Ishinomori uses highly stereotyped imagery in the artistic portrayal of the cyborgs as a means to create characters that are distinct and recognizable, in part due to their exaggerated racialized characteristics, and therefore more appealing and accessible to the greatest audience. In doing so, his characters became authentic and relatable, and through them he could easily convey his larger ideas about war, political manipulation and racial relations. To understand how this seemingly counter-intuitive methodology worked successfully in the oeuvre, one must first understand the critical approach to addressing graphic art, and the history behind the establishment and introduction of the stereotypical racial depictions present in the

work to Japan.

In the discussion of identity and representation in graphic art, D. P. Royal writes that, "Comics are a heavily coded medium that rely on stereotyping as a way to concentrate narrative effectiveness." He goes on to say that, "unlike film, where the characters have more time to develop, graphic narrative, with its relatively limited temporal space, must condense identity along commonly accepted paradigms."[51] In other words, due to limitations such as budget, labor constraints and panel rationing, stereotyping is a technique employed to convey meaning most productively. This approach capitalizes on existing ideologies within a society and exploits them in ways that triggers the release of internalized sentiments, and therefore causes readers to project their own understanding onto a subject lacking explicit explanation. Although Royal applies these notions in the context of legendary writer/illustrator Will Eisner, his points are valid across the larger, international graphic novel genre.

For instance, comic book scholar Scott McCloud mentions a similar idea in his 1993 book *Understanding Comics.* He claims that in the medium of graphic art, the use of icons, or highly simplified representations of images possessing more complex meanings, are essential because of the freedom with which they allow artists and readers to project their own interpretations. The lack of realism is crucial, because it allows readers to add the missing information that a more detailed drawing might provide. He claims the more realistic the portrait or the landscape, the more likely the image will invoke specific feelings, whether good or bad in the reader. Furthermore, the simplicity of art in comics is integral to the success of the medium, due to the necessity for artists, and their assistants or production teams to reproduce images of the same characters and settings for each individual panel. As a result, many artists provide the bare minimum amount of information to convey a meaning or message

about a particular image. For example, Walt Disney gave Mickey Mouse large ears, a snout with a round nose and a long thin tail to convey mouse-like traits. Another artist might draw an image of the Eiffel Tower in the background of a panel to let the reader know a story takes place in Paris. Similarly, when it comes to portraying race, for the convenience of relaying contextual information quickly and efficiently, simplicity is once again essential, and so many artists rely on iconography specific to the culture of their target audience to represent racial difference.

The problem herein lies with the power of interpretation an artist bestows upon his or her readership in the form of a simplified image, for whatever an artist portrays may or may not coincide with an audience's value system or overall understanding of the material. Therefore, even though an artist may not interpret a means of artistic characterization as having a particular positive or negative connotation, certain members of his or her readership might nevertheless imbue specific images with emotional value. This matter of subjective interpretation is further problematized by the inconsistency of stereotyping among different cultures. Thus, across cultures, and even within the same culture, socialized belief systems cause individuals to react to media in a variety of ways. In the case of Ishinomori's work, foreign stereotypes managed to reach the shores of Japan through cultural imports, and found a place within its artistic and narrative vocabulary via processes of Japanization. The effects of the appropriated imagery were shocking at the time for Japanese audiences and are haunting even today for their bold candor.

Ishinomori's mentor, Tezuka Osamu, also engaged in practices of Japanization, and based on his exposure to and admiration for Western artists such as Walt Disney and characters like Betty Boop, he adapted the "large eyes" style now synonymous with Japanese animation.[52] [53] However, with the adoption of Western

artistic vocabulary, certain types of racially charged iconography also found their way into the pages of Japanese manga. To once again use Tezuka as an example, his work *Jungle Emperor (Janguru Taitei)*, serialized from 1950-1954, featured "black primitives" with "bulging eyes, misshapen ears, and bulbous white lips" which John G. Russell notes was "a depiction not noticeably different from that which prevailed in American animated cartoons of the same period."[54] This, and many of the offensively stereotyped imagery that become incorporated in early manga works remained a convention in Japanese popular culture and media forms long after similar depictions became objectionable in the West. These portrayals remained uncontested and avoided scrutiny largely in part because Japan never experienced a Civil Rights movement akin to what occurred in the U.S. Although Koshiro writes that, "The Japanese media, for its part, reported African American struggles on a regular basis so the Japanese public could keep abreast with [the black power movement]," the fact that stereotypical depictions of minority groups remained unaltered is indicative of the underrepresentation of Westerners, especially Western people of color, in Japan. In fact, in many cases this distance between the Japanese and foreign ethnic others came about simply because many Japanese people had almost no exposure to ethnic groups such as Africans or African Americans and Native Americans except from word of mouth, texts, and art from the white, Western populaces who marginalized them.

In *Cyborg 009,* this simplicity manifests in both the unadorned nature of the manga itself as well as in the characters and settings depicted in the narrative art. For instance, aside from the full-page, more abstracted art featured in expositional pages at the beginning and end of certain chapters, the manga itself features a standard-practice use of clean, divisional paneling with sparse attention paid to the objects or setting in the background of any given panel. The character art also features simple

line work, and the designs seldom feature any sort of gradated shading. Instead, the art suggests darker shades by fully inking the given object but varying intensity. For instance, a character with brown hair wearing a black suit will have his/her hair and outfit completely filled with color with no shading to suggest shadows, but the black ink used to fill the suit will be darker than the ink used to depict the lighter shade of the character's hair. Furthermore, in terms of expressing emotion, rather than attempt to present intricate emotional reactions based off of actual human facial expressions, the art of the art in the series will use highly-exaggerated codes like an open mouth, wide eyes and raised eyebrows to express shock, or gritted teeth and balled-up fists to represent anger. The art also features codified iconography imbued with implicit meaning to articulate certain sensations, like motions lines to show fast speeds or a three-pronged 'vein' bulging on a character's forehead to suggest irritation.

This simplified style also manifests in the ethnic representation of the main cast of characters. In order to highlight the specific distinctions between each character, and to create a sense of distinctive individualism in terms of their designs, tropes associated with each of the ethnicities embodied by the main cast are considerably exaggerated, to the point where each depiction is highly caricatured. So although Ishinomori attempted to create an ethnically diverse team to represent how people from different backgrounds can come together and towards a common good, he nevertheless portrays the ethnic differences in ways that could be considered objectionable. Whether he does so out of ignorance of the offensive ways in which the iconographic stereotyping might be interpreted, or whether he does so intentionally to highlight and criticize the hateful ways subjugated ethnicities are portrayed in the media is unknown. However, the fact remains that the simplified, and therefore stereotyped ways in which Ishinomori expresses ethnic difference inform the ways in

which Japan came to understand racial value vis-à-vis the opinions of the West.

Within Ishinomori's main cast, two characters stand out for their particularly problematic physical depictions: Geronimo Jr., the Native American and Pyunma, the man from Africa. Geronimo Jr. (005) is shown with dark skin, hair fashioned in a Mohawk, and with tribal scarring (or paintings) covering his face and torso. Pyunma (008) is portrayed using typical blackface iconography such as pitch-black skin, large, iris-less eyes and bulging discolored lips.

Despite the highly stereotyped art style associated with these two characters, their personalities remain untainted by discriminatory representation. Although it is unclear if Ishinomori was cognizant of this choice, it is quite notable that the two characters outlined above do not exhibit caricatured or stereotyped behaviors often associated with their respective ethnic groups. Instead, the two actively rebel against the negative images associated with their identities, where Geronimo reacts violently towards a lowlife trying to get him to play a "big ole scary Indian chief"[55] in his folk dance group, and Pyunma refuses to become subjected to slavery and escapes the cargo truck transporting him. Yet since the themes of the series surround questioning the morals of mankind and the capacity for humans to selfishly pursue their own individual success at the expense of others,[56] a troupe of characters displaying laughable racial caricatures would diminish the poignancy of the underlying message. Rather, ethnic diversity in *Cyborg 009* functions to show that every individual is capable of good and evil,[57] and therefore that the fundamental flaws and strengths of humanity naturally manifest regardless of one's cultural background. Thus, although they both 005 and 008 project recognizably stereotypical physical features, the lack of offensive behavioral traits helps maintain their integrity, and even highlights their respective desires to be seen as more than just the races they present.

BEHAVIORAL STEREOTYPING IN THE NARRATIVE

In terms of behavioral representation in the story, racial stereotyping initially appears to highlight the prejudice and intolerance present in the Japan of the 1960s. However, as this section will deal with the treatment of two characters that represent countries that Japan views as enemies, namely the Chinese character Chang, and the East German character, Albert, I argue that even though these characters may be physically and/or behaviorally portrayed in a negative manner, rather than reflecting racial stereotypes about the characters' ethnicities, these negative descriptions are in fact politically charged.

Chang Changku (006) is a Chinese character from the Hunan province, who is introduced as a fat, unsightly pig farmer. This character raises interesting questions about how the Japanese might feel towards their most comparatively similar other, the Chinese, and how based on cultural borrowing, these viewpoints may intersect with Western notions of how to depict their Asian other.

Chang is portrayed with unusually shaped eyes that appeared puckered, and perpetually closed except when they are drawn distinctly open, such as when he expresses shock or surprise.[58] However, Chang's eyes are not slanted in the way people of Asian descent are most stereotypically represented when conveying racial meaning.[59] Rather, the shape of Chang's eyes represent a seeming amalgamation of Asian othering represented in the West, and an attempt for a Japanese artist selling to a Japanese audience to pictorially depict a fellow Asian without grotesquely defaming the greater category of Asianness to which the Japanese also belong. Furthermore, in terms of Japanese ideals of beauty, lean, if not slender, body types are considered

ideal[60], and so Chang's homely overweight appearance indicates a further divergence from Japanese standards. This sentiment is echoed much later in the series when Chang is working at a Chinese restaurant with two other characters who are implied to be Chinese. These supplementary characters also convey the simplistic and highly stereotypical features that are meant to help audiences establish their identity without any explicit exposition, and manifest in the form of slanted, un-opening eyes, and thin moustaches and pony tails.[61] Based on the appearances of Chang and his Chinese co-workers, there seems to be some sort of underlying discrimination with regard to the Japanese interpretation of Chinese people. The discrepancy seems to suggest an assertion of Japan's superiority within the context of Asian identities.

Physical features aside, Chang's role in the narrative also suggests a subtextual racial prejudice. For instance, his first appearance in the manga is as an impoverished pig farmer who is about to commit suicide rather than continue living in squalor. The significance of the pig in association with Chang is likely not arbitrary, as the pig is a known symbol in Japanese culture related to greed, gluttony and indolence,[62] and Chang's girth only heightens the correlation. This image in conjunction with the fact that instead of trying to persevere through tough conditions he impulsively decides to end his life via hanging (as opposed to a more honorable method, such as *seppuku*) imbues Chang with many negative qualities the moment of his introduction. Furthermore, as the narrative continues, Chang repeatedly serves as comic relief throughout the otherwise mostly grim tale about battling corruption and manipulation. Given Japan's relationship with China during WWII and China's connection to communism in the framework of the Cold War when the manga was published, the depiction of 006 is retrospectively quite politically charged in the sense that neither Japan nor any Western cultures from which Ishinomori may have taken

artistic influence, viewed the country in a particularly positive light.

The character from Germany as well as, and quite importantly, the character representing Japan are also subtextually marginalized in the work and are both subject to race-based prejudice. Albert (004), the German character, represents a nation with which Japan was affiliated in the war, but which also symbolizes some of the most brutal wartime atrocities and territory split in two under the threat of nuclear power. In the initial 1964 release, Albert is portrayed as a hot-headed, violent, cheeky and combative man from Soviet-occupied East Germany. The reason behind him having the harshest disposition among the group perhaps stems from the fact that Japan was not allied with East Germany at the time, and Ishinomori was attempting to portray Japan's (and his own personal) stance towards the precariously divided state that was half-riddled with Communists. This stance was one of mutual respect from being former comrades in the war, but of distance since Japan was free of occupying forces and in the midst of an economic revival. These positions are mirrored in the text, for despite Albert's nihilism and battle-hardened sarcasm, he is a trusted ally. The cordial contention is furthermore reflected in the interactions between Albert and the main character Joe (009) whose civil yet constant competitiveness (in which Joe often comes out ahead) allegorically represents Cold War political rivalries.

Finally the matter of the eponymous main character Cyborg 009, or Joe Shimamura, shows how the Japanese concept of identity is impacted by the nation's constant desire to position itself against its most salient other. Understandably, since the series was created in Japan for a Japanese audience, the protagonist and namesake of the franchise possesses Japanese racial origins and serves as the de facto leader of the group of nine. However, likely in an attempt to challenge conventional standards of the archetypical hero-figure, Ishinomori complicates the characterization of Joe by

depicting him as half-Japanese. In particular, given the date of initial publication of the manga (1964) and Joe's age at the start of the series (18), if the reader assumes that the manga takes place in the modern day, Ishinomori intentionally frames Joe as an Occupation baby making his date of birth sometime in 1946. At a time when Japanese women were often marginalized for conceiving children of American GIs,[63] Joe's status as the product of a Japanese mother and conveniently absent and ethnically non-specified father is therefore simultaneously riveting and revolting. Ishinomori capitalizes on the discomfort Japanese felt towards *konketsuji* (mixed-blood) children by portraying Joe as a victim of intense prejudice due to his mixed heritage and as a rebellious youth who resorts to delinquency in order to make ends meet.

However, using the layered character of Joe as a catalyst, Ishinomori implies that racial intolerance is not only unacceptable, but that multiracial people represent a future without hate and bigotry. Specifically, once the team of nine cyborgs has been assembled for the first time, each individual goes around and explains their origins or their cyberized capabilities. When Joe's turn comes and he explains his country of origin, his American teammate remarks, "Japanese? He doesn't look Japanese. He's got brown hair," [64] at which point Joe freezes and begins to withdraw from the group. Witnessing his discomfort, his teammate 001 explains his mixed heritage and turmoil over his personal identity to the other cyborgs. He then tells Joe, "Do not be ashamed of having mixed blood. You should be proud! A living symbol of the erosion between nations and races,"[65] after which the other team members assert that regardless of his heritage, they still consider him a "brother" (兄弟). This exchange is key in

understanding the significance of this work to the discussion of self-perception and the Japanese identity. Joe's anguish stems from the fact that he has to deal with the

discrimination, backlash and repercussions of looking a certain way and possessing a genealogy he has no control over in Japan. This struggle symbolizes the discomfort that existed in the Japan of the early 1960s with regard to cultural integration and acceptance of the other. Perhaps Joe is treated in such a manner because even though Japan was in an era of prosperity and rapid globalization/Westernization, the explicit presence of a being that was ostensibly and innately a product of a fusion of the Japan vs. the West binary was threatening and frightening to the Japanese psyche. Nevertheless, the fact that Ishinomori touched on such current and contentious issues in this series suggests that cultural isolationism is harmful, and people should strive towards the erosion of national and racial boundaries that 001 suggests to ensure harmony among humankind.

Despite the profound message imbued in Joe's hybridized identity, the implication is that 009's father is likely white (evidenced in 009's hair and eye colors and skin tone), marking his "otherness" as the most appropriate and widely accepted kind of "other." This connection to whiteness as a superior trait is significant in understanding the Japanese attitude towards racial difference. In Japan, the fairest complexions are considered most beautiful, but even the fairest Japanese look "yellow" in comparison to the white other.[66] Therefore, Joe's mixed heritage is symbolic not only as a representation of a globalized, tolerant Japan, but as an idealized figure embodying a Japanese spirit within a whitened façade.

As noted in the introduction, there are three levels of multicultural integration that explain how Japan understands its national identity and sense of self in comparison to the other. Based on the evidence provided in *Cyborg 009*, especially with regard to the characterization of Joe, neither hybridity nor hybridism has become a normative model of establishing identity by the 1960s. Instead, Japan appears

understand its relationship to its other in dualistic terms. In other words, Japan does not quite seem to be ready to consciously accept the meshing and fusing of its Japaneseness with features that feel foreign. At this point in time, Japan appears to still rely on the model of Japanization, or cultural domestication and rebranding, to incorporate aspects of Western or foreign culture into everyday life. This sense of dualism is also quite noticeable in Joe, who struggles to accept himself as a product of true cultural hybridization, and instead chooses to emphasize one side of his dualistic self (the Japanese side) over the other.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE 1960s

As has been repeatedly touched upon in the chapter thus far, the timeline of events surrounding the publication of *Cyborg 009* is essential in understanding the racial politics imbued within the series' narrative. Using the various global events with which Japan was related in the 1960s as a background, the band of cyborg soldiers represent how global political agendas impacted the way members of Japanese society regarded their own national identity within the framework of international racial relations.

One of Japan's first and major post-occupational political movements was its induction into the U.N. in 1956. Since Ishinomori aspired to spread a message in support of inter-ethnic alliances and towards the prevention of war and other ignorant, hate-based crimes, this milestone was likely very significant in the conception of the story and its characters. Given that the portrayal of a wide array of individuals from differing racial and ethnic backgrounds working together towards a common pacifist cause corresponds with the mission of the United Nations, the troupe of cyborgs could

symbolize Japan's desire to project a global image of multi-national acceptance and lack of xenophobia. As Japan dealt with the legacy of its own war crimes and blind nationalism, this achievement signaled a turning point where the Japanese aimed to thwart the nation's purported WWII image as a homogenous racially-insensitive society. The fact that each ethnic demographic represented within the nine cyborgs was not necessarily congruent with membership within the U.N. also shows a desire to continue expanding the notion of bias-free acceptance to any nation or people regardless of institution. Thus Ishinomori's cast represents a shifting mindset of the Japanese population towards a more inclusive and less alienating sense of racial interconnectedness.

The 1960s, however, was a fairly turbulent decade for Japan on the local front. Although the nation witnessed the benefits of the gradual revival from its war-torn economy, the looming shadow of the Cold War and the resentment of the people towards the US-Japan security treaty[67] left many Japanese feeling at once threatened by the impacts of foreign powers on their nation as well as frustrated by an inability to make changes or take matters into their own hands in a peaceful fashion. This sense of helplessness is echoed among the cyborg cast as each member struggles with feelings of powerlessness as they attempt to put an end to war and violent movements beyond the scope of even what their super-powered cybernetic bodies are capable of handling. Furthermore, though the series does not touch directly upon the issue of US-Japan security treaty relations, the fact that the majority of the nine cyborgs are young individuals who get caught up in violent insurgencies prior to being captured and experimented upon speaks to the political unrest in Japan's youth in the framework of the 1960s. This unrest is epitomized by the series of student protests in opposition to the ANPO movement, the larger menace of the Cold War and the Vietnam War

directly affecting Japan's Asian neighbors.

In fact, a few years into the series' initial publication (circa 1966-7), there is a story arc that actually features the nine cyborgs heading to Vietnam to thwart militaristic unrest in the area.[68] The start of the Vietnam saga commences with a recollection of WWII and the horrific effects of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The prologue continues with a montage questioning the purpose of war and why humankind is compelled towards violent mobilization and conflict to enact change. Within the arc, Ishinomori's anti-communist stance is quite clear, as he allies his cyborg team against the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese army. However, he also makes a point of criticizing the U.S. involvement in the strife and how the introduction of American troops and weapons has only made the warfare become prolonged and bloodier.[69] Though the arc does not exactly represent the events of the Vietnam War in real time, the presence of the cyborgs in the area makes a profound anti-war statement, as the characters (and by extension the readers) are faced with the ways war tears families and villages apart, and how the civilians drafted to fight suffer the most while the politicians making the decisions never get blood on their own hands.

The messages that Ishinomori explicitly attempts to communicate in this arc can be seen as an extension of his own feelings towards the war that took place in Japan and its effects on both the Japanese lifestyle and the people themselves. The impact of the years of conflict and ultimate loss of the war shook the fierceness of Japan's nationalistic pride, and so Ishinomori's opinions likely represented those held by the majority of the Japanese in the aftermath of the war and occupation era. This section of the work can therefore be seen as representative of how the Japanese of the 1960s might have looked back bitterly upon wartime, and now identify more closely

with peaceful, nonviolent means to instigate change.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Ishinomori's *Cyborg 009* challenged the standards of acceptable and accepted racial portrayals and interactions among diverse ethnic groups. In doing so, he paints a vivid landscape of what racial and ethnic relations resembled in the 1960s from both a global and uniquely Japanese point of view. In addition, the oeuvre highlights the Japanese perception of their own identity vis-à-vis the tumultuous political landscape and the nation's growing tolerance for ethnic "others" and its endeavors towards creating a more inclusive and sympathetic worldview.

Even after his passing, it seems as though Ishinomori's personal maxims and belief systems, in terms of opposing conflict and challenging racial stereotypes, of the time have continued to be honored in further iterations of his work. For as time continues and perceptions of ethnic diversity and inter-cultural race relations shift, so do the nuanced behaviors and appearances of the characters. For instance, by the time the mid-80s came about, Pyunma's blackface-based appearance was no longer acceptable in every cultural sphere, and so his character needed remodeling for a movie adaptation of the series. When the series was once again rebooted in 2001, artists refined Pyunma's design once again to look less caricatured. Finally, in 2012's *Re: Cyborg* 009, the most recent iteration of the series, Pyunma was once again remodeled to look even more realistic, nearly completely stripped of any potentially offensive features.

In addition, in the nearly 40 years between the original 1964 manga and the

2001 anime reboot, the American character Jet (002) and Albert appear to have had their personalities switched in the rewriting of the series. Based on the two countries' respective historical relations with Japan at both times of initial launch, the shift makes sense, since in the early 60s Japan was a time when U.S. commodities, fashions and trends were being rapidly adopted by the Japanese and the whiteness and chicness of American popular culture was high, despite the political instability between nations that was to arise in the late 60s.[70] Yet by the dawn of the millennium, Japan was more preoccupied on a course of taking American products and making them better, and had grown accustomed and understanding of the loud, brash and emotional qualities of American folk. Whereas in the case of Germany, the nation had not yet been entirely absolved of the aftereffects of WWII, and was torn between different occupying states – a separation emphasized by the construction of the Berlin wall in 1961. However, by 2001 democracy had long since returned to Germany and the nation had begun to build a reputation as a stalwart presence in the European Union. These changes in history reflect how the personalities of the two characters coincide. For at first, in the 1964 serialization, Jet was sympathetic towards Joe, the Japanese character, and a friendly, reliable ally with whom Joe got along quite well, while on the other hand, Albert was more smug and reckless and somewhat condescending towards Joe who was always seeming to steal his thunder. While in the 2001 version, Albert becomes Joe's supportive mentor, always giving him advice and counsel and participating on many missions together with him. Conversely, Jet and Joe become avid and almost antagonistic rivals, where Joe is often incensed by Jet's condescending demeanor and where Jet constantly tries to outdo Joe to avoid feeling one-upped. *Cyborg* 009 is a truly prolific work, and it continues to be so as the production teams try to remain culturally relevant and true to the author's vision.

Yet perhaps most importantly, *Cyborg 009* should be remembered and acknowledged for the masterful way it weaves together two separate and contradictory methodologies to prove the same ultimate point. By using, and adopting changing notions of stereotyped cultural behaviors the work criticizes and attempts to breakdown the existence of stereotypes themselves. In this double move, the antithesis and thesis become one and force readers to contemplate the existence of their own socialized stereotypes in their minds, and the validity behind them. In simultaneously reinforcing and repudiating their own individual belief systems, audiences are encouraged to look more objectively at humankind and dispel their deeply embedded notions of how certain races, cultures or ethnic groups operate. Ishinomori may rest soundly knowing his work has made important strides in informing the treatment of race in animation.

Chapter 3: Afro Samurai

Afro Samurai is a manga series created by Okazaki Takashi and originally published in 1999. The plot centers on a black samurai, who is seeking revenge against his father's murderer in a futuristic, yet feudal Japan. Though *Afro Samurai* first appeared in a self-published *doujinshi* magazine, the franchise has undergone various permutations, such as the creation of an American-endorsed anime series in 2007, a complete reboot of the manga in 2008 and a feature length animated film in 2009. *Afro Samurai* was the result of Okazaki's desire to develop his own project rather than devoting the entirety of his time and energy to commissioned illustration work. Okazaki was inspired to create works influenced by his hobbies and passions. Namely, he was drawn to incorporate his love for period dramas, hip hop, soul music and American media in his work, and challenged himself to create an ultimate concept that combined all of his interests. Thus, although originally developed as a side project, this combination resulted in the creation of *Afro Samurai* – Okazaki's magnum opus.

In the series' dystopian universe, there are a set of chronologically ranked headbands that denote the strength and skill of the warrior wearing one. The warrior in possession of the "number one headband" is rumored to be so powerful that he possesses abilities rivaling those of a god. As a young child, Afro witnesses the murder of his father, the number one at that time, and vows to avenge him by fighting his way up the ranks until he is the number two, and therefore worthy to take on his father's killer. The tale follows an adult Afro who, as the owner of the number two headband, is finally poised to carry out his revenge, but also targeted by other warriors who desire his ranking and the promise of the absolute power of the number one. Throughout his quest, Okazaki positions Afro at a junction where he is revered

and feared not only for his skill, but also for exhibiting a high level of expertise with a sword in spite of his race.[71] As Okazaki crafts the tale, he sets up many distinct binaries that juxtapose aspects of black culture and Japanese culture to highlight Afro's intersectional existence on the line separating East and West.

In *Afro Samurai*, the black-Japanese hybridity that manifests in the physical settings of the story and behaviors of the characters in the series, ultimately reflects the Japanese conception of the self versus its other. With regard to the establishment of this hybridity, multiple interviews[72] [73] with the author document that he deliberately aimed to include both Japanese and American stylistic elements (such as cinematic camera angles often used in manga, and left-to-right page orientation that American comic books use) to create a fused style that "not many people have done."[74] In addition to juxtaposing American and Japanese artistic elements, Okazaki also incorporated seemingly conflicting thematic devices into the narrative, such as the combination of Japanese samurai historical dramas and aspects of American hip hop culture. In other words, Okazaki creates a series of dualistic binaries in which the two comprising elements simultaneously work together and oppose one another. The most salient example manifests in the ambiguous identity of the main character, whose contrasting black and Japanese features are so deeply interwoven that they are inseparable, and he appears to be a fully hybridized subject.

With regard to how Okazaki fused elements of Eastern and Western iconography in the tale, he decided that with the relaunch of the manga in 2008 he would make a more "*otona*" (adult) version of the original doujinshi story where, "the world is bigger and the settings are stronger."[75] For instance, contrary to the Japanese industry standard, the relaunched *Afro Samurai* manga is drawn in a left-to-right format with the dialogue boxes featuring horizontal text. Furthermore, the pages are

larger than those featured in both manga magazines and single-volume *tankōbon*

(even including special edition reprints). In addition, the paneling is inconsistent with

accepted norms of manga production, given that many of the pages include full-size

drawings that span from the top to bottom without leaving white border space.

Okazaki decided to draw the series in this way since "*Afro Samurai* was originally

intended to be published as a traditional American comic book,"[76] and even

specifically chose to frame some settings and scenes as they would be handled in an

American graphic novel. Therefore, this amalgamation of Japanese and American

models is one notable example of the dualistic dynamic Okazaki attempts to set in this

work.

This mixture of Japanese and American influences also manifests in the anime

adaptation of the series, which was produced in a collaborative effort by teams

working in both nations. Though the original doujinshi was highly influential in

setting the stage for the intersection of urban American and samurai lifestyles, it was

not until the anime was produced, and the manga series was subsequently rebooted

with increased financial support that Okazaki could truly realize his image, and create

a tale where the blend of cultures is substantial. For it was through the process of

creating the anime that the creative collaboration among Okazaki, the Japanese and

American branches of the animation studio, GONZO, and renowned American actor

Samuel L. Jackson formed. Thus, the series was expanded to appeal equally to both

American and Japanese audiences and the lines between the disparate cultures

blurred. As a result, to understand the true depth of the hybridity in the overall project

it is essential to examine the entire opus of the franchise, including the anime and the

reworked manga published in 2008.

With the series' fusion of black and traditional Japanese cultures, Okazaki

weaves a complex web of hybridized identities rooted in what it means to be a warrior. However, despite Okazaki's apolitical agenda, and his desire to simply create an unconventional story with an unlikely hero, his work still incorporates stereotypical imagery that is just inflammatory enough to teeter on the edge of offensive caricature. By examining the titular character and his interactions with others he encounters throughout the tale, I intend to show how visual elements in the media and the characterizations of race in the *Afro Samurai* narrative incorporate dualism and hybridity to critique the Japanese sense of self, as well as examine the historical context of the 1990s to reveal how Japan's perception of other ethnicities and its own national identity equally impact the formation of selfhood.

HYBRID ELEMENTS IN THE ART OF *AFRO SAMURAI*

As opposed to the wide-eyed, cartoony style that Tezuka normalized, and many artists in the manga industry typically employ, Okazaki's art in *Afro Samurai* is gritty, dark and distinguished by fine, concentrated line work. In addition, each page of the manga is almost entirely fully inked, and lacks the use of white, negative space that many manga capitalize on. Finally, the most interesting and uncharacteristic element of Okazaki's work, is the use of color – specifically, the color red which functions exclusively to represent bloodshed. Okazaki's artistic style and choices therefore reflect an acute divergence from typical manga production, which tends to be characterized by clean, simple line work, pages printed on low-quality newsprint or rough Bristol paper (as opposed to Okazaki's manga that is printed on smooth glossy paper, like how many American full-color superhero comics are printed) and a fairly small aspect ration of about 5 x 7 inches.[77] Furthermore, the liberties Okazaki

takes to set this distinct visual tone show his commitment to making a product that feels foreign. In making this painstaking effort, Okazaki revolutionizes a uniquely Japanese form by incorporating recognizably American designs. Thus, by actively juxtaposing Western and Japanese artistic techniques as well as narrative content, Okazaki creates a work situated at a liminal junction where the elements of the story are simultaneously familiar and foreign to both U.S and Japanese target demographics. Duality in Okazaki's art therefore functions in two ways: the first, by challenging standards within the comic book genre to produce that "something not many people have done,"[78] and secondly, as the second section in this chapter will show, in how the ethnic representation of the characters is perceived differently between Japanese and American viewers.

The art in the manga also highlights dualism between Eastern and Western ideas in more obvious ways, especially in terms of how Okazaki artistically juxtaposes the content of the narrative and context of the story setting within action sequences, that is, how he contrasts the people inside a given setting with the setting itself. *Afro Samurai* falls within the *seinen* genre – that is, manga intended to target young adult male audiences – and as with all series in this category, elaborate battles and fight sequences are staples. As to be expected with a series surrounding a samurai's quest for revenge, Okazaki delivers such scenes consistently, and with great effort in detailing and varying each scenario accordingly. However, intriguing nature of the fights is Okazaki's infusion of popular Western combat styles alongside more conventional Japanese sword fighting. For instance, the main antagonist in the series is a character known as Justice, who is portrayed wearing a cowboy hat, a long duster-like coat and boots with spurs. His appearance is reminiscent of characters featured in American Westerns, and this connection is further cemented by the fact that Justice

wields twin long-barreled revolvers. The fact that Okazaki chose to put the two most recognizable warrior archetypes in American and Japanese history (a cowboy and a samurai respectively) at odds is hardly a coincidence. Afro's contempt for the cowboy-figure that slayed his father therefore presents an interesting subtextual conundrum, where the position of these two characters as enemies suddenly imbues the manga with a politically-charged implication that the East vs. West conflict runs quite deep in the Japanese psyche and how they may imagine their sense of self vis-à-vis the American other.

Afro, who individually represents a junction between the East and West by the very virtue of being a black male as well as a samurai, seeks to destroy a man embodying an all-encompassing image of the "West." Here, and interesting triad emerges, where Afro's hybridized black and Asian identity comes forth to combat the whiteness of the West that Justice embodies. Interestingly, Afro's ultimate victory over Justice can be seen as mutually satisfying for both Japanese and American audiences, for in the end, though the representation of hegemonic whiteness falls, Western audiences are still satisfied since the black samurai that simultaneously represents both the East and the West succeeds in his lifelong quest for revenge.

Characters like Justice and Afro demonstrate how racial traits and information about one's personal identity can be portrayed through just their artistic representation. However, these representations get complicated with regard to the degree in which stereotyped portrayals are incorporated. For in the series, and particularly in the anime, Okazaki and his production team's use of stereotyped imagery to express ethnic difference serves as both authenticating and stigmatizing in terms of racial portrayal. In other words, the text uses immediately recognizable stereotypical iconography to suggest realism, and therefore to undermine their

otherwise harmful effects. Since stereotypes all contain some aspects of truths, their employment in popular media serves to validate the collective beliefs a given group or identity has about another. Furthermore, as highlighted in the previous chapter, stereotypical imagery is crucial in the creation of anime and manga since the simplified caricatures help convey information effectively and efficiently. Therefore, from a Japanese perspective, Afro is unquestionably understood to be a black male because of the stereotypical features he possesses such as his dark skin, afro hairdo and thick, protruding lips. Whereas for American audiences, stereotypical samurai dress and behavior convey that certain characters are Japanese-identified warriors. As Frank Bramlett asserts, the ethnicities the artists bestow upon the characters therefore become authentic and believable, in a quite contradictory manner, due to the very stereotypes they embody. Thus, since the characters are interpreted in the ways they were intended, the use of stereotypical traits succeeds in conveying authenticity.

The stigmatizing effect of stereotypical depictions manifests in the unnecessary ways the characters' physical traits and aspects of their personalities are over-exaggerated or transformed into a farcical display. For instance, though it may simply be a stylistic choice, the afros of the main character and his alter ego are grotesquely overwrought. Given that the afro functions as such an important symbol of racial representation and the construction of identity in the narrative, the implausible size, shape and way in which the hair moves significantly reduces any sense of authenticity and disrupts the integrity and believability of the characters.

The anime contains two other examples, in the form of two assassins dispatched to execute Afro, where race is portrayed artistically in potentially offensive ways. The first is Fu, a squat, slit-eyed and pudgy warrior from the Hunan Province of China. The second is Ivanov, a massive, hulking Russian whose

complexion and coloring are remarkably pale. In episode 3 of the anime series, a group of warrior monks determined to slaughter Afro gather a crowd of hundreds of assassins, with these two warriors appear standing in the center as the honored guests. The artists highlight Fu and Ivanov's otherness in the intricate detail given to their appearances while in the same frame, the scores of assumed Japanese warriors have indistinct features and obscured faces. However, the treatment of these two characters in relation to Japanese warriors shown in other parts of the series emphasizes the visual indicators of stigmatization. Ivanov is shown as so much larger, in both height and girth, to any other Japanese warrior and wielding a diminutive dagger in comparison to the nimble *katana* used by most other characters. However rather than his size implying strength or power, his stature suggests more that he is clunky and slow. Fu on the other hand, is portrayed as stocky with buckteeth, a thin mustache and dressed proudly in Chinese-styled garb. The distinction in Ivanov's sheer size gives off an impression that the white other are giant, lumbering beings, while Fu's appearance suggests that the Asian, specifically Chinese, other are short, stout and possess the exaggeratedly slanted eyes often associated with stereotypical Asianness that the Japanese characters, notably, do not possess to the same degree.

Based on these examples, the character art in the series displays how the use of stereotypes can simultaneously bolster an ethnic image, yet also serve to offensively characterize them. *Afro Samurai* does not, however, play upon stereotypes solely with regard to artistic character portrayal, but stereotypical behavior is also used to characterize race within the narrative.

NARRATIVE CHARACTERIZATION OF RACE

Though the series chronicles the story of the titular black samurai, Afro does not exhibit any stereotypical behavioral traits associated with blackness, and instead acts in accordance with his highly disciplined samurai identity. However, stereotypical representations of the black male body do manifest in the series and are almost solely expressed via Afro's alter-ego Ninja Ninja.

Although his hairstyle serves as an intrinsic component of his identity, and also as an authenticating sign of his blackness, there are multiple occasions in the series where his afro is ridiculed. First, there appears to be a running gag of sorts where various items get "lost" within his hair. In episode 1 of the anime, a warrior's spear gets caught in his hair and disappears much to his shock. Additionally, in the final episode of the anime and in chapter 8 of the manga, he narrowly escapes death when the weapon of his adversary strikes a comb he has concealed in his hair that deflects the would-be fatal blow. These instances highlight a common inflammatory association with black hairdos and poor hygiene due to their coarseness. Though the implication is fairly subtle, the attention drawn to the hairstyle as an object that can function as more than just an outward characteristic allows for symbolic interpretations to attach to the given feature. Furthermore, slurs regarding the afro manifest in other parts of the story as well. One example comes from episode 4 of the anime when one of Afro's more powerful opponents taunts him during their battle and claims, "I can't take a warrior with such stupid hair seriously." Here again, the targeting of the afro suggests a scornful regard for the hairdo and the people who choose to wear it. By calling the style "stupid" and stating that he "can't take [someone with an afro] seriously," the character in question devalues the (mostly black) conglomerate of afro-wearers. In this sense, the symbol of the afro is stigmatized in the series. However, in the *Cinema Factory* interview, Okazaki states

that at the time of the conception of the series, afros had become "laughable" in Japan[79] and so the objectionable jabs at the hairstyle could also function as intentional criticism of Japanese mentalities towards afros and their wearers.

Although Afro possesses many stereotypical and even somewhat offensive physical features, like the afro, that define his identity so significantly, the Japanese side of his dualistic persona imbues him with traits that overshadow his blackness, and negate his potential to serve as exclusively as mere caricature. For despite his physical blackness, Afro's personality is seemingly devoid of stereotypical black mannerisms. Rather, his stoic and taciturn samurai identity is featured most prominently. For instance, he very seldom speaks throughout the course of the series,[80] and when he does, the majority of his utterances in both the anime and the manga consist of short or one word phrases like, "Finished." Or, in the case of the utterance he says most frequently: "Shut up." Furthermore, his posture is always rigid and at attention, as opposed to Ninja Ninja who constantly slouches or lazes about. Afro, therefore completely lacks any speech patterns or general characteristics associated with blackness.

Consequently, Okazaki's titular character represents a unique hybridization of Japanese and Western (particularly, American) traits, where his outward appearance belongs to one register while his personality belongs to another. In a sense, Afro is the embodiment of an almost perfect fusion of coveted and to some degree, fetishized Eastern and Western attributes. He has the detached nature, unrelenting honor and skill of the ideal samurai warrior, but also the cool, yet fierce swagger associated with black American males. Since Okazaki could have just as easily achieved the same dualistic effect by say, creating a series around a Japanese character submersed in a black cultural environment, or even a white character in the same role, his choice to

feature a black main character out of every potential ethnicity at his disposal shows

Okazaki's appreciation for and intrinsically imbues value in the black male body.

However, the problematic aspects of Afro's characterization lie in the way blackness

is exaggerated in the case of his alter ego, Ninja Ninja, and how it is stigmatized in

general in the series. Thus, in *Afro Samurai*, the simultaneous praise and prejudice

towards Afro show a duality in the Japanese treatment of the black other.

      Afro's status as a fully-realized and multi-dimensional character in the

narrative is entirely contingent upon the dynamics of his relationship with Ninja

Ninja. Ninja Ninja did not always exist as Afro's alter ego, but the circumstances of

his arrival reveal why Afro's dualistic samurai identity is so crucial to the

development of his character. After his father is murdered, a sword master who runs

an orphanage takes in Afro, teaches him how to fight and encourages him to become

part of their family. Throughout his youth, audiences see Afro grow as a meek, timid

and at times, tender boy, and even though he never abandons his quest for revenge, he

maintains a strong dedication to his new family. However, upon reaching adulthood,

he discovers that the benevolent master who took him under his wing happens to also

be the swordsman in possession of the headband he requires to exact his revenge.[81]

His master refuses to give up the headband without a fair fight, and their scuffle

attracts other wandering swordsmen who also seek the headband, and who threaten to

raze the orphanage if Afro resists.[82] Afro therefore has to choose between his pursuit

of the number one headband and the lives of his loved ones at the orphanage.

Although he ultimately chooses to remain on course to avenge his father, the heavy

weight of the decision causes Afro to crack under the pressure and figuratively tear

himself asunder. With his abandonment and betrayal of those dearest to him, he

comes to understand the sacrifices he must make and the hardships he must endure to

achieve his overall goal of becoming number one and avenging his father. The impact

of this realization and his subsequent emotional breakdown is that he splits his being

into two, where his emotions, innermost thoughts, fears and apprehensions manifest

in the form of his alter ego: Ninja Ninja. With this separation, Afro manages to create

two distinct sides of himself and as a result, he is able to mediate between his

blackness and his identity as a samurai.

However, on the topic of stereotypical representations of blackness, it is

essential to discuss the role of Ninja Ninja in the narrative. Although Afro in his

present form exhibits an apparently perfect fusion blackness and Japaneseness (at

least as far as being a samurai is concerned), he only managed to achieve this

perfection upon the expulsion of his other half. This character, Ninja Ninja is

understood to be the embodiment of Afro's emotions, inner thoughts and insecurities.

However, interestingly he is written playing into the behavioral stereotypes associated

with black American males. Some of these features include his easily excitable

nature, his crassness in terms of speech and suggestiveness, his sexual voracity, and

most significantly, his use of racialized jargon in the form of African American

English or Ebonics in the anime, and hyper-casual speech patterns and slang in the

Japanese version of the manga. All of these features are exemplified in following

quotation, in which Ninja Ninja attempts to give Afro some advice regarding a

woman who tends to Afro's wounds after he gets injured:

> "Y yo yo yo yo yo yo Afro. Can I ask you something? Now I know you cast
> away your feelings and all but does that mean casting away your manhood
> too? Oh mamasans don't get much better than old girl. She's sweet.
> Pretty. Knows her first aid. Can broil a mean fish dinner. I call that
> practically marriage material. Come on now. Confess. You want to hit
> that booty. I just want to see my happy you know? Seriously man. Now
> don't you think there's something vaguely familiar about that woman?

Look. If you ain't gonna knock them boots I will."[83]

Within this excerpt Ninja Ninja's coarseness, misogyny and genuine concern for Afro all come across, and his heavily stereotyped linguistic portrayal as well as the content of the exchange shows the extent to which this character is caricatured in the series.

In addition, Ninja Ninja's purpose in the tale is to represent the cool, yet rowdy qualities of the stereotypical black male (especially as these qualities relate to characteristics associated with the hip hop emcees that inspired Okazaki). Furthermore, he likely appears as a separate entity than Afro so as to portray these stereotypical features without tainting Afro's image, or obscuring the perfectly hybridized balance achieved in Afro. For both Japanese and American audiences, Ninja Ninja's highly stereotypical behavior is familiar, and makes his identity both recognizable and believable. However, Ninja Ninja's over-the-top characterization, and Afro's constant dismissal of him and by extension, the unsavory side of his own personality, also serves to make his character unlikable. Furthermore, any depth that Ninja Ninja's role attempts to provide to the series or to Afro's character development is overshadowed by his primary function as comic relief. Finally, given the Western world's history with minstrel show blackface humor, the fact that this highly stereotyped character functions primarily as a source of humor is exceptionally stigmatizing, and should not, therefore, be ignored.

Finally, the last way in which racial stereotyping is highlighted in the narrative is in the function of social acceptance and rejection throughout the course of the tale. When Afro is a child growing up in an orphanage with his peers, they accept him as one of their own without any signs of racial prejudice. In fact, throughout both the anime and manga, Afro and a fellow orphan named Jinnō refer to each other as brothers.[84] However, once Afro becomes an outlaw, and when he betrays Jinnō's trust

and kills their master, Jinnō, along with many of Afro's adversaries start referring to his race in hateful ways.[85]

This example of a set of features that is initially overlooked, then blatantly stigmatized shows, by extension, how Japanese consumers tend to glaze over the roots and racial elements of foreign products until they are called upon to examine such features critically. As John G. Russell, Ian Condry and Nina Cornyetz all mention in their scholarship, this notion is echoed in that as far as the consumption of hip hop and black culture is concerned, Japanese consumers tend to imitate style and likenesses but fail to acknowledge the meanings and cultural messages imbued within the medium. This connection of inattention to detail links to practices of Japanization in the sense that anime/manga audiences accept the contemporary and widely used artistic elements like large eyes and simplified features as Japanese creations, when in fact such art styles have really been recycled from Western illustrations. Okazaki employs similar appropriation in his attempt to create a hybridized manga infused with both Eastern and Western artistic and production elements. However, as he is forthright with his intentions and methodology, the fusion created in his *Afro Samurai* series feels organic rather than objectionable. To see the true sensitivity with which Okazaki crafted his tale and the characters within it, one must first examine the context of race and the comic genre at the time of *Afro Samurai*'s original inception.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT AT TIME OF PUBLICATION

Just as the previous chapter illustrates how the backdrop of the 1960s influenced the content in *Cyborg 009*, social movements and trends in Japan and the U.S.A. also impacted the development of *Afro Samurai*. In the three decades between

the publication of these two series, issues of racial sensitivity, prejudice and transnational cultural exchanges made significant positive progress. By 1999 when *Afro Samurai* was initially published, Wetsernized globalization had become normalized and encouraged, and as a result, cultural hybridity had become increasingly mainstream, and had begun to challenge the homogeneity that Japan still purported. Furthermore, in light of Japan's burst economic bubble, elements of foreign cultures become more and more appealing and the influx of international products reached an all time high. Thus, the fusion of the Japanese and the racial other had become far less marginalized than it had been in the 1960s, and this progress manifested in Japanese popular culture and media, and specifically in works like Okazaki's. Therefore, given the context of Japan's "Lost Decade," *Afro Samurai* attempts to fuse different ethnic iconographies and stylistic elements to represent a nation disenchanted with its local culture, and desiring to reinvent itself with the inclusion of the ethnic other.

As Condry and Cornyetz have established in their research, Japan exhibited a fervent enthusiasm for and fetishization of black culture in the 1990s. This influx came about as hip hop and soul music from the U.S. began crossing international borders and became popularized on a global scale. The result of the result of this cross-cultural exchange led to not only a figurative boom in the popularity and general interest in black culture, but also led to the appropriation of fashions and musical styles associated with hip hop and soul artists. In fact, even Okazaki recalls watching *Soul Train* on Japanese television in his youth with a sense of nostalgic fondness.[86] However, many of these transnational exchanges turned out to be transactional in the sense that both sides had goods or technologies to offer the other, and Asian culture caught on in the West due to the introduction and subsequent

popularity of martial arts films from Hong Kong. Referred to as the "kung fu boom," the wave of popular Asian culture began in the 1970s but remained in vogue well into the 90s. Interestingly, black hip hop culture and Asian martial arts eventually began to overlap, leading to the formation of hip hop groups and artists that displayed openly Asian performance personas. The most popular group in this category was the Wu-Tang Clan, but many other 90s hip hop artists, like Jeru the Damaja and Foxy Brown, also incorporated aspects of Asian culture in their acts. In addition, significant black personalities/actors started to create works featuring significant Asian influence like in the 1999 film *Ghost Dog*.

With the sudden cross-cultural appeal, Japanese audiences started tuning in to hip hop, R&B and soul music and adopting the fashions, behaviors and lifestyles encouraged by the music. Therefore by the time Okazaki conceived the concept of the *Afro Samurai* series, there was already significant interchange between American black culture and Japanese culture bridged by the mediums of martial arts and hip hop music. Okazaki was highly influenced by these cultural movements and discusses in interviews that his love for hip hop and soul music was one of the main inspirations behind creating *Afro Samurai*. As a further nod to how much Okazaki was astutely aware of the time and context of his publication, he even comments in the *Cinema Factory* interview on the kung fu boom in the U.S and the Japanese population's ridicule of afro hairdos. He states that the kung fu boom caused an inaccurate view of Japanese culture in the West, and so many Western viewers lumped various martial arts like kung fu and jūdō together. His goal in creating *Afro Samurai* was therefore not only to satisfy his desire to create a work that felt genuine to himself and that combined his passions, but also to play with reversing the wrongful image of Japan portrayed in Western media.

In addition to the back and forth flow of cultural exports/imports, the early 1990s saw the burst of Japan's prominent bubble economy, which ultimately resulted in considerable political and economic unrest and an overall deflation of nationalistic pride among the populace. At this time of disenchantment, the Japanese were more willing than ever to look for amusement, entertainment and commodities for general consumption outside of their nation. Due to these circumstances, the growing tolerance for otherness peaked, and hybridity and cultural fusion began to manifest in many aspects of Japanese pop culture. For instance, the 90s were significant in that the decade saw a massive introduction of Western food and clothing chains (like McDonalds, Starbucks, the Gap etc.) that were adopted and indigenized to suit local consumers. However, the general dissatisfaction with the domestic economic state caused the messages of struggle, strife and rebellion associated with black culture and hip hop music to become more appealing to Japanese audiences.

Thus by the 1990s, hybridity in Japan was a more accepted notion, but far from prevailing norm. As the examples above prove, even though fully hybridized characters like Afro exist in the work (as opposed to a character like Joe from *Cyborg 009* who is marginalized throughout the series for his mixed heritage and constantly has to navigate between his existence as two races at once), the fact that certain aspects of their depictions and role in the narrative continue to be portrayed stereotypically show that there is still progress to be made. This disconnect highlights that the tolerance level for hybridity and cultural fusion in Japan did not make a polar opposite shift in the three decades between the publication of *Cyborg 009* and *Afro Samurai*. However, the function of race relations and the display of Japanese tolerance for ethnic blending in the two series are merely points on a spectrum of acceptable hybridity. *Afro Samurai* nevertheless remains monumental in its effort to

not only bridge but to combine two distinct cultures.

CONCLUSION

Hybridity functions in *Afro Samurai* to normalize and problematize race and U.S.-Japanese cultural ties. Throughout the various iterations of the series, Okazaki attempts to break down barriers by constructing and contrasting various sets of contradictory images and iconographies. Though his work certainly does serve to authenticate the role of the black male body in Japanese media, deeply ingrained vestiges of offensive stereotyping occasionally rear their head and fracture the strong foundation Okazaki attempts to build. Nevertheless, the work's endeavor to normalize hybridity does succeed, and the creation of the anime series and the subsequent reboot of the manga prove this accomplishment.

The production of the anime version of the series was in itself a product of a hybridized East and West vision. The series would never have come to exist if not for the influence and tenacity of renowned American actor Samuel L. Jackson. For even though the anime series was already in production by Japanese animation studio, GONZO, Jackson got ahold of an early trailer for the project and suggested a creative collaboration on the project. The result was a fully produced 5-episode series and follow-up film, featuring voice acting entirely in English, with Jackson playing the part of the titular swordsman and a fully produced soundtrack by RZA of the Wu Tang Clan. The series was never re-dubbed in Japanese, and the world premiere was hosted on an American television network months before its subtitled release in Japan. The fact that two studio branches on separate continents could work together to create a cohesive final project is a feat in itself. However, without the intervention of

Jackson and the American team, it is unlikely that the series would have been able to achieve the authenticity and genuine hybridity it ultimately attained.

Though Japanese media still has a long way to go in terms of creating products with cohesive, unproblematic portrayals of cultural hybridity, *Afro Samurai* was definitely a step in the right direction, especially in comparison to the leaps since the 1960s depictions in *Cyborg 009.* Hopefully, as the nation continues to explore its readiness and confidence to engage in fluid racial relations, more series like *Afro Samurai* will arise to challenge the societal norms in place.

Conclusion

Throughout Japan's modern and post-modern history, the nation and its people have struggled to mediate their sense of self in a constantly shifting and rapidly globalizing world. As the nation's history shows, Japan experienced considerable, alternating waves where the support for nationalism caused a resistance to globalization and vice versa. However, the existence of identity discourses such as *nihonjinron* show that even though Japan has embraced its cosmopolitanism over the course of the past 50 years, some vestigial sentiments of cultural superiority and a value for group-oriented homogeneity nevertheless persist.

This project has attempted to address the difficulty Japan has had with defining its self-identity over the course of the 30 or so years between the time of *Cyborg 009*'s original publication in the 1960s and the debut of *Afro Samurai* in the late 1990s. By plotting Japan's attempt at integrating foreign culture into a spectrum from the most disparate division inherent in dualism, to the mild yet incomplete attempt at fusion in hybridity, to the full-blown but unactualized ethnic synthesis of hybridism, the paper shows that Japan has improved, and continues to improve its attempt to see the world more open-mindedly. Unfortunately, the profusion of stereotypical portrayals of race in the media, as well as the general Japanese populace's fear of losing their prized uniqueness, ensures that the realization of a nation built around the foundation of hybridism is still many decades away.

Despite this supposition, Japan should nonetheless be lauded for producing two minds radical enough to make cultural products with a scope far beyond their respective times. In 1964 when Ishinomori published *Cyborg 009* no other character, especially not in an all-age superhero comic, was dealing with issues of identity and what it meant to be shunned and have to pick a side of oneself to hide and the other to

project like Joe did. Though he remained trapped in a dualistic rut throughout most of the series, the fact that he was able to overcome the shame about his mixed heritage that had been socialized within him, deserves considerable recognition and praise.

Similarly, Okazaki's presentation of Afro and Ninja Ninja as two extreme sides of the same hybridized coin also attempted a daring feat. In simply being courageous enough to fuse elements of his own multicultural interests, Okazaki ended up creating a sprawling franchise with international accolades, and put forth the notion that identity is not only fluid, but also something that is multi-faceted and deeply ingrained within each individual. However, Okazaki and Ishinomori's one mutual yet pervading flaw is their respective inabilities to move past the graphic art convention of the use of stereotypes to convey meaning. Yet, at the same time, their respective decisions to employ that methodology also and very likely worked in their favors. For had they not used easily recognizable and approachable means of creating relatable, or at least, familiar characters, their works may not have sold well enough to circulate the significantly profound messages each holds about the perceptions and constructions of identity.

This paper employs hybridization as a useful and impactful tool to examine how ethnic diversity and the intermingling of race in media represent a Japan that is growing more tolerant of its other. In other words, this project aims to show that hybridity can serve as an empowering phenomenon rather than a threatening one. However, recent events in contemporary Japan prove that the nation is still unprepared to fully embrace hybridism. For instance, just since the start of 2015 various incidents throughout Japan have shown archaic levels of conservatism and bigotry especially with regard to the treatment of the black other. For instance, on February 11, conservative author Sono Ayako suggested, with a not-so-subtle hint of

support for apartheid dogma that "whites, Asians, and blacks should live separately,"
with an especially pejorative addition that black families are particularly problematic
because, "blacks [end] up having 20 to 30 family members living [in a single
apartment]."[87] Within a week of the Sono incident, an image surfaced and circulated
around social media of the Japanese male doo-wop group Rats & Star, who have
historically been known to perform in blackface, with members of an all-female idol
group Momoiro Clover Z also made up in blackface to support a collaboration
between the two groups that had been planned for March. Needless to say, the intense
backlash left the idol group extremely ashamed for their participation, and they
canceled their scheduled appearance promptly.[88] Finally, in the middle of March there
was a hotly debated case in which Nagasaki-born half-Japanese, half-black beauty
contestant Ariana Miyamoto was crowned Miss Universe Japan and designated as the
nation's representative in 2016's Miss Universe pageant. Although this announcement
does seem like a positive move in the right direction as far as Japan's perception and
acceptance of multiracialism is concerned, the immediate backlash from various
conservative groups and contingents of the general Japanese populace over social
media highlights how little progress has actually been made. Many comments
suggested that Miss Miyamoto was not "Japanese enough" to represent the country
and that mixed-race Japanese people cannot be considered Japanese to begin with.[89]
Although she was also celebrated with waves of support, the fact that there was such a
loud and vocal opposition suggests that Japan has a lot more progressing to do.

 However, these contemporary examples of bias and unwarranted abrasiveness
towards the other show that there is some considerable resistance towards the notion
of hybridity discussed in this paper. Although the analysis of *Cyborg 009* and *Afro
Samurai* show how the presence of hybridized subjects have steadily increased since

the 1960s, since the end of the 2000s and into the 2010s Japanese politics has slowly

shifted in a rightward direction, especially under Prime Minister Abe Shinzō's

administration. As I have proven throughout this study, examination of the history

and the global landscape during these events is critical. In 2008, the world's most

prominent economic power, the United States, fell into a deep recession, and soon

after many countries, including Japan, also began experiencing periods of severe

economic decline. However, one of the nations that was able to avoid an extreme

financial crisis was China,[90] a nation with a longstanding tense history with Japan.

Furthermore, China's economic sphere was, and has been since on an upward spiral,

and the country is poised to become the next global economic superpower. Given

these events, and especially the fact that Japan's economy did not recover as well as

the U.S. and other nations' economies did, the last decade and a half has caused Japan

to feel threatened, and to question its place in the world.

This feeling of impending domination from other global powers as well as an

uncertainty of Japan's place in the international sphere has resulted in Japan

experiencing an identity crisis akin to the one that occurred after its defeat in WWII

and during the Occupation. In response to the perceived outside threats, there has

been a shift towards conservative politics and a rise in xenophobia as well as a "push

[towards] a nationalist agenda,"[91] all in order to bolster and reaffirm Japan's sense of

its selfhood. This step in the complete opposite direction of the hybridization-

integration model in the political sphere explains why the above examples of racial

alienation have become so prevalent despite a general trend towards worldwide

globalization, and also why cultural integration in the form of hybridism still has not

manifested in Japanese media, and remains out of reach. To harken back to the

introduction, and the discussion of Japan's identity in the scheme of the nation's

history, it appears that Japan is once again entering a period of cultural isolation like it did at the end of the Edo era and again during the 15 year-long Greater East Asian War.

Finally, with regard to the future of this study, I would like to extend my analysis to more recently published manga, perhaps even discovering a series in which includes aspects of hybridism. Though Japan's current events suggest that this search will be fruitless, perhaps my investigations will present a new element to the spectrum model highlighted in this paper, and show me that cultural fusion cannot simply be delineated into three broad categories. In the meantime, with extra time and ideally, some sort of funding, I would be interested to travel to Japan, or gain access to a large wealth of Japanese-language resources to see if the discussion on identity discourses differs significantly from the scholarship analyzed during this 8-month research venture.

However, if this paper has managed to enlighten any reader about identity discourses in Japan or encouraged anyone to critically engage with either (or both) Ishinomori and Okazaki's works then I will be satisfied that I have indeed made a mark within the field of Japanese cultural anthropological studies.

Endnotes:

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[1] Walthall 104-5.

[2] Walthall 14-5.

[3] Walthall 127.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Walthall 144-6.

[7] Walthall 157-8

[8] Walthall 195.

[9] Walthall 168.

[10] Walthall 172.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] *Nihonjinron* describes an ongoing set of discourses/genre of texts focusing on issues of Japanese culture, behavior, nationality and the collective identity of the people. See Rotem Kowner's discussion in chapter 9 of the anthology *Exploring Japneseness: On Japanese Enactments of Culture and Consciousness* (2002) edited by Ray T. Donohue for further reading.

[14] Ishibashi 831.

[15] Tobin 3.

[16] Tobin 4.

[17] Iwabuchi 10.

[18] Even though at this point in the acculturation process the distinction between what is "Japanese" and "foreign" is negligible, knowledge of the origins is a key factor in understanding how certain frames of thought have become normative in Japan.

[19] See Fred Patten's 1998 article "The Anime "Porn" Market" for further discussion.

[20] Drazen 8.

[21] Iwabuchi 54.

[22] "Race and Reflexivity: The Black Other in Contemporary Mass Culture." (1996), "Consuming passions: Spectacle, self-transformation, and the commodification of blackness in Japan." (1998), "Playing with Race/Authenticating Alterity: Authenticity, Mimesis, and Racial Performance in the transcultural Diaspora." (2012).

[23] Russell 1998: 19.

[24] Koshiro 184-6.

[25] Condry 648.

[26] Cornyetz, 120.

[27] Koshiro 200, 202.

[28] Bramlett 197.

[29] Bramlett 188.

[30] Bramlett 184.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Bramlett 198.

[33] Bramlett 189.

[34] Denison 226.

[35] Lu 170.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Lu 172.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Lu 173.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Iwabuchi 6.

[42] Iwabuchi 19.

[43] Iwabuchi 27.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Iwabuchi 28.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Iwabuchi 33.

[50] Particularly noteworthy is his criticism of Japanese societal prejudice towards people of mixed Japanese heritage, which I will address later.

[51] Royal 7-8.

[52] Russell (1996), 25.

[53] Also see Roland Kelts' 2006 book *Japanamerica: How Japanese Pop Culture Has Invaded the U.S.* page 227 for more information.

[54] Russell (1996), 25.

[55] Shōtarō Ishinomori, *Cyborg 009* (Tokyo: Media Factory Comics, 2001) Vol. 1 Ch. 3, 27.

[56] Ishinomori, Shōtarō, *Cyborg 009* (2001) Vol. 1, Prologue; Ch. 1, 10-12.

[57] The Cyborgs choose to either rebel or become agents of death (Vol. 1 Ch. 5, 78)

[58] See Vol. 2 Ch. 9, 118 for an example.

[59] American media tends to portray Asian people with "slit-eyes," (see the 1944 Warner Bros. cartoon "Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips" for reference), while Japanese animation typically displays Japanese characters with Caucasoid features to achieve the *mukokuseki* ideal that Iwabuchi discusses.

[60] Hiroshi Wagatsuma, "The Perception of Skin Color in Japan," *deadelus* 96, no. 2 (1967), 409.

[61] Ishinomori, Shōtarō, *Cyborg 009* (2001) Vol. 8 Ch. 30, 113

[62] According to the legend of the Chinese zodiac, which remains a popular and culturally important facet of Japanese folklore, the pig was the last of the twelve animals to arrive to the Jade Emperor's banquet because it stopped mid-race to feast and then take a nap afterwards. Thus, in many East Asian cultures, the pig is often seen as representative of slothfulness, and an attachment to worldly desires. See http://www.chinesezodiac.com/

[63] Burkhardt, William R. "Institutional Barriers, Marginality, and Adaptation Among the American-Japanese Mixed Bloods in Japan." *The Journal of Asian Studies 42*, no. 3 (1983): 529.

[64] Adapted from the English version. Ishinomori, Shōtarō and Bryan Masumoto, *Cyborg 009* (Los Angeles, TOKYOPOP, 2004) Vol. 1 Ch. 7, 113.
In the Japanese Jet states: '日本人の髪の毛へ黒いときいていたがきみのは栗色だな' – "I heard that Japanese people have black hair, but yours is chestnut-colored.")

[65] Adapted from the English version. Ishinomori, Shōtarō and Bryan Masumoto, *Cyborg 009* (Los Angeles, TOKYOPOP, 2004) Vol. 1 Ch. 7, 113.
In Japanese 001 says, '混血児であることはけっして恥ずかしいことじゃないんだ。むしろ誇りに思っていい…..いまはまでだめだが …..やがて世界に国境とか人種差別といったおろかなことはなくなる日がきっとくる'

[66] Wagatsuma 426.

[67] Walthall 199.

[68] Ishinomori, Shōtarō, *Cyborg 009* (2001) Vol. 4, Pt. 4 Prologue

[69] Ishinomori, Shōtarō, *Cyborg 009* (2001) Vol. 1 Ch. 3, 172

[70] Wagatsuma 417.

[71] At many times in the series, characters tend to underestimate Afro only to be stricken with awe at his seeming invincibility. (See chapter 1 p. 29 and chapter 4 p. 116)

[72] Okazaki Takashi and Kizaki Fuminori, interview by Matsuura Maori, *Cinema Factory*, October 28, 2010.

[73] Okazaki Takashi, Greg Moore and Joshua Hale Fialkov. *Afro Samurai*, vol. 2. New York: Tor/Seven Seas (2008): 166.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Okazaki's single-volume *Afro Samurai* manga that I used for my research was approximately 10 x 14 inches.

[78] See note 73.

[79] Okazaki states: "日本ではアフロって結構笑いになっていたんです"

[80] Bramlett recorded a total of 25 utterances in the 5 episode anime series.

[81] Okazaki Takashi, *Afro Samurai*, chapter 7.

[82] *Afro Samurai,* anime episode 4.

[83] Bramlett 205. (Bramlett's transcription.) Also see anime episode 2.

[84] *Afro Samurai,* anime: episode 4; manga: chapter 6.

[85] SPOILER: Jinnō is the adversary who refers to Afro's hair as "stupid."

[86] See *Cinema Factory* interview.

[87] Johnston, Erik and Osaki Tomohiro. "Author Sono calls for racial segregation in op-ed piece." *The Japan Times* (Tokyo, Japan), Feb. 12 2015. Web.

[88] McNeil, Baye. "Time to shut down this modern-day minstrel show." *The Japan Times* (Tokyo, Japan), Feb. 18 2015. Web.

[89] Holly, Peter. "Why some critics think Japan's Miss Universe contestant isn't Japanese enough." *The Washington Post* (Washington DC), Mar. 20, 2015. Web.

[90] "Quarterly National Accounts: Quarterly Growth rates of real GDP, change over previous quarter." *Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development.* Last Modified April 15, 2015. stas.oecd.org/Index.aspx?QueryName+350&QueryType=View&Lang=en#

[91] "2014: a year of conservative gains." Editorial. *The Japan Times* (Tokyo, Japan), Dec. 27 2014. Web.

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