

Research Article

You are Victim: The Depiction of Enemies in Japanese Super Hero Series

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Abstract

The depiction of Super-Villain in Japanese Super Hero series usually showing the western country as the main villain. The result of World War II primarily influences this. Nevertheless, recently there have been several Super Hero Series that depicted the minorities as the main villain. The purpose of this study is to present the issue of minorities in the Japanese Super Hero Series. Through the cultural study approach, this paper will discuss how minorities being represented by the antagonist character, Roimudde. This study had two aims (i) how does the Roimudde representing the minorities in Japanese society. (ii) how the characters Heart and Medic represent that minorities were victims of society. We found that the Roimudde was a different race from humans representing the minorities through content analysis of the Children television series Kamen Rider Drive. At the same time, Heart and Medic have painful memories that made them grudge toward humanity. It is also mean that this film was recognizing the minorities as the victim of prejudice by society. It is necessary to throw all prejudice to other people just because of physical or race differences to enter transnational society without prejudice.

Keywords: homogenous; minorities; supervillain

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1. Introduction

There are always two sides of a coin head and tails, the light and the dark, and superheroes and villains. Supervillains became an integral part of Superhero narration. In recent years we have seen the rising popularity of several supervillains in cinema. A character like Joker (2019), Thanos in Avengers Infinity War (2018), or even Darth Vader in Star Wars (1977).

In Japanese superhero narration, several heroes are famous to the fans. Like Char Aznable in Gundam Series, Dr. Hell in Mazinger series, or Shocker in Kamen Rider Series. This villain has several similarities, like Caucasian people with German Esque names or even allegory of western culture

who invade Japan after Japan's defeat at World War II. However, recently this narration had changed. There is several series that depicted minorities as the villain of the series.

Nevertheless, why minorities need to be discussed in Japanese society? Isn't Japanese society a homogenous society? Compare to the other country Japan has a low number of foreign people who lived in Japan, but Japan's condition makes them need a foreign worker.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe decided on migration policy. Due to Japan's lack of labor force, the Japanese Government will accept more foreign workers to enter Japan. In 2018 the number

of Japanese births only reached 918,397 people. Japan's Birth rate has been lower than 1 million people since three years ago. It is a threat to the number of laborers in Japan in the future (Kyodo, 2019; Kingston, 2011).

However, this does not necessarily solve the problem. According to socio-psychological analysts, Japan has a feeling of inferiority towards Western nations but has superior feelings toward other Asian nations (Sugimoto, 2010, p.189). Many suspicions arise against foreign citizens, such as the inability to understand the language or understand Japanese culture. It causes foreign citizens to be stigmatized and isolated from society.

The concept of “wa” implies peaceful unity and conformity. In a social group, Japanese people will prefer the continuation of a harmonious community over personal interest. However, on the other hand, people who did not comply with Japanese culture are not tolerated. As one of the Japanese proverb says “出る釘はたたえる”(read : deru kugi wa utareru). Literary means nails that stick out must be hammered down. The proverb means that people who “stand out” from the crowd must be taken down.

There have been two groups in Japan regarding the idea of multicultural Japan. Those who had intolerance and prejudice toward foreigners and pursued a more open and multicultural Japan (Sugimoto, 2010).

Japan has its problem with minorities. Groups of minorities being identified by Japan are burakumin, zainichi, and ainu. Burakumin was a group of people who live outside the class system in the Edo period. At the same time, Zainichi was a worker that Japan brought from Korea to accommodate labor in Japan to work in mines. In contrast, Ainu is a group of people in northern Japan part of Japan. These three groups have found difficulties living with the Japanese people because they have

different cultures and lifestyles (Weiner, 2009; Sugimoto, 2010).

While current labor worker brought to Japan is caused by the low birthrate in Japan. Many Japanese people feel that the foreign worker could not enter the Japanese society because they feel that the foreign worker could not speak in Japanese language and lack understanding of Japanese culture. Even some statement from the government official that has been accusing foreign workers is the cause of the problem in Japanese society. In 2000, Tokyo Mayor Ishihara said that foreigners could start a riot if a big earthquake hit Tokyo. This comment shows how the Japanese prejudice foreign people living in Japan (Burgess, 2007).

Humans should not be divided into a race with a particular prejudice. Only racism insists on the division of the human race. When people discuss race, it is not its cultural and historical division, signified by its skin tone. Nevertheless, instead, people try to make a social and political hierarchy through race division.

According to Faruk (2010), social issues could be identified from art and literature. The issue of the minority in Japanese society could also be identified in one of its Children's television series. Kamen Rider Drive (2014). Aired in Japan October 5th, 2014 to September 27th, 2015, as a part of the ongoing Heisei Kamen Rider Series. Told a story about a police officer Tomari Shinnosuke who could become a masked hero called Kamen Rider Drive, facing threats from a group of enemies called Roimudde.

The Roimudde swear vengeance to humanity that had tortured them before. They were led by three Roimudde called Heart, Brain, and Medic. Through content analysis of the television series Kamen Rider Drive, we would like to see the social status of the Roimudde and how they represent the minorities in Japanese society.

In the previous research, Marc Di Paolo (2010), in his paper titled Gay Rights,

Civil Rights, and Nazism in X Men Universe, concludes that X-Men represented Gay People. Unlike his DC Super Heroes, Marvel Super Heroes was designed to be a flawed character. Take an example for mutant in the X Men Universe. Mutant was a group of people who have peculiar gifts that made them outcasted from normal society. Most of the X-Men readers agreed that X-Men narratives primarily discuss fighting for gay rights, oppression of Jews, the black power movement, and feminism. (DiPaolo, 2010, p. 219~220).

Sugawa-Shimada (2014), in her paper "Japanese Superheroes teams at home and Abroad: Super Sentai in Japan and their adaptation in South Korea Cinemas," says that superheroes narratives in Japan were heavily influenced by the World War result. The Super Sentai teams represented Japanese Shuudan-Shuugi or Groupism which faced the individualism value of the western culture.

In both kinds of research, we can see how superheroes' narratives are more than a story about good versus evil, but some value is represented in the narratives. In this research, I would like to show how recent Japanese Superhero narratives have been transformed from a battle against western culture to criticism of Japanese society's problem.

2. Methods

This study used the cultural study approach to raise minorities in Japanese society in the children's television series Kamen Rider Drive. This study used the concept of Japanese minorities by Michael Weiner (2009) and Sugimoto (2010).

A minority group refers to a group of people who experience disadvantage compared to the dominant social group (Haley, 2019). This group of people was mainly was differentiated because they have different ethnicities, races, religions,

or sexual orientations (Ritzer, 2015). In comparison, Macionis (2017) defines minority as any distinguished people by the physical or cultural difference that society sets apart and subordinate.

Japan has always been a mono-ethnic country. With 98% of its population was Japanese people. In reality, burakumin, zainichi, Ainu, and foreign workers were the minority group who were treated differently because of their physical appearance.

Ainu's situation was derived from an attempt by the Honshu people in the sixth century to colonize the northern area of Japan. Zainichi was people who had been forced to come to Japan to work in Japanese mines in the war era. In comparison, burakumin was a group that came from the caste system of the feudal time. When Japan's economy flourished, foreign workers entered Japan (Sugimoto, 2010, p.191).

Those are the minority group in Japan who had a prejudice, a rigid and unfair generalization, about an entire category of people (Macionis, 2017). Burakumin was an outcast, people in the feudal era. After the war, zainichi, who had lived for over 2 to 3 generations who had lost their Korean citizenship, were not granted citizenship by the Japanese Government. Ainu people were considered as a savage race. At the same time, the foreign worker was always labeled as poor people. Those were some examples of prejudice that minority groups had (Weiner, 2009).

However, biology never divides people base on their skin color; it is racism that divides people into classes or groups. People have different colors and physical features, but that does not make the difference have any meanings. Cultural studies have a part in "defeat" racism. Help to bring into being a world in which the term 'race' is little more than a long-disused historical category (Storey. 2015, p.175-189).

This study will use children's television series in Japan, Kamen Rider Drive. From the observation of the series, this series raised an issue of minorities in Japanese society. According to Bleigh (2015), media could become the communication bridge between political and social actors, influence perception on social issues, and shape public views.

There are three advantages to using media as a basis of minority studies. First, media provide a source of information for minority groups. Second, media convey and construct the representation of minority groups (positive and negative depiction). The third and last media could be a space for minority groups to show their interest and identities.

Through content analysis of the television series Kamen Rider Drive, especially the dialogue of this series, this research will show how the Roimudde, the antagonist of the series, represents minorities in Japanese society.

3. Result and Discussion

This section will discuss how the concept of Roimudde is associated with foreign people who lived in Japan. We will also discuss the two characters of Roimudde called Heart and Medic to explore their story representing the lives of minorities in Japan. There is some explanation about the origin of Roimudde.

Character

Heart and Med is a part of Roimudde. Android can mimic a human being. They could learn the human emotion and was made to help humanity. It could be seen on the Masked Rider Drive Official website, which describes Roimudde as follow.

Data 1

人間の欲しい欲求や欲望を学習して進化するアンドロイド

(Source: Kamen Rider Drive Website
<https://www.tv-asahi.co.jp/drive/roy/>)

Translation :

Android who learns and evolves from human desires

The Roimudde was not only capable of learning human emotion, but they also could take human form. When they are taking human form, they are the same as another human. This kind of distinction between Roimudde and Human is representing the minorities in Japanese society. They have the same characteristic as the Japanese, but they are different.

Plot

While Roimudde was created to help the humanities, their inventors, Professor Banno, have a grudge toward other humans, making the Roimudde learn negative human emotion. The explanation below could be why the Roimudde became the evil organization that would like to destroy humanities.

Data 2

ロイミュードは私の親友万能博士が発明した欲求型アンドロイド。

(Source : Kamen Rider Drive Episode 10
12:31~12:38)

Translation :

Roimudde was created by my friend Profesor Banno. They were Android that can learn.

From the explanation of data 1 and data 2. Roimudde was an Android (Robot with a human form) that can learn and evolves from human desire. In the story of Kamen Rider Drive, all of the Roimudde have a goal to evolve themselves and rule over humanity.

Professor Banno invented Roimudde. However, in the process, Banno tortures them, and they evolve a hatred toward humanity. That is the reason for the Roimudde to rebel and kill Professor Banno. From that day, 108 Roimudde learned and evolved from humans and wanted to rule over humans.

From the story above, Roimudde is a representation of the minority in Japanese

society. At the same time, they were a group of people who are treated differently by society. They were seen as the source of a problem in society.

So does the minority in Japanese society. While the concept of “wa” in Japanese society has a great value, the harmonious society made is a homogeneous society that people can not be different. Once they have a different characteristic or different mindset, they are bullied.

While some Roimudde attack humans. Some Roimudde learns to be human, and even one of the Roimudde, Chase, turns to the good side and becomes Kamen Rider Chase. However, at first, Go, a human who can become Kamen Rider Mach, was opposed.

Data 3

ゴ- : 俺は認めない奴は仮面ライダーは

キリコ : ゴ-、何でそんなにチェースを嫌うの？

ゴ- : 何で？決まってるだろう、奴はロイミュードだから

(Source : Kamen Rider Drive Episode 27, 02:34~02:46)

Translation :

Go : He's not Kamen Rider to me

Kiriko : Go..., why do you hate Chase that much?

Go : Because he's a Roimudde, of course!

From the dialogue above, we can see the hardship, Roimudde had to face when he associated with humans. Go said that Roimudde will always be Roimudde. Hinting that Roimudde is still a bad person. The minorities were also facing this kind of treatment. The prejudice toward Chase was unfair. While he is trying to learn how he could contribute to society, Go was labeling him as a being who could not have good intentions.

Go or Kamen Rider Mach was the second protagonist of the series. He represents how Japanese society reaction to the minorities. Go only sees Chase as a

different human and would not admit his intention to help Go and his Sisters.

While depicting Roimudde as the enemy of the humanities, Three Roimudde Commander Heart, Brain, and Medic was shown to have his reasoning to hate humans. Three of them have some experience in the past that was contributing to their hatred toward the human.

The Heart was Roimudde 002. He had a face of a businessman who refused to fund Banno's experiment toward the Roimudde. Banno then makes Heart copy the Businessman's face and then tortured Heart to please his desire to avenge the Businessman.

Data 4

ハート : 俺の姿のモデルは万能の収支を断った青年事業家だった。俺だけが15年前から人間体を持っていたのはそのため。万能のつまらない復讐のためだった。

(Source: Kamen Rider Drive Episode 40 05:34~05:56)

Translation :

Heart : The person I copied his appearance was a businessman who declined Banno to fund his research. That is why I have the same appearance for the last 15 years for Banno's revenge.

From the dialogue above, it could be concluded that Heart has hatred toward human-caused Banno, who tortured him. That is why he desires to evolve and rule over the human.

Heart and Brain were born as a comrade who has been tortured by professor Banno and has hatred toward the human. At the same time, Professor Bano tortured Heart only because of his resentment toward the people who refused to fund his research. It is shown in the following dialogue.

Data 5

万能 : 余興だよクリム。どうぞあらゆる苦痛や刺激を与える実験なんだ。俺

の価値が分からんバカの顔のほうが気が晴れるものだろう。

(Source : Kamen Rider Drive Episode 40 05:58~06:16)

Banno : It was fun Krim. It was an experiment in applying pain and stimulation. I can let off a little bit of my anger on someone with the face of the idiot who looked down upon me.

This data confirmed that Professor Banno created and caused hatred in Heart and other Roimudde. He let off his anger toward a person by creating the Android, which can feel pain and stimulation like a human. In society, discrimination happens without any apparent reason. Just because of some belief, a group of people is being treated differently.

The Roimmude not only learn dark emotion from the suffering they receive from the torture from Professor Banno. Medic learning dark emotion from another human. She was lead by the other Roimudde but, at first, does not have hatred toward the human. This dialogue confirmed what makes her hate humanity. Medic has the power to heal other Roimudde but has a side effect inside of her.

Data 6

メディック : 私は多くのロイミュードの傷を治した。でもその力の同時に、治療した相手の感情を私の心に刻み込む。直した数だけで、彼らが人間から得た感情が私の心を刻む困れた。恨み、妬み、憎しみなど黒感情が

(Source: Kamen Rider Drive Episode 42 03:24~03:50)

Translation :

I healed many Roimuddes injuries, But when I used that power, the feelings of those I healed cause a side effect inside of me. The feelings they had stolen from humans were etched upon my Heart. Resentment, jealousy, hatred, and all dark emotion

From the dialogue above, we can learn that Medic has hatred toward human cause by feeling that he had from treating his comrade. It can be associated with how minorities feel about society even if they do not have hatred for other people. Hatred can be caused by the community's feeling when the community is given a hardship and caused hatred toward society. Those feelings could affect the people around them. It is causing minorities to have hatred toward the community because of something that happens to that person and something that happens in their community.

From data 4 and 5, we could learn that the same prejudice toward the Roimudde makes them hostile toward humans. The Heart was hostile because the human had poorly treated him. While Medic was learning the negative emotion that she copied from humans.

In the end, Shinosuke, the protagonist of the series, confronts Heart for the last time. Shinosuke was admitting that it is not Roimudde fault to have hatred toward the human. However, it is the human who has made Roimudde have such feelings.

Data 7

慎之助 : ハート、俺はここまで戦って知った。本当の悪意は人間の中にしかない。最悪の存在は万能博士だった。ロイミュードは人間の悪意をなぞっただけだ。犠牲医者みたいのものだ

(Source: Kamen Rider Drive Episode 47 07:39~08:04)

Translation :

Shinosuke : Heart, I have learned from all these battles. The real evil is only in humanity. The most evil being was Professor Banno. The Roimudde has simply programmed with humanity's negative emotions. They were victims too.

From the dialogue above, we can learn that the protagonist admitted that the real culprit was not the Roimudde all along. It is human that had thought them the negative emotion. It implies that even if the

minority has hatred toward the community, society is caused by society.

Kamen Rider Drive was a superhero television made for Children. However, because it is made for Children does not mean its only purpose was for entertainment only. Media have a function to shape perspective the society. The media content is far more severe than their reputation. The superheroes' narratives had been seen as a reflection of the public mood. In war times, it became pro-war, and in peace times, it became a pacifist. Nevertheless, the narrative is not always dependent on the majority of people. Sometimes it also became the sound of the minorities (DiPaolo, 2010).

4. Conclusion

From the study of children's television series, it can be concluded that this series is trying to shape public perspective about minorities.

Roimudde was a representation of minorities in Japan. They are treated differently by society and were given a harsh prejudice by a human. At the same time, Roimudde's act of hostility was caused by the human who mistreated them, which concluded at the end of the series by saying that they were victims of society.

Kamen Rider Drive was a children's television series, who raise an issue about minorities in Japan. While Roimudde was the antagonist of the stories, the series's narration shows that they were mere victims of society. It is a representation of minorities that will shape the viewer's opinion toward the minorities. While physical and race differences are unavoidable in the global era, prejudice toward people just because they had different physical or cultural background differences must be stopped. It is necessary to throw prejudice out of society to enhance culture, community, and society.

We live in a transnationalism society which has different background and culture. We need to raise awareness of how

society lives and not ignorant of the problem in society.

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