NEW LITERACIES, JAPANESE YOUTH, & GLOBAL FAST FOOD CULTURE: EXPLORING CRITICAL YOUTH AGENCIES

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the critical agencies expressed by a group of Japanese youth asked to reflect on their understanding of fast food cultures in the context of a global consumer-media environment. New literacies and the concepts of the young cyberflâneur and the phoneur are used to define and map the youths’ agentic practices, while various qualitative research methods are employed to investigate how eight Japanese high school students understand the meaning and impact of McDonald’s in their lives. Reflecting the multimodal literacies through which youth now express themselves, the thesis experimented with the use of mobile phone cameras, alongside group photo-interviews, as tools for exploring youths’ understanding of McDonald’s and contemporary fast food cultures. By way of conclusion, the thesis considers the students’ unique perspectives as emergent forms of critical agency and the implications of this research for student-teacher relationships in the context of critical media education.

Keywords: convergence culture, media convergence, global consumer-media culture, participatory culture, new literacies, collective meaning-making, affinity spaces, youthful cyberflâneur, phoneur, youth critical agency, McDonald’s global fast food culture, keitai camera, group photo-interviewing
DEDICATION

For my mother, Junko Iwase, & father, Yoshihiro Iwase

&

For the eight high school students who participated in my study
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INTRODUCTION

Today, the media are central to the lives of adolescents living in the global North. For example, American youth aged 8 to 18 years old spend an average of more than 7.5 hours a day consuming media, which is more than any other activity besides sleeping (Rideout et al, 2010). They own and avidly use such media devices, including portable MP3 players (e.g., iPod), handheld video game players (e.g., Nintendo DS, Sony Play Station Portable), laptop computers, and mobile phones (Rideout et al, 2010). They are better at “media-multitasking”: they watch TV and flip through magazines while simultaneously instant-massaging (or IMing) friends through a mobile phone, listening to music on an iPod, or surfing the Web (Rideout et al, 2010). The burgeoning social media, including social networking sites (SNSs) like MySpace and Facebook, are also significant. Older American teens (14 to 17 year-old) avidly use SNSs to post comments to friends’ pictures, pages or walls, to text-message friends, and to join groups (Lenhart et al, 2010). Interestingly, their content-creation online is commonplace as they create blogs and personal webpages, share self-created content such as photos, videos, artwork, or stories, and remix content into new forms of online artistic creation (Lenhart et al, 2005, p. 1; Lenhart et al, 2007; Lenhart et al, 2010).

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1 My use of the term “social media” derives from Mizuko Ito et al’s (2010) understanding of it as “the set of new media that enable social interaction between participants, often through the sharing of media” (p. 28n). Kinds of social media to which I refer here and throughout the thesis include instant messaging/IMing (through mobile phones in particular), blogs, social network sites (e.g., facebook), and video- and photo-sharing sites (e.g., Youtube, Frickr). Where appropriate, I refer to specific social media. These popular genres of social media are central to Tim O’Reilly’s accounts of “Web 2.0” (Ito et al, 2010). For the discussion of Web 2.0 (as opposed to We 1.0), see Section 1.2.2.
Like their American peers, Japanese youth are also avid media users, especially with *keitai* (the mobile phone). *Keitai* ownership is ubiquitous among Japanese adolescents, particularly older teens aged 13 to 19. They use *keitai* to constantly email friends, download music files, visit others’ profiles and blog sites, post comments, and even read novels or manga (Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology, 2009). Similar to American teenagers, Japanese teens today actively engage in creating and sharing self-authored content with other youth. Some Japanese teens create their own profile page called *purofu* (personal website) using mobile phones in order to publicize their diaries and interests (Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology, 2009). High-school girls also seem to be particularly active readers and authors of so-called *keitai* *shosetsu* (mobile phone novels) on mobile phone novel sites (Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology, 2009). In fact, some *keitai* *shosetsu*, which address subjects including high-school romance, rape, and teenage pregnancy, received a huge number of hits on the sites and were eventually published as nationwide bestselling fictions (Hani, 2007; Ishino, 2008).

The profusion of new media, particularly the social media, into adolescents’ lives tends to generate controversial talk of a so-called “digital generation”—that is, “a generation defined in and through its experience of digital computer technology” (Buckingham, 2006, p. 1). This generational rhetoric is associated with hopes and fears about young generations growing up with media

---

2 According to a survey conducted by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (2009), at the end of 2008, nearly all (95.9%) eleventh-grade youth owned a mobile phone as opposed to about a quarter (24.7%) of sixth-grade youth and just over half (45.9%) of eighth-grade youth.
technologies. As David Buckingham (2000) argues, easy assumptions about the positive impact of technology on younger generations create an idea that technology-/media-savvy youth are utterly capable of naturally and effortlessly adapting to changes in the digital age, while simultaneously treating adults as uniformly conservative and backward looking. While such a romanticization of youth growing up in the digital age is present, there is also a discourse of fear about digital technologies based on the assumptions that youth are always at risk from online dangers, including pornography and online stalking, alongside a litany of social ills, including addiction, antisocial behavior, obesity, educational underachievement, commercial exploitation, and stunted imaginations (Buckingham, 2008). This discourse pertains to what Kirsten Drotner (1999) calls a “media panic,” which is a specific form of a moral panic generated through the media as both instigators and purveyors of highly emotionally charged and morally polarized adult discussions focusing on the media uses of what are assumed to be vulnerable children and youth. Japanese adults’ so-called “mobile panics” focus particular attention on the threats posed by mobile phones to

---

3 For example, both Marc Prensky and Don Tapscott are those who advocate an ostensibly optimistic discourse of a digital generation. Prensky (2001) argues that today’s young people or students are “digital natives” who speak digital language and think and process information with brains essentially different from those of technically inept adults or teachers as “digital immigrants.” In similar vein, contrasting between the so-called “Net Generation” (or “N-Gener”) representing the baby boom echo (born between 1977-1997) and the television generation representing their baby boomer parents, Tapscott (1998, 2009) argues the latter who grew up with unidirectional and inflexible mass media should listen to, learn from, and adapt to the new styles of doing things among the former, who use and control media technologies and become more liberated and empowered by the emergent social media today.

4 I use the notion of moral panic here in relation to that which was defined by Stanley Cohen (1980)—that is, “[a] condition, episodes, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests” (p.9).
young people’s literacy, cultural values, and safety (i.e., mobile bullying) (Goggin, 2006).  

As Buckingham (2000) argues, the discourses of hopes and fears about young people growing up with media technologies falls into the trap of not only essentializing a generation but also accepting a technologically deterministic view, treating technology as “autonomous from other social forces, exercising its influence irrespective of the contexts and purposes for which it is used” (Buckingham, 2000, p. 37). As Stuart Poyntz and Michael Hoechsmann (forthcoming) note, debates about the hopes and fears posed by media technologies are important but are likely to reproduce the problem of so-called “either/or thinking.” In such thinking, one tends to treat media technologies as though they either bring about radical and near utopian forms of change, or as resources that produce a whole series of negative consequences that jeopardize the health, vitality, and identities of young people. In contrast to either of these responses, however, it is important to understand contemporary youth’s relationships with media technologies in relation to much broader ecologies. On this, Buckingham (2006) argues:

The notion of a digital generation—a generation defined through its relationship with a particular technology or medium—clearly runs at risk of attributing an all-powerful role to technology. This is not to imply that, on the contrary, technology is merely an outcome or function of other social processes; but it is to suggest that it needs to

---

5 The use of mobile phones among contemporary Japanese youth labelled as an “oya yubi sedai” (thumb generation) (Brooke, 2000) evolves into such mobile panics. The youth’s supposedly obsessive use of mobile phones has become adult discussions of fears and anxieties posed by the technology. Such mobile panics include: “keitai izon sho” (mobile phone addicts) and “keitai jihei sho” (acute withdrawal from one’s physical social life) (Yanagida, 2007); “deeruki ningen” (staying-out person) rejecting familial relations and only preferring mobile communication (Masataka, 2005); the perpetration of covert, insidious cyberbullying through a teenage anonymous online community called “gakko ura site” (behind school site) (Shibuya, 2008).
be seen in the context of other social, economic, and political developments (p.11-12, original emphasis).

Understanding contemporary youth’s relationships with media in broader ecologies helps explore how the ecologies influence and shape their lives, while simultaneously offering new possibilities for them to learn and develop as creative social actors and citizens within these very ecologies (Poyntz & Hoechsmann, forthcoming).

It is such new possibilities for youth, particularly Japanese adolescents, to learn to develop as creative ‘agents’ within a contemporary new media environment that this thesis explores as its broader objective. The new media environment I specifically look into is the powerful force of media conglomerates and large multinational corporations, which capitalize on youth’s new media consumption. For example, teenagers are a significant market segment because they are not only media-savvy but also trend-setting. Marketers are laboriously stalking and analyzing the lives and attitudes of teens in order to track how they define “cool” and to win credibility with them in the endless search of “the next cool thing” (Goodman & Dretzin, 2001). With the development of digital media technologies, marketers have now gained unprecedented direct access to young people as “key pathfinders” in the unfolding digital landscape (Montgomery, 2007, p. 105-106). Thus, corporate power increasingly reaches into and powerfully influences young people’s lives. However, in the new media environment where youth interact with powerful corporate media, they are not utterly shaped by it. Rather, young people can interact in critically complicated ways with corporate power.
In order to explore contemporary youth’s relationships with powerful corporate media, this thesis specifically focuses on Japanese adolescents and looks into their relationships with McDonald’s and its global fast food culture. The thesis has the following two central analytic questions: 1) How do Japanese young people understand and think about McDonald’s? and 2) Do their understandings indicate forms of critical agency in relation to the global fast food culture created by McDonald’s? In Chapter 1, I define three key concepts that help explore these two questions. The three concepts are: 1) a convergence culture, 2) youth’s meaning production, and 3) a youth critical agency. The concept of ‘convergence culture’ represents a contemporary new media environment that youth inhabit and where they find new forms of participation that often operate at a global scale. Youth’s meaning production is defined in relation to ‘new literacies,’ which provides a framework for mapping and understanding youth’s collective meaning-making practices with digital media. Youth critical agency is defined in relation to the critical and aesthetic practices of the ‘youthful cyberflâneur.’

Chapter 2 introduces the qualitative research I conducted in Japan in the spring of 2009. The three concepts discussed in Chapter 1 guided the research as the theoretical framework. I explored contemporary youth’s meaning production and their critically agentic practices within a convergence culture by selecting eight Japanese high school students as research participants and by focusing on a particular global fast food culture created by McDonald’s. This chapter provides the rationale for looking at the culture as an example of a global consumer-media culture and discusses the research methods I used during my
field research, using participants mobile phone cameras along with group photo-interviews.

Chapter 3 analyzes the findings in my research. I examine the eight participants’ meaning production in relation to McDonald’s and map the range of critically agentic practices emergent among eight participants. The chapter reveals the eight participants’ unique forms of critical understanding of McDonald’s specific to their everyday lives.

Given what was found among the eight participants in my research, I conclude this thesis by considering my own role as an adult researcher/teacher/educator in the study. I emphasize the importance of critical media education and consider how the potential collaborative space generated through critical media education helps to facilitate both pride in a teacher’s and his/her students’ work and critique.
1: YOUNG PEOPLE’S PARTICIPATION IN A CONVERGENCE CULTURE: DEVELOPING NEW LITERACIES AND CRITICAL YOUTH AGENCY

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I define three key concepts that serve as the theoretical framework for this thesis and guide my qualitative research and the analysis of its findings discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. The three concepts include 1) a convergence culture, 2) youth’s meaning production, and 3) youth critical agency. In the first section, I conceptualize a new media environment that young people inhabit in relation to “convergence culture,” in which a “participatory culture” interacts with a “media convergence” (Jenkins, 2003, 2006). The second section conceptualizes youth’s meaning production in relation to contemporary participatory cultures by rethinking literacy and charting the meaning of “new literacies” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006). The third section links the discussion of new literacies and a critical youth agency through the notions of the “youthful cyberflâneur” (Kenway & Bullen, 2001, 2008) and young “phoneur” (Luke, 2005).

1.2 Convergence Culture

The relationships which young people, particularly those who live in the global North, have with media need to be considered in relation to broader technological, economic, cultural, and political changes which they emerged and developed over the past two and a half decades. In this regard, I refer to what Henry Jenkins (2006) calls a “convergence culture,” which refers to a manner of
experience “where old and new media collide, where grassroots and corporate media intersect, where the power of the media producer and the power of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways” (Jenkins, 2006, p. 2). The intersection of two significant trends—that is, media convergence in the context of new forms of participatory culture—is crucial for understanding the nature of young people’s mediated experience today. In what follows, I define media convergence as a corporate-driven technological and economic process through which a “global consumer-media culture” (Kenway & Bullen, 2008) develops. I then discuss how the development of such a culture simultaneously contributes to a cultural shift that sets the conditions for forms of participatory experience in which young people are becoming more engaged and creative with media resources.

1.2.1 Media Convergence and a Global Consumer-Media Culture

Broadly speaking, media convergence refers to a corporate-driven technological and economic process in which media content comes to be circulated across systems or platforms that target and address increasingly fragmented media audiences (Jenkins, 2003, 2006). As a technological process enabled by “digitization,” convergence is characterized by the transformation of analogue forms of images, sounds, and information into binary bits of data that move more fluidly across different media platforms and contexts. Where enabled by technological changes however, convergence is also a function of larger economic and regulatory transformations that have taken shape across the Western world over the past three decades.
Often understood in relation to the development of a “network society” (Barney, 2004: see also Castells, 2001), media convergence is at root made possible by the concentration of media ownership across formerly distinct industry divides. Such concentration was encouraged and enabled by regulatory changes implemented in different ways across nations in the global North throughout the 1980s and 1990s under a neoliberal economic regime. This regime stresses the importance of liberalizing markets through which private firms can develop and exploit the potential of new technologies, services and commodities, and the communications infrastructure that support these activities without subjecting them to undue regulatory constraints (Barney, 2004). Government deregulation of media industries have helped create the conditions for large media companies to acquire businesses in different media fields, particularly through the “horizontal integration” of multiple companies that are in the same business but occupy different market segments and positions in the production-distribution chain (Jenkins, 2001, 2003).

National differences are, of course, important here, but the larger point is that media convergence has resulted in the development of a small group of transnational global media conglomerates and other large multinational corporations. They have remarkable influence on young people’s lives. For instance, in the North American context, four major transnational companies, Disney, Viacom, News Corp, and Time Warner, are shaping the media world that children and youth inhabit much of the time (Poyntz & Hoechsmann, forthcoming; see also Wasko, 2008). These so-called “Big Four” media conglomerates dominate children’s media and entertainment markets. The Big
Four have spread the influence of other large multinational corporations that dominate the business of toys, video games, candy, soft drinks, and food by “drawing on their financial muscle and extensive program libraries” (Wasko, 2008, p. 465 cited in Poyntz & Hoechsmann, forthcoming). As Poyntz and Hoechsmann (forthcoming) note, what is common to the Big Four is their ability to globally develop and distribute a vast range of new media products and services to young consumers across multiple media platforms, including movies, TV channels, magazines, and music distribution networks, the Web, theme parks, and countless other sectors and branded entities. Disney typifies a global media conglomerate developing this strategy. Its media products and services are promoted to children and youth around the world through animated film companies (e.g., Pixar), television businesses (e.g., ABC), cable channels (Toon Disney), radio stations (e.g., Radio Disney), merchandising companies (e.g., Disney Store), retail outlets and online catalogue sites (e.g., Disney Catalogue), various online services (e.g., Disney Online), major theme parks (e.g., Tokyo Disneyland), and branded characters (e.g., Mickey and Minnie Mouse).

Now operating across multiple media platforms to distribute their products and services to increasingly fragmented audiences, the media conglomerates and large multinational corporations are able to find ways to target and reach young people more easily and with greater sophistication. As Jenkins (2006) notes, young people are constantly experiencing “organic convergence”: they mentally connect information drawn from multiple media platforms (e.g., Dixie Chicks through a DVD player, car radio, iPod, a Web radio station, a music cable channel) and use the same media appliance for different purposes (e.g., a mobile
phone for playing games, downloading music, watching videos). In response, media conglomerates and large multinational corporations capitalize on youth’s new media consumption and deploy a “synergy-based strategy” (Jenkins, 2003). Through this strategy, they encourage consumers not simply to buy an isolated product or experience but to “buy into a prolonged relationship with a particular narrative universe, which is rich enough and complex enough to sustain their interest over time and thus motivate a succession of consumer choices” (Jenkins, 2003, p. 284). Such a synergy-based strategy is the essential feature of new marketing or brand research in the form of what Jenkins (2006) describes as “affective economics”—that is, a new configuration of marketing theory centred on the emotional commitments and desires that consumers project onto brands as a driving force behind their viewing or purchasing decisions (p. 63).

There are several examples illustrating how media conglomerates and large multinational corporations now operate in the lives of young people by utilizing a synergistic marketing strategy. The first example is global food and beverage companies’ digital marketing. According to Kathryn Montgomery and Jeff Chester (2009), companies such as Coca-Cola, McDonald’s, Burger King, and Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) cooperate with market research firms and media companies and target American adolescents through social media. Specifically, the companies research young mobile users’ profiles and locations and promote their products through various mobile marketing strategies, such as text-messaging, electronic coupons, and videos. Similarly, the companies research young people’s verbal and nonverbal behavior and psychological states of mind through posting to SNSs, such as MySpace and Facebook, and conduct
personalized marketing and sales according to the youth’s preferences, behaviors, and psychological profiles. Moreover, the companies capitalize on the SNSs in order to develop peer-to-peer marketing, such as “buzz,” “word-of-mouth,” and “viral” marketing (Montgomery & Chester, 2009, S21). They also encourage young Internet users to communicate and influence friends with respect to their brands and services.

The synergistic marketing success of Pokémon is the second example. This success is grounded in what Jenkins (2006) calls “transmedia storytelling,” which refers to stories that unfold across different media platforms by making a distinctive and valuable contribution to a more integrated approach to franchise development and consumers’ understanding of the narrative universe (p. 97). Nintendo first introduced Pokémon as a role-playing game for an interlinkable, hand-held Game Boy console to child and teen gamers. Players train creatures called Pokémon (pocket monsters) to capture more monsters through battling and trade them with other players. According to Stephen Kline et al. (2003), a massive promotional campaign surrounding Pokémon started with an entire Pokémon franchise through licensed media spin-offs (e.g., a TV anime series and animated films), product tie-ins (e.g., collector trading cards, clothes, snacks, and toys), and internet promotions, all of which were enhanced through television

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6 I understand Jenkins’ transmedia storytelling in terms of Marsha Kinder’s (1991) idea of an ever-expanding commercial supersystem of “transmedia intertextuality,” in which marketers encourage young spectators to wisely recognize, distinguish, and assemble different narrative elements and genres cutting across multiple media platforms. In addition, Jenkins’ notion of transmedia storytelling parallels a media mix Ito (2006) emphasizes in relation to Yu-Gi-Oh! discussed in the first part of the chapter.

7 Examples of transmedia storytelling include Star Wars and Matrix franchises, which deploy a synergistic approach through not only the trilogy of the films but also novels, comic books, videos, DVDs, video games, animated shorts, toys and character merchandise with careful licensing and a multitude of corporate partners, such as fast food franchises and soft drink bottlers (Jenkins, 2003, 2006).
and print advertising (p. 240). Such Pokémon franchises became possible because ‘the marketers have strategically synchronized “mass media” and “new media,” so that they spiral around one another, referring to and reinforcing one another, deepening the presence of the marketers and the reach of Pokémon symbolics in children’s culture’ (Kline et al, 2003, p. 241).

So-called “immersive marketing” in the context of the children’s online community, NeoPets, is the third example representing how entertainment and food companies find new ways to target contemporary young consumers (Grimes & Shade, 2005; Montgomery, 2007; Montgomery & Chester, 2009). NeoPets, owned by the media conglomerate Viacom, is a free online site where millions of young male and female users create and look after the health and welfare of their virtual pets, explore the community of a world called Neopia, and earn and spend currency called NeoPoints to purchase food and sustenance for their pets. In the online NeoPets site, advertisers and entertainment companies use the site for immersive advertising by directly integrating their products and brand names into the activities young users experience within the site (Grimes & Shade, 2005). This enables young users to eventually identify the products and brand promoted by particular companies. For example, McDonald’s has placed its business in the online Neopets site’s shop section to encourage young users to repeatedly feed their virtual pets with the company’s products (Montgomery, 2007). Thus, advertisers such as McDonald’s can generate ideal virtual immersive environments in which their brand messages are seamlessly

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8 Viacom has also popularized NeoPets by seamlessly advertising it through various programs of its subsidiaries, particularly Nickelodeon cable television network (Grimes & Shade, 2005).

9 While using immersive advertising, McDonald’s has also attempted to synergistically integrate Neopets’s pluses and trading cards into its Happy Meals (Grimes & Shade, 2005).
incorporated into the content in the form of “in-game advertising” (Montgomery & Chester, 2009, p. S22).

Importantly, media convergence which has made possible these corporate synergistic strategies is understood in relation to the development of a “consumer-media culture” (Kenway & Bullen, 2001). In this culture, the media (both traditional mass and contemporary digital media) and advertising serve to remake the meaning of commodities, goods, services, and experiences to be consumed, maintained, and planned, and dreamt about by everyday consumers, such as youth. Complex semiotic practices in the media and advertising constantly distort the logic of commodities (e.g., objects and services). The original use value or meaning embedded in the commodities becomes disconnected, and arbitrary meanings are attached to them through the manipulation of signs and images.

As a result of such a distortion of the logic of commodities, as Jean Baudrillard argues, the excess and saturation of newly produced signs and images lead to a world of simulation and simulacra, of “hyperreality,” which obliterates the distinction between the real and the imaginary (Kenway & Bullen, 2001). In consumer-media cultures, the media, advertising, and semiotic practices converge in producing signs and images to summon up a whole range of associated feelings and desires among everyday consumers. In this context, the culture involves what Jean-François Lyotard calls a “libidinal economy” in which the social and marketing structures exploit consumers’ desires and feelings and make them infinitely unsatisfied through “product senility and
aesthetic obsolescence, leading to the rapid turnover of style and fashion and the creation of an artificial sense of insufficiency” (Kenway & Bullen, 2008, p. 20).

Of course, the movement of such a culture around the globe is always uneven. Referring to Arjun Appadurai’s idea of “new global cultural economy,” Kenway and Bullen (2008) note that consumerism reaches many via the “global cultural flows” of people, images, technologies, money, and ideas (Kenway & Bullen, 2008, p. 18; see also Appadurai, 1996). Such flows are “disjunctive” in the sense that they operate in a complex, overlapping, contingent, and fragmentary order, rather than in a one-way flow characterized as “cultural homogenization” (Kenway & Bullen, 2008, p. 18). In particular, what Appadurai (1996) calls “mediascapes” provide consumers with resources out of which they script not only their own “possible lives” but also the “imagined lives” of others living elsewhere (Kenway & Bullen, 2008, p. 19). Whatever the possible narratives, a binding experience is that such mediascapes produce what Appadurai calls “fetishism of the consumer.” He argues that:

the consumer has been transformed, through commodity flows (and the mediascapes, especially of advertising, that accompany them) into a sign, both Baudrillard’s sense of a simulacrum which only asymptotically approaches the form of a real social agent; and in the sense of a mask for the real seat of agency, which is not the consumer but the producer and the many forces that constitute production...These images of agency [created by mediascapes] are increasingly distortions of the world of merchandising so subtle that the consumer is consistently helped to believe that he or she is an actor, where in fact he or she is at best a chooser. (Appadurai, 1995, p. 307, cited in Kenway & Bullen, 2008, p. 19, their italics).

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10 Appadurai (1996) distinguish the global cultural flows among the following five scapes: “ethnoscapes,” “mediascapes,” “technoscapes,” “financescapes,” and “ideascapes.”
In addition to generating a pseudo-social agency through simulations and simulacra of hyperreality, the mediascapes also contribute to what Appadurai (1996) calls a “production fetishism”—that is, “an illusion created by contemporary transnational production loci that masks translocal, transnational earning flows, global management, and often faraway workers (engaged in various kinds of high-tech putting-out operations)” (p. 42).\footnote{Appadurai (1996) derives the notion of production fetishism, as well as of fetishism of the consumer, from Karl Marx’s famous theory of the “fetishism of the commodity” and argues that the fetishism and the resulting “alienation” have now taken place in the world at large, which is composed of many interactively complex subsystems (p. 41).}

The “global consumer-media culture” (Kenway & Bullen, 2008), which creates the fetishism of the consumer and the production fetishism, has reached into and operates across young people’s lives. Importantly however, this does not mean that young people are simply shaped or constituted by the corporate global consumer media. Ironically, as much as the culture influences their lives, the culture of convergence also includes tensions that have enabled youth to find new forms of participation with the resources provided by the very culture itself. As a consequence, there is now more room for agency, play, and remixing with this culture. To make sense of this apparent contradiction, in what follows, I explore more fully how participation operates in contemporary convergence culture.

### 1.2.2 Young People in a Participatory Culture

Convergence does not simply represent a corporate-driven technological and economic process through which a global consumer-media culture takes possession of young people’s lives. According to Jenkins (2006), it also
represents a “cultural shift” created by everyday media consumers who appropriate the process to bring the flow of media more fully under their control. Because of the nature of digitization and the increasing fragmentation of audiences, Jenkins (2003, 2006) argues that media convergence enables consumers to participate in the archiving, annotation, appropriation, transformation, and recirculation of media content in powerful new ways. What he calls a “participatory culture”\textsuperscript{12} refers to one where they are invited to actively engage with these activities. It is a bottom-up force of “grassroots convergence” interacting with a top-down force of corporate media convergence in unpredictable ways (Jenkins, 2006).

Today, young people actively engage in a participatory culture. Mizuko Ito et al (2010) describes the culture as a “networked public.”\textsuperscript{13} It enables youth to transform themselves from passive spectators to “active participants” who use digital media tools to combine resources available through convergent media ecologies and to richly traffic media content (p. 19). Communicating through

\textsuperscript{12} Historically, a participatory culture has emerged as patterns of people’s media consumption are transformed by a succession of new media technologies. For example, the photocopier became “the people’s printing press” for publishing and circulating perspectives of subcultural communities; the videocassette recorder (VCR) became “a large library of personally meaningful media content”, as well as a tool for “amateur media production”; the camcorder became a tool for filmmaking and documentary production; the portable technology such as Sony Walkman became a liberating device enabling people to carry and listen to their customized favourite music in an urban space (Jenkins, 2003, p.286). The contributions of the Internet and World Wide Web (Web) are particularly significant since they enable everyday consumers to share with others their negotiated interpretation of commercial media culture and alternative cultural production (Jenkins, 2003).

\textsuperscript{13} Ito et al (2010) describe the forms of young people’s (i.e., American teens’) participation in a digitally networked culture as “networked publics” (p. 19). Their emphasis on the term “networked publics” is grounded in Arjun Appadurai and Carol Breckenridge’s notion of “public culture” as ‘a way of understanding “the space between domestic life and the nation-state—where different groups (classes, ethnic groups, genders) constitute their identities by their experience of mass-culture mediated forms in relation to the practices of everyday life’’ (Appadurai & Breckenridge, 1995, p. 4-5, cited in Ito et al, 2010, p. 19). Ito et al extend the notion to the current historical conjuncture in which a growing number of American teens have migrated to digitally networked forms.
complex networks that are bottom-up, top-down, and side-to-side, young people become “reactors, (re)makers and (re)distributors, engaging in shared culture and knowledge through discourse and social exchange as well as through acts of media reception” (Ito, 2008, p. 3). For instance, in the North American context, Jenkins et al. (2006) provide four specific forms of young people’s engagement in a participatory culture. These include “affiliation” by forming formal and informal online communities through social media; “expressions” by producing amateur cultural production through digital sampling, fan fiction, and video making; “collaborative problem-solving” by teaming up with others formally or informally in order to accomplish tasks and develop collective knowledge; and “circulation” by shaping the flow of media (Jenkins et al., 2006, p. 8).

Several studies illustrate how contemporary youth, such as American and Japanese children and teenagers, engage in a participatory culture based on these four forms of engagement. First, in their ethnographic studies in after-school programs, Patricia Lange and Mizuko Ito (2010) observed American high-school teenagers’ everyday creative production and social sharing of digital media content. They observed many teenagers engaging in a “friendship-driven”14 mode of participation. The teens used social media, particularly SNSs (e.g., MySpace, Facebook, Blogger, LiveJournal, and deviantART, and Photobucket), as their always-on communication hubs to connect, communicate, and “hang out” with local friends and peers in their offline social world. Lange and Ito also

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14 According to Ito et al. (2010), friendship-driven participation refers to young people’s most dominant and widespread shared activities growing out of their day-to-day local negotiations with friends and peers. Ito et al. argue that teenagers, who struggle over parental or adult authority regulating space and access to media for socializing with them, use social media, such as social networking sites and mobile phones, as alternative channels. Using the social media, the teens make friends by gossiping, bullying, and jockeying for status or create intimate relationships by flirting, dating, and breaking up.
observed other teens who engaged in an “interest-driven” mode of participation. The teens “messed around” with social media in order to create online profile pages on SNSs, to author them to modify and customize the layout, colors, music, and visuals with uploaded videos and photos, and to publicize the pages to share with friends and peers. In addition, Lange and Ito observed a small number of teens engaging in a “geeked-out” mode of interest-driven participation by using video-sharing sites and fun forums to distribute and publicize their specialized, niche interests beyond their schools and local communities. For instance, a female teenager produced hundreds of videos on YouTube collaboratively with her mother and publicized a series of shows about a mother-daughter discussion and critique of popular American television shows. Other female teens actively participated in online Harry Potter fan communities to publish their own fan fiction and to exchange conversations and feedback with other fans through the site forum.

Jenkins’ (2006) observation of the “Harry Potter Wars” contextualizes the Harry Potter fandom observed by Lange and Ito. The Wars represent a conflict between young Harry Potter fans and a major American film studio, Warner Bros. Family Entertainment. The conflict emerged as the fans’ appropriations of the Harry Potter books infringed upon the intellectual property of the studio, which bought the film rights to J. K. Rowling’s original Harry Potter Books. Children and teenagers of different ethnic, racial, and national backgrounds from all over the world constructed and organized web-based alternative Harry Potter fan communities.

Jenkins notes that the Harry Potter Wars also emerge from another conflict between conservative Christian critics of J. K. Rowling’s original Harry Potter books and teachers who rather see them as a pedagogical means of encouraging young readers.
communities. With fictional personas, they contributed profiles, news stories, and personal introspection and experiences to Web-based fan communities in order to flesh out various aspects of Rowling’s fiction and jointly produced fantasies. However, the studio began to police and suspended some sites that illegally exploited its intellectual property. In response to this legal action, Heather Lawver, a thirteen-year-old American Web-editor of a *Harry Potter* fan site, and her allies coordinated a media outreach and activism campaign against the studio (in the name of Defense Against the Dark Arts) for the right to participate.

Ito’s (2006) two ethnographic studies of Japanese youth’s media subcultures, including *Doujinshi* cultures and Japanese boys’ *Yu-Gi-Oh!* card-trafficking, illustrate how contemporary Japanese youth also find new forms of participation. Similar to Jenkins’s example of the politics of participation illustrated with *Harry Potter* fandom, *Doujinshi* cultures represent young amateur manga artists’ struggles to participate in the manga culture through the networked ecologies of the Internet. *Doujinshi* is an amateur manga, which is a stylized graphic genre of cartoons, comic books, or animated films. In particular, it is self-produced by Japanese school-aged girls who aspire to break into mainstream publishing. Girls’ *doujinshi* production often contains works that are derivative of professional content and explicit and offbeat sexual content. Under the shadow of the mainstream manga, *doujinshi* artists, readers, and collectors had often trafficked in amateur manga writings and related items at regular fringe anime conventions and events. However, the development and spread of the Internet has enabled them to traffic materials online, particularly through
auction sites and artists’ own homepages. A broader demographic of *doujinshi* readers and collectors are now able to have access to amateur cultural production within and outside Japan. Ito argues that *doujinshi* artists, readers, and collectors leverage the Internet to bring together marginal and niche communities of interest that are now globally dispersed. They have made their subcultures visible for the mainstream manga culture.

Ito’s (2006) studies of Japanese boys’ card-trafficking of *Yu-Gi-Oh!* represent youth’s active “entrepreneurial participation.” Similar to *Pokémon*, Japanese boys mimic activities and materialities represented in a popular Japanese manga series *Yu-Gi-Oh!*’s fantasy world. Its narrative is centred on the series’ protagonist and his friends’ engagement in collecting and trafficking in trading cards for card-game duels as game masters. The phenomenon of *Yu-Gi-Oh!* is grounded in Japanese transmedia storytelling, which is called a “media mix” (Ito, 2006, 2008). It cross-references multiple media types and genres, including a TV anime series, manga, comic books, trading card games, video games, occasional movie releases, and a plethora of character merchandise. Japanese boys leverage the media mix of *Yu-Gi-Oh!*.

16 *Yu-Gi-Oh!* and *Pokémon* can be treated similarly as the former rose from the ashes of the latter (Ito, 2006). However, the difference between the two is in their narrative structures: while *Yu-Gi-Oh!* involves gaming as its central content of the narrative, *Pokémon* loosely ties it to its narrative (Ito, 2008). *Pokémon* focuses on the adventure of the protagonist (Satoshi or Ash) who trains the main character Pikachu as a surrogate for battles to collect other imaginary creatures called *Pokémon* (poket monsters) (Kline et al, 2003).

17 The central narrative of *Yu-Gi-Oh!* focuses on long sequences of card game duels based on adventure narratives with the detailed esoterica of the card-game duels, such as the strategies and rules of card-game pay, the properties of the cards, and the fine points of card collecting and trading (Ito, 2006, p. 55).
game masters. In doing so, Japanese boys customize the pre-designed card-game rules and strategies originally created by media industries in order to make them fit their local contexts. In other words, the media mix of *Yu-Gi-Oh!* enables Japanese boys to “personalize” and “remix” their card game play (Ito, 2008). Such personalization and customization are characterized by what Ito (2008) calls “hypersociality,” which refers to “peer-to-peer ecologies of cultural production and exchange (of information, objects and money) pursued among geographically local peer groups, among dispersed populations mediated by the internet, and through organized gatherings such as conventions and tournaments” (p. 404). In this sense, as Ito (2006) emphasizes, Japanese boys translocally create an alternative economy of knowledge and card exchange by collecting, remixing, customizing, revaluing, and reframing the narrative and content in the context of their peer-to-peer relations.

These four examples of engagement are emblematic of a cultural shift created by young people who engage in networked publics. They leverage media resources provided by media convergence and a global consumer-media culture. Young people produce, manipulate, and channel media content by informally affiliating themselves to like-minded individuals, contributing esoteric knowledge, and collaboratively accomplishing tasks. It is in this sense that a participatory culture is a new media environment for young people today. They are no longer passive spectators of the media but are active participants. With this idea in mind, my focus now turns to the types of skills and competencies which young people are developing in the context of contemporary convergence cultures.
1.3 Rethinking Literacy: New Literacies as Youth’s Meaning Production in a Participatory Culture

1.3.1 Rethinking Literacy: A Sociocultural Perspective

American and Japanese young people’s active participation with contemporary media opens up an important concern about the kinds of skills and competencies young people are developing to engage in rich and complex activities in a new media environment. This concern has been taken up alongside a broader rethinking of the meaning of ‘literacy’ in children’s and youth’s lives.

Traditionally, literacy has been understood to refer to one’s cognitive or technical capacity to read and write print texts (Gee, 2008). This view assumes that literacy is something that only exists in one’s head. Being literate means to have an internal, psychological competence, while those who lack this are regarded as illiterate. Grounded in this view, literacy typically describes the lowest common denominator of participation in our culture and indicates “a normal condition, a way of being and a set of abilities toward which all should strive, and from which we can interpret cultural competence” (Poyntz & Hoechsmann, forthcoming).

A so-called “sociocultural” perspective on literacy advocated by proponents of the New Literacy Studies (Gee, 2008; Lankshear & Knobel, 2006; Street, 1995), on the other hand, opens up different ways of understanding the idea of literacy. This particular perspective rejects the traditional view of literacy grounded in an “autonomous model,” which regards literacy as “a separate, reified set of neutral competencies, autonomous of social context” (Street, 1995, p. 114). Bypassing psychological reductionism, the sociocultural perspective keeps “the social to the forefront” and “the ‘embeddedness’ of literacy within larger social practices in
clear view” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006, p. 13, italics in original). In this sense, reading and writing only make sense in the contexts of social, cultural, political, economic, and historical practices to which they are integral and of which they are a part (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006).

Emphasizing that literacy is constituted in social environments in which we operate, a sociocultural perspective foregrounds a concern for what James Paul Gee calls “Discourses” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006; see also Gee, 2008). Gee makes a distinction between a Discourse, with a big D, and a discourse, with a small d. The former refers to “ways of being in the world that integrate identities,” while the latter refers to “the language bits, or language uses, of Discourses” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006, p. 12-13). A Discourse integrates identities in the sense that a person is identified and identifiable as a member of socially meaningful groups or networks and as a player of socially meaningful roles. To be identified and recognized as a member of a particular Discourse, a person takes on particular beliefs, purposes, and ways of writing, reading, speaking, acting, and dressing, all of which form his/her identities appropriate for the Discourse in which he/she participates as a member. A Discourse is, thus, always much more than language alone and involves “connected stretches” of language that are meaningful within it (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006, p. 18).

In this sense, Gee asserts that literacy and being literate are best understood in terms of a person’s mastery or fluent control of what he calls a “secondary Discourse,” to which he/she becomes recruited beyond his/her “primary Discourse” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006; see also Gee, 2008). A primary Discourse serves as a framework or base for forming a person’s first social identity during
his/her primary socialization within his/her family. A secondary Discourse, on the other hand, involves building on his/her primary discourse by participating in various social groups and institutions, such as schools, churches, sports club, community groups, workplaces, and so on. One’s cultural capital then enables him/her to have access to the right knowledge practices in the environment (Discourse) where they are relevant. In other words, a secondary discourse is space where a person becomes acclimatized to working with the language games specific to certain environments and relationships. When a person becomes part of language games within more than one secondary Discourse, he/she develops multiple ‘literacies.’ Literacies are also considered plural in the sense that they encompass not only written-linguistic but also oral, visual, and aural modes of representation (The New London Group, 2000).

Now, Gee also argues that when a person can employ a secondary language as a “metalanguage” for understanding, analyzing, and critiquing other Discourses, he/she develops a capacity for reconstituting themselves within a society. In this sense, a person begins to exercise “powerful literacy” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006, p. 18; see also Gee, 2008). Such a literacy enables a person to opt out of certain Discourses or work to change it. In summary, a sociocultural perspective on literacy circumvents a traditional view, which regards literacy as our internal, psychological competence. Instead, it helps us understand that literacies and being literate are defined in terms of our everyday social practices situated in secondary and powerful Discourses. This perspective draws our attention to social contexts through which literacies in the sense of meaning
production operate in our lives. Based on these insights, my focus now turns to how young people’s meaning production operates in a participatory culture.

1.3.2 New Literacies: Youth’s New Social Practices and Cultural Mindset

Today, social contexts through which meaning production operates in young people’s lives are significantly changing. Young people are developing ‘new’ forms of literacy in a participatory culture. Building from a sociocultural perspective on literacy, Colin Lankshear and Michele Knobel (2006) contend that we are witnessing “new literacies” today that coincide with the way young people are producing meaning in convergent, participatory media ecologies. New literacies relate to the ways young people are doing things innovatively and thinking about the world anew as a consequence of digitally mediated life.

According to Lankshear and Knobel (2006), new literacies are concerned with changing “ontologies” of meaning production in our lives as a result of media convergence. Literacies have become ontologically new in the sense that they consist of a different kind of “stuff” from conventional print-centred literacy that we have known in the past. Lankshear and Knobel (2006) argue that “changes have occurred in the character and substance of literacies that are associated with larger changes in technology, institutions, media and the economy, and with the rapid movement toward global scale in manufacture, finance, communications, and so on” (p. 24). The ontologically new literacies are constituted by two interrelated aspects of meaning production, namely new “technical stuff” and new “ethos stuff” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006). The distinction between the two is made as follows:
At the heart of the idea of new technical stuff is *digitality*: the growth and ongoing development of digital-electronic technologies and the use of programming languages, source code and binary code for writing programs and storing and retrieving data. At the heart of the idea of new ethos stuff is the emergence of a distinctly contemporary mindset (p. 73, original emphasis).

These two aspects of new literacies speak to young people’s meaning production. First, the new technical stuff of digitality typifies new resources young people are using to engage with a variety of digitally-enabled social practices. These practices are no longer simply mediated by typographic means of text production and analogue forms of sound and image production but increasingly with “post-typographic forms of text and textual production” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006, p. 24). In other words, young people’s literacies are mediated by screens and pixels, digital codes, and seamlessly multimodal forms of representation, such as oral, aural, and visual forms. As Lawrence Lessig remarks, young people’s post-typographic forms of textual production increasingly facilitate a “digital remix” of images, texts, sounds, as a conceptual extension of “writing” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006, p. 107). The new technical stuff of meaning production includes at least some of the following: using SNSs to post comments to friends’ pictures, pages or walls; using a personal computer to create a blog, share self-created content (e.g., photos, videos, artwork, or stories), and remix content found online into a new artistic creation; using *keitai* (mobile phones) to email friends, download music files, and create and read friends’ *purofu* (profiles), blog sites, and *keitai shosetsu* (mobile phone novels). In addition, previously mentioned examples, such as Web-based teen *Harry Potter* fandom, Japanese girls’ *doujinshi* production, and Japanese boys’ *Yu-Gi-Oh!* card-
trafficking, are all considered examples of the new technical stuff of meaning production enabled by digitality.

Another aspect of new literacies is new ethos stuff. Lankshear and Knobel (2006) argue that having only new technical stuff is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for being literate today because “[it] might just amount to a digitized way of doing ‘the same old same old’” (p. 93). The new ethos stuff thus refers to a distinctly contemporary ‘mindset.’ A mindset refers to “a point of view, perspective, or frame of reference through which individuals or groups of people experience the world, interpret or make sense of what they encounter, and respond to what they experience” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006, p. 31). As a contemporary distinct mindset, the new ethos stuff is characterized as a new way of encountering the new technical stuff that enables young people to produce ideas, experience, and meaningfulness by participating in different types of space and social relations.

Specifically, the new ethos stuff is characterized by what Lankshear and Knobel (2006) call a “second mindset.” Such a mindset contrasts with an older, modernist mindset which tends to be grounded in a “physical-industrial” worldview (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006, p. 38). This older mindset assumes that products are material artefacts and that production is based on firms and companies. It focuses on individual intelligence and regards expertise and authority as located in individuals and institutions. Moreover, it understands

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18 Lankshear and Knobel (2006) categorize new literacies which have both the new technical stuff and new ethos stuff as a “paradigm” case of new literacies (p. 93). However, they argue that literacies are nonetheless regarded as new “without them necessarily involving the use of new digital electronic technologies” (p. 26, original emphasis). In other words, even if not made of new technical stuff, literacies are still ontologically new in terms of new ethos stuff alone. New literacies in terms of new ethos stuff alone are categorized as a “peripheral” case (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006, p. 93).
space as enclosed and purpose-specific. It defines social relations in terms of bookspace and a stable textual order. Lankshear and Knobel (2006) call this old, modernist mindset a “first” or “newcomer” mindset and designate it as characteristic of those who are new to digitally networked space (p. 34).

By contrast, a second mind or “insider” mindset is thought to be symptomatic of those who are natives to the digitally networked space. It is characteristic of postmodernity and is symptomatic of contemporary youth’s ways of thinking about and living in the world. According to Lankshear and Knobel (2006), the second mindset pertains to a cyberspatial worldview as it dovetails with cyberspace, which is saturated by new digital technologies that are linked with many networks. In particular, it fits with the burgeoning user-generated web application or platform called Web 2.0, which enables Internet users to control their own data based on services, participation, cost-effective sociability, remixable data source and transformation, multiple software devices, and collective intelligence (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006; see also O’Reilly, 2005). In particular, it fits with the burgeoning user-generated web application or platform called Web 2.0, which enables Internet users to control their own data based on services, participation, cost-effective sociability, remixable data source and transformation, multiple software devices, and collective intelligence (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006; see also O’Reilly, 2005). In particular, it fits with the burgeoning user-generated web application or platform called Web 2.0, which enables Internet users to control their own data based on services, participation, cost-effective sociability, remixable data source and transformation, multiple software devices, and collective intelligence (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006; see also O’Reilly, 2005). In particular, it fits with the burgeoning user-generated web application or platform called Web 2.0, which enables Internet users to control their own data based on services, participation, cost-effective sociability, remixable data source and transformation, multiple software devices, and collective intelligence (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006; see also O’Reilly, 2005).

In addition, the second mindset, which adapts to the Web 2.0 domain, pertains to a “post-industrial” worldview, which understands products as “enabling services” and production as “leverage,” “non-finite participation,”

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19 As Lankshear and Knobel (2006) insist, cyberspace has not “displaced” physical space, nor it will do so; rather, it has been “dismissed” and “co-existed” with physical space (31-32). They argue that the “balance” between the two spaces has been shifting significantly (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006, p. 53).

20 Some representative examples of Web 2.0 include such Internet services as Google.com (a web search engine); Wikipedia.org (a collaboratively produced online encyclopaedia developed by infinite volunteers), Amazon.com (an online bookseller incorporating readers’ reviews of books and evaluation ranking), Flickr (an online photo-sharing site), Youtube.com (online video-hosting site), and Facebook (a social networking site). On the other hand, some examples of Web 1.0 include Netscape (a proprietary web browser), Britannica Online (web-based, packaged encyclopaedia whose information is developed by finite reputed experts), Ofoto (Kodak’s online photo selling services whose products are rendered by a supplier), content management systems, and personal websites (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006). The Web 1.0 domain corresponds to a first mindset which operates based on a physical-industrial worldview.
“collaboration,” and “distributed, collective, and hybrid expertise and intelligence” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006, p. 42). Lankshear and Knobel (2006) assert that the essence of a second mindset corresponds to the Web 2.0 domain. They emphasize that a second mindset is defined by at least some of the following features: “participation,” “distributed expertise,” “collective intelligence,” “collaboration,” “sharing,” “experimentation,” “innovation,” and “creative-innovative rule breaking” (p. 60).

All these essential features of a second mindset are manifested in previously mentioned examples, such as Web-based teen Harry Potter fandom, Japanese girls’ doujinshi production, and Japanese boys’ Yu-Gi-Oh! card-trafficking. For example, these examples reveal that American and Japanese children and teenagers appropriate media convergence and participate in meaning production by contributing their dispersed esoteric knowledge to collaboratively accomplish tasks. Teen Harry Potter fans collaboratively produce and share their profiles, news stories, and personal introspection and experiences through Web-based fan communities. Doujinshi artists, readers, and collectors bring together marginal and niche communities of interest globally via the Internet. Also, the examples reveal that young people engage with creative-innovative rule breaking. Teen Harry Potter fans infringe upon the intellectual property of Warner Bros. by appropriating the Harry Potter books. Japanese girls produce doujinshi by appropriating professional content and getting readers and collectors to exchange their amateur cultural production through online auction sites. Japanese boys appropriate a media mix of Yu-Gi-Oh! to hypersocially reframe the original narrative and content pre-designed by media industries in their local,
peer-to-peer contexts. What is common to these examples is young people’s contribution of collective intelligence in meaning production. As Jenkins (2006) emphasizes, young people, who do not know everything but know something individually, piece their resources and skills together by means of “collective meaning-making” within popular culture (p. 4).

Collective meaning-making is the heart of young people’s meaning production that is happening in a participatory culture. It is through this collective knowledge production that young people teach and learn from each other the ways they can produce, manipulate, and channel media content collaboratively. Referring to Gee, Jenkins et al. (2006) posit that the participatory culture offers powerful opportunities for learning by generating “affinity spaces”:

[The affinity spaces] are sustained by common endeavors that bridge differences in age, class, race, gender, and educational level, and because people can participate in various ways according to their skills and interests, because they depend on peer-to-peer teaching with each participant constantly motivated to acquire new knowledge or refine their existing skills, and because they allow each participant to feel like an expert while tapping the expertise of others. (p. 9)21

What underlies the affinity spaces is the essence of a second mindset. As Lankshear and Knobel (2006) emphasize, the spaces instantiate the features of a second mindset, such as “participation, collaboration, distribution and dispersion of expertise, and relatedness” (p. 82).

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21 Gee (2004) notes that in affinity spaces, young people, regardless of their gender, race, ethnicity, and disability, participate in the following activities: accessing and generating new content based on their desires, pleasures, and displeasures; readily developing and displaying both specialized (intensive) and widely shared (extensive) knowledge; networking with others and various tools and technologies based on distributed and dispersed knowledge; participating in the space through multiple routes; and altering the boundary between the leader and the follower (p. 85-87).
The more young people’s social practices privilege the essence of a second mindset evolving from the affinity spaces, the more their practices are regarded as new literacies (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006). The new literacies are new forms of skills and competencies young people are developing in order to engage in rich and complex activities in convergent, participatory media ecologies. In the next section, I consider how young people who develop new literacies can potentially develop forms of critical agency in the context of a global consumer-media culture.

1.4 Critical Youth Agency: Young Cyberflâneur/Cyberflâneuse and Phoneur in a Global Consumer-Media Culture

As argued in the section 1.1, convergence culture includes tensions that have enabled youth to find new forms of participation with the resources provided by a global consumer-media culture. This section looks at how young people can develop and showcase critical forms of agency by developing new literacies through specific practices within contemporary convergence cultures. Using Jane Kenway and Elizabeth Bullen’s (2001, 2008) notion of “youthful cyberflâneur,” this section considers how young people’s playful, critical engagement with digitally mediated culture can be seen to create a space in which they exceed the influence of a global consumer-media culture.

As discussed in the first section, corporate media convergence has brought a global consumer-media culture into play. Media conglomerates and large multinational corporations have taken advantage of technological convergence and deployed various types of synergistic marketing. They have created the dominance of consumerism through mediascapes, which convey simulations and
simulacra of hyperreality around the world. The global consumer-media culture has reached into and operated on young people’s lives. However, it cannot shape them entirely.

Kenway and Bullen emphasize the notion of the youthful cyberflâneur (and cyberflâneuse\textsuperscript{22}) as a metaphor to describe the range of practices young people deploy to critically reflect upon global consumer-media culture. Although the concept of the flâneur is itself ambivalent, Kenway and Bullen (2008) redeem it by situating it in cyberspace and by reconstituting the meaning of this term in relation to practices of critical observation and cultural production. The flâneur is commonly translated as a “gentleman stroller, a street reader, an observer of urban life and a window-shopper” of late 19th and early 20th century modernity (Kenway & Bullen, 2008, p. 23-24). However, it becomes problematic when it only refers to a masculine figure and to the associated male gaze, while disregarding the female flâneuse who became more visible in the public space in the 19th and early 20th centuries in part with the emergence of shopping arcades and department stores. The flâneur also becomes problematic when equated with an immersed spectator or consumer who strolls and window-shops “under the spell of ‘the dreaming collective created by consumer capitalism’” (Buck-Morss, 1991, p. 312, cited in Kenway & Bullen, 2008, p. 176).

The problems associated with the prototypical flâneur—that is, a male passive spectator indulging in the obsessive pleasure of looking at the commodities of consumer capitalism—however, can be transcended by situating

\textsuperscript{22} As stated in this paragraph, Kenway and Bullen’s (2001, 2008) use of youthful cyberflâneur does connote a female figure of the flâneur. However, in order to avoid gendering it as a male figure and to make the female figure more explicit, I also use the notion of cyberflâneuse hereafter.
him within the Internet-enabled “virtual cosmopolis,” which renders physical and spatial differences irrelevant (Kenway & Bullen, 2008; see also Featherstone, 1998). Kenway and Bullen note that the gendered connotations of the flâneur are obliterated as women and girls are deemed to produce new subjectivities that are decorporealized in the virtual space. They also argue that unlike the embodied and lustrous streets of the metropolis, the virtual cosmopolis offers the young flâneur and flâneuse opportunities for cultural criticism through disembodied nooks and crannies in the virtual geographies without breaking their proximity to a global consumer-media culture. The young flâneur/flâneuse is a virtual stroller in the 21st century who transgresses physical, spatial, and temporal boundaries and uses new media technologies for critically observing a global consumer-media culture and producing visual and written commentary and critique (Kenway & Bullen, 2001, 2008).

Kenway and Bullen (2008) call such a young virtual flâneur/flâneuse, acting as a critical observer and a cultural producer, “youthful cyberflâneur” (or cyberflâneuse). He/she becomes a critical observer when able to look beyond the surface of a global consumer-media culture and discovers what lies hidden behind it. His/her role is to detect how the culture operates through mediascapes conveying simulations and simulacra of hyperreality and how they promote phenomena such as fetishism of consumer and production fetishism. New media technologies such as the Internet can facilitate this detective work particularly when a young cyberflâneur/cyberflâneuse connects with others to distribute and share subversive information with one another in online activist communities. Kenway and Bullen (2001) provide an example highlighting an
anti-corporate activist website McSpotlight (www.mcspotlight.org) as a representative example. This particular site monitors corporate practices of McDonald’s and other retailers and corporations, such as Tesco, K-Mart, Coca-Cola, Nike, and Body Shop. Through the site, a young cyberflâneur/cyberflâneuse discovers and shares with like-minded individuals the fetishism of the consumer and production fetishism created by a corporate practice of McDonald’s. For example, he/she finds out that “toys given away in McDonald’s Happy Meals are made by children working in Chinese sweatshops, who earn $5.25 a day, work seven days a week and sleep 15 to a room on wooden bunks with no mattresses” (Sydney Morning Herald, 2000, cited in Kenway & Bullen, 2001, p. 180).

Through a spectatorial activity, a young cyberflâneur/cyberflâneuse also becomes a cultural producer by utilizing a variety of new media technologies. Kenway and Bullen (2008) emphasize: “[t]he young cyberflâneur can use multimedia formats (image and text, audio and video, hyperlinks) and postmodern design methods (pastiche, bricolage, parody, montage) and genres (advertising, designs, journalism, filmmaking) to reflect upon and articulate their critique” (p. 28). For example, young people’s participation in “culture jamming” means to “hack into a corporation’s own method of communication to send a message starkly at odds with the one that was intended” (Klein, 2000, p. 281, cited in Kenway & Bullen, 2003, p. 185). This is the anti-corporate activity executed by parodying corporate advertisements and drastically altering the original messages through the digital manipulation with graphic editing software such as Photoshop (Kenway & Bullen, 2008). Similarly, “e-zines,”
which promote young activists’ virtual communities around shared interests such as films, games, and music, combine “politics with style” through appropriation and subversion of consumer-media cultures (Kenway & Bullen, 2001). Rather than unsettling gender and sexual barriers, young e-ziners play with, mock, exaggerate, and distort corporate cultural and sexual representations (e.g., by plumping up photographic images of super-skinny models).

Previously mentioned examples, such as Web-based teen Harry Potter fandom and Japanese girls’ production of doujinshi, are also considered similar examples of the types of young people’s critical play. These examples exemplify rich and ambitious new literacy practices, especially the new ethos stuff of meaning production. Teen Harry Potter fans create alternative perspectives on the original Harry Potter books by means of collaboratively producing and sharing their unique profiles, news stories, and introspection using the Internet. Japanese girls’ Doujinshi amateur cultural production are derivative of professional content, which is actively exchanged by the readers and collectors who leverage the Internet and bring together marginal and niche communities of interest globally. All these examples indicate how the young cyberflâneur/cyberflâneuse acts as a cultural producer who is capable of “hijacking” resources already available through global consumer-media cultures by means of combining “politics with pleasure” to enjoy “the very objects they subvert” (Kenway & Bullen, 2008, p. 29).

Similar to a youthful cyberflâneur/cyberflâneuse, contemporary Japanese youth can engage in critical practices using a mobile phone. Young Japanese mobile phone users are described as what Robert Luke (2005) calls “phoneur,”
who is a “postmodern flâneur” carrying a mobile phone and strolling the cityscape (p. 187). For Luke (2005), a young phoneur participates in what he calls “postmodern habit@” created by “commercial grids and communication vectors (the sociotechnical constructs of communication)” (p. 187). In such a habitat, he/she tends to be seduced into complicity with the “desiring-machine” of nascent mobile marketing capitalism and with its concomitant panoptic surveillance of the activity of commercial networks (Luke 2005, p. 189). In the face of consumerism created within such a market-driven habitat however, the young phoneur can potentially become a critical observer and a cultural producer such as a youthful cyberflâneur/cyberflâneuse.

A young phoneur’s critical and aesthetic practices emerge in the intermingling of both physical and virtual space. A young phoneur can personalize or customize his/her mobile phone use not only in a virtual cosmopolis but also in a physical or material metropolis (Luke, 2005). As Mizuko Ito and Daisuke Okabe (2005) remark based on their ethnographic research on social locations and keitai (mobile phone) uses among Japanese youth, the youth’s mobile phone practices often take place in what they term “technosocial situations,” which coordinate the flows of both digital and physical space (p. 272). Specifically, Japanese youth’s mobile phone practices, such as emailing, are constructed within a socially networked ecology characterized by the hybrid of both virtual ongoing connections among mobile phone users and their physically located serendipitous encounters of events and activities in everyday places,

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23 Luke (2005) doesn’t seem to use the notion of the phoneur by gendering it as a male figure exclusively. Thus, I treat the notion as inclusive of both a male and a female mobile phone user strolling the cityscape—for the latter, I can perhaps call the phoneuse.
such as at home, classrooms, streets, transportations, and restaurants. The critical and aesthetic practices of the young phoneur can be, thus, envisioned through their encountering of everyday physical resources already available through a market-driven habitat which is part of a global consumer-media culture. This culture in turn enables him/her to hijack it in order to produce and share with like-minded individuals their alternative perspectives through both mobile network and physical material locations.

1.5 Conclusion
While new literacies are used as a framework for mapping and understanding young people’s practices with digital media, the ideas of a young cyberflâneur/cyberflâneuse and phoneur offer particular ways of understanding how young people can disrupt corporate scripts that are afforded to them by media conglomerates and other transnational corporations. The idea of ‘youth critical agency’ emerges when young people engage in the practices of critical observation of a global consumer-media culture and cultural production of alternative perspectives on it. Young people’s critical observation involves monitoring corporate practices of transnational companies and discovering the downside of the practices. Their cultural production involves reflecting upon or articulating their own critique by combining politics with playfulness. Specifically, they can subvert global consumer-media cultures with “humour, irony, mimicry, parody, burlesque and transgression” (Kenway & Bullen, 2003, p. 185). With the idea of critical youth agency in mind, in the next section, I introduce my qualitative research which explored contemporary Japanese youth’s meaning production out of a global consumer-media culture particularly
in regard to McDonald’s and the potentiality of their critical forms of agency emerging from this practice.
2: RESEARCH METHOD: EXPLORING JAPANESE YOUTH’S MEANING PRODUCTION IN RELATION TO MCDONALD’S AND THEIR CRITICAL AGENTIC PRACTICES IN ITS GLOBAL FAST FOOD CULTURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces qualitative research I conducted in Japan in the spring of 2009 in order to explore contemporary youth’s meaning production and their critically agentic practices within a convergence culture. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section provides research questions and the purpose of my study. The second section provides the rationale for looking at McDonald’s and its ‘global fast food culture.’ The third section discusses the research methods that I used during my field research.

2.2 Research Questions and Purpose of My Research

In my research, I explored contemporary youth’s meaning production and critical agencies within a convergence culture by focusing on Japanese young people (as my research population) and by looking at McDonald’s and its global fast food culture (which I discuss in the next section). I formulated the following two questions for my research: 1) How do Japanese young people understand and think about McDonald’s? and 2) Do their understandings indicate forms of critical agency in relation to the global fast food culture created by McDonald’s?

My research was exploratory and was based on the three reasons associated with Marshall and Rossman’s (2006) accounts of an exploratory research. First, I
identified salient themes, patterns, and categories emerging from my research participants’ meaning production. Second, no researcher had ever explored the research questions, particularly in the context of Japan. Third, I considered implications for further research in the related fields based on research findings.

My research was also “qualitative” because I as a researcher involved deploying “interpretative,” “naturalistic,” and “multiple methodological practices” to explore the participants’ meaning production (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Adopting a subjectivist epistemology of the constructivist-interpretive paradigm, the study was fundamentally interpretative as I sought to understand the nature of the participants’ subjective experiences. I positioned myself as a researcher to interpret what and how they found, discussed, and interacted based on their own personal, cultural, and historical experiences. The study took place in natural settings where the participants attributed their social interactions and meaning to their own everyday contexts (e.g., at home, in their neighbourhood, in classrooms, at school). As a research “bricoleur” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), I pieced together a set of different tools, methods, and techniques of representation and interpretation (i.e., camera phones, mobile photographic images, and group photo-interviewing) in order to make sense of the meaning the participants produced out of the world in which they engage (i.e., a global first food culture created by McDonald’s) and to make their distinctive meaning production visible.

2.3 McDonald’s and Its Global Fast Food Culture
For my research, I selected McDonald’s, the world’s largest fast food restaurant chain, as a cultural form out of which my research participants (whom I discuss
in the next section) can produce various meaning. I focused on McDonald’s in order to explore how today’s Japanese young people interact in critically complicated ways with corporate power, which I believe has increasingly reached into and operates on their lives. I argue that McDonald’s creates ‘McDonaldized consumption’ by promoting products and services through mediascapes, which produce the fetishism of the consumer and production fetishism. In this section, I discuss McDonald’s and its corporate power in terms of its creation of ‘global fast food culture’ as an example of a global consumer-media culture discussed in Section 1.1.1.

McDonald’s has become a major icon of corporate globalization. The global economic success of the company is tremendous. It operates more than 32,000 restaurants (including company-operated and franchise restaurants) worldwide, serving 60 million customers on average every day (McDonald’s Corporation, 2010). In 2009, the company as a whole achieved annual revenues of 22.7 billion dollars. In Japanese, in 2009, McDonald’s operated a total of 3,715 stores and served 1.5 billion customers. Eikou Harada, the current CEO of McDonald’s Japan, proudly announced that the company achieved in 2009 recorded annual revenues of 53.19 billion yen (approx. 6.2 billion U.S. dollars) (Japan McDonald’s Corporation, 2010).

I argue that the way McDonald’s has grown globally is predicated on what George Ritzer famously calls (2008) “McDonaldization”—that is, “the process by which the principles of the fast food restaurants are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as of the rest of the world” (p. 1). Ritzer emphasizes that at the heart of McDonaldization are the four basic
dimensions of the “rationalization” process—including “efficiency,” “calculability,” “predictability,” and “control through nonhuman technologies.”

Based on Max Weber’s sociological analysis of modern Western bureaucracy, According to Ritzer, efficiency is the optimum method for satisfying customers’ hunger (i.e., by a drive-through) and for getting the worker to follow the steps in a predesigned process. Calculability ensures high profits by saving time and money based on the quantitative aspects of products to be sold (i.e., portion size and cost) and services to be offered (the time spent getting the product). Predictability assures that products and services are the same over time and in all locales so that customers experience no surprises. And finally, control through nonhuman technology (or nonhuman technologies that control people) contributes to the replacement of already programmed and controlled human workers with nonhuman technologies. Ritzer argues that McDonald’s managerial principles based on these four dimensions have been increasingly adopted by not only other low-priced fast food franchised businesses and higher-priced chain restaurants, but also by other types of businesses, such as toy stores, clothing retailers, furnishings, and coffee shops. Moreover, as Ritzer notes, the McDonald’s model can be further applied to a wide range of social, cultural, and political institutions, as well as criminal justice systems, politics, religions, education, and farming.

Importantly, while Ritzer’s Weberian-inspired theory of McDonaldization is interpreted as “modern” in its form, its “postmodern” ramifications cannot be neglected (Kellner, 1999). Douglas Kellner (1999) emphasizes that McDonaldization is both enhancing and enhanced by postmodern conditions
fabricated through “its phantasmagoric advertising and commodity spectacle, drawing its customers into a world of simulation, hyperreality and the implosion of boundaries, especially as it becomes globalized and part of hybridization that synthesizes signs of modernity with local traditions and culture” (p. 191). He asserts that McDonald’s mobilizes the phantasmagoric advertisements that are eloquently coded to simulate its artificially produced “technofoods” and restaurants in the hyperreal ideologies of fun, family togetherness, and social bonding. Kellner (1999) posits: “when one bites into a Big Mac one is consuming the sign values of good times, communal experience, consumer value and efficiency, as well as the (dubious) pleasures of the products” (p. 188). In addition, the simulation and simulacra of hyperreality of McDonald’s products and services are circulated as commodity spectacle through multiple media channels and sites, including traditional mass media, the Internet, billboards in metropolitan cities, the countryside, sport stadiums, to name a few. Thus, McDonald’s phantasmagoric advertising and commodity spectacle can be equated with Appadurai’s notion of mediascapes. They obliterate the line between the real and the imaginary in the form of hyperreality and ideologically promote the possible lives that consumers can script.

As Kellner points out, globalized McDonald’s mediascapes hybridize the signs of modernity with local traditions and culture. His point attests to Ritzer’s

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24 According to Kellner (2003), commodity spectacle promotes commodity goods and services operated on the principles of McDonaldization through a multiplicity of media and sites. The commodity spectacle can be treated as what Andrew Wernick (1991) calls a “promotional message” which encompasses advertising, packaging, and design and pertains to activities beyond the immediately commercial or beyond the domain of competitive exchange. The promotional message as a type of sign attests to the idea that the promoted entity is the referent of sign. With this respect, a promotional message becomes “a complex of significations which at once represent (moves in place of), advocates (moves on behalf of), and anticipates (moves ahead of) the circulating entity or entities to which it refers” (Wernick, 1991, p. 182).
emphasis on McDonaldization as spreading across the rest of the world. Nonetheless, McDonaldization cannot simply be understood as an Americanized homogenous global culture, despite the fact that it utilizes the same ubiquitous global brand logo (i.e., *Golden Arches*) and themes (i.e., *i’m loving’ it*) to promote itself. Rather, as James Watson’s (2006) studies of McDonald’s impacts in East Asia indicate, its products and services are designed to fit cultural specificities associated with the local values and sensibilities. In this sense, Roland Robertson’s (1995) account of “glocalization,” which is a process by which locality shapes back globalization, is helpful for understanding how McDonald’s develops in different regions around the world.

It is precisely through this idea of glocalization that McDonald’s enhances its marketing in order to reach into the lives of Japanese young people. For example, McDonald’s Japan’s marketing of a regionally specific menu to young customers typifies this. Between April and May of 2008, the company launched an advertising campaign for a glocally articulated special menu called *Kurozu Chicken McWrap* (McDonald’s Holdings Japan, 2008). The company promoted this new menu as commodity spectacle with Yuri Ebihara, a charismatic Japanese fashion model extremely popular among Japanese young people. Apparently, the advertising campaign depicting Yuri Ebihara aimed not only to generate a male gaze as voyeuristic pleasures but also to display her flawless appearance as a desirable social self for Japanese girls. In addition to this rather conventional promotional strategy to market the new item, McDonald’s Japan further attracted young consumers to the special ingredient called *kurozu* (black vinegar), which became a boom in Japan because of its healthful effects and particularly its
merits as a beauty treatment. The company, thus, capitalized on Kurozu as a shared cultural code or repertoire from which Japanese consumers could immediately draw and appreciate its merits. In so doing, McDonald’s Japan targeted young female consumers, who face cultural anxieties associated with negative self-images and who wish to be as flawless as Yuri Ebihara.

Another example of McDonald’s glocal marketing in Japan is Makku de DS service targeting increasingly fragmented Japanese young media consumers. Launched in June 2009, the Makku de DS service has as its motto: “A digital lifestyle enjoyed by everyone coming to McDonald’s with Nintendo DS” (McDonald’s Holdings Japan, 2009b). McDonald’s Japan encourages Japanese media-savvy children and teens who own and bring their Nintendo DS series handsets to access a variety of games, food and beverage discount coupons, and many other features through a wireless network set up in the restaurants. One of the most innovative strategies McDonald’s Japan has deployed through the service is its collaboration with the Pokémon Company (which is affiliated with Nintendo for marketing and licensing a Pokémon franchise) to specially allow child and teen customers in the Wi-Fi-installed restaurant to download rare Pokémon characters for battling and trading with other players. This is synergistic marketing in the form of affective economics, which capitalizes on a Japanese media mix of Pokémon leveraged by children and teens.

McDonald’s phantasmagoric advertising and commodity spectacle in the form of mediascapes, which become globalized and simultaneously hybridized with locality, conceal the downside of McDonaldization. The negative aspects and effects of the rationalization process are described as what Ritzer (2008) calls
“the irrationality of rationality.” He argues that McDonald’s rational system inevitably spawns a number of irrationalities such as false friendliness, health and environmental hazards, the dehumanization of workers, and the destruction of family meals. While masking such irrational aspects and effects, McDonald’s phantasmagoric advertising and commodity spectacle reinforce Appadurai’s notion of the fetishism of the consumer. Consumers are constantly helped to believe in possible lives offered by McDonald’s hyperreal ideologies. Simultaneously, such mediascapes create what Appadurai also calls production fetishism: it creates illusion and alienation with which consumers have difficulties unmasking the underpinning of the global success of McDonald’s, predicated as it is on translocal and transnational capital flows and management in the spectacle of locality. I call the consumption of McDonald’s products and services promoted through mediascapes, which create such a fetishism of consumer and a production fetishism, as ‘McDonaldized consumption.’ The cultural form arising from the popularization of such consumption on a global but glocal scale is characterized as a global fast food culture.

However, it is important to recall that young people can interact with a global consumer-media culture in critically complicated ways. As I argued at the

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25 Specifically, Ritzer (2008) argues that McDonald’s rational system inevitably creates a number of social, health-related, environmental, and ethical issues. These issues include at least some of the following. Socially, McDonald’s system creates “false friendliness” by eliminating the genuine fraternization between programmed workers and customers. In terms of health, McDonald’s system creates hazards resulting from the high calorie, fat, cholesterol, salt, and sugar content of fast food, each of which contributes to potential health risks like obesity. Environmentally, McDonald’s system creates hazards not only because of the production of the everyday masses of nonbiodegradable trash, but also because of an enormous increase in meet production causing land degradation, water and air pollution, and water shortage. Ethically, McDonald’s system creates the dehumanization of workers by depriving them of creativity, satisfaction, and stability. It also creates the destruction of family meals by enticing young people to go out and eat with friends and by undermining a long, leisurely, conversation-filled family dinnertime. The last issue, however, can be considered a bit of illusion.
end of Chapter 1, a convergence culture includes tensions that have enabled young people to find new forms of participation with the resources provided by the very culture itself. It would be, thus, inappropriate to assume that young people are utterly naïve about the problematic effects of McDonald’s global fast food culture; rather, there is a space in which they can play and remix with this culture in order to develop critical forms of agencies.

2.4 Research Methods

2.4.1 Selection of Research Location and Participants

My research was conducted in Okazaki city located in Aichi Prefecture on the main island of Japan between March and May in 2009. Participants included 8 students, 4 female and 4 male, enrolled in class 13 in the second year (eleventh grade) of Okazaki Johsei Senior High School. The school is a private school and my alma mater. The class is categorized as an arts-oriented Z class, which is for those students who are preparing to go to prestigious national and private universities in Japan and take difficult classes primarily concerned with humanities and social sciences. The eight participants were assigned pseudonyms and were Aoringo, a 16-year-old female student from Okazaki; Megumiruku, a 16-year-old female student from Katahara; Natsumikan, a 16-year-old female student from Okazaki; Ichigo, a 16-year-old male student from Okazaki; Budou, a 16-year-old male student from Okazaki; Pineapple, a 16-year-old female student from Okazaki; Curry, a 16-year-old male student from

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26 The Z class is usually called tokubetsu shingaku (or tokushin as an abbreviation) class in Japanese.
27 Katahara city is located in the outskirts of Okazaki city, approximately 30km south from the city.
Okazaki; and Chicken, a 16-year-old male student from Okazaki.\textsuperscript{28} I recruited them using a snowball sampling procedure.\textsuperscript{29} I first contacted my mother’s female acquaintance who works at the high school as a part-time instructor of mathematics. The acquaintance contacted my former teacher who still teaches at the school. The teacher helped recruit from the class he was in charge of. Only these eight students were interested in participating in my research.

I selected the research location as well as the population based on three advantages they offer. They can be summarized in terms of familiarity, convenience, and cost. I selected Okazaki city because it is my hometown where I was born, grew up, and lived until I graduated from high school. It was an ideal place to conduct my study because I can speak the language used in the city and am familiar with the city’s local cultures and geographical features. I expected that such familiarity would bring advantages to me as a researcher to communicate with my participants and interpret and make sense of the meanings they would derive from the local cultures. I also selected the research location and population in terms of convenience. I had fewer obstacles to accessing and recruiting my participants because I already had personal connections to and trust from the school and the teacher.\textsuperscript{30} Selecting my hometown as my field site made my research practical with respect to cost.

\textsuperscript{28} Participants selected their own pseudonyms based on their favourite food or drinks.
\textsuperscript{29} A snowballing sampling technique “starts out with contacting an acquaintance or a friend of a friend, who is then asked to bring together a specific number of other people, who live up to certain specified characteristics” (Schröder et al, 2003, p. 162).
\textsuperscript{30} Accessing high school students has increasingly been difficult today because a number of heinous crimes such as murders of students perpetrated by unknown strangers have made many schools extremely vigilant to outsiders.
2.4.2 Data Collection and Analysis Strategies

The data to be collected and analyzed in my research included not only each participant’s mobile photographic images concerning McDonald’s global fast food culture, but also all the processes of interaction which participants generated to discuss the meaning of their mobile photos with others during group interviews. I used each participant’s keitai camera (or camera phone)\(^{31}\) as a research tool and mobile photos he/she took on it as data form. I employed what I call ‘group photo-interviewing’ both for recording the processes of interaction among participants and for analyzing them.

2.4.2.1 Keitai, Keitai Cameras, and Mobile Photographs for Data Collection

First of all, I focused on keitai as a general research tool because of its ubiquity among most Japanese young people today. The growth of keitai ownership among them has largely resulted from Japanese mobile phone carriers’ (i.e., Softbank, AU by KDDI, and NTT DoCoMo) provisions of flat rates for data trafficking (Ishino, 2008). Using packet discounts called pake-shihoudai that the carriers offer, Japanese young people pay around 1,000 yen (approx. 8.5 Canadian dollar) minimum fixed monthly charges and around 4,000 yen (approx. 34 Canadian dollars) for unlimited mail and Web use. The flat rate data fees have enabled them to engage in variety of digitally-enabled social practices. Anytime and anywhere, young people connect, communicate, and hang out with friends by emailing. They constantly visit mobile community sites, such as Mixi.

\(^{31}\) Hereafter, I use a keitai camera, a camera phone, and a mobile phone camera interchangeably, for these refer to the same meaning—that is, a mobile phone with a built-in digital camera. For example, Kato et al (2005) use the former, while other scholars such as Goggin (2006), Hjorth (2008), and Okabe & Ito (2006) use the latter. Although the camera phone seems to be more predominantly used among scholars, I use this terms as well as the keitai camera to create connotations of Japanese mobile phone where appropriate.
and Mobage-Town, to chat with others, blog, download and share music, and read keitai shosetsu (mobile phone novels). While contributing to the growth of networked mobile market, the increasingly fragmented young Japanese mobile users find new forms of participation by leveraging the new technical stuff afforded by the digitality of keitai and media industries.

I selected as a key research tool a keitai camera, with which each participant took digital photographs, because of two advantages it offers. First, in general, a keitai camera enables people to visually produce and share with others their perspectives from everyday, personal, and street-level visions. This assumption was inspired by Daisuke Okabe and Mizuko Ito’s (2006) ethnographic study of Japanese college and high school students’ camera phone usage. The two categories of camera phone use among youth in Okabe and Ito’s study were particularly relevant to my study. The first category is what Okabe and Ito (2006) call “personal archiving,” which involves using a keitai camera to visually notetake everyday objects or visually record mundane scenes and personal viewpoints. In their study, young people used a keitai camera to visually notetake objects such as a job advertisement poster and book titles and publisher information in order to research and track down the information later on. For a more common practice, other young people snapped photos of mundane scenes or personal viewpoints, such as a huge shell found on a beach, an interesting view from an escalator in a train station, and a cute family pet dog as visual

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32 The third category of young people’s camera phone practice provided by Okabe and Ito (2006) is “intimate visual co-presence.” This practice involves sharing photos of intrusive and narcissistic kinds (e.g., a new hairstyle, a new recipe) with intimates such a lover, spouse, and very close friends, who are not physically co-present but visually so. I didn’t include this category of practice for it is not directly relevant to the nature of my research.
records of everyday life. The personal archiving is, thus, a kind of personal self-authoring practice of recording the unusual within everyday life.

The second category is what Okabe and Ito call “peer-to-peer news and reporting,” which involves using a *keitai* camera to share interesting and noteworthy photos with others. This practice is constructed within the aforementioned “technosocial situations,” where “users assemble social situations as a hybrid of virtual and physically co-present relations and encounters” (Okabe & Ito, 2006, p. 84; see also Ito & Okabe, 2005). Just like emailing friends, camera phone users coordinate the flow of digitally networked space and physically located space whereby taking photos in material space and sending others their photos via email. As an example of the peer-to-peer news and reporting, Okabe and Ito (2006) saw young people using a *keitai* camera to capture so-called “*neta*” (materials for news and stories) in order to make them not only verbally but also visually shareable among friends and family as interesting, noteworthy topics of conversation.33 In a sense, young camera phone users are regarded as “photojournalists” who capture and share the more fleeting and unexpected moments and events newsworthy to others (Okabe & Ito, 2006).

The second advantage of using each participant’s *keitai* camera and mobile photos he/she took on it is concerned with the visualization of photographers’ literacies as social practices. As discussed in the section 1.2, one’s literacies cannot be understood as a set of autonomous skills pertaining to the traditional

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33 According to Okabe and Ito’s (2006) findings, some examples of the interesting and noteworthy topics include a man emulating a Matrix-style move, a student who fell into a puddle, a student who passed out drunk and got vandalized by friends.
view of literacy; rather, it needs to be defined in terms of social practices to coordinate reading and writing, as well as values, attitudes, and feelings within the context of participating in Discourses. As David Barton et al (1994) argue, photographic images, which capture contexts of photographers’ social practices, make their existing abilities and uses of literacies visually explicit and help a researcher examine them. Using a camera phone as a “personal, portable, and pedestrian” device (Ito et al, 2005), young mobile camera phone users can visually capture the moments of their literacies integral to broader social, cultural, political, economic, and historical contexts and render them visually explicit (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006). Taking photos of everyday events and viewpoints using a keitai camera is a practice of producing meaningfulness. They visually manifest the photographers’ social practices within contexts of participating in particular Discourses.

2.4.2.2 Group Photo-Interviewing for Data Collection

I selected what I call ‘group photo-interviewing’ for a primary data collection method. I selected this method because of the “photo-elicitation” technique embedded in the method (Harper, 1986, 2002). A photo-elicitation technique enables a researcher to provoke a response from participants by integrating photographs as projective devices into an interview process (Harper, 1986, 2002). The researcher can understand the significance and meaning located in participants’ photographic images by obtaining their insiders’ perspectives (Collier & Collier, 1986; Harper, 1986, 2002; Smith & Woodward, 1999; Schwartz,

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They Barton et al (1994) argue for this point based on their experience of photographing literacy practices in Nepal, Pakistan, and Chile.
Photographs can help to sharpen the memory and reduce the areas of misunderstanding; thus a researcher can access insiders’ perspectives through the eyes of the participants/informants and learn about the significance and meaning of photos (Harper, 1986, 2002). Participants take photos that are inherently ambiguous and polysemic thereby negotiating the multiple meanings and bringing their multiple perceptions and interpretations into the foreground (Schwartz, 1989). Putting cameras into the hands of participants (rather than the researcher) and using their own photos in the interview also enables the researcher to get inside the context of the photos grounded in the research participants’ life experiences (Hurworth, 2003).

In addition, a photo-elicitation technique alters, if not reverse, participants’ relationships with a researcher by promoting a discussion based on their authority. As Dona Schwartz (1989) stresses, unlike more traditionally formal verbal interview settings, photo-elicitation allows participants to respond to photos without “hesitation” because it helps preclude the strangeness of the interview situations often created by the presence of a researcher and the perceived demands of the task (p. 151-152). Similarly, according to John Collier and Malcolm Collier (1986), “the projective opportunity of the photographs offer a gratifying sense of self-expression as the informant is able to explain and identify content and educate the interviewer with his wisdom” (p. 106). In this process, participants and a researcher can often explore the photos “together” whereby the latter becomes the former’s assistants in interpreting the meaning embedded in photos (Collier & Collier, 1986, p. 105).
Importantly, when a photo-elicitation technique is situated within a group, a participant can engage in constructive discussion with fellow participants whereby negotiating and exploring the significance and meaning located in his/her own photo(s) collaboratively with them. This is because the fellow participants can offer different interpretations of the denotative and connotative aspects of a participant’s photos and new or different perspectives on them. I argue that the process of photo-elicitation within a group coincides with conventional focus group interviewing particularly in terms of generating a collaborative environment. George Gaskell (2000) emphasizes:

[Focus group interviewing provides] a debate open and accessible to all; the issues at stake are common concerns; inequalities of status between participants are disregarded...The debate is an exchange of views, ideas and experiences, however emotionally and illogically expressed, but without privileging particular individuals or positions (p. 49).\(^{35}\)

Importantly, the collaborative environment generated by the focus group interviewing parallels that of Gee’s account of affinity spaces in which young people informally teach and learn from one another new knowledge and skills based on their distributed, shared, collective, and hybrid expertise and intelligence (Jenkins et al, 2006). This informal learning space enables participants to bring, share, and negotiate new knowledge and intelligence using the new ethos stuff of meaning production outlined in Chapter 1. The space facilitates the collective meaning-making among participants themselves.

\(^{35}\) Gaskell (2000) characterizes a focus group in this way by making reference to Habermas’s description of the ideal “public sphere.” Where the sentences are omitted in the quote, he says: “…and the debate is based on rational discussion. On this final characteristic the idea of ‘rational’ is not that of the logical and dispassionate…” (p. 49).
Gaskell (2000) notes that a researcher/moderator who facilitate a focus group interview can explore the group process, opinion leadership, and the dynamics of attitude and opinion changes in the processes of consensus and disagreement. In a similar vein, a researcher who employs a photo-elicitation technique within a group can explore these aspects of a focus group interview. The projective opportunities of the photos enable participants to encounter the nexus of meanings embedded in them, which lead them to the intersections of agreement and consensus. In so doing, the interview can generate different avenues of discussions or debates about the photos among participants. While some participants may explain and identify particular content from different perspectives, others may become uncertain about such perspectives and disagree with them. In these circumstances, as both an observer and participant, a researcher can pay attention to all the processes of how the participants explain and identify the content of the photos among themselves and educate and learn from each other. The researcher can observe participants’ collective meaning-making through the processes which are afforded by the affinity spaces generated by group photo-interviewing.

2.4.2.3 Data Analysis Strategies

The eight participants’ keitai and the mobile photographs they took on them were instrumental in investigating their meaning production in relation to McDonald’s. I selected a group interview to understand the eight participants’ everyday use of keitai, which enables them to engage in a variety of practices based on post-typographic forms of text and textual production. The group interview was useful for investigating participants’ digitally-enabled practices
which speaks to the new technical stuff—that is, one of the two aspects central to

A series of group photo-interviews was instrumental in investigating
participants’ meaning production in relation to McDonald’s. A group photo-
interview was instrumental in interpreting the significance and meaning of each
participant’s mobile photo(s) about McDonald’s through his/her eyes. It was
also instrumental in facilitating participants’ peer-to-peer teaching and learning
through group discussions of particular photos. A group photo-interview
enabled me to interpret and understand nuanced understanding of the meaning
behind each image the participants discuss. A group photo-interview was
instrumental in analyzing the degree to which participants engage in the
constructive discussions with myself and fellow participants by bringing,
sharing, and negotiating new knowledge and understanding in relation to the
photos. Fieldnotes in this context were crucial for producing the observational
and analytic records of what I see and listen to during the participants’
discussions or debates. Audio-recording the interaction the participants was also
useful for subsequent analytic and translation purposes and was crucial for
analyzing their participation in ‘collective meaning-making’ and development of
the new ‘ethos stuff’ of meaning production (or a second mindset) within the
“affinity spaces” Jenkins et al, 2006) created by group photo-interviews.

The investigation of participants’ meaning production in relation to
McDonald’s based on their photos and the discussions they engaged during
group interviews was instrumental in mapping the range of their critically
agentic practices in relation to a global fast food culture. The participants’ critical
agentic practices were analyzed based on to what degree they engaged in critically observing McDonald’s corporate practices and in producing alternative perspectives on its global fast food culture in the way Kenway and Bullen explain with the concept of the ‘youthful cyberflâneur’ discussed in Section 1.3. Fieldnotes and audio-recorded interaction among participants discussing or debating about particular images were both crucial for analyzing the participants’ critically agentic practices.

2.4.3 Research Procedures

I conducted field research in Okazaki city, Japan, between March and May in 2009. Prior to the research (in January, 2009), I requested and received from the principal of Okazaki Johsei Senior High School permission to recruit students as research participants through my former teacher. Once consent was achieved, participating students took part in a total of six meetings.

2.4.3.1 First Meeting

On March 18, 2009, my teacher set up the First meeting with the eight high school students he had recruited in advance. It was held in the students’ own classroom and lasted for about one hour. The purpose of the meeting was twofold. First, it was meant to introduce myself, as well as to have them

36 Despite the fact that my research participants, who were younger than 19 years old, were considered to be minors as legally incompetent or under legal guardianship according to Simon Fraser University’s Senate Research Ethics Policy R20.01, no parental or guardian consent was, however, required for my research. According to the Ethics Policy, parent or guardian consent is generally required only if a research study is deemed non-minimal risk or represents an invasion of the family right to privacy. My research involved neither non-minimal risk nor an invasion of the family’s right to privacy. It only involved minimal risk in which each participant was expected to encounter no greater physical and psychological harms than those experienced in his/her everyday life. See the attached ethics approval letters (Appendix 1) as well as the informed consent letter for participants (Appendix 2).
introduce themselves. Each participant selected his/her own pseudonym based on his/her favourite food or drinks. Second, the meeting was meant to provide each participant with informed consent. The participants were carefully informed of the nature of my study along with the detailed tasks they were supposed to accomplish. They were informed that we would have a total of six meetings, and it was explained that the second meeting would involve a focus group interview about their everyday uses of mobile phones. The third, fourth, and fifth meetings would be group photo-interviews about their mobile photographs. The activities involved 1) using the participant’s keitai cameras to take no more than three mobile photographs that he or she thinks are visually responding to a total of three thematic questions concerning fast food or McDonald’s and 2) sending the photo(s) to me via his/her keitai email at least three hours before the third, fourth, and fifth meeting starts. The participants were informed that a thematic question would be given at the end of the second, third, and fourth meeting. They were also informed that they would be given 2,500 yen (approx. 20 Canadian dollars) commercial gift certificates as a token of my gratitude, if they agreed to participate in my study. After each participant finished agreeing and signing a consent form, I scheduled the next meeting.

37 The informed consent had two components. The first component included the title of my research, the principal investigator (myself), its purpose and goals, its procedures and the participant’s tasks, risks to the participant, benefits, confidentiality, the inclusion of a participant’s name in reports, the contact of the participant at a future time, the use of the data in other studies, the participant’s request for obtaining copies of the results upon completion, persons and contact information for the participant to discuss concerns, and consent. The second component was a consent form. It informed the participant that their participation is entirely voluntary and that he or she can stop participating in the research at any time without risk of jeopardizing his/her grades and standing as well as his/her reports cards in the school in any way.
2.4.3.2 Second Meeting

On March 30, 2009, I had the second meeting with the eight participants. It was held at Aichi Outdoor Education Centre, which is located in the mountains 45 kilometres east from Okazaki Johsei Senior High School.\(^{38}\) The participants were there because all students enrolled in class 13 were required to attend a four-day intensive study camp. I met with them at 1 pm, and the meeting was held in a small room during a 45-minute break after lunch between study hours. Some refreshments were provided. We sat in a circle, and I conducted an open-ended, semi-structured focus group interview with the participants about their everyday uses of their keitai. It was audio-recorded for analytic and translation purposes. The interview began with a main question which guided the conversation: What does keitai mean to you? This question was intended for contextualizing the participants’ engagement with a variety of social practices enabled by the new technical stuff of keitai. I probed to clarify the participants’ answers and requested further examples, where appropriate. I gave follow-up questions that would pursue the details or implications of their answers to the main question. The follow-up questions included: What made you select the keitai that you own currently?, Which functions installed in keitai do you use most often (i.e., an email, a camera, the Internet)?, What are the advantages and disadvantages of keitai?, What are the differences in the use of keitai between you and adults such as your teachers and parents?, Are there any rules and regulation in school about your uses of keitai? I ended the meeting by scheduling the next meeting and giving the participants the first thematic question to which

\(^{38}\) Apparently, this particular location in the mountains was selected for the study camp partly because students wouldn’t be able to get a mobile phone signal in the area.
they were asked to visually respond using their *keitai* camera to prepare for our third meeting. The thematic question was: What does fast food mean to you? I decided to start with this question in order to understand how the participants define the meaning of fast food by themselves in general, before particularizing it in relation to McDonald’s.

### 2.4.3.3 Third Meeting

On Monday, April 6, 2009, I had the third meeting with the eight participants at 1 pm. It was held after class in their classroom at Okazaki Johsei Senior High School. Some refreshments were provided. It lasted for about one hour. It was audio-recorded for analytic and translation purposes. We sat in a circle, and I displayed on my laptop computer screen all mobile photos I collected from the participants via email beforehand. I randomly selected a photographer and asked him/her: What made you decide to take the photo(s)? This question encouraged the photographer/interviewee to first explain the rationale for taking it. The fellow participants and I then probed to clarify the photographer’s answers and requested further examples where appropriate. The probes focused on the time the photo was taken, the place where it was taken, and anything it did not appear to show on its own. I ended the photo-interview by asking all participants: Do you think that his (or her) photo represents fast food? This three-phase process, by which 1) a photographer/interviewee first explains the rationale for taking his/her chosen photo(s), 2) fellow participants and I probe into the contexts of the photo, and 3) the participants discuss or debate about the photo in relation to the given theme, was repeated in succession for the rest of the participants. I took field notes for the observational and analytic records of
what I saw and listened to during the participants’ discussions or debates about the idea and definitions of fast food. Some notes were added to these records after the meeting. These records were crucial for examining how the participants developed the new ethos stuff of meaning production through collective-meaning making. I ended the third meeting by scheduling the next meeting and giving the participants the second thematic question to which they were asked to visually respond using their keitai camera to prepare for our fourth meeting. The thematic question was: What does McDonald’s mean to you?

2.4.3.4 Fourth Meeting

On Saturday, April 18, 2009, the fourth meeting was conducted in the participants’ classroom at Okazaki Jorsei Senior High School. Only seven participants attended the meeting because Chicken was unable to attend. I had to interview the male and female participants separately because they were unable to show up together due to schedule conflicts. I first met with the three male participants at noon. The meeting lasted for about 45 minutes and was audio-recorded for analytic and translation purposes. Some refreshments were provided. I began the meeting by displaying on my laptop computer screen all mobile photos I collected from the three male participants via email beforehand. I randomly selected a photographer/interviewee and asked him what made him decide to take the photo(s) as his visual response to a question: What does McDonald’s mean to you? The three-phase process I used for the third meeting was applied to conduct a photo-interview with each male participant. Each male participant explained the rationale for taking his chosen photo(s), responded to fellow participants’ and my questions concerning the location and time the
photo(s) was taken, and interacted with two other male participants to discuss and debate about the photo(s). Although female participants were absent in the interview, I had them discuss the photos of the female participants.

I met with the four female participants at 3 pm. The meeting lasted for about 45 minutes and was audio-recorded for analytic and translation purposes. Some refreshments were provided. I began the meeting by displaying on my laptop computer screen all mobile photos I collected from the four female participants via email beforehand. I randomly selected a photographer/interviewee and asked her: What made you decide to take the photo(s)? Each female participant went through the three-phase process I used during the meeting with the three male participants. Although the male participants were absent in the interview, I had them discuss the photos of the male participants.

In each interview with the male and the female participants, I took field notes during the group photo-interviews with both the male and female participants. Some notes were added after the interview. These records were crucial for examining how the participants developed the new ethos stuff of meaning production through collective-meaning making. I ended each meeting by scheduling the next meeting and giving the participants the third thematic question, which was: What is your relationship to McDonald’s?

2.4.3.5 Fifth Meeting

On April 24, 2009, I had the fourth meeting with the eight participants. I had to interview the male and female participants separately because they were unable to show up together due to schedule conflicts. I first met with the four male
participants right after school in their classroom at Okazaki Jorsei Senior High School. Some refreshments were provided. The meeting lasted for about one hour and was audio-recorded for analytic and translation purposes. Some refreshments were provided. I began the meeting by displaying on my laptop computer screen all mobile photos I collected from the four male participants via email beforehand. I randomly selected a photographer/interviewee and asked him what made him take the photo(s) as his visual response to a question: What is your relationship to McDonald’s? The three-phase process that I used for the third and fifth meetings was applied to conduct a photo-interview with each male participant. Each male participant explained the rationale for taking his chosen photo(s), responded to fellow participants’ and my questions concerning the location and time the photo(s) was taken, and interacted with fellow participants to discuss and debate about the photo(s). Although female participants were not in the interview, I had them discuss the photos of the female participants.

In the evening at a family restaurant near the school, I met with four female participants who were unable to schedule an interview together with the male participants due to their club activities. They were treated to dinner at the restaurant. The meeting lasted for about one hour. I began the meeting by displaying on my laptop computer screen all mobile photos I collected from the four female participants via email beforehand. I randomly selected a photographer/interviewee and asked her: What made you decide to take the photo(s)? Each female participant went through the three-phase process I used during the meeting with the four male participants. Although the male
participants were absent in the interview, I had them discuss the photos of the male participants.

In each interview with the male and the female participants, I took field notes during the group photo-interviews with both the male and female participants. Some notes were added after the interview. These records were crucial for examining how the participants developed the new ethos stuff of meaning production through collective-meaning making. I ended each meeting by scheduling the final meeting.

2.4.3.6 Final Meeting
On April 30, 2009, I had the final meeting with the eight participants. It was held right after school in their classroom at Okazaki Johsei Senior High School. Some refreshments were provided. The meeting lasted for about one hour. It was audio-recorded for analytic and translation purposes. We sat in a circle, and I began the meeting by asking the participants several follow-up questions that would make them reflect on the tasks they accomplished for the past group photo-interviews. The questions included: Have your ways of thinking about keitai or of using it changed since you participated in my study?, What did you think about the group discussions of or debates about your own and fellow participants’ mobile photos? After this, the participants were thanked and debriefed orally on the purpose and rationale for my study. As a token of my gratitude for their participation in my study, each participant was given CAD$25 commercial gift certificates to be used towards the purchase of any item at stores they chose beforehand.
2.5 Conclusion

My research participants’ mobile photographic images about fast food and McDonald’s and their discussions of or debate about them during group photo-interviews gave me many interesting insights into how Japanese youth can potentially become the phoneur who critically observe McDonald’s global fast food culture and produce alternative perspectives on it by developing new literacies. My participants’ interpretations of their images and the discussions of them in the photo-interviews shed light on critical agetic practices among them. In Chapter 3, I present the results of my field research by analysing and discussing them in detail.
3: RESEARCH FINDINGS: ANALYZING PARTICIPANTS’ MEANING PRODUCTION IN RELATION TO MCDONALD’S AND MAPPING THEIR CRITICAL AGENTIC PRACTICES IN RELATION TO GLOBAL FAST FOOD CULTURES

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I both analyze the eight high school students’ meaning production in relation to McDonald’s, and map the range of critically agentic practices emergent in their work. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section summarizes the eight participants’ everyday use of keitai (mobile phone) based on the findings during the third meeting. Understanding their everyday keitai use is important because it speaks to the new technical stuff of meaning production, which constitutes new literacies together with the new ethos stuff that emphasizes a second mindset. The second section analyzes the eight participants’ meaning production in relation to McDonald’s based on the findings evident from the fourth and fifth meetings. The aim of this section is to examine how the eight participants engaged in collective meaning-making by not only providing and contextualizing their mobile phone images but also by engaging in peer-to-peer teaching and learning through group discussions of, or debates about, particular photos. The third section investigates and maps the range of critically agentic practices emergent among the eight participants based on their analyses of McDonald’s.
3.2 Participants’ Everyday Use of Keitai as the New Technical Stuff of Meaning Production

Before I begin to analyze the student participants’ meaning production in relation to McDonald’s, it is important to summarize their everyday use of keitai (mobile phone) because it speaks to the new technical stuff—that is, one of the two aspects central to Lankshear and Knobel’s (2006) conception of new literacies. The participants’ everyday use of keitai is characterized as a digitally-enabled practice based on post-typographic forms of text and textual production. The group interview I conducted during the second meeting revealed a variety of post-typographic forms of text and textual production common to the students’ use of keitai.

All participants own their keitai (in fact one student owns two). Most of them started carrying keitai when they were junior high school students—at the age of 12 to 13—or just before they graduated from elementary schools—at the age of 11. They chose their device models mainly because of free voice call services between family members or friends who subscribe to the same mobile phone carrier. They usually pay around 6,000 to 7,000 yen (approx. 70-80 Canadian dollar) per month in fees, which includes unlimited email and Web use. They engage with a variety of social practices enabled by the digitality of keitai. For example, they customize the music they download from online music-sharing sites for their keitai ringtones, download and play free games at mobile gaming portal sites (e.g., Mobage-Town), read keitai shosetsu (mobile phone novels) through various mobile sites, and comment on friends’ and others’ profiles posted on SNSs (e.g., Mixi). The participants’ personifications of keitai, especially as a friend, were particularly evident in their constant mobile email exchanges.
with friends. The female participants exchange a higher volume of messages every day. Aoringo, for example, sends an average of 50 emails per day and 150 emails at the most, whereas Budou and Curry (male participants) send around 20.

The group interview also revealed that the eight participants made distinctions between their own use of keitai and that of adults. Aoringo emphasized that parents and teachers understand keitai as a mere “electronic appliance.” She complained that her parents tell her not to use her keitai too much. Ichigo complained that his parents suspended his keitai services because they thought he was becoming addicted to the device. All participants stressed that keitai use is restricted in school and that teachers usually “confiscate” it when they find students using it. All participants nevertheless use keitai surreptitiously behind their desks during classes to thumb out email messages and surf the Web to check SNSs, news, and daily horoscopes.

In addition, the eight participants identified their school’s unproductive ways of utilizing information and communication technologies (ICTs) in classes. They particularly find information technology classes quite “boring” because they only learn with desktop computers and classroom work tends to focus on the use of MS Word and Excel, creating homepages, learning to upload pictures, and practicing presentations using MS Powerpoint. All participants in my study, however, wanted to make the classes more interesting and enjoyable. Chicken said his ideal information technology class would be the integrated study he took while attending a junior high school. In this class, he learned about “the stock market” and played games with classmates. He also wished to use the school’s
information technology class to learn how to use “Winny” (a Japanese peer-to-peer file-sharing program) to learn how to “download” and “pirate” music. Aoringo and Megumiruku wished to use the class for playing “Mario Party” (Nintendo’s backgammon-like party video game) with classmates.

In summary, the group interview during the second meeting revealed that the participants’ everyday social practices are increasingly mediated by post-typographic forms of texts and text production afforded by the digitality of keitai. As such, they did not seem to understand the world and engage in social practices based on a ‘modernist’ mindset or ‘physical-industrial’ worldview. Given that they easily get bored and can criticize how ICTs are implemented in information classes, the participants seemed to be natives to the digitally networked space and capable of thinking about the world and doing things based on a ‘postmodern mindset’ or ‘post-industrial’ worldview.

3.3 Participants’ Meaning Production in relation to McDonald’s

The eight participants’ meaning production in relation to McDonald’s was analyzed based on the findings evident in the fourth and fifth meetings. The photo(s) produced by each participant contributed to a key resource for initiating a form of ‘collective meaning-making’ (Jenkins, 2006). This was generated during the two meetings when each student responded to thematic questions to provide his/her esoteric knowledge and unique experience about McDonald’s, while collaboratively engaging in discussions among fellow participants to teach and learn different or new perspectives.
3.3.1 Findings in the Fourth Meeting

For the fourth meeting, I received from seven participants (except for Chicken, a male participant) a total of eleven mobile phone images. They visually responded to a thematic question that asked what McDonald’s means to them (see Figure 1-11 below). Each participant provided his/her image(s) and engaged in collective meaning-making by sharing new or different knowledge and perspectives on McDonald’s. Five distinct genres concerning McDonald’s became apparent.

The first genre has to do with McDonald’s ‘brand mascot,’ which was central to Ichigo’s, Budou’s, and Aoringo’s photos. Ichigo photographed McDonald’s popular clown mascot, Ronald McDonald, attached to a floor display box of the Happy Meal toys in a McDonald’s restaurant near his house (Figure 1). He took this image in order to emphasize Ronald as a byword for McDonald’s. He said: “Everyone who sees my image immediately sees that it refers to McDonald’s, just like Mickey Mouse is for Disney.”

Budou, also photographed a giant statue of Ronald (with a unusual hairstyle) standing beside the outdoor playground of the restaurant (Figure 2). He has watched Ronald on TV since an early age and said no

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39 When Ichigo photographed Ronald attached to a floor display box of the Happy Meal toys, the toys tied in to a popular Japanese TV anime series, Doraemon.
sooner did he see Ronald than he started thinking about McDonald’s. Similarly, Aoringo photographed Ronald sitting on the bench and warmly welcoming customers in a McDonald’s restaurant near her house (Figure 3). She took the image because she has watched him on TV since her childhood and for her: “Ronald is the signature of McDonald’s.”

The second genre refers to ‘affordability,’ which was evident in Curry’s and Aoringo’s photos of a 100 Yen Makku advertisement. Curry photographed this ad displayed on a McDonald’s restaurant window (Figure 4). He understood this image to suggest that McDonald’s is “super cheap.” He said: “No other place than McDonald’s can offer us meals as low as 100 yen.” This really helps us (poor students).” Similarly, Megumiruku took a picture of a 100 Yen Makku ad posted on the window of a McDonald’s restaurant located in a shopping mall food court in Okazaki city (Figure 5). She

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40 100 Yen Makku menu includes six to seven items among which customers can choose: a plain hamburger, McPork burger, McShaka-Shaka Chicken, Sausage McMuffin, an apple pie, and an ice cream cone (Japan McDonald’s, 2010). 100 Yen Makku is more or less equivalent to the Dollar Menu available in North American McDonald’s restaurants.

41 100 yen is worth approximately 85 Canadian cents. But the significance of 100 yen embedded in the 100 Yen Makku service is concerned not only with its low-price monetary value but also with its form in a single coin, just like a loony, a Canadian one-dollar coin. A 100-yen coin enables customers, such as high school students, not only to get an inexpensive item but also to pay in a coin, which in an extremely simple and convenient method of payment.
understood the image in a similar way to Curry’s—that is, to indicate McDonald’s incredibly low-prices.

The third genre refers to what were perceived to be McDonald’s ‘innovative marketing’ practices. Aoringo spoke of this idea in describing her second photo of Daisuke Matsuzaka (a Japanese Major Leaguer), which was printed on a file folder found at a McDonald’s restaurant during the campaign to support the 2009 Japan World Baseball Classic (WBC) team (Figure 6). She took this image because of McDonald’s “interesting collaboration with a popular baseball player.” The slogan captioned at the bottom of the file, “Sekai wo tsukamou” (Seize the world), was of particular interest to her because: “McDonald’s is not only supporting the Japanese team to become the champion (in the international baseball tournament) but also trying to expand itself worldwide.”

The fourth genre refers to McDonald’s as a ‘ubiquitous’ and ‘easily noticeable’ place. This idea was evident in Budou’s and Pineapple’s photos. For his second image, Budou took a rotating roadside pole sign of McDonald’s Golden Arches (with a “Drive-Thru” sign in Japanese) (Figure 7). He took this image first and foremost because: “The arches cannot be excluded when we talk about McDonald’s.” He then added: “The rotating pole sign is easily found at a distance, and the yellow and
red sign is really everywhere from inside the restaurant to the menus to many other things.” Different, yet in a similar vein, Pineapple took an image of an information board that lists shops, including McDonald’s, located in a shopping mall food court in Okazaki city (Figure 8). She understood this image to suggest that McDonald’s is “conveniently located in the public place” easily accessible to her and her friends.

The fifth genre refers to ‘favourites’ evident in Budou’s and Natsumikan’s photos. For one of his pictures, Budo photographed McFries scattered over a tray (Figure 9). He took this image while hanging out with Ichigo, whose playful fingers appear behind. Budo took this image because McFries are his “favourite” item on McDonald’s menu and are “better” than the fries available at other restaurants, such as Lotteria.42 Natsumikan took an image of McDonald’s Asa Makku (breakfast) menu, including a Mega Muffin, Sausage Egg McMuffin, Egg McMuffin, and Sarada Marine McMuffin (McMuffin with marinated vegetables), using her parent’s computer screen (Figure 10). She took this image because she loves Asa Makku menu, particularly the buns used for

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42 Lotteria is one of the leading hamburger restaurant chains in Japan.
McMuffins. Most interestingly, for the second image, Natsumikan took a picture of the smiling faces of McDonald’s employers and employees (Figure 11). She took this image in order to associate it with so-called “Smile 0 Yen” service, which is listed in the menu at McDonald’s restaurants. She has been attracted to this item because she said: “No other place but McDonald’s offers customers such a friendly item as part of the menu.”

While the content of each participant’s mobile photographic image(s) can be understood in relation to the five genres noted above, there were interesting exchanges between the participants during the group interviews where we discussed the photos and their contexts. During the interviews, the participants engaged in a constructive discussion with myself and fellow participants by bringing, sharing, and negotiating new knowledge and understanding in relation to the photos. Throughout the discussions, four types of participants’ conversations are particularly worthy of consideration as indicative of their engagement in collective meaning-making.

The first type of conversation was apparent during a conversation among the four female participants about Megumiruku’s photo of 100 Yen Makku ad (Figure 5), which expresses McDonald’s incredibly low-priced menu.

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43 *Smile 0 Yen* is a non-edible item actually listed in the menu at every McDonald’s restaurant in Japan. When customers actually order it, the employees/employers at the restaurant give them smiles for free.

44 As I noted in Section 2.3.3.3 regarding the procedure for the fourth meeting, I divided the group photo-interview between the male and female participants due to schedule conflicts.
MEGUMIRUKU: A 100 Yen Makku menu is really cheap.

INTERVIEWER: What do you mean by “really cheap”?

MEGUMIRUKU: Making it really easy for us to stop by McDonald’s.

PINEAPPLE: We aren’t interested in any other menu but a 100 Yen Makku menu.

AORINGO: We’ve become so used to McDonald’s now. It offered a cheap menu before, but the (100 Yen Makku) menu is even cheaper.

MEGUMIRUKU: A single hamburger only costs 100 yen. No other place (than McDonald’s) does this sort of service. MOS Burger never does it.

PINEAPPLE: Maybe the dollar stores do.

EVERYONE: Right (laughing).

AORINGO: Even Potechi (a small bag of potato chips) costs more than 100 yen.

NATSUMIKAN: It costs 120 yen or so, isn’t it?

Here, the four female participants evaluated the merits of McDonald’s 100 Yen Makku service as the main factor for students with little money to favour it over other restaurants, such as MOS Burger. They also assessed the significance of McDonald’s incredible low-prices in relation to a dollar-store or a small bag of potato chips as points of reference. This conversation shows how the participants shared discrete ideas of cheap food and negotiated them to generate new, collective knowledge.

The second conversation type was also evident during a conversation among the four female participants. It has to do with the appearance of drive-thru services at McDonald’s restaurants, which were a focus in a picture by Budou. It showed a rotating roadside pole sign of the McDonald’s Golden Arches with a drive-thru prominently in view in the picture (Figure 7). They were interested in the drive-thru sign because:

45 MOS Burger is one of the leading Japanese hamburger restaurant chains. Its food and beverage menus are quite distinct from McDonald’s.

46 As I noted in Section 2.3.3.3 regarding the procedure for the fourth meeting, although I conducted group-photo interviews with the male and female participants separately, I explained to the female participants on behalf of the three male participants why they took their image(s). I also had them discuss the male participants’ photos.
MEGUMIRUKU: A drive-thru is really convenient.
AORINGO: Yeah, it is.
INTERVIEWER: Why would you think so?
MEGUMIRUKU: Well, we can go to the drive-thru (of McDonald’s) without even worrying about what we wear and how we look. For example, my mom can go there even in pajamas and without making her up at all because she doesn’t have to see anyone on the way because she is just driving and waiting in the car.
AORINGO: Things are really fast there!
MEGUMIRUKU: But when going to MOS, we have to wait for very long.
NATSUMIKAN: Yeah, right.
PINEAPPLE: Yeah, for very long.
AORINGO: Really? I’ve never been there.
MEGUMIRUKU: We have to wait for a while because they start cooking meals only after taking our order.
AORINGO: Is that right? But that’s the good thing about MOS, isn’t it? That’s why its food is more expensive but tasty.

In this conversation, the female participants discussed the value of a drive-thru which provides some lifestyle ease particularly for (Japanese) female drivers who want to protect their ideal feminine appearances in public. Further to this, the participants evaluated McDonald’s drive-thru by comparing it with MOS Burger’s. They shared with each other different perspectives on McDonald’s drive-thru by recognizing its demerits in relation to its food quality at the expense of the speedy service.

The third conversation type was present during conversations between both male and female participants and focused on Natsumikan’s image of the smiley faces of McDonald’s employers and employees (Figure 11). Natsumikan associated these faces with McDonald’s Smile 0 Yen service listed on the company’s menus. In thinking about the image, the male participants commented:
ICHIGO: It seems McDonald’s is doing great employer and employee education.
BUDOU: They (the employees or employers in the picture) look very friendly. They must be really caring for each other.
CURRY: But when we go to McDonald’s, they are not very friendly.
ICHIGO: Yeah, that’s true.

Meanwhile, the four female participants discussed the image in relation to the *Smile 0 Yen* service based on an interesting anecdote:

MEGUMIRUKU: Even if we order *Smile 0 Yen*, it doesn’t appear on the receipt, does it?
AORINGO: Of course, not!
EVERYONE: (Laughing).
INTERVIEWER: Do they (the employees or employers) really give you free smiles if you order it?
EVERYONE: Well, yes and no because we don’t get it at every restaurant.
AORINGO: They don’t give us free smiles during really busy hours, do they?
MEGUMIRUKU: Right. But if we go during less busy hours and order it, all employees at the counter give us free smiles. They never do when busy. We sometimes tease employees (about their free smiles) to get us to five free smiles.
AORINGO: What? How?
NATSUMIKAN: (Giggling.)
MEGUMIRUKU: Well, sometimes at the restaurant with friends, we play a game and get the loser to go and ask them (employees and employers) for smiles on purpose. They give us smiles reluctantly. We feel kind of guilty about getting them to do, though.
AORINGO: Oh my god! I’ve never done it.
EVERYONE: (Laughing.)

The two conversations reveal that both male and female participants discussed and registered the gap between what the image of the smiley faces and the associated *Smile 0 Yen* service imply to them and what the participants actually know about a McDonald’s restaurant they go to. Interestingly, the female participants’ conversation not only made the gap explicit but also revealed their appropriation of the friendliness of McDonald’s employees or employers for their own playful activities.
The fourth conversation type had to do with the reasons why the students choose to go to McDonald’s. As part of the context for this discussion (an excerpt of which is included below), the male participants spoke about everyone’s photos:

INTERVIEWER: How would you describe McDonald’s based on everyone’s photos?
ICHIGO: Well, I guess it’s a place where we can easily stop by on the way from school to hang out with friends or to look for them. It’s a place for relaxation.
CURRY: Also a place where we always end up going when having a trouble agreeing on where we should go to eat. McDonald’s is always our solution.
ICHIGO: Yeah, it’s quite normal for us to switch our decision from going to have ramen noodles to going to eat at McDonald’s.
BUDOU: True (Laughing.)
INTERVIEWER: Why does it (McDonald’s) become the solution?
ICHIGO: Well, the food there is really cheap, so we can easily afford.
CURRY: Plus, we don’t need to worry about who we are because many different types of customers go there. I can’t really go to Yoshinoya because there are always many middle-aged men!
EVERYONE: (Laughing.)
INTERVIEWER: What does McDonald’s mean to you, then?
ICHIGO: Well, they don’t really care who the customers are. I mean, they don’t really care about ages and gender. No one would say anything if girls were eating there. Even a grandpa and grandma can go there.

In the meantime, the conversation among the four female participants further contextualizes the male participants’ comparison among other fast food restaurants:

INTERVIEWER: Why would you choose to go to McDonald’s?
AORINGO: Obviously, it’s everywhere, and the food there is really cheap. Besides, it’s easier for us to go in. I don’t like to go to Lotteria.
MEGUMIRUKU: Right. And KFC is even worse.
AORINGO: It really is. What else can we get there other than chicken?
EVERYONE: (Laughing.)
MEGUMIRUKU: KFC is only for Christmas.
AORINGO: Especially with family.

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47 Yoshinoya is a gyudon (beef bowl) restaurant chain originated in Japan and is one of the leading fast food restaurant chains in the country.
MEGUMIRUKU: We never go to KFC with friends.
EVERYONE: Not at all! (Laughing.)
INTERVIEWER: But why McDonald’s, then?
MEGUMIRUKU: Because there are a lot of young customers there, and even the employees look younger.
EVERYONE: Right.
AORINGO: There are many students wearing school uniforms, and this makes them easy to go there.
MEGUMIRUKU: Even if I see adults (in the restaurant), they eat alone. We have no pressure.
AORINGO: We can’t go to MOS because the meal is expensive. The adults can order many things, but we can’t (because we can’t afford it).
MEGUMIRUKU: MOS is kind of too fancy, and we can’t stay for a while (with friends). And we don’t want to go there in too casual wear.
INTERVIEWER: What about McDonald’s?
EVERYONE: No problem.

Both the male and female participants’ conversations reveal that McDonald’s collapses the differences among social groups and that anyone can go there. They compared McDonald’s with other fast food restaurants and identified the advantage of the former over the latter.

3.3.2 Findings in the Fifth Meeting

Following the fourth series of meetings, I again received a set of images—twelve in total (see Figure 12-23 in Appendix)—which included the participants’ responses to the following question: What is your relationship to McDonald’s? Participants were then asked to talk together about the meaning evident in the images. From this conversation, four distinct genres concerning their relationships to McDonald’s became apparent.

The first genre has to do with ‘family,’ which was evident in Curry’s, Aoringo’s, and
Chicken’s photos. Curry photographed a drive-thru window of a McDonald’s restaurant near his house (Figure 12). This image represents his relationship to McDonald’s because it is here where they go every time his family has a difficult time agreeing on a place to eat out for dinner. Curry explained:

I go to McDonald’s drive-thru when the restaurant we (my family) originally planned to go to is closed, and especially when my dad gets very frustrated with my mom’s idea, such as going to a soba (noodle) restaurant. We have a quarrel in the car, but after all we end up going to nearby McDonald’s. We don’t necessarily like there but decide to go there because food is cheap and is quickly prepared to take it out to home.

Aoringo photographed at home McDonald’s Asa (breakfast) Makku meal (which includes two bags of McHotdog Megasausage, two bags of McShaka-shaka Chicken, a cup of Premium Roast Coffee, and a Sausage Egg McMuffin in a clamshell box), which her father sometimes buys (Figure 13). While she seldom goes to McDonald’s by herself, her relationship to the chain is sustained through her father who is very fond of it. Aoringo explained:

My dad really likes McDonald’s and often takes out meals on the way home from work. He likes new items like McHotdog Megasausage. And he loves using discount coupons (which he downloaded to his keitai and uses it at the restaurant counter). He brings home meals without letting us know and because my mom has already prepared his dinner, she gets mad at him. But my dad eats my mom’s food, together with what he brought home from McDonald’s.

Unlike Curry’s and Aoringo’s, Chicken took an image of his mother cooking in the kitchen and an image of her homemade nut cakes (Figure 14 & 15). Chicken’s images represent his relationship
to McDonald’s through his mother’s cooking, which he loves in comparison to McDonald’s. Chicken explained:

I don’t often go to McDonald’s because I like eating at home. I also don’t go there because I can never eat enough to be full. I sometimes go there with my friends only to get a quick snack. But I would rather go home and eat something my mom often cooks, like nut cakes. I can have a lot!

The second genre refers to ‘friends,’ which was evident from Ichigo’s and Budou’s photos. Ichigo photographed a meal he ordered at a McDonald’s restaurant (which includes a Strawberry Sundae, a cup of Coke, and McFries), along with his friends’ hands playfully visible in the background (Figure 16). The image represents his relationship to McDonald’s by showing McDonald’s as a cozy place where he can go and hang out with friends after school. Ichigo explained:

I stop by there (McDonald’s) to rest for a while after school and before going home. I just go there to hang out and chat with friends. We talk about girls in class, gossip about friends and teachers, and talk about school and our studies. Especially with Budou, we talk about things we did in the past because they have known each other since junior high school. We stay in the restaurant for a while even without having anything. If an employee comes to us and asks us not to stay for long without having anything, we order something like a coffee and stay for a while longer.

Budou photographed his and his friends’ bicycles randomly parked on the sidewalk in front of a McDonald’s restaurant near his house (Figure 17). The bicycles were meant to signify how Budou and his friends travel around the city, including to McDonald’s. Budo explained:
We (I and my friends) can easily stop by McDonald’s by bicycle to hang out together. A bicycle really symbolizes us (as high school students). We can’t drive a car but can ride a bicycle to get there. Adults don’t come to McDonald’s by bicycle to hang out with friends.

The third genre refers to ‘mobile marketing,’ which was part of Budou’s, Pineapple’s, and Natsumikan’s photos. Budou photographed McDonald’s weekly free mobile magazine displayed on the screen of his friend’s keitai (Figure 18). The image represents his relationship to McDonald’s because he can obtain the discount coupons by subscribing to a weekly mail magazine.

Budou explained:

I often go to McDonald’s because of the coupons I can access through the weekly mail magazine. If you scroll down the page displayed on the screen, you can find a URL. If you click on it, you can access a McDonald’s page where you can find a bunch of weekly discount coupons. The coupons are just great because with little money, students can get things very cheap.

Similarly, Pineapple photographed the actual discount coupons (for medium size McFries) on the screen of her friend’s keitai (Figure 19). The image represents her relationship to McDonald’s because without the discount coupons, she seldom goes to McDonald’s.

Natsumikan’s image is of a McDonald’s limited-
time *Enjoy 100Back Campaign* advertisement (Figure 20). Similar to Pineapple, she too only goes to McDonald’s when coupons make the food especially inexpensive.

The fourth genre refers to ‘the absence of McDonald’s,’ which was evident in Megumiruku’s and Chicken’s photos. Megumiruku took two images of her hometown, Katahara city, from an observation hill above the city (Figure 21 & 22). Because there are no McDonald’s restaurants in her city, she used these distinct images to suggest this fact. Megumiruku explained:

There is no fast food restaurant in Katahara. It is not even easy to find a convenience store there. There are so many elderly people living in my city, and they don’t eat out. Katahara is actually a small port city. Fishermen often drive around the city to distribute unsold sea fish and shellfish to the people. There is always something to cook with whatever seafood is at hand. My mom can make fresh seafood *zuke-don* (thin-sliced or diced raw fish over rice served in a bowl) quickly with the delivered sea fish. Most people in my city prefer fresh seafood rather than meat. My local friends are not big fans of meat either. Meat wasn’t very popular during the school lunch of my elementary and junior high school, so going to McDonald’s is quite uncommon.

Chicken photographed (as his third picture) a Lawson Store 100 chain store in his neighbourhood (Figure 23). The image represents his relationship to

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48 *The Enjoy 100Back Campaign* was only available between April 16 and 27, 2009, only after 5 pm (McDonald’s Holdings Japan, 2009a). The campaign emphasized that the only customers who purchase the combination of a particular combo meal (including a *Happy Meal*) and a particular single burger can get 100 yen back in a coin. I argue that during this campaign, McDonald’s Japan attempted to encourage the customers who received 100 yen to buy items available through *100 Yen Makku* service noted earlier.

49 Katahara city is located in the outskirts of Okazaki city, approximately 30km south from the city.
McDonald’s because the store is more accessible than McDonald’s from his house and also because 100-yen items sold at the store attract him, much as they might at McDonald’s. Chicken explained:

The store is located near my house. I go there more often (than McDonald’s). It has a better selection of 100 yen items. You can get a variety of stuff for only 100 yen like onigiri (an oval-shaped white rice ball wrapped in seaweed), liquor, juice, snacks, box lunches, packaged frozen food, underwear, and even pet food. The store definitely sells more different stuff than McDonald’s 100 yen Makku (which only allows customers to choose between only several items). The store is quite convenient.

Both Megumiruku’s and Chicken’s photos are characterized by the absence of McDonald’s, in part because there are no such restaurants in their hometowns, and in part because in Megumiruku’s case, her mother’s home cooking represents the real ‘fast food’ in her life.

While the students’ photos can be understood in terms of the four genres noted, a more subtle and nuanced understanding of the meaning behind each image was apparent during the group interviews. During the interviews, the students engaged in a constructive discussion with myself and fellow participants by bringing together their photos, while sharing and negotiating new knowledge and intelligence in a manner characteristic of the new ethos of meaning production. Two types of conversations were particularly worthy of consideration as indicative of their engagement in collective meaning-making.

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50 Lawson is one of the leading convenience store franchise chains in Japan. In February 2007, the company started allying its part of business with Ninety-Nine Plus Inc, which owns the franchise of dollar or variety stores in Japan and mainly targets housewives, the middle-aged, the elderly, and young singles (Lawson Inc., 2007).
The first conversation included the four male participants’ discussion of Chicken’s two images of his mother cooking in the kitchen and her homemade nut cakes (Figure 14 & 15). They discussed the differences between a mother’s cooking and the food prepared and served at a McDonald’s:

CHICKEN: Well, my mom cooks them (nut cakes) with all her heart.
CURRY: For sure.
CHICKEN: She also cooks them by thinking of the nutritional value.
INTERVIEWER: How about McDonald’s, then?
BUDOU: Well, it provides different kinds of heart...
CHICKEN: Everything is automated there, man. They (the employees and employers) never put their heart into things they cook for customers. They are quite different from a mother who cares and cooks for her husband and children at home. McDonald’s provides food for an unspecified number of people. They (the employees and employers) simply do this as their routine jobs.
ICHIGO: As business! We can never demand love from McDonald’s.
INTERVIEWER: Very interesting. So would you say Chicken’s mother (in the image) doesn’t cook as her business?
EVERYONE: (Laughing.)
CHICKEN: She doesn’t charge me!
ICHIGO: She feeds you now, but you’re gonna have to eventually send money to her to take care of her in 20 to 30 years (when she gets older), man! Better start helping her from now. You should have been in this picture to show yourself helping her out!
EVERYONE: (Laughing.)

Here, the male participants engaged in a constructive discussion to debate the contrast between the degree to which one puts his/her heart into home cooking and the degree to which McDonald’s employees/employers produce food as a technologized and routinized food process. The participants learned from each other how the home cooking represented by Chicken’s mother who treats it with care and intimacy is undermined by and erased in a technologized setting such as McDonald’s.

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51 As I noted in Section 2.3.3.4 regarding the procedure for the fifth meeting, I divided the group photo-interview between the male and female participants due to schedule conflicts.
The second conversation had to do with the four female participants’ discussion of the unusual lunch made by Megumiruku’s mother, which was contextualized in pictures that also highlighted Megumiruku’s hometown (Figure 21 & 22).

AORINGO: (Because of the fresh seafood delivered to Megumiruku’s house) I now understand why there is always no frozen food in your (Mugumiruku’s) lunch.

PINEAPPLE: Yeah, right.

INTERVIEWER: Really?

AORINGO: When my mom makes *bento* (lunch) for me, she uses a lot of frozen food for side dish. Except for the rice at the bottom of my *bento* box (with two layers), everything at the top for side dish is all made with frozen food. But her mom never uses it, right?

PINEAPPLE: I still remember your (Megumiruku’s) lunch had the contents of miso soup as part of side dish before!

NATSUMIKAN: (Laughing.)

AORINGO: Anyways, your (Megumiruku’s) lunch is always really amazing, especially the side dish cooked with seafood.

EVERYONE: (Laughing.)

INTERVIEWER: No wonder she lives in a port city.

MEGUMIRUKU: What a good memory (Pineapple has)! Yeah, at that time, my mom was really reluctant to use frozen food for my lunch. So she used some of the content of the leftover miso soup from the previous night.

EVERYONE: (Laughing.)

AORINGO: Yeah, I saw some wakame (soft seaweed) in your (Megumiruku’s) lunch! It shows your mom really hates using frozen food.

INTERVIEWER: I wonder why she (Megumiruku’s mother) tries so hard to avoid frozen food.

MEGUMIRUKU: Well, my mom often says it’s faster to use whatever’s at hand (such as seafood and leftover miso soup) at home, rather than going to get frozen food at a store.

AORINGO: I think cooking things in a microwave is way faster, though.

In this conversation, by fleshing out the details of Megumiruku’s images and associating them with her mother’s unusual lunch, the students learned from each other the differences between the food. Most interestingly, they learned from each other what might counts as being ‘fast food’ by comparing
Megumiruku’s lunch made by her mother, who made use of whatever was at hand, and others’ lunch made with precooked microwavable frozen food.

In summary, the findings in the fourth and fifth meetings revealed that students came to understand the dense array of meanings in play in thinking about how McDonald’s fits into their lives. The students’ engagement in the discussions to discuss their mobile phone images with myself and fellow participants by developing collective meaning-making facilitated their understanding of McDonald’s and contemporary fast food cultures. However, it was questionable whether the collaborative environment generated in my study parallels that of Gee’s account of an affinity space, in which young people informally teach and learn from one another new knowledge and skills based on their distributed, shared, collective, and hybrid expertise and intelligence (Jenkins et al, 2006). This was because the collaborative environment generated through group interviews was a ‘research protocol’ that I as a researcher helped to set up in order to enable the participants’ complicated understandings of McDonald’s to be revealed. Consequently, I cannot justify the presence of my participants’ a second mindset within the constructed collaborative environment created by my study, though they showed the tendencies.

3.4 Exploring Participants’ Critical Agentic Practices with McDonald’s Global Fast Food Culture

As discussed in Section 2.2, McDonald’s is part of a global fast food culture, which is formed through a vast phantasmagoria of advertising that ultimately constitutes a powerful commodity spectacle in the lives of youth and others. This spectacle in turn produces hyperreal ideologies that constitute a fetishism of
the consumer and a fetishism of the food production process itself. And yet, young people’s critically agentic practices can intervene in relation to McDonald’s in the context of a global consumer-media environment as they can critically observe and produce alternative perspectives on it. In this final section, based on the findings in the fourth and fifth meetings, I examine the critically agentic practices emergent among the eight participants. Specifically, while suggesting that none of the participants engaged in critically observing McDonald’s corporate practices in the way Kenway and Bullen explain with the concept of the youthful cyberflâneur, the participants did in fact generate unique alternative perspectives on McDonald’s and contemporary fast food cultures specific to their everyday lives. I argue that such alternative perspectives reveal ‘emergent’ forms of critical agency among the students in my study.

As discussed in 1.3, Kenway and Bullen’s concept of the cyberflâneur involves young people’s critically agentic practices in observing and producing alternative perspectives on a global consumer-media culture. The first characteristic of such a practice involves monitoring corporate practices and detecting how these operate through mediascapes formed by phatasmagoric advertising and commodity spectacles. However, the participants’ practice of critically observing McDonald’s corporate practices was not evident based on the findings in the fourth and fifth meetings. It is true that the students made explicit a variety of advertising and commodity spectacles in their mobile photo images, but they did not capture them with the intention of critiquing such practices. This tendency was evident in several participants’ rationale for taking their images.
For example, Aoringo did not photograph Daisuke Matsuzaka’s image on a file folder found at a McDonald’s restaurant (Figure 6) in order to suggest a glocally articulated semiotic practice embedded in the print, such as a hyperreal ideology of masculinity, power, nationalism, and victory projected through it. Although Aoringo interpreted the slogan captured on the bottom of the folder—that is, “Sekai wo tsukamou” (Seize the world)—as McDonald’s attempt to dominate the world, she did not seem to develop any critical sensibility in thinking about the semiotic practice. Also, Natsumikan did not photograph the smiley faces of McDonald’s employers and employees (Figure 11) in order to uncover McDonald’s hyperreal ideology of friendliness, togetherness, cooperation, mutual respect, and caring. Although group interviews allowed participants to identify the gap between what Natsumikan’s image implied to them and what they actually experienced at a McDonald’s restaurant, they did not detect how the hyperreal ideology of friendliness produces a fetishism of the consumer and a fetishism of McDonald’s food production process. In a similar vein, although Ichigo’s (Figure 1), Budou’s (Figure 2), and Aoringo’s (Figure 3) images of McDonald’s popular clown mascot, Ronald McDonald, exemplified McDonald’s commodity spectacle circulated through multiple media channels and physical sites, they did not photograph Ronald with the intention of revealing how McDonald’s creates an ideology of fun differently than other restaurants and TV commercials. Furthermore, both Budou, who photographed McDonald’s Golden Arches (Figure 7), and Pineapple, who photographed an

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52 I take up this issue later in this section because although Natsumikan did not take the image to detect a fetishism of the consumer, the female participants’ remarks during the group discussion of the image seemed to point in this direction. Certainly, the female participants did not use the language of the ‘fetishism of the consumer,’ but the participants’ remarks hint at this notion.
information board that lists shops, including McDonald’s, located in a shopping mall food court (Figure 8), did not intend to take the images in order to uncover the omnipresence of McDonald’s in public places as powerful commodity spectacle.

The critically agentic practice of Kenway and Bullen’s concept of the cyberflâneur also involves young people’s production of alternative perspectives on a global consumer-media culture. They reflect on or articulate their critiques of the culture by using available media technologies and combining politics with pleasure (e.g., humour, irony, mimicry, parody, burlesque and transgression) to subvert it. Although the students in my study did not critically observe how McDonald’s corporate practices operate through phantasmagoric advertising and commodity spectacles, they in fact generated unique alternative perspectives on McDonald’s and contemporary fast food cultures by playfully engaging with them in the context of their everyday lives. Importantly, these alternative perspectives reveal emergent forms of critical agency among the participants. Three examples are worthy of consideration.

First, several participants redefined McDonald’s as a ‘transgressive youth space.’ They identified it as a youth space because it is filled with youth practices enjoyed with friends yet distinct from the world of adults. The participants embraced McDonald’s not simply as a place to have cheap meals but as a place of familiarity and intimacy among friends without the authority of adults. For example, Ichigo’s explanation of an image of McDonald’s as a cozy place, where he can go and hang out with friends after school for hours (Figure 16), reveals that he leverages the non-discriminatory environment of a

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McDonald’s restaurant which collapses the differences among social groups and enables anyone to go there. Unlike other fast food restaurant chains, such as Yoshinoya, which are predominantly occupied by adult customers, Ichigo and his friends transform McDonald’s into their own alternative space where they can relax and hang out together. Moreover, they appropriate McDonald’s by defying the norm of having to order items and occupying the restaurant as a youth space for hours. Similarly, Budou’s explanation of an image of his and his friends’ bicycles parked on the sidewalk in front of a McDonald’s restaurant (Figure 17) exemplified young people’s use of McDonald’s as a youth space. It revealed that McDonald’s is part of their route while travelling around the city and that young people or students, who do not own cars, have alternative means of accessing McDonald’s to remake it as a youth space. The bicycles here seemed to represent the symbolic objects with which they distinguish themselves from adults and subvert a status hierarchy.53

Second, different, yet in a similar vein, the students’ very familiarity and comfort with McDonald’s as a youth space allowed students to express a critical understanding of McDonald’s ideology of friendliness. This can be found in the students’ discussion of the ‘forced’ smiles they playfully received from the employees/employers at McDonald’s discussed during the third conversation in Section 3.2.1. This particular practice seemed to exemplify female students’ appropriation of McDonald’s Smile 100 Yen service as a productive resource which they hijacked to execute their playful disruption to contest its false

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53 Although not analyzing young people’s position in society based on Marxian class-analysis, but I am alluding here to Pierre Bourdieu’s (1978) notion of “habitus” as an aesthetic disposition or taste involving thoughts and actions pertaining to individuals’ class position in the social hierarchy.
friendliness. Though unintentionally, the female participants expressed through such playful disruption a sense of disillusionment with a hyperreal ideology offered by McDonald’s corporate practices.

Third, an emergent form of critical understanding was also present in the participants’ differentiation between home cooking and a technologized food setting, such as McDonald’s. This was particularly evident in the male participants’ discussion based on Chicken’s explanation of images of his mother cooking nut cakes with great care and intimacy (Figure 14 & 15). The male participants’ respect for home cooking seemed to exemplify their challenge to McDonald’s technologized food process and routinized work environment, which undermine or erase all the meaning and connection associated with the experience of food from home. Meanwhile, the female participants’ conversation regarding Megumiruku’s images of her hometown and her mother’s unusual lunch (Figure 21 & 22) also revealed an emergent kind of critical understanding of McDonald’s and contemporary fast food cultures. Megumiruku’s explanations of the images of her hometown and the associated story of her mother’s unusual ‘fast food’ lunch ironically suggests that the absence of McDonald’s in her small city in fact helps people to appreciate the city’s distinct food tradition and culinary practices. Similar to Chicken’s, Megumiruku’s images and their contexts were suggestive of promoting alternative food consumption which prizes distinct local food tradition and the real care and intimacy people put into cooking, while rejecting the technologized food process
and routinized work environment characteristic of McDonaldized food production and consumption.\textsuperscript{54}

### 3.5 Conclusion

The eight students used their mobile phone cameras to appropriate resources offered by McDonald’s and reflected on their understanding of fast food cultures in the context of a global consumer-media environment. They worked together with fellow students to understand and explain to each other how McDonald’s fits into their lives with their mobile phone images. My study generated a collaborative environment through group interviews using participants’ mobile phone images. This environment encouraged them to teach and learn from each other based on their distributed, shared, collective, and hybrid expertise and intelligence. However, to be sure, I concede that the environment I generated through the interviews was a constructed research protocol I designed to facilitate the very process of collective meaning-making. Whether or not the students actually experienced the moments of new literacies, especially new ethos stuff of meaning production, could not be justified based on the limited range of students’ meaning production during my study.

On the other hand, the eight participants’ in my study seemed to engage in the critically agentic practices in relation to McDonald’s. Although no student did critically engage in observing McDonald’s corporate practices in the way Kenway and Bullen explain with the concept of the youthful cyberflâneur, they

\textsuperscript{54} The students’ images hinting at such alternative consumption, thus, does not seem to conform to Ritzer’s (2008) polemic concerning the destruction of family meals and a long, leisurely, conversation-filled family dinnertime, which are the characteristics of his notion of “irrationality of rationality” (See footnote #26 in Section 2.2).
did produce unique alternative perspectives on McDonald’s and contemporary fast food culture. Inadvertently however, the participants redefined McDonald’s as a youth space, playfully disrupted McDonald’s ideology of friendliness, and recognized its technologized food process and routinized work by appreciating home cooking as well as particular local food tradition and culinary practices. These unique alternative perspectives specific to the context of their everyday lives can be regarded as emergent forms of critical agency. However, the task of developing and clarifying such emergent forms of youth critical agency is still really to be done. I consider this issue in the conclusion in relation to the role of critical media education. Specifically, I consider how the ‘productive tension’ immanent in the work of the students in my study can be taught and learned.
CONCLUSION: ENVISIONING CRITICAL MEDIA EDUCATION

The aim of this thesis was to explore the emergent critical agencies expressed by eight Japanese high school students who were asked to reflect on their understanding of McDonald’s in the context of a global consumer-media environment. The students’ reflections on their participation in my study during the final meeting provided a productive way to evaluate the study’s strengths and limitations as illustrated in the following discussion:

INTERVIEWER: How did you feel about participating in my study? For example, have your ways of thinking about and using keitai changed in any way?

MEGUMIRUKU: Not really.
BUDOU: Not quite.
EVERYONE: Not really.
INTERVIEWER: How about engaging in the group discussions about everyone’s mobile photos?

MEGUMIRUKU: Well, everyone took very different photos about McDonald’s and had quite different ideas about the photos. I enjoyed listening to everyone’s different ideas.
NATSUMIKAN: Exchanging opinions about photos was fun. The discussions were a good experience. I have never had the kind of discussions I had (in this study) ever since I entered this school.
PINEAPPLE: It was fun to know the differences between everyone’s everyday lives through photos. It was interesting to see everyone’s different ways of thinking about McDonald’s.
AORINGO: There were a lot of surprises during group discussions, especially when I found big differences between my own and everyone else’s ideas about McDonald’s. Unlike a class where we don’t do anything other than listening to our teachers, the discussions with everyone were fun.
BUDOU: It was fun to discover what others thought about McDonald’s and how these ideas were different from mine.
ICHIGO: I guess I became more mature as a person.
CURRY: My perception of fast food and McDonald’s has changed because of everyone’s images and opinions.
CHICKEN: As I saw everyone’s photos, I felt that everyone goes to McDonald’s more often than I do.
What became especially evident from this discussion was the students’ enjoyment of the informal space of learning in which they could share their own ideas and encounter new and different perspectives of fellow students through their mobile photos.

I believe that the ‘student-/learner-centred perspective’ adopted by my study triggered this student enjoyment. This perspective corresponds to Buckingham’s (2003) “new paradigm” in media education, which aims to encourage students to interpret and produce their own media based on their already existing tastes and pleasures without instructional imperatives from their teachers. Media production plays an important role in this paradigm because students’ creative work offers them a means to explore and reflect upon their changing positions in contemporary media culture. The students in my study produced their own photos using accustomed keitai cameras, which enabled them to engage in post-typographic forms of textual production. They used their own everyday sociocultural contexts as spaces to express their understanding of McDonald’s. Thus, the students’ literacy or meaning production in relation to McDonald’s was embedded in the contexts of their own everyday social, cultural, economic, political and historical practices (Lankshear & Knobel, 55)

Following Buckingham (2003), I make a general distinction between “media education” and “media literacy” as follows: the former refers to “the process of teaching and learning about media,” whereas the latter refers to “the outcome—the knowledge and skills learners acquire” (p. 4). Buckingham (2003) also emphasizes that media education is specifically concerned with “teaching and learning about the media,” not “teaching through or with the media” (p. 4, original emphasis). The term ‘media’ here refers not only to the whole range of modern mass and postmodern digital communications media but also to the media texts intertextually circulated through these communications media platforms.
The students also actively engaged in the peer-to-peer teaching and learning during group interviews to reflect upon McDonald’s and contemporary global fast food culture. Throughout the study, my role as a researcher/educator/adult was minimized to such an extent that I acted largely as a passive observer of the students’ activities or at best a facilitator of their group discussions.

While the strength of my study concerned student-/learner-centred interests, the limitation, however, was the very issue I have just raised—that is, my own role throughout the study. To be sure, I argue, however, that the issue of my role was crucial in developing and clarifying the emergent forms of critical youth agency among the eight students. In the student-/learner-centred approach grounded in Buckingham’s new paradigm of media education, there is no clear indication of the ‘critical’ role of an educator. He emphasizes that in the new paradigm, the “critical” analyses of media texts are to be accomplished through a “process of dialogue.” In such a dialogue, “students can reflect on their own activity both as ‘readers’ and as ‘writers’ of media texts, and understand the broader social and economic factors that are in play” (Buckingham, 2003, p. 14). He adds that this approach is grounded in an educator’s attempt to “prepare”

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56 With this respect, I contend that my study contests the traditional view of literacy grounded in the “autonomous model” criticized by Street (1995) (see Section 1.2.1). Following Laura Pinto et al (2007), my study also contests the reductive and functional conception of literacy often enacted through federal and provincial high-stakes literacy testing programs, such as the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) introduced in 2000 in the province of Ontario, Canada, the infamous No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act passed in 2001 in the US, and even the recent National Achievement Test (NAT) reintroduced in 2007 in Japan after 43 years of absence. Moreover, my study also contest the justification of the narrowly defined conceptions of literacy materialized in the standardized literacy testing, which is often circulated through media, particularly print news media. As Pinto et al (2007) and Michelle Stack (2006) argue, the mainstream print news media’s superficial coverage of standardized literacy testing, such as OSSLT and PISA, undemocratically shapes public perception about literacy associated with the narrowly defined one-size-fits-all conception by shutting down any alternative conception and controversy around it.
students to understand and participate in the media culture that surrounds them, rather than to “protect” them from the hidden ideologies of the media. In the latter approach, a teacher is defined as a “critical vanguard” capable of helping students liberate themselves from being “mystified” by the false pleasures and illusions of the media.57

Students’ own creative work was at the heart of my study. The process of discussion was integrated into the study in order to encourage the eight participants to reflect on their own media texts captured by their mobile cameras. As my study’s findings suggest (despite the small sampling population and the need for caution before drawing generalizations from them), while none of the participants engaged in critically observing McDonald’s corporate practices in the way Kenway and Bullen explain with the concept of the youthful cyberflâneur, the participants inadvertently generated unique alternative perspectives on McDonald’s and contemporary fast food cultures specific to their everyday lives. I regarded such unique alternative perspectives as emergent forms of critical agency. However, such emergent forms of critical agency remains a mystery. This is because I avoided “demythologizing” (Buckingham, 2003) the false pleasures and illusions immanent in the media texts the participants provided through photos and discussions. I did not make such an attempt because I wanted to avoid “political evangelism”—that is, a presumption that a teacher treats his/her students as the passive victims of

57 Buckingham (2003) notes that one of the proponents of the protectionist approaches is Len Masterman. Masterman (1983) puts forward a critical interpretative skill called “deconstruction” through which one can break through the surfaces of visual images represented in the media and to reverse the unilateral sender-receiver relation of communication characteristic of mass media, such as television.
negative media effects, while becoming the key to liberation by demystifying the effects and revealing the “truth” to them (Buckingham, 1998, p. 10-11).

To be sure, it was precisely my role as an adult researcher/teacher/educator that became crucial for developing students’ capacity to reflect on the emergent forms of critical agency evident through their alternative perspectives. Nonetheless, Carmen Luke (1997) provides a starting point from which I think it productive to rethink about my role in the study. She writes:

The point is that a critical cultural and social literacy, one that includes a critical understanding of media texts, industries, and the production of meaning, must balance discourse critique with giving students opportunities for alternative readings and text productions. Such alternative should not rely solely on the teacher’s definition of what is appropriate but, rather, should fit into a negotiated framework of acceptable limits within which students’ definitions of “alternatives” can find an expressive space (Luke, 1997, p. 41).

Following Luke, I concede that the eight participants’ alternative perspectives did not develop into a negotiated framework with my understanding of the problematic effects of McDonald’s and contemporary fast food culture. This is because I abrogated my authority as an adult researcher and never shared with the participants my predilections concerning the problematic effects.

I contend that if Buckingham (2003) argues that “[students’] creative production can be a means of generating new and more profound critical insights” (p. 122; my emphasis), this requires a teacher’s efforts to orient them toward the emergent forms of critical agency they inadvertently addressed through their work. In search of “the critical possibilities” immanent in students’ work, Poyntz (2006) argues that they exist “at the point of a productive tension” (p. 171). He argues:
[The tension exists] between self-expression and the way this self-expression brings young people into relationships with dominant social and political formations. It is not enough, in other words, to suggest that the critical moment in youth produced work is registered in the ways these productions allow new, young voices to flourish. This is of course vital; but if media educators are to take full advantage of the opportunities this work affords for developing young people as critical, sophisticated and active citizens, it is also crucial that students learn to identify how their productions inadvertently challenge and engage with power” (p. 171).

As Poyntz (2006) adds, the productive tension arises as a function of a synthesis between the teacher’s desire to ‘protect’ his/her students from media’s potentially negative influences and how students are ‘prepared’ to participate in a media saturated society (Poyntz, 2006).

To be sure, I argue that the emergent forms of critical agency among the eight participants in my study could have been treated as a productive tension. The students’ work inadvertently engaged the ‘power relations’ operating in the midst of their lives in relation to McDonald’s and contemporary fast food culture. They did so by redefining McDonald’s as a youth space, by playfully disrupting its ideology of friendliness, by recognizing the differences between its technologized food process and routinized work, and by appreciating home cooking as well as local food tradition and culinary practices. I could have taken a more active role in encouraging them to reflect on their challenge and engagement with the very power relations the students addressed.

If media education refers to “the process of teaching and learning about media” through which students/young people become “media literate” by acquiring knowledge and skills (Buckingham, 2003, p. 4), it is about creating democratic space in which both pride in a teacher’s and his/her students’ work
and critique is facilitated. This space needs to be ‘collaborative,’ and a teacher must engage “in a search (with students) for pedagogical strategies aimed at promoting the democratizing of interpretation as well as the production of media” (Stack & Kelly, 2006). The ‘critical media education’ generating this collaborative space was what my study failed to practice but is what my future studies will endeavour to achieve.
REFERENCE LIST


APPENDIX 1: ETHICS APPROVAL LETTERS

The research ethics protocol prescribed and approved by the Simon Fraser University Office of Research Ethics for this project confirmed that the right to privacy of the individuals who appear in the photos would not be violated simply by the taking of the pictures. The approved research ethics protocol confirmed that I, as the principal investigator, would ensure that all individual faces would be blurred out if and when the images are shown in public as part of the presentation of research related to this project at academic conferences or in other public forums.
March 2, 2009

Dear Masayuki:

Re: New literacies, Japanese youth, and popular fast food culture: Exploring critical youth practices - Appl. #: 30593

I am pleased to inform you that the above referenced Request for Ethical Approval of Research has been approved on behalf of the Research Ethics Board. This approval is in effect until the end date February 24, 2012, or only during the period in which you are a registered SFU student.

The Office of Research Ethics must be notified of any changes in the approved protocol. Request for amendments to the protocol may be requested by email to dore@sfu.ca. In all correspondence relating to this application, please reference the application number shown on this letter and all email.

Your application has been categorized as “minimal risk” and approved by the Director, Office of Research Ethics, on behalf of the Research Ethics Board in accordance with University policy R.20.01, http://www.sfu.ca/policies/research/r20-01.htm. The Board reviews and may amend decisions or subsequent amendments made independently by the Director, Chair or Deputy Chair at its regular monthly meetings.

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“Minimal risk” occurs when potential participants can reasonably be expected to regard the probability and magnitude of possible harms incurred by participating in the research to be no greater than those encountered by the participant in those aspects of his or her everyday life that relate to the research.

Please note that it is the responsibility of the researcher, or the responsibility of the Student Supervisor if the researcher is a graduate student or undergraduate student, to maintain written or other forms of documented consent for a period of 1 year after the research has been completed.

If there is an adverse event, the principal investigator must notify the Office of Research Ethics within five (5) days. An Adverse Events form is available electronically by contacting dore@sfu.ca.

All correspondence with regards to this application will be sent to your SFU email address.

Please notify the Office of Research Ethics at dore@sfu.ca once you have completed the data collection portion of your project so that we can close this file.

Best wishes for success in this research.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Dr. Hal Weinberg, Director
Office of Research Ethics

c: Dr. Stuart Poyntz, Supervisor

/juny
October 12, 2010

Masayuki Iwase
Graduate Student
School of Communication
Simon Fraser University

Dear Masayuki:

Re: New literacies, Japanese youth, and global fast food culture: Exploring youth critical agencies
- Appl. #39593
Title Change

In response to your request, I am pleased to approve, on behalf of the Research Ethics Board, the title change amendment in the research protocol of the above referenced Request for Ethical Approval of Research originally approved on February 24, 2009.

Please note that the data collection for this project is complete and the file has been closed. This title change is for the same research project that was approved on February 24, 2009.

If there is an adverse event, the principal investigator must notify the Office of Research Ethics within five (5) days. An Adverse Events form is available electronically by contacting dore@sfu.ca.

All correspondence with regards to this application will be sent to your SFU email address.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Dr. Hal Weinberg, Director
Office of Research Ethics

c: Dr. Stuart Poyntz, Supervisor

/jmy
APPENDIX 2: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER FOR PARTICIPANTS

Participants were each given the letter, shown on the following pages, as required under the research ethics protocol prescribed and approved by the Simon Fraser University Office of Research Ethics for this project. No English version of the letter was used.

In the letter, the participants understood and agreed that the research materials and data, including their mobile phone images, would be used as part of this thesis and for the publication of articles in academic journals and presentations at international conferences.
前書

研究調査参加の同意に関して
—高校生の方へ—

はじめまして。カナダサイモンフレーザー大学大学院コミュニケーション研究科
修士課程に在籍しています岩橋正幸です。現在私は修士論文の研究プロジェクト
（タイトル：日本の若者とニューリテラシー：ファストフードを事例とした批
判的実践の追求）を行っています。プロジェクトの一環として、私は高校生に調
査参加のお願いをしています。まず、1～3ページに記された調査の内容を理解
していただき、調査への参加を希望する方は4～5ページの同意書に署名をお願
い致します。

調査について

調査は誰が行っているの？
• 研究者は私岩橋正幸です。この調査はまた、私の指導教授であるスチュアー
ト・ポインツ（Dr. Stuart Poyntz）博士（カナダ・サイモンフレーザー大学大学院
コミュニケーション研究科助教授）が監督しています。

調査の目的は何？
• 調査の目的は主に次の2つです。
  1. 高校生が携帯電話のカメラ・ビデオ機能を使い、どのように自分の食生活、
     またファストフードを表現するかを調査すること。
  2. 高校生が携帯電話などのモバイル・コミュニケーション技術を活用してど
     のよう若者文化を作り出すかを調査すること

調査はいつ、どこで、どのように行われるの？
• 調査は2009年（平成21年）3月17日から4月31日まで行われます。
  調査は学校内または学校外で行います。調査の内容として主に次の3つの活
  動を予定しています。
  1. 食生活、そしてファストフードについてのイメージを、あなた独自の視点
     から、携帯電話のカメラ・ビデオ機能を使い撮影していただきます。
  2. 撮影したイメージを研究者にEメールなどで送信していただきます。
  3. 撮影したイメージについてディスカッションを行うため、学校内または学
     校外で研究者と個別またはグループでのインタビューに参加していただき
     ます。
インタビューについての説明

調査期間中、合計4〜5回のインタビューを予定しています。インタビューは、研究者と個別で行う場合と、他の高校生も交えたグループで行う場合もあります。各インタビューはおよそ1時間半です。すべてのインタビューは研究者が行う分析と解釈の目的で録音されます。最初と最後のインタビューを除き、その他のインタビューのおわりに研究者が次のインタビューへ向けか、あるテーマ（食生活やファストフードなど）を提示します。ここではあなたが携帯電話のカメラやビデオを使い、そのテーマに関するイメージを撮影し、研究者に送信します。インタビューではあなたが撮影したイメージをもとに様々なディスカッションを行います。

調査に参加することに危険性は伴うの？

• この調査は、身体的または精神的な苦痛や危険をも伴いません。また、あなたやあなたの家族のプライバシーの侵害となるようなことは一切ありません。調査への参加はあなたの自由意志に基づいているため、あなたは調査期間中にいつでも参加を止められます。また、この調査への参加・不参加は学校での成績に一切影響はありません。

調査に参加することで良いことはあるの？

• あなたにとって
  o 携帯電話のカメラやビデオを使いあなたが食生活やファストフードについてイメージを撮影することは、携帯電話を単なる機械として見ることよりもむしろ面白いかミュージックやテクニック的な表現、また独自の文化を作り出すことに役立つ道具だということが理解できるようになるでしょう。また、インタビューであなた自身と他の高校生が撮影したイメージについてディスカッションをすることで、イメージを様々な角度から分析し解釈することができ、知識の向上につながります。

• 研究者にとって
  o 調査結果は、今後の日本の若者が社会的に文化的にどのようにモバイルコミュニケーション技術をいかに把握するのかを把握するのにも役立ちます。また、この調査はコミュニケーション学や教育学という分野における研究者にとっても、変わりゆくメディア環境の中で若者が何を経験しているかを把握するのに役立ちます。このことはまた、今後の学校教育のあり方や、若者の学校外での経験と学校教育との関係、そして地域プログラムの発展を考える上でも役立ちます。

調査データはどのように管理されるの？

• あなたの氏名、年齢、住所、連絡先などの個人情報が第三者に明かされることは一切ありません。
研究報告の際、本名は明かされるの？
• 調査データを収集する際、あらかじめ本名の代わりにあなたに仮名が付けら
れます。今後学術研究者や研究協議会の場で調査結果が報告される場合には、この
仮名が用いられます。

調査データは今後どのように利用されるの？
• イメージやインタビューの記録などの調査データは特に、研究者本人の修士
論文のための分析および裁判の目的以外で公開されることはありません。データは日本国内外で出版される学術論文、そして学術協議会の場でのみ公
開されます。

研究終了後、調査結果の報告はしてもらえるの？
• 研究終了後、希望に応じて郵送で研究者から研究調査の要旨を受け取ることができます。研究者の連絡先は以下の通りです。
  □ 研究者：岩瀬正幸
  □ 連絡先：
  • カナダ
  • 日本

研究者または研究自体に何か心配や不満がある場合、誰に連絡を取ればいいか？
• 担当者：ハル・ウェインバーグ（Dr. Hal Weinberg）
同意書
高校生の方へ

下記の内容を理解した上、同意書に署名してください。署名はあなたが研究調査の本質を理解し、記録として前書きを受け取ったことを記します。

- 私は、研究調査の主な目的が1）高校生が携帯電話のカメラ・ビデオ機能を使い、どのように自分の食生活、またファストフードを表現するかを調査すること、2）高校生が携帯電話などのモバイルコミュニケーション技術を活用してどのような若者文化を作り出すかを調査すること、の二つであることを理解しました。

- 私は、すべてのインタビューが研究者が行う分析と翻訳の目的で録音されるることを理解しました。

- 私は、撮影したイメージやインタビュー記録などの調査データは、今後研究者本人の修士論文のための分析および翻訳の目的、そして日本国内外での学術研究と学術機会以外の場で一切公開されないこと理解しました。

- 私は、研究者が研究成果を学術論文や学術機会の場で発表する際、本名の代わりに仮名が用いられることを理解しました。

- 私は、調査への参加は私の自由意志に基づいているため、私は調査期間中いつでも参加を止められること、また、この調査への参加・不参加は学校での成績に一切影響がないことを理解しました。

- 私は、この調査が身体的または精神的苦痛や危険を一切伴わないことを理解しました。

したがって、

[ ] 私は、この研究調査に参加することに同意します。
[ ] 私は、この研究調査に参加することに不同意します。
研究調査への参加に同意した方は、以下の署名、日付、氏名、連絡先をそれぞれ記入してください。

署名

日付

氏名

連絡先

電話番号（携帯）

電話番号（自宅）

Eメールアドレス

コードナンバー
ご協力どうもありがとうございました。