Exploratory Research on Social Media and Digital Writing : Qualitative Interview of Japanese College Students

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Abstract

This exploratory study examined how indigenous social media relates to college students' peer interaction and cultural involvement toward digital writing on social networking services (SNSs) in Japan. A qualitative research design was adopted that involved semi-structured in-depth interviews with eight university students on social media participation to investigate the role new technologies play in the establishment of peer connection practices. It was found that the respondents employed SNSs to connect with friends and to establish a sense of belonging by using a "connected presence" strategy. A thin but perpetual sense of membership belonging was developed mainly through silent online participation behavior which enhanced transient friendships. In addition, connected presence strategies that contribute to humorous content and emoticons were analyzed and it was found that social media facilitated the creation of easy-going online identities, which defuses tension, discomfort, or conflict. Finally, it was found that cultural traits such as a "psychological status of shame" and an "extreme sense of privacy protection" could have an impact on the digital writing of young people.

1. Introduction and Research Questions

As increasingly more people make use of the Internet, social media is becoming an indispensable part of everyday life. Social media refers to the Internet-based applications that allow people to create and exchange content using digital network technologies (Boyd & Ellison 2008). In the US, Facebook is the dominant social media, with 93% of teen social media users having an account, according to a 2012 report (Lenhart 2012). There were approximately 168 million Facebook users in the United States and 1 billion users worldwide as of October 2012 (Na et al. 2014).

Further, MIC[1] reported that 57.1% of the Japanese used social media and the three main social media platforms were LINE[2], Twitter, and Facebook. More than 70% of adolescents in Japan are engaged in one of these social media, with LINE, an indigenous social media, becoming a central part of social interaction for Japanese digital natives, with more than 80% of teenager participating. The digital natives are the generation born after the general introduction of digital technologies who have grown up immersed in and familiar with these technologies (Seo et al. 2013). More than 50% of the Japanese younger generation use Twitter, which is ranked as the second most popular social media in Japan. Almost 40% of Japanese use Facebook, but this is not as popular in the younger generation in Japan (ICT lab 2014[3]).

Even though the most popular SNSs are different in each country, social media plays a crucial role in the lives of the networked younger generation in Japan. Digital media, such as mobile phones or social media, is a connectivity technology that allows users to connect with their families and friends *at all times* (Campbell 2006). While the specific technologies differ, collectively they provide users with a space to hang out with friends. When examining the associations between social media and interpersonal networks, social media has been found to generally support both the maintenance of existing social ties and the formation of new connections. Much of the early research on online communities assumed that the individuals using these systems would be connecting with others outside their pre-existing social groups, as opposed to those within their shared geography (Wellman et al. 1996). Although this early work acknowledged the ways in which offline and online networks blend into one another, the assumed online to offline directionality may not apply to today's SNSs, which are structured to both articulate existing connections and enable the creation of new connections. Hampton and Wellman suggested that information technology such as social media may enhance place-based communities and facilitate the generation of social capital (Hampton 2002; Hampton and Wellman 2003). In this regard, it can be assumed that by utilizing social media, college students facilitate their relationships with friends they frequently meet on campus.

Social Media and "Connected Presence" for Online Friendship

The primary goal of the present research is to examine how newly diffused communication tools, such as social media, are used by college students who have just started their life in a university. In particular, how they initiate and manage new relationships with their friends using social media in everyday life is examined.

What kind of communication takes place on

social media and how are friendships made at the campus?

From the results of previous research, most young people began their days by checking messages on SNSs and spent the entire day on them or a connected/online world (Yang 2014). This form of existence is known as "connected presence", a concept presented by Licoppe (2004) in his research on mobile communications. Licoppe asserted that compared with landline phones, mobile communication tools, such as SMS mediated interpersonal interactions, and were configured to maintain links over distance through a "continuous" presence.

This research also investigates the significant development of "frequent, short digital writing" (Licoppe 2004) on platforms such as Twitter or LINE. These short writings allow or enable people to maintain connections with friends and are more marked among young users.

Ling (2004) demonstrated that mobile phone innovations have dramatically changed friendships and practices for young people. Young people are able to contact their friends more rapidly, economically and simply; further, they can use messaging to share information enabling them to develop and maintain strong peer networks.

However, Bauman (2003) argued that connectivity technology has fragmented friendships, leading to superficial connections. Further, Yang (2014), on the basis of an examination of Taiwanese young peoples' use of Facebook, asserted that connectivity technology has become a type of filter for screening or categorizing friends and not for deepening or integrating friendships Bauman also asserted that categorizing friends into various types has become a method for managing risks in intimate

relationships and for controlling intimacy (Yang 2014).

The hypothesis for the attenuation of relationships in the younger generation discussed above because of new connectivity technology, such as mobile phones, has also been discussed in Japan with the emergence of mobile phone in the late 90s. Previous research has shown that the friendships for Japan's younger generation have become wider but thinner (Ohira 1995; Matsu 1990). However, several researchers such as Hashimoto (1998), Matsuda (2000), Tsuji (1999), and Asano (1999) strongly negate this finding as no empirical studies have been conducted that support this claim. These interpretations may have been distorted by cohort effects, sampling bias, and mass media effect (Hashimoto 1998; Matsuda 2000). Matsuda (2000) also demonstrated that urbanization increases the number of possible contacts, and hence, it promotes selective relationship formation. Moreover, she asserted that mobile technology is not a factor in the attenuation of human relationships in the youth.

On the basis of these prior studies, the following question is proposed herein:

RQ1: How is digital writing by the younger generation employed to maintain their friendships through social media and how social media can affect their relationships?

Association of Cultural factors and written communication on Social Media

When discussing the attenuation of friendship hypothesis, it is necessary to consider the various meanings of friendship across cultures (Adams & Plaut 2003). Castells (2009) gave a magnificent insight on the relationship between technologies and culture from a global perspective: "there is a

youth culture that finds in mobile communication an adequate form of expression and reinforcement. All technologies diffuse only to the extent that they resonate with pre-existing social structures and cultural values"

Namely, if youth culture is to be discussed, it is necessary to consider the culture and social practices embedded in young people's everyday life.

Previous research conducted in an Asian context suggests that cultural differences might be a factor in the significant behavioral differences in computer- mediated communication tool use between South Korea and Japan. For example, the differences between Japanese and South Korean communication behavior with respect to BBS, as demonstrated in previously reported surveys demonstrated these differences. More than 70% of Korean university students surveyed in 2008 accessed BBS at least once a day[4]. Further, 25.1% of those who regularly accessed bulletin boards (BBS) wrote on these boards, while only 3.1% claimed that they "never write on bulletin board." (Kim 2003). However, in comparison, the Japanese use of communication tools, such as BBS and community sites, appears to be more restrained. Research has indicated that all but a very small minority of users on these sites initiate a two-way communication and were "read only" users (Kim 2003). Analysis of the use habits of the registered members of a psychological forum revealed that 83% had never written anything on the site even one year after it was established. Of those who had written, two thirds had done so three times or less[5]. Therefore, the frequency of posting on BBS and the motivation for engaging with the site are different. According to a previous study, the Japanese use BBS for "information exchange,"

while the other categories of motivation, such as to debate issues, to form interpersonal relations, and to attract other people's attention to their own existence (self-presentation), are insignificant in comparison. In South Korea, in contrast, BBS are frequently used as a medium for debate and the exchange of opinions on numerous matters of public interest, including political and economic issues of the day (Kim 2003). Accordingly, the use of a tool is closely associated with the cultural and social perception (Gibson 1979) of that tool, thus cultural and social backgrounds have a distinct effect on the engagement with and the participation in the communication tools. Each culture, therefore, is likely to have its own distinctive associated behaviors, usage patterns, and effects. Moreover, when investigating these cultural differences, *communication styles* and the manner in which interpersonal relations are conducted must also be considered as potential causal factors.

For example, communication within the in-group *(uchi)* is conducted differently from communication with those outside *(soto)* (Nakane 1967). In addition, there is a tendency to avoid publicizing personal information in Japan (Kim 2010). This reflects the mentality of "not wanting to be seen", and together with the emphasis on privacy protection in the mass media, has led to the creation of a distinctive Japanese Internet culture. In this study, the possible effects of such cultural factors on the contribution behavior toward such social media are investigated. On the basis of previous studies, the following question is proposed:

RQ2: How do the cultural and social differences in communication styles affect the ways in which people participate in digital writing on social

media?

While it is recognized that different social media interfaces have various communicative functions, this paper mainly focuses on how the interpersonal functions are used to form and maintain ties, rather than on categorizing the functions according to the media traits. In addition, the social and cultural characteristics of digital writing by the Japanese youth are analyzed in terms of their participative behavior on the Internet. This study also attempts to identify some of the socio–psychological factors at play in social media.

2. Method

Qualitative approach is usually adapted not only to clarify the dyadic or triadic causal effect among factors but also to acquire the tentative appreciation and/or speculation by considering participants' social and cultural proposition.

In this study, for preliminary investigation for the effect that social media has on college students' connectivity and friendships, and to examine their daily interactions by considering their social practices and the culture, a semi-conducted and in-depth interview method was adopted. A purposive sampling method was used and significant sampling variations such as gender, economic background, and life style were considered. First year students from a university located in a specific city who claimed to have experiences with friendship were recruited.

A total of 8 respondents were examined, four females and four males. In addition, all students belonged to certain clubs or circles[6]. Almost all participants used LINE and Twitter but and only

three had a Facebook page. Each student was interviewed several times. With their consent, each interview session was recorded. The content of the interviews was then transcribed and combined with field notes for data analysis. A thematic analysis was conducted in this study by thoroughly and repeatedly examining data to identify frequently mentioned topics that were closely related to the interviewee's life and the social and cultural effects on their digital writing. The experiential data was then analyzed to obtain answers to the research questions.

Table1. The detail of Participants

	Sex	No.of member to reside	Age	SNS	Interview Date
A	m	1(single)	19	T/L/FB	Dec.5.2014
B	m	2(with mother)	18	T/L/FB	Dec.8.2014
C	m	4(With family)	20	T/L	Dec.8.2014
D	m	3(With family)	20	T/L	Dec.15.2014
E	f	5(With family)	19	T/L/FB	Dec.15.2014
F	f	1(single)	19	T/L	Dec.15.2014
G	f	4(With family)	19	T/L/FB	Dec.15.2014
H	f	5(With family)	19	T/L	Dec.15.2014

*T:Twitter, L:LINE, FB:Facebook

3. Findings and Discussion

The participants in this study were so called digital natives who had experienced the evolution of digital technology. They had graduated from high school around eight months ago and were making great efforts to adapt themselves to a new environment and to make new friends.

The three major activities for the Japanese university students were identified: attending classes, participating in club activities, and/or working at part-time jobs. While busy doing these three activities almost every day, they were also devoting themselves to socializing using their smartphones. It is already well known that more than half of social media users access SNSs

using a Smartphone (MIC 2014).

They needed to initialize interpersonal relationships for not only useful reasons but also for psychological stability. The socializing was continuous but also appeared to be extremely difficult to deal with. Although they had different perspectives on the media usage and friendship, the central focus of their life was their study, club activities, and/or part-time jobs. When examining these experiences and the relationship interactions during their lives on the campus, these experiences and interactions must be considered within their life context and social landscape to better understand their emotional experiences and relationship practices (Yang 2014).

Effect of Social Media on the student's connection with friends and on establishing a sense of belonging

Participants did not make phone calls but spent most of their time online on their smart phones except when studying or involved in club activities. All participants expressed a desire to exercise their will power to control the use of their smartphone or the time spent engaging in social media.

All respondents used LINE and were involved in two types of combinations: individual chatting and group chatting. When asked how many LINE groups they were engaged in, participant A had joined 34 groups on LINE but was actively involved in only 5 of these. The other participants had also joined tens of groups on LINE. However, further questioning revealed that few interacted regularly with more than five. Further, their individual chats on LINE also did not exceed with five people.

LINE group chatting potentially satisfied the students' need of belonging but the number of members participating in each group varied. For example, most students generally belonged to groups from the same department or those associated with their club activities. In addition, other small groups were often offshoots from the mother group to fulfill the participants' individual purpose.

Group chatting involved scheduling and the announcement of various kinds of events and activities. There were usually core member who gave announcements in the chat group on LINE, and there was no useless chatter.

Thin but perpetual sense of belonging to membership with silent participation

Most participants seemed quite satisfied with being a group member on LINE to find about the latest class activities without needing to talk. For example, even student D who was an outgoing person did not initiate any dialogue on LINE group chatting. Participants felt connected to the other people through the continual flow of small communicative acts. As is well known to LINE users, LINE offers a read/unread function to mark the state of a message. If marked as "Read *(Kidoku)*" this indicates a "silent participation". As participant, D stressed below:

D: I don't and can't speak in group chat to all classmates. And I don't know who created the group. But, the "read *(Kidoku)*" number soon becomes 20, 30, 40, so it seems surely to be reliable.

Female participants, such as F and G, in particular, used group chat on LINE extensively. Even though they did not voluntarily post announcements and just "lurked (silent

participation),” they enjoyed the sense of belonging to a specific group.

F: Captain or the person in charge of the drinking party, or a manager, informs everyone of something there annually. But we only read it and then it's over.

G: There is a group on LINE of all the students in the same department. It is used for business contacts. We don't have any class monitor so everyone feels free to speak there when he or she notices something, such as who passed the exam, and if “Everyone passed the exam”, sometimes they send photos. Everyone is reading it. But I don't write there.

“Silent participation” or interposing more visibly between people is another form of “connected presence,” because participants fear they would be isolated from others and unable to “catch up” with events in the outside world. The social implication of the “connected presence” of social media can be defined not as communication but as small expressive gestures between members.

This “silent participation” tendency was also found on Twitter. Most participants did not focus on or were not enthusiastic about commenting on Twitter and they typically only read other people's latest status posts and checked what others were doing. Nor did respondents follow celebrity twitter feeds and rarely posted social or political issues.

G: I read Twitter everyday but basically don't post on it. I read the timeline, see others' feelings and read what they are doing. I don't follow celebrities; I just want to know how my friends are doing. We share and respond, and say “happy birthday” to each other.

No participant checked or tweeted regarding social issues or news. Consequently, they were reluctant to post, reply, or retweet serious or political opinions on Twitter. They were more likely to evade heavy or negative topics like social issues or depressing feelings and troubles on social media. When they encountered excessive demands from others, social media enabled the participants to conceal their true feelings and maintain their calm. The characteristics of the “connected presence” also allowed them to express only pleasant or positive information, as highlighted by B:

B: An intense environment is the most troublesome. For example, I am always careful to avoid embarrassing situations like saying something that makes others speechless. I don't talk seriously on Twitter. I use it to write something light and insignificant, such as “I just watched a speech of Suga-san on TV, and what a weak-willed person he is.” That's all.

Sharing amusing content to enhance emotional connection

Young participants show their feelings by sharing humorous content and making other people laugh. By making friends happy and finding common points to laugh about, they feel relaxed and fulfilled with their friendships when using social media.

E: If someone likes my post, I would be very happy. It means that someone is definitely looking at my post! I feel very happy. I don't know the way to make people like my posts. There are people who are good at it. They can tell something funny

and get laughs.

Participants shared humorous content because it made them seem to be an open minded person worth connecting to. Further, they wanted the audience to appreciate their sense of humor. Most respondents shared humorous movies or pictures on social media. Female participant, F, stated the following:

F: Basically, I login to an account that has my actual friends. I use the accounts when I am free. I absolutely post once every day about something that happened on that day, or about some funny guy on the train. I want to tell interesting stories to everybody. If I get a response like "it's interesting!" I am very happy because it means it is interesting not only to me but also to others. I feel satisfied with providing funny stuff that can make others laugh.

Participants were known to avoid in-depth discussion and preferred to maintain thin interpersonal relationships with friends on campus. From previous studies on the younger generation's interpersonal bonds, Matsui (1990) found that compared to the past, young people did not want to maintain deep friendships but wished to associate in a segmented way (Matsui 1990). For example, F commented that she did not want to reveal her hobbies even to intimate college friends without a specific reason and did not seem have any feelings of guilt about hiding this information or not revealing all her feelings, as she said.

F: Actually, I don't talk about the bands I favor with my friends. I never want to expose myself with intimate people from the same department.

I don't want to show my interests to them. When I went to a concert, and they asked where I went and I say, "it's secret"…and because I am busy with a part-time job and club activities, I don't have much time to check LINE. I read it after my job and club, but mostly the talk has already finished. It is a little disappointing to see them talking happily (without me). A little while ago, the other 4 people went out while I was attending a course (because I take a different course), and they seemed to be having a great time. Then they uploaded a picture to group. I thought "why did they upload it here?" but still, I wrote "You looked happy". I felt lonely about this.

Online relationships provide and satisfy friendship needs without requiring the effort of real world friendships. In the past, the characteristics of a good friend included trust, honesty, and loyalty (McLeod 2002). Students experience uncertainty regarding the maintenance and selection of friendships because of the many interactive characteristics of digital networks and their busy lifestyles. As Yang mentioned, connectivity technology has caused student friendships and interpersonal relations to become random and flexible. Loyalty exists in a stable and continuous in-depth association between people. In addition, because these thin-level interactions are "frictionless," they provide a happy, satisfactory type of relationship (Yang 2014).

The individual LINE messenger was found to be used as a supplement to face-to-face interactions between people who were already acquainted. Friendship in the past has been defined as to "perceive and sympathize with another's feeling (*Sassuru*)", but research has shown that this has changed to do not go in-depth

of each other's feeling (*Tachiiranai*)" (Ohira 1995). This assumption is based on the "hypothesis of attenuation of interpersonal relations in the youth" in Japan. Evidence for this claim was provided by the student interviews, as can be seen in the statements below.

A: If I see something negative or something not very good on Twitter, I just leave it alone and don't touch it. For example, if I saw my friend post "I had a hard time...", I would think that maybe something had happened to him or her. But I would not reply to it.

C: I don't unburden my problems on LINE. If I want to talk about them, I'd like to talk face to face. I don't like being misconstrued.

Current digital natives were found to "avoid intruding into other peoples lives." In addition, they adopted "emoticons" as a resource to ease friction on social media. In other words, emoticons were not only used to express their genuine feelings or emotions but also functioned as "emotional lubricants" to manipulate and control their authentic "negative" emotions so as not to hurt or offend others' feelings.

A: My friend once sent me a picture and said it was interesting. I really didn't think so, but I had to say something about it. So I just sent him an emoticon displaying "very interesting!" to "deceive" him…Rather than cheating, it is somewhat troublesome. If I say "it isn't fascinating", the exchange of dialogue will continue which is very troublesome. So instead of saying, I finish and run away from the chat by using an emoticon.

C: It's not so good to speak to new friends at college with a cold attitude, so I usually use Emoji[7]. I can speak to people with a long friendship curtly but intimately. But I can't talk curtly to friends who I haven't spoken to since over half a year.

F: If we get along well with each other, it's okay to talk casually. I use Emoji when I talk to someone I am not familiar with.

Interestingly, emoticons are more frequently used for superficial friends/acquaintances. A possible explanation might that campus friends do not know each other for a very long time as they had only recently met, and they have to get along with each other for four years; therefore, they tend to use emoticons to lighten the atmosphere.

In addition, from the interviews, it became apparent that gender came into play when using emoticons. G explained that he used Emoji according to the recipient's gender.

G: I feel that, I don't need to pay attention when I talk with a man on LINE. I don't need to use Emoji; it's okay to use just words with guys… However, I have to pay attention when I talk with a girl.

Digital Writing Reluctance and Shame (Haji) Culture

C, a somewhat reserved person, started using Twitter when he entered a university but quit 3 months after. He explained his reason below.

C: I feel ashamed. It is alright to post something about events related to other people, but when it comes to my history or what was happening to

me, I had no idea how I should deal with it on Twitter. And...I have had interactions with someone on Twitter, but this ended because of my curt responses. I don't like leaving my footprints--interactions on others on Twitter as my correspondence is revealed. I hate it. It's better to use LINE. I don't understand why it has to be done on Twitter.

C gave three reasons why he quit Twitter. Firstly, he felt pressure to write about himself while being conscious of the attention of others. Secondly, he was anxious and embarrassed to have dialogues without any visual social cues such as nonverbal expressions. He mentioned that he sometimes even deliberately cut off the interactive communication. Lastly, he felt psychological pressure about releasing his private information to others and a fear from the ability of others to read the visiting history.

Consequently, the other-oriented communication style and the accompanying obsession with how they are viewed by others could be seen to be related to the structure of "shame", a subject on Japanese culture which has had many commentators (Benedict 1967). The other-oriented communication style is the most typical of the communication that was found to occur within the circle of the primary group to which an individual belongs. The desire not to "stand out" and to blend in with the group is a feature of this style of communication.

Moreover, people in individualistic cultures prefer to "stand out," whereas people in collectivistic cultures prefer the self to "be effaced and dissolved into" their in-groups (Triandis 1995). Therefore it can be assumed that people in individualistic versus collectivistic cultures would have different types of digital writing styles.

In addition, owing to Protection of Privacy, it usually prevented the students from building new social bonds on the Internet. Almost all respondents locked their twitter accounts so people they did not know face-to-face were unable to access the account.

Twitter allows any anonymous person to create a weak connection, which allows them to gain access to a broad range of heterogeneous information. However, this was not the case for most of the participants in this study. Further, more females tended to fold or close their twitter accounts than males. H asserted below.

H: I think in order to protect our privacy and enjoy the social media, locking the account is a very effective way. If your twitter includes individual information, lock the accounts! You can allow only people you give permission to to read it, and this is what you must do! And I don't want to get to know or need to know new people through twitter. That is scary.

Personal home pages did not feature individual or family members' photographs to the extent they do in South Korea or the United States (Kim 2004). This could be to avoid accusations of arrogance or attention seeking as well as to maintain personal privacy. Twitter allows users the chance to create and gather new and heterogeneous information from other countries, but it was found that these Japanese college students ignored this function and used only a limited part of Twitter. The female students, in particular, were more concerned about privacy protection.

G: Because I've locked my account so others cannot see my Twitter. And I open my name and

the name of the city where I live in to the public on Twitter. Sometimes, someone just wanted to follow me by seeing my name. But…I don't like showing my photo to people I don' now.

Japanese people tend not to express opinions on political or economic matters (Kim 2010). In computer-mediated communication (CMC) research, issues that could potentially become topics of debate tend not to be taken up. The very act of raising such topics could attract the accusation of being *medachtagariya* ("attention seeking"). On my speculation, even in academic contexts where lively debate might be expected, there tends to be an avoidance of direct expressions of opinion, especially where there is a possibility of disagreement, in the interests of maintaining at least the outward appearance of consensus. Despite participant A tended to write something related to politics, he was too anxious about how peoples would assess and consider his contribution of that kind of topic. A explained below.

A: For example, when I write my opinion about the news, I write some, but then I just stop and delete it. There are other opinions about the news, so I feel like it's better for me not to put my feelings into it. So I rarely say anything serious on Twitter. There are so many different opinions. If I write too much about mine, I think my friends would be sick of it and I hate it.

Conclusion

This study took an exploratory approach to examine college students' perception of friendship, how they used social media, and the cultural factors associated with their reported behavior to form and maintain their human relationships. Studying young people's friendship in the context of social media is important, as these platforms are significant for practicing and experimenting with friendship.

A key finding was that social media was found to play an important role in the students' connection with their friends and in the establishment of a sense of belonging through deploying a "connected presence" strategy. Most of all, a *thin but perpetual sense of belonging to a membership* was found through a silent online participative behavior, which was found to enhance transient friendships. Marking other posts as "Read" on LINE was a small communication gesture to show their existence and to maintain friendships. These results are consistent with previous studies that investigated Japanese lurking behavior on BBS (Kim 2004). However, the psychological reasoning for these two kinds of online behavior might be different. While these two behaviors have common factors such as the demand for reciprocity, these were found to be relatively weak compared to individual chat on other applications. However, communication on BBS is often with unknown and anonymous people, whereas group chat on LINE is most often with known acquaintances. As this research did not investigate whether/how the respondents participated on BBS and did not compare the psychological behavior, the results should be interpreted with caution. However, as silent communication on SNSs in the younger generation has been observed in other countries such as Taiwan (Yang 2014), it cannot be assessed to be a unique trait for the Japanese.

In addition, the analysis of the strategy of posting amusing content and using emoticons to demonstrate a "connected presence" indicated that social media facilitated the creation of easy-

going online identities so as to defuse tension, discomfort, or conflict.

Secondly, contrary to the results from CMC research in North America and Europe, the Internet-use patterns differed according to local cultural and social circumstances. When considering how such communication affects the formation of interpersonal relations and the exchange of emotions and opinions, it is necessary to take such cultural factors into account. This paper has suggested some of the ways in which these effects may occur. For example, the cultural traits of "psychological status of shame (*Haji*)" and "extreme sense of privacy protection" could affect the extent of digital writing and contribution by young people. An interesting finding was that most respondents locked their Twitter accounts so strangers could not make contact. Therefore, Twitter was not used to express open opinions, as is the case in other countries, but was only used to share status with known acquaintances. These results were opposite to the tendencies found in previous findings that explored the association between teens' social media and collective action. For example, in the USA, it was found that teen online behavior gradually unmoored them from their local geographical setting. (Seo et al. 2013).

There are some limitations of this study. Firstly, a quantitative approach with a larger and more representative sample would have contributed results that are more generalizable. While the qualitative approach used in this study is an acceptable preliminary method to explore the research questions and objectives, more data is necessary to confirm the findings. Secondly, as the current study was conducted only on Japanese students, it was inadequate for an investigation into the cultural influences on social

media behavior. I will aim to examine how the cultural effects on young Japanese living in different cultures might lead to the use of different tools of communication at upcoming study. Lastly, because of the limited study objects, there was not enough evidence to confirm whether social media enhanced "the hypothesis of attenuation of human relationship". Future research should include both quantitative and cultural comparative perspectives.

This paper has attempted to examine how indigenous social media affects the interaction of college students in Japan by examining how "connected presence', and silent participation can enhance transient types of friendships. Gender differences were observed in the reasons for using social media. For example, young men primarily used social media to arrange activities with their friends, whereas young women used it to create and maintain a space for flourishing friendships. The females also reported that their "addiction to social media" was connected to a *connection- dependence* (*Tsunagari Izon*), which was not seen in males. In future research, reflections on the differences between the genders in traditional friendships and how the younger generation constructs their identity in their daily lives using technology needs to be explored and could shed light on academic achievements for both media and gender studies.

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1 Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications

2 LINE is a mobile messenger service application with free voice and video call. http://line.me/en/

3 http://www.ictr.co.jp/report/20140821000067.html

4 This survey was carried out by Hashimoto-Lab at the Institute of Socio-information and Communication Studies, The University of Tokyo. The survey subjects were university students attending private universities in Tokyo (464 samples) and Seoul (482 samples).

5 The precise breakdown was as follows: once 43％; twice 14％; three times 7％.

6 They were asked in the order of 3 steps below.

1) General inquiries of the personal media, such as frequency, duration, places and history of participation of social media and mobile phone usage etc.

2) How to make and maintain the relationships with their close friends or classmates.

3) The good and bad things of social media and especially perceived effects in terms of relationships with friends.

They were allowed to check their own mobile

phone in order to retrospect the dialogues or the person who they chatted to and shared the information in a specific time or occasions.

7 Emoji means "picture letter" in Japanese. Each character has an official name, defined as part of the unicode standard.pictured characters.