

Critical Ethnography of Decorative Rebellion:

Japanese Girls Subculture in Harajuku

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TABLE OF CONTENT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	1
ABSTRACT.....	4
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	6
1.1 Background of the research.....	6
1.2 Significance of the Research	10
1.3 Research Questions	11
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORY.....	12
2.1 Harajuku Fashion as Subculture.....	12
2.2 Harajuku History: Urbanization and the Blooming Youth Culture in Harajuku ...	15
2.3 Subculture Studies: Challenges and Critics	24
2.3.1 Resistance in Center of Contemporary Cultural Studies	24
2.3.2 Feminist Interpretation of Resistance	28
2.3.3 Post-Subcultural Studies	31
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	35
3.1 Participant Observation.....	35

3.2 Intensive Interview	38
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS	41
4.1 Merging Mainstream and Subculture in Harajuku; Mapping the field.....	41
4.1.1 Mainstream as imaginary	41
4.1.2 Relationship between Mainstream and Decora Participants	48
4.2 Guerrilla Warfare in Gender; Does subculture still resist?	58
4.2.1 Fluidity of Style.....	58
4.2.2 Intertextuality: a way to negotiate with reality.....	62
4.2.3 Cocoonization	73
CHAPTER5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	83
REFERENCES.....	86
APPENDIX	96

ABSTRACT

Subcultural activities have been dominantly male-centered and it has been hardly possible to think about the possibility of the female empowerment by the use of subculture. This research is quite significant because it explores a potential empowerment of young women through a female-oriented subculture in Japan. Subculture has been seen as a unity that resists the power of global capitalism, dominant gender ideologies and social inequalities. However, many scholars have argued that subculture is losing its subversive power, as it is merging with mainstream in the late capitalism era.

In Chapter 1, to explore this issue, I take what is called Decora subculture as my research subject since it has maintained its culture since 1994 and still prevalent. I thus want to propose the new form of resistance in this research. The participants of Decora subculture are mainly school female students and women which allows me to focus on gender issue. It doesn't have industrial force and survived over ten years, from this nature of street-based power, Decora enables us to articulate the very interaction between mainstream culture and individual's use of it.

In Chapter 2, I explain how Harajuku has become a site for youth to play and pursuit their subculture and claim for their identity in order to understand the context of Decora subculture.

I also argue how Harajuku fashion/subculture is studied in previous studies in order to clarify the novelty of this research. I also articulate the subcultural theories in this section referring to critics and challenges of subcultural studies and how feminist scholars reacted the previous male-centered studies to make the subcultural theory more applicable to this research. Lastly, I will look at the focus of post subdural studies to situate this research in the latest discussion.

In Chapter 3, I explain the methodology of the research. I conducted participant observation for about 2-3 months, I also did 1~2 hour interviews with a participant of Harajuku fashion (especially Decora) as well as people who contribute to the circulation of its culture.

In Chapter 4, I examined how mainstream and subculture is entangled by analyzing people's discourse as well as their consumption behavior. This section also illustrate how participants negotiate their identity within wearing Harajuku fashion by employing the notion of fluid identity, intertextuality and cocoonalization.

In Chapter 5, I will provide the summery, my opinion of this topic, limitations of this research and recommendation for further studies of Japanese young female subculture.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the research

When Japan is chosen for the Tokyo Olympic 2020, Kojima Futaba (2013) claimed that “Japanese Kawaii culture contributed to this event. In order to be selected as an Olympic host city, Japan showed International Olympic Committee a promotional video, which contains so much Japanese traditional elements and Kawaii culture was included as one of them.” He was referring to the fashionable people on the Takeshita Street at Harajuku in the video. Actually, the other elements of video were *Udon* (Japanese noodles), *Kyudo* (Japanese art of archery), *Sumou* (Japanese style of wrestling) and so on, which are always defined as typical Japanese cultures. Futaba asserts that Kawaii culture has been a big impact on our Japanese culture as well as the young people all over the world. To explore this emerging subculture, this research set Decora as the focus of research subject. The explanation of Decora subculture will be provided in the latter of this chapter.

This Kawaii culture Futaba described “Harajuku culture” is not a contemporary phenomenon, which culture emerged in early 1990s. In this post-bubble era, various styles emerged, such as Cyber-Punk, Goth-Loli, Ura-Hara and “Fushigi Chan” (mystery kid) (Godoy, 2007). To face this unique subculture, scholars in sociology, economy as well as journalists have been researching

this phenomenon (eg, Godoy 2007, 2008, Groom 2011, Kawamura 2012, Matsutani 2012). Harajuku cultures used to be a minor subculture shared with a specific group of people and youth expressed its own individuality within Harajuku exerting its subversive power, but today the culture itself has been cooperated with industry and widely spread as one of popular fashion style thus a number of concerns has been caused. Artists in Harajuku criticize Harajuku culture has lost its authenticity and it is weakening its subversive power (Masuda 2013), while fashion editors have very optimistic perspective of this situation and embrace the youth consumption of Harajuku culture¹.

Within such historical interplay of subculture and institutions, now the meaning of subculture has been questioned. Scholars have pointed out that Harajuku fashion has no nature of resistance since this subculture has transformed its style by borrowing elements from other culture or mainstream style and does not have its own consistent propaganda. Massive consumption undermines the power of resistance as the subculture absorb the ideology from mass-production. This feature is often linked to postmodern characteristic in that they are playing with signifiers and which is that differs Harajuku fashion from previous subcultures studied in 1960s to 80s such as punk, skinheads and mods (Hebdige 1979, Bennet et al. 1981). The style of Harajuku fashion is now changing day by day through reflecting its parent society and it is consistently merging

¹ From the face-to-face interview with Kojima, the editorial of fashion magazine *KERA*, on August 28th 2014.

with larger institutions such as magazine, fashion brand, and idol/modeling office. Indeed, Harajuku culture may no longer be defined as subculture in that they are not autonomy from mainstream; rather strongly cooperated with it. However, that is the tactic of how this distinct subculture has survived and maintained its legitimacy of being unusual through strategically influencing the larger norms. The main argument of this thesis lies in the potential that Harajuku culture constructs new form of resistance which could not be seen in previous phenomenon of subculture and how it can be done.

To explore this issue, the research focus on Decora (Decorative girls) subculture, which is a type of Harajuku fashion whose style “is expressed in massive piles of hair clips, face band aids, creative layering, and a mishmash of colors and textures” (Wang 2014, see picture 1). This style started around 1994 and has been flourished as a distinct subculture among young generation, especially women and particularly school girls in Harajuku since then. There are three reasons why Decora can be regarded as the most appropriate subject of the research to answer the thesis problem, which is whether resistance is possible in the late-capital era and if so, how it is done. The first reason is its street-based power. Unlike other Harajuku fashion such as gothic Lolita, Punk and Ura-Hara, Decora has never been promoted or featured by neither particular fashion brand nor any magazines. This subculture has maintained its citizenship as one of Harajuku culture for ten years without borrowing any mainstream industry. We can see that Decora relies

strongly on the performance of individual participants in the process of its diffusion and maintenance. From this nature of street-based power, Decora demonstrates the very interaction between mainstream culture and individual's use of it. The second reason comes from its gendered features. Harris (2002) claims that "(s)ubcultural theory and feminism have been the key theoretical paradigms to take seriously young women's cultural and political critique and action"(p.8). Focusing on young women's cultural thus becomes a means of political critique. Most of the participants are young woman ranging from the late thirties to junior high school students. Such traits set the thesis focus on gender perspective as the research is initiated from the concerns of the shortage of Japanese female subcultural empowerment in previous studies. The third reason is that the researcher was one of the Decora girls during the high school time. I felt released by reading those subcultural theories and this research was also a self-healing process of my adolescence behavior. This personal concern inspired me to work on the issue of this particular subculture.

Based on the reasons this research is particularly concerned with the lived experience of those who consume Decora subculture and their use of Decora fashion in relation to gender and mainstream culture, in order to enhance society's understanding of contemporary youth and application as well as rebuild the concept of resistance for the prospective researches on subculture.

1.2 Significance of the Research

This research will contribute for three groups; researchers in cultural studies, Japanese policy makers who are promoting cool Japan to the world, as well as participants themselves and society.

First, for researchers in cultural studies, this study contributes an innovative look to the way of study subculture with gendered issue since many subcultural scholars pointed out that most subcultural studies are concerned with mainly male point of view and women are often drawn as stereo typed (Brake 1985, Miyazaki 1992, McRobbie 1981, Nanba 2007). Thus this research intends to provide a methodological perspective which suggests potential to treat this subject as a significant research issue just like other subcultures such as punk, rock skinheads and otaku.

For Japanese policy makers, Japanese government set A PLAN FOR 300,000 EXCHANGE STUDENTS in 2007, which aims to “increase the number of international students studying in Japan to 300,000 by the year 2020”(NAFSA 2008). One of their strategies is to motivate foreign students to study in Japan by making more young Japanese fan (NAFSA 2008). Since I found many foreigners in Harajuku attended Decora subculture, description of their rituals, practices and circulations will help them discover the one of the attractive Japanese culture. Promoting Decora culture to the world will significantly contribute to increase Japanese fan in the globe.

For participants themselves and society, Harajuku fashion has been regarded as ridicule for

its excessive appearance and those consumers were repetitively criticized as doing something waste of time by their parents, teachers as well as other friends in school. They often conceal their practice in Harajuku for school friends². By collecting the data and arguing their activity have much meaningful implications through conceptualizing resistance, both the participants and society itself can obtain much better understanding of Harajuku culture. Hence this research is a kind of social action in order to make their significance widely known to the public and encourage their activities.

1.3 Research Questions

There are three research questions to guide the study. The first one leads to the exploration of social context of Decora subculture. The second one tries to examine the participants's inner accounts of the subculture as well as their understanding of conventional gender norms. The third one let us go deep into their tactics to see the new form of resistance.

- 1). What kind of systems and sociological condition let Decora subculture grow despite?
- 2). Why would participants choose to consume and maintain Decora subculture?
- 3). How do they make deep meaning of Decora in relation to social norm of femininity?

² From interviews with some Decora girls in August to September 2014 as well as the researcher's own experiences.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORY

2.1 Harajuku fashion as subculture

Since Harajuku Fashion can be considered as culture and life style, it has been discussed in various disciplines such as fashion studies, sociology and cultural anthropology. This section will organize what has been studied about Harajuku fashion then state what position this study takes within the debate.

As for a gender point of view, Matsutani(2012) firstly explained the situation of young women in 1990s. It was the time when school girls' (*Gyaru*) compensate dating (*Enjo Kosai*) was scandalously presented in the news and media. *Gyaru* can be presented typically with mini skirt and red hair who look like a sexy amateur prostitute (pp.88-130). *Gyaru* was boom in 1990s since they were the key players of trendsetting (Kinsella, 2002, p227). This leads to the association of *gyaru* with deviant sexual image in society in those days. Meanwhile, *Fushigi chan* (mystic girls)³ such as Decora girls are the individuals who did not want to be objectified as sexually exploited youth. Thus those Decora girls tried to differentiate themselves with excessive cloths and tried to escape from male gaze (Matsutani, 2012, pp.88-130). This gender perspective is shared with other

³ In this context, Matsutani describes Shinohara Tomoe and her followers as *Fushigi chan*. Shinohara is said to be the first pioneer of Decora fashion so that we can define Fushigi chan as the participants of Decora subculture.

scholars such as Sakurai (2009) and Mizuno (2013). Both of them described that Gothic-Lolita fashion empowers women and lets them stand against male gaze.

As explained in the Chapter 1.1, Harajuku fashion is often discussed with postmodern theories. Tsuchiya (2009) claims that people who wear Harajuku fashion have no style and that keeps changing and they can only find their own identities in that fluidity. Thus Harajuku fashion can be called a paranoia style (Tsuchiya, 2009). He describes it as anarchical postmodern fashion because it is out of order and no one can control it (pp.132-135). This kind of understanding for Harajuku fashion can be seen in Minamitani and Ii's arguments (2004) as well; they characterize Tokyo as whole non-national (*Mu-kokuseki*), non-historical (*Mu-jitai*) and non-ideological city.

Related to postmodern theory, Godoy (2007) has similar view. She is an editor of fashion magazine and named Harajuku girls *Fushigi chan* (cf, p.18). What Godoy suggesting is that Harajuku fashion mutes the meaning of imported fashion. The original meanings attached to the Western clothes fades when they are donned by Japanese youth in Harajuku. For instance, girls can be cute with punk clothes, mini-skirt is not always interpreted as sexy. Through undermining the initial meanings of Western style, the style has lost its rebellious nature (p.24). This argument seems close to what Azuma (2001) calls "Database Consumption", which is the specific postmodern behavior of people, like otaku who takes a signal of original anime character and create the another character based on what they have got from previous characters. By extracting

only signifier of those anime characters, they no longer concern about the context of such signifier (p.70).

Watanabe (2011) has conducted fixed point observation of street fashion for seventeen years, and concluded Harajuku fashion appearing in 1990s such as Lolita, Cyber, Decora and layered fashions are in the opposite poll from conservative style. They started from street. Fashion distribution used to be trickle-down (designer to consumer) but Harajuku fashion has made bottom-up (street to appeal industry) flow (pp.91-96). This argument is also discussed in the context of fashion industry in economics (Nakamura 2011).

Chimura (2001) mentions that the eccentric fashion in Harajuku reached its peak in 1998-1999. We cannot see the political message from their style as these fashions were generated by the aesthetic sense of youth's empty spirit. Otherwise, they were into TV, game and anime too much and identify themselves with those virtual realities. Hence their attitude is a type of cosplay, in other words, they are obsessed with changing their appearance (*Henshinganbo*).

Through overviewing previous scholar's arguments, we can see that there is not much work looking at the formulation of fashion and its community. Muggleton (2000) stresses the importance of ethnography in subcultural studies. He argues that studies based only on representation and bibliography may give researcher a privileged status, which leads to deterministic conclusions. Thus this research will apply participant observation and interview and

will look at how and why Decora subculture enter the subcultural community.

2.2 Harajuku History: Urbanization and the Blooming Youth Culture in Harajuku

When we consider subculture as a text, there is a background of their daily lives, which is called context. The relationship of text and context is interrelated and interdependent (Sato 1984). Therefore, this section illustrates the geographical and social context of Harajuku. Obtaining the basic understanding of generation of Harajuku as a fashion district will help us understand how the Decora subculture flourished. Thus this section will explain the basic history of Harajuku.

We can draw a picture of Harajuku after the Second World War since it was the period Harajuku became a slightly unique district from other places. The US occupation army's residence faculty called "Washington Heights" was built in a section of Yoyogi Park in Harajuku (Harajuku Omotesando Hiiragikai, 2004, p.77). The residents are noncommissioned officers and families categorized as middle class thus the atmosphere in Harajuku was clam and refined. Within Washington Heights, there were residences, school, church, theater, bars, and stores and all employee were required the ability to speak English (Masubuchi, 2012). A book store named Kiddy Land was built in Omotesando for those military officers and Oriental Bather was also established as a souvenir shop for them (Akurosu, 1995, p.94).

In 1958, Central Apartment appeared next to Kiddy Land, many artistes such as photographers, copy writers, and designers moved in since they were attracted the refined atmosphere in Harajuku. The artists often got together at the cafe locating on the first floor of the building and argued their works and political issues (Masubushi, 2012). Harajuku witnessed its largest transition when Washington Heights 1963, was returned to Japan and it reformed into Olympic Athlete Village. In Yoyogi Park, Kunitachi National stadium was built for 1964 Tokyo Olympic (Akurosu, 1995, p.94). Mabuchi (1989) emphasizes that this stadium was the most beautiful one in other stadiums in Tokyo. Hence Harajuku became broadly known for its exotic and international character. Then more designers, models, talents and apparel related people moved into Harajuku, it was called “Japanese Champs Elysees”.

In 1966, *Harajuku zoku* (Harajuku tribe) appeared in Harajuku district. Most of them were middle class college students in mods fashion. They drove sports car to Harajuku (Acrosu 1995, p.94). this can be put into the context Japanese rapid economic growth, especially 1966 was named “*Mai car Nengou* (The year of my car)”. “*Izanagi Keiki* (Izanagi Economics)” had just started when Harajuku tribe came in in 1966 to 1967. They were dancing in loud music and did sports car racing in Omotesando streets thus residents in Harajuku district reported their behavior to the police. In the end, Harajuku tribe was evacuated in the summer of 1967 (Mabuchi, 1989, pp. 139-144).

After the Harajuku disappeared, there was a time when Harajuku became quiet again for six to seven years. Then in the early 1970s, baby boomer generation started to get jobs. As they experienced student movement when they were college students, there was a tendency that they do not want to get employed by ordinal companies, instead, launching new business was more fashionable trend at that time (Mabuchi, 1989, pp. 243-244). Many young designers and buyers in this generation rented small rooms in apartment in Hatajuku and started a cloth store called “*Manshion Maker* (Mansion Maker)”. They sold clothes which attracted people in the same generation as themselves (Narumi, 2007, p195). They started small boutiques in their “mansion” or in Takeshita streets. In 1971 monthly fashion magazine “*non-no*” was published and “*an-an*” followed in the following year. Those magazines featured Harajuku and its cloths stores. Girls reading *non-no* and *an-an*, *Annon zoku* (An-non tribe), became interested in Harajuku. They purchase Harajuku clothes. Consequently, Harajuku and Takeshita streets became known for its fashion and youth culture in Japan (Shibuya trend researcher, 2006, p.60). In 1977, Hokosha Tengoku (Pedestrian Paradise) started in Harajuku. Kawamura (2012) emphasizes it is the primary reason that youth culture flourished in this district. “Between 1977 and 1998, a section of main road in Harajuku was closed to traffic on Sundays...a public sphere and young people dressed in their (often handmade) creative fashion and gathered there”(p. 29).

In the October of 1978, a fashion apparel building, Laforet Harajuku was established. It has

six floors and at first filled with famous brand apparel shops. However, the sale did not go well and newspapers said “Laforet Harajuku was a big failure” (Harajuku Omptesando Hiragikai, 2004, p.82). In the February of 1980, Laforet Harajuku renewed its stores into Mansion makers. Then it became a big success and created bases for DC brand boom from 1982 (Ibid, p.83, see picture 2).

At the same time, in 1978, *Takenoko zoku* (Baby Bamboo Tribe, see picture 4) appeared in Harajuku on weekends. It is the first time that teenagers created their own culture by themselves in the streets. Most of the members are junior to junior high school students. They changed their clothes in Yoyogi Park, and danced with disco music on the *Hokosha Tengoku* (Pedestrian Paradise). Wearing harem pants, kung fu shoes and clothes looks like an Arabian night was the major traits of them. There were only thirty boys in 1979 but the girls’ fan got together and media broadcasted their dancing, it grew more than 2000 members (if we include tourists and fan, it was about more than One hundred thousand people) in 1980. Some of popular boys in Takenoko Zoku (Baby Bamboo Tribe) became models and actors such as Okita Jouji. This phenomenon ended 1981 since new tribe called Fifties, who got regent style and dance twist, appeared in the same area. Hence the Takenoko Zoku (Baby Bamboo Tribe) lasted only three or four years (Shibuya Trend research 2006, p.16).

Because of the Takenoko Zoku (Baby Bamboo Tribe), the center of Harajuku moved

from Omotesando to Takeshita Streets. In the late 1980s, “talent shops” were established on Takeshita Streets. But these “talent shops” only invited the lowering of the age of customers and becoming popular tourist spot. Therefore, it was once recognized as “Children’s place” and “Tourist site” with uncool image (Shibuya Trend Research, 2006, p.60).

DC brand boom reached its peak in the mid-1980s. DC brand stands for Designer’s and Character’s brand (See picture 2). It is a general term to the brands established in those days such as Commes Des Garcons, Wise and Milk. Most of them stems from Mansion Maker. Yonezawa (2008) explained the reason of this DC brand boom is that youth generation had money to purchase fashion brand since it was a time of Japanese rapid economic growth (*Koudo Keizai Seichouki*) (p.2). Narumi (2007) also describe that DC boom occurred because consumer society got matured due to the mass production and mass consumption cycle. Neighbors have the same production (*Sanshu no Jingi*) and lead the same life style thus people no longer get satisfied with having the same clothes as others. Thus DC brand’s unique and avant-garde style got popular in those days (p.223). However DC brand boom lasted only about five years. Because copy brands and product of DC brand appeared, the trend was replaced with *Bodi-Kon* (Body Conscious) and *Shibu-Kaji* (Shibuya Casual) fashion (Yonezawa, 2008, p.3, see picture 3).

In the end of 1980s, when rapid economic growth in Japan was believed to last forever, office ladies and female college students went out for night club and danced all night. They were

called Gyarū or Bodi-Kon Gyarū since they were wearing body conscious clothes that tightly fit to their bodyline and emphasized their sexual attractiveness (Kinsella, 2013, pp.60-61). This Bodi-Kon boom cultivated the upcoming Kogyarū (high school gal) subculture in Shibuya. Kogyarū subculture got popular in the mid-1990s.

Matsutani (2012) is the first researcher who has claimed a significant perspective of Harajuku girls. He asserted that Harajuku girls emerged from the reaction to the sexually objectified image of high school girl. To articulate this argument, first it is necessary to look at the social issue of *Enjokosai* (compensate dating) since it is the outset of association that high school with sexual image.

Kogyarū is the term for high or junior high school girls who are dressed as a figure of delinquent girl (see picture 5). This delinquent image was attributed to high school girls when media sensationalized and reported *Kogyarū*'s commitment on *Enjokousai* (compensated dating) with Japanese Salary-man (white color worker). The menu of compensated dating varies from selling their own panties, pretend to be on an actual date or going to Karaoke, to having sex just like prostitutes. The common nature of compensated dating is that all those girls sold their sexuality for the sake of money (Miyadai, 1994). From this period, a discourse around high school girls has been symbolized as sexual attraction and pornography as the industry also featured high school girl on adult videos, pictures and cartoons (Matsutani, 2012, pp.71-76).

Then Shinohara Tomoe, a solo singer and talent, debut in 1996. It was the time when the words *Enjokosai*, *Ruzu sokkusu* (loose socks) and *Amura* (see picture 6) were awarded the most popular word Prize (*Ryukou Go Taisho*). This indicates that it was the time *Kogyaru* flourished and had been a social phenomenon when Shinohara appeared. Shinohara Tomoe was characterized as flamboyant fashion, high-pitched voice and her unique movement that was just like dancing (see Picture 7). At that time, Shinohara was sixteen years old but did not promoted the advantage of her being a high school girl like other *Kogyaru* women. The followers of Shinohara Tomoe soon emerged, they were called *Shinora*, those teenage girls started to copy and follow her fashion, hair style and behaviors. However, they were still minority and major style trends were still *Kogyaru* during that period (Matsutani, 2012, pp. 88-92), which is one of the reasons Matsutani pointed out that the emergence of *Fushigichan* (Decora participants) is a reactionary phenomenon in response to *Kogyaru*.

Since Shinohara Tomoe and her followers were exposed to media, magazines for those who consumed unique fashion were released; the representative magazines are KERA, Zipper and CUTiE (see picture 7) . Those magazine editors went to Harajuku on weekends and observed young people whose dress were extreme unique. As Godoy (2007), an editor of a fashion magazine, remarks that various kinds of fashion styles emerged in Harajuku since mid-1990s including Punk, Cyber, Lolita, Shironuri, Feary, Decora and so forth (see picture 9). Styles in

Harajuku were never static or fixed as they coexist within the same society. The borders of those styles are often blurred and integrated with each other, or sometimes made a new branch from the main stream. This is the time which people in Harajuku call “good-old days” when the subversive power in subculture was active.

However, since the 2000s, the situation in Harajuku street fashion has changed. Yonezawa (2008) and Masuda (2014) point out the decline in individuality of Harajuku since 2000s or mid-2000s as the fast fashion industry entered the appeal market in Harajuku (Masuda 2014) and real cloths boom (Yonezawa 2008, p. 80). Yonezawa (2008) emphasizes that UNIQLO has led a significant role in this paradigm shift. UNIQLO is a fashion brand established in 1984 in Hiroshima prefecture. It became a broadly popular clothes brand that every national has at least one of its clothes. Its common sales message is simple, functional and comfortable, which can be taken as opposite taste of Harajuku extreme street style (p.95).

Masuda Sebasuchan (2014) also mentions that the decline of Harajuku street fashion is due to the abolition of *Hoko-Ten* (Pedestrian Paradise)⁴. The youth lost their space to grow their

⁴ *Hoko-ten*, or *Hokosha-Tengoku* (Pedestrian Paradise) is a street “with rules in place meant to make walking safer and more enjoyable. The streets designated as a pedestrian paradise are closed to cars, and activities such as riding bicycles, holding performances, and passing out fliers are prohibited.” (Lynda Deaver, 2014, <https://blog.gaijinpot.com/tokyos-pedestrians-paradise/> visited on July 10th 2016). This

fashion and Harajuku witnessed the wave of *Ura-Hara* (the back side of Harajuku) style. *Ura-Hara* can be categorized boyish simple style. Masuda believes in colorful decorative fashion can be stand against adult's norms and capitalism, and he now tries to regenerate Hoko-Ten (Pedestrian Paradises) (pp. 23-25) in Harajuku district.

Harajuku fashion is now internationally recognized as one of the most unique Japanese cultures. In the meanwhile, some artists who have been in Harajuku in all ages complain that this situation is very cynical. Aoki Shoich, an editor of magazine "FRUiTS" commented in the Masuda (2013)'s book that "Foreigners believe that Japan consists of colorful and vigorous people but actually, inside of Japan has come to be a very simple place now. I cannot find anyone to ask for one's street snap in Harajuku" (p.25). This remark suggests that people were aware of the erosion from mass-industry.

Harajuku has a long solid history that shows its growth and situation today is not an overnight story. Its unique culture has been cultivated through youth street power. Meanwhile, some argue that Harajuku street fashion indicates in the crisis of global capitalism and losing its power of street. This research will look at whether subculture is losing its subversive power or not.

pedestrian paradise was a place for young men and women to perform their fashion in 1980s and 1990s but it was closed in 1998.

2.3 Subculture Studies: Challenges and Critics

2.3.1 Resistance in the Center of Contemporary Cultural Studies

The study of youth culture can be traced back to the 1920s when Chicago school was looking at urbanized American lifestyle. The school focused their study on deviant behavior of youth from the perspectives of the social isolation, social distance, and social (dis)organization. Scholars in Chicago school required empirical, qualitative, in-depth analysis to their subject. Subculture was considered as social sub-system which was conveniently used for explaining social pathology. Chicago school approach shifted into criminology in the 1950s and scholars' interests were concentrated on the deviant groups in large cities (Williams 2007). The approach of Chicago school lacked the analytical frameworks and subculture was considered as "an independent organism functioning outside of the larger social, political and economic contexts" (Hebdige, p.79, 1979). In response to this approach, the members of the Center of Contemporary Cultural Studies applied the notion of class and power based on neo-Marxist approach to compensate the lacked analytical element. Subcultural activities were no longer regarded as deviance but a form of resistance to the dominant ideology in CCCS scholars. This chapter describes the main concepts that influenced the concept of resistance in order to carefully interpret the Japanese subculture.

We will see the importance of notion of class first and then shed a light on the concept

of hegemony. Social structure constructs how one lives in a group which one belongs to. Fragmented groups are structured and stratified in a relation to wealth and culture. Then the most powerful group of all can project its view as most decent, adequate and natural. This is where we can divide dominant culture and subordinate culture. Members of subordinate culture also live within the meanings which reflects the interests of dominant groups thus the dominant ideology is structurally prevailed to all members in the society (Clarke, et al. 1975). The ideology remarked created by the ruling class inhabit people's unconsciousness and it works effectively and powerfully for its 'naturalness', so called common sense. Hebdige (1979) illuminates this concept by introducing Hall's explanation of how people are unaware of surrounding ideology. "You cannot learn through common sense, *how things are*; you can only discover *where they fit* into the existing scheme of things. In this way, its very taken-for-grantedness is what establishes it as a medium in which its own premises and presuppositions are being rendered *invisible* by its apparent transparency"⁵.

However, the dominant class does not contain absolute power over subordinate class. Dominant class exerts hegemony which is "the power to frame alternatives and contain opportunities, to win and shape consent" (Clerk, et al., p.38, 1975). Gramsci characterizes hegemony as "the combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally,

⁵ Please refer to Hall.S. (1977), 'Culture, the Media and the "Ideological Effect"', in J. Curran et al. (eds), *Mass Communication and Society*, Arnold.

without force predominating excessively over consent” (Hoare & Smith, p.80, 1971). This concept of hegemony is not given from outside but absorbed into the system of reproducing the subordination where subordinate class lives. The state of subordination is thus maintained only because the dominant ideology successfully weakens, destroys, and displaces “alternative institutions of defense and resistance thrown up by the subordinate class” (Clerk, et al., p. 39, 1975). Dominant class does not necessarily coerce its interests to the subordinate class, but because of hegemony’s fluid nature, the dominant class can gain consent from them hence; their view appears to be more natural and legitimate (Hebdige, 1979). The subordinate group consents because they are convinced that such cultural leadership led by the dominant group seems to share the common interests with the subordinate group, which is not the case all the time. Subordinate group can be easily convinced since they are surrounded by the predominant ideology (Turner, 2002). In other words, hegemony is not privileged only to the specific ruling class but a “moving equilibrium” that moves around in the context of concrete circumstances. Turner (2002) explains that “in order for cultural leadership to be achieved the dominant group has to engage in negotiations with opposing groups, classes and values – and that these negotiations must result in some genuine accommodation” (p.178). Thus we always need to look at such specific context where hegemony is being carried out as to analyze the move of hegemony in flux.

Here we can locate the concept of resistance in the context of ‘moving equilibrium’.

Acknowledged forms of dominance cannot be absolutely normalized as Hebdige (1979) emphasizes with the possibility of symbolic repossession of commodities. Commodities absorbed by dominant meaning can be fractured, distorted or reconstructed by subordinate culture. That is, we can give the oppositional meaning to the commodities through combining the already attached meanings in favor of our intention so called bricolage. Subculture challenges to hegemony indirectly in style, at the superficial level of appearance. Hebdige takes the conflict between different classes at the level of signs. As the culture itself is a place for struggle among different interests' groups through the working of hegemony, Hebdige (1979) claims that "(t)he struggle between different discourses, different definitions and meanings within ideology is therefore always, at the same time, a struggle within signification" (p.17). In order to win in the struggle for signs, subordinate culture 'stole' the 'humble object' such as safety pins and fabricate it to carry 'secret' meanings which is a form of resistance to what keep them in subordinate states.

We are born in the world of network of pre-existing meanings; we are thus influenced by the most powerful ideologies which are for most powerful groups. Power is never static, or hegemonic. Culture is a field of struggle for different interest groups at the level of signification. Subculture attempts to resist the dominant ideology through reconstructing pre-existing preferred meaning in style. Now we will see how this concept of resistance is applied to feminist scholars as to shed lights on female subcultures.

2.3.2 Feminist Interpretation of Resistance

The attention to the role of women in subculture has arose from the awareness of the absence of women in this field. Women are mainly explained very little or stereotyped image of femininity among subcultural researchers (McRobbie & Garber, 1975, Leblanc, 1999, McRobbie 2000, Kawamura 2012). McRobbie and Garber (1975) pointed out that the tendency that cultural studies, sociology and criminology are traditionally male dominated, and that such studies lack female point of view: women are excluded as a subject of research.

Leblanc Laureine (1999) illustrated how the cultural definition of femininity has negative influence on female adolescence's self-esteem and the formation of gendered identity. Girls are placed under pressure that they have to evaluate themselves by their own physical attractiveness not by talents or skills thus have much lower self-esteem than that of boys. They are also expected to accept the social conventional female role such as being obedient, inferior, and supporter of others, which lead her feel less sense of self as subject. Leblanc hence claims that patriarchy or male domination over female has to be the primary oppressive order for women to resist. This way of seeing oppressive force differs from that of CCCS which stems from Marxist theory centered on class.

This criticism on gender also occurred in Japan, Kawamura (2012) asserted that

Japanese subcultures are more female oriented, yet not much research was conducted on it. It can be said that Japanese gendered subculture may offer a refreshing perspective on this unequal power balance between men and women hence we will look at how Japanese girls' subculture has been formulated in terms of resistance.

There has been two major debates regarding to girls' subculture; *shojo-ron* (Girls' theory) and *kawaii-ron* (Cute theory). The commonality of both is that such girls' cultures create their own value which can stand against the masculine attributes (rational, phallic, productive and so on). For instance, we can refer to the genealogy of *shojo* (girl). Imada (2007) points that the word *shojo* (girl) was born out of *shonen* (boy) after The Imperial message on Education (*Kyouiku Chokugo*) was declared in 1989. At that time, there was a debate of meritocracy that boys can success in own life through education in *shonen* magazine. Such gender focused debate excluded girls from the category of *shonen* (boy) as well as the social system of career building, and the words *shojo* (girl) was given to girls. Meiji era also saw the rise of the idea of good wife and wise mother (*Ryosai Kenbo*) which is equivalent to female counterpart of meritocracy in this is the social expectation from the society. This idea pushed middle-class girls to enter girls' school. Within that community and through girls' magazine, girls created their own cultural values. One of the main concepts that signify is what Honda (2010) refers; *hirahira*. The image of the waiving of ribbons and frills are dominantly present in girls' literature, pictures, and comics. This symbolic

imagery of *hirahira* is “heretical entity that has no place in everyday order of classification or matching” (p.35). *Shojo*, who is eliminated from the productive life course and has to face its fertile sexuality which later leads her to be a good wife and wise mother, attempted to indulge myself in girls’ culture and stayed in its cocoon without being violently classified by any social force. We can see such girls’ own created value in the debate of *kawaii-ron* (cute theory) as well. *Kawaii* (cute) is flooded in Japan and everything can be considered as cute for youth people, especially women and girls (McVeigh, 2000, Kinsella 1995). McVeigh (2000) stated that *kawaii* implicates the power relation. When a woman says an object *kawaii*, she is attempting to position the object within her way of understanding of the object, more importantly, as a subordinate position. Telling something *kawaii* equals to showing the comprehension that one sees it as more vulnerable, small, and fragile. Young Japanese women have created a number of branches of *kawaii* such as *kimo-kawaii* (creepy *kawaii*) and *gro-kawaii* (grotesque *kawaii*) (Monden, 2014). By combining such extreme concepts with *kawaii*, young Japanese women are positioning those creepy/grotesque outer elements in their understanding of them.

Although the studies of Japanese youth subculture do not apply the theory from CCCS, we could see traits of resistance in its nature. Participants of Japanese youth subculture recreate, relocate and repeat the significations attached to one object/concept and create new meanings. In contemporary Japanese society, such bricolage is strategically carried out thus and fabricated well

in everyday practices. Therefore, Japanese female subculture would show us a greater potential to resist to their oppressive order.

We have seen that feminist critique on CCCS subculture occurred out of necessity, which is the absence of female subject in the field. Those feminist subcultural researchers see the primary oppressive order on woman is patriarchy not the class. They create their own world and values which can stand against patriarchal social order. In Japanese contemporary society, it is apparent that female subcultural value has spread in all elements and we could trace back such nature of resistance in *shojo* culture too, which stems from late 1890s. We now explore how the concept of resistance is formed in the post-modern era; the debate of the concept of subculture from the 1990s

2.3.3 Post Subcultural Studies

In 1990, 'post-subcultural studies' or 'post-CCCS' arose with the new theoretical concepts to analyze youth subcultures. We can see how they attempt to approach subculture by summarizing two major criticisms towards the studies of CCCS; the methodological and conceptual issues. We will see how new perspectives consider resistance in this post-modern era.

As for the methodological issue, The methodological issue is attributed to semiotic methods. CCCS took semiotic methods of analysis in favor of Marxian cultural theory and

ascribed the participants' language, hair styles and dress to the notion of resistance. Though encouraging the use of ethnographic methods, they kept themselves "within observational method of data collection, rather than including the interview components... they gathered no support from first person subjective accounts for this attribution of resistance" (Leblanc, 1999, pp.14-15) members of CCCS overemphasized the style of respective subculture. Muggleton (2002) tested the internal data collection such as interviews and participant observations to avoid the limited data which affects the validity of research.

In this context, Leblanc (1999) reconstructed the concept of subculture, her claim being "we must consider both subjective and objective accounts of resistance" (p.17). There are multiple subjective topics such as "a subjective account of oppression (real or imagined), an express desire to counter that oppression, and an action (broadly defined as words, thoughts, or deed)" (p.17). By illustrating these subjective statements, we can see whether consumers of subculture "do so constantly and be able to relate to activities within the subcultures. According to Muggleton (2002), the studies on subculture has been occupied by elitism since researchers only read the subjects' clothes as a first impression, which lead to the decisive analysis that is non-related to their everyday lifestyle (pp.9-32). By criticizing this trend, he emphasized the importance of that "social scientific explanations should at least 'fit' the subjective reality of the subjects of the study" (p.14). Thus the post-subcultural researchers claim that we need to look at their everyday life.

As for conceptual issue, the emphasis of CCCS approach lies on the social transition of youth style while post-subcultural studies put significance on cultural consumption (Pilkington & chenko, 2013). Through combining clothes, consumers of this subculture do not just purchase clothes, but they create a deeper meaning for them on a social and emotional level. What underlines this idea is the mistrust in the idea that consumption is a form of false consciousness. However, since 1990s, many fashion brands have been recoupling with the idea of deviance, excessiveness, fetishism and weirdness. (Evans, 1997). Of course we cannot say that mainstream now has the same expressive platform with individuals but rather, scholars in post-subcultural studies see the subculture as more than the political expressive form. Harris (2008) sees this merging of subculture and youth industry as problematic in that

(Y)outh subculture or lifestyle today are the product of an ongoing process of a negotiation between consumer culture and youth creativity. Young people are constantly negotiating the styles that are sold to them with their creativity. Young people are constantly negotiating the styles whether this be music, clothes, or lingo. There is no longer any such thing as the truly “resistant” youth culture because youth style and cultures have been appropriated by the consumer industries, depoliticized and packaged back to youth

(p.4)

As she argues, youth consumption and the industry have a very close relationship. Their conversation is very open to everybody through SNS and internet websites. Therefore, scholars in post-cultural studies claims that we need to see individuals detailed situations in order to one's resistance form (Haenfler, 2007).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Participant Observation

The description of Decora subculture is based on the 10 weeks of participant observation and interviews. Participant observation is “the process in which an investigator establishes and sustains a many-sided and situationally appropriate relationship with a human association in its natural setting for the purpose of developing a social scientific understanding of that association”(Lofland, Snow, Anderson, and Lofland, 2006, p.17).

The necessity and objective of the methodology of field work stems from two main reasons. One is from the criticism towards semiotic approach initiated by CCCS, as it is illustrated in Chapter 2.3.3. The other one is to obtain a fuller understanding of how Decora participants feel, perceive, and behave as the main topic of the research is physically located in Harajuku, which is to explore the way gender is enacted and perceived among Decora people. I hence needed to experience and interact with different rules and situations of subculture as insider.

The procedure of getting into the field and building a relationship with participants was not a difficult task for me, as the Decora subculture is not exclusively formed, rather the community is relatively loose and those who come are welcome, those who leave are not regretted. Q is the organizer of Harajuku event who has witnessed the change in the groupings among Decora

participants over 10 years. He said “The people who join the event changes yearly, sometimes monthly. Harajuku is like a pond where tadpoles come together and have become frogs. Having grown up to know what they really want to be, they go somewhere which they truly belong to”.

I used to be a high school student who wore enthusiastically into Harajuku fashion. It is because I was seeking for a distinctiveness from the other classmates who wore the same uniform and hair-style⁶ and found the Harajuku fashion so intriguing. By remembering such memory, I took *KERA* (Harajuku fashion magazine) so as to find a way to obtain a connection with Decora participants. In the street snap page, all people wrote their twitter account name in the free section. I created my Harajuku account (see picture 13) and followed people in Decora fashion on twitter and tried to make a connection. I first followed the people in streets nap and later searched for the word “Decora” and followed people in decora fashion. Through liking, replying their twitter, I have gained some friends on twitter and planned to stay in Harajuku for a month during summer vacation in 2014. I rented a monthly apartment in Shinjuku for a month and obtained Decora clothes as I started seeing people in Harajuku. I visited Harajuku again on Halloween 2014 and the last week of January 2015 for a week and stayed at the same monthly apartment for a month in March 2015. The participant observation took almost 10 weeks in total. Throughout the engagement, I participated 19 Harajuku gathering and 8 Harajuku events.

⁶ The black long hair style was prevailed at that time and all of my classmate looked similar to me.

As I was unfamiliar with ethnographic approach, I firstly had difficulty having appropriate distance with participants. The participants' age was relatively young around that of junior high to high school students, and I was 24 year-old graduate student. I thus did not used to talk to such young people as friends. Especially, I conducted overt research that revealing myself as a researcher. Young people reacted that me researching Harajuku sounds very cool but I assume I did make some sort of distance between myself and them.

My first connection was a male participant in Decora fashion whose age is 27 and doing Decora for 1 year when I met him. He already had so many friends and was always in the center of conversation in twitter. He understood my research object and kindly introduced me to the first Harajuku gathering, which enabled me to obtain more informants.

The degree of my involvement was partially deep. I enacted with more than 40 people throughout my participant observation and about ten of them deeply got along well with me. We exchanged LINE account and talked over night. This involvement may affect the result of my research.

3.2 Intensive Interview

This research also applies interview out of the necessity of exploring “amorphous social experience” (Lofland, 2006, p.19) that is “those aspects of everyday experience that are transitional in the sense of not being embedded in or peculiar to specific social context or setting” (p.19). My initial interests come from how Decora participants make sense of this subculture on daily basis, hence I needed to ask questions regarding broad issues other than the activity itself. The interview was semi-structured based on the leading question lists (see the list in appendix) and spent 1-2 hours, as the research goes on, I changed the way I ask questions and it may effect the result of the research. Interviewees are 16 people in total which consists of participants of Harajuku fashion (especially Decora) as well as people who contribute to the circulation of its culture such as an editor of Harajuku fashion magazine, a designer of Harajuku fashion brand, and an organizer of Harajuku event.

The interview was mainly conducted in a café in Harajuku, which was “*Oyatsu Café Kaho*” located in the end of Takeshita street. It is because the place was quiet and always 1~2 customers besides us. I firstly asked the potential interviewee to do interview and scheduled the day. It was often before the Harajuku event or gathering.

The chart below is the list of interviewees.

name in research	gender	age	occupation
A	f	15	junior high school student
B	f	23	high school student
C	f	19	freeter, working at apeal store
D	f	19	freeter, working as a model
E	f	21	hair stylist
F	m	37	hair sylist
G	f	19	freeter
H	f	33	freelance weiter
J	f	26	freeter, working at live house
K	f	27	freeter , working at used clothe store
L	f	19	freeter, working at
M	f	23	wife and mother
N	f	33	manager of Harajuku fashion brand

O	m	NA	designer of Harajuku fashion brand
P	m	NA	editer of Harajuku fashion magazine
Q	m	NA	organiser of Harajuku fashion walk

All informants who cooperated with interview were informed that their privacy (identities, names, and specific role) are secured and their information given to the researcher would be only used for this research and they could withdraw from the study at any time.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Merging Mainstream and Subculture in Harajuku

4.1.1 Mainstream as discourse

Subculture is often considered as “subordinate and separate cultural cohorts resisting and standing directly in opposition to the dominant ideology I attempt to legitimize an alternative world view”(Bell, 2013 p.165). Such dichotomist view has been questioned among the scholars in subculture studies. Before getting into the analysis of Decora subculture, it is necessary to illustrate how mainstream is perceived and situated in Harajuku. As we have discussed the problems in the concept of subculture in Chapter 2.3.3, young people have their own reason to pursue their lifestyle through consumption. We have seen the transformation of Harajuku landscape into a fast fashion market since it has become a place for constant commodification. Now the focus of discussion will shift towards the discourse around such situational change in Harajuku fashion. Through interviewing people who have been observing Harajuku landscape for a long time, some similarities in their speeches were found; their critique towards the two biggest Harajuku stores; SPINNS and Wego. These stores have been offering cheap Harajuku style clothes to teenagers since the early 2000s. In this regard, an interviewee, working as an owner and designer O who has run his/her shop for more than 10 years told me “(These days, every

Harajuku stores are closing down, which is related to the fact that mass industry such as Wego and SPINS came into the Harajuku market, thus customers are not going to the unique [individual] stores as much as they used to). After Forever 21 and H&M, Harajuku has dramatically changed, then SPINS and Wego strengthened their markets. That kind of stores are now mainstream and retail stores are now experiencing adverse situations (...) Really, when Forever and H&M were established in Harajuku, everyone said “Harajuku is over”.

Similar to “Harajuku is over” comments were found in other interviews with key persons in Harajuku. Junnyan, a man who organizes Harajuku Fashion Walk, once held “*Dekora kai*” (Decora meetup), in which he called for Decora girls to come and walk along Harajuku. I asked him the reason why he had such meeting and he said “I think Decora is on the way to its extinction, so I wanted to check it.” As he said, decora is sometimes seen as endangered species. This view is very prominent among marketers and managers. A manager N who works for Harajuku fashion brand ACDC told me “Decora are all endangered species. (...) If we go bankrupt, Harajuku culture is over. (...) More and more large stores are coming into Harajuku such as “Alta”, and “Cute Cute.” I don’t mind though, clothes for the mass. Those are the mainstream (in Harajuku). (...) It may be the (Harajuku) culture today.”

As he mentioned, the scene of Harajuku culture has been changed in a way that the culture is now driven to the mass by major stores entering the scene. There is a discourse that

Harajuku fashion is used to be very unique due to the shortage of fashion materials such as colorfully colored clothes and accessories. An editor of fashion magazine once told me that people used to have no access to fashion materials, so they initiated their own style by using various materials such as using a scarf for a skirt.

Similar comments were raised from O, a manager of Harajuku fashion brand who has been in Harajuku for 16 years. She said that young people in Harajuku created their own style with the material available around them and named it their own fashion brand. Harajuku fashion in good old time⁷, then can be drawn as a collected image with individual creators who tried to establish their own uniqueness by assembling available materials. Indeed, this form of activity seems to be very rebellious as Groom (2011) suggested in his observation of *Takenoko-zoku*. However, current Harajuku fashion has been meant for the mass as the interviewees claimed so. You can also sense what people meant to say by ‘fashion for the mass’ in not only within the discourse, but when you walk along Harajuku as well. You see young teenagers who wear the same kind of fashion inspired from fashion magazine, favorite fashion brand or celebrities. The rebellious sense of Harajuku fashion has been weakened due to this process of diffusion of unique Harajuku fashion. This merging of subculture and mainstream as the subculture become popular is pointed out by Hebdige (1979). What he considers as *problemati* is that since mass has tamed

⁷ Which may signify the mid 1990s.

subculture by commodifying its uniqueness and absorb or turn it into one of capital enterprise; mainstream culture.

Here we need to look back to what it means to be ‘mainstream’, as discussed in chapter 2.3.3., the concept of mainstream is the subject of criticism in subcultural studies and we once have to clear the previous discussion of mainstream here. Huber (2013) reconsider the Hebdige (1979)’s concept of mainstream which applies problematic connotations of mainstream stemming from CCCS approach (pp. 5-6). There is a sense that mainstream is associated with hegemony, normal, high fashion, conformists and something characterized as negative. Huber points out that Hebdige had little interest in the mainstream and his interests lay in the opposite side, the subculture. The negativity of mainstream thus comes from his very little effort to understand mainstream/hegemony (p.9). What is suggesting from Huber’s argument is that mainstream has deployed as the category of the ideology in subculture studies in that it “‘masquerades as nature’; it appears to be ‘normal’, it is ‘ahistorical’”(Huber 2013, p.7). Such everyday-ness in mainstream encompass everything else but subculture so that subculture can mark out (p.8). Huber concludes that Hebdige’s point that the mainstream inevitably absorbs subculture and subculture’s power will be diffused, just like a river of tributary go join its mainstream and lose its power to resist to the mainstream (p.8-11). This image of mainstream is already given to our imaginary reality and we take it for granted without any clear consensus. What Huber claims here is not all acceptable

without any criticism since he pretermits the issues that neo-Marxist raised, which is the danger of spreading its conservative ideology, something beneficial for ruling class. We can take the perspective to the mainstream from Huber. We do not need to either take the mainstream as broken down as Maffesoli(1996) did nor figure its form tending to merging with subculture like post-subculture scholarly did. Since it is a type of ideology amongst ordinary people, we need to look at how participants acknowledge the mainstream into their way of understanding of the situation in Harajuku. Huber claims when “we think about specificity of main-stream and the particularity of its practices and process, then mainstream becomes an historically contingent category that usefully refers us to modes of dominant (or dominance-producing) behaviors, discourses, values, identities and so on” (p.11). Based on his point, we can see there is a visible figure of mainstream in Harajuku district. This is defined as “clothes for the mass” which led people in Harajuku to feel “Harajuku is over” or “it may be the (Harajuku) culture today.”

This store owner interviewee expressed that new consumers who go for the larger store for “mass produced individual style (*tairyō-seisangata-koseiha-sutairu*)” referring to “the clothes sold by SPINS and Wego. It is by no means a style for attracting boys (feminine), but everyone is wearing such individual style alike. (...) It is no longer individual style. (...) So-called individual style is categorized into one of fashion such as *gyaru*, *mote* (feminine)”. This term ‘mass-produced individual style’ often came up in conversation or interview with participants in

Harajuku. This view towards new consumers may differentiate the participants from ‘mass-produced individual style’.

On 2015 January 18th, I went to a bar with six Harajuku fashion lovers. A woman named B, who tells that she has been in Harajuku for a long time, complained the current situation in Harajuku as “Harajuku went weird. It has been somehow softened, and a bunch of young girls came in. There used to be more people who are wearing stronger style. (...) All fashion magazine are boring these days”. This impression of “Harajuku has been softened” was also found in other interviews. For instance, an 18-year-old woman who works as a model told me that most of the street snap are all arranged beforehand. In order to make a model and fashion brand famous, models are told to come to a certain place in Harajuku at certain time so we can see the familiar faces are always on the street snap column. The young woman showed strong feeling of dislike regarding this issue and talked about the good old days of fashion magazine.

After the gathering in Harajuku with A and other Harajuku fashion lovers, a woman who joined the meeting, came up to me and talked me about what A said. The woman did not seem to like A’s remarks because she is the “young girl” who newly started Harajuku fashion and does not know the old landscape of Harajuku.

It is confirmed that the idea of “mainstream” has come into one’s thoughts through seeing the actual change on streets and in fashion magazines. This is strongly sensed by especially

those who have committed to Harajuku fashion for a long time. It was also acknowledged by new comers. As mentioned in Chapter 2.2, the specificity of mainstream was already visible through the commodification and rapidly seen in the early 2000, fast fashion as well as used clothes store WEGO⁸ and SPINNS⁹ were established in Harajuku. Since then, both simple and unique street style coming from used clothes have come into fashion in Harajuku district. Besides, through the fieldwork and research, we could find that the idea of mainstream does not only exist in material form but also it has penetrated Harajuku people's mind with negative image. Based upon these interactions between youth subculture and mainstream, the question that centers in the study of subcultural studies and we researchers have to strive to look at is; through being incorporated with mainstream, does subculture lose its power or can it still be rebellious and subversive? What we could extract from post-subcultural studies is that we need to shed lights on the individual's approach to cultural consumption in this late capitalism where even leisure space is commodified. I thus would like to shift the direction of analysis towards individual consumption.

⁸ WEGO established its head store in 2003 (<https://www.wego.co.jp/company/history/index.html>).

⁹ SPINNS entered Harajuku in 2004 as the name "*Furugiya Honten*(Used Clothing Main store) Harajuku" and changed its name into SPINNS in 2013 (information provided by customer service in SPINNS on May 2nd, 2016).

4.1.2 Relationship between Mainstream and Decora Participants

The formational change in commodity associated with subculture has been pointed out by many post-subculture scholars (Evans, 1997. Bennett, 1999). As Evans explains “(s)hopping is a central activity of the late twenty century, the prime site in which we construct our identities through things. Social meanings are produced through the commodity” (p.172). The time we live today is occupied with a massive consumerism as well as constant commodification. People in the era of post capitalism are exposed to this specific situation thus we need to take this situational change into account. Through considering this uniqueness of consumption, Shield stressed that we need to theorize the new form of subjectivity in the context of time and space where consumption is divergently active (1992, p.13). As we have seen in the Chapter 2.3.3, CCCS defines subculture as having a different relationship with commodification. Groups in a certain subculture re-arrange the original meanings attached to the commodities by applying the concept of bricolage. The participants reorganize the commodities and creates new meanings. Such re-arrangement is the key to the idea of resistance and it is what differentiates subculture from mere youth culture (Evans, 1997, p.173). Yet at the time of late capitalism in which youth culture is constantly cooperated into industry, those subjects are constructed through commodification. The process of building-self will be explained in Chapter 4.2. The boundary between main stream

and non-mainstream is blurring and not well defined yet. Therefore, the question need to be considered is the possibility of resistance in this era. This chapter seek to answer this question based on the empirical data.

When someone who is unfamiliar with Decora encounters this fashion, s/he often tells me “It must be hard to afford these accessories and clothes” This is not always true. They often try to find the cheapest clothes by looking through the used clothes store or stores carrying cheap brand or they even make those by themselves. Let us listen to what they say about the consumption in the interview then analyze how they entangle with mainstream, the power itself.

C is 19-year-old woman who has been in Tokyo immediately following her graduation from high school and she is currently unemployed. I met her on a Harajuku gathering and had interview in 2014 March 17th. She mainly purchases clothes at the old clothes store. When I first met a Decora friend in Harajuku, he showed me around Harajuku since I asked him to take me to the places Decora girls usually go to and he took me to KINJI which carries cheap used clothes and he said girls purchase clothes here since most of Decora girls are school girls and does not have much money to spend on. It is true that more young people try to obtain clothes through used clothes store and smart phone application featuring flea market where individuals can sell and buy products at cheap price. People also share information of where you can obtain cheap clothes on twitter. I hold the analysis here and introduce the more voice from people.

A is a 15-year-old girl who was about to graduate from junior high school when I met her in March 2014. She has entered an artistic high school where she hopes to be a make-up artist. She initially liked the model AKIRA who promotes V-kei (Visual black boyish style) as A had short hair but she shifted her style into Decora. She explains the reason as “it was easy to purchase (colorful) clothes... Cross-dressing dress is expensive, isn't it? So this kind of style is relatively reasonable.”

A chooses to wear Decora fashion out of other Harajuku fashion styles since it is cheap to wear. As she mentioned, other Harajuku styles such as cross-dressing, V-kei (visual style), Lolita and so on, are occupied with fashion brands and very expensive to afford. I would not say Decora is open to everyone in terms of affordability. However, it is certain that Decora does not need the outfit fits from fashion brands. It is all about one's creativity of how to combine colorful clothes/goods. It thus does not matter where they collect resources as there is no certain dress code.¹⁰

J is a 26-year-old woman who works for a live studio, and had her own fashion brand as her hobby. I met her on September 3 in 2014 where I hung out with another interviewee. J said she likes the handmaid clothes and often goes to the remake store. I later went to the remake store

¹⁰ For example, to follow Lolita style, you need to wear a frilled skirt which you can only obtain at a Lolita fashion brand store. Those clothes are very expensive for students to purchase.

that she mentioned in interview with her. It is a small select shop which displays creative handmaid clothes that can be characterized with so much frills and sequins, which we can barely see in other major stores like WEGO and SPINS. The store is located on a narrow path and you need to walk into there from Harajuku cat street so only those who know the place can reach the store. This type of select shop which sell remake clothe are scattered in Harajuku, and Shimokitazawa and have a quiet number of fans in decora community.

B is a 23-year-old woman who works in several companies as a part time worker. I met her at Harajuku gathering, on the same day I met others. B likes old lady clothes sold in Shimamura and also likes handmaid dress. She is aware that handmaid dress are relatively more expensive than other used clothes but she purchase them. It is because if she cannot buy them, she will regret it later. She thinks handmaid dress is precious and cherishes the encounter with them. B has her own favorite handmaid brand which and often retweet its products. There are a bunch of brands (or the author of those declare it is “a brand”, not officially confirmed) that are established by both skilled and non-skilled individuals. They create products by collecting resources online and send them into market through free website or consign goods to some stores which are popular among young women. Such brands are often talked about among decora women. While consuming newly emerged popular brand such as SPANK! and WEGO is taken as a negative and uncool behavior, Deocora people embrace those handmaid goods. As B told me, it

is “a precious encounter” that they may no longer see the same product. On the other hand, goods in the mainstream market are mass production so that anyone can obtain them anytime.

D is 20-year-old woman who works at *Izakaya* (Japanese style bar) and also works as a model at modeling office. I met her in September 2014. D remakes ready-go clothes and make them suit her taste. She later showed me the goods she made such as clothes and even rings. She has no prior education for sewing but learned it on her own. This creative attitude (remaking preexisting clothes, creating new products) is seen in all the decora members but same as I, not all of them are trained in needlework. They look for such information through online websites, exchanging the methods with other friends. This experience encourages some of people to go for artistic career such as a make-up artist, dress designer, hair stylist and model or something related to clothes like a sales clerk at a clothing shop. I have seen young women having second thoughts about their future among those creative options during the fieldwork. This point on the career and gender will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.2.

M is 23-year-old woman who is a housewife taking care of a daughter. I met her in September 2014. She has a friend who is a famous handmaid accessory designer and she helps her friend make accessories. M also hope to create her own accessories by herself in the near future. There are two married women in this community and both of them kindly took my interview. The another woman also creates goods and has her own brand as a hobby. I went to a

handmaid store with M and the customers were mostly young women. Store dealt with all handmaid goods whose prices varies from cheaper than ready made goods to expensive for school students. She mentioned something similar to the previous informant; “If the artist decided not to make it, the thing wouldn’t exist here. Considering that, it is indeed attractive.” Here we can acknowledge the singularity of a product. People in decora community is rediscovering the value under the situation where mass products, mainstream, the power is at work.

We have seen how the people in Decora community enact with mainstream. Before getting into the discussion, here I would like to clarify what mainstream means at theoretical and social level. Mainstream is often seen equivalent to hegemony in CCCS approach (see Chapter 2.3.1), which is a vehicle for circulation of ideology, however as Evans (1997) suggested, mainstream products incorporated with subculture and also became deviance, excessiveness, fetishism and weird so that post subcultural studies also focus on how individuals create their lifestyle by cultural consumption. Harajuku culture has interplayed between creative individuals and commercialism since the late 1950s. Throughout its history, it acquired citizenship that may widely influence conservative gender norms, which allows me to claim that subculture is winning cultural space in the late capitalism era. It is dangerous to stop here without mentioning its function of promotion of hegemony-loaded discourses such as encouragement for women to be feminine by complicity of the value of kawaii. Resistance is not always pure (Hollander, and

Einwohnerp, 2004 .549). Resistance and hegemony are not two separated dichotomous but rather entangles in historical context (Vinthagen and Johansson 2013), which we have seen in Chapter 2.1, after Shinohara Tomoe made her debut in the mid-1990s, Harajuku fashion brand as well as used cloth boom came into the market and such power of commercial capitalism promoted new kind of sexuality as well as the new value of individuality (Matsutani 2013). As we found people who feel the authenticity of good old time in Harajuku concern the power of mainstream. An informant organizing Harajuku monthly event for 9 years, once told me “there are more and more young people who believe they can be famous by wearing unique Harajuku fashion. Such motivation is not quite good.” As if there has to be an authentic intent to wear Harajuku fashion. Meanwhile some people accept its trend, recognizing it is a part of dynamics of Harajuku, as I (designer of Harajuku fashion brand) said this tendency of merging mainstream and subculture “may be the (Harajuku) culture today.”

While the mainstream in Harajuku has been influenced by grass-root subculture, it is important to shift that focus of bird eye into everyday practice by individuals in Decora subculture in order to articulate mainstream with their interaction.

In order to clarify the meanings of their behavior, let me introduce the concept of everyday resistance here. When it comes to definition of resistance, scholars often argue whether actor’s intention account for or not and post subcultural studies answered yes, it does matter. If

we agree to consider participants' intention in deciding whether an act is resistance or not, the resistance is subject to their intention. Hence they turned their focus towards lifestyle and identity through cultural consumption (Muggleton 2000, Bennet 1999). It is noteworthy that risks based on the recent discussion of the notion of resistance. "An actor's intentions are not central to the understanding of an act of a behavior as resistance" (Hollander and Einwohner, 2004, p.538) People do act with a number of intentions, to survive, solve a problem, follow a desire, however not with one type of intent. Therefore, limiting the definition of resistance in accordance with only political intent may ignore "*not-yet political awareness differently motivated* resistance" (p.21, originally emphasized). "In fact one of the recurrent repressive mechanisms of dominance is the accusation against (recognized) resistance for not having legitimate, legal or otherwise "appropriate" intentions" (p.21). Especially for young women in Decora community, since they are young, mostly students, female and not having voice to defense themselves, they are often criticized for being indulged, spoiled, irresponsible and deviance by parents, teachers, and even pedestrians who happen to encounter them on the streets. They are accused for not having "appropriate" intent, but wasting their time and money on transient pleasure. The participants indirectly react the criticism towards them by keep wearing Decora fashion regardless.

I thus apply the way Vinthagen and Johansson (2013) describe resistance so as to help us understand Decora people's behavior. To Vinthagen and Johansson, subaltern exercises both

power and resistant (p.25). Resistance is not always expressed in spectacular way, rather it may appear privately or covertly as public resistance is too dangerous so the criteria of resistance is how an act of behavior may undermine power. They also categorize the types of resistances; coping, survival-technique, accommodation, and avoidance/escape. I would like to briefly explain two concepts out of them as analytical tools to see this phenomenon. Escape, is often questioned for its legitimacy of being accepted as resistance but through avoiding the elements provided by the mainstream, people can restrain the mainstream from exercising its power (p.24). Accommodation, is also often brought up in debates for the inquiry whether it is an act of resistance or not. What Vinthagen and Johansson suggests is that accommodation is a disguised type of resistance that it shows the subversive nature one side and accommodate the hegemonic element in different dimension (p.25). Hence we can consider accommodation as resistance under the condition the act of accommodation undermines hegemonic power.

There are some commonalities and features how Decora girls enact with mainstream fashion. Firstly, there was a tacit agreement in participants of Decora subculture that purchasing major chain stores such as WEGO and SPINNS is uncool on the other hand, stores carrying cheap clothes like used clothes stores are embraced by all informants. Secondly, they put value on handmaid goods for its singularity. With consciously/uncourteously, they avoid going for buying larger commercial products in stores. All contents do have the gap of degree depends on the person,

for instance, C cannot take mass-production clothes as she feels sick entering UNIQLO. On the other hand, B purchases old lady clothes at Shimamura, which is a franchised large mass-production store because of its cheap price. Their intentions are neither the same nor politically motivated as Hollander and Einwohner (2004) suggested. However, through avoiding newly entered mass-production at franchised stores, they do not let the commercial capitalism to dehumanize people's creativity, spread the modern ideology of rationality (Ritzer, 2011). This way of interaction with mainstream can be acknowledged a form of resistance in Decora subculture. Instead of escaping from mainstream fashion, they encourage designers of handmaid, or creating clothes on their own, which may entail pros and cons. Such activities may be a vehicle for individuals to promote their creativity, allow them to express their idea freely and give some people opportunity to pursuit it as their life carrier, at the same time, it may accommodate the value of cuteness, femininity and gender norms. As mentioned earlier, resistance dually functions as the both social medicine and poison. We have seen how people in Harajuku as well as Decora subculture see the mainstream. Now it is necessary how the others observe Decora,

4.2 Guerrilla Warfare in Gender; Does subculture still resist?

In Chapter 4.2, the main aim is to elaborate on how participants build their own identity conceptually and in their own manner. To illustrate this identity-building process, I provide three components; 1) the fluidity in style, 2) Intertextuality, 3) Cocoonization. These three concepts rely upon each other and need to account in this order to maintain the coherency of the argument.

4.2.1 The Fluidity in Style

When the research was initiated, many people suggested that I should define the object of the research; Decora. As the research goes on, I was becoming perplexed at its impossibility of defining the term. One would say that Decora is Gomimori (trashy decoration, see picture 10) is done or not but the problem is not only the style but also whether I can even call it ‘subculture’ or not. It is because the community is not coherent and participants do not always wear decora, rather they change their style based on individual fleeting motivations. This is suggested in Post subcultural studies (see Chapter 2.3.4.). Bennet (1999) argues “it seems to me that so-called youth ‘subcultures’ are prime examples of the unstable and shifting cultural affiliations which characterize late modern consumer-based societies” (p.605). Shields (1992) revalorized the new type of a sense of a self which is persona that enables individuals to form multiple identifications

“a self which can no longer be simplistically theorized as unified, or based solely on an individual’s job or productive function”(p.16). What is suggested here is that ‘group’ is no longer the focus of research, rather a sight that individuals select to form their temporally persona is only a transit alternative site before relocating themselves another identity (Bennet 1999, p.605).

As I stated in the second research question, we need to redraw how individuals make sense of one's self out of Decora with application of this idea. I have hence asked a question to the Decora fashionistas how they would define their style, and what their concept or policy are in order to illuminate this issue. Let us first look at some examples first.

C is 19 year-old-female whom I introduced in previous chapter, a part-time worker and currently in search of a job. I asked her what her fashion style is and she answered “I have not decided fixed fashion genre... I didn’t want to be said something (I don’t want to be categorized as a specific genre). I easily lose interests in things so I cannot pursuit one type of fashion. She mentioned that she cannot make a coherent preference of the style throughout her lifestyle. This opinion is very common among other Decora participants. When I ask them what their fashion style is, they are often times not aware of it even though they state “Decora” on their profile section on their twitter accounts. They seem not to want to be categorized as a certain fashion, rather want to be in flux, swinging somewhere where their interests can temporary stay.

J: ... I guess it is pretty recent. At first, when I was 20, I was into cool style. I was doing cross-dressing. Blond hair and decorative nails. Like, something on Ageha (fashion magazine for gyaru).

I: So you are saying, when you were 20, you were doing cross-dressing like gyaru?

J: Like gyaru... but somehow... like, I liked French braid style, or spiky hair style.

As J mentioned, I see people changing their style from Gyaru or Cross-dressing to Decora (myself included). This phenomenon could be explained by the commonality of subversive traits among Decora, Gyaru (Kinsella 2005), and cross-dressing (Ushiyama 2005). But the connection of these styles is not our focus of discussion, rather the suggestion is that people shift style to style and wearing decora dress is only a transient performance in one's life time.

There are patterns how individuals generate and maintain their idea of style; it can be characterized by not-having coherent style; the style-less attitude makes their everyday style. This phenomenon also appears even in names. People change their name from real one to make it sounds more one's sense of the self (two informants said the same opinion on this matter).

Subculture is considered as a group of people with coherency and solidarity although its nature is rather fleeting and arbitrary (Bennett, 1999,p.603). Fine and Kleinman (1979) suggest criticism on the concept of subculture closer to Bennet's (Fine and Kleinman, 1979, p.2). They pointed out that scholars of subcultures try to come up with research conclusion of a certain subculture with a data collected at the particular time of period. However, especially subculture

with no structural force to unite its members, its form of state is rather flux and transient. Those scholars thus preclude the change in its subculture over time (p.6). The problem underlies here is what Bennet claimed the theoretical instability of subculture; the shared value, custom and style are neither fixed nor coherent but always in flux.

The data collected in field research supports this argument of instability. Participants do not want to be identified as Decora. Most of the people in Harajuku do not like Kyary-Pamyu-Pamyu, a singer who is said to be a pioneer of Harajuku fashion (see picture 16). This is because it is often the case with Decora participants that they are likewise called Kyary-Pamyu-Pamyu from pedestrians. They do not want to be put in the same box and it is one of the reasons that they wear Decora fashion. Therefore, they keep changing themes and even styles such as from Gyaru to Decora.

Because of fluidity in identity, they tend to "graduate" from Decora fashion when they start working or become university students. It may seem that Decora subculture is a temporary activity and resistance does not last till it reaches its goal. Yet, I argue that this temporality is a necessary trait for the participants to create individual meaning outside of the market. Through changing styles and avoiding categorization, they obtain power that cannot be robbed by the mainstream. If Decora subculture were to be "fixed," it would then be captured by the mainstream fashion industry and become commodified. This leads to the weakening of subversive power of

Decora. Decora subculture can only be rebellious in the condition of temporality as it is against the value of mainstream; mainstream is fixed, categorized and tied to norms. Decora subculture does not have its form and norms so that it works to sustain itself in a different way from the mainstream. This temporality has been a female privileged right as we have seen shojo-ron in Chapter 2.3.2. The participants evaluate excessively dressed fashion and produce the alternative value which is not given by anyone. Young women could obtain such power by a means of temporality. This utility of fluid identity needs to be articulated its process and content. I would like to discuss this topic more in next Chapter

4.2.2 Intertextuality: a way to negotiate with reality

In the process of identity shaping, the uniqueness of their themes cannot be discussed by solely its own meaning as it is consisted of various elements deriving from previous established forms. To articulate the meaning of their style, we need to employ a more inclusive concept that elucidate this phenomenon, which is intertextuality described by Kristiva (1980). Firstly, this chapter briefly explains the concept of intertextuality by referring how Kristiva attempted to borrow some concepts from Saussure's semiotics and Bakhtin's utterance. The focus then shifts to the actual practices of participants through interpretating them by applying the notion of intertextuality.

The concept of intertextuality stems from literary theory, yet it has been applied to

other discipline/fields such as photography, films, music that can be read as a text (Allen, 2000, p.176). This concept is very useful to explain the process in which Decora fashion participants uniquely build their own identity through their fashion styles.

The foundational idea that enabled Kristiva to come up with the concept of intertextuality derives from the view that a sign cannot stand itself and it exists within a language system by producing meaning in relation to other signs, because it generates its meanings based on the similarities to and differences from other preexisting signs (Allen, *idit*, p.10). Allen explains that Bakhtin extended this way of understanding language through elaborating the social aspect of language, which accordingly viewed to be bounded up with social situation. Each written/spoken words are reflected and transformed by specific context and Bakhtin thus created the concept of utterance. Utterance is the actual pronounced words at a certain occasions and it is never neutral for its boundness with society. To Bakhtin, all language responds to previous utterance and pre-existing patterns of meanings but at the same time, it seeks to further respond (*idit*, p.19). Hence utterance entails dialogic traits in that their meanings are dependent upon what has previously been said. This dialogic view of language help us understand a sign is never singular yet contains otherness, because it keeps addressing other established forms (*idit*, p.21). Throughout the extracting the essential elements from Saussure and Bakhtin's works, Kristiva coined the term intertextuality as; "in the space of a given text, several utterances, take from other

texts, intersect and nutraize one another” (Kristiva, p.36. 1980 (1968)). This idea is very useful in this research as language is always connected to a text that does not only signify language but all cultural forms including fashion.

Intertextuality can never be separated from the discussion of Postmodernism. In the time of postmodern, culture is dominated by codes and representations, which is called simulacra; a copy that does not posseses original (Baudrillard 1988). Modern art appears as a form of reproduction and we see the simulacra in them, or the other words, it is described as parody. In such situation, cultural products seems to be full of codes and cliché thus cause a sense of ennui and boredom. To Jammeson (1991), expressions has no shared sense of ruling norms and the portmodern field has come to be a discursive heterogeneity whitout a norm. Norm that culture resist against. In postmodern era, cultural forms lost the ground Narrative that people belived in. Thus there is no ideology that culture have to stand against. (Jameson, 1991) However, Hutcheon argues that postmodernism is not simply opposing to modernism nor entailing different characterstics from modern but it is built on the base of modernism. Such continuation allow us to employ intertextuality as a means of critically reading their styels. Allen (2000) contends that while a postmodern art work jaxtapositioning established texts with itself, sometimes appearently incomptable forms of representaation, it “serves to question, disturb and even subvert the dominance of those established forms” (p.190). This indicates that, as Krisiva’s view of

intertextuality, one form of text necessarily reflects to the prior texts to generates its meaning.

This concept of intertextuality reminds us of the fact that Decora subculture is not originated from pure space, free from prevailed discourse. Bell (2013) conducted his research on Metal and concluded its style is created and maintained by the supporting market and classified based on the mass-mediated style rather than class and other social references, unlike classical theory that subculture is separated from market/media space in order to avoid exploitative relationship between entertainment industry and subculture (p. 176). As he claims, subculture no longer exists in free space, so does Decora. However, this argument does not mean subculture is taken over by dominant ideology, rather it appropriates the previous meanings. Participants in Decora subculture makes their own narrative by borrowing previous text which may be the prevailed narratives whether through anime, game or preferred signifiers. What these behaviors are suggesting is to realize their ideal fantasy deriving from another pre-existing images. Such fantasy coexists within their everyday lives through donning particular fashion. This intertextuality functions for Decora participants to construct their comfortability in their reality. I will examine these several examples looking from the point of intertextuality.

C is 19-year-old woman who has just moved in Tokyo from Aich prefecture and is currently looking for a job in Tokyo. She often appears on Harajuku fashion magazine and has more than 8,000 followers on twitter and 24,000 on Instagram. I asked her what her style is and she answered

she changes her style daily and the theme of the day was two-dimensional and said “I want to go to two-dimensional world as soon as possible”. C has a favorite character Yoshino (see picture 14) from the TV anime series “Date a Live”(2011~). She likes how Yoshino presents herself as Lolita character with purple hair color while most of the Lolita characters tend to have pink hair to look feminine. She tries to make a connection between her favorite character Yoshino and herself by getting her hair dyed purple. C used to be a gyaru when she was a high school girl and felt awkward wearing gyaru fashion. She told me that gyaru fashion (see picture 5) is for mature woman as it has to be done with sexy revealing dress, which did not suit with her childish face. She thus changed the fashion style into Harajuku style. It is dangerous to call her fashion cosplay since she does not have any commonality with Yoshino. The elements she took from Yoshino is only having cold color hair (purple). She is happy to identify herself with Loli-chara (Lolita character, meaning little female child like an elementary school student) as she feels more comfortable to be so with her childlike face. However, this does not mean she wants to attract men by wearing childlike clothes. C told me that she does not want to be popular among men (*otoko-uke*), and that she rather feels disgusted to be seen in a sexual way. C is double-coding her fashion with Harajuku style and her ideal Loli-character taste, which puts her in neither conventional feminine nor cute figure of woman. But in between animated otaku taste of cuteness and rebellious Harajuku style. The alternative femininity is complexly constructed through

binding previous signs so that she successfully emancipates from the power of putting her in the expected ideological femininity. I would like to introduce another remarkable example that shows us how well participants construct their identity by means of intertextuality.

Here is another interview from M, who is a 23-year-old woman who is a house wife and taking care of her daughter. She took her daughter at the interview. I asked how she gets inspiration of Decora and she answered she likes putting a lot of hair clips on her bang and that image comes from her favorite illustrations. M put hair clips in her bangs so as to look similar to her favorite illustration. Generating idea of fashion from favorite illustrators is also raised by the other two women. Putting hair clips in bangs is the main characteristics of Decora, which is often associated with yume-kawaii (dreamy-kawaii) illustrators (see picture 11). This yume-kawaii theme is often associated with Magical girl as J described in the interview. The fancy pastel color color clothes and motifs of magical sticks, wings and sailor uniform (see <http://charismataalk.jp/I0002117>).

Next example is J, who had worked at live-house and been willing to work as a model and idol. When I met her in June 2016, she belonged to an idol group and performing on the stage. She told me her fashion style changed into *Maho-shojo* (Magical girl) from other Decora styles. J also mentioned that her magical girl theme came from the revival of Sailor-Moon. Sugawa (2013) suggested Magical girl anime encouraged Japanese young girls to emancipate themselves

from the hegemonic gender norms by allowing to have alternative gender ideology (p.265). Her research on audience showed young women obtain self-esteem on their body through watching coquettish feminine body of Magical girl which does not meet the previous discussion of magical girl as a vehicle to promote hegemonic heterosexuality (p.272). Decora participants embodies such coquettish body by not watching but reinscribing on their fashion. Having both feminine body and transformed coquettish Magical girl figure at the same time, they are able to acquire alternative femininity. As Sugawa also argues this Magical girl genre works to get young Japanese girls to realize they are stepping onto adult stage as an initiation process and it occurred around the age of ten (p.264). Hence Magical girl is a field for children at elementary school age. However, the participants are teenager or above twenty years old. There are incompatible collisions within their body during the expression. This is what Allen (2000) calls the disturbing aspect of intertextuality. This way of utilization of intertextuality allows participants to play between shojo and adult body as Honda (2010) asserted (see Chapter 2.3.2.).

B is a 23 year-old female who had worked for several part time jobs. I had dinner with her over the interview. I met her in June 2016 and she changed all her part time job from the previous ones. Firstly, when I asked her age, she forgot her age and checked her driving license to find out. She always introduces herself 74 year-old grandmother while she is 23 years old and does not even have children. This is because her fashion style is inspired by her affection towards children.

She said “I like little children, and I am a licensed *hoikushi* (a nursery school similar to day cares) and I really like little children and I want them They are so adorable so I want them. Something like grandma. I am not suitable to be a mother, and grandma sounds warmer. So I would like to spoil everyone (from the position of grandma). I want everyone to be friends. So I held events. Grandma is 74 years old. It does have meanings. Seven is called *Nana* (seven), and four is called *Shi* (four). So “*Nashi* (nothing)”. (The setting is) very detailed.”

She makes her style out of “Grandma who became conscious of *kawaii*,” and she is dressed exactly in line with the theme of grandma becoming aware of *kawaii* such as colorful knit cardigan, huge glasses and something fluffy. This image of her style comes from the desire of how she wants to maintain a relationship with others. She thus calls her close Harajuku friends “*Oba no Mago* (Grandma’s grandchild)” and those grandchildren calls her back *Oba* (Grandma). She is so into her setting as a grandma that she had forgotten her actual age and creating the fake age that symbolize having no age. In order to foster an ideal relationship of people in Harajuku, she actually held events to build a harmonious community.

We have seen how the participants negotiate their age within their fashion styles, which is often times integrated with little children such as Magical girl and Loli-character. In this case, B strongly identifies herself with the age of a grandmother. She intends to have no age as it signify nothing (74). This reminds us of the Dowling (1982)’s argument in Cinderella Complex. Woman

become sexual objects through male gaze. While woman are little children or old women, they are not sexually objectified as they can escape from such male gaze. Thus women are under continuous fear to be old and become no longer a princess. B is framing herself as grandmother based on her previous experience but at the same time, she successfully liberating herself from being objectified. She also mentioned that she attempts to maintain her chubby body shape by keep having lots of food. It is an act of undermining the dominant figure of conventional femininity that women have to look slim and thin. The social discourse of the elderly is not always positive, rather it entails more negative aspects in highly aged society such as the weak, isolated or excluded group (Young, 1999). However, B's behavior towards the elderly does not consider such aspects and double-code her own elderly image and Harajuku kawaii fashion. B embodies this combined ideal image of warm kind grandma who takes care of her friends and practices it every day.

Lastly, I would like to illustrate a story of tactic by a 21year-old hair stylist, E. I had a casual conversation with E at Harajuku gathering and she told me that she is once said to be Menhera (person who has mental health issue), from her appearance having colorful hair color. This regards came from drunken pedestrians who harassed her by calling her Menhera on the street. She later named her hair style "Menhera-Katto (Mental health illness hair style)". Her followers were inspired on twitter, admire her hair style and some did the same hair style (see picture 12).

Through double coding the negative image of Menhera and stylish hair style, she internalized the traumatic harassment in a rebellious way.

This is a strategy that can be found in the transformation of the meaning of queer (Signorile, 2003, p.xii). Queer used to be an insulting word for LGBT sexuality, however, people endeavored to appropriate the word in academic works and now built a political meaning.

E also appropriated the word Menhera, which was used to abuse her appearance before. She weaved it into her hair style and promoted as a cute fashionable icon. This tactic of value-building as become successful only under the condition of the embracement for weirdness and darkness. The Decora participants has a preference for weird motif clothes and goods such as Yami-kawaii (depressing kawaii) and Kimo-kawaii (creepy kawaii). This atmosphere that encourages any kinds of combination with kawaii to circulate within Harajuku enabled E to double code such incompatible established meanings.¹¹

Examining individual's construction of their values and themes of fashion by applying the notion of intertextuality, we could articulate how they negotiate the meaning of their identity within fashion and behavior. It is important to stress that they are not free from social norms such as sexual objectification, dominant power of conventional femininity. Intertextuality enabled

¹¹ She was also partly criticized by other participants that using the word “*menhera* (mental health)” for fashion is inappropriate because it may be rude to actual patients of mental health.

them to create unique themes that can challenge such conventional expectations.

It is important to note that the participants construct their fashion taking the elements from the slight taste of pre-existing texts. This characteristic differs from the Azuma Koki (2001)'s database-consumption, which describes how otaku consume contents media utilizing the previous plot or features of characters. Otaku finds deep meanings of the past media in the anime or game. Meanwhile, Decora participants change their fashion theme daily, based on the inspiration they find on the day. They transcend back and forth the borders of the texts and frequently combine the images - this grants them the power of creation without stacticity of the norm. This stands against the nature of mainstream and masculinity - the stable, categorized, fixed, and finally, the continuity, durability and persistence. Thus, the Decora participants' criteria of meaning creation is opposite to the conventional way. We have seen female subculture create different values in the description of shojo-ron (See Chapter 2.3.2). The participants maximize their state as those unchained by the society. No one in Decora community works as a white collar or has a job that would be accused for being Decora. They are students, part-time workers, artists and house-wives. There may surely be a point when they will no longer be a Decora participant at certain point in life, yet that is a necessary move to sustain the subversive power of Decora subculture. Such temporality is the value that mainstream has been blind to. In the process of intertextuality, the participants do not care about the order and category of the texts. They transcend beyond the

meanings, and the messy process of production challenges the fixed value of mainstream.

4.2.3 Cocoonization

On March 17 2015, at around 18:30, two pf Decora participants and I were walking along Shibuya scramble crossing. I was wearing a bright blue one-piece, two loud colorful neckless, and green strawberry hair clips with small five star shaped hair clips. My lower half hair was dyed shocking pink, which was done by my friend who was walking besides me. He had warm pink hair color, fluffy pink cardigan, and legs covered bright purple tights with pink and yellow stars, which comes under rainbow colored short pants. Another companion is 26-year-old part timer (who now works as an idol on May 10th 2016). Her hair is colored rainbow, the blue, pink, yellow, purple, and orange bang is under huge fluffy bright pink hat. She was wearing handmaid decorative pink one-piece with bright blue one-piece which were covered over her handmaid pink poncho, which was tied with bear doll on the front button. A bunch of colorful bracelets around her wrists. We were on the way to her birthday celebration party at the café “Butou no kuni no Arisu (Alice’s Fantasy Restaurant)” in Shibuya. While we were walking, we could hear the whispering saying “Sugoino ga aruiteru (There are shocking folks walking around)”, “Yabai (amazing or terrible)”, “Mite are (Look at that)” and “Kyari-Pamyupamyu jan (That’s Kyary Pamyu Pamyu)”. We were drawing attention in a crowd of people. Wearing shockinig outfits means getting so much attention in the both good and bad ways. After we celebrated her birthday,

we went to maid café close to the Alice's restaurant. It was almost 21:00 and the air in Shibuya has changed into more loud and decadent. On the way to the café, a drunken salary man (white color worker) pulled my friend's pink poncho from her back and shouted "Pink chan! Pink chan!". Her eyes were frozen for a moment and quickly looked back at the salary man. He already detached his hand and run back to his company and saying "Uwa~ Pink chan ni Sawacchattayo (Oh my, I touched Pink chan)" laughing so hard with his friends. We run down to the basement café. She was saying "Nani are. Nani ano yopparai (What was that, what's wrong with that drunken dude)", and the male friends said "Atama okashin jan (The guy is crazy)". Both of them shifted to another topic shortly, I could not get the fear off from my mind. Since I started participant observation for four months in total, this kind of harassment has been pretty common yet, I have never gotten used to it.

I asked J who works as a part-timer at live house how she reacts such harassment and she answered " I am just as I look like so I let them do so. It is hard to react. Like, sometimes, (strangers) after passed by me, they laugh "huhattsu" (sound of laughter). Like, after (working at) the live house, three boys passed me and laughed at me like "hahaha". I was scared at that time." She continued to tell me how she was harassed by the strangers as "at a convenience store, a weird guy tackled me on my shoulder on purpose. Then I got irritated, I run after him shouting "What did you just do", and the guy got scared of me, but he still stared at me so I said "Are you on

drugs? Are you on drugs?”, he run away.”

To decora participants, enemies are everywhere, who try to scorn the decora participants, harass and make fun of them in a group in an attempt to get them to realize that their appearance is socially considered crazy, and finally, become obstacles for them to pursuit their fashion. My friend who does excessive decora fashion in Canada told me that she does not want to do decora in Japan since she was brutally harassed there.

Therefore, the power of normativity, the ideological domination of wearing normal clothes, be feminine, do not be too rebellious is in the air while donning decora fashion. Participants face such forcing power by a number of tactics; wearing mask and headphones, thinking the opposite way (you guys are wearing all the same clothes), try to look at only little children and the elderly (since they tend to embrace their unique fashion), joke them back on twitter, and shout back just like the example of previous informant.

One thing I realized throughout the field work is that there is a tendency that participants got used to such attention as they continue to wear decora fashion. They create their own morality, or the way of understanding why people react so harshly. O is a designer of Harajuku fashion brand and she has also been a Decora participant for over 10 years. I asked how others react her fashion and she said “my friends told me “When I am with you, people stare at me” but I got used to such situation too well, so I don’t really get it. I barely realize (the gaze from other people).” She just

does not realize such gaze and when I asked her if others tell her bad words, she said “if this happened to young girls, probably they think “Don’t judge me by appearance” but, the generation like me, I think “this is natural (that people react me)”. I don’t care if a stranger told me “What’s wrong with you?”, because I know I am out of place and I still like to do this fashion. I feel like that is a very natural reaction, I am bold so I don’t get hurt at all. I don’t understand (other Harajuku people saying) “Don’t say that” or “I am so sad to be said so”. If there were people who wore Harajuku fashion around them, they wouldn’t say anything since they could get used to it, but there are none of such people in their neighborhood so... I can’t help it.”

Because O has been wearing Harajuku fashion for over ten years and she got used to the harassment, as she said. She is well aware of “weird-ness” to other people. People react her not because they are cruel and mean, rather such behavior comes from the situation: her being a minority. However, which does not become an obstacle for her. She said she stopped wearing panier (see picture 17) as she became adult.

The next example is A who was a junior high school student and about to graduate from school. She also works as a model at a modeling company. I asked her the same question that how others react her fashion. She said “there are some (people who take pictures of her without her permission). But when I am doing this fashion, what to say, I am on a show. I look rare and outstanding so it is natural that people should look at me. I understand that, because if there is a

person who has Winy Pooh on his head, people would look at him. At first, (I felt annoyed by that). I am human and felt so (annoyed), but later I started understanding so I don't care (now). I have come to understand. I indeed have understood. Summer, I have come to understand after 3 months. I felt embarrassed and embarrassed (first), but now I am OK. I understood yeah, I can understand it is natural that people look at me. I feel different when I do this fashion, how to say, I am very sober at my hometown. Well, because I am very pessimistic. I do Jenga alone at home and surfing internet, so I have become strong only when I am donning this fashion. I became like Shinoara¹² ... somehow feel brighter and energetic. I feel my feelings as a whole changing. I feel the switch turned on.”

The participants in Decora subculture frames these situations in which they're labeled as abnormal as something normal in reality. So that they understand their abnormality to others. Kishi Masahiko (2015) points out the difficulty of 'abnormal' people living in 'normal'. He exemplifies a blog of a person who cross-dresses. He writes various topics from trivial issues to political opinions. It seems like one of the very ordinary web blogs that individuals write for pleasure. However, he puts his cross-dressed photo on every single post. He sees these posts as an ideal reality that we cannot really obtain. In the posts, these cross-dressing pictures become one of trivial issues or one of everydaylife-ness. Kishi (2015) claims it is very precious since we

¹² The pioneer of Decora fashion. Please see the picture 6.

cannot be able to treat cross-dressing as trivial as the blog shows.

As we have seen, decora participants are incessantly harassed. They astonish people by their loud colorful dress, and frequently draw uncomfortable feelings and looks from pedestrians. As participants understand their abnormality as it is, they accept the harsh reaction from others. A, the interviewee, found people taking picture of her without permission while we were walking down the Takeshita street. She showed a piece sign to the person. I was amazed how she accepts such other people's mean behavior.

Participants accept their eccentrics as it is and builds their own moral that their value is different from the external view of femininity and the harassments is a natural reaction. As we see in the previous Chapter, it is necessary to underline that participants are encapsulated by the ideal world they dream of. The concept of intertextuality allows us to reveal their realization of fantasy through the donning decora fashion. Unlike the original version of shojo culture, decora participants are visible, loud, and thus evoking attention. They are encapsulated in a way yet at the same time, spreading the landscape of "non-normal as normal". Their way of seeing world optimized the harsh reality, as they understood how unique they are, they can make sense of such violation.

In this regard, decora subculture differs from shojo subculture as they seek to the connection of their realization of fantasy and reality. It also relates to shojo subculture in that

participants build their own value within cocoon-like space.

This cocoon is not formed within the actual place and community but also in the virtual space and such sphere is more closely connect to participants' everyday life. The third finding was that people spread their everyday coordinate on social networking service. This is the way they obtain citizenship as a member of Hrajuku fashion in such virtual area. All of Decora participants have 4-5 twitter accounts and relates to Harajuku friends with one of them. They organize the follower based on the common interests. One tweets a number of times per a day and the timeline of twitter keep uploading at every second. A participant keeps watching pictures of excessive clothes and comments of embracement of their fashion. Pinterest is one of the social networking services that provides us with a number of photos sorted by related themes. I have heard others getting inspirations from Instagram by following other creative people.

It is noteworthy how participants narrate the harassment they have received in public space. They often make jokes of how they are harassed on streets and on the train. They put the laughter marks on remakes such as "Nobody is sitting beside me, even though the train is tightly packed", or "I was just told crazy by pedestrians". Finding humor in these situations is a way to distance themselves away from oppressive conditions. "Some kind of a space for breathing and maneuvering" (Vinthagen and Johansson, p.19, 2013). Through reading such comments on twitter, participants learn how they figure the situation, and situate themselves in the more harmless view

by making jokes. Participants poke fun at situations and they are not being threatened, hurt, or traumatized by such harassments and gaze. Hence participants refuse to let the normative power dominate over the participants. Not being effected by such harassment equals to not giving the gaze power. Instead, participants take power just like the interviewee A said “I have become strong only when I am donning this fashion. I became like Shinohara ... somehow feel brighter and energetic. I feel my feelings as a whole changing. I feel the switch turned on.”. This is the case in point in that ignorance/avoidance undermine the ideological power.

As for the discussion of shojo, I would like to extract some examples.

I: Is there any difference in feelings between when you are doing Decora and when you are not doing it?

J: Ah, what, like, I feel a little downheartedly. If I don't do it, I feel blue.

I: Oh I see. If you change your hair in black, will you feel different?

J: I think so.

This participant J later stated that “when she wears black, she feels depressed”, this type of remarks are often said such as “As winter comes, people wear black and white during spring. Somehow... I think they are like insects. (...) I hadn't cared about it but after started wearing colorful clothes, I felt like they are wearing uniforms. People wear the same kinds of clothes.” or in previous Chapter, C felt sick at clothes in UNIQLO. Participants wear such dress because it

creates their fantasy as well as it fits them, gives them comfort. In this point, we can look back to the notion of shojo in Chapter 2.3.2. shojo-sei (elements of shojo) comes from consumption, being in the shell, swinging between child and adult, or making connection among shojo. the behavior of Decora participants can be articulated thorough this notion of shojo. They reject the social expectations of donning feminine clothes, and wearing extremer and more unique clothes that is more close to their most comfortable ideal world. Moreover, they also reject fixation of a certain fashion style, creating multiple persona and creating the theme in line with their preferences. This whimsy practice can also signify elements of shojo. Avoiding identities, objectified at fixated self, they are sheltered in a safe comfortable place where the demanding power and social pressure of conforming to "adult-ness," cannot reach them in their haven.

Indeed, this is an act of sheltering the ideological sanctuary of femininity and pure childishness. It also cannot be acknowledged as subversive by observers. However, it is also the tactic that assures they are hidden or proved harmless to the society, so to avoid ostracization. This has enabled this subculture to survive in mainstream and continues to denote that sanctuaries and accomodations are a necessary process in this regard.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATIONS

This section first argue the conclusion that have been extracted from the findings to fulfill the research objectives and answer the research questions then provide my opinion of the topic. The latter section contains the recommendations and suggestions for the future research in young subculture in Japan.

Having done the research, I could capture the tactics of decora subculture. The fluidity of identity enabled them to play with their comfortable texts based on their own values and manners, and enjoy their own creation within the exclusive space like a cocoon, which is separated from the norm, and where different value systems work. I argue such space potentially empowers young women to stand against the imposed femininity and gender perspectives.

Decora subculture has grow in the district of Harajuku street where has been a vehicle for any fashion to flourish and young women have found the novel way of creating the alternative value in the oppositional position to conventional gender norms. I find out that the participats are not consuming and maintaining the decora subculture, rather they are producing the value and changing the styles dailily. Such transient nature makes Decora subculture strongly against to the

social value of durability. Before the society capture young women and categorize them into certain lives, they maximize their fleeting traits of *shojo* to fight against the harsh reality force them to pursuit the social role as a mother, wife or cheap labor. The participannts creates a coccon-like space and reject social norm of femininity. They creates themes everyday so that the participants cannot be tied up with a certain identity as they fleets the surface of the pre-existing texts. Such momentally movement ennables them to creates their own value.

As for the reflection on the researcher's role as insider, I could be involved in multiple activities which enabled me to closely look at how they perseve the violent pedestrians and how they gain pleasure by the compliments from little children. As a 25-year-old female researcher, I could listen to their stories just like their older sister and gain trusts. This helped me have interview with them and make more connections from those whom I am already friends with. Meanwhie, as I was strongly connected to the community, I had hard time getting away from them. I may caused some awkward feelings for the participants as I leave the community. It is because the community is tied under only one condition; wearing Decora fashion. Some people do not like the former participants who quit donning Decora fashion. Since I also stopped wearing Decora clothes, I only had to leave the community.

For the future scholars in young subculture, I would like to suggest that shedding the light on male side of Decora fashion. I did not take up this issue in my thesis yet there are some male

participants in this subculture. A designer of Harajuku fashion told me that young men in Harajuku has been attracted by kawaii stuff and consume frilled-ribbon dress just like women. I believe there is an interesting play of gender in the relationship between male and female in Decora subculture.

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APPENDIX

Picture 1. Decora (Decorative Girls)



The left and right pictures (Source: Fashion Japan Decora. Deprived on January 6th 2015 from <http://www.japanesestreets.com/market/Decora>)

The middle picture was photographed by the researcher on September 7th 2014 in Harajuku.

Picture 2 DC Brand.



The left Picture is the reprehensive style of COMME des GARÇONS, and right side one is created by Youji Yamamoto, both of which are the most popular DC brand in 80s.

Source:

Left Picture: DC brand. Deprived July 20th 2014 from

<http://www.officej1.com/s50years/keimyou27.htm>

Right Picture: It has been 30 years have passed since Youji Yamamoto and his Fellows

appeared: The new generations are taking over their black impulse. Deprived July 20th 2014

from http://www.asahi.com/culture/news_culture/TKY201112140412.html

Picture 3. *Gyaru* or *Bodi-Kon Gyaru* (body conscious gal)



In 1980s, when rapid economic growth in Japan was believed to last forever, office lady and female college students went out for night club and dancing. They are called Gyaru or Bodi-Kon Gyaru since they were wearing body conscious clothes that tightly fit to their bodyline and emphasized their sexual attractiveness (Kinsella, 2013, pp.60-61).

Source:

Left picture: BodyKon. Deprived July 21st 2014 from <http://ameblo.jp/vador/entry-11530917016.html>

Right picture: Juliana Tokyo. Deprived July 21st 2014 from <http://d.hatena.ne.jp/satokazu116/20121119/p3>

Picture 4. *Takenoko Zoku*. (Baby Bamboo Tribe)



Takenoko Zoku emerged in the early 1980s. in those days, “the main street in Harajuku, Omotesandō, was declared hoko ten(‘pedestrian haven’) and cars were banned every Sunday”

Takenoko Zoku, ”(p)erforming choreographed dance moves for hours on end at Yoyogi Park, they invented a vibrant sphere of inclusion where their constructed self-image made them intensely visible, but also kept them distanced from their surroundings and from the audiences they drew.

Quickly becoming a popular tourist attraction, they translated the state of being under perpetual scrutiny into the pleasure of being seen” (Groom, 2011, p.191)

Picture 5 *Kogyaru* (Little gal)



They are characterized as wearing school uniform in a stylish way, loose socks, mini-skirt and sexual deviance (Kinsella 2013, p.60).

Source:

Left picture: Nippon of the day. Deprived July 21st 2014 from

<http://www.pinterest.com/sozaiyakoaki/nippon-of-the-day/>

Right picture: My opinion on Kogyaru Fashion (Kogyaru Kei Fasshion nituiteno Watashi no

Iken). Deprived July 21st 2014 from <http://akb48entertainmenews.blog.so->

net.ne.jp/archive/c2304875360-1)

Picture 6. Amuro Namie and *Amura*



Amuro Namie (shown in the left picture), a solo singer, has become popular since 1995. Her official profile says “Namie’s fashion, hairstyle and makeup became a social phenomenon as many young Japanese girls wanted to literally become Namie”(Namie Amuro Official Website: <http://namieamuro.jp/profile/english.html>). Those girls were called Amura as showing in the right picture.

Source;

(Left Picture: CD news. Deprived July 21st 2014 from

<http://www.cdjournal.com/main/news/amuro-namie/50563>

Right Picture: my little joy. Deprived July 21st 2014 from

<http://www.dcllog.jp/marineco/ma/201311/>)

Picture 7 Shinohara Tomoe (left) and Shinora (right)



Source:

Left picture: GRE News. Deprived July 21st from <http://guri01.com/shinoharatomoe-yuumin-259>

Right Picture: GRE news. Deprived July 221st from <http://guri01.com/shinoharatomoe-yuumin-259>

259

Left Picture: minp!. Deprived July 21st from <http://www.minp-matome.jp/pub/52B65995-9D99->

4009-96B7-EC3EF6E599C8/2)

Picture 8 Zipper, KERA and CUTiE





Source:

Left Picture(Zipper): ZOZO people. Deprived July 21st 2014 from

<http://people.zozo.jp/candystripper/diary/3497959?>

Right Picture (KERA): Listen Flavor. Deprived July 21st 2014 from

<http://item.rakuten.co.jp/listen-f/c/0000000404/>

Bottom center Picture (CUTiE): garitto. Deprived July 21st from

<http://www.garitto.com/product/23559447>

Picture 9 Harajuku Fashion



Picture 9-1 Lolita



Picture 9-2 Punkish



Picture 9-3 Tribal style



Picture 9-4 Fairy style



Picture 9-5 Cross-dresser (Josou Danshi 女装男子)

More styles are introduced in the below source.

Source:

All pictures: Tokyo Style Areana. Deprived July 21st 2014 from <http://www.style-arena.jp/>

Picture 10. *Gomimori* (trashy decoration)



It is a picture taken by the author Nakao Atsumi (the model is also the author). Putting the bunch of hairclips on bangs is called *Gomimori* as the picture shows.

Picture 11 Illustrations associated with Decora



Source: Shima Minami's Blog, deprived on May 10th 2016 from <http://commelui.com/blog-category-5.html>

Picture 12. *Menhera-Katto* (Mental Health Illness Hair Style)



 Follow

メンヘラカットって何だよって
よく突っ込まれる。

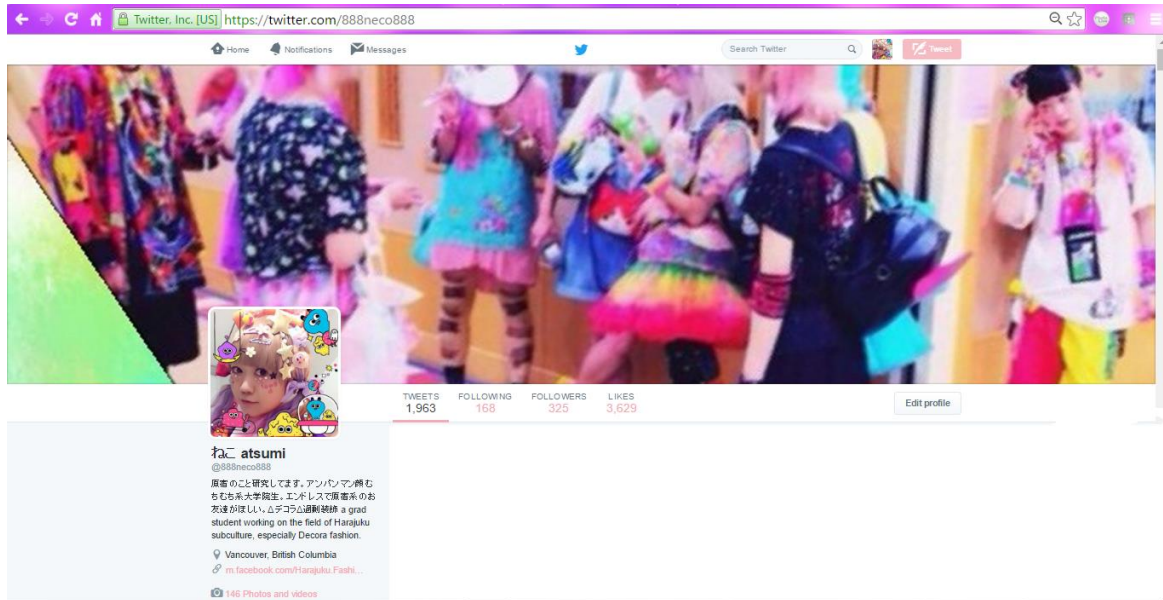
ウチが勝手に姫カットを
メンヘラカットって言ってるだけさ～

She is saying “People ask me what the *Menhera Katto* is, I am calling Hime-cut (having the thick bangs around face) *Menhera Katto* by my own.”

Source: Her twitter, deprived on May 10 2016 from

<https://twitter.com/kimokimochan/status/684728137922383876>

Picture 13 Twitter account of the researcher.



In the profile, I wrote “I research on Harajuku. *Anpanman* (meaning, rounded) face, chubby graduate student. I want friends endlessly. Decora, *Kajo-shoshoku* (Japanese name of Decora), (from here, in English) a grad student working on the field of Harajuku subculture, especially Decora fashion.”

Picture 14 Yoshino from *Date a Live* (2011~)



Source: The official web site of *Date a Live* (http://date-a-live-anime.com/character/character_yoshino.html) Deprived on June 11th 2016.

Picture 15 C's fashion theme "quick, wanna go to two dimensional quick"



Source: Her twitter (<https://twitter.com/colomoooo/status/577691996631>)

Deprived on June 11th 2016.

Picture 16 Kyary-Pamyu-Pamyu



She is said to be a pioneer of Harajuku kawaii fashion.

When I was having a conversation with the Harajuku brand owner, he said Harajuku fashion has become more popular thanks to Kyari-Pamyu-Pamyu.

(Source: Kyary Pamyu Pamyu Official Home Page <http://kyary.asobisystem.com/discography/>)

Deprived on June 13th 2016.

Picture 17 Pannier



Decora participants often wear pannier as it has a lot of colorful color variations.

Deprived on June 14 2016 from <http://store.shopping.yahoo.co.jp/tinkle/KIDS67022.html>

The interview questions from August 2014

1. Age, family member, occupation

年齢、家族構成、職業

2. When/Why did you started Decora? (What motivated you to do Decora)?

いつ、なぜデコラを始めたのですか？

3. What do your family or friends outside of Harajuku think about your doing Decora?

原宿に関係していないあなたの友達や家族はあなたがデコラをしていることをどう考えていますか

4. Do you feel a sense of belonging to Decora community?

デコラのコミュニティの中でどのような所属意識をもっていますか

5. Do you like Harajuku friends more than your daily life friends? If so, why?

デコラの友達のほうが他の友達より好きですか。もしそうならば、なぜでしょうか。

6. Do you have different feelings when you do Decora and when you do not? And if so,

how so?

デコラをする時とそうではないときではどのような気持ちの違いがありますか。

7. How often do you wear dress like that? How do you characterize your style, what is your core policy?

どのくらいの頻度で原宿系の恰好をしますか。また、あなたのスタイルの特徴やポリ

シーは何ですか。

8. How do you get that clothes, items and how do you select what to wear? Do you copy other Decora people's style?

どうやって洋服を購入しますか。何をどうやって着ますか。他のデコラの子たちのスタイルを参考にしたりしますか。

9. What kinds of attitudes do you see in other people towards you when you are doing Decora?

デコラをしているとき、他の人々はあなたに対しどのような態度をしますか。

10. If you were doing different style before, what was it? and is there possibility you will stop doing Decora? If so, what is the reason?

以前、今とは違うファッションをしていましたか。将来的にあなたがデコラをやめる可能性はありますか。もしあるとするならそれはなぜですか。

11. What do you think of the mains stream fashion such as conservative clothes?

メインストリームの恰好、たとえばコンサバ系 ファッションに関してどう思いますか。

12. How many twitter accounts do you have? Which one do you use the most frequently?

いくつツイッターアカウントを持っていますか。また、どれを一番よく使いますか。

- 12.2 What is the difference between them? Is there different target/function?

それらの中の違いは何でしょうか。ターゲットや機能の違いは何でしょうか。

13 Do you want to obtain as many as followers possible? If so, how are you trying to obtain them? Do you want to be famous? Do you respect a person who has more followers than you?

できるだけたくさんフォロワーを得たいですか。もしそうなら、どうやって増やそうとしていますか。有名になりたいと思いますか。自分より多くフォロワーのいる人はすごいと思いますか。

14 (If one is a student), what kind job would you like to work for? What is your life plan?

(もし学生なら)将来どんな仕事がしたいですか。どのような人生設計を描いていますか。

15 Do you have a boyfriend? Does he know you wearing Decora? What does he think about your Decora style?

恋人はいますでしょうか。彼はデコラをしていることを知っていますか。それについて何と言っていますか。