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IT'S MY PASSION, THAT'S MY MISSION TO DECIDE, I’M GOING WORLDWIDE: THE COSMOPOLITANISM OF GLOBAL FANS OF JAPANESE POPULAR CULTURE

A Thesis Presented

by

JINNI PRADHAN

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Department of Communication
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DEDICATION

To my uncle, who always believed I would become the United States Ambassador to Japan someday.

To all those fans who have been dismissed and criticized for simply being fans.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis initially began in my mind's eye in 2005 when I was encouraged to discuss Japanese pop idols in an academic context by David Slater at Sophia University. Over the years, I have developed my ideas both in academic and non-academic venues with a myriad of people, including Stephen Roddy, Vamsee Juluri, and Nikki Barbeau. In terms of this particular piece of work, I am eternally grateful to Emily West for supporting me from the very beginning with the pilot study that I developed in her *Audience Research and Cultural Studies* course; without her, this thesis would have never gotten beyond the idea stage. Anne Ciecko and Jarice Hanson also have been incredibly helpful in refining my ideas around Asian media studies and Internet research respectively.

Thanks to my friends and family as well, all of whom put up with my various fandoms for so long, indulged me, and tried to understand when they really did not care. You all wondered how in the world I had gotten interested in this "Japanese stuff" and because you made me wonder too, I now have this thesis to answer your question.

Finally, thank you to all the fans in the online English-speaking overseas JE fandom—especially my personal fandom friends on Twitter and those fans whom I interacted with via my academic LiveJournal who were always there to help me out when I needed to confirm, deny, or speculate about specific fandom detail. Without your help, this thesis would not exist; I hope it able to do the fandom justice.
This study examines the academic concept of *pop cosmopolitanism*—an interest in global popular culture that leads to start of a global perspective and provides an escape route out of the parochialism of local community/culture—as posited by Henry Jenkins in its lived, experienced context. The online English-speaking overseas fandom of the Japanese male pop idol talent agency, Johnny & Associates, framed as a community of pop cosmopolitans, serves a case study to evaluate this concept. These global fans demonstrate through their engagement with and investment in a form of Japanese popular culture that they are able to obtain a competency in Japanese culture that would have not otherwise been available to them. The obtainment of this cultural competency is driven by the personal notion of fandom, with emotional affect and identification between the fan and the fan object at its core, and access to new media technologies such as the Internet. However, it is noted that Jenkins’s original definition of pop cosmopolitanism does not account completely for the complexity of the lived experience and a distinction of *local pop cosmopolitanism* and *comprehensive pop cosmopolitanism* is necessary. Furthermore, the pop cosmopolitans studied discount the idea of escape embedded into
Jenkins's definition and instead emphasize the positive influence of their pop cosmopolitanism on their own (fandom) identity construction.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</strong></td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>ABSTRACT</strong></td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>LIST OF FIGURES</strong></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>CHAPTER</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION TO GLOBAL FANDOM</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meet the Pop Cosmopolitan</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The English-Speaking Overseas Fandom of Johnny &amp; Associates: A Case Study</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Japan as a Cultural Exporter: the Expansion of Global Fandom</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>THE SECRET CODE: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY OVERVIEW</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Western Perspective: Shifting Paradigms of Fandom Studies</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Asian Perspective: Fandom Studies and Transnational Audiences</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fandom and the Internet</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Global Presence of Japanese Popular Culture</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>SAY WHAT YOU WILL: METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Why Online Fan-Ethnography and Autoethnography?</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conducting Online Fan-Ethnography</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conducting Autoethnography</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>THE AUTHENTIC DREAM BOYS</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I Like Humans, Not Idols</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fans and Idols Growing Up Together</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feeding Emotional Consumption</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elite Celebrities versus Friendly Idols</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>MS. OR MR. TRAVELING FAN</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pop Cosmopolitans Crafted by Circumstances and Technologies</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Refocusing and Re-informing Our Japanese Perspective</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Escape Route or Doorway to Discovery?</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

viii
6. IT'S MY POP COSMOPOLITAN SOUL .................................................................90

7. NEVER ENDING GLOBAL STORY .....................................................................103

   Pop Cosmopolitanism: To Japan and Beyond ..................................................... 103
   Further Developing a New Sense of Cosmopolitanism ........................................ 108

AFTERWORD .......................................................................................................... 111

APPENDICES

A. MONITORED JOHNNY’S FANDOM LIVEJOURNAL COMMUNITIES ..... 112
B. ONLINE SURVEY QUESTIONS ............................................................................. 113
C. SURVEYED FANS’ COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN ..................................................... 115
D. INTERVIEW GUIDING QUESTIONS ................................................................. 116

BIBLIOGRAPHY ....................................................................................................... 117
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Johnny's idol group, KAT-TUN, during their 2008 &quot;Queen of Pirates&quot; concert tour.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Bar graph of survey responses for &quot;How long have you been a fan of Johnny's Entertainment?&quot;</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Arashi's Sakurai Sho posing for magazine <em>GQ</em> as their man of the year for 2009.</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Arashi's Sakurai Sho caught in a candid shot by a magazine during a concert.</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. With their all-natural, boys next door image, Arashi is currently the most popular Johnny's idol group in Japan and amongst surveyed English-speaking fans.</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Kanjani8 is beloved by fans for their honesty and their camaraderie.</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Screen capture from an episode of Japanese television drama <em>Minami-kun no Koibito</em> (2005) starring Arashi's Ninomiya Kazunari with culture notes from subber.</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The traditional image of <em>daruma</em>.</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. My favorite, manga-stylized image of Sailor Pluto.</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO GLOBAL FANDOM

Meet the Pop Cosmopolitan

At seven years old, I was a huge fan of the controversial American children's television show, *Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers*. Even though I was a child, I knew it was originally a Japanese television show from a genre called *sentai*. My eye was carefully trained, able to tell the difference between American fight scene footage and Japanese fight scene footage as the show often blended the two.

From those early days of my childhood, I have cultivated a long-standing interest in Japanese media—from *anime* (Japanese animation) such as *Sailor Moon* to Japanese pop music and celebrities. My leisure pursuit of Japanese media led me to eventually delve deeper into Japanese culture, not only studying it academically, but visiting and living in Japan as well. Henry Jenkins would consider me a "pop cosmopolitan"—a fan whose embrace of and investment in global popular culture provides her with the beginnings of a global perspective and "an escape route out of the parochialism of her local community" (Jenkins, 2006b, p.152).

I first became a pop cosmopolitan through the appropriation and localization of a Japanese television show via American media. The same can be said for the current generation of American youth who grew up during the Japanese *anime* boom in the United States, watching dubbed *anime* such as *Pokemon* and *Yu-Gi-Oh* after school and on Saturday mornings. However, with the advent of new media such as the Internet, pop

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1 For the purpose of this thesis, the *nihon-shiki* style of romanization (transliteration of Japanese into the Roman alphabet) of Japanese has been used when applicable. This is to better reflect the way, in the following chapters, that fans learn and use Japanese. Exceptions to this are words that are commonly used in English and the names of Johnny & Associates idols which have their own common transliterations.
cosmopolitans are no longer reliant on mainstream media to bring them their taste of global popular culture. Pop cosmopolitans themselves are able to further their own exposure and choose from what the world has to offer (limited to what is on the Internet, of course) in terms of popular cultures. In turn, they are able to participate in the creation of global popular culture, bringing specific products into the spotlight through their consumption.

As the idea of the pop cosmopolitan itself is a creation of academic research and the majority of global popular culture consumers have never heard of this term, this thesis specifically addresses the accuracy and utility of Jenkins's definition of the pop cosmopolitan and their cosmopolitanism. My primary concern driving this research was to discover if those who qualify as pop cosmopolitans recognize the specific manner in which they consume, despite their unfamiliarity with the idea of *pop cosmopolitanism*—in a sense, how the theorized concept of pop cosmopolitanism holds up in regards to the lived practicalities of pop cosmopolitanism. Do pop cosmopolitans themselves see the connection between their consumption of global popular culture and having a broader global perspective? Furthermore, do pop cosmopolitans recognize their consumption as "an escape from parochialism" as Jenkins describes?

**The English-Speaking Overseas Fandom of Johnny & Associates: A Case Study**

In order to investigate these questions regarding the lived experience of the pop cosmopolitan, I conducted a case study on English-speaking overseas fans of Japanese celebrities belonging to the male idol talent agency, Johnny & Associates. Before delving into why these fans in particular were considered in conjunction with these fans...
questions though, it is important to introduce the fandom that these fans claim as their own.

Riding a wave of mainstream popularity for the past twenty plus years in Japan, the talent agency of Johnny & Associates actually has been around since the 1960s, named after the founder, Johnny H. Kitagawa. A Japanese-American born in Los Angeles in 1931, Kitagawa migrated to Tokyo after serving as a United States' soldier in World War II (Stevens, 2008). In 1963, he created his talent agency, producing pop idols with the first group, Johnnys, in the early 1960s. Over time, Johnny & Associates has come to be known for producing popular acts and now is an all-male talent agency with fourteen currently debuted (have released a CD single or album) musical solo artists/groups:

Kondo Masahiko

Shounentai, SMAP, TOKIO, V6, KinKi Kids, Arashi,
Tackey&Tsubasa, NEWS, Kanjani8, KAT-TUN, Golf and Mike, Hey!Say!JUMP, and Nakayama Yuma with B.I. Shadow.

While the male idol groups that come out of Johnny & Associates (hereafter, Johnny's) certainly bear surface similarities to their boy band counterparts in the United States such as the New Kids on the Block, N*SYNC, and the Backstreet Boys (and some overseas English-speaking fans even use the Western "boy band" moniker to describe Johnny's idol groups), there are some distinct differences. Johnny's is viewed as an "idol

---

4 Listed in order of debut, from earliest to most recent. "Because of the institutionalized senpai kouhai (senior/junior hierarchical) relationships found in many Japanese organizations, Johnny's groups are introduced according to their age – the newer the groups, generally, the younger the age of its members" (Stevens, 2008, p. 55).

5 The Japanese order for names with family name listed first is employed for names of Japanese celebrities in this thesis; names of Japanese academics will be written using the English order for names.

6 Golf and Mike is an exceptional case as a Thai duo that is only produced and managed by Johnny & Associates in Japan; they have separate management for their main work in Thailand.

7 The debuted status of Nakayama Yuma w/ B.I. Shadow is unclear at this time, but since they were considered a debuted group when this research was conducted, they will be considered as such for the purposes of this thesis.

8 The use of "Johnny's" as an abbreviation for Johnny & Associates is taken from the common shortening of Japanese name of the talent agency in Japanese popular media to Jyaniizu (Johnny's).
factory" by many because of how boys are essentially bred to become idols, working their way up through the ranks (Cahoon, 2005). Young boys, some as young as eight or nine-years old, apply to join the talent agency and go through an audition process. If they pass the audition, they join Johnny's as a Junior, an idol-in-training. It is as a Johnny's Junior that these young boys learn the tricks of the trade, "first [performing] as backup dancers to established acts, giving them the opportunity to acclimatize to the industry before the pressure is put on them to perform in the spotlight" (Stevens, 2008, p.75). Usually, Juniors who manage to become popular amongst audiences move on to be placed into permanent groups that officially debut with a CD release and all the trimmings—their own official fan club, concert tours, television shows, magazine serials, and more. In many ways, this factory-production style of Johnny's mimics the star system of early Hollywood, where the star system "never create[d] the star but it propose[d] the
candidate for 'election', and help[ed] to retain the favor of the 'electors''' (Alberoni quoted in Dyer, 1998, p.19). In Johnny's, it is those idols who are made popular by fans who eventually rise to the top.

The concept of the idol in Japanese music was truly consolidated into a recognizable genre only in the 1980s, bringing together personality, image, music, and commercialism. As Carolyn S. Stevens (2008) explains, an

...inclusive and provocative method of categorization [of the idol] is the performer's level of media saturation. In the 1980s, Japanese idols began the practice of extreme media exposure in the domestic market, which both intensified and limited their success; this continues to define the idol today. [...] Idols did not only sing but also worked as actors, models, talk show hosts, and commercial spokespeople, suggesting that time spent in front of the television camera rather than in the recording studio or the concert hall is the definitive attribute of an idol. (p. 49-50)

While the 1980s were mainly dominated by female solo idols and idol groups, in the 1990s, Johnny's idols came to be the epitome of this concept, "trained" not only to be music performers, but to have various skills that can be utilized in other areas of the entertainment industry. This differs from celebrities in the Western context who "become popular because of their outstanding personal attributes"—they are skilled performers or exquisitely beautiful and it is these few, particular attributes they hone to perfection (Aoyagi, 2005, p. 67). Johnny's idols are the opposite—hardly considered the best in all of the various roles they assume in the entertainment industry, but definitely amongst the most popular entertainers in all of Japan due to their extensive media exposure.

The most popular of music celebrities often trod the line between "something authentically wonderful and significant" and "something manufactured and created by an industry" and the same goes for Japanese idols like Johnny's idols as well (Marshall, 2006, p. 505). For artists such as The Beatles, their authenticity as musicians derived
from the fact that their music was their own, with Paul McCartney and John Lennon as the singer-songwriters and the group as a whole playing their own instruments (ibid).

Authenticity was understood similarly in regard to Japanese music artists as well. In the 1970s, music artists from the "New Music" genre were seen to be more artistically honest and authentic because they could write and produce their own music (Stevens, 2008, p. 47). However, in an almost oppositional way, the humanity and authenticity of the idol in the 1980's came to be constructed around her or his musical imperfection—the very skill that authenticated other musicians—demonstrated through the inability to sing well, as the idol was otherwise "manufactured perfection" (ibid, p. 50).

This emphasis on the idol's media exposure and the establishment of their human authenticity over their musical authenticity is because in Japan, idols are produced to be "life-sized" (toushindai) rather than larger than life, "familiar personalities rather than outstanding stars" (Aoyagi, 2005, p. 67). Idols may be perfect in their physical appearance (and with Johnny's idols, this is certainly not always the case), but with their constant media presence and their imperfect humanity, they are never out of the reach of their fans. Aimed at fans similar in age to themselves, idols function as companions for their fans, reflecting the reality of that generation. Thus it is important that Johnny's idols, too, walk with their fans rather than ahead of them.

**Japan as a Cultural Exporter: the Expansion of Global Fandom**

Japan as a cultural exporter is a fairly recent phenomenon within the past twenty years with anime, manga (Japanese comics), and even film expanding beyond their native market and reaching new popular heights globally. Finding subtitled anime DVDs and translated manga in one's local public library is hardly unusual nowadays and Jenkins
(2006b) attributes this fact to the industriousness of those Western\(^9\) anime and manga fans, who through their niche consumption as pop cosmopolitans, eventually helped its popularity grow enough to be picked up by Western mainstream popular culture.

However, Japan's music has yet to make as big of an impact. Despite Japan being home to the second largest music industry in the world, its industry is still quite localized in comparison to the United States (Stevens, 2008). Japanese popular music, if anything, is considered niche outside of East Asia; it is probably difficult to find if a person does not live in a city with stores that carry imported Japanese cultural goods.

During this research, 860 overseas English-speaking Johnny's fans were surveyed online anonymously and it was found that the majority of these fans originated from fifty-one non-Asian countries\(^{10}\) (sixty-five percent), with nearly forty percent of said non-Asian fans from the United States alone. Less than fifteen percent of these fans professed to speak fluent Japanese; the overwhelming majority of these Japanese speakers were not native speakers of the language. Culturally and linguistically, the majority of English-speaking overseas Johnny's fans are not native to Japan. Unlike anime or manga, access to Johnny's idols and the products they are associated with (music, television shows, magazines) is not readily available in their everyday offline lives. Instead, English-speaking overseas Johnny's fans are consuming their idols online. It is these fans in particular who are the epitome of what it is to be on the cutting edge as a pop cosmopolitan—rather than waiting for global popular culture to come to them, they are

\(^9\) For lack of a better word, this proposal uses "Western"/"West" to indicate the countries of Europe, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. It is primarily a linguistic/cultural-based designation and does not indicate any of the power dynamics that are often associated with the term in comparison to the East.

\(^{10}\) This counts all countries not considered a part of the Asian subcontinent, including the large island archipelago nations of Indonesia and the Philippines.
seeking it out on the Internet and finding it themselves. Therefore, to test Jenkins's account of the pop cosmopolitan and the idea of global popular culture consumption as an escape from a person's culture, I believed it was appropriate to look at this group of people who put in more effort than the "average" pop cosmopolitan to find their escape.

Not only can English-speaking overseas Johnny's fandom be thought of as a gathering of "advanced" pop cosmopolitans, but it is an anomaly within academic studies of fandom also. There is an abundance of research on fans of culturally native media texts, whether they are Japanese fans of Japanese rock bands (Stevens, 2004) or American fans of popular daytime soap operas (Baym, 2000). In the Asian context, more recent research has examined transnational media flows, such as in the case of the circulation of Japanese and Korean television dramas in other East Asian countries (Iwabuchi, 2002; Ko, 2004; Lee, 2008; Leung, 2008; MacLachlan and Chua, 2004; Mori, 2008). There is little published on fans of non-native media texts—though much as been done on the rise of Japanese popular culture in the Euro-American context and its effects on media institutions and global popular culture, there has been a lack of primary focus on the fans themselves. A case study of this particular fandom is not only beneficial to the more thorough understanding of what a pop cosmopolitan is, but also sheds light on an underrepresented, but growing area of fandom studies.

Globally, with the advent of new technologies, the cross-cultural consumption of media and culture has become more prevalent. On YouTube, a person can find the music video for the latest music release of a Johnny's idol group, episodes of the newest Japanese television drama that a popular Johnny's idol is starring in, and even recordings of the most recent airings of a Johnny's radio show. More often than enough, these media
already have subtitles—English, Chinese, Spanish, Arabic, French, Thai, the list goes on. Use Google and search the names of the most popular Japanese idols in English, and a slew of websites, pictures, and videos will appear in the results. Fans worldwide are consuming and discussing these distinctly Japanese idols. Given the ease with which once national media texts are able to find global audiences via the Internet, it is important to think about not only how native audiences are consuming their media, but how culturally non-native audiences are consuming these globalizing media texts.

In today's world, thanks to new media technologies, the views and beliefs that individuals are constructing in their everyday lives do not necessarily consist of just their physical surroundings anymore. They can explore the Internet, which enables them to reach across the world to encounter cultures, people and media that then can be incorporated into and change their everyday. Through this thesis' case study of pop cosmopolitanism as enacted by English-speaking overseas Johnny's fans, it will highlight and create a better understanding of the experiences of these media consumers who are on the front lines of turning what is global into the local and what is local into the global.
CHAPTER 2
THE SECRET CODE: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY OVERVIEW

"A beholder who lacks the specific code feels lost in a chaos of sounds and rhythms, colours and lines, without rhyme or reason."

(Bourdieu, 1984, p. 2)

While questioning a theoretical framework developed by a fandom studies scholar, this thesis is actually quite interdisciplinary in nature, working more at the intersections of Asian media studies and fandom studies. Therefore, it is important to establish where this thesis stands amongst the research in the fields from which it draws. As Bourdieu notes, it is difficult to understand and appreciate something if you do not have the specific code with which to decipher it, and so the chapter aims to provide the code that informs this thesis.

The Western Perspective: Shifting Paradigms of Fandom Studies

Fandom studies as a field within cultural studies came to prominence in the late 1980s, founded by the ethnographic research of such scholars as Janice Radway and John Fiske who were shedding light on the idea of an active media audience. In the early 1990s, Henry Jenkins published what is now considered to be one of the seminal texts of the field, Textual Poachers (1992). Setting himself apart from prior research that had been done by scholars who were not directly implicated in their work, Jenkins sought to alter the discourse on the active audience "based on insider knowledge of what it is to be a fan...to articulate a different perspective that comes out of lived experience and situated knowledge" (Jenkins, 2006a, p. 12). That is his academic reasoning, but as noted by Hills (2002) and Sandvoss (2005), Textual Poachers at times rings as a defensive text that justifies and celebrates the active, productive fan against the stereotypical, negative
images of the fan as the perpetrator in mass media and as the passive victim in early mass communication scholarship. Therefore, it is noted that much early scholarship in fandom studies, including Jenkins's, has a political valence, giving voice to fans as a marginalized social group (Sandvoss 2005).

Though Textual Poachers was one of his earliest works, Jenkins continues to look at fans from a personal understanding as a fan himself, highlighting their positive, productive aspects in his work over the years. In "Pop Cosmopolitanism" (2006b), Jenkins situates his work on participatory culture in American popular culture within a global context, citing that "to write about American popular culture today demands a global framework" (p. 153). Jenkins focuses on two main concepts, corporate convergence and grassroots convergence, as the forces which influence the way in which cultural goods are circulated around the world, allowing for the creation of cosmopolitanism through popular culture.

It is in Jenkins's conception of grassroots convergence ("the increasingly central roles that digitally empowered consumers play in shaping the production, distribution, and reception of media content") where the pop cosmopolitan can be found (2006b, p. 155). He spotlights two groups in his article, the desi (the South Asian diasporic community) and their influence on bringing Bollywood and Bhangra music into Western markets and the otaku (Western anime fans) and their efforts to make Japanese anime and manga more accessible. In both cases, the media texts of Bollywood/Bhangra music and anime were originally imported to the West for those of the Asian diaspora. Eventually, they found popularity with niche groups of non-Asian fans who made the effort to go searching for the music or anime. As niche groups consumed these texts and helped
spread their popularity, commercial interests swooped in to take advantage of these texts' growing status. Jenkins determines that pop cosmopolitans (not the desi who are culturally connected to Bollywood/Bhangra music, but those like otaku, of which the majority are non-Asian) "tap into the coolness they now associate with other parts of the world" to expand their horizons away from their everyday surroundings (ibid, p. 164). Through their grassroots methods, pop cosmopolitans are able to construct their own understandings of globalization aside from the dominant paradigms that mass media circulate.

The term cosmopolitanism itself has a history of being linked to the culture of the urban centers, often conflated with high culture. As noted by Jenkins in his definition of the modern cosmopolitan, cosmopolitanism is also strongly associated with tastes for international forms of culture, such as food, dance, music, art and literature (ibid, p. 156). Cosmopolitans were viewed to have high cultural capital because they had access to these rare forms of global culture that were not readily available outside the urban centers as well as access to specialized education that enabled them to appreciate global culture. They are often associated with mobility as well, always traveling and physically immersing themselves in global culture (Hannerz, 1996).

While drawing from this initial notion of the cosmopolitan, Jenkins's pop cosmopolitan is more complex because it blurs the distinction between what is considered to be low culture and high culture through issues of access. Not only is global popular culture—that is, mass or low culture—connected to a development of broader international views and tastes, but new media technologies increase the accessibility of global popular culture much more than ever before. However, as these global popular
cultures are often not native to their consumers, some level of specialized education is still required to properly appreciate them. In this way, both the cosmopolitan and the pop cosmopolitan distinguish themselves from others through their consumption practices and also are able to find solidarity with those who share their tastes and interests (Bourdieu, 1984; Jenkins, 2006b).

While cosmopolitanism is often defined by consumption—the ability to access and appreciate international culture—these consumer habits are sustained by a specific mindset as well. "A more genuine cosmopolitanism is first of all an orientation, a willingness to engage with the Other" (Hannerz, 1996, p.103). Cosmopolitans are active participants, much more oriented toward mastery of cultures through immersion and experience as opposed to passive, picture-taking tourists, who are exploring cultures, but always one step removed and still based in their culture of origin. In this desire and ability to immerse in, and essentially surrender to, an "alien" culture, Hannerz argues that cosmopolitans reassert their mastery over their culture of origin. Cosmopolitans can possess the alien culture(s), but it cannot possess them as they always have the ability to "go home". Therefore, this willingness to embrace the Other is related to the self as well—"[c]osmopolitanism often has a narcissistic streak; the self is constructed in the space where cultures mirror one another" (ibid, p. 103).

Jenkins never really delves into this more psychological understanding of the pop cosmopolitan and as mentioned above, generally tends to have a more politicized understanding of fandom, highlighting and celebrating fans' agency. Of course, this is reflective of the period of fandom studies in which his work originated; he was in a position where he had to defend himself as an academic-fan and justify why fans were
worthy to be considered by the academy. It is the work that Jenkins put into legitimizing fandom studies within cultural studies that now allows a new generation of scholars such as Matt Hills and Cornel Sandvoss to take for granted the need to validate their study of fans and to ask different, more pointed and personalized questions about fandom.

At the time of his writing *Fans* (2005), Sandvoss notes that the operating, academic definition of "fandom does not necessarily include all fans and their activities, but rather focuses on specific social and cultural interactions, institutions and communities that have formed through the close interaction of committed groups of fans in a subcultural context" (p. 5). With a broad understanding of fandom as the state of *being* a fan, Sandvoss finds studies on fandom communities to be problematic as they fail to examine the self and identity construction in relation to popular culture. Clearly influenced by Bourdieu, Sandvoss views fan consumption as how "one's identity is communicated and assessed" (Sandvoss, 2005, p. 2). He urges for a move away from individual studies of fandoms that reduce each one to their unique qualities and instead emphasizes looking at the common themes around the interaction between fans and fandom objects, while still paying attention to detail.

By explaining fandom through social terms rather than psychological ones, Hills (2002) stresses that Jenkins takes an "anti-psychological stance" in his conception of fandom. While he appreciates that Jenkins is writing from the academic-fan perspective, Hills points out that Jenkins tends to favor his academic identity in his research. Therefore, instead of fandom as "a cultural object which is to be understood and represented", it becomes "a community and a term which must be translated into the shape which will allow it to act on the academic community" (Hills, 2002, p. 10). This
warping of fandom to fit the sensitivities and value system of academia so that it can be considered academically "appropriate" is one that Hills does not condone. That is to say that fandom loses its autonomy to determine itself due to Jenkins and his contemporaries' efforts to legitimize and represent the fan in academic circles.

Jenkins's initial construction of pop cosmopolitan came from a desire to try and understand how the landscape of American popular culture has changed with the introduction of Asian popular cultures. His definition of the pop cosmopolitan as "someone whose embrace of global popular media represents an escape route out of the parochialism of her [or his] local community" gives a sense of empowerment as his use of "escape route" demonstrates that a person is able to gain an ability to "break free" (ibid, p. 152). Pop cosmopolitans are empowered because they are the ones who find these global popular cultures like anime first and the media conglomerates then take advantage and capitalize upon their findings. In his analysis, Jenkins is always focused on the societal implications of the change that pop cosmopolitanism has brought to forms of American popular culture and mass media.

Similarly, Cornel Sandvoss approaches the relationship of the fan and their object of fandom rooted in emotional consumption (Sandvoss's basic definition of fandom) as reflective of the greater "conflicting forces of modern consumption" (Sandvoss, 2005, p. 165). In considering this relationship of consumption however, Sandvoss focuses on it at an affective, individualized level. Jenkins and Sandvoss clearly are in agreement on the importance of examining the forces behind fandom, recognizing its larger reflections and influences on society, but approach fandom itself from different levels of understanding. In this thesis, Jenkins provides the outline of how the pop cosmopolitanism is applied to
the greater mechanisms of popular and media cultures and their consumers. However, it is Sandvoss's theoretical framework on fandom itself as a kind of personalized and reflective relationship that allows for the thorough investigation of the practical, lived underpinnings of pop cosmopolitanism in the overseas English-speaking fandom of Johnny's idols.

**The Asian Perspective: Fandom Studies and Transnational Audiences**

The above discussion on the shifting paradigms within fandom studies is concerned with studies of Western, English-speaking media texts and fandoms—Jenkins's interests are in American popular culture while Hills and Sandvoss are of the British tradition, looking at television fandom and sports fandom respectively. While the majority of the fans I worked with in my researcher are English-speaking, Western countries, the objects of their fandom are Japanese media icons. Consequently, a review of fandom studies specifically in the Japanese context is important.

A focal point of the work done on fandom in Japan is the idea of intimacy. Both Stevens (2004), in her study of Japanese rock band fans, and Yano (2004), in hers of fans of a traditional *enka* singer, note that fan consumption is tied directly to the fan's quest for intimacy with their fandom icon, which also influences their construction of identity. For fans of the Japanese rock band, The Alfee, emotional closeness is drawn from material consumption, such as buying and collecting the The Alfee's CDs and concert goods, but also from non-material consumption, as in the accumulation of knowledge about the band whether it be official or gossip. As one fan puts it, it is not about physical closeness to the band, but "a question of 'distance of the heart'" (quoted in Stevens, 2004, p. 61). Fans of the *enka* singer Mori Shinichi feel that through joining fan clubs, gathering knowledge,
and experiencing Mori in person in concerts they are able to enter into an internal relationship with him. "Self and star commingle as overlapping parts, not as self and other" (Yano, 2004, p. 44). Fans view themselves and Mori as a part of the same insider circle (uchī), where fans support Mori as if they were supporting another member of their family. This type of internalized relationship between fans and their objects of fandom corresponds to Sandvoss’s conception of fandom as reflective, with objects of fandom "as fans' extension of self in which no meaningful distinction between the fan and the object of fandom is maintained" (Sandvoss, 2005, p. 159). As alluded to in the introduction chapter, the relationship between Japanese pop idols and their Japanese fans are conceived in the same way, with the idols framed to be "life-sized" in order to reflect the reality of their fans.

Research that has looked at transnational media flows within Asia has come to similar findings concerning identity construction for audiences of non-native media texts. As a part of his ethnographic work on the growth of a consumer class culture in Nepal, Liechty looks at female audiences of Hindi films imported from India. He finds that urban Kathmandu women enjoy the genres of "social" and "love" Hindi films because they can relate to them. Therefore, these films are viewed as realistic by their audiences because they are "plausible and touch on issues in women's lives" (Liechty, 2003, p. 170). Related work done on the viewing of Japanese and Korean television dramas by women across East Asia (Iwabuchi, 2001; Ko, 2004; Lee, 2008; Lin and Tong, 2008) echoes the sentiments of Liechty's female Nepali audience of Hindi films—female audiences identify with the realism presented in dramas because it gives them the ability to explore the possibilities of their own lives. Reflecting the popularity of Korean media in East
Asia (what is commonly referred to as the Korean Wave), the Hong Kong and Singaporean women represented by Lin and Tong (2008) discover that Korean dramas "provide a potential imaginary space for alternative (hybridized) modernities and femininities" where viewers' traditional values and modern lifestyles can coincide (p. 124).

Fandom and the Internet

Amongst these studies on Asian transnational audiences, Lee's (2008) study of Korean fans of Japanese dramas is noteworthy as the circulation of Japanese media was banned in Korea until 1998, and the government program promoting openness toward Japanese popular culture was not complete until 2004 (p. 157). Korean female fans' consumption of Japanese dramas, which allows them to construct their own identities outside the social pressures of Korean society in imagined worlds of drama fandom with fellow fans, is primarily mediated by the Internet. Lee cites that the consumption of Japanese popular culture increased dramatically with the spread of information communication technologies, with many of her fan-informants downloading Japanese dramas from the Internet, where vast archives for Japanese dramas exist. This ability to consume at one's convenience thanks to changes in the media environment make it so fans have more control over their viewing practices, able to marathon dramas and form stronger attachments, taking in all the details on their computers (Lee, 2008, p. 163).

Hills also notes the effects of the Internet on fandom in an X-Files newsgroup where "rather than new media technology merely allowing fans to share their speculations, commentaries, thoughts and questions, then, [the Internet] has seemingly placed a premium not only on the quality of fan response [...] but also on the timing of
fan response” (Hills, 2002, p. 178). *X-Files* fans religiously follow the rhythms of the broadcasting schedule, anticipating the end of the weekend so that Sunday will come, bringing a new episode, with the most intense discussion occurring online directly after (or sometimes during) that episode's airing. This creates a dynamic where the entire fan community is forced onto a timeline that not all fans can hope to follow, as in the case of British and some Canadian fans who also participated in the *X-Files* newsgroup and whose country's broadcast schedules were behind the American one.

This issue of temporality with the online manifestations of fandom may not be as great of a concern for celebrity fandoms however. As Darling-Wolf (2004) writes about an online fan community for Kimura Takuya, the most famous member of the Johnny's idol group, SMAP, she discovers that rather than cultural origin amongst fans, their devotion to Kimura Takuya is more important within the community. If said devotion is primarily manifested through timely fan response as Hills postulates, the inability to have access to information and respond to it immediately might demonstrate a lack of fandom devotion in the online context. Darling-Wolf's online community of Kimura Takuya fans are different though because they rely on one another *for* information, given that most of them are not in Japan with the ability to find out news on their favorite celebrity as it breaks. This difference in fandom composition—Hills' *X-Files* newsgroup occupied mostly by native fans compared to Darling-Wolf's Kimura Takuya message board community with mostly non-native fans—might offer one explanation since it is the fans themselves who determine the aesthetic of the community. If there is a large native fanbase in that particular community of the fandom, they may align their temporal understandings of the fandom to align with the initial broadcasting of the television show.
Global Presence of Japanese Popular Culture

While Japanese music and celebrities have yet to become noticeably popular within a global popular culture framework, there is a good deal of focus on anime and its rise in Western popular culture. A concept that has been used by many to describe why Japanese cultural products and specifically anime have been able to crossover into the West with such great success is "cultural odor" coined by Koichi Iwabuchi (2001). Cultural odor refers to how "cultural features of a country of origin and images or ideas of its national, in most cases stereotyped, way of life are associated positively with a particular product in the consumption process" (Iwabuchi, 2004, p. 27). In his own discussion of Pokemon's global success, Iwabuchi notes that most of Japan's audiovisual products that are exported are culturally odorless, what he refers to as the three Cs: consumer technologies like the VCR and Walkman; comics and cartoons; and computer/video games (ibid). As Japanese cartoons, anime in particular is culturally odorless because of the fact that most anime characters tend to not look "Japanese"—often with unusual hair and eye color and non-Japanese facial features.

In Napier's (2007) work on anime fandom, she discusses both the physical (anime conventions in the United States) and online (an English-language mailing list) and she comes to conclusions that are similar to those doing research on Asian female audiences of Japanese and Korean dramas. Though she has never done cosplay (costume play, where fans dress up as their favorite characters from anime and video games) herself before, Napier interviews cosplayers at anime conventions, discovering that many of them enjoy being able to "try on" a new identity and communing with their favorite character. They are able to "transcend the limitations of human bodies, to explore new
frontiers where the genetic inheritance with which one was born can be cast away" (Napier, 2007, p. 167). Of the fans who populate the Miyazaki Mailing List—a mailing list devoted to one of anime's most famous directors, Miyazaki Hayao, and his works—Napier notes that Western fans of Miyazaki in particular find a world in his anime that differs from their own, full of Hollywood happy endings and "the need for a defined good and evil" (ibid, p. 204). In Miyazaki's anime, they have a complex, imaginary world to speculate over and in the mailing list they find fans with whom to share what Napier dubs a "sacred space". This sacred space bears resemblance to the female imaginary spaces that Asians had in their Japanese/Korean dramas and Hindi films. Both spaces are viewed as culturally proximate also as anime's cultural odorlessness allows Western audiences to embrace it with greater ease and the Japanese/Korean dramas and Hindi films emphasized shared cultural values with their respective audiences.

In this brief overview of intersection between fandom studies and global media studies, there has been a clear focus on how fans and audiences build a sense of self in direct relation to the non-native media texts they consume. Jenkins's "Pop Cosmopolitanism" (2006b) remains outside this focus, instead de-personalizing questions around the audience and their consumption and orienting them as a force that works within media circulation. As this thesis is framed around the actualization and personalization of Jenkins's notion of pop cosmopolitanism, the grounding of this chapter in the Sandvossian understanding of fandom as a relationship rooted in emotional consumption hopefully has provided the necessary theoretical cushioning for this thesis—in terms of how the research was conducted and analyzed, detailed in subsequent chapters to come.
CHAPTER 3
SAY WHAT YOU WILL: METHODOLOGY

If the driving purpose of this thesis is to evaluate the theoretical conception of pop cosmopolitanism as put forth by Jenkins in comparison to the lived experience of pop cosmopolitanism, two main things are necessary: pop cosmopolitans and attention to the detail of these pop cosmopolitans' experiences. Considering these important points, a case study of a particular community that appears to fit the mold of the pop cosmopolitanism for research was chosen. As discussed in the first introduction chapter, the English-speaking overseas fans of Johnny's idols form such a community, but they primarily exist on the Internet as an online fandom community. While populated by fans from around the world who have physical presence in their respective locales, the English-speaking overseas Johnny's fandom is mediated and enacted through the non-physical platform of the Internet. Therefore, the design of this research was sensitive to the particularities of doing research in an Internet-based environment.

Why Online Fan-Ethnography and Autoethnography?

Traditional ethnography "implies a lengthy immersion in the field being studied," where the 'field' is unknown to the researcher in question who strives to understand this different way of life from her or his own (Hills, 2002, p. 68). The researcher observes and participates with the people in this 'field', learning and analyzing through experience. However, as Hills notes in his survey of fandom studies, "the term 'ethnography' is often used rather loosely in media and cultural studies, sometimes indicating little more than hour-long interviews with respondents" and hardly the precise method of classical
anthropology outlined above (ibid). Many people criticize this relaxed use of the term "ethnography", but I am not one of them. Instead, I find myself agreeing with Markham (2005), who in her discussion of online ethnography notes that the term is used "by scholars whose study of new forms of ethnography broadens the umbrella of what can be considered 'ethnography'" (p.799). As we see fans adapt to "life on the Internet", it becomes important that fan ethnography be able to follow them as they develop new meanings to fandom via new communication technologies. Following in the footsteps of the work that preceded it and expanding upon them, this research is grounded in the cultural studies' understanding of ethnography. It draws on data from a month-long participant observation of the online English-speaking overseas Johnny's fandom, a qualitative survey answered by fans, and interviews with fans, all conducted through the medium of the Internet.

The choice to use ethnography as a primary research method derived from the structure of the online fandom and my ability to gain access to the community. First, it should be noted that as the researcher, I self-identify as an English-speaking overseas Johnny's fan, having participated in the fandom for over five years; this fandom and the particular fan community in question is one with which I am very familiar. As many fandom scholars have done before, I ventured into this research as what Hills (2002) notably refers to as an academic-fan—generally speaking, an academic who also uses their identity as a fan in their work. Removing myself from the research site and simply observing the fan community was out of the question because it would have created artificiality in the research. As a fan, the LiveJournal community for English-speaking overseas fans is a place I inhabit in my everyday life. For that reason, I continued to
participate in the fandom while conducting this research and observing the day to day interactions of the community. This allowed me to remain honest to and aware of my dual identity within the research.

The structure of the English-speaking overseas Johnny's fan community online is rather unique in comparison to prior studies of Internet fan communities (Baym, 2000; Bird, 2003; Darling-Wolf, 2004; Hills, 2002; Napier, 2007). Rather than having a sense of a central place where a community gathers such as a mailing list or a message board, the English-speaking overseas online community of Johnny's fans congregates on LiveJournal. Self-labeled as "a community publishing platform, willfully blurring the lines between blogging and social networking", LiveJournal has become home to many online fandoms that take advantage of the ability to mix the personal with communal (LiveJournal Inc., 2009). Not only are there personal journals\textsuperscript{11} which individuals can design and update as they wish, there are community journals where LiveJournal users and non-users\textsuperscript{12} can gather to discuss and share information on common interests.

Community journals in particular are useful as Johnny's fandom is vast, with fourteen currently active music groups/solo performers. Many Johnny's fans are not fans of all the Johnny's idols and tend to pick and choose specific groups of whom they are fans. In this way, Johnny's fandom can be considered an umbrella fandom populated by many sub-fandoms focused on particular idols and/or groups. This organizational breakdown of the fandom is reflected in the LiveJournal English-speaking Johnny's fan community. There are only a few communities that have no specific focus on a group or idol and cater to all Johnny's fans, but these communities tend to be quiet with very few

\textsuperscript{11} Blogs using the LiveJournal platform are referred to as journals, taken from the title of the platform itself.
\textsuperscript{12} Non-users of LiveJournal are defined as those who do not have a personal LiveJournal and therefore do not have a LiveJournal username.
posts and almost no discussion. On the other hand, each debuted idol group and some popular, yet-to-debut Johnny's Junior units have their own flagship LiveJournal communities, most considered to be highly active with at least ten to twenty unique users sharing media, information and discussion daily.

Despite the focused nature of fans on particular groups, the Johnny's fandom is unified in its intertextuality, where an idol's image is often informed by other idols; idols from different groups often work together in musicals and television dramas and idol groups are constantly defining themselves in relation to other groups hierarchically. Unlike following a centrally-located fan community of one pop idol or a single, finite television show which lends itself well to basic observation and a textual reading of fandom interaction, the English-speaking Johnny's fandom has a higher level of complexity. While it is centrally-located within the LiveJournal community, the Johnny's fandom is spread across LiveJournal in smaller communities which unify not only through the overlapping narratives of their media icons and texts, but also through the overlapping narratives of the fans themselves. In particular, the fan narratives, while being based in the LiveJournal community, may not be completely restrained to that sole Internet platform. To observe only LiveJournal unnaturally brackets Johnny's fandom to a specific space, which hardly reflects its fluidity. A conversation that begins between a group of fans in a community LiveJournal can move into a personal LiveJournal as those fans get to know one another and then may even jump platforms to instant messaging or personal email, but this part of fandom cannot always be read through just the words inscribed in a public community space. Given that Johnny's fandom on LiveJournal is one that must be navigated to fully understand the complexity of the fan experience that I
am addressing with this thesis, participant observation was determined to be an appropriate method of research.

The use of surveys and interviews which allow fans to speak for themselves fit this research because of its aim to better understand how fans conceptualize their own identities as fans and more specifically as pop cosmopolitans. Since the fandom is spread across LiveJournal and there are a variety of different fans depending on which idols are their favorites, the use of an online survey using primarily qualitative questions enabled me as the researcher to reach a wider range of fans. As an academic-fan, the kind of fan I choose to be (according to my own fan preferences) does indeed affect the fans I interact with in fandom. In recognizing this inherent bias in my own personal fandom, surveys again would give me access to fans that I would not normally interact with and allow me to have a more accurate understanding of English-speaking online Johnny's fans as a whole. Interview participants were solicited from the survey participants (the details of this research design are discussed in the following section) so interview informants effectively reflect the wide spectrum of fans from amongst those who chose to take part in the survey. The detailed interviews allowed fans to speak beyond the confines of the survey word count and say more (a lot more!) to their fan experience.

When it comes to fan ethnographies, Hills (2002) highlights that "the ethnographic process of 'asking the audience', although useful in many cases, constitutes a potentially reductive approach" (p. 66). Through interviews and surveys, academics ask fan-informants to reduce their experiences into a comprehensible justification of their fandom when often times affective fan experience cannot be translated into words. This is to say that "fan talk cannot be accepted merely as evidence of fan knowledge" and must
be properly analyzed to not only recognize what is being said by fans and how it may be constructed in the context of their fandoms, but also what is not being said (ibid). Here again, we see that the academic-fan is at an advantage in such a situation when working with constructed fan narratives because she herself is familiar with the mechanics of narrative constructions particular to that fandom.

Hills' critique of taking fans' verbal justifications of their experiences at face value urges academics to recognize that fans' self-consciousness and self-reflexivity influences their narrative construction. Autoethnography, for Hills, is able to bypass these problems of "assuming that the 'real' is always primarily discursive" through prompting "the person undertaking [autoethnography] to question their self-account constantly" (ibid, p. 72).

Therefore, in addition to the principal ethnographic component of this research, I have supplemented it with autoethnography, tracing my own fandom experiences as they relate to not only the English-speaking overseas online Johnny's fandom, but to the central research questions of this thesis seeking to understand the construction of a particular fan identity by the fan herself.

As mentioned above, fandom on the Internet as well as surveys and interviews are enacted through discursive language, which at times can fail to capture or even disguise the affective nature of fandom. Furthermore, the Internet is a place of performing fandom, mediating the relationships between fans and their fandom objects as well as the fans themselves who share fandom objects. Fans can choose how to shape their identities through language choice or even omissions. With autoethnography however, I am more able to demonstrate "the cultural contexts through which the self is constructed [by] examining how processes of 'common sense', commodification and self-
justification/rationalization structure [...] fan [...] identit[y]" (ibid, p. 77). Still, I have not escaped the need to express my fandom experiences through language. However, my own understanding of my emotional involvement of fandom is a direct experience, which cannot be captured when working with online fan-informants as the textual medium is not capable of expressing the full range of emotions.

**Conducting Online Fan-Ethnography**

As I discovered through my research, the Internet is conceptualized primarily as a tool of communication, not only for me as the researcher, but for online Johnny's fans who fall into the category of pop cosmopolitans. As will be discussed in further detail in the following chapters, without the Internet and its framing as the source for all the information and media needs of English-speaking overseas Johnny's fans, this particular fandom could not exist in the way it does now. The Internet allows them to extend their reach, to stay within their physical community while exploring and consuming their fandom based on the other side of the world (Markham, 2004). In the same way, I used the Internet as a tool to reach out to these particular fans who are spread out geographically, but are able to use the Internet as a place to gather and be with other fans like them who are difficult to find in the physical world.

Though I have been using LiveJournal for more than seven years and have my own personal username, I decided to create a specific username, jinniinfandom, and LiveJournal for the purposes of this research. This was not only to help keep me constantly aware of my dual identity as researcher and as a fan, but also for the sake of separating my fandom identity from my researcher identity for those fans participating in my research. I felt this was necessary because having been a visible participant in the
fandom for five years, there is the likelihood that other fans may have a constructed opinion of my fandom identity and I did not want that opinion to interfere with how they approached my research. Therefore, in creating a "researcher only" identity for others to view, I wanted to present an identity that was as free as possible of any fandom-related stereotypes or conceptions; of course, this could not have prevented fans from building any opinions around me as an academic researcher, but I felt that this was the lesser of the two evils.

During my month of immersion in the English-speaking online Johnny's fan community on LiveJournal, my participant observation was split between my researcher identity and my fan identity. I continued to use LiveJournal in the way that was already a part of my daily routine—writing personal journal entries, checking specific fandom community journals and personal journals that were of interest to me and consuming media/information via those journals—through my personal, fandom username. However on a daily basis, using my research username, I also went through and read the thirty-two major Johnny's fandom LiveJournal communities (most devoted to a Johnny's idol or idol group) and recorded what types of posts had been made throughout the day and noted in detail what kinds of discussions (if any discussions were happening) within these posts.

In order to avoid impinging on the privacy rights of Johnny's fans, I only reported on posted entries in communities which adhered to the LiveJournal platform's definition of public posts, often referred to as "unlocked" posts. From my own familiarity with

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13 For full listing of all the LiveJournal communities/journals monitored, please see Appendix 1.
14 The LiveJournal platform has three primary security levels for every posted entry that is made to a community or personal LiveJournal—everyone (public), friends/members only, and just me (private). When one uses the "friends/members only" and "just me (private)" security levels for a posted entry, an icon of a closed padlock appears on the post. Thus, in LiveJournal terminology, these types of posts are referred to as "locked" posts. On the other hand, when the "everyone (public)" security level is used on a posted entry, no icon appears and these types of posts are referred to as "unlocked" or "public" posts.
LiveJournal and in discussion with other LiveJournal users, unlocked posts in community journals are conceptualized as more public than unlocked posts in personal journals, which despite being unlocked carry a more personalized understanding of public\(^{15}\). Being particularly careful to abide by these "unwritten rules" of the LiveJournal platform, I only have paraphrased and summarized findings that draw on my participant observation.

In efforts to engage more in the regular activities that Johnny's fans entertain outside of LiveJournal, I attempted to increase my time spent on other platforms such as instant messaging. Unfortunately, because of my own busy schedule that did not allow me to devote all my time to my field work, I was not able to engage in live discussion as much as I had hoped. However, I discovered that Twitter\(^{16}\) served as a viable substitute in lieu of actual instant messaging. The majority of Johnny's fan discussion that I participated in took place on Twitter, which can be even used as a platform for live discussion depending on how users choose to use it\(^{17}\). Unlike on LiveJournal where I sought to keep my research and fandom identities separate from each other, on Twitter, I did no such thing as those I interact with on Twitter I consider to be personal friends and therefore felt no need to discern the two identities as strictly. As a matter of fact, the fans with whom I interacted on Twitter were particularly indispensable to my research—fairly

\(^{15}\) Often, personal journals can only be posted in by the user who owns the journal and written in under the pretense that only interested friends will read posts made. This is different from community journals where many people/users can post, therefore a wider, more public audience beyond the personal journal is presumed.

\(^{16}\) Launched in 2006, Twitter is a microblogging and social networking tool where users can send and read short message posts no longer than 140 characters which are called *tweets*. "Twitter keeps you informed with what matters most to you today and helps you discover what might matter to you most tomorrow" (Twitter, 2010).

\(^{17}\) While these conversations and discussions are not directly quoted, only referenced, in this research, I did make sure to consider each situation carefully within its context as people have varied understandings of what is considered to be public and private on the Internet, especially when using platforms that do not have such clearly determined definitions of public and private like LiveJournal does (Gajjala, 2002; Markham, 2005)
savvy about the inner workings of the fandom itself and eager to provide me with extra data without solicitation.

Concurrently with my participant observation, I posted solicitations for my anonymous online survey to eight prominent LiveJournal communities for Johnny's solo/group idols gradually over a two-week span\textsuperscript{1819}. Before proceeding to take the survey, each potential survey respondent was asked to read through a consent form, which generally detailed the scope of my research, and click through it before they were allowed to take the survey. The survey consisted of both demographic and qualitative questions about fan activities and about being fans\textsuperscript{20}. To avoid issues with the use of information produced by minors in this research, any survey from a respondent under eighteen was excluded from all analysis. The survey was left open for four weeks before it was closed at the end of the field research period.

Over those four weeks and from the eight Johnny's fandom LiveJournal communities, 860 unique and viable surveys from English-speaking overseas Johnny's fans were gathered\textsuperscript{21}. Demographically, ninety-eight percent of all surveyed fans identified as female with two percent as either male or transgender/other. The majority of fans at seventy-seven percent fell into the age range of eighteen to twenty-four years old. Of the remaining twenty-three percent, twenty-percent were in the age range of twenty-five to thirty-four years old, three percent were in the age range of thirty-five to forty-five

\textsuperscript{18} Initially, I posted to nine LiveJournal communities, but the kattunlove LiveJournal community did not permit me to post my solicitation to the general community and wanted to filter my solicitation as an advertisement. As it was the end of my round of survey solicitation and I had already gathered more than enough data, I chose not to try to post it again to the community.

\textsuperscript{19} For the list of LiveJournal communities to which the survey was posted, please see Appendix 1.

\textsuperscript{20} For the survey questions, please see Appendix 2.

\textsuperscript{21} After eliminating any surveys that were taken by anyone under the age of eighteen, surveys from survey respondents who answered negatively when asked if they considered themselves fans of Johnny's (question eight) were eliminated as well. The reasoning for this was that because the case study is concerned with those who identify as Johnny's fans, those who did not consider themselves to be so could not be included.
years old; only three fans total of the 860 were over forty-five years old. Fans identified to be from over sixty-five countries\(^\text{22}\); twenty-five percent of the entire population of surveyed fans claimed the United States as home. Despite the fandom being a primarily English-speaking one, only thirty percent of surveyed fans originated from English-speaking countries (the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom/England, Australia) and only forty-three percent of all surveyed fans claim English as their native language. However, as noted in the first introduction chapter, sixty-five percent of the total surveyed fans come from non-Asian countries (with fans from European countries and North American countries making up twenty-seven percent and thirty-three percent of all surveyed fans respectively) in comparison to only thirty-five percent fans from Asian countries including Japan. Only fourteen percent of all fans identified themselves as fluent Japanese speakers.

In terms of more fandom-oriented demographics, the spread of fans and how long they have been in fandom looks very much like a bell curve (see Figure 2 below). The majority of Johnny's fans have been fans from between one year and four years with a total of sixty-four percent, with twenty-one percent as veterans of the fandom at over four years and thirteen percent as the babies of the fandom at under one year. The spread of favorite Johnny's idol groups is not quite as even however, because of the intertextuality of the fandom which I mentioned in the prior section. The most popular groups amongst surveyed fans were Arashi at seventy-four percent, NEWS at fifty-five percent, Kanjani8 at forty-eight percent, and KAT-TUN at thirty-seven percent. Coincidentally (or not), all

\(^{22}\) Only 876 fans chose to identify their country of origin. For complete list of all countries fans originated from, please see Appendix 3.
the idols in the four aforementioned groups fall into the two main age ranges of surveyed fans.

While I clearly had no problems gathering a large enough sample of survey responses to draw from, there was an issue in the survey process regarding the incomplete/partial surveys that could not be used. With the online survey service I was using, Zoomerang, each completed response was ascribed to one survey respondent, and thus all of that respondent's answers could be attributed to one fan, who then has a constructed identity within the survey. This could not be done for the incomplete surveys, which were incomplete because a survey respondent did not appropriately push all the

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Johnny's Entertainment (shortened to JE) is how the English-speaking fan community refers to Johnny's; it originates from the name of a music record label managed by the aforementioned talent agency.
"submit" buttons in the survey, including the final "submit" button at the end of the survey; it was in no way correlated to which questions they did or did not answer. In the end, while I had 860 filtered and completed surveys, I also had 564 incomplete surveys. My main concerns about this were what kind of data was lost in these incomplete surveys and more specifically, what kind of fan did I lose in the discarding process? I may have ignored a population of the fandom by discarding these incomplete surveys, but even if I had included them, I would be unable to characterize them because of their lack of coherency. Perhaps with a better online survey service or a more refined, concisely-worded survey, this large amount of invalid survey responses due to technical issues could have been avoided, but for this research, I have done my best to represent the 860 survey respondents as well as possible.

At the end of the anonymous survey, I solicited interested respondents to participate in a more detailed interview based on their survey responses and received 355 responses. After filtering through those 355 responses, I chose to follow-up with thirty-seven to get more details on specific answers in their surveys that interested me. Twenty-six responded to my solicitation, but in the end, due to time constraints, nineteen total interviews were conducted. All nineteen fans were female, ranging in age from eighteen to twenty-nine years old. While sixteen of the nineteen fans were from North American or European countries, only eleven of the nineteen were native English-speakers. Twelve of them identified as high school, college, or graduate students and the remaining seven were working professionals, working part-time, or currently unemployed. Interviews, one to two hours in length, were conducted during the month-long field research period via
three channels: e-mail, private internet chat, and audio-only Skype phone call\textsuperscript{24}, and were
grounded in a set of guiding questions which were individualized according to their surveys\textsuperscript{25}. Anonymity was guaranteed through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews via Skype were recorded and completely transcribed while chat histories and email responses were saved for analysis.

It is important to note that despite all the advances of the Internet since its entrance into popular mainstream culture, it still is very much a text-based medium. Due to this, the Internet user has much more "control over the content and form of the message", which ultimately is his or her presentation of self to the online world, influencing others' perceptions of him or her (Markham, 2004, p.106). Sensitive to the right of a person to construct their own identity online, I did not edit the text of the survey respondents and interviewees, no matter the spelling or grammatical errors and in any transcriptions of audio interviews, I tried to preserve as much of the original speech patterns of those interviewed as possible.

**Conducting Autoethnography**

The autoethnographic portion of this research provides another level of insight into the fan who fits Jenkins's mold of a pop cosmopolitan. As I briefly described in the opening pages of this thesis, the history of my media consumption, involvement in various media text fandoms, and eventual academic interest in global culture defines me as a pop cosmopolitan according to Jenkins. By using autoethnography to self-reflexively

\textsuperscript{24} The Internet is known for the anonymity it provides, allowing people to construct their own identity aside from their everyday, physical identity. Using video chat would destroy this primary understanding of the Internet, especially in fandom where some people are not comfortable connecting their lives as fans to their everyday lives. That is to say, putting a face to an Internet screen name is not always welcome by those online. Therefore, Skype was used in an audio-only format.

\textsuperscript{25} For a sample of the guiding questions, please see Appendix 4.
examine my personal experiences as they have led to my current fandom of Johnny's today, "how multiple fandoms are linked through the individual's realisation [sic] of a self-identity" can be charted (Hills, 2002, p. 81).

Employing the method that Hills (2002) uses when demonstrating a critical autoethnography, I went back into my memories and attempted to chart all of my fandoms, past and present. Grouping them into categories, I found that a common discourse within my own fandom narrative is many of my fandoms' relationships to Japan. From there, I expanded out to trace how those particular fandoms associated with Japan interweaved with the construction of my own cultural identity at various stages in my life—looking at the highs and low of these fandoms and where I was in my own personal growth narrative that related to them. With the right type of questions, these narratives can be drawn from other fans as well, but the level of self-reflexivity needed to deconstruct how one's fan identity is constructed may not be achieved. Also, ethical issues may arise in the researcher's attempt to deconstruct another person's identity. In analyzing my own fandom history, I have been able to critically examine how my own fan identity construction compares to how other fans construct their fan identities in connection with Johnny's fandom as well. My efforts to piece both the ethnographic and autoethnographic narratives together to bring a more holistic approach to understanding of the pop cosmopolitan mainly manifest in chapter six, but hopefully are reflected throughout this thesis.
CHAPTER 4

THE AUTHENTIC DREAM BOYS

You start because the boys are pretty, but you stay because it's addicting. You get to know them, and it's suddenly like they're friends. I know half of it is just that they know how to manipulate emotions, but hey. I don't really care, I just like it. (anonymous fan #364)

The first step to being a pop cosmopolitan, according to Jenkins's definition, is being invested in some form of global popular culture—something completely unfamiliar to you and your everyday life, but considered mainstream popular culture somewhere else in the world. Without that investment, there is no starting point from which a global perspective can launch and develop. Given that, it is only natural to turn the focus of this thesis onto fans in particular, whose identities are established by their intense emotional commitment to an object of fandom (Sandvoss, 2005).

In order to understand the lived practice of pop cosmopolitanism, this chapter delves into the overseas English-speaking Johnny's fandom and how non-Japanese fans express their relationships to their beloved Japanese idols. It is in their explanations of why they are Johnny's fans, navigating through conceptions of similarity and difference between themselves and the idols, where the constructions of their personal fan identities are realized. Also, with their critical understanding of these Japanese celebrities, overseas English-speaking fans demonstrate the beginnings of their more globalized perspectives.

I Like Humans, Not Idols

It usually is the superficial and surface attractions that draw overseas, English-speaking fans to Johnny's idols at first. Whether it is the beautifully chiseled jaw and pair of finely manicured eyebrows of one idol or a high-energy musical performance with complexly outrageous costumes covered in glitter, sequins and feathers of an idol group,
both can intrigue a person enough to make them want more. However, it is not these
groomed and produced images of the Johnny's idols that non-Japanese fans find most
appealing. Rather, it is their interest in the more humanistic elements of the idols as
individual people with distinct personalities and lives that truly "addicts" them.

Of course, he's [Yamashita Tomohisa] really hot (except when he's skinny and
looks like an alien). But he's also really cool and stoic, which I like. But every
now and then, he breaks out with something crazy, or just acts like a complete
psycho. It's so delightful to see him acting like a human during these rare
moments. Especially when he interacts with [Akanishi] Jin, he just gets stupidly
crazy. I love it. (anonymous fan #364; brackets mine)

Anonymous fan #364 hardly denies her physical attraction to the popular idol Yamashita
Tomohisa. However, after declaring his "hotness", she notes that she appreciates the rarer
moments when he is crazy and acting stupid—"acting like a human"—much more.
Rather than his cool and stoic image that she likes, she loves the moments when he is
interacting with his close friend and fellow Johnny's idol, Akanishi Jin. She places high
value on those moments of humanity that she is able to catch in Yamashita.

Much like anonymous fan #364 in her love for Yamashita's "stupidly crazy" acts
of humanity, the following two fans highlight the imperfect aspects of their favorite idols.

Yokoyama Yuu is my favorite. I don't know another famous person who is so
honest and sincere about everything. He talks freely about his social problems
with people he doesn't know (I have the same problem so I guess the fact that I
can relate also makes me like him more), his nerdy gaming habits, stopping
smoking, his relationship with his brothers, anything. He's also one of the
funniest people I know and looks really good with his big ears and white skin.
Not like a picture perfect pretty boy, but that's not my type anyway. (anonymous
fan #556)

One of the reasons I like Kanjani8 best, besides their musical and comedic talent,
is that they're very open people. They talk about jealousy and lack of confidence.
Maruyama Ryusei especially has publicly talked about having to deal with
weight issues and insecurity and wanting to have better direction in life. He has
so much heart – he's constantly kind to the other members and people around
him. He pursues his life with optimism and warmth and sometimes he's not
rewarded for it. If I like human beings better than idols, than Maruyama has to
be the most human and least idol-like member of Johnny's Entertainment.
(Tracey, 27, unemployed, American; brackets mine)

To anonymous fan #556, Yokoyama Yuu is the epitome of sincerity and honesty. He shares stories about his personal life as well as his own character flaws, no matter how much they might warp his supposed shiny idol image. What is more, she points out that he is not the "picture perfect pretty boy" either. These glimpses that Yokoyama provides to his fans about himself beyond his job as an idol are framed as instances of honesty by fan #556; he is not just another celebrity who is there to entertain, but as she points out, she can relate to him. Much in the same way, Tracey speaks of Kanjani8 (the idol group to which Yokoyama Yuu belongs) and Maruyama Ryuhei, her favorite Johnny's idol who is also a member of Kanjani8. Kanjani8 as a group expresses jealousy toward other more successful Johnny's idol groups and Maruyama speaks candidly about his weight issues. These are emotions that any person can understand, most having felt them at one time or another. Therefore, through Maruyama sharing his emotions and personal struggles with his fans, Tracey is able to recognize his humanity and finds authenticity in Maruyama more as a flawed human rather than a glitzy idol.

These feelings of authenticity that anonymous fan #556 and Tracey find in their favorite idols derive in part from an ability to relate to and find commonalities with them.

I didn't realise that I had fallen in love with Ueda [Tatsuya] until it had already happened. It wasn't his physical appearance that initially attracted me, because I guess his dinosaur-face isn't 'conventional beauty'. It may sound clichéd to say this, but it's his personality that drew me in. Many people seek out those they can relate to, right? And the eternal misfit in me that struggled with sickness as a child, that worked so hard to be friendly and 'normal' could totally relate to Ueda's apparent weirdness, his propensity to say things that do not initially make sense or seem somehow off-kilter with the flow of things... I could 'get' that.
(Nina, 22, social care worker, British; brackets mine)
In this excerpt from her personal LiveJournal, Nina specifically points out that she can connect to those things that make Ueda perhaps more abnormal and flawed amongst other idols through her own personal experiences. Rather than being initially attracted to his "dinosaur-face" available for all fans to consume, she felt affinity toward him on a more emotional level that was and continues to be specific to Nina herself as she learns more about Ueda and then reflects on her own experiences. In a way, Ueda is transparent to Nina and it is that transparency that allows her to relate to and identify with him. As will be demonstrated throughout this chapter, Nina's relationship to Ueda is just one of many ways that overseas, English-speaking fans embody Sandvoss's conception of fandom as extension of the self instead of possession by the self, a sense of "me" instead of "mine" (2005, p. 163).

The Johnny's idol Sakurai Sho was the favorite amongst surveyed fans; eighty-four fans claimed him as one of their favorite idols and only a handful of other idols of the sixty-five mentioned by the 860 fans surveyed managed to come close to the level of popularity Sakurai had. Fans primarily love him because of his gyappu—a word in Japanese directly borrowed from the English word "gap". Sakurai was the first debuted Johnny's idol to pursue a college education at a top-tier, private Japanese university while being part of Arashi, an idol group that debuted in 1999. With his bachelor's degree in economics, he then was the first Johnny's idol to become a regular news correspondent on a late night news information program (News Zero) on a major commercial Japanese television network, covering topics from the continuing economic crisis to the recent 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, Canada. Despite this rather studious image that Sakurai maintains on one front of his idol career, he is also known to be "adorkable" and
somewhat incapable on variety shows and when interacting with other members of
Arashi. This creates a sort of disconnect—literally a "gap", thus the meaning of the
Japanese word, gyappu—between the two images that Sakurai holds as the three
following fans elucidate.

He's [Sakurai Sho] my favorite because he is an entertainer and a newscaster.
Also, he pursued his education which is rare. But, even though he is a newscaster,
he is not afraid to say he's scared of heights and he is game enough to participate
in all of Arashi's crazy activities. (anonymous fan #336; brackets mine)

He's [Sakurai Sho] really talented! As a singer, newscaster, songwriter (for his
raps),... And then there's the side of him that seems to not fit with this at all! I
love this contrast he shows. And with this he shows his naturality - he's not
perfect! (anonymous fan #501; brackets mine)

Despite that he [Sakurai Sho] is smart and has the highest education among
Arashi members, he is the man who can't do anything. That is the second thing I
love about him. It makes him more approachable somehow. It's like destroying
the image of idols being the perfect creatures that do nothing wrong and can do
anything and everything. (anonymous fan #639; brackets mine)
Fans, including the above three, admire Sakurai for his intelligence, his rapping ability (he also was one of the first Johnny's idols to write and sing his own raps in Arashi songs), and his work as a news correspondent. Opposed to that is his image as, according anonymous fan #639, "the man who can't do anything". This also has a reference to fandom language, more broadly adopted from Internet vernacular, where moments when Johnny's idols are almost painfully, yet amusingly stupid or incapable are known as "fail". Instances of "fail" are what define Sakurai as natural and authentic, despite his perfect image of intelligence and propriety. As anonymous fan #501 notes, it is that very contrast between his two images that makes Sakurai an idol to be admired and to whom to aspire, yet flawed and relatable. Furthermore, the constant reminder of Sakurai's humanity through his weaknesses makes his achievements all the more admirable because he is just a normal person like his fans, and yet he has been able to achieve such great things, which fans then attribute to his hard work. This understanding that these three fans have of Sakurai align with the production of Japanese idols as "life-sized". Fans’ favorite idols are close enough, human enough, to give the impression that fans too could be idols or achieve similar success if they put in the effort (Aoyagi, 2005, p.67).

Rather than admiring something high up on a pedestal, Johnny's fans are admiring their idols as people just like them, the only difference being their jobs and circumstances.

**Fans and Idols Growing Up Together**

Such is the structure of Johnny's that fans can watch their idols literally grow up—from the time they are young Juniors all the way through to when they finally debut many years later.

The impermanence inherent in Juniors fandom keeps me hooked. I find myself thinking 'They're such good kids' and 'I really want to see more of A and if B loosened up he'd be really funny', and there's ones I want to support really hard
so that they debut, although in a way I want them to stay Juniors because I never want to now [not] be able to watch them being stupid on Shokura [Shounen Club]. (anonymous fan #26; brackets mine)

Anonymous fan #26 articulates a deep investment in watching the growth and eventual success of the Johnny's Juniors. As they are not debuted yet and most are still considered idols-in-training (save for a handful of semi-permanent Junior units that have yet to debut), one of the few ways fans are able to learn about the many Johnny's Juniors is by watching Shounen Club, the primary televised showcase for them. Through watching the Juniors' trials and tribulations as they mature as performers as well as learning about their different personalities on Shounen Club, fan #26 is able to forge a connection with these young boys who are working hard to make it in the entertainment world.

Many fans also expressed an affinity for Johnny's idols and idol groups that were of the same age group as themselves, which allows fans to better identify with their idols not only because they are humans who have flaws and struggle, but more specifically because they share similar age-related experiences.

Even though they're idols, they're around my age, so they're probably experiencing a lot of them same issues in life. Moving out on their own, trying to juggle school and work, maturing, etc. I know we're not in the same situations but I feel that sort of child/adult cusp connection. (Tess, 27, graduate student, American)

Hey Say JUMP- coming same age group, they appear to have the makings of Arashi. I can totally relate to their whinings, their ups and downs, and the character of each, though not yet fully defined, proved to be very promising. All in all I look forward how they grow as a group and as an individual. (anonymous fan #616)

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26 Shounen Club (often shortened to Shokura, taking the first syllable of each title word in Japanese and joining them together) is a music variety show broadcast on the Japanese public broadcasting network, NHK (Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai Japanese Broadcasting Corporation). It is a program that broadcasts two new episodes every month, specifically featuring performances, skits, and talk segments with Johnny's Juniors. It is hosted by two debuted Johnny's idols, NEWS's Koyama Keiichiro and KAT-TUN's Nakamaru Yuichi.
Specifically, Tess is referencing the members of her favorite groups—Arashi, NEWS, Kanjani8, and KAT-TUN—who, for the most part, are in their mid to late twenties like her. As a graduate student who is also working to support herself, Tess even further relates to the balancing of higher education and work, which not only Arashi's Sakurai Sho has experienced, but four members of NEWS and one member of KAT-TUN have as well. Anonymous fan #616 echoes Tess in that she relates to Hey!Say!JUMP because coming from the same age group, she can better connect to them as people. Both have the ability to grow up in real-time with their idols by sharing the same age group and see their experiences reflected in those idols, correlating directly to the understanding of Japanese "life-sized" idols who mirror the reality of their fans (Aoyagi, 2005). This Japanese conception of idols also clearly overlaps with Sandvoss's understanding of fandom as a mirror of consumption—where the fan object reflects the self and facilitates identity construction. In being able to grow with idols, fans have the ability to construct their identity in opposition or in alignment with their idols whether consciously or unconsciously.

Of all the Johnny's idol groups, NEWS and SMAP were spoken of the most in conjunction with narratives of growth.

For SMAP specifically, I love how absurdly long they have been at the top. [...] I love the fact that they revolutionized what it means to be an idol and managed to become truly, truly successful despite their extremely dismal beginnings as a group. They are successful as individuals and as a group, and they've pushed through many scandals and setbacks, becoming closer rather than more distant. They come across as being very honest about themselves -- they never lied about being close when they really weren't, admitting that it's the more recent years that made them appreciate each other as more than colleagues. I love that they are so unafraid to de-glamorize themselves. (anonymous fan #167)

NEWS is my favorite group since they were probably the ones that had the most problem and trials as a group. They've been through so much (scandals, hiatus, loosing members, random members) and yet they've managed to overcome those
and is still around until now. Plus, who can resist their "member-ai"? ;D
(anonymous fan #48)

In recalling the histories of SMAP and NEWS and how they have grown from their troubled beginnings, both fans relay a kind of pride associated with being a witness of said groups’ growth over the years. It is almost as if the fans are talking about their own achievements rather than that of an idol group—very similar in ways to how one family member might speak about the success of another family member. They have internalized their relationship to their idol groups so that there no longer is a sense of the fan and the idols as separate, but they are one in the same—emotionally similar to the feeling of being members of the same team—working toward the same goal (Yano, 2004). In some senses, they are on the same team, as the fan supports and roots for the continued success of their favorite idols and groups, just as much as the idols themselves do. Through their identification with their idols achieved by being able to track their idols' growth and improvement over the years, fans are drawn into a closer relationship with them, sharing in their dreams and successes.

The fan-idol relationship as almost familial in its nature of shared identity is openly embodied in the everyday mechanisms of the Johnny's fandom itself on LiveJournal. During the month I observed the various Johnny's fandom communities on LiveJournal, many new entertainment activity and celebratory announcements were made. When it was the birthdays of Arashi's Sakurai Sho and Hey!Say!JUMP’s Yabu Kota, the respective group communities had special LiveJournal posts to commemorate the day where fans could comment with their well-wishes to the idols on their birthday. When it was revealed that Kanjani8's Ohkura Tadayoshi would have a supporting role in the movie Ooku starring Arashi's Ninomiya Kazunari, the announcement post at the
Kanjani8 LiveJournal community was full of messages of excitement and anticipation for the movie itself and as well as congratulations messages for Ohkura attaining his role in the movie. When NEWS's first music single release after almost a year was announced, much of the reaction from fandom expressed in comments across LiveJournal and Twitter and even in personal communication between myself and other fans was that of relief and glee. A good portion of NEWS fans had been concerned and worried about the lack of music releases and group activities from NEWS in comparison to other Johnny's groups, and given the tumultuous history of NEWS, the fears of fans were not totally unwarranted. These three instances clearly exemplify the fans' investment as beyond a simple viewer who consumes the music, television shows and dramas of Johnny's idols. In terms of the celebration of the idols' birthdays, not only are there congratulatory messages, but some fans will even bake cakes and post pictures of said cakes on LiveJournal or make something creative in the name of an idol's birthday, investing their precious time and energy into projects "for" an idol. As for NEWS, why would a stranger actually worry about idols who they have never met? For these overseas, English-speaking Johnny's fans, while there might be a distance in terms of culture and language,

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27 Dating back to its debut in 2003, NEWS's history is a turbulent one. The group was originally created as a nine-member temporary unit to serve as promotional characters for a national women's volleyball tournament. Popular members were pulled out of established Johnny's Juniors units, combined with practically unknown Juniors and were forced to work together despite having no prior interaction with each other; members now openly talk about how much they did not like or were uncomfortable with being a part of NEWS initially. One member (Mori Takahiro) left the group and the talent agency itself a month after the group's formation. The group was made permanent at eight members in 2004. In 2005 and 2006, NEWS had two underage drinking scandals, resulting in the suspension and voluntary hiatus of two members, Uchi Hiroki and Kusano Hironori respectively. NEWS as a group was put on hiatus in May 2006 and the remaining six members were only allowed to do solo work not connected to the group, a big deal considering the importance of the group unit to Japanese social structures. NEWS as a six-member group was allowed to return to work in January 2007; the two members involved in the underage drinking scandals were not allowed to return to group. Since their return in 2007, NEWS has had no major scandals and remains moderately successful as a group.
the relationship they share with Johnny's idols is one of intimate familiarity, fans relating to idols as important parts of themselves.

In the prior quotes where anonymous fans #167 and #48 explain how tracing the histories of SMAP and NEWS respectively have made them fans of these groups, both also mention that they appreciated the sincere dynamic amongst the members of the groups—SMAP members' honesty about not being the best friends and NEWS members and their member-ai\textsuperscript{28}. This interaction between Johnny's idols, specifically amongst members of the same music group, is something that a majority of fans emphasized when speaking of their favorite groups.

With Arashi, they have this distinct fluidity amongst themselves that no other group can replicate, I think. It's always enjoyable to me to watch anything they're on because they are so comfortable interacting with each other on a daily basis to the point that it's not hard to see just how much they love each other, working with each other, and just being together (purely platonic, I swear). (anonymous fan #30)

There's just something special about Arashi, their chemistry, their friendship and their special brand of zaniness. They inspire and encourage me every day. I tell lots of people that Arashi are the five best friends I'll never ever get to meet. (anonymous fan #86)

Arashi was the most popular group amongst all the surveyed fans; seventy-five percent of fans considered themselves fans of the group. From what the quoted two fans have to say, it is clear that the authenticity of the interaction amongst group members is one of the factors as to why they are so popular. The interpersonal interactions that both anonymous fan #30 and #86 witness amongst Arashi appear genuine and through those

\textsuperscript{28} Menbaa-ai/Member-ai is a phrase that was coined by NEWS's Koyama Keiichiro, combining the word menbaa (adopted from the English "member" and with similar meaning in Japanese) and the Japanese word ai, which means "love". It serves as the name of Koyama's Jweb (management-sanctioned blogs for Johnny's idols that are accessible by cell phone in Japan) where he often talks about his daily life or any experiences he shares with other NEWS members. NEWS fans have claimed the phrase and use it to describe the group camaraderie of NEWS, which is characterized by the members' love for NEWS as a group itself and the fact they get along well with one another.
interactions, they are able to construct a whole understanding of Arashi that is authentic because it is rooted in such honest interaction. Johnny’s idols are understood to be authentic enough that for some fans, the relationships they have with these Japanese idols are comparable to the friendships they have cultivated in the physical reality of their everyday lives.

Kanjani[8] feels really close to their fans and as no-life and nerdy as it may sound, they are almost as important to me as my friends are. (anonymous fan #556; brackets mine)

In observing member interaction, fans are able to further confirm the authenticity of their idols, that they are really human after all. Fans, as "normal" people who are not celebrities have experienced friendships, not getting along with other people, and having to persevere through difficult situations. What is more, they have experienced what it is to grow, change and search for oneself and they all have flaws to which they are willing (or sometimes unwilling) to admit. The fact that these celebrities whom fans admire can
Figure 6. Kanjani8 is beloved by fans for their honesty and their camaraderie. 
(photo scan courtesy of Abby)

feel the same way they feel and can be vulnerable like them bridges the gap between the
celebrity idol and their fans, placing the idol in the same reality as their fans.

**Feeding Emotional Consumption**

Despite not knowing their idols personally, in the colloquial sense of being
involved in their physical daily lives, fans are able to construct quite involved
understandings and opinions of their favorite idols and groups. Where do these opinions
stem from? How do Johnny's idols go from being random Japanese celebrities to
complexly flawed people to whom overseas English-speaking fans feel deeply
connected?

They [Johnny's idol groups] have their own [television] shows, the boys in the
groups don't only sing, but act in dramas and stage plays, host shows, etc. so it's
easy to find them all over the place, all the time. And while some of the boys
keep their private lives fairly personal, a lot of them have blogs for work [Jwebs]
that they make entries in at fairly regular intervals and it makes fans feel a little
closer to them. Also, some people like Koyama Keiichiro and Kato Shigeaki are
quite open about their personal lives in their work environment. So I guess JE [Johnny's] just helps the fans feel closer to the members, hooking them and keeping them there as long as they can. XD

In Tess's clear description, affiliation with her favorite Johnny's idols stems from media consumption. Watching their television shows and dramas, listening to their music, reading their Jwebs, essentially being in constant media contact in one form or another forges a closeness that is initiated by fans' consumption. It then continues, as Tess notes, because in hooking fans with the barrage of media, it helps them be closer to their idols and fans become invested in the relationships created, continuing to consume based on their emotional interests.

...like when they [Johnny's idol groups] have to do concerts, when we see the backstage, kind of, ongoings in the concert DVDs. We see them preparing meetings until like 2am in the morning. And we see them practicing at every [concert] location, all their music and I can imagine that it takes a lot of work and they're probably pretty exhausted traveling from every direction and having to deal with that and not getting any sleep and all that stuff. Juggling dramas and concerts and I don't know, butais [stage plays] and all that stuff. [...] I feel like that Johnny's is more down to earth because we know that they're kind of just boys going into this and they're not really like real stars being catered to all the time. (Abby, 21, college student, American; brackets mine)

I see more of them and their personalities because they have multiple magazine interviews and variety shows and what not. [...] True, that gives JE [Johnny's] idols less privacy and all, but it's how they maintain their public image while under the pressure of scrutiny by the public that appeals to me. I see their hardwork and strength easier. Plus the amount of media that they are in gets me hooked. I hear about them 365 days of the year. There's so much fodder. (anonymous fan #321; brackets mine)

Both Anna and anonymous fan #321 express that it is through the various media outlets that are available that they are able to construct these authentic images of Johnny's idols. Through backstage documentaries on concert DVDs, fans are able to witness all the hard work that goes into creating glitzy and glamorous idol performances. Again, Johnny's

29 "XD" is an emoticon that symbolizes a laughing face. The "X" is the eyes and the "D" is the open mouth.
idols prove to be transparent to their fans through the media that they produce—which essentially produces them as well, as fan #274 notes.

There is just... so MUCH about and around JE [Johnny's]. You can always find something more, something new. And ALL kinds of music, all kinds of shows etc. It's like ten or twenty different fandoms all rolled up into one and nicely connected. (anonymous fan #20; brackets mine)

The "overexposure" aspect is actually pretty nice for foreign fans because we'll never get the extent of exposure that the Japanese do, so if they weren't pimped out all the time, it would be even harder for their to be a foreign fandom at all. (anonymous fan #167)

Anonymous fan #20 lauds Johnny's for being a treasure trove of media, with something always new and if not new, something old that a fan has yet to discover from its various subfandoms. It is this treasure trove, anonymous fan #167 notes, upon which the overseas English-speaking fandom is built. She recognizes that the media exposure for Johnny's idols is probably excessive for Japan, but it is that excessiveness that makes them just a little bit easier to access outside of Japan. Her comment in particular furthers the idea that without the barrage of media, Johnny's fandom outside of Japan would struggle to exist because of the need to initially generate interest and emotional investment in fans and then continue to feed the cycle of emotional consumption that is the basis of this particular fandom.

Though this will be considered in greater detail in the following chapter, at this point, it is important to make a note of the Internet's significance to overseas Johnny's fans in their media consumption within the fandom. Access to Japanese celebrity culture outside of Japan is difficult to attain if a fan does not live in a major metropolitan area that carries imported Japanese cultural goods or in a country that imports Japanese television programming, and even then, access is quite limited. As a result of this lack of physical access, the Internet is the gateway for Johnny's media consumption, where
LiveJournal is considered a "hub" for Johnny's-related media. Not only is the physical unavailability overcome by the Internet—television shows, dramas and commercials, radio shows, magazines, Jwebs, and photos all available in digital form—but linguistic and cultural barriers are overcome through the pooling of resources amongst overseas Johnny's fans. Those who speak Japanese form subtitling and translation groups and translate media into various languages—notably Western languages such as English, Spanish, French and German—, often providing cultural notes as well. These fans help other overseas fans who may not be as familiar with Japanese language and culture connect with Johnny's idols making media more cultural salient to them, if only a little more than in "raw" untranslated Japanese form. Even in the cultural production amongst the online overseas Johnny's fans, it is obvious that heavy emphasis is placed on the fans' ability to fully understand and consume media related to their idols in order to construct intimate and emotional relationships with said idols.

While overseas Johnny's fans' often conceptualize their media consumption around ideas of finding the authentic person behind their idols and therefore being able to forge intimate connections with them, this is not the only way they understand their media consumption.

Often times I hear JE [Johnny's] referred to as "crack" by those in the fandom, and I would have to whole-heartedly support that descriptor, as this is exactly what they are to me. I am presently working on my Master's degree full-time, working full-time, and maintaining the routine interactions with family and the rest of the world-- knowing that I have the rampant "baka"-ness of Arashi and Eito [Kanjani8] to turn to is a great stress reliever. (anonymous fan #225; brackets mine)

...I spend about fourteen hours a day reading theory books and writing and teaching and correcting papers and at the end of the day in the evening my boyfriend knows I always watch one Kanjani8 video because I know it'll be stupid, I know it'll be funny, and that's my stress relief at the end of the day. The

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*Baka* is a Japanese word that means "stupid".
whole silliness of it really maybe draw me more particular to this particular band. 
(Caroline, 28, graduate student, Canadian)

Anonymous fan #225 and Caroline both specifically turn to Arashi and Kanjani8 to indulge in the silliness of these two groups as a stress reliever. As graduate students, they lead intensive lives, juggling studying, working, and a social life, and enjoying media from Kanjani8 and Arashi allows them to step away from those busy lives and just laugh. Both fans also elaborate further in their survey and interview respectively that they are fans of Arashi and Kanjani8 because of the sincere camaraderie amongst the group members that "enables" them to be stupid in front of the camera. Therefore, it is through their identification with the authentic people behind the idol facades that allow anonymous fan #225 and Caroline to genuinely enjoy the entertainment, destressing with their favorite Johnny's groups.

Consuming Johnny's idols and their media as a form of stress relief is just one part of a greater discourse of emotional escapism conveyed by a substantial portion of overseas Johnny's fans in their surveys and interviews. Some fans buy into the idol exteriors that Johnny's promotes, seeking "something sparkly and ridiculously happy in [their lives], something to help [them] escape reality for a while" (anonymous fan #891). Others cannot explicate into words why they are fans of Johnny's, but they provide alternative explanations, rooted in the affect—"well, i can't pinpoint as to exactly WHY i like them.. i think they are my chocolates, releases my endorphins when i listen to them or see the shows they are in (music, variety or drama)" (anonymous fan #757). As entertainers, Johnny's idols are envisioned as producers and suppliers of happiness to their fans (which almost fits in line with image of Johnny's as an idol factory), where their music is loved because it is cheerful and provides upbeat, inspiring messages and
the smiles and laughter that the idols elicit are treasured highly by fans. Some fans are
even skeptical of their own consumption, "almost feel[ing] brainwashed. But that's okay.
Since it will make [them] feel happy" (anonymous fan #162).

This emotional escape that overseas fans appear to find in Johnny's fandom has
been highlighted in other fandom studies—most notably in Radway's (1991) seminal
study on women readers of romance novels—and also has some connection to Jenkins's
definition of the escape that pop cosmopolitans are also able to find in their consumption
of global popular culture (2006). Through fans' deep emotional investment in the
authentic people who are also Johnny's idols, they are provided with an emotional release
that takes them away from the stress of their lives and that adds to their happiness.

"They look younger, more energetic (somehow you become more active too,
saying to yourself "ganbare") and pure (yes, I'm quite tired of scandals in
western ent.world - who divorced, who is addicted to drugs etc.). Personally I
like JE [Johnny's] 'cause it brightens my life and distract me from mundane
problems and from global disasters on TV, which also happen everyday. I
would say that JE is perfect entertainment conception." (Yelena, 28, humanities
researcher, Russian; brackets mine)

Even using similar terminology as Jenkins—describing her daily life and problems as
"mundane"—Yelena relates her devotion to Johnny's idols specifically through this idea
of escapism. Her life is brightened in part due to her involvement in Johnny's fandom,
keeping her away from darker things such as global disasters and the scandals of the
Western entertainment world (the latter of which will be discussed further in the
following section). However, in Yelena's ability to evaluate Johnny's as an "entertainment
conception" as well as in anonymous fan #162's quote in the prior paragraph about being

\[31 \textit{Gambare/ganbare} \text{ is a conjugation of the Japanese word, } \textit{ganbaru} \text{(which means "to work hard and do one's best"), in the imperative form and it used in the same way that English speakers might say, "Let's go!" before beginning an activity.} \]
brainwashed, both demonstrate a slightly more critical view of Johnny's that will be further developed in the next section.

**Elite Celebrities versus Friendly Idols**

Johnny's fans love their idols because their idols are just like them—they are flawed, imperfect people who are constantly growing and changing. Through this identification, fans are able to forge emotional bonds with them that go beyond a simple liking—their relationships with their idols can be internalized, effectively bridging the distance between the famous idol and the everyday fan. More often than not, Johnny's fans thought this relationship with their favorite Japanese celebrities was unique in comparison to other celebrities they had encountered.

...with Johnny's idols, their always-present nature in the media makes them not elites like American celebrities, but more like friends who you just haven't met in person yet. It's uncommon to find American musicians or movie stars who choose to embarrass themselves on national TV with games or experiments on a weekly basis, but these guys do, so we, as fans, feel a closer bond with them, the feeling that if we just met them once, they could easily become our friends. (anonymous fan #506)

"I like the all-rounder aspect of the company [Johnny's]—that one must be able to many different things and to be able to maintain a fresh and approachable personality to the public. I prefer this to the type of celebrity now prevalent in the West: the out-of-control, vulgar and rude people who only amplify the worst in our society." (anonymous fan #29; brackets mine)

In viewing American celebrities as elites, anonymous fan #506 associates them with a removed distance. Johnny's idols are understood to be much closer than American celebrities because of their ubiquity and their willingness to expose themselves constantly through various media platforms. Their presence in their fans' lives is much more constant than American celebrities and because of this many fans, including anonymous fan #506, feel that they are "like friends you just haven't met in person". Anonymous fan #29 seems to think the same thing, emphasizing the friendly and approachable aspects of
Johnny's idols, but instead places them in contrast to the vulgar celebrity of the West. She views Western celebrity rather negatively, associating them with the "worst in our society" because of their lack of decorum. This negative perception of Western celebrity that anonymous fan #29 holds is also mentioned by Yelena at the end of the prior section when she speaks of how Johnny's fandom is a form of escape for her. Johnny's idols' images of purity and freshness appeal much more strongly to the overseas Johnny's fans than the negative images of Western celebrity.

I never really liked other celebrities much. "Western" celebrities always seemed kind of fake to me, always upholding a certain image. Japan (and Johnnys especially) seems to focus on allowing people to get to know a "real" celebrity. Obviously there's still a lot that's all "image," but I feel like for Johnnys we really get to learn more about them as people. For Western celebrities, magazines and media seem to focus only on their work and love lives, but Japan cares more about THEM as people. What they like, why they do what they do, etc. And just so many random facts. I can't tell you what most Western celebrities eat for breakfast or how good their eyesight is, because the media never asks that. But in Japan, they do. It's so much more interesting. (anonymous fan #39)

They are glamorous but aloud to FAIL badly at things at the same time. Unlike American celebrities, their looking bad on camera is taken in a positive, humanizing light. (anonymous fan #24)

Both fans here prove to be quite critical in their evaluation of Johnny's idols in contrast to Western celebrity. In discussing how the two types of celebrities are presented in magazines and on television, these fans demonstrate awareness of the celebrities' constructed images. Despite this recognition, anonymous fan #39 in particular expresses a preference for the Johnny's idol, who manages to be more wholly "real" because they are scripted to appear so, rather than the Western celebrity, who embodies artificiality more due to their lack of humanization and image of "perfection". Along similar lines, in context of Johnny's fandom as an emotional escape, overseas fans were also self-conscious of the idols' construction—recognizing that as fans they were essentially being
"brainwashed" by the media and images they were consuming, but dismissing that in favor of the emotional pleasure gained from their consumption.

It is through their critical reading of Johnny's idols in relation to other celebrities that overseas Johnny's fans show how they have been able to access the Japanese notion of the "life-sized" idol which Aoyagi (2005) expounds.

I think the 'idol' concept is an interesting one. Because it's not just singing, dancing or acting abilities that count or even looks (though it helps to have all of that, or at least one of those things); personnality also has a lot to do with it. It always amazes me that even the ones who can't sing too well or dance too well can still be so popular. But because we get to see them grow up, improve and work so hard, we get to connect with them on some level, so we want them to succeed and do well. It's had this strange effect on me that because I care for them I can ignore things (like Hina's bad singing or the horrible costumes or KAT-TUN when they try to hard to be sexy and it just doesn't work for me 'cause I'm not a teenage girl anymore) that would completely turn me off from other celebrities. (anonymous fan #636)

Anonymous fan #636 clearly is able to make sense of her own investment in Johnny's idols in a manner that encapsulates both the idea of the "life-sized" idol as well as Sandvoss's understanding of fandom as extension and reflection. She recognizes that while the talents and attractiveness of Johnny's idols are important to their identity, it is not what is most important about the construction of a Johnny's idol. It is her connection with the Johnny's idols' personalities that is most significant because it allows her to dismiss flaws and things she dislikes in them that she would otherwise not stand for in other celebrities.

The fact that a good portion of overseas Johnny's fans can be critical of their favorite Japanese idols, but still love them and even prefer them over other celebrities, reveals how they are able to tap into this specifically Japanese discourse on idols, whose marketability is rooted in their ability to relate directly to fans and offer reflections of their reality. It is their embrace of this marketed authenticity through mediated
consumption that reinforces their identities as pop cosmopolitans exploring cultures outside of their native ones.

In this chapter's attempt to better grasp the complex relationship between overseas Johnny's fans and the idols that are their objects of fandom, we have found the budding beginnings of pop cosmopolitanism specific to this fandom. One of the main attractions to Johnny's for overseas fans is the ability to relate on a basic and human level with idols. Fans are able to do this through the constant dirge of media that Johnny's idols are involved in (accessible via the Internet), which allows idols to be a part of the everyday of their overseas fans. Johnny's idols' ubiquity bridges the physical space with an emotional intimacy that stems from the fans' ability to identify with them. This, in turn, supports a cyclical consumption pattern in overseas fans driven by notions of identification and needs for escape. In the emotional connect between overseas Johnny's fans and the idols, the fans confirm the humanity and reality of the idols, which makes them much easier to like than other conceptions of celebrity. Western celebrity was specifically cited in comparison to Johnny's, and more generally Japanese idols, where the former is perceived to be fake and viewed negatively, while the latter is authentic and more positive. Even with a critical awareness that what appeals to them about Johnny's idols is merely a produced image, overseas fans fully buy into the notion of the Japanese idol as put forth by Aoyagi (2005) over the more prevalent discourses on Western celebrity. By doing this, they are actively engaging in the Japanese cultural norms for what an idol celebrity is and how they should be understood in relation to the self and then consumed. There are traces of escapism from the less positive reality that they occupy within their daily lives and even their cultures (when considering the rejection of
Western celebrity) in the overseas Johnny's fans expressions of fandom. These two things are key to Jenkins's understanding of pop cosmopolitanism, where individuals gain an "awareness of alternative vantage points" and find an escape from the insularity of one's own culture (2006, p. 166). However, as will be discovered in the next chapter, the emotional escape that some overseas Johnny's fans speak of in this chapter is not necessarily tied to conceptions of an isolationist cultural escape that pop cosmopolitans embark on according to Jenkins. As a matter of fact, perhaps "escape" is the wrong word to be used in the first place.
... I think that's what most people who are involved in JE [Johnny's] fandom [are], they're the ones who went online, searched all this up, or if they heard it from a friend or something, they would go and find out more.

(Stacey, 21, college student, American; brackets mine)

I like understanding the context that my idols exist in.

(anonymous fan #167)

From the exploration of fandom specific to overseas English-speaking Johnny's fans in chapter three, it is now clear that emotional intimacy is a driving force for this fandom. For the majority of those who consider themselves fans, the intimacy and identification they share with their objects of fandom are unique to each one of them, as it reflects their personal thoughts and experiences. Therefore, it is rooted in what one might understand as a manifestation of narcissism, also considered an element of cosmopolitanism by Hannerz (1996).

Through their ability to read and willingness to engage with the Japanese discourse on idols, these overseas fans technically already have demonstrated their pop cosmopolitanism, embracing a culture that is foreign to them. However, at this point, what we understand of their cultural knowledge is rather niche—specialized to one aspect of popular culture. More often than not, pop cosmopolitans are not restrained to one niche area of knowledge. The following discussion explores how these fans use their investment in Johnny's to become further informed about not only Japanese culture beyond the popular, but also beyond Japan and about other countries and cultures as well. As alluded to in the prior chapter, through this exploration, fans not only articulate their cultural fluency, but also exhibit an understanding of their own pop cosmopolitanism that
does not seem to coincide with how Jenkins employs "escape" in his definition of pop cosmopolitanism.

**Pop Cosmopolitans Crafted by Circumstances and Technologies**

For some overseas English-speaking Johnny's fans, their exposure and interest in Johnny's is their first intimate contact with Japanese culture, popular or otherwise; they may have randomly seen anime on television as a child, but never really paid it too much mind. Of all the fans surveyed and interviewed, this fan was in the distinct minority. The majority of overseas Johnny's fans have had an interest in Japanese culture that extends to before and beyond their encounter with Johnny's.

I've always had an interest in Japanese culture and lifestyle. I live in LA [Los Angeles] (we have a Little Tokyo) so there are a lot of opportunities to see, hear, experience everything Japanese. Liking JE [Johnny's] groups is sort of another thing I'm into because of my primary interest in most things Japanese.

(anonymous fan #276; brackets mine)

Fans who live in metropolitan areas like anonymous fan #276 living in Los Angeles are more easily exposed to Japanese and other foreign cultures because of the diversity that is drawn to these city centers. The inclination toward being a cosmopolitan is already built into these fans' environments, as they are able to engage with the Other on a daily basis and their interest in Johnny's is just one of their many interests in Japan.

The experiences of Stacey and Sage, both currently American college students, reflect this inclination toward cosmopolitanism. Stacey grew up in a large metropolitan city and always loved Asian cultures in general, often reading books about Asian countries as a child and then turning her interests toward Japanese pop music (J-pop). For college, she moved to a small town to attend a mid-sized state university and in our interview, she expressed a sense of culture shock because she is so used to the "big city culture" where there are fine arts and cultural opportunities. On the other hand, Sage is
from a military family and therefore, has lived in a myriad of places throughout her life so far—"every town that [she has] lived in has been relatively small, but incredibly diverse" (Sage). However, like Stacey, she ended up moving to a small insulated town for college and notes that there is nothing to do in town and this is probably why she spends so much of her time on the computer. While living in metropolitan centers or diverse areas and being a cosmopolitan do not share a directly causal relationship, Stacey and Sage's narratives show that growing up in a "big city culture" or being exposed to a diversity of cultures can naturalize and incline people toward a more cosmopolitan outlook, seeking out different and exciting encounters.

For Stacey, Sage and anonymous fan #276, being overseas Johnny's fans is just another extension of their cosmopolitanism which was in part aided by the environments they were raised in, which exposed them to other cultures aside from the standard American fare. In the case of Rita, a twenty-seven year old American lawyer, her current interest in Japanese culture is something that has been purposely developed over a long period of time. As a child, she grew up in a small town and was homeschooled and "there was not really a whole lot of contact to the outside world, other than through media" (Rita). It was not until after her first experience of visiting Tokyo when she was in high school and then moving to small metropolitan area for college that Rita became "interested in learning about the different things that [she] didn't have access to in a small town", eventually obtaining an undergraduate degree in intercultural studies (Rita).

Rita's initial exposure to Japanese culture was through hosting Japanese exchange students at her home and then eventually doing a summer homestay in Japan herself when she was in high school, which was when she visited Tokyo for the first time. It was
through making friends with the exchange students who stayed with her that Rita was exposed eventually to Johnny's. Her Japanese friends as teenage girls were all interested in Johnny's idols and Japanese dramas and variety shows, so Japanese popular culture became a point which they could communicate around because at the time Rita only spoke a little Japanese and they only spoke a little bit of English. While her interest in Johnny's did wane, Rita was quick to point out in her interview that

...it's [Johnny's] something I've always been kind of interested in, but at that time, there's wasn't really a thriving community on the Internet, in fact there wasn't really a thriving Internet at all at that point. I didn't even have an email address I don't think. So it's something that I kind of had less contact with once I was no longer involved with that program, and no longer having direct contact with Japanese people that much. [...] If I would have been in Japan, or possibly would have been in some place um where there were large Japanese bookstores, it have been something I would've been able to keep up with more just because I have access to information. But because I was not really in places that had those things, that didn't have contact with Japanese people, then yeah, it was kind of something where there just wasn't availability of a lot of information. (Rita; brackets mine)

Growing up in the mid-1990s when the Internet was just really starting to become a part of our everyday lives, Rita reflects on how in her small town and even in the small metropolitan area where she went to school there was simply no information to sustain her interests as an overseas Johnny's fan. Only a few years ago was her Johnny's fandom rekindled when she discovered what the Internet could now offer her in terms of multimedia access to Johnny's, and with new information, she became "more interested in it and interested in a broader scope" (Rita).

While it was near impossible to get such detailed narratives and follow the pop cosmopolitan beginnings of all the fans surveyed, one thing that did come out was what Rita alluded to—having one interest that leads into becoming interested in that interest on a broader scope. A good portion of fans expressed that before they had become Johnny's
fans, they were fans of other aspects of Japanese popular culture—*anime, manga,* Japanese dramas, and Japanese music (whether it be J-Pop or J-Rock).

Years back I listened to music like Dir en Grey, Gackt, X and L'arc en ciel. And I was always interested about Japan and I loved its culture, as a teenager I got hooked up with Manga and Anime, and somehow from that to Japanese *Doramas*³², maybe because many of them are adapted from Manga-stories? Anyway, after watching *Gokusen* starring Matsumoto Jun I got interested in him and found out he was part of a group called Arashi and they were part of Johnny's and so on and so forth. (anonymous fan #186; italics mine)

Was in HP [*Harry Potter*] fandom -> someone suggested I try *Prince of Tennis* anime and online fandom -> watched PoT musicals online -> watched fansubbed *Nobuta wo Produce* -> JE (anonymous fan #35; italics and brackets mine)

very usual proccess anime -> dorama -> 'oh, pretty! ... what? he's in a band?' -> google -> livejournal (anonymous fan #33)

In anonymous fan #186's narrative, the intertextuality of Japanese popular culture is clearly evident in her main overlapping interests. Her music interests were in Japanese bands such as Dir en Grey and L'arc en ciel who tend to be categorized as J-Rock, but she had a long standing interest in Japan from her consumption of *anime* and *manga*, which led her to Japanese dramas because many are adapted from *manga*. It was through her exposure and interest in all these things which eventually brought her to discover Johnny's idol Matsumoto Jun and her interest in Matsumoto led her to his group, Arashi. This intertextuality leads to a ripple or domino effect, which the use of arrows ( - > ) by anonymous fans #35 and #33 demonstrate—creating a path of various interests in Japanese popular culture that eventually brought fans to Johnny's.

Most Johnny's fans are already pop cosmopolitans to some extent because of their varied investments in Japanese popular culture and their continuous movement into other fandoms, which demonstrates a willingness to learn and experience new and different things. Once they discover Johnny's, the domino effect continues on its course and many

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³² *Dorama* is the word for television dramas in Japanese borrowed and adapted from English.
new overseas Johnny's fans turn to Google to research Johnny's and then find the large overseas fandom base on LiveJournal as anonymous fan #33 indicates in the continuation of her quick and dirty explanation of how she came to Johnny's fandom above. In fact, the ripple effect that seems to influence how people discover Johnny's initially is reflective of the linking culture of the Internet—where one click leads from one website to the next. The significant influence of the Internet for overseas Johnny's fans—both as an information source and the primary medium in which fans are able to enact their fandom (as discussed in chapter three)—is reflected in the cross-platform nature of their consumption.

I first discovered Johnny's through music videos I stumbled onto on websites like Youtube. I learned about the groups from places like Wikipedia and also came across online places like Livejournal where you could find information and media related to them. (anonymous fan #292)

YouTube, Wikipedia, and LiveJournal are all spotlighted by anonymous fan #292 as contributing to his overall discovery of Johnny's in distinct ways. He was not the only fan to cite these sites along with Google. A common discourse amongst surveyed fans was that of "Google is our friend". That is to say, whenever an overseas Johnny's fan needed to research something whether directly about Johnny's or not, they automatically defaulted to Google. The reliance on Google as the place to begin one's research is highlighted in the following fan's account of how she came to Johnny's fandom through an unusual linkage.

Some car commercial was playing "Secret Agent Man", so I googled that song, found some Japanese version where Nishikido Ryo was singing along. I took a glance at the comments that stated he was from Kanjani8, then I just started looking up everything related to Kanjani8. (anonymous fan #576)

"Secret Agent Man" is a well-known song from the 1960s that served as a theme song for an American television show. However, anonymous fan #576 ended up stumbling upon
the version that is perhaps more well-known in Japan—sung by a prepubescent Nishikido Ryo when he was still a Johnny's Junior and released under the unit name, Secret Agent, in 2000 as the theme song for a Japanese drama. Here, Google really is a fan's best friend because if not for Google, this person might not have become a Johnny's fan, as someone without any familiarity with Japanese popular culture would not have been able to make such a connection. Therefore, viewing Google as one of the ultimate resources for Johnny's fans constantly in the hunt for new information on their favorite idols would be valid.

While Google is a fan's best friend, it must not be forgotten that LiveJournal is the primary hub for overseas English-speaking Johnny's fandom. While I was conducting my field research and distributing surveys across various Johnny's idol group communities on LiveJournal, I encountered three overseas, English-speaking fans who attend the same university that I do but as undergraduates. One fan came to me via the Arashi fandom when I posted my survey to the arashi_on LiveJournal community. I had actually met her before at an on-campus Japanese tea table event about J-pop that I was invited to by a friend; I remember discussing Johnny's a little bit with her, but we did not become friends afterward. The second fan came to me via the KinKi Kids fandom when I posted to the domotokyoudai LiveJournal community. Actually, this fan is a personal friend as I met her two years ago because she was the roommate of a Japanese exchange student who was my friend. Our friendship is very casual—we are friends on Facebook and hang out together occasionally when our schedules permit, but do not really "hang out" online. Though I knew that she was a Johnny's fan, I did not tell her anything about my research. Despite this, she still managed to find my survey on LiveJournal, answered it and let me
know. The third fan came to me via a mutual fandom friend in England. My friend in England contacted me and let me know that one of her LiveJournal friends had stumbled across my survey at the news_jpop community; apparently my friend's friend had just recently transferred to this university to major in Japanese and was excited to learn that I am here as well. All three of these encounters demonstrate that the Internet is the main, viable medium for overseas Johnny's fans because while all three of these fans are in close physical proximity to me, for the most part, we did not find each other as Johnny's fans until we got online. What is more, the fact that they found me through three distinctive LiveJournal communities as fans of different Johnny's idol groups puts LiveJournal at the forefront of places for various Johnny's fans to gather within the overseas English-speaking Johnny's fandom.

I think LiveJournal is the social site with the most opportunity to obtain JE [Johnny's] things. Even though we're in a very global era, Japan is still half a world away from the US [United States]; you can't buy every single or DVD and Life&Style isn't reporting on Nagase Tomoya’s next movie. So the LiveJournal communities are important places to visit to keep up on news and download what you can't obtain (or, download for preview purposes, which can lead to purchasing an item you might have ignored otherwise). (Tracey; brackets mine)

As Tracey underscores, LiveJournal is an important resource not only for fans who are looking to obtain information and media on Johnny's, but it is a social site as well. Fellow overseas Johnny's fans share what media and information they find and also work to make said information and media linguistically and culturally accessible for all other fans (as mentioned in chapter three). The fans themselves are resources of information to each other, new fans constantly asking questions in the various LiveJournal communities dedicated to Johnny's groups—from general questions like if a visa is needed to visit Japan to detailed fandom questions about how many solo songs does KAT-TUN's Ueda Tatsuya really have.
Exhibited in the ways that they utilize the Internet, overseas Johnny’s fans are rather pop cosmopolitan in their active investment in Japanese popular culture that leads them to further engage with various forms of it, such as moving from anime to J-pop and then delving further into general conceptions of Japanese entertainment with Johnny's. It is the Internet that enables them to do this. However, as Rita notes in her personal fandom narrative and Tracey points out as well, information about Japanese popular culture is still hard to obtain in one's everyday life outside of Japan. While the Internet might be the more widespread way of enabling pop cosmopolitans, not all overseas Johnny's fans are foreign to the concept of a more general cosmopolitanism that is shaped by the day-to-day of their lives. However, this cosmopolitanism that fans are already familiar with can incline them to be pop cosmopolitans as well—a fan's general interests in foreign cultures can be focused through popular culture, changing the way she or he views and consumes culture so that it relates to her or his specific investments in forms of popular culture.

Refocusing and Re-informing Our Japanese Perspective

Upon their first encounter with the idols of Johnny's and the entertainment world that the talent agency constructs, most overseas Johnny's fans are awestruck—whether it be in amazement of how, as idols, beautiful they can be or, as singers, how awful they can be—but it is not their first encounter with the idea of Japan, the people and culture of a country in East Asia. Some overseas fans already had cultivated a long-standing interest in Japanese popular culture and becoming fans of Johnny's was just exploring another aspect of it. Other fans may have had a passing interest in Japan, but Johnny's was one of their first forays into its popular culture. Then, there are fans who have a Sony mp3 player and maybe drive a Toyota car, but have never thought of Japan culturally until
becoming Johnny's fans. Surely, there are many other types of overseas fans as well, but no matter the type, the relationship forged with their favorite Johnny's idols further focuses and expands their knowledge of Japan more generally.

More often than not, overseas fans attributed their acquisition of the Japanese language to their interest in Johnny's.

I was a fan of anime and manga for years before getting into JE [Johnny's], but I only learned a minimal amount of Japanese because subtitles and translations were readily available. For the JE things I was interested in, subs [subtitles] often didn't exist, so I watched many videos raw\(^33\) and found myself picking up a lot of Japanese. Eventually, I decided to start taking classes to expand on that knowledge. I also learned more about Japanese culture and dialects than I ever had before. (anonymous fan #2; brackets mine)

When I was younger I was a hard core otaku\(^34\), however, since it was just anime and manga, it didn't expose me to real life everyday Japanese culture and language. JE has even helped me realize my true dream of becoming a Japanese translator. It's kind of funny, because I don't study for Japanese [class] that much. I'll look at a list of words and think "oh I heard this on some Arashi show" (anonymous fan #778; brackets mine)

First, in light of the discussion in the prior section, it is important to note that both fans were fans of *anime* and *manga* before becoming Johnny's fans. In relating the differences between the two fandoms, they note that it was Johnny's fandom that furthered their linguistic interests; this is something with which the majority of surveyed fans who stated they were also fans of *anime* and *manga* agreed. For anonymous fan #2, the highly-active *anime* and *manga* fandoms with an affluence of subtitles and translations rendered the need for Japanese language proficiency to none. However, in the online English-speaking

\(^{33}\) "Raw" is a way describing media that has not been translated, and therefore are unprocessed and raw. The term originates from *anime* and *manga* fandom where media tends to be available in both forms and there are large communities of fans devoted to translating raw media from Japanese into various languages.  

\(^{34}\) *Otaku* refers to American and, more broadly speaking, Western fans of anime. "Otaku" is a Japanese term used to make fun of fans who have become such obsessive consumers of pop culture that they have lots all touch with the people in their immediate vicinity. American fans have embraced the shameful term, asserting what Matt Hills calls a "semiotic solidarity" with their Japanese counterparts; constructing their identity as "otaku" allows them to signal their distance from American taste and their mastery over foreign content" (Jenkins, 2006b, p. 164).
Johnny's fandom, the subtitles and translations tend to be concentrated around the more popular groups which tend to be the younger groups—Arashi, KAT-TUN, NEWS, and Kanjani8. Therefore, in her interests in the older, less popular (within English-speaking fandom) Johnny's groups—TOKIO, V6, KinKi Kids, and Tackey&Tsubasa—and their media, many lacking subtitles and translations, fan #2 ended up being more exposed to the Japanese language which eventually sparked her to take classes. As for anonymous fan #778, it is the realism (that is, animation versus real life celebrities; not to be confused with the conception of the authentic idol from chapter three) of Johnny's fandom media in its focus on more evidently tangible everyday Japanese culture and language that encourages and aids her language acquisition, even serving as a study guide of sorts. Despite their prior exposure to other parts of Japanese popular culture, it was their fandom interaction with Johnny's that inspired the expansion of their knowledge on Japan beyond simply entertainment purposes.

Mentioned in the previous chapter, the need for emotional intimacy is what drives most of the media consumption amongst overseas Johnny's fans. Consuming the media alone is not enough though, especially in the English-speaking Johnny's fandom where there is the extra linguistic and cultural barrier. Comprehension of the material being consumed is perhaps even more important than the actual consumption itself. From the above quoted fans, not only does the Johnny's fandom have a direct influence on their language acquisition through exposing them to Japanese and operating as a tool in the learning process, but it has an indirect influence as it is the emotional relationship fans engage in that drives them to consume the media that then has a cultural influence.

I am the quintessential marketing target. When I discover that JE [Johnny's] idols like a particular thing, I am suddenly interested in trying it. I don't like spicy
things, but Tomohisa Yamashita likes Mabo Tofu, so I want to try it. I've never owned a Playstation, but Ryo Nishikido enjoys playing Katamari Damacy, so I want to play it. Shigeaki Kato frames his journal in the writings of Souseki, so I went out and bought "Kokoro" and "I Am a Cat". (anonymous fan #58; brackets and italics mine)

Right away in her opening remark, anonymous fan #58 is critical of her own position as a fan, recognizing that her behaviors are that of a "quintessential marketing target". She then elaborates how her curiosity is inherently linked to her favorite Johnny's idols.

Through them, fan #58 gets exposed to popular foods and video games in Japan as well as famous Japanese literary authors. Anyone studying Japanese formally in school would probably be exposed to these things—talking about food and games in a language class, reading Natsume's seminal writings in a literature course. Fan #58 is instead exposed to them through Johnny's fandom, which becomes an alternative information source on contemporary Japanese culture.

Well. If I hadn't been into JE [Johnny's], I never would have started watching Japanese dramas, and so I wouldn't know anything about Japanese culture beyond what a book could tell me. But books are often dry and dull and I think that both JE and J Dramas [Japanese dramas] allow a more exciting springboard for exploration. (Tess; brackets mine)

Through following translators and subbers and reading their explanation for things, I've become more aware of how cultural differences shape us and the way we think, how something as seemingly basic as sexuality is defined by our culture's social, political, philosophical and religious history. (anonymous fan #224)

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35 Mabo tofu is a spicy Chinese dish made of tofu and a chili and bean-based sauce that is well-known in Japan.
36 Katamari Damacy is a popular Japanese puzzle video game produced by the Japanese video game company, Namco; it has also been released in North America.
37 Natsume Soseki is one of Japan's most famous novelists of the Meiji Era (1868-1912). He is best known for his novels Kokoro, Botchan, and I am a Cat.
38 Anonymous fan #58 chose to write the Japanese names using Western order of first name, last name and I decided to leave that as is.
39 "Subbers" refers to those who translate and subtitle videos, both individuals who subtitle on their own and groups of people who work on a subtitling team.
Building off anonymous fan #58, Tess argues for Johnny's as an alternative educational source that is more entertaining and engaging than "what a book could ever tell [her]." Using the notion of a springboard, she explains that it is specifically her interest in Johnny's that moved her toward developing a deeper knowledge of Japan beyond what was already familiar to her. Anonymous fan #244 expresses a similar opinion, as thanks to the work of fellow fans who are well-versed in Japanese language and culture, she is able to cultivate a deeper awareness of cultural differences and how it influences a construction of self.

For Leslie, an Irish high school student, one song by a Johnny's idol was enough to open her eyes to an entirely new part of Japanese history and traditional culture that was unknown to her before.
This song, "1582" [sung by KAT-TUN's Kamenashi Kazuya], is based on a story in history, namely that of Oda Nobunaga\(^{40}\)'s death at Honnouji in 1582. This much is fact, but I have read an amazingly detailed and interesting analysis on it, that introduced so many different things to me. The girl who wrote this analysis clearly did an amazing amount of research into many different areas, even translating original sources from Chinese. Firstly, I was able to learn loads of historical information about Oda Nobunaga, his life, his relationships, etc. She had links to loads of sources and I've read through them all, and I'm confident that I know a lot about this important historical figure now. [...] Anyway, she was also analysing Kamenashi's performance of the song in the most recent KAT-TUN concert. Anyone would agree, this is a stunning performance. There is undoubtedly so much thought put into it and the whole performance is so rich in cultural aspects, it's amazing. Anyway, she presented loads of information about the traditional aspects of Noh theatre\(^{41}\) and a bit about its history, how it is used on stage, etc, and it was really so interesting. So I learned a lot about Noh from this also. There was also some language analysis from the song, including subtle language nuances that I might not have caught, or archaic words, forms, and kanji\(^{42}\) that were used to reinforce the historical idea of it. (Leslie, 18, high school student, Irish; brackets and italics mine)

Whether "1582" is actually based on the story of Oda Nobunaga's death at Honnouji or not is up to speculation still as Kamenashi himself has never confirmed the true meaning behind the song's lyrics. Even so, there is no denying the fact that the song's possible connections to the historical incident led fans like Leslie to dig further into Japanese culture to better understand the song's meaning. It is clear that the time invested both by Leslie in learning about these things and the fan who did the analysis, even going beyond the lyrics of the song to look at the possible cultural influences in the actual performance of "1582", that the emotional investment that fans have in their idols furthers their knowledge about Japan—in order to understand what Kamenashi is singing and doing, they research and become more knowledgeable.

\(^{40}\) Oda Nobunaga is a famous Japanese historical figure who helped to unify Japan during the Sengoku (Warring States) period (1467–1573).

\(^{41}\) Noh is a traditional Japanese musical drama style with emphasis on the use of masks. It has been performed since the 14th century.

\(^{42}\) Kanji is the Japanese word used for Chinese characters adopted into the Japanese language writing system.
Television variety shows were a huge source of knowledge for another fan I interviewed, Caroline, a Canadian graduate student. Thanks to her boyfriend's interest in Japanese culture, Caroline discovered Johnny's fandom and became a huge Kanjani8 fan. She, of course, watched their television shows and based on the knowledge she gathered from these television shows, she and her boyfriend planned their first trip to Japan.

When I traveled to Japan the first time, I was astounded at the amount of knowledge I had on the culture without really knowing I had this knowledge just from watching all the TV shows they host. You know, to me, it was almost a given, walking down Asakusa\textsuperscript{43}, the marketplace, I would see darumas\textsuperscript{44}, well, I knew what a daruma was. There was no question asked, but it didn't occur to me that most stores didn't know what they were. Just because I had had the exposure beforehand. (Caroline)

\textsuperscript{43} Asakusa is a district in Tokyo most famous for the Buddhist temple, Sensouji. The street leading to the entrance to Sensouji is Nakamise-dori, famously known to be lined with small stores; this is the marketplace that Caroline mentions in her quote.

\textsuperscript{44} Daruma are round, papier-mâché dolls that are modeled after the founder of the Zen sect of Buddhism, Bodhidharma. Normally they are red, but can vary on color and appearance depending on the artist and the region where they are made. They are often regarded as a good luck talisman.
One television show that Caroline had used to plan her first Japan trip was Muchaburi, a variety show hosted by Kanjani8 on the TVAsahi television network from 2007 to 2008. Each week, a special guest would come on to the variety show with an excessive or absurd request (thus the name of the show as mucha means absurd or excessive in Japanese). Two members from Kanjani8 would then go on an adventure and explore Japan, trying to fulfill the guests' requests. One specific episode that both her boyfriend and her had been interested in was when two members of Kanjani8 went to learn about and make and paint their own daruma. Intrigued by the daruma, they went searching for a place that would allow them to experience what they had seen on Muchaburi. With some struggle eventually

...we ended up doing exactly everything they did on their TV show just at a different factory. And he [the owner of the daruma factory] was very impressed with our own knowledge of daruma. And he was like, "Why do you know about this?! How did you learn? Is it famous in Canada?!!" And we're like, "Unfortunately no. It's because we watched this one TV show with a Johnny's boys band." And he was like, "Wow! Really? And that's how you got interested?!" And we were like, "Sure!" and he was really surprised by that. (ibid)

To this day, Caroline continues to keep in touch with the owner of this daruma factory and they have become good friends. On her trips to Japan afterward, she has visited him and been able to explore and learn about Japan through the help of her native guide. Both Caroline and Leslie's stories demonstrate how they have connected in a deeper way with Japanese culture aside from their consumption of the more superficial and constructed Japanese popular entertainment. To an extent, it is their investment in the popular entertainment (that is, Johnny's) that dictates how and what they learn about Japanese culture. Still this is not to say that overseas Johnny's fans are completely tied to their fandom in order to gain the "global perspectives" that Jenkins says pop cosmopolitans
gain through their consumption; this notion will be pursued further in the following section of this chapter.

While Caroline was not the only surveyed fan who had visited Japan before, she was certainly a part of the minority—only thirty-two percent of overseas Johnny's fans have traveled to Japan before—as most overseas Johnny's fans are younger and usually cannot afford to travel to Japan. The other sixty-two percent of fans (a large 588 out of 860) had never been to Japan before and when asked what they would like to see most if they were able to go to Japan, two types of "dream trips" were described. First, there were fans that for the most part tended to orient their travels around tourist locales—visiting big cities like Osaka and Tokyo or picturesque places such as Kyoto and Hokkaido—and their interests in Japanese popular culture—wanting to experience the Johnny's store and the Johnny's Family Club building, to attend a concert by their favorite Johnny's idol group, to eat at restaurants related to Johnny's idols (the families of NEWS's Koyama Keiichiro and Arashi's Aiba Masaki are well-known for welcoming fans to their ramen and Chinese restaurants respectively), and even visit the filming locations of Japanese dramas; Nick Couldry (2000) has discussed similar types of media-based "pilgrimages" in relation to viewers of the British soap opera Coronation Street. In engaging in these

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45 The Johnny's store is an official store devoted entirely to Johnny's idols. There are four locations throughout Japan—Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya, and Fukuoka—although the store in Tokyo's Harajuku area of the Shibuya district is considered the main store. Many fan goods are sold at the store, including extra concert goods from Johnny's groups' tours, but the main fan goods sold are the official shop photos. Shop photos are "candid" photos of Johnny's idols, usually behind the scenes at work (i.e. filming a music video or during a concert tour) and only sold at these stores. Figure 1 is an example of an official shop photo.

46 Johnny's Family Club is the name of the official fanclub for Johnny's idols. Under the umbrella name of Johnny's Family Club, debuted idol groups have their own sub-fanclubs (except for NEWS, Kanjani8, and KAT-TUN which share one fanclub together and Hey!Say!JUMP which has yet to get a fanclub). The Johnny's Family Club has its own building that can be visited where they display special video and poster messages from the idol groups that can only be viewed there as well as the latest CD single/DVD releases. Fans can also sign up to join the fanclub there, but must have a Japanese mailing address to join.

47 Ramen is a Japanese noodle dish that is of unknown Chinese origin. It is a popular contemporary dish in Japan and many regions of Japan have their own special variations.
kinds of activities, these overseas Johnny's fans seemed to articulate a trip based more around ideas of tourism, be it sight-seeing or media tourism and feelings of closeness that can be achieved through fans sharing the same spaces as their idols.

On the other hand, there were fans whose ideal trip to Japan more closely aligned with the subsequent three fans.

[I would want to visit] The JE [Johnny's] Store? NO, just kidding. Yokohama. It looked so purrrrrty in Tatta Hitotsu no Koi. And the Kansai region\(^{48}\), because that's where Japanese history is really steeped in. (Yay, nothing to do with JE!) I mean, I like my JE when I'm home, but if I ever get to travel to Japan, it won't be because I want to see a bunch of Johnnies. It's J.A.P.A.N. for ferk's sake. I'll soak up all the history and culture I can! (Again, nothing to do with JE, yay.) (anonymous fan #472; brackets and italics mine)

I would like to go to Tokyo and experience everyday Japanese life. Or perhaps as everyday as it can get for a gaijin\(^{49}\). I have always been interested in Japanese pop culture, particularly food, and my greatest priority in going to Japan is just to see how they live and to eat food as they prefer - whether it's the rare chance to eat at a ryokan\(^{50}\), to grab an okonomiyaki\(^{51}\) in a place specializing in it, to eat at a Denny's in Japan, order oden\(^{52}\) at a street cart, or just snack on Calbee chips picked up from a conbini\(^{53}\). Wandering the various neighborhoods of metropolitan Tokyo - and even other Japanese cities - would be interesting to me as well. Since becoming a fan of Johnny's, now I'd also like to add the chance to see a Johnny's concert (preferably Arashi or V6) to the list, but even barring that I enjoy plenty of other Japanese musical acts and would be happy just to be able to see them on TV. (anonymous fan #102; italics mine)

My ideal trip to Japan would be a long one. I'd really like to see just about every part of it--not every prefecture or little tiny corner of it, but both key and everyday points throughout the country, from north to south. I hate being rushed on vacation, too, so I'd like to just devote a couple or a few days to exploring

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\(^{48}\) Kansai is generally what the western half of the main, largest island of Japan is referred to; Osaka is in the Kansai region. The eastern half of the main island is called Kanto; Tokyo is in the Kanto region.

\(^{49}\) Gaijin is the colloquial, somewhat derogatory term for foreigners. The full word is gaikokujin; literally translated, it means "outside country people".

\(^{50}\) Ryokan is a traditional-style Japanese inn with tatami-matted rooms, futons to sleep on the floor, and communal bathing rooms. Ryokan usually offer dinner and breakfast to their guests and are known for promoting the high-quality of their food.

\(^{51}\) Okonomiyaki is often described as a savory pancake-like dish, usually filled with meat, seafood and cabbage though ingredients change with variation. It is associated with the Kansai and Hiroshima regions of Japan, but usually can be found and eaten throughout the country.

\(^{52}\) Oden is a Japanese winter dish consisting of various ingredients such as hard-boiled eggs, Japanese radish, and processed fish cakes boiled in a light, soy-flavored broth. Oden is sold at many convenience stores, but also has a traditional image of being sold from street carts by vendors which is still done today.

\(^{53}\) Conbini is actually in reference to konbini. Konbini is a shortening of konbiniensusutoa, the Japanese word for convenience store which was adopted from English.
each part, doing both touristy things and everyday things. I’d like to see the Japan the Japanese see. Obviously this plan has flaws, as certain places are best visited during different times of year. But it’s the dream vacation. (anonymous fan #60)

Rather explicit in her denial that the only reason she is visiting Japan is because of her attachment to a bunch of Johnny's idols (nearly reveling in it!), anonymous fan #472 insists that she would want to absorb as much about the country as she could on a trip there. Of course, her ideal trip does not completely exclude any Johnny's-related activities (such as seeing Yokohama because it was the featured setting for the drama Tatta Hitotsu no Koi starring KAT-TUN's Kamenashi) and neither does the trip detailed by anonymous fan #102. Expanding on what fan #472 appears to imply, both fans #102 and #60 want trips that allow them to fully immerse in Japan, not as tourists, but just like the Japanese themselves do. Fan #102 is even quite specific about the experiences she would like to have, mainly through everyday cultural interactions with food. Rather than simply observing the culture, these fans long to be participants in the culture.

When considering cosmopolitans, Hannerz (1996) compares them to tourists—where tourists are the spectators that locals (residents of the culture) and cosmopolitans can spot from a mile away and cosmopolitans are those who long to sneak into the backstage of culture and participate with the locals (p.105). With this understanding, we might frame the overseas Johnny's fans who seemed to congregate around ideas of tourism in their idealized travels as the tourists turned spectators of Japan, while fans #472, #102, #60 and fans like them would be the cosmopolitans. However, as Hannerz (1996) notes and Jenkins (2006b) re-emphasizes, cosmopolitanism can manifest in an individual either selectively or wholly—that is, she or he selectively chooses parts of the culture to embrace or she or he accepts the culture completely as a package deal. As established in chapter three, overseas Johnny's fans already enact pop cosmopolitanism
within their fandom itself. It is this media tourism that some overseas Johnny's fans
dream of which demonstrates a more concentrated, selective notion of cosmopolitanism
that is focused through their fandom.

Of course, when Hannerz speaks of the cosmopolitan/tourist/local distinction he is
speaking in terms of physicality and mobility. Both in Jenkins's reworking of the idea of
cosmopolitanism into *pop* cosmopolitanism and the various voices of overseas Johnny's
fans in this section, the answer to "whether it is now even possible to become a
cosmopolitan without going away at all" is provided (Hannerz, 1996, p. 111). The
majority of overseas Johnny's fans, in their engagement with and accessing of the idol
culture specific to Japan, *do* manage to become cosmopolitan; most without ever seeing
Japan with their own eyes, instead through the rigorous consumption of cultural
knowledge in which their idols are grounded, in order to achieve the ultimate fandom
intimacy. And since they are inspired by their relationship with a form of popular culture
to be more open to "alien" cultures, they prove themselves to be *pop* cosmopolitans.

...being interested in JE [Johnny's] has made me seek out legit information about
the culture because it makes me INTERESTED in the culture. It's made Japan
more "well-rounded" in my mind, rather than the unintentional stereotype that
one might accept because you don't know any better. (anonymous fan #167; brackets mine)

I've learned that the majority of "crazy Japanese game shows" actually involve
celebrities doing ridiculous things, not normal folk. I've learned a LOT about
Japanese food and picked up a bit of the language. I've gained a more nuanced
ability to evaluate stuff that before I would have said "that's a crazy Japanese
thing" - now I have the context to understand those things better. (anonymous fan
#415)

With their global perspectives broadened, overseas Johnny's fans who double as pop
cosmopolitans have the ability to distinguish and more clearly understand Japanese
culture. The question now turns to if this access they have found to another culture
outside their own is appropriately described by the concept of an "escape route" as Jenkins defines in his conception of pop cosmopolitanism.

**Escape Route or Doorway to Discovery?**

"Escape" is a word that is laden with meaning. To escape from somewhere or something inherently implies a dislike for the place or thing from which a person is escaping from. Usually said person is running away from something negative and toward something positive. It can have a disempowering effect as well, as someone who runs away from something or escapes a situation that she or he cannot handle is, depending on the circumstances, viewed as a coward. Despite the recognition that everyone "needs an escape" sometimes and that it can be beneficial in "healthy doses", the overall connotation that "escape" holds in everyday speech is a negative one.

Escape as a word and a concept certainly is not foreign to pop cosmopolitans in the online English-speaking Johnny's fandom. In chapter three, fans spoke of the emotional escapism that they are able achieve through Johnny's. Indulging in Johnny's media provides stress relief and lifts overseas fans spirits when they feel down (or even serves as a high-quality procrastination method from school work). Some fans even utilized the word "escape" in their survey responses in order to highlight the pleasure they get from "escap[ing] into a world all bright and shiny" (anonymous fan #680). This was always in consideration of Johnny's idols and associated media as an entertainment form however, as the following interview exchange with Tess elucidates.

Interviewer: So you do you ever think of [Johnny's] fandom or the Internet in terms of "escape"?
Tess: No, I can't say that I do.
Interviewer: Alright, just got to check my bases. ;)
Tess: unless we're talking escape from homework... sometimes it does serve that purpose. XD
Entertainment theorized as a temporary escape from reality is hardly a new or unknown phenomenon in academic discussion. However, Jenkins in his definition of the pop cosmopolitanism envisions popular culture as offering a cultural escape from one's local culture "in order to enter a broader sphere of cultural experience" (2006, p. 155). Most overseas Johnny's fans certainly are aware of how their interaction with Japanese popular culture has further expanded their international horizons, but they do not acknowledge it in the form of an ability to escape from their local culture into a more extensive global arena of cultures. Instead, Johnny's has "opened a whole window on a whole different culture" (Caroline).

...JE [Johnny's] has helped me appreciate Japanese culture and want to learn more about it. It's certainly made me aware that there's a lot more to Japan than I'd thought (which, to be honest, wasn't all that much - I'd never really considered Japanese culture at all), and has provided me with a starting point. (anonymous fan #113; brackets mine)

In anonymous fan #113's conceiving of her fandom as a "starting point" and even in the springboard metaphor used by Tess in the previous section, a more positive sense of new beginnings and opportunity is implied compared to Jenkins's "escape route". This is important to consider in relation to how many fans have been personally impacted by being an overseas Johnny's fan—many fans have gone on to incorporate Japan into their studies and sometimes into their life’s work as is the case for Caroline and Tess and even myself, the three graduate students whose research interests have a strong Japanese culture component. How can we possibly be escaping to another culture if it has become rooted into our everyday lives, an addition to our local culture? Cosmopolitanism itself is defined in terms of mastery of "alien cultures" which then is reflected in the construction
of the self through a critical understanding of said cultures (Hannerz 1996). And if there is one thing that many of these fans are, it is critical.

Overseas Johnny's fans are clearly critical of their own fandom, as evidenced in chapter three. They do not consume their favorite Johnny's idols and the entertainment they provide blindly. This is not to say that every overseas Johnny's fan is critical of their fandom because to be critical is a choice—fans may know they are being "brainwashed" as Johnny's throws their best marketing ploys via idols at them, but overseas Johnny's fans still consume because of the benefits they believe they gain, emotional or otherwise. Fans were also critical of one of the questions on the anonymous online survey that I distributed—"Do you think being a fan of Johnny's Entertainment helps you better understand Japanese culture?" What a good number of fans resisted was the use of the word "understand" in question. These fans did not think that "understand" was appropriate because they were critical of the idea of gaining a direct comprehension of a culture through its popular entertainment.

It certainly gives me more of an interest in Japanese culture. In and of itself, JE [Johnny's] cannot be used to understand culture as a whole. Idols are a part of Japanese society and have a much different role than American idols do. Those differences are what fascinate me - how is it that an idol, Jun Matsumoto, can gain a fan who is an older comedienne who in turn talks about her idol so much that her husband becomes interested against his will and writes a column about that same Matsumoto Jun? I certainly can't understand the position idols hold in Japanese society but things like this have sparked my interest in Japanese forms of comedy and journalism. It's not understanding but it is willingness to learn. (anonymous fan #58; brackets mine)

Just reading interview translations or watching dramas and anime can't tell you everything you need to know about Japanese culture, because they are presented to a Japanese audience; therefore things that are meant to be obvious to Japanese audiences might go totally over our gaijin heads. Reading/watching a lot of these things can certainly get you a better understanding of the culture, but I think a little research helps too. I was actually talking with my friend about something

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54 In this quote, anonymous fan #58 uses Western order of first name, last name and then switches to the Japanese order of last name, first name for Matsumoto Jun's name; I decided to leave that as is.
like this recently, specifically regarding silences in foreign films. I remember the first Japanese movie I ever saw (don't remember what it was at all, just the vague experience) left me confused because it seemed like things weren't progressing naturally between the characters, that they had just wound up together because the script had called for it. But watching a similarly paced movie years later, I understood which silences were conveying tension between characters, what the subtle movements meant, and it made SENSE this time. I never would have come to this point if I hadn't been pulled in by JE [Johnny's], or even have come across that movie without it. (anonymous fan #60; brackets and italics mine)

Anonymous fans #58 and #60 emphasize the fact that popular culture is merely a facet of the broader culture of Japan. Noted in the prior section, Johnny's as a popular form of entertainment cannot be properly interpreted and understood without the broader historical and cultural context and since fans are interested in being as close as possible to their idols, this understanding is key for them. That is to say, actively being a Johnny's fan does not lead to instant comprehension of Japanese culture; it is the effort that one puts into learning more and developing a sense of cosmopolitanism within their consumption of Japanese popular culture that leads to understanding. Anonymous fan #60's anecdote about the first Japanese movie she saw clearly demonstrates the importance of this distinction as it is her greater knowledge of Japanese aesthetics and culture that allow her to savor and enjoy a type of movie that confused her years before.

Another distinction in overseas Johnny's fans responses to this question is the concern that not every fan is critical enough to recognize the fact that simply being a fan of Johnny's does not grant you automatic understanding of the entirety of Japanese culture.

It [Johnny's] is a good example of how the Japanese are more likely to respond to advertising than the people of some Western countries. However, Johnny's idols tend to live in a different world than their average Japanese counterpart. On top of that you have the fact that while JE is popular amongst all ages in the international fandom including the late teens and early twenties, in Japan most of the fans are teens or in their thirties to fifties (depending on the group). That's not to say that there aren't young adults that are fans, and some groups are more likely to have them, but overall it seems to be thought of as more of a hobby for
children and lonely middle-aged women (so some university age fans are not as open about being fans). I feel international fandom has actually held some fans back from understanding the culture completely and gives them a false confidence on their ability to fit in to Japanese society if they were to go there. (anonymous fan #42; brackets mine)

I fear that many fans are misguided about the culture by seeing it only through JE [Johnny's] lenses. I'm old enough, and have studied Japan outside of JE enough, to know the context of the agency. But some of these girls, they think everyone in Japan knows and loves JE, which simply isn't true. So, I mean, I may have learned about new foods watching JE shows, but I'm fully aware that idols are still a romanticized package for the purpose of selling. (Tracey; brackets mine)

Anonymous fan #42 and Tracey as critical overseas Johnny's fans who appear to have a good knowledge of Japanese culture outside of the walls of the Johnny's fandom itself convey concern about some fans who view Japan with rose-colored, fandom lenses; the media tourist-type of Johnny's fan discussed in the prior section might be considered members of this category. As fans who feel they have gathered some level of knowledge on Japan beyond Johnny's (and depending on whether that knowledge came through their consumption of popular culture or not, they can be thought of as cosmopolitans and/or pop cosmopolitans), fan #42 and Tracey demonstrate their own ability to make the distinction that knowing Japanese culture only by consuming media related to Johnny's is not really having a complete knowledge of Japan.

In their serious consideration of the survey question as well as their concern for fellow, less-knowledgeable fans, the above overseas Johnny's fans almost seem to promote a sense of media literacy within the Johnny's fandom itself—it is okay to be a Johnny's fan, but be aware that Johnny's is not a completely accurate representation of Japanese culture. Ultimately, this leads to the creation of two types of distinction that are active in the pop cosmopolitanism of Johnny's fandom. Fan #60's narrative about her experiences viewing a Japanese movie before and after she gains cultural knowledge
about Japan exemplifies one of these distinctions. Her first viewing of a Japanese movie confused her because the progression of the relationship between the characters felt unnatural. At this point, fan #60 can be considered the local who refuses to leave her insular culture to try and understand or the local who is on her way to becoming a pop cosmopolitan and just lacks the knowledge to fully enjoy a foreign cultural text. Upon viewing a similar Japanese movie years later, fan #60 better understood the flow of the film and the structural importance of silences that had confused her before when she watched her first Japanese film. Here, she is firmly positioned as the pop cosmopolitan who can enjoy a similar foreign text now because she possesses "the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which it is encoded" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 2). This first level of distinction is based on an inside-outside dynamic where those savvy pop cosmopolitans with the cultural codes are on the inside and the culturally inexperienced locals are on the outside or even outskirts of fandom. This manifests in the everyday of fandom as enacted on LiveJournal with the use of fandom terminology and even the adoption of Japanese words such as gaijin and otaku, which can be observed in the quotes from overseas Johnny's fans in the prior two sections of this chapter—such terms and words are not defined in the quotes because fans within Johnny's fandom should know them as part of the cultural codes, thus the insider-outsider distinction.

The second level of distinction exists within the fandom itself and amongst the pop cosmopolitans rather than the pop cosmopolitans against an outsider. Argued in the previous section, media tourists who would normally not be considered cosmopolitan to Hannerz (1996), who characterized cosmopolitanism as a desire to be immersed and "behind-the-scenes" of a culture, can be framed as pop cosmopolitans in that their
explorations and desires to be immersed in a culture stem directly from their investment in popular culture. However, these same media tourist pop cosmopolitans are viewed with a certain level of concern by fans who qualify as (pop) cosmopolitans in the "traditional" definitions developed by Hannerz and Jenkins (2006b) because of their knowledge that expands beyond the confines of the fandom. It is this expression of concern and their ability to discern that not all fans share or even seek to attain the same scope of knowledge as they do, restricting themselves (whether by choice or not) to the framework provided by Johnny's, which creates a sense of a local pop cosmopolitan compared to a more globalized, comprehensive pop cosmopolitan.

The local pop cosmopolitan is someone who explores a foreign culture while still rooted in their local, everyday culture of which their interest in global popular culture is a part. That is to say, the local pop cosmopolitan always has one foot in their local culture and one foot in the foreign culture, consuming the foreign culture through the frame of foreign popular culture which has been absorbed into their local culture and identity. On the other hand, the comprehensive pop cosmopolitan is someone who aims to be fully immersed in the foreign culture, willingly letting go of their connections to their local culture to achieve this. While they might have interests in specific popular culture forms of the foreign culture, they do not need or would prefer to not make it the focus of how they consume the foreign culture. Comprehensive pop cosmopolitans can happily live with both feet in a foreign culture, but they know that they have the ability to go back to their local culture at any time—they maintain a full perspective of both the local and the foreign cultures that compose their identity.
In her opinion on Japanese culture, anonymous fan #555's conceptualization of culture illustrates exactly how distinctions within pop cosmopolitanism are able to exist in overseas Johnny's fandom.

Culture is a very big word. I do appreciate traditional culture (flower arrangement, kimonos, tea ceremonies, shamisen and koto\textsuperscript{55} music), as well as pop culture (dramas, cosplay, jpop, visual kei\textsuperscript{56}), but I don't fancy their national culture (being polite when they don't mean it, women being in a lower position from men, talking directly is rude). (anonymous fan #555)

Culture \textit{is} a big word that can and is divided in many ways depending on the person's understanding of the word. This thesis employs the idea of popular culture being just one piece of the greater national culture of a country. The definition of pop cosmopolitan suggests a movement from one local, national culture to another foreign national culture through the intermediary of the latter's popular culture (Jenkins 2006b). In their interpretations of and the way they frame their relationship with Japanese culture, overseas Johnny's fans make these distinctions between a national culture and ideology compared to the aesthetics of popular or traditional culture that draws on the greater national culture. It is their ability to read these distinctions and recognize where they fit amongst these distinctions—essentially, establishing their own identity in relations to these distinctions—that is unique to (pop) cosmopolitanism. Rather than a negative sense of escape and denial of what they are running away from, there is a more positive sense of discovery and acceptance of what they are encountering in the identity construction of overseas Johnny's fans.

\textsuperscript{55} Shamisen and koto are two different types of traditional Japanese stringed instruments, both derived from similar Chinese instruments.

\textsuperscript{56} Visual kei is a style of dress and makeup that is often associated with a specific type of genre of J-Rock music.
After confirming how fandom operates for overseas Johnny's fans, this chapter sought to further explore how pop cosmopolitanism operates within global fandoms such as the overseas English-speaking online Johnny's fandom. Overseas fans tend to be inclined to learning about foreign cultures and learning new things, either as a result of their upbringing and background that has exposed them to a variety of cultures or outlooks or thanks to their adoption of new media technologies that aid them in their curiosity and exploration. Their relationships to their favorite Johnny's idols further mobilizes their "willingness to engage with the Other" as they research and learn about Japanese culture in connection to and beyond the popular culture they consume in their effort to fully understand the world to which their idols belong (Hannerz, 1996, p. 103). Through this, we can see that not only is the relationship between the fan and their fan object in the overseas English-speaking Johnny's fandom of a reflective nature, but that the cosmopolitanism that arises out of this popular consumption is "narcissistic" as well; the distinctions that fans are able to make through their mastery of knowledge of Japanese culture (popular or otherwise) are important to the self-construction of identity. Defining pop cosmopolitanism using the idea of an "escape route" is not embraced by fans, who seem to gain more when it comes to a sense of self than they lose from their "adventures" away from their own local culture.

Of course, there is only so much that can be exposed about the pop cosmopolitanism of overseas English-speaking Johnny's fans through the finite media of surveys and interviews, with limited amounts of questions and time. In order to address these limits and provide a more comprehensive narrative of what it is to be a pop cosmopolitan, who, more often than not, travels various fandoms in their explorations of
global culture(s), the next chapter will recount the exploits of one particular pop cosmopolitanism—yours truly, the author.
CHAPTER 6

IT'S MY POP COSMOPOLITAN SOUL

...Japanese Studies, and international studies in general, are booming. I think students these days are really attuned to what's happening around the world. Perhaps the internet has something to do with it, but it's refreshing to see how much your generation "gets it" in terms of the exciting way the peoples of the world are interacting and learning from one another.

(Stephen Roddy, personal communication)

My generation?

I read over the last paragraph of Professor Roddy's email again. I'm excited to hear that everything is well and flourishing in the department, at the school, where I did my undergraduate work in Japanese Studies. What's more, I feel like what he's saying, what he has witnessed as a professor of Japanese literature and culture, speaks to the heart of what I'm researching. I feel incredibly validated.

However, my eyes linger for a moment when they come to the words, "your generation". My generation? Really? A sense of disbelief briefly runs through me. Professor Roddy is hardly wrong—I am a part of the current generation that through their exposure to the Internet and popular culture(s) have learned to see the world in a broader scope. But it always seems funny (at least, to me) to lump myself in with those whom I study.

Honestly though, there isn't much difference.

When I was seven, I began watching Power Rangers. I watched it on the sly when my parents weren't in the room and when they returned, I would quickly change the channel over to some "tamer" afternoon children's cartoon. My parents never told me I couldn't watch it, but despite this, it was engrained in me that it wasn't okay to admit to
watching *Power Rangers*[^57]. It's hard to recall almost twenty years later why that was the case, but I do remember that pretending to be Ariel from *The Little Mermaid* or Princess Jasmine from *Aladdin* was more in line with what girls did than playing *Power Rangers*.

I went to daycare in the afternoons during elementary school, so chances to catch *Power Rangers* were rare; I became intimately familiar with the Saturday morning television line-up across all the main networks if only to know when I would be able to catch it at 7:30am while my parents were still sleeping. I suppose I was a fan, but only in the ways that a young child who was a closet fan could be—coveting a "forbidden" television show when she could get a chance to see it.

That all changed when I was ten.

For medical reasons, I was confined to my house for four months at the end of fifth grade. Aside from a tutor who came twice a week from the school district to make sure I didn't fall behind on my studies, and my parents, one of who always managed to be home with me at all times, I was alone. None of my school friends came over to play or visit me; there were no children my age who lived on my street either.

I currently live in Sao Paulo, Brazil, which is where I was born and lived most of my life. I moved to the United States (Miami) when I was 14 and stayed there for about 3 years. I didn't really "belong" there so it wasn't much fun, but it was helpful to improve my English, and since I wasn't very sociable back then I started getting into (more than I already was) animes and mangas and the Japanese culture in general, it was sort of an escape (I wasn't into J-Pop back then though). (Norah, 21, college student, Brazilian)

Much like Norah, my interests in *Power Rangers* deepened from a sense of loneliness. I watched *Power Rangers* every day like clockwork. I learned how to use the VCR to tape episodes and skillfully taught myself how to edit the commercials out of each episode. I

[^57]: I am choosing to refer to the entire sixteen-year long franchise as *Power Rangers* instead of using the specific names for the sixteen different series incarnations of the franchise as I do not see the necessity in such specificity here.
had known for awhile that Power Rangers was based on a Japanese children's television show and could tell when scenes were clearly not American (like when villains would speak but the shape of their mouths wouldn't match the words they were saying), but because of the free time I had with being home all day, I became fascinated with learning more about this popular children's television show.

We had always had a computer in the house, but it wasn't until that year—1995—that we had Internet service. It was dial-up, and probably painfully slow compared to the fast speeds that we use nowadays, but for me, isolated at home, it really opened up a new world to me. Quickly becoming adept at how to use it, I explored what the Internet had to offer on what I was interested in at the time, which of course all centered around Power Rangers.

Using Koichi Iwabuchi's (2002) concept of "cultural odor/fragrance", Anne Allison (2006) credits the success of Power Rangers to the fact that in its adaptation from the original Japanese version to the popular American version, it was stripped of its cultural details and therefore was more accessible to its American audience. My experience was clearly different because those were the things that partly intrigued me about Power Rangers and lead me to discover its roots in the super sentai\(^{58}\) franchise of tokusatsu\(^{59}\) television and to become savvy about discerning where and how sentai footage differed from American footage and how the Japanese storylines were translated into American ones. And then, I would discuss my findings with the small communities

\(^{58}\) Super sentai is one franchise of tokusatsu television shows that usually star a team of three or more superheroes who pilot robotic vehicles (mecha).

\(^{59}\) Tokusatsu is used to refer to a genre of live-action film and television shows that feature superheroes and make heavy use of special effects. Tokusatsu translates to English as "special effects".
of Power Rangers fans I had found online—both learning to be and demonstrating my identity as a knowledgeable fan amongst others.

As Power Rangers was my first fandom and remained my dominant fandom for almost ten years after my initial exploration of the Internet, I don't think it a far stretch to posit that if not for that specific moment in my life, the Internet and fandom would not have become so inextricably linked in my mind. This link was and continues to be critical in the development of my own identity as a pop cosmopolitan as it was my Power Rangers fandom that provided me with my first tastes of Japanese culture.

Like every other average teenager, I felt misunderstood. On the outside, I was aggressive and independent because as an only child who felt like she had no friends she could really depend on completely, I had to be. On the inside though, I longed for the ability to rely on someone aside from my parents—to have the ultimate best friend who would stick with me through thick or thin, the ultimate best friend who American television and media told me everyone had. Except me.

Everyone called me a bitch and I lived up to it if only because it kept people away, protected me from getting hurt more than I already felt I was.

Sailor Pluto was the first character with whom I found a deep affiliation. I only discovered her after my descent into Sailor Moon fandom, which came quick on the heels of my Power Rangers fandom—not surprising given that Power Rangers and Sailor Moon are viewed by many as the founders of Japanese media in mainstream American popular culture in its current, most successful incarnation. At the time I was deeply into Sailor Moon fandom—the anime all about a group of young girls given magical powers and charged with protecting the Earth from evil monsters—only the first two series of the
five total series that comprised the *Sailor Moon* franchise were airing on television; Sailor Pluto's character only debuts at the end of the second series and had yet to even appear on American television when I was watching.

I learned about Sailor Pluto initially in my information searches online. American television kept rerunning the first two seasons of *Sailor Moon* and I wanted more, so I naturally gravitated to the Internet and found more. At first, I was purely attracted to how pretty I thought she was, with her flowing green hair, beautifully tan skin and deep red eyes. Eventually, as I read about her role later in the franchise—consuming her mainly through episode summaries of the *anime*, portrayals of her in fanfiction and the subtitled clips and episodes that I found online—I learned about how Sailor Pluto is a really lonely
character, a Sailor senshi\(^6\) charged with the eternal duty of protecting the portal of space and time and a woman who suffers an unrequited love as well. Despite her emotional loneliness though, Sailor Pluto was an incredibly strong character as the oldest and most powerful of the Sailor senshi.

I find him [Yokoyama Yuu] really easy to identify with--his shyness, the fact that he's sometimes awkward but he tries so hard, his love of his family. I love his personality and his love for his family and friends and that he has had struggles and insecurities he's had to overcome in his life. He just seems really human, and I think in some ways I see parts of my own personality in him. (anonymous fan #522; brackets mine)

Sailor Pluto from *Sailor Moon*, Souryu Asuka Langley from *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, Faye Valentine from *Cowboy Bebop*, these three female characters from my favorite anime are all incredibly strong characters on the surface—Asuka and Faye in particular suited to the label of "bitch"—but emotionally fragile because of past circumstances that have shaped their lives. More often than not, I saw myself in them and directly identified with them in a very reflective way akin to how anonymous fan #522 does with Yokoyama. While I don't think I ever found catharsis with my favorite characters, I certainly found emotional empathy. And in that connection, my investment in the anime themselves was cultivated.

While I had other non-Japanese fandoms in American television dramas like *Roswell* and *One Tree Hill* where I strongly identified with one specific character because I could see parts of myself reflected in her or him, the dominant discourse amongst my major anime fandoms is that of what one might consider parasocial relationships. Sometimes, I wanted to be their friend. Sometimes, I wanted to be them. More than

\(^6\) Sailor senshi is generally the term used to describe the group of girls in the *Sailor Moon* anime who transformed into warriors representing each planet; senshi translates into English as "warrior". At the time of the creation of *Sailor Moon*, Pluto was obviously classified as a planet.
anything else though, I valued the ability to find myself in *them* and perhaps better understand myself through them. Therefore, I explored and learned about them as much as I could, which led me deeper and deeper into Japanese culture.

Nowadays, I often remark to people that I can't remember a time when I didn't speak Japanese. But I only started learning and speaking Japanese when I was in college. It's only been seven years since I began (despite having spent fifteen years consuming forms of Japanese popular culture), so there must have been a time when I didn't.

In middle school, I had been really keen on learning Japanese as that was the pinnacle period of my *anime* fandom. I even momentarily considered going to another high school because the one I went to only offered French, Spanish and German as foreign languages and I knew that the rival high school across town offered Japanese. In the end, I made do with taking French in high school to fulfill my language requirement, but the pleasure that I derived from learning a foreign language in high school encouraged me to pursue Japanese on my own.

Over time, the public library had become a source that fueled my interest in Japanese popular culture—with its modest, but growing collection of translated *anime* and *manga*—but now I turned to it for language learning. I often would check out the "teach yourself Japanese" audio CDs that were available and then retreat to my room with my earphones, awkwardly repeating basic greetings and phrases after a monotone Japanese voice. My private study of Japanese climaxed in my final year of high school, when for my senior project in French class, my teacher indulged me and allowed me to conduct an entire class where I attempted to teach basic spoken and written Japanese to my classmates *in French*. In hindsight, it was pretty awful—my Japanese accent was off
and my explanations were shaky at best—but of course, I can only say that now, having been able to develop and hone my knowledge of Japanese language and culture further.

While I pursued learning Japanese on my own as a side hobby in high school, I discovered a local television station broadcasting recent and popular Japanese television shows on Saturday and Sunday nights. I distinctly remember staying up late on Sunday nights to watch a music variety show called *HEY!HEY!HEY!*, though at the time I had no idea what it was. Not understanding much if anything at all, I watched a female music artist perform a song called "Dearest". The performance wasn't particularly outstanding, but something about it caught my attention and immediately, I was online the next day looking for any information on the song or artist. This led to me to Hamasaki Ayumi, one of the biggest female music artists in Japan then (and still now), who sang "Dearest" as a theme song for the *anime*, *Inuyasha*. I was not familiar with the *anime*, but the more I learned about Hamasaki and heard more of her music, I slipped from my *anime* fandom into J-pop fandom.

Maybe it sounds a bit silly, but it was watching karaoked and translated PVs that got me really interested in learning the Japanese language. I guess because with that, I was slowly beginning to figure out how the language was put together, and it was through karaoked videos that I started to figure out *kanji*, *katakana*, and *hiragana*. So because I was slowly figuring this out on my own, it led me into just wanting to do that for my major. (Sage; italics mine)

Sage's exposure to fan-subtitled PVs and visually encountering the complexity of the Japanese language encouraged her to learn the language. As for me, song lyrics had

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61 PV stands for "promotional video" which is what music videos are referred to as in Japan.
62 *Karaoked* in this instance refers to how *karaoke* music videos are subtitled with the song's lyrics. Usually, when Japanese music videos are fan subtitled, they are subtitled with two "tracks": 1) the translation of the song lyrics into the language of preference and 2) the original Japanese lyrics (most of the time only in romanji, but sometimes in actual Japanese) to facilitate singing along.
63 *Kanji*, *hiragana*, and *katakana* are the three major components of the Japanese writing system; the fourth being romanji, Japanese written using the Roman alphabet. One way of thinking of these three is as if they are three different Japanese "alphabet" systems. *Kanji* is the system of writing that was imported from China. *Hiragana* and *katakana* are native Japanese writing systems. Each of the three can be employed in different ways to express different meanings through writing.
always been important to me in my music tastes and this was no different for me when it
came to J-pop fandom. Hamasaki writes a lot of her own lyrics, and even though I was
able to read translations of her lyrics online, I wanted to be able to understand the
nuances of what she was saying. As I continued to get more and more interested in other
less popular Japanese music artists, the necessity of being able to understand Japanese
became more obvious to me as only the popular artists would have lyrics and videos
translated. Being exposed to it, intrigued by it, and longing to understand it, made me
want to study the Japanese language even more.

Korean television dramas have an aesthetic entirely of their own. For me, having
grown up on American television and having had interactions with Japanese media over
the years, Korean television dramas are overly melodramatic, emotional rollercoasters
that are absolutely unrealistic and utterly unpredictable.

Yet, I watched (rather, marathoned) an entire Korean drama—consisting of
twenty-six, sixty minute episodes—with Japanese subtitles because my Japanese
professor suggested it.

My Japanese language professor and I sometimes spent hours on end discussing
my investment in Japanese popular culture. Despite our significant age gap, she and I
would almost giddily discuss how cool and handsome and what an amazing actor Kimura
Takuya was. We would talk about the latest Japanese drama that we saw on the local
international channel. And she would give me entire Korean dramas to watch with
Japanese subtitles because that was what was popular in Japan.

Two years ago, I had a random message on Facebook from a total stranger that
could barely speak English. I couldn't understand what she wrote. She obviously
was Japanese, so I thought maybe I had just met her on the [Japan] trip or
something. Turns out, she was an exchange student living Toronto, and she saw
that I was a Kanjani8 fan so she wanted to make Canadian friends while she's here. And we became really really close friends, and we do hang out all the time now. So she's been the one pretty much teaching me [Japanese], and we do maybe an hour or two a week together. (Caroline; brackets mine)

While how I met my closest Japanese friend, Kumiko, in my second year of college wasn't quite as random as Caroline's story, they share a great deal of similarities. Kumiko was studying abroad at my university and we were randomly paired together as language conversation partners, but bonded over common interests in music. I would give her a copy of Hamasaki's latest album to listen to and Kumiko would give me new music from artists I had never heard of before, like the Gospellers and Spitz. We would discuss our favorite Japanese actress' most recent television drama, *Kimi wa Petto*, and whether it was authentic to the experience of Japanese women in the workforce. And of course, with their epic popularity, the Johnny's idol group SMAP was always a valid topic and shared point of interest; Kumiko was more of a Katori Shingo fan, while I loved Kimura Takuya. We even ended up taking *Contemporary Japanese Culture* together with Professor Roddy; I wrote a research paper on the representation of Japanese women on television as seen in *Kimi wa Petto* and Kumiko wrote one on the presence of Johnny's idols in Japanese society.

College was my first real exposure to learning about Japan outside the confines of what the Internet or mainstream American popular culture could offer me. Through my study of the language, I met people and encountered other types of popular culture that allowed me to expand my greater knowledge of Japan as a society and not just a country producing a media that I enjoyed. Furthermore, my ability to access Japanese popular culture narratives distinguished me from other American students to my Japanese professors and friends—the conversations we had and the relationships we built up, could
be thought of as a different caliber than the average student who merely came to Japanese class and studied only what the books had to offer. While I certainly didn't know everything about Japan at the time—and even after living there will never claim that I do—the type of knowledge that I had access to was distinctively different because of the "untraditional" way that I came to the knowledge in itself. There was activeness in how I searched for knowledge, an eager willingness to learn more—the key component of cosmopolitanism.

I'm a first-generation Nepali-American, my parents having immigrated to the United States thirty years ago. My first trip outside the country was when I was seven to Nepal, followed by a trip to Australia and a tour of Western Europe in middle school and high school respectively. I grew up in the ethnically diverse San Francisco Bay Area, where Caucasians are considered a minority along with the rest of us. I have never really thought of myself as cosmopolitan—pop or otherwise—or worldly until I was in college, blatantly pursuing my interests in the Other in a way obvious to those around me. But isn't this just because from the beginning, my identity was and is constituted by a sense of localized cosmopolitanism?

In the distinction between the local and the comprehensive (pop) cosmopolitan, I have been both. From when I began to watch Power Rangers in elementary school and until finishing high school, I only explored Japanese culture through what I knew and as it was available to me in my everyday. Mainstream American television, the library collections, the Internet. Even my first trip to Japan was seizing on an opportunity available in my everyday, local life—serving as a student ambassador for my hometown to our sister city in Japan the summer between high school and college; on that first trip,
the most exciting thing to me was to be able to buy Hamasaki Ayumi CDs in a real CD store in Japan. There wasn't a lack of a thirst for knowledge on my part, but I certainly didn't venture all that far outside what was already familiar or readily available to me.

I graduated from that localized pop cosmopolitanism when I went to college and more of the world seemed accessible to me, though completely new and different. Interacting with Japanese students and professors on a daily basis was something new and had me engaging with knowledge on a different, lived level. This certainly was the case when I lived in Japan for a year, and even when I returned from Japan, I made the effort to keep Japan in my daily life, associating with Japanese professors and exchange students regularly, and even working for a Japanese video gaming company after graduating college. My pop cosmopolitanism grew to be more comprehensive rather than confined by the boundaries of the available media that I could consume.

Through the narrative of my own continued development as a pop cosmopolitan, the distinction between levels of local pop cosmopolitanism and comprehensive pop cosmopolitanism that exist within cosmopolitanism becomes clear. Local cosmopolitanism is predicated on a person's everyday, local culture, which has come to naturally include the Internet for many. Comprehensive pop cosmopolitanism, at least in my case and the case of many of the Johnny's fans interviewed in this research, is formed in relation to local pop cosmopolitanism, where the latter can serve as a stepping stool to the next level of cosmopolitanism. Of course, this division between the local and comprehensive is not only for the idea of pop cosmopolitanism, but can be much more broadly applied to the more general concept of cosmopolitanism as well.
Moreover, my identity has always been structured in some understanding of cosmopolitanism, an awareness of and willingness to engage with the Other because of experiences and situations that constitute who I am. Thus, my own understanding of my pop cosmopolitanism can hardly be understood in any sense of escape from a local culture because my local culture predisposed me to have a global outlook. Technically, there is no place for me to escape from because my local culture is cosmopolitan and already embraces ideas of the foreign Other.
I now have friends on 3 continents, some of whom I've met and a few more I hope to who live abroad and who have invited a visit. I chat with online friends in around a dozen countries near-daily. It's been wonderful. Also, we [my husband and I] test a lot of Aiba's ridiculous foods and the food experiments\textsuperscript{64}. *kimchee* toast is delicious, and so are the chocolate banana *gyoza*. I haven't the courage to attempt chocolate-covered shrimp.

(anonymous fan #115; brackets and italics mine)

**Pop Cosmopolitanism: To Japan and Beyond**

This thesis has explored the lived practicality of Henry Jenkins's (2006b) theoretical construct of *pop cosmopolitanism*. Rooted in an understanding of cosmopolitanism that draws heavily from Hannerz's (1996), pop cosmopolitanism is a kind of modification where cosmopolitanism develops in relation to an engagement with global popular culture—global popular culture serving as an "escape route" out of the parochial, local community and culture to a broader global culture (Jenkins 2006b). Through the case study of the online overseas English-speaking Johnny's fandom, I found that while Jenkins's articulation of cosmopolitanism and global popular culture consumption is generally accurate, he either misinterprets or overlooks the details of pop cosmopolitanism that are differentiated by pop cosmopolitans themselves—specifically concerning the distinction between *local* and *comprehensive pop cosmopolitanism*.

Positing that online overseas English-speaking Johnny's fans embody such a pop cosmopolitanism, it was important to evaluate the method of engagement that these fans employ with their global popular culture item of choice, Japanese pop idols. Despite most of these overseas Johnny's fans not speaking the Japanese language and not being

\textsuperscript{64} As a member of Johnny's idol group, Arashi, Aiba Masaki is well-known for coming up with various strange and sometimes seemingly disgusting food delicacies on the Arashi variety show, *Arashi no Shukudai-kun*. 
natively familiar with the Japanese culture, they are able to overcome these barriers by finding seemingly universal similarities that allowed them to reflect and connect with these celebrities. The "universal similarities" that overseas Johnny's fans identify in themselves and their idols are what authenticate the idols as humans and make them feel more "real" than even Western, Hollywood celebrities who are more culturally proximate to the majority of these fans. Having connected on a "human" level and therefore feeling emotionally closer to Johnny's idols, fans' consumption of the endless stream of media that their idols produce continues to feed and reinforce their emotional investment in Johnny's idols. In their ability to critically recognize and read the Japanese cultural constructions of what an idol is (a celebrity purposely marketed to reflect the reality of their fans to their fans (Aoyagi 2005)), a good portion of Johnny's fans not only express understanding of how their emotional investment has been manipulated, but still embrace the idea of an idol and particularly Johnny's idols because they enjoy it. These online overseas English-speaking Johnny's fans essentially embrace the foreign Other outside of their local culture and even adopt into their own personal culture, altering how they view an "authentic" celebrity to Japanese standards.

In terms of the affective relationship between a fan and their object of fandom, there is already a clear sense of pop cosmopolitanism because of how non-Japanese fans must negotiate culture to even come to like their favorite Japanese idols. Once established however, this affective relationship drives overseas Johnny's fans to learn and consume more and more Japanese culture because of the desire to be close and master an understanding of their idols in their cultural context. Of course, as pop cosmopolitanism advocates the acceptance and exploration of global perspectives, many Johnny's fans
personal narratives of their pop cosmopolitanism does not begin with Johnny's fandom. Some have histories of cosmopolitanism embedded in the experiences of their everyday lives, having traveled extensively and/or lived in diverse town and cosmopolitanism cities. Some can trace the influences of global popular cultures such as Japan's on their media consumption back to when they were young children who could not completely make sense of the differences. What a majority of fans do cite however is how being a Johnny's fan has helped them to expand and/or continue to expand their explorations of Japanese culture. The ways in which these overseas Johnny's fans choose to explore other aspects of Japanese culture outside of its popular culture differed, giving need to distinguish between local pop cosmopolitanism and comprehensive pop cosmopolitanism. A local pop cosmopolitan is excited and willing to explore other cultures outside of her or his own local culture, but that exploration tends to be selective and limited to the ways the foreign culture links to the global popular culture (which has already been embodied into her or his everyday local culture either as a hobby or part of the fan identity) that provided the window for exploration in the first place. On the other hand, the comprehensive pop cosmopolitan does not limit themselves to the global popular culture when exploring other cultures outside their local culture and seek to become so immersed in the foreign culture so that there are no traces to the local culture, even in respects to the global popular culture that served as the bridge between the two.

While Jenkins's definition of pop cosmopolitanism discusses "different degrees of cultural engagement" in relation to how Hannerz (1998) has discussed them in cosmopolitanism more generally, he does not make the clear distinction between the levels of engagement which is problematic because the online overseas English-speaking
Johnny's fans do (Jenkins, 2006b, p. 166). It is these minute, but important distinctions to fans who are pop cosmopolitans themselves that Jenkins seems to miss out on and even misinterpret. Within the distinctions of local and comprehensive pop cosmopolitanism, there is an inherent understanding of how fan identity, a part of one's personal identity and essentially local culture, is altered by the embrace of global popular media and culture that serves as the supposed "escape route out of the parochialism of her [or his] local community" according to Jenkins (ibid, p. 152).

...it is not just 'being a fan', it IS my hobby. Me being a fan is my hobby. I come home and watch their shows, I hear their music on my way to school. I wouldn't know what to do in my free time if not fangirling over JE [Johnny's]...
(anonymous fan #85; brackets mine)

As anonymous fan #85 so explicitly states, being a Johnny's fan is a hobby that is firmly integrated into the everyday of her life and defines her. Given the important role of global popular culture in terms of identity construction, it cannot represent an "escape route" because it is already embedded in the self. Fans do not even attempt to think of it as anything more than an entertaining emotional escape, and frame Johnny's fandom along the lines of a positive opening or opportunity in relation to how it has aided in the expansion of their global perspectives. Rather than framing global popular culture as abetting an escape from one's local culture, according to these fans, Jenkins's definition might be more accurate if it was an emotional escape that global popular culture provided and both theorized work on entertainment and Johnny's fans themselves clearly acknowledge the latter framing.

While the fifth chapter primarily focuses on how the media of Johnny's fandom encourages pop cosmopolitanism, it is important to note that the online English-speaking
fandom community itself—populated by people from all over the world, gathering around a shared interest and mode of language—has facilitated awareness of foreign cultures.

Because of the people I’ve met through fandom I’ve learned new things - such as (bizarre example here) the other day I learned that what is known as a 'biscuit' in the US [United States] is completely different to what we call a biscuit in the UK [United Kingdom] - not initially related to fandom at ALL except for the fact that I found this out from a friend I had made as a result of us both sharing similar fandom-related interests (Nina; brackets mine)

...like you notice within the fandoms when people become kind of like online friends and everything, you get to learn about other peoples' cultures. Because what I'll do is, like there may be a fan in like Malaysia or something who posts a blog about, I don't know what. But then it includes something about Arashi or KAT-TUN or something. And I think I get a lot of cultural perspective just from seeing their blogs, which they write in English, but they talk a lot about their home country and show pictures and then explain how JE [Johnny's] is in the their country. And seeing the differences in how JE is accepted in all these countries outside of Japan also brings in a cultural perspective. (Stacey; brackets mine)

The Internet as a medium does not only allow global pop and media cultures to circulate across the globe, but enables various peoples of the world to "circulate" as well. In the sense of mobility that the Internet grants to people—where they can gather in communities of their choice and meet with people who share a common interest, but often times have different experiences (cultural or otherwise)—the mobility that Hannerz (1996) believes to be so critical to the definition of cosmopolitanism is fulfilled through the Internet. Stacey and Nina both speak of experiences that support this as it is through their online fandom friends they are able to gather knowledge and get a taste of what other cultures have to offer, expanding their knowledge even further, beyond even Japan. In addition to this, to return to media cultures for a moment, many Johnny's fans are aware of other East Asian pop cultures—mainly Korean and Chinese, which do share some intersections and aesthetics with Japanese popular culture. Much in the way that Japanese popular culture has become part of the mainstream American cultural
consciousness with anime and manga, Korean popular culture in particular joins with Japanese popular culture through dramas and music. The only reason I watched the Korean drama, Fuyu no Sonata, was because my Japanese professor told me it was incredibly popular in Japan at the time. Likewise, many Johnny's fans are able to speak fluently not only about their favorite Johnny's idols, but also about Korean male idol groups such as DBSK (Dong Bang Shin Ki) and Big Bang, who are famous in Korea but also rising in popularity in Japan where they release Japanese language music. Often enough, in personal communications with other overseas English-speaking Johnny's fans, references to these Korean male idol groups are made because Johnny's is just one fandom for these fans and K-pop (Korean pop music) is another of their fandoms—either having discovered K-pop fandom because they were in Johnny's fandom first or vice versa. Given these examples, pop cosmopolitans really are looking at the world with a global perspective—one that is not solely influenced by Japan, but influenced by other cultures as well.

**Further Developing a New Sense of Cosmopolitanism**

This thesis hardly claims that every overseas online English-speaking Johnny's fan can be divided into the two types of pop cosmopolitanism that I have detailed above. For example, Amanda, an overseas Johnny's fan I interviewed, would probably be considered at least a local pop cosmopolitan with her exploration of Japanese popular culture through anime and then moving into fashion and food and eventually Johnny's. However, unlike most fans, rather than frame Johnny's as authentic or real, she frames them as fictional because of their strong "cultural odor" than makes them seem less familiar to herself, a Canadian. As each person's fandom is unique to her or his own
experiences, I could not possibly have categorized all 860 surveyed fans, given I was just working with their survey answers (sometimes not even complete) and that hardly is a full-representation of them as a fans or even as individuals. Given this, this thesis has attempted to uncover how dominant forms of pop cosmopolitanism manifest in the day-to-day of a fandom, but because of the inability to cover such specific detail I cannot account for every variation. It might be beneficial in further research to explore these variations and see if any commonalties accrue that can help refine the conception of how pop cosmopolitanism is lived.

Jenkins's original piece on pop cosmopolitanism covers how American consumers relate to Asian popular cultures. This thesis, while expanded from an "American-only" framing, still manages to focus on a Western consumption identity where Johnny's fans must be English-speaking while they consume a form of Japanese popular culture; in the end, the majority of the fans surveyed ended up being from "Western world" countries. The framework of pop cosmopolitanism seems to hold up well when it comes to "divergent" cultures as the supposed East-West dynamic is described to be. However, in order to better expand the full range of use that pop cosmopolitanism has, further research could attempt to apply the concept of the pop cosmopolitan to consumers and media cultures from similar areas (i.e. media flows within and contained to East and South Asia). How "foreign" does the Other need to be in order to engage with it on a (pop) cosmopolitan level?

Considering how grounded pop cosmopolitanism is in the existence of new media technologies like the Internet and the idea of globalization, another area that future research could look at as well is how pop cosmopolitanism can play out over a long
stretch of time. As noted by Jenkins (2006b) and in this thesis research, pop cosmopolitans tend to be part of the younger generation "distinguishing themselves from their parents' culture through their consumption" of global popular culture with the help of new technologies (p. 156). Also given what we know from the fan narratives of some of my interview respondents as well as my own narrative in the sixth chapter, fandom can be a slightly nomadic experience. It would be interesting to see how fandom further develops (if it continues to develop) for these overseas, online English-speaking Johnny's fans and if there is any "backlash" from the fans themselves, having become too (pop) cosmopolitan that it ushers a return and full embrace of their formerly "isolating" local culture.

In the meantime however, before all this future research takes off and carries pop cosmopolitanism in new directions, this thesis, through the case study of a very specific fandom, has managed to apply the theoretical idea of pop cosmopolitanism to practical lived experience. In this application, hopefully we can see how important the model of the pop cosmopolitan has been and will only continue to be in our expanding global media landscape.
AFTERWORD

I just wanted to point out that just as the fandom that this thesis has discussed is complexly intertextual, this thesis itself has a level of structural intertextuality as well.

Aside from the first introduction chapter, all the other chapter titles and the title of the thesis itself draw on aspects from Johnny's fandom. "It's my passion, that's my mission to decide, I'm going worldwide" that serves as the main title of the thesis is actually a set of song lyrics from the song "GOLD" by KAT-TUN. The second and third chapter's titles draw from "Secret Code" by KinKi Kids and "Tomodachi e ~Say What You Will~" by SMAP respectively. The fourth chapter's title, "The Authentic Dream Boys" derives from the title of a currently annual Johnny's musical called Dream Boys. The fifth chapter and sixth chapter titles—"Ms. or Mr. Traveling Fan" and "It's My Pop Cosmopolitan Soul"—are plays on the titles of songs by TOKIO ("Mr. Traveling Man") and Kanjani8 ("It's My Soul") respectively. Finally, the seventh and final chapter's title, "Never Ending Global Story" is a play on the title of a NEWS concert DVD, "Never Ending Wonderful Story".
APPENDIX A

MONITORED JOHNNY'S FANDOM LIVEJOURNAL COMMUNITIES

- **2wenty_2wo** – Tackey&Tsubasa community*
- **a_ra_shi** – Arashi community
- **ambitious_boys** – Johnny's Juniors community
- **arashi_on** – Arashi community*
- **b_i_shadow** – Nakayama Yuma w/ B.I. Shadow community
- **crazy_accel** – A.B.C. community (junior unit)
- **domotokyoudai** – KinKi Kids community*
- **hey_say** – Hey!Say!JUMP community
- **heysay_jump** – Hey!Say!JUMP community
- **ikuta_toma** – Ikuta Toma community (undebuted idol)
- **je_secrets** – community where Johnny's fans air out gripes about the fandom in the form of anonymous image messages.
- **jesummary** – weekly digest community of latest news in Johnny's fandom on LiveJournal*
- **johnnys_ent** – general JE community
- **jone_records** – KAT-TUN community/archive
- **kanjani8** – Kanjani8 community*
- **kansaichibiko** – Kansai Juniors community
- **kattunlove** – KAT-TUN community
- **kis_my_ft2** – Kis-my-ft2 community (junior unit)
- **mis_snow_man** – MisSnowMan community (junior unit)
- **musical_academy** – Musical Academy community (junior dance unit)
- **news_jpop** – NEWS community*
- **nycboys** – NYC Boys community (temporary unit with debuted members)
- **question_jrs** – Question? community (junior unit)
- **ryo_watch** – Nishikido Ryo community
- **shoonie** – Yamashita Shoon community (junior idol)
- **smapxsmap** – SMAP community*
- **to_ki_o** – TOKIO community*
- **tanokin** – JE senpai community (debuted groups before SMAP)
- **uwasako** – journal full of reported rumors on Japanese celebrities, most pertaining to Johnny's idols.
- **victory6** – V6 community*
- **yayayah** – Ya-ya-yah community (disbanded junior unit; covers former members in Hey!Say!JUMP and Yamashita Shoon)
- **yorokobi_no_uta** – KAT-TUN community

*Communities to which online anonymous survey was posted.*
APPENDIX B
ONLINE SURVEY QUESTIONS

• Demographic Questions

1. What gender do you identify as? \(\rightarrow\) [female] [male] [transgender/other]
2. What age bracket do you belong to? \(\rightarrow\) [under 18] [18-24] [25-34] [35-44] [45 and older]
3. What country do you consider yourself from (country that you most strongly identify with or have lived in longest)? \(\rightarrow\) open-ended question, text box
4. What country do you live in currently? \(\rightarrow\) open-ended question, text box
5. Is English your native language? \(\rightarrow\) [yes] [no]
6. If English is not your native language, what is your native language? \(\rightarrow\) open-ended question, text box + [N/A]
7. Do you speak fluent Japanese (enough to not need translations)? \(\rightarrow\) [yes] [no]

• Johnny's Entertainment Fandom Questions

8. Do you consider yourself a fan of Johnny's Entertainment? \(\rightarrow\) [yes] [no]
9. How long have you been a fan of Johnny's Entertainment? \(\rightarrow\) [less than 6 months] [6 months to 1 year] [1 to 2 years] [2 to 4 years] [4 to 6 years] [more than 6 years]
10. Why are you a fan of Johnny's Entertainment? (text box max is 700 words) \(\rightarrow\) open-ended question, text box
11. Which currently active groups do you consider yourself a fan of? (check all that apply) \(\rightarrow\) [Shounentai] [SMAP] [TOKIO] [V6] [KinKi Kids] [Arashi] [Tackey&Tsubasa] [NEWS] [Kanjani8] [KAT-TUN] [Hey!Say!Jump] [Nakayama Yuma w/ B.I. Shadow] [Johnny's Juniors]
12. Why are you a fan of those groups? (text box max is 700 words) \(\rightarrow\) open-ended question, text box
13. Do you have a favorite Johnny's Entertainment idol? If so, who? Why is he your favorite? (put N/A if you do not have one; text box max is 700 words) \(\rightarrow\) open-ended question, text box
14. Compared to other celebrities you have liked, what is special about Johnny's Entertainment idols which makes you like them? (text box max is 700 words) \(\rightarrow\) open-ended question, text box
15. How did you find out about Johnny's Entertainment and its online fandom? (text box max is 700 words) \(\rightarrow\) open-ended question, text box
16. Have you learned and explored things you would not have before because you are a fan of Johnny's Entertainment? Please explain. (put N/A if you have not learned new things through being a fan; text box max is 700 words) \(\rightarrow\) open-ended question, text box
17. Does being a fan of Johnny's Entertainment influence your other hobbies and everyday life? If so, how? If not, why not? (text box max is 700 words) \(\rightarrow\) open-ended question, text box
18. Have you traveled to Japan before? \(\rightarrow\) [yes] [no]
19. If you **HAVE** traveled to Japan before, how many times have you traveled to Japan? [1 or 2 times] [3 to 5 times] [5 to 7 times] [over 7 times] [N/A]

20. If you **HAVE** traveled to Japan before, for how long were you there each time and why were you there? (put N/A if have never been to Japan; text box max is 700 words) → open-ended question, text box

21. If you **HAVE** traveled to Japan before, where did you go and what did you do while there? (put N/A if have never been to Japan; text box max is 700 words) → open-ended question, text box

22. If you **HAVE NOT** traveled to Japan before, where would you like to go and what would you like to do if you could travel to Japan? (put N/A if have traveled to Japan; text box max is 700 words) → open-ended question, text box

23. Do you think being a fan of Johnny's Entertainment helps you better understand Japanese culture? Why or why not? (text box max is 700 words) → open-ended question, text box

24. What is your general opinion on Japanese culture? Feel free to offer comparisons to other cultures. (text box max is 700 words) → open-ended question, text box

- Soliciting Interviews

25. If you are interested in being further interviewed about what it is like to be in the Johnny's Entertainment fandom by the author of this survey, please type in your email in the text box below and I will contact you with further information. If you are not interested, please leave this text box blank. → text box

- Survey closing

26. Thank you for taking and completing this anonymous online survey about English-speaking fans in Johnny's Entertainment online fandom. If you have any questions or concerns about this survey or my research, you can contact Jinni Pradhan at jpradhan@comm.umass.edu. If you are interested in seeing the progress of this research and possibly having further input, please feel free to follow the blog I have created to discuss the progress of this research at http://jinniinfandom.livejournal.com.
## APPENDIX C

### SURVEYED FANS’ COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>3.03%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tunisia</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Egypt</td>
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<td>3.03%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>China</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.02%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Singapore</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
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<td>6.02%</td>
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<td>Japan</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
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<td>(310/35.4%)</td>
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<td>Haiti</td>
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<td>(3/0.3%)</td>
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<td>Bulgaria</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Estonia</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Latvia</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Norway</td>
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<td>Russia</td>
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<td>Iceland</td>
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<td>Greece</td>
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<td>Catalonia</td>
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<td>North America</td>
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<td>Jordan</td>
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<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.62%</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>(6/0.7%)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. General background question. How old are you? What is your current occupation?
2. Tell me a little bit about where you currently live, or if you moved in the past few years, where you grew up. How big or small was/is it? What kind of people lived there? What did/do you do for fun? Feel free to tell me as little or as much as you want.
3. Tell me your JE story. How did you fall into JE fandom? Why are you still a JE fan? Feel free to be as detailed as you want.
4. In your survey, you talked a little bit about why [favorite idol] from [idol group] is your favorite. Can you elaborate more on that?
5. Question that elaborates more on answer to survey question 14 – comparing other celebrities to JE idols.
6. Tell me about day in JE fandom for you. Are there places on the Internet you go to/things you watch/people you talk to frequently?
7. What do you get out of being a fan of JE? There are plenty of reasons to like JE, but are there any "benefits" from being a JE fan for you?
8. In connection to that, you mentioned in your survey that JE does/does not influence your everyday life. Can you tell me more about that?
9. Question(s) that elaborate more on answers to survey questions 18 to 22 – Have you traveled to Japan before?
10. You mentioned in your survey that you think being a JE fan helps you better understand Japanese culture and/or has influenced your hobbies and everyday life. Do you feel you have a more international perspective because of this?
11. Question that elaborates more on answer to survey question 24 – comparing Japanese culture to other cultures.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


