THE BARBIE PHENOMENON IN JAPAN

Arisa Shibagaki

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Committee:

Marilyn F. Motz, Advisor

Esther Clinton
Marilyn F. Motz, Advisor

This research examines the popularity of Barbie among young adult Japanese women as the “Barbie phenomenon” in Japan. By investigating the historical and cultural aspects of Japanese values of beauty, the author found that the phenomenon emerged from the combination of the values of *kawaii* (Japanese cuteness) and *kakkoii* (Japanese coolness). *Kawaii* is the traditional positive feeling for small and delicate things, and in modern society its meaning extends into popular characters and fashion. *Kawaii* fashion is usually considered to use lace, ribbon, and frilly materials and colors of pink, white, and pastels. On the other hand, the English-language word “cool” is usually translated into *kakkoii* (かっこいい), which means that people’s appearance is attractive, and its meaning also extends into people’s behavior and fashion in modern society. *Kakkoii* behavior is masculine and independent; the colors of black, blue, and khaki and plain materials are usually used in *kakkoii* fashion. In fact, “*Kakkoii*” is different from American “cool,” which is a word used for not only an attractive appearance but also individuality and a sense of belonging; however, the words “*kakkoii*” and “cool” are used without regard for such a difference in Japan. In women’s fashion magazines, both “*kawaii*” and “cool” are the common key words. Japanese Barbie clothing brand is known for offering *kawaii* clothing because of its colors and materials; however, they also offer cool clothing in terms of the standards of fashion styles. Barbie brand clothing is a blend of “*kawaii*” and “cool.” Japanese women wear its brand clothes and accessories because of their desire to become like Westerners.
Barbie is viewed as the typical Western woman, and they see Barbie as the other self or the new icon of beauty. Japanese women related themselves to *kawaii* dolls such as Licca and Jenny, which are Japanese dolls, when they were girls. Similarly, they see Barbie as the other self when they become adult. Japanese women also see Barbie as the icon of a *kakkoii* woman since she acts as strong as men and is independent, which they lack. Barbie is the woman who has a traditional beauty of *kawaii* and a new beauty of *kakkoii*. Therefore, these two values become the keys for the “Barbie phenomenon” in Japan. Thousands of Barbie fans also contribute to this phenomenon by communicating with one another in Mixi, which is a Japanese online networking service, because of their passions for Barbie dolls and Barbie brand clothing. Barbie is the ideal and perfect woman who is *kawaii* and *kakkoii*. The desire to become like Barbie motivates Japanese women to wear Barbie brand clothing, and now Barbie fashions are popular with Japanese women.
To accomplish great things,

we must not only act, but also dream,

not only plan, but also believe.

-- Anatole France
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INTRODUCTION

—I imagine women wearing Barbie logo T-shirts and hats, and carrying Barbie bags.

The “Barbie phenomenon” in Japan started right after Sanei International Corporation started to produce Barbie outfits for women in February 2003. In several fashion magazines such as *CanCam* and *ViVi*, a “Barbie” feature was popular.¹ Soon, women started to wear “Barbie” clothes in the streets. The trend of Barbie brand clothing is still alive among young adult women in 2007 in Japan.

My interest in Barbie dolls comes from my own background. When I was a girl, I never played with original Barbie dolls, but instead I played with Licca or Jenny, domestic dolls manufactured by the Japanese company Takara Tomy, because I could not accept the face and the body of Barbie. Although original Barbie dolls were introduced in Japan earlier than Licca and Jenny, they were not accepted among girls like me.

The history of Barbie dolls began with the toy company Mattel, founded in 1945 by Harold Mattson and Elliot Handler (the husband of Barbie doll creator, Ruth Handler). Mattel first produced handmade wood products and later began to sell musical toys and miniature toy weapons, yet Ruth Handler wanted to produce dolls as well. Handler could not find appropriate plans and designs, but she did not give up and finally got an idea about what kind of dolls she could produce while watching her daughter, Barbara, played with paper dolls.

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¹ *CanCam* is the most popular women’s fashion magazine, first published by Shogakukan (小学館) in 1981. The readers are from teens to women in their forties. *ViVi* is a women’s fashion magazine first published by Kodansha (講談社) in 1983. The target readers are seventeen to thirty-six year old women.
In the summer of 1956 the Handler family went to Europe for a vacation, and Handler found a doll called Lilli at a toy store in Switzerland. Lilli was made of plastic and stood 11½ inches tall. Therefore, Handler finally discovered the ideal doll for her doll business and determined to produce plastic Barbie dolls. During Handler’s many business trips to Japan, she met many manufacturers who specialized in production, and one of them, Frank Nakamura (an expert in manufacturing), became a key link between Mattel and Japan. Thus, the first Barbie doll was actually made in Japan. In 1959, at the American Toy Fair in New York, the Barbie doll was presented as a “teen-age fashion model” (Tosa 30), and more than 351,000 Barbie dolls were sold during that year (Tosa 31).

In 1967 Takara Tommy’s Licca was first sold and the popularity of Licca dolls exploded. Licca has brown curly hair and big drooping eyes, and she is 11 years old. She was created for girls to learn how to live in Japanese society. In fact, in 1962 Mattel’s original Barbie dolls were reimported in Japan, but the sales were low from the beginning and stayed that way. Because of competition from Licca dolls, the sales depression of Barbie dolls lasted and finally Mattel had to withdraw from the Japanese market. During the 1970s, Mattel started to sell Barbie dolls again in Japan, but the sales were still dull. Soon Mattel affiliated with Takara Co. and they began to sell a Japanese version of Barbie. In 1986 the affiliation was dissolved, and Takara Co. started to sell their Japanese Barbie as Jenny. Masubuchi states that Jenny is a so-called “hybrid” doll combining European and Japanese features (“Licca” 12). Her blond bobbed hair and big drooping eyes make her look younger than the original Barbie (“Super Action Jenny”).

One of the biggest failures of Mattel in Japan was that they sold the original Barbie dolls in Japan rather than adapting the doll for the Japanese market. The model of the original Barbie dolls is an American girl, not a Japanese girl. She has blue eyes, large breasts, and is tall. These
features were not “cute (kawaii)” for Japanese girls. They accepted both Licca and Jenny rather than Barbie because they seemed to come from pictures in comic books. Japanese girls grow up with girls’ comic books and animation so, naturally, Licca and Jenny’s faces seem familiar to them. The original picture of Licca was drawn by Miyako Maki, who was the most popular comic books writer at that time. Masubuchi describes the relationship between comic books and Licca:

Eventually, Licca exists against the background of comic books, which is Japanese youth culture, and both Licca and girl’s comic books have progressed together. Comic books are the ultimate Japanese mass culture, and needless to say, there are no girls’ comic books against the background of Barbie (“Licca” 166).

Japanese girls increasingly avoided Barbie since the face and body of Barbie dolls had no interest for them.

In addition, Licca and Jenny were the other self of girls. Indeed, I did not recognize whether Jenny was the Japanese version of Barbie or not when I was a girl, but I chose Jenny because of my preference for her face and clothing. Masubuchi explains the appeal of Licca’s clothing:

Licca’s clothing does directly not reflect the adult fad or fashion. Licca’s clothing does not imitate the fad or stars’ costumes; however, the most important point is that Licca’s clothes are the girls’ dream clothing (“Licca” 180-181).
Licca tends to wear mini skirts, which girls usually wear, and fluffy dresses, which attracts girls. Licca wearing the trendy pants called “hot pants” among adults in 1971 was not popular; Licca wearing popular sporty clothes such as tennis, golf, and jogging outfits were not also popular in 1959. However, Licca wearing dresses including a wedding dress, which reflects girls’ longing to be a bride, is always popular. Licca wearing a mini skirt is also popular because she reflects girls themselves. Some mothers make Licca’s clothes for their daughters and at the same time they make their daughters’ clothes using the same material. Therefore, Licca is considered the other self of girls since she reflects girls’ longing and girls themselves. Licca is a girl and not an adult.

On the other hand, the first Barbie wore a knit swimsuit, which exposed her skin. In the United States, it is not unusual for a middle-class American family to have a pool in their house, and swimming is considered as one of the casual sports. Barbie wearing swimsuit reflects an American lifestyle (Masubuchi, “Licca” 80). Other than swimsuits, Barbie wears professional clothes because of her career. She wears a white coat when she is a doctor and a silver space suit and white helmet when she is an astronaut. Her clothes are for independent adult women, not for children. Barbie is too realistic for Japanese girls and Barbie stays far away from their dream.

Since many women have had such experiences and as children had negative feelings for Barbie dolls, why are they attracted by Barbie brand clothing today? Both Licca and Jenny are considered young girls’ dolls because of their childish clothing. On the other hand, Japanese women finally can accept Barbie’s adult-oriented clothing as they become adult. Therefore, the current “Barbie phenomenon” represents the fact that Japanese girls’ taste changes as they reach adulthood. In my thesis I examine what ideals of womanhood Japanese young women see reflected in Barbie dolls and Barbie brand clothing for women.
To answer this question, I first retraced my experience in my university. I went to a women’s university, where most students often thought about how they could be *kawaii* (cute) and how they can show their *kawaii*-ness to guys. Usually it is considered that students in women’s universities are feminine compared with female students in co-ed universities in Japan because they think it is the only way to attract guys outside the university. In women’s fashion magazines, reader-models are currently popular, and most of them are current students or graduates from women’s universities. “Reader-models” is a word combining magazine “readers” and amateur “models.” They appear in the role of university student or office lady in magazines, and they are actually university students rather than professional fashion models. They are chosen by applications provided in the magazines or by scouting. They are amateurs as models, but some are as popular as fashion models. In modern Japan, female university students relate to fashion magazines because of such reader-models.

In my thesis, I examine the discourse between women’s fashion magazines and Japanese young women by looking at some popular women’s fashion magazines. In magazines, *kawaii* (cute) and *kakkoii* (cool), which represent Japanese values of beauty, are two popular keywords in current fashion style, and Japanese young women’s fashions emerged from *kawaii* and *kakkoii* fashion. My interest is in the Barbie clothing brand, which is usually considered as a *kawaii* clothing brand, but I understand the brand as offering both types of fashion. To examine this, I analyzed Barbie brand clothing in Kyoto Takashimaya department store, includes clothes worn by mannequins at the store, as well as magazine representation of *kawaii* and *kakkoii* fashion.

In addition, I casually observed the conversation threads on each board in seven Barbie online communities in Mixi. Mixi is a Japanese online networking service currently very popular among young people in Japan. There are seventeen communities regarding Barbie as of April, 6th
2007. I chose seven communities from them because I wanted to focus on participants talking about Barbie brand clothing and products. I also communicated with a couple of Barbie fans in Mixi Barbie communities and successfully received some comments about Barbie, which reinforced my understanding of the reason why Barbie is popular and is considered an icon of beauty by Japanese young women.

In his book of *Reading the Popular*, John Fiske explains methodological strategies in the field of cultural studies:

“Cultural analysis reaches a satisfactory conclusion when the ethnographic studies of the historically and socially located meanings that *are* made are related to the semiotic analysis of the text” (96).

In fact, I followed Fiske’s two strategies of ethnography and textual analysis for my thesis because I agreed with his theory that popular culture exists not in texts but in practice; that is, the meanings of texts are understood if we understand how the texts are used and “the part they play within the cultural process that relates meanings both to social experience and to the social system in general” (Fiske 98).

Ethnography requires “thick description” according to Clifford Geertz. He explains the process of “thick description” using the example of the performance of a “wink.” A wink is the performance of closing one eye and opening it again quickly; however, the meanings of winking could be different from one culture to another culture. In one culture it may be a way of contacting people quietly, and in the other way of attracting people. To figure out what people really means in a specific performance, ethnographers need to know underlying meanings that
the people share. Folklorists Giovanna Del Negro and Harris Berger extended Geertz’s theory and stated that ethnographic research allows scholars not only to understand the meanings of how the people act in the specific society (20) but also to provide new perspectives for the people within it (22).

Geertz also mentions that the processes of ethnography includes “establishing rapport, selecting informants, transcribing texts, establishing genealogy, mapping the fields, and keeping a diary” in his article “Thick Description”(6). Janice Radway successfully applies his ethnographic processes in her study of Interpretive Communities and Variable Literacies: The Functions of Romance Reading. She discusses how romance readers read the romances by describing the theory that audiences read texts differently because of their own circumstances. For the first step of selecting informants, she chose the specific reading category of romance readers to focus on in her research. Then, she interviewed sixteen women in a romance readers’ group. Radway explains that the reason why she chose to interview them was to “map the ‘world’ of romance readers” (470), and affirms that oral interviews was accurately revealed “what the women thought they were up to” (471). John Fiske also describes how he applied these ethnographic techniques in his research on Madonna fans and states that ethnography:

“…requires us to study the meanings that the fans of Madonna actually do (or appear to) make of her. This involves listening to them, reading the letters they write to fanzines, or observing their behaviors at home or in public” (97).

For my thesis, I contacted Barbie fans in Barbie communities in Mixi, which is a popular online networking service in Japan, to listen to their thoughts about Barbie. I chose them because they
are open to talk in these communities about what they actually do at home and in public, such as what kinds of Barbie brand clothes they wear and why they like Barbie. This online strategy is possible because of the development of modern technology, which was not available to Radway and Fiske. In addition, I read and analyzed the threads in each Barbie community to gain a more profound understanding of Barbie fans daily actions.

The other strategy of text analysis requires “a close reading of the signifiers of the text—that is, its physical presence—but recognizes that the signifieds exist not in the text itself, but extratextually, in the myths, countermyths, and ideology of their culture” (Fiske 97). In her article *Femininity as Discourse*, Dorothy Smith argues “femininity” involves a social organization by texts—“by the materially fixed forms of printed writing and images” (Smith 39), including the images in U.S. women’s magazines, television, advertisements, cosmetic counters, fashion displays, and books. Books and magazines provide women advice on “standards and practices” (Smith 43) and “a common code among readers vested in languages and images which could be referenced in conversation and in interpreting behavior and events” (Smith 43). In addition, cosmetic departments offer demonstrations, training and advice on make-up. Similarly, Japanese women’s magazines, which I analyzed, usually introduce new cosmetics, trendy clothes, and accessories that the readers should have with the terms of “kawaii” and “cool,” which represent two different Japanese values of beauty. Not only products but also make-up techniques are shown in magazines. In make-up features, magazines explain how to apply make-up not only with descriptions but also by pictures in step-by-step detail. Cosmetics departments also give their customers advice on cosmetics and demonstrations of make-up. In Japan, clerks in women’s clothing departments in the department stores take good care of their customers. Some workers help choose the best clothes for their customers together; others show many clothes
which they think will fit their customers. They are well-mannered and polite. In the case of Barbie clothing brand workers, they are well-mannered and help their customers choose clothes like the other women’s clothing departments. In addition, they usually wear Barbie brand clothes to show how to wear their brand of clothes; that is, they are models for the brand.

In her article, *Material Girl*, Susan Bordo analyzes the social relationship between women and texts from a transcript of the Phil Donahue show and insists that women “are brainwashed to think blond hair and blue eyes is the most beautiful of all” (253-254). Bordo also argues that the standard of beauty is dominated by Caucasians in popular texts such as television and magazines looking at the poster “hair that swings from side to side.” In my textual analysis, mainly by looking at Japanese women’s magazines and Barbie brand clothing, I found that Barbie is the new icon of beauty for Japanese young women. The Japanese have longings to become like Americans—having blond eyes and blue eyes. One Japanese popular singer, Ayumi Hamasaki, wearing blue contact lenses and dyeing her hair blond, is still fresh in my memory. Barbie is considered as the best icon following the Caucasian beauty ideal of blue eyes and blond hair. Barbie’s standard of beauty is internationally widespread—starting with celebrities like Ayumi Hamasaki, Japanese magazines frequently show models having blond or brown hair; magazines explain how to make the readers’ eyes appear bigger and how to show their bodies as slender, and there is no end to Barbie’s standard of beauty. Barbie brand clothing is also available to help Japanese young women to become like Barbie.

Lastly, I looked at several books to examine the terms of cute (*kawaii*) and cool (*kakkoii*) in the context of cultural differences between America and Japan. In *Cool Rules*, Dick Pountain and David Robins examine the word “cool”: its history; “the group-dynamic dimensions of Cool” (8) in sociology; “Cool personality and its relation to others” (8) in psychology and
psycho-analysis; and the role of Cool in textual analysis, especially in films and literature. This book was useful to understand the meaning of American coolness. I used Donald Richie’s *The Image Factory: Fads and Fashions in Japan* to inspect Japanese popular culture. Japanese culture has been influenced by Western culture in its fashion, products, and people. In modern Japanese society, dyeing their hair blond and brown and wearing blue or other colored contact lenses are fads among young people. Richie called them “fake foreigners,” and so surely they are. This is related to the Japanese value of beauty, *kawaii*, three Japanese authors argue. In *Licca Chan No Shojo Fushigi Gaku*, Soichi Masubuchi, who is a specialist in Japanese girls’ culture, explores the psychological and cultural relationship between the Japanese popular doll, *Licca* and Japanese girls. Masubuchi’s *Kawaii Shokogun* investigates the unique value of *kawaii*, which enormously affects products and people in modern Japanese society. Mari Shimamura analyzes the definition of *kawaii* using the similar Japanese word “fancy” in *Fancy No Kenkyu: “Kawaii” Ga Hito, Mono, Kane Wo Shihaisuru*. She defines fancy items as small, white, round, and soft. Concretely speaking, the following are considered to be fancy: a handy radio and a bite-size sausage as small things; a white lace curtain and white wallpapers as white things; muffins and a round-shape telephone as round things; stuffed animals and a quilted purse as soft things. In *Kawaiiron*, Inuhiko Yomota examines *kawaii* as a Japanese value of beauty in the 21st century. The origin of *kawaii* is the 11th century’s famous book, *The Pillow Book*, and the meaning of *kawaii* has been extended as time passes. In modern Japan, *kawaii* is related not only to the taste for smallness, which is the original meaning of *kawaii*, but also to ugliness and weirdness. In addition, he investigates the worldwide popularity of Japanese popular characters, Hello Kitty, Puffy, and Pokemon.
Both ethnography and textual analysis helped me to understand the meaning of beauty among Japanese women and how Japanese women including Barbie fans accept such a standard of beauty from the images of magazines and celebrities. I argue that the Caucasian standard of beauty; that is, the beauty of Barbie, is highly regarded by Japanese women.

In the Introduction, I have given an overview of my thesis. I explained how the “Barbie phenomenon” started in Japan and provided histories of Barbie dolls and Japanese domestic dolls, Licca and Jenny, to explain the competition among Barbie, Licca, and Jenny dolls in the Japanese market. Then, I noted the methodologies and theories that I apply in my thesis. Lastly, I will mention what I am going to observe and analyze in my thesis.

In Chapters 1 and 2, I explain two Japanese values of beauty, kawaii and kakkoii, comparing them with American values of beauty, cuteness and coolness. In Chapter 1, I examine the unique Japanese beauty concept of “kawaii (かわいい),” both its history and how the word is used in modern Japan. I also compare it with the American concept of cuteness. In Chapter 2, I explain the history and meaning of the unique American concept of coolness. In Japanese, “cool” is directly translated into kakkoii (かっこいい); however, American “coolness” and “kakkoii” (Japanese “coolness”) are slightly different. I illustrate the difference between American “coolness” and “kakkoii” with the historical example of jeans and the examples of Japanese comic books and Japanese technical books.

In Chapters 3 and 4, I investigate how kawaii and kakkoii work in describing fashion and people and how these values are related to Barbie dolls and the Barbie clothing brand. In Chapter 3, I compare kawaii fashion with cool fashion. I analyze Japanese women’s magazines because they directly show the items needed for kawaii and cool fashion. I also explain how Barbie brand clothes are related to those fashion concepts by analyzing photographs of Barbie brand clothing.
and a Barbie brand store. Pictures of a Barbie brand store and clothes provide images of how the Barbie brand is treated in Japan. In Chapter 4, I explain that Barbie is considered as both a *kawaii* icon and a cool icon. Japanese women see Barbie as the other self as they saw Licca and Jenny as the other self when they were girls. Barbie is accepted by Japanese women because Barbie is the other self. Barbie is also accepted as a cool icon because of her independence.

In Chapter 5, I observe and analyze how the members of seven communities in the Japanese online networking service called Mixi communicate regarding Barbie and how they act in daily life as Barbie fans. I also contacted a couple of Barbie fans in Mixi to hear about their passions for Barbie.

In the Conclusion, I review the previous chapters and describe how the “Barbie phenomenon” represents both the traditional Japanese value of *kawaii* (cuteness) and the other standard of beauty (coolness). In addition, I mention how much Barbie fans contribute to the current “Barbie phenomenon” in Japan.
CHAPTER I: WHAT IS _KAWAII_ (CUTE)?

Japan is filled with so-called _kawaii_ products, from animation to Hello Kitty, which everybody from young to old generations loves. Most Japanese, especially young women, call such products _kawaii_ whenever they find them at hand. What in the world is _kawaii_? What makes products _kawaii_? This chapter explains the history of the words “cute” and “_kawaii_” as well as the meaning of _kawaii_ (かわいい) in modern Japanese society.

The definition of _kawaii_

The Japanese value of beauty, _kawaii_ (かわいい), is considered to have developed during the 1000s. Sei Shonagon (清少納言) wrote three hundred essays in _The Pillow Book_ (枕草子) during the 990s and early 1000s. She was a writer and poet, and also worked as a court lady of Empress Sadako. In _The Pillow Book_, her experience in the court, personal thoughts, nature, and life were recorded. The following quotation is the section written about _kawaii_ things: below it is the English translation by Ivan Morris.

うつくしきもの

瓜にかきたるちごの顔。雀の子の、ねず鳴きするに、踊り来る。二つ三つばかりなるちごの、急ぎて這い来る道に、いと小さき塵のありけるを目ざとに見つけて、いとをかしげなる指にとらへて、大人などに見せたる、いとうつくし。頭は尼そぎなるちごの、目に髪のおほへるを、かきはややで、うち傾きて、ものなど見たるも、いとうつくし。（“Shinpan Makuranosoushi Gekan” 40）

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2 Hello Kitty is the white cat character designed by Sanrio Corporation. The main character, Kitty White, is commonly known as Kitty chan in Japan.

3 In Heian era, Sei Shonagon served Empress Sadako as a court lady. She was a writer and poet, and mainly recorded the daily life in the court in _The Pillow Book_.

Adorable Things

The face of a child drawn on a melon. A baby sparrow that comes hopping up when one imitates the squeak of a mouse; or again, when one has tied it with a thread round its leg and its parents bring insects or worms and pop them in its mouth – delightful!

A baby of two or so is crawling rapidly along the ground. With his sharp eyes he catches sight of a tiny object and, picking it up with his pretty little fingers, takes it to show to a grown-up person.

A child, whose hair has been cut like a nun’s, is examining something; the hair falls over his eyes, but instead of brushing it away he holds his head to the side. The pretty white cords of his trouser-skirt are tied round his shoulders, and this too is most adorable (Morris 168).

The old word うつくし describes the quality known as cuteness (kawaii / かわいい) in modern Japanese. Sei Shonagon implied that the adorable things were small, lovely, and delicate things such as the face of a child drawn on a melon and a baby sparrow (Yomota 33). At that time, such small, lovely, and delicate things were considered to represent the Japanese value of beauty (Yomota 33). However, うつくし is written as “美し” in modern Japanese characters; its meaning was “beautiful” in the early 1900s, and うつくし or “美し” still means “beautiful,” not kawaii or かわいい, in the 21st century (Yomota 31). In brief, the old letters “うつくし” are replaced by “かわいい” in modern Japanese; however, the value of beauty still exists in kawaii or かわいい even in the 21st century.
**Kawaii in English**

The word “kawaii” is directly translated into “cute,” “pretty” or “adorable” in English; however, the etymology of those words is completely different from “kawaii.” This section describes such differences of etymology and explains the uniqueness of “kawaii.”

According to the Online Etymology Dictionary, “cute” was originally a shortened form of “acute” in the sense of “keenly perceptive or discerning, shrewd.” This meaning was recorded in a 1731 dictionary. “Cute” came to mean “smart” in the 18th century. “Cute” was later used as a term of approbation meaning “pretty, fetching,” for children or small animals in the 19th century.

On the other hand, how the word “pretty” changed since old English is uncertain; however, in the 14th century its meaning was “manly, gallant,” and developed into “attractive, skillfully made,” and then, “fine,” and finally “beautiful in a slight way.”

The etymology of “adorable,” which Morris used for the translation of “うつくし” in *The Pillow Book*, is the following:

c.1305, from O.Fr. *aourer* “to adore, worship,” from L. *adorare* “speak to formally, beseech,” in L.L. “to worship,” from *ad-* “to” + *orare* “speak formally, pray” (“adore”)

The meaning of adore used to be to “worship,” and this word was never related to the modern meaning of adorable in the past.

The etymology of “kawaii” came from the praise of small things. The English words of “cute,” “pretty,” and “adorable” cannot directly be translated into “kawaii.” *Kawaii* is beyond the meanings of cute, pretty or adorable. *Kawaii* is one of the unique words in Japanese because of its history, and the following section explains how *kawaii* is used in modern Japanese.
**Kawaii in modern Japanese**

Everybody from the young generation to the old generation has *kawaii* products in modern Japan. The best example of *kawaii* products is the cell phone charm. Almost every cell phone has a place to attach charms, and people attach their own favorite charms. Cell phone shops, large stores, or even dollar shops have a large section of cell phone charms. A while ago, female high school students attached hand-sized stuffed animals to their cell phones, and it appeared that they had stuffed animals instead of cell phones. Even guys don’t hesitate to use *kawaii* products. My brother, who is a university student, attaches a bear character called Rilakkuma (リラックマ) to his own cell phone.4

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4 *Rilakkuma* is the popular bear character designed by San-X Corporation.
Historically, *kawaii* had a positive meaning of small and delicate things. To be sure, this meaning still exists, but it is expanded in modern Japan. According to a survey for female university students conducted by Inuhiko Yomota, there are various ideas about *kawaii* products. The *kawaii* examples they identify are the following: 1) character goods such as stuffed animals featuring Japanese popular characters, products featuring Japanese popular characters like Rilakkuma, Disney goods, Doraemon (Japanese animation character) goods; 2) small or delicate people such as older women, little sisters, and child actors/actresses; 3) fashion accessories such as a camisole with lace, a Vivienne Westwood brand umbrella and purse, a pink schedule book and bag (Yomota 50).  

Concerning *kawaii* character goods, Japan is the country which generates, and is filled with, many characters everywhere. Sanrio characters like Hello Kitty are very popular, and city banks, small shops, and department stores have also their mascot characters to help people

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5 Doraemon is the imaginary cat robot and the main character of science fiction animation drawn by Fujiko F Fujio.
recognize their companies. Mafalda, which was a Kyoto Chushin City Bank character a long
time ago, was always on the bankbooks or the bank advertisements.\footnote{Mafalda is the main character of the Argentina animation.} Both Hello Kitty and Mafalda are \textit{kawaii} because they are small; in fact, the height of Hello Kitty is the same height of
five piled apples and her weight is the same weight as three apples; Mafalda is a girl. Older
women, little sisters, and kids are also considered as \textit{kawaii} people because of their smallness.
This concept came from the traditional \textit{kawaii} feeling for delicate and small things.

As for \textit{kawaii} fashion, women’s magazines introduce many accessories, bags, and
clothes as \textit{kawaii} in features such as “The \textit{Kawaii} College Student Fashion, \textit{Kawaii} Office Lady
Fashion, Cool College Student Fashion, and Cool Office Lady Fashion: Sweet & Elegance
Popular Phenomenon this Summer” in \textit{Ray} (June, 2006) and “\textit{Kawaii} Feminine Clothes” in
\textit{CanCam} (February, 2006). I will explain what is considered as \textit{kawaii} fashion in a later section,
but generally, clothing with lace, ribbon and frilly materials and with pink, white, or light colors
is called \textit{kawaii} clothing.

Thus, the word \textit{kawaii} is used not only for small and delicate things but also for
characters and fashion in modern Japan. Japanese people are familiar with \textit{kawaii} goods
historically and environmentally.
CHAPTER II: WHAT IS COOL (KAKKOII)?

Donald Richie argues that “kawaii” means “cool” or “neat” (56); in Japanese, however, the English-language word “cool” is usually translated into kakkoii (かっこいい), which means “good looking.” There is also a Japanese word “クール” (pronounced “cool”). Its meaning is “composed or collected,” there is a difference between “kakkoii” and “cool” in Japanese. In modern Japan, however, both words are used without regard for such a difference.

On the other hand, the word “cool” came from America, and in America the meaning of “cool” falls between the meanings of Japanese “cool (クール)” and “kakkoii (かっこいい)” because of its historical background. In America “cool” has more extended meanings than in Japan. In this chapter, I compare the meaning of “cool” in America and Japan.

American “cool”

Originally, the word “cool” came out of Black jazz clubs in the 1930s in America. Jazz clubs were always full of smoke at that time, and they opened the doors and windows to let in cool air. Later, jazz performance came to be called “cool.” Eventually, attractive male jazz musicians or aficionados were described as “cool” (Danesi 37), meaning “excellent, or superlative” In the 1930s and 1940s, hard-boiled detective story authors and Hollywood scenario writers started to use the term “cool” in their writings. In the 1950s, Elvis Presley expanded the word “cool” to white youth culture (Pountain and Robins 12).

In modern American society, “cool” is used daily by people in every generation. The popular TV program “The Simpsons” demonstrates what “cool” is in the following segment of dialog in the episode 3F21 “Homerpalooza.”
Homer: So, I realized that being with my family is more important than being cool.

Bart: Dad, what you just said was powerfully uncool.

Homer: You know what the song says: "It's hip to be square".

Lisa: That song is so lame.

Homer: So lame that it's... cool?

Bart+Lisa: No.

Marge: Am I cool, kids?

Bart+Lisa: No.

Marge: Good. I'm glad. And that's what makes me cool, not caring, right?

Bart+Lisa: No.

Marge: Well, how the hell do you be cool? I feel like we've tried everything here.

Homer: Wait, Marge. Maybe if you're truly cool, you don't need to be told you're cool.

Bart: Well, sure you do.

Lisa: How else would you know?

(“The Simpsons”)

Homer joined the “Hullabalooza” music festival as a carnival freak to show Bart and Lisa that 1970’s music is still cool; however, he was depressed that it was not considered as “cool” music any more at the festival, and Bart and Lisa were embarrassed by Homer’s behavior. After a while, Homer accidentally became a sideshow performer at Hullabalooza, and his powerful performance became popular among the young crowd. In addition, Homer finally got respect from Bart and Lisa as a cool dad. This explains cool should be something new. Elvis’s burn hairstyle is uncool in the 21st century; likewise, 1970’s music is uncool. The 1970’s music will
be *cool* if it is changed into 21\textsuperscript{st} century-version music. Similarly, Homer’s performance was considered to be *cool* because the young people had never had an idea of such a powerful performance; that is, his performance was new for youth culture.

In 1951, *The New Yorker* stated that “cool” was “the current word for hot in musical terminology” (Nunberg 73) as Geoffrey Nunberg quotes from *Historical Dictionary of American Slang*; in the 1970s, the hippies created its antonym *uncool*, and later, surfers renewed it as *way cool* (74). Today, “cool” comes to the internet—“Click here for cool stuff,” or “Today’s cool website” (Nunberg 74). Nunberg notes the persistence of the word “cool” as slang:

“…by the laws of language, *cool* should have died a natural death around 1963 along with most of the rest of hipster lingo. It should have been replaced by *gear* and *fab*, which were themselves replaced by *groovy* and *far out*, which were replaced by *rad* and *boss*, which were replaced by dope and hot, around for a reprise”(74).

*Cool* has been revived and redefined many times. Chris Turner claims that “cool feeds on newness and originality, and it needs to be fed constantly” (206). The word “cool” has been in fashion for decades as a current word, and it has extended its meaning into performance or behavior and fashion as time passed. *Cool* is eternal (Nunberg 74), but must be updated at all times.

On the other hand, *cool* fashion is also important historically. In the mid-1950s, adults preferred conformity for their clothes such as gray flannel suits and white-collar shirts for men and simple tight-waisted dirndl skirts and sweaters for women. On the other hand, young people started to wear blue jeans to rebel against their parents’ values (S. Pendergast and T. Pendergast
851). In 1947, Wrangler had already introduced slim body-fit jeans, and in 1949, Levi Strauss and Co. had also opened their outlet store in New York. In 1953, Lee began to sell their jeans for teenagers, and Lee Riders became popular among teens (Valerie 273). In the mid-1960s, hippies extended rebellion-fashion with fringe looks adopted from Native Americans and various looks adopted from Asia and other cultures. Of course, jeans were a necessity for male hippies (S. Pendergast and T. Pendergast 897). In the 1980s, starting with Gloria Vanderbilt, so-called designer jeans such as Jordache, Sasson, Sergio Valente, and Calvin Klein became popular (Valerie 274). In the early 1990s, baggy pants came in, and in the mid-90s, long baggy shorts became common because of the Gap and Old Navy’s introduction of baggy jeans (S. Pendergast and T. Pendergast 982). The designer jeans boom still continued with Versace, Dolce& Gabbana, and Donna Karan’s brands included in this period. On the other hand, Levi’s started to offer baggy jeans and lost fifteen percent of their sales from 1996 to 1998 (S. Pendergast and T. Pendergast 983). In the 21st century, the designer jeans movement is still alive with Mavi, Paper Denim and Cloth, Seven, and Blue Cult brands (Valerie 276).

Looking at the history of jeans, the popularity of shapes and brands has changed as time passes; Levi’s jeans are not “cool” anymore, and Seven jeans are “cool” at present. In this way, fads change all the time not only in clothes like jeans but also in movies, books, music, and cars. Why does this happen? Pountain and Robins describe an approach to study the word “cool”:

“…We intend to take an unfashionably naive approach by simply accepting cool as a phenomenon that we can recognize when we see it, from its effects in human behaviour and cultural artefacts – in speech and dance, films and television shows, books and magazines, music, clothes, paintings, cars, computers or motorcycles. It doesn’t take too
much investigation to understand that cool is not something that inheres in these artefacts themselves, but rather in people’s attitude to them” (18).

In the 1950s, Levi’s jeans were considered as trendy; however, in the late 1990s, they were not trendy and not counted as “cool” pants even though wearing jeans was still a trend and other brand jeans were popular. In brief, the “performance” of wearing jeans made the wearers “cool,” not the jeans themselves. Cool fashion emerges from the confidence that the wearers have by wearing the popular clothes; that is, “coolness” come out of people’s inside as Pountain and Robins suggested. On the other hand, the other phase of “cool”— rebellion of individuals— is also important.

People usually do not want to be alone. Who liked to eat lunch alone at school? Who wanted to play alone? Most people must have eaten lunch with their friends or classmates at school, and played outside with their friends. Since a young age, people have been used to getting together, and are not used to being alone. People like to be accepted by the group. At the same time, however, people want to have individuality, to show their independence; that is, “I am me,” and “you are you.”

Blue jeans were in fashion in the 1950s and 1960s as a symbol of rebellion among teens. They chose to wear jeans because they wanted to resist their parents and teachers. At the same time, they wore jeans because they did not want to humiliate themselves by not wearing jeans; that is, they did not want to be alone. Thus, “cool” is related with individuality or independence by staying away from adults and also related with a sense of belonging which people always want. Some people might have to stand in the middle of a rip tide or waver between individuality and a sense of belonging.
In conclusion, the original meaning of “cool” as “excellent or superlative” is still used today, and its meaning has been extended in performance or behavior and fashion. The performance of wearing cool clothing generates confidence, individuality, and a sense of belonging. *Cool* is not described in a word. *Cool* must be revived and redefined. *Cool* is always a new value for Americans.

**Japanese “cool”**

American “cool” is usually translated into *kakkoii* (かっこいい) in Japanese. Recently, the American word “cool” has been spelled “クール” in Japanese letters. The meaning of *kakkoii* is that someone’s appearance is attractive. It is said that the Japanese band called “Crazy Cats” started to use the word *kakkoii* in 1963 in Japan (Masubuchi, “Kawaii Shokogun” 44). On the other hand, as I mentioned above, American “cool” is a word used for not only an attractive appearance but also individuality and a sense of belonging. In this sense, Japanese “cool,” which started to spread in the 1960s, is different from American “cool” because of its history and its meaning, because Japanese “cool” does not have such deep history and extensive meanings as American “cool.”

In modern Japan, the word *kakkoii* is used in various contexts. Mostly it is used for people, especially men; however, there are *kakkoii* women if they act in a specific way. In addition to *kakkoii* people, a specific way of eating is counted as *kakkoii*.

The section of *Saigo No Bansan* (最後の晩餐) in the comic book, *Groovy Sukiyaki (Kakkoii Sukiyaki)* explains how to eat sukiyaki in a *kakkoii* way. *Sukiyaki* is the most popular beef dish in Japan. The ingredients are thinly sliced beef, grilled tofu, green onions, *shungiku* chrysanthemum leaves, *shittake* mushrooms, and *shirataki* filaments, and they are usually
cooked with soy sauce, *mirin* (sweet cooking sake) and sugar in a pot. In the story, the main character is annoyed by the other guys eating together at the table because they only eat beef. He also wants to eat lots of beef like the other guys, but at the same time, he wants to eat in a *kakkoii* way; therefore, he cannot eat like them. When the beef is almost gone, he starts to eat vigorously, feeling an irresistible impulse to eat lots of beef. Eventually, however, the waitress brings more plates of *sukiyaki* including lots of beef, and he is embarrassed by what he did. According to him, people who eat only beef in *sukiyaki* are the country people; the *kakkoii* way of eating *sukiyaki* is the following: eat 1) beef 2) *shiitake* mushrooms 3) tofu 4) *shungiku* chrysanthemum leaves 5) *shirataki* filaments 6) green onions in numeric order. The main character, who is from Yokohama, which is considered to be an urban area, thinks that Mr. Hasegawa, who is from Aoyama in Tokyo, also eats in a *kakkoii* way like him at first; however, Mr. Hasegawa eats beef and vegetables alternately, and the main character calls such a way of eating “fake cool.”

As I mentioned above, usually the word *kakkoii* is used for men. However, this word is not used among men. *Kakkoii* or un-*kakkoii* men are virtually always judged by women. The Japanese girls’ comic book *Omoikkiri Kakkoii Otokonoko* (思い出りカッコイイ男の子) shows what kinds of boys are considered to be *kakkoii* from the girls’ point of view. In the book, there are six *kakkoii* boys, and I would like to explain two of them here. In the second story *Nettaiya* (熱帯夜), the heroine Sakura is growing attracted to Kagami, who joins the baseball club, throughout the continuation class in summer. Sakura has worked part-time to travel abroad in the summer; however, she could not travel because of a low grade. When Sakura was struggling to answer some questions in math, Kagami came to class by accident to pick up his belongings. Their friendship began when she asked him to answer the questions, and he helped her study during the summer. He was always busy practicing baseball; however, he was smarter than her.
She was attracted to his smartness and passion for baseball; that is, smartness and eagerness for sports are considered to be *kakkoii* by Sakura. In the fourth story *Okashi-kurai Ai Shiteru* (オカシ−くらい愛してる), the heroine Saki finally realized she really liked Chiba, who had told Saki that he liked her when they had just gotten into high school and now expressed his sincere love for her. Saki had liked Junichi since she was a junior high school student; however, now she was attracted to Chiba more than Junichi because Chiba always looked at her and stayed beside her. Chiba had a solemn cast of mind. Boys who are single-minded for sports and single-hearted boys, so to speak, boys making a sincere effort to succeed, are *kakkoii* for Saki.

On the other hand, in *Kakkoii Otoko To Iwareru Gijyutsu* (格好いい男と言われる技術), it is said that not only men whose minds are good but also men who polish their appearances are more attractive (3). This book examines the requirements for *kakkoii* men in terms of their bodies, skin, fashion, belongings, and behavior, as indicated by the results of research among women, and introduces the detailed techniques needed to become *kakkoii* men. First of all, since men who have sleek and smooth skins are considered to be *kakkoii*, they should keep off sugar and oil so as not to make pimples and should wash their faces with steam to clean pores which are the cause of pimples. The process of washing the face with steam is the following:

1. Pour hot water in three-fourths of the washbowl.
2. Wear a bath towel over the head.
3. Wait ten minutes until you sweat, and wash your face.
4. Put a lot of cold lotions on your face.
The section on body care introduces how to choose the best deodorant and how to remove foot odor because women are very sensitive to odor. As for fashion, detailed advice from underwear to suits is shown. Men should have leather wallets even if they do not have a lot of money, which is an example of the way of using personal belongings. If men have inexpensive wallets, their girlfriends think they do not have money. In addition, men should have two kinds of wallets, casual and formal, because leather wallets are inappropriate for outdoor activity. Regarding hair care, men should chew well when eating food to prevent losing their hair. This works because chewing generates good blood circulation. Some exercises such as walking and training, and the way of dieting, are introduced to help men have *kakkoii* bodies. Becoming *kakkoii* men requires lots of effort, the same as with women.

I will explain *kakkoii* women in detail in Chapter 4; however, I introduce a Mixi community regarding *kakkoii* women here. The community *Kawaii Yori Kakkoii Jyosei!* (カワイイよりカッコイイ女性！) seeks participants who are attracted to *kakkoii* women rather than *kawaii* women; female participants who think are *kakkoii*; participants who know *kakkoii* women in their family or acquaintances; female participants who want to become *kakkoii* women; male participants who like *kakkoii* women; and participants who are interested in the word *kakkoii*. On the board in September 1st, 2006, participants talked about the definition of *kakkoii* women in order to put its definition in the introduction to the community. One participant stated that women who can dress nicely are *kakkoii*. The other participant identified women who can warn people smoking in the streets not to throw away their cigarettes. In the introduction to the community, more definitions are provided. The followings are the *kakkoii* women which its community defines: tall women; women who are good at sports; women who are tough; women who talk like men; women whose muscles are strong; women who have high positions in their
companies; women who are strong as men in their talk; women who can ride motorcycles; 
women who can go abroad by themselves; women who do not show their weakness. In short, 
women who seem to be masculine, strong as men, and independent are considered to be kakkoii.

Thus, in modern Japan, the word “kakkoii” is used in various contexts— the kakkoii way 
of eating, kakkoii men, and kakkoii women. Its meanings are different; however, appearance is 
important in every context. The kakkoii way of eating is not to show provincialism by eating 
only beef when they eat sukiyaki. Kakkoii men are sincere and, moreover, their appearance, 
including face, fashion, and behavior, is very important. The women who act as strong as men 
are considered to be kakkoii women. Japanese cool (kakkoii) takes account of appearance more 
than the inner self. It is different from American cool, which emerges from the inside— 
confidence, individuality, a sense of belonging.
CHAPTER III: KAWAII BARBIE AND COOL BARBIE: FASHION

In women’s fashion magazines, both “kawaiii” and “cool” are considered as key words. Comparing these styles is common. Dorothy Smith states women’s magazines are a treasure trove of the “doctrine of ‘femininity’” (46); in fact, magazines teach Japanese female readers what “kawaiii” clothes and “cool” clothes are.

Barbie brand clothing is usually considered as kawaiii clothing because of its colors and materials; on the other hand, it can be considered cool clothing in terms of the standards of fashion styles. In this chapter, I illustrate both “kawaiii” and “cool” fashion, and describe the reason why Barbie, especially Barbie brand clothing, is a blend of “kawaiii” and “cool.”

Kawaii fashion

Japanese young women call Barbie kawaiii. Why do they call Barbie kawaiii? What makes Barbie kawaiii? Regarding fashion, lacy materials and the color pink are the most important kawaiii aspects in most fashion magazines. Lace, ribbon and frilly fabrics are the important materials for young women’s fashion. As for the colors of clothes, warm colors, medium colors, red colors, pink colors, white, pastel colors, and sorbet colors are kawaiii colors in general (Masubuchi, “Kawaii Shokogun” 196). Kawaiii fashion features are common in Japanese fashion magazines. I will analyze two of these magazines, Ray and CanCam.

Ray (June, 2006) introduced kawaiii fashion under the title of “The Kawaiii College Student Fashion, Kawaiii Office Lady Fashion, Cool College Student Fashion, and Cool Office Lady Fashion: Sweet & Elegance Popular Phenomenon This Summer.” In Japan, female employees and clerks are usually called office ladies; however, if women are assigned to a

7 Ray is the female fashion magazine which started to be published by Shufu no Tomo sha in 1988. The target readers are college students and office ladies.
managerial post, they are not called office ladies. In most of the companies, office ladies have to wear companies’ uniforms when they get to their work; therefore, they change their clothes at their workplace. They can only wear regular clothes on their way to work or home. Sometimes even then their companies require them not to wear jeans or casual clothes because they think casual fashion is not suitable for adult females. Office ladies always have to take care in choosing their clothing because of the companies’ regulations; therefore, fashion for office ladies is introduced in women’s magazines. Here, I focus on and explain *kawaii* fashion, and I will describe cool fashion later.

In the pages on *kawaii* student fashion, lace, ribbon and frilly material, and light pink, white, and pastel colored clothes are arranged. Even if the skirts or pants are black, they are made with ribbons or frilly fabrics. The first “must” item for *kawaii* college students is Barbie brand logo T-shirts. The T-shirt in Figure 3 is the same T-shirt shown in the magazine although the logo was pink instead of brown. The second item is fake pearl headbands. The third item is tube fluffy dresses. The fourth item is red wedge sandals with ribbons. The fifth item is Peach John’s bags and slippers made of towel material. Peach John is a brand selling mostly underwear and bras. The sixth item is navy sweaters for summer. The last item is chiffon camisoles made by Burberry Blue Label, which is the Burberry brand for young women.
On the other hand, in the pages of *kawaii* office lady fashion, white, light blue or pastel colored clothes, rather than pink, are popular because the theme of office lady fashion is “moderate *kawaii,*” that is, using *kawaii* items as an accent. One of the frilly materials called “chiffon” is the most notable material for office ladies. Other than chiffon, these seven items are considered as “must-have” items: 1) sleeveless dresses made of cotton shirt materials 2) AHKAH brand accessories for ankles 3) big straw baskets 4) PRPORTION BODY DRESSING brand’s basics (camisoles or sleeveless T-shirts) 5) light-colored (pink, white) stoles 6) light cream yellow shoes with ribbons by K-KAllisté 7) V-neck cotton T-shirts with lace.

In the second feature of “*Kawaii & Cool Fashion Comparison for May, 2006,*” seven *kawaii* fashion items are arranged. The first item is short white puff-sleeved jackets. The second item is soft-sleeved white tops with ribbon under the chest and accentuated by stitching or beads. The third item is soft A-line pastel colored chiffon camisoles. The fourth item is white Capri
pants with ribbons. The fifth item is romantic white soft knitted boleros. The sixth item is floral-print skirts with lace. The last item is Miss Cotton dresses; cotton dresses with lace or ribbons.

*CanCam* (February, 2006) showed how women should wear their clothes in order to be *kawaii*, in the feature “*Kawaii Feminine Clothes*.” The first item is jackets with fur. The second item is tweed skirts or pants. The third item is clothes that used the color of lavender, baby pink, violet, and peacock green. The theme of the fourth item is soft or fluffy materials using for cardigans or knitted clothes. The fifth is tops for jeans including fur boleros or fur knitted tops. The sixth is soft or fluffy skirts. Regarding accessories, delicate heart-shaped pearls and sweet perfume are *kawaii*.

In modern Japan, women became interested in *kawaii* fashion because fashion magazines introduced *kawaii* items on a lot of pages. The most important materials for *kawaii* fashion are lace, ribbon, and frilly fabrics; the most *kawaii* colors are light colors, including light pink and sorbet colors, and white, as I found in the *Ray* and *CanCam* fashion magazines above.

Following the principles of *kawaii* fashion, Barbie brand clothing is considered as *kawaii* clothing because ribbon, lace, and frilly materials, and warm colors, medium colors, red colors, pink colors, white, pastel colors, and sorbet colors are usually used for its brand clothes as Masubuchi states. In addition, not only their clothing but also the store itself is considered *kawaii* because of the pink walls and English-letter sign.

In 2003 the Barbie clothing brand was established, and there are twenty-three branch stores in Japan as of 2007: one store in Miyagi, Tochigi, Saitama, Chiba, Kanagawa, Kyoto, Hyogo, Hiroshima, Ehime, Fukuoka, Kumamoto; two stores in Aichi and Osaka; and eight stores in Tokyo. All the brand stores are in department stores. Japanese department stores are British-style department stores. There were originally nine floors: food is available on the ground floor;
cosmetics and women’s bags and shoes are available on the first floor; older women’s clothes are available on the second floor; young women’s clothes are available on the third floor; men’s clothes are available on the fourth floor; kimonos, art, watches, and kitchen products are available on the fifth floor; children’s clothes and toys are available on the sixth floor; restaurants and events are available on the seventh floor; pets and playground are available on the top floor.

The Barbie store in Kyoto Takashimaya is on the fourth floor because the department store is not so big and the each store has limited space. However, the “Barbie” signboard written in script English on the light pink walls is notable in this department. Sales ladies wearing Barbie clothes are available to help their young adult customers choose from the array of Barbie-style women’s clothing. A large number of various products such as coats, jackets, T-shirts, and rings are arranged in the store. The main color is light pink, which is the same color as the store walls. Other than light pink, which is the most popular color for all the products, white, yellow and light green products are good sellers. There are also black products; however, these products are always decorated with ribbons or frilly materials, and they are not shown with the other light color products. As a decoration, Barbie dolls are always displayed with products or in the showcase.
Figure 4. Walls and displays at the Barbie brand store in Kyoto Takashimaya department store
(Left: wall with Barbie dolls; right: wall with advertisement )
(Photographs by the author, 2006)

Figure 5. Barbie store entrance display (Photograph by the author, 2006)
The following pictures depict Barbie brand clothes and accessories to show that they are *kawaii* fashions.

The first outfit (Figure 7: mannequin 1) from the shoes to the top is black. However, the details are absolutely *kawaii*. The top with lace in the middle has the same detail as the seventh item shown for a *kawaii* office lady in *Ray* magazine. The skirt with ribbon on its right side has the same detail as the sixth *kawaii* item from *CanCam* magazine. The shoes also have ribbons, and this is the same detail as the fourth *kawaii* item, red wedge sandals with ribbons, from *Ray* magazine and the sixth *kawaii* item, light yellow shoes with ribbons by K-KAllisté, from *CanCam* magazine.

The second outfit (Figure 7: mannequin 2) includes a denim short-puff-sleeved jacket with Barbie logo pin, white fluffy dress with ruffles, and light pink sandals. Although the color is not white, the jacket has the same detail as the first *kawaii* item from *Ray*, a white short-puff-sleeved jacket. The dress also has the same detail as the last *kawaii* item from *Ray*, a Miss Cotton
dress; both are cotton dresses with lace or ribbon. In the case of the Barbie brand dress, it has lace and is made of cotton with a fluffy skirt with ruffles. Theses sandals also have ribbons, and the color is light pink, which is usually considered *kawaii*.

The last outfit (Figure 7: mannequin 3) displays only the tops and includes Barbie logo T-shirts and jackets. Barbie logo T-shirts themselves are considered *kawaii* as I mentioned above. In addition, regarding Barbie logo T-shirts, we can see Barbie from a different point of view. Donald Richie illustrates with Coca Cola logo T-shirts that the aim in wearing those T-shirts in the United States is the expression of irony. On the other hand, Japanese people wear Coca Cola T-shirts because they love Coca Cola (40). Then, can we think that young Japanese women wear Barbie logo T-shirts because they love Barbie? They do in fact wear Barbie logo T-shirts with logo bags because they love Barbie. As for the jacket, it is a short-puff-sleeved jacket, which has the same detail as the white short-puff-sleeved jacket from *Ray*.

Thus, so-called *kawaii* details and styles, as defined by women’s fashion magazines, are found in Barbie brand outfits. In brief, Barbie brand outfits are *kawaii* fashions.
Figure 7. Barbie brand clothing at the Barbie brand store in Kyoto Takashimaya department store
(Upper left: mannequin 1; upper right mannequin 2; bottom: mannequin 3)
(Photographs by the author, 2006)
Cool fashion

The English-language word “cool” is mixed up with the Japanese word “kakkoii” and both are used in Japan as having the same meanings, especially in women’s magazines. “Cool” is translated into kakkoii most of the time in Japanese; however, it is complicated because Japanese women use the word kakkoii differently. I will observe and analyze two women’s magazines to see how women use both words, “cool” and “kakkoii.” In addition, I compare Japanese women’s cool fashion with the Barbie brand “cool” fashion.

Ray (June, 2006) introduced kawaii fashion in its feature on “The Kawaii College Student Fashion, Kawaii Office Lady Fashion, Cool College Student Fashion, and Cool Office Lady Fashion: Sweet & Elegance Popular Phenomenon This Summer” as I mentioned in the previous section. Now I describe the cool fashion.

In the pages on cool college student fashion, jeans and plain pants or skirts are mostly shown. Even if the skirts or pants have lace, it is very modest. As for the colors, light blue, khaki,
and primary colors are popular. The cool items for college students are the following: 1) tops in primary and secondary colors such as red, yellow, blue, and green 2) camisoles and shorts with lace for pajamas 3) denim pants 4) flip-flops with turquoise 5) sorbet colored necklaces 6) Seven bags made by Samantha Thavasa affiliated company, Samantha Thavasa New York 7) camisoles with lace. Samantha Thavasa is a brand producing mainly bags. Samantha Thavasa New York collaborates with Nicky Hilton to produce bags and purses. Because the business partner is an American girl, the colors of their products are usually pastel colors such as baby pink and yellow.

On the other hand, in the pages of cool office lady fashion, khaki or beige color clothing is popular. White is also introduced; however, it is mainly for shirts or pants. The “must-have” items are the following: 1) tops with brass trim 2) new items by EMILIO PUCCI 3) pumps by MIU MIU 4) white asymmetrical skirts 5) chain necklaces 6) dresses like trench coats 7) summer knits using secondary colors such as green and orange. Compared with cool college student clothing, office lady’s clothing is more expensive; however, the details and materials are not so different, especially in the way of using primary colors and the lack of fluffy or chiffon details; that is, simple styles.

In the Ray feature on “Kawaii & Cool Fashion Comparison for May, 2006,” seven cool fashion items are displayed. The first item is white jackets with moderate lace. The second item is very simple V-neck tops. The third item is satin camisoles. The fourth item is black half pants. The fifth is primary colored plain cardigans. The sixth item is mermaid skirts whose hem is fluffy but moderate. The last item is simple cotton dresses.

ViVi (September, 2005) introduced summer fashion styles in the feature on “Sweet & Cool Fashion.” Almost all “cool” fashion models wear denim skirts or pants, and for tops they wear simple T-shirts or tank tops in primary colors. Accessories such as bags and nail-polish are
blue. In the second feature on “Sweet & Cool Fashion Style,” fashion items in the trendy color of black are arranged. The “cool” fashion is to wear black tank tops with lots of jewelry to show the skin (back skin or belly skin) by wearing mini skirts or dresses whose back part is open, and to wear Western boots.

In these magazines, the word “kakkoii” is not used at all; instead the word “cool” is used. For Japanese women, “cool,” which came from America, is treated the same as “kakkoii.” The meaning of “cool” or “kakkoii” is simple, sexy, and masculine because of the colors of black, blue, and khaki, and the plain materials shown in fashion magazines.

In a Barbie brand store, not only kawaii fashion but also “cool” fashion is available, as the following photograph shows. The mannequin is wearing denim half-pants, a T-shirt, and a very simple jacket. Denim pants are one of the “must” items for college students in Ray magazine. The style of wearing T-shirts and denim is considered as “cool” style in ViVi. The jacket is simple and its color is gray, so it is included in the category of “cool” clothes.

Figure 9. “Cool” style of Barbie brand clothing (Photograph by the author, 2006)
Dorothy Smith argues that “women’s magazines are a major source of information about changing images, new tools, materials and instructions” (46), and so they are in Japan also. Japanese women know that the materials of frilly fabrics, ribbons, or lace and light colors such as pink and white are needed for *kawaii* fashion. They also know that simple details and the colors of blue, khaki, and black are needed for cool fashion because they learned this from the magazines. Smith sees the medium as part of the discourse of femininity, and insists that:

“To examine the discourse of femininity is to examine the organization of relations among the mass media of women’s magazines, advertising, television and movie images, and romances imaging, imagining, and enunciating femininity; the productive and commercial organization of fashion, cosmetic, and garment industries; and women’s but also men’s local practices in their everyday worlds” (53).

Mass media texts educate women about the standards of fashion. In this context, Barbie brand clothing must be considered not only as “*kawaii*” but also “cool” for Japanese women.
As the proverb says, fine clothes make a man. Japanese women actually choose clothes to help them behave in a kawaii or kakkoii way. To be kawaii, Japanese women apply make-up, dye their hair, wear colored contact lenses, and wear skyscraper soles (atsuzoko shoes). Similarly, they wear simple pants and shirts to be cool. In both cases, the desire to become like Westerners motivates Japanese women. Barbie is viewed as the typical Western woman, and they see Barbie as the other self or the icon of beauty. In modern Japanese society, women have many opportunities to become like Barbie because of Barbie brand clothing and accessories. In this chapter, I explain the status of Barbie as the other self or the new icon of beauty and how such orientation emerged as the “Barbie phenomenon” in Japan.

Barbie as kawaii icon

A large number of women who look like Barbie can be seen in any city in Japan. Blond or brown color hair has been in fashion for several years. Japanese women have naturally black hair, but young people, especially students just graduated from high school, are likely to change their hair color because the new hair color is considered to represent their independence or individuality. High school students have to wear uniforms and have black hair, which is the regulation in most of the high schools. However, once they graduate from high school, nobody says that they cannot have various colors of hair. The other reason why colored hair is in style is that popular singers and celebrities have colored hair. Ayumi Hamasaki, whom I mentioned in the previous section, has blond hair. Most of the models in fashion magazines have various colors of hair. Other than hair colors, they also wear skyscraper soles (atsuzoko shoes) to heighten their stature (Richie 155) because Japanese women are generally shorter than
Westerners. Thick woolen socks (loose socks) have been in fashion among high school girls to show their legs as slender and longer (Richie 153) because most Japanese females have short legs. Richie calls those young women “fake foreigners” (151), since they look like Westerners when they have colored hair and wear loose socks and *atsuzoko* shoes. Thus, Japanese women originally longed for Western culture, and they have tried to become like Westerners. In fashion magazines, a large number of features show how to make eyes bigger with cosmetics and achieve fashionable hair color or style. It is not too much to say that Japanese women are always encouraged to become like Westerners, like Barbie!

![Atsuzoko shoes and loose socks](image)

In 1962 the original Barbie was reimported and marketed in Japan, but the result was unsuccessful. When a domestic doll, Licca, was marketed in 1967 in Japan, the original Barbie was withdrawn. Then, a Japanese Barbie was introduced as Jenny. Now both Licca and Jenny are the center of attraction among Japanese girls. However, why is Barbie still not acceptable to girls even though she is popular among adults? Soichi Masubuchi explains that “American dolls
realistically evoke the human bodies, and make a point of mechanism; however, Japanese respect the feeling for the simplicity of the dolls” (“Licca” 102). Thus, American dolls like Barbie are too realistic for Japanese girls. They can have a good feeling for both Licca and Jenny, which have undeveloped breasts and big eyes, and are small, rather than Barbie, which has blond hair and blue eyes and is tall and voluptuous.

Other than dolls’ bodies, the reason why Japanese girls prefer both Licca and Jenny is related to their clothing. Barbie clothing seems to be more “adult.” The original Barbie’s clothing was a swimsuit, and she exposed her skin. On the other hand, both Licca’s and Jenny’s clothing is mini skirts, which girls usually wear. When mothers make dolls’ clothes, they sometimes make the same type of clothes their daughters wear using the same material and pattern. When this happens, as Masubuchi says, a “Licca is me; I am Licca” relationship generates (“Licca” 189). Since dolls are the other selves of girls, they refuse to be far away from their dolls.
Figure 11a. Licca doll (left), Jenny doll (middle), and Barbie doll (right)  
(Photographs by the author, 2007)
Japanese women having had such childhood experiences prefer Barbie because they are adults, and they see Barbie as the other self. Changing the color of their hair and eyes by using hair dye and colored contact lenses is one way to become like Barbie. Wearing atsuzoko shoes and loose socks is another way to become like Barbie. In addition, because of the establishment of Barbie brand clothing stores, Japanese women can become Barbie by wearing Barbie brand clothing, which is the closest thing to being like Barbie.

Barbie is the other self of Japanese women. Japanese women grow up with making their dolls the other self of themselves. When they become adults, this time they make “adult” Barbie the other self of themselves by wearing Barbie brand clothing. Both Licca and Jenny are just girls’ toys; however, Barbie is for adults. Barbie is kawaii for Japanese women because the “Barbie is me, I am Barbie” relationship generates between Barbie and them. In short, not until they become adult do Japanese young women see Barbie as a kawaii icon.
**Barbie as cool icon**

Chapter 2 described what Japanese “cool” means. The word “kakkoii” means that someone’s appearance is good; a way of eating looks kakkoii, the appearances of men’s faces, fashions, and behaviors looks kakkoii, and the appearances of women’s strong actions looks kakkoii. Here, I focus on kakkoii women and explain the relationship between kakkoii women and Barbie; that is, why Barbie is kakkoii in Japan.

First of all, if we think about kakkoii women, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, kakkoii women are considered to act manly, strong, and independent. In the 1970s kakkoii girls were drawn in girls’ comic books such as *Attack No.1* (アタック No.1) and *Aim for the Ace!* (エースをねらえ!). The former was a popular girls’ comic book in the 1960s and 1970s which made volleyball a fad among girls around that time. The latter, drawn by Sumika Yamamoto, made tennis a fad among girls in the 1970s and 1980s. Both comic books are about beautiful and talented girls who compete throughout their lives in sports (volleyball or tennis). Kakkoii women are beautiful and talented, having good figures as well as being masculine and strong.

Regarding kakkoii women’s individualism, *Kakkoii Onna Ha “Ohitorisama” Jyozu* (カッコイイ女は「おひとりさま」上手) explains the ways and the advantages of being individual in the Japanese society. If the word *ohitorisama* is directly translated into English, its meaning might be “single”; however, it means “individual” if it is translated by its definition. According to Kumiko Iwashita, the definitions of *ohitorisama* are:

1. Women who can be respected for their individuality
2. The knowledge to live well with other people
3. The philosophy of living to succeed in work and love
4. Individual

5. The appellation for a solitary customer

Ohitorisama is the woman who can enjoy meals and travel by herself and live well with others (Haishi 14). Ohitorisama likes to go to restaurants and bars alone so she can enjoy her favorite meals and drinks without constraint. Even if she wants to eat Japanese food, she might have to go to Italian restaurants because her friends want to eat Italian food. However, if she goes to the restaurant alone, she can go to a Japanese restaurant to eat her favorite Japanese food.

Ohitorisama also likes to travel alone. If she travels alone, she can go anywhere she wants and spend time freely. In short, ohitorisama can enjoy spending her time on her own without pressure from other people. However, traditionally Japanese women do not like to be alone. In fact, they tend to resist being alone. A few years ago, the mass media featured working women who cannot eat their lunch alone. This symptom is called Lunch-mate syndrome, which develops mostly among university students and women in their twenties. It comes from the fear that people think he/she is a person who does not have any friends, and finally he/she assumes he/she is not attractive. In the other case, mothers who have children are always called “Mary’s mother” or “Tom’s mother,” and they are not called their real names. Thus, the individual is concealed and people have a negative image of women’s individuality in Japanese society. Ohitorisama, who has individuality, might be a new icon of woman.

Then, if you relate Barbie to a kakkoii woman, what do you think about? Isn’t she qualified to be a kakkoii woman? Yes, she is because she is beautiful and has a good figure. She is also talented, as we can see from her careers. Starting from her first career, as a teenage fashion model in 1959, she has had many occupations. In 1961, she was a ballerina, registered
nurse, and American Airline stewardess. In 1965, she was an astronaut, fashion editor, and student teacher. In 1966, she was a Pan Am stewardess, and she was a surgeon in 1973. In 1975, she was an Olympic athlete such as downhill skier, figure skater, and gymnast. She was an aerobics instructor in 1984, and in 1985, she was a business executive, dress designer, TV News reporter, veterinarian, and teacher. In 1986, she was an astronaut again and had a career as a rock star. In 1988, she was a doctor, and in 1989, she was a UNICEF ambassador, doctor, army officer, and dancer on a TV Dance Club show. In 1990, she was a U.S. Air Force pilot, summit diplomat, Ice Capades star, and rock star. She became a music video star and naval petty officer in 1991. In 1992, she got several jobs— Marine Corps sergeant, rap musician, rollerblade in-line skater, teacher, chef, business woman, doctor, and presidential candidate. In 1993, she was a police officer, army medic, Radio City Music Hall rockette, and baseball player. In 1994, she was a pediatrician, astronaut, scuba diver, Air Force Thunderbird Squadron leader, and artist. In 1995, she became a teacher, lifeguard, and firefighter. In 1996, she was a teacher, veterinarian, engineer, and Olympic gymnast. In 1997, she was a dentist, paleontologist, and boutique owner (Tosa 120). Thus, Barbie had numerous jobs and the jobs are not only traditionally female jobs such as ballerina, nurse, and stewardess but also traditionally male jobs, such as surgeon, doctor, astronaut, and pilot. She is masculine and strong like men.

All the careers show independence as a working woman. Other than such careers, various companies such as Coca Cola, Hard Rock Café, and Avon, and designer brands such as Christian Dior, DKNY, and Giorgio Armani collaborated with Mattel and made Barbie the mascot girl for each company. She shoulders an important responsibility as the individual representative of each company. Regarding the Hollywood Barbie series, Marilyn Monro Barbie (2001), Elizabeth Taylor Barbie (2000), and Audrey Hepburn Barbie (1998) imitate the original celebrities. She is
again responsible for showing the individuality of the original people. Barbie is the best doll that can represent these individuals.

Therefore, Barbie has the required qualities in *kakkoii* women. She is beautiful and talented. She is also masculine, as strong as men, and individual. Beautiful and talented women are the ideal women, and women who have independence and individuality—*ohitorisama*—are also considered as the dream women in modern Japan since there are still a small number of *ohitorisama*. *Kakkoii* women having such qualities are considered to be heroines among Japanese women, and so is Barbie. Barbie might be the new icon of women in Japan.

In conclusion, Barbie is *kawaii* and *kakkoii*. Japanese women are familiar with relating themselves to *kawaii* dolls such as Licca and Jenny since they were girls. Likewise, they see Barbie as the other self when they become adult; that is, they relate the *kawaii* feeling to Barbie this time instead of Licca and Jenny. At the same time, Japanese women see Barbie as the icon of a *kakkoii* woman since she acts as strong as men and has independence and individuality, which they lack. Barbie is the woman who has a traditional beauty of *kawaii* and a new beauty of *kakkoii*. 
CHAPTER V: BARBIE COMMUNITIES IN MIXI

Mixi is one of the biggest free online social networking services in Japan. Its members must be at least eighteen years old. General members use the service for free; premium members pay three dollars a month, but they can use more extended services than the general members. To participate in Mixi, people must be invited by their friends or acquaintances who have already registered in Mixi (Mixi users). Mixi provides such an invitation system to make people’s backgrounds clear. Mixi offers several services such as diary, message, and communities. One of the biggest services is “communities,” which started on April 1st, 2004. Any Mixi participants can establish and participate in the communities depending on their interests. Its participants, who sympathize with certain themes, use the boards in each community to communicate with other Mixi participants within the community.

There are seventeen Mixi communities regarding Barbie. These include five communities focusing on Barbie brand clothes or products, and two communities for people longing to become Barbie. In this chapter, I explain how participants act in those seven communities to see how online Barbie communities contribute to the “Barbie phenomenon” in Japan.
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<tr>
<td>7. I wear only Barbie brand clothes! (Barbie以外は着たくない！)</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 1. Barbie communities in Mixi (April, 6th 2007)

1. ♡ Barbie♡

This community started in November 11th, 2004. The total number of participants is 6304. This community has the biggest number of participants because it is the oldest and best-known community. Participants mostly like Barbie brand clothing. They sell and buy Barbie brand clothes, show what they bought at a Barbie store, and exchange the information about the items they are looking for.

On the board on March 14th, 2006, participants talked about the reasons why they like Barbie. Five participants including the person who established the board, gave the following reasons: 1) she has liked Barbie brand since she bought its brand of gloves 2) she has liked Barbie brand since she bought its brand clothes such as skirts and coats 3) she likes Barbie clothing because nice, kind, and kawaii workers are working at the Barbie brand stores 4) she has
liked Barbie clothing since she bought tops with lace 5) she likes Barbie outfits because she liked Barbie dolls when she was a girl.

Many participants started to like the Barbie brand when they bought Barbie brand clothing and accessories. It is no exaggeration to say that the Barbie clothing brand made a lot of Barbie fans. Interestingly, they like the Barbie brand not only for its clothing but also because of the workers at the Barbie stores. Store workers must be important in creating positive images of the Barbie brand.

2. I want to become Barbie♡ (Barbie ちゃんになりたい♡)

This community started July 26th, 2005. The total number of participants is 2788. The aim of participants is to become like Barbie in real life by wearing Barbie brand clothing or other products. They discuss websites where they can shop for Barbie products, sell and buy their Barbie brand clothes, and show the best Barbie dolls which each participant has. They also exchange information about how they can become like Barbie with Barbie brand clothing and cosmetics.

Since the aim of this community is to become like Barbie, on two boards they talk about how they can look like Barbie in real life. On the first board (October 26th, 2005), participants talked about how they can become like Barbie with clothing. Participants introduced clothing brands other than the Barbie clothing brand to help them look like Barbie. The brands they mentioned are Morgan, ZARA, Luv Diva, Pinky Girls, RF, and JAYRO white. Morgan and ZARA are brands outside Japan, and the others are Japanese brands. Pinky Girls is known for selling kawaii clothing.
The second board (November 11th, 2006) is about cosmetics—how to use cosmetics or make-up techniques to have a Barbie-like face. One person uses brown mascara, but most participants use black liquid mascara to make their eyes big. The most important technique is to use pink cheek blush. Each participant explains her own make-up technique in detail. One technique is the following:

1. Make the eyes big
2. Use pink cheek blush
3. Use pink lipsticks
4. Equalize the skin tone
5. Use dark eyebrow pencils and make the eyebrows long

The other is to make the eyebrows long, use brown eye shadow, use black mascara (with light blue or pink mascara at the end of the eyes), use pink cheek blush, use highlighting to give the face clear-cut features, and use pink lipsticks and transparent lip gloss. One woman even uses blue contact lenses and dyes her hair blond.

In this community, following their aim to become like Barbie, participants try to look like Barbie by using clothing and cosmetics. Barbie is an icon of beauty among these Barbie fans.

3. ♡ *+Barbie♡ +*+

This community started August 20th, 2006. The total number of participants is 1987. Participants love the Barbie brand, including clothing and belongings. Mostly participants sell
and buy clothing and belongings. They also talk about the Barbie brand clothes shown on television or in magazines.

Since most topics are about trading or selling their clothing or belongings, participants communicate with each other with their personal messages to negotiate the price of the products. On the board on April 12\textsuperscript{th}, 2007, a participant tried to sell a Barbie brand white jacket and a black skirt. She inserted both pictures on the board and stated that she can sell a jacket for 5,000 yen ($50) and a skirt for 4,000 yen ($40), which includes shipping, and that both sizes are medium. She also emphasized that she can sell the jacket and skirt for 7,500 yen ($75) if somebody buys both items. There was one response from someone who wanted to buy them. On the board on April 20\textsuperscript{th}, 2007, another participant tried to sell a medium-size flower-design skirt. This skirt was new and purchased in January 2007 according to her. The price for this skirt was 4,500 yen ($45) including shipping. Again, there was no thread for this board except for the comment that she sold the skirt. There are more posts like these, but most boards do not have responses from the participants. This community might be called Barbie eBay.

4. Barbie stationary & goods (バービー雑貨♡小物)

This community started October 12\textsuperscript{th}, 2006. The total number of participants is 1384. Participants like Barbie convenience goods and belongings. They sell and buy their Barbie goods, discuss the new Barbie dolls, and show the goods which each participant bought recently. Although the focus of this community is Barbie stationary and goods, the participants are mostly interested in Barbie dolls.

On February 5\textsuperscript{th}, 2007 participants talked about a Barbie doll which one participant was looking for. Two participants made comments and informed her where she could get the doll.
One participant, who already had the doll, responded that she could get it on one of the Japanese auction websites; the other inserted a link to the website on the thread.

On March 5th, 2007, a participant tried to sell her Barbie dolls. She inserted many pictures, but she stated that she wanted to negotiate the price individually. Interestingly, another participant exploited this board and tried to sell her own dolls. After a month, all the dolls were sold according to the participants.

Not as many people communicate on the threads in this community. It is considered that each participant should communicate individually because negotiating is a private matter. However, exchanging the information about the locating Barbie products is a good idea because the community consists of Barbie fans and it is easy to get any information regarding Barbie.

5. ○○。 *Barbie Life◎。*

This community started April 20, 2006. The total number of participants is 354. It consists of participants who are excited by the color pink, which is the main color of the Barbie store, and who are like Barbie dolls. Participants talk about what they wear to become like Barbie.

On the board of “introduce yourselves. I am XX Barbie!” (May 19th, 2006), seven participants introduced themselves to get to know each other. One participant really likes Barbie, both Barbie dolls and Barbie brand clothing and accessories; therefore, she stated that she wears Barbie brand clothing all the time. Another participant has liked Barbie since she was a girl because her parents gave her Barbie dolls. She also likes pink, and she uses pink stationary such as notes and pens. She inserted a photo of her favorite Barbie brand shoes, and another participant responded that she also got the shoes because they were in a magazine and she liked
them. Other than these comments, some said that they try to become like Barbie dolls in their daily life.

More than three hundred people belong to this community; however, few participants communicate with each other on each thread. On the other hand, on the above introduction board, participants show their passion for Barbie dolls. Lee O-Young describes a feature of the Japanese as being that “the Japanese feel an unbearable sense of insecurity if left alone” (68), which explains why Barbie participants feel comfort only if they gather as a group.

6. Barbie (バービー)

This community started July 18th, 2006. The total number of participants is 157. It consists of participants who like Barbie and kawaii products like Barbie. They show what they bought recently and exchange information about items which participants are looking for.

The board on which most participants communicate is the introducing board (July 18th, 2006). Participants introduced themselves and talked about how many years they have liked Barbie. The participant who established this board noted that she has liked Barbie dolls for fourteen years, and she has eight dolls. Another participant has liked Barbie dolls since she was a girl, and she has thirteen Barbie dolls. Two other participants started to like Barbie dolls when they made clothes for dolls. Some participants talked about how to take care of Barbie dolls’ hair. To wash her hair, participants use shampoo for wigs; to cut her hair, participants use hair clippers for pets or razors.

Only eight boards have been established since the beginning, and its participants mainly talk about Barbie dolls. In contrast to the ♡ Barbie ♡ community, participants have liked Barbie because of Barbie dolls not the Barbie brand clothing. They like to take care of Barbie dolls by
making clothes for Barbie and cutting her hair. They still like doll play, which is considered something girls like.

7. I wear only Barbie brand clothes! (Barbie以外は着たくない！)

This community started February 16th, 2006. The total number of participants is 63. Participants love Barbie and want to wear Barbie brand clothes every day. They mostly sell and buy their Barbie brand outfits using the boards and its threads and in addition, they show their Barbie brand clothing collections.

The most interesting board is “I♡ Barbie” (June 25th, 2006), where participants talk about how they can wear Barbie brand clothing when they become old although most people wearing Barbie brand clothes are young, in their early twenties. The participants making comments in its threads are still young—eighteen to early twenties; however, they responded that they try to wear Barbie brand clothing as much as they can because they like Barbie brand clothes. One participant indicated that the Barbie brand clothing has become simpler than before. She actually heard the reason from the Barbie store workers, and it is because Barbie brand tried to expand their customers. Barbie brand is usually considered a “kawaii” clothing brand; however, the brand can also be known for “cool” clothing if they make more cool-style clothing. On the board on February 16th, 2006, participants showed their favorite Barbie brand clothing, inserting pictures of themselves the wearing brand clothes. One of the participants said that she wants to be a woman who can wear pink and white clothes even if she becomes old.

The participants here like Barbie brand clothing as we can see from the aim of this community and the threads on each board. They want to wear Barbie brand clothing forever if permitted. This indicates that Barbie brand clothing is made only for young women in Japanese
society; however, the brand currently makes more cool-style clothes to expand their range of customers. Barbie clothing fans’ longing accords with the aim of the Barbie brand.

Even if the aim of each community is different, as we can see above, participants communicate with each other regarding Barbie all the time in each community to share their thoughts as Barbie fans. In most communities participants mainly sell and buy their own Barbie products to share their belongings because as Barbie fans they do not want to throw them away. Participants insert pictures of products they want to sell, and other participants who want the products make comments about what they want. After this process, participants e-mail each other and negotiate the price or exchange products. This is similar to the biggest trading website like eBay, but in Barbie communities, people safely trade or sell their products because they know participants are Barbie fans.

In addition, most participants exchange information about what they have by showing their belongings. This indicates participants here are real Barbie fans. The process of taking pictures and inserting them in the communities takes times even if it does not take a long time. Even if it takes time, they want to share their Barbie information and show their Barbies. Two female Barbie community participants tell why they like Barbie, why they belong to Barbie communities, and what they like in Barbie communities.

Tsubame (Mixi name), who belongs to most of the Barbie communities, reports:

“My mother gave me a Barbie doll when I was a kid. Since then, I have liked Barbie. Barbie is *kawaii* because her clothing and accessories are colorful and fashionable.
Barbie is also *kakkoii* since she has a nice body shape. I have attended most of the Barbie communities for about six months. I like all the communities because I can see the products and information regarding Barbie and other participants’ Barbies."

Hikaru (Mixi name), who is the chair of Barbie (バービー) community, responds:

“I have liked Barbie since I was ten years old. Barbie’s face is *kirei* (beautiful) and *kawaii*. Barbie is *kakkoii* because she has a good sense of fashion. I created one of the Barbie communities because I could not find the Barbie communities which I wanted to belong to. Regarding my Barbie community, I am glad that participants are happily exchanging their Barbie information.”

As we can see from the above comments, participants are actually enjoying what they can see in the communities. In addition, it is a fact that a lot of people belong to Barbie communities; that is, thousands of people like Barbie. The “Barbie phenomenon” emerged from not only women wearing Barbie brand clothes in the streets but also Barbie fans in Mixi Barbie communities. They are closely involved in the “Barbie phenomenon” in Japan.
Figure 12. Barbie fan (Photograph by Madoka Kaniyama)
CONCLUSION

Barbie has become very popular among young Japanese women since the Barbie clothing brand was established in 2003. In the streets we see women wearing Barbie logo T-shirts and pants and carrying Barbie logo bags. I call this the “Barbie phenomenon,” which emerged from Japanese women’s kawaii and cool taste, supported by a large number of online Barbie fans.

The word “kawaii” is usually translated into “cute” (sometimes “pretty” or “adorable”) in English; however, its etymology is different and its meanings, of course, are also slightly different. Kawaii is the word indicating positive feelings for small and delicate things. In modern Japan, kawaii is also used for popular characters and fashion, though the old meaning is still alive.

In fashion, kawaii style is popular among young Japanese women. Lace, ribbon and frilly materials are always used in this style. Pink, white, red and pastels are the important colors for kawaii fashion. Barbie brand clothing fits these categories, and in fashion magazines, Barbie brand clothing is shown as the best kawaii clothes.

Other than fashion, Japanese women have kawaii feelings for animation, girls’ comic books, and popular characters such as Hello Kitty and Pokemon. They grew up with Japanese animation and girls’ comic books and feel familiar with them. They liked the Japanese dolls Licca and Jenny because of their similarity to these animated characters, which have big eyes and thin and delicate bodies like Licca and Jenny. Barbie is more adult than Licca and Jenny since she does not have kawaii eyes like they do, she is tall, and her clothes are for grown women. Thus, Barbie did not fit Japanese girls’ kawaii taste. They sought dolls like themselves and could not accept an adult doll like Barbie. For these reasons Barbie was not popular among Japanese girls.
However, these girls grow up, and when they become adult, they like Barbie instead of Licca and Jenny because both these dolls are too childish for them at this time. They finally attain the right age to identify with Barbie. A few years ago, the Barbie clothing brand was established, and the brand became popular because women finally had the opportunity to be like Barbie by not only dyeing their hair and wearing colored contact lenses but also wearing Barbie brand clothes. In short, Japanese women’s longing for making Barbie their other self and the modern definition of *kawaii* make Barbie popular.

Barbie is also cool. American “cool” is different from Japanese “cool” even though “cool” is translated into “*kakkoii*” in Japanese. American “cool” means a new value of individuality; Japanese “cool” (*kakkoii*) means that people’s appearance is attractive. In modern Japan, however, the American “cool” and the Japanese “*kakkoii*” are used as the same word, especially in women’s fashion magazines.

In women’s magazines, cool (*kakkoii*) fashion is considered simple and primary colored clothing. In contrast to *kawaii* clothes which are fancy with frilly materials and ribbons, they are plain and masculine clothes, especially jeans or denim.

Beautiful, talented, and independent women are called *kakkoii* women. As representative *kakkoii* women, beautiful and athletically talanted girls are drawn in girls’ comic books. They practice hard and have a strong competitive feeling. In addition, independent women are currently considered as *kakkoii* women since their ways of enjoying life—eating good meals and traveling by themselves—are new ways of spending time for Japanese women. Likewise, Barbie is beautiful and talented in the sense of having many jobs—sometimes she is a pilot, and other times she is an astronaut and doctor. This represents her independence as a working woman.
She also represents the ideal individual as a mascot girl for companies and celebrities. Barbie must be one of the *kakkoii* women.

However, *kakkoii* women, including Barbie, are very inaccessible women because there are few beautiful and talented women and it is not easy to become *kakkoii* women like Barbie in Japanese society. On the other hand, because of the Barbie clothing brand, ordinary women have a chance to become *kakkoii* women easily. They were previously able to change their hair color or style and even their eyes by using colored contact lenses, and moreover, now they can imitate Barbie by wearing Barbie brand clothing.

Thus, modern Japanese women’s *kawaii* taste perfectly overlaps with cool taste, and Barbie and Barbie brand clothing have become popular. In brief, the combination of the traditional value of *kawaii*-ness and modern Japanese women’s new value of coolness is the key to the “Barbie phenomenon” in Japan. It accounts for the “Barbie phenomenon,” with women wearing Barbie brand clothes every day in Japan.

Finally, we cannot forget Japanese Barbie fans because they also relate to the “Barbie phenomenon.” Thousands of Barbie fans always contact each other through online Barbie communities on Mixi. Some talk about Barbie brand products, and others talk about how they can become like Barbie. They sometimes sell and buy Barbie brand products within their communities. Unlike many women wearing Barbie brand clothing, Barbie fans forever love Barbie and the Barbie brand. They carry the “Barbie phenomenon” on their shoulders.

In the next few years, this “Barbie phenomenon” will continue. In modern Japanese society, working women are forced to be as “independent” as men. Being *kawaii* as women is respected; at the same time, being *kakkoii* is also required as working women. Barbie clothing brand has offered clothing for these “independent” women. I am not sure that women can think
about being “independent” through Barbie and Barbie brand clothing, but it is a fact that Barbie clothing brand provides proper clothes and accessories which are necessary for working women in order to adjust to the appropriate time, place, and occasion. Licca and Jenny were the perfect girls who had *kawaii* clothes, accessories, faces, and bodies when Japanese women were girls. Similarly, Barbie will be a new ideal icon of a woman in which women can see perfection as adults.
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