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Audible Audiences: Engaging with Music in Japan

Rafal Zaborowski

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Abstract

In this thesis I aim to uncover the nature, quality and implications of audience engagement with popular music in everyday life. Specifically, I look at two post-war generations in modern Japan and analyse their listening practices and interpretations of music encounters.

To investigate this, a mixed-method approach is used based on focus group and individual interviews, questionnaires, participant observation and expert interviews with industry representatives – 100 study participants overall. Emerging patterns and themes are identified through qualitative thematic analysis.

In two case studies – of idol groups and *vocaloid* music - I focus on how audiences, especially fans, and producers interact, with a close bond emerging over a process of cultural co-evolution of production and reception. Then, I position this map of engagements within the experiences of two Japanese cohorts, "the lost" and "the relaxed". I argue that their generational experiences and localities guide the frames through which they interpret music.

I argue that listening to music is a complex social practice whose significance has been undervalued in audience research. Audiences make music choices and engage with musical texts according to specific modes and routines which should be analysed together. Following the legacy of literary and television audience studies, I propose an account of music listening in terms of a spectrum of audience engagements linked to texts, contexts, performances and authorship.

The concepts of proximity (cultural proximity and the proximity between performers and audiences) inform the analysis of the circuit of culture, offering new insight into modes of engagement and production processes. Japan, home of the Walkman and karaoke, emerges from the analysis as not only the land of technological innovations in music, but also as a culture with wider implications for media and audience research.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1   Where it begins

"Mum, what's that song that goes 'Am-beh, am-beh?'"

It was Poland in the mid-1980s and I was three, maybe four. My mother didn't know. It took, probably, a few weeks before the song was on one of the two television channels again (or was it on the radio?), and my father and I happened to listen to it together.

This is my first music-related memory. The second must have happened not long after that. I was in a music store, in a long queue, lifted up by my mother to a tall man behind the register, so I could proudly ask: "Can I have Michael Jackson's album, please!"

'Am-beh, am-beh', as readers might have guessed by now, had been, of course, 'I'm bad, I'm bad', the chorus line from Jackson's bestseller hit song 'Bad'. It was the title song of his 1987 legendary album, and apart from the US, it charted in Canada, UK, New Zealand and a number of European countries. I didn't know anything about that at the time, naturally. I was just happy we were able to get the album (a vinyl record) and I could sing along to the tune at home. This was the first meaning-making through music that I can recall. Whereas the line 'I'm bad' has been interpreted by music experts as Jackson's attempt at 'roughing up' his image and departing from his more gentle pop style, for me, 'am-beh, am-beh' meant something cool, flashy and exotic. It also marked the beginning of my burgeoning music collection.

By the time I was 10, indulged by my parents I had amassed a huge collection of albums (now on cassette tapes). At the time, popular music (largely from the US, UK and Western Europe) was starting to become widely available in Poland, and it was cheap too, as in the absence of copyright law, the cassette tapes were usually pirated and sold unofficially at markets and fairs. Those tapes, along with my comic books, were my treasures, but unlike the comic books, I could enjoy the music all day while

doing other things – playing with my cat, homework, chores, even reading. There was rarely a period of silence in my room; when a cassette ended, I would just flip it to the other side and push 'play' again. Unsurprisingly, the songs stuck in my head and, since I could not understand English, the foreign songs spurred a myriad of original interpretations of what I thought they meant.

As the music accompanied my everyday activities, I sang and I listened, recorded and dubbed. I used music to measure time (as all tapes are the same length) and to provide the soundtrack to the wars my toy soldiers enacted. And of course, I learned my first English phrases through music – some of them correct and some terribly ungrammatical. I accepted and used both, good English and bad English, and in some cases it took me years to realize those mistakes (and to understand what the song lyrics really said). In time, I learned my first Japanese words through songs as well, only to be embarrassingly told, in Japan, that I spoke Japanese like a teenage girl from Tokyo. Of course I did – teenage music stars had taught me well.

It is now 2015, and I have just cancelled my Spotify subscription. I have moved house almost every year for the past five years, within the UK and outside of it. I have learned to keep the amount of my personal possessions in check, and therefore most of my music collection remains in Poland, in my old room in my parents' house. Some of it that is digitalized is scattered across my external hard disk drives and virtual storage. But mostly, listening to music now means for me either occasional iTunes and Bandcamp purchases, or streaming songs through my phone or on YouTube onto the PC. Which is to say, for me, listening to music does not happen as often as it used to.

I have a few favourite acts that I continue to support, and I still enjoy listening to music as a soundtrack to household chores, but I cannot work with music on in the background anymore, even though I can still vividly remember studying for high school finals with 90s grunge coming from the speakers. I was never a fan of mobile music listening, but now I really like to pick a fast song on my mobile phone on my way home from work, as a reward after a hard day, or perhaps, as a way to walk faster towards the tube station. I still like many of the song lyrics and melodies I liked 10 years ago,

but I have discovered that I cannot stand some of them now – and having listened to them again in detail, I'm not quite sure why.

Music has accompanied me my whole life, albeit in different ways, as I engaged with music through various practices, some of which have changed over time. The meanings associated with some of these practices have also changed. I began to wonder, to what extent was this me: my current lifestyle, my surroundings, my upbringing and accumulated experiences, my socioeconomic and cultural capital, my age and gender, my family, my identities as a researcher, a Pole, a European, a student, a young father? To what extent is this about music, dynamically changing in form and style from the 1980s until now? To what extent is this about the technology, which experienced a rapid shift from eight-tracks and cassette tapes, through to MDs and CDs, to MP3 players, lossless digital audio formats and streaming services? And what is the role of the large, structural, globalizing forces of power, embedded in what, according to Zygmunt Bauman (2000), is 'liquid modernity', what Anthony Giddens (1991) calls 'late modernity', and what Ulrich Beck (1999) dubs a 'risk society'?

In this thesis, I start with these questions to remind myself that music listening is complex, even though it sometimes feels simple and straightforward. It is complex, because as I am interested in how music practices reveal the patterns and meanings embedded in everyday life, I investigate the processes of interpretation and how they are situated vis-à-vis different sets of identities and emotions. My aim is to uncover the links between processes of cultural production, circulation and reception, and to see whether and to what extent, at least in the case of music, they shape each other. These are all multifaceted issues, and in the following chapters I unpack them carefully, noting any emerging challenges and limitations.

At the same time, it all starts with something seemingly straightforward – a reader and the text, a member of the audience decoding an encoded medium, a young music listener hearing something that sounds unmistakably like 'am-beh, am-beh'.

1.2   Dancing about architecture? The overarching research question

Of course, writing about music has always been difficult. Our personal experiences, just like mine detailed above, seem to suggest that music is hugely relevant to our lives, that it is embedded in and revealing of our routines and practices, that it is one of the meaningful threads in our everyday existence and the symbolic exchange. However, it is difficult to analyse what is actually going on when we interact with music, because on the one hand, music is very personal, and on the other, it is situated strongly in the social sphere of our lives.

When we think about music we often imagine it as a social, cohesive force, much more than we do about new media. The academic and media debates suggesting that technology, and the internet, are driving us apart (Turkle, 2010) do not focus on music as often as they focus on social media or video games. Sure, moral panics have concerned various musical genres and artists (Jenkins and Maier-Katkin, 1992; Cohen, 2002; Wright 2000), but there has been much more research on cultures, sub-cultures, groups and collectives (now and in the past) which have told us that music can be understood as social behaviour or as mass communication, yet it is always strongly tied to group identity and belonging (Frith, 1978; Hebdige, 1979; Cashmore, 1984; Born and Hesmondhalgh, 2000).

Is this still true in the digital music soundscape, where audiences interact with songs more in isolation from each other: through individual playlists, personalized streaming sites, personal headphones and MP3 players? In 1936 Walter Benjamin famously argued that with mechanical reproduction a certain mode ('aura') of engaging with art disappeared, and this opened up the potential to experience art differently. It happened with the invention of photography and film, as Benjamin noted, but we can easily make the connection to recorded music (cf. Benjamin, 1977). We can discuss Benjamin's notions, and disagree on whether real authenticity disappeared along with the dawn of music record production or not, but, as scholars of music or media, we would probably all nod in agreement to the argument that the availability of records allowed for a plethora of new, contextualized and culturally situated practices.

While I am unconvinced, then, that it is the internet that drives us apart and that it is the music that brings us together, I think that questions of unity and separations through technology are not the right questions to ask – and that more probably, following Doctorow (2008, pp.x-xi), it is that 'somewhere in the network and the music, there's a mix that brings us together because we're apart.' But as it is with other media analysed through the lens of communication studies, it is sometimes challenging to escape some of the simplified, contrasting alternatives: of whether music is cohesive or alienating, or of whether music does something to us (and then we focus on those effects) or we do something with music (and as such, we emphasize our aims and gratifications). Both approaches can end up disregarding the music completely, ignoring the complex ways it is produced, received, circulated, interpreted and negotiated.

So how do we know what the practices surrounding music reception are, and how can we go about investigating them? Some believe that the effects that music has on our bodies and minds can be measured by tracking the tangible changes in our bloodstream and respiration rates. Researchers from the Sonic Arts Research Centre at the University of Belfast conducted a three-month experiment with software called 'Emotion in motion', which measured electrodermal activity and heart rate signals as part of a public exhibition in Dublin (Jaimovich, Coghlan and Knapp, 2013). Similarly, there are medicine researchers studying the physiological effects of music on the human body, looking at, for instance, how music affects blood pressure, sensitivity and circulation (Bernardi et al, 2006) – important findings, to be sure, but they don't tell us much about the practices of music or even about the music itself, since no musical factors (genre, artist, musical preference of the patient, volume etc.) have been found to be relevant to the phenomena observed, apart from the tempo (faster music resulted in an increase in blood pressure and sensitivity, and vice versa). Analysis of physical reactions, then, misses the social and cultural aspect of the music experience. It doesn't answer the question of how music is revealing of our lives, and how it mediates and is mediated through our everyday routines. And while knowing that faster songs make our bodies more sensitive might have clinical value for practitioners

and surgeons, it will not get us any closer to engaging with issues of symbolic power, identity or cultural exchange.

Looking for meaning in music, music scholar and educator Lucy Green (1988) differentiates between inherent and delineated meanings. The first refers to meanings that are in the music itself, in its structure and its elements. The second denotes meanings stemming from the connection between music and the culture it exists in; they are contextualized in the social sphere through the use of music. This parallels similar dichotomies in cultural and media studies – text and context, connotation and denotation – and just like the debates surrounding these, Green did not intend to suggest that inherent qualities of music could be easily distinguished from delineated ones. However, some scholars such as Richards (2003) still critiqued Green's distinction for seemingly suggesting that the inherent in music appears to be pre-social. For Richards (2003, p.28), music is always socially produced and a product of choice between formal alternatives – and therefore it is never neutral, never inherent, and always motivated.

And then, surely, even if we want to approach music as possessing inherent qualities, if we conceptualize music as an entity which 'does something to us' (which is not how this thesis approaches music), we need to acknowledge that less popular strand of research in music studies: one that does not celebrate music as a unifying force and a source of identity, but rather points out how music can also be a tool of punishment (Grant, 2013) or torture (Chornik, 2013). This is because even though music can imply sociality, it can also connote stress. In our everyday life we talk about noise levels in a club; we negotiate music in a shared workspace; we complain (in our heads, mostly) about unpleasant music seeping through somebody's headphones on a crowded train.

Some of the observed and interviewed participants in the study, whom I introduce later in this thesis, talked about music in this way: about music as a pleasure, but also as a social duty. High school student Kōki enjoyed listening to his iPod on the way home, but he had no interest in current musical trends, and found it annoying when others asked him about music. Salaried administrative employee Yoshida liked to sing,

but found karaoke stressful, as it meant performing social rites and revealing his private music taste to his bosses and co-workers. There is, then, the anxiety about acceptance and a focus on managing boundaries. Engaging with music together with other people is as risky as accepting them as friends on a social network, but arguably even more is at stake with music, as musical engagements can be significantly more personal than Twitter, even more emotional than MiXi, and, perhaps, even less allowing for privacy controls than Facebook settings.

To uncover the relation of music and everyday life in greater detail, we therefore need a cultural media approach, and one that will account for audience activity, interpretations, identity creation – and the link that connects these to production and circulation processes. Simon Frith, in his account of music practices in Keighley in the UK (1978), noted that the use of music between different groups of youth is based on that group's needs and interests, their class and capital, and finally, their choices of labour and leisure. Johan Fornäs, Ulf Lindberg and Ove Sernhede, in *In Garageland* (1995), analysed three case studies of obscure Swedish rock bands in their social and cultural environments, leading to detailed accounts of practices of creation, linking power, identity and the artistic process. I mention these two studies because even though they are very different and stem from distinct scholarly traditions, they are similar in their methodologies and limitations (ethnographic method, a relatively small sample, qualitative analysis), but especially in their aims of uncovering how the social sphere and music relate to each other – what music tells us of daily practices and processes and vice versa.

There have been insightful examples of engaging music academically in this way, whether it is from the audiences' side (see, for instance, Bull, 2000; DeNora, 2000), or from the side of scenes, creators and their environments (see, for instance, Cohen, 1991, 2007; Baym, 2011). However, on the whole, media scholars have rarely approached 'listening'. Kate Lacey, discussing the lack of research on audiences as 'listeners', suggests that this scarcity is linked to the fact that the act of listening feels more passive than acts of writing or reading (Lacey, 2013, pp.3-4). Or it might be because, as Allan Moore suggests in his monograph on analysing recorded music,

'listening to songs is as easy as driving a car' but '[u]nderstanding how they work is as hard as being a mechanic' (2012, p.1); in other words, meaning-making through music comes naturally for the audiences to the extent that a third person, a researcher, finds it difficult to describe the process.

Similar stories have been told explaining why listening is so rarely conceptualized in terms of audience activity. In *Listening*, philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy describes listening as a meaningful performance act when he writes that '[w]hat distinguished music … is that composition, in itself, and the procedures of joining together never stop anticipating their own development and keep us waiting in some way for the result – or outcome – of their order, their calculations, their music(ologie)' (2007, p.66). Music emerges here as difficult to grasp, because the listening experience is so dynamic and so embedded in the music that it escapes scholarly description and analysis. This is not unlike what Lacey, referring to Marshall McLuhan (2013), suggests about researching audio audiences – the difficulty ensues because unlike the visual space (which is easily categorizable, and the act of watching clearly separates the object and subject), the acoustic space has no borders and no centre, and the act of listening is an immersion in the sound (Lacey, 2013, pp.7-14). Sterne (2012b, p. 9) suggests something similar when he states that 'hearing places you inside an event, seeing gives you a perspective on the event.' And to add to that, popular science writer Philip Ball writes that emotionality in music is difficult to analyse, because 'it's not clear what the emotions are about' (2010, p.264). In comparing music to television, Ball argues that while it is easier to link emotions to characters on the screen and our empathetic connection to the audience, in music, it is baffling to work out from where emotions might arise.

In this thesis, I believe that all these points are important, and all challenges worth remembering, but I also suggest that they do not make scholarly investigation of music audiences impossible. If listening happens dynamically, if it places you inside an event, as suggested above, than this is more reason to argue against a pure formal, textual analysis of music. To understand what happens when audiences interact with texts, an ethnographic method and immersion in the field becomes necessary, and audiences seem to be the logical starting point of such investigations. I also believe that we

would best tackle the above questions and challenges by returning to and reassessing the circuit of culture (du Gay et al, 1997), a model, which will allow us to see how different processes (representation, identity, production, consumption and regulation) are interlinked – and interdependable. Emotions and meanings are not confined to the musical texts, although the texts are important in understanding the boundaries – of a genre and of particular songs. Emotions and meanings that the creators encode in the texts and performances matter, but they do not determine the listeners' interpretations. Finally, the audiences, which this thesis focuses on, interact with the texts in a variety of contexts and with different meanings arising from that interaction.

With all this in mind, the overarching research question driving this study is: How are people's practices of music listening situated in their social and cultural lives?

In Chapter 2, I add the theoretical aims accompanying this question, and four sub-questions to help address it through theory and then operationalize it (a process which begins in Chapter 3) – but a note briefly unpacking the question is also necessary here. Specifically, I use the word 'situated' to place this study in the audience research tradition, recognizing the audiences' agency and implications. However, this study is careful not to uncritically and excessively celebrate that agency, which would disregard other moments on the circuit of culture. Therefore, I use 'situated' to mean situated by the media on the one hand, which includes links to industry and the text, and situated by the audiences on the other, which recognizes people as individuals in their wider social contexts.

I believe that this question matters, for media researchers and music researchers, because despite the fact that in the past many scholars investigated audiences (arguably less in music than in other media), the attention is still often disregarded in favour of elite discourses analysing power flowing from the industry to the masses. Audiences are often misunderstood – or worse, they are not allowed to be heard. Ethnographic work, and the attention on 'people's practices situated in their social and cultural lives' is important to understand how people relate to media, and how they themselves see those relations within their everyday routines, lives, societies and

cultures. This conceptualization is important as it challenges the text-centric model which too often disregards or assumes what audiences do without checking those narratives with them; it complicates the theories of media effects by presenting audiences as having agency and being contextualized within an array of circumstances; and finally, it challenges the models of media imperialism to think about processes of resistance and glocalization (Livingstone, 2015).

As I explain in this thesis, I approach this overarching research question from the tradition of audience research, but I also refer to music studies and their conceptualizations of audiences. Through the ethnographic approach, I immerse myself in the field and use multiple methods to collect data about practices of listening, interpretations, meanings and the context in which they emerge. I start this immersion in a particular place – in contemporary Japan – and I explain some of the rationale behind this decision in the following section.

1.3   Music in Japan – a visitor's overview

I first went to Japan when I was 19 – alone, as a tourist, fulfilling a lifelong dream (and spending a significant amount of money – some luckily won in a national high school contest, some saved, and a significant portion gifted to me by my parents). The 40 days I spent in Tokyo, Kyoto and Hiroshima were not enough to contain the interest I had in Japan, fuelled by years filled with samurai movies, Japanese history books, dictionaries, guidebooks, manga, J-pop, martial arts practice and much much more. I would return to Japan soon after, with a scholarship to study social sciences at an international university in the southern island of Kyushu. I was only supposed to go for a year, and then to return to continue my interrupted law degree in Szczecin, Poland, but somehow I stayed for four years in Kyushu for my Bachelor's degree, then two more years in the north of Japan, in Sendai, for my Master's, and another year or so in Tokyo between my graduate degree and the PhD programme in London.

Among the things that fascinated me in Japan back then was the overwhelming presence of popular culture in public places and in the media, and also in everyday

discourse. The tone of conversations I heard concerning comic books, animated movies, bubbly popular songs, soap operas or entertainment programmes was rarely condescending (unlike the way talking about boy bands or afternoon soaps often is in the UK). There did not seem to be a clear line dividing the highbrow from the lowbrow, the noble from the coarse – instead, it all seemed to be there as one, infiltrating the everyday, and engaging audiences across class, gender or location. I would revise some of these (naïve) observations later, as I learned more about Japan (and in this context, I discuss the range of different interpretations of popular culture through music in the thesis), but the fascination remained.

In particular, I have always been struck by the amount of popular music embedded in everyday Japanese life. Certainly, a noisy, melodic audio sphere has become a recognizable feature of many big cities of the world – popular music surrounds me in a similar way whether I am in London or in Warsaw, in Berlin or in Tokyo. But in Japan, a musical soundtrack accompanies more everyday activities than it does in other cities. In Japan, convenience stores constantly play current pop hits, and train announcements are recorded with 'muzak' versions of idol pop songs. Walking around Nagoya, Osaka or Tokyo, more people (young or old) have headphones than not. And in the countryside, in Beppu or in Agui, music can be heard coming from cassette players in ploughing machines in the fields, from 'senior-eobics' classes in community centres, and from 'snacks' (small local hostess bars).

And then there is music programming on mass media, and especially on television. Almost every day, during my long stay in Japan, there was a major, regular music show, where popular acts would come and perform, weekly charts were unveiled, and artists were interviewed. There was 'Pop Jam' and 'Music Japan' on NHK, 'Utaban' and 'Count Down TV' on TBS network, 'Music Station' on TV Asashi, 'Hey! Hey! Hey! Music Champ', 'Music Fair' and 'Bokura no Ongaku' on Fuji networks, and a plethora of other programmes on different local stations.[1] There were children's music shows ('Okāsan to issho', 'Minna no Uta'), as well as specialized genre programmes (mostly for *enka*,

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[1] Some of these are now defunct, but a new generation of shows has taken their place, such as 'Kamisun', then 'Kayōkyoku!' on TBS, or 'Suiyō Kayōsai' on Fuji TV.

but also for jazz or classical music). Finally, everyday there was an abundance of music-related variety programmes, which featured strong aspects of popular music. For instance, a category of 'karaoke battle'-type shows operated under the premise of celebrities competing with each other by singing contemporary pop songs (and being judged by either a panel of experts, or more often, a machine that detected changes in pitch and melody). Another category of shows was *monomane* (mimicry) shows (see Figure 1.1), with a somewhat similar idea to karaoke battles, but here, celebrity contestants were also marked by their resemblance to the original artist (this idea is similar to 'Your Face Sounds Familiar', a Spanish television format that was localised and aired on UK television in 2013).

Figure 1.1 A contestant on a *monomane* show, Ōshima Miyuki from the comedy trio Morisanchū, performs 'Everything' by the recording artist Misia

And of course this list doesn't include annual or one-off music-related specials, such as celebrity quiz shows about popular music (now and then), programmes focusing on a specific artist, a producer or a genre, singing shows with an international twist

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(featuring foreigners performing traditional or popular Japanese songs), and on top of this, a huge variety of music ranking shows in all shapes and forms (see Figure 1.2). If we add to this list television programmes where singers or ex-singers are the hosts, we end up with a television guide heavily featuring music or music-related elements (and it should be added here that I have not included cable or satellite programming in this list).

Figure 1.2 'Top 20 Western Artists', a ranking of popular Western singers based on audience data
Note: The corresponding data (artist's popularity divided by the sex and age of the respondents) is shown in the bottom left, while in the bottom right we have the in-studio celebrity commentators, singers Tsuchiya Anna and Katori Shingo, reacting to the developments (see the related discussion about proximity through television production in Chapter 5, Section 5.3).

But music in Japan is not only mediated through television. There is radio, still strong in Japan and heard often, in vehicles (especially outside of the big cities) and in homes.

There is the internet, with YouTube and Nico Nico (previously Nico Nico Dōga), video-sharing websites, where, among other genres, vocaloid songs are circulated and rated (see Chapter 5). And there are print media about music – including not only a rich variety of frequently updated books (academic and popular), but also an impressive array of magazine titles. Among the magazines I captured in Figure 1.3 you can see periodicals dedicated to idol music, vocaloid, jazz, dance or all-round pop; you can spot a section of titles about the music industry and sound recording; and on the lower shelves there are more highbrow magazines with critical commentary about contemporary music – and all of these are weekly or monthly editions.

Figure 1.3 Taken in a bookstore in Tokyo – the left half of the picture is the music magazines section

Then there is the cultural phenomenon of karaoke boxes. A compound of two words, *kara* (empty) and *oke* (from *ōkesutora*, orchestra), karaoke refers to a type of entertainment where an (amateur) participant sings along with a popular song, with a microphone, and with the lyrics displayed on a screen. Karaoke has received some

scholarly attention in the past (Mitsui and Hosokawa, 1998), focusing especially on the East Asian style of karaoke, where instead of singing on a bar stage, groups of friends or relatives rent a small, soundproof room, with elaborate sound and video equipment. However, to date, little has been made of audience practices within the karaoke booths, and of how such engagements are contextualized within the economic, social or generational localities. Similarly, more recent phenomena such as 'karaoke for one' (*hitori karaoke*, see Figure 1.4), or a plethora of interactive internet activities enabled by modern karaoke booth technology, remain unexplored.

Figure 1.4 A poster in front of a karaoke parlour in Nagoya.

Note: The text says: 'Karaoke for one available' [lit. 'We support karaoke for one']! Today, due to high demand, we offer 5 single rooms'.

Of course, the karaoke room is not only a site of performance, power and social rites, but, as I discuss later in Chapter 4, it emerges as a place of different interpretational realms as the various practices (singing, cheering, selecting, listening, dancing, playing, chanting, reproducing...) are positioned within the everyday experience of the participants.

This relates to all aspects of music media mentioned in this section. The music shows on television are watched in various places and contexts, by different people, interpreting the content in a range of ways: at home and on the go, alone and with family, while sitting down or while washing dishes. The magazines are bought by music enthusiasts to be browsed at home, but are also read for free, in store, by businessmen waiting for trains or students killing time (in a reading practice called *tachiyomi*, standing reading). Popular music heard in public spaces can be ignored or even unnoticed (especially when one has headphones on), but it can also become meaningfully interpreted. In this study I argue that to unpack these practices and to understand these encounters, we need to turn to the audiences and to their experiences.

In this section I have provided a brief overview of the amount of music in everyday life I observed in Japan. This is not the only reason why I chose Japan as a research interest, and I address this issue in more detail in the next section.

1.4   Research on Japanese music

My interest in modern Japan and its music, and the rationale behind (also including the consequences of) the choice of two particular Japanese post-war cohorts for the empirical part of this study is discussed in Chapters 3 and 6. The issue of de-Westernization in the context of media and audience studies is mentioned in detail in Chapter 2. However, it is relevant to also briefly address here Japan vis-à-vis media,

audience research and music research, as it connects to the overall research question, and the topic of music in Japanese everyday life, as briefly analysed above.

In his influential collection, *Popular musics of the non-Western world: An introductory survey*, Peter Manuel rationalizes the absence of Japan in his monograph, stating that:

> [A]lthough Japan has a highly developed music industry, mainstream Japanese popular music is outside the scope of this book because, with the exception of enka vocal inflection, it is stylistically indistinguishable from Western popular musics. (Manuel, 1988, p.vi)

It is particularly unfortunate that Manuel does so right before carefully outlining the big questions of popular music audiences, media and culture, some of which I review in this and the following chapter. Manuel maps a range of challenges for cultural and ethnographic studies of music:

> Does popular music rise from the people who constitute its audience, or is it superimposed upon them from above? Does it reflect and express their attitudes, tastes, aspirations, and worldview, or does it serve to indoctrinate them, however imperceptibly, to the ideology of the class and gender which control the media? Does popular music enrich or alienate? Can it challenge a social order? Do listeners exercise a genuine choice among musics, or can they only passively select preferences from the styles preferred by the media? (1988, p.8)

He emphasizes how these questions have thus far been asked mainly in relation to Western popular culture, but he then excludes Japan's prospective contribution to the debate.

We have a body of research suggesting that Japanese music, 'mainstream' or not, is not as aligned with Western trends as Manuel suggests – although admittedly the research still has gaps to address. We know about the complexity of transnational cultural flows to and from Japan, and about the links between music and national and local identities in Japan, whether in the context of traditional folk (Hughes, 2008) or contemporary hip-hop (Condry, 2001). We know a bit about popular Japanese music Ota, 2011; Koizumi 2007) and the ways it is relevant for media and music researchers

elsewhere (Stevens, 2008; Galbraith and Karlin, 2012). However, we still know relatively little about the contemporary audiences of the music.

This lack of empirical inquiry is troubling when considering the interest in Japan by scholarship in other fields. According to Jeff Kingston, Asian Studies scholar, the history of Japan after 1989 is globally relevant as the story of 'increasing risk in a society that is risk averse and has long tried to minimize and mitigate risk' (2011, p.17). Economically, after decades of the post-war convoy banking system, where all boats went at the speed of the lowest, after the 1990s, and in the 2000s especially, previously egalitarian Japan has been introducing trends accredited to creating a Japan of winners and losers, a society of disparities, a Japan of growing unemployment, homelessness, suicide rates, juvenile delinquency, human trafficking, domestic violence, with an overall threat to (the myth of) social solidarity and cohesion (ibid., pp.18-35). And yet, the Japanese way to modernity is in many aspects vastly different to the Western model, and as such, it presents new challenges to dominant epistemologies, both theoretically and empirically (Matanle, 2001).

There are numerous links worth exploring here. In a classic, albeit out-of-date study by Mita Munesuke, a Japanese sociologist, music is a medium corresponding with moods and emotions much better than other forms of popular art:

> What decisively distinguishes popular songs from the various other popular arts… is that the people of the time do not enjoy them in a merely passive manner. For part of what is required to make a popular song popular is that the masses actively participate in it, by singing it to themselves, or singing it out loud, or in unison. (Mita, 1992, pp.7-8)

Mita's account, along with opening up a set of questions concerning cultural relativity, begs us to explore the links between media and audience theories – both from the Western traditions described above, and from the Japanese domestic approaches of *jōhō kōdō* (lit. 'information behaviour', cf. Takahashi, 2002). In Chapter 4 I consider the complex practices surrounding karaoke booths, while in Chapter 5 I analyse audience participation in music, and the co-evolution of production and reception processes through idol music – both particular case studies fleshing out and providing new

insight to the debates in audience studies described in Chapter 2. But there are other, finer points of comparison that have come up empirically in the research, and which may be followed with further studies. For instance, remembering Adorno, who refers to recorded popular music as consumed passively because it is produced by specialists and the audience is not (nor has to be) experts, we could consider precisely Japan, where music skills and music literacy is high. It becomes interesting to investigate how the Adornian thesis fares in a culture where Yamaha school education or other afterschool music classes are taken up by most middle-class children, where playing instruments and singing in tune is taught through school circles (cf. Hebert, 2012) and reinforced through karaoke software.

And the Japanese context is interesting for a number of other reasons. First, the Japanese music market is the second largest in the world (and the first in some measurements of joint recorded music sales, such as the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry's [IFPI] 2012 data; cf. *Japan Times*, 2013, RIAJ, 2013; for analysis, see also IFPI, 2013; Swarts, 2013), and music constitutes a large portion of media consumption within Japanese audiences (RIAJ, 2011). Second, Japanese-specific vocabulary and cultural notions of 'inside' and 'outside' (*uchi* and *soto*), proximity and 'the ordinary' help emphasize the challenges of the framework of everyday life, stargazing and parasocial interaction, and ask questions – new ones, and old ones – in the new setting. Third, comparing the musical engagements of two Japanese post-war generations is insightful for studying the personal and social aspects of media engagements in a scholarly fascinating setting. 'The lost' and 'the relaxed', as I will refer to these cohorts throughout this thesis, are both linked to crisis and downfall; they both seem tragic, albeit in different ways. Although there have been attempts to compare Japanese generations across the ages (Lebra, 1974; Mita, 1992; Sugimoto, 1997), these concentrated on particular cultural values disregarding media practices completely (and in all three studies finding a rather linear progression towards materialism, hedonism, indulgence and moral relativism).

1.5   The structure of this thesis

This introduction has now detailed my personal interest in the study, and the aims of the thesis. I began by describing listening to music as an important, yet relatively under-researched part of everyday human experience. I listed some of the challenges that studies of music and listening have encountered so far. Then I introduced the overarching research question this work addresses. I ended this chapter discussing the context of music in Japanese media and daily experience, explaining the focus on Japan in this thesis, and a glimpse into the state of research about Japanese music audiences so far.

Chapter 2 then presents the theoretical foundations of the study, where I briefly review the history and achievements of audience research, noting both the US communication studies tradition on the one hand, and the UK cultural studies tradition on the other, and I review ethnographic approaches to reception. The circuit of culture model is subsequently discussed in terms of its potential to conceptualize listening practices. Then I analyse music studies of audience and audience studies of music, focusing on the connections and gaps between the two. Finally, I discuss the practice theory approach in the cultural studies of media and contemporary debates on researching media audiences. Chapter 2 ends with four research sub-questions to help operationalize the main research question through the methodology used.

In Chapter 3 I discuss the methodological approach of the study. I outline my rationale for the chosen methodology in light of the research questions, theoretical aims, literature review and the conceptual framework. Then I present the research design in detail, discussing the methods used in the data collection and data analysis, noting challenges that ensued and modifications to the methods to account for the cultural and social setting – including practical suggestions for researchers embarking on an ethnographic research in Japan, in particular through focus group interviews. I also discuss the limitations of the chosen methods, and present alternative approaches, with their advantages and drawbacks. Finally, I reflexively discuss the ethical considerations in the study, the ways various ethical challenges were approached, and in which my ethnic and cultural status as a foreign researcher was a factor in the research design.

Chapter 4, which is the first empirical chapter, engages with the idea of 'practice' as a way of conceptualizing audience activity, encompassing meanings, emotions and interpretations. I first expand the theoretical discussion on practices with models that conceptualize listening from music studies. Then I analyse the social practices of listening through interview and observational data, focusing on the activities of five of the 93 audience participants. I analyse the findings by linking the diversity of listening practices to the participants' everyday lives and experiences, and discuss their listening profiles in terms of modes, playlists and interpretations. I end the chapter linking back to the research question, with reflections about the use of the concept of practice and an ethnographic investigation of listening.

Chapter 5, the second empirical chapter, analyses the ways in which moments on the circuit of culture relate and shape each other. Specifically, through two case studies (of idol groups and vocaloid idols), I investigate the connection between audiences and creators' practices, and the perceived distance between audiences and performers. I discuss the Japanese music and entertainment market and the socioeconomic context in which music is created and engaged with. Then I investigate whether audience practices, imbued with meanings and emotions, differ in the two case studies, and whether these differences or similarities are revealing about other moments in the circuit of culture. The findings are contextualized through two concepts – proximity and co-evolution – that I discuss referring to the literature on media, audiences as well as Japanese studies.

In Chapter 6, the third and last empirical chapter, I contextualize previous findings in a generational context, and discuss audience data from the two analysed groups: 'the lost' and 'the relaxed'. I begin with a theoretical overview of the concept, with an emphasis on Mannheim's original model, its features, advantages, drawbacks and today's relevance. I discuss applications of Mannheim's model in studies of media and society, and refer to other uses of the term in the scholarship and in everyday life. Then I recap the socioeconomic context of 'the lost' and 'the relaxed', and discuss the history of the two labels. In the main part of the chapter I present my findings about

generational identities in and through listening practices and interpretations. In particular, I seek to understand whether musical playlists are generational, and how generational experiences relate to the ways music is meaningfully experienced. Last, I investigate the shape and place of the concept of generations in future media and music studies.

Chapter 7 returns to the aims of this thesis, and to the overarching research questions. It presents a summary of the empirical findings, and discusses them with regards to audiences and music, to broadly reflect on how people's practices of music listening are revealing about their social and cultural lives. These social practices of listening are discussed in terms of the contributions – theoretical, empirical and methodological – that this thesis offers to the fields of audience studies, music studies and Japanese studies. Last, I discuss the various limitations and challenges arising throughout this research, and suggest a number of directions for future research about music audiences.

Chapter 2: Theoretical foundations

2.1   Introduction

This thesis is a study of music audiences. As an audience researcher, I draw on the legacy of theoretical and empirical developments of decades of researchers before me, who, in various ways and with various aims and tools, investigated the link between people and society through and around media texts, context and institutions. I refer in particular to television and film audience research, which in the last few decades has developed analytical tools to address the critical questions of media reception and society. As an audience researcher writing about music, I also consider the legacy of music scholarship, with particular attention to studies that considered audiences.

The balance between the two is surprisingly tricky, as is the relationship between the academic concepts of 'music' and 'audience'. This is surprising, partly because in everyday language both terms seem to fit together naturally, almost as a collocation – and 'audience' stems from 'audio', after all. But mostly because studies of music and audience studies often have common interests and aims, while rarely sharing analytical and methodological skillsets. My aim in the rest of this chapter is to investigate whether and what audience studies (a field once contested, now established, yet not without challenges) have to offer to studies of music, and whether and how studying music (alongside television, film and new media – scholarly interests that music has been overshadowed by) can provide new insights for audience research.

Music audiences are both a promise and a challenge for media and cultural studies. They are a promise, as practices of and surrounding music are distinctly two-fold: music as a cultural practice is deeply connected to the private self, to the subjective, but is also at the same time a foundation of public, social experiences (Hesmondhalgh, 2013, pp.1-2). Music is ubiquitous and musical engagements are linked to a wider social context, to symbolic exchange, to spatial and temporal arrangements. Popular songs are consumed by different groups and individuals, in a variety of ways, times and

places, with a varying degree of participation, with different aims, and with different outcomes. An analysis of the ways music fits into the everyday and the audiences' individual and social spheres becomes an opportunity to critically look at these audiences and societies in general.

However, music is also a challenge, precisely because musical experiences are ubiquitous, tricky to grasp conceptually, ephemeral and inter-textual. Music is mediated in many forms, through various channels, in a number of changing contexts (Lull, 1992), and in each of them the experience is unique from other media. Music adds an additional layer – an audio background – to audiences' other experiences. As, however, music does not exclude these other, predominantly visual, experiences, there exists a spectrum of ways of how it relates to other media. Music can therefore interfere or emphasize, enhance or dim, affect or have no influence on other sensual encounters. Music is in this sense permeable, intersecting other (the old and the new, the analogue and the digital) media, other symbolic spheres and dimensions – genres, contexts and places.

And what is music in the first place? Ethnomusicological tradition has produced a spectrum of answers to this. Ethnographic studies of music-related practices have shown that what audiences regard as 'music' is not locked in the text; more than in just note sheets and recorded sound files, music is also in the range of activities, expectations and emotional states of the listeners. Christopher Small, in his seminal book *Musicking* (1998), proposes 'musicking' as a term that could capture this better than just 'music' – the former deliberately not a noun, but an active verb, reflecting the idea of music as a set of practices and relationships, as a complex ritual. Another linguistic and conceptual development is the practice of using the plural form of the word. Many music scholars have embraced 'musics' to emphasize the heterogeneity of music systems in the world, and in particular, a much needed scholarly attention to non-Western forms of music (Manuel, 1988; Coplan, 1997).

But while these critical interventions and conceptual separation from musicology allowed ethnomusicology to consider a range of social scientific approaches and to

focus on the social, cultural and psychological aspects of music, they also widened and greatly complicated the scope of enquiry. Music can be, and has been, analysed as text and as performance, as a social behaviour or a cultural practice, as system of signs or as art – and each of these approaches is accompanied by heavy epistemological baggage.

All this, of course, reflects a similar development in audience studies. One of the most important stories in audience studies concerns the evolution of the word, and with it, the evolution of the concept of media reception. With the evolution of audience research, 'audience' became 'audiences' to highlight their diversity and fragmentation (Livingstone, 1998), and just as Small coined 'musicking', John Fiske (1992) proposed we use 'audiencing' to give attention to the socially contextualized dynamic between people and the media. In the following sections I look at the legacy of audience research through the changing accents between the text and the audience, and then compare these with studies of music listening.

2.2   An overview of the audience approach in the literature

2.2.1   *Audience research in the West: A brief introduction*

The story of audience research has been told in many ways (see, for example, Livingstone, 2005; Barker, 2006), but it has usually been a story of a concept of a faceless, voiceless mass becoming critical, responsive and interpretative. In the following sections, my focus on audience research begins with broadcasting – mainly radio and television – to establish what has been done so far, and what questions remain. I then move on to research on music audiences and practices of listening to compare the two bodies of research in terms of connections and disconnections.

This thesis is theoretically grounded in the Western tradition of audience studies, which, as we now understand it, has had two main trajectories. On the one hand, there is the North American communication research tradition, drawing from psychology and social psychology, and on the other, and chronologically later, there is the British tradition drawing from the sociology of literature. Overlapping this, there is

the 'administrative' (media-centric, organizational, positivist) tradition and the 'critical' (confronting the political and social role of the media) approach (Lazarsfeld, 1941), a distinction that, for some, has become unproductive (cf. Liebes and Katz, 1993). These are all rich bodies of work, despite their relatively short history. On top of this, there are various issues surrounding the fact that in this thesis there is such a heavy theoretical focus on Western thought (including the fact that 'Western' itself is a contested term), and at the same time, an empirical focus on contemporary Japan. I address these issues in detail in Section 2.5, where I discuss issues of de-Westernization.

The challenge of audiences begins with the term 'audience', which is a familiar and accessible term, yet remains ambiguous conceptually, as we can define audiences by people or by place, by a type of medium or a platform, or by time (McQuail, 1997, pp.1-2). In other words, scholars engaging with the concept of audiences need first to answer which audiences they are researching: young/old; of a particular country/culture/ethnic group; radio/television/music audiences; of specific programmes, artists, genres… And if we consider the global academia, with other languages in the mix the challenge is only exacerbated, as in different cultures the word 'audience' has different meanings than in English, and in some languages, such as French, a different term ('public') is used instead (Livingstone, 2005). How is being a member of the audience different from being a member of the public? Are all audiences publics, and all publics audiences? The history of audience research is also a history of addressing these ambiguities.

The behaviouristic approach of early audience studies has shifted towards more in-depth methods allowing us to understand audiences and their lifeworlds in more detail. Specifically, qualitative research and ethnography was employed instead or along with quantitative counting of audiences. This accompanied another feature of the development of audience studies: the fragmentation or hybridity of the audience, called in different terms by different scholars the 'diffused audience' of Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998, p.68), or the 'elusive audience' discussed by Ang (1991).

2.2.2   *Media effects and uses and the gratifications approach*

Typically, the story of audiences has been divided into three parts: the effects tradition, uses and gratification studies, and encoding/decoding (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998, p.4). Such a narrative helps to draw out some of the debates and critiques that have been made about the three approaches, but it does not mean that the differences between them were clear-cut. As I discuss in this section, uses and gratifications studies confronted the effects approach as too simplistic and top-down, and then the encoding/decoding model set itself against uses and gratifications as too individualistic and lacking a social context (among other things). However, the uses and gratifications approach, constructed first in the US in the 1940s, while opposing the media effects tradition was also, from today's standpoint, sharing significant elements with them (Takahashi, 2002), as, for example, the guiding assumption to understand the effects media had on individuals (Katz et al, 1973). Similarly, the 'active audience' approach stemmed from both the 'encoding/decoding' model, but some aspects of it were informed by the uses and gratifications approach. The story is, therefore, not that simple, and this complexity is reflected in this section.

The radio effects studies in the 1930s and 1940s, influenced by the Frankfurt School, were concerned primarily with the direct and negative effects media has on the audience. The audience in this approach appeared as mass – mass audiences of mass media – easily manipulated and susceptible to harmful media messages, to which they react in a straightforward way, as if to a direct stimulus (McQuail, 1994, p.338; Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998, pp.5-6). Originally, this tradition of the Frankfurt School was, of course, situated in the reality of Frankfurt, and more broadly, Germany in the 1930s and later. Scholars researching media were witnessing the radicalizing political environment of the pre-war country, and looked into the ways people were affected by propaganda that was strongly embedded in the media signals at the time (Kitzinger, 2010, p.170). In the US context, effects studies fit into the debates of media monopoly, advertising and the audience's dependence on the media (McQuail, 1997, p.13).

Most of the effects approaches of that era shared these concerns, but the studies were hardly uniform in conceptual details. Immediate, powerful effects imagined in commentaries surrounding the controversial Payne Fund studies (Jarvis, 1991) were contradicted by the limited effects of the two-step flow theory of 'The People's Choice' study of 1944, according to which audiences were influenced indirectly through opinion leaders. Although even the Payne Fund studies were really not as simplistic as to suggest the process in which media affects all masses alike, as if through the direct flow of a 'hypodermic needle', the direct effects tradition significantly departed from the two-step theories in that according to the latter, people were placed within group bonds and social networks, which influenced and modified the media effects. The later effects approaches considered more factors and nuanced their argument conceptually and methodologically – raising different dimensions of effects, their correlations and levels (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998, p.6). The approach never really disappeared from the media theory landscape (cf. Anderson et al, 2003; Bryant and Oliver, 2004)., despite continued criticism about its methodology, misunderstanding of the media and/or audiences, and insufficiently clear correlations between media and effects (cf. Cumberbatch, 1989; Livingstone, 1996; Gauntlett, 1998). An evolution of the later effects tradition is the cultivation approach (Gerbner, 1973), which focuses on effects that become observable on heavy viewers after a long-term engagement with a medium.

Therefore, when Katz and Lazarsfeld used the concept of media leaders in the 1950s, their conceptualization differed from earlier audience measurements studies, interested primarily in sheer numbers of viewers and comprehension of the message, by the inclusion of a social layer to the reception – people were considered influenced not (only) by the media message, but also through other, elite people's mediated experiences as well. Such studies marked the beginning of the uses and gratifications approach, in that while they acknowledged the effects of the media, and were largely administrative in their aims, they were also interested in people's interpretations and social determinants (Herzog, 1940; Warner and Henry, 1948). This also marked a shift towards treating media recipients as individuals, who use television or the radio according to their own needs, expectations and purposes.

Early studies of radio are particularly significant to the arguments proposed in this thesis, because they concerned the audible and not yet the visual. Therefore, when Marta Herzog's research on radio reception started to go beyond plain counting of 'good' and 'bad' reactions (measured by participants pressing green and red buttons while listening) to the reasons *why* they had pressed those buttons (Razlogowa, 2011, pp.103-6), this was a significant departure from the effects tradition, because even though the audiences were still, more often than not, on the passive side of the spectrum, the focus was more on them and on what they did with the media and not vice versa. Such research, and the employment of interviews as a research technique, was still relatively rare.

Both strands, differing conceptually, but offering a similarly rather passive view of the audience, continued well into the television era. However, with the proliferation of content and new audiencing modes, the methods of enquiry diversified, and the interests shifted, and in the 1950s and 1960s, a more structured approach to the uses and gratification theory emerged (Schramm, 1949; Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955). From the two-step flow model and simple effects, which mostly connected the psychological, individual needs and reported gratifications, a body of studies shed light on the social contexts of media reception, and suggested that social interaction and everyday context mattered in the way media is consumed (Schramm et al, 1961; Mendelsohn, 1964). Even after a theoretical backlash in the 1970s (see, for instance, Elliott, 1974) concerning the vagueness of theoretical claims and flaws in methodology, the uses and gratification approach, revised and modified in consequent decades, remained relevant for audience research. Responding to criticisms, the uses and gratification studies diversified their methodology with ethnographic tools, complicated the model of gratifications sought and gratification earned, and theoretically, went beyond a simplified dichotomy of individuals and media, and placed the audience within a social context (Rubin, 1983).

With VCR, movies, the internet and new media, the uses and gratification approach has been continuously employed in studies interested in the psychological motives of

media (Wu et al, 2010; Hicks et al, 2012). The approach remains attractive because it offers an active account of audience – who chooses to engage with the context according to specific psychological needs and social dispositions. The challenges of the model and unresolved issues include the balance of individual psychological states and other, social factors, as well as the compartmentalization of the studies (Ruggiero, 2000). The latter challenge is also relevant in studies of music, where a number of studies, especially drawing on cognitive psychology research, identify very specific modes of interaction with music according to different aims, but the wider theoretical use of those typologies is limited (see Chapter 4 for an extended discussion about this).

To recap the story so far, then, both approaches (effects and uses and gratifications) differ in some ways (in how they conceptualize audience agency through 'use' and 'effects', in how they see the effects/gratifications in relation to non-media sources, in value judgements towards the media), but they are also similar in others – such as aspects of the functionality of media, a passive account of audience interpretations, and a view of audiences without their location in a social context (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998, pp.7-10). These shared points were critiqued by Stuart Hall and the British cultural studies tradition that developed modern audience research in the UK.

2.2.3   *Encoding/decoding, British cultural studies and the ethnographic approach*

A shift in the field came from the tradition of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in Birmingham, when Stuart Hall (1980) introduced his influential model of encoding and decoding. The model is simple: the meanings in texts are encoded through production processes, and interpretatively decoded by members of the audience. The model, therefore, argues that communication between the sender and receiver of the message is not linear. Media messages do not completely reflect reality and there may exist a range of textual interpretations arising from the decoding process – interpretations that may align with the intention of the encoders, but that might well be modifying the original message or even resisting or rejecting it.

Furthermore, the strength of Hall's model lies in the focus on the receiver – on the audience – and in a new understanding of the audience as diverse, and not as an unidentifiable mass. Such a conceptualization of the receiver had consequences in renewed debates over the different ways in which audience research should be approached methodologically. According to Hall and the CCCS school, particular groups respond to particular media in various ways, and so the ways meaning is constructed needs to be investigated through the positioning of those groups in society, through issues of economy, power and conflict. Here, Hall especially emphasized class and the way in which the dominant culture is resisted by sub-cultures.

Hall's model was used in empirical studies, most notably in David Morley's Nationwide study (1980). Morley used in-depth group interviews following the viewing of the Nationwide news show to investigate how class and the sociocultural background of the groups related to the interpretation of the programme. Among the interpretations, and following Hall's theory, Morley found three main readings of Nationwide: dominant (where the viewers accepted the hegemonic 'preferred reading'), negotiated (modifying the referred reading), and oppositional (rejecting the preferred reading). Morley's findings successfully connected the text with the audience, demonstrating how both could be included in the analysis. Morley's study has also been discussed as a good example of how a sample matches the investigated issues (of the relationship between class and reception of the media; see Bertrand and Hughes, 2005, p.55). However, many issues in his approach were critiqued: from the ambiguous conceptualization of the audience and the lack of analysis of regular viewing patterns of the participants to methodological factors of the artificial setting of the study and the validity of audience reports (ibid.).

Audience research after Nationwide has attempted to address most of these criticisms, despite starting from different places: humanities and social sciences, communication studies or literary reader-response studies. Those attempts are characterized by a strengthened focus on audience ethnography and observing media engagements as it happens in everyday life, in the social context. Such an approach addresses the issue of the artificiality of the research setting in studies like Nationwide, and also helps

observe first-hand how actual practices are performed, instead of relying on self-reports or diaries. As I discuss through some examples below, within the ethnographic approach to media audiences, observation is often accompanied by qualitative interviews, focus groups or even quantitative questionnaires, to capture a broad range of practices from different standpoints. However, apart from the challenge of managing those different types of data, another analytical challenge of the ethnographic approach is approaching the subject of inquiry. Since by observation the interest is in capturing practices embedded in the wider sphere of social life, the researcher's focus and internal validity is key, and that is why methodological rigour and self-reflexivity becomes especially significant (I discuss this in detail in Chapter 3).

A number of influential audience studies were published at the time, in the 1980s and the 1990s. In the UK, where, differently from the US tradition, audience research was also influenced by literary studies, an example of this is Janice Radway's (1984) feminist examination of readers of romance novels. In her approach, Radway critiques the dominant textual approach to romance novels, and shows that the readers' interpretations cannot be inferred from the text and the genre alone. The stereotypical image of romance readers becomes challenged through the stories of the women Radway interviewed, and the various roles reading romances plays for these women are contextualized within family life. Starting from the social sciences, Dorothy Hobson (1980) interviewed and observed women watching the television soap opera 'Crossroads' in their homes, gaining a rich insight into how the meanings are produced and how viewing practices are situated in the daily lives of the observed women.

Ien Ang also studied soap opera viewers, but her methodology was very different: in 'Dallas' (1985), Ang analysed responses sent to her concerning the programme without approaching the interviewees through ethnography. Ang found that responses to 'Dallas' varied, and that viewing experiences could be conceptualized through the ideas of 'emotional realism' and 'empirical realism' (I discuss these with relation to my data later, in Chapter 5, Section 5.5). In the UK, David Buckingham, researching yet another soap opera 'EastEnders' (1987), approached a methodologically more diverse approach, including interviews and textual analysis of the television show, to reveal a

range of meanings contextualized through viewing practices crossing ethnicity, class and age of the respondents.

A significant part of these studies started to investigate the home as the site where media and technology engagement was integrated into daily routines (Morley and Silverstone, 1990), and the youth as the audiences and users of that technology. The field has shifted from an interest in resistant meanings towards cultural and social contextualizations of those meanings, and the ways they emerge through media engagement. This is how Sonia Livingstone, in her 1990 study of 'Coronation Street' viewers, goes beyond the text-reader paradigm, and shows that the meanings emerge not purely from the text or from the audiences, but from the interaction of the two. The relationship is complex: there are a number of readings in the text (yet limited by the textual boundaries of genre), and a number of interpretations stemming from contextualized media practices.

2.2.4 *Beyond resistance: the longstanding debates around 'the active audience'*

Overlapping with and accompanying the developments in the audience research described above was the debate surrounding the concept of the 'active audience'. The main question in the debate is to what extent a media text allows for multiple interpretations, and indeed, is there a limit to those interpretations? And following that, the debate concerns the question as to whether research should be investigating those emerging interpretations through an individual lens of psychological motivations and gratifications, or rather looking at the social and cultural contexts as conditions that shape those interpretations (Livingstone, 2000).

As discussed above, both the media effects tradition and early uses and gratifications studies conceptualized audiences as rather passive, although the former significantly more than the latter. Later, modified uses and gratifications approaches allowed for more agency; however, the media still largely defined the audience's needs, and the model still largely ignored the social and cultural factors.

Hall's encoding/decoding and the reader-response theory from literary studies allowed us to conceptualize audience activity by shifting the focus from meanings in the text towards meanings emerging in the act of reading. Drawing from theorists such as Wolfgang Iser (1978), these acts of reading were conceptualized as 'filling the gaps' made by a skeletal structure of the text. This gap-filling was creative and allowed for the audience's agency, but ultimately, as the skeletal structure was still dominated by the text, it did not allow for audiences to bring in their experiences, emotions and social contexts. The studies that followed Hall's model often focused on the resistant meanings, and took forward the idea of audiences' meanings opposing the dominant message and the power of the media (see, for instance, Morley, 1980; Radway, 1987; Brown, 1994). Even in allowing for multiple meaning in the accounts of John Fiske, he states that the 'polysemy of television lies not only just in the heteroglossia from which it is necessarily constructed, but in the ways that different socially located viewers will activate its meaning potential differently' (1986, pp.391-2). On the other hand, there are studies like Curran's (1990), which suggest that audiences' interpretative options are more limited, and despite a multiplicity of readings, there is only one preferred one.

The following shift in the field is what Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998, pp.36-7) called the move from incorporation/resistance towards spectacle/performance, in other words, from the primacy of ideology and textual readings towards investigation of the ways identity is formed in everyday life (Silverstone, 1994; Hermes, 1995; Livingstone, 2000). It was also part of what has been described as the 'ethnographic turn' (Seiter et al, 1989), which has brought to the fore the sociocultural contexts of media practices and interpretations. By doing so, however, the focus has now shifted towards the context, and audience studies have become less interested in the texts and interaction of particular television shows (or songs, newspapers and games) and audiences.

With all this in mind, in the following two chapters I focus on two developments: the circuit of culture and the practice approach. I do so, because, first, I believe that the circuit of culture has been neglected as a model in media and audience studies (and

especially those concerning music audiences), while it offers an insightful way of conceptualizing the textual with the contextual, the production with the reception, the emotional with the cultural. Second, I discuss the practice approach as a much-needed focus on repeated audience activity, placed in the everyday context and the rich media environment, and also as a model that needs to be imbued with a dimension of audience interpretations.

2.3   Circuit of culture

An important concept following the tradition of cultural studies in the UK is the analytical model of the circuit of culture (du Gay et al, 1997), which took the insight about the complexity of meanings and the interplay of production with interpretation, and developed them to address questions of power and resistance surrounding those meanings. The circuit of culture stems from a preliminary model by Richard Johnson (1986) that emphasized the move between the private and the public, and between the individual and the social structure (Leve, 2012). The modified model, described by du Gay, Hall, Jones et al, simplified Johnson's conceptualization and redrew the circuit to consist of five interconnected 'moments' – production, consumption, representation, regulation, and identity – in which meanings circulate.

The main characteristic of the model is the interrelatedness and inseparability of the five moments. A change of conditions in one dynamically affects the other, so to understand culture, all moments need to be analysed together. To understand the meaning, we need to simultaneously look at production (how meanings are produced), consumption (how they are received), identity (how they are appropriated and negotiated), representation (how they are conveyed and represented in the texts), and regulation (how they are regulated by other forces – cultural, legal and societal).

Du Gay et al introduced the model through a study of a cultural artefact, a Sony Walkman, in their 1997 publication. In that study the Sony Walkman is analysed through the five moments on the model: very broadly speaking, production interlinks with identity, regulatory forces in society clash with the identity formation of Walkman

consumers, which in turn is related to the production efforts by Sony for the product to represent a certain identity. Although there have been some other attempts to apply the circuit of culture model empirically (Hebdige, 1988; Taylor et al, 2002; Champ and Brooks, 2010), on the whole, such attempts have been rare.

For some scholars, the five moments are too arbitrary, and the primacy of culture as a driving force for everything else seems problematic (Fine, 2002, p.106, in Leve, 2012); other scholars try to modify the model with other dimensions of meaning (Lievrouw and Livingstone, 2006; Champ, 2008) – and some of these insights have been taken forward by scholars formulating their research interests as 'mediation' or 'mediatization' instead of the circuit of culture (Krotz, 2007; Lundby, 2008). It could also be argued that a continuation of the effort to contextualize the use of media in everyday and social contexts could be seen in the so-called 'practice turn' in media research, discussed in the next section.

2.4   Media practice

The concept of media practice draws from a body of theoretical work surrounding 'practice theory', and as such, it does not have one coherent narrative, but is rather a collection of theories. John Postill (2010, p.4) recalls Theodor Schatzki (2001), who divided practice theorists into 'philosophers (such as Wittgenstein, Dreyfus, or Taylor), social theorists (Bourdieu, Giddens), cultural theorists (Foucault, Lyotard) and theorists of science and technology (Latour, Rouse, Pickering).' As if this collection of diverse names and tradition was not enough, Postill proposes looking at practice theorists in two chronological waves: the first generation, with Foucault and Giddens, who focused their theories on individual practice and agency, and the second generation, with Ortner and Schatzki, who complicated those theories with different types of practices and questions of history and culture. By extension, scholars using the concept of media practices do not necessarily draw from the whole tradition, but from chosen traits of this eclectic mix.

For Nick Couldry (2010), who draws on, among other theorists, Wittgenstein's emphasis on the social, the practice approach to media is helpful in sidestepping the counterproductive debates about effects (discussed earlier in this chapter), with a focus on repeated activities, a routine, to help address the question of what people do with (or in relation to) the media in their everyday contexts. The focus here is not the individual use of the media, as it is for uses and gratification scholars, or on the capital of media production, as it is for political economists, but in its social significance, and Couldry emphasizes that it should not be about production and use, but on the media-saturated environment in which the audiences operate (Couldry, 2010, pp.37-8).

Such an approach shifts the focus towards the activities and routines from the effects, and, in the end, from the media. Sarah Pink and Kerstin Mackley (2013), in their empirical study, call this the 'non-media-centric' approach (following Couldry as well as Moores, 2012), and argue that avoiding the centrality of the media allows for a more detailed investigation of how technology is situated in routines and everyday ecologies. These routines and ecologies are presented in detail, and this is where the practice approach is most successful: in bringing the anthropological approach back to the study of audiences, and in pointing out that media engagement happens not only when audiences use media directly, but also in different ways in which media are embedded in the culture (Bird, 2010). However, when Pink and Mackley promise to go beyond media content, as a result, the content becomes largely ignored, and with it, the meanings and emotions that emerge when audiences engage with it.

Toke Christensen and Inge Røpke (2010), who draw on the work on Andreas Reckwitz (2002, who reviewed the practice approaches of Giddens, Bourdieu and Schatzki), discuss ICT (information and communication technologies) in everyday life with similar results. Even though some meaning-making is included through what Christensen and Røpke call '[t]he mental aspect of activities' (p.237) which, following Reckwitz, includes aspects of interpretations and emotions, the deeper aspect of audiences interacting with texts is largely missing. As a result, while a detailed empirical account of practices is insightful about changing consumption dynamics and the long-term fluctuation of

audience activities, the interpretative elements of these activities remain unexplored. I return to this discussion in the last section of this chapter.

2.5   Media audiences: Achievements and remaining questions

As has become apparent in the previous sections, the audience research tradition is not homogeneous, and not one without rifts and debates. However, despite the outstanding challenges, audience research has brought considerable achievements to media studies and to social sciences in general.

First, we now understand audiences as plural and diverse, and not as a singular, unified mass audience. This does not mean that this plurality needs to lead towards complete relativism: audiences are diverse, but they are not non-researchable. Patterns of audiencing can be observed and linked to, among other things, social factors and demographics, which in turn need to be approached through interviews and ethnography for a full understanding (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998; Barker, 2006). This is vital, because by observing diverse audiences in their social context, we complicate the question of power by challenging simple media imperialism with local contexts (Livingstone, 2004; Morley, 2006).

Second, we have learned that texts alone cannot give us the knowledge about how the audiences will read them. This is important, as it shifts some of the power and agency towards the reader/viewer/listener, who is not bound to dominant readings. This challenges the conventions about a 'model reader' from literary studies (Liebes and Katz, 1993; Livingstone, 2008).

Third, being an audience is not confined to a simple act of watching or listening. Audiencing is a process – one that begins long before the media engagement, encompassing histories and experiences, and one that does not end after the engagement, because the meanings and interpretations emerge and become appropriated, and in turn link to other moments on the circuit of culture (Barker, 2006).

Fourth, by an interest in entertainment media and popular culture, audience study continued to emphasize that ordinary life is important and relevant (cf. Williams, 1958). This is an achievement of cultural studies in general, but audiences were an important element in that development, as they put the focus on how the everyday is imbued with diverse and particular meanings that can be negotiated and challenged (cf. Hartley, 2003, pp.121-3).

Fifth, the history of audience research and the ways audience research has been conducted so far is also a history of evolving methods and methodologies. From the early days, audience research used questionnaire surveys and interviews, albeit the nature of these methods evolved in time. Large-scale surveys in particular were used to record patterns of media consumption among different groups, classes, sexes and an attempt to correlate media use with those factors. Questionnaires remain relevant in audience studies, and they are often seen to accompany qualitative methods in different forms and with different purposes. Then interviews, conducted in changing contexts and with evolving methodology, enabled audience researchers to check the role of the media and meanings stemming from textual interaction text with the audiences themselves. Focus groups added a social dynamic environment to those methodologies, and allowed researchers to see how meanings become negotiated and appropriated in a group setting (Lunt and Livingstone, 1996). Ethnography and observation, on the other hand, allowed researchers to investigate audiencing practices as they happen, on site, in context (Bertrand and Hughes, 2005, pp.82-3). Last, the emergence of new media and technologies resulted in various new techniques and modification of audience research methods, including virtual ethnography or social media analysis (cf. Hine, 2005).

However, many questions remain unanswered. For Morley (2006), the questions include, among others, the persisting challenge of how 'active' the audience should be conceptualized as, and how then to perceive the power of the media, especially when considering global media and their transnational audiences. For Livingstone and Das (2013), the challenge of audiences' activities lies in being attentive to both texts and

contexts, and yet in remembering that while texts are open to multiple interpretations, excessively celebrating audiences' agency results in researchers losing track of questions of power, production and regulation. For Barker (2003), the challenge lies in moving beyond an empirical accumulation of case studies towards analytical links between concepts, theories and models.

In the next section I discuss the links between audience research and research on music, and investigate how the achievements and questions posited above are relevant to music audiences. Finally, I return to these questions in the last section of this chapter.

2.6   Audience research and research on music: connections and disconnections

In 2004 Sonia Livingstone asked whether the achievements of audience research and the analytical repertoire developed over the years could be useful for analysing newer media (and suggesting that indeed, they can). The question could still well be asked with regard to music, where the 'audience turn' arguably turned out differently than in studies of broadcast radio, film or television.

Peter Martin, in *Music and the sociological gaze*, discusses the tensions between musicology and sociology, saying that 'the study of music must recognize the inescapably social nature of the creation, performance and reception of music' (2010, p.32). Martin discusses the 'new musicology' approach, which, despite claims to include social theory in the analysis of music, retains the 'aesthetic criteria of traditional musicology' (p.207) – in other words, the focus on 'the canon' and 'high culture', and a deterministic emphasis on textual analysis and sometimes, the life circumstances of artists and creators, while disregarding the ways in which music is mediated, circulated and interpreted. And while the tension surrounding the social is not new, and there have been earlier calls to include aspects of it in the analysis of music, and especially, indeed, popular music (Frith, 1996), musicology has struggled to draw deeper from cultural studies and critical theory, and to find a way to approach the textual without being deterministic, allowing for audience interpretation.

This is not to say that there are no empirical media studies dealing with music that foreground audiences or that deal with the text more attentively to the social – because there are, as discussed below – but much of the debate has concerned particular types of audiencing, especially music events. In the preface to their recently edited collection on live music audiences, *Coughing and clapping* (2014), Burland and Pitts define their interest as the 'pleasures and purposes' of listening, and introduce the contributions as showing that 'live listening is made distinctive by its listeners, as each person's connection with the event is shaped by expectations, prior experiences, mood and concentration' (2014, p.1). This book and others (see, for example, Cohen, 1991; Benzecry, 2001) are in this matter the cultural continuation of ethnomusicology and Small's 'musicking' introduced earlier, and as such, an important and careful investigation of audience practice in a specific cultural setting. However, audiences' reception of music in everyday life, encompassing a range of music-related practices, has not been a similarly popular subject in the scholarship.

Among the ways popular music was studied in the past, content analysis has always been an important approach (Zaborowski, 2012). Cooper, talking about American music, concluded that the most insightful perspective for looking at contemporary society through popular music is to 'focus on specific ideas, themes and patterns' prominent in its lyrics (1991, p.5). Frith discusses two of the first pop lyric analysts, Peatman and Mooney, who noted how, under the coating of repetitive love themes, music reflected the changing values and emotions of the audience. Later, song word analyses were used to investigate youth culture, and more specific themes, such as attitudes toward sex or marriage (Frith, 1988, pp.106-7). Similarly, melodies, performances, and especially song lyrics, have been the subject of numerous studies in which researchers utilized a verbal content analysis to draw conclusions about contemporary societies (Cooper, 1991).

However, if we were to leave purely textual approaches and to focus on music audiences instead, and to try to retell the narrative presented in the previous section looking through music research, the narrative would have some common elements,

but some would be rather different. Studies of popular music reception, the latter understood as ways 'people receive, interpret and use music as a cultural form while engaging in specific social activities' (Negus, 1996, p.8), have been an influential strand of cultural, media and popular music studies in the last four decades. In large part, they stem from the original work of the Frankfurt School and Theodore Adorno about the 'culture industry', heavily marked by Adorno's experiences of war-time Europe and post-war US, and its subsequent critiques.

Adorno and Horkheimer coined the concept of a 'culture industry' to describe a process where different forms of culture are produced and commodified similarly to other mass products (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1977). For Adorno, mass music constitutes little more than a capitalistic tool utilized by media institutions to economically and ideologically manipulate the audience (Adorno, 1991). As a consequence, in this view, popular music is (intentionally) heavily standardized, for the industrial capital owners to assert control over consumers and over social life in general. For Adorno, this was possible because the inattentive, obedient and manipulated consumer, influenced and effectively dumbed by standardized songs and tunes, enjoyed the music in a predominantly superficial way – fooled into dominant conditioning of the capitalist industrial producers. On the other hand, serious music is, in Adorno's mind, the complete opposite. Since pleasure in listening to classical music, Adorno argues, requires a mode of concentration, an experience of wholeness and the advantage of previous musical knowledge and education, such music then, rightly, inspires in a listener a rupture from the system, a break from the everyday capitalist-dominated routines, and by that, it invites positive action from an alienated individual (Adorno, 1991, pp.44-7).

A body of work on popular music audiences after Adorno tried to either re-conceptualize these pessimistic visions or position itself in contrast to them. One of the strands of such attempts has been the work presenting the popular music audience as a dichotomy between a positive, active minority and a passive majority – a concept drawing clearly from Adorno's two types of listeners described above, but deliberately inverted in the analysis. Such research, identified with the British cultural studies

tradition mentioned earlier, is exemplified by the work of Dick Hebdige (1979), who introduced the concept of sub-culture as the active and predominantly young minority versus a stale and conservative old parent culture. Resulting from class, economic background and other social factors, sub-cultures were ritualistic responses to young people's frustrations towards the older generations. The style of sub-cultures, encompassing music, but also fashion, movement, body and lifestyle, was an eclectic mix, with rituals and artefacts appropriated and decontextualized by the audience from the parent culture to create opposite meanings.

Like Adorno, this work, too, was heavily contextualized by the experience of British post-war history, changes in society and in the music industry. Hebdige's framework was influenced by the work of Hall and Whannel on the popular arts (1964), which introduced generational frictions through popular music in a similar way. This development was situated in debates in the UK critiquing the concept of 'mass culture' as inferior – popular culture was seen as allowing for aspects of resistance, and in need of contextualized analysis according to where groups of audiences were situated (McQuail, 1997, p.13). An important reconceptualization of Adorno's ideas in Hall and Whannel's monograph was their emphasis that engagements and uses of the text by the audience are often different than those intended by the producers – a culturalist notion, further developed in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s by scholars like Hall himself (1980), Ang (1985) or Morley (1980).

These early studies of Hebdige or Hall and Whannel signalled later problems with an overt emphasis on youth audiences: when Hall and Whannel note popular songs for a young audience 'express the drive for security in an uncertain and changeable emotional world' (1964, p.280), one wonders whether such a drive must be limited to the youth. Nonetheless, triggered by these influential works, since the early 1980s audience studies have become the focal point of much of the cultural studies approach to social analysis (Longhurst, 2007), and the ways music is received by audiences have become the centre of many studies like those of Frith (1988), Chambers (1985), Freudiger and Almquist (1978), Prinsky and Rosenbaum (1987) and others. Authors of such studies became especially critical of the purely textual approach, which, in their

minds, lacked objectivity and a broader perspective, while messages in songs must not necessarily reflect those of their audience (Frith, 1988; Hesmondhalgh, 2002).

At the same time, Frith has not followed these claims with a comprehensive empirical contribution, and the field of music audiences remains relatively unexplored. According to Hesmondhalgh, one of the reasons for this is the almost exclusive focus on youth and/or sub-cultures in music audience research, as popular music has often been regarded merely as 'a rebellious expression of what it is to be young' (2002, pp.117-18). Only lately have we been observing a theoretical shift from studying music in the context of necessary resistance, to studying music in everyday life, as an inevitable part of our soundscape.

There were numerous criticisms towards the Birminghamian work on music reception and sub-cultures, and many of them overlap with the critiques outlined in the previous section. Relating to music, some stemmed from feminist traditions, and raised the issue of gender in style and music audiences (McRobbie and Garber, 1976). Other critics of the CCCS approach, such as Muggleton (2000), noted how Hebdige's account of sub-cultures is insufficient in its analyses of authenticity, fluidity of music sub-cultures and finally, in its ethnography. Other scholars were more interested in moving beyond the rigid borders of sub-cultures. They suggested that sub-cultures were not permanently set, audiences listened to more than one kind of music and thus strict identification and categorization of sub-cultures was significantly difficult (Crafts, Cavicchi and Keil, 1993). Others presented instead more permeable concepts such as 'scene' (Straw, 1991), or emphasized the diversity and plethora of identities and readings stemming from audience activity (Chambers, 1985). This last point was a direct criticism to Adorno's assumed passivity of the audience and the Frankfurt School's pessimistic image of music audiences, as it re-established the agenda of the listener acknowledging the potentially diverse ways that songs or musical performances could be appropriated in everyday life.

With a renewed focus on the audiences of music, new challenges for researchers concerned the generalizability of the isolated, empirical studies of audiences, and

whether such studies are merely and uncritically replicating and re-stating the obvious (Morris, 1988). Elsewhere, it has been noted that the ascribed 'resistance' of the audience might be ephemeral, and the power linked to the activeness is a different concept than power discussed in terms of production (Morley, 1993). It became clear that earlier insights about culture, such as Williams (1958), are more applicable to the study of audiences. Subsequently, even though the audiences were not proved to be as dumb or hopeless to the extent Adorno considered them to be, music industries, texts and audiences appeared to be inevitably linked, and indeed, to be considered in relation to each other (Negus, 1996, p.35).

The field has therefore been witnessing another shift – from the dichotomies of transgression and resistance towards an emphasis on the practices of everyday life arising from the theories of Silverstone (1994) or Hermes (1995). Music audience research fits into these frames, because much of the music listening takes place within the boundaries of everyday routines (Negus, 1996). We rarely (although not never) create time to just listen to music; on the contrary, music listening in everyday life is most often mundane and woven into the simplest of activities (Crafts et al, 1993; Feilitzen and Roe, 1990; Frith, 1996).

More critical for music and audience theory, however, were two later publications: Tia DeNora's *Music in everyday life* and Michael Bull's *Sounding out the city*, both reaching back to the ideas of the Frankfurt School, and supplementing them with newer (and diverse) theoretical paradigms. What both studies have in common is the view of the audience as diffused, as opposed to mass or simple, and in this they are close to the third category of Abercrombie and Longhurst's audience paradigms (1998).

Bull's (2000) monograph about urban soundscape and personal stereos (followed up by his 2007 book on the iPod) 'takes out' the everyday of the living room, and cuts through the active/passive dichotomy of the audience. In constructing an original theoretical approach (referring to critical theory and phenomenology), Bull describes urban spheres of sound, human experience and personal space through in-depth interviews (although this methodology is not precisely explained), contributing to the

largely forgotten sense in media studies – the sound. At the same time, the study mentions little about the content or form, and rather concentrates on his informants' listening strategies and personal passions. In his account of predominantly personal music use, Bull only briefly mentions shared experience (in the form of sharing one's earphones of one's personal stereo), and is not particularly interested in interpretative practices of audiences in relation to the text.

For DeNora (2000), music is much more than a soundtrack to everyday life. It is woven into everyday rituals and practices to the extent that it affects the everyday interactions and moods of the audience in different contexts. DeNora, although vividly following Adorno in some aspects, positions herself directly opposite when she puts less emphasis on intertextuality, genre or style than on 'how musical materials relate to extra-musical matters such as occasions and circumstances of use, and personal associations, where the relevant semiotic unit is more likely to be a fragment or a phrase or some specific aspect of the music, such as its orchestration or tempo' (2000, p.61). It is in this pragmatic way, she explains, that audiences use music for identity construction (pp.61-74). However, in her fascinating ethnographic work, and in making the link between music, audiences and society, DeNora does not seem to be interested in the wider socio-historical and political contexts of interpretation, and evades any attempts to compare the audiences generationally or spatially.

Last, it might be relevant to add that despite the examples above, research containing empirical data to accompany the theoretical approaches developed so far in popular music audience studies is still scarce. David Hesmondhalgh devotes significant space for his critique of recent music studies, noting how all main readers in the field (Frith, 1996; Negus, 1996; Longhurst, 2007; also unmentioned by Middleton, 1990) only cover audiences partially, and these discussions are rarely based on empirical fieldwork studies, preferring instead semiotic, interpretive approaches (Hesmondhalgh, 2002, pp.118-19). This has been the trend in studies of music, and despite occasional efforts to address this gap through studies of concert or spectacle audiences, or through studies connecting urban context to musical experience, on the whole, the interpretative audience paradigm in music has been rather timidly explored.

The reasons for such a state of affairs, mentioned in this section, often point to the unique character of music – its vague character as text, art or practice, and its ubiquity and permeability complicating the theoretical and methodological apparatus of inquiry. On the other hand, some of the struggles mirror the challenges of early television and film audience studies, and stories of opening up the text and giving voice to the audiences. A few years ago, I heard a senior researcher in music studies say, in an informal closing address of a small research conference, that we, as scholars, had reached an impasse in studying music: we know that textual approaches are not enough, and yet asking audiences is pointless, because they do not have the vocabulary to tell us about their experiences. This, rather baffling in light of the overwhelming body of media audience research, suggests that just like television and film earlier, ethnographic audience research still has to validate its standing within music studies.

What, specifically, is the audience researcher to do with music, then? I discuss my conceptual framework drawing from audience studies and the body of music audience work described above in the last section of this chapter.

2.7   De-Westernizing media, de-Westernizing audiences, de-Westernizing listening

The empirical focus of this thesis on Japan was introduced earlier, in Chapter 1, where I discussed my interest in Japan and the abundance of media in everyday Japanese life, and among the media, the abundance of music situated in daily contexts. However, my theoretical starting point in this thesis is Western theory (itself diverse and often contradictory, as I have shown earlier in this chapter) of media and audiences, and my conceptual framework (see Section 2.8) reflects Western approaches to media practices. This approach needs to be addressed and problematized through the concept of de-Westernizing, which I discuss here.

Takahashi Toshie, in her work about media audiences in Japan (2002, 2007), describes the three dimensions of her 'de-Westernizing' of media studies. First, she asserts that

by recontextualizing and reconstructing emic concepts, such as *uchi* and *soto* (inside and outside), she opens up the debate of the cross-cultural validity of non-Western concepts for global, comparative studies of the media and audiences (2007, p.332). For Takahashi, this is also done to challenge some of the trends in Japanese culture studies, namely, the essentialistic Nihonjinron, a body of research emphasizing the uniqueness of the Japanese and their culture (cf. Mishima, 2000).

Uchi and *soto* in Takahashi's work are different to the concepts of 'private' and 'public' (as *uchi*, unlike 'private', refers to a collective, not an individual, and is characterized by group bonds of *uchi* identity between members), and this is also the way I use these concepts later in Chapter 5. In the same chapter, I also discuss the concept of *aidoru*, which is different from the English 'idol', 'artist' or 'musician', and raise a new set of questions about the distance between artists and performers, and the production of familiarity.

Second, Takahashi takes Western concepts discussed in media scholarship on audiences (for example, parasocial interaction, selectivity and personal use), and investigates their validity and conceptual boundaries in a Japanese context (pp.332-3). Challenging notions of media universalism and the hegemony of the dominant Western model, this recognizes that many of the aforementioned concepts are the products of specific social conditions, and cannot be unreflexively translated into different cultural contexts.

I refer back to this point in various places in this thesis. In Chapter 5, I confront the theory of parasocial interaction and Western notions of stargazing and proximity with how proximity is conceptualized in Japanese culture and media. In Chapter 6, I look at how Western sociological theories of generations compare with generational histories of 'the lost' and 'the relaxed', and indeed, how those generations have been conceptualized in the Japanese scholarship, mass media and public discourse.

In her third point, Takahashi acknowledges that the 'de-Westernizing' of media studies should go beyond testing conceptual boundaries or introducing foreign concepts to

Western frameworks (that is, her first two points), but should attempt an integrated, dynamic framework that is useful for global media studies (pp.333-4). This is, I believe the most important, yet also the most difficult, aspect of de-Westernizing.

Eric Kit-Wai Ma, discussing the applicability of, among other paradigms, the active audience approach in China, suggests that Asia does need 'new' (that is, Chinese-centred) media theories, when he states that '[j]ustifying the claims for new Asian media theories by essentializing and exoticizing the Asian experience in fact puts forward an unjustifiable claim that Asia is unique and isolated from the development of transnational capitalism. What we need, I believe, is to modify and adapt existing theories to suit the Chinese context' (2000, p.32). This statement, a chapter in one of the latest attempts of 'de-Westernizing' the field, I find controversial. I believe that Ma is right about the challenge of resisting paradigms of exoticism and fetishized uniqueness. This is reflected in Takakashi's attempts (and mine, in this thesis) in challenging the Nihonjinron, as discussed above. However, when Ma talks about 'modifying' and 'adapting', he does not go far enough – and he seems to disregard the fact that the grand theories and concepts he refers to are products of historical, structural conditions of particular societies and environments, and merely adapting them to fit a new context is hardly sufficient. I am careful to address these notions throughout the rest of this thesis.

Last, the focus on the everyday in the Japanese setting in this thesis will, I hope, counter the uneven media representations of Japanese culture with a look at Japanese culture, music and audiences embedded in the deep context of Japanese society. This is also relevant in the context of media representations. Perry Hinton (2014), analysing the representation of Japanese popular culture in British media, asserts that 'the media anchored to existing representations of the "otherness" of the Japanese.' By ethnographically following audiences and attending to their listening practices and music texts of their own choosing, I aim to present a more balanced view on music audiences in contemporary Japan.

2.8   Research questions and the conceptual framework of the thesis

As mentioned at the start of this chapter, this is a study of music audiences. It is theory-led to the extent that it operates under the legacy of audience research, and the idea of an interpretative link between media texts and the audiences. According to that tradition, audiences negotiate and produce meanings, but also shape social relations in the everyday context by engaging with the texts (Livingstone and Das, 2013). The mediation of these participatory activities of the audience with texts is especially meaningful in the context of society and culture, because societal and cultural participation is increasingly participation through media (Carpentier, 2011; Livingstone, 2013).

The idea of interpretation also draws on the classic reception studies from the Germanic tradition that influenced audience research in the conceptualization of the text reader's practices embedded in a whole array of personal, societal and genre-specific contexts. Wolfgang Iser (1978) and Hans Robert Jauss (1982), in particular, noted the dynamic nature of the reader-text engagement when they wrote that the practice of interpretation is non-linear, as the reader's viewpoint wanders back and forth (Iser), their perspective changes, and their expectations are shaped by a horizon of previous experiences and knowledge about the style and genre (Jauss). A body of audience studies on books, magazines and television texts in the 1980s and 1990s, on the other hand, provided empirical data that challenged the alleged passiveness of media reception, and forced us to rethink the conceptual framework on media interpretation (see, among other work, Radway, 1984; Ang, 1985; Liebes and Katz, 1990; Morley, 1992; Livingstone and Lunt, 1994).

The study begins with an understanding that audiences are diverse and complex (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998), that the texts could be open (Eco, 1979) and polysemic (Fiske, 1986), and that ethnographic work with media informants is necessary to uncover these heterogeneous relations and not having to rely on the 'implied' reader. Much of this work relies on the tradition of British cultural studies and the concept of the 'circuit of culture', according to which the key moments in the cultural process (production, consumption, regulation, representation, and identity) are connected and inseparable (Johnson, 1986; du Gay et al, 1997).

On the other hand, by bringing empirical data to the music reception theories (Hesmondhalgh, 2002, p.118), this project follows in DeNora and Bull's footsteps, and treats music as an affluent and inevitable part of everyday life – not like a direct stimulus, but resulting from the audiences' individual engagements with it. Unlike DeNora, however, this study analyses audience data to address the question of the deep social and generational context in music interpretational practices, also turning to the historical and political contexts. I move away from an interactionist and empirical sociologist approach towards the 'everyday life' understood within a mediascape and in the context of engagement with symbolic artefacts (Silverstone, 1994), and the belief, that '[c]hanging social and cultural contexts also shape audience practices' (Livingstone, 2004, p.4). In doing so, the study seeks to understand how the ordinary engagements of two generations with music differ: in the content and aims of their practices, and in the meaning-making vis-à-vis the music texts by the interpretative work of the audiences.

The project refers back to Hall and Whannel's idea of a 'popular art', especially its emphasis on how in (some, for Hall and Whannel) popular music the (once present in folk) rapport between the artist and audience is re-established. Putting less emphasis on taste and aesthetics, I discuss this notion with the cultural concepts from the field of Japanese studies, such as *uchi* and *soto* (inside and outside), and following that, more modern and related concepts from Japanese popular culture and media studies emphasizing normalcy and ordinariness: 'proximity' (Painter, 1996), 'quasi-intimacy' (Holden, 2004), 'the culture of quotidian' (Clammer, 1997) and 'life-sizedness' (Aoyagi, 2005).

Last, aiming at a thick description in the ethnographic and analytical portion of the project, I inevitably draw on Japanese concepts of generations and seniority, youth and adulthood, deviance and normalcy, class and labour, of education and social change (White, 1993; Genda, 2001; Mathews and White, 2004; Ishida and Slater, 2010). It is in this framework that I analyse the strategies and engagements of the popular music audiences, looking for patterns in the activities of the two, different yet seemingly

similar in their hopelessness, generations. By referring to the political and socio-historical backgrounds of the two age cohorts, I investigate how popular music has been used and interpreted in a variety of ways – as an amplifier and a beautifier, as a remedy and as an inspiration, as a weapon and as a tool for identity construction.

And so, following Abercrombie and Longhurst, this project operates under the assumption of the often simultaneous presence of different popular music audiences in Japan. As such, it presents different modes of engagement with music. Within this framework it introduces the diffused music audiences – the students, homemakers and salaried workers who listen to tunes from their iPods and mobile devices during the everyday commute, while cleaning or cooking; the family audiences engaging with music mediatized via television and radio, in their homes, often singing along in a karaoke-like fashion; and finally, the participatory audiences of concerts, street performances, discos and music clubs in Nagoya and Tokyo. In this thesis, these practices are distinguished analytically, but analysed on the same continuum of contextual and interpretive interactions.

Engaging with the psychological tradition of audience studies, I investigate when and why music goes beyond an individual experience to become a social practice, and how differences in audiences, contexts or genres affect this process. Engaging with the emotional dimension of cultural theory, I ask how the time-transforming and mood-enhancing qualities of music work within the wider social practices of musicking. Most significantly, I assess how far the audience research tools and experience can be helpful in analysing the interpretative practices of audiences' meaning-making with relation to music.

As explained in Chapter 1, this research is driven by the overarching research question of *how people's practices of music listening are situated in their social and cultural lives*. I discussed, in Section 1.2, that I am interested in audiences as individuals in social contexts as well as the texts and the production processes. I also mentioned that listening practices in the question are 'situated' by audiences and by the media – acknowledging the agency of the former, but not celebrating it uncritically.

As I hope has become apparent in this chapter so far, the main theoretical strand on which I draw to answer this question is audience research – itself a diverse field and stemming from different theoretical traditions and fields. I have discussed the achievements of audience studies and the ways those achievements have – or have not – been adopted by studies of music and listening. I have discussed the circuit of culture as a way of analysing moments of production, reception and text, situated in a wider social setting. I have also discussed practice theory and the idea of media engagement as a 'practice', which is conceptually helpful in analysing a range of audience activities in a rich media environment, but which also has its flaws, namely, the relative absence of processes of interpretation and a lack of emphasis on the text.

Therefore, I see this thesis and the answer to the overarching research question as being guided by the three theoretical aims of:

- conceptualizing audience engagements with music as *practices of listening* in order to draw attention to the social aspects of these engagements;
- assessing in what way the knowledge and analytical apparatus from the audience research tradition can be useful in understanding practices of listening;
- investigating what new insights music can bring to audience studies, and what audiences can bring to music studies.

In order to answer the research question, and to be able to operationalize it towards my methodology (which I do in Chapter 3), I investigate the overarching question through four sub-questions:

1. What are people's practices surrounding music?
2. What is the role of music in people's lives, and how is it interpreted in the context of social and cultural relations and identity work?

3. In an era of unprecedented possibilities of access to music performers, also enabled by technology, how do audiences and creators' practices relate to each other?

4. How (if at all) are generational identities relevant within and through listening practices?

The first two questions concern the 'practice' approach, which, as described in Section 2.4, is focused on repeated audience activity in a rich media environment. By focusing on practices, I am able to investigate what audiences do with the media, and how their listening practices are interlinked with the social context in which they are situated. However, while the concept of 'practices', as described by Couldry (2010) or Postill (2010), will help me address the first sub-question, I need to modify it to be able to tackle the second sub-question. Namely, to investigate the role of music and the interpretations that stem from audiences' interactions with the text (in terms of social and cultural relations and identity work), I need to enhance the concept of a practice to include the interpretative dimensions of meanings and emotions. This relates back to the media and audience debates discussed in Sections 2.2.4 and 2.5, and stems from the need to not lose sight of the text when investigating the context, and the need to include meanings and emotions that emerge not only from a general idea of a practice, but also from specific practices with and through specific media texts and genres. To emphasize this modified concept of practice, I refer to it as 'social practices of listening' throughout the rest of this thesis.

The third question addresses the interlinked dimensions of texts, production and reception. As a general point, I am interested here in assessing the relevance of the circuit of culture in empirical studies of audiences and listening. Specifically, I am interested in how the processes of production and reception of music shape each other in the context of perceived distance, or proximity, between artists and audiences. This has relevance for audience studies, as it investigates how the circuit of culture could conceptually map and capture the deep context of all the moments – for music studies, as it asks about the ways audiences actively shape music production and circulation, and vice versa; and for Japanese studies, as the question links to Japanese

concepts of *uchi* and *soto*, asking how they are complicated by music media and changes in Japan in the last 30 years, and whether and how Japanese and Western concepts of proximity can be integrated.

Finally, the fourth question continues my interest in the socio-historical and economic conditions of listening practices, but also raises new areas of insight for Japanese studies. By contextualizing the social practices of listening within the experiences of two Japanese cohorts, I address in particular the questions of (1) the relevance of the generational dimension and generational identities within the meanings emerging from audiences interacting with music; (2) the relevance of the concept of generations in particular, and its place in audience research and music scholarship; and (3) the relevance of the use of particular generational labels, 'the lost' and 'the relaxed', with reference to the two analysed Japanese cohorts and the validity of calling these cohorts 'generations' in the first place.

Chapter 3 begins with these questions and overarching aims, and operationalizes them with the choice of methodology in this study. Then, multiple methods used in the research are discussed in terms of their usefulness to the questions asked, and the inherent limitations those methods include.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1   Introduction

In this thesis, my aim is to understand what people do both *with* and *through* music. In order to analytically map this range of listening practices, and to relate them to the personal and to the social, I begin my inquiry with the audiences themselves, which is reflected in my audience-centred, qualitative, ethnographic research design.

As explained in Chapter 1, my research is driven by an overarching research question:

> How are people's practices of music listening situated in their social and
> cultural lives?

As explained in Chapter 2, this overarching question is investigated though four further sub-questions:

1. What are people's practices surrounding music?
2. What is the role of music in people's lives, and how is the music interpreted in the context of social and cultural relations and identity work?
3. In an era of unprecedented possibilities of access to music performers, also enabled by technology, how do audiences and music creators' practices relate to each other?
4. How (if at all) are generational identities relevant within and through listening practices?

As further stated in Chapter 2, this thesis is guided by the three theoretical aims of:

- conceptualizing audience engagements with music as *practices of listening* in order to draw attention to the social aspects of these engagements;

- assessing in what way the knowledge and analytical apparatus from an audience research tradition can be useful in understanding practices of listening;

- investigating what new insights music can bring to audience studies, and what audiences can bring to music studies.

With these questions and aims in mind, in this chapter I first discuss my rationale for the methodological approach employed. Second, I present the research design, methods used and procedures followed in order to gather fieldwork data used in this thesis. In the focus group section in particular, I also discuss how and to what end these methods were modified in the specific cultural setting of Japanese society. Third, I discuss the analytical strategy followed, along with its implications. I conclude by outlining the ethical considerations of the project, including a self-reflexive discussion of my ethnic, national and cultural status as a foreign researcher in Japan.

3.2 Rationale

3.2.1 *Methodological considerations*

Empirical ethnographic methods in audience studies were discussed in Chapter 2, but here I briefly recap some of the points raised in the context of this study and its overarching question. The empirical interest of the research was to analyse audience practices and interpretations, with a focus on the people and the how and the why of their engagements with music. Taken this way, this methodology is different from a simple counting of audience members and assigning them to categories (Bertrand and Hughes, 2005, p.37). Instead, I am interested here in audiences as groups and individuals embedded in social and cultural contexts, constructing meanings through and beyond the textual boundaries of music media. The study investigates in detail everyday engagements with music, accounting for not only the technicalities, but also the attitudes and contexts of such engagements. I am interested in social practices, as explained in Chapter 2, and with them, in behaviours, interpretations and attitudes,

and thus the methodology used here is in great part qualitative (Bauer and Gaskell, 2000, pp.7-9; Silverman, 2010, pp.8-14).

In the Nationwide study 40 years ago, David Morley (1980) introduced a qualitative element to media audience research in the tradition of British cultural studies. As discussed previously, there were other, earlier attempts to qualitatively include media listeners and spectators under the 'effects' tradition and the uses and gratifications approach. Morley's study was innovative in that it theoretically built on the work of Stuart Hall and his contemporaries of the Birmingham school, and as such, the study was able to conceptually link the encoded text with context and meaning-making in a coherent way.

Much of the current methodological approach to media audiences, at least in the UK, was shaped by that study and its subsequent critiques. The seminal studies of audiences in this tradition that followed (such as Hobson, 1982; Radway, 1982; Ang, 1985; Lull, 1988; Livingstone, 1990; Silverstone, 1994) were interested in different things and covered audiences of a variety of platforms and genres, but all share an interest in seeking the voices of the audiences over analysis confined to the text. This is achieved by the use of ethnographic methods – interviews and observations – moving beyond a positivist tradition of knowledge production, and accepting that reality is a product of social, gendered, economic, historical and political spheres.

An ethnographic approach to audience research can be critiqued by presenting a set of challenges summed up by Bertrand and Hughes (2005, pp.60-1): studies of media engagements often isolate one aspect of culture with less attention to the larger context; media ethnography tends to be short term and thus more superficial than traditional ethnography; and finally, audience research often observes the culture from within, and not from the outside perspective. In response to these three points, a number of methodological decisions are detailed later in this chapter. Practices discussed in this thesis are indeed focused on listening and on music, but the study remains attentive to a number of contexts: social, historical and economic. While five months of fieldwork might be considered short, the work done was intensive, and

yielded a rich, diverse body of data discussed in the following chapters. Furthermore, the insider/outsider paradigm is more complicated and multifaceted: I remained neither outside nor inside the culture (both music culture and Japanese culture), and my hybrid status as a researcher is discussed in Section 3.5.2 later.

Another point to consider is that the theoretical framework of the study, as discussed in Chapter 2, is based on concepts that were developed largely in a specific, 'Western' setting. This includes the history of reception studies and communication research in the US, and the tradition of media and cultural studies in the UK. As discussed earlier, theoretical and analytical models devised from those traditions cannot be seamlessly applied to the Japanese setting – and nor should the Japanese case study be merely an exercise of recognizing the limits of Western theories.

Returning to the research questions outlined at the beginning of this chapter, my interest in mapping the range of audience practices is evident in the first two sub-questions. The third draws on the 'circuit of culture', and relates back to the seminal, disciplinary questions of the relations between creators, texts and audiences. Finally, the fourth focuses on generational identities. Here, part of the rationale stems from a scarcity of comprehensive academic accounts of the two cohorts, and the abundance of stereotyped media reports of 'apathetic youth' and the 'lost generation'. Observing the two groups of Japanese people and listening to their accounts shifts the emphasis to the audiences, their agency and their voices.

To achieve this, the main part of data collection in this research was ethnographic, utilizing qualitative interviews (focus groups and individual interviews) and participant observation. Mixed multi-methods were employed to capture the complicated practices of meaning-making in the most fruitful way, and, among other things, to help triangulate the data and to corroborate findings (Greene et al, 1989; Barbour, 2001). Each of the methods serves a different purpose, and I describe them in detail later, in Section 3.3 (Table 3.1 briefly summarizes the aims of each method in the context of this study).

Each method, however, also brings to the research design its own set of challenges and considerations. Some emerged during a pilot study I conducted a year before I embarked on the main fieldwork. In this pilot study, I interviewed Japanese people in London to gather preliminary empirical data on the subject, and to probe a further direction for the study. Fourteen participants aged between 23 and 35 were interviewed individually or as part of four focus groups. Two main findings emerged. First, the methodological challenges of conducting focus groups in a Japanese setting became apparent (see Section 3.5.2), as did the need for an interview guide and a strategy to account for the two specific cohorts and the spectrum of their identities. Second, the pilot study revealed the variety of engagements with music (both as a personal act and as a social practice), and links to non-music factors shaping those engagements. Even accounting for the limitations of, among other aspects, sample and population of Japanese expats in the UK, the study significantly helped enhance the research design. Going to the field twice meant that I had the opportunity to test and adjust the research tools, and to maximize the efficiency of my work in Japan.

Table 3.1 Research methods and aims

Method	Aim	
Focus groups	Probe and identify preliminary categories and emerging themes of engagements with music	
	Identify aspects of music experiences discussed in a collective setting (team tasks, comparison and contrast)	
	Collect demographic and consumer contexts via a pre-session questionnaire	
Individual interviews	Compare and contrast focus group data with individual accounts; gather feedback about the focus group process	
	Collect more personal, emotional and interpretative accounts of practices in the everyday setting	

	Collect more contextual data on the participants and their experiences	
	Establish connections and prepare the ground for participant observation	
Participant observation	Supplement earlier accounts with data collected in a more natural setting; compare and contrast both accounts.	
	Experience the engagements from the insider perspective	
	Collect accounts and commentaries of live, actual, visual and audible musical experiences in a variety of settings	
	Everyday encounters with music: public places, commuting, shopping	
Expert interviews	Collect accounts describing processes of creation and production in the music industry	
	Trace the music to its original, conceptual stage	
	Analyse the artist–text–performance and artist–audience paradigms from the creator/performer side	

3.2.2 *The site and participants*

The data was gathered during five months of fieldwork in Nagoya and Tokyo between January and May 2012. As explained in detail in the following, the study included focus groups, individual interviews, questionnaires, music data and participant observation, and was largely qualitative in order to tackle issues of audiences' interpretations, behaviours, expectations and attitudes. A combination of different data collection methods allowed for an exploration of different aspects of audience engagement: the

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group setting, despite its artificial element, enabled dynamic, comparable reflections, while follow-up, individual interviews were more personal and focused on the more detailed nuances of sense-making. Interviews with musicians, producers and managers provided an industry perspective to the production and distribution aspects of Japanese music today and in the past. The observational element was the most revealing about the participants' life-worlds within which media encounters are placed, and provided a comparison point for the participants' interview data.

Aichi prefecture is located in the centre of Japan, roughly halfway between Tokyo and Osaka. It is part of the Chūbu (central) region, positioned between two hubs of regional Japanese rivalry, the eastern Kanto region and the western Kansai region. The perceived longstanding cultural differences between the two are known to all Japanese people, and bear many similarities to stereotyped rivalries from other countries, such as the North and South divide in England, or the West and East Coast clash in the US. Kanto, home to Tokyo and Yokohama, is the business and fashion centre of Japan, but its people have a reputation for being cold and emotionless. The people of Kansai (which includes the cities of Osaka and Kyoto), on the other hand, are portrayed as direct, loud and emotional.

The differences between regions also include, among a plethora of other things, dialect, the preferred flavour of soup stock, escalator etiquette, and, of course, rivalries concerning sports teams, music acts and entertainment styles.

In between the two, and not dominated by either, is Chūbu and Aichi. As most cities and regions, Aichi, and especially Nagoya, come with their own set of stereotypes (which include conservative values, a high fashion sense, day-to-day thriftiness and large, expensive weddings), but these are not part of the national discourse, as with the Kanto/Kansai rivalry. Aichi is geographically and demographically diverse. Nagoya, Japan's third largest city, is in Aichi in the West, with less populated areas in the East. The concentrated suburbs surrounding Nagoya contrast with rural scenes and rice fields, a number of national parks, cultural treasures and historical sites (including, from recent history, the site of World Expo 2005).

This study tries to capture this diversity. The participants, recruited across the prefecture, came from rural areas, suburbs and the centre of Nagoya alike, and their background, as reflected across the empirical chapters, is linked to their practices and interpretations. These contexts become especially important in the light of many valuable studies of Japanese youth and media (Ito, 2005; Takahashi, 2010) being focused solely on (middle-class, affluent, educated) audiences in central Tokyo. While urban youth practices through and with media are insightful, they do not tell us the whole story, and certainly do not shed light on the richness of practices beyond the privileged metropolitans. There are limits, of course, to which this study was able to include all such voices, but through a focus on diverse recruitment sites and activities, I was able to map a heterogeneous collection of testimonies and practices that I will present in the empirical chapters that follow.

3.2.3 *Operationalization of research questions*

As discussed in Section 3.2.1, the four research sub-questions formed the basis of research design. Sub-questions 1 and 2 concerned the nature and significance of audiences' practices of listening, and were therefore investigated through interviews with Japanese people and observations of their music-related actions. Sub-question 1 links back to the concept of practice and related conceptualizations from music and media studies discussed in Chapter 2 (modes, routines, choices), and the operational focus here was on the repeated activity, either reported by the participants or observed by the researcher. Sub-question 2 relates to meaning-making through and with the text, and covers the wide concept of interpretation – which becomes operationalized here through the range of audiences' interpretative work concerning musicians and music within their everyday lives.

Sub-question 3 expresses the interest in the relation and distance between audiences and artists, and in the creative practices of producers and listeners that shape the perception of that distance. Theoretically stemming from the model of the circuit of culture and concepts of proximity, the question demands a creator/performer account

in the data collection, which is reflected by the addition of expert interviews to the other three methods.

Lastly, through sub-question 4, this thesis asks about the generational context of listening practices. To identify generational patterns (or lack thereof), the study recruited participants of a specific age falling into two cohorts, and divided the ethnographic data collection process according to those distinctions. In Table 3.2, the four research sub-questions are operationalized through theoretical models relating back to the considerations in Chapter 2, and show the connection between questions, concepts and methods.

Table 3.2 Operationalization of research questions within the research design

Research sub-questions	Key concepts	Methods of data collection
1. What are people's practices surrounding music?	- Everyday life - Modes - Routines - Choices	Focus groups Individual interviews Observations
2. What is the role of music in people's lives, and how is it interpreted in the context of social and cultural relations and identity work?	- Interpretation and meaning-making - Practices - Text and context - Identity	Focus groups Individual interviews Observations
3. In an era of unprecedented possibilities of access to music performers, also enabled by technology, how do audiences and creators' practices relate to each other?	- Circuit of culture - Proximity - Audience participation	Focus groups Individual interviews Observations Expert interviews
4. How (if at all) are generational identities relevant within and through listening practices?	- Generation - We-sense - Practice	Focus groups Individual interviews Observations

3.3   Research design

The fieldwork had three main stages. Due to the dynamic of the fieldwork and to the two research sites, the timing of the stages overlapped, but generally, preliminary findings and themes emerging from each of them informed the next, and allowed for a more efficient and focused flow of fieldwork. Overall, 104 individuals were interviewed at least once for the study. From the industry side, there were 11 individuals coming from various areas of the Japanese music industry (musicians, managers, producers, composers and DJs); all other participants, 'the audiences', were divided into two age groups: 16-24 and 30-40.

Of these, 83 participants were interviewed in 14 focus groups, nine for the younger segment (53 individuals) and five for the older (30 individuals). Additionally, 10 more participants (one from the younger segment, and nine from the older) were interviewed individually based on the same interview guide. All 93 participants also completed a questionnaire, answering questions on media use, music preferences and demographic details. In the next research stage, 28 focus group participants were interviewed in-depth, individually. Lastly, the interviews and focus groups led me to observe and participate in 25 music-related events in and outside participants' homes. These included karaoke get-togethers, domestic routines, family car rides and live concert attendances.

Apart from two interviews with North American DJs (based in Central Japan) in the industry part of the fieldwork, all participants were Japanese, but came from a range of socioeconomic and geographical backgrounds. They were recruited with a number of methods, including offline and online advertising, on-site solicitations and personal introductions. The gender ratio was skewed towards women (56 to 37 in the audience part, and 4 to 7 in the industry part), which I discuss later in this chapter. After the participants were thoroughly informed, verbally and in writing, about the research, all signed consent forms (in the case of minors, the form was also signed by a parent). All focus groups followed a similar topic guide, divided into four main parts: musical engagements and experiences, generations, the role of music, and the image of the

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performer. Individual interviews followed up on patterns discovered during the first research stage, and supplemented the data with a detailed account of everyday musical routines. Table 3.3 shows the ethnographic data collection methods and the number of participants accessed by each of them.

Table 3.3 Participants accessed by each method

Methods of data collection	Number	Individuals accessed
Focus groups	14	83
Individual interviews	38	38
Observations	25	40-50
Expert interviews	11	11

Interviews were transcribed and thematically coded with the assistance of the qualitative analysis software, NVivo. Thematic analysis was chosen because of its advantages in working with qualitative data and its ability to focus on key issues while capturing the deep context of the data and the studied phenomena (Flick, 2002). Thematic analysis also allowed for necessary flexibility and aided the participatory research design (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The categories for coding were created both deductively and inductively, that is, they were based on the pre-fieldwork research and the interview guide, but were also shaped by the emerging empirical data. After the coding process, the themes were further analysed: I reviewed and compared them, contextualized them within the data set, checked versus socioeconomic attributes of the participants, and noted emerging patters. All data collection and analytical stages are discussed in the following sections.

3.3.1 *Recruitment*

Focus group participants from two cohorts (16-24 and 30-40) were recruited across Aichi prefecture in Japan. The recruitment consisted of physical advertising (placing information posters in public places and cultural centres and handing out adverts with information on the study), internet soliciting (including non-commercial websites and social networks), personal introductions and 'snowballing' (Morgan, 1998, pp.86-90). A

number of cultural and non-profit organizations in Aichi helped with the research (see Appendix 9) by letting their space for conducting focus groups, as well as by contributing to recruitment by physical and online advertising. Although there were no initial requirements for participation apart from age, the study sought a demographical balance in forming participants in demographically balanced focus groups in each of the age cohorts, as much as was possible.

All demographic groups and geographical areas covered in the study were challenging in terms of recruitment, albeit for different reasons. In central Nagoya, physical advertising yielded little results and recruitment posters – a drop in the sea of similar adverts – garnered no attention. Internet soliciting through networking sites and portals was much more effective, but yielded a certain type of (young, technologically savvy, interested in cultural exchange) participant.

Participants from rural and less populated areas, on the other hand, were mostly recruited through local and cultural centres, whose role in everyday life was very significant. Institutions, by advertising the research and reaching out to various interest groups, were especially vital in legitimizing the study and myself to the local population (I discuss this further in Section 3.5.2). Importantly, through cultural centres I was able to snowball and reach other networks, including not only the so-called 'cultural exchange' circles (whose members were, as above, of a shared, specific profile), but also, among others, mums' groups or sport circles.

Schools were another story altogether. Recruiting high school students for the study was an exercise in following a trail of bureaucratic procedures of access and legitimacy, starting with local government representatives and leaders of cultural centres and ending with teachers, chancellors and principals. Most of the challenges seemed to concern not the ethical issues of the study (which were covered well in the information pack provided – to, surprisingly, a somewhat lack of interest by the teachers), but the administrative chain of command: as no studies like this had been previously conducted in either of the institutions, there was no procedure to rely on. Repeated personal communication with school and government representatives, coupled with

community engagement discussed in Section 3.5.2, finally led to successful facilitation of focus groups with the youngest of 'the relaxed'.

After the initial round of focus group interviews, ongoing recruitment efforts became focused on the under-represented demographic: the men from 'the lost' cohort. The group was elusive, because working, salaried employees were unavailable during the week (for most, working hours started at around 8am and ended well into the night), and they spent their weekends with their families – or indeed, catching up on more work or (often unhappily) socializing with colleagues and bosses. Men without company jobs were more flexible, but they also divided their time between job interviews and part-time work or volunteering, and scheduling a focus group interview proved to be very difficult.

Eventually, through a focus on this segment in latter stages of recruitment, the studied group was more demographically balanced (although still certainly not ideal) by the addition of 'lost' men through individual interviews, which were easier to organize around the participants' working schedule. The solution, although best under the circumstances, was imperfect, as relatively few older men in the study were interviewed in a focus group setting, limiting the range of responses in a dynamic, interactive environment. Various modifications to the interview guide for these men were intended to bring in some of the elements of the focus group study. For instance, by including a range of statements and themes from already conducted focus groups, I was able to ask more contrasting questions, and attempted to cover the focus group interview guide to some extent at least.

A summary of the participants by age and sex is presented in Table 3.3 below. A more detailed presentation of all non-expert participants in the study can be found in Appendix 1.

Table 3.4 Non-expert participants – summary

	'The relaxed' (16-24 years old)	'The lost' (30-40 years old*)	
Women	29	27	Total:
Men	24	13	93

* The age brackets refer to the research design and the ways 'the relaxed' and 'the lost' were conceptualized before the fieldwork. Among the participants, six did not fit the brackets, but I classified them as 'lost' based on either age proximity to the cohort and/or participation in the 'lost' focus group with friends or colleagues. Among the six, there were five women (aged 41, 42, 42, 45 and 46) and one man (aged 28). The analysis was done with the age difference in mind. For clarity, throughout this thesis I accompany participants' voices with appropriate age signifiers whenever presenting data.

3.3.2 *Focus group interviews*

As part of the focus group study, I conducted 14 focus group sessions with 83 participants overall (see Appendix 1). There were nine 'relaxed' groups and five 'lost' groups, each with between four and nine participants (and between four and six for all but four groups). In this section, I first discuss the general methodological consideration made in the light of the scarcity of focus group research in social sciences in Japan, and the assumed reasons for that. I then move on to the particular procedures followed in this research stage, and critically assess them in light of the data yielded.

Focus group interviews are a type of qualitative study where the moderator guides a discussion on a particular topic in a group of participants from similar backgrounds;

they are characterized by asking 'very specific questions about a topic after having already completed considerable research' (Fontana and Frey, 2000, p.651). The focus group, having gained popularity as a marketing research tool in the 1950s, became a widely utilized method in social science and media research, particularly useful in audience and reception study (Lunt and Livingstone, 1996). Yet in Japan, there is little tradition of focus groups in the field. Although there have been some examples of using the method for social sciences in Japan (see, for instance, Oka, 2003, and to a lesser extent, White, 2003 or Culter, 2003), these examples are rare. The scarcity of similar research is sometimes (and mostly in management manuals) attributed to agency issues and to doubts about whether Japanese people have the character or experiential comfort to provide unbiased, fully free and yet not exclusively superficial opinions in a group setting. My experience of conducting focus groups in Japan and with Japanese people in this and in my previous research shows no clear evidence that those doubts are well founded. However, acknowledging the role of the cultural setting in research design (Mancini and Billson, 2006), I modified the focus group procedure to the Japanese setting.

To maximize the expression of full, unbiased opinion by the participants, I used a variety of techniques, some of which have to do with the context of the Japanese language (and culture). For instance, as a moderator I used short turn-taking and backchannel utterances frequently when listening to the participants (Yuan et al, 2007). The biggest challenge was to minimize possible hierarchical obstacles in the discussion, which was attempted first by designing groups of a similar age range. This is discussed by Morgan, who asserts that by creating groups with visibly compatible participants, the participants can 'spend less time explaining themselves to each other and more time discussing the issues' (Morgan, 1998, p.59). Moreover, pre-session interaction was also limited by cutting the introduction time before the interview (see below for how the pre-session questionnaire assisted in this). Where possible, the participants did not reveal their names, age, education or profession to each other, and nor did they exchange business cards (as they would have otherwise). Instead, all participants addressed each other by their first names or previously submitted 'nicknames'.

As a moderator, I took the role of an 'enlightened novice' (Krueger, 1998b, p.46), and presented myself as someone who was deeply interested in the subject, but relatively inexperienced in this specialist area. This strategy was implemented in an effort to minimize my previous assumptions about the topic, and to distance myself for the discussion, but also to allow the participants to reflect on their culture more broadly to an outsider (or semi-outsider). This was especially vital considering my hybrid status as a foreign researcher educated in Japan, which I further address in Section 3.5.

It is difficult to conclusively assess the effect of these techniques on the acquired data, although the richness of the discussions (and contrasting opinions throughout the sessions) suggests that they were useful. Anecdotally, I also recall at least two instances where participants, socializing after a focus group session, learned each other's age and other personal details, and this resulted in one of them immediately apologising to the other for having assumed the latter's age/position wrongly (and thus having used the wrong honorific words). This leads me to believe that, at least in these instances, more pre-session information possessed by the participants about each other could have resulted in a more hierarchical, restricted interaction.

In the rest of this section I discuss other procedures followed in the focus group study, starting with the pre-session survey. Focus group interviews were preceded by an individual questionnaire (see Appendix 6) to be filled out by the participants, on site. The questionnaire included demographic questions about the participants (for instance, their age, education and occupation) as well as technical queries about the everyday use of media, with a focus on music.

The questionnaire started with short questions about the respondents' demographics, their interests, personal values, home situation and general feelings toward music, moving to the topic of the place of music in their lives: the how, when, how of their listening habits. It gradually introduced the topic of popular hit songs through questions about their music education and experience with music instruments, ending with more complex tasks requiring the respondent to place music among their other

activities, or to grade the role of various media in their lives. Although the topic of specific music preferences and favourite artists was largely left for the focus group sessions, in the questionnaire participants were also asked to briefly identify their favourite music acts.

The questionnaire had four main purposes. First, it was to enable deeper profiling on individual responses and to acquire demographic data that would be too vast or sensitive to include in the focus session. Second, the survey identified music and other media use patterns, and the data helped guide the research in its later stages (individual interviews and observations). With very rare, individual exceptions, all questions in the questionnaire were completed by the participants and yielded insightful data for the analysis, and therefore both purposes were fulfilled.

Third, the (individual) activity of filling out a questionnaire was designed to help participants accommodate to the research site and to other participants under minimum stress. This worked out well: the participants had time to become familiar with the site, to have some tea or juice, or a 'breather' (especially those who had cycled to the site). Additionally, the process of completing questionnaires was crucial in maximizing the group dynamic in the group, as discussed earlier: precisely because the participants (arriving at different times and immediately asked to start on the questionnaire) had no opportunity for a prolonged formal introduction before the session, no business cards were exchanged, and no professional affiliations were mentioned.

Fourth, some of the questionnaire answers were used during the focus session as stimuli for the participants (for instance, asking about the relevance of music in participants' lives during the focus group session, I referred back to the activity-ordering questions in the questionnaire). This point follows guidelines set by Krueger (1998a, pp.63-70), as well as Barbour (2007, pp.82-90), which stress the importance of using stimulus material questions instead of a dry oral procedure in focus group interviews. This aim was also met, and participants actively consulted their questionnaires during sessions. However, in hindsight, the questionnaire could have

been shorter. Some of the ranking questions especially were too long and, judging from some participants' reactions, perhaps even tedious to complete.

The focus group sessions started after the participants completed their questionnaires. They served as a probe to gather and identify preliminary categories and emerging themes related to participants' listening practices for the rest of the study. The group setting allowed for interactive discussions of participants' practices, and, through comparison and contrast, triggered reflections that would have been unobtainable in a one-to-one setting.

The sessions followed a semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix 7), expressed in casual, everyday language, in which the key questions were divided into topical sections: 'Music preferences', 'Generations', 'Music by oneself', 'Music with others' and 'Interaction with artists'. The core topic guide for all sessions was identical, with aberrations resulting from specific occurrences or participants' comments that I used for transitioning between topics. Additionally, there were significant differences in the supplementing questions about social contexts and circumstances between the 'lost' and 'relaxed' cohorts. Generally, however, the study followed a systematic questioning route suggested by Krueger (1998a). Each session began with 'opening questions', designed to make participants comfortable by identifying characteristics they had in common. This was followed by 'transition questions', which moved the conversation towards the key questions, establishing a connection between the participants and the session topic. Then the discussion moved to 'key questions' divided into the five theme panels. Lastly, 'ending questions' helped to debrief participants and to assign weight to the previous discussion and themes that were vital to the participants. They also provided an opportunity for the participants to voice any outstanding opinions about the topics or the session.

Approximately three days after the session, the participants received a follow-up email (see Appendix 8) inquiring about the general impression of the session, the atmosphere, and technical things to be improved on. They were also asked whether they had been able to express their opinions freely during the session, whether they

had felt influenced by other people, and whether they had any topic-related comments they may not have expressed during the focus study. Out of 93 interviewees, this request was successfully sent to 87 recipients (five had provided unintelligible contact details or none at all), and 66 responses were received (see Appendix 1): all were universally positive, most were very short ('Yes' or 'No' answers), with all participants but one confident that they had voiced their free opinions and had not been influenced.

The feedback data is not mentioned here as an absolute measure of the focus groups' atmosphere, but rather as an element of building rapport with the participants and integrating their voices into the research design. A direct email (mentioned during the session and thus expected) was not only an opportunity to reflect back on the session (for most, that reflection was admittedly very brief, but the opportunity was there in case participants wanted and were able to voice a negative focus group experience), but was also a chance for me to express my gratitude and to remind participants about the next stages of the study.

3.3.3   Individual interviews

In the second stage of the fieldwork I individually interviewed 38 participants from both cohorts. The aim was not only to follow up in depth the themes identified during the group study, but also to supplement them with novel accounts of listening practices. Due to the nature of the interview, this data was more personal and significantly more detailed.

The individual setting allowed the participants to further explain things that were not satisfactorily developed during the focus group session. Moreover, it was to allow me to compare individual responses to those given in a group setting. Through the selection of participants, this portion of the study had initially been intended to give voice to respondents who seemed to have not expressed themselves fully in the group session (because of either time constraints or obstacles of group dynamics). Another, but no less important criterion of participant choice had been to include most of the

vantage points vital to the study (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, pp.66-70). At the same time, efforts were made to make the sample balanced in terms of gender, geographical area and profession as well as the age of the interviewees.

In practice, some of these aims were challenged by the recruitment process. Many of the focus group participants did not respond to the invitation to individual interviews; it was similarly difficult to accommodate the schedule of a significant portion of other participants (for instance, when their only possible dates fell on my Tokyo fieldwork period). As a result, 28 participants were recruited at this stage, and the sample was heavily skewed towards younger participants and women. As mentioned in Section 3.3.1, to capture the demographic group of men from 'the lost' group, a decision was made to recruit for individual interviewees outside of the focus groups, which yielded 10 new participants (nine men and one woman). The individual interview format was shorter and easier to accommodate, especially for company employees who could be interviewed during lunch, for instance.

A typical interview lasted around 30 minutes. All interviews started with an introduction and by restating the research aims and conditions (see Appendix 10 for the full interview guide). This was followed by a casual conversation about the focus session. The participants were encouraged to share their opinions about the group dynamics, the range of topics and several other issues. For the 10 non-focus group participants, key questions from the focus groups were asked instead.

Then, a number of descriptive questions were introduced, with the aim of further learning about the participant and tying in this information with the themes discussed in the sessions (Neuman, 2003, p.394). The topics included the participant's typical day, everyday music practices and musical events they might have attended recently. The second part of the interview consisted of structural questions, inviting the participant to reflect on their musical preferences and practices. After a while, I moved on to the third part, contrast questions, building on the data from the focus interviews where possible (Neuman, 2003). Typical questions asked the participant to compare their and their parents' music choices, or to contrast their own music preferences

between now and the past. Lastly, the participant was invited to freely comment on any issues they felt were underdeveloped, or even absent during the session. The session ended with a reminder and an invitation to the third research stage, observations.

3.3.4 *Observations*

This third stage, chronologically overlapping with individual interviews, consisted of prolonged participant observations of chosen participants. I accompanied the participants in their everyday routines (in their homes, in their cars or at school) to gain an insider perspective of their daily lives, with a special sensitivity to music engagements (including ones the participants may not have been aware of). I also participated in social events related directly to music, such as concerts, karaoke get-togethers or watching music television shows (see Appendix 2 for a full list of observations and participants involved). This ethnographic portion was vital, as it allowed me to collect data from the respondents in an everyday context, unlike in the more artificial character of the first two stages. Furthermore, it allowed for a comparison between participants' reported and actual behaviour, and to supplement participants' own accounts with direct observation (Flick, 2002). It also served as a tool to account for the contrast between my culture, theoretical tradition and the culture of the research site (Denscombe, 2003, pp.92-3). In this way, through the participation aspect, the observation enhanced the quality of the data collected through interviews (Dewalt, Dewalt and Wayland, 1998, p.264).

Participants for this part of the study were recruited largely thanks to the rapport established during focus groups and individual interviews (and subsequent communication). In some cases, they were a natural extension of my involvement with the community, as discussed in detail in Section 3.5. Despite this bottom-up recruitment, a demographic variety was reflected in the sample.

The method aimed to paint a rich picture of participants' listening practices in a variety of contexts, proceeding according to Geertz's 'thick description' (1973). I was a

participatory observer in most of these practices. I happily took part in the karaoke sessions, joined in discussions of (and quarrels concerning) car music, and I danced with children whose mothers were busy washing up. Most of these environments did not allow for detailed note-taking (hasty, discreet notes on my phone were occasional, and limited to scenes where I felt I had witnessed something significant), and thus I largely organized my thoughts on paper after the experience.

3.3.5 *Expert interviews*

In late March and April I was also conducting expert interviews in Tokyo. Recruitment-wise, this was the most challenging venture of the whole fieldwork. Emailing record labels and management companies directly (see Appendix 12) did not prove successful, and only personal introductions helped move the process forward. The introductions first came from movie director and animator Shinkai Makoto (met and befriended when I was writing my undergraduate dissertation about him) and Professor Ian Condry, a scholar of, among other things, Japanese popular culture and hip-hop music. With these connections, I was able to network further, and eventually, to interview two music producers, two managers and two composers. Five musicians represented in this study were met during the fieldwork period in music sites between Aichi and Tokyo (see Appendix 3 for a full list of expert interviewees and their profiles).

This part of the study aimed at collecting accounts of the creation, production and distribution of music from industry representatives. The interviews were intended to acquire data on the interaction between performers and audiences, as well as texts and audiences, from the non-audience side: managers, producers and artists. This is relevant not only in light of research sub-question 3, which was operationalized through questions to experts in this research stage, but also in light of the 'circuit of culture' model discussed in Chapter 2. Here, the timing of the expert interviews was chosen consciously: positioned after the bulk of the ethnographic work in Aichi, the Tokyo expert interviews were informed by audience data. The topic guide for the expert interviews reflected this, and included a number of questions emerging from the audiences' perspectives on artists, music and the music industry.

The interview guide (see Appendix 11) was modified for each of the respondents, reflecting their specific professions, experiences and their position in the industry. Generally, though, the main structure of the interview was similar throughout and covered five main areas: the state of the profession/industry, the creative process, the performance, the audiences, and predictions about the industry into the future. Moving from individual accounts and descriptive questions about professional tasks towards more structural and complex accounts of the industry and the outlook on audiences, the interview guide accounted for the need to maximize interview time given and to immediately build rapport with the respondent.

3.4 Analytical strategy

After the three ethnographic stages, I conducted a thematic analysis of the data accumulated through fieldwork (Aronson, 1994; Miles and Huberman, 1994). The process included identification of recurring codes and patterns across all gathered data, and subsequent grouping of them into thematic categories, that is, themes. I began the study with a handful of pre-identified ideas to guide the study. Some of these codes, however, were modified, deleted or supplemented by new categories stemming from the ethnographic data. This approach allowed me to capture the deep context of the phenomena and to organize the conceptual categories as they emerged from the data (Flick, 2002).

The challenge in analysing the data was twofold. First, as the data included focus group and interview transcripts as well as participant observation field notes (in the form of written text, pictures and videos), the challenge was in including all of them in coding and to consider their respective weight. Here, NVivo was helpful in organizing and tagging the data, allowing for links to be made between various sources. In that way, data gathered with different methods was regarded less as separate blocks of information, and more as reflecting the research *process* and the dynamic and interlinked nature of the theoretical model guiding the study, the circuit of culture.

Second, the challenge was in accounting for the deductive and inductive parts in the analysis. The research deductively began with a number of themes identified based on the research questions, the literature review and the conceptual framework. This theory-led element was contrasted with the inductive process, where new themes were gradually and organically emerging from the body of empirical data. Through repeated listening and re-reading of the transcripts, I identified prominent codes and added them to the framework.

Broadly, the thematic analysis of the interview data followed the six steps outlined by Attride-Stirling (2001) – coding, theme identification, thematic network construction, network exploration, summary, and pattern interpretation – but also bearing in mind the mixed inductive and deductive nature of the process. Eventually, the transcripts and field notes were broken down into short fragments consisting of single words, phrases or, more seldom, full passages, coded with a mix of deductive and inductive nodes.

Eventually, codes were grouped in thematic groups, organized in a tree structure (see Appendix 13). Here, the use of NVivo software for analysis was limited and mostly organizational. As mentioned, the software allowed me to keep all the data together and to create helpful links across transcripts and notes; it also helped me to include (and cross-reference) participants' characteristics and to access them vis-à-vis interview data, as needed. Additionally, NVivo allowed for tests that would be time-consuming otherwise, such as checking the prominence of a node across transcripts or across different types of data. Mostly, however, the interpretation was done manually, by re-reading the data in light of identified themes and theoretical framework, and noting emerging patterns and issues accompanying the discussion (cf. Attride-Stirling, 2001, p.395).

3.5 Ethical considerations and the role of the researcher

3.5.1 *Ethical dimensions and procedures*

Any research should, in its aims, strive to achieve the highest standard of science possible for the good of the profession, and to aid the production of new knowledge in the future. Methodologically, I have demonstrated my attempts to do so in this chapter thus far. However, aside from my responsibility to the research community, I am also bound by a set of ethical responsibilities to people whom this thesis concerns, and who contributed their time and voices to this research. This last section describes the ethical precautions undertaken before and throughout the study, including data protection and security, participants' anonymity and safety, concerns about their emotional wellbeing, as well as issues of participation and accurate representation.

During all stages of the fieldwork, efforts were made to protect the participants from excessive risk. This included issues of privacy, confidentiality and informants' wellbeing. Especially for the more vulnerable groups (high school students), procedures concerning consent and risk were strictly implemented.

Written consent was obtained from all participants before the interview sessions (see Appendices 4 and 5), after a thorough explanation of the research aims and the use of the data by the researcher. For high school students participating in the study, in addition to their signatures on the consent form, I requested a signature of a parent or a legal guardian (admittedly, it is impossible to definitively assess whether the signatures were indeed from the parents!). To do this, consent forms were sent to school a few days before the session, and therefore in these cases a more thorough explanation followed the signing of the consent form. However, in all these cases (as during all other interviews conducted) the students were advised that they were able to stop their participation at any time without giving a reason. While due to the dynamic nature of participant observation it was not always possible to obtain the consent of other people taking part in listening practices (concert attendees, high school students not part of the studied classes), I made sure that my role and purpose was at all times transparent and unambiguous.

Although the topic matter was not considered sensitive when designing this research, discussing emotional engagements (in this case, personal everyday practices, identity work, family relations etc.) always carries a degree of risk to the participants. Therefore, all participants were carefully briefed about the voluntary aspect of every part of the study, and were instructed to refrain from answering questions that made them stressed or uncomfortable. It should also be added at this stage that the participants were gifted with bars of Polish chocolate after the interview session, although most of them had not been aware of this beforehand.

During all fieldwork stages, efforts were made to protect the participants' anonymity and the confidentiality of their personal information. As mentioned earlier, in most focus groups participants used only first names or nicknames) when addressing each other. After the interview sessions, participants' personal and contact information was kept separate from the interview data, and from the analytical process. All names used in this thesis are a result of a careful anonymization process, where, for reading coherence, I have tried to use age-appropriate names for the participants.

Lastly, an effort was also made to involve the participants in the research outside of their interviews and observations. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the participants had the opportunity to feed back about the research process by responding to an email sent to them after the interview sessions (see Appendix 8 for the text of the email and Appendix 1 for the list of participants who responded). Some replied with detailed comments that started conversations about various topics related to the research (the ways the interviews were conducted, the state of popular music in Japan etc.).

Although I had no opportunity to conduct closing interviews with all the participants, I discussed the emerging ideas and issues of representation with a number of them by email, telephone and in person at the end of my fieldwork. Although limited in number, I believe these conversations were meaningful for all involved, and even those participants who could not talk to me beyond the interviews were informed that

I was accessible at all times and willing to discuss all aspects of the study. A summary of this thesis (and the full thesis on request) after its completion, written in Japanese, and presenting the findings in an accessible way, will also be sent to the participants and that, I hope, will lead to their further feedback.

3.5.2   *Role of the researcher*

As most of the data gathered in this research is through interaction with study participants (either by interviewing or observing them), in this section I discuss how my status as a researcher and as a foreigner, and the participants' perception of this, might have been a factor in the nature of my fieldwork and, by extension, the findings emerging out of it.

First, being a researcher potentially put me in a position of power when interacting with the participants. The challenge of unequal power relations between interviewers and interviewees in qualitative studies has been the topic of methodological discussion that is not limited to a particular country (Kvale, 2006), but it is vital to recognize here the significance of the Japanese context. In Japan, the hierarchical structure is embedded in social relations, and also reflected in language. Professions linked to public trust and a high level of mastery achieved (such as teachers, doctors, instructors, politicians and lawyers) are addressed with the honorific word *sensei*, implying respect and authority. This is also how many of the participants addressed me at first, especially after learning about my graduate degree from an imperial Japanese university (I used that information in the recruitment pack to legitimate the study and gain access; cf. McLaughlin, 2010).

To mitigate the cultural preconceptions concerning authority figures, and to avoid an interview dynamic of 'replying with what the interviewer wants to hear', much effort was made to deconstruct and minimalize the hierarchical power relations between the participants and myself where possible. Assuming the 'enlightened novice' moderator role, mentioned earlier in this chapter, was one of my efforts, as was my friendly, informal and approachable manner throughout. Furthermore, in the briefings before

each interview session, I stressed that there were no correct or incorrect answers, and that I was interested in the participants' genuine voices and experiences. Regarding the honorific language, during the self-introductory part of the focus group sessions I asked participants to address me with my first name, just like most of them chose to call themselves with their first names (all with the standard '-san' suffix, of course).

Second, it would be unwise to assume that my ethnicity was not a factor in the fieldwork. I was, after all, a European coming to study – and to analyse – Japanese culture. I feared that my immediate and obvious foreignness could limit the amount of thoughts participants might share with me – both because I was an outsider and because as a non-Japanese person I was not expected to be familiar with the more subtle cultural references. I used my 'hybrid' status as a Polish national educated in Japan (and with a Japanese wife) to help address this, and to let participants reflect on their culture from an outside perspective, and yet to maximize the fullness and honesty of the data. Still, the balance was not easy to achieve. On the one hand, I conducted the fieldwork and all recruitment communication myself from the start, in fluent Japanese, to make the participants feel comfortable expressing themselves in their everyday manner. Similarly, during the sessions I picked up on pop-cultural references to television shows or comedians raised by participants to encourage more detailed accounts of practices. On the other hand, I stayed a 'novice': I displayed that I was proficient in the Japanese language and culture, but the everyday context of the participants' practices was not familiar to me, and so I asked for explanations.

Some of these efforts were further aided by the presence of a Japanese assistant during the focus groups, and my Japanese wife performed that role. She helped with the administrative element of the session, but her presence was primarily to reduce the potential uneasiness of starting a discussion with a foreign moderator. Furthermore, my wife's role was significant in gaining access to some of the rural communities, and helping legitimize the study in the eyes of participants and schools or cultural centre functionaries.

Based on the data and my recollections of the research process, the intricacies of my status as a researcher had less weight the more involved in the communities I became. From the start, I tried to become engaged in local activities as much as possible under the time and geographical constraints. Some of these activities were part of the observation of practices relevant for the study (such as the wind orchestra concert in Ōtani High School), and a few surprisingly turned out to be so (for instance, when I volunteered in the Esperanza study centre and noticed that many of the learning activities involved music) – but most were not, and these included conducting lectures and classes, babysitting or practising Kendo. I never disguised my status as a researcher or the nature of my study, but I believe that through all these activities, a mutual trust with the community was established, which helped me gather and analyse my data more efficiently, and to represent the participants' voices with the respect they deserved.

3.6   Limitations and conclusion

Starting with the overarching topic of audiences' engagements with music, the study operationalized the research questions in terms of practices, interpretations and generational experiences of two cohorts in contemporary Japan. These formed the base of the interview guides, and partially, the codes for thematic analysis. Thus, the methodological decisions undertaken during the study stemmed from the theoretical framework, but also affected the heuristics of the process, and resulted in a number of challenges and limitations I discuss in the last section of this chapter.

By recruiting the participants in two age groups, and conceptualizing the initial framework in terms of possible generational experiences, the study looked for practices and interpretations that could provide insights on 'the lost' and 'the relaxed'. In this way, then, the interview guides were theory-led. At the same time, however, there were no unchecked assumptions, and through interviews and observations I tried to give the participants as much voice as I could. As discussed in detail later in Chapter 6, some initial hunches about the generations that emerged from the data were largely refuted (such as the idea of generational playlists), while some were

greatly complicated by the interview data (like the concept of generational interpretations of idols).

However, some aspects were challenging to efficiently capture, even with the multiple methods employed. During the five-month fieldwork I was not able to individually interview all focus group participants, or to observe all of them in a more natural setting. While expanded observation and interviews could have yielded some new insight, data saturation reached in the late stages of fieldwork suggests that the gravity of that insight could have been limited.

With the employed theoretical model of the circuit of culture, I could also allude here to the absence of an expanded textual element. I haven't conducted a content analysis of Japanese popular music in the study, although I played with this idea at various stages in designing the research. One possible advantage of that path-not-taken could have been a stronger focus on textual cues and factors in songs, which, in the tradition of audience research, I could then confront with participants' interpretations, as well as conduct comparisons of Japanese song form and content across decades. Instead, in this study I decided to focus more on practices and interpretations of the text by the audiences. This does not mean that text has been forgotten – it featured in questionnaire answers, interview responses and observed practices, and I have discussed this in terms of the conceptual framework in Chapter 2. But to add to that, analytically, the decision to treat all data as stemming from audiences and forming the basis for a unified thematic analysis helped design the research in a coherent way.

In the following three chapters, I present and discuss the findings emerging from the data collection and analysis described here. In Chapter 4, I draw from questionnaires, interviews and observations to analyse the concept of listening practices and the place of music in everyday life. Then, in Chapter 5, I compare interview data from the participants and industry experts to analyse and discuss ideas of co-evolution and proximity between audiences and performers. In Chapter 6, I contextualize these findings through the experiences and interpretations of two studied cohorts, 'the lost' and 'the relaxed'.

Chapter 4: Social practices of listening

> And don't worry about the bits you can't understand. Sit back and allow the words to wash around you, like music. (Roald Dahl, *Matilda*)

> We'll light up the world with our smiles and voices
> Let's go! let's go!
> We're aiming right at your pink-coloured hearts
> Come to see us on Saturday and Sunday!
> We're the weekend heroines
> Swiftly kick-boxing our way through
> We'll get to your hearts. (Momoiro Clover, 'Ikuze! Kaitō Shōjo')

4.1   Introduction

How and why is music listened to? When we immerse ourselves in musical sounds, as if they wash around us, or when we let the music kick and punch its way through to our hearts, what do we actually do, and how do these practices (as discussed in Chapter 2) relate to everything else in our everyday lives: our demographic markers, jobs, families, emotional states and routines? With this chapter I begin to introduce my empirical data, bringing out distinctive engagements related to music listening as well as their significance for audiences.

I begin with a review of approaches to listening, and in particular of modes of listening stemming from musicology, the psychology of music, semiotics and media studies. I look critically at the different taxonomies of modes and routines related to music, their aims and advantages, suggesting that the concept of modes, as present in music literature now, is too narrow to allow for an accurate insight about music audiences. Then, while engaging with the vocabulary of focused and background modes, I expand it using media practice theory to identify the wider, overarching practices of music listening centred on audiences' repeated activities in their daily lives. This might yield a

model in which media practices are enhanced with dimensions of meaning-making, and typologies of modes are reconceptualized through practices, which brings them towards the social. This is not a complete model, but rather a way of talking about music listening that takes into account audiences and texts, and is attentive to the circuit of culture (while noting its limitations), presenting a more accurate account of audiences' experiences with music.

This is complex, because, as discussed so far, sound is multimodal. The concept of a 'mode', described by Gunther Kress as 'a socially shaped and culturally given semiotic resource for meaning-making' (2010, p.79), implies that different modality has a potential for different meanings to emerge, and because music, and sound in general, is accompanied by image, gesture, gaze and other modes (especially with the development of recording technology), it forces us to inquire how the particular modes are part of the social and the cultural in particular everyday situations (Jewitt, 2009, p.4).

In my analysis of the data I was able to distinguish between four types of practices: mood management, connecting, companionship and listening-as-identity. I map all four, below, onto three general modes stemming from music studies – focused listening, background listening, and incidental listening – but in many cases they are not exclusive to one mode, and provide a way of conceptualizing audience engagements without limiting categories of attention.

In the second part of the chapter I present a detailed analysis of the music engagements of five people. I chose these five out of the hundred participants from the study as aptly representing the various musical practices emerging from the data, as well as the demographics of the analysed audiences. Additionally, they were chosen out of the 20 participants I had the most interaction with throughout the study as part of focus groups and individual interviews, as well as the actual practices of listening I observed.

4.2   Approaches to listening

There is a certain imbalance in the way we, as researchers (and especially media researchers), have been analysing sound, compared to the way we have researched the picture. Listening (often contrasted with 'speaking') feels unconsciously somehow more *passive* than watching or reading. Even in academic writing, we operate with words and phrases accentuating this visual bias, such as 'as we can see', 'to shed light' or 'to get insight'. This is especially striking when considering modes of engagement with media. As discussed in Chapter 2, one of the achievements of the audience research tradition is the connections with reception and literary studies, and the discovery that the interpretative work of the viewer mediates the reproduction of textual meanings (Livingstone, 1998); however, modes of listening, on the other hand, have traditionally been the domain of semantics, musicology or sound studies.

Michel Chion (1983, 2012) distinguishes causal, semantic and reduced listening, arguing how all three overlap in the context of film soundtracks. The first, and most frequent, is concerned with the origin of a sound. We are listening for the cause of a sound, and recognize (or do not recognize) its source or a category of sources. In semantic listening, we interpret the message in the sound – be it a voice, a code or a different sound sequence. In reduced listening, which is central to Chion's argument, we are disregarding cause and message, and listen to the sound itself, concentrating on its elements: rhythm, pitch, timbre, melody etc. In practice, this is the most difficult mode to isolate (as we constantly tend to refer back to causes and messages), and requires the sound to be recorded for repeat listening.

	Abstract	Concrete
Objective	4. *Comprendre*	1. *Écouter*
Subjective	3. *Entendre*	2. *Ouïr*

Figure 4.1 Shaeffer's classic four modes of listening

Chion takes the idea of reduced listening and the necessity for the sound to be 'fixed' by recording it from French composer and musicologist Pierre Schaeffer. Shaeffer's (1996) model is significantly more complicated, as he identifies four modes, which could be placed in a two-by-two table as shown above.

In this model, the rows define the focus of listening: objective modes are deictic (the object is the focus), and subjective modes are listener-centred (the sound itself is the focus). The columns deal with meaning, and distinguish between abstract modes (where we are concerned with the meaning in the sound), and concrete modes (where we are not trying to extract any meaning). Shaeffer's argument is that only recorded music allows us to bracket out the spatio-temporal causes behind the sounds (that is, to disregard the objective modes), and to focus on the sound itself. This Shaefferian *reduction* is then an artificial process, and one that needs to be practised.

Other musicological ideas on modes of listening follow in familiar sets of two. Gurney (1880) talks about 'definite' and 'indefinite' listeners, the former perceptive to the sequences of form, harmony and melody, the latter merely able to acknowledge a tune as pleasant. Lee (1933) distinguishes between 'listeners' and 'hearers', building on a popular comprehension that 'listening' is somewhat more active than hearing. Listeners, than, are the preferred audiences for music, because they are able to attend only to the musical qualities of a piece, whereas hearers become overcome with non-musical associations, memories and images. This is what Peter Kivy (1990) called 'music alone' – a formalistic account of how music *should* be analysed: autonomously, that is, stripped of authorship, commentaries and historical context (as opposed to, one can imagine, 'music in context').

Theodor Adorno (1962) went further than Lee by not only identifying as many as eight types of listeners (expert, good, cultural, emotional, resentful, jazz, entertainment, indifferent), but by organizing them in order of decreasing quality of listening experience. Adorno further equalled the mode of listening with the content of music, suggesting that the genre defines the mode and vice versa. This view, although rarely presented so strongly, is still present in the discussions of music (see, for instance,

Sloboda, 2010, and his presumed causal link between length and complexity, and listening modes, or Stockfelt, 1997, and his discussion of genres). For Adorno, this listener taxonomy was a way to make an argument for the connection of class and taste, and in that sense it was elitist and condescending about the listening experiences of 'less quality' – it was the focused, conscious and knowledgeable listening that was something valuable to aim towards.

More often than not, then, a dichotomy of listening experience has been imagined: 'deep' versus 'superficial', 'conscious' versus 'background', 'everyday' versus 'special', 'motivated by aesthetic pleasure' versus 'motivated by goal achievement'. Not only were the modes imagined as mutually exclusive, but also as indicative of the music taste, genre and individual characteristics of the listener (Ross, 1983; Müller, 1990). Only in some studies were the two allowed to exist simultaneously and to influence each other – analytic listening enhancing emotional listening, for example (Rauhe, 1975; Rotter, 1987). For Dibben, it was the listener who privileged different modes 'in different ways according to his or her needs and preoccupations' (2011, p.162).

Truax (2001) ranked his three listening modes in terms of listener attention. 'Listening-in-search' refers to focused listening in which the listener actively searches and selects a particular sound to listen to. For Truax, in 'background listening' we do not find a particular sound significant – it is present, but we don't look for it, we ignore it. 'Listening-in-readiness' lies somewhere between these extremes: the listener is concentrating on something else, but still registers and can contextually react to the sound by built-up associations.

Perhaps the most exhaustive taxonomy was generated by Tuuri and Eerola (2012), who reviewed most of the modes above, added a handful more, and ended up with 12 modes organized in three main categories: experiential, denotative and reflective. There were a number of useful distinctions in their study. First, they separated intentionality (that is, what they called 'modes') from attention (the amount of focus on environment) and disposition (personal listening styles). This hugely complicates previous models, and leads to greater homogeneity of modes, which are no longer

defined based on the level of the listener's focus towards the sound. This is helpful, because, among other things, it also allows us to discuss meaning-making in the less attentive modes, and in this matter, Tuuri and Eerola critique previous attempts that suggested that interpretation was only linked to foreground, focused listening.

Second, unlike previous attempts, Tuuri and Eerola's taxonomy puts strong emphasis on the listener and his or her action-oriented, goal-seeking properties – the listener is not only described in terms of his or her abilities. Furthermore, this meaning-making is divided into modal categories, which stress different aspects of the listening process: reflexes and/or associations (experiential mode), looking for source and/or the meaning (denotative mode), and critically analysing the structure of the sound and/or the sound in context (reflexive mode). These modes are not exclusive, nor are they determined by the text, and Tuuri and Eerola suggest this very clearly with two examples of how the same listening event may be experienced in all the proposed modes.

We might compare these efforts and taxonomies with the legacy of media studies of effects and uses and gratifications approaches (cf. Chapter 2) – particularly through studies of television. Liebes and Katz's (1990) study of 'Dallas' audiences differentiated between the referential and the critical, and also, based in a reading of Marshall McLuhan (1965), between hot and cool viewer involvement. According to them, the referential mode of engagement happened when viewers related people or stories on screen to their private lives, while the critical entailed a focus on the representation and construction of the story. In order to conceptually emphasize that viewer engagement through either of the two modes does not necessary imply greater or smaller distance between texts and audiences, Liebes and Katz complicated the table with categories of 'hot' (emotional) and 'cool' (cognitive), which arguably confused the interpretative value of the model by suggesting that some of the forms (hot and critical) are implicitly negative, while others (cool and referential) are positive – which might not always be so (Livingstone and Lunt, 1994, pp.89-90). Still, the two-by-two offers much more on the critical engagement with a medium and with the text's ideological framing than Truax or Tuuri and Eerola's conceptualizations.

The existence of two (or more) exclusive modes of engagement with a medium is not, however, limited to theories of listening. John Ellis' (1982) comparison of 'the glance' with 'the gaze' is a parallel example from the field of visual media analysis. According to Ellis' distinction, the glance is casual, almost disengaged, and associated with television audiences at home. Cinema goers, on the other hand, are associated with the gaze, that is, a thoughtful and respectful mode of engaging with a film. The strength of Ellis' analysis lies in his careful identification of these different modes; the weakness lies in their categorical boundaries and the lack of a middle ground. Just as the legacy of audience studies greatly complicated the home television viewing paradigm, in the same way, we cannot hope to apply these modes successfully to music: neither participating in a concert nor shuffling an iPod collection on a train should automatically indicate a certain mode of engagement.

Anahid Kassabian (2013) proposed the idea of ubiquity to counter those linear ('narrative', as she describes them) attempts to deal with listening. Kassabian's 'ubiquitous listening' is a mode 'dissociated from specific generic characteristics of the music', where we listen '*alongside*, or simultaneous with, other activities' (Kassabian, 2013, p.9, emphasis original). The concept of ubiquitous listening shares, then, a certain reduction (or 'sourcelessness') with the Shaefferian analysis, but the similarities end there; the concepts of foreground and background music are no longer applicable to sound in this context (as almost all music is listened to ubiquitously), and Kassabian, unlike the music theorists mentioned earlier, does not look down on this 'less attentive' mode.

Some questions remain. Even if we put aside the issue of the extent to which such a model applies to the act of listening beyond urban, technologically developed environments, we may wonder whether classifying all listening as 'simultaneous' is not 'throwing the baby out with the bath water'. Surely, even though most music might indeed be accompanied by a plethora of other stimuli, it is important that we analyse these engagements in detail, as my empirical data suggests that audiences consciously switch between modes, and identify them as such. Precisely because a listener is

'entangled in a musical assemblage' of sounds, experiences, moods and interactions (Born, 2010, p.88), academics should not give up on untangling them. Placing the media experience within the rich context of everyday life does not, as we learned from cultural studies and audience theory, preclude multimodality; on the contrary, it allows us to make the important connections between media, the personal and the social.

To make this connection, a focus needs to shift from formalist, textual approaches, to models that also encompass the experiences of listeners. The 'ethnographic turn' (Seiter et al, 1989; Lull, 1990) in the social sciences left music relatively unmarked. The ongoing clash between sociologist and musicologist approaches to music is in a stalemate, mostly because both sides, at least in most of the Anglophone literature, refuse to acknowledge this clash and to talk to each other. Rare interdisciplinary approaches, usually coming from media, anthropology or, less often, ethnomusicology, spend so much energy carving their institutional spaces and legitimizing their angles that by the time they get to overarching arguments, they are already exhausted. The most influential books in this tradition over the past 20 years (Bull's *Sound moves*, Denora's *Music in everyday life*, Clarke's *Ways of listening*, Sloboda's *Music and emotion* or Sterne's *MP3*), although very insightful about the available modes of music reception and about the ways music fits in modern society, were all rather unsatisfying in contextualizing the personal-social paradigm. Be it because of a primary focus on technology (Sterne, Bull) or psychology (Clarke), the audience in these publications is often overly theoretical and lacking empirical, especially ethnographic, data.

In this chapter, I argue that successfully linking the spheres of the personal with the social connection can be realized through conceptualizing audience engagement as 'practice', that is, a regular and social set of activities (Braeuchler and Postill, 2010; Couldry, 2010), as introduced in detail in Chapter 2. This, I argue, allows me to move from the linear musicological models described above, towards a more circular account of listening, and will help answer the main questions for the chapter: namely, 'What are people's practices surrounding music?' and 'What is the role of music in people's lives, and how is it interpreted in the context of social and cultural relations

and identity work?' In the next section, I introduce an account of five participants' music use, followed by a discussion of practices and modes.

The five participants profiled in the next section were chosen to illustrate the complexities of the social practices of listening. Three come from 'the relaxed' cohort (Sayaka, Naoki and Hikari), two from 'the lost' (Yoshimi and Shigeru). Engaging with the literature I have presented in this chapter so far, the practices I discuss through these five profiles build towards an argument against the rigid typologies of listening on the one hand, and as I allude to in the findings of Chapter 6, an analytical account of generational labels and identities.

4.3   The listeners

4.3.1   *Yoshimi*

Yoshimi is a 36-year-old year old mother of three-year-old Sae and four-and-a-half-year-old Jun. Yoshimi takes care of the two, and works part-time at a (different) nursery. Interviewed, Yoshimi strongly asserts that she does not listen to 'her' music anymore, and all her music engagements are with the children.

Because of her busy schedule, Yoshimi insists that she did not watch television music shows much, but during the focus groups she was rather knowledgeable about contemporary music. This might have been because she admits to having watched popular night television dramas while finishing housework, and claimed she recognized their theme songs that usually end up in most popular song ratings. Yoshimi listens to music in the car, but, by her own admission, "kids' songs are the only ones there [in the car]." Because most of the car rides for Yoshimi are shared with her two children, the car playlist consists of various nursery rhymes – both in Japanese and in English (the latter in an effort to help her children develop English skills).

Yoshimi's focused use of music is largely limited to occasional concert outings. When we talked, she had just recently attended a large B'z concert, and was still thrilled by

the experience. The concert made her "feel young again", it "cheered" her up, both because this had been the band Yoshimi had admired for a long time, and because 'she felt like [finally] she was able to have some personal time.' Such experiences seemed rare, however, and limited to special occasions: such as when one of her favourite bands released a new album or visited the nearby city.

The songs Yoshimi calls 'her songs' include both artists from the past ("they bring back memories… of someone I liked then and such") and the present, but, just like B'z, her favourite tunes are all predominantly fast and melodic. Music, for Yoshimi, has to be able to cheer one up, energize, lift one up. This focused, mood-managerial role of music for Yoshimi stood in contrast with her other experiences with music, strongly shaped by her roles as a parent and as a professional childcarer.

> Yoshimi: "I play the melodica.[2] Because at the nursery I'm at, for many years there has been a recital where all the children's melodica skills are showcased. But it's so hard to teach it."
> Interviewer: "Yeah, because they are so small."
> Yoshimi: "They don't know Do Re Mi, so they do it by colours: blue, red, yellow. That's really tough. I feel a bit sorry for them sometimes."
> Interviewer: "Right."
> Yoshimi: "Yeah. If they can read, if they do it because they want to, that's fine. But everyone has to do it. The kids who can't do it, you have to make them as well, so…"
> Interviewer: "Right. Right."
> Yoshimi: "So I think it must be done so that they don't come to hate it."

In the above, Yoshimi critically assesses the nursery's pedagogy and curriculum. For Yoshimi, the music experience should connect and stem from interests, and not be forced on the children. This approach to music is consistent throughout my interactions with Yoshimi and her family. Except for music, Yoshimi strictly regulates her children's media time. The television is barely on – the children are not exposed to cartoons or the popular live action superhero shows (*sentai*) and only (and happily) watch the morning nursery rhymes programme; they are not allowed to use phones or

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[2] The melodica or the pianica (also known as the wind piano) is a wind instrument with a small keyboard and a mouthpiece, played by blowing air through the mouthpiece and pressing one or more keys on the keyboard to make a sound.

tablets either. Music is different: I have observed the children request songs during the car commute, ask for music to be put on during afternoon play, or even asking for pop songs to be acquired (primed, admittedly, by my presence and by Yoshimi asking her son what songs he had heard at nursery that day). The children bring home a lot of new tunes, too, remembered at nursery and kindergarten. This often includes popular idol songs, such as those of AKB48 or Arashi, but also, influenced by her mother, Yoshimi's children gladly sang for me the chorus, one-syllable shout featured in a famous song by B'z. Furthermore, Yoshimi often goes to karaoke with her children, and they spend an hour or two singing and dancing, mostly nursery songs known to and often requested by the children.

Unlike with television or games, Yoshimi does not limit the children's exposure to music, as for her, it is 'active' and links to other 'desirable' practices.

> Yoshimi: "Right, they're very athletic. When they were smaller, maybe not anymore, but when they were smaller, I would turn on the music and do the calisthenics routine,[3] they would learn and danced along with me. And they would enjoy doing that, and through that… [they enjoy music now]. Now, they've developed a bit of shyness."
> Interviewer: "These are the same each time, right? Or a different song?"
> Yoshimi: "The last exercise song is always the same. It's has been so, what, 15-16 years the same song now, so yeah, I don't really feel like dancing it anymore [laughs]."
> Interviewer: "And you have the CDs too? DVDs? And those 'Together with mum' songs?"
> Yoshimi: "I do, I do. If I play them, the kids might dance. Or won't they?"

Music experiences for Yoshimi seem to be twofold, and clearly separated. On the one hand, there is the rare personal listening that serves to invigorate and excite; on the other, there is the music used for learning, development and intergenerational connection.

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[3] Radio calisthenics ('rajio taiso') have been broadcast on public NHK radio early morning since the 1920s. Apart from serving at school as a warm-up or during events, they are also used as team- and morale-building exercises in some Japanese companies.

4.3.2 *Sayaka*

Sayaka is 23 and in her last year of community college, majoring in chemistry. As with all her friends at this stage, she is overwhelmed with job-hunting activities: job fairs, symposia, company introduction events, and soon, applications. As a result of all this, she is struggling to find time to finish her graduation dissertation (a chemistry experiment) and to continue working part time at a local chemists.

Sayaka is an amateur musician – she plays cymbals with a number of groups and wind bands. As I observed through the analysis of the data, this aspect of Sayaka's identity links to her music choices. Although Sayaka admits to listening to a few popular bands, such as GreeeeN or Momoiro Clover, her primary love is wind orchestral music. She does not pay much attention to lyrics ("cannot remember them"); for Sayaka, it's all about the rhythm and melody.

Music for Sayaka is huge, and in her own words, if music wasn't there, 'her life would have no meaning.' On another occasion, Sayaka says music 'enriches her heart' and 'makes everything more fun.' At the same time, in our conversations, Sayaka stresses that she doesn't listen to music much, and definitely less than her peers.

> "When I'm sad and I want to listen to a human voice, then I would look for [music] on YouTube, but not that often."

As I have inferred from our interviews and from my observations of Sayaka's practices, a big chunk of Sayaka's music listening is incidental. She does not buy music, nor does she download songs. Rarely, less than once a month, she rents an album or two from the CD rental store.

> "I don't listen [to music] while commuting. I listen to nature. Besides, it's dangerous [to listen to music] on a bicycle… But when I'm at school, often someone puts on the music when we do our experiments. It lifts me up."

Music, for Sayaka, is connecting with others. Skilled in a number of instruments, when asked about what is fun in music, Sayaka strongly emphasizes the community aspect.

> Sayaka: "The feeling of togetherness. Everyone, doing it together, becoming one. It's lonely on your own."
> Interviewer: "But you can play an instrument by yourself, can't you?"
> Sayaka: "Yeah, but it's much more fun with others. I play the electone too, but that's sad."
> Interviewer: "But the electone you can play by yourself, right?"
> Sayaka: "By myself. Lonely."

The only exception is music via YouTube, which Sayaka uses in the background while working on her project in school. She said she would put on a YouTube playlist in the morning at work, and it would continue playing until lunchtime, with little interference. This is an example of mood management in background listening.

> "For example, it's morning, and I'm at school, depressed. 'Blah, it's school again', you know. So I try to cheer myself up: put on some music, eat breakfast, organize my experiment data, and 'yeah!', I lift myself up."

Asked about listening to old songs, Sayaka, again, stresses connectedness.

> Sayaka: "The songs we used to sing together, songs that bring back our youth."
> Interviewer: "You listen, and you remember a certain time. So, 'Morning Musume'?"
> Sayaka: "Yeah, yeah. 'Morning Musume' brings back the past. We went camping recently and listened to songs from the past there, reminiscing. Together."

Melodies popular 8-10 years earlier bring back memories, but the focal point of those memories for Sayaka is the social experience: singing together, listening together. Music is vital to revive those memories, because old music is easily accessible – Sayaka, like most of the participants, keeps her old music collection at home, while archival content of television is limited to occasional nostalgia shows.

Similarly, presented with a 'desert island discs' question, Sayaka chooses:

> Sayaka: "Desert island? [I'd take] some wind orchestra remix of pop songs to dance together."
> Interviewer: "To dance together? Right, but it's desert…"
> Sayaka: "To remember, through that. You know, like 'oooh'."

Despite her impressive skills and a long history of musical training, playing music professionally has never been an option for Sayaka. "It's just a hobby. But to be able to do it as a hobby, to make a living, I need to work. To be able to keep my free days sacred."

Sayaka doesn't enjoy karaoke – she hates it, and refuses to go even when pressured by her friends. Sayaka doesn't like to be in the spotlight, with a microphone in hand – she finds it embarrassing, and doesn't enjoy singing either. However, my analysis of the data suggests that this is not because of Sayaka's fear of public performing. Her wind bands give regular concerts in schools, cultural centres or music clubs and, with her cymbals or electronic piano (admittedly, not leading instruments in a wind band), she is a vivid part of the performance. On one such occasion I observed Sayaka assume an organizing role both before and during the performance.

This is reflected in Sayaka's other media activities. Although she does not listen to radio, because 'she doesn't have a car' (other, especially younger participants similarly referred to the pairing of the two activities as exclusive). She doesn't go to movies or watch television much, as her work and study leave little time for that, but at home she catches a glimpse of variety entertainment shows watched by her family, and is knowledgeable enough to converse about popular comedy sketches with her colleagues.

Online, Sayaka uses YouTube as mentioned above, and Facebook to keep up with friends. The internet, however, she primarily uses to "look for fun places" to be able to suggest holiday spots to her circle of friends.

4.3.3 *Shigeru*

Shigeru is 35. A father of a one-and-a-half-year-old boy, he divides his time between family and work in a large service company on a lower managerial post. The firm has a long history and pre-bubble, a customary seniority system, strict hierarchy and the mentality of 'company as family', which, in practical terms, means Shigeru wakes up very early, comes home late, and relocates every few years.

Shigeru commutes 50 minutes one-way from his suburban apartment, to the office in the city centre. He spends the travel time with music, listening to songs he downloaded earlier onto his smartphone. These 100 minutes a day is the full amount of Shigeru's daily listening: all personal and all focused.

> "Yes, it's during the commute, among all the busyness, it gives my mind a break. It's as if there's a switch, this music, you switch it on and it calms you down. It gives you that certain serenity."

Shigeru's train playlist consists of roughly 50 tracks on his phone, not organized in any playlist, and most often played in shuffle mode. More play control is unnecessary, he feels, because the songs on the phone's memory are very similar: in tone, rhythm and words. Shigeru said he edits his playlists every 10 days or so, and then replaces all the songs with new ones. Because he looks for a certain type of music, he is careful in the process of choosing songs to download. He hears about popular artists or albums from friends and colleagues, or looks for new releases from his favourites on the internet – but always checks the songs once on YouTube to assess whether they will be appropriate for his needs. Only then does he download them onto his smartphone.

Shigeru looks mainly for Japanese ballads; for him, they serve the purpose of calming him down and helping him to deal with work-related stress much better than the energetic rock or punk songs he used to listen to.

> Shigeru: "So, more than rhythm and such, for me, the content of lyrics gets to me I think…"
> Interviewer: "So for you, what kind of lyrics are good?"

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> Shigeru: "Right. Well. Like, 'when you struggle now, if you work hard, you will be rewarded.' I think I like lyrics with these kind of nuances."
>
> Interviewer: "To motivate yourself."
>
> Shigeru: "Exactly. Things like that, you know."

This change in music marks Shigeru's entrance into the workforce. In the past, influenced by his older siblings, he used to listen to Japanese rock, punk and foreign pop rock (among others, B'z, The Blue Hearts and The Beatles). Shigeru's brother owned a stereo, and young, 12-year-old Shigeru would spend his pocket money on new rock releases quite regularly. Those up-tempo songs do nothing for him now, apart from some fleeting nostalgia when he heard them incidentally:

> "In the past, yes. When I hear an old song, for example, I recall my middle school days, and so on. How it was. But recently all I listen to sounds similar to each other [and different to what I used to listen]. So that [variety] doesn't happen much anymore."

At home, apart from the occasional editing of the mobile phone playlist (done with earphones), there is no music for Shigeru. He usually comes back late, when his son is asleep, and he has no time to watch television, listen to music or read – and he is too tired to do anything else besides eating and sleeping. The weekends are for the family: playing, walking in the park, going out – but music is not part of these activities. When the family travels by car, a CD with nursery rhymes is used on the car's stereo, Shigeru implies that this is more a way to keep his son entertained than a shared practice.

Shigeru's media use was different before he got a job and became a 'salaryman'. In his university days, he remembers watching television music shows, going to occasional live shows and frequenting karaoke booths at least once a week. Now there is no time for any of this – apart from a work-related karaoke every three months or so.

4.3.4   *Hikari*

In her last year of high school and about to start a community college course in physiotherapy is 18-year-old Hikari. The school also runs on a Saturday, so six days a

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week Hikari follows a similar routine: school until the afternoon, then dinner at home, some television and music to relax, and study in the evening. On Sunday morning until early afternoon, Hikari works in a meat specialty restaurant ("It's tough!").

It takes 40 minutes to get to school by train, and that time Hikari spends with music on her iPod. She also uses the iPod before falling asleep in the evening.

> "Before sleeping, always. I fall asleep with earphones on. They fall off when I roll in my sleep."

Hikari tells me that she puts a lot of effort into arranging her music collection, and my interpretation of data collected by observing Hikari's listening practices also suggest that Hikari's use of music is very conscious. Her music folders on her iPod are neatly organized into functional playlists: music 'for sleeping', 'for the commute', 'new releases' and so on. The collection is huge, and is carefully, yet not frequently, updated. In the span of four months during the fieldwork, she only added a handful of songs to her iPod: "I rarely add new artists – rather just new releases from my favourites." Hikari's favourites are all Japanese – she likes to be able to understand the lyrics – and include a selection of Top 10 charting artists and some independent acts. There is also a significant portion of music from the 1980s and 1990s, which is Hikari's father's influence and, for Hikari, links back to her childhood memories of car listening.

Like most of her peers, Hikari doesn't buy CDs – because they are expensive, and rental stores provide a much cheaper alternative. There's also YouTube, used in a similar way as Shigeru, that is, mostly to discover new music. Hikari inputs the artist's name in the YouTube search box, looks for songs she didn't already know, and then follows the algorithmic recommendations appearing after the video – skipping when something doesn't match her taste. If a song is good, Hikari downloads it and transfers to her iPod.

> Hikari: "I hate noise, and the buzz outside. I want to shut it out."
> Interviewer: "Right. From your world."
> Hikari: "And when I hear up-tempo songs, my walking gets faster."

Interviewer: "Yes, yes. And when the song changes, the walking changes?"

Hikari: "Yeah, yeah. If it's a bit slower, then I do too, to match my walk to the rhythm. And when it's faster I go quickly… If it looks I won't make it for the train, I [choose] an up-tempo song to walk faster, so that I can make it."

Interviewer: "Of course."

Hikari: "As long as I'm listening to music, I don't seem to get tired."

Interviewer: "And before sleeping and when you sleep – are those different songs?"

Hikari: "For sleeping those are the songs I want to listen to. A bit more peaceful songs. Because sometimes [when I press the wrong playlist], when I am about to fall asleep and Maximum the Hormone pops up, and it goes 'waaah!'. And I'm wide awake."

A division becomes evident: background listening while walking, but focused listening before sleep. As discussed in the next section, the two serve different purposes and are surrounded by different circumstances.

Hikari is unable to attend big concerts because of financial and time reasons, but enjoys seeing school orchestra performances and small-scale gigs when she can. The big thing is karaoke, which Hikari loves – and is extremely knowledgeable about. During karaoke sessions with Hikari and her friends I observed, she was always in charge of technology and in-room games. She would manipulate the karaoke software to compare the group's singing scores with the rest of Japan. She knew how to search for a specific performance video of a song, so everyone could join her in recreating the choreography routine while looking at the screen. And she would come up with ways to amuse her peers while singing, such as covering parts of the lyrics to test their memory and dividing a popular song into parts to sing together etc.

Hikari frequents karaoke with various groups of friends, with family (where a three-way software-mediated singing contest between Hikari, her mother and her grandmother is a regular feature, too), but also, and quite often, by herself – to practice before group sessions, or simply to sing her favourite songs loudly, which is difficult at home. However, the pleasures of karaoke, as hinted, are not limited to singing, but rather reveal practices of connecting and competing.

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> Hikari: "When you pick songs nobody picks, less known songs, it says [on the screen] 'this month six people sang this song…' Or when you use DAM[5] machines, it shows you your ranking real-time, and it tells you, for example, how many points you need to get to the second place. I looked at it and it makes me happy."
>
> Interviewer: "It's fun, isn't it?"
>
> Hikari: "It's fun, and, since the computer scores [your singing], there's this [option of] 'ultra harsh marking' and when you're bad it cuts you off, goes down. We do that with the family too."
>
> Interviewer: "Wow. And you can do that, with computer?"
>
> Hikari: "Usually, when we do it with friends, we sometimes want to quit the song before it ends, before the marks come up. Because it gets competitive, becomes a contest. And when I really want to sing freely, I come by myself."

There is, again, a distinction between personal and social music use. The group karaoke sessions mean family bonding and connecting with peers, and include social rites: picking older songs to sing with the grandmother, and choosing an appropriate singing mode so all the classmates feel comfortable.

4.3.5 *Naoki*

Naoki is 21 and in university. He leaves home in the morning and takes two trains to get to school, and that takes him an hour-and-a-half. Three or four days a week, straight after school, he works part time at a Japanese-style bar until late. He catches the last train and gets home, tired and sleepy. On no-work days, and even sometimes after work, he spends evenings with friends, hanging around convenience stores and all-night shops, like Don Quijote. On a very busy night, he occasionally gets home early in the morning and sleeps until noon, but usually returns about midnight.

Travelling between home, school and work, Naoki, like most participants, listens to music through his iPod. The practice lets him unwind, not think about his duties, and energizes him for upcoming challenges. He only listens to Japanese music because

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[5] Brand name of a popular karaoke system.

although he doesn't pay that much attention to the meaning of the lyrics, foreign words 'throw him off' as he doesn't understand them.

I met Naoki a number of times, and he would often stress the importance of the music on his iPod. "The daily commute would be a disaster without it", he said, referring to the role of music for companionship and self-regulation. However, as I discovered through my interviews with Naoki, the contents of his iPod are not only not regularly edited by Naoki, but he did not choose the songs in the first place. When I asked Naoki the 'desert island discs' question, he admitted that he did not quite know how to operate the technology.

> Naoki: "So, 'Battle and Romance' by Momoiro Clover Z is one, but they don't have more albums yet. And then what else. Tokyo Jihen maybe. I'd take an album by Tokyo Jihen. And Shōta Shimizu. These are the artists I became a fan of in university. I don't put songs into the iPod myself. I don't know how to do it really, so I don't. I don't have Momoiro Clover Z there, so for me when using iPod, it's always Shōta Shimizu."
> Interviewer: "So, what do you do?"
> Naoki: "With the iPod? I listen to songs that are there. That were [sic] there before."
> Interviewer: "Someone did it for you in the past?"
> Naoki: "Yeah. Someone helped me put them in. And it stayed like this till now."

At home and in the car, Naoki engages with music in a different way – through concert recordings. Idol group Momoiro Clover Z is his music of choice, and each night before sleeping, Naoki enjoys parts of a concert DVD in his room. In his words, he just presses 'continue' when he gets home, and, watches a song or two in bed before falling asleep. In the car, Naoki is able to watch the same DVD too, as the vehicle is equipped with a video system.

Momoiro Clover Z (see also Chapter 6) is "fun, wacky, and cheers me up." Naoki emphasized the hard work the girls put in in all their performances – choreography, dance, talking segments – and how it all come together on the DVD. For Naoki, this is motivating and helpful to continue the everyday struggles of work and school life.

Needless to say, Naoki says he would love to meet the artists. A handshake event with Momoiro Clover Z would be ideal ("to tell them 'carry on' or 'thank you' in person"), but a concert is second best. Naoki had already been to one the previous year, and could not wait for another chance ("a female friend is in the fan club, so we might be able to get tickets").

Momoiro Clover Z is also Naoki's repertoire at karaoke, where he often goes with a group of high school friends. Naoki's karaoke is an intense, fan experience: the choice is limited to the handful of songs the group have released so far, but Naoki knows the (often complicated) lyrics perfectly, and, despite often singing out of tune, gives it his everything, including choreography. This is a way to celebrate the fandom, and perhaps, to sing idol songs loudly, which might be difficult in his busy house. Karaoke, then, happens for Naoki only with trusted friends: he needs to feel comfortable and not pay attention to social conventions. He doesn't participate in others' performances, or invite others to join in. It is about him – and the girls from Momoiro Clover Z.

4.4   Discussion

A finding emerging from my analysis of the participants' practices, and visible through the five profiles discussed in the previous section, is first and foremost, the diversity of social practices of listening. Music is encountered in a variety of daily situations, through a plethora of devices, and with different meanings emerging from the encounters.

When Shigeru describes his train listening practice, it is similar to the classic mood-managerial mode as observed by DeNora (2000): Shigeru is not only consciously regulating his mood via music, but also perceives the distinct elements of music (in this case, tempo and lyrics) as different tools in achieving a desired emotional state. This listening practice aligns with his everyday routine and identity as a salaried employee, commuting to work every morning and back home to his wife and child in the evening. The challenges of a stressful job continue, as Shigeru, a mid-level manager, has to

organize work for junior colleagues as well as respond to pressure from senior managers. In his own words, he needs to stay calm at work, and there is no space for nerves – and to get to that mood, he has found that a particular kind of Japanese ballad works best. In a similar way, Hisae, also from 'the lost' cohort, described her three-step, elaborate listening strategy of overcoming sadness, which I discuss later, in Chapter 6.

On the one hand, this reflects Shigeru's age and experience. When he reflects that he has had different musical interests in the past (including Japanese rock and punk), he acknowledges that they do not work for him anymore in the context of a mood management practice – he has tried them, but they do not calm him in the way ballads do. But a range of other identities come into play as well, when Shigeru talks about his stressful job, which leaves little time for music or about the differences between his generation and younger colleagues, which, for him, are also reflected in music choices.

For Sayaka and Yoshimi, music is often a practice of connecting. Yoshimi, both as a nursery professional and as a homemaker, communicates with her children through music: by exercising together, by listening to CDs in the car, finally, by sharing her music with children – and by listening to songs her children bring home from the nursery. For Sayaka, music is a means to connect her with her friends, past and present. Both Yoshimi and Sayaka, when connecting through music, are not concerned about particular artists, but the texts do matter: they need to be accessible and pleasant for everyone in order for the connection to succeed.

Naoki describes music as a companion. It is there with him in almost every aspect of his everyday routine: from the early morning, through the long commute back and forth, and in the evening, when he falls asleep. And yet, most of these practices involve music Naoki did not choose himself. Why? It is unlikely that Naoki has no one to turn to with the iPod playlist maintenance. Naoki is the youngest of four boys, all still living at home, and seems to have good relations with his parents as well (who are technologically savvy – on another occasion Naoki told me about his parents transferring songs from a rental CD to a car stereo hard drive). A more plausible

explanation is that, for Naoki, listening while commuting is not a focused enjoyment of favourite music (otherwise he would make an effort to transfer his favourite Momoiro Clover Z to his iPod), but background melodic noise, which calms by its familiarity and repetition.

Finally, music is linked to identity by all of the participants above. For Yoshimi, this is the personal, focused listening of B'z. For Sayaka, it is the wind-orchestral music listened to alongside working. Hikari expresses herself through the highly personalised playlists and through karaoke performances, while Naoki, as a Momoiro Clover Z supporter, does it by watching DVD footages over and over again.

All the practices discussed above (mood management, connecting, companionship and listening-as-identity) are imbued with meanings. Through the analysis of the five profiles, it becomes apparent that practices intersect modes and routines; meaning is situated not in the text nor in the context – but in the act of practice, in the interaction. Mood management can happen in the background, and it can be the goal of a focused practice. Connecting through music can be performed in the car or at work – while doing other things and when concentrating only on the song. Practices cannot be categorically and exclusively mapped into modes: because audiences transverse through modes, the latter are not enough to analyse and understand meanings and interpretations.

The models described earlier in the chapter cannot do this because of their linearity. Truax's approach, although helpfully addressing the discussion via the concept of attention, is still unable to capture the audiences' experience with music. Take listening at home while doing housework, for instance, which was a common practice among the participants. This is hardly Truax's 'background listening', because the music is important for the listener, and can play a number of roles – companionship, motivation, relaxation, and so on. Although the attention is low, the listener does not ignore the sound, but embraces its background presence. The action is not Truax's listening-in-readiness, as the listening process is less about pattern recognition or reaction, and more about companionship and self-regulation (and surely it is not

Truax's listening-in-search either, because the sound is not prioritized or sought for among other sounds).

A prime examples of a complex site of practice is the karaoke booth, where participants can sing and dance, support and cheer, play games – or just tune out and use their phones to remind themselves of the upcoming lyrics. Karaoke can be empowering, just like the club was for the British youth in the 1990s (Thornton, 1995), which could be seen through Hikari's enthusiasm for karaoke technology, and in the light of Hikari's karaoke-for-one sessions. However, karaoke can also reinforce social rites of hierarchy and increase tensions, and we can observe this through Naoki or Sayaka's stories. This complexity stems not only from the fact that music is multimodal (see Section 4.1) – but also from the fact that individual meanings and emotions (Sayaka's reluctance, Hikari's social awareness, Naoki's sense of privacy) can affect the interpretation of the general practice.

Karaoke is linked to other practices with different emotions and pleasures, and requires a set of complex practices to sustain it. Moreover, in karaoke different meanings emerge also because of the significance of music texts. The karaoke practice is centred on the texts, from the song and video choice appropriate for the occasion, through the personal, social and cultural significance of lyrics and melody, ending with the various textual and meta-textual games played inside the karaoke booth. The particular texts, then, cannot be disregarded when analysing practices; on the contrary, the interpretation processes need to be included in the analytical model to enrich understanding of social practices of listening.

And so, the musicological models make certain unchallenged assumptions about the listener, the listening process and the sound text – most notably, they posit that the listening is a linear process. Strong parallels can be drawn here to the uses and gratifications theory described in detail in Chapter 2. Just like in uses and gratifications, the above listening mode taxonomies offer limited generalizability, a limited account of audience activity and a limited range of factors beyond the audiences' goals. Specifically, the assumptions can be challenged by the following points that I have drawn from my data.

First, not every listening activity is functional or driven by goals, as audiences engage with music in a variety of ways, and are not always motivated by earning gratification. Moreover, even when listening *is* linked to goals, these are dynamic and changing (cf. Lemish, 1985). Second, listening cannot only be defined by individual cognitive processes, as the models suggest, as music can be and often is a social activity. This element of sociality is not always absent in the models, falling under 'listening styles', but it is never emphasized enough. Third, in the presented conceptualizations, the significance of text is either missing, or the text is presented in a simplified way, suggesting a straightforward causal link between the qualities of the text and the mode of listening. Fourth, there are other factors in listening to which the theories do not attend (such as the knowledge and attitude of production processes, social rules and conventions, the wider conditions of meaning-making etc.), and which could be traced though the moments on the circuit of culture mentioned in Chapter 2, and concepts such as co-evolution, introduced in Chapter 5. In the next chapter, I will further analyse those practices by looking at the relation between audiences and artists, and between production and reception.

Chapter 5: Idols and virtual idols

> *Midsummer – sounds good!*
> *Murmuring, I want to take the next step*
> *In the curriculum of love.* ('Manatsu no Sounds Good!', written by Yasushi Akimoto and performed by AKB48, 2012)
>
> *And so I melt*
> *I want to walk holding hands with you*
> *But is it goodbye time already?*
> *Hug me now!*
> *… or something.* ('Melt', written by ryo and performed by Hatsune Miku, 2007)

5.1   Introduction

"Completely different", says Taiki ('the relaxed', man) about the similarities between idols and virtual idols' songs. Taiki explains that with the former, all you get are boring and predictable accounts of summer flings (presumably, just like the one by AKB48 quoted above), or narratives of having a secret crush on a classmate. "How is this different?" I ask, pointing to the karaoke screen from which Taiki's friend, Shōta, is passionately singing the lyrics of 'Melt' (see above). "Wait for it", promises Taiki, and so we wait, singing along with Shōta. When the song is over, I feel like I missed the answer, so Taiki helpfully recalls the last line of the song: "or something". I must still look confused, and Taiki explains that because of the last phrase, you can see that Miku, the singing virtual idol, was only half-serious throughout the song. She wasn't cute, naïve or bubbly – "that's not who she is." Taiki says that it was all a ruse to get closer to that boy she likes in the song, but she is really not girly like that. And the cover's blown in the last line.

Participating in karaoke sessions with Taiki and Shōta was one of the many moments in the research where audiences' interpretations of texts emerged as rich, nuanced, and often surprising. Such discussions were especially revealing when they concerned idols, both virtual and real, who, in Japan in 2012, were at the peak of national popularity. Through observations of audiences' interactions with texts and

performances of idol groups, such as AKB48, and of vocaloid performers, such as Hatsune Miku, a complex map of interactions emerged and was additionally complicated by interviews with the producers, managers and musicians.

Chapter 4 introduced the framework of practices, encompassing not only modes, choices and routines, but also meanings and emotions stemming from audiences' interactions with texts. This contextualized the act of listening and music media in everyday life. This chapter focuses on the links between production, texts and reception, and maps the range of ways of engaging between producers and audiences. Drawing from interviews with and observations of audience engagements with music, and from interviews with representatives of the Japanese music industry, I present and analyse the ways of interaction as viewed by both sides.

That last sentence requires explanation. Dividing 'both sides' in such a definite manner into producers and audiences is contrary to recent trends in audience research and fan studies (Delmar et al, 2013; O'Neill, Gallego and Zeller, 2013; Coppa, 2014). Henry Jenkins (2009), in particular, argues that with the rise of new media and participatory culture, the line between audiences and producers has become blurred, as amateur audiences are more and more actively shaping the media flow. Audiences are therefore not just consumers, but rather, 'prosumers' or 'produsers' (cf. Bruns, 2007, 2008), which emphasizes their agency and creativity. I discuss this further in Chapter 6 (in Section 6.2), but note here that I do not deny audiences that agency – nor am I contesting the fact the audiences are active. I do, however, engage with some of the debates concerning the true extent of the audiences' creative participation (especially that of young audiences) and its offline civic influence (cf. Livingstone et al, 2005; Östman, 2012). Moreover, as mentioned earlier in Chapter 2, it is helpful to look back to the model of the circuit of culture and its moments of production and consumption (and representation, identity and regulation), and to use that conceptualization to operationalize this study.

With this in mind, two case studies are drawn on here to illustrate the map of audience engagements with music. The first is the Japanese idol industry and its fans, analysed

here through the examples of all-girl idol groups Momoiro Clover Z and AKB48. AKB48, a unique concept band consisting of over 200 (constantly rotating) members, is arguably the only music act in the world to regularly sell more than one million copies of single CDs. Along with Momoiro Clover Z (a smaller girl band of 'only' five members), they enjoy unprecedented intergenerational popularity, and are two out of only six music groups to have performed at the iconic National Olympic Stadium in Tokyo since its opening in 1958. What are the reasons behind such success? In this chapter I look at how these idols' personas are produced and engaged with, focusing especially on the concept of proximity between audiences and performers.

The second case is the Japanese virtual idol Hatsune Miku, and by extension, other idols from the vocaloid line. Miku, a virtual persona and initially a marketing avatar for voice synthesizer software, sings and dances, performs at live concerts, stars in commercials, and tours the world through a hologram projection. My analysis of the data suggests that for her fans and producers, Miku is a 'real' entity, and the lack of a physical body can even enhance the emotional engagements on offer during the audiencehood. How is that possible? I analyse those engagements to focus on the emotional and interpretational processes at play, and compare those to the non-virtual idolatry in the first case study. In doing so, I use proximity and authenticity as key concepts in artist–audience interactions.

Finally, the idea of diminishing distance between performers and audiences, stemming from a number of studies of Japanese popular culture described in this chapter, and emerging from my analysis of empirical data, is compared with Horton and Wohl's model (1956) of parasocial interaction and Western literature on stars and idol gazing. This chapter aims to investigate the observed proximity, often framed as a unique Japanese phenomenon by scholarship on modern Japan, arguing whether it can inform existing academic conceptualizations of global idols and/or it can be successfully analysed through existing frameworks, drawing especially on the idea of parasocial interaction between performers (as created by producers) and audiences.

5.2   Popular music in Japan

Why the two case studies of idols and virtual idols? To understand the relevance of idol groups and vocaloids for contemporary Japanese audiences, we need to look back briefly at the history of popular music in Japan, and the dialogue between local and global influences of the form and the content. Idol pop and vocaloid music emerge as influential styles for both of the analysed cohorts, albeit in different ways. They are closely tied in with the spectrum of economic, social and technological transformations that Japan has experienced in the past 30 years.

For scholars of Japan, modern Japanese popular music usually begins with the start of the Meiji restoration in 1868 (Hosokawa et al, 1991; Condry, 2011). After centuries of an isolationist stance, Japan was forced to open up to the world, and the changes, shaping and restructuring of the country for years to come also included music, brought in on foreign vessels in the form of marching bands and military tunes – which was very different to popular *shamisen*[6] or *shakuhachi*[7] music of the earlier Edo period. Soldier training centres in Japan started incorporating the marches into the military regimen before 1868 (as early as the late 1850s, after Commodore Perry's second visit to Japan), creating a style that scale-wise drew from earlier Japanese folk songs, but was undeniably more influenced by the sound of Western drum and fife bands (Mitsui, 2014, p.3).

Military music bands accompanied Japan in periods of war surrounding the dawn of the 20th century and thereafter, but were only one aspect of the changing soundscape (Oba, 2010). Much of the musical shift was done through the education system, as Western (including, among others, English, American, German, Spanish) melodies became officially used in the Japanese elemental school music curriculum. Japan slowly but steadily became familiar with previously unknown scales and chord progressions, by learning popular overseas tunes such as 'Greenville' or 'The Bells of Scotland' with original Japanese lyrics (Mitsui, 2014, p.4).

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[6] A three-stringed, plucked instrument similar in structure to a banjo.
[7] A type of end-blown flute.

The early 20th century saw a variety of Western music brought to the country (by travelling performers, passengers, and mostly by thriving cargo liners filled with cultural goods and commodities), including Italian opera, musicals, a number of dances, and the style that became the symbol of modern Japan, jazz (Atkins, 2001, p.97). With the birth of radio stations and ever-increasing communication between Japan and the rest of the world, Western music in Japan started diversifying fast. New genres were introduced, following American and European trends on the one hand, and the domestic political situation on the other (these political factors included, for example, the presence of occupation forces after the Second World War and a growing cultural exchange with other East Asian countries). And so, just to select a few trends from the 20th century, French *chanson* were popularized in Japan in the 1930s, country and western in the 1940s, rock'n'roll in the 1950s, blues and folk in the 1960s, and rap in the 1990s (Condry, 2011, pp.239-42; Mitsui, 2014, pp.6-10).

Three caveats need to be added to the above narrative, however. First, while it might seem from this brief recap that the history of foreign music in Japan is a simple progression of genres, the reality is considerably more complex. The genres *did* gain popularity in specific decades, but they were not the only types of music available to audiences at the time. Different parts of Japan, different cultural sites and different classes engaged with the new on specific and unique terms, and the popularity of artists or songs was never homogeneous throughout the country – not to mention that the genres kept on evolving, blending and separating. Unfortunately, there is no opportunity for me in this thesis to analyse more thoroughly the evolution of inter- and intra-national flows of music in the 20th century in Japan (especially because the nature of such narrative would eventually require an overview reaching back to at least the 8th century and the imperial court music of *gagaku*). I am, instead, interested in the connections and overlaps music as a social practice has had with the structural, ideological and agentic processes of modern Japan. Still, the awareness of complex and diverse issues has enabled me to have a deeper engagement with my data, and these issues need to be kept in mind in the following sections.

Second, the cultural exchange was never one-sided. While in the beginning (that is, in the 1860s) Western visitors were reluctant to acknowledge Japanese traditional music as anything but unpleasant (Mitsui, 2014, p.2), similar accounts exist describing first Japanese encounters with Western music (Nakamura, 1987). Nevertheless, Japanese traditional instruments and melodies were successfully introduced in Europe and the US through the music of travelling performers, beginning in the 1860s. Although it took almost a century from the start of the Meiji restoration for a Japanese song to reach the US Billboard number one chart (Sakamoto Kyū's 'Ue o muite arukō', problematically and nonsensically[8] renamed as 'Sukiyaki' in England in 1962, and in the US in 1963), Japanese influences have been overt in the works of many European composers (Messiaen or Puccini,[9] to name just two). Again, there is no space to recount these transnational currents in detail here; this intervention serves rather as a means of distancing from essentialist accounts of Japan and Westernization (for a more detailed critique of such accounts, see Takahashi, 2010).

Third, and perhaps most notably, any narrative of music in Japan seen as a clear-cut interaction of 'Western' and 'domestic' is too simplistic – and misses the point. Western music was never *just* imported or localized in the Japanese setting. The unfamiliar tunes gained their meaning not only from their origins or added 'Japanese' elements (such as traditional instruments, native lyrics or a slightly modified musical scale), but also from wider structural changes in the Japanese economy and society at the time (Condry, 2011, p.243), which took the music in very different directions. For example, the spread and popularity of the classical Western canon and the perception of Europe as the home of fine, dignified music (as opposed to 'lowly' folk or traditional Japanese melodies) by the Japanese in the early 20th century needs to be considered together with the rise of the middle class and intellectual circles in Japan (Imoto,

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[8] *Ue o muite arukō* translates to 'I look up when I walk', while the word *sukiyaki*, denoting a Japanese traditional hot pot dish, has no relation to the original song (but was considered catchier than 'Ue…'). The additional layer to this story is that the lyrics, written by Rokusuke Ei, were influenced by the failure of the students' protests over the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the US and Japan, which is very subtly hinted at in the original version of the song.

[9] Puccini's 'Madame Butterfly', along heavily orientalist tropes, includes a large number of traditional Japanese songs.

2006). Similarly, the story of Japanese jazz has to be read in the light of structural specifities. For instance, the distinctive popularity of shorter jazz songs in Japan can be linked to musicians being paid by the song, which in turn was influenced by economics and the culture of jazz halls and taxi dancers'[10] employment structure (Atkins, 2001).

It is therefore unwise to separate the budding dominance of domestic music over Western music in Japan (starting from the 1960s) from advancements in recording technology, and from the rise of Japan as a post-war economic superpower. It is in this context that the 1970s and 1980s in Japan emerged as an important and vibrant period. Undoubtedly, the Western-influenced, Japanese-infused styles of rock'n'roll and folk were still maintaining strong popularity, as was *kayōkyoku*, a syncretic genre with roots in Japanese traditional folk, Western light jazz and boogie (among others). None of these, however, captured the hearts of the youth, who, coming of age in a completely new, powerful country, couldn't fully identify with Western stars covered by Japanese performers (Mitsui, 2014, p.12).

These transformations, combined with changes in industry and marketing (cross-media promotions, the rise of the 'office model'), consumerism and politics, resulted in the birth of new styles of music in the 1970s and their continued popularity in the 1980s. Among these we can include a new kind of *kayōkyoku* called 'idol music' or 'idol *kayō*', performed by young attractive singers, with elaborate choreographies and uniquely Japanese lyrics; socially and politically engaged Japanese folk; rebellious (or pretending to rebel) Group Sounds (GS) and new rock; and later, flashy disco music to match the lavish bubble economy. All were fresh, all defied the music of the previous generation, who, alienated by the dramatic changes in modern music, turned to *enka*, a type of revived sentimental ballad playing on the (reinvented) images of a 'perfect hometown' and 'the Japanese heart' (Wajima, 2014). Between the 1990s and 2000s, of all these genres, except *enka*, only idol music remained a distinct style. Modern folk, rock and GS amalgamated into an eclectic mainstream mass that the Japanese refer to as 'pop' (*poppusu*), and which the world outside Japan calls 'J-pop'.

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[10] In the early 20th century in the US, taxi dancers were paid dance partners, hired on a dance-by-dance basis.

The subsequent decade was initially less revolutionary. The 1990s started as a variation of the above: idol music was still popular; folk, GS and new rock became pop; and *enka* still played an important role, especially outside of the big cities.[11] Underground venues experimented with punk and hip-hop, but (for now) on a small, local scale, and limited to large cities. Even the economic bubble bursting in 1992 did not change the music industry immediately. It wasn't until the late 1990s that all the elements reached their critical mass. Effective production efforts and marketing, the dramatic rise of dance music, Japanese hip-hop, R&B, as well as techno resulted in the highest grossing period for music in the post-war Japanese history of recorded music. And then, in the 2000s, the sales suddenly declined. To some extent this was mirroring global trends, but scholars of Japan also point to domestic factors: the spread of broadband internet across the country, the popularity of CD rental stores, young consumers turning to DVDs and video games instead of music (Condry, 2010, pp.242-3), and the continuing domination of an archaic distribution system, which, for a long time, completely ignored digital sales. This was the story of the first decade of the 21st century in Japan: sales were plummeting, and nobody knew exactly why.

In 2011 the trend was reversed with the comeback of 'idol music'. During what is now hailed as the global financial crisis, Japan became a lone, profiting island, largely thanks to one band, AKB48, and its physical CD sales. Formed through an open audition in 2005 by a veteran producer and lyricist Akimoto Yasushi, the group of teenage girls initially performed daily live concerts in a small indoor theatre in Akihabara, Central Tokyo, as 'idols you can meet'. Originally consisting of 20 performers, the group membership gradually expanded through subsequent auditions, and soon reached and surpassed Akimoto's goal of having 48 members split into three teams. Following local devoted fandom in Akihabara, the group steadily gained mainstream interest, and within six months had a top ten single in the charts,[12] and countrywide exposure on television. In 2015, there are currently 137 core members of AKB48 divided into five

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[11] *Enka* targets the older rural demographic, which is also evident by the format of the releases (cassette tapes which can be used in farm vehicles).
[12] AKB48, 'Sakura no Hanabiratachi', written by Akimoto Yasushi and Hiroshi Uesugi, 2006.

teams (as well as into multiple sub-groups and solo acts), and an additional 50 members with part-time status. The brand also includes a number of sister groups in Japan and Asia. With over 30 million physical CDs sold, AKB48 is the world's sixth best-selling female group in history.

Scholars (Aoyagi, 2005; Ota, 2011; Gailbraith, 2013) attribute the popularity of AKB48 to a combination of factors, including their intergenerational appeal (see Chapter 6), the legacy of 'idol groups' in Japan (see later sections in this chapter), or the extended media. A common thread in those observations is the proximate distance between group members and the audience, a characteristic achieved through a myriad of production and marketing initiatives (contests, elections, handshake events, cross-media promotions, but also the content and form of the media texts as well as the idol personas), which I introduce later in this chapter. Idol pop in the early 2010s emerges as a spiritual offspring of *kayōkyoku*, originally a hybrid of Japanese and non-Japanese elements, but now a unique and self-referential style on its own.

Finally, the last decade is the period when vocaloid (a brand new style of music and music-making) was born. The name 'vocaloid' denotes both the singing synthesizer software, first commercially released in 2003, and the style of music created using the software. The defining feature of the software, and the source of its (now worldwide) popularity, is the marketing concept of selling vocaloids as virtual personas – personal singers, complete with visual representations (avatars) and ascribed personalities. Vocaloid, as discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, opened up new opportunities for music creation, as, thanks to the software, composers and musicians no longer needed to record voice tracks in order to add vocals to their songs. Moreover, through its pioneering creative license arrangements (see Section 5.4.2), vocaloid defied existing models of production and distribution by allowing free non-commercial and paid commercial use of the vocaloid characters. Vocaloid also stood in stark contrast to any other music on the Japanese market, both lyrically and musically, although in many ways it built on the *aidoru* culture. Vocaloid avatars, such as Hatsune Miku, are presented as idol personas, albeit virtual, and as such, virtual idols are soon embraced by young audiences.

It is impossible to dissect current popular music in Japan fully by splitting it into the two exclusive categories of domestic and foreign influences (Tokita and Hughes, 2008, pp.1-2). Each of the popular music genres across the two discussed centuries needs to be contextualized within a wider spectrum of social, cultural and economic changes as well as transforming audiences. In the past 30 years, these transformations have coincided with two major occurrences in Japanese music – the rise of idols to intergenerational, mainstream popularity, and the invention and spread of vocaloid music.

There are certain technological advances that have made the two occurrences possible. For vocaloid, it is the development of concatenative synthesis software, which allows for linking short units of speech (syllables) into verses to form a song. In both cases we could mention the new platforms for exposure (digital television, broadband, interactive karaoke technology, portable music players) and the new opportunities for artist–audience interaction (the rise of social media, mobile internet). But these emerging technologies accompanied wider trends, and the most important of these was inflated economic growth in the 1980s, followed by the deep crisis that began in the early 1990s, and continues until the present. The rise and fall that significantly affected the Japanese economy, changed labour market, culture, education and national identity (see Chapter 6). Music was an inevitable part of these social processes, and not only its production, but especially its interpretation, also changed.

Today's 30-somethings are the first generation to have grown up with idol music. They are familiar with the style – they can relate AKB48 to idol groups such as Onyanko Club from the late 1980s or Morning Musume from the 1990s and 2000s – and they recall the changing attitudes to singing groups, from sub-cultural stigma to inter-generational acceptance. The evolution of idols and the progressing emphasis on performers' effort and everyday struggles mirrors the cohort's narratives in post-economic bubble Japan. Today's teenagers and young adults, on the other hand, born in the period of idols' chart dominance in Japan had not experienced the evolution. For

most of the cohort's personal music history, AKB48 were already national darlings. Although many young people do listen to idol music (cf. Chapter 6), in the words of one participant, "this is not exactly their music" (Shiho, 18, individual interview), because they are inevitably sharing it with previous generations. In this context, vocaloid emerges as a completely new paradigm, offering the youth a means to 'rebel', a new approach to producing, sharing and engaging with music.

As such, the two cases present an opportunity to insightfully investigate Japanese audiences within a spectrum of social processes. I am not suggesting that idols and vocaloid represent Japanese music between 1980 and 2010 in a true and conclusive way. Alternative investigations could be completed using other empirical examples. Ian Condry (2006) analysed the changes in Japan through his detailed study on Japanese hip-hop and rap. Christine Yano (2003) researched *enka* to capture the transformations of Japanese identity. In addition to possibly revisiting those genres, cases for studying Japanese reggae (*japarege*), anime music, punk, 'visual kei' or heavy metal could also be made in place of this research. None of this music, however, is as appealing to demographically diverse audiences as idols and virtual idols. Whereas hip-hop and *enka* focus on specific areas of Japan, and reggae or punk take us into secluded, sub-cultural territories, idols are engaged with by the young and the old, big city dwellers and farmers, salaried men and housewives. I explain this quality of mainstream, countrywide appeal in the rest of this chapter through the concept of proximity.

5.3 Star proximity and parasocial interactions

The distance and intimacy between performers and audiences is not a new topic of academic inquiry in either musicology (Baron, 2008) or media studies (Cook, 2011), but it rarely combines the perspective of artists/producers and listeners. In this section I begin with the concept of parasocial interaction, and by the end of the chapter propose its update from television studies in the 1950s to the study of music audiences now.

In 1956 Horton and Wohl coined the term *parasocial relationship* to describe an interaction between audiences and performers (1956/2006). Performers on the radio or television assume personas (or personae), who, through a variety of strategies, can achieve close intimacy, satisfying and influential for masses of viewers and listeners. These strategies include (1) the casual, informal style of performing; (2) the close rapport between the performer and their supporting cast; (3) 'blending' with the studio audience through verbal interaction and/or with the home and studio audience through watching a different footage 'together'; and (4) the use of technical devices and camera techniques (Horton and Wohl, 2006, pp.2-5).

Such parasocial relationships, Horton and Wohl argued, are unbalanced, in that they are controlled by the performer who is responsible for initiating the intimacy, and, depending on their success in doing so, the audiences may maintain the intimacy through fan interaction (p.5). The role of the audience is, then, not just perception, but 'the role enactment that completes' the interaction (p.6). Here, the idea of 'completing' foreshadows audience gap-filling and Iser's (1970) model of the implied reader mentioned in Chapter 2. Similar to Iser's skeletal structure of the text suggesting the audience response, in Horton and Wohl's parasocial interaction, audience is 'coached' towards appropriate responses by the format of the show and values emerging from repeated interaction with the personas.

Thus, Horton and Wohl did not disregard the idea that audiences might reject the role prescribed for them by the performer, but their analysis was focused on ways the performers tweak their strategies to adjust to the audience. Audiences' concerns, they suggested, often stem from insufficient engagement with the show, or from a mismatch between demographic or cultural characteristics and the format or content, which can be (at least to an extent) controlled by producers and personas.

Horton and Wohl referred in their framework to radio and early television stars (mostly the latter, and focused on the chat show genre), but the idea has been widely used with regard to newer television formats as well as the new media. For instance, the two elements of a parasocial relationship – lack of reciprocity and imbalance of

information – have been found and analysed in reality television (Finnerty and Reynolds, 2004), soap operas (Shefner-Rogers, Rogers and Singha, 1998) or communication with celebrities via Twitter (Stever and Lawson, 2013).

Regardless of the medium, the idea has not changed significantly across the years. Some studies shifted the focus from the interaction towards the level of sympathy audiences feel towards performers (Schramm and Hartmann, 2008; Cohen, 2009), while a body of scholarship was dedicated to complicating the original framework by introducing scales of parasocial interaction, the most popular (yet widely modified) being the PSI (parasocial interaction) scale developed by Rubin, Perse and Powell (1985), a quantitative factor analysis based on the psychometric approach in the uses and gratifications tradition. Generally, though, the medium has not been perceived as an agent of change: studies of the subject have continued to find parasocial interactions with stars and performers on television, internet blogs or social media, as in each of the instances the relation remained similarly unbalanced and largely one-sided. Initially concentrated on the effects of television role models for children and adolescents, and strafing heavily into media psychology, in time such studies also became interested in the ways fandoms are created, and norms established and followed (or not).

The concept of parasocial interaction, which is, in any case, rarely used in research on music performers, has been practically invisible in studies of Japan. Instead, sociologists and media scholars describe similar phenomena with a focus on the distance between individuals involved in the process. The notion of 'proximity' between producers and audience has been raised by scholars of different fields of Japanese popular culture and media in the last 20 years. Conceptualizations vary to some extent, depending on which mass medium is being analysed, but the basic idea is common across the scholarship: proximity with the audiences is created when the performer consciously embodies an ordinary, imperfect persona in their performance (and/or media appearances). By doing so, the performer seems more like the audience, which challenges the perceived distance between the two.

For instance, Painter, describing Japanese afternoon television programming, wrote about the effort producers make to create a 'quasi-intimate interaction between those on the screen and those who watch at home' (Painter, 1996, p.295). Similarly, Yoshimoto presented a similar view, noting how Japanese television 'has the unique quality of eliminating the distance between the self and other' (Yoshimoto, 2000, in Morton, 2003, p.216).

Although these studies (of talk shows) bear similarities to Horton and Wohl's original study, they are much more contextualized in culture and in culture-specific concepts such as *soto* (outside) and *uchi* (inside). It has been argued that through a number of unique production and editing techniques, as well as the language employed, the television show is situated both 'inside' and 'outside' at the same time (Tanaka, 2004; Holden and Ergül, 2006). For example, through the use of superimposed subtitles and a window-in-window commentary insert on Japanese television shows, the audience witnesses and engages with an 'outside' situation, but is invited to experience it 'inside', with a group of 'safe', 'ordinary' commentators. This format, although similar, reaffirms the boundaries of in/out more strongly than by merely 'watching together', such as when the presenter in an American television show introduces an off-studio video clip, and, as implied by Horton and Wohl, blurs the line between their persona and the viewers. On a Japanese show, these *soto/uchi* contrasts are maintained throughout the show on both a visual and audible level: the audience experiences the 'outside' clip along with the 'inside' visuals of the studio presenters, with their constant commentary overlapping with the clip's audio, and emphasized with subtitles.

But the intimacy between audiences and their idols goes beyond production strategies described by Horton and Wohl or later television studies. As explored in the previous section, music idols' immediate presence is tangible – for example, meeting the performers during a handshake event, albeit short, is not unimaginable, and requires only a moderate number of CD purchases by a fan. In the study, only two participants experienced a direct encounter with their idol, but the data suggests that more than

the actual experience, it is the *real possibility* of such an encounter that is valued by audiences.

Idol concerts are another type of events where performers interact with audiences. Unlike a typical live experience of a US or UK pop group, where audience participation may range from sitting/standing in silence to nodding in rhythm or singing along, attending a Japanese idol group concert is a physically exhausting, mediated and nuanced practice. In Japan, concert participants come dressed in elaborate costumes, often including names or faces of their favourite performers embroidered on them. The colours worn are key, too, as each of the idols has a favourite colour (listed on the group's website as well), and supporting a specific performer often means dressing up in his/her colours (see Figures 6.1 and 6.2). This includes another important item: a glow stick, which is used to dynamically gesture and dance later on. In specific moments of the concerts, participants are able to change the colour of their glow stick (newer models are even synchronised with mobile phone technology) according to the situation: for instance, when a group member delivers a closing speech, it would be customary to light your glow stick up with the member's colour.[13]

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[13] In the past, when multi-coloured glow sticks were not available, the most enthusiastic participants would coordinate and arrange for everyone to have a particular colour of the glow stick with them on, for instances, birthdays of group members. Often these participants would stand out before the entrance and distribute self-bought glow sticks to everyone who entered.

Figure 5.1 Before a Momoiro Clover Z concert.   Participants, dressed in their favourite member's colours, are holding out glow sticks. Photograph by Kevin Martin.

Figure 6.2 A gathering before the concert. Not-costumed participants are scarce. Photograph by Kevin Martin.

During the concert, the audience works hard, too: by singing, dancing and waving of the glow sticks. However, instead of singing *along* with the performers, participants sing (shout) between the original lyrics and across the melodic line of the song. This practice is known as 'calls' (*kōru*) and 'mixes' (*mikkusu*) and is common across idol audiences in Japan. The most popular calls involve the name of the singer: after a verse has been delivered by a group member, the audience shouts out the pet-name of the performer in unison. Others are more sophisticated and sometimes involve whole new lines of text. As one might imagine, the coordination of calls and mixes requires considerable effort. In the past, idol enthusiasts would meet personally and arrange them, nowadays the activities are agreed upon online. For newer fans, there are even detailed tutorial videos explaining calls and mixes, detailing 'what to keep in mind while having fun at an idol concert.[14] All these concert activities are, for the audiences, a way to communicate with their idols. Hideki (man, 32 years old), who attended girl idol group concerts in the past, told me that part of the appeal of engaging with calls and mixes, costumes and glow sticks, is that the performers directly acknowledge fan effort in their stage speeches and through social media posts.

For those who cannot attend a concert there are cinematic screenings of concerts in movie theatres across Japan. This is not only a Japanese phenomenon (see Martin Barker's monograph on livecasting, 2012, for instance), but in Japan through this practice audiences recreate an atmosphere similar to the 'real' show, including costumes, glow sticks, calls and mixes – despite their idols not being there in person. Shiho (18, woman), who attended such livecast concerts described the experience in the following way, noting the communal aspect of concert-going:

> "It's weird. Somehow, rather than go home and watch the concert DVD, it feels so much better to [experience it] with people around you, with many similar people who like the same things." (Individual interview, 'the relaxed')

In a similar way, Hideki related the experience of meeting other people during a Momoiro Clover Z live concert.

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[14] An example of an online fan tutorial is available at https://youtu.be/JT40Ae_hsrs (in Japanese only).

Hideki: "During concerts, well, it depends what artists we are talking about. But for Momoiro Clover, for example… how can I say it? It's this thing of everyone, all supporters, including the artists too, everyone doing the thing together. That kind of emotion, you know. That sense of unity that we are all creating something… When I go to a concert, naturally before the concert you have to line up with [other people], you line up to buy merchandise and whatnot, and you exchange different things that you have [with others]. And you talk with them, for example, you say where you're from and such, you ask whether they had seen the latest TV programme that [the group] was on."

Interviewer: "Right, right. That sounds fun."

Hideki: "Yeah. And so the time spent together before the gig, you do different thjings to pass the time, in the meantime you go someplace like a coffee shop and you talk a lot about different artists, for example."

Interviewer: "That is nice. And you would exchange contacts to meet again at the next concert, perhaps?"

Hideki: "Yes, yes, yes. And that's how, gradually, there are more and more familiar faces [at the concerts]." (Individual interview, 'the lost')

However, even non-concert audiences are able to influence the tangible effects of their support thanks to the internet and communication technology which mediates the interaction. A prime example here is the AKB48 annual election, which allows fans to cast a vote for their favourite group members by purchasing a single CD (and to cast more votes by purchasing more CDs!). Girls with the most votes become this year's 'core squad', take centre positions in the group, and receive more media opportunities than the other members.

Finally, the intimacy is also embedded in musical texts in a nuanced way. For instance, a common practice in girl idol song lyrics is the usage of male personal pronouns instead of female ones. We can immediately relate this convention to what Laura Mulvey (1975) coined 'male gaze' in the cinema, where, through the camera work, the audience assumes the perspective of a heterosexual male. So, because of the usage of male pronouns in pop songs, masculine positions are adopted in listening or re-enacting the songs in karaoke. For male audiences in my study, the male pronoun convention allowed for a closer engagement with a song through identification with the lyrical subject, and, on a practical level, was convenient when singing idol songs in a karaoke box. Female audiences, on the other hand, seemed to negotiate the gaze,

and often interpreted the linguistic practice as imaginary role-play: "the song [is] sung by a girl who wishes a boy would sing these words for her – or who hopes he is thinking about her in this particular way" (Eri, female, 21). It needs to be added here that the pronoun convention does not go the other way: male idols do not use female pronouns in their songs. Thus, the proximity, at least as far as idol music is concerned, emerges as strongly gendered.[15]

Holden, writing about infotainment, argues that the proximity is contextual to culture, because it is by inviting the audience 'inside' that the medium serves a purpose of 'defining (national, ethnic, gender, age etc.) groups, often by juxtaposition' (Holden, 2004, pp.12-13). Intimacy is then engineered, to 'forge the collective uchi' (Holden and Ergul, 2006, p.106). In a similar fashion, Takahashi (2010) mentions the concept, noting how media and ICT create and remake different modern *uchi*: national, domestic or professional. In her adapted and complex notion of *uchi*/*soto*, Takahashi claims that engagement with media results in new forms of self-creation by Japanese audiences (ibid., pp.129-141, 162-164; cf. Zaborowski, 2012). The above example of karaoke is

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[15] For instance, the song 'Manatsu no Sounds Good', quoted at the beginning of this chapter, has the following three verses:

"Put sunscreen on my back!"
Saying that, you removed your swimsuit top and lay down
*That bold single sentence of **yours***
gave off a sweet scent.

The blue sea and sky surrounding us
Are just like you and me:
Even though they're connected by the horizon
Yup, (you're) still like a selfish little sister (…).

*I left **you** sunbathing on the sand*
*And **I** went to swim by myself*
After that, that unexpected kiss
Had a salty taste.

The words in bold illustrate the trend: the pronouns 'yours', 'you', and 'I' are expressed with masculine pronouns, indicating that the scene is narrated by a heterosexual male, even though it is sung by girls/young women. This is also evident through (rather creepy) mentions of the 'swimsuit top' and 'little sister'. Bearing in mind that such examples abound in idol music (and that 'Manatsu…' was a million-copy single), I suggest that further study of audiences attentive to texts, and specifically to gender representations in idol songs, is needed.

consistent with this – the gendered *uchi*/*soto* is an important factor in the audiences' experiences of the idol song.

In popular music this proximity can be achieved by descriptions of daily social situations, concrete objects/places, and the artistic stylization of imperfection and ordinariness. Ian Condry, in his study of Japanese hip-hop, notes how this musical genre in Japan has many distinctive features: the lack of references to violence, recreational drugs or misogyny, and on the other hand, a strong imagery of daily life and everyday routines (Condry, 2001, p.223). Yano, in a somewhat parallel notion, described *enka* portrayals of hometown or motherly love in 'wonderfully simple, direct and untarnished', when contrasted with 'the tumult and complexity of today's Japan' facing challenges of economic recession, natural disasters and globalization (Yano, 2000, p.60). Hip-hop and *enka*, in these two examples, emerge as creations that emphasize ordinariness and everydayness in order to resonate with the audiences. Although the studies were not primarily focused on how the audiences perceive that imagery, and whether and how proximity is created at the interface, Yano (2000, p.125) discusses the appeal of *enka* emerging because of the connection between audiences' lives and situations portrayed in the lyrics.

Similarly, Condry discusses what I have been calling proximity in this chapter through the idea of *genba* (local, actual place), and stresses its significance for the meaningful exchange between audiences and artists. By doing so, Condry and Yano also hint at the relation between proximity and authenticity, which I discuss in Section 5.5. Apart from those two influential studies of *enka* and hip-hop, much of the scholarly discussion of proximity and ordinariness concerns Japanese pop and the idols, and I review this literature in the following paragraphs.

Describing the Japanese idol music scene, Aoyagi (2000) noted that whereas stars in the West possess superb personal uniqueness, Japanese idols are much closer to 'ordinary' people (Aoyagi, 2005). What is distinctive in Japan is the link between the performer and the audience. The performers, even if they surpass (or appear to

surpass) the audience in skills or talent, they seem to surpass them only *just*, as if not to intimidate the audience – as if to maintain the close bond (Zaborowski, 2012).

Nakamori described the whole music industry in Japan through the concept of ordinariness. Nakamori discusses how since the 1980s it have been precisely the absence of talent and ability that mattered. That way, communication between artists and audiences was made possible (Nakamori, 1991). On a similar note, Stanlaw briefly describes the amateur nature of stars in Japan, and the difficult path they must follow in their careers (2000, pp.77-8). He explains that this long public exposure creates a bond between girls in front of the television screen and girls inside – or between artists and audiences. This is not limited to the women singing Japanese pop. Brasor and Tsubuku note that members of highly successful (and all-male) music groups from Johnny's Jr stable are not exactly talented singers either (Brasor and Tsubuku, 1997, pp.55-65). The performers are not special – they are made special by their public exposure precisely because they were not unique at first, and the mediated aspect of their lives from early childhood creates a personal close bond with the audiences (Painter, 1996, p.214).

Conceptualising Japanese entertainment stars in those terms, Aoyagi calls the performers 'life-sized', which is similar to what Ogawa (1988) described as 'quasi-friends' (Aoyagi, 2000, p.311). The process in which stars are portrayed and received, Aoyagi explains, creates a virtual sense of intimacy of audiences with the performers, which is enhanced by numerous participatory events: handshake events, get-togethers or public photo shoots (Aoyagi, 2000, p.312). Similarly, Clammer (1997) describes Japan as a culture where the quotidian – the mundane and the everyday – is really a form of (mainstream) art. My previous research has shown that participants consumed the 'ordinariness' in songs in two ways – to achieve a deeper personal identification with the song, and to rediscover the markers of their national identity (Zaborowski, 2012). Through various processes, the audiences seem to utilize these concepts for both self-creation and unique meaning interpretation.

In the light of the above studies, a question emerges again: how unique is the concept of imperfect idols? Intuitively, for a scholar of audiences, it should not seem to be – studies of reality television or talk shows have shown us otherwise, and the cultural trope of a 'girl next door' is an embodiment of longing for 'life-sizedness'. In her investigation of (female) audiences' identification with Hollywood stars of the 1950s, Jackie Stacey (1994) described a number of patterns in which audiences gaze at and fantasize about the performers. The image of a perfect star – cool, distant, unapproachable – was salient in the analysis. But this was true for the 1950s, and Stacey's respondents often expressed a nostalgic longing for the stars of the past era. These stars remained distant ('on a pedestal'), and one of the audiencing pleasures for the respondents was, somewhat paradoxically, to adapt their identities to the stars' perceived personas. According to the respondents, modern Hollywood idols lacked such stardom precisely because of an increased proximity between the stars and their audiences (1994, p.241).

Is there a temporal or generational argument here, and not a cultural one, then? Was there a global shift in the way stars and idols craft their personas – from distant to approachable, from perfect to flawed? This is an interesting question, and my study, empirically focused on one country and limited in scope to the boundaries of musical engagements of two recent generations, does not allow for conclusive statements in that regard. However, as I argue in this and in the following chapter, the increasing or diminishing proximity cannot be looked at through production and texts alone, and needs to account for other moments in the circuit of culture. Proximity is created when audiences interact with the texts and the artists, and as such, generational identities and historical circumstances are relevant factors in this analysis.

Furthermore, as the next section argues, the emergence of two contrasting models in Japanese music industry in the past 10 years shows that the concept of proximity shares some aspects with non-Japanese conceptualizations, but is also complicated by different understandings of authenticity held by audiences of traditional idols on the one hand, and virtual idols on the other.

5.4   Idols and virtual idols: two models

5.4.1   *Idols and their 'offices'*

Research on Japanese idols is still scarce. Existing studies, as reviewed in the previous section, tend to focus on aspects of idol production and the intimacy between the performers (usually female) and their fans, drawing comparisons with idolatry in Japanese history, religion or culture (see, for example, Aoyagi, 2005; Nakamori, 2007; Galbraith and Karlin, 2012). There is a surprising lack of conceptualization of what *idols* (as an idea) are, and how they are different from (or similar to) first, virtual idols or other Japanese artists, and second, non-Japanese star performers.

An 'idol' (*aidoru*) in Japan refers to a mostly teenage male or female singer and/or media personality, who also frequently models for magazines and appears in promotional campaigns. Although there seems to be no set definition of *aidoru*, the lines between 'idols' and 'non-idols' are most frequently drawn around the portrayed persona (idols are role models, remain down-to-earth and are easy to relate to), affiliated agency and management style (idols often form groups, are banned from dating, and their image remains heavily controlled), music style (idols sing mostly 'bubbly' pop) and abilities (idols often possess no special singing talents; more valued is the effort they put in, and their proximity to the audience). Furthermore, unlike in the West, where the word (pop) idol denotes a much wider category of popular performers, in Japan 'idol' means exclusively a very young and physically attractive artist, signed by a management company ('office') and marketed as pure, innocent, patriotic and relatable for the audiences. Idols in Japan, as mentioned, do not need to be (or rather, should not be) too talented. Discussing American idols of the 'Pop Idol' reality format, Holmes observes the combination of innate skills and effort in successful performers:

> … being a pop idol is not necessarily something that is purely essential or inherent (…) and there is an emphasis on the external labor that goes into the image. However, this needs to be balanced with an acceptable degree of what

is repeatedly referred to as raw, natural talent and, of course, an acceptable physical appeal … – which is then yoked to a deliberately ambiguous focus on specialness. (Holmes, 2004, p.155)

In Japan, innate skills include only physical attractiveness. Everything else is labour – hard effort that is appreciated not because of the result, but, as I explain later in this chapter, because of the journey idols undertake with their audiences.

At the same time, the usage of the word 'idol' is much more common in contemporary Japan than, for instance, in the UK or US, where 'star' (or 'celebrity') is employed instead.[16] In Japan, non-idol stars are referred to as either literally 'famous people' (*yūmeijin*) or, depending on their profession, as a 'male actor', 'female actor', 'singer', 'comedian' etc.

> "In Japan the words *artist* or *talent* are extremely vague. In the UK, for example, a comedian who also releases songs wouldn't sell. [In the UK] if you're not an artist, you don't sell [songs], right? That's what's so different in Japan. Even *AKB* are considered artists, you know. [Laughs] Here in Japan, they *are* [even though they don't create any content or have singing talent]." (E2, interview)

While the popularity of the word in Japan is certainly intriguing, speculating about the significance of its religious roots and their meanings for the audiences is, although attractive, ultimately pointless. 'Idol' in the context of this study is only ever written and pronounced in the *katakana* syllabary, which is used for transcribing a foreign term into Japanese (and so 'idol' becomes *aidoru*, just like radio is *rajio*, coffee is *kōhi* and bus is *basu*). The native Japanese equivalent of the word 'idol' (*guzō*) in its primary meaning (that is, denoting an image or representation of a religious, revered or spiritual force) is never used in the context of a popular artist or celebrity.

The *aidoru* machine intersects media and industries, and, especially in recent years, has become synonymous with mainstream Japanese pop, as idols such as AKB48 or Momoiro Clover Z remain the only acts seemingly not affected by the decline in CD

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[16] The word 'star' was briefly popular in the 1970s, but even then was used mostly to describe foreign performers.

sales. Virtual idols share some of the characteristics outlined above (persona, 'age', multimedia visibility), but lack the others. The manufactured voice and singing style, the digital-only presence, and holographic visualization are significant points distinguishing Hatsune Miku, the world's most popular virtual idol from the mainstream Japanese music model. However, it is primarily the vocaloid production and distribution system that is structurally different to the standard industry practice in Japanese entertainment business.

The Japanese music business is centred round 'offices' (*jimusho*), a vernacular for 'artist management companies'. 'Offices' not only sign and produce music acts, but also create most or all of their content, retain master and publishing rights, and keep full creative control. Although not limited to idol pop (see, for example, Christine Yano's 2002 discussion of the *enka* genre, or Carolyn Stevens' 2008 experiences with a Japanese rock band and their agency), the *jimusho* model is most powerfully described in English in Aoyagi Hiroshi's book on the idol industry (2005), where he discussed a range of practices exemplifying the power of 'offices' over other institutions in the music business. To avoid the attention of the public and regulating institutions, 'offices' operate as small companies, but they retain ties, formal or informal, with large Japanese corporations, and are said to be linked to the underworld (Marx, 2012, pp.42-5).

As a result, the 'offices' are the dominant power in the Japanese music industry. By controlling the master and media rights, they are effectively in charge of the whole creative process: they (or rather, their corporate bosses) decide who will be promoted on television and radio, they dictate the image of the performers as well as much of their private lives, and naturally, control the musical content. All this is hardly a secret to the audiences and general public. The on-stage characters and the performer personas, clearly manufactured, are sold to the audience on a disbelief suspension clause, or, in the words of a *jimusho* producer, "a lie that we are all in on" (E2, interview, 2012). The amount of control over (especially young) idols can easily be tracked through mainstream media news in Japan – which in some cases gets picked up by English-language outlets. There was the story of Minegishi Minami, a 20-year-old

member of all-girl band AKB48. Minegishi, who had been spotted breaking the contractual 'no dating' ban, was demoted to a trainee level, and shaved her head in a video apology (McCurry, 2013). The story, although perhaps rare in international press, is only one of many similar appearing in Japanese media in the course of a month. As acknowledged by a producer at a large Japanese record label, young idols are not considered long-term assets:

> "They are not told what they should do in order to have a healthy career as an artist, as a talent, for the next 50 years. They are told: 'for the next project, to sell more CDs, you need to be in a swimsuit. Or play the guitar.'" (E1, interview)

Human and labour rights aside, the *jimusho* system has been criticized within the industry for its inability to cope with the new market reality. The centralized model became unable to produce anything outside its comfort sphere – musically conservative songs to appeal to the widest audience, and good-looking, 'safe' idols to return years of production investments and to help secure advertising and television deals – and, with the declining television viewership and press readership rates, the 'office' idol model is bound to be endangered (Marx, 2012, p.52).

This ties in with similar issues in other industries, such as in anime production (Kelts, 2008), and reflects the overall challenges of Japanese entertainment to engage with the global market: misunderstanding of international content flows, an aversion to new media model, fears of decentralizing, and an uneasy approach to intellectual property (IP) regulation (E3, interview). A model to tackle these challenges is presented in the example of the production and distribution of vocaloid music.

5.4.2   *Vocaloid idols and the Peer Production model*

Vocaloid starts with a piece of software. A copy of a vocaloid voice synthesizer is available for around US$170 (for Hatsune Miku V3, available from September 2013; Crypton Media, 2014). The software allows the user to input lyrics (divided into syllables) and to assign them notes (and voice effects), which the vocaloid, using a pre-

recorded voice collection, mashes into a vocal track. Seemingly just the next step in synthesizer software evolution, the truly innovative aspect of vocaloid lies in its marketing strategy. Yamaha Corporation first developed the software in 2004, but it was not until 2007 that Crypton Future Media, a small (at the time) company, added an extra module to the vocaloid line, developing the first virtual, animated persona for the series – Hatsune Miku. Since then, the software is sold not just as a tool for musicians, but as a singer – your own personal music idol. The idol is not, however, the voice actress who pre-recorded the syllabic sounds (Fujita Saki, in the case of Hatsune Miku), but an animated, virtual being. Miku is, therefore, not just a picture on the software package, but, as provided by Crypton, a 16-year-old girl, 158cm tall, weighing 42kg, and with a passion for idol-style and dance music (Crypton Media, 2014).

After Hatsune Miku (literally, 'the first sound from the future'), there have been a number of vocaloid releases by Crypton, and also by other companies. These vocaloids, each with a different voice bank, differ by age, gender and even language. Yet Hatsune Miku remains the most popular and the global face of vocaloid. Apart from being the vocalist in over 100,000 songs (including at least one internationally bestselling single, 'The world is mine'), a character in comics, movies and games, Miku has also starred in commercials, movies and toured around the world as an on-stage hologram.

One of the reasons for the popularity and for the range of associated media activities is the vocaloid creation and distribution model called *PiaPro* (short for 'Peer Production') *Character License*, which is a twist on the Creative Commons agreement. Under the license, everyone is allowed to non-commercially transform and recreate Hatsune Miku's image, and to create derivative works from it without any cost (apart from the vocaloid software price, where applicable). However, if the character is to be used in a commercial project, artists using Miku's likeness in his are bound to a mutually agreed deal with Crypton Media. The reason for such a twofold license is Crypton's dissatisfaction with the existing copyright laws, especially in Japan: while traditional arrangements would greatly limit fan activity and interaction, an open source software license would not account for the fact that the vocaloid software remains commercial, and it is only the character image and derivative works that fall under free non-

commercial use. The creators, then, can freely create vocaloid music, which they upload and distribute through video-sharing services, most notably Nico Nico Dōga, but also YouTube and Vimeo in the case of non-Japanese musicians. The works are also shared through Crypton's own web space.

IP rights and distribution aside, the 'office'-managed idol industry, and the decentralized vocaloid model, share some similar imagery and marketing practices. One is the concept of presenting teenage idols as machines (or half-machines) in promotional videos or campaigns. This links, of course, to the prominent trope of virtuality and cyborgization in Japanese popular culture from way back. Referring to idols specifically, we might mention Kyōko Date, the ultimately failed attempt at the world's first virtual idol, in 1996. In the modern idol era, we could point to the 2012 Glico campaign with girls from AKB48. In this cross-media promotional campaign, a new member named Eguchi Aimi was announced to be shortly joining the group. Her profile, personal details and picture were presented on the campaign website and in other outlets, spurring a nationwide discussion: is the girl real (Kolawole, 2011)? She was not, but the image was realistic enough to fool everyone. What drew most suspicion was not the visual image, but the fact that the newcomer had, at the age of 16, no recorded history in show business – a rare thing in Japan, where idol auditions start as early as at the age of 10, and by the age of 14, it is already too late to "hop in" (E5, interview, 2012). Finally, after weeks of speculation (on online message boards, and also in the mainstream press and on the morning television shows), Eguchi's face was revealed to have been constructed from the facial features of the six most popular members of the group at the time. This revelation was followed by a launch of an online activity, where fans could create their own 'perfect virtual idols' combining the facial elements of nearly 50 chosen AKB48 members.

This is certainly not a new trend. In Japanese music videos, the trope has been implemented in a number of popular idol songs. To take just the most commercially successful girl idol productions: in Momoiro Clover Z's 'Neo Stargate' (2013), the five performers are woken up from a sci-fi hibernator and transformed into futuristic costumes with full-face, spiked masks. In AKB48's 'Beginner' (2010), the girls are

connected to a mainframe in a computer game simulation, which has them, one by one, annihilated by virtual projections (brutally, to the extent that the video was pulled from television distribution). Cyborgs, robots or virtuality can be found in W's 'Robo Kiss' (2004), MiniMoni's 'Lucky Cha Cha Cha' (2004), Amuro Namie's 'What a Feeling?' (2011) or Kyary Pamyu Pamyu's 'Invader, Invader' (2013); in a number of Hamasaki Ayumi or Utada Hikaru's videos (including 2004's 'You Make Me Want to Be a Man', released in the US), and in the whole concept behind acts such as Perfume or K-On.

As in the previous section, the point of bringing in these examples is not to suggest that the tropes of virtuality and cyborgization are unique to Japan, or even to East Asia. On the contrary, a number of similar conventions could be found in US hit songs (albeit comparably less). In 'The World is Not Enough' (1999) by Garbage, the vocalist's cyborg body (created by Asian scientists) is a weapon used for sabotage; elements of the cyborgization of human physique appear in David Guetta's 'Turn Me On' (2011, featuring Nicki Minaj), Bjork's 'All is Full of Love' (1999), a number of Kraftwerk or Daft Punk videos – and more could easily be found just in the 2000s alone (see Collins, 2011, for examples of robots as musicians since the 1970s). The point to make here is rather a point of establishing a thematic continuity. The audiences who listen to vocaloid music are familiar with the convention. Depending on their ages, there is a fair chance that they had been exposed to Sharon Apple, a singing hologram superstar in the 1995 internationally renowned anime Macross Plus, or to 'Beginner'; they might have read about the artificial intelligence and idol singer Rei Toei in William Gibson's novel *Idoru* (1995), watched a video of 'Robo Kiss', or played one of the popular enhanced reality mobile phone applications (such as 'Barcode Girlfriend' or 'Bride Collection') that simulate a relationship with a virtual being. In other words, an individual engaging with Hatsune Miku also engages with it in the context of their experiences of and expectations towards the virtual idol genre.

The emerging picture of the two models remains complicated. On the one hand, the two industries are working with a completely different *modus operandi*. 'Offices' present a Japanese twist on the big music industry, with controlled creativity, top-down production and distribution, minimization of risks and maximization of profits.

PiaPro is much closer to a bottom-up crowdsourcing platform, with significantly more democratic access and participation (including a strong community aspect)[17]. On the other hand, the production of (the illusion of?) proximity is strikingly similar in the two models. Where AKB48 members are 'girls next door', Hatsune Miku is a 'hologram next door'. You meet the idol girls during handshake events, and you can set the software to make the vocaloid smile at you. You can configure a virtual diva to sing your original lyrics – and you can digitally manipulate AKB48's faces to create your perfect performer.

A large part of these opportunities, however, is ultimately taken by a minor section of the audience. Although vocaloid fans among young people are numerous, there are considerably fewer young vocaloid producers, because of economic barriers, lack of interest and mentorship, or the scarcity of skill development programmes, especially outside of the big cities. Similarly, participation in idol handshake events or concerts is, especially among the youth, strictly limited to city dwellers, or at least, to city commuters. What emerges from the data, however, is that although such participation is uneven across cohorts, classes and areas, audiences are aware of the practices, even when they do not take part. The imagery of 'idols you can meet' and 'virtual divas who sing for you' was a strong component in the audiences' interpretations of idols and virtual idols, and, as the expert interviews will reveal, was a significant part of music management and production efforts as well.

But how do audiences' engagements with idols and virtual idols work in practice? Due to a scarcity of empirical data, the framing of vocaloid audiences in academic or mainstream literature remains at best, speculative. The emerging questions of the ways audiences make sense of idol and vocaloid music require giving voice to those audiences, and contextualizing the analysis within the overarching frame of the circuit of culture. In the following sections I look in detail into the interpretation and production of idols to see whether and, if so why, the two styles of music are

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[17] For Itō Hiroyuki (2012) of Crypton Media, small but telling examples of this are the spontaneous collaborations between graphic artists and composers within the community, and the common practice of leaving a thank-you note after using someone else's work.

important for modern Japanese audiences, what exactly emerges as 'proximity', and how it informs previous conceptualizations and examples from research outside Japan.

5.5 Between the audiences and the producers

Although the interviewed professionals agreed that the production and distribution 'office' model of the industry was stale and in need of reforming (cf. also Karlin and Galbraith, 2012; Marx, 2012), the music is constantly evolving. The producers try to track and categorize the audiences and their changing preferred modes, routines and choices. Referring to the young generation's attitudes and lifestyle, E1, for example, explained how music listening was transformed in the 2000s when the effects of the economic crisis became severe:

> "… young people lost interest in cars. In the past [youth] would listen to music in their beloved cars a lot, not anymore… Also now, when you're with your sweetheart in the evening and you put on some music you're considered weird, apparently. In the past there was mood music, jazz, that you would play. Why won't they play R&B or sweet soul, of some jazz ballads? I was surprised when I learned that from university students. They were taken aback [that you would use music for that]. They put the TV on and the music there serves as background instead."

In this quote above, the producer refers to the stereotypical portrayal of 'the relaxed' generation as one so apathetic that the youth do not attempt to buy cars or look for more ambitious jobs. This, as explained later in chapter 6, has not only been the main media narrative about contemporary youth, but a problematic, yet popular, position in the scholarship (Azuma, 2012; Matsuda, 2009). In this quote, and in numerous other moments in my interviews with industry representatives, the producers emerge as well aware of audience practices related to music, while at the same time they are baffled about the (especially young) listeners' reasons behind these practices.

The producers agree that although the music industry has undergone numerous changes because of advancements in digital technology, in some ways the production and circulation processes have not developed since the 2000s. One of these is the

quality of recorded sound, which, according to the producers' data on users, stopped being a significant factor in music enjoyment. "Especially with idol music", suggested E1, "users are not that interested in high quality sound, and we can see that – there are no complaints about it, and so there is little value in investing in it." My interviews with members of the audience add additional layers to this narrative, as the audiences point to their routines to explain their preferences: since much of the music is listened to 'on the go', in noisy environments, the rise or drop in quality is not noticed.

The development and direction of record labels and offices' efforts is therefore closely linked to the audiences' changing modes, routines and choices. The Japanese audience, too, is savvy and well versed in performers' strategies or production models, and this knowledge also informs their attitudes and practices. As explained next, the emerging finding is one of the co-evolution of practices between artists and fans.

Both fans of idols and of virtual idols in the study were not exclusive to either of the two studied cohorts, 'the lost' or 'the relaxed'. Among each group of supporters there were men and women, boys and girls, city and country dwellers alike. There were, however, few instances of a fandom shared between vocaloid and idol groups. It was almost as if identification with one automatically implied indifference to (or contempt for!) the other. The difference was acknowledged by the industry representatives, who, like E2, dubbed them 'different target groups' with different values and different patterns of music consumption. Although my data is inconclusive about the latter, idol fans' and vocaloid fans' attitudes to music and the recording industry were noticeably different.

For instance, a large portion of the differences concerned the production and distribution models. A consistent finding across the data was how well aware the participants were of the intricacies of music production in Japan, and how significantly this knowledge informed their listening choices. This was regardless of the participants' lack of experience in music production, as among the participants I did

not meet anyone who regularly created popular songs or vocaloid content[18] (despite the fact that more than half were educated, formally or informally, in at least one music instrument, and there were a few amateur musicians with experience in classic music composing). Still, the participants debated and defended the production models of their favourite music quite vigorously. Vocaloid enthusiasts, quite naturally, often brought up the issue of authorship and management:

> "It's just a bunch of talented people, using [the software] for everyone to enjoy. They don't have to go through [the industry], they just upload." (Shōta, 18, man)

From this quote, which is typical, we see that the crowdsourcing element and the fact that the vocaloid producers were largely not part of an 'office', seemed a vital component in the popularity of Hatsune Miku among teenagers. This popularity was evident in statements such as Shōta's quote above, explaining audiences' motivations to choose vocaloids in terms of values, and also in terms of access – my questionnaire data shows that for these young people, mobile phone or PC downloads and video upload sites were the primary, and often the only ways, of obtaining music. But more importantly, such opinions during the interviews usually led to a critique of the idol industry:

> "Nobody tells them [vocaloid composers] what to write. They're not like those grandpas [in 'offices'] telling teenagers to sing about the summertime or a first kiss or whatever. They really write. *Really*." (Keita, 30, man)

This typical quote from a vocaloid fan is fascinating, because to an observer it is perhaps not immediately obvious in what ways writing lyrics for a '16-year-old' virtual

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[18] Among the younger vocaloid fans, vocalo creativity was low for various reasons. Saya (18, woman) could not rationalize the purchase of vocaloid software to her parents, as it had, for them, no connection to the school curriculum. Takashi (18, man) and Shōta (18, man), the only two who saw the software in action and who made an attempt at creating a vocaloid song, did not pursue their interests because of a lack of technology access (no personal computers). The paths not taken in the context of links between the school and home (cf. Buckingham, 2007; Ito et al, 2013; Livingstone and Sefton-Green, 2015) were not the focus of this research, but the gaps between the curriculum, job skills and interests emerge as significant, and consistent with the generational divide discussed later in Chapter 6.

diva is significantly different to idol producers 'telling teenagers what to sing'. For the participants, the two processes could not be more distant. Whereas vocaloid fans, like Keita above, emphasized the bottom-up/top-down production aspects, idol fans raised issues of reality and virtuality, and immediately dismissed Hatsune Miku as "in the end, just a hologram" (Emi, 23, woman). The intangibility of the singer meant that much of proximity creation, or parasocial processing, would be impossible, as virtual idols cannot write blog posts or shake hands. On the other hand, many vocaloid enthusiasts noted that these events would be inaccessible for them from a practical side. "It does not really matter," said Saya about the fact Hatsune was not human, "It's not as if I could meet her (if she was)." This, a commentary about the star culture and the performer–audience proximity in late modern popular culture, is perhaps most importantly an indicator of socioeconomic status, and the divides within music audiences. Most of my rural and small-town participants admitted to never having attended a big concert. Because of the distance to the nearest prefecture capital city, where popular acts may (or may not) perform during a national tour, the cost in time and money was too great to be able to participate. Television and video-sharing websites (rarely concert DVDs) remain the primary sources to watch an idol sing.

The conceptual differences of 'reality' elicited most vocal responses when discussing aspects of supporting virtual and non-virtual idols. Although a small number of the participants equally enjoyed mainstream idol pop music and vocaloid music (Saya, Kanae), most were eager to point out the ways in which, in their minds, one was superior over the other. Where idol fans raised reality as an issue, vocaloid fans stressed authenticity – and both groups used the concept to build their fandom around proximity with the performers. The bluntest comparison came from Taiki (18, man): "This is real. This is the real freedom of expression. Look at the idols, look at the girl groups. All fake."

For vocaloid fans, paradoxically, in the battle of holograms and teenagers it is the latter who are considered virtual. Whereas teenage girl and boy idols play carefully defined roles in order to adhere to the idol blueprint (purity, innocence, hard work, naivety etc.), in vocaloid, there is no pretence, no fabrication. Hatsune Miku is real

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because the audiences expect her to be, based on a pop-cultural history of machine-enhanced singers. The audiences make her real because she sings about things that matter to them. Finally, she is real because she represents a bottom-up, collective model, where access and participation are potentially unlimited. Idol fans downplay some of these issues and focus on the genuine effort of idol performers. For them, authenticity is not built on the creative process, but on the training and improvements made in the performance, which parallel the daily efforts of the 'everyman'.

Ien Ang (1985), analysing audiences of the Dallas television series, distinguished between empirical realism and emotional realism. It is the latter, according to Ang, that audiences use to judge the reality of characters in the drama: it is the structure of the characters' emotions (paralleling those of the audience), and not their literal realities that matter. For audiences in this study, the realism, or authenticity, as I have been conceptualizing it here, emerges significantly from emotional structures. Idol audiences, one the one hand, negotiate these structures by emphasizing emotions that the singers put into performing, even when the texts are written for them. Vocaloid audiences, on the other hand, emphasize the emotional coherence between the song creator and the virtual performer. However, as I have mentioned, the empirical realism also matters, as it is the sheer physicality (that is, non-virtuality) of the idol performers that makes them authentic for some members of the investigated audiences.

Apart from the industry model, then, proximity is built on idol personas. Condry, attempting to explain the popularity of Hatsune Miku, alludes to mediation, noting how Miku is 'social without being real' (2011, p.14). But this aspect of 'unreal' is just a twist on a long tradition of Japanese successful music idols (Aoyagi, 2005) portrayed as approachable and ordinary. In the global narrative, despite being an international pop star, Miku craves fast food and sneaks out from the studio to take a nap (Sweet, 2011), just like teenage Shiori from Momoiro Clover Z is portrayed as constantly hungry in her media appearances.

5.6   Mapping co-evolution and proximity into the circuit of culture

Linking back to the beginning of this chapter, both cases also show that authenticity, real or perceived, strongly promotes parasocial processing (see Hartmann, 2008). The producers adjust their strategies to maximize fan investment (emotional and financial). In the words of E1, a high ranking manager at a major label:

> "I shouldn't say that, but if there's one thing (…) I would get rid of, it's [the idols'] Twitter. Social media. It's so time-consuming. We need to supervise, constantly. Help with content. But that's okay – it's the supervising that's terrible. And I say 'I shouldn't say that' because this is what the customers want. They say they need the artists to do that. *And they know* [whether the artists write the entries themselves]. So they [the artists] do that, more or less. But we need to watch it, day or night. There were incidents…" (emphasis added)

Here, the producer admits having major creative control over the performers' social media, but also acknowledges the audiences' knowledge of the process that influenced the practice in some ways. The data tells a story of co-evolution, where production and reception aspects are closely intertwined – production is shaped by the dynamic relations with the sphere of reception (and circulation and interpretation) and vice versa. When E5, a major international composer and performer, was tasked with creating music for a popular video game franchise, she had to take into account not only the game designer's general vision ("find me a sound that has never been used in video games before", E5 recalls), but a plethora of other factors: the textual boundaries of the format, audiences' perceptions and interpretations of the genre and regulation in the domestic and the international stage). At the other end, Yoshikazu ('the lost', man), familiar with the game franchise, told me he had read about some of the creative process behind the music in the game (in particular, about the long and costly international audition process, stories of which had been featured in game magazines at the time), and this enhanced his enjoyment from the game – he even bought the standalone music CD.

The finding of co-evolution was consistent in all my interviews with professionals. E10, a young street performer from Tokyo and an emerging recording artist, admitted revising her music based on audience feedback and pressure from the management:

"I don't usually write love songs or slow ballads, but when fans ask me to create some, I watch soapy dramas or movies for inspiration, something emotional, and try to write them… And management, sometimes they would say my song lacks 'a punch', you know, they told me that and I wasn't sure what that meant [laughs], but apparently they needed 15 seconds of something cool so it could potentially be used in a commercial… It's difficult."

When I attended the high school wind orchestra concert in Nagoya, I observed how circulation of the commercialised idol genre interrelates with musical production and curriculum in schools. The annual concert was a significant cultural event in the city – the afterschool music club was known in the region for their high-level performances. The big hall rented for the occasion was completely sold out and, among parents and acquaintances, there were wind orchestra alumni – but the audience was primarily constituted of ordinary citizens of Nagoya. They were in for an exciting show: after a number of wind orchestra standards, the performers switched the tone to the popular. Hit songs of AKB48 and Arashi were performed to great applause, especially as the performing students were not confined to their seats; on the contrary, the musicians danced the idol routines with perfect choreography and invited the crowd to participate. Observers familiar with the orchestra's line-up timidly started a "call" with some of the girl's names, to the delight of the dancing trumpet section. The lack of glow sticks among the audience did not stop people from gesturing back and forth with their empty hands – or the concert pamphlets. Among the ruckus, I noticed a number of confused faces around me: this was clearly not the norm for a Nagoya school wind orchestra concert. However, most of the audience embraced this, and wanted more.

After the concert, when I joined a group of students in attendance for a karaoke session in a nearby venue, their reactions were mostly positive. "It was fun", said Sōta (man, 18 years old), the best they have done so far, definitely." Even though he was not particularly a fan of idol music (as he stated himself), he appreciated the participation aspect: it allowed everyone to "do it all together." Rena (woman, 18 years old) was slightly more cynical: "I guess they have to do it, because AKB48 is so

popular right. Well, I mean they don't *need* to do it – but you know what I mean. It was different. Fun."

The specific nature of relations between all elements in the music ecosystem is crucial to a comprehensive understanding of virtual idols, but the paucity of academic inquiry into music audiences (vocaloid or otherwise) limits the analytical repertoire on offer. Vocaloid and idol cultures are telling examples of diverse and rich audiences who defy one-dimensional notions of reception, but the implications also stand in the context of research on music in general. The proximity of producers and fans is enhanced by participation (potential or real): the modes and engagements of the audiences do not exist in a vacuum. On the contrary, consumption can affect production and vice versa.

Additionally, the vocaloid element further challenges this interactive model. When Keita says he feels as if "[Hatsune Miku] was here with [him]" when he plays a song, he is also referring to artist–performer proximity. Precisely because Hatsune Miku is a fan creation, music-wise (as songs can be created by anyone) and personality-wise (as audiences dynamically shape the Miku persona by, for instance, interacting and discussing Miku online), her presence is much more direct: she is nowhere, thus she is everywhere.

The concepts of proximity and co-evolution, as well as the diversity of engagements and connections, are especially revealing of the music media and society when analysed through the circuit of culture model. This stresses that the moments in the model are not 'self-contained entities', but each moment is 'constituted dynamically, processually – through its significance with the others' (Livingstone, 2015). Meanings are negotiated at every moment. For example, through the idea of co-evolution, I have shown that production is shaped by its links to reception and interpretation. By introducing proximity, I discussed the distance between audiences and artists, and argued that meanings are created at the interaction of audiences, texts and artists. The two dyads of relations, audiences and performers, conceptualized through proximity and audiences and producers, through co-evolution, mapped onto the circuit of culture, reveal that moments of production, consumption, regulation, representation

and identity all shape each other through a myriad of dynamic links and processes. Moreover, the complex relations between all aspects of texts (the original song and the karaoke performance; a vocaloid song by a producer and an edited interpretation by the audience etc.) reveals where the circuit of culture is limited and needs to be modified to account for all processes emerging between production and reception, performers and artists.

Additionally, the practices of idol industry and the PiaPro model complicate the mostly homogeneous and Western-centred, global culture industry model (see Hesmondhalgh, 2013). As discussed in this chapter, both the 'office' model, with its power shifted from record labels to management offices (and far away from the performers) and the vocaloid, with its innovative licensing agreements, are distinct from the Western cultural industries in these aspects at least. True, the concept of proximity and imperfect idols has much in common with existing ideas in Western studies of media and celebrities, and by denying these links, an entirely modern scholarship of Japan explicitly or implicitly reverts to the outdated notions of Japanese cultural nationalism (the *nihonjinron*) of the early 20th century. On the other hand, the account of co-evolution in creativity, distribution and reception of Japanese music provides new insight into modes of engagement and production processes.

Returning to the beginning of this chapter, conceptually, Horton and Wohl's parasocial interaction remains useful, as it allows for a discussion of the role of the audience, and implies an active component in the viewing experience. According to interview data generated in my research, the model accurately describes aspects of audience practices of engaging with idol or virtual idol music – particularly aspects concerning roles and identity. Similar to television audiences in the 1950s, music audiences in this research were not under the aesthetic illusion obscuring situational references or self-consciousness, and this is what differentiates the parasocial relationship and suspension of disbelief in movies or theatre plays. The audience is not removed from the presented reality, and through the parasocial relationship their separate identities are constantly maintained (cf. Horton and Wohl, 2006, p.5). The model, however, is

limited and needs to be reframed with regards to contemporary music audiences in at least two instances.

First, comparing the idol and vocaloid case studies to the framework and (by now dated) examples used by Horton and Wohl, we can contest the idea of limited reciprocity. As already suggested in Chapter 4, audiences are not categorically limited in their interpretations to textual boundaries, and their interpretations are more complex and more embedded in their social everyday lives than previously assumed.

Second, the imbalance of information of the original model needs to be updated with regards to opportunities arising through new media and communication technologies. Although these, and especially blogging and Twitter, have been mentioned by scholars with regards to parasocial interaction (Stever and Lawson 2013; Chung and Cho, 2014), still little has been written on the co-evolution between creators and fans. The two case studies presented here stress both the savviness of audiences as a significant factor in influencing production and distribution, as well as the producers and creators' awareness of that savviness.

Having first analysed audience practices in Chapter 4, and focusing on proximity and co-evolution through two case studies in this chapter, in the following chapter I position the emerging map of engagements within the experiences of two Japanese cohorts, 'the lost' and 'the relaxed'.

Chapter 6: 'The lost' and 'the relaxed' as cohorts and as generations

> *Our generation is here to make things interesting*
> *Though we're easy to hurt, and we're sentimental*
> *It's our generation.* ('Sentimental Generation', written by Tsunku, performed by Tokito Ami, 2010)

> *Don't trust the under 30s, they don't know freedom*
> *Don't trust anyone under 30, they're all just words*
> *If you find yourself a fan of a young writer or musician, let me tell you something*
> *Their words, that seem to move your heart, they're all lies*
> *"We'll destroy the values of the old society" – they say bravely*
> *But this is just a dumb powerless scream of angry egoists.* ('Don't Trust U30', written by HobonichiP, performed by Hatsune Miku, 2012)

> *Yo, "dirty money", "rotten environment", "rotten politicians and big business"*
> *"Rotten nation", "Japan Inc.", "it's their fault – I'm the victim"*
> *"It's the adults' fault", "the children's fault", "the dumbing down because of relaxed [reforms]"*
> *"The education's fault", "the government's fault", round and round, "the adults' fault"*
> *Well let me represent the bad adults and tell you without taboos*
> *This world isn't that simple and there is no last boss.* ('The Choice is Yours', written by Utamaru and Mummy-D, performed by Rhymester, 2012)

6.1   Introduction

Of all media, we have traditionally tended to reach to music for discussions of generational identities. This is perhaps less so now, as online practices and emerging technologies inspiring new generational labels have shifted interest towards the internet. Even so, music remains a significant part of generational experience, but how so?

In *Club cultures*, Sarah Thornton describes music as the cultural form closest to the youth (1995, p.15), and since in scholarship it is the young, adolescent cohort that is usually investigated and dubbed a certain generation, music emerges as an important cultural artefact and/or practice. For Thornton, it was rave culture as a rite of passage

for young single Britons living with their parents in the early 1990s. Earlier, for Dick Hebdige (1979) it was punk as a youthful counter to the British crisis of the 1970s. In Japan, it was the emergence of hip-hop and the new reality of Japanese modernization and urban youth (Condry, 2001). Other studies, of course, can easily be found, and across them a strong link between music and identity, stronger, perhaps, than in other cultural forms (Frith, 1988; Bennett, 2015).

In Chapter 5 I analysed the relationship between fans, artists and producers through music media by discussing two case studies (of a teen idol group AKB48 and vocaloid diva Hatsune Miku). Specifically, I analysed the creative strategies of producing and consuming proximity, and of bridging the distance between performers and fans through texts, personas and marketing efforts. I contrasted these with audiences' experiences of idol and vocaloid music. By contextualizing the framework of listening modes and practices, as introduced in Chapter 4, a complex picture of fandom, interaction and interpretation emerged.

In particular, I argued that in the changing Japanese society, producer–fan co-evolution and artist–audience proximity have been emerging as significant factors in the production and reception of popular music. Through examples of modern idol groups and vocaloid music, I also proposed that that proximity, while altogether novel when compared to earlier Japanese music, is not homogeneous, and accompanies both forms of music production and circulation: a top-down 'office' model and a bottom-up vocaloid model. Lastly, I suggested that cohorts respond in different ways to these developments, resulting in different interpretational audience practices.

This chapter takes up this last finding, and looks more carefully into the similarities and differences in audience practices between the two analysed cohorts – 'the lost' and 'the relaxed'. I present comparative audience engagements with texts, and seek to answer the chapter's research question of whether the cohorts should, indeed, be called 'generations', and what insight might come with such a conceptualization. As discussed earlier in Chapter 5, the processes of interpretation ('consumption') analysed in this chapter are closely and dynamically linked to other moments in the

circuit of culture, as idols are produced and regulated in a specific social, cultural and economic moment environment of modern Japan.

Although this study is not a systematic analysis of lyrical trends in Japanese music, the texts and their interpretations remain vital. The three song fragments quoted at the beginning of this chapter all make generational claims. I chose them consciously – not to provide a representative sample of modern Japanese lyrics, but to illustrate the diversity in genres and stances, while at the same time the limited voice of the younger cohort. 'Sentimental Generation', an idol song performed by Tokito Ami (born in 1987, that is, 'the relaxed' cohort) and written by Tsunku (Terada Mitsuo, born in 1968, that is, 'the lost' cohort), is a patronizing portrayal of the young generation as naïve and emotional, yet hopeful. 'Don't Trust U30', written for the vocaloid Hatsune Miku by producer HobonichiP, is a strong statement condemning the younger generation for their lack of "traditional" values. 'The Choice is Yours' is an aggressive hip-hop address to 'the relaxed' from 'the lost', urging the former to stop blaming structural factors and to get to work.

With that in mind, how do both cohorts make sense of the musical texts on offer? This chapter begins by problematizing the concept of generation as a social and/or historical construct. Then, linking back to Chapter 1, it briefly (re)introduces 'the lost' and 'the relaxed', and places them within the socioeconomic changes taking place in Japan since 1990s. I then discuss the main findings of the chapter, in particular, analysing whether the two researched cohorts have some attributes of a generation in a sociological sense, and how comparative audience analysis of their interpretations of musical texts could be revealing about the generational self-recognition, or the 'we-sense'.

Throughout the chapter, however, I refer to 'the lost' and 'the relaxed' as cohorts. This is done not to (or not only to) avoid connotations with the concept of generations within a family, as did the critics of Mannheim (Ryder, 1965; Kertzer, 1983), but because I am wary of the unrigorous use of the word in the literature, and I make my case for the use of the concept in this context as my argument unfolds. Specifically, in

this chapter I argue whether 'generations' is an appropriate or, more to the point, useful term to describe the two groups. As discussed in the later sections of this chapter, although I look for inter-cohortal interpretations of music to link to patterns of a generational sense of self-recognition, there are other factors (age, class, gender), I suggest, which need to be analysed further versus the idea of 'units' within a generation.

Further unease about classifying 'the lost' and 'the relaxed' as generations in a media study on the music context of East Asian music also stems from the loose use of the concept in similar studies in the past. Here are a representative few from the many recent attempts from various fields of social science: when de Kloet (2005) describes the Chinese *dakou* generation, the term is not explained, and can seemingly denote cohorts of modern Chinese composers, a sub-culture of technologically able Chinese youth or a genre in music, or all of the three at once. Matunami (2011) states that a generation gap is a vital factor when discussing the effects of music therapy, but never problematizes the concept, only dividing Japanese society into pre-war and post-war. It is similarly vague who is and who is not included in Mori's (2005) Japanese 'freeter generation', who, he claims, use dance and music for political gains differently from the social protesters of the 1960s. We are to speculate that it ties in with the post-economic bubble labour market crisis, and is therefore a manifestation of 'the lost' – but a discussion of location or actuality is largely absent (and *freeter*, a word describing people not in full-time employment, could refer to Japanese in different decades), which significantly weakens Mori's claims on generational identity and values.

Alongside 'cohort', the terms 'the lost' and 'the relaxed' are employed in this chapter. They are English equivalents of the popular names for the two age groups in Japan, although a deliberate choice was made in translating *yutori* literally as 'relaxed', without the negative connotation of 'laziness' that the label has acquired in the past 20 years. In fact, in many places in the thesis, and especially in this chapter, I argue that the negative media and academic portrayal of the cohort is unfounded, if not surprising. On a final methodological note, the cohortal terminology is also employed with full awareness of the dangers of calling a whole generation 'lost' (cf. Wohl, 1979).

In the deliberately cultural approach to the concept of generations (Buckingham, 2006; Siibak, 2010; Aroldi, 2011), this study looks not only at the social and technological conditions of meaning-making, but investigates how presumed members of both cohorts define their shared (or separate) identities. In doing so, it starts with Mannheim's model, and tries both to recount the public narrative behind the history of 'the lost' and 'the relaxed' (both in the sense of their actual histories and of the labels used for them), and to check the individual narratives of the participants. This brings the framework closer to other conceptualizations (such as those of life course or life history) of an age perspective in media audience research, and reopens the methodological and epistemological debates on the use of audiences' oral histories and a historical approach to reception (cf. Livingstone, 2001; Vittadini et al, 2013). However, as recalled in Chapter 2, audiences' meaning-making in this study is given primary focus, therefore generation (the we-sense generation) emerges as crucial in understanding the link between the identity and choices of the two cohorts, and their socio-historical and economic contexts.

In the rest of this chapter I examine whether the generational self-recognition processes can be observed through audiences' interpretations of text, even if little creative participation is taking place. On the example of Japanese popular music, I present intra- and inter-generational interpretations of young singing idols of the past 20 years. Because these singers become popular at a very early age (usually aged 10-14) and gain mainstream, countrywide exposure for a number of years (until the next idol/group appears), they and their music spur insightful interpretations by different cohorts. In this study, there are two such cohorts, and the analysis tests the working hypotheses: will the older cohort look at the young idols of the 2010s through the lens of memories of idols of their adolescence, and will the younger, aged similarly to the performers, see them as either representing or misrepresenting their own voices? Finally, in the context of the discussions above, I examine how the cohorts see themselves in generational terms, and how they interpret the labels given to them through media or academic discourse.

6.2   Generation as a concept

The academic concept of a 'generation' can be traced to the early sociological use of the term by Mannheim in his seminal essay, 'The problems of generations' (1923/1952), where he explained it as a social location that may potentially affect knowledge, behaviour and ideas. For Mannheim, a generation has three aspects: status, actuality and unit. Generation status, the widest classification of the three, means location in spatial and temporal terms, and denotes being born in a specific place in a specific period. Actuality refers to an identity shared between members of generation 'by their being exposed to the social and intellectual symptoms of a process of dynamic de-stabilization' (Mannheim, 1952, p.393). In a Mannheimian sense, this is often the most significant factor in distinguishing between generations and non-generations. Common status, or location, is not enough to be classified as one; there also needs to be a shared bond and self-realization (as a group) in response to social, economic or intellectual changes of the time. Lastly, the concept of generational units stems from Mannheim's own reservation that the location need not determine a homogeneous consciousness, and takes into account that any number of intra-generational units may experience and respond to historical events differently, while still being a part of a generation.

The strength of the Mannheimian model lies in this conceptual separation of status and actuality. Although around for almost a century, Mannheim's essay is still the starting point for any sociological account of generations (Foster, 2013; Westlund and Weibull, 2013; Woodman, 2013; Kelan, 2014), and is also of value for media scholars. For Colombo (2011), who applies the model to include digital technology, generations are defined by external and internal perspectives, and in both media play a significant role. In the former, the media report generational events and help shape the discourse. In the latter, they serve as platforms for the generational voices to be produced, heard and consolidated. There is thus the need to supplement the macro-sociological model with empirical data from audiences; to collect bottom-up narratives in the form of generational experiences and interpretations in addition to the top-down discourses surrounding media events and socioeconomic contexts. The

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challenge in defining and studying generations this way lies, for Colombo, in the fact that 'social rituals are encoded as a generational habit when a generation recognizes itself as such, and not at the stage of its formation' (2011, p.31). It is therefore difficult, argues Colombo, to observe such habits particularly in youth cultures, because even though we are able to analyse the external perspectives through media discourses of defining events at the time, and we can hear the individual voices of members of a generation, the process of public, generational self-recognition comes much later, in the form of looking back at the shared identity and experiences.

This discussion touches the core of the challenge of generation as actuality, as described by Mannheim, but also refocuses the issue with attention to the media and technologies. The process of self-recognition is tied here to cultural production. For Colombo, the difficulty lies in the difficulty of completely separating 'authentic' self-recognition narratives and marketing strategies that respond to and create the cultural demands of the youth. And because youth participation in cultural production was traditionally limited, the distinction was even more challenging – although the spread of digital literacy, broadband internet and technological opportunities for generational self-expression will, suggests Colombo, gradually contribute to better opportunities to define and observe generations' internal perspectives. This, of course, links to contemporary debates concerning new media and user-generated content, and their consequences for the cultural and civic participation of the youth (Dahlgren, 2007; Bennett, 2008; Banaji and Buckingham, 2013). Although 'participatory culture' of the youth and digital media has been widely celebrated (Jenkins, 2009; Cohen and Kahne, 2012), it has also raised questions of the true extent of this participation among adolescents. Particularly contested and elusive are issues concerning the true nature of youth participation (basic use or creative engagements; reception or collaboration etc.) and of whether and how creating user-generated content transfers to influence and offline civic engagement (cf. Livingstone et al, 2005, 2011; Levine, 2008; Östman, 2012).

Even with the addition of media, one can see how the relation between generation as status and generation as actuality remains vague. Critics of the Mannheimian model

have focused on this unresolved conflict of biological factors versus social and historical contexts in the making of generations, and accused Mannheim of avoiding the problem by simply separating the two (McCourt, 2011, p.55; for other recent critiques of Mannheim's approach see, for instance, Steele and Acuff, 2011; Aboim and Vasconcelos, 2014; or France and Roberts, 2015). However, it seems that a more definite theoretical statement would not necessarily enrich the model. Rather than being a flaw, the inclusion of both demographic attributes and social contexts is in line with modern audience studies, and opens up the analysis to external and internal factors, as it is done in this chapter. Moving forward, this is precisely how I approach generations here: as a sociological concept encompassing status, actuality and units, but attentive to the fact that generational practices are mediated through and by media, including music.

The coherence of this social scientific concept of generations can be contrasted with the symptomatic approaches from marketing. Generational labels used in marketing tie generations in terms of consumption, usually with a context of a specific medium or technology (Craig and Bennett, 1997; Colombo, 2011), and are much more superficial and essentialist. It is in such a context that phrases such as 'Nintendo generation', 'Facebook generation' or 'iPod generation' circulate in the press and television, usually with a healthy dose of moral panic about the platform in question – or even worse, with grandiose claims about the youth's superb digital competence, which will be a defining feature in family or societal relationships (cf. Ofcom, 2014). Such claims are easily countered with studies that are attentive to audiences and media (see Helsper and Enyon, 2010, for instance), which raise significant factors missing from the analysis – class, experience, gender and others (cf. also Banaji, 2012, on the 'Generation X' in India).

Finally, this brief review did not include other uses of the term in literature or in daily life. In scholarship 'generation' has referred to, explicitly or implicitly, conceptually different phenomena, including family relations, age cohorts, life phases or historical periods (Närvänen and Näsman, 2004). In art and literary studies, a group of contemporary artists representing a trend or subscribing to a particular set of values is

sometimes called a generation. Works in the discipline of history oscillate between universal approaches, interested mostly in birth cohorts and looking for long-term, rhythmic generational patterns, and specific studies of inter-group differences caused by socio-historical factors (Jaeger, 1985). Casual and everyday use of the term includes some of the above, but also, among others, generations of migrants and 'generation' as a category to cover a type of similar object or product developed at the same period (mobile phones, drugs etc.).

There is no doubt that each of these usages, to a greater or lesser extent, may affect the understanding of the term in everyday discourse. There is no question that more often than not, the usage of 'generation' is vague, and that popular phrases, such as 'war generation', 'stolen generation', 'Beat Generation' or 'Facebook generation', are all completely different conceptually, and stem from very distinct traditions. However, I argue that this disarray is not a reason to give up on investigating the concept. Williams, in the introduction to *Keywords*, describes his interest in the term 'culture' through not only interdisciplinarity, but also the relevance of the concept in general usage:

> It has specialized meanings in particular fields of study, and it might seem appropriate task simply to sort these out. But it was the significance of its general and variable usage that had first attracted my attention: not in separated disciplines but in general discussion. The very fact that it was important in two areas that are often thought of as separate – art and society – posed new questions and suggested new kinds of connection. (Williams, 2013, p.12)

In the following sections I am attentive to this variable usage when discussing my data. This is significant, as this is an ethnographic study, and participants' perceptions and attributed meanings are one of the foci of the analysis. Additionally, because the fieldwork was conducted in Japanese (as described in detail in Chapter 3), the cultural context in which the term is embedded requires unpacking, as does the distinction between the native Japanese word *sedai*, and the loan word *jenerēshon* ('generation').

6.3   Generational identities of Japan, 1990-2012

Jeff Kingston, an Asia Studies scholar, observed that 'Japan in 2010 is very different from the way it was in 1990s; (…) during these fleeting two decades many of the seemingly ineradicable verities, assumptions, and practices of Japan have been unalterably transformed' (2011, p.37). Those transformations started with the market collapse in the early 1990s, when the land asset bubble burst, rearranging the social, political and economic spheres of modern Japan. The consequences, still visible today, were multifaceted: they involved not only continuing economic recession, but also, among others, demographic shifts, a labour market crisis, changes in the family, increasing income gaps and unresolved welfare challenges (Bestor, Bestor and Yamagata, 2011, p.3).

In the short term, however, the impact was felt most in the jobs market. School or university graduates in the early 1990s were the first post-war generation to be massively denied lifetime employment or, in many cases, employment at all. Whereas in the past completing a course at a certain institution guaranteed a full-time, open-ended contract, in the 1990s Japanese companies started hiring contingent, non-regular workers on an unprecedented scale instead. Because of the nature of the non-full-time contracts, in addition to diminished salary and status, those lucky enough to become employed were deprived of the usual benefits and training, becoming unable to advance into full-time positions, which were reserved anyway for older executives, according to the entrenched seniority system (Kingston, 2011).

The term 'lost generation' (*ushinawareta sedai*) in Japanese literature has been used sparingly in this context. A much more common phrase is 'the lost decade' (*ushinawareta jūnen*), denoting the period, rather than the cohort. 'The lost decade' is widely used in Japanese scholarship from various disciplines, such as economics (Harada, 1999) or sociology (Ogawa and Matsumura, 2005), in written political statements (Ito, 2003), and in the mainstream press (Yomiuri Shinbun, 2014). In the past few years, due to the continuing recession, the phrase has switched to 'the lost two decades' (*ushinawareta nijūnen*). In all these outlets, the reasoning for the label is

based primarily on the economy. The decade is 'lost' because economic outputs at a country level were low; companies were failing, not thriving, and productivity and innovation was at an all-time low.

On the other hand, 'lost generation', both in native Japanese form and as an English loan word, *rosuto jenerēshon*, primarily denotes the First World War generation in the US, just as in the original use of the term in American literature. When the term *is* used to describe the cohort of Japanese who turned adult in the early 1990s in Japan, it is usually not a pejorative term towards the cohort – at least, not anymore. Condry (2013, p.121) notes that it has not always been so, and in the late 1990s, 'lost generation' had equally bad press, and was synonymous with slackers, NEETs (not in education, employment or training) and freeters. This is another hint at the cyclical nature of generational gaps (see also Genda, 2005), and brings the two cohorts together in terms of shared youth experience. Nowadays, quite on the contrary, the qualities of hard work and perseverance in hard economic times are often emphasized when the 'lost' youth is mentioned (Matsuda, 2009).

The term for 'relaxed generation' (*yutori sedai*) is a label stemming from a series of 'relaxing' educational reforms, which can be traced back to the late 1970s. The most significant of these were changes made in the 1990s, most notably the gradual abolition of Saturday classes and significant cuts in the school curriculum. Thus, not unlike in the case of the 'lost', the term 'relaxed' was not originally used for describing a cohort. In time, however, the phrase 'relaxed generation' became increasingly popular in the press and literature, and more often than not acquired a negative connotation. 'The relaxed' were, especially in the tabloid press and popular television shows, attacked with a familiar range of accusations seen in reactions to Generation Y in other parts of the world: a lack of commitment to the workplace, high expectations, or too much reliance on technology (Wallace, 2010). Other concerns were more specific to the Japanese context, and focused on the perceived roots of the problem – the 'dumbed-down' school curriculum, which was seen as derailing the progress of the youth (Nishimura et al, 2012).

Such narratives tend to end up focusing on the cultural texts of the times. One of the most popular scholars of Japanese popular culture, Azuma Hiroki, is known for his systematic and rather one-sided critique of modern animation or music as meaningless and devoid of significance, from which he makes connections with the state of Japanese society and the *yutori* generation (Azuma, 2012). Similar descriptions appear in television shows and the Japanese press and magazines on a regular basis (Asahi Shinbun 2013, NHK Takeshi 2012), usually as, respectively, debate shows, with panels of experts or concerned editorials, and the voices of the discussed generation remain not represented. This is, of course, a familiar story. American babyboomers' memories of youth spent with rock music from the 1960s clashed with the experience and with the much less overtly political music of their children. The contrast contributed to the perception of the 1990s youth as apathetic and egoistic (Bennett, 2001, pp.152-8).

One of few alternative categorizations of Japanese generations was done by Matsuda (2009) on the basis of purely economic and demographic factors. He relabelled 'the lost' as 'the second baby boomers' (literally, 'baby boomers jr'), and divided the subsequent 15 years into a 'post-bubble generation' and a 'low birth rate generation' ('baby slump generation?'). His analysis lacked a social element, which Matsuda tried to then introduce via a concept of a 'non-spending generation', denoting a group of apathetic non-consumers, who start to appear with his youngest cohort. As a result, the concepts are overlapping, and although there is value in Matsuda's careful economic approach (especially because cultural and sociological approaches to generations often lack a detailed discussion of the economic context), analytically, the concept of 'the relaxed' is much more elegant.

In any case, the two epithets, 'lost' and 'relaxed', seem far apart conceptually. Perhaps this is why existing scholarship is reluctant not only to compare 'lost' and 'relaxed' cohorts, but even to problematize both generational labels. Such a state of affairs is unfortunate, especially if we consider the two in a longer historical context. The lost decade and the bulk of relaxed reforms in school education were both consequences of the land asset bubble burst, and as such, should be considered as strictly linked. Instead, they are treated as mostly unrelated events, triggering the births of two

contrasting cohorts, which, by association, are perceived as completely different – which is not the image emerging from this study.

The two cohorts share similar experiences. As mentioned earlier, both were subjected by the media and public discourse to negative labelling in their formative years. Whereas the interview data suggests that 'the lost' already overcame the experience, for 'the relaxed' the issue is much more immediate and upsetting. 'The relaxed' in this study were much more willing to argue with or qualify the generational label than 'the lost'. Reactions of the younger cohort ranged from anger about structural changes (Hikari, FG2: "First, the cut the curriculum in half, and then they act surprised we're dumber") to personal declarations about inclusion in the cohort (Tsubasa, FG5: "I know some who are 'relaxed', but not me, no. I'm not. I go to school, I'm doing my job-hunting"). In no interview did the label surface in a positive light when first mentioned. On the contrary, in a typical exchange below, the label *yutori* was used as a playful insult between two teenagers:

> Saya: "We are *yutori*, so yeah. And everyone says this explains everything.
>   "Because we're *yutori*."
> Kōki: "*Yutori*?"
> Kazuki: "He doesn't know. He doesn't know what *yutori* is. *That's* how
>   *yutori* he is, this guy." (Focus Group 2, 'the relaxed'; emphasis
>   added)

In this exchange, first Saya recognizes and accepts the label, before sourly expressing her resentment towards the older generation's deterministic and unfair, as she finds them, media portrayals of *yutori*. Then, when Kōki (who is sitting at the other end of the table) asks for clarification, Kazuki jokingly equates the label with ignorance: according to him, Kōki doesn't know the meaning of *yutori* precisely because he is *yutori*, that is, a product of a dumbed-down education curriculum.

On the whole, though, the cohort did possess quite a strong sense of a shared experience. They all recalled stark differences between themselves and older peers stemming from a changed school experience. Those with older siblings reported a contrast between the amount of classes or homework. Mostly, however, it was the

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annoyance with *yutori* being spun to denote 'apathetic' and 'dumb'. They did consider themselves *yutori*, and were in favour of the educational changes, which, in their minds made them less stressed and more free – but were disappointed that the school reforms had not been followed by changes in the labour structure, leaving them in limbo between two systems, the old and the new. Like Nana above, they recognized themselves as a coherent group facing unique challenges.

On the other hand, 'the lost' amongst my informants and interviewees, although similarly accepting and recognizing themselves as a distinct cohort, with a shared identity, did not seem to feel stigmatized by the label. Rather, when prompted, they referred back to their post-bubble hardships, and linked the word 'lost' to the economic situation in the 1990s. Yes, they were the unique generation, united by a cataclysmic change in societal values and structure, but they were not 'lost' in the sense of a lack of hope. It was the economic decade that was lost, and they had to do their best to make a living in spite of that.

Finally, intergenerational tensions would often surface in the interviews, especially with 'the lost'. Directly – as company employees, part-time workers or community members – or indirectly – through spouses, friends or acquaintances – the older participants were used to interacting with 'the relaxed'. Their opinions about those encounters were predominantly negative, just like in this typical exchange:

> Izumi: "It's not so bad, isn't it? Even though they say, oh, this 'relaxed generation' and that 'lost generation', and how the times are worse now, worse than before. But it's not so bad, they have it good, you know?"
>
> Hiroko: "Completely so. They can buy whatever they want, eat whatever they want to eat. If you think about it, I feel they're rather spoiled."
>
> Izumi: "In my husband's workplace, there are such people, in mid-twenties maybe (…) and they had changed jobs twice already before joining my husband's company. In the past, you would feel confident about a person [that age] at work, they would have this 'company consciousness' about them. When we started working, even five years younger colleagues were like that, but recently it is different, there are now so many people lost in a workplace, like it's too much for them." (Focus Group 3, 'the lost')

Similar conversations and anecdotes about apathetic youth lacking commitment and loyalty to the workplace appeared across all focus groups with 'the lost'. These anecdotes resembled Japanese media discourses about 'the relaxed', and conflated personal experiences and memories of the crisis with one's current status. The hardships of the early 1990s were recalled as much more severe than the current economic situation, while a stable income, accumulated possessions and family life were raised as evidence of grit and perseverance bearing fruit in the end. In the quote below, Chiyo (36 years old, with two children close to *yutori* age) elaborates on raising children in post-bubble Japan, mentioning, again, the improved economic situation compared to her childhood experienced.

> Chiyo: "There are so many of those [young people] that can have anything. And it began, you know, when grandmothers would buy them any toys they wanted. Our generations did not even have such toys in the first place, right? Really, we would only get something on a special occasion. And even on special occasions, it would be one or two things, you know, from one grandmother, from the other grandmother. 'I want this', 'I want that', they just say it, casually. And, of course, it's always 'because someone else has it already.'" (Individual interview, 'the lost')

Chiyo's comments are representative for a number of participants who spoke of 'the relaxed' in such negative way while idealising their own past hardships. They are also rather generic, typical of a generational discourse elsewhere and could easily be heard in a non-Japanese context.

'The relaxed', on the other hand, did not address 'the lost' so directly; rather, they resented all older cohorts, referring to them as 'they' – a product of the past. Moreover, the youth in the study were much keener to emphasize the structural differences surrounding each period: the continuing crisis, changes in schooling etc. In the extended fragment below, six members of 'the relaxed' discussed this with reference to the education system, curriculum and corporal punishment in schools. The conversation starts by discussing generational 'yutori' labels given from above, but further along the participants make comparisons with even younger generations, and assess them in a negative light too.

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Kyōko: For us that's normal so I don't think anything about that really. I
    don't know the past anyway.
Naoki: I feel they're making fun of us.
Haruna: Right?
Junpei: I don't feel that way though.
Haruna: So what do you feel?
Junpei: Because, well, even *yutori* have some good points too.
Naoki: Like what?
Kyōko: That 3.14 becomes 3?[19]
Junpei: No, that they are not caught in the system. [They're] free.
Interviewer: But that's not really how the media see it, is it?
Haruna: Nope. [...]
Interviewer: Does this make you irritated?
Junpei: Not really, no.
Naoki: Yeah, looking at who's saying that, they probably look down on us.
Kyōko: For sure.
Haruna: But look, probably, if those who are not *yutori* die out eventually,
    when there's mostly no one but *yutori* around, the *yutori* will be the
    norm, won't it. Still there are not too many [of us] population-wise, so
    we stand out, you know, everything we do becomes 'oh, yutori' [did
    something again].
Kyōko: But what is *yutori* then? What's *yutori*?
Eri: We had school on Saturdays for a while, then after that we didn't.
    That's, like, *yutori* education.
Kyōko: Well, I know that, but…
Haruna: Yeah, the system has changed completely.
Eri: But now old people say that we should go to school on Saturdays.
    Young people must study more, they say. As if they're not involved [in
    what had happened].
Haruna: In short, the individuality was started to be respected much
    more. Even in [school] foot races they won't give you a rank now, no
    places are given anymore. To take care of the individual is more
    important.
Naoki: The times of individualism began.
Junpei: That's a good line. [...]
Ayane: And another thing. In nurseries and play circles, there needs to be
    a number of main characters [cast in a play].
Haruna: Yeah, it is so very difficult. There can't be anyone without lines,
    for example.
Ayane: Like there are a numbers of Cinderellas each time.
Fujita: Oh? Is that so?
Kyōko: That is weird.
Haruna: So until now there were only seven people in a school year that

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[19] Kyoko is referring to the typically raised example of *yutori* education in media and commentary, where the value of π (Pi) was simplified to just "3" in some school curricula.

could get a "10" [highest overall grade]. But now, you guys, you are told that anyone who gets a given number of points, receives a "10". So there can be any number of people.

Kyōko: But that is, I like this more I think. Because if you are in a smart class…

Haruna: But if you don't fight, you don't really grow enough.

Ayane: Your ambition fades.

Eri: If it makes you fight, that's not yutori education.

Haruna: Yes, that was not yutori education. In my times.

Kyōko: Oh, I see. That was better.

Junpei: I'm against it.

Ayane: There's a limit, right?

Haruna: Yes, yes. And students below you, they have it even worse.

Ayane: Terrible. They're so selfish.

Kyōko: But listen, our teacher for example, he used to hit students. I think that's good.

Haruna: Right? This was also forbidden around your time.

Kyōko: If you don't [hit students], you'll get more people like us here.

Haruna: So our mothers and fathers, they're from such [different] times and that's why they think that way.

Kyōko: If you try to emphasise that way, it becomes tough.

In the above dialogue, Haruna, who is the oldest (Haruna is 24, the rest of the groups is 20-21 years old) and also a teacher (and thus has the most direct contact with students of different ages) speaks from a position of 'not really relaxed' – for Haruna, the real 'yutori generation' came after her time as a high school student. There were other instances in the study where neat generational boundaries were challenged. For example, in two demographically similar focus groups, one with 20- to 24-year-olds (average age = 21), the other with 22- and 23-year-olds, the discussions took different turns. In the first one, participants discussed the idea of a 'relaxed' generation, implicitly placing themselves as part of it. In the second one, the concept was discussed as pertaining to a younger cohort. The participants acknowledged some overlap between their histories and the 'relaxing' educational reforms, but identity-wise, they regarded themselves as mostly outside the label – they were neither 'lost' nor 'relaxed', but willingly leaning towards the former. On the one hand, this development might have resulted from the group dynamic and differences in profession. The group who regarded themselves as not fitting the relaxed generational list of attributes had

three participants with professional teaching experience, two of which had regular contact with adolescents and teenagers, which might have resulted in such distancing themselves from the youth. On the other hand, this is also, I think, the result of vagueness of the term *yutori* in the media – and since I did not preface these discussions with definitions or explanations of the concept (cf. Chapter 3), various interpretations emerged.

Acknowledging these instances, still, in sociological terms, the 'we-sense' of a generation emerges from the data. Both cohorts reported a gap between the knowledge learned from the previous generation, and the reality they were experiencing. For 'the lost', their skills and education had become unsuitable to the post-bubble environment. Expecting their final school exams and the choice of a university to be directly and simply correlated to their future professional posts, as it had been the case before, they were in for a bitter surprise. Employers (those who were still employing – and not bankrupt) were less interested in test scores, and more in flexibility, experience, connections and low expectations. Contracts, when offered at all, were often offered for limited time periods or on a part-time basis, which destabilized the labour market; job hunting ceased to be something only done at the end of a formal education, but instead it became a long-term, strenuous activity. 'The lost' were not trained for precarity, and struggled to succeed in the new world.

For 'the relaxed', their formal education lay in contrast with values passed on in the family, the community, and through public discourse. Initially, the gloomy, post-bubble message of having to persevere before the economy got better was passed on to them by parents, teachers and media personalities alike, and in schools they were taught to adopt the ethos of hard work and patience. But then, somewhere around their last years of primary school or during middle school, the message changed. The curriculum was cut, extracurricular activities were loosened, and suddenly, 'the relaxed' had much more afterschool leisure time than the previous cohort (and cohorts before it) had ever had. And paradoxically, when the adolescents were spending their newly acquired free time with friends or pursuing hobbies (as was the idea behind educational

reform), in the media or public opinion they were increasingly being berated for being lazy or apathetic.

The difference in structural realities affected the processes in which 'the lost' interpreted actions of 'the relaxed', but also how the 'the relaxed' made sense of the discourse provided to them by 'the lost' (cf. Brinton, 2011, p.11). Izumi, a 38-year-old woman, in a quote presented earlier in this chapter, expressed disdain for frequent job changes by her husband's younger colleagues, because she found such practice 'frivolous'. Her work experience in the 1990s did involve flexibility and employment changes, but for her, these, unlike the job hopping of 'the relaxed', had been forced by the state of the labour market at the time. On the other hand, Takashi, an 18-year-old man, felt no need to be an overly loyal or patient jobseeker, or to follow in the footsteps of his elders in other ways. For him, there was no silver lining, and the economic crisis was not about to end anytime soon, if ever, and the relaxing of the educational reforms was only proof of that.

So the emerging picture is a complex one. Both cohorts might have much more in common than portrayed in the literature. So far I have mentioned the economic crisis affecting the youth, their experiences of negative labelling and new challenges in the labour market. Next, I turn to music to allow for a more detailed interpretational analysis of generational similarities and differences, where 'the lost' and 'the relaxed' are positioned between texts and contexts. To do this, I refer back to the framework of modes and practices mentioned earlier, in Chapter 4.

6.4   Generational music practices

In the study, a generation divide in terms of participants' favourite artists emerged less than expected. The first research method, the questionnaire, already hinted at that finding. In one of the questions, participants were asked to list up to three favourite music acts. Ninety-three respondents (40 'lost' and 53 'relaxed') gave 243 answers overall (96 and 147 respectively), most of them unique. Statistically, the number of answers that overlapped was not significantly greater intra- than inter-generationally.

For instance, the three most popular performers – Arashi, Mr. Children and EXILE – were chosen by a similar number of participants from both cohorts (see Table 6.1). Moreover, there were twice as many occurrences of an artist listed once in each cohort[20] than an artist listed twice in one cohort.

Still, generational differences emerged as more significant than gender differences in the study, and there were a number of cases where the former seemed especially salient. Using only the year of major label debut as a criterion, Table 6.1 divides the performers into two groups, roughly matching the band's formative activity with the audience's adolescence. The results are rather intuitive, and suggest that there is indeed a trend for preference for music from one's youth. There data indicated, however, not only a number of exceptions (for instance, Ikimono-gakari debuted in 2006, but had five times the occurrences in the older cohort than in the younger), but also a significant overlap between the two groups of performers in both cohorts. Table 6.2 presents the latter in more detail, by listing the five most popular music acts from the questionnaire. The years of debut are very different here, encompassing a period from 1988 to 2006. There is also a strong preference for group acts – be it idols or pop rock bands.

The responses match market data from Japan during the period. The five best-selling albums of 2012 were Mr. Children (double album – places #1 and #2), AKB48, Arashi and Exile, and besides AKB48 (a multi-member girl idol group, see Chapter 5 for an extended introduction), all of them feature in Table 6.2 (Oricon, 2013). The absence of 'AKB48' responses in the questionnaires (and the band's increasing presence in subsequent stages of the fieldwork) suggests that in many cases this particular fandom can be embarrassing for its fans in public: during individual interviews, the participants admitted that they had been hesitant to write the band's name in the questionnaire so as not to appear 'weird.'

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[20] The most surprising of those was Franz Liszt, listed by Rena (18, woman) and Keiko (30, woman).

Table 6.1 Music acts listed most frequently – grouped by year of major label debut

Music acts	No of occurrences in 'the lost'	No of occurrences in 'the relaxed'
Major debut after 2000	11	27
Major debut before 2000	22	15

Table 6.2 Music acts listed most frequently (more than five times overall)

Music act	Year of major label debut	Type of act	Number of occurrences in 'the lost'	Number of occurrences in 'the relaxed'
Mr. Children	1988	Four-member pop rock band	6	7
EXILE	2001	All-male idol/dance group	3	5
Arashi	1999	All-male idol group	3	4
Yuzu	1997	Pop rock/folk duo	4	2
Ikimono-gakari	2006	Three-member pop rock band	5	1

The data described above is not presented here as an accurate measure of generational taste. Even ignoring the low number and the skewed balance of responses (96 and 147) and its consequences for the calculations, the questionnaire question itself is analytically problematic. Still, as a snapshot, it provided a valuable direction to the research process.

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The questionnaire, as well as the market data in general, lacks attention to other factors that could provide additional context to the responses. For instance, even a brief analysis suggests that gender could be a significant category in musical choices. Arashi, the boy idol group popular in both cohorts, was only listed by women, while Momoiro Clover Z, a girl idol group, exclusively by men. In non-idol acts, audiences' responses seemed less gendered, as Mr. Children, Yuzu and Ikimono-gakari received mentions from both men and women. Generally, though, the emerging picture is that of an intergenerational playlist. The cohorts, although retaining their own cohort-specific music choices, share the most popular acts to a surprisingly large extent.

The pattern of an intergenerational playlist resurfaced during the focus groups, interviews and observations. The participants reported sharing music data with their parents and siblings. I observed family rituals of music engagement in cars and living rooms. I heard negotiations concerning music choices, and I heard of shared practices of listening. An overarching generational theme in those encounters was twofold: musical choices were similar, but interpretation of music was vastly different. I consider these separately in the rest of the chapter.

In shared spaces, musical choices were negotiated. Classic examples of such shared spaces were cars and living rooms, where the outcome depended on the context and the family dynamic. Such spatial music negotiations are surely not specific to Japan or the two cohorts (Frith, 2002), but the musical choice overlap is uncommon. Even though I heard about a variety of cases and witnessed a number of family quarrels, the emphasis was still on a largely shared musical playlist. Here, in one such exchange, Shōta (18), talks about his and his parents' (who fall within 'the lost' range) musical choices:

> Taiki: "In my family, we don't play anything while in the car. Nothing on."
> Moderator: "Right."
> Shōta: "*I don't play anything. My parents choose [car music]… I listen through earphones.*"
> Moderator: "What kind of music?"
> Shōta: "Some oldies, Spitz and such… Sazan, Tube…"

Moderator: "And your parents then? The music that your mother, father put on?"

Shōta: "Same [music], same one I like."

Moderator: "So you and they like the same music, but you're listening separately?"

Shōta: "I like some more than others." (Focus Group 4, 'the relaxed')

In this exchange, Shōta makes an effort to stress the differences between himself and his parents. He says that there is no shared listening in the car, but rather an 'alone together' moment (to borrow the phrase from Sherry Turkle, 2012), where the family commute is experienced together, yet separately, and interaction is sacrificed for control of the soundsphere. However, it is all still done in the context of shared musical interests: choices are similar, even though routines and modes are not.

The shared playlist could be the effect of many factors, and my evenings with families in this study revealed at least one. The time after dinner in both rural and suburban homes was usually devoted to watching television in the living room. Even though this ritual involved a plethora of other activities and multitasking (phone checking, washing dishes, reading newspapers, playing with pets…), all the family was attentive to the television show in at least some capacity, and the most important on-screen developments were discussed and commented on. Very often the evening television programming had a musical element, whether in the form of a weekly live music show, a musician present on a variety show, or a karaoke or musical impersonation contest for celebrities. On top of the performances being actively discussed and judged, there were instances of intergenerational transfer of celebrity knowledge, when parents introduced to children, and vice versa, some of the artists unknown to them. My field note from one such visit exemplifies this trend. Takashi, of 'the relaxed' age, and his siblings Miki and Eriko, are watching a television special with their parents (early forties, liminal experiences of the bubble burst, arguably still 'the lost' in terms of background) and their grandmother:

Mother interested in Hatsune Miku [vocaloid idol] on screen, saw her on a morning show as well. Asks Takashi ('the relaxed') who writes songs for her. Producers, Takashi replies, on YouTube. Mother confused, Takashi explains the process in more detail…

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> [During a quiz show] Insert on Inoue Yōsui [folk rock singer, most popular between 1972 and 1990]. Mum stops the chores – loves him. Was he that famous? children ask. Mum starts to explain but stops when the song is heard, joins in, hums, then sings along. Dad puts down the phone (!), provides historical context, lists the main hits. Miki, Eriko know a few, but thought it was someone else.

In other instances, participants revealed intentional practices that, they said, resulted in a shared playlist. Similarly to many of 'the lost', Fumiko shared musical choices with her children through repeated listening:

> "I make my kids like the same music as I do, so their favourites are mine. That way, [we can listen to] EXILE [together]…" (Focus Group 6, 'the lost')

Such practices also included, for example, educating children/parents during shared viewing and listening, as in Takashi's family above, or shared music CD renting practices. Both of these examples, although not completely unique to Japan, are somewhat culturally specific – the amount of music programming on mainstream Japanese television is unusually high when compared to the US or Britain, and so is the cheap and legal (physical) music rental system.

Not all playlists were shared, of course. Even disregarding inconclusive responses ("I am not really sure what songs my mother likes", Kayo), a tenth of the participants distanced themselves from their families' musical engagements, either by stating different preferences as a reason, or by claiming their parents (but not the children) had "no interest in music" (Tsubasa).

While the cohorts, to continue with the conceptual framework introduced in the previous chapter, did not differ significantly in choices, they did so in routines. Such differences were most immediately obvious because of different schedules between school and work. For parents, time dedicated to music listening was naturally limited. For women in particular, who often had to juggle housework, childcare and part-time work, time spent alone was scarce – much scarcer than their mothers' had been at that age (who very rarely had to work on top of homemaking). As a result, music was commonly an experience shared with children and/or a spouse, be it in the car or at

home. These places became arenas of exchanging and negotiating not only the content, as described in the previous section, but also interpretative practices between generations. Music on the radio or television was discussed and evaluated.

The music practices of the older cohort were thus significantly influenced by family members, especially children. For families with very young children, this was reflected in much of the music engagements concerning nursery rhymes, music for babies and toddlers, and television shows for children. When the children became older, they brought home cultural and music references from kindergarten, preschool and school, where popular songs increasingly played a vital part in the educational curriculum. Such practices were re-enacted in the family setting, where a parent would then rent the CD for home listening, or, in some families, creatively perform the song together in the car.

However, along those resulting from different ages and, subsequently, lifestyles, a generational analysis reveals further differences in routines. Adolescents and young adults of 'the relaxed' had unprecedented access to music and music technology, and an unprecedented amount of free time. With free Saturdays and less rigorous afterschool activities, they filled the gap between school and home with social activities, hobbies, and, very often, music. Interviews, observations and questionnaires revealed a much more diversified routine of listening, not primarily accompanying a commute, as for "the lost", but social gatherings, study time, a pre-sleep routine or karaoke practice. Their portable music players reflected that variety, in that they had overall more songs than "the lost", and the music was significantly more varied in genre and performers – and as such, very often organized in folders intended to accompany a specific activity. Music, in the words of Naoki (21), was "an everyday companion"; for 'the relaxed' it defined the routine, while for 'the lost' it was enhancing it.

Here, a related finding that emerged through individual interviews highlighted the difference in the perception of sound and silence. Silence was an unwanted, unpleasant experience for the younger cohort (Saya: "I hate silence"; Haruka: "Silence

gives me the creeps"), whereas some participants in the older cohort noted positive connotations to the lack of sound (Yoshimi: "Sometimes, I pray for silence"). We can, again, relate this difference not only to age (parents deprived of silence, teenagers enjoying the ruckus), but also to generational identities. Silence has been an unusual and sought-out phenomenon for 'the lost', whose lives were filled with preparations to enter the workplace, and then with struggles to find their place in the new economic reality. For 'the relaxed', on the other hand, silence might denote the negative social phenomena of modern Japan: (cyber)bullying and *hikikomori* (acute social withdrawal). The former has been theorized as a result of strong group conformity fostered in the Japanese school system, and often manifests itself as escalating hostile behaviour towards 'misfits', leading to complete social exclusion and physical aggression by classmates, often informally sanctioned by teachers (Peak, 2001; Mino, 2006). The latter is a phenomenon unique to Japan, where young people (mostly men) isolate themselves in their bedrooms (in their parents' houses), and refuse contact from the outside for prolonged periods of time, sometimes years. Causes of *hikikomori* have not been sufficiently proven, and a number of psychological, psychiatric and sociological hypotheses have been raised to explain the phenomenon (Miyadai, 1996; Saito, 1997).

Lastly, the interviews also reveal significant differences in modes of listening. As discussed in Chapter 4, we can distinguish three main modes: focused listening, background listening and incidental listening (hearing). When 'the lost' cohort in the study did report individual music listening, there were two main types of such practices. Most often, the mode of engagement was defined as background music during housework or the car commute. On those occasions, there was little control over the content – music was primarily played from the radio, television or a random CD found in the car, and there was not much manual interference or shuffling throughout the activity. Music was there to 'ease' or to 'energize'.

When the older cohort employed focused listening, music was very consciously utilized for a specific purpose. Many participants reported having a collection of emotional 'song triggers' that would elicit a reaction in a difficult situation (cf. DeNora, 2000). Such mood management was sometimes particularly sophisticated. For instance, Hisae

described a three-part process she always underwent when feeling depressed: first, she would listen to a folk artist who would make her even sadder ("hit rock bottom"), then she would switch to a punk rock band for recovery, and finally, she would switch again to a contemporary pop rock band to establish a "flat, feel-good time." This musical menu was fixed – the mood management process needed to be time-efficient, and there was no space for experiments.

On the other hand, 'the relaxed' cohort spent much more listening time in a focused mode. As mentioned above, music for them was not a mood-managerial response to a given situation, but an opportunity to create such situations. Yes, they were very selective when picking a song for a given situation (they reported an often and repeated use of the 'Next' button, and many of them divided their music into playlists appropriate for a particular mood, time of day or type of activity), which resembles Hisae's experience in the previous paragraph, but even in the background mode, this cohort was less functional in their approach to music.

The link between these practices and generational experiences can easily be made. 'The lost', as outlined at the beginning of this chapter, were raised in the bubble ethos of hard work and big rewards – and it is when the system failed that they had to react and channel that ethos into new labour opportunities (or lack thereof). Music, like everything else, was a means in this process. 'The relaxed' did not share this ethos. Their predicament was that no rewards were guaranteed regardless of effort. Music was a void-filler, a companion, a different world.

6.5   Generational interpretations of music and listening

Most notably, the two cohorts differed in their interpretive processes and meanings emerging from their interaction with music. This finding was especially salient in discussions about pop idol group songs, present in all focus groups and many individual interviews. Idol group acts, such as AKB48 or Arashi, appealed to both cohorts (cf. Table 6.1 again), albeit for different reasons. The older cohort, even while tacitly acknowledging aspects of sexualization and voyeurism present in the marketing of

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those (very young) girls and boys, praised their "cuteness", "hard working spirit" and "liveliness". These were, at the same time, precisely the qualities that the older cohort found lacking in "today's youth". The interpretative emphasis of 'the lost' was the ethos surrounding the 'bubble burst' period – nationalism, hard work, ambition and perseverance under any circumstances.

On the other hand, the younger cohort valued the performativity and social aspects of idol group music much more. The songs were interpreted as relatable to the everyday experience, easy to sing at karaoke, fun to dance with friends, or energetic enough to be an alarm tune in the morning. The interpretative focus was on the small, everyday struggles and low risks.

While AKB48 and Arashi could in this way be examples of multi-texts, appealing to multiple kinds of audiences, *vocaloid* music (very similar melodically to the idol group sound!) was exclusively the domain of the young. Of particular interest here are the audiences' perceptions of the production aspect and user-generated content. Vocaloid, unlike the idol industry, was a more bottom-up, crowd-sourcing endeavour, which was attractive to young listeners for two reasons: ideologically (vocaloid as Japanese post-punk, a contrast to the 'office' model) and in terms of access (music freely available, creative fan participation allowed on a character licence) – and this was despite the fact that, as discussed in Chapter 5, creative work with vocaloid was rarely done by the participants. At the same time, the vocaloid was also rejected by the older cohort (but not only – other reasons included dislike of the music style or lyrics) because of a perceived lack of tangible effort: unlike in the idol groups, there was no improvement in singing or dancing (as it is done by a machine/hologram).

In all younger cohort discussions of Japanese pop music and idols, the issue of authenticity (discussed previously in Chapter 5) would inevitably surface. Often this would happen immediately after the topic of idols was mentioned, spurring a heated discussion before moving on to other aspects of popular music. It seemed as if the young people *needed* to mention they were aware of the discourse, and that their musical preferences (that is, liking idols, hating them or being indifferent to them) had

been shaped by it, or despite of it. Typical exchanges addressed the performers' personas and the content of their social media profiles:

> Yū: "It's the old guys who are actually handling those."
> Kenta: "Well, some idols are writing [mumbling] those themselves."
> Hiroki: "The manager writes everything [on their behalf]."
> Kōji: "You're such a sad (dreamless) person to say something like this."
> Hiroki: "In the idol industry, you have to sleep around [to succeed]."
> Kōji: "Hey now, stop!" (Focus Group 12, 'the relaxed')

> Tsubasa: "That's the manager, for sure."
> Nao: "You're wrong. They write it themselves."
> Shin: "I check their diary. Greeeeen write their own diary. Each time."
> Tsubasa: "If it's Greeeeen... they might really write it I guess."
> Nao: "Naoto (Naoto Inti Raymi) writes it himself." (Focus Group 5, 'the relaxed')

The dynamic was always similar: a disillusioned participant (Yū, Tsubasa) proclaims the lack of authenticity and is met with a mix of support (Hiroki) and opposition (Kōji, Shin, Nao). The latter would usually either present arguments for the authenticity of content (Shin implying she can tell by the writing style) or, much more often, deem the issue not subtracting from the enjoyment of idol music (Kōji referring to Hiroki as someone 'without a dream').

The link between performers' authenticity of creation and audiences' musical choices became even more apparent when song lyrics were mentioned. Two typical excerpts from the interviews were as follows:

> Nanami: "I don't like when there's no connection. When an artist writes lyrics on their own, I feel like the emotion is there when they sing it. When idols sing, they just sing stuff written by somebody else, and they don't feel that emotion, and for me it's difficult to feel it too. When lyrics are created and sung by the same person, that's when I can identify [with a song] the most." (Individual interview 11, 'the relaxed')

> Naoki: "I feel like you [through music] you can get to know that person's [the artist's] personality... Because, you know, they are so dedicated." (Focus Group 8, 'the relaxed')

Here we have Nanami and Naoki engage in the same interpretative process of identification with music through authenticity and emotion. Nanami, a fan of singer-songwriter performers, defines this authenticity as authorship of lyrics, whereas for Naoki (who is an idol fan), the authenticity lies in the artist's dedication. Whatever the stance on the inner practices of the industry or on what constitutes authenticity, the interviewed young people regarded the latter as an important factor in the music experience. 'The relaxed' interpreted music not only through melody and lyrics, but also used a variety of contextual cues (authorship, legitimacy, type of contract) to judge its value.

Two minor points need to be mentioned here before I compare these with parallel interpretations coming from the older cohort. First, in Chapter 5 I discussed the finding that the content is, indeed, in many cases, produced by managers and 'old guys' alluded to in the exchanges above – and 'the relaxed' are well-informed about the intricacies of production processes. Still, as one of the big record label producers confessed to me in an in-depth interview, one of the big recent challenges of the industry is the rise of social media. If, he explained, artists were to be allowed free use of it, platforms like blogs or Twitter were a threat to the performer's image, the image the producers have worked so hard to establish. "I would love if Twitter didn't exist at all", he concluded, "and we would not have to monitor the content." I can easily imagine that this sentiment is shared by managers and PR specialists worldwide, in music, and also other entertainment genres, sports or politics. Recent examples might include actor James Franco's 'flirting with a teen' Instagram controversy, US politician Anthony Weiner's Twitter sex scandal, or a PR storm after a 'Free Palestine' tweet by music superstar Rihanna. In the world of sport, a telling case occurred during the 2012 London Olympics, when, after a string of Twitter controversies, performers were asked to adhere to an Olympic good practice handbook (International Olympic Committee, 2012) when using social media. The difference between those and the Japanese music industry is that in the latter the wide practice is to effectively take over the performer's social media activity, and it is only when that control system fails that occasional scandals occur.

Second, numerous comments during focus groups (such as Kōji's above) and individual interviews suggest that idol fans are hardly oblivious to the manager's control of the creative process. On the contrary, they displayed deep knowledge about the industry, acknowledging that some level of involvement is necessary, as the performers operate on extremely busy schedules. Even so, those fans admitted they would disregard this knowledge when engaging with idol music or social media content. As described in the previous chapter, in order to maximize their enjoyment from the music, they suspend their disbelief and try to accept the idol narratives at face value.

The older cohort was much less passionate about authenticity than the younger one. The topic was only discussed in one group, where participants contrasted the differences between singer-songwriters of the old with 'singing-only' girl and boybands of the present. Even then, the latter practice was not necessarily considered worse, but rather 'different', and evoking distinct emotions. This initial finding may parallel some studies of music and youth, which stress the importance of 'realness' or 'the truth' in music performers (Thornton, 1995; Hayes, 2007; see also Huq, 2007, for a critique of the concept). However, as I discuss in Chapter 5 on the example of idol groups and vocaloid, this authenticity is also differently constructed and interpreted within the generations, and, as I argue below, the focus on authenticity (or lack thereof) is circumstantial and tied to socio-historical contexts and audiences' experiences.

Instead of authenticity, discussions of idols focused on more tangible elements of the music acts: the quality of lyrics, melody type, singing voice or choreography. A typical exchange looked like this:

> Yoshimi: "I don't get it. I don't understand AKB. The one about headbands, headband something. Why would you make this the [song] topic?"
> Hiroko: "I don't get any of them."
> Naomi: "It's just word play."
> (…)
> Izumi: "I've always liked artists who could sing well… that was the case mostly."
> Moderator: "Right."

> Izumi: "[But] Sometimes, with popular songs… For example, AKB really aren't very good at singing, but as a group, their power, their synchronized dancing, everything comes together. And then I think, oh, this is a good song. This song cheers me up. And I come to like it."
> (Focus Group 3, 'the lost')

Here, Yoshimi recalls the (then) recent single by the girl band AKB48 entitled 'Everyday, Headband' and expresses her confusion about the title. Hiroko agrees, confused by AKB lyrics in general, before Naomi jumps in and explains that the words are not meant to be meaningful. Later, Izumi praises the group's energy and choreography while undermining their singing ability. This was a typical flow to these discussions; participants would list good and bad, in their view, aspects of idols' musical performance, and judge the artists accordingly. More often than not, the final opinion about the performer related to the elements participants would value the most in the pre-interview questionnaire: for instance, if lyrics were more important than the melody, this participant's opinion about the artist's lyrics was in line with their overall opinion about the artist.

The key phrase in such exchanges in the older focus groups was effort and team spirit. Idols were praised for the final package, for the successful combination of all the elements that, analysed separately, were 'mediocre' or 'confusing'. It is when, in Izumi's words, "everything comes together" that the idols shine and win the sympathy of the audience. The interviewed 30-year-olds recognized the idols' effort and hard work.

> Hideki: "Yeah. So when you only see them at a concert or on TV [you miss it], but they update [their blogs] every day, you can see, oh, they did this today. Or when it's before a concert, they write what lessons they had that day. Or they write that they have a recording from now on. And you look at things like that and you realize that they work really hard (*ganbatteiru*) at various things when you don't see them."
> (Individual interview, 'the lost')

Idols' hard work as a team was valued the most here. The group choreography lessons or updating the blog with information on various group activities is part of *ganbaru* – 'working hard' or 'doing one's best'. As nobody expects idols to be good singers or

dancers, the emphasis is on the effort – not on becoming great, but on improving yourself (cf. Brasor and Tsubuku, 2002; Zaborowski, 2012). This is what Aoyagi (2006) dubs 'life-sized idols' in his work on Japanese artists, and while such discussions were invisible in the younger cohort, the 30-year-olds were eager to bring up the issue. In the example below, Shizuka compares two generations of idols and their changing personas as well as audiences.

> Shizuka: "Nowadays, the idols and the music, like AKB… they're different from the idols of old. The lyrics used to make adults think, oh, if only [all young people] were like that. Make boys think, oh, if all girls were cute like that. And female idols would strive to achieve that. And now, the emphasis is on being more life-sized, you know. So now, for girl [idols], the goal is to be easily relatable for young girls, to make music that would achieve that, I think." (Focus Group 7, 'the lost')

The picture emerging from all these examples is one of authenticity versus effort, or of ideals versus order. The interpretations of musical texts of pop idol groups are closely tied to the membership in 'the lost' and 'the relaxed'. 'The lost' see in idols unstoppable effort despite the circumstances (lack of talent), in the same way that they talk about their own efforts in the altered labour market in the early 1990s. It is striking to compare their interpretations of AKB48, above, with their reflections about the generational experience:

> Hideki: "The rules changed… but [we] had to fight (*ganbaru*)." (Individual interview, 'the lost')

> Yumiko: "It was much tougher [than it had been before] so [we] needed the grit (*konjo*) not to give up." (Focus Group 7, 'the lost')

For 'the lost', idols represent order and team effort. Authenticity and authorship is largely unimportant. The hierarchy is maintained, and it is natural that young singing boys and girls listen to their elders (producers) and recite the lyrics given to them – as long as they do all elements (singing, dancing, interacting with fans) wholeheartedly. It is, in this sense, the much more preferred reading, to return to Hall's model presented earlier.

'The relaxed' value effort as well, but attribute to it only secondary importance. Working hard is only as good as the reward, and the latter is, in the present socioeconomic system, highly doubtful. It is in this context that *yutori* is the cohort of 'safe', pragmatic choices, a cohort that does not require a car, a cohort that doesn't go abroad or apply for prestigious jobs (Matsuda, 2009), fearing the possible lack of return on such investments. It is precisely this generational actuality that manifests itself in valuing authenticity in pop idols. 'The relaxed', in the words of Hikari ('relaxed' herself), were 'tricked' by the educational reforms from the "old guys in charge", and thus tend to resent or at least notice any musical or music-related texts that are not 'genuine', not created by the artist, or at least by someone of similar age to them.

Such discussions concerned not only idol music. Issues of authenticity and of being disillusioned by the world of "the lost" emerged during fieldwork in connection with other artists as well. Sometimes it was the generationally 'older' music along with the 'current' music that provided comfort for the teenagers: here, 18-year-old Nao, says that alongside Ikimono-gakari (debut in 2003) she chooses Mr. Children (debut in 1988) to help her face challenges of adult, work life.

> Nao: "Lately, it's Ikimono-gakari's album. It's from a while ago, it came out in March. I put it in [my playlist]. There are a lot, you know, songs that cheer you up. When you want to laugh, or you know, just lighter songs in general. I listen to songs that can give me power."
>
> Interviewer: "Right. And you also said it's both melody and lyrics for you, didn't you?"
>
> Nao: "I do like lyrics a lot. When my spirits are low and I can't get into the right mood... Or you know, when I think, deep inside, that I have enough of the world of adults, then I listen to Mr. Children's "Na Mo Naki Uta" for example, and the lyrics that say that you should always be honest with yourself, I want to listen to those then."
>
> Interviewer: "I see. Do times like those happen more often, now that you've graduated?"
>
> Nao: "Yes. Very often. [Now], there's so many situations where I have to face myself, so I want to be honest with myself, you know. The feeling of wanting to stay honest, you know, I feel it strongly. That's why I listen to such songs." (Individual interview, 'the lost')

The generational playlists are therefore not only permeable and non-exclusive for audiences, but songs from different decades can be listened to in response to generational challenges.

6.6   Conclusion

The two overarching conceptual streams in this chapter concerned generations. On a general level, I have investigated whether the concept of generations has anything to offer to audience studies, and if so, how audience researchers should build generational considerations into their frameworks. On a specific level, I looked at two Japanese post-war generations, and wondered whether the existing narratives about them in scholarship and media match the generational experience – and whether it is analytically helpful to look at those cohorts as generations in the first place.

I began this chapter theorizing the concept of generations. Identifying generations has long fascinated social scientists and marketers alike, because it offered a way to combine demographics, identity and social context. For a media researcher, it also provides a framework to include intersections of age, gender and class, contextualized through the media users' voices. At the end of this chapter, I argue that comparative audience studies should revisit generation, and include the concept in their analytical repertoire, as it is helpful in accurately describing the diversity of audiences and bounding them according to culture, collective memory and social change.

Yes, the concept remains challenging. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, it is tricky to accurately examine generations through the lens of their self-recognition processes rather than just formation – and this becomes evident in this study, which builds a narrative from a snapshot of empirical data of the two audiences. True, there are issues of vagueness of the term (both in specialized and in casual usage), issues of generalizability and issues of attention to specific socioeconomic and cultural contexts which sometimes tend to become blurred by the big, generational labels. However, as noted by Siibak, Vittadini and Nimrod (2014, p.102), generations uniquely present an

opportunity to discuss modern audiences' fragmentation and links between media use, technology and culture.

Based on the analysis conducted in this chapter and the subsequent discussion, I suggest two directions for further study of generations from an audience perspective. First, as suggested by Colombo, we need to extend Mannheim's sociological model to include media and cultural practices. As presented earlier, Mannheimian dissection of each of the two aspects into generation as actuality and generation and status, analysed in the overarching context of music media practices, revealed insightful connections between membership in a cohort and interpretations of the social world. Second, audience researchers need to go beyond what Colombo proposes. An insightful generational audience analysis must take into account the ways members of generations define themselves not only through where they are located, but also in comparison to the other: generations, cultures, class, technology etc. In other words, we need to retain the concept of generations, and the complex narratives surrounding it, because generational identities form the ways in which groups self-define in contrast to other groups.

Such an approach to generations is also helpful in assessing the particular validity and usefulness of 'the lost' and 'the relaxed' as generational labels. In this chapter, it allowed me to focus on similarities and differences of musical engagements between two groups strongly tied to their socioeconomic localities, yet not forget about their shared experiences and self-recognition. A careful analysis of the two as status and actuality revealed that there is analytical value in treating them separately (as opposed to grouping into 'two lost decades', cf. Obinger, 2013), and in not following the trend of adopting the Western nomenclature of Generation X and Generation Y. 'The lost' and 'the relaxed' (although not unproblematic concepts, as discussed throughout this chapter), link back to the unique structural factors of modern Japan beginning with the Second World War and the post-war economic miracle, and ending with a post-bubble, all-encompassing crisis. The investigation of their audience practices shows largely distinct patterns of engagement and interpretation.

Specifically, in this chapter I argued that although favoured musical content does not vary much between cohorts, the music is engaged with and interpreted in different ways, and via different social and economic contexts. With regards to the generational we-sense, I argued that the youth do indeed use the *yutori* label when discussing their generational identity, but resent the older generation and media coverage for the negative connotations in such labelling. The concept of a 'lost generation' is less contested, perhaps because of much lower attention to it in contemporary Japanese public discourse.

Agreed, the two labels are uneven and carry different weight, and it is challenging to consider them in a purely social sense. 'The relaxed', especially, are labelled with a plethora of related terms ('the non-spending generation', 'the no-car generation'), used mostly in a marketing sense, and as such share the approach with problematic concepts such as 'broadband generation' or 'Facebook generation'. Nevertheless, both 'the lost' and 'the relaxed' not only fulfil the conditions of location and self-recognition, but through analysis of their inter-cohortal interpretations of the same musical texts we can trace the 'we-sense' beyond Colombo's proposition. Japan, with its teenage and preteen performers, who, due to their age and prolonged exposure hold a special proximity to similarly aged audiences, and can (mis)represent and realize the sentiments of a cohort, is an important case in modifying the sociological model with a modern account of media texts and audiences.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1   Introduction

This research set out to answer the overarching research question of how people's practices of music listening are situated in their social and cultural lives. Approaching this question theoretically, the thesis has been driven by three aims. First, conceptualizing audiences' engagements with music through the idea of 'practices', I have been interested in finding out how the concept might be helpful in understanding the social and cultural aspects of engagements with music. Second, starting my research from the audience studies tradition, I wanted to investigate in what ways the analytical tools from the field could be of use in understanding music audiences. Third, and more broadly, I wanted to find out what new insights music could bring to audience studies, and what audiences could bring to studies of music.

In order to address these theoretical challenges, I specified the overarching research question through four sub-questions, concerned with the nature and meaning behind listening practices, the relation between audience engagements and production activities, and the generational and cultural aspects of practices and interpretations.

I engaged with these questions through my conceptual framework, informed by audience studies and the practice approach, which drove the methodological decisions in the study. For data collection, during my five-month fieldwork in Japan, I used a mixed methods approach (including questionnaires, focus group interviews, qualitative individual interviews and participant observation) to corroborate findings and to understand practices in a deep, contextualized way. Then I conducted thematic analysis of the data to identify recurring themes and categories, and to analytically capture the patterns of listening practices.

In this chapter, I recap the empirical findings from the previous three chapters, and discuss their significance with relation to the theoretical framework of the study and scholarship on music, audiences and Japan (especially in relation to the music

cultures). Then I step back and address the theoretical aims of the research more broadly. Finally, I reflect on the various limitations of the study and propose further directions in the study of music audiences and listening practices in light of the findings in this thesis.

7.2 Summary of the empirical findings

This section returns to the empirical findings from Chapters 4 to 6, and relates them to the four sub-questions I asked at the beginning of this thesis.

To recap, these sub-questions were:

1. What are people's practices surrounding music?
2. What is the role of music in people's lives, and how is it interpreted in the context of social and cultural relations and identity work?
3. In an era of unprecedented possibilities of access to music performers, also enabled by technology, how do audiences and creators' practices relate to each other?
4. How (if at all) are generational identities relevant within and through listening practices?

The findings relate to different areas I have investigated in this study, and inform different, yet sometimes overlapping, academic debates. In the following sections, I first discuss the place of the concept of listening practice within the so-called 'practice turn' in media studies, then I discuss proximity and co-evolution as concepts informing the debates of, respectively, audience–performer interaction, and reception–production dynamics, and finally, I turn to the concept of generations and argue for its relevance in media and music studies.

7.2.1 *'Practices' in media and music research*

In posing my first two sub-questions, I have been interested in the concept of practice: its meaning and its place in the everyday lives of the audiences.

The concept of media practice, as discussed in Chapter 2, can mean vastly different things within and outside the field of media studies. John Postill, in the introduction to *Theorising media and practice*, the most recent attempt to theoretically systematize and define the concept within media and communication research, lists 190 past uses of 'practices' in 93 different ways in his brief literature review of media anthropology (2010, p.4), finally settling on practice theory as 'a body of work about the work of the body' (p.11), which, while catchy, seems too general to effectively apply.

In this thesis, the idea of a social practice of listening, defined as a culturally contextualized, repeated activity through and with music, helps in an understanding of engagements with media not as individual, unconnected instances of the use of a specific medium, but rather as sets of activities in a rich media environment (Couldry, 2012; Deuze, 2012). It is in this way that I have introduced my idea of 'social practices of listening', in the plural, and have argued that in order to understand the relevance of music in everyday life, we need to observe a whole range of music-related practices, in some of which the focus is not on the music at all. Social practices of listening can be general or personal, and are not only about listening or only about music – but about how listening and music are integrated and interpreted in social and cultural life.

I have discussed listening as a practice throughout this thesis, but empirically I engaged with the sub-question most in Chapter 4. As explained, the idea of practice, stemming from the idea of 'practice' in social theory, is helpful for a music audience researcher because it approaches audiences in terms of what they do with the media (Postill, 2010). The ethnographic approach, discussed in Chapter 2, and media anthropology, are natural extensions of the concept. 'Practice' builds on the achievements of audience studies, suggesting the need to account for audiences' agency in their engagements with the media, and also the need to not let go of the idea of producers'

power in shaping representations in media (cf. Ortner, 1998). For Elizabeth Bird (2010, pp.86-7), a 'focus on practices helps us conceptualize what to study in relation to the media in everyday life (beyond media texts themselves) and it also helps position anthropological ethnographic approaches at the centre of media audience study.'

The concept of media practices, defined through the focus on audiences' agency and their immersion in the rich media environment, has been helpful in answering my first sub-question that asked about people's practices surrounding music. However, the concept of practice alone is not enough to tackle my second question, which asked about the role of music in people's lives and the ways it is interpreted in the context of social and cultural relations and identity work. There are two dimensions to this: one, general, is an investigation of audience practices and the relevance of existing models conceptualising audience reception. Two, the study is located in Japan, and analysing the practices of Japanese audiences (as opposed to Western audiences) helps bring out the conceptual tensions and look at it in cultural terms. Through my framework in Chapter 2 I have argued that the practice approach, understood as a turn towards the non-media-centric (Moores, 2012; Pink and Mackley, 2013), loses the focus on media, and with it, the focus on the textual dimension which is necessary if we want to understand the emotions and meanings that emerge through the interaction between audiences and texts. In Chapter 2, I have argued that the concept of 'practice' in audience studies needs to include this dimension going forward.

With all this in mind, in Chapter 4, I presented the social practices of listening through the detailed activities of five of the 93 audience participants. The social practices of listening are nested in a Japanese cultural scene and provide a non-Western context to the theoretical models presented. Particularly, these five were chosen as a way to illustrate the complexities of the concept of practice in the literature (especially in the light of linear typologies and neat models) and to discuss what is there to be taken forward by audience studies and studies of music. Through the discussion of the five profiles, I have argued that many of the social practices of listening happen through and with the music media, but in many, media is not in the fore.

Linking back to Chapter 2, I have also argued that just approaching the variety of listening activities by categorizing them into modes is not enough to understand the social relevance of such activities, in particular, the national, regional and cultural contexts. I have shown that, indeed, people do engage with music in modes, which I have grouped into focused, background and incidental listening modes. I have discussed how these modes are recognized and appropriated by the audiences talking about their music use, and argued that the social relevance of practices is historical and changing. When reporting their practices, the participants divided their engagements into real, focused listening, background listening and incidental listening, and towards each of them they associated different meanings and emotions. I have also discussed the content of the participants' music devices, where songs were often organized functionally, in order to accompany specific modes and routines.

However, it is not enough to discuss these meanings only through the related modes. First, I have suggested that these modes are hardly exclusive. This becomes apparent because music in itself is multimodal (cf. Kress and van Leeuwen, 2011), encompassing sonic, visual and bodily experiences. Second, while modes of listening might map with the idea of a general practice well, I have argued that individual meanings in this practice can change interpretation of general practice. For instance, in Chapter 6, I have discussed how Shōta's family listens to the same songs, although on different devices, and in Chapter 4, I analysed how Naoki's iPod collection, his personal treasure, had been pre-loaded by someone else years ago.

I have also discussed karaoke as a site of diverse practices, meanings and emotions. Karaoke practices presented in earlier chapters have not only been rich, but have been linked to a wide range of other practices. Hikari uses the karaoke room by herself, to practice before group performances, and also to get some privacy. Naoki shies away from workplace-related karaoke, but happily goes to sing with good friends, with whom he is able to focus on himself and can pick his favourite songs without social pretence. Sayaka avoids karaoke altogether whenever she can, because her 'thing' is playing instruments, not singing, and because a karaoke box is, for her, not an inclusive social experience. These are already different types of practices, and different

pleasures and aims are being embedded in them. However, another layer of interpretations can be uncovered by delving deeper into the meanings circulated in the karaoke room: the songs chosen, the interactive options switched on and the devices used.

I have discussed that there exist a plethora of listening practices, general or personal: commuter practices, car listening practices, parental practices – and more. These intersect modes and meanings. For instance, one of the five profiled participants, Shigeru, uses music for mood management, and consciously regulates his emotions through particular elements of music (tempo and lyrics). Other participants do similar self-regulatory work with lyrics or with choreography visuals, which is consistent with DeNora's (2000) findings about the mood-managerial roles of music in everyday life. However, practices of mood management are complicated through a set of identities (Shigeru as a salaried employee, a 35-year-old male, a father), emotions and meanings. The notion of social practices of listening is not in the text, and is not purely determined by the non-textual. Like the concept of the interface (Livingstone, 2008), it is not confined to the genre or to the listener. The sense of the practices emerges rather from the meaningful interaction between them.

I have argued, then, that the concept of practices needs to be imbued with meanings and emotions stemming from the interaction of audiences with the texts. 'Practices of listening' in media and music should be broadened in a similar way that 'literacy as practice' has been distinguished from 'literacy as event' by Street (2003, pp.78-9): that is, not just concerning the mediated activity, but also the broader, culturally contextualized ways of thinking about listening.

Furthermore, I have discussed that my analysis revealed that a significant part of meaningful practices of listening are incidental or background, and that finding brings out the need for a more detailed ethnographic investigation of these practices. The methodology in studies of music audiences needs to go beyond questionnaires of music use or interviews about favourite artists and lyrics, because they might miss most of the non-focused, incidental practices, and with them, an important part of

meanings imbued in everyday listening. Participant observation emerges as a helpful tool for that, of course, but more than that, there is a need for a mixed method approach to listening: one that will combine the insight that can be collected via qualitative interviews, quantitative music use data, and the ethnography of actual use in the everyday context.

7.2.2   *Meaning of co-evolution and proximity*

The third research sub-question asked about the ways audiences and creators' practices relate to each other. The question of production and reception (and audiences and producers, readers and writers, listeners and speakers) has always been the core of the theoretical traditions from which this thesis stems. Just like the first two sub-questions, this one, too, I have addressed in two dimensions: a particular one, in which I argue that in Japan proximity and co-evolution are important social and cultural concepts, and a general one, in which I argue for a reassessment of the circuit of culture model in the light of the dynamics between production and receptions, and between performers and audiences.

Media and communication studies in the US and in the UK, different in their roots and foci, were both interested in how media is made – and how it is received. Recently, with the rise of the concepts of convergence culture and 'prosumerism', scholars like Henry Jenkins (2006) have argued that the two aspects, production and reception, are not separate anymore (if they ever were).

In an era of unprecedented possibilities of access to music performers, also enabled by the technology, in this thesis I have been interested in how audiences take up the opportunities of actually meeting 'the idols that you can meet' (AKB48), how relevant this (perceived) closeness is to them, and what meanings are embedded in the relation between the performers and the audiences. By conceptualizing the study through a circuit of culture model, discussed in Chapter 2, I was able to see the dynamic connection between moments of production, consumption, regulation, representation, and identity.

In this thesis, I have used two case studies to analyse the relation between moments on the circuit of culture: first, Japanese music idols, exemplified here by multi-member girl bands AKB48 and Momoiro Clover, and second, the vocaloid culture, with a focus on the most successful global virtual idol, Hatsune Miku. I have argued that the two case studies represent two contrasting models of production and distribution, to which the audiences attribute different meanings and values. Idol groups, produced by top-down, strict and controlling 'offices', are the old way, challenged by the rise of crowdsourcing and bottom-up production efforts represented here by vocaloid. However, vocaloid is still not 'mainstream' in the way the traditional idols are and the non-virtual idols and offices, as discussed, are certainly not fading away. On the contrary, they represent the still dominant model, and through creative practices diminishing the distance between performers and audiences, they result in a uniquely prosperous venture on a global scale.

Two key findings of proximity and co-evolution emerged in relation to the sub-question, and both were discussed primarily in Chapter 5. Regarding proximity, I have found that the idea of limited reciprocity in the classic concept of parasocial interaction discussed by Horton and Wohl (2006) needs updating to attend to technological developments of the new media (which allow for digital reciprocity more than ever before – although, as discussed in Chapter 5, these opportunities are not taken up by all audiences), and the cultural and social diversity of practices in late modernity.

Horton and Wohl's model, discussed in detail in Chapter 5, is still relevant in capturing some aspects of the performer–audience relationship. The model left quite a lot of agency in the hands of the audience. The latter was, according to Horton and Wohl, to fill in the gaps of the performance, and to complete it – but they were also allowed to reject their roles when not enough engagement was made, or when the performer did not sufficiently connect with them. However, just as the reception research tradition in the UK evolved from the sociological literary studies beyond the idea of just 'gap-filling' (that is, completing the text written by a creator) to encompass a diversity of

contexts and interpretations, I suggest that the parasocial interaction model needs to be expanded to account for more complicated practices of meaning-making.

In the thesis I used the concept of proximity to describe the perceived distance between performers and audiences. As argued in Chapter 5, similar accounts of proximity can be found in the pop-cultural history of regions outside Japan, but a careful analysis rooted in the cultural context remains crucial to understand them. Writing about Japan, in this study I used the concepts of *uchi* (inside) and *soto* (outside) that were helpful in understanding proximity at various levels: television production, lyrical content, promotion techniques etc. For instance, I have discussed how boundaries between *uchi* and *soto* are crossed through both the vocaloid software (making the virtual idol sing the lyrics one has created) and an online face manipulation game related to idols from AKB48.

I have argued that proximity is key to understanding audiences' practices relating to idols and virtual idols in Japan, but the concept also offers a way to analyse other media practices in modern Japan, and elsewhere. I have related the audiences' perceptions of authenticity and realism embedded in their listening to idol groups and vocaloids to Ang's idea of emotional realism. Where in the case of AKB48 the authenticity is built on the physicality of the performers, in the case of Hatsune Miku, it is the producer's/writer's authenticity that counts. I suggest that authenticity, a key word in much of music scholarship, should be understood here through the audiences and their interpretations. For instance, for idol audiences, it does not matter that the idols are singing songs written for them by older producers – even though they are aware of that. For them, authenticity in music is what Thornton describes as "the reassuring reward for suspending disbelief" (1995, p.26). The world portrayed in idol songs is a specific kind of fantasy; a representation of what the producers think the ordinary life of a young boy or girl is like. For older idol fans, this is parallel to television production processes in Britain in the 1950s, where the middle class made films about the working class for the middle class (Palmer, 2002). What is authentic is relative and negotiated and stems from the audience interaction with the text and though a range of contexts.

Some of the findings above recollect lessons learned from audience research across decades. From studies on television, books and movies audiences, we have learned that audiences are diverse, and their interpretation processes are complex. We know that meanings are not just in the text itself, but are made in the act of contextually engaging with the medium. I have shown that these findings apply to music audiences as well, but I have also argued that the diversity of audience practices needs to be understood in terms of the whole circular model of culture, which I discuss in the following.

Regarding co-evolution, I have argued that Japanese music audiences are very well versed in the intricacies of production and distributions. I have also noted that the producers and creators of content are aware of the diversity and sophistication of the audiences. On the one hand, it builds on my point of updating the parasocial interaction model. I have argued that the model needs to attend to the agency of the audiences and the opportunities that have surfaced through social media and broadband internet technology. On the other hand, this links back to discussions of audiences and producers in scholarly writing about music, to which I allude in this section.

I have discussed co-evolution through an example of producers not investing in the quality of sound, because according to their data, most audiences were not interested in sound quality anymore. Interviewed audiences in my study, indeed, placed little importance on the issue, because the difference in quality was unnoticed in noisy environments where the music was listened to. Is this reflecting an international trend? The availability of lower quality music albums on torrent sharing sites and video streaming services could be taken as an argument supporting this. On the other hand, Baym (2011), analysing the ways bands earn their revenues in digital times, reflects on the Swedish model and encourages artists worldwide to embrace the sharing model of music, and focus on, among other things, quality (although not only sound quality). Engaged audiences, Baym argues, will support the band, and it is helpful for the artists

to develop personal connections with audiences and offer distinctive, high quality work (to distinguish it from the illegal copies online).

In my study, both producers and audiences knew about each other's strategies, and were aware of the other's knowledge of them. Such examples abound in my data, and link to two points I raise now: a methodological one and a conceptual one. Methodologically, I was able to acquire such accounts from both sides due to this work being a PhD thesis. I had a few years to complete it, and thus I was able to approach this topic with a wide framework. Travelling between Aichi and Tokyo, I was able to compare the industry interview with audience data real-time, and those relevant connections informed the methodological choices made and questions asked. When I asked a participant about a newly released AKB48 song (which had some of the girls portrayed playing musical instruments, a rare setting for Japanese idols), I was able to then confront the producers about the audiences' reactions, and then go back to the audiences again.[21] This has been a privilege which is not always a norm for non-doctoral research (and even with my timeframe, I often wished I had more time and resources, which could have been spent on producing a thorough ethnography of the music industry, or extending the methodology to different cohorts of audiences).

Conceptually, co-evolution informs the production/reception model by showing that the processes are interlinked and cannot be analysed separately. This finding builds on the classic cultural study of the Sony Walkman, a staple of the British cultural studies tradition (du Gay at al, 1996/2013), discussed briefly in Chapter 2. The study established a conceptual link between a media product, manufacturing technology and a cultural form, arguing that studying culture meant investigating related and dynamic practices surrounding production and consumption. However, many aspects of the analysed data, especially the complexity of practices, suggested that the circuit of culture model needs revisiting and refining to be useful for contemporary audience researchers. I will address this in Section 7.4.

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[21] Paraphrasing, the sense of the exchange could be summed as the producer saying: "We give the girls instruments, but we don't expect the audience to believe they really play them", and the audience responding with: "We know they don't really play them, but it's nice to see them try."

Twenty years later, music studies alluding to the circuit of culture model, even implicitly, remain scarce, although there have been in-depth studies engaging with multiple moments in the model described by du Gay et al. For instance, Sara Cohen, in her work on the Liverpool music scene (1991, 2012), maps the processes of musical production and circulation, and contextualizes them within the historical and social realities of the city, showing that the processes are interlinked and insightfully analysed together. An interdisciplinary, nuanced and rich account of MP3 technology as a cultural artefact by Jonathan Sterne (2012a) is multi-angled in its analysis, as is his monograph on listening technologies of the past (2003), but in both, Sterne focuses on the history of the format and the cultural meanings embedded in its production and circulation – whereas the listening and the audiences have not been investigated empirically. Nancy Baym engages with creators and audiences with the goal of bringing them together, and addresses the issue of the music industry in the age of the precarious and the digital. In a series of articles, Baym analyses what audiences think of their beloved artists (2007), and how musicians see their audiences (2012), but also, drawing on the Swedish market example, how the industry should embrace the flow of information, apply a social exchange model alongside an economic one, as well as build and expand the social relationships between those who create and perform music, and those who listen to it (Baym, 2010, 2011).

In this thesis, I have shown that my approach can engage with the accounts discussed above, and offer new insights into creative and reception practices. I have argued that in the age of technology and social media, audiences are not only aware of production models, but they also negotiate meanings associated with those models in their interpretations of music texts. This challenges the dominant model of media power according to political economy, but also challenges claims of meanings being strictly determined by texts and their boundaries.

Last, in the research design I divided 'creators' and 'audiences' with a solid line. The groups were part of different research stages, with different interview guides and different aspects stressed during the fieldwork. This is, perhaps, against the trend in

recent media research, where the Jenkinsonian 'prosumer' is never just a member of the audience, but always also a creator. As evident in this thesis, I do not disagree with the amount of agency attributed to the audience by writing from the 'participatory culture' tradition (Jenkins, 2009), but, based on my interpretation of the gathered data, I am also arguing that the extent and meaning of (especially youth) participation needs to be empirically revisited. Despite the overall savviness of the analysed participants, and even with the co-evolutionary developments described above, user-generated 'creative' cultural content observed in the study was scarce. Vocaloid songs were not composed by the participants. Watching audience-created idol song mash-ups or video clips were, for some interviewed, a source of viewing pleasure, but they rarely attempted to create such works themselves. I have suggested that at least some of these activities were not taken up for economic reasons, which raises the need to further observe participation and creativity in the context of class and capital. But I also argue that the creative digital practices of young people need a more careful investigation in terms of the content of such practices, and especially in terms of their aims, expectations, embedded meanings, links to the offline world and the place of those practices in people's everyday worlds.

7.2.3   *The challenge of generations*

The fourth research sub-question concerned the ways generational identities remain relevant (or not) within and through listening practices. Chapter 6 focused on addressing the question most directly, but the generational aspect was present throughout the study. As discussed, this thesis began from a number of places, and one was my preliminary thoughts about media stereotypes portraying young Japanese people as apathetic, lazy or lacking ambition. Designing the research methodology, I decided to look at music audiences through the experiences of two cohorts: one, 'relaxed', the subject of those stereotypes, and the second, 'lost', similarly (in form) stigmatized two decades ago. This aspect of the study was driven by the similarities and differences between the two generations, and by an investigation of whether the term 'generation' can be revisited in media and audience studies.

As discussed in Chapter 6, the word 'generation' carries different meanings for different people. Casual use of the term may refer to familial bonds or to categories of products; academic use varies depending on the discipline, but even within disciplines, the concept remains contested and often unrigorously used.

In recent audience research there are signs of interest in the concept. In 2014 the *Participations* journal published a themed section on 'Media generations'. The issue was related to the COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) framework 'Transforming Audiences, Transforming Societies', and to the book coming out of the network, *Broadband society and generational changes* (quoted previously in this thesis) by Colombo and Fortunati (2011). In the introduction to the special issue, Siibak, Vittadini and Nimrod acknowledge that while 'generations' in media research is still a relatively new concept, it can be very helpful for the development of the field:

> In short, the *cultural concept of generations* offers a wide range of valuable heuristics to explore the meaning and use of media in people's lives (media repertoires, media habits, media as status symbols, etc.)… [and] may help scholars in describing the contemporary audience fragmentation and in exploring the complex interrelations between audiences, technologies and cultural settings. (Siibak, Vittadini and Nimrod, 2014, p.100)

This is certainly a tall order, and just like the articles in the special issue, the concept might point researchers towards a plethora of epistemological and methodological approaches. Such variety is also reflected in other recent initiatives involving generations. In early January 2015, the annual MeCCSA[22] conference took place in Newcastle under the theme of 'Generations'. The conference papers engaged with the theme in a wide spectrum of connotations and, to some extent, the ambiguity was intentional. The conference call for papers invited submissions 'addressing generations of technology, media theory, practice and policy, but also professional generations; those about to leave the profession, who may have entered higher education in the 1970s and 80s, and those who are just beginning their careers across a range of

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[22] MeCCSA (www.meccsa.org.uk) is the largest academic association in media, communication and cultural studies in the UK.

disciplines' (MeCCSA2015 website, 2014). The wide and often contrasting use of the term throughout the conference reflects the diversity of the highly interdisciplinary field of media and communication studies, but also points to the challenge of 'generations'.

Only a brief browse of the conference abstract shows presentations regarding generations as kinship ('generational conflict in television soap opera') and as a category of products or services ('generations of media technology', 'generations of cinema', 'generations of public service provision', 'generations of photography courses', 'generations of Scientology'). When the presenters discussed 'generation' as a group of people, they referred to migrants ('second-generation Asians in Britain'), generations of video artists, of protesters, of actors, of producers, of ICT users. Among the conceptualizations widely used in the scholarship and mass media ('baby boomers', 'millennials', 'digital natives'), presenters talked about 'generation rewind' or 'the happening generation'. There were generations that were more universal ('global generations' or 'generations of women'), more locally specific ('generations of Nigerians', 'younger generations in the north of England', 'generations of Russian journalists') and generations that were rather enigmatic in their scope ('future generations', 'under-18 generation', 'younger/older generation', 'next generation').

A theme of a conference is, of course, just that: a theme of a conference, chosen consciously to encompass a variety of topics and approaches, and appropriated with varied rigour and interest by academics, depending on one's current research. I have not summarized the conference use of the concept above as the state of the field, but rather as a glimpse into it. It is telling that we, media and audience scholars, have a problem with generations: their definitions, conceptual roots and implications.

Perhaps scholars in the field are uneasy about the concept because much of scholarly effort has been directed in critiquing 'generations' as simplistic determinants of media use, literacy and abilities. In this way, in media and audience research, much more work has argued against the problematic uses of the concept than proposed a more coherent use of the term instead. For instance, David Buckingham (2006) recaps

arguments for the 'digital generation' proposed by Don Tapscott (1998), and counters with findings from media research that hugely complicate Tapscott's media determinism. Buckingham asserts that generational labelling based on technological progress and emerging digital platforms disregards the fact that such developments exist in powerful socioeconomic and political contexts, and often replicate (and not create) old power relations. Moreover, without a careful, contextual investigation of what people do with the media, the issue of human agency and diversity is lost, and without it, the analytical picture is highly incomplete.

The debates surrounding 'digital natives' tell us that generational preconceptions are problematic (Livingstone, 2009; Helsper and Eynon, 2010; Banaji, 2011), and that presenting cohorts in terms of generational differences carries risks of essentializing them and disregarding other factors in the cohortal experience (Buckingham, 2006; Banaji, 2012). That is why a focus on the ethnographic approaches of people's practices has been employed instead. Especially in youth and childhood studies, this has become evident in the new 'sociology of childhood', which, instead of defining children through labels and effects, investigates them as active shapers of their realities (Corsaro, 1997; James, Jenks and Prout, 1998).

I argue that all this does not need to result in the sidelining of the concept of generations. Mannheim (1923), talking about generational consciousness, noted that it does not need to be homogeneous. Even within generations we have units, smaller and larger, that act and interpret things differently. However, as shown in this thesis, I argue that the concept of generations can remain productive. I have found that it is helpful to revisit the concept of generation especially through audience research, as it offers a way to bind the social, the historical and the individual. I have not forgotten about the lessons from audience research, and the critical debates about 'digital natives'. I have used 'generations' not as being determined by consumerism or by an emergence of a medium, or solely by a generalized type of practice. Instead, I have shown how an analysis of shared experiences, self-recognition and meaning-making through media can and should remain attentive to socioeconomic, cultural and political localities.

Analysing 'the lost' and 'the relaxed' in this thesis, I started with a caveat that these labels are also problematic because of their names. Even compared with generational labels elsewhere in the world, they are gloomy and negative. Conceptual issues aside, phrases such as 'digital natives' or 'net generation' suggest skills and savviness. 'Baby boomers' refers to demographic factors, 'millennials' denotes a period of time – both labels, on the language level at least, are seemingly neutral. The two Japanese generations analysed in this thesis have no such luck: they are either lost, or they are relaxed (and the latter is hardly positive in the cultural context, as discussed in Chapter 6).

Of course, as it usually is with labels, the people concerned did not choose them for themselves. Yes, the labels carry different weights and different conceptual baggage, and are valued differently in media and social discourse. But as I have shown, the two are not just Japanese versions of Generation X and Generation Y, and their significant generational localities also counter the idea that they are one, wide, 'lost generation'. I have argued that both analysed generations have the conceptual qualities of media generations: location and self-recognition, also through media texts and practices, and as music audiences. The generations recognize themselves as such, while acknowledging the discourse surrounding the terms, and that recognition is important to them, and emerges through their everyday listening practices.

In this thesis I have shown that the concept of generation is essential to a thorough analysis of audiences. Generations contextualise audience practices in terms of media texts, temporality and identity. They provide researchers with a more precise set of analytical tools than a "cohort" or an "age group", even though very often the generational labels are contested and complex. Last but not least, the concept of generation is relevant, because it remains a significant part of the ways in which groups self-define in order to differentiate themselves from other groups or collectivities. Of course, this is not to say that audience researchers should take these self-definitions at face value – but, as they form a significant part of social and cultural experiences, we cannot disregard them either.

As stated so far, I have done it through an analysis of practices and interpretations of two groups of Japanese audiences. Those two generations are not homogeneous, nor are they exclusive in their practices. I have demonstrated that the idea of a generational playlist does not accurately reflect the generational reality. The content of music does not vary significantly between 'the lost' and 'the relaxed'; it is the practices that are different, and they reflect a range of social cues (gender, age, socioeconomic capital), but are also strongly defined by generational identities. 'The relaxed' also experience music through their generational experiences of school curriculum cuts, more leisure time and a lack of perspectives, perpetuated by the media and social discourse. 'The lost' formed by the 'bubble' ethos of hard work and perseverance, take music more functionally, as a means in the process leading to a reward.

This has become evident in my analysis of generational interpretations of music. Taking idol groups as an example, I have shown that while both groups are familiar with and listen to idol music, they do it for different reasons, and through different interpretative frames. For 'the lost', the key meanings emerging from their engagement with the texts were hard work, national symbols and hierarchy, while for 'the relaxed', it was the everyday social aspect and the performativity of the music. 'The lost', unlike 'the relaxed', were little interested in authenticity; they could not care less that the producers were fully controlling the creative content, as long as the performers did their best and expressed considerable 'team effort'. 'The relaxed' were disillusioned: team spirit had got them nowhere so far, so their focus was on the performer's perceived authenticity and on the ability of music to relate to their everyday lives in a 'true' manner.

An audience analysis of the two age cohorts, disregarding the social and historical aspect of generations, would not be sufficient to reach the findings above. The practice and interpretations discussed are related to the audiences' ages, surely, but that is not the only (or the most significant) factor. My finding about perceived authenticity, for instance, can be contrasted with research on young people and music. While we know

from some studies that young people value 'the truth' and authenticity in music (McLeod, 1999; Williams, 2001), we know it mostly because research on music audience (and audiences in general) is usually limited to the youth, and not because empirical studies show us that the older generation are disinterested in authenticity. Similarly, I have found that young people in my study are not manipulated by the music industry and its mythologization of the 'authentic' roots of certain kinds of music, as previous studies suggested (cf. Frith, 1978). As shown in Chapter 5, the youth are savvy and remain aware of the production processes. Their investment in authenticity does not come from their lack of agency, but through their active interpretations rooted in historical and social cues. By linking the practices to the socio-historical realities experienced by the generations, I have been able to empirically discuss these interpretational differences.

Last, the fact that there is less intergenerational variety in music content choices, combined with the richness of generational practices and interpretation, brings forward the need for more generational audience studies. The generational meaning cannot be inferred just from a textual analysis. The texts are shared between generations, and academics need to ask and observe the audiences to understand how meanings are created, negotiated and circulated.

Moreover, a significant overlap results from shared practices – watching television together, listening to the radio in a car – which should be further analysed through cross-cultural studies. As discussed in Chapter 6, the opportunities for some of these practices are related to the production and distribution of content in the Japanese media industry: the availability of cheap music in big rental stores across the country, in small and big towns alike, or the amount of music programming on television. A cross-cultural study, staying attentive to local cultural and historical contexts by employing the concept of 'generations', could compare these practices, and gain further insight about listening practices and social change.

7.3   Outstanding challenges and limitations

In Chapter 3 I mentioned the various challenges that arose during the research, and noted the limitations of the chosen approach. It is important to bring some of these limitations to the fore here, to add other ones stemming from the discussion of the findings, and to present them in order to reflect on this project more broadly.

Observing and analysing other cultures, even when they are familiar, carries risks and implies challenges. There are different dimensions of translating that need to be done: translations of culture, translations of language, translations of the social context. This is a general issue, but is also particularly relevant to listening audiences, who talk about music in the context of pleasure, of fun, of informal everyday engagement, and it is the researcher's job to translate that language into the academic context. While I have tried to address these challenges by stressing self-reflexivity, undoubtedly there have been moments during the study when some things became lost in one of these translations.

Then, there are also challenges particular to my study and the chosen research design. As discussed, the sample of participants was skewed towards women among the audience participants and towards men among the industry participants. Additional recruiting efforts were made to balance the audience sample, and these were successful to an extent, although not fully. Although saturation of the accounts of practices has been reached from both women's and men's perspectives, a more balanced sample would provide a stronger ground for some of the findings and issues of representation. Moreover, the additional efforts introduced new variables to the methodology. In particular, the biggest limitation arising from the process was the fact that the men recruited later were not interviewed in focus groups, but only individually. While I tried to account for this by expanding the individual interview guide in those instances, it is unclear what new data could have been obtained from those participants in a group setting.

Moreover, while the participants' backgrounds were diverse, the nature of the study and ethical procedures excluded some groups from participating. For instance, since the youngest of 'the relaxed' were recruited through high school, they only included students, and the listening practices of school drop-outs or those home-schooled were not investigated. This becomes relevant in light of the existence of socially and economically deprived groups in Japan, which have been the subject of some scholarship about Japan in the last two decades (Genda, 2005; Inui et al, 2006). I have mentioned these groups in this thesis, and discussed their status in light of mass media coverage and academic publications. In particular, I have mentioned NEETs ('not in education, employment or training') and freeters (young part-time workers), as well as youth suffering from *hikikomori* (severe social withdrawal). Again, with the caveat that these three labels are not unproblematic, and this study had not set up to investigate them in detail, it should be acknowledged that while among the participants a few considered themselves freeters, access to the other two groups had been restricted.

In Chapter 3 I elaborated on the lack of an expanded textual element that could serve as a quantitative addition to the ethnographic study. This could be done in a number of ways. Content analysis of a corpus of popular songs chosen by participants, using a coding frame developed with participants' input, accounting for not only lyrics but other song elements significant to the audiences, could help corroborate the findings and, for instance, allow for textual comparisons across the decades. Similarly, the questionnaire of music use employed in this study was most used to inform and aid the next stages of the research, but an expanded, quantitative investigation of listening practices may have added a new layer to the analysis, and allowed for more generalization.

Last, the fieldwork was conducted over a five-month period, and many participants were only interviewed once, during the focus group stage. This limits the scope of the findings regarding the cyclical nature of generations in Japan. Without a long-term observation, and without returning to the field to see the changing dynamics in practices in interpretations (and, for instance, to see what happens when 'the relaxed' reach the age of 'the lost'), my analysis of the data offers a snapshot of contemporary

Japan rather than an empirical account of change. While notions of time and change were present in the study through participants' recollections and memories, a repeated immersion in and out of the field across time would be necessary to address the generational change in more detail.

7.4   Addressing the questions

In this thesis I have asked the overarching question of how practices of listening are situated in people's social and cultural lives. In this section, I will address this question, the theoretical aims of this thesis, as well as the sub-questions which I posed to operationalise the overarching question.

Throughout the thesis, I have argued that social practices of listening are revealing of daily routines and everyday contexts, and they happen through a range of meaningful contexts, even if they are not always engagements directly with the music. People's experiences of music are diverse, and this has become evident in this thesis. They are diverse not only on a personal basis, but vary across time and space, and across cultural, generational and socioeconomic localities. Music changes, people change, and practices change too, along with the evolution of communication technologies that allow music to be reproduced and distributed in newer and (often, but not always) more convenient ways. From theatres and concert halls, through transistor radios, jukeboxes, stereos to personal MP3 players and streaming devices, people have come to enjoy music in a growing range of daily situations, and with an increasing amount of control over the process.

In this thesis I have argued that to understand the role of music in the everyday, it is not enough to study the texts or performances, or the effects these might have on the audiences. To capture the experience of listening, we need to turn to the people, and include their listening practices and interpretations in our analysis. Audience research provides us with a conceptual repertoire and the methodological tools to capture this range of engagements. The audience approach has revealed much of the meaningful ways people relate to and with print media, television or films. And yet, perhaps due to

the uneasy relation between musicology and ethnomusicology, studies of music have not developed a strong audience tradition within cultural studies, which is unfortunate. Similarly, audience scholars have not been interested in music to the extent they have been interested in novels, radio shows, soap operas or social media.

The advantage of combining different approaches in this thesis is that it let me look at audience studies through music, and at music studies through audiences – and at both through the lens of cultural, generational practices. I suggest that practices might be more contingent than we had thought, and much less directed. As studies of music have shown in the past, practices are negotiated and may be compliant and resistant. However, in Japan at least, they appear to be significantly circumstantial, as I have argued that historical circumstances – generational circumstances – affect work and leisure, and thus they affect the practices of listening. This reconceptualization of generation is an important finding in this thesis, both for Japanese studies (as I discuss later in this section) and for social sciences in general, as the focus on generational circumstances and contingency reveals limitations in the circuit of culture.

To capture the dynamic and interactive relation between production, reception, regulation and text, then, the circuit of culture should be revisited and used in empirical studies of audiences – including music. However, as it has become apparent in this thesis, the model needs updating to account for aspects of social and cultural practice. For instance, as evident through my separation of production-creation and performers-audiences dyads, circuit of culture currently does not capture the distinctions particularly well. Analytically, the model should be modified to include the different dimensions of audiences and creators, too. Even though not all audiences are prosumers, as argued in this thesis, the conceptualisation of 'representation' and text in the original model is outdated. In Chapters 4-6 I have shown how the texts change, traveling between moments on the circuit of culture, and these differences affect the positions of the whole model. Similarly, in the original model there is little space for capital (economic or cultural) or for the aspects of meanings and emotions which I have argued to include in social practices of listening. It is perhaps, not a *circle* of culture anymore – but rather a three-dimensional model: a ball/sphere, or a cone?

Following on this, I have offered a re-conceptualisation of the idea of a media practice to the audience studies, by mapping meanings and emotions into practices, and including social and cultural dimensions. Without those, I argued, the concept of practice is incomplete, and as such, cannot compete with or replace the reception paradigm. This is also highly relevant for music research. Music needs to be understood not only through linear connections between texts and audiences, but through sets of interactive relations of texts, meanings and emotions; production and reception; the personal, the social and the cultural.

Finally, there are clear limits of ethnocentric research of audiences, which I have crossed and refined by being attentive to particular, cultural findings in the study, and general ones. Media and audience research needs to further address those limits through more careful, empirical studies in a non-Western setting. In this study, the choice of Japan is a significant for a number of reasons. The history of the post-war decades in Japan shows unusual shifts in economy, society and culture. Although some aspects are parallel, on the whole, these circumstances (affecting generational identities, and with it, audience practices) differ greatly from the corresponding periods in the West and provide a fresh perspective to the concepts Western scholars often take for granted. For Japanese studies, I offer the account and a re-conceptualisation of the two generations and the relevance of generational identities, which challenges the dominant views in academia and the media. I also argue, challenging the dominant methodological view, that ethnographic study of audience practices, also through focus groups and observations, is insightful and most of all – possible in a Japanese setting. Furthermore, for audience and music studies, I argue that the richness of listening practices and music-related innovative technologies (karaoke booths, vocaloids, idol marketing through media etc.) in Japan is remarkable and a scholarly analysis of it through a comparative frame helps conceptualise the practices in a modified way, as I have done in this thesis.

7.5   Conclusion and some directions for further research

In this thesis I have analysed audience engagements with popular music in everyday life by looking at two post-war generations in modern Japan, and investigated their listening practices and interpretations of music encounters. I have asked about the place and meaning of listening practices in social, cultural and generational contexts, and about the relation between audiences, performers and producers. I have answered these questions thematically, analysing the patterns and themes emerging from a multi-method data collection approach, which included focus groups, individual interviews, questionnaires, participant observation and expert interviews with industry representatives.

Empirically, I have discussed my data through two case studies – of idol groups and vocaloid music – and through the detailed social listening practices of five participants, contextualized within accounts of practices and interpretation from over 100 participants overall. I have found that the audiences' practices of listening are complex and diverse. Audiences engage with music in a spectrum of activities embedded in their everyday lives. Their engagements are not always with the media, nor do they always directly involve listening, but to understand their significance and meanings emerging form the practices, listening needs to be investigated in a spectrum of audience engagements linked to texts, contexts, performances and authorship.

I have shown that such conceptualization of a listening practice helps to stress that audience activity does not exist in a vacuum, but is co-evolutionarily linked to production and circulation processes. Moreover, through a dynamic and interlinked sets of production and audience practices, proximity between performers and audiences is perceived differently, and the process in which it does informs the analysis through the circuit of culture, showing its limits, and offering new insight into modes of engagement and production processes.

Last, I have argued that the cultural and generational experiences of two Japanese cohorts, 'the lost' and 'the relaxed', guide the practices and interpretations of music. These two generations are specific to Japan, and my analysis of their circumstances, and practices offers new insight for contemporary studies of Japan and shows that the generational identities of "the lost" and "the relaxed" are still an under-researched, yet important area of research. However, my findings about the concept of generation are not limited to Japan and are relevant for social science in general. Based on my analysis of 'lost' and 'relaxed' in this thesis, I have proposed extending Mannheim's sociological model to include media practices and, empirically, to investigate the ways members of generations define themselves through those practices, through their generational locations, and in comparison with the other cohorts and their practices.

Regarding further research, my strongest suggestion is quite simply for more audience studies of music. As discussed throughout this thesis, without an audience element, the cultural and social roles of music cannot be fully understood, because it is through audiences' engagements with music texts and genres that meanings are created and circulated. An audience study, however, must remain rigorous in its methodology and attentive to the contexts of location, power, class, ethnicity or gender.

Hesmondhalgh (2013, p.52), referring to DeNora's study of music in everyday life (2000), warns that focusing on middle-class subjects when asking about music experience results in an 'incomplete sociology of music'. Empirically, we need to include and account for demographic cues and differences in social and cultural capital – not as determinants, but as factors in practices of listening. Further studies should follow this by including participants from various backgrounds, and mapping those backgrounds together with the spectrum of audiences' engagements. In Japan, this could mean diversifying the population and further investigating experiences between East and West, as well as between big cities, towns and villages.

Further research should also look into the two generations discussed in this thesis. In particular, 'the relaxed' is a group that requires scholarly attention and understanding, to counter superficial, and, as I have argued, often unfair portrayals in the media and

literature. This is challenging, because the timeframes surrounding 'the relaxed' are vague, but I suggest that this is exactly why more ethnographic studies of that youth group is needed now. Some of my youngest participants joined the workforce immediately after high school and, by the time I am submitting this thesis, have already worked for two or three years. How did this affect their identities? Are they different people from those who are now in vocational schools or universities? Such questions of generational units can only be answered with empirical data.

Another possible line of inquiry would be to focus more on the gendered experiences of music. Popular culture in Japan has been analysed in terms of representations of femininity and masculinity (Allison, 2000; Kinsella, 2013), but popular music has been largely disregarded in the scholarship, and in particular, in writing that looks at audiences. Stating this, I am conscious here that many of the musical examples featured in this thesis are by female performers, and deal with portrayals of girlhood and womanhood. The choice of the texts stemmed largely from the audiences, and the fact that girl idol bands AKB48 and Momoiro Clover were, at the time of the fieldwork, at the peak of their popularities and heavily featured in the media. I have argued that production and circulation processes, and many intricacies of 'office' management activities, are similar for male and female idols, but this has not been thoroughly discussed here, and requires further inquiry. Similarly, in terms of the audiences, gender has featured in various elements of this thesis, but these scattered insights could be taken further into a gender-centred analysis of listening practices.

Furthermore, I suggest that the Japanese music industry offers an insight into the frameworks of cultural industries and cultural production. Much of the production activities discussed here could be an argument against the idea of a global, hegemonic and homogeneous media industry, but these activities need first to be thoroughly analysed, unpacked and contextually understood. This, I suggest, methodologically needs to go beyond interviews, and should include an element of observation and participation in the creative process. Another approach would then be to compare the Japanese music industry to music industries in East Asia, in particular in Korea, China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, to see to what extent the power structures are similar, and

how the production or circulation processes are affected by diverse changes in culture, politics and society in those countries.

Last, there is a need to keep the discussions on music, media and devices updated. Music trends are dynamic; changes in music technology remain fast. While I am writing this, idols in Japan are still going strong in popularity, just like they were three years ago during my fieldwork. But during those three years, AKB48 have rotated tens of members, vocaloid software has had a significant update (and will soon receive an English voice bank, 'Ruby'), and there is more and more buzz about the possible debut of a Japanese music streaming service. How these changes might affect listening practices – and how the changed listening practices will in turn shape new industrial practices and outputs – remains to be investigated.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Participants' Information (names changed)

<mark>Highlighted</mark> – participants who were also individually interviewed

	No.	Name	M/F	Age	FB received
FOCUS GROUP 1 (RELAXED) 15 January 2012, 7pm, Moderator's family house	1	Emi	F	23	yes
	2	Sayaka	F	23	yes
	3	Kana	F	23	no
	4	Mio	F	23	yes
	5	Rie	F	22	yes
	6	Yuri	F	23	yes
FOCUS GROUP 2 (RELAXED) 17 Jan 2012, 3:30 pm, Otani High School	7	Mika	F	18	yes
	8	Akari	F	18	yes
	9	Kazuki	M	18	no
	10	Yūhei	M	18	yes
	11	Takeru	M	18	yes
	12	Kōki	M	18	yes
	13	Hikari	F	18	yes
	14	Saya	F	18	yes
	15	Rena	F	18	yes
FOCUS GROUP 3 (LOST) 25 January 2012, 10 am, Yoshimi's house	16	Izumi	F	38	yes
	17	Chihiro	F	41	yes
	18	Naomi	F	42	no
	19	Hiroko	F	30	no
	20	Yoshimi	F	36	yes
FOCUS GROUP 4 (RELAXED) 2 Feb 2012, 10 am, Otani High School	21	Haruka	F	18	no
	22	Kayo	F	18	no
	23	Shōta	M	18	no
	24	Taiki	M	18	yes

	25	Shiho	F	18	yes
FOCUS GROUP 5 (RELAXED) 2 Feb 2012, 12:30, Otani High School	26	Nao	F	18	yes
	27	Tsubasa	M	18	yes
	28	Shin	M	18	no
	29	Sōta	M	18	yes

	30	Masayuki	M	40	yes
FOCUS GROUP 6 (LOST) 18 Feb 2012, 8pm, Tokoname Dojo	31	Naoko	F	42	yes
	32	Fumiko	F	34	yes
	33	Eiko	F	45	yes
	34	Hisae	F	46	yes

	35	Akira	M	32	yes
FOCUS GROUP 7 (LOST) 19 Feb 2012, 1pm, Handa Int'l Center	36	Shizuka	F	41	yes
	37	Yumiko	F	37	no
	38	Kaori	F	35	yes
	39	Yoshino	F	36	no
	40	Yōko	F	30	yes

	41	Eri	F	21	yes
FOCUS GROUP 8 (RELAXED) 21 Feb 2012, 5pm, Otani High School	42	Kyōko	F	21	yes
	43	Junpei	M	21	yes
	44	Naoki	M	21	yes
	45	Haruna	F	24	no
	46	Ayane	F	20	yes

	47	Seiko	F	35	yes
FOCUS GROUP 9 (LOST) 23 Feb 2012, 10:30am, Esperanza Center, Agui	48	Nozomi	F	37	yes
	49	Satomi	F	36	yes
	50	Chiyo	F	36	yes
	51	Yukari	F	39	yes
	52	Sayo	F	33	yes
	53	Chika	F	32	no
	54	Mariko	F	36	yes
	55	Keiko	F	30	yes

	56	Shunsuke	M	37	yes
FOCUS GROUP 10 (LOST) 25 Feb 2012, 10am, Handa Citizen Center	57	Tomomi	F	34	not sent
	58	Shōko	F	40	yes
	59	Ryōsuke	M	31	no
	60	Mari	F	30	yes

FOCUS GROUP 11 (RELAXED) 7 Mar 2012, 2pm, Tokoname High School	61	Aoi	F	16	no
	62	Hina	F	17	not sent
	63	Nanami	F	17	yes
	64	Riko	F	17	no
	65	Takayuki	M	17	not sent
	66	Shingo	M	17	yes
	67	Jun'ya	M	17	yes

FOCUS GROUP 1 2 (RELAXED) 26 Apr 2012, Aichi Univ. of Education	68	Kōji	M	18	yes
	69	Haruki	M	19	yes
	70	Hayato	M	18	yes
	71	Yū	M	18	no
	72	Kenta	M	18	yes
	73	Hiroki	M	18	not sent
	74	Shūji	M	18	no

FOCUS GROUP 1 3 (RELAXED) 27 Apr 2012, Aichi Univ. of Education	75	Shō	M	20	yes
	76	Takuya	M	20	no
	77	Mami	F	20	no
	78	Ai	F	20	no

FOCUS GROUP 14 (RELAXED) 27 Apr 2012, Aichi Univ. of Education	79	Kanae	F	19	not sent
	80	Junko	F	19	yes
	81	Yūya	M	20	not sent
	82	Rina	F	19	no
	83	Saki	F	19	yes

Non-focus group participants	84	Yoshikazu	M	37	yes
	85	Shigeru	M	35	yes
	86	Keita	M	30	yes
	87	Tsuyoshi	M	28	yes
	88	Takashi	M	18	yes
	89	Noriaki	M	30	yes
	90	Hideki	M	32	yes
	91	Masaru	M	31	yes
	92	Keiichi	M	30	yes
	93	Hanae	F	32	yes

Appendix 2: Observations

Observation	Time taken (hours)	Participants
Karaoke in Nagoya	3	Shōta, Taiki
	3	Taiki, Hikari, Rena, Sōta
	2	Shōta, Taiki, Hikari, Sōta
	3	Eri, Kyōko, Junpei, Naoki, Ayane
Car commute	0.5	Yoshimi
	0.5	Takashi
	0.5	Rie
	0.5	Yukari
	0.5	Mio
Train commute	1	Shigeru
	0.5	Taiki
Home visits	1	Yuri
	1	Yoshikazu
	1	Shigeru
	2	Takashi
	1	Masaru
	3	Yoshimi
High school visits	2	Participants of focus groups 2, 4, 5
	1	Participants of focus group 11
University visit	2	Participants of focus group 12, 13 and especially 14
Ohtani High School Wind Orchestra Concert	2	Haruka, Kayo (performers), Kazuki, Tsubasa, Sōta, Kōki, Hikari, Rena, Shōta, Taiki, Shin, Takeru (audience)
All night live club *anison* event in Nagoya	4	E8, E9
Street community concert in Kanayama	1	Sayaka
Street live performance in Shinjuku	0.5	E10
Esperanza centre volunteering	2	Mari, Noriaki

TOTAL   38.5

Appendix 3: Experts' profiles

Name	Profession	Interview time and place
E1	Producer at a major label	20 April 2012, Tokyo
E2	Producer at a small label, worked at a big label in the past	28 March 2012, Tokyo
E3	Manager, music promoter	13 April 2012, Tokyo
E4	Manager, assistant producer	13 April 2012, Tokyo
E5	Major international composer, singer and songwriter	22 April 2012, Skype interview
E6	Drummer for a number of underground punk bands	25 April 2012, phone interview
E7	Game and anime music composer	17 April 2012, Tokyo
E8	Club DJ, club promotor	31 March 2012, Nagoya
E9	Club DJ, musician, event organiser	31 March 2012, Nagoya
E10	Singer-songwriter	6 June 2012, Skype interview
E11	Musician, singer, small label owner	28 April 2012, Nagoya

研究承諾フォーム
「日本現代社会と世代間」

研究者： Rafal Zaborowski　（ザボロフスキ・ラファウ）
ＬＳＥ大学（ロンドン・スクール・オブ・エコノミックス）、メディアコミュニケーション学部、博士課程
r.zaborowski@lse.ac.uk

このインタビュー、グループディスカッションに参加することを承諾します。
この研究の趣旨と詳細を了解したうえで、私の意見を出すことに同意します。

このインタビューで、あなたが話した内容が文書化されることを承諾し、
そのため音声を録音することに同意します。
作成した文書は、研究者のザボロフスキ・ラファウだけが使うことを許され、
研究者は個人情報を保護します。

この研究の結果は、将来、学会、出版等によって使用される可能性があることを承諾します。その際、皆さんの名前は伏せられ、個人名が特定されることはありません。

上記の内容に同意します。

日付　　……………………………………………………

本人　　……………………………………………………

保護者　……………………………………………………

Appendix 5: Interview Consent Form (English translation)

Study consent form: "Views of Modern Japanese Society between Generations"

Researcher: Rafal Zaborowski, PhD Student, London School of Economics and Political

Science, Department of Media and Communications
r.zaborowski@lse.ac.uk

I agree to participate in this interview / group discussion.
I have been informed about the nature and details of this study, and I agree to share my views.

I am aware that what I share in this interview will be transcribed, and I consent to the use of voice recording. Only the researcher, Rafal Zaborowski, will have the access to these transcripts and my personal data will be protected.

I know that the findings of this study may be reported in future publications or conference presentations. In such cases, names will be altered and my real name will not be identified.

I agree with the statement above.

Date: …………………………………………..

Participant: ………………………………………..

Parent/guardian: …………………………………..

Appendix 6: Pre-focus Group Session Questionnaire (translated from Japanese)

Part1: Questions about yourself

1. Do you like music?   YES   ・   NO

2. Do you live at your parents' home (*jikka*)?   YES   ・   NO

3. Choose three things most important to you

    Friends   Work   Family   Fun   Love   Relax   Hobby   Pet(s)   School   Traveling
    Memories   Other   _____   _____

4. Can you play an instrument?   YES   ・   NO

    If you chose YES   ─＞   What instrument(s) can you play?

    _____

    Have you attended classes for that?   YES   ・   NO

    If so, how many years?   _____

5. Can you read music notes?   YES   ・   NO

6. Please order these activities from 1 to 1 according to importance to you (1 – most important to you, 11 – least important)

Activity:	Rank:
Work	( )
Study	( )
Eating	( )
Sleep	( )
Shopping	( )
Reading	( )
Watching TV	( )
Games	( )
Listening to music	( )
Spending time with family	( )
Meeting friends, loved ones	( )
Other (_____)	( )
Other (_____)	( )

7. Please rank the following according to their relevance to your life (write "X" in appropriate boxes)

	1. Very relevant	2. Relevant	3. Somewhat relevant	4. Not relevant
Television				
Radio				
Books				
Movies				
MP3 player (iPod etc.)				
Game console				
Internet				
Mobile phone				
PC				
Newspaper				
Magazine				
Other_____				

PART 2: Music in your everyday life

8. How much approximately do you listen to music every day?

a.)   Less than 30 minutes a day   b.)Between 30 and 60 minutes a day c.) Between 1 and 2 hours a day   d.)   Between 3 and 4 hours a day   e.)More than 4 hours a day

9. What is your favourite artist/singer/band/composer (write up to three)
_____   _____   _____

10. What are your three favourite songs?
_____   _____   _____

11. When you listen, which is more important for you: melody or lyrics? Write in a form of percentage (e.g. music 50%, lyrics 50%))

        Melody   _____%   Lyrics   _____%

12. How and where do you listen to music? Please write "X" below where appropriate according to your listening habits.

Frequency / Place	1.Usually	2. Often	3. Sometimes	4. Rarely	5.Never
At home, while doing other things:					
While cooking					
While eating					
While exercising					
When I have guests					
Other: _____					

	1.Usually	2. Often	3. Sometimes	4. Rarely	5.Never
At home, only listening to music					
On the move – listening through mobile devices during commute (iPod, mp3 player etc.)					
In a club					
While driving a car or a bike (listening through speakers)					
Other situations (please specify below)					
……………………………					
……………………………					

13. How do you get your music? Write "X" in appropriate boxes

	1. Frequently	2. Sometimes	3. Seldom	4. Never
I buy records at a store				
I download on my phone				
I download on my PC				
I listen at a music store				
I borrow from friends				
I receive as presents				
Other_____				
Other_____				

14. Answer the following questions by writing "X" in appropriate boxes

	1. Regularly	2. Sometimes	3. Never
Do you read music magazines ?			
Do you watch music shows on TV?			
Do you read music-related articles online?			
- CD Reviews			
- Artist information			
Do you belong to a music fan club?			
Do you follow artists online (on Facebook, Mixi, Twitter etc.)?			

15. How many non-Japanese CDs do you buy or listen to, compared to Japanese CDs?

a.) Roughly the same amount   b.) A bit more non-Japanese music   c.) A bit more Japanese music   d.) A lot more non-Japanese music   e.) A lot more Japanese music

16. How many album or single CDs do you buy or download a month?

a.) 0-2   b.)   2-4   c.) 5-10   d.)   More than 10

17. How many album or single CDs do you borrow a month? (including music from rental stores and borrowed from friends)

a.) 0-2   b.)   2-4   c.) 5-10   d.)   More than 10

18. How often do you go to concerts or gigs?

a.)   Less than once a year   b.) 1-2 times a year
c.) 3-4 times a year   d.) once in two months   e.) once a month or more

19. Age   _____   Profession   _____   Birthplace_____ /_____
Education finished   (Primary school/Middle school/High school/Vocational school/Junior college/ University)

Briefing

Self-Introduction

Aims and nature of the study

Today's session: names chosen freely, no right/wrong answers, no need to answer

Consent: confidentiality, anonymity, the right to withdraw at any time

Questions before we start?

1. Self-introductions and warm-up questions

Did you come from far? Do you know each other? What do you do?

2. Experiences with music

Do you listen to music much?

Where/When/How do you usually listen?

What do you usually listen to?

3. Music individually

What do you look for in music? Why?

How do you choose?

What elements of music are important in those choices?

Do you often encounter songs that reflect your feelings well?

Do you listen to different music than your friends? Parents? Children?

What do you think about top charts currently? And in the past?

Do you choose different music based on different situations?

Do same songs sound different under different circumstances?

Do you think music has changed? Why do you think so?

4. Generational experiences

What do you think when you hear "yutori generation"

(Younger groups) Do you think you're included in the category?

(Older groups) Do you know someone who you think is included in the category?

In your eyes, how is your generation different than the one before it?

And than the one after it?

5. Music events and music socially

Do you listen to music together with friends? With family? How?

Do you talk about music with family, friends?

Do you talk about music online? Leave comments? Call radio?

Do you go to concerts? What/Where? Why?

How is music heard live different from music from CDs?

Do you go to karaoke? Where? Why?

What kind of songs do you sing? Why?

What is important to you when in karaoke?

Is it a factor if someone can/can't sing?

6. Interaction with and interest towards artists

Do you do anything related to music besides listening?
Do you gather information about singers or bands?
Do you write letters/emails? Would you like to?
Do you get annoyed with artists?
Do you feel close to your favourite artists?
Do you care about their personal lives, or only about the music?

7. Closing

Why do you listen to music?
What do you get from music?

Debriefing

Anything you would like to express, clarify or add to our talk today?
Do you have any questions to me?
Thank you and acknowledgements

Recruitment request
Feedback request 3-4 days after the interview
Invitation to next stages of the research

ｘｘさん、

こんにちは、LSE 大学のラファウです。

お元気ですか。〇月〇日のディスカッションに参加して頂き、本当にありがとうございました！楽しく、良いディスカッションができたと思いますので、研究の参考にとてもなりました。ぜひ、またお会いしましょう！

今回、ディスカッションの感想をお尋ねしたいと思いメールをさせてもらいました。よろしければ、以下の質問に答えて、お手数ですが返信下さい。どうぞよろしくお願いいたします。

１．ディスカッション中、自分の正直な意見、考えを述べることができましたか？できなかった場合は、その理由を教えてください。

２．ディスカッション中に不快に感じられる点、迷惑な点がありましたか。また、内容以外で、改善点、こうしたほうが良いという点が何かありましたら教えてください。

３．トピック・質問について、言い足りなかったこと、言い忘れていた意見等何かありましたら、詳しく教えてください。

４．話の内容を振り返り、トピック内の各質問において、何か聞かれるべきだったと思う質問はありますか？

また、ディスカッションのときにも言いましたが、僕の研究はまだ続きます。ｘｘさんが音楽に触れ合う場所（カラオケ、演奏、ライブ、CD の店等）に、ご一緒させて頂ければ、幸いです。難しいお願いだと思いますが、可能であれば、よろしくお願い致します。僕は、いつでも大丈夫ですので気軽にメールをください。

最後になりますが、まだ研究の参加者を募集していますので、是非お友達にも伝えてください！よろしくお願いします！

メールが長くなり、申し訳ないです。ありがとうございました。ご返事をまっています！よろしくお願い致します。

ザボロフスキ・ラファウ
(researcher's phone number and email addresses)

English translation:

Dear (name),

This is Rafal from LSE. How are you? Thank you so much for participating in the discussion on (date).

I think we had a fun discussion and I was able to gather a lot of data for my research. I really hope to see you again!

I am writing with a feedback request concerning the discussion. If you can, please answer the questions below and reply back to me.

1. Were you able to voice your honest opinion and personal views during the discussion? If you weren't, please tell me why.

2. Did you feel uncomfortable at any point in the discussion? Was there anything annoying? Other than the content, if you feel something should have been done differently, please tell me so.

3. Regarding the topics mentioned during the discussion, if there is anything you forgot to add or would just like to elaborate on, please do so here.

4. Looking back at the discussion topics and questions asked, do you think there are any questions that should have been asked but weren't?

As I mentioned in the discussion, the research still continues. If you have any musical activities planned (karaoke, concerts, performances, visits to CD stores etc.), I would be very happy to join you. I realise this is a big request, but if possible, this would be a huge help. I am fine anytime and you can casually contact me by email about this.

Lastly, I am still looking for study participants, so please kindly share this information among your friends!

Apologies for the long email. Thank you very much. I am looking forward to your reply!

Rafal Zaborowski

(researcher's phone number and email addresses)

Appendix 9: List of Organisations assisting with Recruitment[23]

Name of organisation	English name
名古屋国際センター	Nagoya International Centre
Nagono センター	Nagono Center
半田国際交流会館	Handa International Association
常滑国際交流協会	Tokoname International Association
岡崎市国際交流協会	Okazaki International Association
犬山国際交流協会	Inuyama International Association
知多市国際交流協会	Chita International Association
なごやボランティア/NPO センター	Nagoya NPO/Volunteering Center
豊橋市国際交流協会	Toyohashi International Association

---

[23] The list includes only organisation which assisted in the research. I reached out to 16 other local, regional or national organisations who did not reply or were unable to help.

Appendix 10: Individual Interview Guide

1. Introduction

Friendly questions

The focus group experience: reflections and continuations

2. Descriptive

Please walk me through a typical week day – for example yesterday. Starting from waking up and ending with going to bed.

Do you listen to music at any of these stages you described? Where, what kind of music?

What about music you didn't choose to listen, but heard anyway?

When was the last time you listened to music at home/outside the house/during a concert/in a karaoke parlour? Can you describe the experience?

3. Structural

How did it make you feel? What specifically made you feel that way?

What is important for you in music? What songs do you like to listen to?

What do you like, and what do you dislike about the music you hear on TV and on the radio?

What songs do you usually sing in karaoke? Why? Are they different to songs you normally listen to? How do you perform the songs?

4. Contrast

Do/did you parents listen to different music than yourself? What are the differences?

Do you listen to different music now, than you had listened to in the past?

Do you listen to / sing different music in different situations?

What is similar and what is different between the original songs and your friends'/your karaoke versions?

5. Conclusion. Debriefing.

Appendix 11: Expert Interview Guide (general template)

1. Introduction, consent

2. Introductory questions, details about the profession
(questions informed by previously done research on the interviewee)

3. The "grand tour" of music industry and the profession within it
     a. The "now" and "then" in the music industry, changes in the past 10/20 years
     b. The "office" management model and the impact of post-bubble crisis
     c. Creation of content throughout the stages

4. The creative process / production process – reasons, aims and attitudes
     a. Work flow on an individual level
     b. Management/production issues: vital points, challenges
     c. Market pressures
     d. Fan input and relationship with audiences

5. The difference between performances. The original song and the performance
     a. The professional cover and the fan cover
     b. The karaoke performance

6. Audiences
.   a. Thoughts on the audiences
     b. Audience expectations towards the performer
     c. Fan interaction.
     d. Attitudes toward (music and non-music) media and live appearances
     e. Attitudes about social media

7. Music and the industry into the future
     a. Predictions and aims
     b. Hopes and anxieties

8. Conclusion.
     a. Free thoughts about the music industry, opportunity to voice other issues

9. Debriefing

Appendix 12: Industry Interview Request template (original and English translation)

株式会社　○○○
　　御中

拝啓　時下ますますご清栄のこととお慶び申しあげます。

私は、ロンドンの **LSE** 大学メディア学部２年に在籍しております、ポーランド人のザボロフスキ・ラファウと申します。現在、博士課程論文執筆のため日本にて実地調査に来ており、メディア学の中から特に日本の音楽に焦点を当て研究を進めております。その中で、＠＠様のご活躍、考え方を○○ などから知り、イギリスにいるころから大変強い興味を持ち、不躾とは存じましたがご連絡をさし上げた次第です。

○○

私の研究の一環として、日本の音楽について業界の方からお話しを是非ともお伺いしたいと願っております。ご多用中のところ恐縮ですが、一度お目にかかってお話をさせていただけますようお願いいたします。

○○

ご多用中、誠に恐縮ではございますが、ご検討賜りましたら幸いでございます。なにとぞご高配を賜りますようお願い申し上げます。

なお、ご参考までに私のプロフィール、研究内容の文書を添付させて頂きますのでどうぞご査収くださいませ。何卒、よろしくお願い申し上げます。

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　敬具
平成○年○月○日
　　　　　　　〒住所
　　　　　　　LSE 大学・・・・
　　　　　　　　連絡先　(家、携帯、メール)

English translation

Company name
Name, position

Dear (name),

[formal greeting]

My name is Rafal Zaborowski and I am a second year media student at the LSE in London. I came to London to do fieldwork for my doctoral thesis, in which I investigate Japanese music from the point of view of media studies. Related to this, I am familiar with your (accomplishments/experience/views) through (source) and I have been strongly interested in your work since when I was in the UK. I apologise to approach you so directly.

(details related to the nature of interviewee's work)

As part of my research, I am hoping to hear about Japanese music from representatives of the industry. I realise you must be incredibly busy, but I would very grateful and privileged if you would consider agreeing to meet me and answer my questions.

(details related to areas I would like to ask about)

Again, I know you must be busy and thank you for even considering this.

I am attaching to this message my profile as well as the details of my research. Please, and thank you.

Date   Address, researcher's contact details

Appendix 13: Main codes for analysis

Music and media
> Genres and artists (multiple sub-codes)
> Platforms and devices (multiple sub-codes)
> Playing and organising
> Sources (acquiring music)
> Music/other media

Time perception and generational values
> Generational identity
> About the lost
> About the relaxed
> Japan now and then
> Music now and then
> The future

Everyday life and family
> Routines
> Resources
> Opinions and values
> Social relations

Events, places, activities
> Concerts and gigs
> Karaoke
> Sharing
> Performing

Listening
> Modes: Foreground; Background; Incidental; Other
> Uses and Pleasures: Encouragement, Self-regulation, Escapism, Serenity,
> > Companionship, Kinesthetics, Learning, Connecting
> Routines (multiple sub-codes for different routines coded separately)
> Song elements: Music; Lyrics; Melody; Rhythm; Visuals; Voice; Other

Music industry
> About the industry
> About the audiences
> Coevolution
> Authorship
> Management
> Authenticity
> Distance
> Fandom

Appendix 14: Pre-session questionnaire – a completed example (English translation in bold)

１．あなたは音楽が好きですか。　　**Do you like music?**　　　はい　**Yes**

２．あなたは実家に住んでいますか。　　　　はい
Do you live at your parents' home?　　　　　**Yes**

３．あなたにとって一番大事なものを三つまで選んでください。
Choose three things most important to you (Friends　Work　Family　Fun　Love Relax　Hobby　Pet(s)　School　Traveling　Memories　Other　)

　友達　　　　家族　　　　趣味　　**Friends　Family　Hobby**

４．あなたは楽器を弾けますか。　　**Can you play an instrument?**　いいえ　**No**

「はい」を選んだ場合　ー＞　　　何の楽器ですか。　　　　　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

　そのための習い事をしていましたか。　　　　　　　　はい　・　いいえ

　それは何年間ですか。　　　　　　　　　　　　　　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

５．楽譜を読めますか。**Can you read music notes?**　　　　　いいえ **No**

６．あなたの行動基準を、１位から１１位まで順位わけしてください。"１位"は、あなたにとって最も重要な行動を、"１１位"はあなたにとってそれほど重要ではない行動を選んでください。**Please order these activities from 1 to 11 according to importance to you (1 – most important to you, 11 – least important).**

行動: 順位:

行動		順位
仕事	**Work**	(5)
勉強	**Study**	(9)
食事	**Eating**	(4)
睡眠	**Sleep**	(7)
買い物	**Shopping**	(8)
読書	**Reading**	(6)
ＴＶを見る	**Watching TV**	(10)
ゲーム	**Games**	( )
音楽を聴く	**Listening to music**	(11)
家族と時間を過ごす	**Family time**	(1)
友達、恋人と会う	**Meeting friends/lovers**	(2)
他 (_____スポーツ観戦_)	**Other**	(3) **Watching sports**
他 (_____)		( )

７.あなたの生活において、以下のものがどれだけ重要であるかランクわけ（評価）してください。（該当場所に"X"でチェックしてください）**Please rank the following according to their relevance to your life .**

	１－とても重要 **Very relevant**	２－重要 **Relevant**	３－やや重要 **Somewhat relevant**	４－重要でない **Not relevant**
テレビ **TV**		X		
ラジオ **Radio**			X	
本 **Books**		X		
映画 **Movies**			X	
MP3 プレーヤー（iPod 等）**MP3 player (iPod etc.)**		X		
ゲーム機 **Game console**				X
インターネット **Internet**	X			
携帯電話 **Mobile phone**	X			
パソコン PC	X			
新聞 **Newspaper**		X		
雑誌 **Magazine**			X	
その他 **(Other)**				

８．あなたは、一日に平均どのくらい音楽（曲）を聴きますか？
How much approximately do you listen to music every day?

c.) １日に１時間から２時間以内　　**Between 1 and 2 hours a day**

９．最も好きな歌手・バンド、もしくは作曲家を３つまで教えてください。
What is your favourite artist/singer/band/composer (write up to three).

福山雅治　**Fukuyama Masaharu**
一青窈　　**Hitoto Yō**
山崎まさよし　**Yamazaki Masayoshi**

１０．最も好きな曲を３つまで教えてください。
What are your three favourite songs?

take me home, country road
whatever
家族になろうよ　[*kazoku ni narouyo – Let's become a family*]

１１．曲をきくとき、メロディーと歌詞、どちらをもっと大事にしますか。
　　　パーセンテージで示してください　　（例：音楽５０％、歌詞５０％）
When you listen, which is more important for you: melody or lyrics? Write in a form of percentage.

メロディー　　６０％　　**Melody**　　　歌詞　　４０％　**Lyrics**

１２．音楽をどのように、またどのような状況で聞いていますか？以下の表に、
　　　自分が音楽をよく聞いている状況に"X"でチェックしてください。.
How and where do you listen to music? Please write "X" below where appropriate according to your listening habits.

程度 **Frequency** 場所 **Place**	1.ほとんどいつも **Usually**	2.よく **Often**	3.時々 **Sometimes**	4.少し **Rarely**	5. 全く無い **Never**
家で、他のことを行いながら音楽を聞く **At home, while doing other things:**			X		
料理中 **While cooking**					X
食事中 **While eating**					X
運動中 **While exercising**			X		

他：**Other** _____					
家にお客が来たとき **When I have guests**					X
家で、音楽だけに集中しているとき **At home, only listening to music**		X			
移動中。バスに乗っているときなど(iPOD、mp3 プレーヤー等) **On the move – listening through mobile devices during commute (iPod, mp3 player etc.)**	X				
クラブにいくとき **In a club**					X
車、バイクの運転中に聞くとき (スピーカー使用) **While driving a car or a bike (listening through speakers)**	X				
他の状況 (下に詳しく書いてください) **Other situations (please specify below)**					
……………………………					
……………………………					

１３．どのように音楽を入手していますか。（該当場所をチ"X"でチェックしてください）**How do you get your music? Write "X" in appropriate boxes.**

	１．頻繁に **Frequently**	２．時々 **sometimes**	３．めったにない **Seldom**	４．全くない **Never**
店でレコードを買う **I buy records at a store**				X
携帯からダウンロードする **I download on my phone**				X
パソコンを使ってダウンロードする **I download on my PC**	X			
ＣＤショップで聞く **I listen at a music store**				X

				X
友達から借りる **I borrow from friends**				X
プレゼントとしてもら う **I receive as presents**				X
その他　**Other**＿＿＿＿ ＿＿＿				
その他　＿＿＿＿＿＿				

１４．以下の質問に答えてください。（該当場所を"X"でチェックしてくださ
い）**Answer the following questions by writing "X" in appropriate boxes**

	１．定期的に **Regularly**	２．時々 **Sometimes**	３．全く無い **Never**
音楽雑誌を読みますか？ **Do you read music magazines?**			X
ＴＶで音楽番組を見ますか？ **Do you watch music shows on TV?**			X
インターネットで音楽についての記事を読みますか？ **Do you read music-related articles online?**		X	
ＣＤの評価の情報 **CD Reviews**		X	
歌手についての情報 **Artist information**		X	
バンドや歌手のファンクラブに入っていますか？ **Do you belong to a music fan club?**			X
歌手やバンドをフェースブック、mixi やツイッターでフォローしていますか？**Do you follow artists online (on Facebook, Mixi, Twitter etc.)?**		X	

１５．邦楽ＣＤと比べて、あなたはどのくらい洋楽ＣＤを買ったり、聞いたりしますか？**How many non-Japanese CDs do you buy or listen to, compared to Japanese CDs?**

c.）邦楽のほうが少し多い **Japanese music a bit more [than non-Japanese]**

１６．１ヶ月に、アルバム・シングルを約何枚買いますか、またはダウンロードしますか。**How many album or single CDs do you buy or download a month?**

b.) 2-4枚 **2-4 CDs**

１７．１ヶ月に、アルバム・シングルを約何枚借りますか（レンタル・友人から等）。**How many album or single CDs do you borrow a month? (including music from rental stores and borrowed from friends)**

a.) 0-2 枚 **0-2 CDs**

１８．ライブやコンサートによく行きますか？
How often do you go to concerts or gigs?

a.) 一年で１回行くか行かないか **Less than once a year**

１９．年齢　職業　公務員　出身地（県/市・町）
最終学歴 . **Age, Profession, Birthplace, Education finished**
[ALL ANONYMISED]

Appendix 15: Japanese music acts mentioned in the thesis (in alphabetic order)

Performer/ group name	Details	Years active	Representative song
AKB48	All-female idol group	2005-now	"Manatsu No SOUNDS GOOD" https://youtu.be/MBuJ5R2KBKo
Amuro Namie	Female R&B/pop/dance singer	1992-now	"Can You Celebrate?" https://vimeo.com/96254494
Arashi	All-male idol group	1999-now	"One Love" https://youtu.be/ak2_zJo_yak
B'z	Male rock duo	1988-now	"Ai No Bakudan" https://youtu.be/9DbrwffF2AM
EXILE	All-male idol/dance group	2001-now	"Choo Choo TRAIN" https://youtu.be/Rs1ynO9x0OA
GreeeeN	Pop rock/hip hop male quartet	2007-now	"Ai Uta" https://vimeo.com/102052646
Hamasaki Ayumi	Pop/dance singer-songwriter and producer	1998-now	"Seasons" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQEBJeZSaVs
Hatsune Miku	Vocaloid persona	2007-now	"Melt" https://youtu.be/FoTd918zhZc
Ikimono-gakari	Mixed three-member pop rock band	2003-now	"Joyful" https://youtu.be/i84PaagsviU?t=3m29s
Inoue Yōsui	Male singer and composer	1969-now	"Kasa Ga Nai" http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2gaes_inoue-yosui-kasa-ga-nai_music
Kyary Pamyu Pamyu	Female singer and fashion model	2010-now	"PON PON PON" https://youtu.be/yzC4hFK5P3g
Maximum the Hormone	Mixed hardcore punk/ metal band	1998-now	"Tsume Tsume Tsume" http://www.downvids.net/maximum-the-hormone-tsume-tsume-tsume-clip-pv--521793.html
Minimoni	All-female idol group	2000-2004	"Minimoni Jankenpyon!" https://youtu.be/XpORHo5-Z3U
Momoiro Clover/ Momoiro Clover Z	All-female idol group	2008-now	"Ikuze! Kaitō Shōjo" https://youtu.be/lp1m0-jyqmQ
Morning	All-female idol	1997-	"Love Machine"

Musume	group	now	https://youtu.be/NwacTv-6DK4
Mr. Children	All-male pop rock group	1988-now	"Na Mo Naki Uta" http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x6j2jg_na-mo-naki-uta-mr-children_music
Naoto Inti Raymi	Male pop singer-songwriter	1998-now	"Takaramono" https://youtu.be/QdFico0YK1k
Onyanko Club	All-female idol group	1985-1987	"Sērāfuku o Nugasanaide" https://youtu.be/83uFs-o1yBA
Perfume	All-female electropop group	2002-now	"One Room Disco" https://youtu.be/hO6zD7yiMd8
Tokyo Jihen	Mixed rock band	2004-2012	"Gunjō Biyori" http://www.jukebo.com/tokyo-jihen/music-clip,gunjou-biyori,lsflp.html
Sakamoto Kyū	Pop/folk singer and actor	1958-1985	"Ue o Muite Arukō" https://youtu.be/xUA-DcW1lFc
Shimizu Shōta	Pop/R&B singer-songwriter	1998-now	"Home" http://alive.in.th/watch_video.php?v=KB4D3469DXX3
The Blue Hearts	Male punk band	1985-1995	"Linda Linda" https://youtu.be/c9kBdIG-NcY
Tokito Ami	Idol pop singer and model	2005-2010	"Sentimental Generation" https://youtu.be/M69RcKcN4xw
Rhymester	All-male hip-hop trio	1989-now	"The Choice Is Yours" https://youtu.be/OmjJWUM8VcA
Utada Hikaru	Pop singer-songwriter	1996-2011	"Automatic" https://youtu.be/L_QVB4Qdh6o
Yuzu	Male pop rock/folk duo	1997-now	"Niji" http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xy2pxk_yuzu-niji_music