FCJ-038 Women's Creation of Camera Phone Culture

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Introduction

2 Mobile phones have extended human activities beyond the constraints of time and space by increasing *mobile communicability en route and real time interaction*. These devices have evolved into multi-functional media that can function as camera phones, camcorders, MP3s, PDAs, wireless Internet and so on, and have constructed and reconstructed people's everyday experiences. During the late 1990s and early 2000s, the number of mobile phone users in South Korea grew rapidly. As the information and communication technology sector has been promoted as the nation's new growth engine during this period, South Korea has become a global trendsetter, with one of the world's highest mobile phone penetration rates and competitive infrastructure. By 2004, 36.1 million people out of Korea's total 48 million population carried one or more mobile handsets, meaning that more than 75% of the total population had taken advantage of mobile phone technology. In addition, 73% of mobile phones sold in 2004 were equipped with built-in digital cameras as well as other media functions. Although there is little information about the number of male versus female users, based on the current penetration rate of mobile phones in Korea, several surveys have suggested that young women in their teens and twenties have been the most active users and consumers. According to a 2004 survey by the Korea Social Research Center, 85% of high school girls, compared to 68.5% of boys, were using mobile phones and were sensitive to maintaining communicability via them. Lee and Sohn's study (2004) also indicates that young women are active in adopting new multi-media functions of the mobile phone overall, except for games and m-commerce, and their willingness to adopt such functions is significantly stronger than men's. Such active mobile phone usage among young women in their teens and twenties raises questions about gender politics, technology and new media in Korea, where gender inequality and patriarchal ideology notoriously survive.

3 The dominant structure of patriarchal capitalist society, in which women have been marginalised and confined to private spaces, especially the home, has been deeply involved in the processes that define women's lives and identities. They have become accustomed to viewing themselves as the other, through the male gaze. Deeply rooted in the real world, the processes of representation, production, and consumption of new media culture seem to barely escape the restraints of this patriarchal dominant structure. However, it cannot be overlooked that the socio-cultural possibilities, or effects, of new media technologies reshape our ways of perceiving, experiencing, communicating, expressing and maintaining relationships. It is worthwhile asking how a new media technology environment has been articulated in our gendered culture, how the symbolic and material characteristics of media technologies have conditioned women's experiences, and the degree to which de-gendered recodification has been realised in that articulation. In particular, an experiential understanding is required of the ways in which new digital communication technologies such as mobile phones equipped with digital cameras have been embodied in women's daily lives. The recent formation of a camera phone culture draws our attention because women, especially those in their teens and twenties, have become active participants in creating its culture.

4 This study will ask whether women are mere consumers of digital camera phones whose usages are strongly driven by market forces or whether they can expand their own experiences, creating a rift or a difference in the gendered world. It will suggest that the digital camera phone has been adapted, utilised, and appropriated in young women's daily lives in both an experiential and microscopic dimension. Rather than simply verifying the causal relationship between the digital camera phone and its effects upon young women's lives or building another abstract theory for understanding young women's usage of digital camera phones, this study attempts to investigate concrete cases of young women's uses of camera phones and to pay attention to their practices of deriving meaning from a new media environment. By examining how digital camera phones have been utilised in young women's daily experiences, this study attempts to look at the degree to which young women can be the producers of their own culture, generating new subjectivities and empowering themselves, and the degree to which their cultural practices can subvert common beliefs in women's ineptitude with regard to new media technology and its functions.

The Camera Phone as a New Media Environment

5 The appeal of mobile phones is their transcendence of temporal and spatial boundaries. Mobile phones enable us to be connected at any time and in any place, even when on the move. With telephones we can interact with someone not physically near to us, but mobile phones let us communicate when we ourselves are spatially mobile. As the mobile phone saves our time and effort and, at the same time, frees us from the limits of a physical space to be able to communicate with someone in a different place, it enables a new form of 'micro-coordination' of temporality and spatiality (Ling and Yttri, 1999). It is a 'space-adjusting technology' with which we can easily move around in different and multiple social spaces (Green, 2002; Palen, Salzman and Youngs, 2001) and can be virtually co-present in different places. Moreover, such use of mobile phones blurs the old social boundaries that separate public space from private space. At the same time, it tends to reconstruct new boundaries between public and private spaces (Gant and Kiesler, 2001; Ling 1999). As 'an irresistible intruder,' in McLuhan's term (1964), it can easily privatize a public space and consequently extend a person's private communication space in an innovative way. In addition to its mobility and ability to privatize a public space, the mobile phone is not only a social instrument of interpersonal communication, but also a multi-functional medium. It can carry textual and visual information as well as aural information. It allows us to interact via SMS (short message service) and MMS (multimedia message service), to record and edit audio-visual information, to have a PDA (personal digital assistant), to play games and use MP3 files, and to use the Internet and DMB (digital multimedia broadcasting) services. More than an interpersonal communication channel, it can take the role of a data-gathering device, a recording and playing appliance, presentational tool, personal diary, entertainment medium, and so on.

6 When the mobile phone is equipped with a digital camera, it contributes to the mass production and circulation of digital photography. Since the digital photograph is processed as a form of calculable digital data, it can be more than the record of an event. It can be easily duplicated and manipulated, and thus transforms the cultural meanings of the analogue photograph. The digital photograph then raises questions about the cultural basis of the analogue photograph, questioning objectivity, the sense of 'that-has-been' existence. It makes uncertain the one-to-one relationship between reality and its representation (Mitchell, 1992). Moreover, it changes the ways we take, print and store photographs in albums. The photographer can actively participate in the process of generating, transforming, reprocessing and, finally, making meaning from images. On the one hand, the camera phone that combines mobile communicability with digital photography can accelerate the ontological "crisis" of photography as a medium of recording as discussed by Mitchell, Lister, and Manovich. Users can easily edit and distort the photographed images for personal pleasure, and enjoy being the active producers and distributors of those images. On the other hand, users can record the moments of a person's everyday life and the scenes they witness on the move, making the world in private and public spaces more visible and transparent.

7 The fixed-line telephone as an antecedent of the mobile phone has exemplified the contradictory gender norms deployed in social uses of media. Lana F. Rakow (1992) argues that the telephone has been a site where the meanings of gender are expressed and realised. Women's uses of the telephone have been said to reveal women's propensities and abilities. While the telephone has helped housewives at home to maintain their social relations, the mobile phone allows women 'to exist in their domestic and work worlds simultaneously.' Lana F. Rakow and Vija Navarro write, 'the cellular telephone sits in an ambiguous position for most of them, between being a feminine and familiar appliance (the telephone), and a masculine machine (a mechanical and/or electronic gadget)' (Rakow and Navarro, 1993: 153). They suggest that although the mobile phone tends to blur the institutional boundaries between the domestic and work worlds, enabling women to simultaneously and flexibly exist in both worlds, it contributes to reproducing women's traditional role and subordinate social status. More generally, they also argue that gender ideology leads to women living different lives and using technology differently from men.

8 The advertisements for mobile phones, which have defined and reflected the social usage of the new technology, have displayed women's mobile phones as instruments of security and relation-maintenance, contrary to men's mobile phones, which are displayed as a social symbol of masculine power and virility (Katz, 1999). They have tended to project the concept that mobile phone usage is predetermined by conventional gender roles in the real world, and to naturalise

gendered mobile phone usage. Indeed, it is often found that women tend to use their mobile phones as instruments of expression and sociability, while men tend to display them as the symbol of their social status and virility, as well as instruments of business (Plant, 2003). In the last two years, Korean TV commercials for mobile phones have often portrayed male models as those users who actively utilise their multi-functions, compared to female models who are confined to either the role of those attracted to these male users or those who become the eye-catching objects themselves that display the glamour of the mobile phone. In these advertisements, men with digital camera phones take pictures of gorgeous women, or draw their attention. Although women have been major users of mobile phones in Korea, the market still assumes that women are passive consumers or objects to fulfill men's fantasies.

9 The representation, production and consumption of mobile phone culture have not tended to get very far away from the deep-seated gender system. As gender relations in a society may condition women's and men's purposes for social actions as well as their social roles and status, so they may condition the cultural practices of the mobile phone. Women's usage of the mobile phone has often been characterised by their gender roles or attributed to their femininity. Yet their diverse experiences of mobile phones, especially camera phones, have been neglected. Moreover, little attention has been given to women's creation of camera phone culture. This study attempts to look at what has been neglected, that is, how the camera phone has been utilised and embodied as an instrument for sociability by young women in their teens and twenties, and what kind of subjectivities they have experienced in this formation of camera phone culture. From an experiential and microscopic approach, it tries to observe the cases where young women adapt the camera phone and consume it in daily life.

Ethnographic Approach to Women's Everyday Uses of Camera Phones

10 The ethnographic case study described here examines women's lived experiences and cultural expressions with camera phones. Rather than collecting objective data that would take a broad view of women's camera phone usage, or generalising and confirming the gender-specificity of camera phone usage, it intends to retrieve moments of the individual's diverse experiences and their processes of creating cultures. In order to examine the processes of presenting oneself, making connections, and deriving pleasure from camera phone use, it focuses on those young women in their teens and twenties, who tend to be more active in using new media than other age groups.

11 For this study, a total of 17 women, including two high school females, 13 undergraduate students, and two graduate students in their 10s and 20s, living in Seoul and neighboring cities, were interviewed between August and December of 2003. There were not only in-depth interviews with each individual, but also group interviews where the interviewees shared their experiences with camera phones. They told the author about their uses of communication media in everyday life, their motives for purchasing mobile phones with cameras, their expectations, the contexts and contents of their camera phone usage, their degree of usage, their perceptions of the relationship between media and gender, and other new media activities related to camera phone use. They also showed and self-reported the photos taken with their camera phones, which were stored and displayed in their camera phone albums, blog-styled mini-homepages, and cyber café communities. Via these talks, this study closely observed the ways in which individuals presented themselves with camera phones, and derived meaning from them. It also observed the various individual methods of presentation with camera phones. In attempting a qualitative analysis of the similar or differentiated usage patterns of camera phones, this study looks at the diverse experiences of young women as agents and subjects who derive cultural meaning from their camera phone use. For convenience, the names of interviewees are denoted only by S1 to S17 and their age.

Reception of Camera Phones: Intimacy with Technologies

12 Historically, technology has been considered a male domain, and technical ability has been regarded as a sign of masculinity. As culturally associated with masculinity, technology can be understood as a gendered culture or a discursive artifact. Gendered ways of representing technology have been consistently reproduced in daily life (Gill and Grint, 1995). While men have confirmed their masculinity with their technological ability, it has been said that women are

ignorant of or incapable of dealing with technology. Judy Wajcman (2001) writes that women are successfully using new machines such as cars, microwave ovens, and dishwashers, but their mastery of the use of these machines does not build self-confidence in the use of technology. A social myth that technological ability is a masculine characteristic and, on the contrary, technical inability is a feminine characteristic, is operating here. Moreover, the so-called *soft* technologies belonging to women's domain have not often been considered *real* technology. It is also habitually assumed that women passively use the technology of consumption (Cowan, 1979; Cockburn and Ormrod, 1993). It is true that men and women show different usage patterns in their uses of new media, such as computers. However, such differences do not substantiate women's innate inability to use technology (see Turkle, 1984).

13 The interviewees' responses regarding use of the multi-functions of mobile phones, including camera functions, have not revealed any technological fears. Although several interviewees felt that men were better at 'machines' than women, many said that there was little difference in having curiosity about and using new media, like mobile phones with the new camera functions. Many thought that access to new media technology is different according to one's personality, taste and sensitivity to technological trends, rather than gender.

14 > Among boys, there are some who hardly use camera functions, and others who decorate their mobile phones. Among girls, those girls who are more active are more often using camera phones. (S3, age 18)

15 > Since most men in my surroundings are old, they hardly show any interests in camera phones. Girls are comparatively young, and many of them have camera phones. (S10, age 21)

16 At the same time, many expressed the view that mobile phones and camera phones are 'feminine' or 'intimate' for women. Compared to 'complicated and delicate' masculine machines, mobile phones with cameras are said to be 'small' 'tiny,' and 'simple to operate,' and thus provide a media environment that groups of girls of that age can easily access, and through which they can share their experiences. While telephones have conventionally appealed to the loneliness of women tied to private spaces, mobile phones with cameras are compatible with the desires of young women, who are concerned both about their 'appearance' and about social relations with girls of the same age.

17 > Boys who have camera phones do not seem to enjoy them. Two boys I know have camera phones… However, they neither show their pictures nor voluntarily propose, 'I will take a picture.' While they show their interests in cars and computers and other complex machines, they don't show much interest in those tiny machines like camera phones. (S7, age 22)

18 > Women are using mobile phones and camera phones more than men. They love talking. Men hardly use SMS. They simply make a phone call. And yet, women talk about trivial rounds of daily life with SMS, and come to have easier access to and to have more concerns about camera phones…Even though men have been changed, women have a stronger tendency to take pictures of beautiful things. (S15, age 21)

19 > Especially, schoolgirls have more interests in appearance. The more girls are using camera phones, and the more they take pictures and exchange them…Girls are better at using cameras. Boys don't do that. (S17, age 16)

20 Most interviewees said that before they purchased camera phones they had been little interested in bringing cameras with them and taking pictures. However, now they are continuously taking pictures and having their picture taken in their daily life. As play, as a practice of friendship, or as a way of self-presentation, camera phones have become embodied as one of their everyday commodities. Moreover, most interviewees hope to have or have actually bought a digital camera in order 'to take more professional pictures.' They have come to be more actively interested in taking pictures as a form of self-presentation. With camera phones, taking pictures is experienced as an everyday activity, and such activity is expanded to the use of a digital camera. Some interviewees who became good at using the camera phone and have enjoyed these experiences have gone on to the challenge of more professional media and to develop more familiarity with technology in general. This all suggests that women's 'inability' or unfriendly attitude toward technology is an outcome of socialisation rather than women's intrinsic nature. As one controls a technology more freely, one experiences a kind of empowerment, which in turn gives one an interest in more sophisticated technologies.

21 With camera phones, I come to like taking pictures. I want to take pictures of me and other things around me. I didn't have any interest in taking pictures. But as I have been taking pictures with the camera phone, I have had more interests. Now, I want to have my own digital camera. (S8, age 20)

22 Mobile phone commercials in Korea often demonstrate a star actor 'coolly' taking a picture of a woman he fancies. These commercials reproduce the conventions of man as gazer/woman as a displayed object, or man taking pictures/ woman having pictures taken of her. However, in actual practice, camera phones provide a media environment where woman can just as easily be the subject taking pictures with their own gaze over objects. Although taking pictures with camera phones has different meanings to the same activity with an analogue camera – that is, people use camera phones for 'fun' or 'play' – woman can have the experience of being the subject doing the gazing.

Self -Presentation and Irony of Gaze

23 The camera creates a division between the viewer and the viewed. Susan Sontag writes, 'to photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge – and, therefore, like power' (Sontag, 1977: 4). Since to photograph is to frame the object, having a distance from it to some degree, the photographer temporarily has power over the object. Those who see the picture are also put into the same position of subject as the photographer.

24 The pictures that the interviewees have taken are mostly those of their intimate friends and family, their valuables, objects of curiosity, and themselves. Camera phones, which can capture things very easily at a close distance, allow one to photograph oneself easily.

25 The conventional structuring of the gaze in mass media has reproduced man as an 'ideal' spectator and woman as a viewed object and, consequently, makes women accustomed to looking at themselves through men's eyes (see Berger and Mulvey). However, women with camera phones frequently photograph themselves, challenging the conventional structure of gaze. One can look at oneself as the object and, at the same time, can practice the *I* of the subject; *I* become the observer of *me*. The process, in which she searches for her ideal image, enthusiastically repositioning her camera phone, enables the woman to be an active spectator. This process subverts the conventions of the gaze, that 'men act and women appear, men look at women and women watch themselves being looked at.' Several interviewees said that they enjoyed the play of controlling and manipulating images – the shift of position from that of photographer to object to be photographed and vice versa.

26 I often take pictures of myself with my camera phones. Making various facial expressions, I delete weird looks but leave pretty ones. I take many pictures and later pick out good ones. (S1, age 19)

27 The interviewees have had the pleasure of being objectified for their own cameras and they have learned by experience the principles of constructing images as well as those of being viewed as an object. They have recognised that photo images don't reflect their real appearance as it is, but the gaze as the viewer constructs them. They have realised that the relationship between real appearance and image is constructed. Controlling angle and luminosity, and retouching images with photo editing software like Photoshop, they learn how to display themselves in a favourable manner – how to get the images that satisfy themselves.

28 I wasn't confident of my appearance. And thus, I didn't like being photographed. I was ashamed of myself. However, as I am taking pictures with camera phones, I come to gain my confidence. In the past, when my friends asked me, 'let's take a picture,' I said, 'no.' But these days, I say 'yes.' (S8, age 20)

29 In the past, young people had a tendency to avoid being photographed. But after the advent of camera phones, today's young people don't avoid it…When someone says, "she is an eol jjang(a good-looker)", others would show great interest, saying 'pretty,' 'weird,' 'retouched,' and so on. Nowadays, everyone is eol jjang. Indeed, most girls can use Photoshop. They can use it to retouch their own face images. (S16, age 16)

30 This process of making effort to display themselves attractively could be seen as following the desire for an ideal female body molded by capitalist society. As is well known, Capitalist society has indeed capitalised women's bodies and appearance as the objects of consumption and investment. Yet, as women's bodies and appearance become *resources* to enhance feminine value,

rather than merely the *objects of constraint*, the management of their appearance in order to achieve beauty becomes, at the least, a very important topic for these women, as well as an interesting site of contention. With camera phones, women learn by themselves how to design their own images, even if in order to reproduce the cultural stereotypes of beauty, as defined by a patriarchal capitalist society. Several interviews suggested that these activities of self-representation were in the mode 'to show themselves attractively to others' and, thus, reinforce the conventions of the gaze.

31 > Boys don't do that. Yet, girls take pictures of themselves. It's because they can make their looks the best possible with camera phones. Boys tend to be embarrassed by doing this for themselves. These days, girls have a thick hide...Nowadays, it is important to show myself to other girls as well as boys. Although there's a self-satisfaction (when one photographs herself), one cannot free herself from others' eyes. (S5, age 20)

32 However, it cannot be concluded that all such activities of self-photographing follow the conventional structure of the gaze shaped by that of the patriarchal capitalist society. As women gain more power of control over the gaze as well as over their own images, they can have the pleasure of subverting the conventional patriarchal gaze. Manipulating a camera to transform their body image, and enacting various self-portraits, they can experience the *I* of the gaze. Moreover, they can reflect on the very act of taking pictures in order to show themselves to others. S6 (age 21), S14 (age 21), and S15 (age 21) had in fact developed a negative opinion of taking self-portraits in a stereotyped posture. They were disinclined to make a pretense of 'being pretty' in front of the camera, and to be objectified.

33 The ambiguities of this situation are played out the more in the context of the close-up. With camera phones, close-up images can easily be taken. These are often distorted images due to the effect of wide-angle lens settings. At the same time, images can as easily be deleted as they are taken. All of this perhaps frees up the photographic situation from some of its previous burdens. The interviewees played with their images in various ways; they used props, staged situations, took fragmentary images, inserted titles, or put them in different frames. They produced various forms of self-representation. When the interviewees were alone, whether they were in their private space or a public one, they amused themselves with camera phones to pass the time. At home, on the subway or bus, in the beauty salon or classroom, whenever they felt bored, they spent their time taking photos of themselves and experienced a new sense of existence. The 'represented self' ensured this new, particularly female, sense of existence. At that moment, regardless of place, a woman enjoyed her boredom and loneliness, depending only on her own self. The gaze of the camera in such situations cannot simply be considered a substitute for an imaginary man's gaze. It could, however, be considered a narcissistic gaze, the gaze of a producer making her own images in various forms, a gaze that was conscious of the gaze of other friends of the same sex, or a gaze that objectified 'herself' for herself. Allowing such diverse forms of gaze, camera phones allow the camera to become a tool for self-exploration in a series of new modes.

Capturing Everyday Moments: Making Private Memories

34 In the past, of course, analogue photographs were often used to produce or reproduce an idealised formal image of family. When cameras became more portable and widely available on the mass market from the 1880s, 'photography played not merely an incidental but a central role in the development of the contemporary ideology of the family, in providing a form of representation which cut across classes, disguised social differences' (Williamson, 1993: 238). Whether formally taken by professional photographers or snapshots taken during family leisure or trips, photographs have maintained the fantasy that the family is always in harmony, always happy. When taking a snapshot became a leisure activity, it was used to perpetuate and support specific moments of family life (Holland, 1997). Family photographs have been used for indexical references to represent an imaginary cohesion of the family, and for instruments that celebrate the rites of family life and constitute familial self-presentation and memory. According to Marianne Hirsch, the 'family photo both displays the cohesion of the family and is an instrument of its togetherness; it both chronicles family rituals and constitutes a prime objective of those rituals' (Hirsch, 1997: 7). When photographs became embedded in the fundamental rites of familial life, they were framed in certain conventional ways, barely escaping from a hegemonic ideology of the family as 'stable and united.' Although this familial ideology has been contingent upon historical

and socio-cultural context, it tenaciously resides in the imagery of family photographs. In short, photographs have played a central role in reproducing the institution of the bourgeois family.

35 Photographs of graduation ceremonies, birthdays, wedding ceremonies, anniversaries, or other familial rites have provided a 'typical imagery', consciously or unconsciously shaped by the social expectations imposed upon them. The photographs taken by camera phones are different. While the personal or family album of the past carefully selected the records of life's moments that were considered important, and tried to perpetuate a kind of identity transcending everydayness, camera phone photographs have rather trivial meanings. The photograph used to give significant meanings to the record of the moment, and to make people nostalgic for 'what has been,' in Barthes' term. However, the moment as photographed by camera phones is the temporary and trivial state of everyday life, and is relocated in the photographer's playful discursive space. To photograph with camera phones is to play. It is an everyday event, rather than a meaningful ritual designed to record and commemorate the past. With the camera phone a personal medium of mobility and portability, the users can take photographs less tied to their conventional social functions. The interviewees spoke about their pleasure in making informal images by freezing particular moments of everyday life, moments which are less serious but personally intriguing. The material traces of moments that would be disregarded by conventional photography have become the sources of their personal pleasure. All this is perhaps why, rather than preserve photographs in the personal or family album that would constitute and perpetuate a person's or family's formal memories, most interviewees use them to share their daily experiences with their friends, filling up the still pictures' absent context with their lively interpretations.

36 > The merit of the camera phone is its portability, tininess, and handiness. If someone takes out a digital camera to take a photograph, people become tense and hardened. However, with a camera phone, everyone seems to be relaxed, making funny faces. (S7, 22)

37 > It's for fun. After taking a photograph of my eyes, I say, 'aren't my eyes big?'. Whenever I go to cafes and eating places, I photograph them, as if reporting, 'I have been here.' I try to take many photographs to tell my friends about them. (S17, 16)

38 The interviewees capture the trivial moments of everyday life and easily discard them by deleting them. They photograph for fun and for intimate friendships. Although sometimes kept, their photographs are not particularly memorial in the traditional sense. In addition, the screen of the camera phone is not large enough to truthfully represent the time and space of the past; it's very small and the images are distorted. In short, to photograph with a camera phone is to assume that the event is easily forgettable. This meant that the interviewees were more relaxed in front of the lenses of camera phones.

39 > This camera phone can save 70 photos. No more than 70 photos. If it notifies me that there is no more memory, I click a 'delete' key. Although I can delete all or a specific one, I am careless about deleting them all...I use a digital camera to photograph my friends. I print it and give it to them. The camera phone is not for keeping and preserving photographs. (S8, 20)

40 Figures and animals that are photographed at a distance by camera phones are sometimes hardly recognisable; only the photographer can see them. For example, S3 (age 18) said that she took a photo of some water because she liked its sound, and S10 said that she took a photo of a squirrel on the grass. Yet neither of these images was very recognisable. S 14 (age 21) explained the various looks of her pet from seemingly identical pictures. Such photographs depict experiences so personal and subjective, yet so vague, that only the individual photographer can interpret them. At the same time, any photograph, even those taken for personal satisfaction, is available to be shared with others. As discussed above, to photograph and view images with camera phones is therefore not only a personal activity, but also a form of play with friends.

Sharing Experiences of Photographing and Viewing

41 Alexandra Weilenmann and Catrine Larsson (2001), who studied the mobile phone usage of Swedish teenagers, indicate that the teenagers' mobile phone communication often provides the basis for shared experience in social life. This finding argues against the mobile phone as a personal, privatized medium for communication. Although the mobile phone can create private space in public places, exclusive of others, it can also be used in different ways, depending on local contexts. While the camera phone is a tool for personal expression and private memories, it also

provides a wealth of cultural material that can be shared and enjoyed in the interactive processes of groups. Most interviewees said that, when they were with their friends, their camera phones no longer belonged to themselves alone. Many photographs saved in their camera phones were in fact taken by their friends. For them it was acceptable to borrow another's phone to take a photograph, and to compare what they had taken with each other.

42 My friends who think my camera phone takes better pictures borrow it and photograph…Later, I can find many photographs of the borrower saved in my camera phone. It often happens. (S2, 20)

43 The photographs taken by camera phones can vitalise and support group dialogues. They can sometimes verify persons or events that one is talking. Not only photography, but also passing around and chatting about has been photographed becomes an important part of friendship culture. The camera phone thus provides a space for exhibition that exposes a slice of personal life, people and things with which the woman has intimate relations.

44 When I meet my friends, we play with camera phones. We are spending time photographing each other…As we speak of personal things, we show each other our photographs related to our talks. With this camera phone, we can have a real good time. (S4, 23)

45 In his book, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), Erving Goffman differentiates behaviours at the formal "front stage" from the informal "backstage," suggesting that a person's front stage self-presentation is performed within a range that is socially acceptable. To minimise embarrassment from her/his failure in presentation, she/he prepares a presentation carefully within this range. The photo album derived from the camera phone is made not only for one's own pleasure of self-expression but also in order to show oneself to others. Mindful of interactions with others, one scrutinizes the pictures of one's private and intimate moments, and continuously revises one's version.

46 There is no secret; I show them all…Yet, when I save a photograph, I think it would be shown to others. So I delete poor pictures right away. (S8, age 20)

47 The individual, who is aware that the photographs saved in the camera phone could be used someday as material for conversation, steadily updates her album and prepares to exhibit her works. This exhibitive space is always open to her friends. Visiting each other's exhibitive spaces, which are private but ready to please visitors, she and her friends build up their intimate relationships.

Recycling in Cyberspace: Expanding Pleasure

48 With MMS (multi messaging system) and e-mail, one can send the camera photograph to other mobile phones or PCs. The photographs transferred to a PC can be posted on Internet galleries, bulletin boards, or weblog-style mini-homepages. Thus the Internet becomes another communication media that is embodied in the interviewee's everyday life.[1] While mobile phones tend to strengthen the intimate relations of a person, they also become interconnected with the Internet and can produce more diverse forms of communication. All but three of the interviewees have posted their photographs on Internet bulletin boards or mini-homepages.

49 Placed in the vast network of the Internet, camera photographs can be shown and circulated without one's permission, or apart from one's intention. Often, however, the field in which these photographs circulate seems to depend on the different social relations of those posting the images.

50 I have had a meeting with my elementary school mates once every two months. I have often taken the photographs of this meeting and posted at the cyber café for other schoolmates. Then, people leave a message like, 'I should have gone to that meeting', 'she came there?', 'her looks have changed,' and so on. (S4, age 23)

51 When I photograph unusual things, I am posting it on Cy-world (mini-homepage) and saying 'I have been to a place and found such a thing.' I am doing this in order to show it not only to my offline friends, but also my online friends. These friends usually leave messages at the bulletin board. (S17, age 16)

52 There are obvious a serious of paradoxical inversions here between the public and private nature of the camera photographs. John Berger (1980) divides the uses of photography into the private and public. The former recollects and maintains a record of an individual's experiences, which are

'appreciated and read in a context which is continuous with that from which the camera removed it.' By contrast, the latter records certain events and scenes, which are 'torn from [their] context,' and 'lend [themselves] to any arbitrary use' (Berger, 1980: 51-52). The public photograph plays the role of witness and reporter about an event whose original context and meaning the reader would not necessarily know. When the photograph taken by a camera phone is displayed and circulated via a person's mini-homepage or a bulletin board in a cyber-community café, the context in which to be appreciated and interpreted will be changed. In this context, the boundaries between the private and the public become blurred. When the photographs taken by the camera phone capture the moments of everyday life or self-expression and become remediated by the Internet, these personal expressions gain a public channel for circulation; the photographer can expand the space for self-presentation and self-exposure. As her camera phone becomes connected to the Internet, she becomes more conscious of what photographs she will select to show; she is more careful in managing impressions. This expands her pleasure as a producer of her own self-presentation and meaning-making.

Concluding Remarks

53 Women can use camera phones as materials of conversation and in order to experience a new form of gaze. The camera phone becomes various tools in turn: a tool for one's own private pleasure, a tool for conversation, a tool to play with acquaintances, and a tool to experiment with ways of self-presentation and self-expression. One can experience oneself as an object and, at the same, as an active spectator. Judith Butler writes that, 'there is no gender identity behind the expressions of the gender.' Rather, 'identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results' (Butler, 1990: 24-25). According to Butler, gender identity is constituted by everyday practices of the assumed gender identity. It is not easy for women, who have been positioned as submissive and passive media consumers in a real world governed by patriarchal ideology, to be active performers. It would still be questionable how far women with camera phones are self-reflective on their play and performance, are free from the existing gendered media culture, and expand their social capital of empowerment. It is difficult to find evidence that camera phone usage helps to enhance feminist awareness.

54 However, the ways in which the interviewees have used the camera phone to increase intimacy with media technology, to present themselves, to capture a moment of everyday life, to share the experiences of photography and seeing, and to pursue pleasure, suggest that these women are not the mere owners of camera phones, but performers who create various cultural meanings. They develop a more intimate relationship with technology, challenge the conventions of gaze, give meaning to what is taken, and circulate their own expressions. These processes of cultural meaning-making neither directly subvert the existing gendered system, get away from the context of commercialism, nor constitute a feminist mobilisation. However, the uses of the camera phone seem to affect, to some degree, women's receptiveness to new media technology, and the ways in which they present themselves and have relations with others. With the camera phone, women have another tool that will help them to be cultural producers.

55 Flis Henwood (1993) argues that to change the gendered culture of technology, one should not merely focus on criticising the characteristics of the gendered technology. One should understand women's subjective experiences and practices of technology and, based on this understanding, define or redefine technology. The camera phone may be a less serious technology, a technology of daily consumer culture to which everyone can have easy access. However, it is problematic to treat less seriously the technology that women use to a great extent for their interactions and pleasure; it is a male-oriented perception of valuing a technology. The ways in which women utilise and make social meaning from the camera phone cannot be neglected. To recognise and rediscover women's needs and desires as they appropriate technology seems to be an efficient means to challenge the imbalance of a gendered technological culture.

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Note

[1] Most interviewees use the Internet one or more hours per day. They usually use home computers to connect to the Internet. They use the Internet mainly to search for information, to join cyber communities, and to communicate with others.

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