

**Satomi Sugiyama**

***Visual images and mobile phone communication***

Abstract

The mobile phone has been transformed into a tool for visual communication in several senses. First, some mobile phone users, such as Japanese users, frequently use pictorial icons instead of words in SMS. Not only pictorial icons but also photographs and videos are becoming increasingly integrated into mobile phone communication. Thus visual images seem to have become an important part of interpersonal communication between those who stay connected via the mobile phone. In addition, as the mobile phone becomes incorporated into personal appearance and body movement in public places, the way people use the mobile phone has become the object of both “seeing” as well as “showing” to others. In the latter regard, the mobile phone seems to be closely related to the process of fashion display.

This study aims to understand the way Japanese young people use the mobile phone as visual communication. Focus group interviews will be conducted in order to explore how and why Japanese youth use pictorial icons, photographs, and videos in mobile phone mediated messages. The interviews also examine the relationship between the mobile phone and fashion in Japanese public places. The study will be replicated with a group of U.S. young people, in order to provide a comparative perspective.

Bio

Satomi Sugiyama is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Communication at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, and a MacArthur Fellow in the Department of Philosophy and Religion at Colgate University. She is particularly interested in the influence of mobile communication technologies on social behaviors in a global context, and on various forms of aesthetic expression via everyday communication. She has collaborated with Dr. James E. Katz on several studies and conference papers. Her most recent conference presentation is: Katz, James E. and Sugiyama, Satomi (2003). “Mobiles and fashion: A survey of US and Japanese youth” National Communication Association Annual Meeting, Miami, November 20. Her publication includes: Sugiyama, S. & Katz, J. E. (2003): “Social conduct, social capital and the mobile phone in the US and Japan: A preliminary exploration via student surveys”, in Kristóf Nyíri (ed.), *Mobile Democracy: Essays on Society, Self and Politics*, Vienna: Passagen Verlag, 2003, pp.375-86.