"Freeter" as a Cultural Product: The "Birth" of "Freeter" and its Social Background

Nagatomo, Jun
Graduate School of Seinan Gakuin University

"Freeter" as a Cultural Product:
The "Birth" of "Freeter" and its Social Background

Jun Nagatomo

(Graduate School of Seinan Gakuin University)

Introduction

Framing the Question

Although the word freeter is a popularized negative word in Japan which means young people who willingly choose to manage on part -time jobs, it is generally unknown that the word was produced as a positive word by the part-time employment magazine as a commercial strategy. Since its birth in 1987, the word freeter has boomed by appearing in text as a word whose meaning is consumed and re-produced with ease by readers. In this process, there are various kinds of social interactions between younger generations and older generations, and part-timers and full-timers. However, it is obvious that there is an unsavory connotation to it in the Japanese social context.

This thesis focuses on the birth of freeter, which discloses the characteristic of freeter as a cultural product produced artificially by the commercial strategies of increasing magazine sales. The analysis highlights the following two aspects: contemporary business enterprises' figure as cultural producer, which plays the main role in the cultural production in the age of late capitalism and the existence of commercial interests in using mass media and advertising.

Perspectives

The argument on the birth of the freeter strongly relates to the perspective of cultural politics, which is common in cultural studies. What is called "culture" in modern social science and humanities gains more trans-boundary scope than ever before. By the same token, the perspective of seeing culture as a dynamic flow and process, has pervaded instead of the traditional view of "culture": "stable, coherent, and bounded" [Mahon, 2000]. Shiller [1997] adequately defines this view. He defines cultural politics as "the processes through which relations of power are asserted, accepted, contested, or subverted by means of ideas, values, symbols, and daily practices." Aware of these processes, the analysis generally emphasizes cultural politics of representation, power relations, and reaction of audiences.

Freeter issues provide a set of cultural political factors as follows: freeter was artificially produced by enterprise, a major cultural producer in this modern age; various social interactions in the "public sphere" have occurred since its birth; de-coding and re-production processes were made by the audiences; with these matters, the word freeter exists in a social space where meaning of the word and power relations are contested or subverted within the various sorts of interactions.

Definition of the Freeter

Although negative representations prevailed in the Japanese social context, the word originally had a positive meaning. Freeter is an artificial word coined by the part -time employment magazine *From A* in 1987, meaning "young people who live on part-time jobs." They combined an English word "free" and a German word "arbeit," the former means the freedom from the strict Japanese company organization, working hours, and mental restraints, whereas the latter means a part-time job. In the late 80's, Japanese society marked a rapid increase in the part-time labor market especially in the service sector. Thus, it can be

stated that the word describing new part-timers was in large demand as well as the part-time job opportunities.

Definition on freeter as a social group varies by each research[1]. Not a single stable definition can to be found, but the definition by the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare is prevalent: Freeter is, 1) an employee called 'arbeit' or 'part-timer' at the work site. For men, they must have been working five years or less. For women, they must be single. 2) As for the unemployed, the person who does not go to school or do housework, and hopes for work of part-time or arberit. In the White Papers by the government and the government-affiliated labor research institutions, the definition above has been embraced. This thesis tentatively adopts this definition due to the lack of prior studies and the uses of governmental statistics in this thesis.

Prior Studies

Although the prior studies on freeters are very limited, most of the researchers consider freeters as social pathology phenomenon or a "dropout social group." The arguments of Kosugi [2003] in *Freeter toiu Ikikata* (Freeters' Way of Life) and The Japan Institute of Labor [2000a, 2000b] are representative examples of the social pathology view, focusing on categor-ization and rehabilitation. Their studies over-value the statistical analyses, and lack any sociological relocation of them. Kosugi refers to freeters as having low vocational capability, developing ability, and the lack of an encour-agement smooth shift from schools to full-time employment. However it involves problematic

views as follows: First, freeters, as a social group, are discussed as a stable social group without mentioning its mobility inside in spite of the fact that about 50% of them enter the full-time work-force within three years[2]. Second, in her discussion of the "taking back" of the smooth shift from school to a full-time job, the characteristic of Japanese labor market, Kosugi fails to point out that the Japanese labor market itself is in a dramatic transformation process to a more western type society with high mobility in the market. This change relates to globalization either directly or in-directly. As Appadurai [1996] mentions of "ideo-scape" as one of the five aspects of globalization, transnational perceptions must be seen in this issue as well as the global flows of the social systems.

In addition to the above, the following are the books related to freeter: Murakami [2001] shows the comments of the academics, the public intellectuals and freeters in *Miraino aru Freeter, Miraino nai Freeter* (Freeters with Future, Freeters with no Future). Sugimoto [1989] describes his freeter experience in Freeter Chronic. Gakken Co. [2001] *Freeter naze? Doshite?* (Why Freeter?), and Matsuo [1990] *Freeter de Daijobu?* (Are you okay being Freeter?), encourage the freeters to change their work-style. On the other hand, Recruit From A Co. [1987a, 1987b] in *Freeter* and *Wakamono Shigotosagashi Data Magazine*, detail positive representations of freeter. In addition, only one academic study that does not perceive freeters as a negative social group is by Nagasu [2001], whose view on them is the "social circumstance" of having a loose connec-

Table 1-1: The Number of Freeters in the millons in 2000.

	Total	Male	Female (unmarried)
Age: 15~24	98	45	53
Age: 25~35	95	38	57
Total	193	83	110

Data Source: Management and Coordination Agency. 2000. *The Labor Force Survey*.

tion with the young culture.

General Information of Freeter
1) The Number of Freeters:

The number of freeters is nothing more than estimates so that it is impossible to grasp the precise number. This is due to different definitions in studies and the low number of research projects. In this academic circumstance, according to the Management and Coordination Agency, the number was estimated to be 1.51 million in 1997, about three times increase over that of 1982. In addition, it increased to 1.93 million in 2000.

The *Keiyaku-Shain* (contracted employee) and the *Haken-Shain* (temporary employee dispatched by personnel agency) were not counted in the number above. If it contains their numbers, the total becomes about 3.4 million[3]. Due to the fact that some of the

Keiyaku-Shain or *Haken-Shain* do identify themselves as freeters, and others do not, the number, 3.4 million, can not be used as precise data. However, it is certain that the number in 2000 is at least more than two million.
2) The Breakdown of Sexes and Generations:

About 70% of the freeters are women. As Table 1-2 shows, 1.1 million women account for the total of 1.93 million freeters. Besides the ratio of those from 20 to 24 are relatively higher than other age groups.
3) The Academic Background of the Freeter:

Table 1-3 shows that freeters are not able to be viewed as a dropout social group in terms of academic background. The college graduate account for 13.4 % of total, and 32.4 % of male freeters. These figures weaken the logic of the "common representation on freeters as the dropouts." [Nagatomo 2003][4]

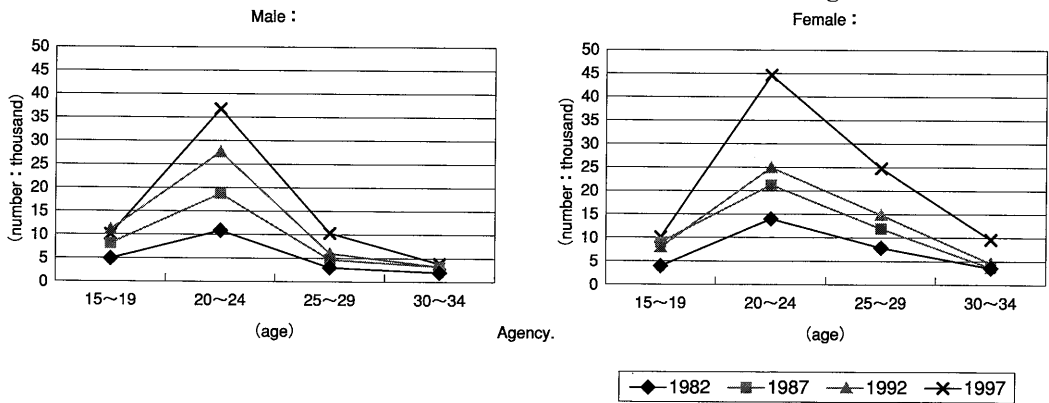Table 1-2: The Number of Freeters —the breakdown of sexes and generations.

Table 1-3 : The Academic Background of Freeters.

	Total	High School Drop out	High School Graduate	Technical School or Junior College Dropout	Technical School Graduate	Junior College Graduate	College Dropout	College Graduate	Graduate School Dropout or Graduate
Total	100.0	4.1	47.4	11.3	7.2	9.3	6.2	13.4	1.0
Male	100.0	2.9	50.0	5.9	0.0	0.0	8.8	32.4	0.0
Female	100.0	4.8	46.0	14.3	11.1	14.3	4.8	3.2	1.6

Data Source: Management and Coordination Agency.
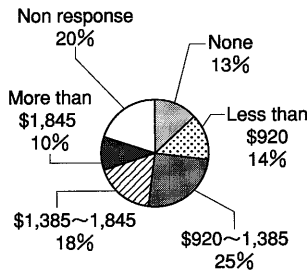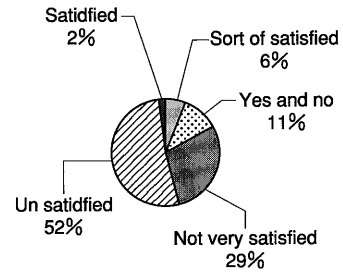
Table 1-4: The Average Monthly Income of Freeters.

Non response
20%
—None
13%
More than
$1,845
10%
—Less than
$920
14%
$1,385~1,845
18%
$920~1,385
25%

Table 1-5: Financial Satisfaction.

Satidfied
2%
—Sort of satisfied
6%
—Yes and no
11%
Un satidfied
52%
Not very satisfied
29%

Data Source (Table1-4 & 1-5): Recruit From A Co. 2000. *Freeter Hakusho*.

4) The Income of the Freeters:

The average monthly income of the freeters is about ¥125,000 ($1,000) for men and ¥104,000 ($800) for women, twice as much as part-time income of college students, and three times as much as high school students. On the other hand, the average starting salary in 2000 is: college graduated male ¥187,000 ($1,558); female ¥157,000 ($1,308); high school graduated male ¥187,000 ($1,558); female ¥147,000 ($1,225). These figures are not enough to evaluate their financial circumstances, but it is possible to describe about 60% of freeters[5], who live with their parents, do not have difficulties in the barest needs.

5) Choosing the Freeter Life:

The reasons for choosing the freeter life differ from the person to person. In the survey held by Recruit Co. [2000], "Because I often becomes to be tied to the company in case of full-time work" and "Because my time becomes more flexible" are the two that mark high percentage and characterize their general trend. In spite of the fact that 46% of freeers work five days a week and 17% six days a week[6], the tendency of seeking for the non -restraint on the time and the organization can be seen. And that lead to the idea they have a tendency of avoiding typical Japanese employment.

However, a paradoxical trend is seen for the intention to keep their life-style. 49.7% of them want to quit their work, that is higher than 29.9% of those planning to continue two or three years[7]. In short, Freeters generally perceive their part-time job as temporary employment patterns.

6) The General Social Valuations on Freeters:

The social valuations on freeters vary with generations. According to a public opinion poll by *Yomiuri-Shinbun* in 2000[8], which showed statistics on social understanding for freeters, in the ratio of the persons who had answered, "understandable" and "very much understandable" were in total 35%, on the other hand, "not understandable" was 64%. A feature point is that the difference of the understanding level is caused among generations. In the twenties, "understandable" was 67%, and "not understandable" was 34%. "Not understandable" occupies the majority above forty. And "not understandable" accounts for 81% of the respondents in the sixties. The statistics shows that the older generations perceive them negatively and the younger generations show more understanding of them.

I. Freeter as a Cultural Product: The Birth of Freeter

I-1. The Producer of Freeter

The word freeter was made as a commercial product in a way, and that can be perceived as a cultural product. The birth of it signifi-

cantly resembles large number of modern cultural products produced by enterprises, the modern cultural producers. Present-day scholars of culture regard even the TV characters such as *Ultraman* or *Doraemon* as cultural products. In the origins of most products, there are the enterprises as cultural producers and the mass media. The word was developed by employment magazine Recruit From A Co. in 1987, produced by the chief editor Katsuo Michishita. At the same year, the company as well as Recruit group companies began to use this word. Also, they produced the movie *Freeter* in November, spending 2 billion yen ($1.7 million).

The views of "who," "to whom," "why," and "how" the cultural product made are significant. It relates to Said [1978] who revealed Western ideology of constructing the non-western world, Hall and Du Gay in cultural studies, Hewison [1987] and Thorns [1998] in tourism anthropology, and Clifford [1986] and Ota [1998] who refer to the issue of researchers' position. These perspectives emphasize that social context are available in freeter issue; the subject that made the freeter is an enterprise, part-time employment magazine, whose main target is young people and students.

It is considered that cultural producers generally come from mainstream institutions [Mahan 2000], and the same holds true for the word, freeter. Although what is called mainstream institutions needs extensive statement, two aspects characterize the point: Firstly, the media itself has been enjoying a large share. Secondly, the core human resources of the producer are full-time employees. Not to mention the latter, regarding the former, the figures below indicate its plurality. The employment magazine *From A* sells more than 230,000 copies twice a week. The parent company Recruit Co., publishing various information magazines, had an operating revenue of 322 billion yen[9] ($ 295 million) in the fiscal year of 2002. Within this amount, the employment section holds the highest share with 34.7 % of the total[10].

From A is an employment magazine and significantly differs from others in a certain points. Employment magazines have more interdependency between media and advertisements than other kinds of magazines, in which advertisements capture large part, meanwhile the media producers are nothing more than the editors. Advertisements are the fundamental entities and one of the main income sources at the same time. However in the general magazines, the content never becomes equal to advertisements. In contrast, employment magazines have the advertisement=contents mechanism, in which original pages are relatively few. Even if the original pages are made, it is difficult to avoid something from the advertisements since they involve indirect advertisement for some companies.

Being under the umbrella of Recruit Co. distinguishes the company's figure. They publish several employment magazines such as *Syushoku Journal*, *B-ing*, and *Townwork* and they also carry out the business assessment, educational training and development programs by 43 companies sharing market data and media. They exist interdependently. In the market process of the word, freeter, the aspect of wide-ranging group style had more efficiency than that of only one company.

The producer of freeter can be taken as what Bourdieu [1979] calls "mediation" in "habitus" —the mediation which ties hierarchical similarity of society and culture— due to their own media possession in the market process as well as coding symbolic signification by coining an artificial word. On that basis, they developed a new sign[11] that rather embodies the social circumstances. In this point, the development of sign functioned as a connecting social circumstance, the employment trend, and the lifestyle of the youth. Then, they made the active market strategies to transform the sign to more symbolic entity, for instance, movies,

intensive advertisement strategies, etc. Conse-
quently, the sign became more consumable. It
was the producer itself that played the interme-
diary role between the consumer and the pro-
ducer in a set of the production. Given this
perspective, the enterprise can be perceived not
only as the mediator between the employment
situation and the embodied sign but also as the
intermediary connecting the sign and the con-
sumption.

I-2. The Social Background of the Production
     In the late 1980's, when the word was made,
the Japanese economy experienced economic
restructuring, and the number of the part-time
employment was increasing. It mainly occurred
with the labor shortage in the bubble econ-
omy[12] era and employment reorganizations by
Japanese companies because of global competi-
tion. The trend was especially prominent in the
service sector of manual labor or replacements
by part-time workers, which resulted in a high
increase of part-timers from 11% in 1985 to
19%[13] in 1990 only five years later.
     The representation of freeters is relatively
negative. It is apparent that the people called
ichinin-mae (full-fledged) in the article of
freeter criticism means the full-timers who
fulfill the duty of government pensions and tax
payments. In addition, the relatively large
amounts of articles and studies describing them
as social problems, too, imply their social deval-
uation.
     Against such a background, the commer-
cial sign, which creates a new social group as
others and deconstruct or reconstruct the mean-
ing of part-time employment, was necessary for
business strategy. "We are doing product devel-
opment as a company. We create a proper
word if it nicely describes a social group and
helps with the product of employment maga-
zines. These backgrounds also relates to the
birth." (Mr. Saito, in charge of public relations
of *From A* in an interview, October, 2002) This
explanation by Mr. Saito provides us with a

part of the process and motivation of cultural
producers. For enterprises, the social dissemi-
nation of commercial sign or sort of slogan is
effective means in the long and medium term,
normally found in corporate strategies. Produc-
ing the word leads to the business income if it
clarifies the essence easily in a single word and
successfully makes the booming social impact.
     It is the public relations activity of using
mass media that comprises the strategy of
diffusion and social boom. Commercial prod-
ucts such as goods can easily be advertised.
The word, freeter, is difficult to advertise since
it is not a goods but a commercial sign. How
can it be widespread and eventually lead to the
benefit? In terms of this question, Recruit Co.
had a necessity of deconstructing the existing
view of part-time labor and reconstructing it as
a positive one. It was possible for them to
change the image even though it wasn't to
multiply the number of the part-time workers.
Thus, producing a movie with a great amount
of advertisement expenses in the same year of
the birth can be pointed out not as a coincidence
but as a strategy.
     In short, the high increase of part-time
workers in the late 1980's was a great business
chance for employment magazines. They had a
strategic motivation of redefining part-time
employees, as well as labor, to a positive mean-
ing.

II. The Production Process:
Coding Positive Images

II-1. The Label and the Otherness
     The word freeter used to be the advertise-
ment sign that had explicit signification, how-
ever for the present it exists and functions as a
symbol that has image-evoking effects with
both positive and negative meanings. It is
obvious that negative representations prevailed
rather than the positive ones in the Japanese
social context. Staying away from the analysis
of the social context, in this section, I will state

how the producer made the coding for the word.

The existence of the coding process and its prevailing strategy by a company in the production of freeter relates to the argument of Du Gay and Hall [2000]. They discussed the coding process of an advertisement sign by companies in the analysis on the circuit of culture such as productions, representations, and consumptions regarding Sony Walkman.

The subject that a sign signifies is necessary in the production of advertisement sign. The commercial products such as the Walkman might be the subject itself, however, the word freeter was required to create the existent of a social group. Providing the audiences with the substantiality on the imaginative social group was the first step for the popularization of the word. It used to be the unemployed or part-timers that meant those other than for the full-timers. Therefore, the process of creating the new group in the clink of existing epistemological structure had difficulties.

Consequently, the emphasized point in the directing the birth is the otherness of the social group and its spontaneous generation nature. "In 1987, freeters got birth! Getting rid of the stereotype. New-styled and free-minded. They reject to walk on the laid rails, holding their dreams forever, loving their freedom." (Recruit From A Co. 1987. *Freeter*) As the quotation above shows, the book, *Freeter*, edited by the person who coined he word, begins with the phrase that seems to say "freeters" got birth spontaneously, without mentioning who made the word. However, it is nothing but freeter creator saying it came to be.

The main part of the directing the birth was the exposure of the word to the mass media. In 1987, they intensively made the "freeters" special feature articles, and developed in-train advertisement, and also made the movie, *Freeter* [1987]. As a result, the word as others was discussed and consumed, and increasingly prevailed in the text, being used by the audience, thus generating a sort of social boom.

The labor market did not have the means of specifying them as others, but the part-time employment magazines and the media did. Although Becker's labeling theory [1963] discusses not only the politics in labeling, but also the adopting process of by whom it was labeled, only the politics of the former is available in freeter production. That is, there is not the existence of those who made freeter a good meaning, free from restrictions Japanese employment system.

II-2. Coding the Positive Images

The process of constructing freeter simultaneously occurred with the process of coding the positive images. The coding took place in a way that was convenient for the producer, and intended to contribute to magazine sales. The codes were to be positive images of the young. As the accumulation of representations supporting the codes, *Freeter* and *From A* made many articles about prominent persons.

"After all, I think it is better to experience various kinds of part-time jobs." (The comment of Kanako Wada, *Freeter* p.28)
"I changed part-time jobs so many times since I thought it would be better for my career as an actor." [The comment of Yuji Miyake, Freeter p.130]

These representations were repeated in various media outlets of the company. The strategic goal as the cultural producer is to increase the employment magazines sales. The prominent persons' words supported the code of "changing part-time jobs one after another is meaningful in a long term." In this coding, part-timer labor is looked at as valuable even if it is long or short term, and it is shown that part-time experiences bring personality growth. Practicing these codes means buying employment magazines and finding part-time jobs. In the contemporary Japanese social context, changing jobs, whether it is full-time or part-time, is not seen positively. However, the

producer decoded the part-time labor and the act of changing part-time jobs, and equated it with personality growth. It strongly relates to the point that Hall states, culture as a "signifying process" having crucial products or significations.

The godparent of the word, Mr. Michisita, the chief editor of *From A*, explains about the increasing freeters in the newspaper interview[14] as follows.

－I heard you're the godfather of the word, freeter.

"Yes, I named it since I thought free-arbeiter sounds bad, so I named it the freeter, which means the person who lives honest by his / her own feelings.

－Do they differ from moratorium of person development?

"They have steady outlook on their occupation. They do not see working in a company as an absolute thing; they would rather hope to develop their own vision."

－If they increase, is not the workforce of Japanese enterprises lost?

"If the traditional human resource managements are held continuously, the workforce will be lost. Most of the college students today have a sort of freeter-orientated, and hate to have an ordinary way of life. The older generations may think they are not responsible, but we have to examine the younger generations' work tendencies and create proper jobs."

To "examine" and "create proper jobs" are exactly the companies' strategies. It is significant to point out that they are locating them as different from moratorium of person development, free from existing social restrictions, having upward mobility, and being independent-minded. They made freeters seem real as the existent of others in the process of making it positive.

In coding of positive images, they also produced the movie, *Freeter*, in 1987, the same year of its birth. Although freeters today are considered as those who are described in the movie are several college students. They are successful in business and become successful even though they are merely students. In addition, their work-style is a co-operative one that is totally different from the common style of freeters today. What the movie intended to show was not the example of their work-ethics, rather their concept of destruction of the existing value system, which is mainly work＝company organization. That is why the movie emphasizes their free-mindedness and a rejection of institutions. Being poor, every character shows the appropriation of jobs and institutions as a resistance as well as independence from the company organizations. It was production in the year of the birth of freeters and was intended expose the word to the media, as a part of the business strategy to familiarize the word in a positive meaning, which was that if you are a freeter you can still be successful.

III. The Production Process: Sociological Interpretations of the Market Strategies

III-1. The Cultural Product in the Public Sphere

It is the public sphere, in a sense, Habermas [1962] discussed where the word freeter reaches after the presented to the market. Their market goal was to make the word discussed common among the public, and to popularize it. That is, they expected the word to create the sphere in which new public opinions or publics discussions on freeter would arise in daily communication practices. The market process of non-objects intended to make the word used in the daily life. Although the target audience in the advertisement strategies was the young part-timers, the movie or excessive advertisements indicated that they had postulated much wider audience. The market strategy was the one that had extension in the public sphere in terms of making a social boom and becoming the subject of public discussions.

The advertisement strategies were held in a distinguishing space. In the advertisement performed with the magazine sales, they made special efforts to the transportation advertisement like other general magazines do. Using the space of the compartment was effective for the pervasion and characteristic of freeter in some ways: the space is hermetically closed, and that let audience consume the advertisements subconsciously. As the consequence, total strangers share the same information regardless of their intentions. The effect made by the information shared is the secondary effect as the subject of discourse in daily conversation or in the spread of the word. The market strategy of these secondary effects evoking space was significant for the diffusion of the word consumption.

The secondary effects took place in various sites. For instance, the word was everywhere, such as classified advertisements on the walls or windows of shops, utility poles in towns, and situations newspapers. The job ads like "Part -time Job Recruiting Hurriedly! Freeter and Housewife Welcome!" became easy to find in everywhere. On the other hand, the arguments in mass media acknowledging them as problematic increasingly occurred after the collapse of the bubble economy, and "the freeter problem" came to be taken up on the same plane as the unemployment issue. Freeter pervaded as a vocabulary, however its semantic content has been fluctuating in the various social interactions. Although the result differs from producers' intention, it can be noted that they succeeded in making the public sphere as the new discussion site as well as creating the secondary effect of the word consumption.

The argument above relates to the infiltration of commercial principles to a public space, on which Adorno and Horkheimar [1947] showed the pessimistic view and Habermas called "structure fluctuation." Their perspectives contain a problem on the point that they take the audience as a passive or controllable, whose ineffectiveness is clearly shown in the fact: the secondary effects occurred with the social boom, while the negative representations and range of the social interactions also arose contrary to the creator's intention. In short, although the production of the word freeter produced the public sphere as the new discussion space, the space was filled with various social interactions in which the controllability by the media and passivity of the audience are completely denied.

III-2. The Articulation Between the Media and Advertising

The articulation between the media and the advertising is a recent phenomenon characterizing cultural production of the present age. The modern media and its contents exist under the complex interactions by the stakeholders that dwell in a variety of social backgrounds. The television has the factors of advertising revenue and audience rating and the papers have those of global distributing agencies. Likewise, modern magazines have various kinds of advertisement pages. In media, the advertisement is a large and important source of income. Therefore, it can be said that the modern media and advertising exist interdependently. The advertisements in general media are in parasitic existence within the media contexts, and they remain in subsidiary objects. Meanwhile, the help-wanted magazine, the producer of freeter, is anomalous on the point that the main contexts consist of advertisements, which is not supposed to be the forefront in general magazines. Employment magazines provide the spaces. The given space gains independence regarding the context from other ads or even from the media offering the space. The medium between them is insertion fee, based on the space size. To this extent, the media and the advertising in the help-wanted magazines are in interdependent relations in which each has a clear assignment.

The arguments on media as cultural pro-

ducers, contexts, and popular cultures require reference to the theories of the Frankfurt School such as Habermas, Adorno, and Holkheimer, as well as the modern media theories of Bourdillard or Thompson.

The Frankfurt School has a distinctly negative stance on the cultural industry. Adorno and Holkheimer [1947] pessimistically indicated that the cultural industry slows the individual thinking ability of each person by means of the expansion of the standardized products produced by the industry. Taking of them partially over, Habermas showed his expectation on the initial development of the public sphere, while it never achieves by its structural transformation begotten by mercantile mass media. The characteristic points of their view are the over-acceptance of opinion forming power, its controllability of mass media's commercial aspect and the ignorance of audiences' reproductive reading or interpretation. Although the interactions between cultural industries and commercial interests are tangible in the modern age, it needs careful discussion on the matter of the controllability of public opinion. As for freeter, the producer's market strategies partially succeeded in making a new public sphere, while the company ironically failed in creating the word's positive semantic content, which should have been the most significant for them, due to the opposed readings by the audiences.

Baudrillard [1975] discusses the loss of reality according to the shift from media to media, in which the concept called the "hyper-reality" relates to the media strategies on freeter. Freeters used to be the imaginary social group which did not exist socially originally, however the social acceptance of the sense of their existence has been constructed within the continuous and active processes of representations by mass media like newspapers and televisions. In this sense, it can be perceived that freeters came to exist as a hyper-reality in the secondary repercussion effects

originated in the cultural producer and spread to various media.

Thompson's [1995] media theories are characteristic on the point that he, as opposed to the Frankfurt School, recognizes the newly-created social interactions by media, and acknowledes the possibility of critical thinking by the audiences. In the three typologies of the face-to-face action, the mediated interaction, and the mediated pseudo interaction, he regards the social interactions created by mass media as mediated interaction, suggesting that it has unidirectional form that has expanding availability of time and space as well as unspecified number of potential audiences. And then, he states these three typologies exist together as a mixture in modern life, without inhibiting other interactions, but transforming the equilibrium between public objects and private objects. His arguments have high relevance to the social contest of interactions on freeter in the regard that the public sphere, as opposed to the argument of Habermas, is taken as becoming more lively with the blooming aspects, discussions, and interactions.

III-3. The Circuit of Culture

The cultural product freeter has been produced by the articulations of various processes such as labor representations, identities, and mass media. As Du Gay [1997] argues there are five process interactions in production, consumption, identity, representation, and regulation. There are the modern cultural productions that are hardly analyzed with the monochromatic factors of producers, the products or the consumers. Behind the production of the freeter, there was the social context of increasing part-time workers, and Recruit Co. appropriated it, articulating the context and the product. In producing, the company created the advertisement strategies using its or other mass media. The representations were constructed through the process of reproducing the semantic content of part-time labor and employees to

a positive one, which was to create a new label for youth identity. Intertwined intricately with each other, the processes have continued by the company strategically due to pursuing the coding and making of the market. The word freeter is not a short-run production, but a cultural production made by the continuous complex processes of advertisement associated with stake-holding mass media including the producer.

Freeter is a product of a label put to the increasing part-timers in a globalizing post-industrialized society, which of substantiality and image as a group were formed through the processes of production and reproduction by the producer and the audiences. Although globalization is an inevitable theme not only for contemporary cultural studies but for entire social sciences, the Japanese labor market has already experienced its noticeable influence. Enterprise improved its efficiency in all fields such as human affairs and production for the relocation of production bases or the global competition. As a result, the part-time ratio increased. The speed and its timing differ from those of western societies; in Japan it occurred in the late 1980's. Modern western societies recognize a sort of freeters in a more general sense than Japan. It became the object of a bigger discussion by the appearance of the label. Modern Japan is in a transitional period. The new figure born in the transformation process gained substantiality by getting the label, resulting that the new young part-timers are represented as a certain social group. "Feeter," as a produced word, is forming the complicated cultural politics in which power relations are contested or subverted and consumption or semantic content are reproduced by the audiences.

IV. Conclusion

The popularized Japanese word freeter can be perceived as a cultural product. It is entren-

ched as a word meaning the young people who willingly choose to live on part-time jobs. However, it is an artificial product made by the employment magazines' processes of strategic coding and market strategies. Behind the rapid increase in the number of the part-timers, they developed the word freeter with the intention of increasing their magazine sales as something that reproduces the semantic content of the part-time labor or employee. The efforts of positive coding as well as constructing freeters' generalized otherness and substantiality were made in the incrustation of the representations. And then, they succeeded in causing a new social boom as a result of continuous exposures to the public sphere as can be seen in advertisements. In the marketing process, various sectors of media such as movies, books, magazines, and transportation advertising, are used. Especially, an employment magazine, the most emphasized sector, was the characteristic media on the point that the two factors of the context and media trade places, and the insertion fee plays part of the medium systematically. The interactions of multiple processes like the articulation between the context and the media by means of the insertion fee are noticeable in the production of freeter. Freeter was produced through the articulated and continuous practices of various processes such as representation, consumption, identity, production, and regulation. The increase of part-timers is just a part of social mobilization. The different point between Japanese and western societies is whether the labeling on them was made or not. Contrary to the producer's intentions, the word gained negative meaning as a result of the reproduction of semantic content by the audience. This process and consequence show that freeter is not the product as the object but the cultural product, whose semantic content and power relations are contested or subverted by various audiences having each social contexts in cultural politics filled with complex interactions.

Notes

1) Other definitions in prior studies are as follows:
"Young people who don't start full-time work
but rather part-time work to enjoy their life after
graduation." [Recruit Co. 1987] "Among young
people working not as full-timers but as part
-timers, one who does not hope to have a regular
occupation." [Recruit Co. 1988 *Free Arbeiter
Hakusho*] "Among young people who are work-
ing as part-timers, *Keiyaku-shain* (contracted
employees), and *Haken-shain*, (temporary
employees dispatched by personnel agency), nei-
ther student nor permanent employee, one who
does not hope to have a regular occupation."
[Recruit Co. 1990]

There are two different aspects between the
definitions above. Firstly, the definitions by
government-affiliated research institutions
include the unemployed, however those of
Recruit Co. do not put them in. Secondly, the
former limit the age range due to statistical
reasons, whereas the latter do not. A common
point is to limit freeters as young people despite
the fact that there are the workers who manage
on part-time jobs in all working generations.

2) Data source: Recruit From A Co. 2000. *Freeter
Hakusyo*. Tokyo: Recruit.

3) Data Source: Japan Institute of Labor. 2000.
"Working Conditions and the Labor Market."
Vol.39 - no.11. November 1, 2000. [online] . URL:
http://www.jil.go.jp/bulletin/year/2000/vol3911/
02.html; Internet; accessed 22 July 2000.

4) Nagatomo, J. 2003. "The Multiple Analysis on
the Social Interactions between the Freeters."
MA thesis, Fukuoka: Seinan Gakuin University.
Using statistical analysis, textual analysis, and
ethnographical approach, it argues 1) the produc-
tion process of freeters as the commercial sign, 2)
the process and the politics of appropriation and
articulation of the word by media, 3) the reac-
tions of the freeters.

5) Data Source: Recruit From A Co. 2000. *Freeter
Hakusho*.

6) Data Source: Management and Coordination
Agency.

7) Recruit Research Co. 2000. *Arbeiter no Shurou
nado ni kannsuru Chosa*.

8) Sampling was held in the way as follows, and
the data are adoptable in the thesis's context:
Date: December 21-22nd, 2000. Poll: 3,000 votors,
250 sampling points. Stratified multistage sam-
pling method. Implementation method: Visit
-interview.

9) Data Source: Recruit Co. 2002. *The Financial
Statements*.

10) Data Source: Recruit Co. 2002. *The Financial
Statements*.

11) There is a conceptual difference between *Sign*
and *Symbol*. Although sign has a corresponding
definition, symbol does not have it but symbol
has evocative power. Turner, V., Cohen, A.,
Duncan, H., and Burke. K. have this perspective.
Symbols are object, acts, concepts, linguistic for-
mations that evoke sentiments and emotions, and
impel men to action.

12) Bubble economy is the name for the Japanese
asset-inflated economy which occurred in 1980's.

13) Data Source: Management and Coordination
Agency. 2000.

14) *Nikkei Sangyo shinbun*. Nov. 24th, 1987: 32.

Bibliography

Adorno, T.M., and Horkheimer, M. 2002[1947].
*Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Frag-
ments*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Anderson, B. 1991. *Imagined Communities*. London:
Verso.
Appadurai, A. 2001. 'Grassroots Globali-zation and
the Research Imagination,' In *Globalization* (ed.)
Appadurai, A. Durham: Duke University Press.
Appadurai, A. 1996. *Modernity at Large*: Cultural
Dimensions of Globalization. Minneapolis: Uni-
versity of Minnesota Press.
Applegath, J. 1982. *Working Free*. New York:
Amacom.
Baudrillard, J. 1970. *The Consumer Society: Myths
and Structures*. London: Sage.
Baudrillard, J. 1993[1975]. *Symbolic Exchange and*

Death. London: Sage.

Becker, H.S. 1963. *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. New York: Free Press.

Bourdieu, P. 1986[1979]. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London: Routledge.

Burger, P. and Luckman, T. 1967. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Anchor Books.

Clifford, J. and Marcus, G. (eds.) 1986. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

De Certeau, M. 2002 [1984]. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Du Gay, P., Hall, S., Mackay, H. and Negus, K. (eds.) *Doing Cultural Studies*. London: Sage in association with The Open University.

Evans, J. and Hall, S. (eds.) 1999. *Visual Culture: The Reader*. London: Sage.

Fiske, J. 1989. *Understanding Popular Culture*. New York: Routledge.

Foucault, M. 1979[1975]. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Fountain, J. and Thorns, C. 1998. 'Heritage tourism and New Zealand cities.' In *Time out? Leisure, Recreation, and Tourism in New Zealand and Australia*. (ed) Perkins, H.C. and Cushman, G. Auckland: Addison Wesley Longman.

Funabashi, N. 1983. *Nihonteki Koyou to Chingin*. (Japanese Employment and Wage) Tokyo: Hosei University Press.

Gakken, Co. (ed.) 2001. *Freeter naze? Dousuru?* (Why Freeter? What are you going to do?) Tokyo: Gakken.

Geertz, C. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books.

Habermas, J. 1989[1929] *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge: Polity.

Hall, S. 1972. 'The Determination of News Photographs.' In *The Manufacture of News: Social Problem, Deviance and the Mass Media*. (eds.) Cohen, S. and Young, J. Constable.

———. 1976. *Resistance through Rituals*. (eds.) Hall, S. and Jefferson, T. Birmingham: University of Birmingham.

———. 1978. *Policing the Crisis*. (eds.) Hall, S., Critcher, C., Jefferson, T., Clarke, J. and Roberts, B. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

———. 1982. 'The Rediscovery of Ideology: The Return of the Repressed.' In *Media Studies' in Culture, Society, and the Media*. (eds.) Gurevich, M., Bennet, T., Curran, J., and Woollacott, J. London: Methuen.

———. 1997. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. (ed.) London: Sage in associations with The Open University.

———. 1996. *The Questions of Cultural Identity*. (eds.) Hall, S. and Du Gay, P. London: Sage.

Harvey, D. 1989. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Hebdige, D. 1979. *Subculture, The Meaning of Style*. London: Methuen.

Hewison, R. 1987. *The Heritage Industry*. London: Methuen.

Imamura, H. 1998. *Kindai no Rodokan*. (The Modern Work Ethic) Tokyo: Iwanamishoten.

Iyotani, T., Sakai, N., and Suzuki, T.M., and Yang, I. 2003[1998]. *Globalizasion no Nakano Asia*. (Asia in Globalization) Tokyo: Miraisya.

Kan, S.J. 1996. *Orientalism no Kanata e*. (Beyond Orientalism) Tokyo: Iwanamishoten.

Kosugi, R. 2003. *Freeter toiu Ikikata*. (The Lifestyle of the Freeter) Tokyo: Keisousyobou.

Mahon, M. 2000. 'The Visible Evidence of Cultural Producers.' In *Annual Review of Anthropology, v. 29*. Palo Alto: Annual Reviews.

Mcluhan, M. 1964. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Toronto: New American Library.

Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare. 1999. *White Paper on Labor*. Tokyo: Minestry of Health, Labor and Welfare.

———. 2000. *White Paper on Labor*. Tokyo: Minestry of Health, Labor and Welfare.

———. 2001. *White Paper on Labor*. Tokyo: Minestry of Health, Labor and Welfare.

Morioka, K. 1995. *Kigyou Chushin Syakai no Jikan Kouzou*. (The Time Structure of the Company -centered Society) Tokyo: Aokishoten.

Murakami, R. (ed.) 2001. *Mirai no aru Freeter, Mirai no nai Freeter*. (Freeter with Future, Freeter with no Future) Tokyo: Nihon housou syuppankai.

Nagasu, M. 2001. 'Freeter toiu Wakamono tachi.' In Kawaru Wakamono to Syokugyou Sekai: Transition no Syakaigaku. (Transforming Young Generations: The Sociology of Transition) Yajima, M. and Mimizuka, H. (eds.) Tokyo: Gakubunnsya.

Nagatomo, J. 2003. "The Multiple Analysis on the Social Interactions between the Freeters". MA thesis, Fukuoka: Seinan Gakuin University.

Ota, Y. 2001. *Transposition no Sisou*. (The Concept of Transposition) Tokyo: Sekaishisousya.

Recruit Research Co. 2000. "Arbeiter no Syurou nado ni kansuru Chosa" (The Survey on 'Arbeiter' work) Rpt. in *White Paper in Labor*. Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, 2000 ed.

Recruit From A Co. (ed.) 1987a. *Freeter*. Tokyo: Recruit From A Co.

———. 1987b. *Wakamono Shigoto Sagashi Magazine*. (Job Hunting Magazine for the Young People) Tokyo: Recruit From A Co.

———. 1988. *Free Arbeiter Hakusho* (White Paper on Part-timers) Tokyo: Recruit Co.

———. 1990. *Freeter Hakusho* (White Paper on Freeter) Tokyo: Recruit Co.

Said, W.E. 1978. *Orientalism*. New York: Random House Inc.

Takenobu, M. 2002. *Workshareing no Shouzou*. (The Figure of Worksharing) Tokyo: Iwanamishoten.

Takeuchi, S. 1999. *Shitugyou Jidai wo Ikiru Wakamono*. (The Young Living in the age of Unemployment) Tokyo: Ootukishoten.

The Japan Institute of Labor. 2000a. *Freeter no Ishiki to Jittai*. (The Consiousness and the Actual Condition of the Freeters) Tokyo: The Japan Institute of Labor.

———. 2000b. 'Working Conditions and the Labor Market. Vol.39-No.11. URL:http//www.jil.go.jp/bulletin/year/2000/vol39-11/02.html Ref. July 22nd, 2002.

———. 2001. *Daitoshi no Wakamono no Syuugyoukoudou to Ishiki*. (The Atitude and Consiousness of the Young Generations in Urban Cities Toward Finding Job) Tokyo: The Japan Institute of Labor.

Thompson, J. 1996. *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media Policy*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Tominaga, K. 1990. *Nihon no Kindaika to Shakai Hendou*. (Japanese Modernization and Social Change) Tokyo: Koudansya.

Turner, G. 1996. *British Cultural Studies*. London: Routledge.

Ueno, C. 1994. *Kindai Kazoku no Seiritsu to Syuen*. (The Formation and the End of the Modern Family) Tokyo: Iwanamishoten.

Ueno, C. 2001. 'Freeter no Haigo ni Arumono.' (The Backgroud of the Freeter) In *Freeter naze? Dousuru?*. (Why freeter? What are you going to do?) Tokyo: Gakken.

———. 2002[2001]. *Kouchiku Syugi towa Nanika*. (What is Constructurism?) Tokyo: Keisoushobou.

Watabe, M. 2001. 'Youth Problems and Japanese Society' In *The Japan Foundation Newsletter. Vol. xxvii/nos.3-4 June 2001*. Tokyo: The Japan Foundation.

Williams, R. 1981. *The Sociology of Culture*. London: Fontana.

Willis, P. 1977. *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*. Farnborough: Saxon House.

Yamada, M. 1999. *Pallasite Single no Jidai*. (The Era of Pallasite Singles) Tokyo: Chikumashobou.

Yomiuri Shinbun. 2002. 'Koyou ni kannsuru Yoron Chosa.' (the public opinion research on the empoyment) In *Yomiuri Shinbun* December 28th, 2002. Tokyo: Yomiuri Shinbun.