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The transgender world in contemporary Japan: the male to female cross-dressers' community in Shinjuku

Junko MITSUHASHI (Translated by Kazumi HASEGAWA)

ABSTRACT *This paper not only gives an overview of the transgender world in contemporary Japan but also attempts to illustrate the male to female cross-dressing (MTFCD) community in Shinjuku, Tokyo, which plays an important role in the overall transgender world and how people in the community think and live, by conducting comprehensive fieldwork. The MTFCD community consists of amateur cross-dressers and their patrons, and it is formed around about ten bars/clubs in Shinjuku. This community differentiates itself from the gay community in their customs and consciousness; they tend to recognize gender based on gender performance rather than biological sex, which is usually accepted for distinguishing sex. Therefore, a MTF cross-dresser with feminine performance is considered as a 'woman,' regardless of one's physical and biological conditions. Because of this recognition of gender based on gender performance, people in the community are able to develop the 'quasi-heterosexual' relationships as men and 'women.'*

KEYWORDS: Transgender, cross-dressing, Shinjuku, Tokyo, Japan, quasi-heterosexuality

Introduction

The hidden world

This paper aims to provide an overview of transgender communities in contemporary Japan by focusing on the male to female (MTF) cross-dressing (CD) community in Shinjuku, Tokyo, since this community plays a very important role in the transgender community as a whole. The term 'transgender' refers to any act or phenomenon that transgresses stereotypic gender boundaries, or a person who embodies or expresses gender transgression. In other words, it defines those whose gender identity is at variance with their assigned birth gender. This transgender community consists of an entire spectrum of identities ranging from MTF (Male To Female, a person born as man who lives as woman) to FTM (Female to Male, a person born as woman who lives as man).

Psychologist Tsuneo Watanabe interviewed men who cross-dressed as women and frequented non-commercial, private CD clubs during the years of 1976–1977. Watanabe also conducted research on CD women in cooperation with a commercially run CD club and a CD-focused magazine company in 1985. Except for these interviews, there has been almost no comprehensive academic research on transgender communities. And even Watanabe's research does not grasp the entire picture of the transgender community. Being small and closed to the outsiders, its details have not been discussed outside of the community. Therefore, the community has not been recognized either in public or academically. In contrast, the gay men's community (gay town) in Shinjuku 2-chome is acknowledged and widely accepted, although gay men are also considered a sexual minority group. In this regard, the transgender community, which was formed during the mid-1960s, has largely been an

invisible world of which most people are unaware. However, because of the increasing attention to sexual minorities during the 1990s and the changes in the people's consciousness within the community, the awareness of the transgender community has now begun to surface. Mass media such as magazines and television programs have started to feature the CD community in Shinjuku as well as transgendered people.

For instance, in July 1997, *Sunday Mainichi* published an article in a magazine entitled 'Eleitotachi wa naze josô wo shitanoka? [Why Do Male Elites Cross-Dress?]' to introduce six CD women in Shinjuku with full-color centerfold pictures. In December of the same year, AERA also provided insights into the MTFCD community with an article titled 'Zubon wo sute machine deyô: "Môhitori no watashi" no sekai [Take Off Your Pants and Go to the City: Cross-Dressing Leads You to Find "Another You"]'. As for television, Fuji Television broadcasted a documentary program, 'Non-fiction: Seikimatsu josô monogatari [Non-fiction: Stories of CD women at the End of the Century]', presenting these women as heroines. Through these broadcast programs, the MTFCD community in Shinjuku, which had been described as an underground world, is gradually receiving public attention.

In terms of academic research on MTF cross-dressing, the research conducted by the 'Sengo nihon 'transgender' shakaishi kenkyûkai [Research Group on Social History of 'Transgenderism' in the Post-War Japan],' which was organized in February 1999 (directed by Professor Masami Yajima), was the first academic study on transgenderism. The researchers in the project completed an ethnographic study on CD women in 2000. They selected several 'well-known' CD women in the community and discussed their consciousness and performances through an analysis of CD women's own memoranda and diaries. In 2001, the same project organizers also examined the life histories of experienced CD women who had actively committed themselves to the community from the beginning up to the development period of the MTFCD community in Shinjuku (from the middle of the 1960s to the beginning of the 1980s).

As I have explained, fieldwork on the MTFCD community in Shinjuku has just begun; however, I believe that this research on the MTFCD community can provide more than just an analysis and description of the community. MTFCD women in Shinjuku are transgressors of sex/gender boundaries and they play a crucial role as a bridge that connects the transgender community (neither man nor woman) with the general society. Androgynous perspectives, behaviors, and recognition of gender based on gender performance seem more common in the MTFCD community and challenge the conventional gender binary system of the modern era. In other words, the CD women's community serves as a medium to reveal various issues and problems in our society where our conventional ideas on women and men are inflexible. Moreover, the MTFCD community can offer alternative and effective visions of gender/sexuality for the future. The ultimate purpose of this paper, which aims to provide the first comprehensive analysis of the invisible MTFCD community in Shinjuku, also supports this vision.

Research methodology

I first stepped into the MTFCD world in Shinjuku in 1992. I had been a member of 'Elizabeth kaikan.' This was a private members club offering recreational facilities, including clothes and make-up service, for amateur cross-dressers. Although members were required to cross-dress while on the premises they were not allowed to leave the premises while cross-dressed. To me, who knew only this club, the MTFCD bar in Shinjuku 3-chome, 'Lisa' (run by Lisa Ayukawa 'mama'¹), the first such bar I visited in Shinjuku, appeared healthier, more pleasant, and more sociable. In September 1993, I also visited another MTFCD bar 'Ju-ne'² (run by Kaoru Nakamura 'mama') located in the center of the MTFCD world 'Hanazono 5 bangai' (also called Golden gai). There I experienced the most 'authentic' and exciting MTFCD world.

After 'Elizabeth kaikan' expunged my name from the list of membership in August 1994 because of our increasing disagreement over the concept of cross-dressing, my performance 'stage' for cross-dressing shifted completely to Shinjuku. Attempting to translate the MTFCD online world into offline reality through the activities organized by 'Club Fake Lady (MTFCD circle),' this club won me a reputation in the Shinjuku MTFCD community. After this success, I became a freelance CD woman, while working as a 'volunteer hostess' once or twice a week for the well-known MTFCD bar 'Ju-ne.' By working in this bar, I acquired the skills necessary to work in the largest entertainment district in Asia, and nurtured my awareness as a member of the MTFCD community.

This fieldwork is based on my real experience and observations in the MTFCD community; that is to say, it is an analysis made by an insider/member of the community. The methodology I use is probably similar to what is called 'participant observation' in Sociology. However, it is important to note that, in my case, although I made enormous efforts to collect data and to interview the CD women in the community, the research itself was not my primary purpose. Therefore, I do not claim that this research fully follows the principles of participation observation, and I would welcome critiques of my academic legitimacy and the objectivity of my research.

The data for my research were collected mainly through my experience inside and outside of the bar, the personal anecdotes I collected while I was working as a 'volunteer hostess' at 'Ju-ne' from fall 1995 to the end of 1998, and through some observations when I was a 'guest employee' at 'Misty' (new-half and MTFCD pub) from February 1999 to March 2001. Notwithstanding the fact that my research covers approximately six years and the MTFCD community was continually transforming over these years, this paper attempts to elucidate the MTFCD community as well as the people who lived in this community at the close of the twentieth century.

Transgender word in contemporary Japan

Figure 1 conceptualizes the transgender world (exclusively the MTF community) at the end of the twentieth century. The transgender community positions itself separately from the gay world, and it is constituted by four major groups, the 'new-half,' the MTFCD community, MTFCD women's members-only clubs, and the Gender Identity Disorder (GID) or transsexual group. There are also two sub-groups: drag queens and the cyber transgender community. I will describe each of these groups in what follows.

'New-half (Mr. Lady)'

A new-half lady refers to a man in female clothing or a trans who has already undergone some elements of sex-reassignment surgery. The new-half community is usually situated within commercial businesses like entertainment (as hostess of bars and clubs), show business (as dancers and performers), and sex services (as sex workers). 'New-half' is an English word coined in Japan in the middle of the 1980s, and it has begun to replace the term 'gay boy' which was commonly used previously. From around 1989, people became comfortable describing transgendered people who work in the entertainment business as 'new-half' ladies. 'Mr. Lady' is synonymous with 'new-half.'

The prototype of this 'new-half' ladies community goes back to the gay men's community established around the 1950s. In the 1970s, along with the separation from the gay men's community, employees (gay boys) at bars /clubs feminized themselves in female clothing and thus created the 'new-half' community. Although I emphasize this separation from the gay men's community, in fact the 'new-half' community still maintains an intimate

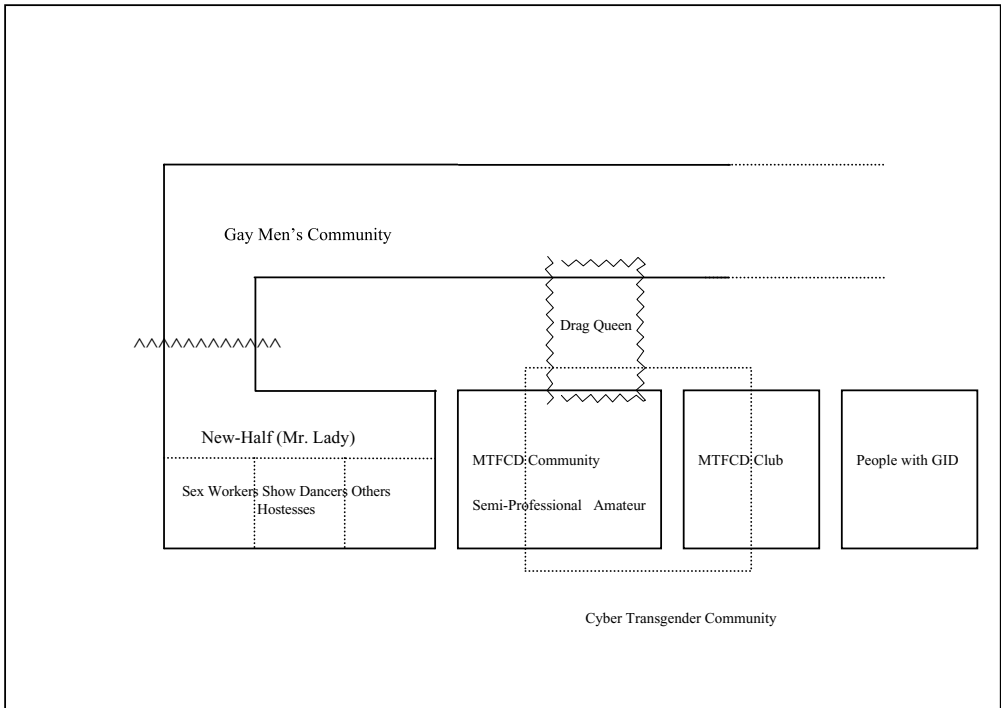


Figure 1. The conceptual diagram of transgender community (MTF) at the end of the 20th Century

connection with the gay men's community in respect of their shared consciousness, similar backgrounds, and shared supply of human resources.

The 'new-half' community embraces diversity. It includes transgendered people, transsexual women, cross-identified gay men, and people with GID. You also encounter people who are allied with the dominant culture in gender/sexuality issues, but choose to drag in female clothes just for their jobs. The 'new-half' community is classified into two categories according to their business: *omizu* and *fashion health*.³ The entertainment business consists of hostess clubs (where conversation is the core service) and show pubs (where a dance or show is performed). Many 'new-half' ladies compete to feminize themselves physically and make themselves more marketable utilizing body-altering high technology. They attempt to gain ideal bodies through permanent hair removal of the beard or inhibiting moustache growth and body hair, emphasizing body and breast curves by taking hormones and undergoing facial cosmetic surgery, enlargement of the breasts, surgical castration, and vaginoplasty.

While you may imagine that 'new-half' ladies come to enjoy themselves at these clubs, in reality, 'new-half' bars serve principally heterosexual men and women customers. Of course, the employees of the bars are 'new-half' ladies. It is rare to see CD women as customers at these bars and clubs. At present, centered in big cities such as Tokyo and Osaka, or medium-sized cities which have populations of over 200,000, there exist 200 to 300 bars and clubs and the number of 'new-half' employees has reached approximately 1,000. (Figures calculated by the author.) MTF specialized magazines include *She/Male hakusho* (*Demographics on She/Males*), published bimonthly by Kôsai-shobô, which has now become Issui-sha, and *New-half Club*, quarterly published by Sanwa shuppan. The most influential magazine, *New-half Club*, has about 15,000 subscribers.

The MTFCD community

The MTFCD communities are found in large cities such as Tokyo (Shinjuku area), Osaka and Nagoya, and are based on the MTFCD bars and clubs where MTFCD women and their customers (usually men who do not cross-dress) can interact. Shinjuku has ten such bar or clubs; Osaka has six, Nagoya three, Sendai one.

One of the distinctive characteristics of these bars and clubs is the 'quasi-heterosexual relationship' created among the customers. The staff of these bars and clubs are transgendered women (genetic women sometimes work there, too) but the customers are mainly amateur CD women and non-CD men. This bar space serves as a meeting place for these amateur CD women to interact with genetic men whose gender expression is also male.

Since the CD customers and the men customers interact in potentially sexual places such as bars, snack bars, pubs, or clubs, this space gives the amateur CD customers opportunities to impersonate the professional hostesses who serve male customers. Through these experiences, some amateur CD women have gained the particular skills necessary for professional hostesses. In this space, the interaction or contact with men is relatively common for CD women, frequently resulting in the development of sexual relationships.

The relationship between a CD woman and a man is considered a heterosexual engagement; yet this relationship is more accurately a 'quasi-heterosexual' one. Both bodies are genetically male bodies, but they perform socially and psychologically male and female roles respectively from beginning to end and share the fantasy of a 'male-female' love affair. This consciousness makes this community apparently different from the gay community in Shinjuku 2-chome where a homosexual consciousness (in a male-male relationship) is valued as a shared experience.

Many CD women belong to CD clubs with dressing rooms where they can change their clothes, put on make-up to cross-dress, and then go out of the clubs. They then visit different clubs in the cities of Shinjuku/Tokyo and Osaka or just spend time shopping or dining at regular restaurants. This kind of freedom facilitates CD women in acquiring the particular social skills of 'women,' but needless to say, they also confront various risks that women cannot avoid in an entertainment district, for instance, molestation and rape.

Not only do CD women cross-dress, but oftentimes they choose permanent body change as a process of increasing the level of feminization. It is not possible to generalize about these CD women in terms of how they like to be treated, but most likely they prefer to be regarded as 'woman.'

The MTFCD community started and has been extended with the gay and MTFCD bar 'Utako' in Abeno, Osaka, which opened in the 1960s, as well as the MTFCD club 'Fuki,' that was built in 1967 at Golden gai in Shinjuku, Tokyo (run by Kozue Kamo 'mama' and renamed later as 'Kozue'). The community has been further developed by the club 'Ju-ne' (run by Kaoru Nakamura 'mama'), which was a successor to the business style and the customers of 'Kozue' in 1980s.

The location of these MTFCD clubs covers a wide range of areas, extending from Kuyakusho Street of Kabuki-cho to 'Suehirotei block' of Shinjuku 3-chome, the 'gay town' of Shinjuku 2-chome, and the area around Shinjuku Gyoen Subway Station. While the CD community in Tokyo partially overlaps with the 'gay town' of Shinjuku 2-chome and is a broader community, in Osaka the bars are scattered from the concentration in Dôyama-cho, Kita over Tenma, Juso, and Minami districts. It is estimated that between 150 and 200 CD women constitute the Tokyo community and 70 to 100 CD women are in the community of Osaka. They do not have their own magazine as a medium to speak for themselves; however, the 'new-half' magazine, *New-Half Club* is now featuring updated stories from the community.

Recently, fewer and fewer CD women are using the dressing rooms that belong to the clubs; instead, they come to the bars directly from their homes fully dressed. Some of these people identify themselves as amateur cross-dressers, so as to differentiate themselves from other semi-professional CD women. These CD women do not like to follow the semi-professional mode of dragging, which requires specific social skills, behaviors, knowledge, and desires, as I have explained before. They simply want to enjoy the act of cross-dressing. Their activities can be observed in a cross-dressing coterie magazine *Himawari* (published bimonthly by Yûbi-sha) with Candy Milky as chief editor.

The MTFCD women's members-only clubs

This MTFCD world is for purely amateur CD women. It is formed around the commercial MTFCD women's members-only clubs such as 'Elizabeth kaikan' in Taitô Ward, Tokyo, and 'Palette House' in Yodogawa Ward, Osaka. 'Elizabeth kaikan' was established in Kanda suda-cho, Chiyoda Ward in 1979. Then, after moving to Kameido, Kôto Ward, this club finally settled in Asakusa-bashi and became a comprehensive MTFCD women's club equipped with a store providing cosmetic and other products needed for dragging, lockers, powder rooms, chat rooms, and a photo studio. The makeup stylists and other valets and employees in this club are all genetic women. Users are charged 6,000 yen every time they use the facility.

Genetic men whose gender expression is also male are strictly prohibited from entering the club; thus the CD women here do not have any opportunity to contact men. Needless to say, there is no sexual relationship with men in this club. The CD women are not allowed to go outside in general. Instead, they participate into various seasonal events like *ohanami* [cherry blossom viewing picnics] in spring and *nôryôsen* [cool-breeze cruises] in summer and bus tours, which are all arranged by the club staff. Consequently, registration fees for these events tend to be expensive because participants need to pay for the usage of the club, the actual travel fees, and additional fees for the organization of the tours. These tours create an absolutely safe and comfortable environment for CD women participants because they are not easily identified, being isolated from society; however, because of the nature of this high secrecy, these CD women seldom acquire sociality or socializing skills as 'women.'

The members of the clubs simply enjoy the conversion in gendered patterns and the surface of sociability symbolized by women's clothes and cosmetics without committing themselves to fully transforming their gender identity or gender roles. These CD women do not have to build sociable or close relationships with other people. Few of them go through surgical operations or other changes such as permanent body hair removal or taking female hormones.

Although it is assumed that even the biggest club, 'Elizabeth kaikan,' has fewer than a hundred regular members, irregular customers, who like to experience transvestism once or more by paying 15,000 yen each time, reach a fairly large number.

For these CD women, a periodical magazine *Queen* is published bimonthly by Anto Shôji with sales figures reaching 3,000.

People with gender identity disorder: transsexuals

Gender Identity Disorder (GID) people, transsexuals, have been working since 1996 as a self-help group in Tokyo.

The self-help group consists of GID people whose gender identities do not match their innate sex or 'appropriate' gender role/gender pattern, as well as people who have not yet been diagnosed with GID but have doubts about their own gender. Because of the gap in

recognition, many obstacles arise in these GID people's social lives which are intimately connected to their gender. They choose medical support and treatment in order to resolve these problems in their social lives. One might characterize them as transgendered people who rely on the medical discourse.

In terms of their social techniques as transgendered persons, GID people are varied, ranging from people who are not much trained in performing as women, to people who are very willing to undergo sex change but have yet to acquire feminine gender techniques in cosmetics, behavior, speaking manners and fashion trends, and on again to people who can already successfully pass as women.

The majority of GID people do not get involved in the existing transgender community; in fact, many of them have left the community because of their discomfort with being members of that community. They claim that their present body and sex/gender are 'wrong' to them and they need to be medically and socially 'corrected.' Moreover, after the sex change, they strongly desire to live with the gender they have selected and blend in with mainstream society with full citizenship. So, GID people never perceive themselves as transgender; instead, they acknowledge that after a sex change, their bodies are 'returned' to them as they should be and the new sex is 'recovered.' Based on these views, some GID people discriminate against other transgender groups (new-half women or other trans). Male to Female GID (MTFGID) people who attend medical institutions number approximately five hundred in Japan.

Drag queens

As a form of resistance to socially acknowledged masculinity, some gay men dress according to extremely feminine codes to create a transcendence of gender. In their performance, they attempt to satirize the dichotomy of sex in society. The original meaning of 'drag' is to 'trail,' and the term 'drag queen' stems from the female gesture that one trails the very long and splendid dress (which is considered a symbol of extreme femininity).

Since most of the drag queens identify themselves as gay men, it is not appropriate for them to be included in the category of transgender; however, the fashion of drag queens is incorporated into the CD communities. In this regard, drag queens play a role that bridges the gay men's community and the transgender community.

Transgender world in cyberspace

This transgender world in cyberspace was created through CD/Transsexual communication networks that have been operating since 1990. These include 'EON' (Ryuko Jinna runs this site in Tokyo) and 'Suwan no yume' (run by Mika Shiratori in Osaka). These web activities have helped the isolated CD women connect with others and brought an enormous information-distribution innovation into the community. Many CD women have become informed about transgender issues through these websites, which have helped expand the transgender community quantitatively.

Since the mid-1990s, efforts to link the transgender world in cyberspace with the offline transgender world in Shinjuku have been accelerating. In particular, Junko Mitsuhashi, a MTF transgendered person, formed a social club named as 'Club Fake Lady (CFL)' and coordinated various events (booths at parties, social gatherings, and *onsen* [hot spring] tours). The link between the online world and the offline world was further developed by her efforts and it reached a peak between 1996 and 1998.

Since the technology of the Internet was introduced in 1998 to the transgender world, the total number of major CD websites has now exceeded 200. On the one hand, the increase in transgender-related websites has lowered the barrier between the transgender world and

the larger society, but on the other hand, the cyber transgender community is scattered, resulting in the loss of the centralized functioning of the community and its members' sense of belonging.

As I have briefly explained, the current transgender world in Japan has four major categories and each has its own characteristics and rules of functioning. The New-half world, a professional group that makes their world a profession or business and is capable of making money out of it, clearly differentiates itself from the other three groups. The MTFCD women's private clubs, on the other hand, do not have any social relationships with society. In exchange for the safe environment, these CD women give up their own freedom in terms of their activities. The restriction of freedom makes it completely closeted, exclusive, and different from other three groups. A third group, people with GID, attempts to reduce and resolve their uncomfortable gender identification by receiving medical service and treatment or by relying on medical authority. They voluntarily position themselves in the medical discourse of GID; this is the most distinctive characteristic of the GID group.

In comparison with the principles of these three communities of the new-half world, the MTFCD women private clubs, and the GID community, the MTFCD community in Shinjuku, Tokyo, seems to exist in a very different mode. It is not professional like the new-half world: it is not exclusive with a closed environment that guards its safety by not revealing their identities outside of the CD women clubs; certainly, it is not defined by medical discourse like the GID community. Put another way, Shinjuku CD community is basically amateur oriented, possessed of high social skills, and capable of enjoying society by claiming its own responsibilities and freedom. In the next section, I would like to explain the history and development of this CD/transgender community.

An overview of the Shinjuku CD community

History

The root of the MTFCD community in Shinjuku dates back to the CD bar 'Fuki' opened by Kozue Kamo 'mama' at Shinjuku hanazono5 bangai (Golden gai) in February 1967. Besides working for Yomiuri Shimbun at the beginning of the 1960s, Kozue Kamo was one of the influential amateur members of a secret CD women's society called 'Fuki club.' In cooperation with this 'Fuki club,' 'Fuki' started as a club where CD women and men (genetic men with male gender expressions) could drink casually. But in February 1968, Kamo parted company with 'Fuki club' and changed the club's name from 'Fuki' to 'Kozue' in September 1969. Along with these changes, she decided to foster and train amateur CD women in her own ways.

Of course, even before then, Golden gai had embraced some small gay bars where professional CD women met and attended to male customers; however, unlike these gay bars, 'Kozue' developed a new business method in this district. It provided a meeting space for amateur CD women or hostesses on a temporary basis where they could meet men patrons who were fans of CD/transgendered people and who wanted to build romantic relationships with them. This semi-professional model, which fell somewhere in between the professional CD world (gay bars) and the purely amateur CD world (Fuki club), took shape between the late 1960s and the early 1970s (its early developmental stage) and became one of the major characteristics of the Shinjuku CD community.

In October 1978, a MTFCD bar 'Ju-ne' opened in the same district quite close to 'Kozue.' When the owner of Ju-ne was replaced by Kaoru Nakamura 'mama' in 1984, it grew to constitute the core of the Shinjuku CD world in succession to 'Kozue' which was closed due to financial difficulties between 1982 and 1983.

Very clearly, Ju-ne decided to continue the operating policies and traditions of Kozue. In the bar, amateur CD women, sometimes as part-time hostess, attended male customers, so the bar itself served as a special space for them to meet as 'women' and men. In addition, Ju-ne introduced a membership system. For the members of the bar, a dressing room was provided for CD women to change their clothes and put on make-up. Because of this unique management style, between the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s Ju-ne succeeded in training and producing many 'high-level' CD women such as Makiko Miyazawa, Maiko Nakayama, and Nina.

Starting with the MTFCD bar 'Jô,' which was opened in 1986 by Yuki Aisawa who used to be an employee of Ju-ne, 'Mana' (Kei 'mama'), 'Actress' (Kaoru Mizuno 'mama'), 'Swan no yume' (Harumi Inoue 'mama'), and 'Misty' (Mari Ikeda 'mama') – all former Ju-ne staff – worked one after another as the 'mama' or the owner, learning the business method developed at Ju-ne. By the same token, the 'mamas' who were trained in these clubs would then open their own bars as if the family tree was expanding. For example, 'Lisa' derived from Jô (Lisa Ayukawa 'mama') and 'Takami' derived from Mana (Takami Murata 'mama'). These CD bars were undoubtedly 'business rivals,' but somehow they shared a fellow feeling and tried to build loose business partnerships by allowing mutual discounts to their members. In this manner, from the late 1980s through the early 1990s, the Shinjuku semi-professional CD/transgender community, centering on these CD bars and clubs, was formed (the establishment stage).

In May 1994, Ju-ne moved to Kuyakusho Street in the Kabuki-cho district, one of the major streets in Shinjuku. In addition to this move, they also transformed the business style from a bar to a club, equipped with L-shaped sofas. Around the same time, a long-established lesbian bar 'Vivian,' which was located in Shinjuku 3-chome, switched to a MTFCD club by installing a dressing/make-up section in the club. These transformations of the clubs sparked off a new era in the Shinjuku CD community.

From the middle of 1990s, the Shinjuku MTFCD community gradually accepted the breakaway members ('refugees') from the excluded amateur CD club, Elizabeth kaikan, whose members were discouraged from cross-dressing while outside the premises. And, the Shinjuku community absorbed CD women who were developing their cross-dressing identities on the web, which had emerged in this period. As a result, more and more CD women were knocking on the door to the Shinjuku community, which was being revitalized and expanded enormously.

In contrast, the influence of Elizabeth kaikan on the CD community started to fade since it lagged decisively behind the other clubs in the practical application of computer communication and Internet technology. Therefore, the center of the amateur CD world transferred from the closed MTFCD clubs with restricted freedom to the more open and freer community in Shinjuku (the late developmental stage).

Today, the Shinjuku CD community has become more multifaceted. Some bars and clubs place emphasis on their conventional function as meeting places for CD women and their male fans/lovers (who are interested in creating relationships with the CD women), whereas other bars and clubs actively accept genetic men and women customers who are not prejudiced against CD women. There are also clubs that are considered a mixture of new-half and CD influences, such as 'Misty' (which has changed from Mari Ikeda 'mama' to Eru Aoyama 'mama'). The consciousness of CD women has also changed. Loyalties to their own clubs are dwindling among CD women, and they are no longer in favor of the semi-professional (hostess-like) roles in the clubs. Increasing numbers of CD women tend not to limit their activities to the clubs where they hold a membership, but instead enjoy themselves in wider and more diverse places.

The Shinjuku CD community, with almost 40 years of history, is transforming to become a more diversified, sociable and open transgender community.

The geography of the Shinjuku MTF community

The Shinjuku MTFCD community has been developing through ten bars and clubs that are widely scattered from the eastern area of Kuyakusho Street in Kabuki-cho, 1-chome (two clubs), through Golden gai district (three clubs) and 'Suehirotei block' of Shinjuku 3-chome (two clubs) to the area of 2-chome Naka Street (one club) and the Shinjuku Gyoen Station area (two clubs).

The map (Figure 2) shows that the location of these MTFCD bars and clubs is dispersed, although it partially overlaps the 'gay town' in 2-chome. To the eyes of ordinary people, this community is not overt; when compared with the 'gay town,' where many distinctive bars and clubs are concentrated, it seems to blend in seamlessly with the cityscape (of other bars and clubs). Further, the location of the MTFCD bars and clubs does not overlap with Kabuki-cho, the heterosexual nightlife district (centering on the Koma Theater in Kabuki-cho 1-chome). The MTFCD bars and clubs have spread between the heterosexual entertainment district and the homosexual one, like three obliquely layered bricks. This development of the community's geography is very interesting; it is almost as if it reflected the social characteristics of the CD community.

Consequently, the CD women's world ranges over various districts. These include Shinjuku 5-chome, where their dressing/make-up rooms are usually located; Shinjuku Station (Japan Rail, Odakyu Line, Keiō Line, and the subway) and Shinjuku 3-chome Subway Station; and even Shinjuku Gyoen Station, where major transportation lines pass through; Kabuki-cho 1-chome, Shinjuku 3-chome, and 2-chome where the CD bars and clubs are located; and the 'love hotel' district where CD women rendezvous with their male customers/patrons. These districts also embrace various department stores (Isetan etc), convenience stores, boutiques, cosmetics stores, cafes, restaurants, bars, and other stores where CD women are frequently seen and their presence is almost becoming an everyday affair. In most cases, there is no problem for CD women to shop and dine in these areas, and they are treated as regular 'female' customers.

MTFCD bars and clubs

According to research conducted in June 2000 (Table 1), ten bars and clubs have been recognized as MTFCD venues in the Shinjuku transgender community. The oldest one among these bars and clubs is 'Kazu' (run by Kazu 'mama'), which was built in 1975. Ju-ne followed, commencing business in 1978. Then two more bars and clubs opened in the 1980s. Five bars and clubs were founded sequentially between 1996 and 1999 and this time was the period during which the Shinjuku community expanded and developed most notably.

The listed identities of the 'mamas' are those claimed by the 'mamas' themselves. As is clear from the table, the identity of cross-dresser predominates in this industry. However, there are of course some exceptions: Mari Ikeda 'mama' at Misty entered the CD business from the new-half industry. But her starting point as a transgender originates in cross-dressing. Takami Murata 'mama' at Takami used to be a top star at Elizabeth kaikan, and she is one of the few successful examples who shifted from the CD women clubs' world to the Shinjuku CD world.

The management styles can be categorized into three types according to the forms of a bar or club and its business patterns. 'A' refers to a bar or club that, in general, has booths, and hostesses attend the customers to provide services. 'B' indicates a bar or club that has booths but does not offer hostess-related service. 'C' indicates a bar that only has a counter. It is interesting to see that Ju-ne and Misty, which are located on Kuyakusho Street, the area in which hostess clubs for men in Shinjuku are concentrated, adopt the same hostess business style as if these CD women were a mimicry of genetic women. Regarding the staff,

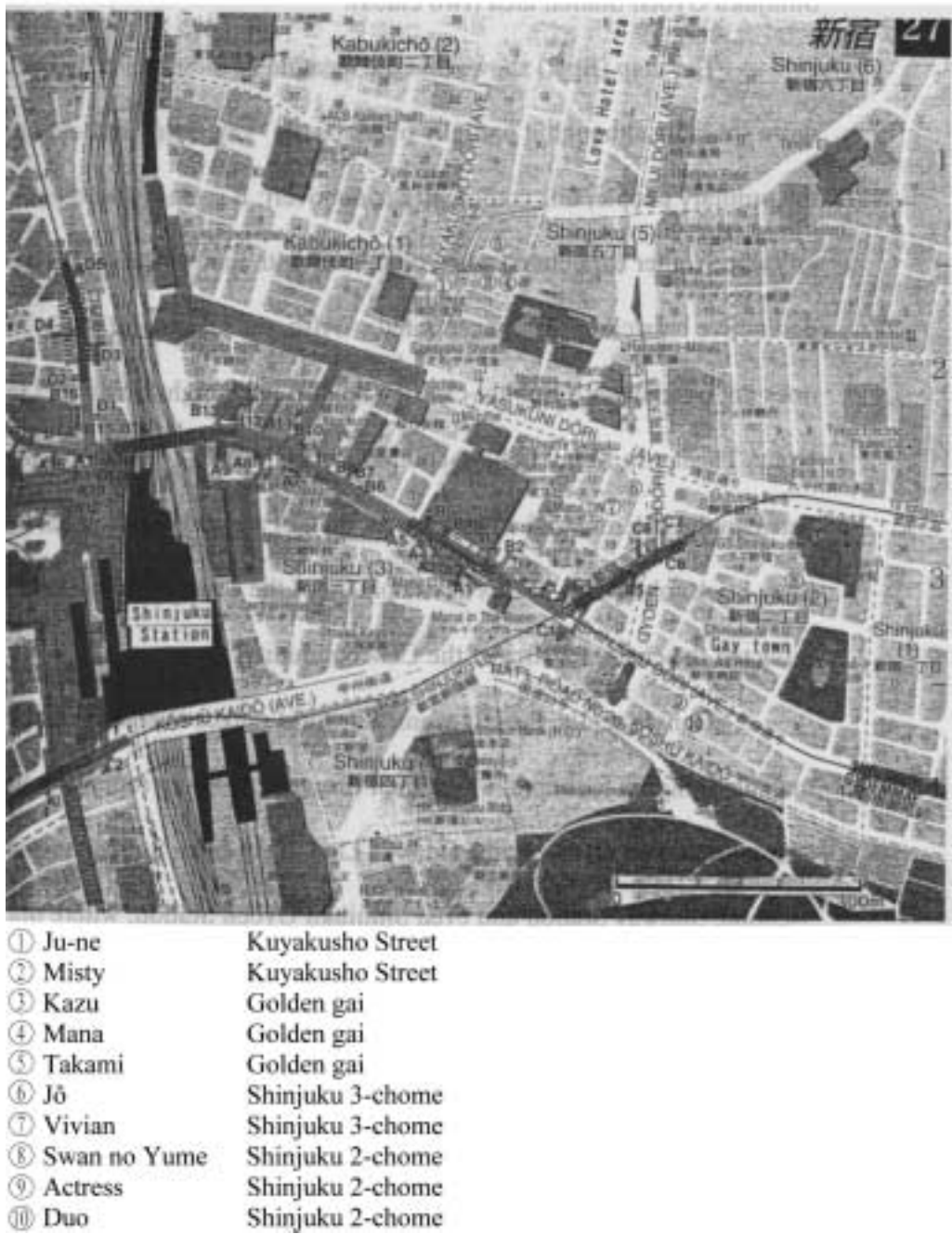


Figure 2. The geographical locations of MTF cross-dressing bars/clubs in Shinjuku, Tokyo (June, 2000). The original map is taken from *Newest 63: Tokyo-to kubun chizu* (ôbun-sha, 1991).

Table 1. MTFCD bars/clubs in Shinjuku, Tokyo (June 2000)

Name of Bar/Club	Year of Establishment	Identity of "Mama"	Style of Management	Number of Staff	Presence of Dressing Room	Location	Remarks
1 Ju-ne	1978	CD woman	A	3+1~2	O (Yes)	Kuyakusho Street	Relocated to the present address in 1994
2 Misty	1999	New-half woman	A	2+1~3	× (No)	Kuyakusho Street	
3 Kazu	1975	CD woman	C	1+0~1	× (No)	Golden gai	Kazu 'mama' passed away in January 2003
4 Mana	1989	CD woman	C	1+0~1	O (Yes)	Golden gai	
5 Takami	1998	CD woman	B	1+0~1	× (No)	Golden gai	
6 Jô	1986	CD woman	C	0+1~2	O (Yes)	Shinjuku 3-chome	The present name is 'Shô,'
7 Vivian	1979	Genetic woman	B	2+0~1	O (Yes)	Shinjuku 3-chome	Transformed into a lesbian bar in 1994
8 Swan no Yume	1997	CD woman	B	1+1~2	O (Yes)	Shinjuku 2-chome (gay town)	
9 Actress	1996	Transsexual woman	B	2+1~2	O (Yes)	Shinjuku 2-chome (gyoen area)	
10 Duo	1999	CD woman	B	1+1~2	× (No)	Shinjuku 2-chome (gyoen area)	

Table 1 illustrates the number of full-time (on the left-hand side) and part-time staff. This is only a rough estimate due to the frequent mobility of the staff. It is inevitable for A-type business bars and clubs to have the highest number of staff, while the number decreases as we move from B to C. In most cases, the full-time staff work from Mondays to Saturdays, whereas the part-time staff join in to help on busy weekends. These staff are nearly all cross-dressers, while genetically male staff who do not cross-dress (usually called as *kurofuku* in the entertainment industry) are basically not seen in these CD clubs.

Table 1 also shows whether each bar or club is equipped with dressing rooms for its members. Each bar or club usually holds ten to fifteen members. However, the owner of Actress, which I have marked ㊦, also runs an independent dressing room, Guppy, that holds about 50 members. Since it has a large membership, it rather appears that the club Actress is an offshoot of Guppy. Below, I will further explain the system of membership in the bar or clubs.

A-type bars and clubs have a seating capacity of 15 to 20, which is considered to be the largest capacity of customers. C-type bars and clubs have the smallest capacity, which runs to seven or eight. Compared with the bars and clubs where genetic women are hostesses, these CD bars and clubs are relatively small. The ratio of genetic men to CD customers is varied: the proportion of eight to two at Misty records the highest rate of genetically male customers, while Ju-ne posts seven to three and Actress, five to five; the latter has the largest numbers of cross-dressers. These days not only genetic men and cross-dressers but also genetic women customers come to these bars and clubs.

Fees also differ from one bar to another. Some bars charge men according to the time they spend, while a flat-rate fee is applied to CD women. Others use the system of cover charge plus the cost of drinks, with a flat-rate fee for the rest of the customers. Depending on what kind of fee scale is applied in a bar or club, the actual cost changes. Hence, it is not necessarily appropriate to generalize about the fee, but overall, for genetic men customers, the fee would average between 5,000 to 12,000 yen for two hours; and for CD customers, between 3,000 to 6,000 yen. It is generally said that the ballpark figure of a fee for CD customers is half as much as that charged to genetic men. In this sense, CD women receive favorable treatment because of the club 'mamas' thoughtfulness to 'be considerate of CD women's spending to keep up their clothes, cosmetics, and other things.' But, this also carries a different meaning as a business strategy that stabilizes the CD customers by giving them fairly reasonable prices while attracting genetic men who like to hang out with CD women at bars and clubs. In comparison, the price for genetic women customers is set either between the price for genetic men and the one for CD customers, or equivalent to the price charged to CD women.

Membership system

What distinguishes the Shinjuku CD community is the existence of a membership system. CD women become members of CD bars and clubs so as to be eligible to use the *heya* [dressing room] in exchange for a monthly membership fee that ranges between 13,000 and 15,000 yen. The dressing rooms are apartments or condos located not far from the bars and clubs (usually five minutes' walking distance) and overseen by the owners or 'mamas' of the bars and clubs. There, lockers and shared dressing tables are installed so that CD women can get ready to go out in the city, changing their clothes and putting on full make-up in order to transform from a male figure into a female one. And after clubbing or helping out at the bars and clubs, they can come back to the dressing rooms to change back into male figures. If they are tired, they can even take a nap there.

These facilities make it convenient for the CD women to have a dressing room and to store and hide their female accessories. The membership system helps the CD women in

various ways. It encourages the CD women to cross-dress frequently, enhances their cross-dressing skills, and expands their world to network among other CD women.

The treatments and responsibilities at the bars and clubs of which they hold membership depend on each bar or club, but whenever the CD women use a 'dressing room,' they are expected to pay a visit to their own bars and clubs. That is considered one of the rules or basic manners for the CD women.

Ju-ne, which plays a key role in the community, established the dressing room system in 1985. Members of the club pay a monthly membership fee of 15,000 yen in order to receive free drinks and food (4000 yen for non-member CD women) at the club. If a CD woman visits the club every week, it is financially more beneficial to become a member of the club. In exchange for free drinks and food, CD members are required to sit with the male customers and escort them. Whenever the club becomes busy, these members need to assist the club staff in making drinks for the customers, managing karaoke orders, lighting customers' cigarettes, etc. Even if the CD women will not work agreeably, they are never scolded or penalized by the 'mama' for not helping, but certainly these CD women are evaluated as 'unhelpful girls.' When the club gets more crowded with customers, members are asked to give up their seats to the customers. This is simply to contribute to the sales performance of the club. These kinds of help and hospitalities are expected exclusively from the members, never from CD women without membership.

It is common practice at the clubs that a CD member with ravishing good looks who can attract male customers, or who is a good singer (karaoke is frequently enjoyed at Ju-ne), or who is a considerate and diligent helper in clearing away empty glasses and used ashtrays – that is, a CD women who has an aptitude for working as a professional hostess – is considered 'helpful' or an 'asset' to the club and will be greatly appreciated. The 'mama' sometimes gives an allowance to those 'helpful' CD members.

As for the relationship between the 'mama' and the members, the members are called 'daughters' of the 'mama' and their relationship is likened to a mother-daughter relationship. In addition, the seniors and juniors of the members are regarded as 'sisters.' Therefore, as a whole, the relationship in the club is constituted like a matrilineal family-based community. Should a CD member fall into serious trouble with male customers or the outside community, then the 'mama' and the entire club will promise to protect 'their own daughter' by providing effective advice, support, and security.

The membership system also functions to train new members of the club. These new faces can learn the practical know-how of the night stage of Shinjuku directly or indirectly from their senior members/sisters. This includes how to purchase the necessary accessories for cross-dressing, how to put on make-up, how to develop fashion style, how to behave and talk with male customers, how to manage groping or other sexual advances from male customers, and even the sex techniques and etiquette of a 'woman.' Through the 'sisterhood' of the members, the specific techniques, attitudes, and philosophy of cross-dressing are handed down from the senior members to the newcomers to the club.

Cross-dressing women customers

CD women workers and CD women customers in the Shinjuku community have not been researched at all. The reality of this community is still unclear because interrogating someone's privacy is basically taboo and people move on or leave the community frequently. Therefore, the following data about CD women are only based on my own observation.

In their daily lives, most CD women live and work as 'man,' but on the weekends, they 'drag' and visit the bars/club cross-dressed, and become 'part-time' transgendered women. Many CD women are in their 30s; these outnumber the 40-year-old and 20-year-old CD women. The oldest one I know is in her 70s. The assumed reason why the average age of

these CD women is high is because maintaining both lives as a man and a CD woman needs a stable economic foundation. Many CD women over 40 are married and have wives and children as much as other genetic men do. They usually have professional occupations with high educational backgrounds.

The incentives/reasons to cross-dress vary but can be loosely categorized into the following four types:

- I. People who feel sexual excitement or obsession with women's clothes or parts of women's clothes (fetishism).
- II. People who are attached to or excited by their own cross-dressed figures and want to materialize their own female image (narcissism).
- III. People who have strong sexual desires toward men and use cross-dressing as a means to enjoy men's gaze and make it easy to create sexual and romantic relations with men (cross-dressed gays).
- IV. People who are uncomfortable in their own bodies, so even for limited periods of time, they want to materialize their female image and construct a social relationship with others as women (gender dysphoria).

It is certainly difficult to generalize and simplify the Shinjuku CD women's motivations since we find multiple and combined factors and there is flexibility to transit from one type to another; however, it seems that the dominant type in the Shinjuku community is type IV. Type II and I follow after in terms of quantity. Type III are unexpectedly few. People who are categorized type III may feel more comfortable belonging to the Shinjuku 2-chome gay town rather than to the Shinjuku CD community.

When a Type IV CD woman has a sexual or romantic relation with a man, this relation is an extension of the constructed social relations between a cross-dressed 'woman' and a man. Although this may be regarded as 'false' or 'quasi' heterosexual behavior, it is nevertheless based on heterosexual consciousness. On the other hand, in case of the type III, her purpose is to have sexual or romantic relationships with men through 'dragging'. So, when comparing these two types of CD women, it is found that the forms of the intended relationships are similar, but at the level of consciousness, there is a large gap between these two types. I will demonstrate this difference in consciousness in detail later.

The male customers and their sexual/romance consciousness

The male customers who visit the MTFCD bars and clubs may be categorized into three kinds:

- I. Men who like CD women or new-half women. In other words, men who like 'women with a penis' (she/male).
- II. Men who emphasize female outward appearance or psychological patterns (gender patterns and gender identities) over sex and acknowledge the cross-dressers as 'women.' For these men, femininity in appearance and mind is the key criterion to be considered as a 'woman.' Even though the CD women have male bodies, they are not considered to be men.
- III. Men who prefer the causal atmosphere of the CD bars and clubs and the cheaper price systems.⁴ If they can enjoy drinking at a reasonable price, they do not care what kind of club it is.

Type I men have tended to play the core role as the male members of the Shinjuku CD community as well as in the secret CD women clubs. These men who like CD women are called 'tranny chasers' in the Euro-American context. The Japanese term *kama zuki* is equivalent to this term. Some men in this group are much more informed about the CD world

than the CD women themselves as a result of reading CD and new-half magazines. They are not only familiar with the community in a general sense: some men become fans (chasers) of specific CD women and new-half women and frequently visit bars and clubs to meet them. These men most actively seek sexual/romantic relationships with CD women and request sexual interaction and dates inside and outside of the bars and clubs. Some of them desire to be cross-dressed but cannot materialize the desire because of their innate disposition and/or environmental factors. So they become obsessed with CD women, who reflect their own desire to be cross-dressed.

I asked a man whom I think is categorized as this type about his consciousness of sexual romance. He answered, 'I am neither pure heterosexual nor homosexual. Am I bisexual? [...] I guess I am a *kama* lover. So, I'm a "kamasexual",' he continued. His statement is typical and explains that one cannot adequately categorize sexual orientations by the existing taxonomy of heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual.

Type II men have their own measurements for the gender identity of the CD women; they put more emphasis on femininity (feminine gender) than on body (the form of the genitals). They do not regard all CD women as women, but judge the latter based on the level of 'femininity' in outward appearance and psychology. For these men, a female body that embodies little femininity is not a woman; instead, a male body that expresses intense femininity becomes a woman. This judgment sounds severe to the CD women, but considering the fact that these men most appreciate the femininity that the CD attempts to construct, they are the most preferred customers for the CD women as well as for the bars and clubs.

However, even though they build sexual and romantic relationships, these men claim that their sexuality is heterosexual: 'the CD is a woman. If I like her, I am a heterosexual man.' Although the relationship is created between two genetic men, they persist in believing that the relationship is a creation between a woman and man ('a quasi-heterosexual' relationship), both psychologically and socially.

I asked a man whom I think is type II why the CD women are attractive to him. He answered, 'First of all, a CD woman makes every effort to become a "woman," but somehow she deviates from the "real women." Junko has the title of a "fake lady." Fakeness is exactly what I feel attracted to. There are certain "women" whom I can meet only in this kind of bar.'

Type III are gaining visibility along with the increasing openness of the CD community. They tend to treat CD women as cheap replacements for genetic women. Because some men are not popular among genetic women, they come to the CD bars and clubs with the fantasy of being loved by CD women (in most cases, this fantasy remains just a fantasy, and does not become reality). For the bars and clubs, as long as he pays money for drinks and services, a man of this type is just one of the customers. Their sexuality is pure heterosexual; they just do not carry much prejudice against transgendered people. Often, customers who begin to visit the CD bar because of its casualness end up finding the CD bars and clubs attractive and move to type II.

Sexual/romantic matters

Since the Shinjuku CD community functions to provide a 'meeting space' for CD women and their male customers, sexual and romantic matters are never far away; however, in the contemporary Shinjuku CD community, these matters are not accorded much weight.

During the Hanazono 5 ban gai period (1978–1994), since 'Ju-ne' was a very small bar, physical and sexual contacts between CD women and male customers were unavoidable. For instance, when a CD customer tried to reach the toilet, the aisle leading to the toilet was so narrow that she had to squeeze along behind the male customers' seating. If she faced

forward to the male customers, they could touch her crotch. If she moved sideways, they could flip her skirt up or touch her behind. The community was extremely closed at that time and this information was never exposed outside it. That is why some very erotic play and interaction was seen even at bars and clubs. It was not particularly rare to encounter a scene where a man and a CD woman customer who had just met each other at the bar disappeared into the darkness en route the 'love hotels' in Hanazono 8 bangai.

When I was a 'volunteer helper' in Ju-ne in the late 1990s, the radical edge and frequency of this sexual play had already faded away. Physical contact was limited to the touching of the CD women's thighs and hips. Kissing was seen only between regular customers (patrons) and CD women. Dating outside of the bars for sex did not happen very often. I cannot deny that some bars and clubs still attract their customers with the possibility of sex, but for the community as a whole sex does not seem to be an important factor in attracting customers. From the CD women's point of view, the desire to cross-dress seems no longer to be equivalent to the desire to have sex or romance with men.

When the male and CD customers have sexual or romantic relationships outside of the bar, petting (of the women's breasts) and fellatio (performed on the men) are the most common sexual interactions between the two. It is not very frequent for them to reach the stage of intercourse or anal intercourse. The CD woman tries to avoid making her body, especially her penis, visible and thus tends to resist taking off her clothes and ruining her female mimicry. Furthermore, the male customer who basically holds a heterosexual consciousness is also fearful about disintegrating the shared fantasy of quasi-heterosexual experience between a man and woman, so he also tends to avoid uncovering the CD woman's masculine body. For both the man and the CD woman, the masculine body of the cross-dresser might remind them of the images of homosexuality between men, and that is something of which they are extremely afraid.

As this fear clearly explains, the sexual or romantic relationships created by genetic men and CD women in the Shinjuku community are instituted based on the shared fantasy of a quasi-heterosexual image of men with 'women.' Although the two bodies involved are physically and genetically male, homosexual consciousness never stands between them. The mimicry of man-'woman' relationships is strongly supported. Consequently, a man who regards a CD woman as just a 'man in girlish clothes' and brings some homosexual consciousness to the CD community is not preferred. In this regard, relationships between genetic men and CD women may be shored up by a shared homophobia.

Yet there are CD women who do let their penis become visible in bed and still maintain the fantasy of heterosexual experience because of their feminine body shape, behaviors, and sexual techniques. These CD women are categorized differently from the 'men cross-dressed to become female-like.' They are instead considered as 'women who own a penis' or 'women with a larger clitoris.' Therefore, quasi-heterosexual fantasies can be kept well intact even when reaching the stage of intercourse. Having sex does not conjure up any hated images of homosexuality.

In the contemporary period, like heterosexual couples, men and CD women carry out their sexual/love acts in love hotels or business hotels. Their sexual acts are very similar to those of heterosexual couples except that the location of intercourse is located 'just a few centimeters to the rear,' particularly sex with highly trained CD women. Special places like *hattenba* [cruising grounds], where male strangers have sex with each other, or accommodation for gay couples (hotels, ryokan, etc) are seldom used.

In addition, sexual/love acts between the CD women also occur. These are known as *kama rezu*: a quasi-lesbian relationship. Among the CD women who commonly have sexual/love acts with other CD women, some create a specific sexual orientation known as CD woman-lover. But for others who have lesbian consciousness, CD women are just a replacement for genetic women who are difficult to meet in the community. Also, sexual

acts are practiced between the older sister-like experienced CD women and the less experienced CD women so as to pass on sexual techniques, advice, and training to the younger CD women as preparation for sexual acts with men.

The Shinjuku MTF cross-dressing community and its logic

The world of a CD woman in Shinjuku: the story of a night of Mr A and Ms A.

Let me introduce a model case of a CD woman in order to provide a more concrete image of the Shinjuku CD community. The time frame of this case story is set around 1997–1998.

At 7 pm on Friday, Mr A (35 years old) hurriedly leaves his overtime work and excuses himself from going to have a drink with his co-workers, telling them he has a date. He rushes to the *heya* [dressing room] located close to the subway station of Shinjuku 3-chome. He is a member of the club that owns the dressing room and he pays 15,000 yen monthly to use it. In the dressing room, one senior cross-dresser has already arrived before him. Mr A takes off his tie and shirt and spends almost an hour and a half making up his face and changing his clothes to become Ms A (28 years old), who looks just like any regular OL (office lady) with flashy taste.

A little after 9 pm, Ms A leaves the dressing room with Ms B, the senior cross-dresser whom she has just met in the room. On the way to the club, they purchase eye shadow and nail-polish remover at the cosmetics section of a pharmacy and have dinner at a curry restaurant. Around 10 pm, they reach the MTFCD club, 'Ju-ne,' locating on the Shinjuku Kuyakusho Street.

Introduced by the *chii-mama* [the second 'mama'], who is also a CD woman, Ms A sits next to a male customer at the counter and says, 'I am Ms A. It's very nice to meet you.' Ms A then toasts the customer by clinking her glass against his. Ms A continues chatting with this male customer (Mr C), who is a little nervous because this is only his second time here, while she provides subtle services such as lighting his cigarettes or mixing drinks for him. After a while, Mr C asks, 'Have you been doing this for a long time?' 'This is not my real work. I am just a member of this club. I have a legitimate job, too,' Ms A responds. 'Excuse me. I thought that you were a club hostess,' Mr C replies. 'Please don't concern yourself with these trifles. Why don't we sing?' Ms A chooses a moody duet from the karaoke selections and invites the man, who seems embarrassed by his own earlier question, to accompany her in the duet.

As Mr C is leaving the club to catch the last train, Ms A says to him in a whisper, 'Please come and see me again. I am here on Fridays.' Ms A and 'mama' see Mr C off outside of the club and make deep bows behind him as he departs. After Ms A returns and relaxes for a short time in the club, Mr D, a senior executive of a company and a regular patron of the club, arrives. Mr D takes over the booth seat and chooses Ms A to sit next to him. He suddenly snuggles up to her and asks, 'You are maintaining your beauty well. That is a good thing. Is your work going well in the aboveground world?' Keeping his hand from reaching inside her skirt and replacing it on top of her thighs, Ms A answers, 'Of course, I'm doing fine!' Mr D offers a lesson, as usual: 'You must not be negligent of your daytime life. Your night life really depends on it.'

Mr D complains, 'The women in Ginza are beautiful, but I don't feel comfortable with them.' His favorite, Ms A, tries to change his mood: 'But I am so comfortable being with you.' Then, Mr D asks the 'mama's' permission to take Ms A out for a date. Despite the fact that he is a relatively old man, it is Ms A's good fortune to walk on the arm of someone as respectable and gentle as him.

They arrive at a sushi bar and Mr D boasts to the master, who is a familiar face to Ms A: 'Look. Isn't she beautiful? She is my girlfriend.' She is embarrassed, but doesn't feel bad

about it. They start eating superior quality sashimi to go with sake. After a while, Mr D changes the conversation topic and begins asking her opinions and about the latest technology. In fact, he knows that Ms A is an expert in this specific field. She mutters sulkily, 'Well, I thought you were going to court me seriously tonight.' Nevertheless, Ms A switches her brain quickly and gives Mr D the explanations that he wants to hear.

By the time Mr D escorts Ms A back to Ju-ne by taxi, it is almost 3 am. Ms A finds another regular patron, Mr E, sitting at the counter. 'Hello, Mr E. Thanks for coming. Sorry, I popped out for a bit,' Ms A says smilingly as she cuddles up to Mr E. They are karaoke-mates. Starting with their standard duet number, 'Itsudemo yume wo' [Always Dreaming], Mr E sings jazz numbers and American pop tunes. Ms A chooses the Japanese pop song 'Aitakute aitakute' [I Want to See You So Much] by Mari Sono from the 1960s and 1970s, which is Mr E's favorite. They take turns to sing for each other. The numbers that Ms A sings are basically songs by female singers. Her voice, which captures the mid-range between the male and female registers, makes her highly appreciated as a talented singer even among the Ju-ne staff who are also great singers, including the 'mama.' They decide to close the night with 'Last dance ha watashini' [The Last Dance is For Me] by Fubuki Koshiji. They dance cheek-to-cheek to this song and Ms A whispers sweetly in Mr E's ear, 'don't forget me,' speaking in unison with the last line of the song's lyrics.

After preparing to make her departure, Ms A leaves the club with Mr E who is going to take the first train back home. In front of the club, Mr E holds her in his arms and soul-kisses her. Even though she knows that he is quite infatuated with her, she subscribes to the old hostess theory that prohibits her from sleeping with customers. So she just kisses him and bids him farewell.

At dawn, Ms A rushes back to her dressing room in the city. On the way there she is accosted by a stranger: 'Hey, sis! Are you already going back home? Why not come play with me?' But she answers back in rejection, 'Sorry. I am rather tired and sleepy.' It is after 5 am when she returns to the 'room.'

Ms A takes off her female clothing, removes her make-up and the polish from her nails, and treats her face briefly with face lotion and cream. Then she prepares a futon next to the senior CD woman who is already sleeping. All the stress accumulated from her entire week of work as a man has been released; there remains only the comfortable fatigue that comes after these eight hours spent as a 'woman.' Mr A soon falls into a restful sleep.

Dual fictions and the shared fantasy

The Shinjuku CD community fabricates dual fictions. First, there is the fiction in which genetic men perform the roles of women. The 'dressing room' is the necessary 'backstage' required for the CD performers to play the myriad forms of femininity. Second, there is the fiction in which amateur CD women imitate and perform the identifiable forms of professional night club hostesses. MTFCD clubs such as Ju-ne are the 'stages' for the shows. In both fictions, the CD women are the agents who construct these fictions and they are also the 'actresses' who play the dual fictions on the CD club stages.

The CD women spare no effort in enhancing their performance skills to the highest level. Female mimicry is never as simple as one thinks. Born as male bodied, the CD women have to learn to embody the various female gender forms within a very short period of time, whereas genetic women spend nearly 20 years, from infancy through adolescence, learning these forms. Ms A, who appears in the case study before, determines the concrete images of her female impersonation by setting up her own age and fashion taste. In order to embody these mimicked images, Ms A spends a great deal of time and money to improve her make-up skills and fashion sense. She even learns how to

wear female kimonos and her efforts to achieve beauty are much greater than those of average women.

Due to these efforts in embodying the female gender, the second fiction can be constructed. The CD women in the bars and clubs not only complete routine work as club hostesses such as mixing drinks for the customers, lighting cigarettes, selecting karaoke songs, passing the customers hand-towels when they return from the toilet, and sending the customers off with the 'mamas'; but they also play the special role of club hostesses, which make the customers feel relaxed, by chatting, singing, providing subtle physical contact, and leaving the customers in anticipation of their next visit. Furthermore, Ms A leaves the club for a date with Mr E, who is an influential patron of the club. She makes herself appealing as a club hostess through a 'special relationship' with him. In reality, the date ends up very business-like. As a result, Ms A contributes to the club in both labor and sales. Her devotion and skills in hostess mimicry are considerable for an amateur CD woman who receives no financial compensation.

The required club hostess skills are not easily practiced, even by genetic women. For a man who has had no previous experience of receiving similar services from female hostesses in straight clubs, Mr A (Ms A) needs to steal the hostesses' techniques by watching TV dramas, movies, or novels featuring club hostess, and reading a text-book for Ginza club hostesses discovered in a secondhand book store. Based on these materials, Ms A creates a certain club hostess image. She also observes how the staff and senior CD members behave at Ju-ne and takes on the hostess image they create. If Ms A is asked why she does all this, she would probably answer: 'That is what I want to be.'

Yet the dual fictions of the Shinjuku CD community are not maintained or operated simply by the agency of the CD women; the system needs another player, a male customer, who is willing to respond to the fiction. For example, the patron Mr D appoints a favorite 'woman' in the club, compliments the CD woman on her 'femaleness,' touches her body – which is considered an established routine between bawdy customers and club hostesses – and asks for dates to get a chance to 'court' her. He is without doubt a highly skilled and effective conspirator: while he acknowledges that Ms A is Mr A offstage, he helps materialize and complete the fiction by treating her as a real woman club hostess as well as giving her a sense of satisfaction at being a CD woman. What a talented player! In the case of the inexperienced Mr C, he understands only the first fiction: a CD woman is in fact a man behind-the-scenes; however, he is puzzled when confronted by the second fiction, discovering that a club hostess is not a professional hostess. To become a perfect conspirator on the dual fictional stage, Mr C may need to visit the club several times more.

Mr E and Ms A seem to have more opportunities to develop their intimacy as a 'heterosexual' couple in reality, although this intimacy is underpinned by their conspiracy on the fictional stage. The deep kiss hints that Ms. A has moved beyond the fictional arena. What prevents them from advancing their love relationship is only her club hostess theory, which prohibits her sleeping with the customers. Although she is an amateur CD woman, their relationship produces a situation where fiction and reality get intertwined, similar to those situations that are often seen between men and women in the professional entertainment business.

As I have described, the Shinjuku CD community is full of fictitiousness. A genetic man performs femaleness. An amateur CD woman impersonates a club hostess in the CD bars and clubs. In addition, the male customer knows that the CD woman has a male body but behaves as if the CD woman were a real female club hostess. The CD woman and the men customers are both performers of the dual fictions that establish the 'quasi-heterosexual' relationship, the shared fantasy in the fictions.

There is one more unsolved question. Ms A responds to Mr C that 'she also has a legitimate job' and shows off to Mr D the professional knowledge acquired in her life as a man. And, a skillful conspirator, Mr D asks 'how Ms A is doing with her legitimate job?' and requests a special lecture from her. For this inexperienced male customer, Ms A discontinues the club hostess mimicry and deliberately reveals the aspects of her aboveground world (her daytime work as a man). The regular customer also makes conversation that does touch the other side of her life. This sort of utterance is only allowed if a person is a regular customer. If not, it appears as a 'bad-mannered' act that ruptures the fiction.

Why does the CD woman purposely take certain actions that lead to the disclosure of her created fictions? We might suppose that the CD woman and the man customer want to confirm an additional shared consciousness that underlines the consciousness of constructing the fictions; that is, an analogous awareness that connects the CD woman with the man customer in that both have comparable social positions in the aboveground world. Symbolically speaking, it implies the status of the white-collar class as well as the common awareness that they are 'normal' constituents of 'normal' society.

Since the fictions are buttressed by this underlying common awareness and are grounded on it, the CD women and male customers can feel assured and enjoy performing the fictional heterosexuality. When Mr D comes to the CD club after a straight club, he says that 'he is comfortable being with her (a CD club hostess).' His sense of relief derives from the shared awareness, the 'fantasy of normality,' that makes both players 'normal' members of society.

This shared fantasy continues to function up until the time that they exchange identifications with each other (for instance, exchanging their legitimate business cards) and the common awareness seems to be an important concept for balancing their psychology. The male customers, who like the CD bars and clubs, tend to dislike going to the new-half clubs managed by professional CD club hostesses or transsexual women. The main reason comes from the fact that it is not possible in those contexts for them to create the shared 'fantasy of normality' and indeed this causes emotional tensions and psychological risks.

At a glance, the CD community appears very deviant and queer from the perspective of outsiders, but the shared fantasy of being 'normal' constituents of society is present as a fundamental structure and it underpins the fictions of this community. Moreover, the shared fantasy enables the CD women and male customers to identify the mimicry of heterosexuality (quasi-heterosexual relationships) with the sexual or love relationships of straight couples. Simultaneously, it produces an explicit sense of distinction from (sometimes hatred of) the 'abnormal' sexual or love relationships, especially those experienced in the homosexual world of the Shinjuku 2-chome area.

The Shinjuku CD women's community consists of two players: CD women and male CD lovers. Yet, they are not independent of each other; they are connected through the 'shared fantasy of normality.' Figure 3 gives a graphic representation of this concept.

In addition, male customers and CD women are interchangeable subjects through the corridor named the 'shared fantasy of normality.' Due to the aging of the CD women and changes in the surrounding environment, it is not entirely unexpected that in time they may convert into male customer subjects. Those CD women who have transformed into male customers understand the psychology of CD women well and they are usually popular among CD women. There are also a few men who have the desire to cross-dress, but cannot put it into practice because of their physical and/or social situation. These men seek CD women in compensation for their own desires. Or, these desires work on particular occasions as a catalyst to convert them from male customer subject into CD woman subject. The CD women and male customers stand on the same common root.

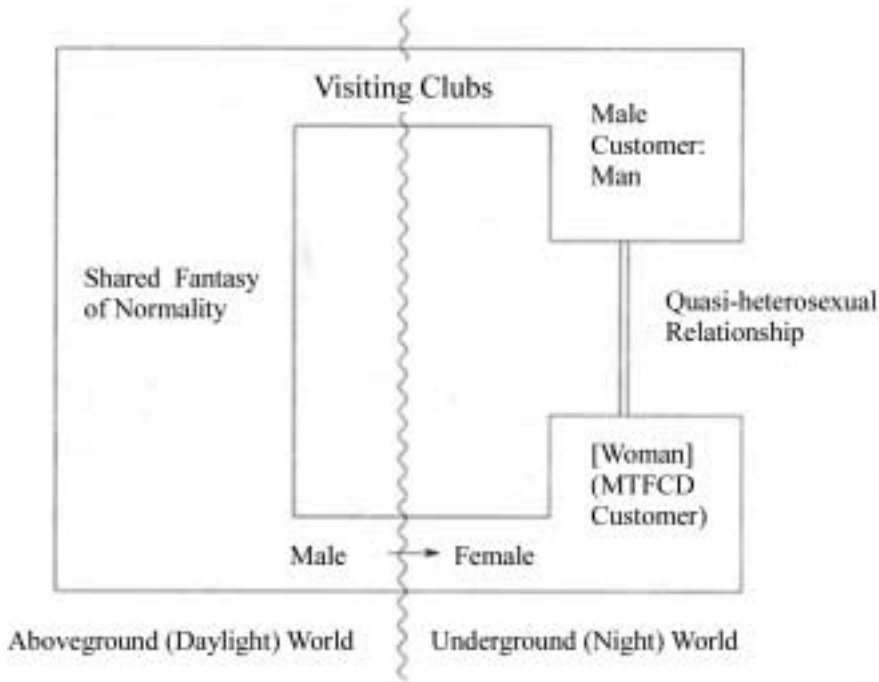


Figure 3. The Structure of the MTFCD Community

Sex/gender recognition logic

The sex/gender recognition logic shared in the Shinjuku CD community emphasizes categorization and recognition through gender. To rephrase this in a simpler way: if a genetic man embodies or expresses female gender codes (gender patterns and gender roles), this CD woman deserves the specific treatment that other genetic women receive from society. On the other hand, the gender recognition commonly accepted in society depends on the form of the genitals at birth (whether a baby has a penis or not). In this manner, the recognition of gender based on gender performance appears extremely deviant whereas the general gender recognition is determined by the form of the genitals. This widely accepted gender recognition is not always perfect. The Japanese judiciary has for a long time taken the position that 'human sex is determined by sex chromosomes.' However, this means of categorization has begun to be revised according to the latest findings of contemporary sexology: the differentiation into male (formation of a testis) is determined by the SRY gene, which is located on the Y chromosome. Supporting this recognition, the Japanese judiciary has continuously rejected the petitions by post-op transsexuals to change their sex as it is recorded in the family register.⁵ In this case, the judiciary is denying the commonly accepted sex/gender recognition that is based on the external form of the genitals.

In other words, there is no absolute sex/gender recognition in society. It has to be multi-dimensional and multi-layered, taking into consideration the measurements of various gender expressions, gender roles, and gender identities; the sex of external body figures, the sex of brain systems, the sex of external genital organs, the sex of internal genitalia, the sex of hormones, the sex of gonads, the sex of chromosomes, and the sex of genes. The sex/gender recognition that appears so highly peculiar in the Shinjuku community needs to be comprehended as just one layer or dimension of this complicated process of sex/gender recognition.

Is the recognition of gender based on gender performance peculiar to the Shinjuku CD community? That a genetic male embodies or expresses female codes (as a Shinjuku CD woman performs) is explained as 'female mimicry' when applied to ecological science. In case of insects or animals, if the mimicry comes to light, the original function of the mimicry is compromised: for instance, when a butterfly simulating a leaf is discovered to be a butterfly, it may be eaten by a bird. But, at least in Japan, with human mimicry this is not necessarily the case. The Shinjuku CD women shop at department stores or general stores and patronize restaurants frequently. In these places, the Shinjuku CD women are not always successful in deceiving the employees. Seeing the mimicry of the CD women, the employees in these spaces accept it. In the love hotel district in Kabuki-cho 2-chome, gay couples, in most cases, are not allowed to check in; however, a man and CD woman – a quasi-heterosexual couple – is hardly ever refused check-in even if a front clerk sees through the CD woman's disguise. The validity of the mimicry is maintained, albeit exposed as such.

Thus, even in the other environments surrounding the Shinjuku CD community, people accept the particular mode of sex/gender recognition that enables the quasi-heterosexual relationship between a man and CD woman, not emphasizing their sex difference. When CD women travel to the countryside, the recognition or treatment they receive is not substantially different from Shinjuku: for example, the pink female *yukata* [summer kimono] are still prepared for CD women travelers in spite of the advance notice telling the *ryokan* [hostel] about their identities. This kind of flexibility in sex/gender recognition is spread throughout Japanese society.

This sex/gender recognition, I believe, comes from the Japanese tradition of *mitate*, which projects a certain image onto other similar objects: the transposition of images. The act in which one names a conical mountain another Mt Fuji is an example of this tradition. By the same token, one can transpose the female image onto the image of CD women. This may be the simplest form of this *mitate*. By utilizing this method, for instance, although we know that Tamasaburo Bando is a kabuki actor who performs women's roles in plays, this does not prevent us at all from applauding his/her beauty as well as treating him/her as a woman.

Japanese traditional society, which differs from Euro-American societies, allowed the existence of transgendered people. The social activities of transgendered people have been supported by this flexible sex/gender recognition that rather emphasizes gender. Thus, the sex/gender recognition produced by the ecology and logic of the Shinjuku CD community also touches on the core issue of Japanese culture.

Conclusion

There are many issues that I have not discussed in this paper; however, by providing an overview of the contemporary Japanese transgender society, I have analyzed its logic and perception on sex/gender recognition through fieldwork research.

Unfortunately, aside from Professor Tatsuru Tsutamori's works, Japanese gender/sexuality studies hitherto have not paid serious attention to transgendered subjects. Theoretical studies have only focused on Euro-American transgender communities but have neglected to look at Japanese transgender communities; and some research has made one-sided and definitive assertions based on indirectly collected information. The lack of intellectual interest and awareness in this field reveals the strong prejudice and discrimination among researchers who think that new-half ladies, Ms Dandy, or CD women are too trivial to be discussed. The attitudes of these researchers then reproduce the deeply rooted biases and prejudices among the general public.

Although the issues of transgendered people and transgenderism have now at last started to be discussed among intellectuals, fieldwork research in the Japanese transgender

community is definitely lacking and I do hope that this paper can make up for the lack of research in the transgender community.

Acknowledgement

I thank the 'mamas' in the Shinjuku community who kindly responded to my questions despite being so busy running the bars and clubs. The staff of Ju-ne were particularly supportive by allowing me to be a 'gatecrasher club hostess.' I would like to thank my senior CD women, CD friends, and the male customers who unknowingly became the targets of my observation and the models for my fieldwork research.

A supplemental note

This article was originally published in Japanese in 'Chuo daigaku shakaikagaku kenkyujo nenpô (No. 7)' (Chuo University, June 2003). After this publication, the Shinjuku transgender community has changed dramatically. 'Ju-ne,' where my research was mainly conducted, was closed on December 25, 2003, whereas three new MTF cross-dressing bars opened in the Golden gai district in 2004. The representative magazines in the amateur MTF cross-dressing community such as 'Queen' and 'Himawari' were sequentially forced to discontinue their publication in December 2003 and in August 2005. Transgender people are now experiencing tough changes as the 'medicalization of the transgendered' signified as 'GID patients' is becoming more influential. However, in this English translation of this article, instead of providing readers with updates on the community, I have decided to make only the necessary changes in order to retain my original purpose of illustrating the Shinjuku transgender community.

Notes

1. 'Mama(s)' are not simply the proprietresses of bars and clubs. They also play a role as guardians or mentors for the cross-dressers who come to their bars and clubs.
2. 'Ju-ne' derives its name from a French writer, Jean Genet (1909–1986). This transliteration follows the pronunciation of the Japanese word. The bar moved to Kuyakusho Street in the Kabuki-cho district in May 1994.
3. 'Omizu' means entertainment business, and 'fashion health' is a code term for oral sex. Such terms are general sex-industry terms, not just directed at TGs and gays but at straight men, too.
4. The customers who visit these CD bars and clubs are usually charged per hour, which includes the cost of drinks and food they order. Because of the difference in the pricing system from the hostess clubs, CD bars and clubs are usually cheaper and more casual.
5. The Japanese Diet approved the bill for the 'Law Concerning Special Cases in Handling Gender for People with Gender Identity Disorder' on July 10, 2003. Since July, 2004, the law has allowed those with GID who meet the requirements specified in the law to request the Family Court to change their registered gender in the family registries.

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Special terms

"Aitakute aitakute" 「達いたくて達いたくて」

chî mama チーママ

"Eleitotachi wa naze josô wo shitaka?" 「エリートたちはなぜ女装をしたか」

Elizabeth kaikan エリザベス会館

fashion health or health ファッション・ヘルス、ヘルス

hattenba ハッテン場

heya 部屋

Himawari ひまわり

"Itsudemo yume wo" 「いつでも夢を」

Jô 嬢

Ju-ne ジュネ

kama rezu かまレズ

kama zuki かま好き

Kazu 和

"Last dance ha watashini" 「ラストダンスは私に」

Mana マナ

Misty ミステイ

mitate 見立て

New-Half Club ニューハーフ倶楽部

nôryôsen 納涼船

ohanami お花見

omizu お水

onsen 温泉

Queen クイーン

ryokan 旅館

Sengo nihon 'transgender' shakaishi kenkyûkai 戦後日本<トランスジェンダー>社会史研究会

She/Male hakusho シーメール白書

Shô 鞋

Swan no yume スワンの夢

Takami たかみ

“The Non-fiction: Seikimatsu josô monogatari” 「ザ ノンフィクション——世紀末
女装物語」

Vivian びびあん

yukata 浴衣

“Zubon wo sute machine deyô: Jyosô de hirogaru ‘môhitori no watashi’ no sekai” 「ズボンを
捨て御に出よう——女装で広がる『もう一人の私』の世界——」

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