

# Intertwining Femininities and Masculinities at Drag (*Josou*) Performances Among Japanese Youth

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## 1. Aims

Drag is a well-studied theme in gender and sexuality studies in the US and Europe (e.g. Rupp and Taylor 2003), but *josou* (“dressing as women”) in Japan has a history and cultural meanings of its own (e.g. Mihashi 2008). *Josou* not only penetrates the media, but also constructs youth subcultures in various corners of society, from *josou* cafés in Akihabara, the fashion of *sukaato danshi* (men wearing skirts), to *josou kon* (drag contest) at numerous universities and high schools. Based on our ongoing qualitative research on participants of university drag contests, we will analyze how these participants performed their femininities at drag performances and how they discursively constructed the meanings of their performances and their intertwining femininities and masculinities. Our research contributes to investigating the intersexuality of gender and sexualities in Japanese sociology.

## 2. Methods & Analysis

We observed a preparation meeting, make-up sessions, the *josou kon* event itself and gathered their twitter data about the event. We have also conducted nine interviews so far with participants, organizers, and a make-up helper and asked how they got involved in the event, how they construct their *josou* performance, and how they interpret the meaning of *josou* and their masculine and feminine identities. In this presentation, we analyze how one participant discursively constructs his femininities through his *josou* performance based on discourse analysis and membership category analysis.

## 3. Conclusion

Our analysis reveals that the alignments of female/male and femininities/masculinities are shifting in complex, non-normative ways through the performativity of *josou*, which illuminates the quasi-independence of two conventional genders (Harris 2006). Masculine body and female speech and attire, and feminine and masculine identities and representations, blur in dynamic ways in the moment of *josou* performance. *Josou* thus provides us with an analytic tool to understand how femininities, masculinities and sexualities are intertwined in contemporary Japanese society.

## References

- Mihashi, Junko, 2008, *Drag and Japanese (Josou to Nihonjin)*, Kodansha.  
Rupp, Leila J. and Verta Taylor, 2003, *Drag Queen at the 801 Cabaret*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.  
Harris, Joseph, 2006, What Butler Saw: Cross-Dressing and Spectatorship in Seventeen-Century France, *Paragraph*, 29(1), 67-79.

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