

COMPLETION REPORT

[Research Summary]

This research project began as an attempt to give a voice, an effort long overdue, to Female-to-Male (FTM) transpeople in contemporary Japan. With the generous support from the Sumitomo Foundation, I was able to take the first step in documenting the multiple constructions of the FTM in present-day Japan, and bring such long-silenced voices into English academia.

During the research period, I completed an abridged Japanese-English translation of a FTM autobiography *Daburu Happiness* (Double Happiness), and conducted an interview with its author, Sugiyama Fumino (regular guest on NHK's *Hāto wo tsunagō*, and currently co-host of NHK's *Hāto Netto TV*). It is my intention in my abridged translation and interview to foreground Sugiyama's long and often complex process of identity-exploration and (re)construction. How does a female-bodied, male-identified person come to terms with the discord between his physical body and gender identity? How does he negotiate this identity with the people around him? Compared to many monolithic accounts of transsexuality where the transsexual is perceived as inherently and single-mindedly desiring surgery as a means to an end, Sugiyama's story vividly illustrates the complexities involved in a FTM trans-subject's identity formation process. The translation and interview will be published as an academic journal article in late 2012. The preliminary analysis of an array of other narratives produced by/for the FTM has also been conducted. This analysis has enabled me to draw a clearer picture of the discourse of FTM transgenderism in present-day Japan, and the results will be published as an academic journal article in early/mid 2013.

I also completed a preliminary textual analysis of two *mini-komi* (zines), *Like* (later renamed *Like Boy*) and *Laph*, produced by and targeted (mainly) at the FTM. I explored how the figure of the 'FTM' in the zines is being defined and constructed by their female-born yet non-female-identifying editors, and what messages are being elicited through such portrayals. These FTM zines are filled with images of cheerful boy-next-door FTM, articles on successful FTM professionals, and interviews with FTM with happy families and/or blissful marriages. Such zines not only inform (and assure) their FTM readers about the existences of other people 'like them'—something not easily attainable from the mainstream media—but also complicate the monolithic representation of transsexuals in the mass media as necessarily 'sick' and suffering, bringing into awareness the varied possibilities of living trans-lives in present-day Japan. The results of my analysis were presented at the Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA) Conference at the University of Western Sydney in July 2012.

In spite of the increasing cultural representations and (personal) narratives produced by/on/for the FTM in Japan over the last decade or so, English-language academic literature on non-normative gender and sexuality in Japan is still very much focused on male homosexuality and Male-to-Female (MTF) transpeople. Furthermore, funding for research on sexual minority are, more often than not, hard to come by. It is hoped that this study has not only filled in the spaces that current LGBTQ studies have overlooked, but has also served as a testimony of the significance (both academically and socially) of LGBTQ research that can and has received institutional and financial support. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Sumitomo Foundation for enabling this crucial springboard for more research on female gender-variants in Japan.

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

Yuen Shu Min. “*Like (a) Boy*: Representations of Female Masculinity in Japanese FTM zines.” *Knowing Asia: Asian Studies in an Asian Century: 19th Biennial Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia*, University of Western Sydney, Sydney, Australia, July 11-13, 2012.

Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)

Yuen Shu Min. “Double Happiness—An abridged translation and interview with Sugiyama Fumino.” *Intersections: Gender, History and Culture in the Asian Context* (in progress).

Yuen Shu Min. “Masculinity without ‘men’—Performing female masculinity in Japanese FTM zines.” *Positions* (in progress).

Yuen Shu Min. “Female-to-Male transgenderism in contemporary Japan.” *Sexualities* (in progress).

Yuen Shu Min. “Female gender diversity in the lost decade and beyond: Representations and articulations of female gender variants in contemporary Japan.” PhD Dissertation (expected date of completion: end 2014).

Book (Publisher and Date of the Book, Title and Author of the Book, etc.)