

Name: Malgorzata Karolina Sidz  
Date: December 2018

MASTER'S THESIS

*Reproduction of mothering in East Asia:*  
a qualitative study of Japanese and South Korean  
mothers

Centre for East Asian Studies  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
University of Turku

The originality of this thesis has been checked in accordance with the University of Turku quality assurance system using the Turnitin Originality Check service.

UNIVERSITY OF TURKU  
Centre for East Asian Studies/Faculty of Social Sciences

SIDZ, MALGORZATA KAROLINA  
*Reproduction of mothering in East Asia:*  
a qualitative study of Japanese and South Korean mothers

Master's Thesis, 132 p., 6 p. appendices  
East Asian Studies  
December 2018

---

The issues of motherhood and mothering remain one of the biggest factors influencing the gendered organisation of modern East Asian societies. Women are encouraged through different societal agents into becoming the main caregivers of children on the cost of their own careers and personal growth. The tendency is visible not only through women leaving work or changing to part-time occupations, but also through becoming the main decision-makers in children's lives. This Master's Thesis focuses on the data collected through extensive semi-structured interviews. Fourteen interviewees from South Korea and Japan reflect on the ways they were conditioned into making the choice of centering childcare in their lives. Based on the literature, the different factors are divided into the categories of biological, sociological and generational influence. The results of the study show a tendency towards the generational influence, as well as a "domino effect" of women following the decisions of their peers. Additional findings point at the changing trends regarding the sex preference for the baby, as well as diminishing role of the mother-in-law and the extended family in the East Asian society.

KEYWORDS: Japan, South Korea, East Asia, Gender Studies, Women, Motherhood, Mothering

## Acknowledgements

My time studying at the Centre for East Asian Studies at the University of Turku has been a fulfilling and fruitful experience. I have deepened my understanding of the East Asian region, as well as the knowledge of academic and research tools. This thesis is the culmination of these studies. It could not have been written without the guidance of my academic supervisor, Annamari Konttinen. I would also like to thank the other staff members of CEAS, with special thanks going to Antti Leppänen for inspiration. Without them, I wouldn't have the necessary skills and motivation to carry out this research. I would also like to thank my classmates for feedback and motivation provided to me throughout the years. My thanks also go to the teachers at the University of Turku, as well as Rikkyo University that provided me with language skills and cultural knowledge. My special thanks to the Academy of Korean Studies, where I was offered a six-month research grant and a guidance of Kim-Kyong Il. Without their support, this thesis could not have been completed. Finally, I would like to thank everyone, who has provided me with inspiration and their interesting insights, that provided me with motivation needed for finishing this research.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Abstract</b>	3
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	4
<b>1. Introduction</b>	8
<b>1.1 From Mothering to Motherhood</b>	11
<b>1.2 Mothering and Female Inequality</b>	13
<b>1.3 Research questions</b>	15
<b>1.4 Methodology</b>	16
<b>1.5 Conducting Interviews in South Korea</b>	17
<b>1.6 Conducting Interviews in Japan</b>	17
<b>1.7 Differences in Interview Conducting in Japan and South Korea</b>	18
<b>1.8 The legitimacy problem in reporting experience</b>	19
<b>2. Theories of Mothering</b>	20
<b>2.1 Biological Essentialism</b>	22
<b>2.2 Social Constructivism</b>	23
<b>2.3 Psychoanalysis and Social Reproduction</b>	25
<b>3. Mothering in East Asia</b>	27
<b>3.1 The Confucian Cultural Heritage</b>	27
<b>3.2 The Fertility Problem</b>	29
<b>3.3 Modern Trends in Mothering and Marriage</b>	30
<b>4. The Interviewing Processes</b>	33
<b>4.1 The Fieldwork Impressions</b>	33
<b>4.2 The Interviewee's Profiles</b>	34

	6
<b>4.3 The Importance of Intersectionality</b>	38
<b>5. The Ways in which Primary Caregiver Role is Expressed</b>	39
<b>5.1 The Desire to Stay Single</b>	40
<b>5.2 Reasons for Getting Married</b>	42
<b>5.3 The Attitude to Professional Work</b>	47
<b>5.4 Woman's Main Responsibility for a Child</b>	50
<b>5.5 Summary</b>	56
<b>6. Personalised Reasons for Taking on Mothering</b>	58
<b>6.1 Mother-child Relationship and the Wife-husband Relationship</b>	59
<b>6.2 Childbearing as an Emotional Reward</b>	63
<b>6.3 Motherhood as a Rite of Passage</b>	67
<b>6.4 Mother as a Natural and Essential Caregiver</b>	70
<b>6.5 Male Attitudes to Childcare</b>	74
<b>6.6 The Role of a Father</b>	80
<b>6.7 Summary</b>	83
<b>7. Outside Reasonings for taking on Mothering</b>	85
<b>7.1 East Asian Society</b>	86
<b>7.2 Direct Influences of the Social Circle and Family</b>	92
<b>7.3 Reproducing Behaviour through Copying</b>	96
<b>7.4 The Domino Effect</b>	103
<b>7.5 The Father's Influence</b>	105
<b>7.6 Summary</b>	110
<b>8. Additional Interview Findings</b>	112
<b>8.1 Difficulties in Mothering</b>	113
<b>8.2 Final Remarks on the Influences towards Mothering</b>	116

	7
<b>8.3 Interchangeability of Concepts of Marriage and Childbearing</b>	120
<b>8.4 Preference for the Sex of the Child</b>	121
<b>8.5 Summary</b>	124
<b>9. Conclusion</b>	125
<b>10. Bibliography</b>	130
<b>Appendix – Interview Scheme</b>	133

# 1. Introduction

In the beginnings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Sigmund Freud wrote that “biology is destiny”. He believed, that the biological built of a female inevitably leads to her certain mothering behaviours. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, after having experienced three feminist waves dedicated to deconstructing the gender roles and their origins, the scholars begin to show an interest in complicating the issue and looking into ways, in which mothering of women can be influenced, separate from the biology.

Today, the issue of childrearing is one of the most important questions in sociology and in the growing field of gender studies. There are many interpretations of what both the idea and practicing of childrearing mean to women, men and for the society itself. Mothering can become and often becomes a defining experience in the life of a woman. But motherhood, more so than a personal thing, is also an institution. Not only can motherhood be a life-defining emotional experience and a part of the self-identification process, but it is still today an important gateway to the social status and self-fulfilment in the societal terms.

Motherhood is also an important political question, as it is inseparable from the question of human fertility. Fertility is crucial for the ever-growing capitalist society, which needs new workers produced in the place of the ones passing away. Historically, both overpopulation and low fertility rates have always been regarded as major problems for the governments. Nowadays, we can agree that it is not only accepted that the State plays a role in policing the population size, but it is even expected of it<sup>1</sup>.

However, that is not without controversies itself, as there are conflicts in the way neoliberal governments imagine female fertility and ownership of female body, and the way it is desired by the left. While the left-wing politics tend to focus on female agency and the individual right of making her own choice about fertility, the right-wing politicians would point out the agency of the child

---

<sup>1</sup>Greer, Germaine. *Sex and Destiny: Politics of Human Fertility*. S.l.: Pan, 1995. Print. p.331

itself and the natural female duty of motherhood, often stemming from religion.

Another issue is that while the poor nations are often encouraged to fight their „overpopulation”, rich nations create initiatives to stimulate their population growth. In the political discourse, there are desired and undesired populations. For Japan and South Korea that means, that the national fertility rates are stimulated while immigration from abroad continues to be difficult.

Motherhood as a political question is especially visible in the region of East Asia. Both Japan and South Korea have noted steep decline of their fertility rates in the last sixty years. It has led to what is often described as an *Ageing society*. As both those countries implement the capitalist system that relies on steady reproduction of the population, that situation has been recognized as a problem, especially for the future generations. It has been met with family-planning policies of different sorts as well as governmental initiatives to stimulate female childbearing.

Reproductive work is often recognized as a women’s issue. However, mothering can be understood as a set of behaviours and activities that the main child carer undertakes. As such, mothering doesn’t have to be done exclusively by female biological mothers of the children. Nevertheless, we must recognize that the model of childcare in Japan and South Korea is still dominated by the role of a female carer and the model of families consisting of two parents taking care of their biological children is the prevailing one. Thus, this thesis is focused on the mothering experience of Japanese and South Korean women, biological mothers of their children.

I have focused my research on the experiences of mothering of South Korean and Japanese women of different backgrounds. The women I chose for my research are hold different levels of education, come from different backgrounds of Seoul and Tokyo. However, they hold similar views on motherhood. I shy away from comparisons and I use Japanese and South Korean women to illustrate trends in the East Asian society as a whole. The character of my research is qualitative. Through my research, I wanted to give the voice to the mothers themselves and focus mainly on the way the ideas of mothering were reproduced in their lives to make the decision of motherhood.

The thesis is divided into 11 chapters: *Chapter 1. Introduction; Chapter 2. Theories of mothering; Chapter 3. Mothering in East Asia; Chapters 4-9* reflecting the interview findings, *Chapter 10. Conclusion, and Chapter 11. Bibliography.* In *Chapter 1. Introduction* I will introduce my motivation for researching the question of motherhood and its importance, as well as introduce the methodology I have used while undertaking my research. In *Chapter 2. Theories of mothering* I will introduce the main feminist and anti-feminist theories used for understanding the female mothering and its reproduction. In *Chapter 3. Mothering in East Asia* I will shortly discuss the discourses of motherhood in East Asia and the current situation of marriage and mothering in Japan and South Korea. In *Chapters 4-9. Interview Findings* I will thoroughly present the findings from my research undertaken in both South Korea and Japan and analyse it using the theories of reproduction of mothering introduced in the Chapter 2. I will also discuss the various findings concerning the ideas of motherhood and marriage appearing in the interviews. *Chapter 10. Conclusion* provides a conclusion to the interview findings I have previously presented. I will provide additional questions for the discussion about the reproduction of mothering in Japan and South Korea. *Chapter 11. Bibliography* provides a list of different sources I used throughout the researching period. At the end, I am attaching an Appendix, including the Interview Scheme I have used for my research in both English and Japanese language version.

## 1.1 From motherhood to mothering

Motherhood is an important rite of passage in every society. As Simone de Beauvoir famously said, one is not born a woman but rather becomes one<sup>2</sup>. In most societies, motherhood is often understood as a coming of age event that creates women out of girls. Becoming a mother and beginning to participate in the mothering activities often becomes a defining moment, creating a narrative of a life before and after the birth of a child.

A woman, as a life-giving source, is often used as a symbol of nationhood. Motherhood is an important, ritualized function, because its existence is the sine qua non condition of the reproduction of the nation. In that sense, conservative interest and insistence on mothering values is always an expression of nationalism.

Motherhood is an identity strictly policed by the society. A woman, even if she doesn't consciously subscribe to the traditional notions of motherhood, is constantly aware of the existence of norms somewhere "out there"<sup>3</sup>. That creates a sense of a lack of the "maternal mandate" if she reminds childless, a sense of inadequacy and a "sense that she should be able to carry out the generative undertaking precisely because she is female"<sup>4</sup>. Female fertility is the property of the humanity; therefore, women carry a responsibility to carry it out properly and in a codified manner. As Patrice DiQuinzio puts it, the discussions about mothering often take on an urgent tone that "suggests that fundamental issues and crucially important values are at stake"<sup>5</sup>.

---

<sup>2</sup>Beauvoir, Simone De, Constance Borde, and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier. *The Second Sex*. New York: Vintage , a Division of Random House, 2011. Print. P.22

<sup>3</sup> Douglas, Susan J., and Meredith W. Michaels. *The Mommy Myth: The Idealization of Motherhood and How It Has Undermined Women*. New York: Free, 2004. Print. P.18

<sup>4</sup> Vegetti Finzi, Silvia, *Mothering: Towards a New Psychoanalytic Construction*. New York: The Guilfford Press, 1996. Print. P.116

<sup>5</sup> DiQuinzio, Patrice, *The Impossibility of Motherhood: feminism, individualism, and the problem of mothering*. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print. P.VII

As we can see, motherhood is often appropriated by the society, but the essential idea behind it is presented as biological in its essence. However, unlike in other animals, human mothering requires a lot of acquired knowledge. Silvia Vegretti Finzi writes that “if we observe women in their actual experience of maternity (gestation, delivery, breast feeding, early maternal care), we can only be stunned by their radical lack of skill. Everything must be learned.”<sup>6</sup>.

Motherhood is a function hard-wired into the society. The term *motherhood* points at the embodiment, relationship-forming and identity-creating function of childrearing. While self-identity of a female is an extremely important question, my thesis is focused on the mothering as a set of behaviours. The term *mothering* positions childrearing as an action, a continuous activity and as such, it is something that can be stopped, paused or transferred to another person. The term mothering strips the childrearing activities off their relationship-forming function. Mothering doesn't point out to a *mother* as an identity that must be taken to rear children. Rather, mothering can be done by anyone, whether male, female, a relative or a stranger, out of a sense of love, duty or as a paid function.

I choose to focus on mothering to reflect its functionalism and the reality of childrearing-related behaviours. I believe that understanding the essence of child-care without focusing on the analysis of mother figure psychology is important in creating the society which is more inclusive towards different new forms of mothering – whether it be adoption, homosexual parenting or co-parenting scenarios. It is especially important in Japan and South Korea, where the above-mentioned forms of parenting are still social taboos.

---

<sup>6</sup> Vegretti Finzi, Silvia, *Mothering: Towards a New Psychoanalytic Construction*. New York: The Guilford Press, 1996. Print. P.122

## 1.2 Mothering and female inequality

Female unequal social and economic status has been explained through various theories. The explanations are often divided between the feminist and anti-feminist theories, but even in the feminist movement, the ideas tend to differ. The biggest discrepancy lies in recognizing or rejecting the notion of female biology being different to the one of the male; and recognizing the kind of role it has played in creating an unequal society. The difference between feminist and anti-feminist theories lies primarily in the opinion on whether the gender inequalities within the society should be sustained or not.

The biggest issue in theorizing female subordination lies in its understanding of female biology. Patrice DiQuinzio describes this issue in the feminist movement as the “dilemma of difference”<sup>7</sup>. In accordance to the notion of individualism, women should appeal to individualist subjectivity to gain their independence<sup>8</sup>. However, that can produce problems in creating a discourse of a common, female experience.

What that means, is that feminists would often reject the idea of female difference on a biological level, as any idea that would position women as different to men creates a risk of then being used to further exclude women<sup>9</sup>. The radical feminist Shulamith Firestone would argue, that if female biology lies in the roots of the oppression, feminist revolution would therefore require technology that would liberate women from their biology and provide new ways of reproduction outside the female womb<sup>10</sup>. Alice Rossi, on the other hand, points out that equality can be achieved

---

<sup>7</sup> DiQuinzio, Patrice, *The Impossibility of Motherhood: feminism, individualism, and the problem of mothering*. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print p.XV

<sup>8</sup> Op.cit, 1999. Print P.6

<sup>9</sup> Everingham, Christine. *Motherhood and Modernity: An Investigation into the Rational Dimension of Mothering*. Buckingham: Open UP, 1994. Print. P.4

<sup>10</sup> Mann, Susan Archer., and Ashly Suzanne. Patterson. *Reading Feminist Theory: From Modernity to Postmodernity*. New York: Oxford UP, 2016. Print. P.89

through further equal involvement of men in looking after their children<sup>11</sup>. Liberal feminists argue that women should become free from their biological impediments of childrearing through governmental provisions – services such as childcare, maternity leave and access to birth control<sup>12</sup>.

Another theory explaining the female inequality is the sociohistorical developments – the urbanization; the spheres of outside employment and the inside work moving away from each other throughout the years; and the creation of two modes of production: production for exchange and production for use, out of which only one was then considered valuable by the society<sup>13</sup>. As we can see, mothering is often understood in its relation to paid employment, often in the relationship of contradiction. Patrice DiQuinzio writes, that “to the extent that women’s responsibility for child rearing is at the centre of the sex-based division of labour, the issue of mothering is at the centre of an analysis of this division of labour”<sup>14</sup>

Many feminists argue that women can only achieve full equality through employment and abandonment of the childrearing activities and housework at home. Liberal approach to feminism seeks equality in terms of economic power and presence on the labour market in precisely the same terms men are present in it<sup>15</sup>. According to that view, not only is employment helping women towards the full emancipation, but the housework hinders their possibilities to fully invest themselves fully in the paid labour.

Another theory relies on the rights of property. Friedrich Engels argues, that the introduction of the concept of property lies in the bases of the female, and class inequality<sup>16</sup>. The property laws

---

<sup>11</sup> Sayers, Janet. *Biological Politics: Feminist and Antifeminist Perspectives*. London: Tavistock, 1986. Print. P.149

<sup>12</sup> Op.cit. P.176

<sup>13</sup> Mann, Susan Archer., and Ashly Suzanne. Patterson. *Reading Feminist Theory: From Modernity to Postmodernity*. New York: Oxford UP, 2016. Print. P.146

<sup>14</sup> DiQuinzio, Patrice, *The Impossibility of Motherhood: feminism, individualism, and the problem of mothering*. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print P.14

<sup>15</sup> Sayers, Janet. *Biological Politics: Feminist and Antifeminist Perspectives*. London: Tavistock, 1986. Print. p.174

<sup>16</sup> Mann, Susan Archer., and Ashly Suzanne. Patterson. *Reading Feminist Theory: From Modernity to Postmodernity*. New York: Oxford UP, 2016. Print. P.142

brought with them the idea of inheritance, and therefore the need for policing of the female sexuality arose. The patriarchy was established to maintain clarity on the paternity of children. The gendered divide of the social roles was established as a means to exercise power.

The reason my research is important lies in the relation of mothering and female inequality. Some feminists see mothering as limiting and the loss of control over woman's own biology traded for being the object of the social control. Others point out at the importance of the experience both for the mother herself, and for the possible unification of women in their shared experience<sup>17</sup>. There are many ways in which mothering can be problematized, but its relationship with the female inequality is undeniable. There are many answers to resolving the inequality question – whether it is abandoning the childrearing practices, transferring them to the government, sharing them with men – may not be clear, but first it is important to learn the attitudes of the women themselves.

### 1.3 Research questions

My main research questions regard the reproduction of mothering. I am interested in the way that the ideas of motherhood, mothering and what it entails are introduced in the lives of young women. I want to find out where do the ideas come from predominantly – whether it be the society, the family or whether the reasoning for them lies in the female biology. I use three theories that explain the way mothering is reproduced in the society, that I further describe in the Chapter 2. In my research, I seek this theoretical framing in my interviewee's perspectives. Therefore, my main question is: how is mothering reproduced in South Korea and Japan? Which one of the three main theories of mothering explain its reproduction in South Korea and Japan most accurately, as described by the mothers themselves? I have decided to represent two regions in East Asia, expecting to find both similarities and differences in the way that the mothering is defined and

---

<sup>17</sup> DiQuinzio, Patrice, *The Impossibility of Motherhood: feminism, individualism, and the problem of mothering*. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print p. IX

reproduced in the societies.

While doing my research, I encountered other interesting research questions that I incorporate in my Thesis. The interviews made me think about the questions of relation between the marriage and motherhood and the way that the ideas of motherhood are being internalized. I have also encountered interesting findings regarding the sex preference for the baby and the changing role of the extended family in the East Asian society.

## 1.4 Methodology

Silvia Vegetti Finzi writes, that „describing the adult female experience from the point of females themselves, and especially from the point of view of the female unconscious” is one of the most urgent tasks of humanity<sup>18</sup>. With that thought in mind, I chose to conduct in-depth focused interviews with women, who already have an experience of mothering in South Korea and Japan. I was searching for women representing variety of backgrounds in Seoul and Tokyo. However, most of the women I interviewed hold a university degree and come from middle-class or affluent backgrounds. I have not interviewed women from poor areas or experiencing hardships otherwise. The motivation for choosing those interview subjects, is that their position awarded them more variety of choice in their lives, and therefore their decision of childrearing can be expected to be less influenced by factors such as poverty, lack of sexual education or exposure to violence.

My interviews had the elements of life-course interviews. The questions were based around the themes of marriage, motherhood and their relations with the society. I had asked about the family, women’s own set of values and experience. The reason for choosing focused interviews was to allow additional questions that could create an accurate image of interviewee's experience of

---

<sup>18</sup> Vegetti Finzi, Silvia, *Mothering: Towards a New Psychoanalytic Construction*. New York: The Guilfford Press, 1996. Print. P.115

mothering, while remaining within the structures of main themes of reproduction of mothering.

I have conducted the interviews during my sojourn in Seoul, South Korea in the Autumn semester 2015/2016 and in Tokyo, Japan in the Autumn semester 2016/2017. In South Korea, I was a recipient of a Research Grant at the Academy of Korean Studies in Seongnam. In Tokyo, I was awarded a place at the Rikkyo University as an exchange student. I chose the sample of seven interviews in each country and that goal was met in both South Korea and Japan.

## **1.5 Conducting interviews in South Korea**

In order to find interviewees in Seoul, I used the snowball method. As a recipient of the Research Grant, I was under the care of my supervisor Kim Kyong-II. He has introduced me to his niece, which introduced me to two women with whom I conducted interviews. From that on, they have introduced me to other future interviewees. I have thoroughly explained the character of the research I am conducting, and I was introduced to women who wanted to share their experience for variety of reasons. I have conducted the interviews in English, as all my interviewees were fluent English speakers, some with an experience of living abroad.

## **1.6 Conducting interviews in Japan**

In Japan, I was introduced to a sociology student who is also a volunteer, by the sociology professor Akiko Iwama. I decided to join him in volunteering at the after-school child centre in the centre area in Tokyo. It is a centre offering after-school care for older children and teenagers. I have interviewed the owner of the company, as well as women who volunteer there. I have also asked mothers who came to pick up their children for the interviews. For that reason, and for them to remain anonymous, I decided not to disclose the name of the facility. I have conducted the interviews in Japanese.

## 1.7 Differences in interview conducting in Japan and South Korea

There were certain differences in the way I have conducted the interviews as well as my perceived role as a student between South Korea and Japan. While in South Korea, the interviewees were women who were interested in both sharing their experience, as well as meeting me – a foreigner, in Japan, I was not overwhelmingly met with interest. While South Korean women often kept in touch and continued the relationship by inviting me for different events, the Japanese interviewees would cut the contact and leave my e-mails without reply. The interviews in Japan were also often ended abruptly, while in South Korea I often found myself talking longer with the interviewee after the interview was finished and treated for a coffee or dinner.

While conducting my interviews in South Korea, I was treated as the one offering and the interviewee as the receiving part – partly because of the willingness to listen that I offered and possibly because of the curiosity about me as a foreigner – in Japan on the other hand, I was treated as the receiving part, that was extracting the experience from my interviewees, while they were the offering parts, providing me with means for my research. The discrepancy could have possibly been created by the language insufficiency in Japanese on my part, as well as the unequal situation that using Japanese creates. While in South Korea both me and my interviewees used a foreign language to communicate with each other, in Japan I was the one attempting to speak the language of my counterpart. It is also possible, that the practice of English that I offered to the interviewees in South Korea made it more worth-while for the interview time.

The usage of mother tongue versus a foreign language can create differences between the ways in which the interviewees can explain their ideas. It is possible that the interviewees in South Korea could have experienced difficulties with expressing their ideas clearly, however, it was not evident to me as an interviewer. All of the South Korean women I have interviewed had either had an experience of living abroad in an English-speaking country or were connected to the teaching of English. If there was something that remained unclear in our communication, I asked additional

question until we came to an understanding.

On the other hand, at times while interviewing the Japanese women I was under the impression they would use simple wording or short sentences to help me understand them. I would try to encourage them to speak freely, by saying that the interview will be recorded and I will be able to check the vocabulary later. I also encouraged longer responses during the interviews by using prolonged silence or additional questions.

Both using the mother tongue of the interviewees and using English created unexpected results in the way the interviewees expressed themselves. However, to my surprise, the English interviews conducted in South Korea led to longer and more extensive statements.

## 1.8 The legitimacy problem in reporting experience

Feminism and gender studies, as well as sociology itself, is faced with the problem of the legitimacy while reporting on the own experience of the subjects. On the one hand, it is important that the subjects, and in this case interviewees, are being able to voice their own opinions; and articulate their own experience; and be met with belief on the part of the interviewer.

At the same time, no socialization is successful unless it's internalized. As Patrice DiQuinzio puts it: "feminist must critically analyse the determination of women's reports of their situations and experiences by sexist and oppressive conditions, conditions that render at least some of women's articulations of their situations and experiences problematic and/or inaccurate"<sup>19</sup>.

My interviews, as any qualitative data in sociology, must be observed through this lens. However, I found the women I interviewed, especially my subjects in South Korea, extremely self-reflective and observant and therefore I find the findings of my research valuable.

---

<sup>19</sup> DiQuinzio, Patrice, *The Impossibility of Motherhood: feminism, individualism, and the problem of mothering*. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print P.16

## 2. Theories of mothering

In this chapter I will focus on the theories of mothering, particularly regarding its reproduction that is of my highest interest. The three theories I present exhaust the ways traditional gender division of reproductive labour is explained in the mainstream social discourse. In my research, I will use the following theories and try to establish, which of the theories best explains reproduction of mothering in South Korea and Japan, as explained by the interviewees themselves. I am interested in the discourses, that the women use themselves, while explaining their decision for undertaking mothering.

Mothering is constantly reproduced and re-introduced into the society to maintain the functioning ideology. Mothering is offered to women not only as a choice, but a choice with its own morality, validity and consequences for their social positioning.

Through embodying the idea of a “mother” and through practicing the mothering practices and behaviours, women have been historically awarded a certain regard in the society. However, in the modern world, work has become a defining quality for validating a person as a member of the society. Women gained the possibility for employment but men did not follow with household duties. That created discrepancy and inequality in the social status of women, who to become fully human need to „have it all”. That creates a situation, in which women must weigh the pros of cons of childrearing and employment; and either negotiate their position in the society while balancing between the two roles, or devote themselves to one of them primarily, losing out on certain social or personal benefits that the other role provides.

Some of the processes of counting the costs are subconscious, some of them are conscious. Women are often not the only agents while deciding on their childrearing and their future employment and mothering balance. There are certain societal factors at work in the East Asian societies that must be taken into the consideration that I will discuss in the Chapter 3.

In this Chapter I am focusing on the theory of reproduction of mothering. I understand the

term *reproduction* as described by Karl Marx, referring to the processes that participate in re-creating the social structures in new generations. However, I use it in a broader sense, not only including the social processes, but also biological and psychological factors. I choose the word reproduction to further recognize the cyclicity of the process.

Finally, I would like to point out that female agency can play a crucial role in internalizing the reproduction processes. When women are the agents over their own body; and lifestyle choices can be made by them under no threat of violence or punishment by law; their agency has the power to overrule the reproduction processes. On the other hand, it is noteworthy to remember how important is the performance of gender for the subject positioning of the self. Women, as any other group in the society, must deal with the fear of social dis-integration<sup>20</sup>.

Another factor that must be considered when theorizing motherhood is the way it is often used in *othering* the women. Women who are conscious of the ways mothering is offered to them as a lifestyle choice are often just as conscious of the ways the society punishes them for making the same exact choice. Therefore, it is important to remember that when choosing mothering, women are confronted both with agents and discourses which encourage them, as well as those who work to discourage them from it. As Simone de Beauvoir writes, women's experiences are mediated by consciousness, which is affected by their status in the society<sup>21</sup>.

---

<sup>20</sup> Hansen, Gitte Marianne. *Femininity, Self-harm and Eating Disorders in Japan: Navigating Contradiction in Narrative and Visual Culture*. London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016. Print. P.27

<sup>21</sup> Beauvoir, Simone De, Constance Borde, and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier. *The Second Sex*. New York: Vintage , a Division of Random House, 2011. Print. P.88

## 2.1 Biological essentialism

Essential motherhood is the theory, that links femininity and motherhood, and points at the essential, biological nature of a woman and her reproductive capacities to explain female mothering<sup>22</sup>. It follows, explaining that the specific female biology is in the roots of superior childcaring abilities that women display as opposed to men<sup>23</sup>. More than that, the fact that women have been involved in those activities for centuries is used as a proof of its biological source<sup>24</sup>.

That discourse takes extensively from Darwinism and biology to explain female mothering – it is positioned as something “natural”, based on the animalistic instinct, therefore, making it inevitable. Mothers exclusively possess an animalistic “parental instinct” which works as a radar “responding to infantile happiness”<sup>25</sup>. The theory also draws an argument from infantile dependency and points out that the mother-child relationship is crucial for the survival of the species<sup>26</sup>. The root of female parental instinct is sought after in their lactation ability, hormonal cycle, physical structure of the body and the fact, that a human woman is a mammalian species<sup>27</sup>.

However, there is a logical lap between acknowledging the childbearing qualities of a woman and her consequently being the exclusive provider of childcare during the following years of the child’s growth. There is a following recognition that the traditional gender roles contribute to the female subordinate status. However, they are presented as an effect of evolution and as such, cannot and should not be changed<sup>28</sup>.

Not only does the essential motherhood discourse require a certain type of heterosexual female sexuality, aimed at reproduction, but it also derives certain psychological qualities of

---

<sup>22</sup> DiQuinzio, Patrice, *The Impossibility of Motherhood: feminism, individualism, and the problem of mothering*. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print p.XIII

<sup>23</sup> Sayers, Janet. *Biological Politics: Feminist and Antifeminist Perspectives*. London: Tavistock, 1986. Print p.149

<sup>24</sup> Sayers, Janet. *Biological Politics: Feminist and Antifeminist Perspectives*. London: Tavistock, 1986. P.149

<sup>25</sup> Op.cit. P.149

<sup>26</sup> Op.cit. P.152

<sup>27</sup> Op.cit. P.163

<sup>28</sup> Op.cit. P.29

females and as such, is not only a discourse of mothering, but also a discourse of femininity itself<sup>29</sup>. Female biology is naturalized, which points at motherhood as the essence – an entity created from unchanging qualities. According to this view, not only are all women designed to rear children and must all become mothers, but they should also draw emotional satisfaction from this act.

The critics of biological essentialism point out at many female experiences, in which unwanted pregnancy is seen by the pregnant woman herself as a bodily violation and an embryo – as a parasite<sup>30</sup>. Not all women become “motherly” even when faced with their own pregnancy. However, in the theory of biological essentialism, the post-partum depression or lack of interest in childbearing are presented as individual psychological problems of immaturity.

Biological essentialism provides also a very narrow vision of what mothering is, therefore pathologizing and delegitimizing other forms of mothering – for example mothering shared, done by men, done in a homosexual relationship, single motherhood, et cetera<sup>31</sup>.

## 2.2 Social Constructivism

The socialisation theory is largely adopted by sociology and the feminist movement. Liberal feminism does not agree with the notion of biological difference between women and men being at the root of female inequality. It rather points at the difference of ability created through the discrepancy between the female and male socialization processes. The theory of social constructivism is based on the dichotomy of sex and gender. When a child is born with specific genitalia, it begins undergoing a gender-specific socialization process. Those are various complicated social processes starting from the differences in infant care and persisting throughout the lifetime of an individual.

---

<sup>29</sup> DiQuinzio, Patrice, *The Impossibility of Motherhood: feminism, individualism, and the problem of mothering*. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print P. XIII

<sup>30</sup> Sayers, Janet. *Biological Politics: Feminist and Antifeminist Perspectives*. London: Tavistock, 1986. Print p.163

<sup>31</sup> DiQuinzio, Patrice, *The Impossibility of Motherhood: feminism, individualism, and the problem of mothering*. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print p.24

To create a female or male gender-identifying individual, there is a need for a system of division of labour, bodily and behaviour policing throughout childhood and in the education system, and tight co-operation of many societal agents from the level of government to the level of parenting and friendship. Children are constantly reminded about their gender and encouraged to copy the behaviour of the people “like them”. People who are not behaving accordingly with their assigned gender identity are being sanctioned<sup>32</sup>.

Social constructivism denaturalizes the notions of motherhood and femininity. Mothering, therefore, is not sex-specific, but under certain social conditions, it could even be constructed as an aspect of masculinity<sup>33</sup>. It is only the *feminine mystique* (a term coined by Betty Friedan) – a set of positive, supposedly feminine values imposed by the patriarchy, to maintain the status quo of women in exchange for praise and social acceptance – that is responsible for encouraging women to give up paid work and devote themselves to housekeeping and mothering.

Women are socialized to be empathetic and make decisions without taking their own best interest into account. They must provide “caring labour” not only for the children, but also for the elderly. “The individuality of the female is opposed to the best interest of the species”, writes Simone de Beauvoir<sup>34</sup>. Therefore, a lack of interest in mothering is seen as a social, or even political issue, framed as egoism or immaturity. Therefore, mothering is a necessary self-sacrifice that women must take to be recognized as fully female in the society.

The examples of socialization of mothering can be found in the media, in the discourse of motherhood as fulfilling, emotional experience and the lack of portrayal of problems mothers face. The TV show “16 and pregnant” and likes of it, provide a vision of pathological motherhood, ensuring the image of socially desired motherhood in a heterosexual relationship bound lawfully by

---

<sup>32</sup> DiQuinzio, Patrice, *The Impossibility of Motherhood: feminism, individualism, and the problem of mothering*. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print P.17

<sup>33</sup> Op.cit. P. 56

<sup>34</sup> Beauvoir, Simone De, Constance Borde, and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier. *The Second Sex*. New York: Vintage, a Division of Random House, 2011. Print. P.25

the institution of marriage in a certain age. Female mothering is also socialised through a push for heteronormative sexual relationship – something that girls are introduced to already through fairy-tales and Disney movies in their childhood.

Social constructivism theory highlights the understanding of mothering as a practice, while biological essentialism describes the female identity. Femininity, therefore, is not intrinsically bound with motherhood and can be understood outside of this category.

## 2.3 Psychoanalysis and Social Reproduction

Nancy Chodorow, the author of the generational reproduction of mothering theory, started off by criticising the social constructivism reproduction theory. Instead of agreeing that “children learn by observing and copying the childcare behaviours that they have seen rewarded for their own sex”<sup>35</sup>, she points out that mothering is not just a set of behaviours. It is rather a set of acquired psychological and emotional capacities combined with the desire for childrearing<sup>36</sup>.

Mothering is not only participation in the activities but sustaining a mutual, affective relationship. To participate in such relationship, one must first acquire a psychological readiness, as well as a sense of self and a personality capable of a relationship<sup>37</sup>. It is impossible for the society to socialize a woman to provide the level of care and relationship that she does, if she already doesn't have the internalized sense of self as maternal. Therefore, the persistence of mothering is a function of “social structurally induced psychological processes”<sup>38</sup>.

According to Nancy Chodorow, it is the generational processes that are responsible for the reproduction of mothering. Because women are the ones doing the mothering, male and female children grow up in the family models where women mother. The model of mother children

---

<sup>35</sup> Sayers, Janet. *Biological Politics: Feminist and Antifeminist Perspectives*. London: Tavistock, 1986. Print p.157

<sup>36</sup> Chodorow, Nancy. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Berkeley: U of California, 1978. Print. P.33

<sup>37</sup> Op.cit. P.173

<sup>38</sup> Op.cit. P.7

encounter, puts expectations on the type of mothering they want to reproduce in the future. Children expect, that they will find themselves in a similar family setting. In this way, mothering “reproduces itself cyclically”<sup>39</sup>.

Another implication of it is, that based on their sex, female children create a relational bond with their mothers and other female care-takers, while male children's identification requires negating the same bond with their caretakers. That creates a different sense of self in men and women – while women define themselves through relations with others, man define themselves based on their separateness and distinction<sup>40</sup>. That process is gender personality differentiation. The child's personality is being formed through the way he or she appropriates and internalizes the early experiences in his or her own family<sup>41</sup>. That creates different psychic outcomes in the upbringing of children and creates women with maternal desire to mother.

The “by-product” of the gender personality differentiation processes is the reproduction of male personality as emotionally unavailable. That creates another incentive for women to find fulfilment that they can't get in heterosexual relationships, in childbearing<sup>42</sup>. Childrearing reproduction is asymmetrical, because it is aimed at the mothering done by women, but also encourages them to seek heterosexual relationships with men, that men are not encouraged to pursue on the same level.

The society presents a solution to the desire to mother only within the framework of perpetuating the feminine mystique. The full reproduction of mothering is fulfilled, when the desire and the maternal self are established, and the societal discourse of mothering behaviours is presented as intrinsically connected to it.

---

<sup>39</sup> Chodorow, Nancy. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Berkeley: U of California, 1978. Print. P.6

<sup>40</sup> Chodorow, Nancy. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Berkeley: U of California, 1978. P.207

<sup>41</sup> Op.cit. P.206

<sup>42</sup> Op.cit. P.208

### 3. Mothering in East Asia

To understand the way mothering is reproduced in South Korea and Japan it is important to understand the specifics of the organization of reproductive labour in South Korea and Japan. It is important to understand the motherhood discourses in the context of its tradition, as well as the ongoing processes of modernisation. The raising female employment, nuclearization of the family, as well as the urbanisation processes have affected the construction of the East Asian family nowadays. While some of the results are unambiguously positive – such as the disappearance of the problem of femicide – others can be more problematic.

In the following chapters I will provide a short overview of motherhood, marriage and family relations in the modern societies of Japan and South Korea, as well as shortly describe the traditions that are in the process of moving away, but still hugely influence the modern East Asian societies. I decided to create the overview in a compilation form for both South Korea and Japan, as I will only provide a short background for my data, without analysing the specific phenomena. I will therefore focus on the concepts prevailing in both Japan and South Korea.

#### 3.1 The Confucian Cultural Heritage

Both Japan and South Korea are recognized as part of the “Confucian heritage group”. The cultural values historically recognized as “traditional” in those societies are predominantly coming from China<sup>43</sup>. Confucianism lies at the bases of the *Good Wife, Wise Mother* ideology. According to this ideology, woman’s role in the society is through marriage and motherhood. Women held an inferior position in both South Korean and Japanese societies. They were confined to the house, while the outside world belonged to men. The female duties were presented in being an obedient

---

<sup>43</sup> Rindfuss, Ronald R., and Charles Hirschman. "The Timing of Family Formation: Structural and Societal Factors in the Asian Context." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 46.1 (1984): 205. Web. P.2

daughter-in-law, devoted wife and dedicated mother<sup>44</sup>. Women were to master various domestic skills, as well as achieve intellectual excellence, in order to raise “quality children” for the nation.

The Confucian cultural heritage expresses itself also in the importance that is placed on the bloodline. The Confucian family structure is male-dominated<sup>45</sup>. Women would enter the family of their husband after getting married and stopped being a part of the family of their parents. Her priority then was taking care of her parents-in-law. On the other hand, living in a few-generational household often awarded her additional help with childcare from her mother-in-law.

Traditionally, women were expected to bear sons, as only the males could become head of household and prepare the necessary rites for the deceased parents. The importance of bloodline had also lead to a significantly small number of children born out of wedlock, or adoptions. That has been often reflected in the sex preferences for the male child and an occurrence of the problem of femicide, especially prevalent in South Korea. That problem however, has virtually disappeared over the last few decades.

Both Japan and South Korea have the tradition of *arranged marriage*. However, the arranged marriage and *love marriage* did not create a simple dichotomy. They were not mutually exclusive, and often an arranged agreement was reached after the sides expressed their interest in each other. The traditional arranged marriage was often also a kind of a “mediated marriage”, in the sense that more than two parties were involved<sup>46</sup>. Nowadays, even if a marriage is described as an “arranged marriage”, that usually should be interpreted as unions created through introduction, rather than an obligation<sup>47</sup>.

---

<sup>44</sup> Gelb, Joyce, and Marian Lief Palley. *Women of Japan and Korea: Continuity and Change*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1994. Print P.192

<sup>45</sup> Kim, Sook K. *Abandoned babies: the backlash of South Korea's special adoption act*. Washington International Law Journal Association, 2015 P.6

<sup>46</sup> Sugiyama Lebra, Taakie. *Japanese Women: Constraint and Fulfilment*". Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985. Print. P.88

<sup>47</sup> Fujimura-Fanselow, Kumiko. *Transforming Japan: how feminism and diversity are making a difference*. New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2011 P.110

### 3.2 The Fertility Problem

During the past 60 years there has been a fertility decline observed all over the East Asian region. The numbers of women with more than two children have rapidly fallen and percentage of women who remain single is growing. At the same time, the life length expectation rises, creating what often is called *an Ageing society* in Japan and South Korea. Those rates are presented as alarming both because of the pensions, labour shortages and rising elderly needs, that are expected to hinder the economic productivity<sup>48</sup>.

The reasons for delaying marriage and childbearing can be traced to uncertainties of the labour market, impossibility to temporary shift to part-time employment and exposure to different values than the domestic roles, through female education<sup>49</sup>. Another factor is growing female employment that leads to higher opportunity costs for women who decide to have children<sup>50</sup>. While the wage work has gained its significance and the rates of female employment has risen significantly, no cultural or social shifts have occurred, and the expectations placed on women remain unchanged<sup>51</sup>.

Both the government of South Korea and Japan have implemented policies addressing those issues. “The Angel Plan”, “The New Angel Plan” and “Plus One Proposal” are examples of policies introduced by the Japanese government. They provide financial provisions at birth of children, as well as allocate funds towards the construction of new day-care facilities. Meanwhile, the South Korean government looks in the direction of technology. Robots that take over the care for elderly are expected to boost female employment rates. Meanwhile, the foregoing automation is expected

---

<sup>48</sup> Boiling, Patricia. *Family Policy in Japan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. p.3

<sup>49</sup> Frejka, Tomas. "East Asian Childbearing Patterns and Policy Developments." *Population and Development Review* 36.3 (2010): 579-606. *JSTOR*.P.2

<sup>50</sup> Mason, Karen Oppenheim. "Gender and Family Systems in the Fertility Transition." *Population and Development Review* 27. Supplement: Global Fertility Transition (2001): 160-76. *JSTOR*. P:8

<sup>51</sup> Devasahyam, Theresa and Yeoh, Brenda S.A. *Working and Mothering in Asia*. NIAS Press, Singapore 2007. P.13

to lower the needs for labour power.

The problems of addressing the fertility issues and the issue of childrearing that follow them come from the characteristics of the East Asian welfare regimes. According to the Esping-Andersen welfare regime typology, Japan is often described as a mixture of liberal and corporatist-statist welfare regimes. South Korea is often described in a similar fashion, but considering that in the recent years the family-based welfare policies have been on the raise. However, the social welfare services targeting women, children, elderly and disabled are still the least developed<sup>52</sup>. The idea of family-based support system of responsibility is still prominent in the social policy in East Asia, even more so in South Korea than in Japan.

### 3.3 Modern Trends in Mothering and Marriage

While the opportunity costs of having children rise and East Asian women more often than before tend to postpone marriage and motherhood, the societal pressure for marrying young still prevails. Even though the “expiration date” for female marriageability is constantly moved forward, passed a certain point, single women are still considered “incomplete”<sup>53</sup>. A variety of terms, such as *parasite singles*, 負け犬 *makeinu* – loser dogs, *Doenjang girls* - soy bean paste girls or sometimes even the Chinese term *leftover women*, are used in derogatory fashion for describing women who remain single and childless in their thirties. In the new political climate of ageing society, such a “choice” is often considered selfish by the society. On the other hand, the social stigma aimed at single mothers and divorcees, creates a society in which only one specific way of creating a family is encouraged<sup>54</sup>.

---

<sup>52</sup> Kim, Yeon-Myung. *Towards a Comprehensive Welfare State in South Korea: Institutional features, new socio-economic and political pressures, and the possibility of the welfare state*. London: Asia Research Center (ARC) P.16

<sup>53</sup> White, Merry Isaacs. *Perfectly Japanese: Making Families in an Era of Upheaval*. Berkeley, Calif: U of California, 2004. P.124

<sup>54</sup> Fujimura-Fanselow, Kumiko. *Transforming Japan: how feminism and diversity are making a difference*. New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2011 P.128

With the modernisation and urbanisation, came the nuclearization of the family. That means that even though women are still expected to manage the household and the children, there is lesser support from the older generations. A relief in terms of child care and housework has not yet occurred, neither on government nor relationship level. A family is still largely considered a “women’s domain”<sup>55</sup>.

On the other hand, the modern industrialized society requires one to join the labour force to be considered successful. Despite the gains in real salary the families increasingly feel that they need two incomes to satisfy all the consumer needs. Therefore, women face pressures both towards taking employment, as well as focusing on their role as a mother.

“The family roles, whether as wife, mother, or caregiver to the elderly, are designated as fulltime identities”<sup>56</sup>. The expectations for a working person in East Asia are hard to be fulfilled by someone, who already must fill in one of the above-mentioned roles. Women deal with it in a variety of ways – through taking part-time jobs, postponing motherhood or hiring additional help. In a survey undertaken in a hospital in Seoul, South Korean women pointed out, that the lack of spousal help, as well as insufficient governmental facilitations, are the main reasons for their dissatisfaction as working mothers<sup>57</sup>.

The Confucian idea of raising “quality children” still prevails nowadays. Declining infant mortality rates together with the economic growth has created in Japan, and later in South Korea, a demand for children of excellent “quality”, rather than for their “quantity”<sup>58</sup>. Said quality is measured through their educational achievements. The idea of a *helicopter mom* has gained a lot of

---

<sup>55</sup> White, Merry Isaacs. *Perfectly Japanese: Making Families in an Era of Upheaval*. Berkeley, Calif: U of California, 2004 P.125

<sup>56</sup> White, Merry Isaacs. *Perfectly Japanese: Making Families in an Era of Upheaval*. Berkeley, Calif: U of California, 2004. P.100

<sup>57</sup> Kim, Yeong-Mee; Kim, Min Yeong. *Difficulties faced by Working Mothers and Potential Solutions to these Problems: A Survey of Nursing Personnel in a Korean Teaching Hospital*. In: Perspectives in Nursing Science Vol.10 No.2, 2013 P.153

<sup>58</sup> Devasahyam, Theresa and Yeoh, Brenda S.A. *Working and Mothering in Asia*. NIAS Press, Singapore 2007. P.51

press recently and is widely recognized in the mainstream society. The same phenomenon has been previously described in the Japanese context as a 教育ママ, *kyōiku mama* – an education mom<sup>59</sup>.

The helicopter mom is a full-time mother, who devotes a significant amount of her time to micro-managing the academic and otherwise education-related needs of her child<sup>60</sup>. A helicopter mother acts as a manager of her child, negotiating between the school, local community and any personal networks that would facilitate its future education and employment. That behaviour stems from the prevailing idea, that the mother alone is responsible for the future and success of her child<sup>61</sup>. The phenomenon is especially prominent in South Korea. South Koreans, which have only recently begun enjoying high economic growth, face even higher pressure towards educational achievements and good employment from the early ages.

Another reflection of the idea of female responsibility is “learning in the womb. That concept may be even more radical, as a pregnant woman is held responsible for the prenatal environment of her child.”<sup>62</sup> That means that her own emotions, feelings and activities can be blamed for the future shortcomings of her children.

The above-mentioned concepts stem from the discourse of child-focused family. The modern East Asian societies can be described as child-centred<sup>63</sup>. A mother and her child create the basis for the family. Merry Isaacs White writes, that “the late twentieth-century family reversed the temporal focus from sacrifice for the sake of the long line of ancestors behind to sacrifice “for the sake of the children” yet to come”<sup>64</sup>.

---

<sup>59</sup> White, Merry Isaacs. *Perfectly Japanese: Making Families in an Era of Upheaval*. Berkeley, Calif: U of California, 2004. P.106

<sup>60</sup> Park, SoHyun; Lim, Hyunchul; Choi, Hyeekung. “Gangnam Mom”: *A Qualitative Study on the Information Behaviors of Korean Helicopter Mothers*. Seoul: Seoul National University, 2015 P.1

<sup>61</sup> Devasahyam, Theresa and Yeoh, Brenda S.A. *Working and Mothering in Asia*. NIAS Press, Singapore 2007 p.3

<sup>62</sup> White, Merry Isaacs. *Perfectly Japanese: Making Families in an Era of Upheaval*. Berkeley, Calif: U of California, 2004. P.101

<sup>63</sup> Op.cit. P.102

<sup>64</sup> Op.cit. P.103

## 4. The Interviewing Processes

I have conducted my semi-structured interviews in South Korea and Japan between October 2015 and February 2017 during two exchange periods. In South Korea, I have been helped by professor Kim Kyong-Il who introduced me to his daughter-in-law which contacted me with two interviewees. I expressed my interest in the religious affiliations of the first one of them and in turn she became enthusiastic to help me and introduce me to a friend from the church. The remaining interviewees I have found through the snowballing technique.

In Japan, I have been contacted through a social sciences professor Akiko Iwama with a student, who volunteers in an after-work care facility. The facility is aimed at children, whose parents work long hours and can't afford private childcare nor have family support. Most of the children come from immigrant backgrounds or single mother households. At the facility they were encouraged to either study, learn Japanese language skills or do creative work through play.

Because of the lack of skills in Korean, I decided to conduct the interviews in English. When quoting, I am sticking to the original wording used by the interviewees. In Japan, I conducted the interviews in Japanese and I have translated them by myself.

### 4.1 Fieldwork Impressions

At the beginning, I was unsure of the social setting I am getting into. I didn't know whether my status of a foreign student gives me an advantage or rather puts me in a disadvantaged position. Soon I found out that the exchange was reciprocal. I have found the data for my interviews and interviewees were pleased to have an attentive listener for a few hours, as well as in the case of the few mothers of younger kids – a rare contact with an adult from outside their family. A few of them mentioned after the interviews, that they have told me something they previously didn't share with anyone; or that I made that ask themselves questions they never thought about.

I was worried about asking certain private questions, but I found out that the interviewees

were very encouraged by the anonymous status of the interviews. Some of them have mentioned in our conversation after the interviews that it felt good to talk about those issues anonymously. Three of them created a connection with me that resulted in me being invited to their homes, taken out for dinners or welcomed in their churches.

## 4.2 The Interviewees' Profiles

The women I have chosen for my interviews represent different educational and economical backgrounds, as well as different ideas on mothering. Some of them are young mothers, some of them have adult children. In South Korea I relied heavily on the snowballing method of finding interviewees. In Japan on the other hand, I was looking for potential interviewees at the volunteering centre suggested to me by a student of Akiko Iwama. After the few initial interviews, I have also used the snowballing method to gain more interviewees.

The first interviewee in South Korea has been introduced to me by professor Kim Kyong-Il of the Academy of Korean Studies in Seongnam. So-Young<sup>65</sup> is a friend of the professor's daughter-in-law. She is in her middle 30s and comes from an affluent background. She has two children, a boy and a girl. She considers having got married in her early 20s as very early. As all my South Korean interviewees, she lives in Seoul. She is a housewife and holds a university degree.

The second interviewee has also been introduced to me through Kim Kyong-Il's daughter-in-law. Na-Young is in her middle 40s and she is a professor at a university, same as her husband. Shortly after getting married she went on to study in the USA for a year. She is on sabbatical now. She has two children, one boy and one girl. Na-Young comes from an affluent background and hopes for her children to achieve the same level of education she and her husband represent.

The third interviewee was the first one I met through the snowballing method that I

---

<sup>65</sup> Names of all interviewees have been changed.

continued to rely on until the end of my interviewing period in South Korea. Hyo-Rin has two children, both are daughters, in ages 8 and 10 and comes from an affluent background. She was about to get her PhD when she got pregnant. When her children grew a little older, she became an English teacher on a part-time basis. Hyo-Rin was introduced to over fifty different men by her parents, out of whom she chose her husband.

The fourth interviewee is a mother of one in her early 40s. Soon-Yi comes from a working-class background and holds a degree in Spanish language. After her daughter was born, the nanny expenditures added up to be higher than her salary, which she calls a good “excuse” to becoming a housewife instead. She continued to invite me for different events at her Church following the interview, as well as writing Christmas and Easter greetings.

The fifth interviewee is a young mother in her late 30s. Min-Ji is a housewife and her only daughter is 8 years old. She holds a degree in marketing. Before she got pregnant, she used to be a scriptwriter in a broadcasting company and worked with entertainers. Her husband is a broadcasting hardware importer. She grew up in a working-class family. Even though Min-Ji is a housewife, she strives not to become a “helicopter mother” for her children.

The sixth interviewee is in her mid-40s and is a mother of three children – two daughters and a boy. She works on a Gangnam station in a hat store owned by her mother. Yu-Ri got married four months after meeting her husband. After the interview was finished, she told me about an article she read. According to that article, children are influenced already in the womb by every action and movement of their mother. Yu-Ri comes from a working-class family and finished her education on high school.

The seventh interviewer is in her early 30s and has just had her daughter. Eun-Ji comes from an affluent background and has been working for a TV station. She holds a degree in marketing and has travelled a lot around the world working for UNICEF. Right now, she is a housewife and her mother helps her with childcare on daily bases. The interview took place in her apartment at the

presence of her daughter and ended up stretching into almost eight hours. We ended up having a dinner afterwards and Eun-Ji was the interviewee that has kept most in touch with me after the interview, regularly sending me e-mails and inviting to meet up with her.

The first interviewee I encountered in Japan has become my acquaintance because of a shared interest in Finland. Yayoi is in her early 30s and has a 3-year-old daughter. She is married to a Finnish national and they both live in Japan. Her daughter is growing in a bilingual household. Yayoi comes from an affluent background, as her father works in an advertising agency. Her mother is a housewife. She also has a younger sister, which is studying abroad in Europe. Yayoi has a higher degree in international relations.

I encountered the second interviewee in Japan through my volunteering work with children. Kiyomi is in her 50s and works as a diet practitioner. Both of her daughters are in their 20s and as Kiyomi finds more free time in her life, she decided to dedicate it to the volunteering work with children. Her parents divorced when she was young, as her father fell in love with another woman. Because of that and the fact, that she worked the whole time while having children, she describes her family as “unusual”. She is highly educated and comes from a middle-class background.

The third interviewee is a single mother of three children between ages of 8 and 12. I approached her at the facility I volunteered at and where her children are using the services. Mari is a divorced single mother in her late 30s. She is a third generation Japanese-born Korean. Seeing the struggles of her family members who own neither the Korean nor the Japanese passport, she early on decided to get married with a Japanese national and enter the Japanese family register. Another reason for it was changing the name for Japanese to avoid discrimination. Mari was a housewife until the divorce and now is a businesswoman and is working hard on starting an internet underwear shop. She has a boyfriend. She does not hold higher education and comes from working-class background. Her mother found a new boyfriend and left her for grandparents’ care in order to start a new life when Mari was 17 years old.

The fourth interviewee is a housewife and a mother of a 13-year-old girl that I was introduced to by Mari. Kyoko is in her late 30s has a side-job as a volunteering – she reads for children. She went to a vocational school but left without getting a degree. She comes from a lower middle-class upbringing. Kyoko is concerned about her younger sister, who has been dating for a long time but is not married yet. Before her father's death six years ago, the parents were living in separation. Her pregnancy took a physical toll on her and after many years she is still recovering.

The fifth interviewee is a young mother. Yume is in her early 30s and works in a bank. She has a higher degree and comes from a middle-class background. Her daughter was born three years ago. At that time Yume took a two-year break from work. As of recently, as she got back to work, her daughter started spending up to ten hours at a kindergarten and they spend time together on the weekends. Her father is dead and her mother lives with Yume's younger sister. I met Yume through the snowballing method, as an acquaintance of Kyoko.

The sixth interviewee is the 40-year-old owner of the facility where I volunteered. Yuki has two children of her own, both are boys. Her parents are both retired – her father used to work full-time and her mother got a part-time job when the children were older. Her husband works in air-conditioning and doesn't contribute in the household chores, but she gets a lot of help from the extended family she lives with.

The seventh and final interviewee is a freelance architect in her early 50s who only recently became a mother. Mika is highly educated and comes from an affluent background. She is an acquaintance of previously met Yume. Her daughter was born 20 years into her marriage thanks to fertility treatments. Her husband works full-time, and it was his influence that helped Mika make the final decision of becoming a mother.

### 4.3 The Importance of Intersectionality

Intersectionality has become an important word in the social sciences, especially gender studies. Its meaning derives from different forms of discrimination faced by people on different grounds and the “intersection” on which they meet. The first person who has used the word in the context of feminism is Kimberlé Crenshaw. She points that the experience of being black cannot be understood independently from the experience of being a woman, as those identities often reinforce each other, as well as interact with each other<sup>66</sup>.

If the data findings from my research are ever to be interpreted through that lens, it is important to introduce intersectional tools in the analysis. However, in my thesis I am mostly interested in the self-reported experience of my interviewees and categorizing them within the frames of factors of socialisation, biology and generational influence. I am interested in how women themselves perceive factors responsible for creating their experience and their choice of mothering. Therefore, I feel that western social studies and psychoanalysis is sufficient in interpreting the data.

---

<sup>66</sup> Crenshaw, Kimberle. *Intersectionality: the double bind of race and gender*. In: Perspectives Magazine of the American Bar association, Spring 2004. Web P.5

## 5. The Ways in which Primary Caregiver Role is Expressed

As previously stated, work and childcare are often treated as the ultimate choices between which a woman must negotiate her lifestyle. The main way that taking on the role of a primary caregiver of a child expresses itself is therefore, through diminishing the role of work in her life. In my interviews, I asked my interviewees to choose between what is more important – work or childcare. That proved a difficult choice for most of the interviewees, but they predominantly chose childcare in their answers. Yuki answers similarly to all my interviewees:

*Childrearing is more important. (...) When they are small, the time goes so fast. There is not that much time. I really enjoyed spending time with my children.*

That argument points out both the importance of mother for the children, but also the importance of children for the mother. Children provide enjoyment for the mother. The relationship between a child and a mother is seen as reciprocal and symbiotic.

Mari chose work in her answer, pointing out at the difficulties women face when attempting to join back the workforce later in life:

*I think it's more important to work. It's more important to be able to earn your living then get married. So that if you get married, get divorced, it's better to work. If you get married, become a housewife, if you get divorced, if you have no skills to get food on your plate it becomes very hard.*

Here, the choice is presented as a survival tactic. According to the interviewee's opinion, it is just smarter for a woman to develop skills and a backup plan in case the marriage doesn't work out. Her choice is not done in a void but takes into consideration the realistic scenarios, that any woman may face in her lifetime.

So-young answered in the way that some of the other interviewees did, prioritizing the well-being of the child in her decision:

*It's very, it's very difficult decision to say that. Well, I think, when the child is young take care of children is more important than to have job, to work. Because I feel they need a mom, when*

*they're young. I'm not sure. Still confused and still considering about that but yes, now I have to focus on my children, right now.*

Taking care of the child and leaving work is seen as an obligation to the child.

In this chapter I will describe how female mothering is expressed. The way my interviewees describe becoming a primary caregiver of the child is first and foremost through giving up work. Alternatively, it is done through changing working pattern into part-time. Second most important way that becoming a primary caregiver of children expresses itself is through becoming an agent responsible for the everyday decisions concerning children. Many women include their husbands into decision-making process regarding “big issues” in life, such as choosing a school for the child. But the small decisions made in everyday lives are done by the mothers. It is also the mother who needs to do necessary sacrifices for the wellbeing of the child, if the need appears. I will also describe how the interviewees recognized work-childcare dichotomy and how that worked as a deterrent towards marriage and motherhood. I will also provide different reasons women would have to change their mind about staying single and decide to get married. I will also describe an interesting finding regarding the way the concepts of marriage and motherhood are intertwined to the point, that the words become interchangeable in discussion.

## **5.1 The Desire to Stay Single**

To the exception of two, most interviewees expressed their feeling of wanting to be single in their childhood and youth. That was always explained as career-motivated. The interviewees recognized the marriage and motherhood as subsequent happenings. They also realize that parenthood is pitted against work in the modern society and their choices are very much based on the understanding of the dichotomy.

Yayoi expresses herself this way:

*I thought it would be good to stay single before I met him. Free? I could hold my way of*

*thinking. (...) In Japan, how to say, education is the most important, getting into a good university, entering a good job. But when women get married and give birth, they have to give up working. I hate that, so I thought it would be fine to be alone. (...)*

She recognizes the societal expectations and the way that the traditional female role of a caregiver is not fit for them. It is interesting how she sees entering the workforce as giving her more freedom, even though both life choices confine oneself to a certain activity.

Na-Young expresses it in a similar fashion:

*No, actually, when I was a high school student I was thinking just live as an unmarried female. Because when I was a high school, I was so ambitious. Actually, I started very well, that's why I went to Seoul National University and then I was the first summa cum laude. (...) My parents and all my friends did not expect me to devote my life for my family at all. Even I think that way too.*

*So, I was thinking ok, living alone is also good for my career. (...)*

In the similar way, she equates marriage with giving up a career, not specifically because of itself, but because it is a gateway to having children. She then continues:

*Because I saw my mom for a while and I saw my other female workers, so. Marriage is not so much, raising a child is really. Be harder for female to get promoted. Working in this area, that's why I was thinking that living alone would be a good choice too. (...)*

Na-Young constructed her idea about marriage and its limitations based on observing other women in her area. Her decision was more informed than just relying on the ideas of the society.

Soon-Yi says in her interview, that her parents and friends expected her to stay single, because of her being career-oriented person:

*About that. I think I prefer single I guess, when I was high school student. All my friends said they were really surprised I decided to get married. Because I thought I'm gonna live single. (...) I really care about money, job and then. I didn't date a lot. I liked parties but not with guys.*

*Friends parties, I really enjoyed that. I like sports and enjoyed my life by myself. (...)*

Soon-Yi touches on the idea, that marriage deprives a woman of her hobbies and enjoyments. We can assume that in this case again she equated marriage to motherhood.

Min-Ji continues on a similar note:

*At that time, I didn't think about marriage. Or pregnant. Cause I loved my work and the work was very interesting and actually it was important to get that kind of job. It was very popular and nowadays too. So, I thought I want to be single, for a long time. I didn't want to share my life.*

Here, Min-Ji not only mentions the work-home dichotomy but adds on saying that she didn't want to share her life. She didn't want to give up the prestige coming from her work position and was forced to choose between different social positions to fill.

We can see a clear tendency among both my South Korean and Japanese interviewees. Most of them confess the desire to stay single in their youth. Most of them express similar opinions and their desire to stay single had not necessary to do with the marriage itself, but with motherhood, that in East Asian society is still associated tightly with it. In the next section I will present my interviewees' reasoning behind changing the decision and getting married.

## 5.2 Reasons for Getting Married

Regardless of the previous want to stay single that most interviewees held, all of them decided to get married. The reasons vary, from personal feelings to conforming to family pressure through arranged marriage. Three of my South Korean interviewees and two of the Japanese interviewees told me, that their parents were married through an arranged marriage. Na-Young and Hyo-Rin were married through an arranged marriage. Na-Young has chosen the second partner she was introduced to. Hyo-Rin went through dates with over fifty men to choose her future husband, this is how Hyo-Rin describes the process:

*There is still such a job as matchmaker still in Korea. My parents got married that way and my parents in law got married that way. This matchmaker and they get paid from the groom's side, not*

*the bride's side. And sometimes bride's side give them money too. My mom she was the bride's side too, right? But she knew she didn't have to give them money and she paid every time (laughter). So the process is like, they give them a list of gentlemen with their family, education, age, their job. And you could select the one that you like. And you go out and have a date with them for one day. And if you have more than three days of meeting, the matchmaker will start to give you pressure. How do you feel? What is the next step? Would you like to see their parents? And I met like 50 gentlemen by matchmakers and they were giving me too much pressure. (...) My parents just (laughter) they set everything, date for me and I said OK I'll have a date for today. I just accepted it. Well, some of my friends really hated the system. In my generation it was like 30% of women got married by matchmakers. I'm not sure if I'm correct but the percentage is getting smaller. So, 70% of them got married by love and then my other friends that got married by matchmakers, when they get pressure, well they got stressed a lot. But I was different, I was just enjoying it. OK, I'm going to have a date today! Well, he's not the one. Well 50 gentlemen are a lot! (...) Well, I met three nice guys. The second one I almost got married. I liked him but then his parents. I don't know. I really didn't wanna get into his family. Even though I liked him a lot.*

Her approach towards the matchmaking system was unorthodox. Even though she was not actively interested in getting married, she enjoyed the process of dating and meeting new men, that her parents created for her. Min-Ji also took her parents' guidance into consideration when choosing her partner:

*Partner's job was very important at that time, for myself and for my parents. They thought partner's job makes decision of wife's future. For example, the more he made money, the better their daughters can live a good life. They thought. And these days many parents think their daughters' job is very important.*

With more women being employed, a new variable in the shape of woman's workplace position enters the lifestyle negotiation process. Marriage becomes a less attractive option once the

stakes for women are higher. Future employment possibilities are something Mika was also considering while making her decision on getting married:

*I also thought about staying single. But I thought that I want to get married. I also had a thought that maybe I wouldn't be able to do everything that I want to do when I'm 30. Especially when I had no partner, I would think that. But when we started dating, I wondered whether I would be able to work on my own pace. I thought that marriage can become an obstacle. Still I decided to get married. (...) After the wedding, you are not only the two of you, you are not only together, you are making a new family.*

The Japanese family register is still organizing the way the society is organized. Not having been entered into a family register could prove problematic when exercising parental rights in the case of divorce or moving into another country. For Mika, who is a Japanese woman of a Korean descent, the reasons to get married were always more political than emotional:

*(...) I was born in Japan, but I am Korean. I think it's different abroad, but I hold a certain type of document in Japan. Like a green card in the US. I was born in Japan, waited, I didn't get a VISA from birth. I am not Japanese, but I was born in Japan as a Korean, got certain special document that gave me a right to live here. I live in Japan, but I have no rights, a lot of my rights are not the same as the Japanese persons'. I can't vote. I have no voting card and my job opportunities are limited. My name has been a problem for me. As a kid, I was called Kim. It was my family name. I was brought up by my mother, but I didn't get her name. My parents got divorced when I was 4 months old. My mother left her family and went on to live alone. I was brought up by my grandparents. (...) I think that making a family in Japan is good. Living alone is extremely lonely. It's a problem of loneliness. People are busy in their communities, you don't meet for years. It's a release for the heart to get married. I don't think it's important to be just a worker in the society, I am very happy I got married and got my children and created a family. I am happy I got married because of my children. In my case it's a good thing. (...) I was told it may be hard for me to marry*

*a Japanese person. Everyone from my community is Korean. (...) The communication is the smallest nucleus binding the family. You become a couple, you have the same mind, you live together, you have a person you always want to live together as a partner, always find it easy and peaceful to live together. (...)*

Even though it was crucial for her to get married in order to become a citizen and get a passport, Mika also expresses her longing for companionship. Indeed, the feeling of having a partner in life was listed most often as the reason for getting married by my interviewees. Even Na-Young, who was introduced to her partner through her parents' efforts, names being understood and able to share a life as the most important reasons to get married:

*I picked my husband, because he was, I was thinking he could be my best friend. My soulmate and best friend. (...) Marriage is going through the life with someone else. So being, getting through the whole difficulties by yourself is very hard and very lonely. Having someone else with me or together going through the same or going through the whole life, then is good. Being with someone else.*

*Because once we get grow old is really hard for us to live with our parents anymore. Because regardless of married or not they get older and they do not understand me. So, having spouse and marriage is to have someone else to understand me. In the same generation and going through the same difficulties. (...) Marriage is a chance to have a person I can rely on, I can live together, or I can play with. (...)*

She describes a transition from living with parents to creating a new household. Finding a new best friend in life is a smooth passage from the parent's love into a new type of relationship. Yayoi also describes the way in which newly-built family relations replace the old ones, when talking about her daughter's future:

*I wish she would get married. When the parents die, it's important. With someone. Of course, friends are great as well. But it's important to make a partner for life. Of course, I also want to become a grandmother, if she finds a good person for her. (...) In Japan, marriage becomes a social*

*thing. If a man is not married at a certain age, he is not trusted. Married people are more trusted.*

*People think of unmarried people as bad. They are presented as a problem by the society and economy. But unmarried married at certain age become a trend worldwide.*

Yayoi mentions the societal pressures for getting married. Kiyomi, who was uncertain about getting married, but wanted to have children, describes similar pressures concerning her offspring:

*(...) When I had my children, I didn't want my children to be bullied of being born outside of marriage. They would experience discrimination in the society. (...) Life is much easier in Japan if you are married. Your position. It is expected. (...)*

Marriage is presented as a natural choice for both men and women in the Japanese society, and of course similarly in the South Korean society. Marriage is not an individualistic thing, but through entering the family register, the new spouse becomes part of the family. Yume describes an advice she got from her father in an amusing way:

*He said one thing, my father. He wanted me to date someone who can drink alcohol. Because my father loved alcohol. He had only three daughters, I am the older one, so he didn't have anyone to drink with, so he wanted me to bring someone who is strong, that's what he's always been saying, I am not too strong with alcohol. (...) I've always wanted children, I said I wanted to be a bride or a mother, already in the kindergarten. I've always wanted to have children from a very early age. And when I got married, when the ceremony was finished, I felt I can finally have them soon.*

Even though it's a rather funny example, we can see how the new male member of the family would fill the void and become a "son" for Yume's father. It is also noteworthy how she felt "allowed" to have children by the society only after getting married.

Lastly, I would like to present two interviewees, who don't mention societal pressure, but rather point at emotional reasons to getting married. So-Young decided to marry her partner when he was offered to study abroad, in order to stop him:

*I was too young to think deeply or consider many things. I just want to be with him. So that's why I*

*decided to marry him. And actually, he had a plan to study abroad after marriage. After, at that time. And I think, marriage is kind of timing. Situation makes us, made us to decide to marry.*

So-Young was very young when getting married and the proposal came from her side, when she realized, she may lose the man she is invested in. The most insightful way in describing the love relationship comes from Kiyomi:

*Through the experience of getting married, you see a lot of new worlds, don't you? The partners' viewpoint, the partners' family. The unmarried people don't see that. And being married is also fun. I think it's a good thing, but if you don't get married, you can get free, collect a lot of experiences, that is also fun. There is a lot of lives.*

To conclude, my interviewees presented different reasons to get married. Even though they mentioned the societal pressure and the social setting that created the need to get married, they all mentioned some type of emotional connection or fondness of their partner that was a deciding factor in them getting married to him.

### **5.3 The Attitude to Professional Work**

In this and the following section I will focus on the way that mothering is expressed – which is mainly through prioritizing childcare over work and through taking the personal responsibility for the child in a predominant way. The one thing that all of my interviewees have in common, is that they have decided to either forego the professional life or make a change for a part-time job when confronted with pregnancy.

Yayoi has not yet held a professional job, as she got married and pregnant very early in life, soon after graduating university. She contemplates the Japanese society when being asked, what she finds more important – work or childcare:

*Very hard question. But at the moment, I think taking care of children is the most important. Long time ago, before I got married, I didn't think of childrearing highly. I thought work is more*

*important. But ever since my cute girl was born, I think taking care of children is the most important, before work. It's number one. (...) In Japan, I think most women think it's important, but I think men think work is the most important. (...) Is it better to work for a mom? Personally, I think yes. But from the society's standpoint, thinking about the Japanese society, I don't think it's possible. I do not work, but I have friends who do and after marriage, they were bullied into quitting. They have friends but going to the company they were told "well, let's look for some new worker". There is no one who didn't experience it.*

She describes her second-hand experience in the work harassment, that seems to be a common occurrence in Japan. While the society gives a subtle pressure towards taking on full-time childcare, working as a carrot, the workplace often resigns to indirect, as well as direct harassment, working as a stick. They both together create a situation, in which freedom of choice becomes questionable. Kiyomi answers the same question in the following way:

*It's hard to choose. But I don't think it's good to quit working. That's what the society is making you choose. I think it's a mistake. I was working less when the child was small. There was also disadvantages with that but there are good and bad sides. Because there are plenty of plus things in the long run. I think the society is making you choose childcare over work. I find it strange. (...) But the period when childcare is absolutely necessary is very short. So, it's impossible to choose. Not to quit working but do a little "pace down" and continue on. I couldn't quit it completely. I had to choose as well, but I was very lucky. (...) My neighbours, they would suggest me to quit a little, but they understood there is no way around it.*

Kiyomi decided to restrict her working hours but has also experienced a pressure to quit working completely. She made a decision that a lot of women in Japan and South Korea make.

Hyo-Rin describes a perfect arrangement in her opinion, while talking about her children's future:

*(...) As I told you it's a dilemma. If they wanna have a job, and if they wanna be a good mom also, they would probably have to have part-time job like me. (...) The best thing is to have a professional*

*job only during the morning time and after lunch you're back home and have your children spend time with you. But I don't know if that could be possible.*

As most of the interviewees, she sees an ideal work-childcare balance in maintaining a part-time job. Mika does the same thing, but her job is of crucial importance for her:

*(...) Either way, I want to work while bringing up my child, I don't think I can just take care of a child right now. If possible, I would like to do more of the childcare, put more pressure on that. I was working before I had my child and when I am done taking care of her, I will also work. I have a lot of confidence from my work, so I can't give it up completely. I got older since the time I got marriage, I have a job but to think about leaving... I am satisfied from stopping to do it full-time, but I wouldn't go any further. I am very satisfied.*

Mika already has plans for her future employment. As mentioned before, women who do not work, may have troubles if they find themselves in the need for employment later in life. By maintaining a part-time job, they leave themselves a leeway and possibility to go back. Yu-Ri enjoyed her time with the baby at home a type of an extended holiday:

*I was working as an English teacher before I got married. When I got married, I wanted to get kind of holidays, long holiday. So I quit. So only later I had a first child. I wanted to kind of enjoy my life with the baby. I wanted to learn knitting, sewing, and also, I had to stay in my house with the baby.*

When writing about work, the problem of job satisfaction is rarely problematized. Whether work is something giving a human life a meaning or rather dehumanizing activity the society should get rid of has long been a matter of debate. Work can provide personal satisfaction, but more often than not is only means to fulfilling our other material needs and desires. To quit working, when job is not providing satisfaction and when the material situation allows it, seems to be a tempting choice, out of which both the woman and the child benefit.

Finally, for Na-Young work is important, but her overwhelming feeling of responsibility for her child would make it possible for her to leave anytime:

*Yes, I'm doing both of them. Both are important, but if something, some important thing happen for my children then I am willing to quit the job for time, to suspend, get suspension for time. Because, yeah. Because I can't quit raising a kid. But I mean, I can hold work for time, for year, it doesn't change my life. If can, you know, delay my promotion, it may delay my promotion. But it's not a big deal. If something important happened to my child then I think I need to hold my work for time, I'm willing to.*

Na-Young continues to work part-time but is willing to take necessary sacrifices if the need be. That final point takes us to the next section, in which women describe different ways in which the responsibility for the child is internalized to the higher extend that husband's or other family members' sense of responsibility for it.

## **5.4 Woman's Main Responsibility for a Child**

As mentioned before, the female mothering is also expressed through the ways women are willing to take on the main responsibility for the child's well-being now and in the future. As Yayoi says it when considering the role of a mother:

*Generally speaking, in Japan, a role of mother is properly taking care of children and helping them become a part of the society.*

Yume follows with:

*Role of the mother is not only helping the child grow, it's also giving her self-confidence in her life.*

Indeed, in the East Asian society, the role of the mother doesn't end with feeding and clothing her children. The behaviour of the mother becomes responsible for the future qualities and emotional stability of the children, as expressed by Hyo-Rin:

*When I think of my children as children, not as my daughters, just as general children, they have to have their own mom's love and the most important thing for them to have is the time with mom. So, if their mom is busy, I don't know if they can have trust in life.*

Hyo-Rin feels responsible for her daughters being able to trust people in their future. Yu-Ri goes further by saying different ways in which mothers are responsible for their children's qualities and fates:

*Motherhood is really, really important. Usually mother influences children a lot. So, mother has a really important role to their children. So, mother has to be strong and mother has to be right. Mother has to have a healthy mental... mentally they have to be very healthy. And they have to think about, not only their children, but see other children and other society. If they only think about it... If they are selfish, they only think their children are best, it's not that good thinking. They have to see other children too. They always think about other people's situation, mother has to. And they have to teach that to their children. I don't want my children to be selfish. When I see a student who is really bad, bad attitude, I wonder what kind of mother he has. Education is not that important. For humanitarian, mentally, everything is important.*

Her reflection is a good example of how the society reproduces its expectations of women when it comes to children's behaviour. In this paragraph, it's evident, that Yu-Ri sees women as responsible not only for their children on the personal level, but also for the well-being of the society and other children globally. Woman's responsibility therefore doesn't end with her own offspring but extends to the society as a whole. It is also interesting, how Yu-Ri points out the importance of mental health. In this instance, woman's own mental health doesn't belong to her, but becomes a tool in creating a new member in the society. Similarly, Mari describes the way woman's body is not considered completely hers once she gets pregnant:

*My father-in-law thought a woman has to enter a family and take care of the children. When I got pregnant, he told me not to ride a bicycle, because its vibrations are supposedly not good for the stomach.*

The pregnant female body becomes a commodity of the whole community, that she is about to present with the new member. The mother is also responsible for sharing the skills she owns:

*It's not a sacrifice. Motherhood is giving their talents or their attachment to their child.*

*Motherhood is not sacrifice, just sharing or if I had a high education... Because we have high education, we have to share, and we can give the quality to children, so we should. It was very interesting and very important. We have to make a person. And we have to give good personality to the children. Not only education.*

As mentioned before, in South Korea, more so than in Japan, women are going to the extreme lengths in order to develop their children's skills and knowledge. Two of my South Korean interviewees mention the women moving abroad with their children in order to provide them foreign education. Min-Ji describes such arrangement in her family:

*My elder sister lives in Australia. She left to educate her daughter in Australia, she wanted her daughter to be globalised. So, I thought it was very successful. Cause her daughter has a major in piano, it was very, very good. She lives in Australia and her husband lives in Seoul. In daughter's vacation they met each other and sometimes when the daughter has competition around Asia. Her husband came to see her there.*

She reports this matter-of-factly, while So-Young describes her concerns with the practice: *In Korea, there are lots of, mom and children live apart, not divorced, in separate but not because parents problem, only because education. (...) It means, if children education, for children's education mom bring children to States or Canada to study English and father stay in Korea and working, bring them money. (...) There are many couples, many mom and children do that, but... Me and my, I and my husband doesn't think it's good decision, it's not good for the education. Even if they speak English very well, but it's not good for the family and for the children too.*

The practice of women prioritising their children over their own romantic relationships is quite common in East Asia, and stems from the child-mother relationship taking the precedence before the partners' relationship. I will describe this later on, in the next chapter.

Mothers often do feel the responsibility for their children and prioritize them over other

relationships or work. Yuki describes it in the following way:

*Children became the centre of my world. If they have a fever, I run to do everything for them. They are in the centre of everything. (...) As a mother you get awareness. To become a mother, responsibility is very important.*

The importance of responsibility in motherhood is pointed out by other interviewees as well. Mika describes this all-encompassing responsibility in her everyday life:

*I am doing well somehow, but as my child is growing up, I would do more work requests daily. Sometimes if my child is being patient, I can get more work done. If she can take it. But if a child is sick, she is a priority. I choose according to a situation. If she really wants to play, then it's time to take care of her. (...) As a mother, you should all the time think about what is good for the child, what type of mother is a good mother, to properly treat the child. There are many shocking, many surprising things, that you are unprepared for. But you have to remain calm. The child needs its mom. It is also worried if mom is. Those type of things. I am trying to be a mom thinking like this.*

Here, according to Mika, the mother's mood is presented as often adopted by the child. Therefore, women need to be especially careful with their emotional state as not to influence the child in the wrong way. It can become overwhelming, especially once the children become teenagers and their emotional state is not as obvious to the parents, as described by Yuki:

*When they are young, I could recognize how they feel. How, what they want. But I don't know nowadays, what they think, what they want, what should I do to them. Nowadays I realized oh, it's very difficult to be a mom and it's very difficult to have a responsibility to children, nowadays I feel those fears. (...)*

The mother's role is best presented, when compared to the role of the father. I will describe the role of the father deeply in the following chapter, however, here I would like to present a few examples of how the decision-making process is being divided in the household. It is described in the simplest way by Yu-Ri:

*Mother's role is, you know, eating, everything. But fathers decide the big things. Shows the roads, where to go, something like that, we have to talk. For raising our children.*

Communication is very important between the parents. Na-Young also stressed the crucial role of the parents' dialogue in the household and divides the decision-making process in the similar fashion:

*The decision, main decision? Yeah, I told about, with my husband always to make a decision. Some decision actually we try to agree on the decision. Because if somebody, if one of us, one of us does not want to one kind of direction, the I don't think it can give us, result in good things so we have discussed and then make decision together for important things. But a lot of things I make decision by myself.*

Na-Young tries to make the big decisions with her husband, while deciding most of the things by herself. She is very careful, though, not to make any decisions that would make her husband displeased. She doesn't want any discrepancies within their thinking, because childrearing is a joint effort. Hyo-Rin describes her decision-making process in more detail:

*If my children have to find a tutor to teach them to play the piano or cello or sports, this sort of things, I always do the research. For example, if I go somewhere, I always do the research, to book a hotel, to book an aeroplane ticket, this sort of thing. (...) Yeah, he should be involved. He doesn't make really decisions on little things, it's on me. So, at first, I thought he gives me too much freedom but now I think he doesn't care about us (laughter) but then again when it comes to very important case he does get involved, he would get involved and he should get involved. (...) To spend more time with us and to prepare more for family events. Because I'm always the one who prepares the family events, he doesn't really enjoy the little, private life. He's very workaholic. So, I would stay try to stop your work and spend more time for yourself and your family and try to plan your own weekend!*

Hyo-Rin demonstrates her slight irritation with her husband's inability to plan together with

her. She accepts her husband's role as a "workaholic" and his discontent with enjoying small pleasures in life and takes over the family life organising. She does not mention whether she enjoys it more than him, but rather concedes as it has to be done by someone.

Lastly, Hyo-Rin expresses her very strong opinion on motherhood:

*I'm the only person who have to take care of my baby. I kind of enjoyed, at the time. (...) I had to stay at home. When the baby was lying, she couldn't walk, I always had to bring her when I go somewhere. (...) If a woman can't sacrifice for her children, she'd better not have children. (...) Raising children is living in a prison without a fence. Without a wall. There is no wall, no fence, but we cannot go. We have to stay with the children. I really, really agree with that sentence. I cannot go anywhere. I have to stay with my... I love them, I want them, but sometimes I wanna go watch a movie... that kind of sacrifice. Very sacrificial but happily. (...) should all women become mothers? No if they can't sacrifice their life to their children. (...)*

In her opinion, women who can't make the necessary sacrifices should refrain from having children. She naturally adopts her responsibility in taking care of the helpless baby from the very beginning of its life. Even though she describes her motherhood as happy, she still thinks of it as a type of prison, to which she is confined.

Taking care of children also takes precedence over education. Eun-Ji talks about not being able to finish a degree she "had 100 pages of already" because of her pregnancy:

*(...) Yeah. I didn't even think I would give up, I never thought but when the moment came, when I got pregnant and I was done with my coursework and I was writing my dissertation and I already had 100 pages and then I actually couldn't. If there was somebody who was helping me to do the housework, I could have finished maybe. But there was nobody who could help me, and my husband was always out to do research. And I couldn't do it. So, I just stopped. (...) If I had more money, I could hire somebody to work as a nanny, then I could've probably finished my degree, but then I couldn't.*

According to those words, Eun-Ji felt solely responsible for the pregnancy and it was her education that had to be sacrificed even if it was on a quite advanced stage. When asked whether she ever asked her husband to help, she admitted she never thought about it. Those examples show how women take on responsibility for childcare and housework through assuming other tasks as secondary. If they decided to stay in the labour force, they have to rely on the help of other women. In case of my interviewees, the burden of childcare is moved to a nanny, the mother or the mother-in-law, rather than to the husband.

In this section, I have presented the ways in which women adopt the main responsibility for the child. That works together with the work-abandonment practices described in the previous section. Through those processes the creation of the mothering is conducted.

## 5.5 Summary

This chapter provided examples of how mothering practices are expressed in the everyday life of my interviewees. I have presented their initial will to stay single and the way it is intertwined with the idea of inability to practice professional work after getting married. As I have mentioned before, women are in the constant need for negotiating between the childcare and traditional female tasks and participation in the workforce as expected in the capitalistic society<sup>67</sup>. Especially for my interviewees, out of which most have higher education and wide range of options for living the life of their choosing, their opportunity costs for choosing motherhood are high<sup>68</sup>.

I have also shown the different reasoning behind eventually making the decision to get married. While most of the interviewees expressed personal reasons, a lot of them reflected on the foundations of the society and its influence on women's choices. As mentioned before, women are

---

<sup>67</sup> Frejka, Tomas. "East Asian Childbearing Patterns and Policy Developments." *Population and Development Review* 36.3 (2010): 579-606. *JSTOR*.P.2

<sup>68</sup> Mason, Karen Oppenheim. "Gender and Family Systems in the Fertility Transition." *Population and Development Review* 27. Supplement: Global Fertility Transition (2001): 160-76. *JSTOR*. P:8

always aware of the existing social norms, whether they decide to adhere to them or not<sup>69</sup>.

I have also presented the way women take on the mothering role through prioritizing childcare over employment and through taking the main responsibility for the child in their households. That is done through readiness for sacrificing the career, as well as through making the main decisions in the household regarding the child's growth. In East Asian societies, especially prevalent is the need for creating children of exquisite talents and skills, therefore giving mothers even more pressure on the way they care for their children and how much they are involved into their children's upbringing and education<sup>70</sup>.

What is an interesting finding is also how recent is the institution of arranged marriage in the East Asian societies. Even though I was expecting to meet interviewees', whose parents have been married through the arranged marriage, I was surprised to find that two of my interviewees were married through this arrangement themselves.

Another interesting finding was the story of Mari, who specifically wanted to marry a Japanese person, because of her unequal status as a Japanese-born-Korean according to the Japanese law. Lastly, two of my South Korean interviewees were closely introduced to the idea of moving abroad for the children's education.

---

<sup>69</sup> Douglas, Susan J., and Meredith W. Michaels. *The Mommy Myth: The Idealization of Motherhood and How It Has Undermined Women*. New York: Free, 2004. Print. P.18

<sup>70</sup> Mason, Karen Oppenheim. "Gender and Family Systems in the Fertility Transition." *Population and Development Review* 27. Supplement: Global Fertility Transition (2001): 160-76. *JSTOR*. P:8

## 6. Personalized Reasons for Taking on Mothering

In this chapter I will introduce the personalized reasons for taking on mothering, as expressed by my interviewees. I will categorize different emotional advantages and rewards that are offered to women by the society and their community, once they become mothers. I will present different ways in which women categorize the event of childbirth itself – as a certain rite of passage, a manifestation of survival, or a door the key that opens the door for new human experiences.

Another thing I will mention in this chapter is the male unwillingness to take on the childcare chores and main responsibility, as described by my interviewees. It can take the form of perceived “unfitness” of the husband by the woman, unwillingness expressed by the men themselves or the violation of the agreement established before the birth of the child. All of those situations lead to women leaning in and taking on the role themselves, easily understood as the notion that “someone has to do it”.

In this chapter, I am exploring the idea of the “maternal instinct” and the natural, biological relationship that evolved between the mother and the child<sup>71</sup>. The bond is described as directly leading to women taking on the mothering role and main responsibility. It is only achievable through pregnancy, and therefore, it is unavailable to men. According to the biological essentialist theory, that is the immediate explanation as to why mother have and still do mother.

Lastly, in this chapter I will also explain the particularities and differences between the mother-child relationship as opposed to the father-child relationship and the married couple’s relationship with each other, as described by my interviewees. Through their words, I will describe the way that the mother-child relationship is presented as the one and only, unique human relationship, that has its own special qualities unavailable to attain in any other sort of relationship. In this way, I will be exploring both the biological essentialist idea of the “maternal instinct”, as

---

<sup>71</sup> Sayers, Janet. *Biological Politics: Feminist and Antifeminist Perspectives*. London: Tavistock, 1986. Print P.163

well as the psychoanalytical theory's base, that sees the bases of the socialization of mothering in the creation of the infant-mother relationship.

According to the biological essentialism, motherhood is connected to femininity. Even though a woman who has not given birth cannot technically be considered a mother she is already expected to behave in a "motherly" way and her responsibility for the child and its future starts right at the conception. In this chapter, I will show different ways in which the position of a mother, or the person who is mothering, differs from the rest of the relationships within the family. As Nancy Chodorow writes: "Being a mother, then, is not only bearing a child – it is being a person who socializes and nurtures"<sup>72</sup>. In East Asia, the concept of "child outcome" is important, as in countries with low birth rates, the demand for "quality children" is exceeding the supply<sup>73</sup>. In this chapter, I will also explain the responsibility, that is placed on women, on the "quality" of their children.

## 6.1 Mother-child Relationship and the Wife-husband Relationship

During my interviewees, the interviewees were asked to compare their relationship with the child and its importance to their marital relations. I have blatantly asked them, who takes precedence in their life after their children were born. Most of the interviewees answered, that the child is the most important entity in their life. Yayoi puts it in this way:

*The child! Of course. The child is so small, takes a lot of work, the child is number one in everything. My husband can do everything himself. (...) I don't think it's just a Japanese thing. I think everyone thinks kids are the most important. I think that's a good way to think.*

Yayoi understood the question in "care" terms. In that case, the husband stays less important, because he can take care of himself and doesn't need her as much as the child does. Eun-Ji

---

<sup>72</sup> Chodorow, Nancy. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Berkeley: U of California, 1978. Print. P.11

<sup>73</sup> Devasahyam, Theresa and Yeoh, Brenda S.A. *Working and Mothering in Asia*. NIAS Press, Singapore 2007. Print. P.51

understand it in a very similar way:

*Oh, of course to be mother is more important! Because she needs me. My husband, he likes me. We love each other, we love each other, but it's different. She has survive. So, I have to take care of her more and more. And that's... and my job is taking care of her. It's the most things, best things. And I have to take care of my husband, but he is an adult, so it's different. She needs me more.*

Both Yayoi and Eun-Ji admit to putting the relationship further, because of the more pressing need to take care of their child. Yuki describes similarly, how the child becomes the centre of the everyday activities, when I ask her whether she gets to spend time with her husband:

*But our child is in the centre. In the very centre. We are always with it. We are 2 plus.*

Then I continue to ask whether they do date just the two of them:

*I never thought that's something I would want to do.*

Not only does the child become the centre of attention for Yuki, it also determines the way the whole family gets to spend its together time. The activities are organized around the child, rather than in order to include it. Mika describes the way her relationship changed in a very similar way:

*How did my relationship change? You become a family. A unit, a community. I felt like that.*

When asked whether she gets to spend alone time with her husband:

*We don't. Sometimes we work together, so we only talk about that. But we spent so many years only the two of us, so if now we don't have it, that's fine.*

In Mika's case, she had many years of marriage before having a child. Therefore, her relationship may be more grounded than the other interviewees'. Even though most of my interviewees answer by saying that the childcare is the most important for them now, Yume admits that she can't make an easy decision on which relationship is the most important for her now:

*I want to say my child is the most important, but. I can't make a distinction, I have to be careful. For example, at night, I should turn off all the nights, because my daughter is going to sleep early, but I leave some, because my husband on the other hand, he is coming home late. Before I would do*

*it, but now we talked about it. I put her in a separate bedroom and turn the light off. I am trying to live discussing all my daughter's issues with my husband.*

Yume also thinks about the question in terms of making allowances and caring, but she appears concerned about her marital relationship as well. She points out, that she tries to include her husband in her childcare, in order to strengthen their joint relationship.

Kiyomi reflects about her relationship in a concerned way:

*You don't balance it. Until the child is big, you are not a couple anymore. (...) You give up being a couple once the child is born. Then you can go back to it. I guess so. It's not like you come back to being a couple but it's again a priority. When the child is small, the relationship gives priority to your relationship with the child. I was not uneasy about it. When the children grow up and leave the parents... Still, the couple is left. Now I am also working, so it's not going well. There are many people getting divorced.*

Similarly to the previous interviewees, she admits that at the first years after the childbirth, the child needs to become a priority, at least on the level of everyday childcare. However, on the level of relationship, she points out that the marital one lasts longer and that's what possibly makes it stronger in the long-run. Therefore, she is concerned about the future of her relationship.

So-Young disagrees with the popular idea, that in South Korea children are expected to be the priority members of the nuclear family:

*I still think my husband is priority number one. But my children need me more than my husband, so they keep, he feels probably, he is number two. But in my mind, he is number one. (...) That means, in the family in Korea the mother and father usually gave the priority number one to children. Especially education. I don't think it's a good way to raise them. It's not good influence to children. But there are many families. (...) the husband and wife are primarily husband and wife and then the children come, yes.*

So-Young admits, that she ends up spending more time and care on the children, because

they need her more. But contrary to what Yayoi and Eun-Ji said previously, that doesn't change her attitude towards her husband as being her priority. Even if that's only on the internalized level. What is also interesting, is that she sees her marital relationship as a role model for her children. She sees her responsibility in presenting a good marital relationship role mother for her children.

Min-Ji describes the way the relationship changes after children are born:

*The relationship changes. Before my daughter, always when he went to work, he kissed me, but he didn't after. After I have a baby, I don't know why. Just it was not natural, it is not natural. Because I always kissed my daughter and I pour my attachment to my daughter. Always I kiss her, I hug her. So, I thought my energy gives to my daughter. (...) The relationship changed for worse (laughter). Both of us put taking care, loving our daughter on the top. I think my daughter is my world. But as my daughter is growing up the thought is not that changed. But someday she doesn't want my too much love. So, I have to get ready to have her own world. We have to! (...) My daughter sleeps with my husband and me (daughter). But it's OK. So, the relationship... I think it's kind of different. The relationship with my husband is getting worse in case of attachment or loving. But both of us have responsibility for our daughter. But being together is much harder. (...) Even though we don't like each other like before.*

Min-Ji appears to have a feeling, that her love is lacking for both. What love she “uses” on her daughter, she doesn't have spare for her husband. She also feels unnatural about giving him the same type of affection she is giving her daughter. Women often admit to feeling that the child's love is a different kind of love in itself. It is often seen as superior, purer or unconditional. For the woman, her child can “provide a kind of unconditional love that relationships with men did not”<sup>74</sup>. In the following section, I will present, how women themselves see the newly-built loving relationship with their child in comparison to previously known romantic love.

---

<sup>74</sup> Douglas, Susan J., and Meredith W. Michaels. *The Mommy Myth: The Idealization of Motherhood and How It Has Undermined Women*. New York: Free, 2004. P.26

## 6.2 Childbearing as an Emotional Reward

When asked about the benefits of motherhood, the women often described the emotional gains that they received from their children. They expressed a sense of reward and gratefulness for the appearance of their children in their lives, even if they often admitted that it was bound with a level of sacrifice and suffering.

Kiyomi describes that mother-child relationship:

*I became rich in many ways. I don't care if I die, the child is most important for me. (...) I don't know the life of a person who doesn't have children, because I do. For me, without my children, I couldn't be happy. But I don't think women can't be happy without children. (...) Children are indeed hard, but also fun. It's fun to live with someone, you get a friend.*

For Kiyomi, children are the source of joy, as well as the condition sine qua non of her happiness. She mentions the sacrificial, uneven character of the relationship, when saying that she is willing to die for her children. That sacrifice is also described by Yu-Ri, who mentioned that understanding of motherhood in the quotes presented in the previous section:

*(...) I feel if there's no children, no descendants, what does that mean? I mean, there are kind of, for me children give me energy to work hard. To live for. Everything they mean actually for me. (...) So, it's sacrificial. Everything, I have to sacrifice myself economically, emotionally, especially time. I have no time myself no time! (...)*

Yu-Ri sees her children as the source of the meaning of life. They also serve as a motivation for working hard. Soon-Yi sees it in a similar way:

*But still mother is love. (...) Mother doesn't want anything from her children, right? Just person give love only, one way.*

Soon-Yi also points out that the relationship between the child and the mother is unequal. So-Young doesn't agree with that in her statement:

*Become a mom is very, happy experience. To be loved perfectly by children. Children give me a lot*

*of joy and happiness, even if they have another feeling. Yes, it is very thankful to be a mom.*

The children provide a perfect love, otherwise unavailable at the other sources. Mari describes the way that her mothering filled a void left by her own mother:

*With my mother I used to talk a lot on the phone. But she didn't come to my sports events or to school. I wanted her to come, but my mother was not a very attentive mother. It wasn't sweet. I had that complex and I was lonely. I felt really warm about getting married. If I get married, I never wanted to divorce no matter what. (...)*

Mari wanted to fill the loneliness of her childhood with new relationships through getting married and having a different type of relationship with her children. She ended up getting divorced as of recently, but her children continue to provide her with that relationship. Na-Young also admits that the marital relationship is in its core different than the mother-child relationship:

*Motherhood. Motherhood is, being a, motherhood, giving a chance to love someone else a lot. Because I love my husband but it's different. Children is like a different, clear love. What I mean, children, children can love someone else, but I can be more generous to someone else. Because before I have child, I was not the most generous person ever. Once I gave birth to a child then I can be more generous, before I work for the society as well. So, from that way I think having child give me chance to love somebody. That way is good. This is really happy to have, to love someone. What I mean, my spouse it was really hard for me to love him all the time. For children, regardless of what happen, regardless of what kind of situation I am in, I can love them all the time. Regardless of what they are doing to me, I can love me. So is very good to have someone to love.*

Na-Young was able to create an unconditional love towards her children, that the relationship with her husband could not provide. She sees motherhood as something graciously granted to her, a chance to grow and experience a new, superior type of love.

Na-Young has also described the way that becoming a mother changed her personality. It helped her become more generous, a better person. Min-Ji also thinks that having children has made

her character better:

*My character is very changed. Before giving birth, I pay attention to myself. And I had no open mind to those who I don't know. I tried to open my mind to many people. (...) But I think I love to take care of my daughter very much. It was very interesting because also I teach her. And I think make a person and making a person is very interesting. I thought I have a talent to make a person. And sometimes as I help her, her talent is getting open. It was very interesting, so sometimes I wanted to enjoy those days life.*

Min-Ji also finds it rewarding to find her new talent in creating a new person. Motherhood makes her enjoy the everyday life and makes it interesting. Mari also admits that the childbirth made her into a different person:

*(...) I wanted to grow, and I grew a lot. I changed a lot. I was the only child, so I only thought of myself. I didn't care for people, I wasn't kind. I didn't think about them at all. Now more than about eating myself, I think about feeding them. We take a bath together, wash hair together. I am not myself, I exist for someone else 24/7. That is a big change. It's a good thing.*

Mari goes as far as to say that she is not herself. She exists for someone else rather than for herself. She sees it as a part of the process of growing. Yuki feels very similar about the organisation of her everyday life around her children:

*Every day became a discovery. The kids were expressing themselves. And I made a lot of friends thanks to them. Other mothers who have children, in the city. My life is built around having children. And I am also growing thanks to that.*

She pointed out the ways in which having children benefited her life directly. Her friends group is wider now, and every day has become an interesting happening for her. Instead of mentioning the indirect happiness, lived through the children, Yuki sees the direct benefits from their presence in her life. Kyoko feels a similar excitement, when discovering, how different her children are from herself:

*I've felt how hard it is to take care of children. It's not only fun. It's also very hard. They have a different point of view than me. They are born from me, but their personality is different, their ways of thinking are different. It's interesting. It came out of my belly, but it's so different. It's a good experience.*

Lastly, Hyo-Rin comes back to the sacrificial character of the motherhood, but describes it as an extremely fulfilling emotional state:

*Because you wanna sacrifice everything just for them. And when you love somebody you have very strange feelings inside and when you have children, similar thing happens again. And it is longer lasting. I don't know when they grow up how I feel, maybe I would have empty nest syndrome. I don't know. But for now, I'm happy and if you would meet somebody you really loved desperately, I think it would be good to become a mother, to have your lover's child whom you made together. Cause it's half of you and half of spouse, right.*

For Hyo-Rin, having her child is like entering the state of being in love again. It is being awarded the strong feeling of the beginning of the relationship once again. Other than that, she also finds it beautiful to see her marital love materialize and her relationship to form a new human-being, who combines both of them in itself.

As presented in this section, the mother-child relationship is described by my interviewees as sacrificial, but also rewarding. It provides the emotional fulfilment otherwise unavailable or hard to attain through different sources. The women describe the emotions accompanying motherhood as in themselves worth making all of the necessary sacrifices.

In the following section, I will present, how the interviewees see the mothering as a rite of passage, as a type of a ritual that opens the door to new experiences and new identities.

### 6.3 Motherhood as a Rite of Passage

Many women see motherhood as one of their biggest accomplishments. Childbirth can be seen as a rite of passage and is an identity-forming experience. Yume says:

*Getting married is also nice. But after getting married becoming a mother, that is what is a very important experience for women.*

Motherhood is an experience that truly unites women in the way that marriage, shared with men, cannot possibly do. In this section I will look at having children not in the terms of direct and indirect benefits, but rather as a life-changing experience, the beginning of a new life in a new identity, and simultaneously the ultimate way of complementing the previous life experience. Yayoi puts it simply yet poignantly:

*My life has created a fruit.*

In the previous section, we looked at the way childbirth was responsible for self-growth and personality change. Here, I would like to look at it from the stand-point of a new identity, as described here by Hyo-Rin:

*(...) Motherhood... It's more difficult. It's to learn the world, how to deal with the world and how to manage the world. By becoming a mother, I started to look at the world more differently, more objectively. Because I have to explain the world to another person. If they have the same questions as I do, I really get perplexed, because I don't know what to answer. So, they make me become more philosophic. And they make me think more, they make me read more, think more, and be... Yeah, that's it.*

According to Hyo-Rin, the mother has to change, because the growth of her child demands that. In a way, childbirth takes the woman backwards, forcing her to learn the world in the new way from the beginning. Therefore, personal growth is a necessity, that leads to creating a new, “philosophic” personality. Mika describes the feelings of accomplishment accompanying the personal growth:

*The good thing is that all fell into place. Before I lived with the child, I would sometimes work overnight. I wouldn't care so much about food, things like that. So, for the child, everything had to be made correct. (...) there are more good sides to having children. When you have a child, you see the world in a different way, the humans relations you have are growing, you meet other moms and so on. I have a sense of community now, I have a lot of relationships with people around me. My life became richer. (...) I think motherhood is a great thing. It is very important. It is very important, but you can also get a lot of sense of fulfilment and a sense of accomplishment. You get the sense of tranquillity. You are the only person who can grow your own child, there is no one else who can do it. You must change a lot. A lot must be changed. A job is something anyone can do, I don't have to do it, someone else can do it. Bringing the child up is the thing only I can do. It makes me feel like I am on my own, only by myself.*

Not only did Mika's personality change, but also her community grew. Similarly to Hyo-Rin's "philosophical" personality, Mika achieved a sense of tranquillity and accomplishment, through changing herself according to the need of the child. Mika has a survival sense of being on her own. Even though she created her child with her husband, the following process of bringing the child up is something that can only be done by herself. There is a sense of pride felt in those words, rather than loneliness or a complaint.

For Kyoko, changing her surname to the husband's surname has been a source of mixed feelings at the beginning:

*You change your point of view. Your point of view is different. You change your name, it's a surprise at the beginning. For 20 years you had the same name and now it's different.*

That issue is specific to Japan, where married partners are still required by law to bear the same surname. In South Korea, where women do not change their surnames after getting married, such an issue would not arise.

Eun-Ji explains also thinks that having children is an important experience for women, but

she respects women who choose otherwise:

*It can be different for every person. I know very many people cannot get pregnant or don't want to be pregnant. Don't want baby. Their character is like that. I think it's OK, but if you can and if you want, being a mother is a very valuable experience for woman. Because I was very happy when I was pregnant and get bigger and bigger. She kicked my belly. It was very amazing, magical. And I felt it cannot be expressed but it was very amazing. And I think it's kind of honours, glorious experience for women to be mother. Because you cannot know before you to be mother, you just can realize if, when you to be a mother.*

Eun-Ji uses the word “magical” to describe her pregnancy. She sees it as an “honour” to be bearing a life in her growing belly. She describes the experience in very physical terms, as a very enjoyable time of her life. Kiyomi describes a mystical element in her pregnancy:

*I can't explain it in general terms. Before I got pregnant, I lived in a usual way. Soon after I got pregnant, I saw a dream. Through it, I understood I was pregnant. I thought it was very mysterious, I had a weird feeling. It was a sign from within. The child gave me a sign and I understood it. Even though I was unsure, and a lot of things changed for the worse, I didn't give up.*

Here, the relationship between the child and the mother is something mystical, yet physical. Kiyomi also says that she didn't give up in the face of difficulties, which brings back the notion of motherhood as an accomplishment.

In this section, I presented the range of emotions of fulfilment, that accompany having children. Whether the accomplishment comes from within or is rather a social construct created through the notion of sacrifice and suffering, is debatable. However, through their self-reported experience, my interviewees described their mothering as an experience of value in itself, without putting it in terms of gains and losses.

## 6.4 Mother as a Natural and Essential Caregiver

In this section, I will present different ways, in which my interviewees perceive mothering as a natural role for a female. I will also present the way in which, the other way, mother is presented as an essential being for the child. I will the biological essentialist notions on how different female qualities account for her superior role in childcare, that the male partner is unable to supersede<sup>75</sup>. I will show the different notions of femininity, as presented by my interviewees, which often become combined with the notions of appropriate parenthood<sup>76</sup>.

As explained before “women’s childbearing ability is not (...) the product of socialization but is instead the product of factor’s specific to female biology. Biology (...) has rendered women better able than man to care for children”<sup>77</sup>. The logic behind this argument is often presented in a loop – because women have been taking care of children throughout the human history they must “have been endowed by biology with an instinct to help them in that task”<sup>78</sup>. Most of my interviewees present a version of that thinking, such as Yayoi:

*Mother is the most important for the child. It’s the person that the child spends most time with. So right now, I am the most important person for her. (...) Well, women are more caring, they are better at taking care. They wonder what the child wants now. A father may understand it as well, but mother is the number one.*

Yayoi combines in her thinking the characteristics of stereotypical femininity and mothering figure. We can see the same looping argument of women being more knowing of children’s needs, because they spend more time with them, as well as the general idea that women tend to be more caring. Mari uses the term “natural” often to describe the idea of motherhood:

---

<sup>75</sup> Sayers, Janet. *Biological Politics: Feminist and Antifeminist Perspectives*. London: Tavistock, 1986. Print P.149

<sup>76</sup> DiQuinzio, Patrice, *The Impossibility of Motherhood: feminism, individualism, and the problem of mothering*. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print P. XIII

<sup>77</sup> Sayers, Janet. *Biological Politics: Feminist and Antifeminist Perspectives*. London: Tavistock, 1986. Print. P.149

<sup>78</sup> Op.cit. P.149

*(...) A lot of my friends do not have many children. I also thought the same. Later on, I thought it's natural, that I soon will have children, I will soon give birth. And then I will take care of my children. I thought of it as a standard, I thought it was only natural. I have a lot of friends who couldn't have children and were sad about it, even though they wanted them from the beginning. I thought of women who don't have children as miserable... But also, when you think of the people who want children but can't have them... (...)*

Mari sees it as a natural thing for women to have children feels pity for her friends and women who can't have them. Yuki also sees motherhood as a natural, when answering the question on whether mothers should work:

*It depends on the person. But when they devote the time for work, instead of devoting it to their children, they cannot enjoy the growth of their children. So, I think it's wasteful. It depends on the person's priorities. There are different opinions and priorities that women have. I had an ideal situation. I didn't work, I was enjoying the time with my kids, I was playing and having fun with them every day.*

Yuki does see devoting the time for children as more important than devoting it for work. Even though she does say that women have different priorities, when asked whether all women should become mothers, she answers:

*Yes. They will be happy. You can become truly happy only once you have a child.*

Min-Ji points out that the relationship between the mother and child is special:

*(...) Childhood of a baby, they need to be cured or to be taken care of by their mothers. They have to. Because her mind and her.... Children's minds depend on her mothers.*

As presented in the previous section, according to Min-Ji motherhood is based on a dependency relationship with an infant. Here, this dependency is presented by Yume in comparison to the relationship with the father:

*There are people who have no confidence to become mother, but once you become one, if you have the willingness to do so, people who can should become mothers. Don't you think? Not that they are forced to though. (...) I think the mother is the most important person in the child's life. When they are sad, it's not the dad, but the mother who consoles them.*

Mika also describes this special relationship between the child and the mother:

*More than thinking that I want a kid, I felt that I want to get married and of course then the child will follow, but I didn't love children that much. I felt that it will all come naturally. People are different, but if somebody wants to, they should. If they don't, it's not bad. They have more time to have fun. (...) Mothers spend the most time with them. Even if you are the only child, you have your mom. She is the one who plays with you, she spends a lot of time with you. (...) I think it's important to feel like you are doing it together. Men are reluctant at first, but once the child gets bigger, they become better at that. It's important to feel you are in this together, for him to feel like it's his own child.*

Mika mentions a lot of interesting points here. Firstly, the motherhood that came naturally in the deal with marriage. Secondly, that the mothers are the ones who spend the most time with their children. Here, the loop idea that mothers are better at taking care of their children, because they spend more time with their children is reflected again. Lastly, Mika describes the way that the father's relationship with his child has to be built and encouraged, rather than comes naturally, the way the female relationship does. She calls men "reluctant at first", but willing to participate in childcare later on. In Mika's case it is especially interesting, as she admits her husband's will was the reason for her eventually deciding to have children. I will explore the idea of male participation in childcare in the following section. Eun-Ji was involved into certain type of economical negotiations with her husband:

*(...) But I think it, if my husband can take care of baby better than me and I can earn money more than him, we can change our jobs. And if the baby is happy, is happier. I don't care about that. But*

*he likes his job and he likes to be. Of course, he wants to be with her. But we have to earn some money. We decided, to child mommy is better. Better than dad.*

In the interviews conducted in an American High School, Arlene Tigar McLaren has asked students of both sexes on their attitudes towards childcare and labour division<sup>79</sup>. In the results of her survey, both girls and boys often express an opinion, that the person who earns significantly less in the couple should become the main childcare provider, i.e. do the mothering. However, when boys are asked in the following questions, whether they would be willing to follow up with that decision if they were the ones earning less, they back out<sup>80</sup>. The results of the study suggest that the idea of basing the childcare decision on the payroll is rather used per factum as an explanation for gendered role division, rather than an actual rule for decision making. Whether that can be applied to Japan is yet something to find out.

Lastly, I would also like to follow up with Eun-Ji's later explanation of what motherhood has meant for her:

*Motherhood is being a mother (laugh). Some kind of process... Because I feel I'm not being a mother perfectly. I'm still, say help me my mom, help me mother in law. So, this is process. And as she grows up, I am growing up too. As a baby, as a mother. We can grow together. And growing is kinda changing. Many things changing, but this is not bad thing. I think it's for good than... it's good for me and for a person. Mother is just mother, as a person I am growing. I think motherhood is educated thing, it's not natural. Because I thought if I have a birth, the motherhood and feelings like mother, pop up like this. But it wasn't. When I saw the baby, it was an amazing thing. Because when I saw the media oh my baby like this, this is so beautiful. But it was very busy. Doctors came, nurses came and first the baby, it was very ugly. It was like, covered with blood. Looks really ugly. Not pretty, not beautiful thing. So, I thought oh this is very ugly baby, how can I live with this baby.*

---

<sup>79</sup> McLaren, Arlene Tigar. "Coercive Invitations: How Young Women in School Make Sense of Mothering and Waged Labour." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 17.3 (1996): 279-98. JSTOR. Web. 15 Jan. 2016. P.11

<sup>80</sup> Op.cit. P.8

*There is no motherhood. No feelings of very glorious mom, there's not. But being mother is also growing as the baby grow up. And educated. I have to study about the baby, what is baby's development, I have to search and studied a lot. I think motherhood is also a little bit like grown up, this is not a natural thing. But we have to try our best to be a mother and to be a good mother. This is natural. This is not every mother has to sacrifice for the babies. No. I think I don't agree with that. This is educated and have to be grown up. (...)*

Eun-Ji describes motherhood as a learnt set of behaviours and describes her surprise as she didn't get the mothering feelings after her birth. In here, we have to come back to Silvia Vegetti Finzi, who points out how absolutely unskilled women are in their first attempts at childcare, and how each of their actions have to be learnt<sup>81</sup>.

In this section, the interviewees expressed her ideas on the natural character of the mothering. However, we should remember that the existence of so-called "maternal instinct", even if someday concluded by neural science, does not lead to all women inevitably becoming mothers. There is a leap between the idea, that women are better equipped towards motherhood and the conclusion that therefore women should be the ones doing the mothering.

## 6.5 Male Attitudes to Childcare

Male unwillingness to taking on childcare is very important for the reproduction of mothering by women. As Nancy Chodorow writes, "Men don't rear children because they don't want to rear children. (This implies, of course, that they're in the position to enforce their preferences"<sup>82</sup>. Because of the sex-gender system built around the division of labour always including women's mothering in the confinement of the heterosexual marriage, male unwillingness

---

<sup>81</sup> Vegetti Finzi, Silvia, *Mothering: Towards a New Psychoanalytic Construction*. New York: The Guilford Press, 1996. Print. P.122

<sup>82</sup> Chodorow, Nancy. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Berkeley: U of California, 1978. Print. P.31

of taking on mothering is rarely questioned, and the female one is taken for granted<sup>83</sup>.

When arguing for female access to professional work, the wins of the feminists in the West was only partial. Women have indeed gained access to professional work, but male engagement in childcare did not follow. At the same time, as Janet Sayers writes: “(...) thesis that women can achieve equality with men through pursuing different activities from them might have been a viable goal in the past. The historical development of our own society, however, has entailed the progressive subordination of domestic labour to social production. (...) As a result, production within the home can no longer be equal in importance and worth with production outside the home. (...) women can now only hope to achieve full equality with men through participating equally with them in social production – in production outside the home.”<sup>84</sup>. What that means, is that the social competition has been confined to the workforce. That deems the childcare less attractive and counterproductive to achieving a social status, as well as often seen as economically unworthy or in the best-case scenario neutral. That can be used an explanation as to why men are not willing to participate in childcare on the level that women do.

In this section I will provide a few testimonies of my interviewees, on how did the division of chores in their households come to be. First, Kiyomi explains the way she did it:

*We didn't talk about sharing chores. During the second child, the economy wasn't good, so I didn't get any help.*

I then ask, whether it was a natural decision for her to take on the childcare.

*Hard question. His income is overwhelmingly higher than mine. Because we needed it, this chore share couldn't be helped.*

As stated in the previous section, the higher income of men is often used as a reason for choosing the mother to leave her work. The husband's busy schedule is the reason for necessary

---

<sup>83</sup> Chodorow, Nancy. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Berkeley: U of California, 1978. P.9

<sup>84</sup> Sayers, Janet. *Biological Politics: Feminist and Antifeminist Perspectives*. London: Tavistock, 1986. Print. P.153-154

accommodations on the woman's side, such as in the case of Yume:

*He doesn't have time, he wakes up early and comes back late. When he comes back home earlier, we eat together, we try to make time to meet in the morning as well. Sometimes he takes her to the kindergarten, he helps a lot.*

The word "help" ( 助けている ) was often used by the Japanese interviewees when describing their husband's childcare. Yayoi uses it here while describing the ideal husband material according to her parents:

*When I was a kid, I was told to get married to a rich man. I was told to find someone rich, because life in Japan is expensive. (...) About the rich man part, a certain level of income is needed in Japan, and also for the everyday life, it's important to get certain income. Some men don't work, and I think it's fine. But I think it's important to be with someone who works and is a part of the society. And also, a person that helps out is great.*

Kyoko also uses the word "help" when talking about her husband's involvement:

*When children are small, it's more important to devote your time to them. It's good to do things for yourself to some extent, even go to work... it's also important. The husband should also put some effort into helping with house chores and childrearing, the wife could also work. My husband can't do any housework at all, so it's a little bit... If I worked, it would become a lot, together with house chores and childcare... (...) He doesn't really take care of them. Compared to what I hear from other people, my husband doesn't do much. He doesn't change the diapers. He doesn't put them to bath. Can't say it's nice... (...) I would like my husband to engage more, with the kid. I would like my husband and my daughter to bond a little more. (...) I want my husband to remember about house chores. I want to work. (...)*

Kyoko expresses her dissatisfaction with her husband's involvement in childcare, especially in comparison with her friends' husbands' involvement level. Kyoko's husband is presented as

someone who can't be trusted with childcare – he is unskilled with housework and often forgets his chores. Kyoko expresses her will to go back to work, but it's impossible because of the amount of childcare and housework. Soon-Yi also describes her husband as bad in housework:

*My husband cares really wrong. My daughter and my husband they really good friends, more than me. Problem is my husband, you know Samsung, he is working for Samsung, loads of work. Can go very early and then come back very late. That's only problem.*

Again, the work is an obstacle for Soon-Yi's husband involvement in childcare. However, he is still benefiting on the emotional level of his relationship with their daughter. Mika is another interviewee who describes her husband's childcare as insufficient:

*I felt a little pressure from my husband. I take care of the child more than him, I do all the house work, I am very efficient in it. Because I am efficient, I end up doing everything. So, the number of things I need to do is ever growing. When I try to do my job, I feel like burdening my husband, so I feel the pressure. He would say something like "It's OK if you don't do it", about my job. So, I feel pressure. A pressure from my husband. (...) I am satisfied. I am only a little bit satisfied, but I feel like there is no other way around it, so I am happy.*

She admits to feeling pressure to leave her part-time job and take on full-time childcare from her husband. Rather than help with childcare, the husband sees the solution for her overwhelming burden in leaving her job. That seems to be a common theme. Another common theme is the feeling that there is no other way around it, that many interviewees express, like Na-Young here:

*Ah... I was not happy about that but I'm just accepting it. Because as I work, I know the Korean culture, the business, especially for the male area. You need to hang around together. And then there are lot of things happening that meetings after dinner. I know that. So that's why to support my husband I think it's better for him to spend like four days out of five with his colleagues. But I'm not happy but accepting it.*

Na-Young admits she is not happy with the arrangement, dictated by the Korean society rules, but sees no other way than to accept it. A very interesting account comes from Min-Ji, who tells me, that she decided to divide the chores equally with her husband. After the childbirth however, the husband decided to opt out of the arrangement:

*And he told me you could get your job and you could keep your job after marriage, so I agree with him. (...) Yeah, yeah, yeah! Many people think after marriage most men is changed. After marriage. And they are not the same or not similar with the date life. In my case and my friends also like that. I wanted to divide chores 50-50 but he didn't want, and he was not good at having chores and cleaning and washing. Because his mom didn't let him do like that. Because of that we have quarrelled many times why didn't you do house working? Because at that time I was very busy working and I stayed all night long to have a script. So, I had no time to have chores. So, I asked him, but he didn't concern. He didn't care about that. (...) I told and told for a long time. He was changed for a little (laughter). And I gave it up. Men was not changed. And many people said like that. Most men are not changed. Don't consume your energy to make man changed.*

After her efforts to engage her husband with housework proved inefficient, finally, Min-Ji conceded her efforts to teach him. His inability could have been produced by his upbringing or the lack of care, as Min-Ji insinuates.

Lastly, the Hyo-Rin's detailed description of childcare division is again one of husband's inability and unwillingness to participate:

*Well, because I'm not spending much time on working, I don't really push him to be as responsible as I am. Because well, some moms do expect a lot of things from their husband and if they work outside the house I would say, yeah that's fair, but I'm the one who is supposed to take care of the children and supposed to do the housework. So, when my husband comes back home with a very tired body I don't wanna ask him to do a house chore, because he has done his role already, I think. But during the weekend I wanna spend time with him, so if... Well, at the beginning of our marriage*

*life he spent most of the weekends to work, to research. He's a researcher at the time, he works. And I complained a lot and children were born and they were really young, and he had to go to the lab to conduct experiment and I was so sad, but he had to because, well, he had to get a job to conduct a career. I understood. And now he is in a better situation, so in this situation if he has to work during the weekend, I would be sad. Well, he does spend time with us during the weekend, so that's enough. I don't wanna ask him to spend more time during the weekdays or to be more responsible so if for example, if my children have to find a tutor to teach them how to play the piano or cello or sports, this sort of things, I always do the research. For example, if we go somewhere, I always do the research, to book a hotel, to book an aeroplane ticket, this sort of things. Well, I'm OK. Because he's already busy too much, so I'm OK. (...) How come? No, we didn't talk (laughter). I think I loved him too much so most of the things I just sacrificed. I didn't have a conversation about that at all. (...) It came natural, natural. Yeah. I didn't even think I would give up, I never thought, but when the moment came, when I got pregnant and I was done with my coursework and I was writing my dissertation and I already had 100 pages and then I actually couldn't. If there was somebody who was helping me to do the housework, I could have finished maybe. But there was nobody who could help me, and my husband was always out to do research. And I couldn't do it. So, I just stopped.*

I continue to ask her, whether she thinks if her husband was more involved in childcare, she could have finished her PhD.

*I never thought so. Maybe. But I never thought that way because to me he always looked too busy, I could not dare ask him to help me. Cause sometimes he couldn't even speak because of his heavy work, duty. Well maybe it could've been nice if he could do so, but I think if I had more money, I could hire somebody to work as my nanny, then I could've probably finished my degree, but then I couldn't. (...) I never asked him, and I've never thought about it!*

For Hyo-Rin, asking her husband for help was out of question, because of his busy research

career. However, she doesn't apply the same logic to herself. She admits she sacrificed her educational goals out of love for her husband.

In the case of Hyo-Rin, as the previously quoted interviewees' as well, the organisation of childcare is often a result of "natural" processes or the mother giving in and doing the childcare because "someone has to do it".

Mika wonders what type of person not complying with the social expectations of doing the childcare on her own would make her:

*I thought about it when I was a child. I did everything for my children. I made food for my husband, I wanted to prepare really good food. I was a housewife. I did everything for my children, I cared for them all the time on my own. In Japan it's different than in Europe, the couple is always staying in love, but in Japan children are the most important. If my husband was getting up to take care of children, what type of person would that make me? I would be thought of as a problem, disturbance.*

*I worked hard and did my best only for my children.*

The male learnt helplessness is treated with understanding that the female, who is supposedly equipped with a maternal instinct, doesn't get. In the next section, I will present the different ways in which the father plays a role in the family and in the child's life and different tasks, that are specific to men in the parenthood, according to my interviewees.

## 6.6 The Role of a Father

As described in the previous section, men are often expected to form a type of relationship with their children, that is very different from their relationship with their mothers. What is expected of them is often presented in the form of emotional and intellectual aid much more than the everyday tasks that the mothers do. It goes very much in line with the findings from the previous chapter, showing that mothers are responsible for the everyday decisions, while fathers

take care of the more crucial ones.

In this section I will briefly present the image of fathers, that emerges from my interviews. The image is very coherent on both South Korean and the Japanese side and all of the interviewees describe the father within the terms of a provider and a friend/teacher figure for their children.

Yayoi summarizes it shortly:

*I don't think a father has such a strong image. In Japan. He has to provide money, help with the education, explain the world. He can be their friend.*

Yume goes on to describe it very similarly:

*Someone who plays together with them, even when there is no time, he must play with them. I think. Every day, normally, from morning to evening just a little bit each time. It is important to have a lot of communication.*

Yume thinks the father's relationship is very important and built on communication and play. For Min-Ji's husband building of a relationship was important enough to quit the job for a year. He is the only husband of an interviewee who got involved with childcare on that level. Here, Min-Ji answers the question on father's role:

*Not that much, I think. If they play with their children, it's a good chance for children to get better social life. And sometimes especially in case of my husband. He quit his job for a year, one year. To help me and to take care of my daughter.*

Yuki also sees the emotional care of a father as crucial for the children:

*He must become a person they can trust, they can rely on. They should give them unbelievable amount of love. Just every day, no matter what. Without any troubles.*

The emotional role of the father seems to be especially important for the male children, as described by a few interviewees. Mari puts it in those words:

*Usually, boys look up to their father, especially as they become teenagers. Boys can learn a lot of things from their father, because they only have me, they can't learn those things to become adults and that's very pitiful situation.*

Mari expresses a similar sentiment:

*When boys become adults, they learn their behaviour from fathers. There is no one like the father. For example, with friends' father, my boy thinks very highly of them, no matter what kind of person they are. They want to become however their fathers were, protecting their family and being gentle.*

In here, we can see that the father figure can also be irreplaceable in the way that the mother has been previously presented as. Kiyomi agrees, as well as points at the importance of father's social standing for the children:

*It depends on the child's sex. We only have daughters so it's hard to say. He needs to scold the children when needed. It's great if the father was a figure respected in the society. He should help in certain situations. And also, his social standing changes because he becomes a father. If you have a boy, he could consult him, talk about... it would be easier to consult a man. In that sense a role of the father may be necessary.*

Finally, Yu-Ri stresses again the value of the father's outside work:

*He had to provide economically, we need a lot of money because I didn't work to take care of our children. So, he takes that part. So, I have to take care of my children at home, at all. When my twins are four, I started doing something.*

In this short section I provided the image of the father in the eyes of my interviewees. The complimentary role of the father is crucial for understanding the main role of the mother. It is evident, that the father can only play a complimentary role, as long as the mother plays the main role in bringing up the children, and vice versa.

## 6.7 Summary

In this chapter, I have presented the traces of essentialist biological theoretical thinking in the way my interviewees describe their experience of mothering. It cannot, however, be taken as conclusive evidence of evolutionarily developed mothering skills and “innate factors” existing in women<sup>85</sup>. Women could be using the terms that have been introduced to them through the social discourse or even use them consciously as a way of “explaining” themselves, as in the previously provided example of boys choosing the lower paid employee for the task of unpaid childcare in their future families<sup>86</sup>.

In the first sections, I provided different descriptions of fulfilment gained from taking care of children, that the interviewed women expressed. The pleasure taken from mothering is definitely a huge factor helping women to make the decision, just as presented in the previous chapter in the case of getting married. Even though women are presented with a variety of choices in the capitalistic society, they still often opt for the options that provide them with emotional gains. In the case of East Asian society, the frame within which those gains can be achieved, is a narrow one. In order to achieve the love and fulfilment coming from childcare and marriage, women need to “sacrifice”, as often described by my interviewees. The marriage and childcare are a gamble with stakes higher than in the Western societies. When observing the falling marriage and fertility rates in East Asia, one can wonder whether those stakes can be even too high nowadays.

In the following sections, it becomes evident, that male unwillingness to play the role in bringing up the children is one of the deciding factors for predominantly female mothering. Because of the female inferior position in the relationship, male attitudes, taking childcare for granted and unwillingness to take over, lead to woman ending up being the “somebody” that has to take over the

---

<sup>85</sup> Sayers, Janet. *Biological Politics: Feminist and Antifeminist Perspectives*. London: Tavistock, 1986. Print. P.152

<sup>86</sup> McLaren, Arlene Tigar. "Coercive Invitations: How Young Women in School Make Sense of Mothering and Waged Labour." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 17.3 (1996): 279-98. *JSTOR*. Web. 15 Jan. 2016 P.9

role of a primary caregiver<sup>87</sup>.

The importance of establishing a satisfactory work-life balance, as well as equitable solution to the childcare and housework division, cannot be understated. In the new order of capitalism, the social equity of women can be achieved through higher male involvement in the childcare<sup>88</sup>.

---

<sup>87</sup> McLaren, Arlene Tigar. "Coercive Invitations: How Young Women in School Make Sense of Mothering and Waged Labour." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 17.3 (1996): 279-98. *JSTOR*. Web. 15 Jan. 2016. P.7

<sup>88</sup> Sayers, Janet. *Biological Politics: Feminist and Antifeminist Perspectives*. London: Tavistock, 1986. Print. P.149

## 7. Outside Reasonings for taking on Mothering

In this chapter I will explore the theory of socialisation, as presented through the eyes of my interviewees. As described before, the theory “emphasizes the internalization of norms and prescription and links personality to social structure”<sup>89</sup>. According to the socialisation theory, mothering is being reproduced through social agents such as media, families, schools and peer groups. Women are coerced into becoming mothers through exposure to messages about their female identity. The patriarchal society presents them with available sets of social meanings and practices, out of which mothering is presented as a necessity<sup>90</sup>. I will explain the direct and indirect influence of the society and the above-mentioned groups on the female choices.

In this chapter, I will also explore the psychoanalytical theory of reproducing mothering in cycles, developed by Nancy Chodorow. According to that theory, children learn through observing and copying behaviour of the same-sex parent.

According to Nancy Chodorow, children are raised in families where women mother. That means men are reproduced by women and women are reproduced by women. That also means that growing up in the families where women mother leads to expectations of women mothering.

Because of the relational relationship that women have with mothers and other female caretakers, they end up assuming a similar role, while male children's identification requires negating identification with their caretakers. According to that theory woman's mothering “reproduces itself cyclically”<sup>91</sup>.

Nancy Chodorow also points out, that for mothering to take place, women do not only have to accept a certain set of behaviours, but also, they need to create a new type of relationship with their baby, which I have already explained in the previous chapter, when comparing the specifics of

---

<sup>89</sup> McLaren, Arlene Tigar. "Coercive Invitations: How Young Women in School Make Sense of Mothering and Waged Labour." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 17.3 (1996): 279-98. *JSTOR*. Web. 15 Jan. 2016. P.2

<sup>90</sup> *Op.cit.* P.5

<sup>91</sup> Chodorow, Nancy. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Berkeley: U of California, 1978. Print. P.6

a mother-child bond as opposed to the marital bond between the parents<sup>92</sup>. In this chapter, we will also explore the specifics of the other relationships within the family.

Neither the society nor the family exist in the vacuum. More often than not, social influence is strengthened by the pressures expressed by the family and vice versa. In this chapter I am doing my best in separating the copying of behaviours from the direct pressures, but often in my interviewees' statements, they become mixed up altogether. Also, in their final remarks when answering the question on the agents influencing their mothering, women often pointed at both direct and indirect social influence, as well as copying their parents' behaviours.

## 7.1 East Asian Society

In this chapter, I will describe the different social forces specific for the East Asian society, as seen by my interviewees. Yayoi talks very excessively during her interview about the influence that the Japanese society has on the Japanese women. She describes her direct experience as well, as well as the situation of women the way she understands it:

*Having children is considered something incredible in Japan, so marriage is a good thing, but I do not necessarily think getting married is good for women. (...) Taking care of children is still considered a woman's thing. Also, tuition fees are high, so the decision about working has to be made by everyone themselves. (...) In general, right? That's the general way of thinking in Japan. Since long time ago, you would get married, have children, do house chores. Men would be outside, work, support the family financially, that is how it has been understood. Everyone would ask "When will you have children?", "Why don't you have them yet?", that's how it was. (...) Now I think it's a little sad. It is only expected of women to have patience and resilience. Not to work, to stay at home. When I think about it, when women don't work, they become lonely. After quitting, it's very*

---

<sup>92</sup> Chodorow, Nancy. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Berkeley: U of California, 1978. Print P.173

*hard to go back to work. That's why they end up only able to do part-time jobs. (...) It's like that. In the end, we are influenced by the society's images. By the economy, by people saying "Aren't you gonna have children? When are you gonna have a child?". Maybe I had a child because of all that pressure.*

Yayoi wonders, whether her decision on having children was influenced directly through people asking her about her status, as well as indirectly through copying of the "society's images". It is a common sentiment found throughout the interviews. Even though all of my interviewees admit they are happy with their decision to have children and become the main caretaker of them, many of them recognize the outside factors that might have shaped their decision.

Kiyomi, who is very interested in sociology and social issues, reflects deeply on the issue: *It may be just a Japanese thing, but you are not really a married couple legally if the child is not born. The "family" doesn't start from two, but when you become three, four people. It is changing, but Japan is still not a couples' society.*

I ask her, whether she would describe Japan as a "family society":

*Exactly. People are not thought of as a part of a couple. They are thought of in terms of family. Couple relationship is not considered a family relationship. There is a natural change in the world, as couples with small children work. People bring their children up together. (...) There is still a long way until marriage becomes something legally equal in Japan. The law is the problem. For example, the surname change. Getting divorce is easy, but still horrible. In Japan, marriage law is like the constitution. The divorce can be problematic, and the family may interfere. Now the longevity is becoming a problem in Japan, elderly care is becoming a huge problem. Traditionally, the children would take care of the parents. It is still being thought of this way. Before 40 years, the marriage was something between homes. I don't think it's all bad, but women are the ones overburdened. It's very difficult. Also, economy is becoming harder, it's hard for women to find a*

*stable job. That makes some college students want to become housewives, for the stability. But for women, it's impossible to have children without suffering mental difficulties. (...) Men? They can decide freely. It's been like that traditionally. Generally, a married man was seen as a part of the society. A made human, of certain capacity. (...) But becoming a mother makes you socially stable in a sense. However, we live in a competitive society, being a mother is very negative. It seems that giving birth is fulfilling your role as a woman. So long as woman has no children, she can't be a real part of the society. Women are discriminated against if they do not give birth. There is no existential meaning to this woman. Women exist to give birth. It's not healthy. A woman becomes lonely. A lot of people think it's not like that anymore, but as long as there is economic power it is like that. (...) In 60s and 70s Japan, feminism was introduced, and its influence definitely shaped me. There was a gap between this and the intellectual academia. It's not to say that I am committed to the vision from the 70s. But according to that view, getting married and having children was truly "natural", a commonplace for women. That was understood. Even people who do get married, but have no children, or people with children who are not married meet with pressure. In my case, coming from a liberal family where father was helping out, I was not thinking of it as a commonplace at all. I was brought up to always think deeply about things. With the zeitgeist, I can say that. It wasn't that I didn't get any pressure, I was influenced by its image, but I think I made my decision myself. Not that I didn't have it.*

Her extensive reflection is interesting for a few reasons. Firstly, she recognizes the traditional patterns in the Japanese society coming from the Confucian ideology. According to the tradition, marriage took place between two families rather than between two people. Until the married couple has children, it was not seen as a legitimate family unit. Women ended up doing the traditional work of childcare and elderly care, while men worked "outside". However, after having had children, both women and men were respectively rewarded with a social status and the status of

fulfilment of the social roles. Kiyomi points out, that the society is changing, which creates hope, but new problems, such as lack of the proper elderly care, also arise.

Knowing the Japanese tradition and having been introduced to feminism, Kiyomi found herself considering her decision even more carefully. However, having known the both sides of the coin, she is convinced she was able to make the right decision for herself on her own.

So-Young describes the problem of the lack of child support in the South Korea:

*(...) Women in Korea they keep, keep considering, keep confused which I have to do. I have to choose work or choose children. I think it's because of social... Kind of social problem. If government give us some support to take care of children, we can stop. If we start work anytime when we are, need or we want, after raising children, you can do that but it's very hard to do that in Korea, nowadays, to have a job.*

I asked her why she thinks it's hard to get a job after raising children, whether the companies do not want to hire women:

*Yes, really. I think yes. And it's very hard to get a job when we are stop the job once. Yes, it's very hard to have a job, have some pause, and then come back to work.*

So-Young sees the problem in the economy rather than in the traditional roles. The problem is created through the inconsistency of the workforce situation of women. They are encouraged to devote themselves to childcare, but they are not awarded financially for their efforts. At the same time, if they reach out for additional support, even after having have completed their duty of raising children, they are not welcomed.

Min-Ji describes the pressure that the South Korean society puts on women regarding the children's education:

*Korean mothers recently want to push her education. Push her to high education. And I sometimes, I don't agree with them, because education is the second. Personality comes to the first. I think. But*

*many Korean moms education is more important than making personality. (...) Cause the children who get higher education and graduate from good university can get a good job. Good job means they can have a lot money. (...) Many Korean moms pursue to be helicopter mom. Some mom called to university professor to make him to give high score to her son. Sometimes Korean moms are arguing or telling that, why their sons are late to lecture, instead of their sons or their daughters. Even at the company! Even if their sons work at company, when the son gets into trouble with their supervisor, their mothers call the supervisor. So, I don't want to be that kind of mom.*

Min-Ji recognizes a clear pattern of focusing on the children's education, but she doesn't want to participate in it and she values good personality development of her children as the most important. From her response, we can conclude that education, which is followed by a good job and high income, is a goal in the South Korean society. That creates a huge discrepancy between the futures of male and female children. While both are encouraged to aim high in their education and career, female children become discouraged from continuing their careers later during their lives. That creates an internal problem for women.

One of the interesting findings I encountered during my interviews, is that the concept of marriage seems to be intrinsically connected to childbearing. In both South Korea and Japan, it is widely believed that the age of the woman has a great influence on the course of her pregnancy. That can explain why the age of marriage is so important. Yu-Ri describes in detail the politics of age in the Korean society:

*Nowadays even we talk about that kind of... Do we have to get married? When we are in the right kind of, late 20s... Korean people are quite conservative, so they think there's a certain age, certain marriage age for women. Late 20s and early 30s is best age for women because they have to get child, right? They have to deliver the child. In a way it's the right thinking. (...) Yeah, but in Korea it's not that easy to get married in very young age. Usually they have to study. They gonna be graduated when they're 24 and they have to get a job. Maybe some people they get married when*

*they are student. In that case parents have to support everything. They have to pay their school fee, everything! In that case their parents have an ability to support economically, they raise their children when they are studying. But it's not that normal case. (...).*

Yu-Ri agrees with the idea, that youth is important for delivering a healthy child. However, she points out at the economical problems revolving a young marriage in South Korea. Yet again, similarly to the example provided by So-Young, the society puts certain expectations on its members, without providing the sufficient means to fulfil them.

Eun-Ji also describes the pressure that women reaching their 30s get:

*(...) I get married when I was 30 years old, 3 years ago. In Korea, 30 is very important age for women. In general, generally, people think after 30 is very old woman. They say “**nochanyang**”, **chongyong** is virgin, **no** is old. Old virgin, like this. Nowadays, I think it's not old age, 30 is not old, but still every, many of Koreans inside think 30 is very... I think it's average nowadays. Getting later and later these days. Because women are very studied, study long time and very high educated and take a job, better than male, guys. So, these days, the marriage age is getting later. Still, many people say, and many women have pressure inside in their 30s.*

Eun-Ji introduces the *Old virgin* term, that is used to describe unmarried women in their 30s. However, she recognizes that the patterns are changing and getting married in their 30s becomes commonplace for women.

Na-Young expresses her worry on the image of mothers in the South Korean media:

*They don't put details about what kind of trouble we are getting through. They are also showing supermom who can handle working and family perfectly. There cannot be a perfect supermom at all, I think. (...) I mean the media, they sometimes showing like models of a supermom. Then they make bad influence on the husbands, because husband, every guy can think, look, that kind of girls can achieve both of them together perfectly!*

Na-Young is concerned about the heightened expectations on women from both the society

and their husbands, that such images create.

In this section, I focused on describing the East Asian society through the lens of my South Korean and Japanese interviewees. Even though there are specifics for both of the countries, as described earlier, they both have cultural foundations in the Confucian ideology. They also face similar problems of infertility, the disintegration of the multi-generational family, economical problems, as well as changing gender norms.

## 7.2 Direct Influence of the Social Circle and family

In this section, I will provide examples of direct influence from the society and the family of my interviewees, as well as social messages that they recognized as targeted at them specifically.

Yayoi describes a very direct pressure she got from her family when answering the question on external pressure to get married:

*Yes, I felt it! From my mother. "I want to quickly see a grandchild's face". She said to me, that she wants to see a sweet face of a child. (...) Not from the friends, now the society is like that. But I think the generation up there still has a way of thinking that a woman should get married and stay at home. (...) Before getting married, at that time I was around college students a lot, so I was not told that. For example, my cousins of 33 and 35 years old were asking "Aren't you getting married? Don't you want to get married?". So, I got that kind of pressure from everyone. (...) My father doesn't do anything around the house. So, mom told me it would be great to find someone who puts a lot of effort. (...) Not as much from my mom, but from my grandmother. She told me to hurry up and get married. Same about children. When I got married, she soon started pressuring me by asking "When will you have children?".*

Yayoi describes the direct pressure she got from her grandparents, as well as her parents. Not only the generation of her parents and grandparents, but also her cousins in their 30s were asking her about getting married soon. She recognizes that people in her circle – younger students – did not

give her a similar pressure. It is also interesting, how her mother advised her to look for a husband dissimilar to Yayoi's father. Indeed, in the other parts of the interview Yayoi describes the relationship of her parents as "fake". She was encouraged by her mother to seek a different relationship and she succeeded.

Kyoko shortly describes a similar pressure she experienced:

*When I got married, I was told a lot that they want to see a grandchild. I wouldn't call it pressure, I was just told they want to see a grandchild. My mother. My father didn't say it. And when it was born, they said it was pretty.*

Hyo-Rin is one of the two interviewees, who met her husband through her parents' efforts.

This is how she describes their pressure on her getting married:

*Staying single or getting married, both were possible. I thought if I meet somebody, I will get married but then my parents always wanted me to get married, so everyday introduced somebody to me, I just met them. And then out of 50 gentlemen that they proposed to me three were OK and the last one I met was the best one. He is my husband right now. (...) It was OK cause even though they somehow gave me some pressure I enjoyed it as a boyfriend. OK, if you want me to get married, I will have time with them and if I like them, I will think about it. Then yeah luckily, I met somebody that I loved.*

Even though her parents were invested into setting her up with someone, she remained calm and relaxed about the process. She stayed open-minded and enjoyed dating men. Eventually, she was lucky to find someone she fell in love with, but she considered both staying single and getting married earlier in life. In her case, the parents pressure didn't create an internal pressure.

Yu-Ri describes a similar situation in her life:

*Of course! My parents. I'm a first daughter out of 3 siblings. We have only one-year age gap. So, my parents pushed a lot. Why don't you get married? (...) Mostly, most Korean parents do that. They*

*kind of push you know, children to get married. But these days it's a little bit, kind of, their thinking has been modernised. Even my younger sister, she's only one year younger than me, she's not married yet. But she will get married next year. It's very old, a little bit late to get married, in Korea. No more thinking, they have to get a baby!*

Yu-Ri describes a difference between her parents' treated her and her younger sister, because of the changing zeitgeist in the society. However, she recognizes that most Korean parents would put pressure on their children to get married.

So-Young doesn't feel she had any pressure to get married, but describes the experience of her friends, who avoid big gatherings in order to escape it:

*(...) According to my friends yes, they are kind of pressured to get married and to be mom, yes, I think so. Because... from parents. Or society, probably. Work. I still have a, I have a friend, she, I have some friends she doesn't get married yet, they often talk to me they have some pressure. So, some holiday like a New Year's Day or Thanksgiving Day in Korea, they just travel. Don't want to see any relatives.*

Na-Young also feels that growing up in South Korea influenced her decision:

*(...) Oh yeah, yeah! If influenced me. Because I always heard girl is supposed to be, woman is supposed to be, mother is supposed to be, that's what I heard. Every time, every second from media, from newspaper, from my family, from my children. Even from my children! One of my children telling me mom you are supposed to do something, just like another mom, something like that. The all society...*

Na-Young points out at the social influence, but also mentions her family, as the agents putting direct pressure towards her becoming a mother. Min-Ji describes it this way:

*At two years since I had a date with him friends and many co-workers asked me will you marry him? Just I had a date and I don't think about that because I enjoy my life right now. But many people always oh! Two years passed! Will you marry him? In three years, aaaall the co-workers*

*asked me, I said yes, they said finally!*

Min-Ji's decision to get married with her boyfriend came as a relief to her co-workers. She doesn't mention any pressures coming from her family. Eun-Ji describes such pressures coming from her mother:

*Yeah, she always told me, this is most important thing to women. Being a good wife and wise mother. Yeah. It means... many people thought, when they were told, that it means just housewife, no other job. I don't know why they think like that. I always said my dream is wise mother and good wife, but was I take a job or not, my dream is that. Because it's not the same thing. Because whether I have a job, I can be a good mother and wise wife, wise mother and good wife. But I don't know why people think about this. Just take no job and play house.*

Eun-Ji had her own understanding of the Confucian idea of a wise mother and good wife. Even though she was told to follow these patterns by her mother, she took her own understanding of it for herself.

Other than the above-mentioned quotations, most of my interviewees in Japan, and some of the one in South Korea said that they did not feel pressure to get married or have kids. Some of them admitted, that it could be because they got married young, but a lot of them recognized the changing patterns in the East Asian society. Even if there are prevailing factors, such as the organisation of the workforce, as well as lack of the child support and shortages in childcare facilities, the direct pressure, according to my interviewees, seems to be in decline.

### 7.3 Reproducing Behaviour through Copying

As mentioned above, Nancy Chodorow recognizes copying of behaviour in the generational cycles as the main factor in reproduction of mothering<sup>93</sup>. That influence can be direct, indirect, internalized consciously or subconsciously. Some of the interviewees point out being influenced by their parents, some of them created their family patterns in an opposite to their childhood families.

Yume assigns her decision of becoming a devoted mother and a full-time housewife to being brought up by her mother:

*I grew up looking at my parents, and I wanted to get married. I am happy I managed to do it. (...)*

*When I was young, I grew up in a house where mom was always at home, so I wanted to do the same, in the same way... When I started working, I felt overwhelmed... I was missing her, I felt bad, but it's good to get attention from other people, for the child. (...) I've seen my relatively kind mother around me, I wanted to be like my mother. I saw my mother look after my sister when she was young, so I had this image imprinted. It was easy to just follow it. I wasn't worried.*

In the beginning, Yume tried to participate in childcare and work at the same time, but in the end, she found herself pleased with following in her mother's steps. The fact, that she is copying her mother, which she finds as a kind and good mothering figure, gave her comfort.

Soon-Yi doesn't think she copied her mother's behaviour, but she recognizes her influence:

*She was housewife, right? I didn't wanna live like housewife. So that kind of stuff she was not good model. (...) Mothers want her daughter to be doctor, teacher, very safety and special job. that make their life easier. Many guys want that kind of job these days. (...) Unconsciously I think from my mother. Don't you think? I think my mom did it, my mom give a lot of influence to me. (...)*

Soon-Yi remembers her mother and her influence on her life in this way:

---

<sup>93</sup> Chodorow, Nancy. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Berkeley: U of California, 1978. Print. P.3

*(...) You know, she is traditional Korean woman, Korean mom, so she told me just respect your husband and like that and live happily (laughter). (...) She didn't tell me about mother's life. But I remember when I was young, she really had a hard time to find herself, I feel like it, nowadays I'm thinking about her life. She wants to find some, find some way to her life. Not just mother life, just herself, yes. Because she is only girl child, she had only two brothers, two elder brothers. My grandma was very strict to her in house, so yes. That's why she is looking, she was looking for something, something else. (...)*

Soon-Yi tries to understand her mother and her lack of purpose in life. Nowadays, that she has become a mother herself, she finds herself figuring out those feelings of her mother.

Min-Ji recognizes the generational cycle when answering the question about the agents influencing her mothering:

*My mom. Because we grew up looking at my mom's life. So, my mom's life influences my life, my future life. And my daughter also will be influenced from me. So always I try to do my work very well and organize my life well.*

Not only is Min-Ji aware of having been influenced by her mother, she is also aware of passing the model on through her children. She feels the responsibility to have her life in order, to give a good impression for her daughter to copy.

When I ask the same question to Yu-Ri, she considers many female agents:

*Mom. My mom. I just naturally, I didn't have to learn, I just naturally learnt from my mother. And my grandmother. We lived together until my grandmother passed away. And also, I could compare what my mother did, and my grandmother did, and I choose to learn good things from them. And even my aunt. I just saw them, what they did. I didn't mention, oh I have to select, I have to learn. But naturally, maybe. (...) Yeah, yeah, yeah. My mother helped me a lot, so I think I have to help them. Cause my mother did that for me. She sacrificed a lot. So, I think later if my daughter, son, need my help to raise up their children, I definitely wanna help.*

Not only does she recognize the pattern of copying her mother's behaviour, she also includes other female figures in her analysis. She feels the generational responsibility in the way that the help in childcare is provided by the grandmother and she is willing to provide such help precisely because she was awarded that type of help herself from her mother. Earlier on in the interview she also reflects on how being brought up in a bigger family influenced her decision on having three children herself:

*I lived with my grandparents. So, it was very natural to see the family. That's why maybe I wanted to have more children! Some of my friends only have a boy or a girl, but I wanted more, I wanted to have more children. I don't know why, I just... sometimes compare other home when they have only one child. We live in a same size apartment, but I have three children.*

I ask whether she wanted a big family, because she comes from a big family herself:

*I didn't even notice, but automatically I just fell when I have only one daughter, I felt really lonely. It felt really lonely. I felt sympathy for my daughter. If she's the only person when we go away, maybe 50 years later, 60 years later... My husband and I will go away. There's only my daughter left! I couldn't, I felt so sympathy for my daughter.*

Her reasoning for having many children stems from her shifted sense of loneliness, that she placed on her oldest daughter. However, she also recognizes, that subconsciously, she might have been following the patterns of her own family.

Eun-Ji also admits to being inspired by her mother:

*Because I saw my mother and that she is very happy. Very happy, always happy. I have not seen them fight at once. Nowadays, I can see they can have some troubles, but they didn't express them to me, didn't express bad feelings to me. So, I can see their troubles or fight... I always oh my mom and dad are very happy, and very happily wedding, very happy family. I always dreamed being a wife and mom.*

Even though the relationship of her parents may be going through some changes nowadays,

Eun-Ji still recognizes the good relationship patterns that she got from them in her childhood. She was inspired by watching her own mother's happiness and decided to follow in her footsteps in order to achieve a similar level of happiness.

In Kyoko's case, being exposed to children and childcare early on in her own childhood made her want to have children from a young age:

*I've wanted children since I think around high school. But I also thought kids were cute when I was younger. For example, my seven years younger sister. I thought she was cute. When I become an adult, I thought I could have a cute child. Even before I got married, I wanted to have children. (...) I wanted children. just like that. If I didn't think my husband, I would still want children. even if I had no partner, I would want to have children.*

Eun-Ji describes the way the idea of a good husband and father was influenced by her own father's image in her mind:

*Different, yeah. I thought that... When I really was young, I think that is amazing. But when I was 15 to 18, oh that's not. My daddy is very boring, I don't like that! But when I was 19, oh my father is very nice guy. Because he has very deeply heart. Expression is not that much, but he has always deep warm feelings and love. I can realize when I am grown up. After he passed away, I thought oh he was very good man. And good husband and good daddy. I always think about him. After I graduated university, I always found someone like my dad.*

Mika thinks it's important to become a good example for her children to follow:

*I think work is a good thing. But I think a mom that stays all the time at home is also happy. Because I think about what type of an adult my daughter is going to become, I think it's important to show her an image of a happy, working mother.*

Na-Young aimed at creating a relationship different from the relationship of her parents:

*(...) Well I mean is, my mom does her job, my father does his job but then... They are not hanging together a lot. They are living together, but not hanging together, playing together. He has his own friends and she also has her own friends. But I mean they are happy because they got used to that, that kind of lifestyle. I don't want to have because, I mean, they are happy, but I do not want to make my married life like that because I wanna hang with my husband because I picked my husband because he was, I was thinking he could be my best friend. My soulmate and best friend, so that's why I don't wanna make my marriage life just like my parents' life, not at all, not at all.*

For Na-Young, the expectations of the relationship are high, and she wants to derive happiness from it first and foremost. She decided on picking her husband precisely because of the potential of him becoming her best friend.

Yayoi answers the question on whether she would like to copy her parents' relationship:

*Opposite is too hard of the word. But I wanted to get along with my husband.*

Here, Min-Ji, who is a full-time housewife, expresses her wish on her daughter achieving the career she wants:

*I wish she would be happy, and she can have a job, or she can find her talent to survive in her future life. She wanted to be a doctor, because she wants to take care and cure her grandfather. And she has a lot of loving mind. And she always wants to take care of others. So, she wants to get daughter. Sometimes she wants to be a painter, she loves to paint. So, I want for her to be happy, so I want her to get a job that she wants. (...) Sometimes I pray for her to have a good partner.*

In this example we can see how the daughters' happiness is passed to the next generations. Min-Ji resigned from her work in order to offer her daughter the life she wants. But, if her behaviour becomes reproduced in the way that her mother's behaviour way, the promise of happiness and fulfilment will be yet again passed to the next generation.

Na-Young also doesn't want her daughter to copy her example:

*If I could decide again, I will get married early, but I will give birth a little bit later than I did. Once*

*I achieved my whole things first and then get married later on. But then the thing is I gave a birth when I was 30, years ago. It was not that late but still at this moment 30 years old is not that early to giving a birth. But if it is possible, I wanna delay like 35 or 36 or even 40 if it's possible physically and mentally. If it is possible. (...) For my daughter, I would give that advice to my daughter. But as I told you if it is possible physically because 40 years old is very hard giving a birth. Even worse it would be very hard to get pregnant as well once they get like 40 years old. So, for pregnancy I think between 30 and 35 is the best time. Just for pregnancy itself. But as a woman's life it is better for delaying it as much as possible, so it is always juggling between those two.*

Her description of female fertility as always juggling between what's good for woman and what's good for the future child is very poignant. She wants her daughter to create a better settlement between the two than she did. However, earlier in the interview Na-Young describes the way she copied her own mother:

*I'm thinking... Unintentionally, I think my mother influenced me. Because sometimes I was surprised when I treat my child, the way I treat my child is something very similar to the way my mom treated me. I didn't intend it. But I have learned it, because I was raised, I was raised by her. So, I got influenced, I just knew it, it's my mom, I just did it the same way my mom did it to me. Even though that was not my intention I realized that I have some influence from my mom. I got influenced by her. I don't think I can avoid. Because I was, I am her child. (...)*

When deciding her style of mothering, Hyo-Rin describes in detail the way that her own experience being a child made her realize the type of mother she wants to become:

*(...) I think she had a hard time. Cause even though there was a nanny in my house I don't remember having my mom home during the dinner time. Most of the time she was not home. Maybe that's why I wanted to stay home, psychologically even though I didn't feel it. Maybe. Subconsciously I thought that I have to spend my time with my children. These days I just find out myself maybe because my mom was not home most of the times when I was young. Even after I was*

*back from school there was nobody. (...) When I was in elementary school there was only me in my home. And my father was working, my mother was working, and when I got home, I was home by myself. And I had to do my homework myself and the nanny gave me food but then that was it, she couldn't do anything else with me. (...) And I really didn't know that I felt lonely when I was young because I always thought I have three siblings and I'm the fourth one, I have a really big family. But then when I think back more specifically now, I know there is only me. (...) I was always... Empty somehow and maybe that was a reason I could quit my studies so easily, I don't have any regrets and I could pour all my efforts on my children, raising them. Maybe. So, I think that's the dilemma for my children also. If they wanna have a child and if they wanna raise them with love and spending more time with them they would have to lose their time on working. (...)*

*Because if I go to other friends, I can also see the similar situations. Like, mom, if moms are working, they would be home alone and there'll be... well, some people have nannies, and some don't. Then somehow, they looked lonely and I think I was one of them. So, I wouldn't wanna copy it but then I didn't really think I would wanna deny it, it's like kind of neutral.*

Hyo-Rin felt loneliness and emptiness in her childhood, that she wanted to spare from her own children. In that sense, she decided to go against the model of mothering her parents provided her with. She also understands the difficulties that her daughter will then have to face similarly:

*(...) Sometimes maybe it's good for them to have a job where they can achieve a little and they can also have their own family where they have dreams and love and happiness. I don't know, it's very hard for women to have both. And then if I look at my husband's friends who are women and who have children, I wonder how they manage it. (...) And then I think, well as a woman it's very hard to be successful and have a happy family life so it's always a dilemma. So, I don't know what to say to my children. My first daughter always says I will have a job, I will get married after graduate or maybe I'll go to graduate school but after graduate school I will get married, maybe I will get a part-time job. And then I'll become a professional mom. And I don't know what to say to her...*

Hyo-Rin is unsure about the type of future that awaits her daughter. She is concerned whether her daughter will be faced with the similar choices and similar difficulties.

Mika sees no point in her daughter creating a new path for herself:

*Both me, and her grandma, everyone was always working, so there is no point in her becoming a housewife. It doesn't have to be a job, it can be a hobby, but I want her to have some kind of skill. (...) I loved my mom and I wanted to become a mom like her. Not my husband's mom, my own mom is the most important.*

There are many ways that the parents' relationship and mothers' mothering are copied and reproduced cyclically within the newer generations. In this section, I provided various and extensive examples of copying those patterns, as well as my interviewees expressing their understanding of the system while talking about their own children's future. My interviewees recognize the subconscious ways, in which they internalized certain modes of behaviour and conscious ways in which they decided to find a way of life for themselves, often in the opposite of the learnt patterns of behaviours.

## **7.4 The Domino Effect**

While conducting the interviews, I have often encountered women describing their decision as influenced by their closest peers. Four of the Japanese interviewees, as well as two of the South Korean ones told me, that they decided to have children when watching their friends have them. That can be described as a type of social pressure or socialization, but it's very specific. In this section I will shortly present the way my interviewees expressed those feeling.

At first, Yayoi is asked when she first thought of becoming a mother:

*When a close friend of mine became a mom. When I looked at the couple, I started to want one. They were having fun, enjoying themselves together.*

Later, when explaining why she decided to become a mother in the end, she says:

*I think that's because of the family I come from. In my case, the close friend had the most influence on me, she was so happy that i started to want a child as well. That was the biggest direct influence.*

Yume describes her similar experience:

*I saw myself in my nearest circle, like in a mirror. More and more of them were having children. I heard conversations about it all the time. From my friends, co-workers. So, I gradually wanted to have a child myself.*

Yuki felt a similar pressure towards getting married:

*I wanted to get married. (...) Not always, but when everyone in their 20s in my circle started getting married... (...) The society. When my friends were getting married, they had babies. (...) I thought that was a good way to become happy.*

The most detailed account comes from Yu-Ri, when answering the question on whether she felt the pressure to get married or have children:

*Yeah, yeah, yeah, even I envy to see my friends' wedding ceremony. Wow, when am I going to get married? You know we say there's a certain age some people who want to get married. Certain period. I think it's right. Before when I was 29 or 27, I didn't really want to get married, I wanted to study. Study more. But we say, right before 30, Asian people think it's a very big change. So, 29 for a single lady, 29 aged single lady is very good, big change age! Have you ever heard about that kind of big... big wave? You're gonna be 30, you're gonna be 40. It's very big... Everything is same but... (...) I saw many of my friends, they got married. Before that, all of my friends remained as single lady and I felt it's OK because they are single. We met each other, we are not married yet. But one by one I saw, I was the only one left. So, I felt a little bit anxious, uncomfortable, I started feeling uncomfortable. Is it time to get married? That kind of social pressure.*

Yu-Ri attributes the social pressure to follow her peers' behaviour to the specifics of the East

Asian society. Whether it is specific to East Asia or not, we can observe this tendency for women to copy the behaviour of women not only in generations above them, as in the previous chapter, but also their peers in age. Whether it can be contributed to the social pressure, it rather serves as the last push towards having children in the specific timing.

## 7.5 The Father's Influence

The husband's upbringing lays foundations for his expectations of the type of family organisation he is willing to create with his wife. Often the father of the child wants to create the family organisation that reminds him of his parents', similarly to the mother. That can create tensions within the family, but the mitigating factors are often the male disinterest in the family and childcare, while also his higher position as a decision-maker in the society<sup>94</sup>. In this section, I am interested in the way those factors and the husband's upbringing and internalized behavioural patterns play a role in creating a new family structure.

Na-Young compares the relationship of her parents to the relationship between her husband's parents:

*My mother and father... My father is older than my mom. They got married and they live together. My mother in law and my father in law they are at the same age and they grow up in the same town. So, they have been friend for a long time. So even though they are a lot, like, ten years older than my parents, I actually like their marriage life a little bit more.*

I ask her, whether she thinks that her husband was influenced by their relationship:

*Yes, yes, yes. He tried to copy that.*

Hyo-Rin is wondering, whether the philosophy of her husband make an imprint on their relationship that exceeded her own upbringing:

---

<sup>94</sup> Chodorow, Nancy. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Berkeley: U of California, 1978. Print. P.9

*Maybe. Cause my father always tried to give equal opportunities to boys and girls. in my family there are two boys and two girls. I really think that he gave as the equal opportunities. But in my husband's family the story's different. My father in law spent the most money on my husband's education and then the second son, to my sister in law I would say he spent the least money, on her education. Even though she was smart. And maybe somehow his philosophy which he got from his father got absorbed in me. Maybe. Because I was not raised that way and somehow, I got absorbed in Korean traditional marriage ideas from their family. I don't know, maybe, now I think, yeah.*

Hyo-Rin ended up becoming a stay-at-home mother, even though her parents established different family patterns. However, as a child, she was unhappy with her mother working, which is another variable worth considering towards her decision.

Eun-Ji describes the direct pressures from her mother-in-law:

*My mother in law... If you can, this is the best way to raise child. Be with your baby. As long as you can. So, before I decided to quit the job, a little bit considered... Oh my mother in law! How about, how she thinks about my decision? To quit the job. I wonder, I'm not sure, but she said like this. If you can and if you want, I think babies needs mom. And this is the most important thing. Is be with baby, with the baby.*

Eun-Ji took turned to her mother-in-law for advice, when considering whether she should stay at home with her children or continue to work. Whether that is a direct influence rather than a pattern connected to husband's upbringing, it's interesting to see, how Eun-Ji considers her mother-in-law's opinion on her family organisation. It could be that it stems from the respect for her husband, or possibly from the respect she feels for an older, more experienced female.

Mari describes the difficult relationship with her husband:

*Recently we have a lot of communication, because we're in business together. (...) After my children were playing with the fireworks, my husband punished them with corporal punishment. That's how he was brought up, it was obvious to him. That's not how I was brought up, I felt disgusted. (...) You*

*could see we had different ideas, there were many differences in our environments. But I thought that was nice. I felt bad for my husband. I wanted to help him, I thought I could do something. He also wanted to create a warm family, I felt that he wanted that kind of marriage. Before we got married. So, we had the same dream. In the end, he didn't change after we got married. Our ways of thinking didn't match.*

This is how she answers the question on who influenced her decision to become a mother:

*I got that influence from men. From my husband and his father. Because in Japan, it's very important to have a son. A son is a continuation for the family, he is the successor of the family, a successor of the business, of the society, they wanted someone to lead the company.*

Mari decided to become a mother to please her husband and create a new future owner for his company. Her ideas and the ideas of her husband did not match. She attributes it to his upbringing and the idea, that he copies his parents' behaviour while bringing up his own children.

Na-Young judges her husband's behaviour through a similar lens:

*(...) If possible, I wanna get more help from my husband. But to do that is really hard. I need to change his whole personality as well. They, Korean guys, they grew up in that way, they are looking at their fathers and they grew up in that way, seeing that housekeeping or raising a child is mainly his mom's responsibility and they grow up that way. They grow up, they can help, they can help their wife, but they are not fully responsible for raising of the kids, managing the household, housekeeping, everything. It's hard for me to change him, his thinking, cause he has been grow up this way for 40 years. If I wanna change his whole mind probably I have to go through whole kind of battles. And I don't want to. So right now, I am accepting it, partially accepting it, but asking him to do something else.*

She continues on explaining the behaviour of Korean men when talking about her hopes for the future of her children and the advice she gives them:

*Actually, for my daughter I do not give advice that much. Cause they can, as a girl, they can do, there's not much to change for them. For men, guys, they need to change. That's what I think so, that's why I give him advice, to my boy. To do not do that way, do always, there's a way. And I ask him errands all the time, to help the housekeeping, everything. Cause I don't wanna raise him just like my husband. I'm not telling you my husband is bad, but I mean, he is typical Korean husband but in 20 years it will be changed. So, I need to raise my son.*

She raises her son in hopes of breaking the cycle. Even though she concurs, that Korean men grew up to be inattentive with household and can't be changed, she decides to change it differently, through teaching her son to be a different type of husband and father.

Min-Ji describes the direct pressure she got from the people surrounding her husband:

*Yeah, I got pressure, especially my husband's parents, his mom. Gave me a lot of pressure but he didn't, sometimes he didn't tell me about that directly but indirectly she gave it to me. (...) Those who my husband worked with. Because it is usually to tell about their children. When I meet each other, what about your daughter what about your son. (...) Always many Korean moms tell their son's wife to endure. If your husband has some trouble with you or somebody then endure. You endure!*

Min-Ji got an advice from her mother-in-law to endure he son's misbehaviours. It is an interesting example of women being aware of male unwillingness to taking on childcare and family life seriously, even when relating it to their own sons.

The husbands had also direct influence on some of my interviewee's decisions. Mika decided to fulfil her husband's wish to have children:

*I thought if he wants it so much, and I can give birth, then I guess it's fine. I didn't think that I definitely don't want to give birth.*

When I ask Hyo-Rin about the person that influenced her motherhood, she answers:

*My husband? Cause when we wanted to get married, he said he wanted to have a child between him and me. So, maybe I wanted to give him a present. Now, I think. I never thought about it but since you asked me, I think so.*

So-Young's and Eun-Ji's husbands both suggested that they should become stay-at-home mothers. Here, So-Young describes the pressure she felt:

*I feel like that, that he pressured me (laughter). I feel like that, yes. And my husband talks to me this time, my children need your help and he asked me to take care of them more than thinking about work outside. Yes, he talked to me like that.*

Eun-Ji explains, why she thinks her leaving work was her husband's idea:

*It was, it also was very naturally. I had some vacation, first vacation at the job, for 15 months. So, I quit the job this July. We just think about it, think during the 15 months and he decided if you have no feelings about miss the job, I think it's better to be with the baby. Because she likes you so much.*

Mika gives an interesting example, when answering why she decided to have children:

*Maybe I felt that I want to preserve my genes somehow? My husband quit his company and joined my father's company. I started thinking about heritage, so I thought it would be better if we had a kid, we would grow stronger. I was already a little already, I thought giving birth would be hard, maybe I can't do it? But I didn't think about it too much.*

In this section, I provided examples of women recognizing the influence of their husbands and their husbands' family in making decision on their mothering. Even though it can't be traced whether those decisions had a final say in their decisions, they remain one of the factors having a potential of triggering an avalanche.

## 7.6 Summary

In this chapter, I provided excessive examples from my interviewees regarding the different outside factors involved in their decisions on becoming mothers and taking on the primary caretaker role in their children's lives. The interviewees are aware of the different processes that shaped their mothering. Gitte Marianne Hansen describes her experience of interviewing Japanese women: "Compared to people from my own social background, where performance of femininity and subject positioning appear to be fairly unconscious concepts, both for performing individuals themselves and their surroundings, Japanese women often seem quite aware that normative gender is learned and accomplished through effort"<sup>95</sup>. It is something I have also noticed when conducting my interviews. For East Asian women, housewife is still a typical positioning in the society and the fear of social dis-integration in the event of failure in gender performance is the reality<sup>96</sup>. The social pressures become one of the main agents of reproduction of mothering.

Ever since the feminist revolution, women are charged with a responsibility, that Chizuko Ueno describes as a "women's double burden"<sup>97</sup>. Even the succeeding women are described as failures, if having a family doesn't follow their success. Women end up having to perform different social roles, which requires obtaining many various competencies, while men are still only expected to perform at work. In the case of East Asian women, greater choice often leads to greater inequality<sup>98</sup>.

Mothering has its potential relationship as any woman's "powers of reproduction and to her children", but is also still "an institution, which aims at ensuring that that potential – and all women – still remain under male control"<sup>99</sup>. That creates "a dangerous schism between private and public

---

<sup>95</sup> Hansen, Gitte Marianne. *Femininity, Self-harm and Eating Disorders in Japan: Navigating Contradiction in Narrative and Visual Culture*. London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016. Print. P.31

<sup>96</sup> Op.cit. P.27

<sup>97</sup> Hansen, Gitte Marianne. *Femininity, Self-harm and Eating Disorders in Japan: Navigating Contradiction in Narrative and Visual Culture*. London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016. Print. P.31

<sup>98</sup> Op.cit. P.37

<sup>99</sup> Rich, Adrienne, "Of Woman Born: motherhood as experience and institution". New York: W.W. Norton & Company

life”<sup>100</sup>. In this chapter we have analysed, how women stuck in the patriarchal system are overwhelmed by different agents of pressure influencing their life decisions. We have observed how this pressure can come directly or indirectly through social messages, media, peer groups and observable patterns of behaviour in the family.

In this chapter, I have also extensively explored the idea of the reproduction of mothering through the unconscious copying and generational passing of mothering. Many of my interviewees admitted to seeing those patterns of copied behaviour in their mothering and many of them pointed at their mothers as the main agents responsible for their reproduction of mothering.

---

Inc., 1976, Print. P.13

<sup>100</sup> Rich, Adrienne, “Of Woman Born: motherhood as experience and institution”. New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1976. P.13

## 8. Additional Interview Findings

In this chapter I would like to present additional findings that I encountered throughout my research. Firstly, I would like to present women's concluding remarks on their attitudes towards mothering in two sections including their complaints, as well as their final remarks. In the following two sections, I will present the interchangeability of the terms *marriage* and *motherhood*, as well as the expectations towards the sex of the child.

All of my interviewees, to no exception, have expressed being content with their decision on mothering. Even though they recognize the social pressure towards motherhood and the artificially created work-childcare dichotomy, that awareness doesn't change their opinion, that eventually, having children and rearing them is a good, fulfilling decision.

In the first section I will present different complaints, that accompany my interviewees' accounts of childrearing. Even though all of my interviewees think that having children is worth the hardships it entails, they do express different problems, that childrearing brings with it.

In the following section, I would like to express the final remarks regarding childcare and their decision to take on mothering. The disillusioned view on motherhood and marriage, that most of my interviewees represent, combined with their optimism for the future and reconciliation, is a good way to conclude this part of my interview findings.

In the following section, I will present the interchangeability of term *marriage* and *motherhood* when talking about interviewees' decisions. Often when asking about one of them, I would get answers about the other. The connection between the two is understood by my interviewees, and in both Japan and South Korea the concepts became interchangeable.

The final finding is the changing nature of the biological sex expectations of children. While some of my South Korean interviewees admitted to hoping to give birth to a boy, the Japanese interviewees predominantly, with an exception of one, hoped for a daughter. The daughters were seen as providing more emotional fulfilment.

## 8.1 Difficulties in mothering

In this section, I will present the self-reported difficulties women face, when finally going through with their decision of becoming a mother and mothering their children. Even though all of the mothers I interviewed admitted there are good and bad sides to becoming a mother, they all agree that the bad sides are worth surviving for the sake of the good ones.

Yayoi doesn't see the childcare as equally interesting as having a career:

*I think being able to work is more fun. Part-time job would also be fine. Doing only childcare work, you have no social life, it would be nice to talk to other people.*

The change in social relations is also something Min-Ji has noticed in her life:

*Friends. Before my daughter, my friends are my friends. Who has common things with me. These days my friends are those who meet often, are my daughter's friends' moms. And I have a lot of time to talk with them, not to my friends. It is a big change. (...) And before my daughter I spend my time using my life. These days I spend my time organising what I have to teach her. For example, English grammar or sometimes homework. And yoga, doing yoga. Before my daughter I spend reading book for me. These days reading books for my daughter. How to take care of her or how to, her education.*

Other than changes in the social circle, Min-Ji points out, that after the birth of her daughter, she devotes her own free time to taking care of her daughter. The time that used to be devoted for her own self-care, such as taking yoga classes or reading books, is now spent on organising her daughter's activities.

Mari describes it similarly:

*I have no time for myself. I stopped being a person, my children became my priority. (...) There is a lot of happiness in it, but I would like to find more selfishness in it. Even though I think it's great. There is a lot of very difficult things as well. It's something you can change little by little yourself, with huge feelings it should be possible.*

Not only does Mari describe the lack of time for herself, she also describes the feeling of not being a fully her own person. She wishes that she could find a “selfish” part to her mothering. By this word, it’s understood that she describes the will to spend more time and care on herself.

When asked about the problems associated with having children, Kiyomi says:

*I felt loneliness at times. But I think being lonely from the time we are born, being alone, being alone until we die, is a human condition.*

At first Kiyomi answers about the feeling of loneliness in the context of having children, however, she soon backs off to point out, that the feeling can be ascribed to most of the people at times and in various circumstances.

Hyo-Rin describes the changes in her biological rhythm as the biggest problem she encountered when becoming a mother:

*Oh, the biological rhythm. I breastfed my first child for two years and then the second one, right after I finished my breastfeeding, I got pregnant again. And then breastfed my second child for 2,5 years. So almost 5 years I couldn’t sleep. I would say the hardest thing for me to get pregnant and have children was the biggest change of my biological rhythm. I couldn’t sleep. So still now I have that kind of habit. (...) So, I do housework during the night-time. (...)*

For Hyo-Rin, the biological changes in her sleeping patterns were the hardest to accept.

Eun-Ji describes a similar problem:

*Because this is no start and no end. Even I am sleeping, I have to wake up. When she’s sleeping, she can cry, she can find me, momma momma momma. Even I can’t sleep and always I have to look after her. (...) The people I meet is just mother and baby. When I was in TV station, I met very many kinds of people. Even the president, of I can meet some artist, or very many talented people. But nowadays I just meet baby, and with mother. (...) I feel I am not interesting. (...)*

Eun-Ji, same as previously Yayoi and Min-Ji, describes a change in her social circle. She then goes on to describe the “baby blues” she felt soon after the childbirth:

*Just tears came out. Nothing came out but... just tears and mind oh there is no honeymoon. There is no our time. That time, just birth and three days, she did not sleep. She cried all day. And she needed breastfeed every time. Every one hour. So, I just popped up my breast and did not, cannot close, wear clothes. Just like bare, nude. Oh, this is not human life. Like a cow. What is this? but I realized, oh this is the blues. This is why the hormones changed a lot. I realized, and I popped up and husband was very helpful at that time. He held her instead of me. He feeds me. He tried to make me smile, laugh. So, I can bear it. I can get over the blue. But at the time, I could understand somebody can throw the baby out of the window. Oh, I can understand. Yeah, I can understand the feeling. (...)*

In the case of Eun-Ji, the help of her husband was crucial for her psychological well-being. It is striking when she describes the feeling of being fed-up with her own child to the point, that she understands the women who would “throw the baby out of the window”.

In this section, I provided examples of different difficulties that women encountered while finally deciding to have children. It is important to point out that the women are not pleased and happy about their mothering because of their good experience, but precisely even with the understanding of the bad sides, they are still happy about their decision. Their happiness doesn't come from unawareness, but rather from the place of deep understanding and reconciliation with different issues they encountered on their way towards mothering.

## **8.2 Final Remarks on the Influences towards Mothering**

As the final question during my interviews, I asked my interviewees, to answer what they think influenced their decision on motherhood and mothering, in the context of our previous, lengthy discussion. That provided my interviewees with another chance to organise the different influences they mentioned in the interview into a coherent image, as well as express their opinion clearly. That provided me with an opportunity to collect their final thought on motherhood, its

meaning, and the reproduction of mothering.

In this section, I will present the interviewees final thought on the different agents of influence, that they encountered on their way towards mothering.

Mari puts it simply into words, why she ended up choosing to become a mother, even though she didn't get good models of behaviour as a child:

*The society. Because I have no family. Looking at my mother and my father, and my grandma and my grandpa, I should have never wanted to get married, but I did. (...) I think so, I thought I wanted to create an opposite family, wanted to get married...*

Mari sees the society as the main agent in controlling her decision on mothering. She recognizes that, according to the models of behaviours she encountered as a child, she should not have been interested in mothering, but she was.

Hyo-Rin describes mothering as a dilemma:

*(...) Well, that's the dilemma I would say cause if you wanna be successful in a society, if you get married and if you have children, they'll be burden for you. But then, as a human being, you could also... yeah, seek a life of little things, then having a family would be a good thing too. So, it's a sort of dilemma. So, I'm thinking of my daughters, if they get married and if they got a good job and if they have good jobs, mostly they would have to spend a lot of time in their workplace. Then I would be the one who have to take care of my grandchildren maybe. (...) But think of children, when I think of my children as children, not as my daughters, just as general children, they have to have their own mom's love and the most important thing for them to have is the time with mom. So, if their mom is busy, I don't know if they can have trust in life. I think I gave enough trust and love to my children so that's the good thing for them. But then as a life of woman, as a successful life of woman, if they want to have a high social position, it would be really hard. So, it's still the feature. (...) If they get married it will be hard for them to get a high social position. Cause they would have*

*to spend much time in childcare and home duty. Even though their husband helps them, still. (...) She will always be in the middle. She wouldn't be a... If somebody works only during morning time, she wouldn't be as successful as others who work the whole day. So, if you wanna be the boss, you have to give up something, anyhow, give up something from here and something from there, that way you can balance. You cannot have both. If people say you are a super mom, that's just superficial. If you get inside it, it never happens. (...)*

Hyo-Rin recognizes that her involvement doesn't end at her being a parent, and for her daughters to be successful in life, she will need to help them with caring for their children. She recognizes that it's impossible for "women who have it all" to be successful in their careers, as they are unable to put extensive effort in it, on the level that men, who are not burdened with childcare, can. Even though she expresses readiness to help her daughters, she is aware that in the East Asian society, their success will prove difficult.

Kyoko answers the final question in the following way:

*It's hard to say. I think like I've wanted a child naturally, because of the environment I grew up in. I don't think I looked up to someone in particular. I think I just wanted children myself. (...) I wanted to marry a more serious man, compared to my father. But I wanted to get married, myself. (...) I became a stay at home mom like my mother in the beginning... But when I did, I wanted to work. When I started working, I wanted to become a housewife. It's also hard to be a housewife. But when you work, it's hard to be separated from your children. (...) Yes... It's quite hard. After children are self-sufficient in some way, it's good to work again.*

For Kyoko, mothering is also a dilemma. The competing emotional forces within her steer the way she feels discontent with either life situation. It is unclear whether she feels displeased because of the feelings of guilt or not passing with social models, or it's just her personal need for having access to both types of activities in her life.

Eun-Ji further describes the motherhood-work dilemma:

*Oh, working mom is not a good at work and not good at the house. At the work, the mom always thinks about baby. So, she is not professional, and when she come back to home, she already lost a lot of moments of the baby, so she is not a good mom. This is stereotype of working mom in the media, I think. And the housewife mom, not working mom, is just lazy and play, lie down, all day. I think laziness is very stereotype of the housewife. (...) So, these days, there is... Hatred for women. Very seriously, in the internet. (...) I think the society, I think. Because somebody has to earn money, and somebody has to take care of child. And you should, this age you have to marry, and this age you have to bring child, if you want healthy and smart child like this. I think there is something invisible role and rules in the society. This can be maybe average and common sense but there is something invisible role, I think. It can be brought by tradition or these days society. (...) If I can, I want to change the concept father has to earn money, mother has to take care of child. It can be different. Father can take care of children. Because there is a lot of fathers who wants to be with child but if the father like doing housewife, maybe every person in neighbourhood, their sibling or parents think he is idiot, like this. but It has to be changed, I think. Because every character is different, but this is not for gender. Males and females are like this, this is not the roles, I think.*

Eun-Ji criticizes the sex-gender division of roles in the society. She points out not only that women want to work, but also that many fathers would like to participate in the childcare but fail to do so in fear of social ostracism. She also describes a typical “damned if you do, damned if you don’t” criticism of mothers – you will get criticised if you continue to work, and you will be hated for your “idleness” if you don’t.

Soon-Yi expresses hopes for changes in the East Asian society:

*Working mothers is good. So many mothers, they really have high education and then study a lot. Then they don't do anything, right? Just childcare, right? That's a kind of wasting. Too much! Of course, around here the mothers really nice university, they graduated really nice university and*

*then they don't do anything. Just chatting, eating nice, and only care about their children. So, it's problem too. (...) My husband can make more money more than me. That make me safe and comfortable too. Because Korean society is still more generous to men, not women at all. They can go up, they can make more money. It's gonna be better my daughter's generation, gonna be much better, still! America too, right? America and other country too. About job more generous. (...) Too stressful, I should work for my family, too stressful! But if his wife make money it's gonna be easier or less stressful for him to do, I think.*

Soon-Yi is concerned about working father and the burden on supporting the family on their own. She is also worried about the loss of skills in the society and women's education not being used in any efficient way. She focuses on the problem of women not working sufficiently and devoting themselves to childcare, but she doesn't provide any thought on how the childcare would then be redistributed.

Finally, Min-Ji reflects on the social norms regarding the age of females:

*I have a lot planned and at the time I didn't have any plan about marriage before I got married. So, I thought I wanted to keep working. To 35 or 40. But it was very difficult with my decision, because at that time, most women and most single women got married around 30. Early 30s. And many Koreans thought women and single women and single men had to get married. Because single life is not that easy. And single women and men are not common. Cause it was a long time ago. So, I also at the time someday I have to, I have to get married! (...)*

For Min-Ji, getting married and subsequently having children, was fulfilling the social norm for the women at her age at the time. She describes the feeling of obligation, by saying that she felt like she had to get married. She points out though, that it was “a long time ago”, she got married almost 20 years ago. Therefore, she doesn't think the norms for female age when getting married and having children remained unchanged.

In this section, I focused on showing the interviewees' final remarks on the different

influences they encountered on their way to marriage and motherhood. Out of all of the interviewees, most of them mentioned the society as the main reason for their decision, some of them mentioned following the footsteps of their mothers and peer behaviours. In the end, they all pointed at some group that had an influence on their decision.

### 8.3 Interchangeability of Concepts of Marriage and Childbearing

Many times, when asking about marriage I would get answers regarding motherhood, and vice versa. That was especially apparent along my interviewees in South Korea.

In the ideas of my interviewees, in the South Korean society, marriage seems to be intrinsically connected to childbearing. That can explain why the age of getting married is so important. Hyo-Rin admits that the “right age” for women of her generation was to get married before 30 and indeed, the statistics from the 70s show that 90% of 25 to 29-year old women were married, and 99% of those in the age of 30-34, followed by 97% of them having given birth by the age of 30-34<sup>101</sup>. Also, according to a survey from 1976, 71% of women expressed an opinion that women should get married before the age of 30<sup>102</sup>). So-Young explains:

*(...) Korean people are quite conservative, so they think there's a certain age, certain marriage age for women. Late 20s and early 30s is best age for women because they have to get child, right?*

*They have to deliver the child (...)*

Na-Young describes it when talking about her worries before getting married:

*Yes, I was also aware that It will stop my career. I read a newspaper and I got a lot of, I hear a lot about that from my old teachers, female teachers, my relatives, my aunt, everybody was talking about it, if you wanna be a leader, really wanna be a big successful person, then probably having a*

<sup>101</sup> Rindfuss, Ronald R., and Charles Hirschman. "The Timing of Family Formation: Structural and Societal Factors in the Asian Context." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 46.1 (1984): 205. P.6

<sup>102</sup> Rindfuss, R. R. "The Transformation of Korean Child-spacing Practices." *Population Studies* 36.1 (1982): 87-104. JSTOR. Web. 16 Jan. 2016. P.5

*child will be a big problem for you. But you know once you get married probably you will be under pressure to having a child, giving birth to child, so marriage will be harder for you. That's what I heard for, for a long time.*

I proceeded to ask her whether she thinks getting married would somehow equate to getting pressured to become a mother, to which she answered in the affirmative.

In the previous chapters, as well as in this short follow-up, it is apparent how marriage and childcare are interconnected, and one seems to be following the other in a natural course of action. The conversation about mothering was bound to be a conversation about marriage and I think that in the context of the East Asian society, those two stay very much connected and should be studied together, especially when researching the reproduction of mothering.

## **8.4 Preference for the Sex of the Child**

In my interviews, I have asked a question about a preference for a sex of the baby. I got various responses, but to the exception of the ones I will now present, most of my interviewees didn't find the sex of the baby important.

Yayoi points out that having a daughter would mean having a closer image of herself:

*Personally, I wanted a daughter. I thought a daughter would be more like me. We could talk about a lot of things. She could also help me a lot with the household chores. But of course, any sex would be good.*

Yayoi shows awareness of the generational reproduction, when she mentions that her daughter would be able to help her with household chores. She is aware that the reproduction of behaviours would proceed smoother if the child is of the same gender as her.

Eun-Ji also prefers a daughter:

*Yeah. I prefer daughter. My husband absolutely prefer daughter. But my father and mother in law prefer son a little more. (...) This is not Korean tradition or something. This is nor for her. She just*

*likes son.*

Even though her mother-in-law preferred a male grandchild, Eun-Ji points out that that doesn't stem from social, traditional patterns, but rather from personal preferences.

So-Young's preference for a daughter stems from her inexperience with male children:  
*Actually, I don't have any boy siblings, so... I don't know how to deal with boys, so I still have a hard time to take care of a boy, even though he is a second child. Actually, I prefer the girl (laughter).*

So-Young has both male and female children, but she has a preference for her daughter and finds her easier to take care of. Mika thinks similarly:

*I was a girl, and girls are great. And also, because I am older, it would be hard with a boy. But either one would be good.*

Even though she doesn't have a strong preference, she finds taking care of a daughter easier. That seems to stem from a presumed more "active" nature of male children.

The only one of the Japanese interviewees, who expressed her preference for a son, is Mari, who interestingly comes from a South Korean background:

*Because in Japan, it's very important to have a son. A son is a continuation for the family, he is the successor of the family, a successor of the business, of the society, they wanted someone to lead the company.*

I have previously presented that quote of Mika's, which shows her interest in passing on the company business. According to Mika, that would be easier had the child been male.

For Na-Young, having a son was important for passing on a family tradition:

*Actually. Honestly speaking, yes, I had a preference. Because I am, my husband is first son's first son's first son's first son for 18 in a row. You know what I'm talking about? My husband is first son, first son, first son... for 17 times in a row. So, my parents in law they are very nice. Even though they are very nice, they didn't explicitly mention, but I know that they want to have a grandson first.*

*Because my husband, as I told you, first son. So, they want to have first grandson. So, when I get pregnant for my first child I was thinking if I give a boy, probably they will not give a push anymore. Cause I feel like finished my duty. So, from that perspective I was hoping to have a boy first. And then I get a boy. And for the second child I wanted have a girl. Really wanted to have a girl. (...) It was not personal. Pressure from my parents in law to give a boy.*

In Na-Young's case, the preference for a boy came from a hope, that it would fulfil her parents-in-law's expectations. However, for her second child, she wanted to fulfil her private desire for a daughter.

Hyo-Rin describes a similar situation:

*Cause I wanna have my daughters as my friends when I get old. For me fame, family roots, is not important. I just love the relationship. But for my husband the fame and the family name is important. Because, when we get married, we don't change our family name. I'm still Park, my husband's family name is Kwon and I'm still Park, I don't change it. So, my husband wants to have a son who has his own family name and who will become famous. I don't think he's famous now, but he wants to achieve something. And he wants his son to follow him and do the same thing.*

Even though Hyo-Rin's husband does not own a business that will become an inheritance, the idea of him succeeding in the future, makes him want to secure a continuation for his efforts in the shape of a son.

Yu-Ri didn't have a strong preference for the sex of the child:

*Because it was my first child, a little bit I wanted a boy but actually it doesn't matter. I just wanna have a healthy baby. Because my husband is the first son, so I felt a little bit that I had better... We Korean people say, these days they changed a lot, so some parents want a girl, but maybe ten years ago they prefer the boy. (...)*

Similarly to the case of Na-Young, Yu-Ri wanted a son in order to continue the tradition of "first sons" in her family. She points out that those preferences have changed in the society in the

last ten years.

In this section, I shortly provided a few examples for changing patterns and falling importance of male children for the family. It is especially visible in the Japanese case, where all of my interviewees, to the exception of one, expressed their slight preference for a daughter amidst a general indifference to the child's sex.

## 8.5 Summary

In this chapter, I presented the final remarks regarding the different influence that women encountered for their decision on marriage and mothering. They serve as a supplement to the factors mentioned in the previous chapters, as well as a summary of their views. Through it, I have also created a balance for previous chapter describing the emotional fulfilment of motherhood, through providing examples of difficulties, that mothering can bring to women. That serves to create a full picture of the final decisions and thoughts of women and points out at their awareness of both sides of the coin.

Finally, I shortly presented the changing patterns in the expectations of the child sex, as well as the interchangeability of the concepts of marriage and motherhood when discussing the issues of female life choices and reproduction of mothering.

Even though the examples from the interviews in no way provide a final conclusion about the changing patterns on the expectations regarding the child's sex, in the East Asian society, they are an evidence of a trend and are worthy of researching further, possibly through quantitative methods through an anonymous survey.

The interchangeability of the concepts of marriage and motherhood is in no way a universal occurrence. Even though single motherhood is a rare case in the East Asian society and childless marriages are not very common, those family patterns do exist and with the modernisation of the society, they will possibly become more and more common.

## 9. Conclusion

“The one unifying, incontrovertible experience shared by all women and all men is that months-long period we spent unfolding inside a woman’s body.”<sup>103</sup>. Indeed, being brought to the world by a woman, could possibly be the only human experience that unifies us all. The rates, to which the importance and mysterious nature of the reproduction of mothering is underestimated and under-researched is overwhelming. The idea of essential, biological nature of female mothering is often accepted, and even when questioned, the real bases underlying the reproduction of mothering remain to be confirmed.

Patrice DiQuinzio writes, that: “At the centre of essential motherhood is the claim that what it means to be a woman is fundamentally a function of female embodiment. From this perspective, the fact that women play a specific role in the physical reproduction of the species means that to be a woman is to fulfil this role. The ideological elaboration of this claim further argues that, not only are women meant to become pregnant and give birth, but also that women are meant to do the work of child rearing. Women are expected not only to want to become pregnant and give birth but also to have a certain bond with or a connection to the children to whom they give birth. (...) They are expected to love their children unconditionally, empathize completely with their children, meet their children’s needs selflessly, and be completely fulfilled and satisfied by the experience of child rearing.”<sup>104</sup>.

Nancy Chodorow follows: “When biological mothers do not parent, other women, rather than men, virtually always take their place. (...) Women have always cared for children, usually as mothers in families and occasionally as workers in child-care centres or as paid and slave domestics. Women’s mothering is one of the few universal and enduring elements of the sexual

---

<sup>103</sup> Rich, Adrienne, “Of Woman Born: motherhood as experience and institution”. New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1976, Print. P.11

<sup>104</sup> DiQuinzio, Patrice, *The Impossibility of Motherhood: feminism, individualism, and the problem of mothering*. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print. P.89

division of labour. Because of the seemingly natural connection between women's childbearing and lactation capacities and their responsibility for the child care, and because humans need extended care in childhood, women's mothering has been taken for granted."<sup>105</sup>

According to the essentialist view on female motherhood, all of the mothering activities can be traced back to the short lactation period. The belief that the seemingly natural connection between the female biological functions and her family-oriented, selfless destiny is that of cause and result, is a logical fallacy. It is pretty clear, that even considering the existence of so-called "maternal instinct", stemming from a Freudian theory, women undergo many socialisation practices in order to become "mothers", with every relational meaning that this term entails.

In my thesis, I focused on understanding *mothering* as a set of behaviours, a continuous activity, that can be interrupted and transferred, rather than *motherhood*, with its identity-forming relational meaning. Mothering can be done by anyone, which is often proven by foster families, grandparents taking over the childrearing of their grandchildren, or even by the institutional carers. In South Korea and Japan, it is especially important to underline the transferrable characteristic of mothering, in order to dispose of social taboos, regarding for example single parenthood and homosexual parenting.

Patrice DiQuinzio also writes, that: "Understanding mothering as a practice implies that men and women are alike in that their consciousness and social relations are shaped by the practices in which they engage. It also indicates that mothering is an individually and socially significant practice in which both men and women can and should participate. In this way it undermines essential motherhood's claim that all women and only women should be mothers".<sup>106</sup>

Understanding mothering as a set of practices has the potential of undermining the essentialist view, that only mothers can take on mothering. That can be then used to undermining

---

<sup>105</sup> Chodorow, Nancy. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Berkeley: U of California, 1978. Print. P.3

<sup>106</sup> DiQuinzio, Patrice, *The Impossibility of Motherhood: feminism, individualism, and the problem of mothering*. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print. P.120

the idea, that only females possess a set of qualities needed for mothering children. Those claims may, if widely understood and accepted, can bring change in the East Asian society.

Nancy Chodorow writes, that: “Theoretically, a sex-gender system could be sexually egalitarian (and, presumably, generationally egalitarian as well). Hitherto, however, all sex-gender systems have been dominated. Moreover, every sex-gender system has organized society around two and only two genders, a sexual division of labour that always includes women’s mothering, and heterosexual marriage.”<sup>107</sup>.

The fact that women mother can be prescribed to the fact, that historically women have mothered. According to Nancy Chodorow, that relationship is passed in a generational cycle. That is an extension of a theory, that mothering is in fact socially implied, rather than natal. That does imply, that the social pressure on motherhood can be rejected. In the end, it lies in “the individual sphere of woman’s choice” to pursue or stray away from marriage and childbearing, in order to achieve her own individual goals<sup>108</sup>. The true freedom is exercised, however, only in the situation, in which any choice leads to an equal social positioning. However, in reality, the outcome of each choice has to be filtered through different variables and therefore is so hard to research through sociological methodology.

In my thesis, I have presented the self-reported evidence of female awareness of the social, as well as generational patterns, through which the reproduction of mothering takes place. I have also explained the role of male social positioning and unwillingness in participation in mothering and its consequence of women taking on mothering because “someone has to do it”. Even though the conclusive evidence on the whole female population is not available through qualitative method researching, I believe that my research gives a great starting point to the potential quantitative research, as well as opens the discussion on the reproduction of mothering in generational cycles

---

<sup>107</sup> Chodorow, Nancy. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Berkeley: U of California, 1978. Print. P.9

<sup>108</sup> DiQuinzio, Patrice, *The Impossibility of Motherhood: feminism, individualism, and the problem of mothering*. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print. P.53

and through society, as well as undermines the essentialist biological claims on female innate mothering behaviours.

Whether a “maternal instinct” exists or not, it cannot be denied, that women get satisfaction and fulfilment from having and taking care of their children. In my thesis, I have presented such instances of female-child relationship being a source of fulfilment and satisfaction for women. Whether that satisfaction is natal, and not learnt, is undermined by the existence of post-natal depression, as also described by one of my interviewees.

In my thesis I focus on the mothering as a set of behaviours, but the relational character of motherhood as an identity is very important and demands further research. For the woman’s relation to the family unit, the concept of “the family” is indistinguishable from the concept of her own mothering, which calls for a deeper analysis of motherhood and its relation in connection to essential femininity <sup>109</sup>. The interviews I conducted, as well as an interview scheme I provide as an appendix can serve as a basis for understanding the self-reported experience of motherhood, as expressed in the East Asian society.

Adrienne Rich writes, that: “Because the fact of physical motherhood is so visible and dramatic, men recognized only after some time that they, too, had a part in the generation”<sup>110</sup>. It is historically true, that men have not equally participated in childrearing throughout times and places. However, with our modern understanding of the equal role that men play in the conception of a human being, it is very important to include them in the childrearing practices as well. That would not only create a more equal society, but also provide men and their children with valuable relationships with each other.

Women have already achieved their goal of equal workforce participation. There are still problems regarding its quality – the equal pay, the overrepresentation of women in the lowest paid

---

<sup>109</sup> DiQuinzio, Patrice, *The Impossibility of Motherhood: feminism, individualism, and the problem of mothering*. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print. P.72

<sup>110</sup> Rich, Adrienne, “Of Woman Born: motherhood as experience and institution”. New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1976, Print. P.12

jobs and their underrepresentation in the highest paid jobs, to just mention a few. However, the access to workforce can not be truly equal and available, if equal distribution of the responsibility for childcare does not follow along with it. This is the goal for the future generations in East Asia, as well as in the West.

## 10. Bibliography

1. Beauvoir, Simone De, Constance Borde, and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier. *The Second Sex*. New York: Vintage, a Division of Random House, 2011. Print.
2. Boiling, Patricia. *Family Policy in Japan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Print.
3. Chodorow, Nancy. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Berkeley: U of California, 1978. Print.
4. Crenshaw, Kimberle. *Intersectionality: the double bind of race and gender*. In: Perspectives Magazine of the American Bar association, Spring 2004. Web.
5. Devasahyam, Theresa and Yeoh, Brenda S.A. *Working and Mothering in Asia*. NIAS Press, Singapore 2007. Print.
6. DiQuinzio, Patrice, *The Impossibility of Motherhood: feminism, individualism, and the problem of mothering*. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print.
7. Douglas, Susan J., and Meredith W. Michaels. *The Mommy Myth: The Idealization of Motherhood and How It Has Undermined Women*. New York: Free, 2004. Print.
8. Everingham, Christine. *Motherhood and Modernity: An Investigation into the Rational Dimension of Mothering*. Buckingham: Open UP, 1994. Print.
9. Frejka, Tomas. "East Asian Childbearing Patterns and Policy Developments." *Population and Development Review* 36.3 (2010): 579-606. JSTOR. Web.
10. Fujimura-Fanselow, Kumiko. *Transforming Japan: how feminism and diversity are making a difference*. New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2011. Print
11. Gelb, Joyce, and Marian Lief Palley. *Women of Japan and Korea: Continuity and Change*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1994. Print.

12. Greer, Germaine. *Sex and Destiny: Politics of Human Fertility*. S.l.: Pan, 1995. Print.
13. Hansen, Gitte Marianne. *Femininity, Self-harm and Eating Disorders in Japan: Navigating Contradiction in Narrative and Visual Culture*. London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016. Print.
14. Kim, Sook K. *Abandoned babies: the backlash of South Korea's special adoption act*. Washington International Law Journal Association, 2015. Web.
15. <https://digital.lib.washington.edu/dspace-law/bitstream/handle/1773.1/1505/24WILJ0709a.pdf>
16. Kim, Yeon-Myung. *Towards a Comprehensive Welfare State in South Korea: Institutional features, new socio-economic and political pressures, and the possibility of the welfare state*. London: Asia Research Center (ARC). Web.
17. <http://www.lse.ac.uk/asiaResearchCentre/files/ARCWP14-Kim.pdf>
18. Kim, Yeong-Mee; Kim, Min Yeong. *Difficulties faced by Working Mothers and Potential Solutions to these Problems: A Survey of Nursing Personnel in a Korean Teaching Hospital*. In: Perspectives in Nursing Science Vol.10 No.2, 2013. Web.
19. <http://s-space.snu.ac.kr/bitstream/10371/86572/1/10-2-151-%EA%B9%80%EC%98%81%EB%AF%B8-%EC%B5%9C%EC%A2%85.pdf>
20. Mann, Susan Archer., and Ashly Suzanne. Patterson. *Reading Feminist Theory: From Modernity to Postmodernity*. New York: Oxford UP, 2016. Print.
21. Mason, Karen Oppenheim. "Gender and Family Systems in the Fertility Transition." *Population and Development Review* 27. Supplement: Global Fertility Transition (2001): 160-76. *JSTOR*. Web.
22. McLaren, Arlene Tigar. "Coercive Invitations: How Young Women in School Make Sense of Mothering and Waged Labour." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 17.3 (1996): 279-98. *JSTOR*. Web.

23. Park, SoHyun; Lim, Hyunchul; Choi, Hyeekung. "Gangnam Mom": *A Qualitative Study on the Information Behaviors of Korean Helicopter Mothers*. Seoul: Seoul National University, 2015. Web.  
[https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/bitstream/handle/2142/73636/124\\_ready.pdf?sequence=2](https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/bitstream/handle/2142/73636/124_ready.pdf?sequence=2)
24. Rich, Adrienne, "Of Woman Born: motherhood as experience and institution". New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1976, Print.
25. Rindfuss, Ronald R., and Charles Hirschman. "The Timing of Family Formation: Structural and Societal Factors in the Asian Context." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 46.1 (1984): 205. Web.
26. Rindfuss, R. R. "The Transformation of Korean Child-spacing Practices." *Population Studies* 36.1 (1982): 87-104. *JSTOR*. Web.
27. Sayers, Janet. *Biological Politics: Feminist and Antifeminist Perspectives*. London: Tavistock, 1986. Print.
28. Sugiyama Lebra, Taakie. *Japanese Women: Constraint and Fulfillment*". Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985. Print.
29. Vegetti Finzi, Silvia, *Mothering: Towards a New Psychoanalytic Construction*. New York: The Guilfford Press, 1996. Print.
30. White, Merry Isaacs. *Perfectly Japanese: Making Families in an Era of Upheaval*. Berkeley, Calif: U of California, 2004. Print.

## Appendix – Interview Scheme

The research results will be published in Finland and will **not** be published in South Korea or Japan. The interviewee will remain anonymous.

インタビューの内容はどなたがお話になったものかわからないように匿名とします。また、この結果はフィンランドのトルク大学に提出する英語の修士論文として発表される予定であり、日本語や韓国語で公表されません。

### 研究の説明:

日本と韓国における結婚と子育てに関する比較研究をしております。比較のため、既に韓国でおこなったインタビューと基本的に同じ質問をさせていただきます。答えにくい部分などありましたら、ご質問ください。それではどうぞよろしくよろしくお願い致します。

### 質問:

#### 1. Tell me about yourself.

自己紹介してください。例えば、仕事がやっていますか？どんな仕事やっていますか？どこに住んでいますか？など、教えてください。

#### 2. Tell me about your children.

自分のご子供の話をしてください。名前は？子供は今何歳ですか？学校に行きますか？

#### 3. How long have you been dating when you first thought you wanted to get married?

あなたの配偶者の方と「結婚したい」と初めて思ったのは、交際してどのぐらいたってからでしたか。

#### 4. Did you decide together, or did he propose?

どちらからプロポーズしましたか。

#### 5. Was it always obvious for you that you will get married one day? Or did you ever consider staying unmarried?

結婚することは当たり前のことだと思っていましたか。それとも、結婚しない可能性も考えていましたか。

6. Do you think it's good for women to get married? Why?

女性が結婚することは一般的によいことだと思いますか。そのようにお考えになる理由を聞かせてください。

7. Do you feel you've experienced pressures to get married while and before you started dating your husband? If so, where were those pressures coming from?

結婚前に、ご家族などから「結婚するように」という圧力を受けましたか。

8. Did you personally feel that you should get married?

あなたは個人的に結婚したかったですか。

9. Please tell me about your parents and siblings.

あなたご自身のご家族について教えてください。

10. Are your parents still together? How would you describe their relationship with each other?

ご両親の夫婦関係はあなたから見て良好ですか。

11. Do you think they are happy? Do you think your mother is happy?

お母さんどのような感じでいらっしゃると思いますか？ 嬉しいですか？

12. Would you like to have a similar relationship with your husband to the one your parents have? Why?

配偶者（はいぐうしゃ）の方と、自分のご両親のような関係を築きたいと思っていますか。なぜそのように思われますか。

13. Did your mother talk to you about marriage and parenthood? What did she say? Do you think those were good advices and do you follow them?

お母さんと、子供の時、結婚と子育ての話がしましたか。何を言うっていましたか。これはいいアドバイスでしたか。

結婚前、またお母さんと結婚と子育てについて話しましたか？何が言われましたか？それはいいアドバイスでしたか？

14. Did you ever feel pressured by your parents to get married or to become a mother?

ご両親の話か、お母さんの話から、結婚するか子供を生むように圧力をうけましたか？

15. What about your in-laws, are they together? Do you know about their relationship, whether they are happy?

夫さんのご両親の夫婦関係はあなたから見て良好ですか。その関係によってよく知っていますか？ 夫のお母さんは嬉しいだとも思いますか？

16. Do they give you advices or tell you to have children? Do you know of their expectations towards you?

配偶者の方のご両親から子どもを持つことについて何か言われましたか。

17. Do you work?

仕事をしていますか。

18. What do you think is more important – work or childcare? How is it for women and how is it for men?

仕事か子育てかどっちのほうが大事だと思いますか。子育てと仕事のバランスについてどのようなバランスがいいですか？ 女性も男性も同じ様子だと思いますか。

19. Did you have to make a choice between work and childcare? If so, are you happy with the choice?

仕事をする事、子育ての間に、選択することがありましたか。選んだことはよかったですか。いい選択になりましたか。

20. Did you ever feel pressured into that choice? If so, by whom?

その選択は誰かに圧力を受けましたか？ だったら、誰に？

21. If not, would you make such a choice? What would you choose?

選択する必要がなかったら、今ならそんな選択することになったら、どうしますか？

22. Have you felt pressure about leaving/taking up job from your husband, in-laws, parents or elsewhere?

仕事を辞めるか続けるかについて、どなたから圧力を受けましたか。

23. Do you generally think it's good for mothers to be working?

一般的に、母親が仕事をするのはよいことだと思いますか。

24. Who do you think is more responsible for the children, you or your husband? Do you use any other help, for example in-laws or hired help?

子どもの面倒は誰が見ていますか。

25. Before you got married, did you decide on a plan to divide childcare chores?

結婚前に、あなたの配偶者の方と、子どもの面倒をどのように分担するか相談しましたか。

26. Are you happy with how those responsibilities are divided now?

あなたは今の子育ての分担の仕方について満足していますか。

27. Do you think after a woman gets married, it's natural she will also become a mother?

一般的に、女性は結婚する後で、母親になるのは当たり前のことだと思いますか。

28. When did you first start thinking about becoming a mother?

初めて子供を持ちたいと思ったのは、いつでしたか。

29. Do you remember such feelings from childhood?

子供の時か、学校生の時は、子供を持ちたいと思いましたか。

30. When did you decide you want to become a mother? Or has it always been obvious to you?

子供を持ちたいという決定をしたのが覚えていますか。それとも、いつも当たり前のことだとおもいましたか。

31. Have you had any fear about motherhood? Please tell me about and describe all of the insecurities you've had.

出産前に不安をもっていましたか。

32. Did any of those fears come true? How did you cope with them?

その不安は現実のものとなりましたか。どのようにその不安に対処しましたか。

33. Please describe how your life changed after becoming a mother. Are there mostly positive or negative changes? Please describe them.

母親になった後で、自分の生活がどのように変わりましたか。よくなった面と悪くなった面の両方をお聞かせください。総合的にみると、よくなったことが多いですか。それとも、悪くなったことがおおいですか。

34. Who do you think becomes more important after a child is born – a husband or a child? Who should?

子供の面倒と夫の関係のは出産後で、どちらが一番大事ですか？子育ての面倒と夫さんの関係のバランスはどのようなバランスが望ましいだと考えていますか。

35. Do you think becoming a mother was a good decision? Is it a good decision for a woman? Do you think all women should become mothers?

母親になってよかったですか。一般的に、母親になる経験は良いものだと思いますか。女性であれば全員が母親になった方がよいと思いますか。

36. Are there things you would like to change in your life now?

自分の今の生活で変わりたいと思ったことはありますか。

37. Who do you think is most important for the child – mother, father or somebody else? Why?

子供に対して、誰が一番大事な存在だと思いますか。母親か父親か誰かほかの人ですか。どうしてですか。

38. What do you think is the father's role in the upbringing of the child?

子育てにおける父親の役割についてのあなたのお考えをお聞かせください。

39. What has been your preference for child gender? Why so?

子供は女の子か男の子はどちらがほしかったですか。どうしてですか。

40. What do you hope for your children's future? Who do you hope they become one day?

お子さんに対して、どんな大人になってほしいと思いますか。

41. Do you want your children to get married one day?

お子さんに対して、結婚してほしいと望みますか。

42. What will you tell your son/daughter about getting married and parenthood one day? Which kind of advice would you give them?

自分の子供に、結婚か、子供育ちについてどんな話するつもりですか。もうしましたか。どんなアドバイスをあげますか。

43. What is your general view on marriage?

結婚はどんなことだと思いますか？

44. What is your general view on motherhood?

母親になるのはどんなことだと思いますか？

45. Do you remember having role models as a child?

学校生の時は、母親のロールモデル（お手本）がいましたか。

46. Do you think your mother is a role model for you?

あなたのお母様はあなたにとって、子育てをするうえでの「お手本」ですか。

47. What about your mother-in-law?

あなたの配偶者のお母様はあなたにとって、子育てをする上での「お手本」ですか。

48. Personally, who or what do you think influenced your decision on becoming a mother?

子どもを持つかどうかについてを決めるとき、どなたからの影響を受けましたか。