(Becoming) Strong Women in Sweden: Japanese Female Immigrants in the Greater Stockholm Area

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Abstract

This thesis investigates how the Japanese women who were born and grew up in Japan experienced their migration to Sweden. Three things are examined. The first regards the Japanese female immigrants’ (re)interpretation and practice of gender. Differences in policies and social systems of Sweden and Japan to pursue a gender-equal society are illustrated through contextualization of social and historical backgrounds of the past few decades and informants’ lived experiences. The second regards their (re)construction and performance of ethnicity. Various meanings and experiences of Japanese cultural space were highlighted in transcultural settings of Swedish society and (re)constructed Japanese ethnicity in Sweden. Having these perspectives as components, thirdly, their multiple, complex and flexible ways of being and sense of belonging(s) are scrutinized by employing translocational positionality framework. This analytical framework permeates all chapters of this thesis and discusses how Japanese female immigrants multiply constructed and flexibly shifted their ways of being and sense of belonging(s) in addition to their positionality in Swedish social stratification depending on situations and contexts they were exposed to. This thesis is an attempt to contribute to burgeoning ethnographic studies on gender and migration by revealing female immigrants’ construction of corrective identities in their country of settlement.

Keywords: gender, migration, Japanese female immigrants, collective identity, ethnicity, culture, space, positionality, translocational positionality

論文の要旨

本論文は、筆者の 2018 年 3 月から 10 月に及ぶスウェーデン王国首都ストックホルムとその近郊における民族学的調査によって、日本人女性の日常生活に焦点を当て、移民かつ女性という彼女たちの集団的属性が移住先での暮らしと社会的位置性をどのように形成するのかを民族誌的に明らかにすることを主題とするものである。そして最終的に、当該地域における彼女たちのジェンダー意識の再形成とその実践の過程、日本人という民族性の現地での再形成とその体現のされ方、そして彼女たちの状況に応じて多様かつ複合的に形成される集団的属性と帰属意識を明らかにすることを目的としている。本論文は次の 5 章で構成されている。第 1 章では研究動機、研究目的、理論的背景の考察、調査の概略などについて述べ、第 2 章では調査対象の人々の労働生活、第 3 章では家庭生活を始めとする私生活、そして第 4 章ではストックホルムでの日本文化の体験と再現に焦点をあて、個別的テーマに関する民族誌的データを検討し、第 5 章において本論全篇にかかる考察を行っている。本論文は、近年増加するジェンダーと移住に関する人類学的調査に則りつつ、先進国間での移住に焦点を当てた調査である。
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Notes on the Translation and Transliteration of Japanese Words

I employ Recommended System for Romanizing Japanese by Department of English Language and Komaba Organization for Educational Development (2009) through this thesis when mentioning Japanese words and names, and referring to Japanese-language sources in English. In addition, since the Japanese language does not distinguish singular and plural, I write words, for example, “two hi-seishain workers” or “two hi-seishain” instead of “two hi-seishains.” All translations from Japanese-language sources are mine and double checked by a Japanese-English bilingual person unless otherwise noted. The footnotes and bibliography offer the complete forms of the original texts in Japanese for the benefit of researchers.
Informants for Semi-structured Interviews

(Alphabetical Order)

**Akiko** – came to Sweden because of her job changes in the 1960s when she was in her early 30’s. She used to work as a draftsman.

**Ayaka** – moved to Sweden because of her Japanese husband’s research collaboration in the 2000s when she was in her mid 40’s. She had a Japanese husband and a job at an import and export company. She was a representative of the *Japanska Föreningen i Stockholm*.

**Chihiro** – came to Sweden to attend courses at a *folkhögskola*, a folk high school (Skolverket, no date), in the 2000s when she was in her early 30’s. She had a child with her Swedish partner and a job as a web developer.

**Haruka** – moved to Sweden for her Swedish partner and her career prosperity in the 2010s when she was in her early 30’s. She had two children with her Swedish partner and a job as an IT consultant.

**Kotomi** – came to Sweden to live her life with her Swedish partner in the 1970s when she was in her late 20’s. She had three children with her Swedish partner and several grandchildren. She used to work as an accountant for a Japanese company in Sweden.

**Mana** – used to be a pianist. She moved to Sweden for her Swedish husband in the 2000s when she was in her early 30’s. She had two daughters and a job at a *grundskola*, a compulsory school (Skolverket, no date).

**Misaki** – moved to Sweden in the 2010s when she was in her late 20’s because of her American husband’s job changes. She had two children and was a self-employed pastry chef.

**Saki** – lived in Sweden for a year when she was five years old because of her father’s job transfer. She visited Sweden again to conduct her research for her doctoral degree, and later she decided to move to Sweden as a post-doctoral researcher in the 2000s when she was in her early 30’s. When she took part in the interview, she was conducting her research at the same time as working at a *förskola*, a nursery school (Skolverket, no date).

**Yuko** – moved to Sweden in 2014 when she was in her early 30’s to live a life with her Swedish partner. She had two children and a job as a hairdresser.
Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

‘Ohayō gozaimasu.’¹ I greeted with a little bow to the receptionists as I came through the entrance. When walking through the entrance hall, my back got straightened with being nervous in this headquarters office in Tokyo. During the freshers’ training days, one of the vice-chiefs of the Department of Human Resources once taught us that these corridors have to be deadly quiet because such silence indicates workers’ good manners and shows the dignity of this company to the visitors. By the reception, there was a signboard. One of the papers said, ‘to those who are here for the female sales associates’ in-house training’ and showed the location of the room with a small map. I started walking a corridor to get there. Some cheerful laughter which must be from that room caught my ears on the way. I came infront of the door and took a deep breath. As I opened the door, I greeted again in the way I did to the receptionists. The section chief of the Department of Human Resources welcomed me in. The room was filled with women! They were dressed up with business suits in quiet colors such as black, light brown and gray, wearing high-heels, putting some decent make-up on and such by following the instruction given by this company to look appropriate as female sales associates. By seeing them, I finally felt that I was a part of something and relieved of loneliness I had been feeling at my branch office every day.

It was in December 2015, and I was there to attend the in-house training which was organized by the Department of Human Resources in the Japanese company I was working for at that time. Everyone in the room, about 30 women, were the female sales associates hired as seishain² and sōgōshoku³ employees. We were gathered from branch offices located all over Japan to attend this in-house training.

This company had one of the features which are commonly shared among many Japanese companies in specific industries; the workforce was mainly made up of men. As a matter of fact, although this company was the employer of about 4,500 workers, women made up only about 20%⁴ of all during my stay, which was between 2014 and 2017. In addition, when it came to the Department of Sales, which employed everyone as a seishain and sōgōshoku worker, women made up less than 0.1%. In order to support those women who were a tiny minority to stay strong, this company was organizing this training day comprised some seminars

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¹ “Good morning” in Japanese.
² Regular employee(s) who usually are entitled to have lifetime employment and employee benefits including Employee’s Pension Insurance and more (Sugimoto, 2015). This term is explored further in the ethnographic chapters.
³ Workers on career-track among seishain (Konno, 2000).
⁴ This percentage includes any types of employment.
and lectures dedicated to female sales associates annually. At the end of this training day, we moved to an izakaya⁵ and a get-together followed.

As everyone found their seats in a big party room, a toast was proposed by one of the female associates. Then we began to drink and eat a hot pot together in groups of five to six people gathered around the tables, respectively. After some ice-breaking conversations, discussions about the working conditions started at our table. Although the situations seemed to vary in each branch office, everyone complained about the long over working hours as one of the main issues of this job. We were generally spending 10 to 12 hours a day or more to fulfill the duties of sales associates. In addition, we were required to pick up phone calls anytime, including holidays. As a result, we barely had time and energy to spare for our private life. Then, one of the vice-chiefs of the Department of Human Resources who were listening to our conversation opened his mouth and stated that ‘this company is looking for a ‘leading lady.’’ And he continued, ‘if you could hang in there with this job for 10 years, your possibility for promotion is limitless.’

This statement made an unforgettable impression on me. On the one hand, it sounded as an excellent opportunity for female seishain and sogoshoku workers. Since this company had only a few female workers on the board of directors and in other higher positions, the executives were eager to promote women to prove themselves as one of the companies with gender-equal opportunities.

On the other hand, considering the working conditions which required sales associates to work long hours, it sounded challenging to keep up with this working style for 10 years, especially when it comes to having a family. As a matter of fact, there was only one working mother in the Department of Sales since a significant number of the female sales associates were leaving their position when getting married or pregnant. It was in part because the shortage in a number of nursery schools which was occurring in many cities in Japan, and the typical way of forming a family based on male breadwinner norms which were underlying in society. Considering all these facts, the statement by the vice-chief made me realize that there likely to be two options in front of female sales associates, a career or a family.

I deployed this approach of autoethnography, “writing the self” (Ettorre, 2017, p. 2), which is commonly used among the feminist writings to highlight the lived experiences of oppression. My aim here was to highlight cultural dynamics and gender political realities which

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⁵ A Japanese-style bar, which is the equivalent of an English pub, where they serve snacks to accompany your drinks.
women often confront in Japan, and reveal the complex struggles implanted. However, my experience of struggles described above actually can be the common struggles of all Japanese seishain and sōgōshoku employees regardless of gender. As Allison (1994) discovers through her anthropological research in Japan, employees in Japan are called as the “company person[s]” (p. 98) and required to commit severely in their work to succeed in their careers. As a result, there are many men, called sararīman,6 “who [are] male white-collar [workers] in a prestigious firm” (Allison, 1994, p. 10), work severely and are often absent from their family lives.7

Recent studies which include Human Renaissance Institute (2008), Ogasawara (1998) and Takenobu (2010) argue the issues of women who struggle with pursuing their careers at the same time as forming their marriage life, and the struggles of sararīman male workers who are required to work severely and tend to be absent from their family lives. Corresponding with such situations, there is a decrease in birth rate and an increase in the average age of marriage, which can result in the rapid decrease in the Japanese population in the near future (The Nikkei, 2019). Thus, Japanese society confronts these intertwined issues mostly because of the underlying gender norms and working conditions which are considered to be traditional.

Under the influence of the commonly called Scandinavian boom in Japan, many books, journal articles, and narratives of the gender-equal societies and lives with work-life balance in Scandinavian countries have been introduced in Japanese society during the past few decades. I could not help but wonder what if Japanese people could choose other ways of living instead of choosing between a career and a family life. And if they could choose both, what kind of struggles and privileges could await them. Thus, I decided to conduct research in Sweden as one of the countries where the gender system seemed to be completely different from the one in Japan.

1.2 Research Questions and Aim
There are several previous anthropological studies on gender and migration including Zontini (2010), Winarnita (2016) and Hamano (2019). Zontini conducts research on Moroccan and Filipino women in Bologna and Barcelona, Spain, to explore how their gender and national backgrounds shaped their life in the post-migratory phase including their labor-market possibilities and transnational ways of participating in social and family lives. On the other hand, Winarnita’s (2016) study on Indonesian female dancers in Perth, Western Australia, explores

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6 The sararīman employees are often also employed as seishain and sōgōshoku.
7 This aspect of Japanese gender roles are further explored in the second chapter.
how gender, mostly femininity, was constructed as the result of migration. In addition, Hamano (2019) studies Japanese women marriage migrants in Australia to scrutinize their motivation to migrate and their construction and use of ethnic and gender identities in the post migratory phase.

This thesis initially began as an inquiry to deconstruct Japanese and Swedish gender politics through the Japanese women’s lived experiences in Japan and after their migrations to Sweden. Japanese women instead of men were chosen for this study to investigate if and how they have experienced a shift in their gender roles they are supposed to play in society. However, it morphed into something more extensive than that. Though my original aim was to understand gender inequality and explore the options in women’s life, the data gathered represented the embodied experiences of migration including how the interviewed Japanese women as immigrants anchored in the place of settlement by adapting and retaining their way of living in transcultural settings. Their not only gender but also ethnic background seemed to shape their everyday lives to a great extent.

This thesis, therefore, aims to investigate how the interviewed Japanese women who were born and grew up in Japan experienced their migration to Sweden, have adapted themselves to the everyday lives in Sweden and developed their sense of belonging in the country of settlement. Gender politics in Sweden and Japan naturally comes on to the surface as one of the distinctions of these countries.

In order to reach this aim, several research questions are addressed. First of all, how did the migration from Japan to Sweden affect the interviewed Japanese women’s perceptions of gender in their work life? And how did they find themselves positioned in the Swedish society? In the course of answering these questions, their motivation to participate in society as working individuals, some oppression to overcome as immigrant workers, and Swedish and Japanese gender politics are revealed through their lived experiences.

Secondly, how did the Japanese women interviewed for this study change their interpretations and performances of gender in their private and family life? By focusing on their changes in understanding gender and performing gender roles in the post-migration phase, this question supplements the investigation of gender politics of the first research question.

The third question is about how the interviewed Japanese women have (re)constructed their identities and how it was reflected in their understandings and experiences of space. Through focusing on the roles of Japanese communities, language, and traditional culture in Sweden, the process of their identity (re)construction is revealed.
As reflected in these research questions and aim of this study, this thesis is an attempt to contribute to burgeoning research on gender and migration by revealing female immigrants’ construction of corrective identities in their country of settlement.

1.3 Theory and Analytical Concepts
By stating the aim and research questions of this thesis in the previous section, this section explores crucial analytical concepts of this thesis in addition to the theory that permeates all chapters, translocational positionality by Floya Anthias (2001).

1.3.1 Race, Ethnicity and Culture
In scrutinizing immigrants’ everyday lives in a host society, ethnicity is an important concept. In order to discuss ethnicity, first, the differences with race as a concept need to be clarified. Race tends to highlight features, which are often physically, inherited. Before and during the Second World War race was highly biologized. Today, however, it is considered to be a social construction and collective identity, which refers “to the part of self-concept that is based on memberships in social groups or categories” (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992, p. 302; Takezawa, 2005). In other words, race is ascribing and ascribed identity.

Other features of race are that it often operates through the power to categorize people based on physical distinctions, and oppress minorities and group considered to be inferiors. In addition, even when physical differences are absent, the racialization of particular groups of people can happen. For example, in the case of the Burakumin in Japan, they share the same racial and ethnic background with other Japanese are but socially alienized (Takezawa, 2005).

Therefore, in the discussion of racialized experiences, when, where and how race became relevant in the interviewed Japanese women’s perspectives are highlighted in order to examine the time, place, and occasion when they became the victims of the racialization in Swedish society.

In addition, following Collins (1993), the term, oppression, is used in this thesis like it is used above when highlighting the thoughts, actions and experiences uphold or involve subordination of someone “within some major system of oppression, whether it be by race, social class, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, or gender” (p. 25) although none of the
informants used the term oppression, which can be described as *yokuatsu, dannatsu, hakugai* and such in Japanese, when talked about their experiences.\(^8\)

Ethnicity also categorizes people but functions differently than race. Though culture used to be a signifier of ethnicity and it relied on “geographical and social isolation” (Barth, 1996, p. 9), such approaches have long been abandoned. According to Barth (1996), ethnicity is one type of socially constructed, ascribing and ascribed collective identities which often highlight the origin and background of actors and particular cultural features of them. However, such cultural features of one actors’ group are not universal. That is because different characteristics are retained, constructed, and performed in different locations because each destination of settlement consists of different socio-cultural systems, ecology, transmitted culture(s) and other components of the social environment. Thus, ethnicity is relationally constructed in different places, respectively (Anthias, 2001; Barth, 1996).

With this approach to ethnicity, culture, as one of the components of ethnicity, is also regarded as a social construction. As Hannerz (1992) states, “cultures belong primarily to social relationships, and to networks of such relationships” (p. 39). Thus, in the process of constructing culture, diffusion and differentiation with other cultures occur. Therefore, for example, a Japanese immigrant group in Hawaii can have different cultural features from the one in Stockholm to unite their compatriots.

As another dimension of ethnicity, one ethnic group can change its cultural features and function as a social organization through time as society and the differences which signify the boundaries with the dichotomized others change. Ethnicity encapsulates such fluidity; however, the differences remain as borders among such ethnic others, and such features of ethnicity let immigrant groups sustain, respectively (Barth, 1996). Therefore, for instance, the cultural features of the Japanese immigrant group in Stockholm and its roles among the people may change as time goes by. On the other hand, the Japanese as one of the ethnic groups maintains their identity by managing the boundaries based on the differences with other ethnic groups.

Following Hall (2013), constructing ethnicity (and culture) can also be described as the process of making the ‘others.’ According to Hall (2013), the ‘others’ are relationally constructed, and the self and the ‘others’ are co-dependent to mark differences. When discussing Japoneseness, for example, what it is to be Japanese is described by highlighting the differences with the ‘others,’ such as British, Swedish, and Chinese people. In a multi-ethnic

\(^8\) In interviews, they instead used the word, discrimination which is *sabetsu* in Japanese, as Yuko does in section 2.3.2 so as Haruka in 3.4.3. Haruka found it a bit extreme to use the term oppression to describe her experience, however, considering the structure of society which brought difficulties based on their gender, ethnicity and other identity makers, I decided to use the term oppression as an analytical concept by following Collins.
society like Sweden, therefore, each ethnic group is classifying the ‘others’ as those who are different from ‘us’ to identify themselves.

I employ Barth’s (1996) concept of ethnicity, Hannerz’s (1992) concepts of culture and Hall’s (2013) concept of the ‘others’ to examine when and how their ethnicity and culture became relevant and irrelevant for the interviewed Japanese women. Thus, in this thesis, I ask when, where, and how they were reminded, perceived, and performed their ethnicity and culture in the Swedish context by using these analytical concepts.

1.3.2 Gender
Whereas sex refers to the binary opposition of male and female, gender is a concept which cannot be used interchangeably with sex. Gender is socially and culturally constructed concept so that it contains different meanings and operates differently in individual geographical locations and social contexts (Massey, 1994). In addition, it divides male and female domain by enabling and disciplining them and their performance (McIntyre, 2013, p. 294). Therefore, for example, men and women differently behave and perform gendered practices in Japan, and the desired women’s gendered behavior, performance and practice can differ between Sweden and Japan so as men’s.

Pessar and Mahler (2003) adds a praxis-oriented perspective to this concept of gender by conceptualizing it as a process. They states that whereas gender is often perceived as natural and eternal, it actually is a human construction and changeable. People do ‘gender work’ while performing gendered practice, and “they reproduce and/or contest hierarchies of power and privilege” (Pessar & Mahler, 2003, p. 813). Thus, the reproduction of gender and fluidity of “gender identities, relations, and ideologies” (Pessar & Mahler, 2003, p. 813) are also highlighted in this perspective. Another dimension of gender described by Passer and Mahler (2003) is that gender also contains the function of a structure. Gender is produced and reproduced in the institutionalized form at various scales including family, education and society. Thus, the power of gender is operated above individuals.

According to the conceptualization of gender described above, the Japanese women interviewed for this study were influenced by the gender norms they were exposed to in Sweden which were (re)produced by the actors of society and the various institutions. The interviewed Japanese women simultaneously were (re)creating gender through their gendered activity, practice, discourse and more. I wonder how the participants’ doing of gender have been changed in the post-migratory phase. Their change in performance of gender and reactions to gender
roles should reflect the change in their interpretation of gender norms. Thus, how the informants actually did gender in their everyday lives are explored in the ethnographic chapters.

1.3.3 Space
In discussing the everyday lives of one of the immigrant groups, a concept of space also needs to be discussed as an analytical concept to conceptualize the actors’ surroundings and concrete situations. For Massey (1994), space is created out of social relations which are inherently dynamic and never still. Following this view, the spatial which is “social relations stretched out” (p. 2, emphasis on the original text) is also inherently dynamic so as to space. Because of this fluidity of social relations, space and the spacial always should be considered with time.

In addition to such fluidity, space also contains multiplicity and complexity. Following Massey (1994), a particular space may provide different experiences and meanings for individuals. Since space is influenced by economic, political, and cultural dimensions of social relations, for instance, individuals’ positionality in social stratification including ethnic hierarchy brings about different experiences of space. This characteristic of space also enables to conceptualize the spacial as formed out of various spatial scales including global, national, local, and more wherever social relations emerge. Thus, space is “unfixed, contested, and multiple” (p. 5). In the case of a Japanese cultural event organized in Stockholm, for example, the experiences and understanding of it vary depending on the participants’ background and positionality in society. Japanese space can be assumed as an opportunity to (re)experience and enjoy Japanese culture by themselves in addition to introducing it to the others in the first generation of Japanese immigrants’ perspective. On the other hand, it can be one of opportunities to become familiar with or (re)experience it in the perspectives of the second and third generations of the Japanese. In a global perspective, it can be seen as the prosperity of Japanese culture abroad. And, in Swedish perspective, it can be seen as one of the examples of immigrants’ coexistence in the dominant culture, respectively.

For Massey (1994), in addition, place should be considered in relation to space because place is a moment formed out of space. Since meanings and experiences of space depend on individuals, place also relies its interpretations on “the particular set of social relations that interact at a particular location” (p. 168) to make sense of it. In other words, place is “attempts to stabilize the meaning of particular envelope of space-time” (p. 5, emphasis in the original text). Therefore, following the features of space, place is also “unfixed, contested, and multiple” (p. 5). In the case of a Japanese cultural event organized in Stockholm, following the example raised for space, Japanese place is temporarily created in Stockholm. Such place taking of the
Japanese is also experienced by the participants with different perspectives, respectively. As it happens with space, place is also experienced in various spatial scales. Thus, it can be seen as the moment of capturing the prosperity of Japanese culture abroad in a global perspective and one of the examples of immigrants’ co-existence in the dominant culture in Swedish perspective, for instances.

I wonder when and how Japanese space was experienced by the participants and what kind of meanings were given to them in Stockholm, especially among the interviewed Japanese women. Since experiences and meanings of space reflect the social relations, this approach enables to reveal the Japanese immigrants’ positionality, ethnicity, and its glue to maintain them as one of the immigrant groups in Sweden.

1.3.4 Translocational Positionality
There are various different concepts to study collective identity. Intersectionality, to begin with, is the concept which makes it possible to discuss how gender, ethnicity and race, for example, intersect and are experienced at once. The intersection of such components constructs a distinct collective identity and positionality, and brings about specific experiences to be studied (Anthias, 2009; Collins, 2000). Hybridity, on the other hand, focuses on intercultural and cross-cultural lifestyles of actors, such as on how different cultures are cut, mixed, and brought in various aspects of everyday lives, in order to discuss issues of identities and boundaries of belongingness (Anthias, 2001; 2009). Based on intersectionality, and by pointing out the limited analytical work of hybridity to discuss identity, Anthias (2001) proposes translocational positionality as an analytical framework to describe collective identity.

Following Anthias (2001), positionality refers to the social position as an outcome, and social positioning as a process in addition to the features that it is constructed by the actors’ self-attribution and attributions by others.⁹ As intersectionality, therefore, identity markers such as gender, ethnicity, class and such are also crucial components of translocational positionality to discuss actors’ social position and positioning resulting from the intersection of those. However, what Anthias (2001) emphasizes additionally is the importance of spatial and temporal context, and spatiality and temporality of the context which recognize the focus on location and translocation. Actors’ positionality shifts in different space, time and context because their identity markers such as class, ethnicity and gender also shift their meanings and intersect differently. The actors’ self-attribution and attributions by others also show flexibility.

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⁹ This is how I refer to positionality, position and positioning in this thesis.
Translocational describes this feature of collective identity. This approach enables to reveal actors’ complex, multilayered and fluid sense of belonging to collective identities depending on space, situation, time, and context (Anthias, 2001; Doan & Portillo, 2017).

Another dimension of translocational positionality is recognizing identity and collective identity as creating not only boundaries of categories but also social stratification which bring about privileges and oppression around resource allocation. Actors’ positionality in social stratification and resource allocation also function differently depending on space, situation, time, and context (Anthias, 2001). For instance, a Japanese man can identify himself with other immigrants when he struggles in job-hunting in Sweden because of his Swedish language competence whereas he can differentiate himself with his Chinese friend because of some differences in eating habits.

As described above, culture, ethnicity and gender are socially and relationally constructed concepts, thus, they contain different meanings and discipline actors differently in different places. Such concepts intersect and construct specific space depending on the actors’ spatial, temporal and contextual positionality and also create various interpretations by them and the others.

In Sweden, there seem to be various ways to label the Japanese women interviewed for this study. They can be called as immigrants, non-Europeans, Asian, east-Asian, Japanese, women, workers, and more. Such various options of identification make me wonder when, where, why, and how such labeling become relevant to them. In other words, I wonder the time, place, occasion, reason and process of the interviewed Japanese women who came to identify themselves with the people in a specific label and what privileges and struggles, sometimes even oppression, were experienced. This approach should bring a praxis-oriented perspective into the study of a sense of belonging(s) and collective identities of the interviewed Japanese women through their lived experiences as one of the immigrant groups in Swedish multi-ethnic society.

As described before, recent anthropological studies of gender and migration such as Zontini (2010), Winarnita (2016) and Hamano (2019) focus on function of gender, and construction of gender and ethnicity in the post-migratory phase. My ethnographic focus is not only on such aspects but also on multiplicity, complexity, and flexibility of my informants’ ways of being and sense of belonging(s). Therefore, I instead use translocational positionality, an analytical framework by a sociologist, as a main theoretical reference in this thesis.
1.4 Research Methods

This section aims to introduce the research methods I employed during field research. Since this thesis focuses on the everyday lives of the Japanese female immigrants, qualitative research methods including participant observations and semi-structured and unstructured interviews were employed and served as the primary methods. Apart from them, the possible effects of my Japanese background in the field and my internship experience at a Swedish company were crucial to shaping the methodology of this thesis so they are also discussed in this section.

1.4.1 Fieldwork

I conducted fieldwork during the period between March and October in 2018. Since this year marked the 150th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Sweden and Japan, many events were held. They gathered significant number of people not only Japanese immigrants but also people with various backgrounds, and showed the spirit to celebrate this special occasion. I expected this situation to make a rather smooth entry into the field. On the contrary, some significant difficulties in conducting this research was experienced at the beginning of fieldwork. It was difficult, first, to find Japanese female immigrants, and, second, to become close enough with them to ask a favor of participating in my research. The greater Stockholm area was chosen as the focus of my study because Stockholm, as a capital, has the most significant population in Sweden and this can increase the possibilities to encounter Japanese women. In spite of that, I was experiencing a hard time to find informants to conduct interviews during the first few months in the field.

To make a change, internet ethnography which aims to study online social groups and their formation of a community (Davies, 2008, p. 163) was conducted as a step to find the offline Japan related gathering events and meet the members in person. The organizations and clubs I participated in turned out to be a significant help to find the informants for this research in a limited time. I joined some events and club activities with introducing myself as a student who studies anthropology and is conducting research on Japanese women in Sweden. I managed to become acquainted with some of the participants, and asked them if they were interested in sharing their comments and experiences with me. Some people showed interests in my study and offered a help by sharing some comments or participating in my interviews. The others recommended me to go to a specific other community to meet possible informants.

As a result, this fieldwork as a whole took the form of a multi-sited ethnography focusing on the Japanese network expanding in Stockholm and the surrounding area by following connections within the network instead of “remaining focused on a single site of
investigation” (Marcus, 1995, p. 96). Although my field remained rather small because it was in one area, the greater Stockholm area. However, each event and activity showed distinct differences. They had different purposes, gathered different kinds of people and had different aspects of Japan or Japanese culture to be shared. Such distinctions led me to see my study conducted in a collection of different sites.10

How I conducted the participant observations and unstructured and semi-structured interviews are explained below together with the issue of anonymity of the informants. In addition, discourse analysis of empirical and material data and archival data collection were conducted for this study.

**Participant Observations**

In order to deepen the understanding of Japanese people residing in Stockholm and the surrounding area, I worked as a volunteer at *Japanska Skolan i Stockholm*11 between April and June 2018 and at two seasonal events organized by *Japanska Föreningen i Stockholm*, JFS,12 which were *Sakura-Matsuri*, the Cherry Blossom Festival, and *Aki-Matsuri*, the Autumn Festival. I also joined two activity clubs, a tea ceremony club called *Japanska Thesällskapets Tankoukai*, and a club called *Kosode*-club that taught participants how to wear *kimono*.13 These all were to conduct participant observations. Since Japanese people in Stockholm and the surrounding area had a wide residential distribution, I did not encounter such a thing as a Japanese town. In addition, there were not any significant religious facilities for Japanese indigenous religion called *Shinto*, or Japanese Buddism either. These events and activities were, therefore, crucial opportunities to meet Japanese people and see how Japanese people and people who are interested in Japan occasionally gathered and enjoyed something related to Japan together. How they served in the interviewed Japanese women’s everyday lives are explored in the ethnographic chapters.

**Interviews**

In addition to the unstructured interviews I conducted on many occasions, I also conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with nine Japanese women between June and October in 2018. As reflected in the research questions, my interest is in how the Japanese women manage

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10 Differences of such events and activities are further explored in chapter 4.
11 In the rest of this thesis, I refer to *Japanska Skolan i Stockholm* as *Japanska Skolan*.
12 In the rest of this thesis, I refer to *Japanska Föreningen i Stockholm* as JFS.
13 A Japanese traditional garment
everyday lives where gender norms are different from their country of origin,\textsuperscript{14} and how they attach with and detach from their countries of origin and settlement.

In studying the gender norms of Japan and Sweden, I found the working conditions as the crucial aspect of shaping their gender roles. Therefore, I chose to interview those who have or had a job in Sweden. This happened to narrow down the focus of my study on those Japanese women who were staying or going to stay in Sweden for a long-term. The reasons behind this have connections with the Swedish labor market, thus, they are explored in the ethnographic chapters.

Prior to making the first contact with the possible informants, I also searched my informants’ name on the internet by exploring websites such as the one called “hitta.se” which showed the personal information of those who are registered with the Swedish Population Register, including the living address, age and name of the co-habitant partner. This system was possible to exist because Sweden allows accessing personal data openly (Svensson, 2018), and helped this research to discover if there were an area where Japanese people live concentratedly and so on.

As the semi-structured interviews should be, the setting was formal. The time and place to meet were decided in advance. In some cases, it was in their home and they welcomed me with their homemade sweets and even dinner sometimes. And, for the other time, it was at a café or a restaurant near the meeting spot. In contrast, the interviews themselves were flexible. I brought a list of questions, but I let the interviewee direct the conversation as much as possible (Davies, 2008, p. 105&106). On my list of questions, there were three major categories: 1) her background, 2) her experiences in Sweden, and 3) comparisons between Sweden and Japan. And each category consisted of 10 to 15 questions. I was prepared to not to miss asking some crucial questions but, as mentioned above, the conversations flowed flexibly.

All the interviews were conducted in Japanese because it was everyone’s mother tongue. The interviews took between 90 minutes to three hours, and I recorded everything on Dictaphone and transcribed everything after the interviews with their permission. Translations between Japanese and English were made by the author and double checked by the Japanese-English bilingual person. Some of the quotes from the semi-structured interviews were translated by the informant herself following her wish.

\textsuperscript{14} In the interviews, the informants did not describe Japan as a home country which can be expressed as furusato, sokoku, bokoku, kokyou, and in other ways in Japanese. They instead simply described themselves as a Japanese, nihonjin, by referring to the fact that they came from Japan. Considering this, and since some but not all of the informants seemed to be starting to see Sweden as their (second) home country, I call Japan as their country of origine instead of their home country in this thesis.
For the informants of the semi-structured interviews, I decided to interview at least eight people and be flexible depending on the situation after I consulted my supervisor. Four out of nine of them were found during the participant observations described above. In contrast, the other five were found through my network. When I was trying to find the informants, though it is natural for one who resides in a foreign country to become friends with compatriots, I chose not to interview those who belong to my closest circle. This was because I was afraid of reactivity, my effect on the data as being their friend (Davies, 2008, pp. 7&8). I was afraid that if the relationships we had could have an effect on the data. Therefore, I talked about my study and asked them to help me to find the informants for interviews instead. As a result, this strategy led me to interview Japanese women from different backgrounds in various generations. The ethnographic materials I gathered embraced various narratives that happened both in Japan and Sweden. When conducting the interview with my eighth informant, it was already in September so I felt that the clock was ticking. In addition, thanks to the various backgrounds of my informants and generosity of them spending long time to participating in my interviews as described above, I felt that I got enough data at least to write a master’s thesis. Then my eighth informant recommended me to interview her friend who came to Sweden in the 1960s, who could be the pioneer. I decided to accept her kind offer and made that interview as the last one.

1.4.2 Internship
Doing an internship in Sweden turned out to deepen my understanding of the narratives which the informants shared with me, and inspired me on how to structure this thesis. I worked as a social e-commerce intern for the Japanese market at a Swedish company located in Stockholm from November 2018 to February 2019. My role included enhancing communication with the distributor and warehouse in Japan which led to reveal the differences in work culture between Japan and Sweden. In addition, most of the employees of this company were people who grew up in Sweden although their ethnic background varied. The primary language at this office was the mix of English and Swedish. All in all, this experience inevitably widened my perspective in analyzing empirical materials.

1.4.3 Self-reflexivity
Reflexivity is broadly defined as a process of self-reference to reduce the effects of the researcher when conducting research (Davies, 2008, p. 4). In the case of this thesis, my background that I studied the social system of Sweden as a bachelor’s student in Japan could
have effects in addition to my background as a person who grew up in Japan with Japanese parents.

I conducted research on Swedish society during my bachelor’s study. I, therefore, had specific positive impressions on the Swedish social system which pursues gender equality in society. These impressions almost initiated this research together with the various course of events. However, in the field, several informants and materials I encountered reminded me that there is also a room to improve in Swedish society to make it more gender-equal.

My background as Japanese is also worth noting because it shaped my fieldwork in many ways. As mentioned above, all the communication with the informants were made in Japanese. Being a Japanese also brought about the smooth entry to the field when joining club activities and working as a volunteer at Japanska Skolan.

In contrast, it was crucial to avoid overestimating the degree of how much I understood the meaning of the narratives shared by the informants during the fieldwork even they sounded similar as what I had experienced. One of the strategies to overcome this was to encourage the informants to share the in-depth insights of their stories. For example, in the field, one of the most significant differences between the informants and me was the length of stay in Sweden. Whereas I was a new-comer and possible short-term visitor, the informants were the long-term or permanent residents of Sweden. Since they had a job and were fluent in Swedish among other things, they seemed to be exploring Sweden on another level than me. I emphasized this distinction during the interviews and encouraged informants to elaborate more on the comments and narratives. Though we could relate to one another in some of the comments and experiences, this approach with subjectivity and objectivity were employed by being self-reflexive.

1.4.4 Anonymity

As it is often discussed, how to protect and respect informants’ anonymity is a crucial part of anthropological research (Davies, 2008, pp. 59-61). As my informants and I have agreed upon, therefore, pseudonyms are used for all informants. In addition, all the informants of the semi-structured interviews including the principal of Japanska Skolan and JFS were given the opportunity to read and give opinions on this thesis before the submission. I also do not specify the name of the company I used to work for in Japan and Sweden because I was pledged to the secrecy of the company when I left. Though the informants are protected as described above, for those who are in the public positions, the principal of Japanska Skolan and the chairperson of the JFS, I appreciate their cooperation with this study.
1.5 Chapters
This thesis consists of five chapters. Three ethnographic chapters follow the introductory chapter on research questions and aim, theory and analytical concepts, research methods, and background.

Chapter two, “Working Life,” and chapter three, “Family and Private Life,” are to explore the interviewed Japanese women’s everyday lives by breaking them down into different spheres. In other words, the second and third chapters supplement each other to build concrete understandings of the everyday lives of the Japanese women interviewed for this study in terms of their ways of being, sense of belonging(s), ethnicity, and gender politics. In the process of investigating them, their lived experiences of struggles and privileges in Swedish society are revealed. In these ethnographic chapters, therefore, Anthias’s (2001) translocational positionality framework, Barth’s (1996) concept of ethnicity, Takezawa’s (2005) race and Pessar and Mahler’s (2003) gender are employed.

Chapter four, “Japanese Space,” plays a slightly different role than the previous ethnographic chapters because this chapter primarily focuses on ethnicity to illustrate the informants’ concrete situations of everyday lives in a country of settlement. Therefore, it takes a closer look at the Japanese communities in Stockholm. Informants’ experiences and performances of Japanese ethnicity in Stockholm are explored through the outcomes of the participant observations conducted at Japanska Skolan and Japanese cultural events and activities organized in Stockholm in addition to the materials gathered from the interviews. Thus, Anthias’s (2001) translocational positionality framework, Barth’s (1996) concept of ethnicity, Hannerz’s (1992) culture and Massey’s (1994) space are employed.

Chapter five follows in the end to summarise the main discussion of this thesis. Sections are divided into 1) gender norms and 2) constructions of belonging. In the course of discussions, answers to the research questions are given. This thesis closes with raising some suggestions to the future study.

1.6 Background
As mentioned, this thesis scrutinizes the everyday lives of Japanese women living in Stockholm and the surrounding area. In order to understand their concrete situations, it is crucial to understand 1) Japanese people as one of the ethnic groups, 2) Japanese people’s positionality as one of the immigrant groups in Sweden, and 3) socio-historical backgrounds and situations which surround immigrants in Sweden. Therefore, those three aspects are explored below.
1.6.1 Japan and the Japanese People
As described by Levinson (1998), Japan is known to be “one of the most ethnically homogeneous nations in the world” (p. 238). In September 2018, the number of foreign residents\(^\text{15}\) reached 2.7 million, the highest number ever, which occupies about two percents of the population (Ministry of Justice, 2019). Thus, among the population of 126.2 million (Statistics of Japan, 2019), immigrants are tiny minorities.

In addition to those immigrants, there are a certain number of minority groups under the administrative label of ‘Japanese people.’ For example, there are some indigenous people of Japan, who are on the north borders called Ainu or Aino and on the south borders called Ryukyu or Okinawan. In addition, the socially constructed racialized group in Western Japan is called Burakumin (Levinson, 1998; Takezawa, 2005).

Therefore, the ethnic and cultural hegemony\(^\text{16}\) of Japanese people who are an absolute ethnic majority in Japan is evident. And, nationality, ethnicity and culture as concepts are often used interchangeably among the Nihonjinron, theories of Japanese, scholars (Sugimoto, 1999).\(^\text{17}\) Such characteristics of Japanese ethnicity seem to be in part the reason that the informants of this thesis did not describe any experiences of being the victim of racism in Japan.

1.6.2 Japanese as Immigrants
To follow the historical traits of Japanese immigrants, the emigration of Japanese people started in 1868, and the years between 1868 and the 1960s are described as the era of massive emigration in Japan. There were three different types of Japanese immigrants traveled overseas during this period; those who were on the labor migration, the assigned colonizers, and the young men who wished to study abroad (Azuma, no date). In addition, the oversea travels were deregulated in 1964 (The Mainichi Newspaper, 1964) and this resulted in enhancing the emigration of Japanese to all over the world. According to the last available data, the number of Japanese people residing overseas\(^\text{18}\) marked over 1.3 million which was the highest number in the record (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018). Nowadays, many Japanese people emigrate for their temporary work assignments by employers, marriage, educational opportunities, or

\(^{15}\) 在留外国入。This term includes those who do not necessarily have a permanent residence but have obtained a visa to stay in Japan for not less than three months (Ministry of Justice, no date).

\(^{16}\) There are, on the other hand, considerable regional variations under the label of Japanese culture including the regional variations of Bon-odori festival which is explored in the fourth chapter.

\(^{17}\) In this thesis, however, ethnicity and culture are treated in the way I discuss in the Theory and Analytical Concepts section following Barth (1996) and Hannnerz (1992).

\(^{18}\) 海外在留邦人。This term includes those who do not necessarily have a permanent residence but have obtained a visa to stay outside of Japan for not less than three months (Ministry of Justice, no date).
business ventures (Azuma, no date). In Europe, the majority of Japanese immigrants are for their temporary work assignments by employers. Thus, they stay for a short-term which is usually three to five years (Goodman, et al., 2003, p. 8&9).

In the case of Sweden, there were 4,217 Japanese immigrants as of 2017 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018). Sweden is a country often described as multi-ethnic whose population marked 10.2 million and the population of foreign-born made up 1.9 million of them, about 19.1% of the population. In addition, there are 1.1 million people who are foreign-born and Swedish citizens (SCB, 2018). This is the outcomes of the immigration into Sweden which has been exceeded emigration since the 1940s. A great number of refugees and asylum seekers immigrated into Sweden especially after the mid-1970s from all over the world and the diversity of ethnic groups in Sweden was increased (Aldén & Hammarstedt, 2014; Ehn, 1992). Among those foreign-born people, therefore, the Japanese were a small minority group although the number had been mostly increasing for the past few decades (see Figure 1). Their motives for immigration are explored in the ethnographic chapters.

1.6.3 Immigrants in Sweden

Corresponding with the high percentage of immigrants in the population, significant efforts to protect the rights of minority groups have been paid in Sweden. For example, in addition to its official language, Swedish, five official minority languages are stated by law including Finnish,

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19 Here “total” means the number of people who have Japanese citizenship but live in Sweden for more than three months.
Meänkieli, Sami languages, Yiddish, and Romani (Lagen.nu, 2009; The Local, 2014). This reflects the attitude to protect the language and culture of some minorities within the country. In addition, the immigrants who have received a Swedish personal identity number have a right to receive Swedish language education without paying school tuition (Stockholms stad, 2018). Moreover, it is common to hold a Welcoming Ceremonies for new Swedish citizens on the Swedish National Day. These indicate that significant efforts to integrate the immigrants into Swedish society have been made in Sweden (Ulfstrand, 2008).

In contrast, issues of economic and ethnic segregation are also severe according to previous research. For example, Sweden places as the fourth worst country when it comes to the rate of foreign-born people without an occupation (OECD, 2017). Among others, immigrants originally from Africa and Asia possessed the lowest employment rate and the highest unemployment rate although the rates were improved as their length of residence increased (Aldén & Hammarstedt, 2014). This is in part because about 80 percents of all jobs in Sweden are transmitted via informal networks (The Local, 2016) and foreign-born people can have a disadvantage in this area. As for ethnic segregation, some of the immigrant groups with specific identity dominate some of the areas in Stockholm. For instance, a high number of Somalis are in Rinkeby and Tensta while Iranians are in Kista in addition to the significant number of Syriacs in Södertälje (Mack, 2017, p. 8).

In addition, issues around racism are complex. As emphasized by Goldberg (2015), postraciality which has started from the early 1950s aims to remove any racialized categorization, however, its impact seems to be limited in public discourse (p. 69). Sweden seems not to be an exception. The Swedish anti-discrimination law from 2009 abolished the term race because “all people belong to the same race: the human race” (Government Offices of Sweden, 2017), however, the act of racialization toward immigrants and people of color exists at school (Hübinette & Tigervall, 2009) and many corners of Swedish society. So-called “everyday racism” (Hällgren, 2005, p. 321), the acts of racism which repeatedly occurs in the everyday lives of the victims as a structural function, are found in Sweden (Hällgren, 2005). Such intertwined situation surrounding ethnic diversity of Sweden is also reflected in the interviewed Japanese women’s lived experiences.
Chapter 2. Working Life

Among the Japanese women interviewed for this study, there was one thing they all appreciated about Sweden: women can have a career even after getting married, and ultimately, become financially independent of their husband. This reflects their different experiences in Japan and Sweden in terms of gendered roles.

In this chapter, therefore, Sweden and Japan’s historical and social backgrounds are explored first in order to capture the actual situation of gender-equal opportunities at work and working conditions. These also reflect gender structure and men and women’s positionality in both countries. Then, the interviewed Japanese women’s lived experiences are investigated by being divided into the categories of “having a career,” “job-hunting,” and “working conditions.”

I aim to analyze if and how gender norms of the interviewed Japanese women were changed and why in the post-migratory phase. In addition, it is investigated that which collective identification became relevant and irrelevant when and why, and what kind of privileges and struggles were experienced. To reach this aim, I employ Anthias’s (2001) translocational positionality framework, Takezawa’s (2005) concept of race and Pessar and Mahler’s (2003) concept of gender to explore the inquiries. The findings presented in this chapter are based on the in-depth interviews conducted with the Japanese women who live in Stockholm and the surrounding area.

2.1 Historical and Social Backgrounds

In scrutinizing Swedish working conditions through the interviewed Japanese women’s experiences, it is crucial to understand the differences in working conditions between Sweden and Japan. According to the data provided by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2019), OECD, employment rate marked 84.3% for men and 70.6% for women in Japan whereas it marked 79.3% for men and 76.5% for women in Sweden. Comparing with the OECD’s total, which marked 76.1% for men and 61.2% for women, Japan and Sweden locate above average. There are more details to explore such as the Japanese gender norms and working conditions on a concrete level than those numbers, however. First of all, it is crucial to clarify the terms used for different types of employment in Japan.

2.1.1 Japan

In the Japanese employment system, it is crucial to understand the characteristics of the part-timers. Part-timers are those who work fewer hours than the full-time workers with a different
type of contract and they make up about 30% of the workers. About 70% of them are women (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2017). They are often described as the inferiors comparing to the full-timers because, in many cases, they earn less hourly wages, belong to a different working sector, are on fixed-term employment, and are not entitled to full social benefits, paid vacation, retirement pay and pensions among other things. It is common to work as part-timers as re-entry into the labor market after childcare for the Japanese women because of the flexibilities in working hours which make it easier to work alongside managing the household tasks (Ida, 2003, pp. 94-99). Such working wives are often referred to as pāto taimā20 in Japanese (Sugimoto, 2015).

Among the full-timers, there are also two types of employment, regular (seishain) and non-regular (hi-seishain). Hi-seishain workers are considered as the inferior comparing to the seishain workers because, for example, they are often on fixed-term employment, not entitled to receive bonuses and retirement money, and are not covered by a welfare program (Sugimoto, 2015). When workers are employed as full-time and seishain, they can be categorized into further two respective groups depending on if they have an opportunity to be on a career track, sōgōshoku, or not, ippanshoku (Konno, 2000). Although there are many other terms to explore in the Japanese labor system, those are the keywords to scrutinize how gender-equal opportunities are pursued in Japan in the past few decades.

Although there have been certain reformations happening in the recent Japanese labor market, Japanese typical employment practices for seishain employees have several main bases: lifetime employment, a wage structure based on seniority, employment of new school leavers, and so on (Yashiro, 2011). Among the middle-class Japanese, it is considered to be a great success if one is employed by a pristigious company with such typical employment practices. That is because, it means that the employees are provided with social security, stable income and status, among other things (Allison, 1994, pp. 91-93). Thus, the competition to enter such pristigious companies is severe (see Allison 1994 for this entrance system).

After entering one of the pristigious companies, employees are secured to a certain point because of the employment system for seishain workers mentioned above. On the other hand, however, entering such company also means that they start a new competition to achieve a better promotion there. As one of the features of Japanese companies, workers are expected to be “company person[s]” (Allison, 1994, p. 98). Meaning they are supposed to be devoted to

20 If a pāto taimā registers as a spouse of a seishain worker and his dependent, she is covered by a welfare program as her husband including pension and more. To be covered by this system, her annual income has to be below 1,300,000 yen (Sugimoto, 2015; Government of Japan, 2018).
their job so that they are expected to work intensely. It can be summarised as “the more successful a sarariiman\textsuperscript{21} is, the more he is expected to give to his job” (Allison, 1994, p. 98).

In addition, workers are expected to become a part of family-like relationships at the office and look after each other, especially supervisors look after subordinates, encompassing the matters in their private lives to a certain point. Spontaneous drinking parties are also crucial to attend to maintain good bonding with the work fellows, in many cases.

If an employee fails to meet such norms of Japanese workers, s/he can be categorized as a member of the so-called madogiwazoku, “the group who sit by the windows” (Allison, 1994, p. 98). Madogiwazoku employees are still hired as sōgōshoku and seishain but they have fallen out of the career track and are given dull jobs (Allison, 1994). For this reason, sōgōshoku and seishain workers are often eager to work intensely to win the game, especially if they are eager to have promotion prospects.

As a result, Japanese husbands tend to be absent from their family life, and Japanese family model often functions with husbands’ financial supply and wives’ devotion to family. Thus, Japanese family tends to be based on the “man as breadwinner, woman as housewife” (Ito, 2014, p. 141) gender norms which seem to be taking opportunities away from mothers and wives to participate in society as working individuals at the same time as taking much of the family life away from fathers and husbands.

It is by all means possible for Japanese women to pursue their careers by becoming sōgōshoku and seishain workers. However, there can be various difficulties. Firstly, it can be challenging after getting married in part because of working conditions described above. Secondly, there is a shortage in the number of nursery schools in Japan. At the point of October 2018, there were 55,433 children on the waiting lists for nursery school places (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2018). As another burden, sex wage gap is significant between seishain men and women in Japan. In 2017, among those who were on their first year of employment, there was a sex wage gap of 15%. According to the data of the senior employees, this gap was maintained around 15% during the first four years of employment, and even exceeded 20% after 15th years (Sugawara, 2018, pp. 84-88). For these series of difficulties and demerits, many of Japanese women choose to become housewives or pāto taimā. Some of them even stay married after they realize that their roles in marriage are more about being mothers than wives who fulfill their duties to support the function of a family unit (Allison, 1994, p. 108).

\textsuperscript{21}This term is the same as sararīman.
Although there are such traditional gender roles underlie, various political actions were taken, and social policies were formed to provide gender-equal opportunities in Japan. As one of the actions, there was administrative reform in the 1980s. In this reform, the Equal Employment Opportunity Law, EEOL, which was formed in 1985 marked the starting point of pursuing gender-equal society in Japan. However, EEOL mainly focused on providing equal opportunities regardless of gender but did not succeed in encouraging workers to share household tasks beyond gender norms. Thus, EEOL turned out to bring about struggles for women to handle the responsibilities of household tasks at the same time as participating in society as working individuals. In addition, considering the social policies reformed in the 1980s including an income tax deduction called a spousal deduction for wives, it was apparent that it was aimed to invite women into the labor market with maintaining the traditional family-style. Women were expected not to become economically independent of their husband but to support the family economy partially. As a result, this administrative reform in the 1980s has categorized Japanese women into two types: the career pursuing type and the housewife type (Ito, 2014; Sugimoto, 2015; Takenobu, 2010).

In contrast, the 1990s was the decade when the gender-equal society was pursued under the slogan of the *jenda furi*, which literally means “gender freedom” (Ito, 2014, p. 137). The Basic Act for Gender Equal Society went into effect in 1999 and pursuing a gender-equal society was recognized as policy issues because of the urgent situation of the aging society and the declining of the natality. However, a backlash against *jenda furi* occurred in the 2000s. It was initiated by the ultra-conservatives, the Japan Conference. They believe in traditional gender roles as the core of the formation of an ideal Japanese family. Since this backlash, social policies tend to focus more on increasing the birth rate, and gender-equal opportunity issues are often discussed as a part of preventing the decline in it (Sugimoto, 2015).

According to the annual report published in 2016, the employment rate of Japanese women marked 66%, and only 44.1% of them were *seishain* (Gender Equal Bureau Cabinet Office, 2016). These numbers indicate that Japanese women are still categorized into two types, the career pursuing type and the housewife type, to a certain point and the majority of them belong to the latter. There can be a significant number of women who wish to be a working mother but actually are a worker or a mother against their will.

On the bright side, women’s participation as flexible labor force such as *hi-seishain* and *pāto taimā* workers was one of the keys for post-war Japan to have a rapid economic growth.

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22 This system tax reduction is applied when a wife’s annual salary is below 103 million yen (Kokuzeichou, 2019).
As a result, Japan turned out to be one of the largest countries in terms of economy (The World Bank, 2019). However, it can be summed that several efforts towards forming a gender-equal society remained fruitless instead.

Including the Act on Promotion of Women’s Participation and Advancement in the Workplace, which went into effect in 2016, various efforts have been undertaken by the current Abe Cabinet. For example, there are some companies such as Sekisui House, Ltd. which requires male workers to take a month of parental leave (Iijima, 2019), and Fujitsu Limited which provides employers with options of locations to work in, which resulted in succeeding in supporting working mothers who need to look after their family at home, among other things (Kishimoto, 2017). Therefore, Japan is in the process of reforming its society and social system to let everyone beyond gender contribute as the workforce.

2.1.2 Sweden

On the contrary, Sweden is one of the well-known countries with gender-equal society although this mantra is also argued by feminists, anti-racists and other scholars (Martinsson, et al., 2016). In the 1930s and 1940s, however, working women were still only an unattainable ideal in Swedish society. It was thought that wives were connected to private sphere, homes, whereas the husbands were linked to the public sphere.

At that time, Swedish reformation towards the social-democratic welfare state was initiated by the idea called “the People’s Home” (Lund, 2011, p. 43). This was stated by the Social Democratic politician Per Albin Hansson during his speech in 1928 to overcome Swedish “economic, social and parliamentary stagnation in the 1920s” (Linderborg, 2004, p. 91). In “The People’s Home,” it was suggested that society should be based on solidarity, equality, security and justice, and everyone should be looked after by a nation (Lund, 2011). Under this vision, the decades from the 1940s to 1970s became a time of significant reformation of Swedish society. This reformation coincided with economic prosperity resulted from the official neutrality status of Sweden during the Second World War (Linderborg, 2004). Swedish economy was developing so that it was a time for women to participate in society as the workforce.

In this social reformation, individual autonomy was a key concept. The aim was to liberate individuals from the traditional family system which created co-dependent relationships among the members because there was “the difficulty of combining the paid work and family life” (Lund, 2011, p. 42). Therefore, rationalization and professionalization of housework duties
such as laundry, childrearing, and elder care were considered to be of primary importance in encouraging women to work outside the home (Lund, 2011).

Therefore, during this reformation towards the social-democratic welfare state, there were several systems and laws which were newly launched: family law reforms released children from the obligation to support elderly parents, universal access to the nursery school provided women with opportunities to work, individual taxation encouraged housewives to work outside the home, student loans allowed the independence of children at an early age, a social insurance system which supports individuals based on the recipients’ income worked to give incentives for workers, and so on (Allard, et al., 2011; Trädgårdh, 2011, p. 73).

As a result of this reformation, the liberation of individuals from the family unit was enhanced. Individuals, regardless of gender, got opportunities to work so that they became less family dependent and more financially independent. This increase in gender-equality also resulted in an increase in individual autonomy. The state prepared social security net which aims to save individuals from every possible struggle, including unemployment and sickness. The state became an ally to individuals, and trust towards the state became intrinsic.

As a result, in Sweden, the ideal family model today is comprised of adults who work and are financially independent based on the “dual-earner ideology” (Kumlin, 2007, p. 207), and “children who are encouraged to be independent as early as possible” (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009, p. 73). Although this can mean the disappearance of housewives in Sweden as a consequence, Sweden has been succeeding in encompassing women in the labor market to a certain point.

Although Sweden started marking high positions in the lists of various gender-equality rankings since the middle of the 1990s (Martinsson, et al., 2016), it is also claimed that the gender equality in Sweden is not complete. In terms of the working conditions, it is reported that Swedish fathers actually cannot participate in childcare tasks as much as they are willing to because their workplace is not supportive of taking parental leave, for example (Allard, et al., 2011). Moreover, it is claimed that “[m]en tend to work longer hours, have more prestigious positions in companies and earn more money than women do” (Allard, et al., 2011, p. 142). And, Kumlin (2017) points out that significant workplace segregation is occurring in Sweden as one of the causes of the significant sex wage gap. In practice, there were 13.2% of the wage gap to be adjusted in 2015 (Gustafsson, 2015).

In addition, Martinsson, Griffin, and Nygren (2016) argue, there is also an anti-feminist movement such as jämställdisterna and the political party such as Sverigedemokraterna which
aims to remove gender-equality in Swedish society. Thus, these are also some back-lash occurring in Sweden.

Therefore, it is evident that gender equality in Sweden has room to improve in various perspectives, although the room is a lot smaller than the one Japan has. Such current situations in Sweden are reflected in the interviewed Japanese women’s experiences.

2.2 Having a Career

Most of the Japanese women I encountered during the fieldwork were employed or self-employed workers except for the students, the new-comers who often concentrated in studying Swedish, and the temporary visitors. Such temporary visitors were those who came to Sweden because of their husband’s job transfers or something equivalent. In other words, it was common amongst those who were residing in Sweden long-term to have some type of employment.

Among the interviewed Japanese women, the stories of entering the labor market varied. Saki and Akiko came to Sweden because of their job changes. Therefore, they started working as they arrived. Another interviewee, Chihiro, came to Sweden to join a course at a folkhögskola. Therefore, she got a job after graduating from school and mastering Swedish to a certain point. The other Japanese women interviewed for this study migrated to Sweden mostly because of the desire to live their life with a partner although some of them had further reasons to add. In their case, they started job-hunting and learning Swedish as soon as possible after arriving in Sweden. There were several reasons for them to pursue a career in Sweden.

2.2.1 To Become a Strong Woman

As I arrived at the door to Misaki’s apartment, I found a piece of paper on the door saying, ‘please knock on the door instead of using the buzzer because my baby is taking a nap.’ So I knocked on the door, and Misaki welcomed me in with a smile. We passed the corridor as quiet as possible with whispering. As we entered the dining room, Misaki turned up the volume of her voice and told me to have a seat and relax. She started preparing some brewed coffee for us. My eyes quickly scanned the kitchen on my way to the dining table. The U-shaped kitchen was equipped with a tall refrigerator, a big, new-model looking oven, and various tools for cooking and baking. They seemed to be in their position with being tightly organized. I could not help but being a little excited to see a pastry chef’s kitchen. This is where all the magic, the baking and decorating, happens. I chose one of the chairs surrounding the big dining table which can accommodate more than six people to have a seat. A famous flower pattern from the Finish textile brand, Marimekko, was decorating the seat of the chairs. She later told me that this dining
table becomes a work table when she holds baking lessons. At the other end of the room, there was a large window that leads to the balcony. The clock marked at 2 pm. In Swedish June, the sun goes too high to see it from the window. As she brings her homemade *matcha* cake with a cup of coffee, she told me that the building we can see from the balcony is a *förskola* where her first daughter goes to (Fieldnote, 2018).

Misaki was a self-employed pastry chef in her early 30’s. She graduated from a professional school to become a pastry chef and worked as a pastry chef at a restaurant and a pastry shop for some years in Japan. Right before moving to Sweden, she was running her own pastry store in Tokyo. Her mother decided to run it as a café after her migration. She also organized Swedish pastries baking lessons there when she visited home.

Misaki moved to Sweden in the 2010s after she got married to John. He is originally from the United States but had spent over 10 years in Japan as a *sarariiman*. When they got married, they were located in Japan, however, they saw marriage as a turning point in their lives. John started looking for a new job outside of Japan to begin a new journey. Misaki agreed to move to a foreign country with him because it had also been her dream to live in a foreign country. When he found an ideal position, the company was located in Sweden by chance. Thus, their destination of migration just happened to be in Sweden, which also made some significant changes in their family life plan.

I wanted to take it easy after coming [to Sweden] because I had been working furiously in Japan. Well, I was planning to focus on childrearing. I wanted to take it slow without having a job. I wanted to become a housewife, to be honest (laughter). We came [to Sweden] without knowing that there are almost no housewives in this country. So, I was planning [my life in Sweden] based on Japanese norms. I was thinking like, ‘I am married now. So, it’s time to take it easy.’

Misaki was familiar with the gender roles considered to be traditional in Japan and identifying herself with other Japanese women in Japan who often become a housewife after getting married in her early post-migratory phase. In addition, neither of Misaki or John was familiar with Swedish norms, including the typical way of forming a family in Sweden based on a

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23 Green tea powder
24 Original texts: 本当は、来たら、日本でガツガツ働いてたので、ゆっくりしたかったんです。もう、子育てしようと思っていて。のんびりしたくて。仕事なんてしないで。専業主婦したかったんです。本当は。こんなに専業主婦ってものがいない国だと思わないと来ちゃったので。なので、なんか、日本の感覚で。「結婚したし、のんびりしよう」って思って。
cooperative system of financially independent husband and wife. Thus, the differences between Japanese and Swedish norms in forming a family took them by surprise.

Where John thought that Misaki could be a housewife, Misaki chose to become a self-employed pastry chef as a result of the series of events. Due to the lack of Japanese pastry chefs in the greater Stockholm area, many people recommended her to start her business there. She grabbed this opportunity. She started her career in Sweden by collaborating with some cafés and restaurants. When this interview was conducted, she was a very successful pastry chef in Stockholm who always had long lines of customers attracted by her pastries whenever she organized a pop-up café.

She registered herself as a self-employed during the first year in Sweden. She struggled a lot in the beginning because all the registration process, tax declaration system and seminars on being self-employed were only available in English or Swedish which she was not fluent at that time. However, she seemed to be happy with this decision. Misaki said “I like it here. And, my business finally started being on track. I want to continue.” Although she was not sure if she and her family would stay in Sweden permanently or they would move to another country, she seemed to be enjoying her position which introduces Japanese and Swedish pastries between two countries.

In addition to the encouragements she received to start up a business as a Japanese pastry chef, Misaki had another reason to pursue a career in Sweden.

Misaki: One becomes strong in this country. Everyone would think like, ‘I have to become independent!’ because women are strong [in Sweden]. They are the source of such inspiration.

Yuka: I feel that too, the atmosphere [in Sweden] is different from Japan, maybe.

Misaki: (Nodding with a giggle) Everyone becomes strong. [Everyone] must! I started feeling like, ‘I want to be connected to society!’ ‘I want to become a part of society!’ and such […] I don’t think I would have ever felt this way if I had stayed in Japan.

Misaki explained how she was amazed and influenced by the strong women in Sweden who are financially independent of their husband. After spending some time in Sweden, she came to

Original texts:

**25 Original texts:** 気に入ってるし、やっぱり今、お仕事が軌道に乗り始めているので。このまんま終わりたくないな、と思いま

**26 Original texts:** Misaki:“強くなりますよね。この国に住んでると。もう、自立しなくちゃ！って思いますね。みんな、女性が
強いので、その力ですよね。” Yuka:“確かに、日本とちょっと違う風が吹いてますよね。” Misaki:“強くなりますよ、みんな。な
らざるを得ない。社会とつながりたい！と思うんです。社会の一員になりたい！って思いますが。[...] 日本にいたらそんなこと
絶対に思わないと思います。”
identify herself with those strong working women in Sweden and thought that she wanted to have her own career and financial independence of her husband.

For Misaki, having a job and financial independence of her husband was a crucial criterion of being a woman in Sweden. She also seemed to experience a shift in her interpretation of gender norms because she began to think outside of the gender roles considered to be traditional in Japan, and pursue her career although she was married (Anthias, 2001; Pessar & Mahler, 2003)

During the semi-structured interviews, the term strong was commonly used by the informants to describe the women in Sweden so as the criterion to be in Sweden. Misaki’s description above on strength of the women in Sweden, however, involves financial stability and independence of husband so it is used in a different perspective than when others used the term strong. I will come back to this perspective later in this ethnographic chapter.

In addition to such desire to belong to the majority, the working women, other reasons to have a career were discovered through the interviews.

2.2.2 To Feel a Sense of Belonging

Misaki added another reason to have a job while recalling the time when she had her first daughter.

I went to the children’s center almost every day. I was intensely focused on childrearing. But, well, I felt very lonely. […] I think it can happen for mothers, especially those who are with their first child, to feel being left out of society, or something. It is often called solitary childrearing [in Japan], right? In addition to that, I was in a foreign country. I was not familiar with neither the place where I was nor childrearing. And I wondered, like, ‘why and for what am I here?’ It was something like an identity crisis. When I was working, I could see why I was here, though.27

Misaki took parental leave and became a temporary housewife after the birth of her first daughter. Although she initially wanted to become a housewife, her experience of being a temporary housewife made her realize that she preferred being a working mother.

27 Original texts: ほとんど毎日児童館行ったりとか、子育てにどっぷりだったんですけど、すごい、あの、孤独を感じてしまっ
て。[...] 最初の子育てって特に、社会と、こう、自分だけが取り残されているような感覚ってあると思うんです。孤独な育児、
とか、よく言うじゃないですか。それプラス、海外！みたいな。慣れない環境でわからない子育てで、自分は何のためにここ
に居るんだろう？みたいな。アイデンティティクライシスみたいな感覚ですけど。
It was commonly raised as one of the motives to work in Sweden among the interviewed Japanese women that their work made them feel connected with society. As Misaki described, being housewives in a country of settlement made these female immigrants feel certain loneliness. In contrast, employment gave them a specific positionality in society which resulted in reinforcing their sense of belonging to host society. It was in part because they felt that their social networks were expanding through their job. Consequently, being employed brought about opportunities to identify themselves as a member of Swedish society (Anthias, 2001).

2.2.3 To Have a Safety Net
Kotomi and Chihiro added different perspectives on the motive to have a career in Sweden. Kotomi moved to Sweden in the 1970s when she was in her late 20’s to live her life with her Swedish partner. She had four children and several grandchildren when the interview was conducted. She used to work as an accountant in Japan and, after learning Swedish, she continued her profession at a Japanese company in Sweden.

On the other hand, Chihiro came to Sweden to attend courses at a folkhögskola in the 2000s when she was in her early 30’s. She was not planning to stay in Sweden for a long-term, but she met her partner and things slightly started to change. After graduating from the folkhögskola, she decided to stay longer to study Swedish, and longer to try job-hunting, and so on. When she took part in this interview, she had a child with her Swedish partner and a job as a web developer.

Kotomi and Chihiro were the members of Japanska Thesällskapets Tankoukai On the day when this interview was conducted, they met me at a café in Stockholm Central station after they performed a tea ceremony at Japanska Tehuset, the Japanese tea house, in Etnografiska Museet, the Museum of Ethnography.

Prior to the interview, I contacted Kotomi and asked to become an informant for this study. She not only kindly agreed to participate but also brought another informant, Chihiro, by surprise. Thus, this interview turned out to take a form of discussion on our everyday lives in Sweden rather than following the structure of the planned semi-structured interview. This resulted in widening the perspectives of this study.

Kotomi: I think this country is easy to live in for women. We do not have to worry about our financial situations such as pension system [in relation to the marriage]. Well, I think it is challenging to become housewives in Sweden, though. If you do so…

Chihiro: What if something happens.
After living in Sweden for a long time, Kotomi and Chihiro were aware of the differences in women’s positionality in Japan and Sweden (Anthias, 2001). In the Japanese social system, for example, housewives can share the right of receiving the pension benefits to a certain amount with their ex-husbands even after the divorce (Japan Pension Service, 2018). In other words, housewives’ rights are protected to a certain point. But this is not the case in Sweden.

In the Swedish social system, in contrast, housewives do not have their right to share social support such as the pension system with their (ex-) husband. Kotomi and Chihiro also added that divorce could come through only based on one of the married couple’s will. Considering such differences, they deemed that becoming a housewife contains high risk in Sweden and women should avoid such risks by being employed. In other words, they identified themselves with other wives in Sweden who can be financially vulnerable without their own job in terms of their position resulting from the social system (Anthias, 2001).

Kotomi and Chihiro also experienced their change in interpretation of gender. They considered such systems of Sweden as bringing about freedom for women because marriage is not necessarily connected with their financial stability. In other words, they saw positive aspects of not being tied with unwanted marriage just for financial reasons.

Since their decisions of having a job and being financially independent of their husband were initiated by the Swedish social system, this can be described as the operation of gendered structure. In addition, those who are participating in the labour market with considering this aspect of social system are conceptualized as doing ‘gender work,’ following Pessar and Mahler (2003). Thus, together with other working women, Kotomi and Chihiro were also doing ‘gender work’ and (re)producing gender (Pessar & Mahler, 2003).

Although only Misaki, Kotomi and Chihiro’s narratives were highlighted in this section, these were the primary reasons to have a job in Sweden shared among the Japanese women interviewed for this study. They found an opportunity, were inspired by the strong working women in Sweden, wanted to feel a sense of belonging to Swedish society, and/or regarded the needs and positive outcomes to have financial independence of their partner. In the next section, their experiences regarding their job-hunting and at their office are explored.

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28 Original texts: Kotomi: "女性にとってはすごく生活しやすい国だと思う。経済的なそういうその、年金とか考えてないで。やっぱ、専業主婦はできないと思うけど。してたら..." Chihiro: "なんか、あるかもしれないですね。" Kotomi: "わからないじゃない。"

29 If only one of the spouses wants the marriage to be dissolved, the spouse is entitled to divorce only after reflection time, for example (Lagen.nu, 2019).
2.3 Job-hunting

2.3.1 Struggles as Immigrants

Among the interviewed informants, experiences of job-hunting varied. In terms of being an immigrant, Haruka felt some difficulties to find a job.

I think that it is crucial to have a connection to get a job [in Sweden]. If you are a friend of a friend with one of the employees, you can get a recommendation and have an interview. Well, such things happen even in the companies which value workers’ abilities. Sweden is way more a country which requires a connection than I have expected. It was hard to find a job. I used to work for a global company in Japan, though. I felt that, things such as my educational background and working experiences in Japan, and probably any working experiences outside of Sweden, did not really matter. I am not sure if it is accurate or simply because my educational background and working experiences were not good enough. But others also say something similar.30

Haruka came to Sweden in the 2010s when she was in her early thirties. She migrated because her husband is originally from Sweden and she also wanted to try to live in a foreign country. In addition to those reasons, she wanted to use this as an opportunity to change her job. Although she liked her profession, an IT consultant, she wished to work for different kinds of projects, such as the projects for the market of overseas, instead of the ones she was deeply participated in with her former employer, the projects for the domestic markets. Her migration to Sweden also worked as her opportunity to find a better career path.

She managed to get a job in her field of interest, however, she struggled in the job-hunting process though she had several years of experiences in this field and Master’s degree regarding this field from one of the top universities in Japan. In other words, Haruka felt that she had a short in her networks and connections, and educational and professional backgrounds in job-hunting. This was oppression she might never have felt if she had not moved to Sweden. Based on such experiences, Haruka was identifying herself with other immigrants who are with foreign educational and occupational backgrounds beyond differences in nationality, ethnicity, and participated industry (Anthias, 2001).

30 Original texts: で、やっぱり、コネ社会？仕事が、友達の友達だと面接に推してくれるけど、まあでもね、能力に応じた会社でもあるじゃない。あの、意外とコネ社会でなあって。ってことかなぁ。仕事が見つかんくて。日本で、そうだ。まあグローバルな会社で働いてたとしても、日本の学歴とか日本の職歴とか、スウェーデン外国での職業ヒストリーあんまり関係ないっていう。みたいな。思った。なんかそれが本当なのか、ただ、あるいは私の学歴とか職歴が未熟なのかはわからないけど。でも、ほかの人も同じようなことをよく言うね。
Haruka’s narrative corresponds with the statistical result that shows the immigrants’ difficulty to find a job in labour market mentioned in the introduction chapter. As one of the immigrant groups from Asia, which locates at the bottom in social stratification in finding a job together with those who came from African countries (Aldén & Hammarstedt, 2014), Japanese can struggle a lot to find a job. This reflects the positionality of the Japanese immigrants in social stratification regarding employment in Sweden. In addition, this also suggests that immigrants can be categorized as the (ethnic) ‘others’ in the Swedish labor market and struggle in finding a job beyond their nationality, ethnicity and language competency in Swedish regardless of the educational background and working experiences (Anthias, 2001; Hall, 2013).

2.3.2 Racialized Experience
On the other hand, Yuko experienced struggles in finding a job in a racialized sense.

A friend of mine told me, ‘I found it in the newspaper, that hair salon [near your place] is hiring. Why don’t you give it a shot?’ So, I brought my CV with me and visited there. However, they were like, ‘no, we only hire Swedes.’ Yeah, I felt something like discrimination there, a little bit.31

Yuko moved to Sweden in the 2010s when she was in her early 30’s to live her life with her partner. Before coming to Sweden, she worked as a hairdresser for about 10 years. In Sweden, she was working for a hair salon where her husband’s mother introduced to her.

When the narrative described above happened, Yuko identified herself with other hairdressers in Sweden and thought that she could apply for this position. The employers of this hair salon, however, saw her merely as the ethnic ‘other’ and excluded her from the candidates without considering her skills as a hairdresser. Yuko, thus, felt the immigrants’ positionality in Sweden who were carrying difficulties to find a job because of the ethnic ‘otherness.’ This experience of Yuko also can be described as the act of racialization because she was excluded from the candidates solely based on physical distinctions (Anthias, 2001; Hall, 2013; Takezawa, 2005). She kept a calm tone when she was describing this experience. She even joked about how she ended up with being shut out without having any opportunities to take out her curriculum vitae from her bag.

31 Original texts: その人（近所に住む日本人の知り合い）がなんか、「新聞見たら、あそこの美容室、人募集してたよ」みたいななんじで言ってくれたし、「行って来たら？」みたいななんかじでなんかが CV 持って行ったら、なんか、「いや、もうこちらはスウェーデン人じゃないと受け付けません」みたいな感じやって。うん、そこでも確かにちょっと差別じゃないけど、そういうのがなんか感じたかも。
2.3.3 Gender Occupational Segregation

In contrast, Chihiro felt some oppression in finding a job in a gendered sense. In other words, she felt the gender segregation of occupation in the industry she was to work for.

Chihiro: For a programmer, well, seriously, this industry wants more English skills and men. So, I thought the obstacles to get a job was not because I am a Japanese but because I am a female foreigner. They want young Swedish boys, like the ones who are about 30 years old.

Kotomi: It’s still conservative there. Men come first.

Chihiro: That is because, in their perspective, women do not look like understanding computers, simply.32

Before moving to Sweden, Chihiro worked as a programmer for about 10 years in Japan. Thus, she identified herself with other skillful programmers in Sweden beyond gender. Regardless of her work experience, however, Chihiro felt that employers saw her as someone who did not understand computers simply because she is a woman – this led her to face struggle in finding a job. Her experience suggests the positionality of women in Swedish social stratification who carry difficulties to find a job in specific industrial and occupational areas solely because of gender (Anthias, 2001).

Mana and Saki, who worked as school teachers, also experienced such gender segregation. From their experience, they felt that women were dominant than men in this industry, and the number of female teachers get even more significant, as the students’ grade level goes down. These impressions, on the other hand, suggest women’s privileged positionality in specific industrial and occupational areas (Anthias, 2001).

Haruka, Yuko, Chihiro, Mana and Saki’s experiences highlighted here show various situations of privileges and struggles in job-hunting in Sweden. They led to reveal the Japanese women interviewed for this study’s complex positionality in Swedish society depending on the collective identit(ies) highlighted and situations surrounding them.

32 Original texts: Chihiro: “プログラマーはプログラマーで、いや、ほんとに、もっと英語か、男の子が欲しい業界。だから、日本だからというよりは、外国人で女の子だから、っていうのが結構ネックなのかなぁと思う。だからその欲しいのは、若い、できればスウェーデン人の男の子。30ぐらい。” Kotomi: “まだそこはね、conservative だね。男性がってね。” Chihiro: “だってどうしても、感覚として、会った時にコンピューターがわかりそうに見えづらい。単純に。”
2.4 Working Conditions
Experiences at work had considerable variation among the interviewed Japanese women because they all had a job in a different section of a different industry. However, some of the features were commonly reported by them during the interviews. This section explores such aspects of their working conditions.

2.4.1 Gender Equality
When it comes to the experiences at the office, Haruka compared her experiences back in Japan and here in Sweden in a gendered perspective.

As a consultant, I was surrounded by men, like many men [in Japan]. A woman, just because of that, I was standing out. Even my clients took no time to remember me. There was a lot to benefit from, I guess? So, even my senior workers seemed to have given extra time and caution to mentor me. Yeah, in that sense, since I came to Sweden, like, I am finally treated equally with other male colleagues for the first time. I no longer receive special attention or treatment. Although I believe those specials were not there without good work performance record of mine, I sometimes realize that I was a bit spoiled [back in Japan].

Haruka experienced differences in female workers’ positionality in Sweden and Japan. Thus, her process of adapting with such environment and overcoming unexpected challenges can also be perceived as a process which Haruka constructed a sense of belonging to the female workers in Sweden (Anthias, 2001; Pessar & Mahler, 2003).

2.4.2 Work Styles
In contrast, Mana was surprised at her office because of the differences in work styles.

In Japan, it is hard to leave the office when you are done with your tasks, but others are not, right? [...] There is nothing like that [in Sweden]. It is like, ‘I am done for today. See you!’ Everyone leaves like that. When I just started working, I thought like, ‘but everyone else is still working…’ and hesitated to leave. But my colleagues told me that ‘are you done? Then, just go
home!’ Just like that. Nobody is waiting for anyone else. It’s like, even if you wait, nobody benefits from such behavior. [...] So, everyone goes home when s/he is done.³⁴

Mana came to Sweden in the 2000s when she was in her early 30’s. As for her career, she used to be a pianist back in Japan. In Sweden, she was working as a mathematics’ teacher at a grundskaola. She explained that it was rather easy to become a teacher in Sweden because she had a Japanese teaching license. She needed to take some courses to get a Swedish version of it. Mana and her husband, Tobias, who is originally from Sweden, met in Japan and began their married life there. They came to Sweden because Tobias’s father got cancer and they wanted to support the family. Their stay was supposed to be short-term initially, however, Tobias told Mana that he did not want to go back to Japan after all. She called this his homesick.

At the Swedish school’s office, she discovered different working styles than she was familiar with. She was appreciating this work style which did not consider leaving office before the co-workers as abandoning them. She usually has come to school early in the morning because the first class begins at eight. Other than that, as long as she finishes the class for the day, she could leave school as soon as she needs. For example, Mana added that “When I need to go home early because of my children, I can bring everything back home. And I can work from home.”³⁵ As a mother of two, this flexibility was precious for her. It seems that experiencing and adapting with this work style also coincided with the process that Mana identifies herself as a member of the working individuals and one of the working mothers in Sweden (Anthias, 2001).

Regarding how to leave the office after working hours, Saki experienced something similar. Saki was working as a teacher at a förskola and she looked back at her experience when she just started working there and was trying to learn how to manage her new job by working overtime.

The principal of the förskola came up to me and asked, ‘what are you doing, Saki?’ So, I said something like, ‘well, I am trying to catch up with things I could not finish today.’ [...] ‘Why?’ I asked. Then she said, ‘go home.’ She continued that ‘go home, now. It’s already passed three

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³⁴ Original texts: 今日仕事終わっちゃったけどみんな残ってるから帰りづらい、とかないですか？ [...] そういうの一切ないです。もう、「今日私終わったら。じゃあ！」って。みんな、帰ります。私も最初働き始めたばかりのときは、「みんなやってるのに…」って思ったり、そうすると「終わったの？じゃあ帰なりゃ！」って。そういう感じで、誰もそんな、誰も待ってないし。待って誰も得しないというか。 [...]だからみんな終わったら、自分の仕事が終わったらサッサと帰ります。

³⁵ Original texts: 早く今日は子どものことで帰らなきゃいけない、とかあったら、もう、デスク全部持って帰ったりとか。家で。そうすると家で働いたりとか。
Saki came to Sweden as a post-doctoral researcher in the 2000s. Prior to that visit, she had spent a year in Sweden when she was four to five years old because of her father’s job relocation. That stay left her an unforgettable impression and Sweden kept staying on the backside of her mind as her second home country. Such pleasant experiences during her childhood influenced her decision to revisit and stay in Sweden. After spending several years as a researcher, she decided to become a teacher at the förskola at the same time as pursuing her research. She called her life in Sweden also as re-experiencing her childhood.

Saki, as a newly employed worker at the förskola, was trying to catch up by staying after working hours. However, her boss insisted Saki not to do so because it is not good for her health and the förskola’s economy. After this talk, Saki started not to work overtime unless it is an urgent matter. Saki experienced a change in her behavior and that can also be seen as a process which she constructed a sense of belonging to the working individuals in Sweden (Anthias, 2001).

In Haruka’s case, she was amazed by how easy it is to leave the office for family matters such as picking up her child at the preschool. In contrast, she also recalled the situations of the office when she overworked on Fridays.

In our office, we have employees from Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States as far as I know. Yup, everyone is surprised, like, ‘what is this!?’ because the office becomes almost empty, especially like, at five pm on Fridays. We were joking like, ‘it is an old evil axis of Japan, Germany and Italy again!’ Yeah, including those who came from the United Kingdom, we were like, ‘yay!’ ‘It is filled with foreigners!’ and such. We even gave high-five to each other in the afternoon of one Friday. 37
At Haruka’s office, the employees who were not there, mostly the Swedes, were categorized as the ‘other’ among the immigrant workers who were staying to complete their work by working overtime (Anthias, 2001). And she continued,

Everyone is talking about teamwork in Sweden but it’s different from Japanese assumptions. It doesn’t expect people to always prioritize team, and they are allowed to work in the way as s/he like [in Sweden]. There is no such thing like, ‘we are gonna survive this severe hardship together although it might be trouble for our family [because it is going to require overworking]!’ or ‘let’s go out drinking tonight because everything is going great today!’ and so on. […] I would say I see many of them blunt, unsociable and individualistic, I guess? (Laughter).

Although Haruka was identifying herself with other immigrant workers in the way they kept working on Fridays after working hours, when it comes to the work styles as a whole, she was describing everyone as the ‘other.’ Thus, she was experiencing multiple and flexible sense of belonging at the office depending on situations (Anthias, 2001; Hall, 2013). Kotomi’s experience also reflected her surprise of her co-workers’ behavior.

Kotomi: if [the workers] were Japanese and had a deadline to meet, and the production was delaying, they would say like ‘we have to make it!’ and fight for it. They even sacrifice their weekend to meet the deadline. But in Sweden…

Chihiro: They would possibly say ‘we have a party planned on this weekend’ or something like that.

Kotomi: Or, ‘I am going home because my working hours are up.’ I was like, ‘what!? Did they just go home!?'

Kotomi was quite shocked by the other employers’ decision. She did not understand such behavior and identify herself with the ‘other’ workers when it came to deadline management (Anthias, 2001; Hall, 2013).

38 Original texts: 人とかチームがバラバラっていう感じもするけどね。みんな、好きなようにやって。なんか「一丸となってこの苦しい苦境を、ちょっと家族に迷惑をかけてでも乗りきるぞ！」とか「今日はなんか良い感じだから飲み会いくかー！」みたいなのは全くない。

39 Original texts: Kotomi: “これまでにきちっとやろうって言ったら、例えば残業しても、日本の人たちは、生産間に合わなかったら、やらなければ行かずっていうので、頑張るじゃない。で、週末とかでも、なんとか頑張ってやる。でもスウェーデンは…” Chihiro: “週末は、今日はパーティだから…とか。" Kotomi: “(就労時間終わったら帰るよ、とか。え、帰ったの!?って。"
These experiences show that the flexibilities of working styles which allows working remotely and the absence of the social pressure to overwork were appreciated among the Japanese women interviewed for this study. However, there were also some aspects of working habits they could not cope with or were in the process to understand and adapt with. When such aspects came on to the surface, they did not identify themselves with Swedish workers or the other workers as a whole which reflect the flexible maintenance of the boundary between ‘them’ and ‘us’ (Anthias, 2001; Hall, 2013).

2.4.3 Interacting with Co-workers and Customers

On everyday interaction with co-workers and clients, different aspects of their work-life, and labeling of and belonging to collective identification appeared. Among others, Haruka looked back at her time when she was not as fluent in Swedish.

Well, it was not like excluding because of the lack of my language ability. But, maybe, they thought like ‘I do not need to bother to tell this to her because she does not speak Swedish’ or something. Like, ‘this is not necessarily for her’ kind of thing. I was kept out of the loop, a little bit. After working for some more years and building up better relationships with them and understandings of the workplace, I thought something like that could be going on [when I was not fluent in Swedish].

Haruka worked for a global company originally from the United States. The official language at the office was English and essential documents were exchanged in English as well. However, for the sake of being located in Sweden, the dominating language of small talks at the office was Swedish. Haruka found it harder to make friends at the office without the language ability and discovered the difference in her positionality after mastering Swedish to be able to handle everyday conversations.

Haruka experienced that if one does not speak Swedish, his/her positionality in social stratification can be different. If Swedish language competence affects not only on a private sphere such as around friendship, but also on resource allocation such as building a good relationship with supervisors and being promoted at his/her workplace for example, language

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40 Original texts: 言葉ができない=のけ者にされてるわけじゃないけど、なんか「この子スウェーデン語わかんないから言わなくていいや」とか。そう、「別に知らなくてもいいだろう」みたいので、ちょっと蚊帳の外に置かれてたっていうのは、まあ今となってみて、何年も働いて、それなりにわかっていて、人間関係ができるってところになると、そうだったなぁ、って思うところはある。
plays a crucial role in positioning immigrants within the social stratification in Sweden (Anthias, 2001).

On the other hand, Yuko’s experience in interacting with her customers in Swedish at the hair salon contained a racialized sense. One day, when she greeted a new customer, she was told that “no, I did not ask you [to cut my hair].”41 She described how things went on.

Yuko: Well, maybe it was scary. She was not sure if I could cut her hair properly. Perhaps, they imagine something like that to the immigrants. It does not matter if I am a Japanese or not, I think. Maybe she just did not trust [immigrants]. I felt like that.

Yuka: I see. But, in the end...?

Yuko: In the end, she was very satisfied. She books an appointment with me every time. When leaving the salon on that day, she said ‘I am sorry that I talked to you like that at the beginning.’ She apologized so it was alright. Well, I did not even care about her comments in the first place (laughter).42

She called this kind of behavior she sometimes received during her working hours at the hair salon as xenophobia. She felt that, beyond her nationality and ethnicity, she got categorized as an immigrant and was the object of ‘othering’ although she identified herself with the other hairdressers. This experience reveals how immigrants could be positioned and socially stratified, and shows how experiences of racism can occur in everyday lives of immigrants in Sweden. Solely based on physical distinctions, she failed to have a positive first impression and struggled to gain trust from customers (Anthias, 2001; Hall, 2013; Takezawa, 2005). Recalling that day, Yuko also said that,

It was probably also scary in her perspective because, like, she was not sure what kind of hairstyle I was capable of and if I could communicate well enough in Swedish. Maybe something like that.43

41 Original text: いや、私、あなたに頼んでないよ。
42 Original texts: Yuko: "やっぱりその、やっぱり怖いというか。ちゃんと切ってくれるかわからんっていうその。なんか多分その、そういうイメージは持ってるんじゃないかって。日本人であれ、日本人でなかれ。移民に対して。やっぱるその、信用してない感じはたぶん。感じましたね、そこで。" Yuka: "そうだったんですね。でも、結果的には...?" Yuko: "結果的にはすごいそんなか、その人満足して。そっからもう私のお客さんになって。その毎回私のところに来てくれるようにもなって。で、最後帰るときに、「ごめんな最初、なんか、あんな言い方して。」って。それは、そう言われたし、まあよかったけど。まあ私も別に気にしなかったけど。"
43 Original texts: たぶん怖い、どんなへアスタイルになるかもわからんし。言葉もう通じるんか、この人理解してるんかどうかなのかもおそらくし、みたいね。たぶんね。
Yuko’s experience reinforces the importance of Swedish language skills. The customer changed her attitude after discovering her language skills in addition to her skills as a hairdresser. Thus, on the one hand, this kind of xenophobia experienced by Yuko can in part reflect Sweden’s current obstacles for immigrants to enter and play an active role as a workforce in society and abolishing racism. On the other hand, language skills can elevate such immigrants’ positionality in social stratification although it is not sure if this pattern is applicable for various immigrant groups and situations in Sweden (Anthias, 2001; Hall, 2013).

As one of the changes occurred since they came to Sweden, almost everyone raised specific changes in their ways of expressing themselves. Mana elaborated on this by comparing the surroundings she used to have in Japan.

I think I became to say things in a direct manner, about my opinions. When I was in Japan, I was expecting the others to read my mind. But, I realized that I could not expect this to happen [in Sweden]. Nobody reads your mind. [...] [At the office.] when I cannot take more tasks, if I say ‘I can do it,’ I have to do it. Everyone else says ‘I cannot do it because I am busy,’ so, I have to say so too. Otherwise, I suffer a loss.44

Mana started behaving the same as the others at the office to control a workload and protect herself. Although this experience at work was highlighted, she seemed to learn a better way to express herself and behave in Swedish context as a whole, and change her expectation to the others. Yuko also started changing her behavior at work since she came to Sweden.

I have to tell [my clients] when the hairstyle that the clients wanted is not possible, in a straightforward manner. Otherwise they do not get it. So, I tell it. If I were in Japan, I tell it in an indirect manner by saying like, ‘well, this one looks better on you than that.’45

Mana and Yuko experienced their changes in expressing their opinions since they came to Sweden. In their perspectives, being able to express things in a direct manner was one of the criteria to manage their everyday lives in Sweden. This kind of changes also can be described

44 Original texts: 物をはっきり言うようになったかもしれないですね。自分の意見を。日本に居る時はもっと、まわりが察してよって、思ってた部分があるんですけど、それが期待できなくてことがわかってましたので。誰も察してくれないですね。[... ] できない仕事はできないって。「わかりました」って言っちゃうと、やらなきゃいけないから。だから「あ、私はいっぱいあるんでしょう」ってみんな言うの。言わないと、やっぱり損。

45 Original texts: この髪型は無理やっていうのを、もうはっきり言わないと[お客様さんも]わかりません。まあ言う、みたい。まあ日本やったらたぶん、なんかなしにこう、「ああ、こっちよりもこっちの方が（似合いますよ）」とか言うんやけど。もうこっち（スウェーデン）やったら「え、それはちょっと...」みたいな。
as their process of identifying themselves as the residents of Sweden (Anthias, 2001). Other examples which reflect changes in their ways of expressing themselves are explored in the following ethnographic chapters.

2.5 Summarizing Reflections
This chapter explored that if and how interpretation and performance of gender of the Japanese women interviewed for this study were changed in their post-migratory phase. Their gender norms seemed to shift as the length of stay increased. Reasons behind such a shift included their desire to become a part of Swedish society which encouraged them to participate in society as working individuals, and the Swedish social system which highlighted the merit to be financially independent of their partner by becoming working wives. These Japanese women resulted in (re)constructing gender interpretation and changing gendered practices.

This process was initiated by the structure because they were influenced by the other women in Swedish society and Swedish social system, among other things. However, the informants also came to do the ‘gender work’ by performing gender. Though they were affected by gender norms and following the gender norms to a certain point, they also seemed to be creating their own version of gender after experiencing both Japanese and Swedish versions of it. This aspect is explored further in the following ethnographic chapter. Thus, their experiences also suggest the intertwined relation among gendered structure, the process of ‘gender work,’ and (re)construction of gender (Pessar & Mahler, 2003).

In addition, their complex ways of belonging to collective identifications were also investigated together with the cause of such classifications, so as privileges and struggles experienced as outcomes. In the Swedish labor market, they were belonging to various collective identities by the actors’ self-attribution and attributions by others depending on the situations, contexts, and times they were exposed to. Their immigrant background, ethnicity and gender among other things labeled them and brought about struggles, or even experiences of oppression, in finding job and performing at work. In contrast, gendered occupational segregation also provided some privileges for women in specific fields. Racialized experiences were observed but Swedish language abilities were discussed as one of the tools that help to overcome such difficulties in specific situations. Rather flexible working styles comparing to Japanese ones were enjoyed by the informants although some aspects including attitudes towards working overtime and deadline management were found as hard to cope with (Anthias, 2001; Hall, 2013; Takezawa, 2005).
Some changes in their manners of expression were highlighted and described as one of the crucial things to work on after migration. It was also perceived as one of the crucial criteria to live everyday lives in Sweden, and further investigation is made on this in the following ethnographic chapters.
Chapter 3. Family and Private Life

According to the previous chapter, the interviewed Japanese women were participating in society as working individuals, and their change in interpretation and performance in gender were also observed. This causes specific effects on other parts of their life, especially in their family and private life.

This chapter, therefore, first explores gender systems of Japan and Sweden which have a significant effect on forming their private and family life. Secondly, it explores how the interviewed Japanese women handled work and family life responsibilities on their everyday lives’ level. Some aspects of Swedish and Japanese social systems are also explored to deepen understandings of the concrete situations. Finally, their private life is scrutinized from different perspectives, including creation and maintenance of their social networks and their everyday lives as immigrants.

My aim in this chapter is to analyze the interviewed Japanese women’s performance and (re)interpretation of gender (Pessar & Mahler, 2003), their sense of belonging(s), and how they were positioned and wanted to position themselves in society (Anthias, 2001; Barth, 1996; Hall, 2013). The findings presented in this chapter are based on the unstructured interviews conducted with the Japanese women I encountered in Stockholm and in-depth interviews conducted with the Japanese women who live in Stockholm and the surrounding area.

3.1 Gender Norms

3.1.1 In Japan

Recent scholarships often describe Japan as a country with male breadwinner norms (see Allison, 1994; Ito, 2014; Sugimoto K., 2015 and more). An opinion poll discovered that regardless of the wives’ occupation, 87.2% of husbands on average think that their wives should be responsible for the housekeeping and childcare. In addition, 86.4% of housewives and 78% of pāto taimā wives share the same view with their husbands on this matter. Only the wives with a full-time job including seishain and hi-seishain are the exception, and 37.1% of them think that the housekeeping and the childrearing are the wives’ responsibilities (Economic and Social Research Institute, 2004).

Corresponding with such numbers, according to a survey conducted by OECD to study the workers’ everyday lives, men spend only 14 minutes per a day for routine housework such as food and drink preparation and laundry while women spend 148 minutes in Japanese households (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2016). In
addition, whereas 83.2% of seishain and 70.7% of hi-seishain women who had a job and gave childbirth between the period of October 2015 and September 2016 took parental leave, only 5.14% of their seishain and 5.69% of hi-seishain husbands did (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2019). These numbers indicate the gender expectations which are deeply rooted in current Japanese society. As one of the underlying ideology in Japanese society, Confucianism seems to contribute to maintaining these traditional gendered norms.

Although Confucianism has first arrived in Japan several centuries before (Hsu, 2008), it saw the revival of studying Confucian traditions as neo-Confucianism among Zen priests from the 12th to 14th centuries (Gelb & Palley, 1994). Later, during the Edo period between the 17th and 19th centuries, the government “formally adopted neo-Confucian teaching as the ideological basis for its rule” (Gelb & Palley, 1994, p. 5). Since this adoption, Confucian traditions which is “defined in terms of an emphasis on such values as a secular, this-worldly orientation, personal discipline, diligence, ordered family life, respect for hierarchy and authority, social harmony, and an emphasis on education” (Colcutt, 1991, p. 111) started to have an influence on ordinary people’s everyday lives. Confucianism was integrated harmoniously with existing religions including Buddhism and Shinto, and other philosophies and moral systems (Gelb & Palley, 1994; Hsu, 2008). In Japanese society today, although almost no one considers him or herself as having a belief in Confucianism, “strong Confucian traits still lurk beneath the surface” (as cited in Colcutt, 1991, p. 112).

In Confucianism, there are several key concepts that form ideologies in Japan. In terms of constructing gender norms, there is one doctorine worth noting: “three obediences of women: to the father when young, to the husband when married, and to the son in old age” (Gelb & Palley, 1994, p. 3). In other words, according to Confucianism, women always have men as superior power throughout their life. Women are raised to fulfill their roles under men’s dominance when they are growing up with their father. This continues with their husbands in marriage and with their first son in old age. As reflected in this doctrine, Confucianism justifies women’s subordination to men as one of the series of hierarchical relationships (Gelb & Palley, 1994; Ito, 2014). Therefore, the persistence of Confucianism seems to result in the current co-existence of the awareness of Western-influenced ideal of constructing a gender-equal society and the gender norms which are considered to be traditional in Japan.

These gender norms are evident in the formation of a Japanese family. As Yuzawa (1982) pointed out in his research conducted in Japan, “whereas wives and children are quick to identify the sole duty of a husband and father as financial supporter, husbands and children include entire range of expectations when speaking of a wife and mother” (as cited in Allison,
1994, p. 110). As it is reflected in these expectations from husbands and children, Japanese wives and mothers cover various duties at home, they “manage the house, raise the children, [and] take care of the husband” (Allison, 1994, p. 110). Although there is such unequal participation between fathers and mothers in Japanese family life, both of them tend to accept such inequalities because of the Japanese employment systems and work culture described in the previous chapter. As a result, husbands’ and wives’ roles are divided in most cases in Japan; husbands pursue their careers and wives take care of the household duties.

A study conducted by the Human Renaissance Institute, HRI, shows aspects of newly increasing working parents who aim to cooperate with their partner to manage their careers and family life at the same time. HRI conducted in-depth interviews with working fathers in their 30’s who work severely and share household tasks actively with their working wife. HRI’s aims were to reveal their lived experiences and struggles to commit both work and family life, and Japan’s current situations of providing opportunities to balance between work and life for the working individuals (2008, pp. 3-7). Most of those working fathers decided to support their family after seeing how their working wives struggle to manage work, household tasks and child-rearing at the same time.

The result of becoming a family-friendly working father varied, according to HRI. Some expressed that they wished their co-workers could have better understandings on having flexible working hours at work to pick up their child at the nursery school on time and such, and the others wished they could focus solely on their careers. One of the suggestions from a group interview was that, it would be helpful if they could take many short-term holidays instead of a long parental leave because this would allow them to have time with their family without fear of spoiling their career opportunities (Human Renaissance Institute, 2008). Although their methods of conducting interviews and the specific location of this study are not mentioned, this study suggests that there are numbers of people who are challenging the traditional division of gender roles in Japan.

3.1.2 In Sweden

In contrast, the gender structures in Sweden seems to be quite different comparing to the Japanese one. According to the opinion poll, regardless of the wives’ jobs, only 7.8% of the husbands and 5.1% of the wives on average in Sweden consider housekeeping and childrearing to be the wives’ responsibilities (Economic and Social Research Institute, 2004). Therefore, they seem to perceive that the responsibilities for child-rearing and housekeeping should be shared by husbands and wives. These perceptions could be the positive outcomes of the social
reformation Sweden experienced in since the 1940s which were explored in the previous chapter. However, gender equality seems not to be wholly achieved yet between husbands and wives. For example, the participation of a household task is not wholly equal yet. According to the survey conducted for the workers, whereas men spend only 93 minutes per a day for routine housework including cooking, laundry and so forth, women spend 120 minutes in Swedish household (OECD, 2010).

In addition, based on the Swedish system on parental leave, “each parent [is] entitled to at least three use-it-or-lose-it months” (TT/The Local, 2018) among 480 days offered per a child. As a result, 27.9% of the parental leave was claimed by fathers in 2017. Considering the fact that it used to mark 10% in the 1990s, it has increased significantly (TT/The Local, 2018). However, it is also clear that mothers are taking more responsibilities to look after their children, especially infants.

The actual functions of the social system on supporting gender-equal opportunities in work and family life and other experiences related in this regard are revealed through the narratives of the Japanese women interviewed for this study in following.

3.2 Sharing Household Tasks
As entering the Swedish labor market, the interviewed Japanese women came to realize the importance of sharing household tasks with their partner. This resulted in reinterpreting gender and reconstructing gender roles at home and initiating the negotiations with their partners.

3.2.1 Reinterpreting Gender
During the interview, Misaki expressed that since coming to Sweden, she started questioning why all the pressure and responsibilities of childrearing tend to go to mothers in Japan. Although she had been aware, she had never questioned this inclining when she was in Japan because it was something natural to her. However, when she searched on the internet to find information on childrearing in Japanese, many articles and blogs were saying that, for example, “we support hard-working moms” and such, according to her. “Why only moms?” she began to wonder. This inclining of the gender roles also happened with the packages of diapers and other baby-related products of Japan (see Figure 1). On the contrary, Misaki pointed it out that “baby-
related products like on the packages of Babybjörn’s products, diapers’ and more, there always is a father [in Sweden]47 (see Figure 2 and 3).

Figure 2 (On the left) A page of webpage which introduces options of diapers for the consumers (Procter and Gamble, 2019)

Figure 3 (On the right) Babybjörn's webpage introducing baby carrier (Babybjörn, 2019)

Misaki experienced a change in her attitudes to gender roles because of her everyday life in Sweden (Pessar & Mahler, 2003). These reactions also seem to coincide with the reinforcement of a sense of belonging to the mothers and women in Sweden as the length of stay increased (Anthias, 2001).

Misaki was not the only one who started questioning the division of gender roles. Kotomi also felt how her gender assumption had changed over time when she visited her parents in Japan. She giggled a bit and said,

I got a bit irritated when I saw my younger brother [at our parents’ home] in Japan. He did nothing. […] I said a few words to him. Then, the others told me that ‘you do not have to say that.’ I was told, ‘I feel sorry for him if you say things like that to him after turning that age.’ This kind of frustration happens when watching [others’ behavior]. In addition, my husband often came with me for such visit. And when my mother was still doing well, she told my husband that ‘you do not have to do anything.’ Like, about cooking and the cleaning after eating. And my husband said, ‘I am supposed to do nothing. I am just allowed to have a seat and wait. This feels very awkward.’48

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47 Original text: 育児グッズとか、こういうベビーボロンのパッケージとか、おむつのパッケージとかなんかですねけど、パパが絶対映ってるんですよ。

48 Original texts: 日本にいて、弟なんか見てたら、なんかイラライラするっていうか。何もしないじゃないですか。[…] 私なんかこう、文句言ったりとか、言われた。「言わなくていいじゃない」「って。そんな歳になって言った可哀想よ」とって。そういうこと、ありますね。見てね。あとあの、うちの夫が一緒に行くでしょ。で、まだ母さんが元気なうちにやっぱりほら、「あなたは何もしないでいいから」とか。台所とか、片づけなんかね。「いやあ、もうなんか何もしないで良いって。黙って座って良いってすごいねむずかしい」って。
Kotomi’s expectations in gender role divisions had changed after spending her everyday life with her husband in Sweden (Pessar & Mahler, 2003). And, this change made her question her family’s behavior at home and Japanese gender norms as a whole, eventually.

As Misaki and Kotomi experienced, many of the Japanese women interviewed for this study started to question the gender system they used to be familiar with back in Japan as a result of living in Sweden and experiencing a distinctly different set of norms in regard to gender and gendered expectations. They often expressed that household tasks should be shared between husbands and wives which is the opposite of what they called Japanese traditional gender roles.

Following Pessar and Mahler (2003), these changes in their interpretation and performance of gender can be described as the outcomes of gendered structure. Packages of consumer products such as baby products which Misaki pointed out, and gender expectations described by Kotomi show gendered structure (re)produced in institutionalized form, namely society and family (Pessar & Mahler, 2003). As a result, they became more and more identifying themselves with other working women and mothers in Sweden (Anthias, 2001).

3.2.2 Negotiating Their Roles

When sharing the responsibilities in childrearing and housekeeping, a discussion between partners became necessary to keep family-related things running alongside their job. It also became crucial to maintain equal participation as much as possible in work and family life between the partners to provide equal opportunities for each other. On this regard, Misaki explained how she negotiated on sharing household tasks with her husband after giving birth to her first daughter.

Since this year, many things have changed. But I used to be responsible for household tasks in most cases, especially when we had our first daughter. It was also because I was not working that much. I was at home, naturally. But among people in Sweden, it is usually like, mothers take parental leave for a year and stay with their baby. And then, fathers take it for half a year. After that, the child goes to a nursery school, in many cases. But in our case, I was staying home for a year and two months until she started to go to a nursery school. I did not like that. I did not like the inequality between us. So, I stated that I wanted to work more when we had a second child before I got pregnant. It is hard to make it completely equal because he earns more than me, and we need to repay the loan [of this apartment].

49 Original texts: 今年になってから、だいぶ変わってきましたけど、前は、ほとんど私が家事を担当していたね。最初の娘のときは特に、私もそんなに働きかけてなかったから、自然と私がお家にいて。ちょっとの人だと普通は、あの、だいたいお母さんが1年ぐらい子どもと家にいて、で、そのあとにパパが育休を半年ぐらい取って、1歳半ぐらいで保育園デビューする子が多くと
Misaki was identifying herself as a working mother with the other working mothers in Sweden who manage their job and household tasks cooperating with their partner (Anthias, 2001). As a result of her negotiation, Misaki and her husband started using the time-management service called Google Calendar, which is available online. They created one Calendar to share it between them and named it as “the Family Calendar.” There, they regularly updated their hourly schedule. By visualizing their schedules, it became easy to share the household and childrearing tasks. When their schedules crashed, they discussed and made a decision. For example, it was often about who could make some arrangement and go pick up their daughter at the förskola and such. Although housework was not completely equally shared between them as Misaki described, she seemed to be satisfied because she gained more time to spend for her career than before.

Although the situations varied, it was common among the interviewed Japanese women that, as a result of a shift in their gender expectations, they shared the household tasks with their partner to a certain point. In Haruka’s case, for example, she and her husband took turns by categorizing the tasks. For example, if Haruka was responsible for cooking, her husband did the laundry on that day, and they had a different part of household tasks to look after on a different day. Thus, they had a clear division in what s/he was responsible for “the day” although she added that;

He is often more hardworking than me. I sometimes start the washing machine and totally forget about it. But he hangs those forgotten clothes without saying anything. I really appreciate that.50

On the other hand, Yuko and her husband had no rigid rules to follow. They shared all tasks flexibly based on the discussion and depending on the situations. Yuko explained that “when I am exhausted, he cooks dinner. When I am ok, I cook.”51 Since it was their motto that they did not use a dagis, a day nursery, or a förskola, they discussed and organized their schedules including the responsibility of looking after children during the day. When their schedules crashed, her husband’s parents who lived in the town where Yuko’s salon located came and

50Original texts: 旦那の方がけっこう、まめまめしくやってる。私、洗濯かけるだけで、⼲すの忘れたりとかするからね。黙って⼲しといてくれるからね。あれは助かる。

51Original Texts: もう私がめっちゃ疲れてたら、主⼈がごはん作るし、私ができるときは私がするし。
helped them. Thus, strategies in managing the household tasks varied among the informants, but the constant discussion with the partner and the attitude to help each other seemed to be crucial.

3.3 Social Systems
In handling household tasks and childrearing, the differences in the social systems between Sweden and Japan had significant effects on their management of everyday lives and decision makings. This section focuses on how differences between Swedish and Japanese social systems shaped the informants’ everyday lives. Sick and parental leave and financial aids for schooling were often described by the informants as making considerable differences, thus, they are explored in this section.

3.3.1 Sick Leave
Regarding the social system and working conditions which help workers to participate both in pursuing their careers and participating in family life, sick leave plays a crucial role to support workers to take proper rest and look after their children.

In Japan, although the system of sick leave varies depending on how it is defined in each companies’ office regulation, it is common to take a paid vacation during the first three days to see the situation of the sickness or injury. When sickness takes more than three days to heal, employees are supposed to call in as kekkin which literally means absence. During kekkin, workers do not receive any salary. Thus, workers are entitled one of these systems described in following during the kekkin, which often begins from the fourth day and lasts till one year and six months in maximum. If a cause of sickness was brought from or an injury was happened outside of working hours, a worker could receive approximately two-thirds of his or her salary as invalidity benefit from the Japan Health Insurance Association. If the sickness or injury happens during the working hours or commute, a worker is entitled to receive approximately 80% of his or her salary by the workers’ accident compensation insurance (Employment Advance Research Center, no date). These systems show that workers’ financial situation is secured to a certain point even when they take sick leave.

On the other hand, according to research conducted in 2018, on the rate of taking annual paid leave, Japan ranked as the worst country (Expedia PR Jimukyoku, 2018). Workers in Japan tended to take 10 out of 20 paid leave, and 58% of those who took a payment leave felt guilt which was the highest rate among the countries surveyed. According to this survey, workers in
Japan said that they did not take paid leave because there was lack of workforce at the office, they wanted to save it for the case of emergency, and they did not want to be seen as having low motivation for their job (Expedia PR Jimukyoku, 2018).

In the Swedish system, in contrast, it is stated that “[i]f you cannot work as a result of the fact that you are sick, you can normally obtain compensation from and including the second day of sickness” (European Commission, no date). In this system, a worker often receives approximately 80% of his or her salary for the first 90 days as sickness cash benefit from the Swedish Social Insurance Agency “if [s/he is] considered unable to cope with his/her normal work” (European Commission, no date). However, the first day of a sick pay period is counted as a waiting day, karensdag. Meaning when a worker needs to take only one day off because of his or her condition, his or her pay gets reduced by the amount equivalent to one working day (European Commission, no date). One of the informants from the unstructured interviews explained that this system reflects the fact that it is considered to be the workers’ responsibility to look after his or her own health to a certain point.

Among the interviewed Japanese women, they explained that they contacted their boss when they needed to take sick leave because of their or their children’s sickness. Depending on their job, some of them had an option to work remote as well. Some of those who worked as the teachers appreciated that they could get the substitute teachers to fill in their position. In Yuko’s case, since she worked as a hairdresser back in Japan and kept the same profession in Sweden, experienced significant differences between the old and new working conditions around sick leave.

When my child is sick or I am sick and I need to stay home, I contact my co-workers at the salon. Then, they contact the client to change the appointment. I think this is something impossible to happen in Japan. Even when I was sick, I needed to drag myself [to come and keep the appointment] (laughter). The employer was like, ‘come anyway.’ And, [if I cancelled the appointment just because I was sick,] the clients would think like ‘what!’?

As a hairdresser, Yuko could not ask someone else to replace her even when she needed to take sick leave. Thus, the employer’s working policy and the clients’ tendency of reactions affected

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52 Original texts: 子どもが例えばなんか熱とか出して、とか自分が体調悪くて、とかだったら、職場の人と連絡したら、もうちゃんと、お客さんとかにも連絡取って日にち変えてもらったたりとか。日本だったら絶対ないな、みたいな。風邪引いたらもう遠ってでも、来い！！みたいな感じやけど。お客さんも「え！？」みたいな感じやと思うし。
her significantly. She expressed a keen appreciation of the working conditions she was exposed to in Sweden.

3.3.2 Parental Leave

In the Japanese system, parental leave is possible to take until one year after the birth of the child. If particular requirements are met, this can be extended to two years at maximum. In this system, the first eight weeks after the birth is counted as maternity leave and even if a father takes these eight weeks as his parental leave, he can take a second one for the length of his choice later as well as long as the specific requirements are met. In addition, if the father takes parental leave while the mother is still on her maternity leave, the parents can take parental leave until one year and two months after the birth of the child (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2018). During the parental leave, parents can receive about 67% of the salary as childcare leave benefits during the first 180 days and 50% between the 181st day and the last day of the parental leave (The Employment Security Bureau of the Ministry of Health, no date).

In the Swedish system, parents are entitled to take 480 days of parental leave and each parent have 90 days of them as their exclusive rights. During the first 390 days of parental leave, parents are entitled to be paid a parental benefit at the same rate as the sickness benefit. For the other following 90 days, compensation becomes 180 Kronor per a day (Försäkringskassan, no date). Comparing the systems in Japan and Sweden, it can be said that these countries are encouraging fathers to take parental leave in different ways.

When it comes to the social system and working conditions around taking parental leave, Haruka was impressed by how her employer and co-workers made her parental leave comfortable.

When I told everyone about my pregnancy, it was like, they all said, ‘congratulations!’ And, they even took care of me very well. Yeah, like, I did not need to feel bad about [taking parental leave] at all. No feeling of guilt whatsoever. And, this is also because I live close to the office, but I met my co-workers and boss for lunch during the parental leave. We could discuss, like, the position I would work for when my parental leave is over in a frank manner.53
Haruka experienced that not only the social system but also the working conditions and co-workers’ and employers’ attitude could significantly affect how the workers feel about their or their partners’ pregnancy and parental leave. This can influence ultimately on considering having a child.

Thanks to the warm atmosphere and attitude from the co-workers, Haruka took parental leave and went back to the office. During the first eight months back in the office, Haruka’s husband, Johan, was taking parental leave. Then she realized something had changed in their household thanks to this period.

When my husband took parental leave, 100% of the responsibilities of child-rearing and housekeeping went to him. On the contrary, it was like, I forgot how to do it. During the eight months of his parental leave, our child also grew up. What we needed to bring when we went out with our daughter also had changed. Thus, I could not pack stuff properly for things newly became necessary. But, my husband could do it. [...] I think [taking parental leave for long-term] is good both in short- and long-term perspectives to share household tasks. He would understand to the core what must be taken care of [in housekeeping and childrearing as a whole].

By referring to an article she read on the internet, Haruka explained that long-term parental leave is not only good for mothers to catch up with their job while their partner is taking full responsibilities of housekeeping and childrearing, but also good for their future as parents and partners who need to cooperate in housekeeping and childrearing. Moreover, this also gives opportunities for fathers to build bonding with their children.

3.3.3 Childrearing with Financial Perspective

When it comes to school tuitions, the Japanese system, on the one hand, covers up to high-school (Ministry of Education, 2013). In addition, some of the students will be entitled to get a grant to go on to a university from April 2020 if a student meets specific requirements. This grant will cover all or some of the entrance and tuition fees depending on the students’ educational and financial backgrounds (Ministry of Education, no date). This reformation not

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54 Original texts: やっぱり育児休暇の時間、旦那が取るじゃん。で、そのときは、100%、育児・家事の責任が向こうに移るわけ。でね、私はさ、育児のやり方忘れるっていうか、8か月間、旦那の育児休暇の間に子供も成長するから、お出かけするときには、必要なものとか、変わわるわけ。で、その分のパッキングとか私できなくなるの。けど、旦那ができる、とか。 [...] 短期的なメリットもあるし、やっぱ中長期的にもういいよね。家事の分担とかは、何をやんなきゃいけないかな、ってね、身に染みてわかるからさ。

55 Private high schools are also going to be covered from April 2020 (Ministry of Education, no date).
only will be a help to provide equal opportunities for children to receive higher education, but also can cause some changes in the class structure of Japanese society. According to Hashimoto (1986), the class structure in Japan is profoundly affected by the individuals’ class origin. This is because, children’s access to the higher education is often dependent on the parents’ financial situation (p. 180).

In Sweden, on the other hand, school tuitions are basically covered by the government. Between the age of six and 15 or 16, students receive compulsory education. If a student wants to go on to the higher education and meets the requirements, s/he can also go on to an upper secondary school and other higher education (Sweden.se, 2016; 2018). In addition to this system providing children universal access to education, there are several student grants and loans available for those in the age of between 16 and 56 years old. For example, full-time students those who are between 16 and 20 years old are entitled to receive 1,250 Kronor per a month under the Study Allowance system if they are going to an upper secondary school or something equivalent. After turning 20 years old, students can be supported by the study grants and loans if they are attending a university or some other higher education. In 2019, under the Study Aid system, full-time students can get 809 Kronor as a grant and 1,860 Kronor as a loan per a week. It is up to students if s/he withdraws the student loan or not (CSN, 2019a; 2019b). Therefore, the effect of the parents and family’s financial situation on the people’s opportunities to study is minimized in Sweden.

According to the narratives of the interviewed Japanese women, such financial aid from the government had a significant effect on their everyday lives. Mana expressed her relief of raising her children in Sweden from a financial perspective.

[In Sweden,] we have to pay a lot of taxes. But in Japan, educational expenses cost a lot. Especially for universities, if your child goes on to a private one. But we don’t have it here. It’s like, I do not have to feel much pressure on this. In Japan, parents are like, ‘we have to save some money!’ because they want their children to go on to a university. But it does not cost here. […] For example, it won’t be like ‘my kids cannot go on to university because we cannot afford it.’ This freedom from such kind of pressure makes me feel better.56

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56 Original texts: まあ税金けっこう取られるんですけど、でも日本だとこう、教育費だとか、すごくかかりますよね。大学とか、やっぱ私立とか行くと。でもそういうのがないのです。そんなにこう、プレッシャーを感じないって言うんですかね。日本だともう「貯めなきゃ！」ってみんなやっぱ。大学行かせようと思うけど。だから、でもここは教育費がかりない。[...] 例えば、「ああ、うちがお金ないから大学行かれない」とか。そういうプレッシャーがないのは、楽かな、と思います。
Mana felt that such an educational system is not only securing the opportunities of receiving an education but also reducing the pressure in childrearing for parents.

Considering all the privileges they were receiving in their current positionality in Sweden, the interviewed Japanese women who lived in the greater Stockholm area did not find it valuable to move back to Japan. They were afraid that everything could be different if they would have relocated in Japan because of the all differences between Japan and Sweden, especially in their social systems and expected gender roles surrounding them. Thus, they only paid a visit to Japan occasionally, commonly once a year. The frequency of visit tended to be higher among the mothers with their small children. It was mostly because, according to the mothers, it seemed to be the best way to teach the Japanese language to their children. Other primary reasons for the visit were to eat Japanese food and meet friends and family, among other things.

In other words, their positionality and privileges surpass their struggles and oppression experienced in Sweden so that many of the interviewed Japanese were perceiving themselves as residences of Sweden and visitors of Japan although most of them were keeping their registrational Japanese nationality (Anthias, 2001). This was also because they did not find any necessities to lose it. They had already obtained a permanent residence permit in Sweden so that, as Kotomi described, “only when there is an election for the national parliament” they experience some inconvenience because they cannot vote without Swedish citizenship.

Chihiro and Kotomi even emphasized the privileges of having a Japanese passport in terms of the numbers of countries they can enter without a visa and the Japanese Embassy located all over the world as Swedish one does. In the case of the longest resident among the informants, Akiko, she had obtained Swedish nationality and citizenship because it was required in the past to be entitled to the pension system, according to her.

The interviewed Japanese women showed praxis-oriented flexible and multiple ways of belonging(s) to their country of origin, Japan, and their country of settlement, Sweden. Their interpretation of Japanese people’s positionality in global stratification, which seems to be rather highly located, was also something they reflected on and related to when interacting with other immigrant groups (Anthias, 2001; Barth, 1996; Hall, 2013). Experiences which highlight their ethnicity are described in the following.

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57 Original text: 国政選挙のときくらいよね。
3.4 Private Life

Though previous sections in this chapter are focused on the issues around the social system and balancing work and family life, this section focuses on other parts of their private life. Their process of making friends and their impressions of Swedish society through their everyday lives are explored.

3.4.1 Social Networks

One of the crucial parts of private life is time with friends. At the beginning of their life in Sweden, language school played a crucial role to make friends. In addition, some of the informants mentioned about some friendships with their partners’ friends as helpful, especially during childrearing. They could bring their children who were about the same age together so that both children and adults could have a pleasant time with friends. However, on the macro level, their network of friends varied. For example, Misaki had more Japanese friends than Swedish ones. Mana, on the other hand, had zero Japanese friends and Haruka had only a few Japanese friends whom they were keeping in touch with. Looking back their experiences on making Swedish friends, some of the mothers among the Japanese women interviewed for this study mentioned their children as an ice breaker.

Mana: It was hard to become friends [with Swedes] when I did not speak Swedish. But after mastering Swedish, it was like, through my child? At the nursery school, she often said like, ‘I wanna go play in the park with [his/her name]!’ when I went there to pick her up. I said, ‘oh sure, fine.’ When kids are playing together, mothers talk to each other, right? Such situations made us become friends. So, it was like, our kids connected us.\(^{58}\)

Mana felt that it was crucial to have Swedish language skills and opportunities to spend some qualified time to become friends with Swedes. Thus, language skills can affect individuals in private sphere to avoid being categorized as the ‘others’ by Swedes (Anthias, 2001; Hall, 2013). In addition, Kotomi emphasized that it is crucial to initiate the first step if one wants to make Swedish friends. Since she was eager to expand her social networks, when she was at a park

\(^{58}\) Original texts: 言葉ができないときは難しかったですけど。言葉ができてから、子どもを通して？子どもが保育園行って、保育園迎え行ったなら、なんか子どもが「帰りになになにちゃんと公園で遊びたいー！」とか言うんですよ。「あ、やっぱ良いよ。」って言って。で、子ども遊んでるとやっぱりお母さん同士保りますよね。で、そういうの、結構友達になりました。だから子どもが結構繋げてくれたって言うのかな。
playing with her children and if happened to make friends, as she described, “I always invited them to my home.”

3.4.2 Expressing Themselves

As explored in the previous chapters, according to the interviewed Japanese women, it is considered necessary to be direct in expressing themselves at offices in Sweden to have better communication with ‘others’ (Anthias, 2001; Hall, 2013). In addition, all the informants regarded the importance to express themselves more directly in Sweden than in Japan in many aspects of their everyday lives beyond the boundary of the private and public sphere. Misaki’s experiences cover this.

Misaki: Swedes express themselves a lot, right? It was something like a big culture shock to me. We [Japanese] barely have opportunities to give presentations and such in Japan, right? Like, we barely do things which are about expressing our opinions […] It was one of the biggest struggles for me. Even at school for learning Swedish, they asked about my opinions. Both in SFI and SAS. Like, ‘what do you think?’ And I was very shocked when I realized that I had no opinions. I do not have any opinions because I was born and grew up in Japan! (laughter) I was like, ‘well, my opinion… I have nothing to share.’

Yuka: I know, I am also like that at university.

Misaki: Right? It has been trouble. I am not good at having a discussion at all. […] it was surprising and shocking at the beginning because I had shockingly little opinion of mine.

From an everyday conversation with her friends and husband to the discussions and negotiations at work with owners of a restaurant or a café, and at school with a teacher and classmates, there were many moments when Misaki realized that she did not know what her opinions were, and how to express herself since she came to Sweden. She looked back at her experiences while she was growing up in Japan, and identified herself with those who grew up in Japan without many

59 Original text: 必ず家に招待しましたよ。
60 Swedish language school for immigrants
61 Same as above
62 Original texts: Misaki: "スウェーデン人ってよくしゃべるじゃないですか。それ、すごい大きな、カルチャーショックというか。プレゼンテーションとか、日本に居たらやらないじゃないですか。自分の意見を言うっていうことを。[…] 頭いたところですね。スウェーデン語の学校行ってても、意見を求められるんです。SFI はも SAS もですけど。「あなたどう思う？」みたいな。自分の意見がないことに、自分でびっくりしました。日本で生まれ育った私には、意見がないんです。「意見と言われても…ないですよ。」みたい。Yuka: "とてもよくわかります。わたしも大学でそうですね。" Misaki: "ねー。困りますよね、ディスカッションとか。すっごい苦手で。[...] 自分の考えのなさすぎて、びっくりと、落ち込んだりしました。"
opportunities to express their opinions. As a result, the immigrants from different countries and Swedes were regarded as the ‘others’ based on their ways of expressions in Misaki’s perspective (Anthias, 2001; Hall, 2013).

However, late in this interview Misaki also emphasized the importance of becoming strong and expressing oneself actively and explicitly in Sweden based on her experiences. She said, “otherwise this kind of things happen!!” at loud voice filled with anger and slapped a magazine on the table. This cooking magazine was issued to introduce Japanese sweets, and she was interviewed by the skilled writer who had excellent knowledge of pastries. Although she had a great time during the interview, she was under the impression that she could not express herself as much as she wanted, and she was suffered from regrets afterward. As a result, although her interview was the main topic of this issue, the front cover of the magazine was a picture taken at a café which was of her competitor. “I have to improve my communication skills!!” she said with an energetic voice.

Among the Japanese women I encountered during the fieldwork, similar narratives as Misaki’s were mentioned by almost everyone. And one of the informants from the unstructured interviews summarized that “you become strong in this country. Otherwise, you have to go home!” In this context, strength was measured mostly by about how directly they can express themselves in various situations in Sweden. Yuko described her experience in this regard.

> For example, when my daughter is sick and I need to make a phone call to the hospital, I became to talk in a more direct manner than before, I think. About the things I used to say in a round-about way when I were in Japan, I became to say very directly, I think.

In her case, she felt her growing strength when asking questions and for demands in Sweden. Strength of expressing themselves in a direct manner was considered as a necessary skill and was trained through everyday lives in Sweden among the Japanese women interviewed for this study.

In addition, Chihiro mentioned that “I do not sense the needs of the others anymore.” She looked back when she visited Japan and went out for drinking with friends.
I was eating and drinking, just by focusing on myself when other girls were ordering for everyone else and such. I don’t care about it at all anymore.68

She experienced a change in her behavior which inclined to be more individualistic than before. Kotomi even expressed how she got irritated at Japanese people’s behavior when visiting Japan. She said “I want them to say, ‘yes!’ and ‘no!’ clearly,”69 and talked about how it took time to pay for the drinks when she went out with her friends because everyone was trying to read the atmosphere to decide how to split the bill.

Many of the interviewed Japanese women’s manners and preferences of expressing themselves shifted in the post-migratory phase. As a result, they started to perceive Japanese people’s ways of interactions and behavior differently than before. Their positionality contains some in-betweenness because both Swedes and Japanese can be categorized as the ‘other’ depending on time, situations and contexts (Anthias, 2001; Hall, 2013).

According to the narratives of the Japanese women interviewed for this study, being able to express themselves more directly than they used to do in Japan is considered as one of the necessary skills to live everyday lives in Sweden. However, such a change in ways of expression was causing specific problems in the Japanese community in Stockholm. Ayaka, the chairperson of the JFS, elaborated on this issue after explaining the existence of various backgrounds of people who are involved in JFS’s activities.

We all speak differently in Japanese. As a result, new-comers from Japan are sometimes offended when they see how the long-term residents tend to write [e-mails] in Japanese. It is very straightforward and often directly comes to the point. There is neither ‘how have you been?’ nor ‘I am very grateful what you have done for me before’ part. It begins with ‘about this issue,’ and like that. […] you will be slightly surprised like, ‘wow’ if you are not familiar with this pattern. The Japanese language can be a kind of tools to hurt others without knowing self, if you are not careful enough to write and speak with politeness and in an ambiguous way.70

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68 Original texts: もう自分のことしか考えてない。パーって食べてパーって飲んじゃう。みんな他の女の子とかちゃんと注文したりとかしてるのに、もう全然気にしない。
69 Original text: Yes! No! とかハッキリ言ってほしい。
70 Original texts: 日本語が違うんですよ、全員。で、傷付くんですよ、日本からいらしたばかりの人が、ここに長く住んでいる人の日本語を見ると。単刀直入で、「元気でいらっしゃいますか」がなくて。[…]「えー」って。そこがよくわからないと。日本語はね、非常に丁寧に使わないと、相手を傷つける言葉にもなっちゃうんですよ。（Translation made by the informant).
Ayaka described that some of the Japanese immigrants can be ascribed as the ‘other’ in newcomers from Japan’s perspective (Anthias, 2001; Hall, 2013). This also suggests that different Japanese ethnicity is being constructed in the Swedish contexts (Barth, 1996). Further experiences which characterize Japanese ethnicity in the Stockholm region in Sweden is described later in this chapter.

3.4.3 At the Corners of Swedish Society

During the interview with Haruka, we moved from one café to another. On the way to the destination, we walked through a rather crowded shopping street in Stockholm.

I was trying not to bump into a stranger, and I said ‘wow, so many people.’\(^{71}\) Haruka giggled a bit and said, ‘it’s like having a superpower when you are pushing a buggy.’\(^{72}\) At first, I did not quite understand what she meant, however, I saw not a few people who dodged to make space for her in streets. When crossing the streets, she told me that there is always a step-free part on the edge of the pedestrian passage to help buggies, wheelchairs and more. I was impressed and said, ‘it’s very well planned!’\(^{73}\) She replied that ‘hm, but I feel more like, the government is telling us that, we prepared everything for you. So, you gotta do whatever you need to do by yourself’\(^{74}\) with smiling cynically. Several meters after this conversation, a lady bumped into Haruka’s buggy. She just came out of the restaurant when we were passing in front of it, and she kicked the front wheel of the buggy which was very close to the baby. However, she left without a word. Haruka knitted her brows and said, ‘these kind of things are very insensible and really piss me off!’\(^{75}\) with a tone of voice filled with anger (Field note, 2018).

During the interview, she described Swedes as insensible quite a few times. This incident described what she meant by the word, insensible, the carelessness of the others which might be underlying in Swedish society, especially in Stockholm and the surrounding area. On the other hand, Saki described such features of Sweden as individualism. She mentioned that “there are many immigrants who are getting tired of Swedish individualism”\(^{76}\) with a sharp and cold tone in her voice. This aspect of Sweden seemed to be found challenging among the interviewed Japanese women. As Ayaka described, “there are many people who are crying because of this.

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\(^{71}\) Original text: うわあ、混んでますね
\(^{72}\) Original text: ベビーカー押してると無敵だからさ。
\(^{73}\) Original text: すごいよく考えられてますね！
\(^{74}\) Original text: うん、でも整えてやったらあとは自分でなんとかして感じたよね。
\(^{75}\) Original text: こーゆーところがinsensible で、本当に腹が立つ！
\(^{76}\) Original text: みんな結構、スウェーデンの個人主義にはもう飽き飽きっていうのはあるよ。
society” with criticizing all the books and narratives on Sweden published in Japan which only highlight positive and fun aspects of Sweden.

These reactions can be described as the construction of Japanese and Swedish ethnicity (or nationality) in the Swedish context, especially in Stockholm and the surrounding area. The interviewed Japanese women were highlighting specific aspects of Japanese and those whom they encountered in Sweden, and ‘othering’ the “insensible” and “individualistic” behavior of the latter, and maintaining the boundary with the ‘others’ (Barth, 1996; Hall, 2013; Hannerz, 1992).

In this line, when I asked about the interviewed Japanese mothers about the characteristics they wanted their children to have, everyone mentioned how it would be great the good aspects of both Japanese and Swedish people could be mixed. Among other things, the strong mind to express opinions like Swedes do, and kindness and thoughtfulness to others like Japanese people do were most commonly raised, respectively. These descriptions also reflect the Japanese women interviewed for this study’s ways of differentiating the Japanese and the Swedes in their perspectives. At the same time, this shows the construction of Japanese ethnicity in the Swedish context (Barth, 1996).

Among the interviewed Japanese women, on the other hand, experiences around racialized experiences were rather an uncommon narrative to hear in their private sphere. Haruka described one of the shared experiences among the informants.

I don’t think it is racism, but sometimes a stranger says to me “Ni-ha-o,” talks to me in Chinese. Well, I just like to say that there are many Chinese people but not all Asians are Chinese. And, this does not feel great either.78

Although she did not perceive this as racism, she felt offended because she was misunderstood as a Chinese.

Many of the Japanese women interviewed for this study mentioned similar experiences and they were either felt offended or wondered how such acts were motivated. These kinds of reactions of the informants reflect that they do not want to be perceived as Chinese and prefer to be seen as Japanese in this kind of context (Anthias, 2002). Apart from this kind of negative experience which can be conceptualized as everyday racism (Hällgren, 2005, p. 321), most of

77 Original text: 泣かされている人はたくさんいますよ。
78 Original texts: あと、差別じゃないけど、私とか、唐突に、ニーハオとか。中国語で話しかけて。なんかさ、まあ、中国人たくさんいるけど、アジア人は中国人じゃないよ、って。思う。っていうのもあんまり、まあ、気分はよくないよね。
the interviewed Japanese women saw being Japanese as an advantage and tended not to see themselves as a victim of racism overall (Takezawa, 2005).

To highlight the differences with the ‘others,’ Mana compared her situation with her friend who is originally from Thailand. According to Mana’s friend, as soon as she showed her Thai passport, she was asked various questions including her motive to come to Sweden and about her Swedish partner at the passport control in airports. On the other hand, Mana described that “as soon as I show my passport, they are like, here you go.”79 with throwing her fist on the table by mimicking the move to put the stamp on a passport. Thus, although both Mana’s friend and Mana should be the object of ‘othering,’ under the same category of immigrants, they were positioned differently because they possessed a foreign passport from different countries (Anthias, 2001; Hall, 2013).

In addition to such experiences at the airport because of their nationality, there were many other narratives shared by the interviewed Japanese informants when they felt privileged from being a Japanese. They often felt it when they were interacting with others because as soon as they introduced themselves as Japanese, people mentioned, for example, how their or their friends’ or family’s trip to Japan was excellent. Such experiences made the interviewed Japanese feel lucky to be Japanese. They overall felt that being a Japanese helped to leave a positive impression when meeting someone. Therefore, they were the object of ‘othering’ in such situations as one of the immigrant groups, however, they seemed to be considering their positionality as a positive one among immigrants (Anthias, 2001; Hall, 2013).

3.5 Summarizing Reflections

In this chapter, I first explored the gender systems of Sweden and Japan. Then, I investigated how the Japanese women interviewed for this study managed their family and private lives in Sweden around their work lives as (re)interpreting and changing their performance of gender and benefiting from the social system. In addition, the specific changes and experiences they went through in their private life as a result of their migration were also highlighted to capture the concrete situations of the informants in their country of settlement.

Their change in interpretation and performance of gender seemed to be the outcomes of the gendered structure of Sweden. Gender norms were reflected on package of consumer products such as baby products, functions of family which were mostly shown by their partner, and the social system employed by workplaces and performed by colleagues (Pessar & Mahler, 1998).

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79 Original text: 日本のパスポート見せられたら、「あい！」
As a result, the more they spend time the stronger they became to identify themselves with other working women and mothers in Sweden on this regard (Anthias, 2001). They also became the performer of the ‘gender work’ who (re)construct and (re)produce gender (Pessar & Mahler, 2003). Furthermore, construction of their own version of gender was suggested in ways how they shared household tasks with their partner, and their reactions to them. For instance, they seemed to be satisfied with participations of their partner even when their roles in family life were not entirely equally divided.

Based on their experiences, especially around the social system and working conditions which are supportive of parents and working mothers, the interviewed Japanese women did not find it beneficial to move back to Japan. However, this did not mean that they abandoned their country of origin because they kept their nationality considering various benefits of being a Japanese, and paid a visit to Japan from time to time. Among other things, they seemed to be proud of introducing themselves as Japanese in various situations. This behavior and discourse reflected their multiple and flexible ways of identifications and belonging(s) (Anthias, 2001; Hall, 2013).

In other aspects of their private life in Sweden, especially as immigrants, the importance of Swedish language and being expressive in conversations were discovered as chapter one. Their complex positionality was revealed around the manners of expression involving the boundary-making between the new-comers and the long-term residents of Japanese. As reflected in the children’s possible ideal personality, they have some desire to combine the Swedishness and Japanese-ness they discovered in their everyday lives in Stockholm and the surrounding area though they also had been experiencing some struggles in the process of living. This also suggests the construction of Japanese ethnicity in Swedish context (Barth, 1996). After revealing such complex collective identifications of the interviewed Japanese women, it is worth exploring what unite Japanese immigrants as one of the immigrant groups in the multi-ethnic society of Sweden.
Chapter 4. Japanese Space

As explored in the background chapter, Japanese people are one of the tiny minority groups in Sweden. They live widespread throughout the country, yet had only a few cultural facilities in the greater Stockholm area. Thus, this chapter focuses on how, when and why Japanese people gathered and how space was perceived and experienced by the participants during such gatherings. In addition, this chapter has its primarily focus on ethnicity to illustrate the informants’ concrete situations of everyday lives in a country of settlement.

I am employing Massey’s notion of space (1994) as an analytical concept in addition to highlighting the interviewed Japanese women’s sense of belonging with Anthias (2001)’s translocational positionality. In the course of analysis, construction of Japanese ethnicity is also explored following Barth (1964). The findings presented in this chapter are based on participant observations conducted in Stockholm and semi-structured interviews conducted with the Japanese women who live in Stockholm and the surrounding area.

4.1 Locating Japanese in Stockholm

Among immigrant groups, religion often plays a crucial role in uniting people in a host country. For example, as explored by Mack (2017), a significant number of the diasporic Syriac Orthodox Christians reside in Södertälje which came to be known as the capital of their worldwide diaspora. In this case, they built the first church in 2009 as the numbers of their people grow because the church is one of the social anchors for them to maintain unity in the diaspora. It provides a gathering point and spatial opportunities for the group to practice their rituals such as weddings and funerals (p. 94).

On the contrary, over 90% of the population is affiliated with Shinto or Buddhism, or both in Japan (Japan Agency for Cultural Affairs, 2019). The Japanese, however, tend not to regard themselves as religious or show interest in organized religion. The word religion, moreover, often contains peculiar negativity in their perspective. This is mainly because of the history of the two world wars tainted by the extreme faith in the emperor, who used to be the highest rank of Shinto, and the tragic accidents which were carried out by Aum Shinrikyo, a Japanese cult religious group. As a result, traditional practices of Shinto and Buddhism remain in a part of their everyday lives as culture (Ando, 2014).

80 Aum Shinrikyo is a cult group. One of the most tragic attack by them happened on March 20th, 1995, when they released sarin, a deadly nerve agent in one of the subway stations in Tokyo. In total, 29 innocent lives were lost and about 6,500 victims were harmed because the attacks by them (Japan Broadcasting Corporation, 2018; Olson, 1999).
This hesitant approach to religion was also shared among the Japanese immigrants I encountered in Sweden. When I asked about religious belief, Misaki replied that,

I do not have any religious belief. I am just like the other ordinary Japanese. I visit the shrine during the New Year’s season, have funerals with Buddhist style, and celebrate Christmas.81

She did not have any enthusiasm in tone. Similar comments were often given by the informants. Thus, religion tended not to provide a common place to gather, opportunities to bond, or social anchoring in the case of the Japanese immigrants in Sweden. Therefore, it is worth exploring what played a role in uniting Japanese immigrants in Sweden.

Cultural activities were one of the popular events enjoyed by Japanese communities. Among the interviewed Japanese women, participation in the Japanese communities greatly varied as to how they perform the traditional and cultural practices in their everyday lives in Sweden. Some were active enough to host events and activities, the others had never participated or had no interest in participating except for the Japanska Skolan. Some ate Japanese food or at least some similar foods which contained primary seasonings in Japanese cooking such as soy sauce on a daily basis, while others enjoyed Japanese food only as a part of the seasonal celebration and in equivalent exclusive opportunities.

Apart from such personal level, at the Japanska Skolan, some events organized by the JFS, and other club activities seemed to offer opportunities to gather Japanese people, maintain, share, and perform their old tradition, culture and more. Even the informants who had no interest in joining Japanese activities considered applying for the Japanska Skolan, which suggested further exploration of this inconsistency.

4.2 At Japanska Skolan i Stockholm82

The clock just struck 8:30. On Saturday morning, Drottninggatan, the shopping street in Stockholm, was filled with silence like the city was still asleep. As I turned left, the square-shaped Tegnérlund park appeared right ahead of me. The area surrounding this park looked to be a rather calm residential area. The buildings were five to six floors tall with light yellowish or pinkish walls and black roofs. Windows were decorated with plants and lace curtains, or came with balconies. As I looked around, Enskilda Gymnasiet’s83 school flag waving gently in the

81 わたし無宗教なんです。[...]
82 Many of the findings presented in this section is also presented in an unpublished work by Kikiuchi (2018).
83 Gymnasiet means an upper secondary school (Skolverket, no date).
calm spring wind caught my eyes. I double checked the location with my phone. According to the GPS on my phone, I should be in the right place. However, there was no sign of Japan or Japanska Skolan in my eyesight. As I was strolling towards the flag with anxiety, one family overpassed me. Two children were accompanied by their parents, and the mother was holding light blue colored randoseru. As they arrived at under the school flag, they disappeared into the building through the double doors. I quickened my pace with confidence and excitement. There it is! (Fieldnote, 2018)

Before the first day of my volunteering at Japanska Skolan, I was given the visiting address, the time to show up, and things to bring with me which were inside shoes, a lunch box, and a red pen. On the way there, I was looking for some sort of indication on the streets telling me the location of Japanska Skolan. Probably a sign in a street which says “Japanska Skolan is this way,” Japanska Skolan’s school flag, or something. But I found nothing. Then, the family who passed me on the street was holding a randoseru, a school bag which many of Japanese elementary school’s students carry on their back to carry their textbooks, notes, pens and such on every school day. And it was finally a sign of Japan for me.

Japanska Skolan is one of the extra-curricular schools which are supported by the Japanese government and run by the local Japanese communities. There are over 200 other schools like the Japanska Skolan which located all over the world. These schools offer classes in the Japanese language during afterschool hours or on weekends to those Japanese descendants who go to local elementary and junior-high schools full-time. Some characteristics of these extra-curricular schools are that they teach subjects such as Kokugo, Japanese language, and Sansuu/Suugaku, mathematics, by using the same textbooks as the elementary and junior high schools in Japan. Their aim is to offer the same qualified compulsory education to the Japanese descendants who reside outside of Japan so that in case they come back they can still keep up with those who have been consistently studying in Japan (Ministry of Education, no date).

The Japanska Skolan i Stockholm was established in 1976 under the sponsorship of the Japanese Businessmen’s Club and JFS as an extra-curricular school. As the principal described, the school was established by parents of the Japanese descendants. The school followed the Japanese calendar. The school year started in April, offered classes on Saturdays, and had seasonal breaks in Spring, Summer, and Winter. Thus, school days added up to 36 days in total, and they taught Kokugo, Japanese language, and Sansuu/Suugaku, mathematics. Classes were

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84 A typical school bag for students at elementary school in Japan.
taught with Japanese textbooks and followed compulsory Japanese curricula. Due to the small number of school days, parents were counted on as “the second teacher” and their home was defined as “the second school” (Japanska Föreningen i Stockholm [JFS], no date). This meant that parents were supposed to help the enrolled students to learn Japanese and finish their homework at home to keep up with the classes.

In addition, the Japanska Skolan loaned the school building of the local school, Enskilda Gymnasiet, under a yearly contract. It did not own its school building because of the limited number of school days, the small number of the enrolled students, and lack of financial resources. The Japanska Skolan received support from the Japanese government that covered up to 45% of costs. The remaining 55% was paid for by financial aid from the JFS, school tuitions, and donations from the public.

Although this building was on loan, a miniature Japan was temporarily recreated at Enskilda Gymnasiet on Saturdays to bring about variations of experiences and understandings of space to the participants, namely the students, teachers, volunteers, and parents. This temporary character of space also reflected the social relation of Japanese immigrants within Swedish society. While the bigger immigrant groups such as diasporic Syriac Orthodox Christians established their positionality in Swedish society by almost creating their city in Södertälje, Japanese immigrants remained to occupy one school building temporarily (Massey, 1994). Though the scale remained small, people were behaving according to Japanese standards of acceptable behavior because, as the principal said, “once you step in, you are in Japan.”

I just came into the school building through the entrance door. Because of the view from this end side of the corridor, I was a bit overwhelmed. I had never seen this many Japanese people in one place in Sweden. I quickly looked around. The walls had a similar yellow color as this building had on the outside. Advertisements on the walls were written in Swedish to give some information to the students of Enskilda Gymnasiet. The ceiling was high, and the lockers there and the doors to the classrooms were very tall, so the school children looked even smaller. In front of each classroom, there were some picnic sheets on the floor with students’ shoes lining up tightly on it. Everything I heard was in Japanese, and many people were greeting each other in a Japanese manner with a little bow or waving a hand (Fieldnote, 2018).

85 Original text: この学校の中では、日本に居るのと同じことですから。
Since this building was meant to be used by older students, desks, chairs, and other facilities seemed to be too big for Japanska Skolan’s students to use. Furthermore, everyone was told to pay special attention in order not to break or damage anything of this borrowed space.

Besides such vague feelings of belonging to this school building and some problematic aspects for the sake of borrowing a building meant to be used by high-school students, there was no any fatal issues because it was still a school building which came with the necessary facilities to function as a school. Some difficulties existed but they were manageable and did not disturb the main function of Japanska Skolan. The building was temporarily filled with Japanese, and things were tied up in the Japanese manner to a certain point. For example, as the principal later explained to me, instead of having a typical Japanese school’s entrance hall with shoe shelves for every individual to change shoes from outdoor ones to indoor ones, they used those picnic sheets (see Figure 4). In addition, it was part of the school regulation that everyone must speak Japanese when s/he is in Japanska Skolan. Thus, everything I heard was in Japanese, and everyone was behaving in Japanese ways to a certain point, such as greeting with a little bow. These efforts made this space understood and experienced as Japanese, and gave various meanings to participants to spend time there depending on their positionality in Swedish society, including students, teachers, parents and volunteers, and backgrounds such as the first generation of Japanese immigrants and the descendants of Japanese (Massey, 1994).

In the case of the diasporic Syriac Orthodox Christians, on the one hand, their global capital, Södertälje, is described as a theater by the members of the community because their “behavior is being observed, discussed, calibrated, and evaluated according to Syriac standards of
acceptability” (Mack, 2017, p. 135). Whereas such circumstances bring about struggles in various ways for those who also identify themselves with other people and behaviors outside of the Syriac community, it also seems that there are plenty of opportunities to learn, perform and retain the desirable Syrian behavior and norms through their everyday lives as the result of their compatriots residing concentratedly.

On the other hand, in the case of Japanese immigrants, they had a relative small number of compatriots. In addition, they lived spread thorough Sweden. Thus, *Japanska Skolan* seemed to be one of the major places where they had opportunities to physically experience and develop understandings of Japanese (school) culture in their everyday lives in Sweden (Massey, 1994). In the speech which was given by one of the students during the entrance ceremony held in April (see Figure 5), several positive aspects of learning Japanese and coming to *Japanska Skolan* in students’ perspective were summarized. She mentioned that it would be great to be able to communicate with the local people when visiting Japan, understand Japanese sense of humor, and make friends and get to meet them every week at the *Japanska Skolan*. These reasons to study in *Japanska Skolan* also served as meanings of space for the enrolled students (Massey, 1994).

![Figure 5 The entrance ceremony. The flag in the middle is Japanska Skolan’s school flag (Taken by the author).](image)

At the *Japanska Skolan*, there were several problems with running it. One of which was a gap between the *Japanska Skolan*’s official aim and its role in Stockholm in practice. *Japanska Skolan* had the enrolled students between the age of seven and 15, and they were divided into classes from first grade to sixth grade in elementary school and from first grade to third grade in junior-high school in correspondence with the Japanese compulsory educational system. As of April 2018, there were 157 children as enrolled students. These enrolled students of *Japanska Skolan* were categorized into two groups. The one group was the short-term residents who came to Sweden mostly because their parent/s are stationed overseas by their employers for the
limited number of years, and the other was the descendants of long-term/permanent residents. Such differences in their backgrounds seemed to create gaps in the level of Japanese competence and motivation for studying.

In practice, many of the students who belong to the former group had already received some education in Japan, thus, they were at *Japanska Skolan* to maintain their language skills and keep up with the Japanese compulsory education because they were eventually returning to Japan. Their length of stay is limited, and they will move back to Japan as soon as their parent(s) complete the assigned period of time as it is usually the case among the majority of the Japanese immigrants in Europe (Goodman, et al., 2003). Thus, for these students who are the short-terms residents, *Japanska Skolan* can be understood as the place to maintain their language competence, keep up with those students who are in Japan, and remind them the school culture back home, among other things (Massey, 1994).

On the other hand, according to the principal of the *Japanska Skolan*, approximately 80 to 90% of the enrolled students belonged to the latter, the descendants of long-term/permanent residents. Since they were born in Sweden, they had limited skills in Japanese and often managed their everyday lives without Japanese. In their perspectives, the *Japanska Skolan* was experienced rather as additional space of their everyday lives to studying Japanese and mathematics following the Japanese curricula mostly because of their ethnic background (Massey, 1994). Such features were reflected in students’ behavior in classrooms, thus, it was often discussed how their motivation could be maintained to study Japanese.

When I was volunteering at *Japanska Skolan*, one of my primary tasks was to encourage such students who were with low motivations to participate in the study during the classes because some of them often fallen asleep during the classes, started doing something else such as drawing on their notebooks. In the worst case, some students left the classroom to roam the building, so I followed them to keep them the company. Despite this behavior, they came to school every Saturday and performed fine when we had open house days for the parents.

In response to such situations, the principal of the *Japanska Skolan* described that “they are coming [to the *Japanska Skolan*] to satisfy their parents.” According to him, since most of the descendants of the long-term/permanent residents enter the *Japanska Skolan* when they are at the age of seven, their enrollment is often motivated by their parents’ desire. Many of the lesser motivated students lack an incentive to maintain Japanese when they are permanently

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86 Original text: 彼らは親のために来てるんです。
settled in Sweden. Correspondingly, many of students quit the *Japanska Skolan* after fourth grade.\(^{87}\)

As a result of the gaps in motivation among the students, the primary aim of *Japanska Skolan* was to teach Japanese to the enrolled students although its formal aim was to provide the Japanese curricula consistently for Japanese students living in Sweden (JFS, u.d.).

4.2.1 Teaching the Japanese Language

Although the aim and the reality differed and there were considerable difficulties, many of the parents wanted their children to be able to communicate in Japanese to provide options for the children’s future, according to the principal of the *Japanska Skolan*. If they speak Japanese, they can choose to, for example, study abroad or do a working holiday in Japan, or work at a Japanese company, among other things. Such possibilities they could give to their children were also connected with the meaning of *Japanska Skolan*’s space in the parents’ perspective (Massey, 1994).

In addition to such strategies to increase the scope of the future career of children, there seemed to be some more reasons among parents to teach Japanese to their children. Among the interviewed informants, Kotomi, a mother of four, expressed that “I thought it would be unfortunate if my children could not communicate with their grandparents.”\(^{88}\) As it was also mentioned as one of the positive aspects of studying Japanese in the students’ perspective, learning Japanese means to have a tool to communicate with the local people in Japan, especially with family and relatives. This was often mentioned as a primary reason to teach Japanese to the second generation among the Japanese women interviewed for this study.

Apart from the low motivations of these children, there were also some more problems with teaching Japanese. Kotomi explained her case in this regard.

> But my parents talked in dialects. So, when I visited Japan from Sweden, I asked, ‘mom, can you speak in a way closer to the standard Japanese?’ and then, it came out to be even harder to understand her. Because she was speaking in a polite way, but it was still the dialect (laughter).\(^{89}\)

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\(^{87}\) In the case of 2018, there were 26 students in first grade, 36 in second, 21 in third, 22 in fourth, 11 in fifth and 14 in 6th (Fieldnote, 2018).

\(^{88}\) Original text: でもおじいちゃんとおばあちゃんとさあ、（話せないと）寂しいじゃん?

\(^{89}\) Original texts: でもうちの親は方言で話すでしょう。だからスウェーデンから行ったなら「お母さん、もうちょっと、もうちょっとねえ、標準語に近い言葉で話して」と言ったたらね、なんか何言ってるのか。笑 丁寧な言葉で言ってるけど、方言の丁寧な言葉で言ってるから。
Although the differences between dialects and the standard Japanese brought about unexpected difficulties in the communication between her children and their grandparents, she recalled that it was still great that her children had some Japanese language skills because they could communicate with their grandparents to a certain point. Kotomi’s children did not attend *Japanska Skolan* till the graduation, however, they all went to Japan to experience study abroad or a working holiday program. She described that “their Japanese language ability is not amazing but good enough to go anywhere they want by themselves in Japan.” And, she added that when she calls to her children on the phone, if she starts talking in Japanese, the conversation tends to go on in Japanese whereas if she begins with Swedish, it can continue in Swedish. Such mixing of language in communication with their children was often described by many of the interviewed Japanese women, although specific reasons for doing this varied.

In Mana’s case, she appreciated her daughters’ Japanese language skills because it provided her opportunities to talk in her mother tongue in everyday life dominated by Swedish. Such reasons were shared among the informants. Even after mastering Swedish to a great extent, it seemed to be still a bit tiring to communicate in Swedish 24 hours a day. This also seemed to remind these Japanese women of their mother tongue, national origin, and sense of belonging to Japan (Anthias, 2001).

4.3 At Events and Activities

Whereas *Japanska skolan* provided space to learn the Japanese language and Japanese (shool) culture for the Japanese related families, there were significant numbers of events and activities organized openly for those who are interested in Japan and its culture.

In the case of Japanese immigrants in Spain, for instance, they had cultural interests prior to migration. Inherit difficulties of moving abroad were considered as opportunities to gain life experiences attribute to personal developments and deepen the understandings of the culture which they were attracted. In addition, many of them migrated after mastering Spanish to a certain point. In the post-migratory phase, such motives encouraged them to actively participate in socio-cultural activities by attending such as Spanish language courses and cultural activities in Spain. Such orientations resulted in expanding their social networks and increasing the feeling of belonging to a host country (Martinez-Callaghan & Gil-Lacruz, 2017, pp. 254&255). Thus, interests in the culture of a host country can work as a glue to expand the

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*Original texts:* だから、うちの子たちはすーごく上手っていうあれはないんだけど、まあ、日本に行けばね。自分で行動できるぐらいの日本語です。
social network through such cultural activities which bring about opportunities to meet people beyond national backgrounds.

Among the Japanese women I encountered during the fieldwork, on the other hand, their cultural interests seemed to increase in the post-migratory phase. Their migration often occurred because of their partner’s job relocation, their job changes, arisen educational opportunity, and/or a desire to spend a life with their partner. Corresponding with such motives to migrate, when I asked about the knowledge and interests in Sweden prior to the migration, the interviewed Japanese women’s explanation remained simple. It was often mentioned that they knew Sweden as one of the developed countries, with great social benefits, but also with a dark winter and such. In addition, Kotomi recalled that the term “free-sex” was associated with Sweden and misunderstood by Japanese in the 1970s and how her husband was annoyed by this idea. Chihiro remembered how Swedish designed furniture became popular in Japan in the 1990s and imagined Sweden as a pretty fairyland. Yuko imagined Swedish lifestyle to be a stylish one because of the way Japanese media introduced it.

Although they tended to have little cultural interest in Sweden prior to their migration, they seemed to have grown interests in it after. This however did not necessarily mean abandoning Japanese cultural and traditional practices. They enjoyed celebrating Swedish seasonal and religious events like they used to do in Japan beyond the boundaries of religions such as Shinto, Buddhism, and Christianity with other various seasonal events and rituals.

As one of the examples, it was often described that Christmas and New Year’s celebration could be opposite between Sweden and Japan because Christmas tends to be a family reunion day in Sweden instead of the New Year’s holiday. According to their narratives, they were adapting with Swedish habits to a certain point while inserting some of the New Year’s celebrational rituals they used to enjoy in Japan. In Haruka’s case, she explained that she usually eats buckwheat noodle for dinner on New Year’s Eve as she used to do in Japan when her family eats ordinary food. Chihiro said that she orders frozen Osechi-ryori92 from Japan every year and eats it with her daughter while her husband has low interests in it, and Misaki described how she organized a New Year’s party with a series of Japanese foods and invited her close friends in Sweden. In addition, Kotomi mentioned that she cooked some

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91 Although it was all about the freedom of expressing one’s sexuality, it was misunderstood as freedom of having sexual activities.

92 A particular dish often served in four-tiered lacquered boxes during the New Year’s holiday. Each tier has specific foods, for example, first tier is for dishes to be eaten with sake, alcoholic beverage made with rice and water, and more, second tier is for grilled food, third tier is for pickled food, and the forth tier is for delicacies obtained in the mountains although there are regional variations. Some foods contain auspicious meanings based on color and double meanings to celebrate the new year (Shinntani & Sekizawa, 2013).
Japanese foods when celebrating Christmas with her family every year and it was usually appreciated by her family member because it was different from the other parties they attended.

Therefore, these Japanese women were combining old and new practices as a result of residing in Sweden and celebrating Swedish events at the same time as retaining some old habits remind them of Japan to a certain point. In other words, their Japanese space was experienced by themselves in the Swedish context (Massey, 1994). This practice and performance of their culture reflect their flexible and multiple ways of belonging(s) to Japanese and Swedish cultures (Anthias, 2001).

In addition, for some of the Japanese women I encountered in the field, Japanese related socio-cultural activities seemed to have become a crucial part of their everyday lives and their identity maintenance as a Japanese. How their Japanese mind was cooperating with their everyday lives in Sweden was reflected on the motives of the participants at Kosode-club and Japanska Thesällskapets Tankoukai.

When I joined the lesson at Kosode-club with some other participants, none of us except for the lecturers had ever learned wearing kimono back in Japan whereas the majority of the participants were the immigrants from Japan. According to Kotomi and Chihiro, this is the same in Japanska Thesällskapets Tankoukai though they got immersed in it and many of them began to own a tea room with tatami, Japanese floor mats, at their home. Chihiro described her motive that “it’s like, we suddenly became Japanese after we came to Sweden.”93 Kotomi added that “Japan gathers our attention.”94 Similar reasons were suggested by the participants of the Kosode-club.

On those reactions shared among the Japanese women interviewed for this study, it is reflected that since they moved to Sweden they began to identify themselves as Japanese stronger than ever before. Thus, they began to practice the Japanese traditional culture. The motivation drove them to participate in such activities, and space experienced by themselves reflected what meant them to be Japanese and their sense of belonging to Japan. In the post-migratory phase, their country of origin’s traditional culture got highlighted and performing traditional culture reinforced their identity as Japanese (Anthias, 2001; Massey, 1994). On the other hand, some seasonal events organized by the JFS had different roles in addition to reinforcing the sense of identity among Japanese.

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93 Original text: なんかこう、急に日本人になるよね、こっちに来ると。
94 Original text: 日本に目が行っちゃうのよね。
4.3.1 Akimatsuri

Among the events organized by JFI, Akimatsuri was the annual festival which was providing the opportunities to enjoy Japanese festival called Bon-Odori in the garden of Östasiatiska Museet, the Museum of East Asia, in Stockholm. It was held on one Sunday in September in the case of 2018.

The organizer of this event, JFS was formed in 1975 as a non-profit organization. Its primary role is to promote the integration of Japanese immigrants, disseminate Japanese culture and tradition to Swedish-born descendant of Japanese, and create a meeting point for Japanese and people who are interested in Japanese culture (JFS, no date) Corresponding with its overarching aim, the members of the Board committee who were elected at the regular annual meeting held every March had a various national backgrounds. According to the chairperson of the JFS, anyone can become a member of the Board as long as you have a passion and a sense of responsibility.

Akimatsuri was one of the most significant annual events organized by them alongside with the Sakura-matsuri in April, and Shinnenn-kai, the New Year’s festival, in January. For Akimatsuri, it was directed by one of the members of the board and run by all the member of the Board with the supports from the volunteers. The advertisement of hiring volunteers was posted on JFS’s page of one of the social networking service, Facebook, and sent via an e-mailing list of JFS which was delivered to the registered members of JFS exclusively. The advertisement was written both in Swedish and Japanese which reflect that applicants must be able to communicate in one of the languages. The hiring process was based on the spirit of first come, first served. I also participated as one of the volunteers. The member of volunteers mostly consisted of students but the national and educational backgrounds hugely varied.

On the day of the Akimatsuri, I showed up 30 minutes before the meeting time but the member of the Board were already there. I was told my division for the day, which was the support of the sushi restaurant, but the chef was running late. Thus, I was asked to help to decorate the room and the entrance of the museum to increase the spirit of festivity and sense of Japan.

Though Akimatsuri was held outdoors last year, it was also using one of the rooms inside of the museum called the Atriel Dragon this time which is usually a kids’ playroom. The chairperson of JFS later explained that it was the idea by the assigned organizer for this year’s Akimatsuri to escape from the possible rainy or windy weather. She continued,
I think the principal should just take responsibility for all. If anything goes wrong, I bear the brunt of the attack by apologizing that ‘I am sincerely sorry, it is all my fault.’ But if I give orders for every single little thing like ‘you have to listen to me,’ ‘this is how it’s done before,’ it’s not fun, right? […] So, I prefer taking new ideas. Sometimes coincidences and mistakes make things even more fun (laughter).

This chairperson’s attitude created the free-minded atmosphere of the backstage side of this festival. For example, when the volunteers were helping the decoration of the Atriel Dragon, the members of the Board committee handed out the boxes of decoration materials including many lanterns, but how to decorate the room was up to the individuals’ inspiration. This enhanced communication among the volunteers and the Board members. We were asking each other’s opinions to complete the decoration.

Such patterns of listening to the opinions of everyone also occurred when the volunteers were preparing the café booth run by the JFS. The principal asked the newly arrived exchange students their opinions on the ways of serving drop coffee and tea. She explained to them that, in Sweden, the coffee and tea servers are often by the cashier together with a milk carton, sugar and such. Thus, the customers pour coffee and mix things they want by themselves. The students said “it is weird,” “it is better if we prepare it on the back and pass it to the customers one by one,” and such. The principal chose to follow the new-comers’ opinions. Later she explained that;

It was one of the ways to borrow the sense of feelings and knowledge of everyone, like the opinions of younger people and the new-comers from Japan. […] We [the long-term resitends] tend to forget some sense as Japanese because we are here in Sweden.

Ayaka was identifying herself and other long-term residents as a group of people different from the new-comers because of the familiarity of Swedish norms which resulted in forgetting Japanese ones. This again suggests the in-betweenness of the Japanese immigrants in Sweden.

95 Original texts: 会⻑は責任を取るだけです。何かあったら矢面に立って「申し訳ございませんでした、私が1番悪いです」って言って、それでもうガンと謝る方ですよね。でも、細かいやり方について毎回ね、あなたことしなさい、あなた私のこと聞いて、これはこうするべきよ、前もそうやってたの。言ってたらね、面白くないでしょう。笑 […]だからなるべく新しいアイディアで。で、偶然の間違いが面白くなったらってことが、結構ある。笑

96 Original text: それはちょっと…

97 Original texts: いやあ、やっぱりお茶は、後ろで準備して、一人ずつお出しした方が良いと思います。

98 Original texts: そういう風に、皆さんの感覚と知恵を借りられる。若い方、あるいは日本からいらしたばっかりの方の意見を取り入れる。 […]そういう日本的な感覚？みんな忘れがちなんです。ここスウェーデンだから。
and construction of their ethnicity because the boundary with the new-comers was observed as it happened with the use of Japanese language in the previous chapter. Following Barth (1964), ethnicity has different characteristics depending on geological location, time and situation. According to the experiences of the Japanese women interviewed for this study, their construction of Japanese ethnicity in the Swedish context was suggested in their ways of expressing themselves in Japanese language and specific aspects of their ways of thinking and performing which turned out to be different from major Japanese ones as a result of their everyday lives in Sweden (Anthias, 2001; Barth, 1996).

In addition to the café booths by JFS and sushi restaurant, there were several booths to explore in the Atriel Dragon including a Loppis, a second hand store, to circle Japanese books, toys and more, a kimono selling booth, a café booth, and a booth of the Embassy of Japan where the goods celebrating the 150th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Sweden and Japan were given for free. As the clock marked noon, the starting time of the event, the room became very crowded.

I was dealing with the long line for the sushi booth by the chef who was decorating and packing sushi rolls one by one. This gave me time to have a small talk with visitors while proceeding the payment. In addition to some of the informants of the semi-structured interviews and some of the students and parents I met at Japanska skolan, there were some tourists from Japan or different countries, Japanese and other immigrants, and more. Many people in the line seemed to have specific interests in Japan so that they were wearing kimono or some Japanese related clothes and accessories. And many said a word or a few, or sometimes even perfect sentences in Japanese when ordering.

In addition to such indoor booths, there was a Bon-Odori as the central theme of this event. Bon-Odori, the Bon Festival Dance, is one of the summer events held in local parks or other open areas in Japan. It was initially a dance to welcome the spirits of dead ancestors who come back to visit the house of their descendants during Obon, between July 13th to 15th on the lunar calendar. Today, Bon-Odori is often organized in July or August depending on the region. At Bon-Odori, people usually get dressed up with Yukata, light summer kimono, with various colors and patterns on it and dance along with the songs made for this festival with choreography. Songs danced at Bon-Odori often have specific locality. Therefore, there are many songs about the particular village, area, and such (Adachi, 2004; Shinntani & Sekizawa, 2013).

In the case of Bon-Odori at Akimatsuri, the Japanese Association announced the list of songs including Tankou-bushi, Tokyo-Ondo, and Tokyo-Gorin-Ondo 2020, which is a very new
song dedicated to the Tokyo Olympic 2020, through the e-mailing list several weeks prior to
the event. In addition, they provided some lessons a few weeks before the event to give
everyone opportunities to learn how to dance. Shortly before one pm and three pm, a member
of the Board committee of the JFS announced that soon it is time to enjoy some Bon-Odori in
the garden. The announcement was first made in Japanese and repeated in Swedish. I managed
to join the one from three pm (see Figure 6).

Figure 6 A picture of people dancing Bon-Odori at Akimatsuri (Taken by the author)

As I came out to the garden, I found people gathering and making a large circle. It reminded me
of the circle which people made around the Maypole for the Midsummer festival in Sweden. I
decided to observe it from outside of the circle. The MC explained about Bon-Odori first in
Japanese, and one of the volunteering members explained it later in Swedish. The Japanese lady
dressed up in kimono who was supposed to set an example of dancing to others raised her hand
to tell her location as the MC called her name. As the song started playing, people danced along
with the song, and the circle started moving counterclockwise with the choreography. The circle
seemed to consist of many people from various backgrounds and generations. I also spotted
Kotomi dancing with her child and grandchildren. Ayaka was also in the circle. An owner of
the Japanese café, who is originally from China, was dressed up with kimono and dancing in
the circle as well. Clothing also varied, some were in an ordinary cloth, and the others were in
kimono, yukata, and other of Japan-related cloth of their choice. All the varied cloth looked very
bright under the clear blue sky. Some were totally into the dance, the others’ body moves were
a bit stiff. How happy people were dancing in the circle made me grin (Fieldnote, 2018).

After dancing to the first two songs, Tankou-bushi and Tokyo-Ondo, a Stockholm’s local
Japanese inspired dancing group Byakuya-Yosakoi was introduced and they set an example
of dancing to others for the third song, Tokyo-Gorin-Ondo 2020. Whereas the two first songs were
led by the lady who is the first migrant generation of Japanese, Byakuya-Yosakoi was consist of people with various background but shared a keen interest in Japanese dance culture.

This particular space was filled with Japanese immigrants, the descendants, and those who have interests in Japan. Thus, the meanings and understandings of space seemed to vary depending on the participants’ positionality in society and background (Massey, 1994).

4.4 Summarizing Reflections
In this chapter, I explored how Japanese immigrants were learning, experiencing, passing down, and disseminating Japanese cultural related things in the country of settlement. Such Japanese space was analyzed from the meaning and understanding of space for the participants (Massey, 1994). Japanese immigrants’ flexible and multiple collective identities were also reflected in the process of making sense of such experiences (Anthias, 2001).

Instead of religious belief and practices, the language school and various cultural activities were functioning as a glue to unite the Japanese compatriots. Although the students at Japanska Skolan shared a characteristic that they were those who had at least one Japanese parent, participants of various events and activities showed variety in their national and ethnic backgrounds. Thus, the overarching aims of JFS, creating a meeting spot for among the Japanese people and everyone who is interested in Japan, seemed to be reached to a great extent.

All the Japanese related activities were conducted in the Swedish context which reflected the Japanese immigrants’ and culture’s positionality in Swedish society and provided various meanings and understandings of space depending on the participants and their positionality in society (Anthias, 2001; Hannerz, 1992; Massey, 1994). The boundaries of collective identities were also found by recognizing the differences between the new-comers and long/permanent residents of Japanese and resulted in highlighting specific characteristics of Japanese ethnicity in Sweden (Anthias, 2001; Barth, 1996).

For many of the interviewed Japanese women, among the other people, it seemed that such occasions provided them with opportunities to (re)experience and perform Japanese related activities and practices. Such opportunities played a crucial role to support the collective identity and feeling of the connection with their country of origin amidst their everyday lives in Sweden.
Chapter 5. Conclusion

In the ethnographic chapters, everyday lives of the Japanese women interviewed for this study were explored with various perspectives, including their ongoing process of (re)construction of gender norms and change in gendered practice, flexible and multiple ways of belonging(s) and boundary management of collective identities, and understanding and experiences of their Japanese space in the Swedish context. In this chapter, I give an overall analysis of the outcomes of this research and suggestions for future studies.

5.1 Gender Norms

One of the focuses of this thesis was on if there was a shift in gender norms of the interviewed Japanese women. And if there was, how and why it happened. According to the empirical materials explored in the second and third chapters, the interviewed Japanese women seemed to experience a significant change in their interpretation of gender and practice of gender roles in their post-migratory phase. They were influenced by the women in Sweden who were pursuing their careers at the same time as managing their family lives. The fact that such women were the majority in Swedish society made them have a desire to belong to the majority. This process is characterized by what Pessar and Mahler (2003) called ‘gender work’ of the others. As they started participating in society as working individuals even after getting married, they also became the performers of the ‘gender work’ (Pessar & Mahler, 2003).

The Swedish social system seemed to be encouraging women to be financially independent of their husbands while providing various supports in having and raising children, looking after the elderly of the family, and more. In addition, the working conditions, including the colleagues’ warm and understanding attitudes to childrearing, also seemed to give significant help in addition to their partners’ willingness to participate in family life. Pessar and Mahler (2003) called such functions of variously scaled institutions which construct gender norms in society as structures. Such structures enhanced the interviewed Japanese women’s (re)interpretation of gender and practice of gender roles.

Through the interviewed Japanese women’s lived experiences, therefore, various positive aspects of Swedish society in terms of gender and its functions were revealed. On the other hand, however, participation in household tasks and childrearing turned out to be not wholly equal between the parents and partners. In the field of business, some industries seemed to have gender occupational segregation as well. Negotiation of gender roles seemed to be required depending on the situations.
The interviewed Japanese women’s (re)interpretation and (re)construction of gender norms in their post migratory phase were also reflected in the narratives on when they started to question the gender norms of Japan which they were not used to be opposed to. Moreover, construction of their own version of gender were observed in the ways of and reactions to how they shared household tasks with their partner. Various differences between Sweden and Japan in separating and not separating gender roles were raised as one of the primary reasons why they do not consider moving back to Japan. Thus, although various struggles were brought about in the interviewed Japanese women’s everyday lives because they came to society with different gender norms as a result of migration, they still preferred to strive in society where gender-equality was better pursued rather than following gender norms which are considered to be traditional in their country of origin.

5.2 Constructions of Belongings

Another focus of this thesis was on how the interviewed Japanese women developed their sense of belonging in the post-migratory phase. In a process of this analysis, various aspects including their experiences and understandings of space and construction of ethnicity were explored.

The concept of space revealed various positionalities of the Japanese immigrants in Sweden and social relations with others (Massey, 1994). Since Japanese is one of the tiny minority ethnic groups in Sweden, various ways to enjoy Japanese culture and tradition alongside the Swedish ones on the personal level were revealed especially around food, traditional cultural practices, and seasonal and cultural events. In addition, their opportunities to experience Japanese space contained a temporary aspect and remained rather on a small scale. Such opportunities were understood and experienced differently by the participants who possessed various positionalities in society.

At Japanska Skolan, Japanese (school) culture was experienced by all participants, whereas the meanings of it varied. Among the enrolled students there were two distinct groups, namely the short-term residents and the long-term or permanent residents. For the former, on the one hand, Japanska Skolan was space to remember a Japanese school, keep up with Japanese school curricula, retain and develop Japanese language skills, and such. For the latter, on the other hand, Japanska Skolan was space to understand Japanese (school) culture, learn the Japanese language, retain and develop their Japanese ethnic identity, and more. Although parents of enrolled students were eager to send their child or children to Japanska Skolan to provide various options for their children’s future, the principal and the teachers were struggling
to meet the official aim of *Japanska Skolan* because of the gaps among students in motivation and meanings to attend classes.

At the cultural activities organized by the *Japanska Thesällskapets Tankoukai* and *Kosode*-club, space was often understood as opportunities to reinforce ethnic identity as Japanese by learning traditional cultural practices, including how to wear a *kimono* garment and perform a tea ceremony.

At the seasonal events, such as *Akimatsuri*, which were organized by JFS, a particular cultural space was experienced and provided different meanings of it for the participants, depending on their social positionality and identity, respectively. While JFS took these opportunities to provide connections and meeting spots for Japanese immigrants and those who are interested in Japan, and many of the participants experienced space in the way that JFS wanted, this space seemed to have even more meanings. For the second and third generation of Japanese immigrants, for instance, this space could be experienced as opportunities to become familiar with Japanese culture and reinforce their identity as Japanese descendants. From the perspective of the first generation of the Japanese immigrants, in contrast, giving such opportunities to their grandchildren and children, re-experiencing Japanese culture in the new home country, an opportunity to feel their Japoneseness could be experienced. In the local perspective, such cultural activities of Japanese can be perceived as the immigrant groups’ rights, and in the global perspective, it can be described as the construction of the ethnicity of the Japanese immigrants in the Swedish context (Anthias, 2001; Barth, 1996; Massey, 1994).

Thus, Japanese space in the Swedish context was experienced in various scales and perspectives, and gave different meanings to the participants. Although the Japanese immigrants are a tiny minority group, the glue and sense of belonging seemed to be maintained through their cultural practices.

Through all the ethnographic chapters, the flexible and multiple collective identifications of the interviewed Japanese women were explored by employing Anthias’s (2001) translocational positionality framework. There were various ways, times, contexts and situations for them to identify themselves with various collective identities. They can be discussed by themes. As one of the themes, when entering the labor market in Sweden, the Japanese women interviewed for this study identified themselves with the majority of women who were actively participating in and pursuing their careers. They were the source of inspiration and ideal positionality for them. The experiences of job-hunting, however, brought about various different identifications to them. They were often categorized as immigrants,
ethnic ‘other,’ and/or women and experienced privileges and struggles, and even oppressions, sometimes.

Becoming active in society as a worker coincided with reinforcing their sense of belonging to Swedish society at the same time as securing themselves in the financial perspective. As they worked, they built several collective identities depending on time, space, and context. For example, they identified themselves as “working women in Sweden” who were equally treated with male colleagues, and “employees in Sweden” who were allowed to have specific flexibilities in working hours and locations, and expected to avoid working overtime. In addition, involving ethnic perspective, they identified themselves with “immigrant working individuals” who were, for example, those eager to work to meet deadline even when it was on a Friday after five pm and also struggle to make friends with Swedes at the office. In addition, they were “a Japanese worker” who miss family-like relationships with the colleagues, and more.

In the private sphere, their identification also showed a high complexity. They began to identify themselves as “working women in Sweden” who expected to share the responsibilities in managing household tasks and childrearing with their partner. In contrast, when it came to the celebration of cultural and seasonal events, they became “a Japanese located in Sweden” and enjoyed Japanese events in their individual ways while participating in Swedish ones. In the post migratory phase, some of the informants built a keen interest in traditional culture such as wearing a kimono garment and performing a tea ceremony which reflect the growth of their Japanese identity. Experiences of becoming tired in communicating in their second or third language also seemed to remind them of their Japanese background.

Moreover, while struggling to express themselves in various circumstances in Sweden and identifying a lack of ability to express themselves explicitly as one of their Japanese characteristics, they were irritated at the Japanese people’s indirect manners of communication when visiting Japan and such. On the other hand, they described insensible and individualistic behavior of the people in the Stockholm region and ‘othering’ those who behaved like that. Newly arrived Japanese immigrants and temporary visitors such as exchange students from Japan perceived the long-term Japanese residents as “Swedishnized Japanese” because of their use of language and such. These reactions and ascribing and being ascribed experiences suggested the construction of Japanese ethnicity in Sweden (Barth, 1996).

Although various, the privileges and struggles were experienced by the interviewed Japanese women after migration. They perceived themselves as “residents of Sweden” and “occasional visitors in Japan” because they did not find it valuable to move back to Japan,
whereas visiting Japan was crucial to meet their family and friends, enjoy foods and give opportunities to learn Japanese language and culture to their children, among other things.

In terms of their positionality in Swedish social stratification, their ethnic ‘otherness,’ gender, and language skills seemed to play significant roles. Although language skills can be perceived as a way to elevate their positionality in the social stratification, this might not be universal to all immigrant groups in Sweden. As reflected in the interviewed Japanese women’s experiences and impressions, including the experiences at passport control in the airports, small talks with people who had positive impressions on Japan and Japanese people and such, the Japanese immigrants experienced a somewhat higher positionality in social stratification.

This thesis was an attempt to scrutinize Swedish gender politics and the Japanese female immigrants’ societal and cultural positionality through the experiences of the interviewed Japanese women. As the translocational positionality framework suggests, various components such as gender, ethnicity, culture, time, space, context, and more created their positionality in social stratification and they also created flexible and multiple collective identifications. And as the lives of the nine interviewed Japanese women illustrate, such positionality and collective identifications are never fixed.

5.3 Suggestions for the Future Study

Future research on Japanese women and immigrants in general in Sweden can be done in various perspectives. Given that the total number of the informants for the semi-structured interviews was “only” nine, a study with similar focus with a higher number of informants, such as with those from various generations beyond employment status, employed or not employed, and residential status, a long-term or a short-term, can explore different insights and impressions of their everyday lives in Sweden. In addition, although this thesis focused on those who are located in Stockholm and the surrounding area, Japanese immigrants located in a different city can bring about different outcomes on the matters explored in this thesis because they can have a different context. Moreover, one of the characteristics of this thesis is that I chose only Japanese female immigrants as the informants for the semi-structured interviews. Thus, gender perspectives also can be explored with the male Japanese immigrants’ perspective. From their perspective, participation in the family life can become obligational as a result of migration to Sweden. Such a shift can bring about specific privileges and struggles in their everyday lives, and experiences of these are worth exploring.
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