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**From Sweden, with Love -  
Sweden's normative and discursive  
power on gender equality.  
Perspectives of African migrant  
women living in Sweden**

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MSc. International Relations

## **ABSTRACT**

This study explores how states influence people's gender identities by studying the influence of Sweden's public discourse and gendered language/narrative of gender equality. While the Swedes connect naturally to their 'Swedishness' in terms of gender equality, this is often lacking among immigrants because gender equality may have a different meaning to an African migrant woman than to a Swedish woman. Hence, this feminist research explores whether and how African migrant women are socialized into an egalitarian state discourse and changing their minds about patriarchal ideals and embracing gender equality.

Research findings reveal that some of these women keep their past views about their identity, roles, and responsibility and remain in subjugated situations regardless of exposure to Sweden's national narrative. Also, it uncovers that some other African migrant women accept gender equality norms and are using them to gain agency or empowerment within their private sphere. This research therefore argues that the power relations matters in the interface between state discourse and cultural narratives at the public sphere and the practice of these discourses and narratives in the private sphere.

Keywords: patriarchy, gender equality, norms, culture, discourses, narratives, power relations, gender.

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**DECLARATION**

I, Wopara Goodness Ruhuoma, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature.....

Date.....

## **DEDICATION**

To every strong woman, who has walked through the tunnels of darkness, but came into the light. Despite the scars, yet can laugh, sing, smile and dance.

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## CHAPTER 1

### 1.1. INTRODUCTION:

The phrase ‘Swedish exceptionalism’ frames the distinctiveness Sweden has achieved as the most tolerant, egalitarian, and multicultural welfare state in the world. Also, Sweden holds a positive reputation as a prototype of state feminism (Martinsson, Griffin & Nygren, 2016, p. 1; Dahlstedt & Neergaard, p. 4). However, Sweden was not always egalitarian. In the past, Sweden held traditional or patriarchal ideals about the status of women in the family and society. Women occupied the private sphere (un-paid household labour and child care) while men occupied the public sphere (sole providers of household income) (Lundqvist 2011; Hirdman, 2002). Sweden moved towards egalitarianism by confronting patriarchal structures and renegotiating gender power relations using the concept ‘jämställdhet’ which means ‘gender equality.’ This norm currently means more than gender equality, it now encapsulates other forms of structural inequalities in the Swedish society (Florin & Nilsson 1999, p. 14).

Swedish scholars and researchers argue that Sweden was able to restructure its society from patriarchy to egalitarianism by using vast public debates (Florin & Nilsson 1999; Dahlstedt & Neergaard, 2016; Lundqvist 2011). Thus, the government based its policies for education, social welfare provisions, institutional restructuring, etc. on the norms of gender equality. Thus, husbands and wives had the same responsibilities and rights towards decision-making, housework, childcare and family finances (Florin & Nilsson 1999, 21). Women gained more power and recognition in the public sphere- economy, politics, labour market, etc. This is because the normative narrative encouraged direct relationship between the individual citizen and the Swedish state. The consequence is a profound national sense of identity reflecting in narratives like ‘the Swedish culture,’ ‘the Swedish society,’ or ‘the Swedish attitude towards gender equality,’ etc. (Grip 2012, p. 153).

Scholars like Grip (2012), Schierup & Ålund (2011), Dahlstedt & Neergaard (2016), de los Reyes, (2016), and Borchorst (2008), argue that Sweden’s success in changing the individual’s and structural identity from patriarchy to egalitarianism was due to the state’s homogeneity in language and culture. This changed after the Second World War with the inflow of immigrant and Sweden became a heterogeneous society and so had to deal with new forms of inequality (especially an intersect of race, and gender) (Dahlstedt & Neergaard, 2016, p. 6).

Hence, there are studies of how Sweden's discursive frameworks can affect migrant views, identity, experiences, agency, and responsibility mostly by problematising cultural diversity and multiculturalism. Examples are, migrant integration into the Swedish labour force (Dahlstedt and Neergaard 2016). Migrant citizenship discourse like racial discrimination in access to welfare provisions (Grip 2012). Swedish family policy for migrant integration (Earles 2011) among others. Findings from such researches have shown that immigrant integration strategies have traceable impact on the relationship between the migrant communities and the host country.

However, migration is a gendered process and can affect the lives of men and women in diverse ways because it involves the restructuring of traditional gender roles and power relations after migrating (Kwon, Mahutga & Admire 2017, p. 374). Thus, it is unclear to understand the extent to which African migrant women are adopting Sweden's national values and cultural practices to counter inegalitarian aspects of their home culture. This research investigates the power of Sweden's norm to influence the individual African migrant woman's ability to use state narrative to challenge or sustain earlier stance about patriarchal gender relations. More importantly, the research investigates the extent to which African migrant women can partner with the Swedish state to renegotiating power and gender relations as well as confront certain inegalitarian aspects of their home culture. This research therefore analyses two narratives<sup>1</sup> because both discursive frameworks play a significant role in how they influence the African migrant woman's views about gender roles and the inherent power relations.

## **1.2. PURPOSE AND AIM OF THE STUDY.**

The purpose of the thesis is to contribute to a better understanding of the discursive power of cultural narratives. The research investigates the extent to which Sweden's discourses influence women's sense of identity and agency in renegotiating power and gender relations.

In the past, Sweden achieved the feat of influencing Swedish women's sense of identity and agency before the state embraced multiculturalism and faced intersecting issues between race and gender. Hence, as in every host country, it is important for Sweden's new minority (immigrant community) to adapt to Swedish cultural narrative. This leads to the research questions below:

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<sup>1</sup> Gender equality and patriarchal ideals and tenets

### **1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- To what extent is Sweden's narrative of gender equality influencing the views of African migrant women about their identity, role and responsibility in the home and wider society?
- To what extent has migrating to Sweden influence African migrant woman's tendencies to reproduce or stall gender inegalitarian aspects of her home culture?
- To what extent have African migrant women embraced and use gender equality to gain agency or empowerment within their private sphere?

### **1.4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study employed feminist methodology and interpretive methods (in-depth interviews) to assess meaningful personal accounts of discourse and cultural power. The aim is to understand how discourses and cultural narratives at the public sphere (e.g. society) can inhibit or empower women within their private sphere (e.g. home). The sampling method used in the research was purposive in nature - snowball method. Next, the data generated was thematised and analysed using critical discourse analysis (CDA). This was necessary to deconstruct hegemonic discourses like gender equality and patriarchy. Importantly, CDA was helpful to understand the ways African migrant women construe their identity in these cultural contexts (patriarchy and gender equality) and how the 'other' is a discursive construct. Lastly, I did this by critical document reviews of past researches, journal articles and books to understand the link between discourse and practice in this regard.

### **1.5. OUTLINE**

Chapter 1 introduces the research, gives the reasons for the study, the aims and the questions the research addresses.

Chapter 2 explains the theoretical framework on how gender relations give the state its legitimacy especially through the gendered language it speaks in its policy processes and interventions. This chapter also explains power as a medium that can create certain options for women (migrants and citizens) to act or not act in both the private and public spheres.

Chapter 3 explains the entire research process from formulating the problem to collecting and analysing the data. This chapter also captures my epistemic stance within the research process. This chapter also explains how my relationship with the research subjects informed my decisions about the research questions, methodologies, methods for data collection, and

analysis. More so, to ensure non-biased inferences, findings, and conclusions, this chapter explains vividly the ethics I followed throughout the research process. Lastly, I discussed the limits to which I could investigate, find answers to my research questions, and achieve my research goals.

Chapter 4 presents the empirical application of theoretical framework by looking at Sweden's normative power. This chapter further explores how Swedish norms influenced people's view about their identity, gendered roles and responsibilities through its policy outlook, and interventions. The chapter also looked at its resultant impact on migrants (i.e. the intersect between gender and race) in the state's continuous, gradual movement towards achieving a more gender equal society.

Chapter 5 presents the empirical findings of the African migrant woman's experience with gendered patriarchal culture before migrating to Sweden. This chapter also highlights the inegalitarian aspects of these patriarchal tenets. Importantly, the chapter further highlights how these women with alternative knowledge, experience, views, and identity use Sweden's narrative to challenge or sustain earlier stance.

Chapter 6 presents the conclusion and offers suggestions for future research.

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. THE GENDERED STATE (THEORETICAL BACKGROUND):

According to Parashar, Tickner & True (2018), the state is a gendered political entity especially in its constitution, policies, and actions. To further explain, it is pertinent to understand that ‘gender’<sup>2</sup> is the concept that describes the social relations between men and women. Gender also explains the cultural, normative, and subjective identities of men and women (Blakemore, Berenbaum & Liben 2013). More so, gender is the structural, relational, and symbolic differences between men and women (Acker 1989, p.238).

With these definitions is the agreement among contemporary feminist theorists that gender transcends the biological and natural attributes that differentiates a man from a woman i.e. sex. Thus, to become a woman or a man are the consequence of cultural understandings of bodies (Butler 1986, p. 36). In other words, sex is the biological i.e. anatomical, hormonal, and physiological differences between men and women. Conversely, gender is an achieved status, constructed through psychological, cultural, and social processes (Ridgeway & Correll 2004, p. 510-11). In recent usage, "gender" is a synonym for "women" because, it is a particularly useful word for differentiating sexual practice from the social roles assigned to women and men (Dharmapuri 2011, p. 58; Scott 1986, p. 1056).

Theoretically, gender is important to question the processes and structures that produces, maintains, and changes women’s subordination as well as other forms of institutionalized masculine powers (Acker 1989, p.238). More so, it is through the gender order that a state creates and recreates its codes for masculinities and femininities. Thus, the enduring effects of interpreting and defining norms, gendered roles and identities are not only influencing personalities but shaping society’s culture and institutions (Pilcher & Whelehan 2004, p. 62). In other words, we cannot understand state processes and structures (e.g. economy, politics, military, security, etc.) without considering gender (Acker 1989, p.238).

Feminist theorists have studied the relationship between the state and gender through different theoretical lenses i.e. theories of how gender and the state intersect, interact, and constitute one another (Kantola 2007, p. 271). For example, liberal feminists assert that a state that looks out for women’s welfare and includes them in the economic and political sphere is women friendly. Women and men are equal citizens and deserves equal treatment in the public

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<sup>2</sup> In this study, I use gender broadly to understand women’s situation both in their home culture (discourse of patriarchy) and in Sweden (discourse of gender equality).

sphere. Thus, it is the state that mobilizes its political resources to promote women's interests through its policies and laws (McBride & Mazur 1995, p.9). Example is Nordic countries that are supportive and accommodating to women (Rose 1994, p. 48).

For Marxist and capitalists, the argument is about how states define women's gendered roles as wives and mothers as economically unproductive. They argue that states are marginalising women's economic usefulness. This in turn plays out in women's unequal opportunities to employment, access to resources, involvement in politics, etc. (Pringle and Watson 2004, p. 208).

From a radical feminist perspective, the state is hostile and intimidating to women because such states legitimize patriarchal structures in domestic and foreign policy outlooks and interventions (Rose 1994, p 48). In this view, a patriarchal state specially needs gender because it is gender that gives patriarchy meaning (Pilcher & Whelehan 2004, p. 62; Acker 1989, p.238).

Post-structural feminists theorise that the state is a site for diversity. This is because states are places where the different forms of dominance (i.e. gender, race, class, and sexuality) intersect and interact (Squires 1999, p. 4). They argue that the state is not monolithic rather, it is the plethora of meanings attached to practices and discourses. These practices and discourses in turn can have both differentiated and contradictory effects on state institutions and citizens (Kantola 2006, p. 12; Brown 1992, p. 12).

In other words, instead of viewing the state as inherently patriarchal or capitalist, post-structural feminists see the state as a set of power relations and political processes. power relations and political processes. These power relations and political processes constantly constructs and contest what constitutes dominance. Consequently, post-structural feminists assume that states do not inherently purpose to nor act evenly to either keep a capitalist or patriarchal identity (Kantola 2006, p. 12).

Thus, for post-structuralists, the gendered language a state speaks exposes its nature and form (Parashar, et. al. 2018; Marchand & Runyan 2005, p. 46). This means that how a state behaves (e.g. patriarch or fosters gendered politics and policies) determines its nature and form. In other words, states are neutral, patriarchal, capitalist, or women-friendly based on the gendered language it speaks (Kantola 2006, p. 1-2). Also, a state's gendered language explains how institutionalized ideas and practices reflects on the individual's acceptance of such

ideological and material practices and vice versa (i.e. public-private interface) (Rose 1994, p 48).

## **2.2. STATE POWER: DISCOURSES AND ITS INFLUENCES ON PUBLIC-PRIVATE INTERFACE:**

From the above discourse on gendered states, we can deduce that the state is more than a set of institutions that have powers but also a process of discourse and structure (Kantola (2007, p. 271). Feminist scholars are challenging the centrality of state in the discourse of gender. Thus, feminist scholars are questioning how states disguise women's agency and involvements in its processes, institutions, and structures (ibid). One of the ways feminist scholars have discussed state power is through the idea of sovereignty. This is because, a state's sovereignty constructs the social environment in which states express the identity needed to interact in the international environment (Steans 1998, p. 7).

With sovereignty, the state also gains the right to speak for its people but needs legitimacy or political authority to compete internally and globally. But these hinges on the people's loyalty and lawfulness (i.e. social contract between the state and the citizens) (Kantola 2007, p. 275). For example, the Scandinavians believe in and support their states as an 'instrument of popular will' and so has the right to control the private forces of the market and family (Philips 1998, p. 212). For Weber (1998), state sovereignty is also discursive and cultural because in the state, women have the specified role as reproducers of the nation. Hence, the state's power to controls women's sexuality and reproductive rights (p. 90-91).

According to True (2001), gender is integral in constructing a state's sovereignty because, like Weber, True believes that sovereignty is often part of the gendered reproduction of the state. This is because, a state would support the gender order that sustains its authority and legitimacy. An example is the need for the existence of the 'other' to make their own identity and authority more visible in the global environment (p. 252). e.g. Swedish exceptionality from the rest of Europe. Thus, what a state holds as its discourse or narrative internally, reflects as its identity globally thereby attesting to its discursive authority and power.

But then, for this research, it is important to highlight the discursive power of the state internally. According to Squires (1999), the state uses its various public services and bureaucratic structures to present and express its narratives and norms (p. 25). This takes the forms of the discursive practices that constructs and represents these interests in its policy processes and the channels of interventions (Philips 1998, p. 210). In other words, debates,

conflicts, and consensus on the state interests are the machineries of the government as well as politics.

Foucauldian approach to power explains state discursive power using the ‘strategic game of liberties’ i.e. the freedoms allowed citizens within state-constrained or state-given freedoms. This means that in social and political relationships, liberal policies provide a sphere of liberty but within established structures. This means that the citizens exercise their liberties from state granted liberties and so face specified sets of outcomes. For example, states granting social benefits under supervision together with sanctions for non-compliance (Foucault 2007, p 220).

According to Luke (1974), this is the state’s inconspicuous power to influence people’s perspectives and preferences. It is also state’s power to make its citizens accept assigned identities, roles, and responsibilities in its preferred gender order (p. 24). This means that the state has the power to inform an individual’s outlook on his or her identity, roles, and responsibility as a citizen. For Luke (1974), this happens through socially constructed and cultural patterns that a state expresses in its identity, language, and norms (p. 22; Rose 1994, p 48). This supports Marchand & Runyan (2005) argument that a state’s gendered language reflects in its politics and policies and as such exposes its nature and form (p. 46).

Furthermore, this state power can have both empowering and disempowering impacts on women since the link between gender and the state is multiple and intricate (Kantola 2006, p. 13). For instance, certain state policies and practices can privilege certain groups of women, class of people and ethnic groups over others thereby creating inequality even among women (Bustelo 2004, p. 211).

On the negative aspect, state power can become repressive and dominating because, culture, norms, social and political institutions can undermine the individual’s capacity to appreciate or act on his/her own interests and preferences (Foucault 2007, p 220). However, for Foucault, the individual is not just a docile body, but one capable of resisting what he or she considers dominating structures.

In his theory of self, Foucault discussed how individuals interact with norms, culture, and language operating in their socio-political environment. Foucault asserts that power is the active force for individual formation of self. Engelstad (2009) listed them as, the alienated self, the staged self, reflective self, protesting self, underserving self, conformist self, commercialized self, condescending self, aggrandized self, and the empowered self (p. 232).



For this research, the staged self, reflective self, protesting self and the empowered self are the ways the individual can successfully interact with the state. The staged self involves an individual that has a fluid identity. The person shapes identity by aligning with the prevailing viewpoints in his environment. The reflective self involves inner thoughts, desires and self-exams and abilities which guides the individual's choices to exercise his/her freedoms in pursuit of their convictions. The protesting self resists beliefs and ideas it considers unacceptable and hence should change. Lastly. The empowered self is efficient within cultural contexts and is closely associated with knowledge and daily learning experiences. The aim is to empower, shape his/her capability, adjust their desires, and increase their ability to mobilize resources for action (Engelstad 2009, p. 232).

From Engelstad (2009)'s view, political commitments and moral insights help the individual to develop these senses. This is because the 'self' entails power that creates knowledge, incites, and induces actions, as well as creates pleasure for the individual (p. 231-232). For Arendt, it is through this identity (self) that individuals move to 'act in concert' against perceived social inequalities (Arendt 1963 in Allen 1999, p. 105). Thus, as a member of a group, the individual woman expresses her right and need to protect, celebrate, and replicate her perceived identity and ignore the 'other.' Similarly, in the private sphere, this power serves as a silent negotiator which Arendt argues is not about dominance rather, capacity for emancipation (Collins 2017, p. 28).

According to Arendt, the 'ability to act in concert' generates important conceptual, normative, and psychological resource for the individual's agency as well as necessary for social change. This might explain how the individual Swedes identify with their 'Swedishness' and the state could attain its exceptionality in its international relations. This might also explain why immigrant women and men might remain 'others' in Sweden's national narrative and vice versa.

To further explain Grip (2012) asserts that, the diverse ways gender equality connects naturally to 'Swedishness' or being 'Swedish' is lacking among immigrants. Thus, gender equality for a migrant woman might not have the same meaning for the Swedish woman. In other words, there is the discourse of 'their reality' and our 'ideals.' Hence, it is about using Swedish ideals as a template for immigrant reality and so reproduces the intersecting differences between gender and race.

McNay (2013) criticized Foucault's theory of power and sense of self for having unresolved conflict between his view on emancipatory social change and his refusal to specify the normative assumptions upon which such changes should occur (P. 4). McNay proposes instead that norms have normalizing effects on the individual's freedom to act. Normative guidelines for practices of self would as such serve as safeguards against individual dominance in the private sphere and structural dominance at the public sphere. (p. 5)

Lastly, other aspects of daily experiences of the individuals is necessary to understand why women are not innocent victims of oppression but instead use 'self' within their social relations to resist norms<sup>3</sup> that do not favour them (McNay 2013, p. 10).

### **2.3. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK: POWER RELATIONS:**

As a social phenomenon and in feminist theory, power is a broad, complex, and multi-faceted and hence, lacks a universally accepted meaning. This is because of the different theoretical approaches feminists used to explain existing gender relations (Allen 2018. p. 1; Göhler 2009, p. 27).

Still, power is central in feminist discourse of gender relations especially since the aims of the last three waves of feminism was to expose, critique and reverse specific relations of power (Allen, 2009, p. 293). In studying gender relations, feminist scholars often use two competing views and yet distinct concepts i.e. 'power over' and 'power to' to analyse and understand the 'very nature' of power (Pansardi 2012, p. 73).

Power over refers to power as domination, subordination, and oppression and it means power over people (Haugaard 2012, p. 33). Classical scholars like Dahl (1957), defined power over as 'A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do' (pp. 202–203). This means that one enforces his will over another. For Göhler (2009), this happens only within social relations and has an intrinsic negative impact on those subjected to it by restricting their ability to act (p. 29). Hence, regardless of A's good intent or the positive impact his will has on B, B's ability to act is still less than A's (Huggard 2012, p. 35).

On the other hand, 'power to' is more favourable because it entails the ability to act autonomously (Göhler 2009, p. 28). Pansardi (2012) sees 'power to' as equivalent to

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<sup>3</sup> This can be patriarchal norms or gender equal norms. In chapter 5 we see that women (Swedes and African migrant women and men) perceive these two norms as both favourable and unfavourable. This in turn dictates if people adopt or resist them.

‘empowerment’ (p. 73). This means that the use of power to is not to subject others or enforce one’s will over another. Rather, individuals and groups as actors can act independently (Göhler 2009, p. 29). Göhler (2009) asserts that power to does not happen within social relations but instead produces the social relations through which power acts. This means that, power over is subjective when imposing one’s will and interest on another. On the other hand, power to is objective in carrying out inherent necessities or given norms (p. 29). In other words, while one (the subject) is dependent and controlled, the other is self-aware and so acts based on self-preference (Foucault 1982, p. 212).

Regardless, to differentiate power to from power over entails ambiguities. This makes it hard to understand their applicability in everyday gender relations (Göhler 2009, p. 28). To use one of these two aspects of power to explain, understand and analyse daily gender relations will fail to capture the interplay between dominance and resistance. This is because, "we can be both dominated and empowered at the same time and in the context of ...the same norms, institutions, and practices" (Allen 1999, p. 25).

Göhler (2009) supports this idea by asserting that, both can be repressive and productive (p.29). This is because as Pansardi (2012) puts it, having power over could also mean ability to act or power to (p.75). In other words, power is a medium in social relations to structure fields of action. Hence, when exercising power or power appears, certain options to act or not act opens or closes off for the actors involved (Göhler 2009, p. 28).

#### **2.4. STRUCTURE, AGENCY, AND INTERSECTIONALITY:**

Göhler (2009), defined agency as power relationships towards acting persons or collective actors while structure is like a system especially of impersonal mechanisms (p. 30). Feminists view agency and structure as working together from the beginning. This happened when women agreed to the ‘subjection of women’ as criteria for continuing and reproducing the process of human agencies (Clegg 1989, p. 139). Hence, the continued dominance of women because, an actor will continue to restrict the field of action of the other if he already succeeded in doing so. This is the reason for women’s individual experience with dominance and structural dominance resulting from patriarchy and which women themselves have also internalized (Göhler2009, p.30). To effectively measure power relations, it is pertinent to know who exercises power and who endures it since sex is culturally conditioned, and gender is a social construct.

Allen (2009), echoes this thought by asserting that women willingly submitted to be the other and so are oppressed. This is because they are compelled to assume the status of the other and so subjected to male immanence (p. 295). Furthermore, Allen posits that women are torn between being subject to male immanence and utilising their self-awareness to gain transcendence. Hence, cultural, social, and political circumstances hold women back and deny them transcendence. In this sense, power is about dominance as women are unable to use power to or agency to gain transcendence (Allen 2009, p. 2960).

For Firestone (1970), the family is to blame because, the family is the root for women's subordination owing to how it distributes gendered roles and responsibilities unevenly. Firestone asserts that women's biological role of reproduction makes it natural to care while depending on men for physical and economic survival (p. 8). In other words, as affirmed by Enloe (2017), women are unwilling to actively resist patriarchy or seek emancipatory change (p.49; Firestone 1970, p. 10). Similarly, the socialising effect on children results in gendered children that are inclined to heterosexuality. Thereby, creating men and women primed to embrace gendered roles (women-caregivers/housework) and men (wage work) and a structural gender-based subordination or patriarchy (Göhler 2009, p. 207).

Nevertheless, the same identity and responsibilities of women as mothers and caregivers can also serve as agency or a source of empowerment for women (Held 1993, p. 137). This power comes from the same capacity women have, to birth, nurture and empathise. Thus, through these qualities, women have the capacity to create new and promising understanding and interpretation of power. In other words, women hold the capacity to reconceptualise power and so, transform patriarchal social order by the same nature that keeps them subjugated (Allen 2009, p. 298).

For women to actualize, use and make sense of agency and empowerment as well as resistance will hinge on confounding sex binaries and denaturalising gender. Also, on increasing insight into the multiple and intertwined systems of oppression women experience daily i.e. the need to explore intersectionality (Allen 2009, p. 304).

From an intersectional view, theories on power must not ignore the intersecting and interlocking nature of social relations. That is how gender, race, class, and sexuality intersect with power (Hawkesworth 1997, p. 65). This is because, feminism is about how the various categories of women use the very structures of power to seek emancipation and agency. With

intersectionality, feminists can reveal ‘the workings of power that is both pervasive and oppressive at all levels of social relations (Carastathis 2014, p. 307).

For post structural feminists, this entails understanding the relationship between gender and power because the categories of women or gender is inherently power-laden. More so, categorising gender is totalising and exclusionary. Thus, necessary to call for the subversive performance of the gender norms that in turn governs gender identity. In other words, dividing women into race, class, sexuality is totalising, exclusionary and is an act of power. This is because gender norms govern or expresses these categories as the identity of women. Thus, identity categories according to Butler, is not merely descriptive but also normative (Butler 1997, p. 2).

Consequently, these categories subordinate women as social actors within multiple systems of power. Hence, the power hierarchies and social inequalities that characterizes one system of dominance resembles other systems which all work together to shape women’s daily experiences (Collins 2017, p. 21). From an intersectional view, liberal narratives of gender equality can conceal the identity or self of migrant women. More so, social policies can produce a hierarchy in selecting what proper rights and benefits the migrant woman can access in their host country (Eliassi 2017, p. 8).

Furthermore, intersecting views can explain the constructing of the ‘other’ as a threat to the liberal normative order and social unity. An example is narratives that perceive migrant men as dangerous and violent. This also exposes patriarchy in the migrant’s cultures and gender equality in host country’s culture. Lastly, this rhetoric of cultural clashes features in policies of immigration and repatriation (Mulinari & Neergaard 2017b, p.93).

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. FEMINIST METHODOLOGY:

The research investigates the lived experiences of African migrant women living in Sweden. The research also explores the patriarchal power structures that have inhibited their lives and their ability to express their identity and ideals while they were in Africa. More so, there is the need to understand their views and ideas about their lives in a gender equal state like Sweden. The aim is to understand the power relations inherent in the struggle against patriarchy, male dominance as well as the role of the state in helping the individual confront patriarchy and the inherent inequality they have experienced.

To achieve this, I rely on feminist methodology because my study aligns with the goals of feminist research as argued by Atkinson (2017) and Tickner (2005). Atkinson posits that feminism explores patriarchal power structures, the daily lives of women (and other minorities) and how these power structures have marginalized and silenced them (p.66). On the other hand, Tickner believes it is a dialectic process i.e. listening to women and understanding how the subjective meanings they attach to their lived experiences differs from the meanings they internalized from society at large (p. 4).

To undertake a study like this, the feminist researchers can adopt many and any research methods (Atkinson 2017, p. 67). This is because feminism does not dictate what to research or to favour and use one theoretical perspective over another. It also does not impose qualitative or quantitative methods as the best way to investigate social realities (Ackerly & True 2008, p. 693). So, feminist researchers have used both qualitative and quantitative methods like, ethnography, statistical and survey research, etc. to pursue their enquiries overtime. This is because feminist inquiry is an on-going process, it is tentative and emergent, and researchers can explore issues through texts, research subjects and/or data (Tickner 2005, p.3; Reinharz 1992, p. 230).

For this study, I chose qualitative methods because, using interpretative methods like interviews allow me to make visible the women at the margins of society by giving them voice. The goal is to assess meaningful personal accounts of how state power at the public sphere can inhibit or empower women within their private sphere (Tickner 2005, p. 14). In other words,

interpretative methods like interviews will help me to interpret how states discursive power structures can inform the individual's daily practice (Kronsell 2006, p. 127).

To answer feminist research question, the method(s), ontological and theoretical perspectives, and the sites of study, etc. that the researcher chooses is not meant to offer a comprehensive epistemology<sup>4</sup>. Also, the ontology<sup>5</sup> represented by the units of analysis (e.g. individuals, genders, states, etc) are relative and dynamic in nature (Ackerly & True 2006, p. 6). Thus, the continuous self-conscious reflecting on epistemological ideas, ontological perspective, ethical responsibilities, and method choices are guides rather than 'the best way' to produce knowledge about social realities (Ackerly & True 2006, p. 7; Heckman 1997p, 343).

### **3.2. PLANNING FOR FIELDWORK:**

My first thought and strategy to start my fieldwork was to go the streets and shops run by African women in Stockholm, Lund, and Göteborg to find and meet women who might be willing to take part in my research. However, I started out by looking for a contact that will connect me to African migrant women. Hence, I went online looking at websites of African organisations in Sweden that would have female members I can interview. Also, I was hoping I can interview the leaders of these organisations to get their perspectives about how they help their female members gain agency in confronting patriarchy tenets in their personal lives as members of a group.

Consequently, I contacted the Swedish federation of immigrant women's associations (RIFFI), Eritreanska riksförbundet i Sverige (ERIS), Somaliska Riksförbundet i Sverige (SRFS) and the Nigerians in Diaspora Sweden (NIDO). However, the only organisation that responded to my application for fieldwork is the Nigerians in Diaspora organisation. It was the arrangement I had with the chairperson of this organisation that was the concrete step to begin my field work in Sweden.

Furthermore, I felt it was necessary to consult Swedish government institutions that work with African Migrant women. My belief was that they may have publications and key informants that may help me decipher how much the Swedish government views its role in changing the individual woman's views about her role and position in the home and society.

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<sup>4</sup> i.e. an understanding of the world.

<sup>5</sup> necessary to gain this understanding of knowledge

This prompted me to contact the Swedish Equality Ombudsman and the Ministry of Culture, but the institutions denied my application to do research. Both institutions did not believe they were not suited for nor had the information I needed for my research. Instead they directed me to the Afrosvenskarnas Riksförbund which is an umbrella organisation for immigrant organisations like the ones I had contacted earlier. I contacted Afrosvenskarnas Riksförbund but the contact person directed me to choose and contact the different organisations that seem interesting to me. Since, I had contacted the organisations, I waited for the responses from the ones I had contacted.

However, I visited the offices of Swedish Equality Ombudsman and the Ministry of Culture respectively to get some official publications to help me in my research. However, it was compulsory to get an appointment before I can enter the offices, so I was unable to get an appointment. Based on the advice of my supervisor, including the government institutions will widen my research and make this too vast for me to cover in this thesis. So as part of my attempt to narrow my research, I abandoned my pursuit to get interviews from these government institutions.

### **3.3. PURPOSIVE SAMPLING METHOD:**

For this research, I used purposive sampling method to gather data from African migrant women willing to take part in the research. It was necessary for me to find participants who grew up in societies that have patriarchal beliefs and practices and are currently migrants in a society that has a liberal and gender equal outlook. So, the method of sampling used for this research was snowball sampling method.

My first interviews took place in Stockholm as the chairperson of the Nigerians in diaspora took me to my 2 first successful participants in my research. One of the women took me to a saloon where I held 2 more interviews. I was able to schedule more interviews with 3 other women in the saloon. However, the interviews did not go as planned because for some reason, the women did not pick my calls to meet up for the scheduled interviews. I did not let this discourage me, so I took to the street of Stockholm where I met and scheduled interviews with 5 women. But, only one woman agreed to an interview before it was time for me to leave Stockholm. I was able to convince this lady to connect me to her cousin living in Göteborg where the next stage of my interviews took place.

My first successful interview in Göteborg was with the wife of the cousin of my contact at Stockholm. She further connected me to 2 of her friends who also directed to one friend



each. In all I held a total of 5 successful interviews in Göteborg. However, I attended church in Göteborg where I met more women but instead scheduled a telephone interviews because, I was returning to Norway the next day. In all I was able to schedule 6 telephone interviews but ended up successfully conducting 3 of these interviews. The table below reflects the distribution of the research participants:

<b>Method</b>	<b>Sample size</b>	<b>Scheduled interviews</b>	<b>Successful interviews</b>	<b>Unsuccessful interviews</b>
In-depth personal interviews	17	17	11	7
Telephone interviews	6	6	3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>9</b>

*Table 1: Representation of sample*

### **Sample overview:**

There was a total of 23 scheduled interviews for this research. Out of which I scheduled a total of 17 personal and in-depth interviews. 11 of these were successful while 7 were unsuccessful. I also scheduled 6 telephone interviews out of which 3 was successful while 3 were unsuccessful. However, out of the 14 successful interviews, I used 12 in the research as the remaining 2 lacked quality and useful information for the research. This is because the respondents did not answer the questions I asked during the interview. I think it is because, the questions probed their personal lives and experiences.

The 14 research participants with whom I held successful interviews with migrated from East and West African countries. 7 of these participants are Ghanaians, 2 are Kenyans, 3 are Ugandans while the remaining two are Nigerians. The age range for the participants is between 35-60 years. They were all married before they moved to Sweden though some divorced their spouses after the family moved to Sweden and then remarried or has remained single. Others have managed to stay married after moving to Sweden. The participants in the research have lived in Sweden as much as 7 years and more.

<b>Migrant Country</b>	<b>Code<sup>6</sup></b>	<b>No of Participants</b>	<b>Type of interview</b>
Ghana	GHAM	7	Personal interview
Kenya	KEAM	2	Personal interview
Uganda	UGAM	3	Personal/telephone interview
Nigeria	NGAM	2	Telephone interview

*Table 2: Characteristics of sample.*

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<sup>6</sup> It is a mixture of the country of origin and African Migrant.

These characteristics are important to expose the similarities the countries share in holding patriarchal and unequal culture and norms that influences the views of these participants about their roles, position, and identity as women. Their status as married women are also important in this study because, there is a need to compare past experiences and views on patriarchal tenets with what they are experiencing and exposed to living in Sweden. The goal is thus to assess if there are changes in their views about their roles, positions, and identity as women. Consequently, this plays a role in assessing the extent to which the Swedish norms of gender equality empowers women to do things and perceive issues differently. Or do these women keep their sense of self, responsibility and role that patriarchy taught them.

### **3.4 FIELD WORK/DATA COLLECTION:**

The fieldwork or data gathering for this research took place in September 2017 at Stockholm and Göteborg. and consists of personal semi-structured interviews and telephone interviews in cases where participants were too busy to meet me in person. I collected both sets of data using a semi-structured interview guide.

#### **3.4.I SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS:**

Semi structured interviews are useful for a feminist researcher to achieve her research values and goals. Also, it is less invasive, reduces the power relations between the interviewer and the interviewee and instead builds rapport and fosters reciprocity (Bryman 2015, p. 488).

Thus, I employed semi-structured interview because I wanted my research participants to express their views and thoughts in their own words and in their own way. I was interested to have their personal stories, and experiences heard instead of my own understanding and interpretation of what they believe about the research interest, and goals.

Some of the interviews were face to face while others were on the telephone however, I did all the interviews in English language. The interviews were in-depth because I encouraged the research participants to ‘ramble’ especially since, it helped me to gain better insight into lived the participants’ experiences and meanings (Atkinson 2017, p 71; Bryman 2012, p. 470). More so, to show my gratitude for their willingness to take part in the interviews, I listened carefully and keenly to all the stories my participants had to tell. I nodded, laughed, and made mumbling sounds in agreement or to show I was sorry for the negative experiences they had to share.

I used an interview guide that focused on and can help me answer my research questions and achieve my research goals. Utilizing an interview guide with open-ended questions created flexibility in the way I asked the question. This is because, the responses I got, led to new questions, or made the next question irrelevant for the interviewee (Bryman, 2012, p. 472). Consequently, I removed or added some questions from the interview guide as more and new data emerged. I used this format because of the ontological and epistemological views it holds in interpretivism i.e. it focuses on the processes of how I and the participants make sense of their lived experiences or how these lived experiences shape meanings and understandings (Atkinson 2017, p 73). I recorded each interview sessions with a recording application on my mobile phone and each session lasted between 10 to 20 to with the longest interview taking about 40 mins to complete.

### **3.4. II. SOURCES FOR LITERATURE REVIEW:**

My sources for literature review and analysis includes books I collected from the university library in Ås. I also used articles from peer-reviewed academic journals I found on the web through the university's database search, J-store search engine and google scholar, as well as some e-books. I used these in the literature review, theoretical background, in analysing data to better explain and express my research etc.

### **3.5. DATA ANALYSIS:**

The main analysis of primary data began with transcribing the interviews followed by coding based on the recurring themes or topics as expressed by the participants. This aligns with the goals of the research and was important to answer the research questions. The codes I used includes the participant's country of origin (e.g. GHAM means Ghanaian African migrant).

Then I summarized, and compared the resulting data and information using thematic analysis. Furthermore, I compared the findings from the primary data to the assertions and theoretical backgrounds the literature sources provided. The goal is to get a coherent picture and to gain greater insights on the experiences of these women back home before they migrated and what they are experiencing as migrants in Sweden regarding patriarchy and gender equality.

### **3.6.I CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS:**

This research adopts critical discourse analysis (CDA) because it is a method that helps researchers analyse hidden as well as visible structural relationships of dominance and power as expressed in language (Wodak 2001, p. 2). It can help explain the type of language a state speaks that gives it its identity and expressed in its narrative, politics, and policies e.g. gender equality and mainstreaming (Marchand & Runyan 2005, p. 46).

Thus, this analytical tool is useful for this research because it illuminates how Sweden's national narrative of gender equality infiltrated the core of the people's identities and caused the changes that can still reflect in Swedish gender relations. More so, it will help explain the agents of change the Swedish state employed to create the new gender order and reverse former patriarchal cultures and views especially at the individual level. In other words, it is imperative to find out how a state's discursive and narrative power influence the individual's sense of self, alignment with or resistance to structural dominance.

However, Sweden's national ideology is increasingly intersecting with other complex social issues like incorporating immigrants and minorities as equal citizens in the society (Siims 2013, p. 78). Hence, this method is necessary to assess the extent to which Sweden's discourse of gender equality is influencing the African migrant woman's understanding of her identity, roles and position in the home and society. More so, it is necessary to analyse how the national discourse supply the power resource (i.e. agency) African migrant women need to confront patriarchy and assert their rights to equality within their social networks just like the Swedes.

According to Wodak (2001), as social institutions (e.g. family, schools, states, etc) and individual subjectivity interact, they produce and reproduce discourses. Discourse is important because it is the structuring principle that constitutes or produces meaning by making social realities visible (p.3). This means that we cannot understand social relations until we refer to the discourses that give them meaning. It follows then that the discourses like patriarchy and gender equality are cultural narratives (both in the migrant's original country and within the Swedish context). These (patriarchy or gender equality) give meaning to and inform women's relations with their social networks (e.g. family and the wider society). Thus, this thesis explores the relationship between these discourse and practice i.e. individual experiences with them (Bryman 2012, p. 536).

Furthermore, utilizing CDA as an analytical tool illuminates how discourses like patriarchy become hegemonic as well as how other discourses like feminism and gender

equality become strategies employed by social agents (e.g. the state) to effect social change (Bryman 2012, p. 537). Importantly, it helps to show how individuals internalize these public discourses which in turn reflects on how they (African migrant women) use these to find new ways of acting and interacting within their social networks. In other words, using these discourses will enable me to examine how past reality (the African migrant's experience with patriarchy) had constrained their individual agency and how gender equality gives them agency.

Lastly, CDA has emancipatory goals because it focuses on negative issues confronting the silenced, or those subjected to oppressive gender or race relations. It also exposes the resources and options of action available to tackle and overcome these problems. (Fairclough 2001 p.125, Wodak 2005, p. 308). Hence, it becomes useful to illuminate the power relations expressed in Sweden's use of gender equality as an agent of change. This method also enabled me to analyse how the changes in the meanings assigned to gender equality has overtime affected African migrant women's agency in confronting patriarchy. and lastly in giving these women a more liberal outlook on their identity, roles and positions within the family and the wider society.

### **3.6.II LEVEL OF ANALYSIS:**

In feminist perspective, patriarchy has two dimensions i.e. the public and private spheres. Examples of the private spheres are women's rights in marriage, divorce, and inheritance, while examples of the public sphere are access to education and politics (Benstead 2016, p. 5). Regarding gender relations, feminists emphasize the need to go beyond the 'public' periphery of the state-centred realities and instead incorporate the 'private' or domestic world by investigating how power relations happen (Youngs, 2013, p. 6). The purpose is to have a fresh conceptual context on global issues and communicating same in a fresh way through the views of the individual.

Kirsh & Ritchie (1995) also believed that it is important to include the personal in public discourses. To not 'transcend the individual woman' but embrace her. To align 'our thinking and speaking to the body of the particular individual woman,' and thus, see her as a valid source of knowledge (p.7). Thus, the level of analysis chosen for this research is the individual African migrant women living in Sweden. However, this is in relation to how she incorporates state narrative into her dealings with her social networks.

Furthermore, Moane (2003) in her research, asserts that dominance and the struggle for freedom happens both at the individual and state level. Also, that social structures i.e. political, cultural, etc, are the sources of ideologies, narratives and discourses that underlie oppressive or liberating social orders which in turn affects the everyday experiences of women (p. 92). For instance, it is how the individual African migrant woman internalises the male dominance she experiences within her social network and wider society that decides if there is the possibility for change. It also decides if she will keep her sense of helplessness which inhibits change and sustains such dominance.

Likewise, the ideologies, narratives, and discourses surrounding her experiences and understanding of her situation can help me illuminate the relationship between the personal and the political (Moane 2003, p. 95). Consequently, this research explains how the subjective meanings participants attach to their lived experiences differs from or converges with the meanings they internalized from the wider society (i.e. country of origin and Sweden) (Nielsen 1990 in Tickner 2006, p. 21).

### **3.7. OBJECTIVITY, VALIDITY, AND RELIABILITY OF THE RESEARCH:**

In traditional positivist researches, objectivity, validity, and reliability depends on the extent to which the researcher removes him/herself from the study (Tickner 2005, p.3). This means that a good research should be objective. This means that the researcher should be neutral and impartial in undertaking the research process and unbiased in the research findings and conclusion. The researcher must recognize and separate his/her personal view about the phenomenon and be mindful of it while interpreting and representing the participants in the data collected (Fusch & Ness 2015, p. 1411).

More so, for the research to be valid and reliable, the researcher must prove or support a theory. To achieve this, he/she must specify if the inferences or hypothesis after testing the observed phenomenon have implications in the real world. Also, the researcher must report the testing procedures undertaken so that by other members of the scientific community can replicate it elsewhere e.g. other IR scholars (Tickner 2005, p.2). Lastly, the researcher must triangulate i.e. use multiple external methods in analysing the same empirical events (Denzin 2006, p. 13). This means that the researcher explores diverse perspectives to understand the phenomenon as the criteria for rigor and quality.

But feminist research is unique because, women's individual experiences and voices are the indicator for what constitutes social "reality" (Tickner 2006, p.7). In past studies, feminist

scholars discussed how the individual voices can be and is a valid and objective source of knowledge in IR. Even in recent feminist discursive researches on topics like power, agency, and resistance, still express concerns over the absence of participants' first-hand experiences within the wider discourses (Thompson, Rickett, & Day 2017, p.2; Tickner 2005, p.2).

Thus, my thesis aligns with the above feminist requirement for rigor and quality because it highlights the individual African migrant woman's experience and voice and the social relations in which her life is situated (Tickner 2005, p.7). More so, as the new ethnic minorities, migrant perspectives are silenced voices feminist researchers should highlight and understand. This is important for better integration into an increasingly multicultural state like Sweden (Ålund. & Schierup 2011, p. 45).

Thus, this thesis addresses two sets of silences- women and migrants from Africa. The purpose is to use the knowledge collected from the views of these women's lives and experiences to reveal those obscured knowledge hidden by mainstream approaches to epistemology (Tickner 2006, p. 8). Hence, feminist research is postpositive in its stance because it does not need to formulate and test hypotheses or prove a theory (True 2006, p. 19). This means that feminist researchers set out to uncover epistemological and ontological foundations of IR theories that have left "women" and "gender" outside of and/or in the margins of the IR discipline (Kronsell 2006, p. 111). An example is Enloe research question of "where are the women in IR?" which exposed how women have been excluded not only from the discipline but also in international politics (Kantola & Lombardo 2015, p.3).

Furthermore, it is important to point out that there is no standard of methodological correctness or the "feminist way" to carry out research. Neither do feminist scholars want to construct one. This is because, the social realities feminists explore and investigate are like an archaeological dig or a journey (Tickner 2005, p 3). They are usually continuous work in progress like Swedish feminist policy on gender equality and mainstreaming. Equally, my research is not about producing a conclusive theory about the views of African migrant women on how Sweden influences their social interactions.

It follows that, feminist researcher can adopt different and vast methods in gathering, analysing, and interpreting their data. Unlike conventional scientific and positivist research criteria, this is a strength rather than a weakness because knowledge gathered from these migrant women's standpoint leads to more robust objectivity (True 2006, p. 20). Similarly, CDA as an analytical tool does not have an accepted principle for collecting or analysing data.

It is also useful in operationalising discourses by analysing Sweden's language or narratives of gender equality. CDA research involves systematic analysis, self-reflectivity throughout the research process. Thus, describing the problem, using the data, and interpreting the African migrant women's story, and voices is naturally, a transparent process (Wodak 2009, p. 311).

Furthermore, undertaking field work (i.e. conducting individual interviews) is one of the most effective ways I can probe or evaluate the impact of Swedish discourse on the individual African migrant woman (D'Costa 2006, p. 132). Also, adopting the individual woman as the unit of analysis and using critical discourse analysis to interpret and make sense of the findings are valid, reliable, objective, and accepted ways of pursuing feminist studies.

### **3.8 REFLECTIVE, EPISTEMOLOGICAL, AND INTERPRETATIVE ISSUES:**

According to Tickner (2006), feminists still struggle with the issue of power relations between the researcher and her subjects. (p.8). The relationships between the researcher and the participants may be reciprocal, asymmetrical, or potentially exploitative. Likewise, the researcher's stance may be intimidating, self-promoting, or flattering to the participants (England 1994, p. 82).

Feminist researchers also hold epistemic power with which they can differentiate fact from belief. More so, it involves producing knowledge, evidence, as a means of giving a convincing argument about what the study aims to achieve in IR scholarship (Ackerly & True 2008, p. 695). To collect data, interpret and make sense of social issues, feminist researchers need to be mindful of the power differences between them and the participants (England 1994, p. 82).

Ethically, the feminist researcher doing fieldwork should seek a reciprocal relationship based on understanding, mutual respect, and knowledge sharing with the participants. This means the researcher must not exploit or exposes the participants' weaknesses and must be aware that she needs to depend on the participants to give insight into the subtle nuances of meaning that structure and shape their daily lives and experiences. This is thus necessary to curtail an asymmetric and potentially exploitative power relations by handing some power over to the participants (Ackerly & True 2008, p. 696).

In line with the above, it is thus necessary to reflect on my position as a researcher in the way I conducted this research. The main purposes for using experiential and reflexive knowledge-building is to work towards understanding these women's lives as well as



empowering them through the knowledge we have built together through this research. Consequently, my experiences and my shared identity as an African migrant woman, is necessary to guide and understand my epistemic and interpretivist stance.

Growing up in a patriarchal society as an African, I learnt what it means to be a woman, I learnt about my position and identity in relations to men. I remember seeing and serving in meetings where the family elders made decisions on family matters while the women cooked and served. As women, individuals, and members of the family, no one sought our opinions nor consulted us on these issues that would affect us.

In asking my research questions, conducting interviews, transcribing, analysing, understanding, and making inferences from the resulting data, I could see myself in the stories my participants told. Some of the experiences were like mine. So much that I lost the sense that Africa is a continent with different peoples, languages, cultural beliefs and their views on women's positions and identity in relation to men also differs.

More so, I live in Norway, a country with similar culture to Sweden i.e. a country with a more gender equal, egalitarian, and liberal view than Nigeria where I come from. Like some of my research participants, I believed that I had to question, understand, reshape my views about what I have learnt, growing up in Africa. It means that I had to wear my feminist lens to scrutinise my earlier stance on what patriarchy taught me and what feminism and gender equality is teaching me. These issues informed my research and therefore has some influence on what constitutes reality and truth for me and for my participants as well as some preconceived ideas of what I expected to find as my research outcome.

For Kirsch & Ritchie (1995), this might make the researcher's account 'the master narrative' whereby I might "...essentialize the other" and speak for my participants instead of relaying their views, understanding and stance on the research topic. Thus, there is the risk of providing a partial and distorted account of these women's lives and their relationship with their social networks (Harding 1992, p.50).

It is difficult to not have and present 'a master narrative' as a feminist researcher because, I have some epistemic power in that I have read, researched, understood, and formed my own ideas about the different issues on gender equality and feminism. More so, I share experience and identity with the research participants and I had certain preconceived ideas of how I expected the participants to respond. I knew we shared experience and identity and I would say

it felt good that despite the participant's country of origin, I could align myself with what they said and so confirm what I wanted to hear.

However, some stories of the participants did not fit my ideas or what I wanted to hear to confirm my assumptions about Africa's innate patriarchal culture and the power it wields over African women. This is because, I believe patriarchy is a stronghold that is forceful and pervasive enough to leave these women unchanged regardless of how long they have lived and interacted with Sweden's national discourse of gender equality. For example, one participant from Ghana explained how back in Africa, her husband willingly joined in housework and taking care of the children as well as ask her opinion in decision making. For me, I felt she was lying about this because, in my I thought African men would not normally do that. I believed that most African men think it is unmanly to do the housework, care for the children or consult their wives before taking crucial family decisions. So, I set aside my feminist lens and reevaluated my epistemic stance as well as leave out my preconceived ideas.

Hence, I asked myself crucial questions like, do all women in Africa live in subjugated positions and do all men in Africa exercise dominance over all the women in their lives? Are there African countries where women have a good representation in political spheres and governance? Do every culture in Africa favour men over women or there aspects even within patriarchal cultures that have tenets that do not privilege men over women. Perhaps, there are certain cultures that give women power over the men so that men face subjugation instead of the women. In other words, I had to believe that her husband was not the 'typical patriarchal husband' I envisioned. That some women's experiences might be different from what I wanted or expected.

Consequently, to some great extent, I have set aside my bias, preconceived ideas and I have presented the participants views and life stories as the 'social reality' of life as an African migrant woman living in Sweden. I did not speak for my participants and I have relayed these women's experiences and how they view the extent of Sweden's narrative on their relationship with their social networks (Harding 1992, p.50).

Thus, aligning with Keohane (1988)'s claim that feminist research does not necessary need to follow traditional scientific methods of finding causality or reaching an objective truth. Still, Keohane argues that IR scholars need to find a way to convince IR non-believers that feminist researches are valid, rigorous, and replicable. So, feminist research must be 'neo-positive' by recognising that knowledge is a social construct (in Tickner 2005, p. 2). This is

because the research questions and the methods adopted must reflect what the researcher and the participants identified to produce knowledge jointly. Thus, for Keohane, researchers must strive to be as objective as possible by reaching intersubjective agreement about the social reality under study (ibid).

### **3.9. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

Over the past decades, ethical issues in feminist research has become increasingly important. They are right way or codes of conduct a researcher must observe all through the research process (Hesse-Biber 2013, p. 74). In my research, I met some ethical dilemmas and I will explain them as well as describe the steps I took to address them. Hesse- Biber (2013) listed them as respect for the privacy and dignity of research participants, ensure participants willingly give their consent, confidentiality and use the acquired information within legal framework of the state (p. 76).

Firstly, to fulfil these ethical requirement, I signed a document given by the department that gave me approval to do research as part of the requirement to get my master's degree in international relations. It held a pledge that I would keep the Norwegian laws on undertaking academic research. This acted as a guideline for me all through the research process. Also, my supervisor and the study adviser at the department gave me an introductory letter that I presented to the participants during my work in the research field.

Secondly, to respect the privacy and dignity of the participants, I did not ask for their names as part of the interview questions nor did I use their names when writing my research report. This issue of anonymity is important because it involves collecting sensitive data i.e. "...information that could be embarrassing, discrediting, or potentially discriminatory" to the participant (Berkhout 2013, p. 22). Some of the respondents told sad and embarrassing stories which I guarded with a promise of confidentiality.

Confidentiality is important to protect the research participants from psychological, financial, emotional harm associated with the purposeful or accidental disclosure of personal information or sensitive data (Berkhout 2013, p.22). Thus, I tried to build rapport and trust with my participants by showing solidarity and obeying their wish during the interview sessions. For example, one participant asked me to switch of my recording for some story she shared with me. I stopped the recording so that the story was not part of the interview and so did not reflect in the transcript. After the interview, her story brought memories for me which I also

shared with her and we ended up chatting about how we struggled, survived, and overcame some of the negative situations we experience as women and as Africans.

Lastly, I asked the consent of the participants before any interview started. Also, I asked for their consent to record our conversation because of the limits of being unable to make coherent notes on each interview. I assured them that the record of the interview was for my use alone and that the raw data was solely for academic purposes only. Furthermore, I assured that they were free to quit the session at any time they felt uncomfortable. So, all participants in the research gave their full consent to take part in as well as allowed me to record the entire interviews session.

### **3.10. LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH:**

My research faced glitches that constitutes common criticisms against feminist research and methods. According to Akerly & True (2008), it is important to be aware that feminist research process can marginalize and silence some subjects that can matter in the research process. This is because, boundaries are an inevitable part of knowledge-creation in feminist scholarship and so researchers must be conscious of and take responsibility for their intended and unintended outcomes. (p.697).

More so, the multiple and intersecting identities of the research subjects is also source of ethical dilemma especially in producing epistemology. This is because, the researcher tends to focus the social, political, and economic actions and relations of the chosen research subjects like they are more important than those silenced in the research. Hence, it is ‘problematic’ that feminist research tends to focus on women issues or addressing them as a homogenous category (Stern in Akerly & True 2006, p. 180).

First, this research falls into this dilemma because it focuses on women and aligns with the binary concepts of sex and gender. Feminist theorists argue that sex and gender differences are power strongholds that limits the researcher’s ability to critical deconstruct gender hierarchies. It also severely exposes the epistemological power of heterosexuality because, it is still difficult to stop looking at our world in binaries, good/bad, gay/straight, sex/gender, masculine/feminine, etc. (Dietz 2003, p. 413; Hesse-Biber 2013, p.43). For example, my research did not talk about African migrant women in same-sex marriages, single, etc. It thus focused on women in heterosexual marriage or relationships before and after they moved to Sweden. This is because I had a desire to see how they can compare life in Africa and Sweden to understand patriarchy vis-à-vis gender equality.

More so, my research does not consider African migrant men and other migrant women from other parts of the world thereby ignoring cultural identities of these people as well as the intersection between race and gender. Feminist agree that a researcher should consider the "...multiple axes of oppression." That means that the research must realize that others face oppression other than the participants chosen for the research (Knapp 2005, p. 442).

For example, the husband of one the respondents interrupted our interview to complain how he has lost his manliness in Sweden. He complained that the government teaches African women to disrespect men. Also, that his wife points out gender equality when he must care for the children but would play the 'woman card' when he wants her to pay the rent for the month. Thus, for him, he feels disempowered living as a migrant in Sweden where otherwise he would have 'kept his respect' if he was back home. Thus, it would have been interesting to know the 'other's' perspectives i.e. explore the intersectionality of race and gender.

## CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH CONTEXT.

### 4. 1. SWEDEN'S HISTORICAL NARRATIVE ON GENDER EQUALITY:

Sweden is one of the world's northernmost countries and is known for its long coastline, wide forests, and many lakes. The country practices parliamentary democracy and shares a border with Norway. Currently, Sweden has a population of about 10 million people with immigration accounting for over 40 percent of population growth since the 1940s. Also, Sweden transformed from a poor country to one of the wealthiest welfare states in less than a century ([www.sweden.se](http://www.sweden.se); Hearn, Nordberg, Andersson, Balkmar, Gottzen, Klinth, Pringle, & Sandberg 2012, p. 31).

Sweden has a well-documented, strong, and impressive self-image and status as the most modern and gender-equal country in the world popularly described as the 'Swedish exceptionalism' (Martinsson, Griffin & Nygren, 2016, p. 1). Sweden also has the most institutionalized model of gender equality. The national sense towards the gender equal norm is significant as political parties and politicians readily call themselves feminists. The country is renowned for its former social-democratic welfare system in which gender equality played a vital role. More so, the norms of gender equality had a strong impact on the country's change into a neoliberal society (Martinsson, et. al. 2016, p.1).

In the past, Sweden held traditional or patriarchal ideals about the position of women in the family and society. Women were the sole providers of love and care, raising the children and keeping the home. At the time, the ideals of female emancipation through wage-work or as active participants in the public domain was not strong in the narratives within the society. For example, the first edition of the Social Democratic Women's magazine, 'Morgonbris' 1904 featured Ellen Key on its front page. Ellen was passionate about the importance of motherhood for women and society and fiercely defended it in the public discourse on the differences between the sexes. In other words, the public discourse at the time centred around women as the main care providers in the home i.e. women occupying the private sphere (Hirdman 2002, p.4; Lundqvist 2011, p.1).

Also, Sweden's economy was a male breadwinner welfare model. Men were the sole providers of household income while the women did the un-paid household labour and child care (Lundqvist 2011; Hirdman, 2002). This led to heavy public debates from the 1920s to 1950s. Persons like Gunnar and Alva Myrdal were strong voices behind these radical family debates as they challenged the traditional family structure while arguing for a change in gender

roles as well as the need to balance the power relations between the sexes. More so, there were debates about a re-engineered social arena which women would increasingly embrace the public sphere while men would enter the private sphere. Also, how families and the state can deal with new care challenges that might arise from this exchange (Florin & Nilsson 1999, p. 12). These discourses also considered the extensive costs these changes might have on the family and the society (i.e. the impact/ power relations that norms can have on the individuals as well as social institutions (Florin & Nilsson 1999).

As new forms of families sprang e.g. single mothers and fathers, the nuclear family lost its hegemony thereby making the male bread winner model obsolete. Consequently, public debates spilled from mere social and economic concerns to research, politics, and policy interventions (Lundquist 2011). More so, labour movements and researchers highlighted women's dual roles as mothers and workers, noting the 'working mothers' situation as problematic and this was also central in social and family policy discourses at the time. At the same time, labour shortages led to women joining the labour market. Thus, housewives, and immigrants (both men and women) became an important "reserve army" for the labour market (Lundqvist & Roman 2008, p. 224). Thus, the state used policy to resolve these social challenges at the time, popularly called 'women issues' (Florin & Nilsson 1999, p.21).

For Florin & Nilsson (1999), the resulting changes are expressions of the older social structures that had existed in Sweden. They assert that these were historical continuation of Swedish gender equal culture specially following its early debates about gender roles and power relations between the sexes. Florin & Nilsson reasoned that, these legal and institutional frameworks (i.e. policy) enabled a direct civic relationship between the individual woman and the state specially as she gained recognition as a mother, worker, and a member of the society. This further helped Swedish women gain advantage in political bargaining (i.e. agency/empowerment) despite strong resistance that are natural to reforming patriarchal structures (Florin & Nilsson 1999, p. 21).

However, these questions and steps at reforming gender relations took on higher and innovative forms in the 1970s and 1980s just as the new women's movements were rising (Hearn, et. al. 2012, p. 33, Martinssen, et.al. 2016, p. 3). Around the time, Sweden coined the concept 'jämställdhet' which means '*gender equality*' as new way to describe how relations between women and men ought to be. It was an effective label for questions and discourses about women's right but has since expanded it to include other aspects of structural inequality

(Florin & Nilsson 1999, p. 13). This became the 'political correct' word that was both relevant and convenient in that it united many people, bridged class differences, and lacked sexual undertones. Thus, institutionalising 'jämställdhet' gave Swedes their national identity as a 'gender-equal people.' (Florin & Nilsson 1999, p. 14).

Some researchers argue that the Swedish people specially the young held affinities and solidarity for this new culture and identity and expressed these in several demonstrations, feminist movements, and political rituals and symbols. Therefore, producing a new "gender contract" between men and women (Florin & Nilsson 1999, p. 14; Rosenbeck, von der Fehr, & Jonasdóttir 1998, p. 45). Likewise, institutionalising gender equality marked the beginning of Sweden's state feminism in that the state began to intervene in gender equality issues. Consequently, the government employed 'femocrats' or state feminists to resolve feminist issues and to create more innovative ways to promote norms of gender equality (Florin & Nilsson 1999, p. 14).

Furthermore, Sweden undertook more pragmatic changes in the public discourses about how to integrate migrants using its gender equal approach (Reyes, 2016, p.24). Because in this context, gender equality was about women's equal involvement in the family, labour force, and politics. By the 1990s, Sweden had developed a 'gender-friendly welfare model' patterned after the UN's universal human rights. Also, national belonging, paid work and social engineering was and are still central to the Swedish model (Reyes, 2016, p.26).

To enable women successfully combine family life with work, government put up political measures like universal child care provisions, tax policies, and access to part-time jobs in the public sector, etc. An example is the law on parental leave in 1974 that further improved the conditions of working-women to be more equal to men. The provisions of the law are still referred to as the 'most generous parental leave insurance in the world (Hellgren & Hobson 2008, p. 219). Consequently, not only did women's presence in the labour market increased, political mobilisation and representation in the parliament and government also increased. Thus, for Sweden, gender equality is an ongoing political project that is closely linked to its identity both at the state and the international arenas (Reyes, 2016, p.2).

#### **4. 2. STATE INTERVENTION THROUGH REFORMS:**

Based on this historical narrative, one puzzling question is how Sweden's quest for gender equality penetrated the core of people's gender identities and demanded the changes that still reflects in the relationship between the sexes today? Also, what agents of change did



the Swedish state employ to create the new gender order? In other words, how does state's discursive and narrative power influence the individual's sense of self, alignment with or resistance to dominance?

Hirdman (1994) attributed Sweden's ability to penetrate the people's identity and quest for change to social engineering undertaken by the Swedish Social Democrats in the 1930s. The ideologies of people like Alva Myrdal who he describes as social engineers helped Sweden stir in the direction of egalitarianism. Swedish philosophers and politicians he argued, pursued planning, infrastructure, reason, and science. Though Hirdman argued these were utopian visions, they were based on the belief that adequate planning could offer the greatest happiness to the greatest number of people. Also, that the happiness of the individual citizen should be the goal of the state (p. 76-77).

Accordingly, Swedish philosophers and politicians pursued their vision by engaging socialist ideas of having a state that meets the need of the citizens. For the Social Democrats, these "needs" then became the fundamental rights which was basic at the time -food, warmth, clothing, housing. According to Ellingsæter, & Leira (2006), Sweden wanted new norms and arrangements to cushion, address and redress the challenges resulting from confronting patriarchal structures and renegotiating gender power relations as well as the interface between private and public sphere. Thus, Sweden began this process by making private issues like family issues e.g. parenting and child care, political issues. Apart from implemented generous leave packages for parents, it engaged in educational investments e.g. day care services for children (Eydal & Rostgaard 2011, p. 162).

Another important aspect of the Sweden's weapon in creating a gender identity while creating the desire for change was to highlight the importance of fathers as carers as well as a child's right to a father's attention (Eydal & Gíslason 2008). Again, the state used heated and widespread public debate on the importance of caring fathers and the extent to which the state can intervene in ensuring that fathers take part in child care.

To this end, in 1995, Swedish fathers became entitled to one month's father's quota but then, extended to two months in 2002 and by 2008, the state paid bonus to parents who divided their parental leave equally (Haas & Rostgaard 2013, p. 63). The impact being that the law allowed flexibility in taking time off work to be a parent. For example, people could save part of their leave to extend summer vacation. Also, since the 1960s, more children including children from single parents, migrant and working-class families gained from the public day-

care services hence, embracing intersectionality (Duvander & Ferrarini 2010). According to Duvander & Ferrarini (2010), the long incumbency of the social democrats and the interest of Swedish women both within and without the party were the driving forces for the successes recorded after adopting these policies (p .5).

#### **4.3. BEYOND SWEDEN'S "WOMEN -FRIENDLY" WELFARE STATE**

Over the years, feminist re-workings, and critiques on the distinct types of welfare states have inspired large research on the relationship between the state, gender, and the discourse of power relations (Orloff 1993). For welfare states in the Nordic region, Nordic feminists works show, and elaborate on the historical, social, cultural, political, and theoretical 'break-ups,' i.e. sudden shifts or radical changes that have occurred in gender relations. The changing forms of women's experiences and shifting strategies in the constant struggle and bargain to make room for themselves and their interests are also important in this regard.

Sweden has implemented different welfare models with institutions that have offered social insurance programs, universal citizens entitlements, and social assistances like provision of day-care, education, housing, medical services, etc (Orloff 1996, p. 52). According to Orloff (1996), like other welfare states, Sweden has also been profoundly affected by gender relations in terms of the sexual division of labour, discourses about citizenship, motherhood, masculinity and femininity, etc. Orloff (2009) believes it is important for feminist and gender analysts to investigate how welfare states can further successfully incorporate gender in its social policies and be a resource in achieving gender equality (p. 318).

But then again, to describe a welfare state as 'women-friendly,' it means that it is a state that is responsive to women's claims and has adopted an array of policies that give women more and better options as well as a voice both in the public and private spheres. It also means the impact of the state's political decisions on women's daily lives (Addis, De Villota, Degavre & Eriksen 2016, p.65). Furthermore, it means that the state is responsive to the changing political forces in civil society and has room for women's agency (Hernes, 1987). More so 'women-friendly' states have significant level of women taking part in the labour market, politics, and education. It has an established system of public childcare and parental leave, as well as expansive gender equality laws (Borchorst & Siim 2008, p. 209).

Thus, Hernes (1987), defined a woman-friendly state as a state that "...would not force harder choices on women than on men, or permit unjust treatment based on sex. In a woman-friendly state, women will continue to have children, yet there will also be other roads to self-

realization open to them. In such a state, women will not have to choose futures that demand greater sacrifices from them than expected of men. It would be, in short, a state where injustice based on gender would be largely eliminated without an increase in other forms of inequality, such as among groups of women.” (p. 15).

While critically analysing Hernes (1987)’s definition, Borchorst (2008) points out that there are changes to be expected in the public and private (i.e. family and state) aspect of achieving a gender equal state (p. 28). These changes can either cement a patriarchal order or lead to increased options for women compared to men specially in matters of care and reproduction. It means that a state through its policies shapes and is in turn affected by gender relations. Thus, the state through its policies either replicates gender hierarchies or is changing or restructuring its impact on all forms of social inequalities (Orloff 1996, p. 53).

In line with this thought, the Scandinavian countries like Sweden focus on equalising breadwinning i.e. equal gender roles in generating family income and engaging in care. Thus, the state exploits the synergy between women’s agency in the public, political decisions about welfare benefits and women’s policy machineries (i.e. pursuing social and economic policies that are mostly beneficial to women) (Outshoorn & Kantola, 2007, p. 2-3). The states do this by feminising the private or ‘below’ by mobilizing women to actively take part in the public sphere (i.e. political /cultural activities, feminist movements). In turn, the state responds from ‘above’ by institutionalizing the private sphere (e.g. parental insurance that promotes equal shared roles and parenting) (Borchorst 2008. p. 34). Thus, women’s dependence in Scandinavia moved from the private to the public sphere i.e. from individual men to the state. This shift meant women’s increased power in relation to men (Walby 1990; Teigen & Wängnerud 2009, p.27).

Furthermore, Hernes points out that woman-friendly welfare state would end other forms of inequality specially among groups of women (intersectionality). Also, as Oskarson & Wängnerud (2013), pointed out, the concept behind a women-friendly welfare state is based on the thought that women share common and collective interests different from the interests of men (p. 61). For example, women can share interest in certain issues like child-bearing, sexual violence, their unequal position in the division of paid and unpaid labour and their exclusion from most arenas of economic or political power (Phillips 1995, p. 67).

Peterson (2013) argued that initially, intersectionality meant that in a “woman-unfriendly” welfare state, gender inequality catered for white, middle-class, heterosexual,

home-making mothers (p.75). More so, policies were to inspire privileged white, middle-class women to be stay-at-home mothers, while denying migrant and working-class women the same access to such support. Thus, welfare states tend to overgeneralize and overlook the differences between the groups of people (i.e. intersectionality) within it. Consequently, it disregards the diverse and contradictory effects of its interventions, institutions, policies, and processes on the other groups of women e.g. migrant women (Peterson 2013, p.76).

#### **4.4. MIGRANTS WITHIN ‘THE GENDER-EQUAL’ SWEDEN (INTERSECTIONALITY)**

According to Borchorst (2008), at the time Hernes (1987) defined a ‘woman-friendly state, immigration had not become a political problem nor a key issue in the public debates in Scandinavia. However, as Scandinavian countries experienced increased multiculturalism, these states that were once homogenous had to grapple with new forms of inequality. For instance, there were new gap between the ethnic majority (i.e. natural citizens and minorities i.e. migrants) (p.64). Thus, aligning with criticisms against liberal feminist thoughts that ‘woman-friendly’ states are blind to the cultural diversities among women (los Reyes, Mulino & Mulinari 2003, p. 31).

In this light, by the 1950s and 1960s, Sweden received increasing number of migrant women especially needed for domestic services and low paying jobs in the industrial and agricultural sectors (de los Reyes 2016, p. 28). Migrant women’s participation in the labour force exceeded that of the Swedish women which created an overlap in hierarchy of class, gender, and ethnicity (de los Reyes 1998 in Siims & Kraus 2009, p. 81). More so, in the 1950s and 1960s, the discourse of gender equality marginalized and silenced the experiences of migrant women and their input in the Swedish market and welfare sectors Thus, politicians, experts and researchers believed that migrants were different and needed integrating thereby making them targets of the integration policies of the 1990s. It was also a way to curb structural racism as a political and moral issue in Sweden’s quest for egalitarianism (Towns 2002, p. 159).

According to Siim (2013), among the Nordic countries, Sweden has the best multicultural policies in trying to include immigrants and minorities as equal citizens in the labour market, democracy, and society (p. 78). However, migration, multiculturalism combined with gender equality are complex and highly politicised issues and are still the dominant discourses in Sweden. The country’s ideas about these issues are explicit but not yet a success because, it is

still about the continuous, gradual, and linear movement towards a gender-balanced society (Christensen and Siim 2009 in Siims 2013, p. 78).

Post-colonial feminist research in Sweden finds that the state's identity of 'exceptionalism' is crucial and central in understanding the construct of migrant women as essentially deviant in the light of Swedish norms. This made them target groups for gender studies as scholars wanted to analyse how neoliberal reforms politicise and conceptualize the new social inequality these Nordic countries are experiencing. Traditionally, Swedish researchers studied race/ethnicity and gender divide separately, but the new intersectional turn opened new insights to the centrality of how ideas of singular identities can co-articulate with structural inequality (de los Reyes 2016, p. 24).

More so, these exclusionary practices and systematic silencing of the differentiation processes makes gender politics an arena for hegemonic femininities. Thus, reproducing the power relations among women. Despite Sweden's explicit concept of gender equality, state intervention for dealing with feminist demands relied on national boundaries which in turn acted as natural arenas for negotiating new gender orders. This also manifests in the nation's strong culture and identity (de los Reyes 2016, 29).

Thus, concentrating on or anonymising a migrant's background or ethnicity as the basis for policy reduces the chance of capturing the needs, abilities, desires, and experiences of migrants (de los Reyes 2016, p. 30). For Balibar & Wallerson (1991), the idea of an ethnically and culturally homogenous state was significant in keeping the order of power in Sweden whereby the migrants had to meet the state's demands to get integrated (in de los Reyes 2016, p. 30).

## CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION.

### 5. 1. GENDERED PATRIARCHAL CULTURE AS AN INEGALITARIAN ASPECT OF MIGRANT COUNTRY:

This aspect will discuss the inegalitarian aspects of the patriarchal culture the African migrant women that took part in this research experienced and socialised with before migrating to Sweden. This will help us understand how cultural narratives can change or stall the women's ability to accept or reject Sweden's cultural narrative.

Enloe (2017), defined patriarchy as a “particularly complex web of both attitudes, and relationships that position women and men, boys and girls in distinct and unequal categories, that value particular forms of masculinity over virtually all forms of femininity, and this is crucial-that ensures that men who fulfil these favoured forms of manliness will be able to assert control over women” (p. 49). For Hunnicutt (2009), it is the social arrangements that privilege males and where men dominate women both structurally and ideologically (p. 553).

These definitions are expressive of how the African migrant women that took part in this study tell of certain aspects of cultural requirements that put women in subjugated place to men both structurally and ideologically. The result of the interviews shows the inegalitarian aspects of their home culture and how these inform their subjectivities about their identity, position, and responsibility as women. The example below describes a cultural practice (i.e. rite) meant for girls among the Bono people of Ghana. This also shows how patriarchy subjugates women, prescribes their identity as well as dictates gendered roles.

*“...There is the Dipo rites among the Bono people in Ghana that girls are expected to do before they can get married. The ceremony is like giving the girl who must be a virgin the right to a sex life, marriage, and childbearing. On that day, the girl will wear beads, with exposed breasts and little loin clothes to cover her pubic area. It is like an announcement or advertisement to men that the girl is mature and ready for courtship and marriage. But if the girl loses her virginity or gets pregnant before she can take part in the rites, people see her as a disgrace to herself, her family, and the entire community. It even affects her baby who people will give a degrading name that often reflects the circumstances in which he or she was born. They do not have such laws or ritual requirements for boys. In fact, men can marry more than one*

*woman and even be unfaithful, but it is a taboo for a woman to cheat on her husband. The belief is that the ceremony is important to bless the woman, so she will be fruitful in childbearing and also like a proof that she can be faithful is her marriage” (GHAM 3).*

Here, the culture stipulates a rite for young women of ‘marrying age’ that do not apply to men in the same category. The dominance of men over women reflects in the requirements women should meet before they can qualify to take part in the rite. For example, a young girl must remain a virgin because, losing her virginity and/or getting pregnant outside marriage is shameful, and a curse to her, her family, and the entire community. Also, this is in line with Enloe’s claim that patriarchal cultures are obvious in attitudes and beliefs that places women and men, boys, and girls in distinct and unequal categories. For example, the same culture has little or no consequence for the boy/ man that impregnates a girl/ woman.

More so, this shows not only the structural unequal categories between men and women but one that values ‘particular forms of masculinity over femininity’ as well. Example is that the rite advertises women to men, gives a woman the right to a sex life, marriage, and childbearing, and the need to prove her ability to stay faithful in marriage without reciprocal requirements from the men in the same community. The same is true from the Nigerian respondent. This depicts the ideological aspect of how patriarchal cultures assign separate roles and responsibility to men and women (Osgood & Robinson 2017 p. 37& 38).

*“...Yes, there are separate cultural expectations for men and women...The man is there to provide for the home and the discipline of children while the woman is the homemaker. She is to cook, clean and care for the children...these are the duties of a woman in the home” (NGAM).*

According to Walby (1990), patriarchy happens at both the private and public spheres and are the arenas that expresses and sustains gender inequalities by relegating women to the private domain of the home to fulfil expected roles as mothers, nurturers of children, husbands, and other extended family members. The men on the other hand occupy the public domain (engage in paid work, politics, etc.) and so, are the providers of financial security for the family (p. 201; Crittenden & Wright, 2013, p. 1269).

For Osgood & Robinson (2017), patriarchal cultural discourses have greater meaning and impact from the family because the family is instrumental in enforcing its tenets as well as

displays its attendant power relations. i.e. children learn sex roles by the daily messages received from families. This is because, the family is the chief institution of patriarchy or a patriarchal society (Walby 1990 in Kalabamu 2006, p. 238). Respondents recall the diverse ways they learnt gender roles and gained their identity as women from their families.

*“When I was growing, my parents taught me how to be a girl, and how to behave like a girl. For example, as a girl, you must wake up early, wash the clothes, plates and sweep the house before you can go to school... So, you must learn everything like to cook, clean the house and care for the younger ones...” (GHAM 2).*

*As a young girl, I was labelled a ‘tomboy’ and bad girl because, I had a lot of male friends that took me to night clubs and parties. So, many people in my extended family believed I would not get married because, I was not behaving like a responsible girl with home training. That was the reason my mother sent me to live with my aunt. My aunt made me do house chores and she was very strict with me because I was there to be trained to be a good girl (GHAM 3).*

The phrase ‘home training’ captures how children learn gender roles. The respondents said that they received stricter upbringing because it is their parent’s responsibility to raise them to be women fit for marriage. According to Millett (2016), the family plays this role because patriarchal society demands it. This is because, the family is like a mirror and so, acts like a connector to the larger society thereby making it a patriarchal unit within a patriarchal whole (p. 33). Thus, the family plays a mediating role between the individual and the social structures (i.e. private-public interface) by effecting control and ensuring conformity to patriarchal tenets and ideals (ibid, p. 34). This reflects in the respondents’ statements that this training was necessary for success in marriage and acceptability within the wider social structures e.g. community. For example, the idea that a ‘tomboy’ would not make a good wife and as such must be salvaged by stricter training (GHAM 3).

Furthermore, from a feminist post-structuralist lens, these cultural discourses inform how respondents make sense of themselves as gendered beings i.e. children actively construct their own gender identities due to exposure to these sociocultural values and beliefs of being a man or woman (Osgood & Robinson 2017, p. 38). The everyday discourses, norms, codes, and expectations taught within the family does not only reflect a child’s reality, but also constructs



it and so, make up the child's life experiences (Bustos 2017, p. 106). In the example below, the respondent expresses what a girl learns, constructs what and who she becomes – a good wife and competent home maker.

*“... As a girl, you must learn everything like to cook, clean the house and care for the younger ones because, one day you will marry, and you must do these things by yourself in your home. If you do not learn, married life will be hard for you because, how can you cook for your husband and wash his clothes and your children's clothes if you have not learnt it as a girl. It means that when you become a woman, it will be hard for you to take care of your family” (GHAM 2).*

Thus, explaining the power that constructs contingent hierarchies and discursive truths about gender roles and identities or what constitutes what is 'normal' or expected (Bustos 2017, p. 107). In other words, these women construct their identities, as well as perceive their role and responsibility because they interacted with the everyday discourses, norms, codes, and expectations they learnt as children. Consequently, their exposure to these informs their subjectivities about their experiences which in turn constitutes what is their 'truth' and 'reality' about what is normal, expected, and acceptable.

## **5.2. THE DISEMPOWERING NATURE OF PATRIARCHAL CULTURE:**

Because patriarchal societies subordinate women, these societies can have disempowering impacts on women by severely constraining their identities and agencies (Meyers 2002, p. 45). This plays out as 'power over' whereby both women and men unconsciously adhere to what patriarchy taught them and so men might assert authority over their wives and women submit to this authority by choice. For example, women employing strategies to cope with or not actively resisting these disempowering aspects of patriarchal ideals (Sharifi 2018, p. 25; Enloe 2017, p. 49, Feldman 2001, p. 1099).

In line with this thought, the respondents expressed several disempowering effects they experienced living in a patriarchal society. For example, this respondent expresses being subject to her husband's rule and preferences with huge consequence for her agency and with a sense of helplessness from such an experience.

*“My ex-husband in Ghana was a soldier... he would not help with domestic chores, and hardly stays at home so it strained our*

*relationship... I had to make his food and do everything before he comes from work. Whether I am working or not, I must do everything before he comes back. He does not do anything to help...*” (GHAM 1).

The power relations from the above example stems from the distributed gendered roles. As Göhler (2009) asserts, power over or dominance happens only within social relations and has an intrinsically negative impact on those (women) subjected to it (p. 29). As such, regardless of patriarchy’s good intent or the positive impact, these women still have lesser agency (Huggard 2012, p. 35). In other words, gendered roles, and power in the sense of dominance work together to make patriarchy possible i.e. plethora of formal and intimate relationships helps patriarchy to persist and adapt (Enloe 2017, p. 49).

More so, it severely inhibits women’s ability to take part in making decisions within their households. For instance, Chuta (2017)’s research in Ethiopia, indicated that the involvement of women in household decisions was very limited because of the deep-rooted cultural norms that accept men as household heads and so has the power to make all the decisions (p. 9). The finding from this research aligns with Chuta’s study. All the respondents in this study agreed that marriage in Africa gives little room for women to take part in decisions that affects them as members of the family. Similarly, this respondent asserts that it was impossible for her to give input on matters that affected her as a family member and partner in a marriage.

*“...to make decisions? that is impossible being married to a soldier because it is like you do not have respect for your husband. You can contribute to the decision making but it will not work because he would just ignore it. In that kind of barracks environment, no man takes an idea coming from a woman seriously. They take it like she is just saying something... she is just beating about the bush... if for example my husband wants to build a house for his mother, he will just go and do it without telling me. If for instance I find out, he will tell me “the money is mine, so you cannot decide for me.”*” (GHAM 1).

The above reflects the sense of powerlessness of women’s inability to take part in crucial decisions. These experiences might explain why the research participants believed and adhered to the learnt roles, responsibilities, and identity such culture portrays. To further explain, Meyers (2002)’s study explored the links between patriarchal norms, gendered identity, and women's agency. She agreed with Osgood & Robinson (2017) that women individualize and

internalise patriarchal norms which in turn influences their subjective understanding about what their gendered roles and identities are (usually subordinated) as well as their agency (p. 45).

*“As a woman in my home, things like cleaning my kitchen and cooking is my job and my responsibility. In Africa, even if you work 10 hours and your husband works 8 hours, it is your duty to cook for your husband because your husband married you so that you can take care of the family” (GHAM 4).*

Most respondents in this study expressed similar willingness and readiness to do housework, and childcare because patriarchy taught them that they must care, cook, and clean as responsible wives and mothers (e.g. GHAM 2; NGAM). It is also a sign of loyalty and respect for the man thus exposes the disempowering impact such ideals places on the woman. For example, it demands women to do their ‘responsibility’ regardless of similar circumstances in the public sphere (i.e. wage work/ career) (GHAM 4). Thus, are attributes and behaviours that are acceptable to both women and men especially as women accept a subjugated position and men, a place of superiority and authority. This attitude and sense of acceptance among women is the why patriarchal tendencies and tenets has persisted and adapted overtime (Enloe 2017, p. 49; Bryson 2016, p. 159; Osgood & Robinson 2017; Bustos 2017; Meyers 2002).

This is because women and girls have not automatically rejecting nor rebelling against patriarchal ideals and the inherent power relations rather, they accept it. Patriarchy also has rewards for women who align with its tenets and practices but punishes those who do not. Example is behaving like a ‘tomboy’ or perceived as lacking ‘home training’ can make a girl/woman unmarriageable (GHAM 3). Hence, women can gain society’s respect, marital economic security, etc because such society praises a woman that fits for her beauty, sacrifice, domestic skills, sex appeal, being a devote and caring mother, feminine grace, and good judgement (Enloe 2017, p.49-50). Hence, patriarchal institutions are resilient and adapting because women are still co-operating with its tenets and so remain exposed to its influence and disempowering impacts (Enloe 2017, p. 49; Bryson 2016, p. 158; Millet 2016, p. 35).

However, it is important to note that this research does not claim that all women from Africa including those mentioned in this research experience patriarchy in the same way-subjugated or oppressed. It also does not imply that all men everywhere are in dominant positions over women rather, it means that women and men’s experiences of patriarchy are ‘lived’ and socially constructed (Enarson & Pease 2016). Also, women’s experience of

patriarchy keeps changing overtime and across spaces (Acker 1989, p. 235). In other words, though patriarchy affects women, it is not always and only about them i.e. women's subjectivity is not the central or dynamic driving force of patriarchy. Rather, patriarchy is the male-identified, controlled, centred social system that encourages men and women to fulfil men's needs (Becker 1999, p. 24).

### **5.3. POWER RELATIONS UNDER A NEW NARRATIVE:**

Bearing in mind the patriarchal predisposition the research subjects have before they migrated to Sweden, this aspect explores the idea that migration discourse is about how to effectively integrate immigrants into the national community. It is also to address the cultural conflicts between an old majority and a new minority (Kwon, Mahutga & Admire 2017, p. 373). Thus, Sweden like many other host nations expect migrants to adopt their national values and cultural practices. For example, Sweden through its narrative, programs and policies aim to familiarize migrants with its gendered norms (Kivisto 2005, p. 5). As Kwon, et. al (2017) posits, immigration policies have traceable impact on the relationship between the migrant communities and the host country but their implications for gender inequality within immigrant communities are less clear (p. 374).

Thus, this aspect will explore the possibility that migrants keep their past views about their identity, roles, and responsibility, as well as still being in subjugated situations regardless of exposure to Sweden's national narrative of gender equality. Secondly, it looks to uncover the extent to which these African migrant women accept Sweden's national narrative of gender equality and lastly, how they use Sweden's norm to gain agency or empowerment within their private sphere (Koopmans 2010, p. 4).

#### **(A). RETAINING PATRIARCHAL TENDENCIES?**

According to Nygren, Fahlgren & Johansson (2016), Swedish national narrative of gender equality tends to create a narrative of 'us' that also produces the 'others' both in its policy and social processes. It means that, the African migrant woman's awareness of her cultural origins explains the need for recognizing and understanding one's 'self' while empathising with the 'other' and vice versa. Thus, a certain amount of 'secure identity' is necessary to insist on one's own values regardless of the 'other's values and norms' (p. 60).' More so, like Arendt (1963) said, the sense of self as a member of a different group makes it possible for the African migrant woman to express her right and need to protect, celebrate, and replicate her perceived identity and ignore the other's.

Most participants in this research agree that as Africans, they see themselves with their culturally ascribed roles, identity, and responsibility. As Africans, a good wife is one who understands her position in the marriage- accepting her husband's superiority over her equals respect. Hence, they gladly undertake their role (e.g. cooking and cleaning) and know that care work is their responsibility (childcare, husband, and extended family members). An example is in the statement below;

*“I was born and brought up in Africa. So, things like this gender equality is strange to me. Here, they say man and woman are equal but in Africa, man and woman can never be the same because in Africa, we respect our husbands. But here, if I can cook, why can't my husband cook as well? We are both working 8hours daily but i still come home and cook for my husband. In Africa, even if you work 10 hours and your husband works 8 hours, it is your duty to cook for your husband because your husband married you so that you can take care of the family. But here, it is not like that. Here, you see they say man and woman are equal but for me, being an African woman, I do not believe that man and woman are equal because that is what they taught me.” (GHAM 4)*

This statement expresses the discourse of difference between 'us' (African migrant women/ patriarchy) and 'them' (Swedish women/gender equality). A man's purpose for taking a wife is still to cook, clean and take care of the family regardless of new socio-cultural environment and narratives. Nygren, et. al, (2016), explains why this Swedish 'core value' is problematic or subjective. For Nygren, an individual's critical thoughts and choices about gender equality results from the contract between the individual and his/her community's history, traditions, and culture. This in turn influences if the individual agrees with another's ideas of 'normal' and 'acceptable' values (p. 61). Hence, to this respondent, gender equality is incomprehensible, and a deviance from what she learnt back in Africa. In this sense, it is a conscious decision, an awareness of 'self' to not adopt and incorporate Swedish gender equality in her relationship within her private sphere.

*To tell you the truth, I did not allow the situation of gender equality to affect my relationship with my husband or my family. When I got married and had children, I was willing and happy to do what I am supposed to do as a wife and mother... I do not believe in Swedish laws*

*and I did not use it as a yardstick for myself or my husband but sometimes I would need help and he would happily help me because, I gave him that respect.” (GHAM 4)*

In other words, her identity, duties, and responsibilities are clear and still the same. Furthermore, Sweden’s gender equal narrative also looks irrelevant to her relationship because keeping her patriarchal ideals easily gives her power in her home. This aligns with Arendt (1963)’s assertion that the same identity and responsibilities of women as mothers and caregivers can also serve as agency or a source of empowerment for women (in Allen 2009, p. 298; Held 1993, p. 137). So, it serves as a silent negotiator especially since, “giving him that respect” as the head of the family makes it easier to encourage her husband to take part in care and housework willingly and not because the law asked him to do so (Collins 2017, p. 28; Allen 1999, p. 105). This explains these women’s new understanding of as well as how they reconceptualise power through their subjective experience with patriarchy (Allen 2009, p. 298).

Similarly, what Sweden counts as empowering might mean disempowerment to the African migrant women because as de los Reyes (2016), asserts, intersectionality as a political strategy hides the impact of power relations and structural inequalities. In other words, Sweden’s focus on gender equality silences other forms of inequalities thereby reinforcing that women’s voices are unitary. Hence, though Sweden’s norm of gender equality sounds inclusive and grand, it views the other’s (migrant’s) traditions is like of those who are unfree (Nygren, et. al, 2016, p. 61). Consequently, it can give rise to strong strains between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (on both sides). For instance,

*“Here, it is the Swedish law and I cannot change it and they themselves cannot change the law because the law has been on ground for a very long time. So, as an African woman, I was not born here. What I learnt as a young girl is what I am applying in my marriage. The Swedish culture has not affected me at all and I do not want it to affect me because I keep the challenges I face in my life and marriage to myself. For me, when you discuss your family challenges to an outsider, they start telling you that you are in Europe, things are different here. Which means, you take their advice, it can scatter your marriage and mislead you. I follow what I learnt back home in Africa and it is helping me to keep my marriage intact... (GHAM 6).*

From this statement, following Swedish law on gender equality has the potential to destroy her marriage which spells disempowerment. Here, gender equality policies and its practice can be misleading and so she feels safe and empowered in practicing what she learnt and still being a believer in patriarchy. Mulinari & Neergaard (2017b) attributes this to cultural clashes prevalent in migration-integration discourses (p.93).

### **(B). CHANGING?**

Earlier research shows that migrants can accept, adapt, and transform earlier gender identities and reverse expected domestic division of labour. For example, Lundström (2014) studied Swedish women who migrated to the United States and found out that some women had to renegotiate their ideas of gender equality especially if she had to be a supportive wife to a working husband (p.3).

According to Guðjónsdóttir & Skaptadóttir (2017), migration as a gendered process can affect the lives of men and women in diverse ways, because they occupy various positions, roles and responsibilities within the household, the labour market, and society (p. 3). In some cases, women end up abandoning their traditional gender roles after migrating (Lundström, 2014, p. 3), experience new freedoms, gain independence (Mahler & Pessar, 2006, p. 34) gain agency or feel empowered (Darvishpour 2002, p. 277). Other women that took part in this research have a different idea about their role, responsibility, and identity since they moved to and has interacted with the Swedish socio-cultural environment. For example, this respondent in Sweden.

*“Here in Sweden, men and women are the same. They help each other but in Ghana, men have more power than women...I think that it is a good thing that women and men are equal here. Like am here working in my salon, my husband is in the house with our children, giving them food, and looking after them. So, it is a good thing. I like it very well. I feel good and happy because, I cannot be doing everything by myself and it make marriage happy because we are helping each other.”*

(GHAM 2).

Here, there is a change in gendered role. For example, she is at work in her saloon and her husband is home caring for the children. Thus, within the Swedish cultural narrative men and women are equal partners in the marriage and there is minimal power difference between couples unlike what she learnt and experienced back in Africa. Thus, immigration makes it

possible for women to escape the dominant ideas of patriarchy in their home country as well as improve their relationship with their partners and children (Darvishpour 2002, p. 278). Similarly, this respondent exposes the differences in power relations between men and women in both cultures.

*“I like it here better than what I had in Nigeria. I think the culture here makes men to understand that women are not slaves, that women also need help with the children and housework. But back home it is like you are bound by culture and norms to do these things. African men here know and accept that they can push a stroller, bath the children, tuck them in bed at night and not feel less than a man like they would have felt if they were in Africa. So, I love it a lot here and I think it is a good thing because the government made it compulsory for men to be active fathers and helpers in the house. So, they are helping, doing what they would not naturally have done if they were still in Africa.” (NGAM).*

Here, while power in patriarchy ties a woman’s identity, role and responsibilities to the private sphere and a man involved in such losses his manliness (his identity). The Swedish environment is different such that African migrant men understand that ‘women are not slaves.’ That they can push a stroller in the street, do the housework and still be ‘real men.’ In other words, the power of the state (through public narrative) has direct influence on the understanding and use of power within the private sphere. This is because, the state made it compulsory for the men to be active fathers and helpers in the home. Hence, as Charsley & Liversage (2015) concludes, migration can ‘weaken the men’s power’ in the home especially in house and care work (p.3)

Despite restricted power and agency in the patriarchal sense, migrant men can use the dominant discourses as subversive spaces of empowerment to renegotiate their gender identity as they relate their own cultural understandings of masculinity to the meanings and practices in the dominant culture. For example, migrant men build new and intimate relationships as fathers to their children (Wojnicka & Pustułka 2017, p. 92; Charsley & Wray 2015, p. 408).

Darvishpour (2002)’s interview with Iranian migrant men in Sweden supports this as the study discovered that these men felt that their power resources changed after moving to Sweden. These men felt an exchange of position (i.e. subjugated). More so, the public discourses about women’s right, identity, etc. is powerful enough to incite their women against



them. As such, the government's narrative gives women more power in the private sphere than patriarchy would have allowed (p. 277). In this sense, state power has become repressive and dominating and restricted spheres of action for the men as actors in the private sphere (Göhler 2009, p. 28). This because, the new culture, norms, social and political institutions undermine these men's ability to act on their interests and preferences (Foucault 2007, p 220).

Furthermore, under the Swedish national narrative, African migrant women that took part in this study reported that they experienced new ability to make decisions within the family (Guðjónsdóttir & Skaptadóttir (2017, p.5). For example, prior to migrating to Sweden, in the statement below, the respondent expressed powerlessness in bargaining or decision making.

*“To make decisions, that is impossible being married to a soldier because it is like you do not have respect for your husband... but here in Sweden, I will not lie to you, it is different because I am now married to a Swedish man. I contribute to the decision making and I also make a lot of decisions by myself too. My husband would always ask me “mama, what do you think, should we do it this way or that way, how do you want it? So, there is no decision without my contribution...”*  
(GHAM 1)

According to de los Reyes (2016), such ability to bargain results from collaborating with the state as a practical partner for negotiating power relations based on a new idea of 'proper' female and male identity, roles, and responsibility (p. 33). Ahlberg, Roman, & Duncan (2008), argued that it is these new understandings about gender relations that strongly shape bargaining between spouses which reflects in how for instance, they share domestic labour (p. 13). Thus, exposes state's subtle power in the form of laws and norms and identity (Rose 1994, p 48).

Another outcome of an African migrant woman, accepting, changing, and aligning with Sweden's national identity is her ability to challenge patriarchy. For Göhler (2009) and Pansardi (2012), this is 'power to', 'agency, or 'empowerment' as these women gain the ability to act independently. The findings of this research show that some African migrant women have adapted Sweden's gender equal narrative and has used same in confronting perceived negative and disempowering nature of patriarchal tenets. For example;

*“I also think that because of the law in Sweden, some African women are a little over the top in asking their husbands or partners to share equally in the housework and with the care for their children. They feel*

*that the government has given them a lot of rights and power and then they lack the wisdom to balance things in their relationship with their spouses and in their home. Some of these women are misusing the right government gave them which they would not dare or try if they were still in Africa. In Africa, if you do not do things as a responsible wife and mother, your husband can send you packing or report you to your parents or the elders to caution and call you to order. But here, instead of a man to send the wife packing, African women are sending their husbands packing. So, it is the opposite here in Europe where women have more rights and power than in Africa where men have more power and right. In Africa, a woman cannot tell her husband to pack and leave the home, but here the woman can call the police, tell them to get her husband out of the house and when the police come, they will make sure he leaves the house. It makes men to be very careful here about how they act towards their wives and children.” (NGAM)*

Here, these African migrant women are indeed demanding equality and asserting themselves in their private spheres because, they understand the Swedish law and are aware of their unique environment. As Göhler (2009) asserts the use of power to is not to subject their partner to oppression but to act independently to change one’s situation of oppression. Hence, the woman gains new power to free herself because, this type of power produces a new meaning of social relations. (Göhler 2009, p. 29). ‘Power to’ in this sense is objective in carrying out inherent necessities or given norms i.e. the woman is self-aware and so acts based on self-preference (Foucault 1982, p. 212).

So according to Foucauldian view, these women dare to do what they ordinarily would not do if they were still in Africa. Because, in Africa, if a woman undermines her husband’s authority and not do what a responsible wife and mother should do, she risks losing her marriage or disciplinary action by patriarchs in the family. But in Sweden, these women understand their power and right granted them by the Swedish constitution as well as the use for the state’s institution- the police in achieving or enforcing their rights.

Consequently, the men in these relationships also recognise and understand the culture on woman’s right, role, identity and so, are careful in asserting their masculinity and identity, playing their role, or demanding their patriarchal rights (i.e. power-over). This is an important

aspect of feminism i.e. women's ability to use the very structures of power to seek emancipation and agency. From an intersecting view between race and gender, applying feminist tenets can reveal to the subject pervasive and oppressive power. Thus, the need to act and change unfavourable experiences (Carastathis 2014, p. 307). Example;

*“When we moved here, he still did not contribute to the house work or caring for the children. I did everything in the house even to pay the house rent. And it was so bad that he even used to hit me. And the police were always coming to our apartment because of the violence and they threatened to take away my children. Because, I had this feeling that I do not want to be without a husband or my children without their father, I endured. But my children were growing up without a father because he was not there for them. So, after a while, I said no, enough is enough. So, I broke off the relationship. So, since my husband left, I feel like I have a new life. People said it is a sad thing to be single again, but I do not care because in my view, why should you have the structure of a man in the house and he is not doing anything? Many men are like that and women are still with them just to say, ‘I have a man.’ So yes, it has affected me a lot because now, I am happier. Now if I meet someone, I tell him what I expect of him which I would not have done before now.”*

(UGAN)

Here, the Swedish law and national narrative on gender equality has given her a shift from her experience to a more liberal perspective on gender relations. This also aligns to Luke (1974)'s view on the ability of state's normative power to influence people's perspectives and preferences to accept a new role within that the state prescribes (p. 24). More so, this aligns with what Allen (2009) posited i.e. women's ability to actualize their sense of self by using agency and empowerment. Also, in resisting oppressive ideals and tenets hinges on confounding sexual binaries and denaturalising gender relations. This means that what used to make sense before ceases to do so. This is due to continued interpreting and making sense of power relations in social relations i.e. increased insight into the multiple and intertwined systems of oppression women experience daily (Allen 2009, p. 304). Another example;

*“I have learnt a lot. I learnt to be a strong lady and I think I am too much of a feminist now. I hate to see women who suffer.... Sometimes*

*when I speak to my mother, we tend to disagree because my cultural outlook has changed from what we shared when I was still with her in Uganda. I try to tell her to leave my father, but she stays because she believes she needs this or that from a man even when the man is mistreating her. My cousin told me her husband would not give her money for food for their four children and I ask her to leave him and she disagrees because of the insecurities our culture tells her she will face. So, for me, it is not okay because, I have lived in Sweden and I have a different view now. So, if it was me, I would have left that marriage. So, my family back home call me a rebel.” (UGAN)*

Here, moving to Sweden and internalizing its narrative emboldened the respondent to confront patriarchy within her family thereby making her ‘a rebel’ to people who do not have similar exposure. In this sense, she is no longer a victim of patriarchy but instead uses her sense of ‘self’ within their social relations to resist norms she believes does not favour her (McNay 2013, p. 10).

Regardless, in the research, understanding how the interplay between power to and power over is vague because of the back and forth movement or interchanging of who holds/uses the power. More so, it depends on how the participants understand and interpreted the applicability of such power (norms and narratives) within their social spheres (Göhler 2009, p. 28).

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION AND FURTHER STUDY.

#### 6.0. CONCLUSION:

This thesis has looked how patriarchal or gender equal norms, culture and tenets in the public sphere can inhibit or empower women within their private sphere. First, it explored how the Swedish state influences people's gender identities through public discourse and gendered language/narrative. The assumption is that gender equality penetrates the core of people's gender identities which led to the changes in the relationship between men and women in Sweden. The same applies to the African migrant women who have been socialized into patriarchal tenets and ideals within their home countries before migrating to Sweden. These tenets can still guide their sense of self, roles, and responsibilities as women in Sweden. Hence, in both socio-political environments<sup>7</sup>, the research found out that culture (patriarchy), public discourse, and state narrative (gender equality) can have power to influence the individual's sense of self, alignment with or resistance to dominance both ideationally and structurally.

Furthermore, the research observed that a homogeneous environment (society held by similar culture, beliefs, language, etc) plays a part in how this happens. For example, Sweden successfully and effectively employed public discussions on gender equality, as well as used its policy framework, and interventions to achieve social change from patriarchy to a more gender-equal society. Thereby, gaining its exceptional leadership position as a 'feminist' state internationally as well as proved that norms matter in penetrating people's everyday perspectives.

However, with increasing arrival of migrants into Sweden, the state is experiencing a more multicultural society. Sweden that was homogenous had to deal with new forms of inequality. Hence, the state's dominant discourse of gender equality currently intersects with issues of race as there is disparity between the ethnic majority and a new minority (i.e. Swedes and migrants). Sweden through its narrative, programs and policies intend to familiarize migrants with its gendered norms i.e. expects migrants to adopt their national values and cultural practices.

Migration is a gendered process and can affect the lives of men and women in diverse ways because it involves restructuring or rearrangement of traditional gender roles and power

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<sup>7</sup> In Sweden and migrant Home country

relations after migrating. However, it is unclear to understand what extent these African migrant women adopt Sweden's national values and cultural practices to counter inequalitarian aspects of their home culture.

This research found out that these women personalize and individualize norms and culture and their choice to adopt or reject Sweden's gender equality results from their contract with their community's history, traditions, and culture as well as negative experiences with such patriarchal culture. From findings, some of the women that took part in the research rejected Swedish gender narratives and refuse to adopt its ideals in their intimate relationships. These women displayed awareness of their cultural origins and this explains why Sweden's narrative constitutes the 'other' in their view. Thus, some feel secure in her culturally prescribed identity, role, and responsibility and this spells empowerment and agency for her while the 'other' is disempowering. Thereby exposing how this women experience agency differently.

On the other hand, people can change their minds after interacting with new narratives. From the findings in my interview, some of these women have adapted to Sweden's gender equal narrative and have used them to confront and escape dominant ideas of patriarchy as well as its perceived negative and disempowering impacts. It was surprising to me that African women, use Sweden's narrative to exercise new power to renegotiate gendered roles and responsibilities in the home. Some also reported improved relationship with their partners as well as decision making powers which they naturally lacked back in Africa. I also found out some of these women relished having the table turn against African men in their lives especially those that had prior negative experiences with patriarchy.

From an IR perspective, state narratives matter in daily lives because it reflects power relations in the interface between the public sphere and the private sphere. Patriarchal tenets or gender equal norms equally have ability to inform a person's sense of self or identity. It also informs how the person perceives and negotiates gendered roles and responsibilities in social relations. Furthermore, these two ideas or narratives can have empowering or disempowering impact depending on people accept as 'our culture' and 'their culture.' This is because, some of the migrant rejected Sweden's narrative because it is 'their culture' and so, it is against 'my culture.' From the research, those that accepted Sweden narrative found it empowering in renegotiating gender relations, and those who rejected did so because, it was disempowering to them.

## **6.2. LESSONS LEARNT AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDY.**

Though a Sweden's gender equality is a work in progress, the country's ability to change its socio-political narrative from patriarchy to a more gender equal one is very impressive. Even more impressive is reengineering social structures and institutions (e.g. family policies like paid parental leaves) that enabled the citizens and migrants to renegotiate gendered power relations. The use of public debates that highlighted the importance of fathers as carers and politicizing women and family issues, etc. was also instrumental.

Sweden also models the idea of normative power in how norms affect everyday life experiences. Also, that the individual matters, and that addressing women/gender issues as political issues can have a restructuring impact on all aspects of society (education, health, economics, politics, etc). Other countries can emulate Sweden's model to reduce gender gap and redress unfavourable aspects of cultural narratives that subjugate women or foster masculinities.

This research focused on women in heterosexual marriage or relationships before and after they moved to Sweden. Particularly, to know the extent to which the power of Swedish norms can change the individual African migrant woman's views about her role and position in the home and society. I recommend further study on African migrant women in same-sex marriages, single, African migrant men, and other migrant women and men from other parts of the world living in Sweden. These people might give an interesting and new perspective other than what this study garnered.

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## APPENDIX

### Tentative interview guide

Country of Origin:

Marital Status: Married  Separated or divorced

Age: 18-30  31-50  51-Beyond

1. Please tell me a little about your childhood and your life in Africa before you came to Sweden. For example, parents, siblings, education, work etc.?
2. Which role and position do you have in the family?
3. Are there instances when your parents, school, church, or mosque taught you what it means to be a female?
4. Are there instances when you had to conform with such expectations when you were growing up?
5. Please describe the cultural and traditional norms, values and expectations your community have for girls and women.
6. Are there penalties or rewards for fulfilling or failing such expectations?
7. Please what the challenges have you experienced growing up as a woman in Africa?
8. How did you overcome such challenges?
9. What lessons did you gather from such situations and how did they influence your views about your role and position within your community?
10. If you were married before you came to Sweden, can you describe your everyday role as a wife?
11. How was the relationship with the husband before you moved here?
12. Does your husband join in domestic work e.g. doing the dishes, child-care, etc.?
13. Are you able to take part in decision-making? Can you influence the decisions? In what way?
14. How long since you migrated to Sweden?
15. What did you know about this country when you moved here? How did you learn about this, get information?
16. What was your reason, hopes and expectations when you moved to Sweden?
17. What were your first impressions when you first moved here?
18. What do you understand by Sweden's feminist policy?
19. What do you understand by gender equality?

20. Have you learnt Swedish norms, values, and rules (gender equality i.e. about your role and position as a woman)?
21. Did you attend any 'integration' course arranged by national or local authorities or did you learn these norms and values by observing the Swedish people?
22. What are your perspectives about these norms and values of feminism?
23. Has Sweden's norms affected or changed how you views about your role and position in the family and society?
24. If you have children, do deliberately or instinctively teach them about their roles and positions as girls?
25. Does it align with how you learnt it in Africa or does it lean towards Sweden's model?
26. Do you think that the change happened because you learnt it from living here?
27. How long did you think it took before your views and actual position and role changed?
28. If you migrated with your partner, has Sweden's gender equal and feminist norms affected your relationship? In what way?
29. Does your husband join in domestic work e.g. doing the dishes, child-care, etc.?
30. Are you able to take part in decision-making about the family? Has your influence on the decisions become greater since you moved here? In what way?
31. Do you have anything you will like to add?

## Final interview guide

### Bio-information:

Country of Origin:

Marital Status: Married  Separated or divorced

Age: 18-30  31-50  51-Beyond

How long have you lived in Sweden?

### Interview questions:

1. Please tell me a little about your childhood and your life in Africa before you came to Sweden. For example, parents, siblings, education, work etc.?
2. Which role and position do you have in the family?
3. Are there instances when your parents, school, church, or mosque taught you what it means to be a female?
4. Are there instances when you had to conform with such expectations when you were growing up?
5. Please describe the cultural and traditional norms, values and expectations your community have for girls and women.
6. Are there penalties or rewards for fulfilling or failing such expectations?
7. Please what the challenges have you experienced growing up as a woman in Africa?
8. How did you overcome such challenges?
9. What lessons did you gather from such situations and how did they influence your views about your role and position within your community?
10. If you were married before you came to Sweden, can you describe your everyday role as a wife?
11. How was the relationship with the husband before you moved here?
12. Does your husband join in domestic work e.g. doing the dishes, child-care, etc.?
13. Are you able to take part in decision-making? Can you influence the decisions? In what way?
14. What were your first impressions when you first moved here?
15. What do you understand by gender equality?
16. What have you learnt about Swedish norms, values, and rules (gender equality i.e. about your role and position as a woman)?

17. Has Sweden's norms affected or changed how you views about your role and position in the family and society?
18. Does it align with how you learnt it in Africa or does it lean towards Sweden's model?
19. If you migrated with your partner, has Sweden's gender equal and feminist norms affected your relationship? In what way?
20. Are you able to take part in decision-making about the family? Has your influence on the decisions become greater since you moved here? In what way?
21. Do you have anything you will like to add?



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