

Title:

The stories of immigrant women on a common platform in Katrineholm: Marginalization, disappointment and stereotypes.

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Abstract

The social-liberalist definition of citizenship is used in the interviews as the official definition to interpret the personal experiences and positions of immigrant women regarding the status of their citizenship. Feminist critiques argued against the social-liberal definition of citizenship, as it constitutes norms that exclude other groups from achieving their full status of citizenship. It has also been argued throughout the study that the women's movements and gender research constitute elements of ethnocentricity. The study also shows that the Swedish policymakers fail in matters concerning integration, as it does not benefit immigrant women compared to ethnic Swedes. Furthermore, language and stereotypical images of immigrant women are used to marginalize them within the public discourse, indicating that they are considered to be second-class citizens. The interviews were conducted in Katrineholm, a small town in Sweden where women told their stories about marginalization, disappointment, as well as the ethnocentricity which still exists in the contemporary Swedish society. The stories of these women are used as case studies, which, within the gender dimension, have not been carried out very often by Swedish research; the authentic voices of immigrant women to highlight issues concerning citizenship have been ignored. The result of the interviews indicates that the formal theory of rights and possibilities, which are supposed to work on the practical level, have collapsed and is contradictory, as it has not been successful concerning immigrant women and their status of citizenship; the study shows that immigrant women are not able to use their citizenship status fully in their adopted home country, Sweden.

Key word: Marginalization, Immigrant woman, Stereotyping, Ethnocentricity, Sweden

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1.1 Background & Problems

Multiculturalism has encouraged Sweden to re-formulate its integration policy after receiving fierce criticism due to its exclusion of the immigrant population.¹ In 1997 the Swedish Parliament approved the new integration policy for the development plan, which aimed to improve equal rights opportunities regardless of ethnic or cultural background. Although there has been a lot of campaigns and speeches about integration policies such as education, employment, social resources, self and cultural development, as well as an increased awareness of multiculturalism, the fact is that Sweden remains a segregated country.² Swedish citizenship gives rights to the citizen and in turn the citizen has an obligation to society. According to judicial definitions, people who have been living in Sweden have been officially documented in the national registry, and are members of the society and thus must uphold the rights and obligations to the society.

During the 1980s there were a growing number of feminist movements, especially the Black American feminists, who claimed that feminism was constituted of a hierarchy, which is embedded with norms and ethnocentricity. They contended that feminist speech was articulated by and circulated only among the white middle class heterosexual women. However, during the late 1990s the law against ethnic discrimination was more strongly enforced and questions such as those mentioned above were taken up from a Swedish perspective. The debates were centered among Swedish gender researchers, and women's movements were accused of a lack of enthusiasm and an unwillingness to study the differences that exist among other women in Sweden. Other debates that rose concerned the role of women's movements, which were said to represent only ethnic Swedish women and their positions. The Swedish women's movements were thus criticized for not taking up the experiences of migrant women as well as for dismissing their knowledge.³

Within gender studies there is still a lack of interest in studying or researching areas concerning citizenship regarding immigrant women as well as doing research about these women and their perspective regarding their position as a citizen. This study aims therefore to discuss their position while focusing on how they relate to citizenship, as well as the position of being an

¹ (SOU 1996:55, Prop 1997/98:16)

² SFS (1999:133) and also see proposition 1997/98 :177, see also SOU 1997:174

³ Ålund (1999) page 51

immigrant woman. Through interviews, the study is meant to open a place that will fill the current academic gap on the empirical level.

1.2 Purpose and Aim

My inspiration for the purpose of the thesis stems from my own experiences as an immigrant woman and citizen in Sweden. The thesis aims to investigate how immigrant women in Sweden experience their situation as citizens. To fulfill the purpose of the study interviews were conducted to build a case study in order to highlight the personal experiences of immigrant women. The case study was analysed using a theoretical framework to see whether the data gathered corresponded to the conclusions of existing research in the Gender Studies field. In order to look at immigrant women as marginalized citizens, I have used feminist ethnocentrism as my main focus for the research question.

Research question:

More specifically:

- How does the interviewee define the concept of citizenship?
- Does the interviewee feel that social life in Sweden is easily accessible? i.e. What kind of opportunities do they have to build a social network with ethnic Swedish women.
- Does the interviewee consider that their citizenship has given them any advantages in different areas?
- Does the interviewee think that their situation, as described in the answers to the above questions, is influenced by the fact that they are women and also from ethnic minority?

1.3 The structure of the work

The paper is divided into two parts where the first part of the paper consists of a literature review that elaborates on the theoretical framework that supports the research materials. The point of departure of the theoretical framework is social-liberal thinking, which is discussed in section 2.1 and 2.2. This is followed by section 2.3, which presents feminist- criticisms that discuss about the theoretical framework of marginalized citizenship and also feminist research and feminist movements.

1.3.1 Previous Research Design and Literatures Presentations

Sociologist Diana Mulinari is a professor of Gender studies at Lund University. Her research theme lies within the feminists' theoretical views on inequality and social changes and racism. She wrote an article called "Invandrarkvinnans medborgarskap" in SOU 1999:8, in which she uses the terms class, gender, and race in connection to immigrants and citizenship. In this article Mulinari connected the concept of class, gender and race using a research design conducted in Britain and USA between 1980-1990.

The study deals with ethnic questions and race relations. Mulinari shares the same point of departure as Haraway, which is 'situated knowledge'. She describes how in the past terms like class, gender, race and sexuality were discussed from the positions of the researcher, and often opens the debate of 'who is speaking on the behalf of whom'? The theme of 'immigrant women citizenship' runs alongside the theoretical framework of race, which has its roots in the Chicago school. Here Mulinari uses the historical explanation studies from Britain and USA conducted during the period 1980-1990 to explain how the concept of race and politics became an important contribution for the study of race. This remains an important factor in the study of the questions of race and its relation to the state and social politics. It has become crucial because the creation of race categories exists and the term has a social meaning for inequality, racism and ethnicity. The important matter she points out in this article is that when we speak about immigrant women and minorities that experience racism in their day to day lives, one must remember that they are not homogenous but extraordinary and they differ in the question of education, class, race, gender, sexuality and political background.⁴

Meanwhile Ålund deals with the theme of ethnicity and shares the same views as Mulinari. Both of them study questions related to citizenship from an ethnic point of departure; this theme runs alongside international migrations and ethnic relations. In Ålund's research design, "The power of definitions, Immigrations women and problems- centered", she claims that Swedish feminist studies seem to be lacking in this area as not many materials since have been written since the 1990s. Most of the empirical studies that were conducted were directed within an area such as working life or health and care.⁵ Some other important facts Ålund discusses in her article regarding Swedish research and researchers is the lack of interest in the prospects of immigrant women, and the tendency to see these women as a passive traditional collective. Furthermore, their findings and results are often connected to society and its relation to different immigrant

⁴ SOU 1999:8 Demokrati Utredningen Invandrarskap och Medborgarskap. Skrift no 13. Stockholm: Elanders Gotab. Mulinari speaks about ethnocentric in SOU

⁵ A., Ålund 1991B, 1994, 1999 Ålund, Aleksandra (1991b) 'The Power of Definitions' in Ålund, Aleksandra and Schierup, Carl-Ulrik (1991) Paradoxes of Multiculturalism. Aldershot: Avesbury

cultures, while failing to address questions of social structure and power relation. Meanwhile post-colonial theoreticians Wuokko Knocke, also a sociologist, and Paulina de los Reyes share the same point of departure in their articles and reports. De los Reyes deals with questions of how the Swedish majority sees immigrant women. The study on immigrant women had enormous significance for white Swedish women as it improved their status, as the equal opportunity politics also addressed their issues, therefore this benefitted the Swedish majority more than the immigrant women. Meanwhile Wuokko Knocke discusses the situation of immigrant women relating to the Swedish labour market.

The theoretical discussions focus on American literature; the social-liberal definitions of ‘‘citizenship’’ and also the feminist criticisms of the definitions are in use with the help of feminist citizenship theoreticians, M.C.B. Voet, who wrote her dissertation within the area of ‘‘Feminism and Citizenship, Feminist Critiques of the concept of the social –liberal Citizenship’’, Ruth Lister and Susan Moller Orkin, and lastly, the work of T.H. Marshall, a liberal theoretician who has developed more in-depth explanations for citizenship in ‘‘Citizenship and Class’’. The purpose for feminist theoretician works uses the social –liberal definitions because it carries a more holistic definition of citizenship than others that are not founded within the work of liberal-theoreticians. Marshall, however, introduced an important holistic definition of citizenship where his theory of citizenship became widely accepted. I choose to use the feminist theoreticians widely in this study because they gave more holistic descriptions on the concept of citizenship compared to liberal theoreticians.

Feminist criticism against marginalized citizenship and ethnocentrism got its first wind from the USA and UK. Authors such as Bell Hooks and Patricia Collin are some of the feminists that devoted their research to questions regarding ethnocentrism, which leads to the dynamics of social movement upon black feminist epistemology. In Ålund’s report, ‘‘The power of definitions, Immigrant Women and the problems-centered ideologies ‘‘ she refers to the later versions of theoretical frameworks of other authors; here the authors using the same reference are being used to a certain extent. Meanwhile the relevance of international feminist debates to this study, which boiled down during the period of 1980-90, lie in their use of the latest versions of the literature between gender and ethnicity. The definitions of ‘‘point of intersections’’ between gender and ethnicity are related to debates surrounding marginalization and citizenship. Here the debates are focused on feminist movements and research attitude.

This study is about immigrant women and their personal relationships, as well as their experiences connecting to the concept of citizenship in their lives as narratives. I consider the study to be unique because not every woman will experience the concept of citizenship in the same way; neither could the experience of citizenship among these women be measured using statistical values questionnaires.

1.3.2 Method

This study will involve conducting personal interviews with immigrant women who have attained Swedish citizenship. Previous studies and literature will be used to analyse my findings

The interviews are based on a semi-structured design, which contains open questions followed by several specific questions so that I can have some follow up interviews. The semi-structured model will allow me to reconstruct the questions to fit the conversations.⁶ There is a risk in this model of interviews because this type of interview is open and flexible and depends on the participants' responses. This means that the interview questions were prepared prior to the interviews and thus the risk is that, as the interviewer, one needs to constantly remind oneself of one's own position and motive in searching for answers to the study. Another advantage of open interviews is that there is a bigger possibility to avoid misinterpretation.

The interview materials have been analysed using the theoretical definitions of "citizenship" in connection to the women's own reflections, and their experiences, based on gender and ethnicity dimensions. In this study I have treated the interview as narrative interactions taking my point of departure from Czarniawska's book, which is called *Narratives in Social Science Research Introducing Qualitative Methods*. Czarniawska explains that, in order to understand a society or part of the society, it is important to discover a repertoire of legitimate stories and find out how they have evolved.⁷

In chapter four Czarniawska describes narrative in an interview situation as a method where an interview is two people seeking knowledge and understanding in a common conversational endeavor.⁸ Here Czarniawska refers to S. Kvale's book "Inter Views" about how interview techniques have been conducted over time. She describes a form of interviewing technique,

⁶ Kvale, Page 117-120

⁷ B.Czarniawska (2004). *Introducing Qualitative Methods Narratives Social Science Research*. London : Sage Publications. Page 5

⁸ B.Czarniawska (2004). *Introducing Qualitative Methods Narratives Social Science Research*. London : Sage Publications Page 48

which is not a mutual exchange and the interviews were considered unpleasant; she calls it “inquisitions or an interrogation”.⁹ It is also important for the interviewer to bear in mind that interviews do not stand for anything else, rather they represent nothing but themselves. Czarniawaska’s method and concept explains that interviews are not a window on social realities but are a part, a sample of that reality.¹⁰

I use Czarniawaska’s model for this study because the concept of how immigrant women describe their citizenship and how these women experience their citizenship is a type of narrative, almost story telling. The interviews have been carried out in Katrineholm, which is a town with 30,000 inhabitants; a one-hour train rides South of Stockholm. I came in to contact with Anita Kittig Boman who currently works as “arbetsförmedlare” at the Katrineholm employment office. Through her I came in to contact with the immigrant organization called “Neem”.¹¹ The organization was founded in 2002 and entered into force in 2003; membership in Neem is open to women of all nationalities. The acronym “Neem” stands for “Network for entrepreneurs for ethnic minorities” and it was started by women of ethnic minorities who participated in a development program for Equal diversity in entrepreneurship. I came in to contact with the interviewees through this organization, as they were able to refer me to other women entrepreneurs in Katrineholm who are immigrants.

The interviews are their stories and how these immigrant women experience their citizenship in their daily lives. My position in this interview is not interrogate neither to become a researcher detective but simply to tell their stories, because, as Czarniawaska says, “an interview is two people seeking knowledge and understanding in a common conversational endeavor”.¹² The interview material was composed through working using the theoretical framework, which is connected to women’s narrative. My intention is that the interview material should highlight the theoretical framework through the personal experiences of the interviewees. A total of seven interviews were conducted with women from various ethnic backgrounds such as Tanzania, Kenya, Russia, Sri Lanka, Iraq, Nigeria and Indonesia; all of which I came in to contact with through the organization Neem.

⁹ Ibid. Page 48 an interview is two people seeking knowledge and understanding in a common conversational endeavor

¹⁰ ibid 49

¹¹ <http://www.neem.se/OmNEEM/AboutNEEMinenglish/tabid/1516/Default.aspx> (05.05.2008)

¹² B.Czarniawaska (2004). *Introducing Qualitative Methods Narratives Social Science Research*. London : Sage Publications Page 48

1.3.3 Limitations of the scope of the work

The limitations of the scope of the work are based upon the criteria according to which I selected the interviewees. I have chosen to study interviewees that have technically obtained Swedish citizenship and who are female. The interviewees come from various ethnic backgrounds, they are all aged 18 years or older, and the length of the interviews were approximately one hour. Lastly, the interviewees have diverse educational backgrounds and civil status. My interview questions are not based on why these women left their home country, for example whether these women left their home country because of political reasons. I chose not to address these types of personal questions because it might arouse some unpleasant emotions in the women and I regarded this as an ethical consideration. The study is meant to focus only on the experiences of immigrant women as Swedish citizens who are not of Swedish origin. The study does not intend to investigate the women's origins nor their reasons for coming to Sweden.

2. Theoretical Framework on citizenship

2.1 The social-liberals definitions

The theoretical models of citizenship, presented in this section, will provide the study with an analytical framework, against which the empirical data will be examined. In doing so, it will provide the concept of citizenship with some room for experience. There are many different approaches to the concept of citizenship, however I have chosen the social-liberal definition of citizenship as my point of departure, as well as feminist criticisms against the social-liberal definitions of citizenship. The social-liberalism roots of classical liberalism come from modern classic liberalism, which can be found in Great Britain in the works of, among others Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Adam Smith. Locke is to be considered of particular importance for the development of the notion of liberal citizenship.¹³

The point of departure of the official Swedish definition of citizenship lies in the notion of the social-liberal definition. The social-liberal thinkers' arguments were built upon notions of individualism and the freedom of individuals, which is most important. This is also followed by representative democracy, which means that "all public powers proceed from the people".¹⁴ Here is the common platform where political debates are discussed, the basic ground for

¹³ See Lister (1995) pp. 218-219, and Clarke, Paul Barry & Foweraker, Joe (2001) *Encyclopedia of Democratic Thought*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 52-54.

¹⁴ <http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/2853> (05.5.2008)

democracy, shaping and sharing political debates,¹⁵ which is done in the western world. A parliamentary democratic system in combination with a welfare state is an excellent model for social – liberalism in practice.¹⁶ The theory of social-liberalism also strives to merge an equal citizenship with a version of plurality.¹⁷

T. Marshall's theoretical framework was published in 1950 "Citizenship and Social Class" and has been influential but has also been heavily debated and criticized from feminist perspectives.¹⁸ In his work Marshall analyses the problematic between citizenship and capitalism; however the foundation of social-liberal views of citizenship is a "formal membership", which is based on legal definitions of rights and obligations.

Marshall identifies three conceptually and historically distinct elements in citizenship. On the first level is the civil citizenship, which contains the fundamental liberal rights such as the right to own property, to enter in to contract, and the right to access court in any event. So one could identify these elements of citizenship as "legal citizenship".¹⁹

The second level is political citizenship. This element consists of the right to vote, and to participate representatively in political life. Here is a basic and formal acknowledgement of an individual's right to be treated equally in the political system and of the reciprocal obligations, which are taxes and the obligation to work. Political citizenship also consists of all the ancillary rights and benefits which make meaningful participation possible: freedom of political speech, the right to move freely through public space, free choice of occupation, equality of opportunity, equal access to income wealth and so forth.²⁰

The third element is social citizenship. Marshall identifies this final element as being the individual's independent access to the basic social goods provided by the community to its members. Thus access to welfare benefits, and the entire range of welfare services from education to medical treatment form part of this third element.²¹ The work of Marshall and his analysis of citizenship, seen as a linear model that gradually extends rights, is seen by some critics to be less

¹⁵ M.C.B., Voet, (1995) *Feminism and citizenship: Feminist Critiques of the Social-liberal concept of citizenship*. Leiden : Rijkuni., Page 22

¹⁶ M.C.B., Voet., . (1995) Page 24

¹⁷ Ibid page 26

¹⁸ R., Lister. (1997) *Feminist Review* N0 57, Autumn pp 28-48 (see page2)

¹⁹ T.H., Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1964. Page 43, see also Marshall & Bottomore (1992) p. 7.

²⁰ T.H., Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1964. Page 58-59, see also

²¹ Ibid 58-59

than idealistic when it comes to women.²²

Although Marshall's model of citizenship is somewhat simplified however, and he admits this model of rights has been developing since the 18th century, where political rights mainly evolved during the 19th century and eventually social rights during the 20th century.²³

Marshall is most interested in the social rights as he is primarily interested in the relationship between citizenship and inequality. Thus the issue of social class becomes important as it has relevance for Marshall, as he states it is “ “...reasonable to expect that the impact of citizenship on social class should take the form of a conflict between opposing principles”.²⁴ The reason for this is that while citizenship is based on principles of equality, social class is based on inequality. The social –liberalism theory admits the need for recognition on the behalf of the state is the starting point for achieving equality, however this point of departure varies between those who advocate social-liberalism and those who do not.²⁵

According to social-liberalists, political participations, which come along with the citizenship status, are seen as possibilities. Later one could use these possibilities in any degree, which is up to each individual. These thinkers argue that the state should be neutral even when it comes to political participation. The question of compulsory political participation cannot be seen as part of idealistic citizenship, because individuals would then be forced to participate in specific types of questions.

2.3 Summary

This section decried that citizenship has its roots in the male image and it is hard to define because of its many different meanings in various historical periods, languages and theories. The section discussed the basic meanings of citizenship, as well as citizenship from a theoretical point of view. T. H. Marshall's point of departure describes citizenship as full membership in a community. From his point of view citizenship is a universal construct in abstract form. Marshall's perspective of citizenship as universal is supported by liberal theories of citizenship, and is a reductionist view, which defines citizenship as a legal status in the form of the rights that

²² Ibid 58-59

²³ Marshall's analysis concerns the development of citizenship rights in Great Britain and, thus, does not claim to have universal validity.

²⁴ Marshall & Bottomore (1992) Page. 18.

²⁵ M.C.B., Voet (1995) Page 34

an individual holds within the state. On the theoretical level, all individuals have universal access to these rights by virtue of their membership in a state. Rights were confined to the civil and political spheres under classic liberalism. In the twentieth century, rights were extended to embrace the social sphere demanded by social movements.

The next chapter will discuss citizenship and its relation to feminism and gender. At first, a more careful definition of citizenship will then be given in order to understand why women have become marginalized. The chapter will focus on the different dimensions, dichotomies that are public private issues surrounding citizenship.

2.3.4 Feminist criticism against social –liberals’ definition

Feminist political theorists criticized the social-liberal definition of ‘‘citizenship’’ as exposing gender bias in which women are excluded from the theory and practice of citizenship.²⁶ R. Lister, a feminist political theoretician, argues against the social-liberal definition of citizenship because of its universalistic abstractions and because it carries gender hidden variables.²⁷ What Lister means is that this gender variable could be defined simply as ‘‘white male heterosexual without disability’’.²⁸ The irony of Marshall’s citizenship model and others sharing this view is that they merely notice women and men do not share the common platforms while defining citizenship. The feminist citizenship attempts to understand both citizenship and political participation as being common platforms in discussing the status of citizenship against social-liberal theoreticians. Gender differences are one of the most heated debates when it comes to the question of invisible citizens that are underrepresented in mainstream political discussions.²⁹

Within feminist literature, criticism concerning citizenship, and also the private sphere of the family, has generated a range of responses. According to feminist criticisms, the social-liberal conceptualization is inadequate because in general women have more difficulties even today in the areas of rights because of the persistence of gender inequalities, and the weakness of women’s rights.³⁰

²⁶ R.Lister., (1997a) Page 66

²⁷ R.Lister .,(1997a) Page 66

²⁸ R.Lister .,(1997a) Page 66

²⁹ R.Lister., (1997a) Page 68

³⁰ M.C.B., Voet (1995) page 173-174

In addition, feminist critics against the social-liberal conceptualization of citizens rights is that it was formulated according to men and their public sphere, while women are still relatively unprotected, especially in the private sphere.³¹

The feminist debate against the social-liberal conceptualization of citizenship and its practical conditions is one that has provoked feminists for some time because it carries complex ideas regarding the term freedom. This is seen as a problematic area as it visualized individuals as abstract concepts, which causes a separation between the private and the public sphere.³² This category explains the traditional models of interpretation where men belong to the public sphere, which is linked to the political sphere, in contrast to the family and private life, which belongs to the category of women.³³ Within the theoretical paradigm of liberalism dichotomy on private/public, debates raged among feminist critics because it reflects a set of standards, a model looking from a male perspective, which contains gender characteristics and traditional roles³⁴

Feminist criticism denies the notion of citizens as “free” because the concept is vague and does not fit reality. Feminists argue that individuals are not totally free or free from oppression in the western models of democratic systems. Thus, when the theoretical social-liberalism paradigm defines every citizen as free from oppression, in reality we are ignoring some unfortunate groups of people and their difficulties.³⁵ In addition, the social-liberal conceptualization of freedom has counter-response in reality as women have a lower status in comparison to men as a group. The formal definition of freedom makes no difference however, when individual women’s freedom of participation has been hindered because women are underrepresented due to the assumption that their proper and only sphere is the private sphere. Women’s freedom is also often taken away by violence and sexualisation conducted by male perpetrators. Gender has an impact on our conceptualization as citizens, although in principle citizenship is also only given to adults.³⁶

Some feminists argue negative freedom is not nearly the same as freedom because it has been heavily painted with the idea of the white heterosexual male as the ideal citizens.

Lister argues that the public-private divide is pivotal to women, literally excluding them from full citizenship in both a theoretical and practical sense. Throughout history women were denied their

³¹ M.C.B., Voet (1995) Page 173-174

³² R., Lister (1997a) Page 69

³³ R., Lister (1997a) Page 69

³⁴ R., Lister (1997a) Page 69

³⁵ M.C.B. Voet., (1999) Page 1143

³⁶ M.C.B., Voet (1995) page 102-103 also 237, see also R., Lister (1997) Page 70-71

rights to participate in the public realm, and in addition, were treated as second-class citizens. When it comes to citizenship women represent invisibility and inferiority. The public sphere is valued and appreciated, while the private is considered unpaid work, and unpaid women in the home might be one of the women's tragedies of the 20th century.³⁷

2.3.5 Gender Constructions in Citizenship

Among other feminist scholars that argue that citizenship is gendered concept is the American sociologist Carol Pateman, who shares the same point of departure as Lister, believing that the theoretical disembodied and the public-private are the fundamental reasons for women's past and the continuing trend of the exclusion of women from full citizenship. In addition, she argues that citizenship has been defined according to male perspectives in order to suit them, meanwhile women and their activities seem to be overlooked as, within public exercise of citizenship, it falls under the category of secondary private sphere. Pateman argues that full citizenship is often seen as masculine because of its characteristics. In addition, she argues the need for individuals, embedded within a particular history, social and gender. Lister too argues that the private and dichotomy are barriers for women, theoretically and practically, in attaining full citizenship because women have been put in the private sphere, which leads to a negative impact on women being active in the public arena. She notes fellow citizens have a common burden to contribute to the nations, but Marshall's definition only serves gainful employment, and in reality, the men were seen as the breadwinners for the family. These masculine characteristics show the practical definition of what is considered citizenship and their contributions, and who by per-definition, could contribute, in addition to gaining benefit from the welfare state.³⁸

Pateman explains another concept of citizenship which is the "sexual differentiated" conception that would recognize women because they are women, as women and could also be a possible solution to this dilemma. In this way, she argues women would be seen as women and through this could become politically significant in an area where men are lacking, i.e. to create life, meaning motherhood. She strongly feels motherhood should be granted political relevance for defining citizenship, which is a big ultimate test for citizenship. In addition, she argues for fighting the patriarchal structure, such as giving an alternative to challenge it, and promote new methods regarding the women's question. On the other hand, theoretical and social changes that

37 R. Lister,(1997:) page 6. see also (2003) *Feminist Theory and Practice of Citizenship*

Paper presented at the Annual Conference of German Political Science Association page

38 C.Pateman. (1996) " Att arbete att äga att bidra. Demokrati på 1990-talet. Page 207-208 in SOU 1997:114

require women and men to be full members of free democratic society are far reaching, as can be imagined. In order to build a society wherein women are included as full citizens, the political body must be reconstructed and reassembled to fit.

This task extends from the rejection of the patriarchal separation of the private and public, to a transformation of our individuality and sexual identities as feminine and masculine beings. These identities now stand in contrast to the multi-faceted expression of the patriarchal dichotomy between reason and desire.³⁹ Pateman points out that “The most profound and complex problem for political theory and practice is how the two bodies of humankind and feminine and masculine individuality can be fully incorporated into political life”.⁴⁰

However, Pateman argues that the future of autonomous and democratic differentiation is nearly impossible with the current state of patriarchal domination. Pateman argues for the paradox of being included as citizens and excluded as women by contesting that we should not eliminate ‘men’ and ‘women’ from our reflections on citizenship in favor of gender – neutrality. She rather argues that if both sexes are to be full citizens, “the meaning of sexual difference has to cease to be the difference between freedom and subordination”.⁴¹

Pateman’s standpoint is linked to what is called the woman-centred feminists who are not in favour of gender-neutral citizenship, as they regard to be pointless, doomed to failure. Instead, women-centred feminist’s criticism argues that we need to rethink citizenship from the viewpoint of the female citizen.

However, in 1990 Helga Hernes in her book *Welfare State And Women Power* explains women and Scandinavian’s welfare after World War Two. She stressed the change between the private and the public but continued to criticize welfare state thinkers for ignoring women; in reality the development of the modern welfare state affected women and men differently. These two quotations of Hernes in which she contests a welfare state follow:

A woman-friendly state would enable women to have a natural relationship to their children, their work, and public life.... The Nordic democracies embody a state form that makes it possible to transform into woman-friendly societies...

A woman-friendly state would not force harder choices on women than

³⁹ C.Pateman (1989) *The patriarchal welfare state* Cambridge: Polity Press Page 50-53

⁴⁰ C. Pateman Ibid Page 53

⁴¹ C.Pateman (1992) Page 2

on men, or permit unjust treatment on the basis of 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 will not have to choose futures that demand greater sacrifices from them than are expected of men. It would be, in short, a state where injustice on the basis of gender would be largely eliminated without an increase in other forms of inequality, such as among groups of women.⁴²

The social -democratic tradition also seems to collapse and contradict itself when it comes to questions about equality. It has the characteristic of differentiating when it comes to the private and public. Here differentiation means the asymmetrical relationship wherein a particular type causes another type of difference, which is the private and public. To understand the reason why women have been excluded from the political decision making process, Hernes then analyses the consequences of the welfare state. Equal and fair material distribution is one of the strongest Scandinavian welfare state ideologies, which means that individuals are expected to make equal contributions for the progress of the society. To simplify, individuals who benefit from the state are should never receive more than their income. These demands on individual presentations contribute to an unequal distribution regarding paid and unpaid work, which indirectly questions the citizen's status.⁴³ Many feminist scholars have criticized and are against the liberalism theory because of their dichotomy on the private-public, as the definition is being used too vaguely. It leads to many important questions that are not observed by the political theoretician. Voet suggests that liberal theories of citizenship:

Tell us that equal and full citizenship for all adults born within the territory of the state already exists. It tells us that with the disappearance of feudalism and slavery, and the inclusion of all adults in suffrage, political inequality has also been eliminated. After all, as far as public life is concerned, all members of western societies have an equal status and possess equal rights.⁴⁴

⁴² H. Hernes, (1987). *Welfare State and Woman Power. Essays in State Feminism*, Vojens: Norwegian University Press: 15.

⁴³ H . Helga (1987). *Welfare State and Woman Power. Essays in State Feminism*, Vojens: Norwegian University Press: page 144

⁴⁴M.C.B., Voet 1998 Page 9-11

In fact Voet is critical of liberalist theories of citizenship because they carry universal norms that could not be applied in practice to the concept of citizenship. Her argument is based on the fact that women and members of minority groups throughout history formed marginalized groups and were prevented from gaining full membership in communities. However the current citizenship was based on a two dimensional model of rights and duties, and this model carries a series of dichotomies as it connected the male duties with the female. Among others who contest citizenship as being universal, as well as consider it to be a gendered concept is Lister. She argues that the public-private spheres are fundamental for women's past and continued exclusion from full citizenship status, and she adds that citizenship has been defined according to a male image. In addition she also argues that the public-private spheres in theory and on a practical level, were barriers to women's citizenship because the private duties were formed according to woman, which have a negative impact on women's ability to be active in the public arena. This division within the liberal can be seen date back to the 17th century and connects to when women were eluded from the public life and liberals discussed women's rights and their responsibility connecting to the private, which is in relation to marriage and family. Meanwhile men had a political role, not only as individuals, but also as head of the family and the breadwinner.⁴⁵

2.3.6 Marginalized citizenship within feminist criticism

Intersectionality is a set of way of describing the interactions in a system of oppression. The term was born out of efforts to specify how race and gender relationships shaped political life. It came in the form of writing of black feminists who argue against current thought about interactions of race and the gender system as equal, because it does not address those problems which are faced by black women. They argued that their problems and experience could not be described as either the black men or the problems of white women. This is because black women face many problems as "black women" and their unique perspectives, identities and experiences cannot be explained from the examination of the experiences and positions of either black men or white women. Angela Davis and Bell Hooks were among the first black women in the United States to question how race, along with gender, oppressed women. Hooks' *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center* (1984) and *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (1988) was highly influential in starting a debate among racialized women on their own experiences.

For example, Bell Hooks in her book called, *Ain't I a Woman* argues that black women's

⁴⁵ S.M. Okin (1991) *Gender Public and Private* see in H.David (1991) *Political Theory Today*. Cambridge :Polity Press

experience has been obscured by the political movement. Hooks argued that racial identity and racism distinguished the experience of black, and by implication, other racialized women, and were as significant as gender in oppressing them. Black women, she argued, looked to the comfort of the home and family relations as a safe harbour from the racism of the larger society. Gender oppressed them, no doubt, but only in tandem with race and class. The critics were against feminist theory, in which the definition as "women" became a norm that was applied to middle class white women only. It was their experience and opinion that has been researched, and the political participation was circulated only among themselves; in addition, these were the first women groups that articulated feminist speech.⁴⁶

American feminists such as Collins and Hooks have argued strongly against the model-making in the second wave feminism; along with them were also lesbian feminists who came forward criticizing the middle class white women from the western world that dominated the feminist debates and created strong interpretation. In addition, the theoretical discourse tends to focus on black women as a separate group. However black women's experience differs in critical ways from white women's experience (Hooks, 1981)⁴⁷. From the same point of departure, Spelman has argued that "identity" is not like pop-beads: People cannot discern the "woman part" from the "African American part" from the "middle class part" from the "middle class part"⁴⁸. Spelman in *Inessential Woman* strongly opposes such an additive method, arguing instead that women's identities and their oppression are integrated and inseparable. She notes that "One's gender identity is not related to one's racial and class identity as the parts of pop-bead necklaces are related, separable and insertable in other 'strands' with different racial and class 'parts'"⁴⁹. In other words, "As opposed to examining gender, race, class and nation, as separate systems of oppression, Intersectionality explores how these systems mutually construct one another"⁵⁰.

Black feminists asserted that when white feminists interpreted the "women" situation in relation to men, it is usually taken from a wider majority perspective in question of colour, which these women share with the white; meanwhile the black women's situation differs in this matter. Black women's marginalization is strengthened by white women's uncritical position in speaking to women's groups. As an example, white power seems to work as a 'starting

⁴⁶ E. Spelman, 1988. *Inessential Woman*. Boston: Beacon Press. Page 4, Page 16

⁴⁷ B.Hooks, . 1981. *Ain't I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism*. Boston: South End Press. 159-196

⁴⁸ E. Spelman, 1988. *Inessential Woman*. Boston: Beacon Press. Page 4, Page 16

⁴⁹ E. Spelman, 1988. *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought*. Boston: Beacon Press.

⁵⁰ C. P. Hill., 1998. "Its All in the Family: Intersections of gender, race and nation." *Hypatia*. Page 63
13(3): 62-82.

point'', which is seldom problematized. In the western world, people of white colour constituted a norm, thus their theories were never questioned, neither has it been discussed. The reality is that black feminists or third world feminists were often seen from their original background, by their colour and their differences. In the words of Hook:

The force that allows white feminist authors to make no references to racial identity in their books about women that are actually about white women is the same one that would compel any author writing exclusively on the black women to refer explicitly to their racial identity. That force is racism.⁵¹

This suggests that the white middle class feminists had a lack of consideration towards black women and also the experiences of immigrant women, which were underrepresented. In other words those women are considered different to native-born women.⁵² Most of the time the immigrant women were subject to stereotypical remarks; these particular remarks result from a combination of being ''black'' and also from the fact that they are ''women'', and the black woman's experience and background was differentiated and also seen as asymmetrical, all of which mean that she cannot be compared to white women and their experiences.⁵³ However the experiences of black women were not unified because of their position. Firstly, these women's experiences were silenced and at the same time the position is considered to be below men. Again it is about the nature of a complex structure, a combination of racism and sexism.⁵⁴

In addition, the question of subordination could not exclusively be connected to matters relating to discrimination, because the concept of discrimination was matter of proof and evidence that individuals were actually subjected to an act, and a motive that can be simplified as seeing from one dimension point of view. Meanwhile, when it comes to gender, sex, or ethnicity as a point of departure, were in use as proof then the result should have been different than if the discriminated individual was not a woman, or black etc. The second point of departure, which is gender, sex, or ethnicity, could only address matters concerning experiences; neither models

⁵¹ B.Hook (1981) *Ain't I a Woman*. Black Women and Feminism. London: Pluto Press. Page 138

⁵² Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1993) Page 113 and also 124

⁵³ P.H.Collins (2004) Chapter 4 See also Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1993). Page 101

⁵⁴ B.Hook (1981) Page 9

could address matters concerning the visibility experience prior to confirming the ‘‘intersection’’ between two models such as: ‘‘being a women and also as black’’ in a specific situations.⁵⁵ In addition, some criticize the term discrimination because it works only for a special kind of subgroup that is seen as being more privileged than the rest of the group. As the privileged positions represent the ‘‘whole group’’, which could be simplified as white women or black man respectively, those individuals who are present within the intersection model were marginalized and are ‘‘invisible’’. Therefore, those who follow this point of departure must clarify their expression in which the person of question is discriminated.⁵⁶

In addition, within the contemporary feminist criticism debates on ‘‘experiences’’ taken from black women’s perspective, their experiences were not just variables that one could add, but naturally these varying experiences must be observed and analyzed and also must be influenced.⁵⁷ Debates surrounding the term citizenship are often present within feminism. The debates often circulate around generalizing the concept of citizenship and the consequences of using this definition in regards to a universal definition of citizenship. Naturally the universal definition of citizenship is powerful and dynamic, as the term constitutes a legal definition, which is rights and democracy, followed by the rights of the individual and also group rights. Supposing one considers replacing the universal term for citizenship - we are naturally also facing some consequences. Losing concept would mean we are losing basic equality when one demanding for changes. Again, I refer to Ruth Lister, as she simplified how one should apply the definition despite rejecting it due to its inherent weaknesses. In addition she argues, the reason the term ‘‘ women’’ is open for deconstruction is that when the feminist movement originated, it was connected with women’s citizenship, as the gendered character of citizenship was identified by feminists.⁵⁸

3. Public image of immigrant women in Sweden

In section 1.1 I highlighted Sweden's integration policy over the period of the 1990s. Despite a huge number of campaigns and speeches regarding integration, the policy still has had many

⁵⁵ E. Spelman (1988) Page 322-325

⁵⁶ Crenshaw (1989) Page 322-325

⁵⁷ Crenshaw (1989) Page 314-315

⁵⁸ R. Lister (1997) ‘‘ Dilemmas in Engendering Citizenship’’ in Crossing Borders. Gender and Citizenship in Transitions. Page 61

failures and Sweden remains a segregated country. The official report conducted by the women's movement and also the results shown in feminist research have drawn a huge amount of attention in Sweden. Meanwhile gender researchers claim that Sweden still remains a homogenous entity, using the society argument as a point of departure, and there is still a lack of gender perspectives in matters concerning migration. Although issues concerning immigrant women are often debated within research, this still leads to marginality and anonymity.⁵⁹

Paulina de los Reyes has argued about the Equal Opportunity Report, which was conducted in 1977 as a diversion as it were, used to exclude, eliminate and also ‘de-generate’ immigrant women in the name of equality.⁶⁰ In addition the Swedish public discourse often contested the living standard of immigrant women as incapable or even declared as incapacity and this image of foretelling creates a negative image of immigrant women⁶¹ as well as causing them to be seen as victims, which is also problematic. In addition, when it comes to matters concerning migration, as well as questions regarding integration using an ethnocentric point of departure, it has been confirmed that the majority sees others as problematic and threatening, and explained how the term problematic could be used to describe the existence of discrimination.⁶² In addition, it also explained that the marginalization in the society exists and is disguised in the form of culture instead of taking an obvious form of discrimination.⁶³ On the other hand Swedish immigrant women were drawn within the public discourse as well as in research areas, and are embedded with negative articulations.⁶⁴ Although Sweden has deliberately accepted to alter the core of the integration policy, the result of research says otherwise. Thus, during the 90's the credibility of the researchers, as well as their positions, was questioned although those types of research were not intended. In addition, recommendations were made within research areas so that women's experiences could be studied as important variables, and knowledge about immigrants who lived in a strong patriarchal culture could be gained through them.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ P. De los Reyes (1998b) Reyes, Paulina de los (1998 b) ”Jämställdhet på svenskt vis” in *Invandrare och minoriteter* nr. 2/98

⁶⁰ P. De los Reyes ,I ., Molina & D. Mulinari. (2002) Introductions- Makten (o)lika förklådnader. Page 39 in P. De los Reyes ,I ., Molina & D. Mulinari. (2002) Makten (o)lika förklådnader. Kön Klass & etnicitet i den postkolonial Sverige. Stockholm: Atlas. See also Reyes de los (1998) ” Jämställdhet på svenskt” vis i *invandrare och minoriteter* nr. 2/98 r

⁶¹ A. Ålund., (1998) page. 3

⁶² A. Ålund (1999) Page 50-51

⁶³ A. Ålund (1999) Page 50

⁶⁴ W. Knocke., (1999) Page 4

⁶⁵ A. Ålund., (1999) Page 3

3.1 *The public definition of culture*

Within the public discourse, Ålund explains that the term culture boiled down to segregation; high unemployment is regarded to belong to the “other culture” rather than regarding it as a social structure which limits the individual as the object of the culture. This brings us back to the question relating to immigrant women. Drawing on her framework of ethnographic research (1991, 1991b, 1994, 1999), documenting lives of immigrant women, and highlighting some problems behind the curtain of culture as well as how it is defined and understood broadly, she also pins points uses of culture as an umbrella to differentiate the relation between immigrants and Swedish.⁶⁶ In addition, she argues ethnicity and culture as being something fairly static as well as constant.⁶⁷ Furthermore she adds, the Swedish approach, including Swedish research, is embedded with ethnocentric characteristic views since it discusses ethnic relations in terms of cultural differences because it concludes a fixed and singular understanding between “traditional” and “modern”.⁶⁸ Ålund’s theory of culture emphasizes tension by the “immigrants cultural productions”, which is noted as something one could take pride for, as well as undercutting the integration process⁶⁹. More broadly, Swedish research includes immigrant associations as the object of study wherein multiculturalism and integration are considered to play crucial roles in unpacking the power structures that coexist in society.⁷⁰ Although this kind of politics allows individuals to be different, at the same time it also influences individual’s opportunities for equality in a negative way.⁷¹ Within the feminist debates concerning citizenship, few theoreticians agree that there should be a better understanding to improve the standard of living of women because it is uneven. Meanwhile others argue that the universal definition of citizenship plays an important role because it constantly opens up for challenges, as well as changes in practice.⁷²

3.2 *Dogma problems and equality*

Within the scientific research community, the term ethnicity often coincides with questions about citizenship, social conditions, political participation and so on, in which the conditions are often ascribed to the immigrants but dismissed without questioning the conduct of the majority in the

⁶⁶ A.Ålund, Aleksandra and Schierup, Carl-Ulrik (1991) *Paradoxes of Multiculturalism*. Aldershot: Avesburt

⁶⁷ A.Ålund (1999) Page 47

⁶⁸ A.Ålund, (1999) Page 51

⁶⁹ A.Ålund, Aleksandra and Schierup, Carl-Ulrik (1991) *Paradoxes of Multiculturalism*. Aldershot: Avesburt page 14

⁷⁰ A.Ålund, Aleksandra and Schierup, Carl-Ulrik (1991) *Paradoxes of Multiculturalism*. Aldershot: Avesburt page 20

⁷¹ A.Ålund (1999) p

⁷² R.Lister (1997a) Page 85-90, Lister (1997b) Page 61

bigger picture⁷³. Ålund highlights the fact that immigrant women are often subjected to a stereotyped image wherein immigrant women have a lack of self representation and are perceived as incapable; in other words, immigrant women suffer from a great deal of negative elements in the areas of education and culture etc. Furthermore the majority of the society tends to address all immigrant women as a singular group, labeled using “culture” as an umbrella definition.⁷⁴

The popular stereotypical image of immigrant women has often been articulated as passive and is also seen as a specific subordinate group of women. It also connects immigrant women to traditions, differentiating and deviant in the social process.⁷⁵ In the work of Knocke, patterns of structural conditions that deal with unemployment areas were coined together under ethnic segmentation. On the other hand Knocke refers to the scenarios as a complex process, thus the pattern illustrates an individual cultural manifestation, and this manifestation leads to subordination within individuals.⁷⁶

The Equal Opportunity policy, as well as matters concerning questions of equality, tends to overlook the position of immigrant women, such as giving culture as a concept that hinders immigrant women from being integrated in to Swedish society, and also the idea that immigrant men forbid their women to develop themselves. On the other hand this is the usual way that questions regarding equal opportunity have been interpreted, as well generalizing the immigrant women in relation to their culture and traditions. By connecting the issue indirectly to a cultural dimension, one could argue that immigrant women are exposed to discrimination in terms of equality. The underlying concept that the immigrant needs to be educated on equality, and immigrant women are a problematic variable is, in fact, discriminating enough. Immigrant women are often pressured from the majority to accept and to accommodate the ideal image of Swedish Western women. However questions such as whether migrant women and native-born Swedish women are be discriminated against on the same level in the public sphere, in attaining equal employment opportunities and in their position tied to culture and the home, should be raised.

3.3 Feminism movements and their field of research

Swedish feminist movements could be argued as being equally dynamic such as those of **black** and minority feminist scholars, primarily in the US and the UK such as Hooks, Collins, and Davis

⁷³ M.Dahlstedt .,(1999) 70-71

⁷⁴ A.Ålund., (1988) Page 9

⁷⁵ A.Ålund., (1997 a) Page 131

⁷⁶ W.Knocke., (1991) Page 6

etc. In Sweden the famous works of Ålund, Knocke, Mulinari, de los Rayes and others, has contributed a huge number of debates in the field of integration, equality and also ethnocentricity; their frameworks are also used in dealing with state inquiries and other official reports such as SOU. There are a number of criticisms towards Swedish integration policy as women of minority are often excluded. Furthermore the equality project was partly adapted to accommodate the political community to fit their agenda. However, questions concerning intersectionality between ethnicity and gender were also lacking in the scientific research community and political community. The fact is that not many women in society are able to come forward to speak about their positions concerning matters relating to equal distribution, neither do all women have the power to express their views. Women within the political community who reclaimed their political positions benefited the Swedish ethnic women in comparison to immigrant women. Matters concerning equality projects, which have often been debated, should benefit everyone but seems to exclude immigrant women especially in areas concerning employment.⁷⁷ The argument of language is often used as an umbrella definition to define how poorly educated immigrant women are; the ‘‘cultural’’ definition is also used to draw on the asymmetrical positions of immigrant women. However, the development in equality project could be argued as being useful in some respects, as it is thanks to these studies that we know that immigrant women did not achieve equality to the same extent as woman of Swedish ethnicity.⁷⁸

Furthermore, the terms ‘‘culture’’ and ‘‘cultural differences’’ are indicated as having been used heavily within feminist research as well. In addition, international research indicates that feminism questioning of matters concerning citizenship are being discussed in parallel with ethnicity as well as social inequality, and were debated by contemporary political thinkers and feminist however in Sweden citizenship discourse still not been discussed extensively.⁷⁹ On the contrary, women’s movements often draw attention to issues surrounding female immigrants with skepticism.⁸⁰

4. Analysis Questions

4.1 Citizenship analysis with gender-ethnicity reflections: en analyses using interview materials

⁷⁷ A.Ålund (1988) page 3

⁷⁸ A.Ålund (1988) page 3

⁷⁹ A.Ålund (1997 b) Page 6 and also 10

⁸⁰ W.Knocke (1991) Page 6

The point of departure of this study is to hear the experiences of Swedish immigrant women in regards to matters relating to their status as a Swedish citizen. The study gives a specific room and possibility for these women to tell their stories. I consider all their stories to be unique because of their age, experience, education, and ethnicity, and also their consider their positions to be unique because, as Collins argued, the lives of marginalized groups such as women, and especially women of colour, provided a privileged vantage point that challenged mainstream understandings of nature and society. To study and write about social marginalization in regards to immigrant women and how they experience their citizenship leads to an epistemic advantage because their position as being “marginalized” has a two sided feature, which is both as an insider and an outsider, and which contributes to greater awareness.

I have dedicated this section to discussing my interview materials, which I have documented during seven days of interviews with members of “Neem” and other immigrant entrepreneurs who have technically obtained Swedish citizenship. The works of feminist citizenship theory are used in parallel with the interview materials so that a deeper understanding and knowledge could be gained in this particular area. The themes that are used in this study were obtained through literature reviews so that the paper can give a holistic structure, thus it gives a structure to the analysis as well as the discussion of citizenship within the interviews to formulate the questions. The theoretical framework of this study was written prior to the collection of the interview materials, and is in use in introduction of the chapter in order to lay a foundation of understanding for the nature of the interviews.

The theme that I have used to show the results of the interviews might overlap with similar areas of the study because it connects the interviewee’s narrative and their experiences relating to real life. For this reason, it is important to me that I take a stand in interpreting the materials to preserve the integrity of the interviewees. There were seven interviews with seven different women in all; my main priority was to analyse their experiences and their thoughts through questions regarding citizenship instead of questionnaire-type inquiries. Furthermore I have used a theoretical framework as well as the interviewees’ stories to highlight the situation as well as to contribute a narrative discussion regarding immigrant women and their citizenship in Sweden. Although the narratives of the interview materials are not the same, there are some similarities in their stories and experiences that make the interview materials interesting. At the same time it leaves room for discussion about how different women’s knowledge and their experiences open

the window for analysis because it differentiates two different points of departure as well as the individuals signification in a group which is often argued as homogenous and singular.

4.2 Summary and the Interview Process

All the interviews were conducted with a tape recorder and have also documented them by taking notes; however I followed up some of the interviews through telephone calls. The interviews were conducted in both English and Swedish so that participants were able to choose the language of their choice to express themselves freely, and feel comfortable sharing their experiences and thoughts. The interviewees' ages vary from 30-55 years, and the duration of the time they have lived in Sweden varies between 8- 20 years; all of the women have teenage or adult children.

The interviewees come from seven different countries of origin, and their education varies from secondary school education to university level, from Sweden and also from abroad. These women have also had different kinds of experiences concerning matters relating to establishing themselves in Sweden. The skill of spoken Swedish language varies in the group; few possess good skills of Swedish communication and others can communicate fairly, and some of the women prefer to speak English. All the women are formally married with the exception of one who is a widower. All the women are entrepreneurs, some of them recently became entrepreneurs while others have been in the business a while. All these women were interested to become entrepreneurs because they were unable to enter the Swedish labour market after being unemployed over a period of time. The interviewees possess self-confidence; determination and also most of them are independent in matters relating to their personal experiences as immigrant women in Sweden and as citizens, as well their personal opinions and matters regarding the image of immigrant women, which has been projected onto matters of employment and also their experiences working among other immigrant women and children.

4.3 Sweden: The image of immigrant women⁸¹

This section is intended to discuss the areas where the interviewees share common perceptions about their surroundings while living in Sweden as immigrant women, as well as how the majority of society perceives them as a collective identity instead of seeing them as individuals.

⁸¹ The interviewees are given a code which is according to their age and their priority such as (W1; 55) is Woman 1 and her age

Furthermore the umbrella definition of “immigrant women”, which is represented in the public and private discourse, being linked to collective identity, carries negative connotations.

The interviewees’ perceptions and understanding is confirmed in the works of Ålund and Knocke who argue how Swedish society sees the image of the immigrant, even if they meet immigrant women and came in to contact with them through gaining a place within the labour market; still the interviewees argue the difficulties of coming in to contact with Swedish colleagues, and perceived their lack of interest, and thus continued to draw themselves away, and, as a concluding remark, were careful. However the interviewees see themselves in a different position when being with other immigrant women colleagues, as the women consider it easier to interact with women from other countries in comparison to Swedish women. Below are the stories of the interviewees:

I was at the centralvården when I recently moved to Sweden; my little son was sick and I could not communicate so well in Swedish with the staff at the reception. I told them I needed to see the physician because my son was sick and one of the female administration staff told me I have to wait a couple of days before I could see the physician. I was very irritated with her and spoke in English, and suddenly she said I could wait and see the physician. There you see, when you can’t speak perfect Swedish you’re treated differently, and you always need to prove that you’re aware and that you know something. (Woman 3:55)

The other four interviewees see themselves in a similar situation because they are often exposed to environments and situations where they need to prove themselves as knowing the norms of the Swedish society. Below is the story of another interviewee.

“Being a Muslim woman you are often exposed to situations where people look at you differently, especially when I wait for the bus. However I have never been exposed to any kind of racist gestures but some of my friends told me that they were treated differently because we Muslim women wear hijab, and were more exposed to strange looks in comparison with the male immigrant men because of our clothes. Often Muslim immigrant women are assumed to only want to have a son and it never crosses Swedish women’s minds that Muslim women too could be feminists.” (W 5: 33)

Another interviewee relates her story “One day I went for an interview and as I entered and sat down, the guy said, E.... “You look like us”, and she replied, why shouldn’t I look like you people?”. (W6: 40)⁸²

However one of the women does not consider her as having been exposed like those other women in the group. (W1: 55) She explains, who ought to be blamed in this sort of situation? She is able to get along and communicate with Swedish women and couldn’t care less what others think of her, but she’s interested in knowing Swedish women if they show a common interest.

Most of the interviewees often expressed the label “immigrant women” about their physical appearances, as they look different in comparison with ethnic Swedish women, which is a lightness or darkness, visible culture or religious practices such as wearing hijab and physical characteristics, which can have an effect on how immigrant women are judged and treated in everyday life. However, most of the interviewees see a “immigrant identity” and naturally this image creates a stereotype, and most of these women neither see themselves as such nor as belonging to the bigger majority of the Swedish society. They meant that to be accepted as a bigger part of the majority society simply means seeking employment, being able to represent themselves in a meeting, as well as not being judged while asking for medical care, housing, and so on. In addition, some of the interviewees were against the stereotype images, which were forced upon them as being traditional as well as being backward. These women also discussed their positions in the Swedish society, claiming that immigrant women are often seen as a singular group with a common culture instead of individuals, despite their culture differences in which the above statement from Ålund confirms.⁸³

The Neem organization is not only a platform where the interviewees meet other entrepreneurs but it also could be confirmed as a place where these women come in to contact with other international organizations through entrepreneurship regarding the promotion of gender equality. In addition, the Neem organization opens its membership for everyone, whether ethnic minorities or Swedish. In this way the immigrant women are able to share their views and meet women from different backgrounds including the ethnic Swedish. Here is the story of another interviewee:

⁸² (W6: 40) Du ser ju ut som oss, Varför skulle jag inte ser ut som ni?

⁸³ A.Ålund (1999) Page 47

“ It is very hard to come in to contact with Swedish women whether at work or outside the working environment. Once I was doing a project with a group of Swedish women, to my surprise they did not want to cooperate with me, and they were not interested in sharing their ideas with me. I decided to do the project alone, and when I was done with the project these women never even gave me a compliment that I was good and had done well. Later they asked me whether I wanted to do another project with them but I refused to work with these people’.(W4: 45)

The situations is such that even if she wanted to have contact with ethnic Swedish women, she is often confronted with a stereotyped attitude and immigrant women must prove to the ethnic Swedish their ability of carrying out a task, which is not in the case for the ethnically Swedish women themselves. Two other interviewees seem to have same point of departure. As women often take on a huge responsibility at home and so do ethnic Swedish women, which often becomes a stumbling block for women becoming more active in organizations, and at the same time meeting women from other cultural backgrounds.

Six out of seven interviewees explained the difficulties of becoming part of society and creating a contact with ethnic Swedes. As I have explained throughout the paper, the lack of interest among ethnically Swedish women in engaging with immigrant women was confirmed by the interviewees except in regards to gaining employment. It is also important to reflect on the interviewee’s educational background as it varies from secondary school to university level. In addition, three of the interviewees managed to use their previous educational merits to continue studies in Swedish universities, however other four interviewees continued their education at the community school (komvux). I do not see how educational merits would make any difference to their personal experience of being labeled as ‘immigrant’, which clearly creates an unpleasant environment for them. At the same time, the interview materials are reflections and authentic voices of immigrant women, however it is possible to reflect upon Swedish feminism issues concerning immigrant women, nevertheless it is important to acknowledge the importance the interviewer has in providing information about women’s experiences as well as how they want to be seen.

In addition, one women expressed her more positive experiences among women ethnic Swedes, as she herself, wanted to explore the new society which she came in to contact with.

“I really don’t care if I speak in broken Swedish, I usually tell them that I know more languages than them and that is the reason I’m speaking broken Swedish” she said, laughing away.(WI:55)⁸⁴

Furthermore it is important to document all the experiences, whether positives or even experiences that could be described as ethnocentric and how ethnocentricity has been forced upon immigrant women in their daily lives.

4.3 Integration and Equality in relation with individual and society

As a citizen it is important to fit in in the new society and adapt to the new environment and all seven of the interviewees explained the importance of striving (kämpa), and also “looking after oneself”. The interviewees explained that it is important to adapt and accommodate to what they refer to as the “new homeland”. Another of the interviewees said:

“I came from a country with a rich cultural background and as much I have respect for the new culture, so must the new society respect my religion. But often I worry about my children because they lose part of me and I wonder what the future would hold for them if I did not share this part of me with them.” (W 4:55)

Several of the interviewees expressed the idea that individuals must be able to relate to their culture and their traditions without being forced to eliminate them; it should instead be seen as a complement to the new culture. In this context the social-liberalist thinking in which feminist citizenship theoreticians were reluctant, as well as skeptic, the concept would be able to work on the practical level because the argument is for the right to be different, as well as to be equal under the same conditions.

All of the interviewees say it is important as immigrants that one must integrate in the society, as one of interviewees speaks about concerning integrations:

“I have been living here for 23 years but my husband is Swedish and all my children were born here. But often my children are seen as immigrants too because the Swedish like to differentiate between those who do not look like them, and this of course leads to delaying matters concerning integration”. (W7:50)

⁸⁴ “Jag bryr mig inte om hur jag bryter på Svenska, men då brukar jag säga till dom där “svenskarna” att, jag bryter för att jag kan fler språk än du,”

All the interviewees described similar difficulties even if they had been living in Sweden for more than 10 years, but they are still confirmed and seen as immigrant women despite obtaining their citizenship, and they are often confronted with questions such as, where are you from?⁸⁵ “And one becomes tired of the question because you are constantly being reminded that you are an immigrant woman, even though one might not feel or experience themselves as being so.” (W7: 50)

In addition most of the interviewees found that the easiest way to come in to contact with ethnic Swedes was by gaining employment, which is not an easy task because most the immigrant women were not able to attain a job, and were thus away from the social life of the majority of the society. The interviewees also commented on integration, as it tends to fit sharply based on individual levels from the Swedish society as well as from immigrant perspectives, thus it is a problem that exists on different levels and must be discussed so that a better solution can be found in matters concerning the equality project.

One interviewee says: “Arguments for diversity is one of the well-known speeches of the integration policy, however often the speech contains underlying messages because it is often about total adaptation to the Swedish society on behalf of the immigrant society. I wonder how it is possible to speak about diversity when most of the immigrant families are living in ghettos far away from being integrated with the Swedish neighborhoods. Children are being excluded and it is important that Sweden practices its integration policy on the practical level so that immigrants are able to contribute as citizens and become resourceful. They’re not ethnic Swedish even though you might have some problem with the language, so what?” (W5: 33).

In addition, the interviewees confirm in this study Ålund’s conceptualization of the variations of the theme when she spoke of the representation of immigrant women as “problems ideologies”. In the section 3.2 I have discussed the communication of the Swedish language as well as cultural interpretations that are being explained as the main medium for immigrant women to be excluded from Swedish society. Furthermore even though the interviewees come from different cultural backgrounds, they share common experiences and common positions in matters concerning language barriers. Some of the interviewees even asserted that immigrant women should be able

⁸⁵ Varifrån kommer du? (W7: 50)

to take responsibility because of the possibility, which has been offered by Swedish society. This contradicts with Ålund's point of departure where she highlighted the structural conditions, and also her arguments claiming that the structures intended to reproduce to some extent an image less exclusive. Ålund's important point of departure is the struggle of immigrant women to achieve equality under same conditions while striving to eliminate the negative image immigrant women have towards the societal attitude, which has also left a negative impact on them.

One of the interviewees says: ‘‘ It really makes a lot of difference who is speaking broken Swedish. Those whites that come from the USA and England work in big companies and speak broken Swedish too, but it doesn't matter; then the Swedes will speak in English, and suddenly it's acceptable. But if those who come from the third world speak broken Swedish then the world just went under’’ (W3: 33).⁸⁶

Another interviewees says: ‘‘I was doing my course within the university in affärs juridik and the teacher told me you're special because, despite being an immigrant, you're a women, and you're old .I never imagined you could hear such things in Sweden’’. (W5: 55)⁸⁷

Few of the interviewees expressed their opinion about not being able to participate fully nor be treated equally. Before becoming entrepreneurs with Neem they were not able to sustain a steady job and neither had these women anything in common with ethnic Swedes. Although there is a need to engage on a practical level as citizens, when you get to a certain age it just becomes impossible. When I raised issues concerning the equality project as well as matters about equality from the Swedish political community there seems to be skepticism among few of the interviewees. Some of them explain that on the theoretical level Sweden seems to be an equal society but on the practical level it is not as it is stated in the policies and by the policy makers, although others agree that the equality project is heading in the right direction because integration policy varies between different ethnic groups because the approaches were as equal as the Swedish equality project.

⁸⁶ Men det skiljer vem som bryter på svenska språket, dem som är vita män eller kvinnnor som kommer från USA eller England jobbar inom ett stort Svenskt företag bryter så går bra och svenskar går runt och snakar på engelska då är det acceptabelt , men dem som kommer from tredje världen måste prata perfect svenska annars hela världen går under’’

⁸⁷ Du är invandrare, kvinna och gammal. (W5: 55)

4.4 Analysis sub questions 3 & 4

“In Russia the situation is really bad in comparison with Sweden; there is too much bureaucracy. However in Sweden you know rights and also it is always possible for any woman to get out of a difficult situation such as being a single mom ‘’ (W5:55)

Several of the interviewees see that, through adopting Swedish citizenship, they have the possibility to influence their own lives through pursuing their studies, becoming politically active, and also the possibility of becoming small time entrepreneurs, because Sweden offers possibilities for women and help and support. However although many women see the positive aspects of being a citizen of the country, nevertheless, four of the women share the concern about not being able to sustain a job in the labour force for sometime before becoming entrepreneurs. Being a citizen also enabled these small time female entrepreneurs to take mortgages from a finance company called micro credit; at the same time, these women became active citizens and became involved in the school with other immigrant women such as doing interpreting for those immigrant women who had recently arrived in Sweden. These four women described how often the situation was bad for those women who were not able to obtain work because they are not economically independent and also some of the women came from strongly patriarchal cultures and could not free themselves even in Sweden because their culture and traditions and the new home land did not provide them new possibilities. These three women assert that although through being a citizen one gains all possibilities for progress, often the road to the future is dark; first of all everyone needs to start from the ground up, and it’s long way. Everyone wants to work, as relates the example of one of the women who says: (W4:45)

“ I came with my husband who is Swedish to Sweden 10 years ago, but my daughter went to the USA the same time I came here, and she could not speak a word of English. Within a year she was able to speak not good English, but she was able to communicate and able to work and gain work within 12 months - this what you call a country of opportunities’’

The statement above indicates that even though immigrant women are open to possibilities, still they are unable to use their citizenship on the practical level because they are unable to compete in the labour force on an equal stance with ethnic Swedes. Although it is often argued that immigrant women are seen as a homogenous group their stories evidently hold contradictions, and therein confirm the framework of Ålund that the lack of representation as well as the Swedish labour market left a gap that was soon filled up by a number of stereotypes; however in reality it’s

the opposite, as Swedish research has failed to observe that immigrant women are not a singular entity, nor are they homogenous, to take Ålund's word. In addition, as we notice the interviewees have differences in the field of education, language skills and also their situation as women and mothers, even so, some of the interviewees and their family situations were totally gender structured as these women were faced with obstacles outside their home, which is the structure of the majority society, which is the norm.

Some of the interviewees do not regard Sweden to be practicing the equality project towards some groups.⁸⁸ In addition, the interview materials, confirmed in the writing of Swedish context also along with Ålund, Knocke, de los Reyes and Mulinari as these researchers pointed out the failures of the Swedish integration policy in the sense that the rights of women from minority groups have been insufficiently debated. As de los Reyes explains, immigrant women could be hindered from the gender system within the Swedish society as well as within their own family, thus the Swedish public sector does not admit such structures.

On the other hand, the interview materials contain ambiguity regarding the possibilities of immigrant women in Sweden. Although the interviewees describe their possibilities as being a citizen of the newfound country as good, they also describe the huge obstacles faced by immigrant women, relating not only to themselves but also to other women in the same situation as them. The spokeswoman of Neem says:

Most of the immigrant women that come here are those who want to change their lives. There are many women like me too; coming from Tanzania where I was a headmistress for the Tanzania folkskolan, being active in many international organizations such as labour organizations and other experiences along these years have helped me to reach what I am today. We have stories to tell everyone out there, we want our stories to be heard and listened to, and I'm sure there are many women like me. Being a spokeswoman for Neem I have confronted women that are afraid to talk for themselves because of their language skills but I always tell them, "so what?". They came here because despite many years of being unable to obtain work, some of these women decided to do something about their lives. By telling

⁸⁸ (W2:30, W7:50)

my story to them I hope they will be able to gain the confidence that the society fails to give them. Although I'm married to a Swedish man, it does not mean that everything should go smoothly for me; my past experiences are important resources for my current situation".

Although most of the interviewees married Swedish men, as the interviewees explain it has not necessarily made their lives easier in the newfound society in comparison to if they had married their own countrymen. The only possibilities or advantages of being married or living together with an ethnically Swedish man would be to expand their social life and social structure; but these could also be seen as hindering - the fact immigrant women are living with an ethnic Swede.

Further more the interviewees see good resources for areas where there is a need, especially in being a single mother, and for the possibility of studying for personal prospects, but there is also uncertainty because most of the immigrant women, as they argue, are rather locked up or trapped in the power structure. Some of them are trapped in a situation where they are not able to share the distribution like ethnic Swedes.

The Feminist citizenship theoreticians argued in this paper concerning the social-liberalist view in which women were excluded from attaining full citizenship status because citizenship has been defined according to the male image, because it fits the white male heterosexual standard of living and also what could be symbolized as ethnocentric. Throughout official reports like SOU, the conclusion was made that there was a lack of Swedish legislation in matters concerning discrimination against working situation which contains discriminating against sex (kön), ethnicity, handicap, and sexual conduct.

The legislations were introduced to strengthen the possibility for these groups to perform their duties as citizens, a member of the political community, in the form of gaining employment, which is defined by a set of rights and obligations which was founded within the social-liberalist thinking; it represents a relationship between the individual and the state, and this in return was bounded together by reciprocal rights and obligations which comes in the form of paying taxes, an act of obligation contributing to the state. Since the new legislation has been introduced it could be argued that the social-liberalist definition of citizenship needs to be strengthened on the practical level as well as concerning ethnic discrimination surrounding employment situations and also for individual gaining employment, which were taken up in the preparatory work.

Furthermore participating in gainful employment indicates the citizen's duty in doing right for themselves, however, all the interviewees argue that rights and obligations about citizens should be able to become active when dealing with their own lives, which is the economy as well the duty of the society to see the citizens as being able to contribute within certain limitations. It is also reasonable enough to ask for woman and as citizens to have the chance to obtain income as well as to be able to support oneself, which is a reciprocal situation as one is expected to take responsibility by gaining employment. All the interviewees see the economical importance for women to be independent because the path to autonomy is through economical independence.

Six out of the seven interviewees have experienced being unemployed for more than ten years, however W:30 has only been unemployed for the past 5 years. Most of these women have spent the period of living more than 10 years in Sweden and most of the time they were sent to do some practical work in the commune. One of the interviewees (W7:55) explains that she came to Sweden 23 years ago and things were not so bad as now. According to her things became more difficult because of the huge number of immigrant influx arriving in Sweden every year. She asserts that 23 years ago there was a bigger need for migrant workers compared to now and you did not need to speak perfect Swedish unlike today. Although in the preparatory work it is written that ethnic discrimination is forbidden in the working situation, even then employers still insist on a certain level of languages skill; however it should be reasonable in proportion to the work.⁸⁹ Being an immigrant and a woman in Sweden in Ålund's words, means working in the marginal job as well as having the burden of a job inside and outside home, and also this could be seen as triple discrimination, which is the workplace, being a member of a minority and also being female. Although the interviews do not indicate the pattern of gender or ethnic discrimination in questions regarding the division of work at home nor participating in gainful employment, it must be concluded that the group is rather too small to draw drastic conclusions (W1:55,W3:33,W6:40,W4:45,W2:30,W7:50).

In addition, all the interviewees think that, as a citizen, everyone must contribute something to the country, and woman still trying to adapt to the life in Sweden who is also taking responsibility as a citizen, on top of the responsibility that one has in taking care of their children and seeing that they are able to become good individuals with a sound education, is also a way of contributing to integration.

⁸⁹ SOU 1997:174 Page 192

Six out of seven interviewees are not active in any kind of organization, political or social. Although four of them have worked with other immigrant women within the school, most of them argue that they don't have much time for hobbies or any kind of activities although they share their home chores with their partners. One of the ones who is active in a political organization in Katrineholm explains:

‘‘It is hard for most of immigrant women to get involved politically because they do not come in contact with other women, especially ethnic Swedes. Often they’re trapped by their household and traditional family responsibility’’(W5: 55).

The experiences that the women are describing also brought into question private life and their situation, and how an individual could use their citizenship publicly. To participate in an organization as well as politics is a way to influence one’s situation, but in reality this might be difficult for immigrant women to understand, even if they were to take the incentive, because of the majority society’s views and images influence their self-esteem and makes them think, who wants to listen an immigrant woman?

5. Conclusion

The Swedish interpretation of citizenship, which is based on the social-liberalist definition of citizenship, could be argued as universal and excluding within the Swedish theoretical context. Although it says all adults who are registered in the national registry in the country have same rights and obligations by being a member of society.

The point of departure in this study was to investigate how immigrant women, who technically have obtained Swedish citizenship, were experiencing their citizenship on a personal level and also a practical one. This of course highlights the feminist criticism against the social-liberalist definition of citizenship because it carries the male norms of citizenship but on the practical level it leads to variation, which is gender and ethnicity and some discussions on ethnocentrism as well as within research about women’s movements.

The search for knowledge on the area is important as it increases the understanding of citizenship on the theoretical level, although there is very little research that has been conducted in this area.

The point of departure of this paper was also to understand the definition of citizenship as well as the feminist criticisms on the theoretical level.

The interview materials gives an images, to a certain extent, of a challenge, but also confirms in part what was written in earlier research about immigrant women, and which was taken up and criticized in the framework of Ålund. Because the interview materials does not give any unanimous representations, it does challenge the argument that immigrant women are a homogenous group. The group is in fact heterogeneous, however, it is possible to conclude that some of the experiences that these women experience are common, especially concerning the impact of the view of the Swedish majority on immigrant women. In addition the interviewed women and their personal experiences of their citizenship tend to support the research material, and supports the fact that immigrant women and their citizenship do not work on the practical level. I have drawn this conclusion based on several different areas, which is the fact that immigrant women are unable to attain or gain employment at the same level as ethnic Swedes, which connects to rights and obligations, as well as the fact that it is important that immigrant women are seen as individuals and not as a collective entity. From these women's narratives it could be argued reasonably that immigrant women were not considered as resourceful in Swedish society because of stereotyping, such as two of the interviewees described in explaining how the female body of a Muslim women was taboo and traditional, and also the discourses relating to the fact that immigrant women give importance to family ties. I strongly agree with Ålund and de los Reyes and feel that the situation and issues surrounding immigrant women must be discussed in regards to Swedish society. The argument for the cultural explanation, argued by Ålund, did arise during the interviews, but the interviews did not generates enough to fully explain cultural factors because the group had many individual cultural differences.

The narratives of the women that I interviewed are a good example as it represents them as individuals despite of collective consciousness, and this is what Swedish researchers and feminists ought to understand. At the same time one should be able to build a network to create contacts in the area that could be seen as a common platform for everyone. In Ålund's words, the Swedish women's movements and gender researchers ought to raise more awareness regarding question surrounding ethnicity and social inequality. Most of the interviewees have seen and experienced the obstacles of being an immigrant woman and this status does not change automatically when one becomes a citizen in the country; in fact some of them considered

immigrant women as second class citizens and they are seen as pathological in the Swedish public discourses.

The study discussed the social hierarchy that exists in Swedish society as well as legislation against ethnic discrimination and reflections over how the state sees the differences between the concept of citizenship, which still exist among ethnic Swedes, and immigrant women on the practical level. I hope the study can contribute to the awareness and knowledge regarding immigrant women and their experiences of their citizenship. This study will also contribute to some changes in Katrineholm, a platform in Sweden, for a better equality project in the field of integration.

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7. Interview Questions

Background questions for the interviews based on:

- Nationality
- Age
- Time spent living in Sweden
- Education
- Employment
- Family

I asked each woman to describe herself and introduce her background, and country of her origin, but I did not pose the question why did she come to Sweden as I wanted to leave the question open. Other questions surrounded what she did prior to coming to Sweden, her current situation, and her experiences among ethnically Swedish women, as well as her opinion about Swedish society.

Could you describe the situation how you experience your citizenship?

In your own understanding what should a citizen be?

How do you associate this position in daily life? Examples: are you active within the labour union, politically active within the commune or school or any other international organization?

What does the interviewee consider to be the best way for immigrant women to meet at a common platform to exchange ideas with other immigrant women?

How does the interviewee describe her position as a woman and also as an immigrant?

How does the interviewee describe the possible scenarios that could possibly change her life?