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**Chinese Immigrants in Sweden: Crisis and Compromise in
Patriarchy**

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Abstract

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This study explores how Chinese immigrant families with patriarchal structures adapt after relocating to Sweden. Before immigration, these families followed a system I conceptualize as "soft patriarchal ruling," where wives internalized patriarchal norms and men maintained control through subtle power-sharing. However, upon moving to Sweden, this system faces significant challenges, leading to what I term a "patriarchal crisis." In response, women develop new gender expectations and adopt various strategies—such as turning to religion, seeking employment, or pursuing divorce—to negotiate and reshape patriarchal dynamics within their households, ultimately creating a new gender dynamic.

Key words: Patriarchy, Chinese immigrant, Soft patriarchal ruling, Patriarchal crisis, Patriarchal bargain.

Popular science summary

This study explores how Chinese immigrant families in Sweden adapt their traditional family roles to fit their new environment. Before moving, these families followed a power dynamics which called "soft patriarchal ruling." In this setup, husbands had the most control, but they would share some of the power in subtle ways, while wives often accepted traditional roles and responsibilities.

When these families relocated to Sweden, they faced a crisis in their traditional family dynamics. Many women, who were once active in the workforce, found themselves becoming full-time homemakers, leading to feelings of isolation and dissatisfaction. They struggled with loneliness and a lack of personal worth, while their husbands faced challenges with language, employment, and adjusting to their new surroundings. This led to frustrations on both sides and made the old family dynamics harder to maintain.

To cope with these challenges, women began to adopt new strategies. They turned to religion, particularly Christianity, to reshape their family roles. By interpreting religious teachings, they found ways to address their new expectations and seek greater equality within their families. Religion provided not only comfort but also a framework for negotiating new family dynamics.

Additionally, many women sought employment outside the home. Working helped them gain independence, which allowed them to negotiate more equal roles within their families. It also helped them build new social networks and feel more integrated into Swedish society.

This study highlights how Chinese immigrant women are actively working to improve their family situations. Despite traditional roles, they are finding ways to create more balanced and equal relationships through religion and work. Their experiences show that even when traditional family structures are challenged, new strategies can help transform family dynamics in positive ways.

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1. Introduction

My first impression of Chinese immigrants in Sweden was that they exuded a sense of ease and vitality, yet beneath the surface, I sensed subtle vulnerability and helplessness. Despite residing in a seemingly less competitive and tense society compared to China, my friend, who had been in Sweden for 12 years, confided in me about her depression and struggles with suicidal thoughts, which were exacerbated by family issues and her husband. For my friend, a housewife in patriarchal China, immigration is not merely a physical relocation; it meant transitioning from a patriarchal family structure to a more egalitarian Swedish society, resulting in her feelings of fragmentation and confusion. The reality of their experiences, and how families from patriarchal backgrounds adapt to the more gender-equal society, their depression, and conflicts within the family, remains largely hidden from outside observers.

In the extensive history of imperial China, the predominant societal structure was unquestionably patriarchal, making patriarchy one of the most crucial concepts for analyzing Chinese family and societal dynamics (Hamilton, G. G., 1990). Confucianism laid the groundwork for the fundamental principles of marriage in China, with the core value of 'male superiority and female inferiority' constructing women as subordinate to men within marital relationships, thereby confining women within the confines of marriage. For centuries, women were relegated solely to the domestic sphere (Gao, X., 2003). The entrenched patriarchal system entrenched in Chinese society not only perpetuated gender inequality but also imposed strict gender roles, relegating women to subordinate positions both within the family and broader society. Consequently, women's autonomy and agency were severely restricted, with marriage serving as a mechanism for the perpetuation of male dominance and female subjugation. Despite the emergence of research highlighting the evolving power structures and statuses within modern Chinese families, particularly with urban women gradually challenging traditional patriarchal family dynamics, the overall societal landscape still remains largely entrenched in patriarchal power relations in China, with traces of patriarchal dominance persisting within family structures (Hung, J. K. M., 1995). While contemporary shifts may signal progress towards gender equality, they have yet to significantly undermine the deeply ingrained patriarchal power dynamics pervasive in Chinese society. And despite urban women's

increasing agency and autonomy, patriarchal influences continue to exert a significant impact within the familial domain, perpetuating traditional gender roles and hierarchies. While there may be instances of resistance and change, the overarching patriarchal framework remains largely intact, shaping familial dynamics and interpersonal relationships within Chinese households.

In contrast to Chinese society and family structures, Sweden has long been at the forefront of pioneering comprehensive and progressive multicultural and gender models (Castellanos Breton, A., & Ricalde Perez, J. G., 2023). Almost all women in Sweden are active participants in the labor market, contributing to its reputation as a gender-equality paradise, characterized by the provision of extensive social support and gender equality safeguards, as acknowledged by many feminist scholars (Lewis, J., & Åström, G., 1992). Sweden stands in stark juxtaposition to the patriarchal norms and constraints prevalent in Chinese society. The labor force participation of women in Sweden is nearly universal, reflecting a commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment across various spheres of society. And Sweden's robust social welfare system and policies promoting gender equality serve as pillars supporting women's rights and autonomy.

The measures implemented in Sweden stand in contrast to the patriarchal structures and gender disparities entrenched in Chinese society. Understanding how Chinese families and couples with patriarchal power structures or patriarchal influences adjust to Swedish society is a pressing research question. Gender, in fact, is considered a core organizing principle during the process of immigration and adaptation to a new country (Boyd, M., & Grieco, E., 2003). Families, as the smallest units of society, are defined by gender, which dictates behaviors and role expectations between spouses. The new country, along with its culture and institutions, shapes expectations for the behavior of wives and husbands, ideal states, and behavioral patterns, thereby constituting different gender contents (Yu, Y., 2011). New immigrants either seek to maintain their family power structures in the new country or adopt new values and gender expectations to reconstruct family order. Fundamentally, gender is not static but rather characterized by "endless looping norms and expectations, with room for modifications and variations by individuals" (Quek, K. M.-T., & Knudson-Martin, C., 2006).

As Chinese immigrants settle into their new lives in Sweden, they grapple with the complexities of

adapting to a different societal ethos, where patriarchal structures are less pronounced and gender equality is more strongly emphasized. This transition inevitably influences family dynamics and power relations, prompting shifts in traditional roles and expectations. Understanding these dynamics is paramount for unraveling the transformation of gender roles and power structures within Chinese immigrant families in Sweden. By examining how these families and couples navigate the adaptation process, we can uncover the intricate interplay between culture, societal norms, and individual agency, as well as how patriarchy adjusts in Swedish society. It's important to note that, akin to gender, patriarchy and its ruling are not fixed constructs. Despite the appearance of entrenched dominance, patriarchal systems are actually composed of a nuanced interplay of gendered norms that have developed over time. Butler (1988) characterizes this as "a sedimentation of gendered norms," reflecting the accumulation of both congruent and contradictory elements. These norms may consist of both similar and contradictory elements, creating a dynamic and multifaceted structure. Within the context of immigration and adaptation to a new society, the negotiation and interaction between patriarchal hegemony and the emerging social order become more prominent. This underscores the flexibility of patriarchal systems and their capacity to adapt and evolve in response to changing circumstances, such as the experience of migration.

As Chinese immigrants embark on their journey of settling into Swedish society, they are confronted with the challenge of reconciling their culture with the prevailing societal norms of their new environment. This transition not only reshapes family dynamics and power structures but also raises fundamental questions about the evolution of gender roles and the adaptation of patriarchal systems. By delving into how these immigrant families navigate this process, we gain valuable insights into the intricate interplay between tradition and change, cultural identity and societal integration. Moreover, it compels us to examine the specific changes occurring within these families and couples as they acclimate to Swedish society, shedding light on which aspects of their culture persist and which evolve in response to their new surroundings. Through this exploration, we can uncover the emergence of novel dynamics as they navigate the complexities of adaptation and integration, providing a deeper understanding of the transformative journey experienced by Chinese immigrants in Sweden. Thus, it prompts critical questions: What novel dynamics emerge in the family power structure as they negotiate the complexities of adaptation and integration? What strategies do

Chinese immigrant women adopt to face these changes?

Addressing these questions is crucial because, according to various studies, the challenges faced by immigrant families and women manifest differently across countries. The strategies adopted by immigrant women to cope with these patriarchal challenges also vary significantly depending on the specific social, cultural, and economic contexts of the host country. Understanding these variations is essential for revealing the transformations and changes occurring in gender relations and family power structures. By examining the experiences of Chinese immigrant families and women in Sweden, we can gain valuable insights into the broader dynamics of migration and integration.

The remaining chapters are organized as follows: First, I will present the literature review and theoretical framework, followed by the methods section. In the analysis, I will structure the discussion around a timeline, focusing on the periods before and after immigration. Before immigration, it is crucial to understand the dynamics within the family, which I conceptualize as "soft patriarchal ruling"—this represents my primary theoretical contribution. After immigrating to Sweden, this soft patriarchal ruling encounters a series of challenges, leading to what I term a "patriarchal crisis" within the family. During this crisis, wives develop new gender expectations and adopt different strategies—such as turning to religion, seeking employment, or pursuing divorce—to meet these expectations, ultimately creating a new gender dynamic. I will provide ample material to support and illustrate these points.

2.Literature Review

Migration serves as a crucial context for revealing changes in gender relations (Curran et al., 2006) because it often disrupts traditional power dynamics within families and challenges existing gender roles. The migration process exposes individuals to new social, cultural, and economic environments, leading to significant shifts in how gender relations are structured and perceived. These changes become particularly evident as immigrant families navigate the complexities of adapting to a new society, where expectations and norms regarding gender roles may differ markedly from those in their country of origin. As a result, gender as a set of socially constructed norms and expectations has gained unprecedented prominence in migration studies (Gu, 2015; Herrera, 2013; Lee & Kim, 2011). Many researchers have begun to investigate whether migration can alter patriarchal power structures and institutional arrangements within families and whether it can liberate women from patriarchy (Gu, 2009). The existing research and literature present two opposing camps in response to these questions.

On one hand, some narratives suggest that migration can lead to the liberalization of women. This perspective highlights that immigrant women from non-Western countries often gain unprecedented opportunities to pursue and practice personal freedom, gender (or power) equality, and even sexual freedom (Zhou et al., 2022). Migration can lead to increased economic contributions by women to their families (Jibeen & Hynie, 2012), enhanced power within the household (Hyman, 2008), and changes in family structure (Zhou et al., 2022). For example, non-Western immigrant women entering the labor market can elevate their status within the family. Exposure to the more egalitarian ideologies of the host country can also help these women achieve greater autonomy (Schneider, 1998). Additionally, the increased labor force participation of immigrant women, combined with underemployment or limited earning capacity of men, challenges traditional male-dominated gender norms and patriarchal family structures, potentially leading to marital conflict (Chang, 2004).

On the other hand, the narratives around the feminization and re-domestication of immigrant women focus on their return to traditional gender roles as caregivers or housewives. This shift often occurs as a survival strategy for immigrant families facing employment challenges (such as engaging in

low-skilled or menial work) and a lack of viable childcare options (Ho, 2006; Meares, 2010). This perspective is largely supported by empirical studies of skilled or highly educated immigrant women in Western countries (Cooke, 2007; Ho, 2006; Da, 2003; Lee et al., 2002). These studies suggest that despite their professional backgrounds, many immigrant women find themselves relegated to domestic roles due to systemic barriers in the labor market and social expectations within their communities.

Within these two broad narrative frameworks, some studies have explored in detail how immigrant women either achieve liberalization or become further re-domesticated and feminized through migration. These studies examine the strategies women use and the changes in patriarchal family power structures following migration. In this part, I will present findings related to these two narratives.

Liberalization

The narratives around the liberalization of women through migration have given rise to numerous specific studies, revealing that female immigrants from patriarchal backgrounds often employ various strategies to empower themselves. Despite this, patriarchal ideologies and structures remain potent and can hinder potential changes. Nevertheless, immigration presents a new opportunity for women to advocate for gender equality within the family (Kim, N. Y., 2006). Consequently, new dynamics and power structures emerge within immigrant communities and family settings.

Immigrant women typically leverage external resources to resist patriarchal dominance within the family. Lim (1997) indicates that when facing economic pressures, Korean immigrant women may join the workforce to contribute financially, leading to a shift in traditional family roles. By doing so, Korean immigrant wives no longer take their husbands' dominance and relief from household duties for granted. Many wives become less submissive by expressing their opinions or openly opposing their husbands, resulting in family conflicts and challenging the patriarchal family power structure. Thus, entering the labor market and contributing financially becomes an important factor for women to gain more power in the family and empower themselves. Another Studies on Korean immigrant

women suggests that they use different resources, such as the dominant masculinity or gender expectations of their new country, as leverage in negotiating with patriarchy (Kim, N. Y., 2006; Lim, I.-S., 1997). They challenge Korean patriarchy by critiquing Korean men and patriarchal norms through the ideals of Western masculinity, which emphasize gender progress, romanticism, and open-mindedness (Kim, N. Y., 2006). Similarly, Iranian immigrant women in Sweden attempt to blend Asian collectivism and Islamic family customs with Swedish individualism and secularism to enhance their power resources within the family (Darvishpour, M., 2002). Additionally, immigrant communities themselves become sources of female empowerment. For instance, in Vietnamese immigrant communities in the United States, women's social networks serve as a vital source of job information and informal family power. This informal power enables immigrant women to partially influence private family matters, creating an advocacy alliance for their rights and weakening traditional male authority within the family (Kibria, N., 1990).

And all these changes in family often leads to a transformation in the nature of spousal relationships due to changes in power resources, with a notable reversal of gender roles, particularly in the economic sphere. This transformation increases the motivation of the weaker party to change the relationship, thereby raising the likelihood of open conflicts. In patriarchal contexts, it is frequently the women who initiate these changes (Darvishpour, M., 2002).

Feminization and re-domestication

The situation is not always as optimistic as some studies suggest. Contrary to the view that migration leads to the liberalization of immigrant women, other research indicates that migration can result in increased feminization and re-domestication. This often reinforces patriarchal structures and traditional gender roles within the family. For instance, research on immigrants from patriarchal societies shows that entrenched family structures, language barriers, cultural shock, and lack of job skills can exacerbate the subordinate status of immigrant women. These factors intensify existing inequalities and patriarchal norms within the family, sometimes leading to increased domestic abuse and violence (Ho, 2006; Meares, 2010; Man, 2004; Pillai, 2001).

In-depth interviews with Chinese immigrants reveal that many women experience a decline in occupational mobility and a shift from paid employment to traditional domestic roles (Ho, 2006). In their new environments, they often revert to more traditional gender roles as wives and mothers, which results in the feminization of their roles (Ho, 2006). While men typically focus on finding employment, women are generally more involved in settling the family, which includes tasks like arranging housing and education for children, as well as emotional labor such as rebuilding social networks and helping family members adjust culturally. This shift tends to elevate their roles as wives and mothers while reducing their roles as income earners (Lee, 2002; McLaren & Dyck, 2004). This pattern is also reflected in my research. Evidence suggests that women's reluctance to advance professionally is significantly influenced by deep-rooted institutional practices that prioritize male achievements over female ones, along with societal expectations of married women's behavior (Cooke, 2003). However, what these studies often overlook is that the feminization and re-domestication experienced by Chinese professional women due to migration can become a catalyst for challenging patriarchal family structures.

Although these studies provide valuable insights, they do not fully address how migration processes lead to either liberalization or feminization and re-domestication. My research highlights that both processes can occur simultaneously. Chinese immigrant women navigate this complex terrain by actively seeking liberalization or, when faced with feminization and re-domestication, by creating new gender expectations that challenge traditional patriarchal norms. Thus, while narratives of liberalization often depict women as fully active agents, and narratives of feminization and re-domestication portray them as passive, the reality is more nuanced. Immigrant women actively seek and utilize various resources to redefine their gender roles and establish a family order that meets their new expectations.

3.Theoretical Framework

In this section, I will illustrate the theoretical framework that underpins this research. The primary theories guiding this study are patriarchy theory and patriarchal bargain theory. These frameworks are essential for understanding the complex dynamics of gender relations within Chinese immigrant families.

3.1 Patriarchy

According to Therborn (2004), patriarchy is "the rule of the father and the rule of the husband, in that order." Eisenstein (1979) defines patriarchy as a sexual hierarchy manifested in the woman's role as a mother, domestic laborer, and consumer within the family. In other words, patriarchy refers to male dominance and the power relations in which men exert control over women. Thus, the concept of patriarchy is used in feminist movements to analyze the fundamental principles of women's oppression. Theoretically, patriarchy is used to address the underlying issues of women's subordinate status and to analyze its specific forms. This theoretical framework attempts to delve into women's unique experiences and expressions (Beechey, 1979). In a postmodern context, the essence of patriarchy remains unchanged. Its most powerful and negative expression continues to be male dominance and traditional heroic leadership, along with the value structures they create (Bahlieda, 2015).

However, based on the data I gathered from my participants, I found that patriarchy is not a rigid, unchanging structure but rather a flexible and nuanced one. In Chinese married couples born in the 1970s and 1980s who have immigrated to Sweden, patriarchal control is no longer enforced through overt displays of male dominance. Instead, it operates through more subtle and complex mechanisms that quietly maintain women's subordinate positions within the household and family dynamics. This form of patriarchy is characterized by indirect methods of influence, such as decision-making processes that appear egalitarian on the surface but ultimately reinforce traditional gender roles. Women usually have the illusion that they are loved and may feel empowered in some areas, but the underlying power dynamics still favor men, perpetuating a form of control that is less visible yet still pervasive. I refer to this phenomenon as "soft patriarchal ruling," a concept that captures the adaptive

and covert nature of patriarchy in these immigrant families. This concept is the key theoretical contribution of my thesis, providing a fresh perspective on how patriarchal structures can evolve and persist even within more progressive or egalitarian social contexts. Rather than offering a rigid definition, I will explore this concept in depth through detailed analysis and extensive data in the analysis section, demonstrating how "soft patriarchal ruling" functions within Chinese families.

3.2 Patriarchal bargain

Based on patriarchy theory, the concept of the patriarchal bargain is also central to my thesis. With the rise in women's status, the concept of patriarchal bargaining has emerged as a crucial form of resistance against dominant patriarchal discourse, highlighting the potential and specific forms of women's active or passive resistance within patriarchal structures (Ismah, 2022). Research on patriarchal bargaining follows two main paths: first, women's agency, which is a form of resistance to patriarchal hierarchies and norms (Bayat, 2007); and second, women's involvement, which focuses on their ability to act and maximize opportunities to exercise their rights and empower themselves (Nielsen, 2020).

Theoretically, Banstead (2021) argues that while patriarchal bargaining does constrain women, it also provides a space where they can strategize and negotiate issues of autonomy, encompassing both public and private spheres. In specific studies, Kandiyoti (1988) first used the term to explain how women negotiate and adapt to patriarchal rules or constrain patriarchal gender orders. Kandiyoti compared two male-dominated regions—Sub-Saharan Africa and the Muslim Middle East, as well as South Asia and East Asia—to examine women's coping mechanisms under two different forms of patriarchy. She posited that within the constraints of patriarchal structures, women employ various strategies to maximize their benefits and life opportunities. Women's patriarchal bargaining shapes their gender subjectivity and gender ideologies within different social contexts (Kandiyoti, 1988).

Subsequently, "bargaining with patriarchy or patriarchal bargain" has been widely used in gender studies. Yang (2023) analyzed how Chinese social media influencers use both egoistic and altruistic values to bargain with patriarchy, gaining male recognition for feminist goals and promoting male

support for feminist participation. Gatwiri and Karanja (2016) further illustrated how culturally marginalized women can use subtle forms of resistance, such as silence, to enact significant changes in patriarchal systems, showcasing the multifaceted strategies women employ to navigate and transform hegemonic gender orders. Bayat (2007) introduced the concept of "everyday resistance through patriarchal bargaining," demonstrating how Iranian Muslim women challenge gender discrimination without overt actions. These women adopt subtle acts of defiance, such as wearing the hijab in non-traditional ways, to subvert patriarchal norms without provoking direct conflict.

"Bargain with patriarchy" or "patriarchal bargain" is an important concept. This concept helps in understanding that resistance to patriarchy does not always manifest through overt rebellion or organized movements. Instead, it can be subtle, nuanced, and embedded in everyday practices. This perspective broadens the scope of what constitutes resistance and agency. Within the theoretical framework of patriarchy and patriarchal bargain, studying the patriarchy in Chinese immigrant families using qualitative research methods is most appropriate. In the next chapter, I will discuss in detail the rationale for the research methods employed in this study.

4. Methods and Data

In examining the adaptation process of Chinese immigrant families and couples with patriarchal traits in Swedish society, it is crucial to focus on their individualized experiences and personal narratives, as well as their genuine emotions during their adjustment. Thus, employing qualitative research methods is essential. Unlike quantitative approaches, qualitative analysis goes beyond surface meanings to reveal deeper implications and nuances (Tracy, S. J., 2020, p.190). Methods such as interviews provide a thorough understanding of individuals' experiences, emotions, and attitudes. Given the complexity of cultural adaptation and shifts in gender roles, it is vital to capture the specific encounters and sentiments of individuals. Consequently, this research primarily uses interviews to gather data. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the authentic experiences of Chinese immigrant families and couples in Sweden, shedding light on the challenges they face and the strategies they use to navigate these challenges. It also offers valuable insights into the power dynamics within families and the subtleties of patriarchal systems.

4.1 Sampling

I utilized three main avenues to recruit participants for my research: online recruitment, snowball sampling, and referrals from acquaintances. My focus was on Chinese immigrant families who had gotten married in China for more than 5 years and now had been living in Sweden for at least five years, preferably with children. This duration was chosen to ensure that the families had established structures and entrenched gender roles. My goal was to interview five second-generation individuals, five wives, and five husbands to gain comprehensive insights into their adaptation experiences and observe power dynamics within the family. However, finding complete families willing to participate was challenging.

Initially, I posted recruitment notices on Xiaohongshu, a social media platform, targeting second-generation individuals. I received over 20 responses and selected and interviewed five individuals, mostly in their twenties, who had immigrated to Sweden between the ages of 5 and 13. To find immigrant couples, I joined various WeChat groups catering to Chinese immigrants in Sweden, such as "Malmö Moms Group" and "Swedish Chinese Entrepreneurs Group." Engaging

first-generation immigrants was more difficult as they were more reserved. Despite this, I managed to recruit two immigrant wives, who then introduced me to two more eligible wives through snowball sampling.

Recruiting immigrant husbands proved to be the most challenging, as they seemed to vanish within the Chinese immigrant community, making them difficult to locate. These men were virtually invisible in the circles of Chinese immigrants. In the end, I had to rely on my acquaintances within the Chinese immigrant community to introduce eligible immigrant husbands to me. Surprisingly, with the introduction from mutual friends, many husbands became more willing to communicate and participate in interviews. Eventually, I successfully recruited six immigrant husbands and four wives, forming three couples.

In total, I included 17 participants in my study, comprising five second-generation individuals, six wives, and six husbands. It is important to clarify that the second-generation participants are not the children of the couples involved in the study; they come from different families whose parents did not participate. Among these participants, there are three married couples. To protect their privacy, I am unable to identify these three married couples, as doing so could make it easy for their friends to recognize them from the tables below.

Second Generation					
Name	Age	Location	Age at Immigration	Father's Occupation (Sweden/China)	Mother's Occupation (Sweden/China)
Ki	Twenties	Helsingborg	9	Restaurant staff/Unemployed	Factory worker/Factory worker
Han	24	Stockholm	13	Chef/Private sector manager	Restaurant staff/Private sector manager
Lin	21	Malmö	6	Chef/Chef	Officer/Officer
Six	24	Stockholm	5	Professor/Phd student	Chef/Private sector employee
Ya	Twenties	Stockholm	11	Chef/Chef	Sushi chef/Casual worker

Wife						
Name	Age	Location	Immigration	Occupation (Sweden/China)	Husband's Occupation	Number of Children
Yi	Forties	Lund	2018	Private sector procurement officer/Housewife	IT	2
Hai	34	Bara	2012	University lecturer/Freelancer	Driver	2
Sen	Forties	Stockholm	2011	Primary school teacher/Freelancer	IT	2
Mei	Forties	Malmö	2008	University lecturer/Housewife	Professor	2
Min	35	Malmö	2012	Private sector employee/Housewife	Entrepreneur	4
Ye	Forties	Malmö	2012	Doctor/Housewife	IT	2

Husband						
Name	Age	Location	Immigration	Occupation (Sweden/China)	Number of Children	Wife's Occupation
Soy	Forties	Lund	2018	IT/IT	2	Housewife - IT
Hua	Forties	Malmö	2013	Sales manager/Unemployed	2	Housewife
Min	45	Malmö	2011	Professor/Phd student	2	Housewife
Jin	53	Malmö	2012	Entrepreneur/Entrepreneur	4	Housewife
Wa	Forties	Malmö	2012	IT/IT	2	Housewife
Yu	35	Malmö	2012	Entrepreneur/Entrepreneur	2	Freelancer

4.2 Data Collection

In conducting this research, I opted for semi-structured interviews as the primary method of data collection. This approach not only ensured coverage of all essential questions but also provided the flexibility to adjust the interview structure based on the respondents' answers. The semi-structured interviews were designed around five key themes: a) life narratives encompassing experiences in both China and Sweden; b) the distribution of household tasks and responsibilities; c) the

decision-making processes within families; d) familial relationships, including those between parents and children, as well as marital dynamics; and e) instances of family conflicts and crises, along with the strategies employed to address them. These thematic areas were chosen to illuminate the extent of patriarchal influence within the participants' families and to explore the underlying power dynamics. By delving into the details of family conflicts, crises, and their resolution in the Swedish context, we aimed to gain deeper insights into how patriarchal structures navigate the uncertainties and challenges inherent in the immigration process to Swedish society.

Throughout the interviews, a total of 17 participants were engaged, with the duration of each interview ranging from 45 to 90 minutes. Following the interviews, all audio recordings were meticulously transcribed, resulting in a comprehensive transcript comprising approximately 240,000 words. This meticulous transcription process ensured that every nuance and detail captured during the interviews was accurately documented, allowing for thorough analysis and interpretation of the data collected.

4.3 Bias

While I endeavored to minimize biases in my research methodology, it was inevitable that some biases arose during the interview process. Particularly notable was the manifestation of distinct gender differences during interviews. As a female researcher, interactions with wives tended to be more amicable. They exhibited stronger expressive abilities compared to male respondents and were more willing to share their experiences of immigrating to Sweden, along with profound personal insights and emotions. In contrast, responses from husbands often lacked this depth. Furthermore, during interviews with the husbands, I often felt that they perceived me as a teenager rather than an adult. This perception may have been influenced by factors such as the age gap, gender differences, or prevailing patriarchal attitudes. And it is possible that face-to-face interviews induced feelings of insecurity in husbands, leading them to selectively respond to my inquiries or refrain from sharing their true thoughts and feelings. To mitigate biases stemming from my own perceptions, I typically opted for telephone interviews with husbands. Interestingly, the quality of interviews with husbands conducted via telephone significantly surpassed those conducted face-to-face, indicating a potential

reduction in biases associated with this methodological adjustment.

Furthermore, it remains possible that the data included in this research may contain minor discrepancies. Such discrepancies could arise from participants' subtle biases or attempts to portray their family situations in a certain manner. Acknowledging this limitation is important for the interpretation of the study's results, as it underscores the complexities and challenges inherent in conducting qualitative research within a limited timeframe.

Moreover, the sampling size for this study was relatively small, and my participants were predominantly born in 1970s to 1980s. This demographic focus could limit the generalizability of the findings, as it may not fully represent the experiences of younger generations or other age groups.

5. Analysis

Throughout my interviews, I interacted with twelve individuals, consisting of six wives and six husbands. They shared a common demographic profile, predominantly born in the 1980s and currently in their early forties. Their migration to Sweden occurred around 2010. Additionally, there were five second-generation participants in their twenties, along with their parents in their fifties, who immigrated between 2000 and 2010. In total, the sample included three married couples and five families of second-generation immigrants, totaling 14 family units.

Despite the diversity among the families included in the study, they all exhibited patriarchal elements, indicating the persistence of such norms across various cultural backgrounds, even after migration to a more egalitarian society like Sweden. The adaptation period to Swedish society lasted between three to five years for all participants, reflecting the significant adjustments required when transitioning to a new cultural and societal environment. However, the extent of challenges varied depending on the strength of patriarchal norms within each family.

Families with stronger patriarchal tendencies faced more prolonged and arduous adaptation processes. This could be attributed to the clash between traditional patriarchal values and the more egalitarian principles and institutional arrangements prevalent in Swedish society. The resistance to change and the need to reconcile traditional roles with new societal expectations likely contributed to the difficulties experienced by these families. Conversely, families with weaker patriarchal elements encountered smoother transitions with fewer conflicts. This suggests that a more flexible approach to gender roles and power dynamics facilitated adaptation to Swedish society. These families have been more open to embracing the egalitarian values promoted in their new environment, leading to a more seamless integration process. It shows the relocation to Sweden also led to changes in spousal dynamics and family power structures.

Thus, understanding the dynamics within Chinese families prior to immigration is crucial for comprehending the challenges and adaptations they undergo when transitioning to a new cultural context, namely Sweden. The presence of soft patriarchal ruling within Chinese families indicates a

nuanced power structure where traditional gender roles and hierarchies exist, but are often manifested in subtler, less overt ways compared to more rigid forms of patriarchy.

5.1 Before immigration: soft patriarchal ruling

In imperial China, Confucianism played a pivotal role in shaping societal norms and establishing a patriarchal hierarchy. Through an emphasis on relationality and contextuality, Confucian teachings structured all relationships, except those among friends, along hierarchical lines. Within the family sphere, wives were expected to adhere to the authority of their husbands, with obedience serving as the cornerstone of these relationships. Any disruption to this familial order by women was met with moral and legal repercussions, underscoring the entrenched nature of patriarchal norms in Chinese society (Liu, J. 2022). Chinese society has long been rooted in patriarchal principles, with patriarchal families maintaining their authority through ideology, law, and morality. However, the collapse of imperialism and the establishment of the People's Republic of China ushered in profound changes in traditional moral and legal frameworks. Particularly in modern times, market reforms and socioeconomic development have catalyzed significant transformations in Chinese society and family structures (Song, J., & Ji, Y. 2020). The development of the market economy and state policies reducing individual responsibilities towards the collective have led to the emergence of individualism and a redefinition of the family as the focal point of personal life (Song, J., & Ji, Y. 2020). This signifies a departure from traditional Confucian norms, as economic reforms and shifting societal values reshape dynamics within Chinese families.

However, families are not merely passive recipients of societal change; they possess agency to actively adapt to and resist such changes (Jin, Y., & Pan, J. 2011). While processes such as individuation, urbanization, and marketization have indeed altered power dynamics and gender norms within families, the fundamental characteristic of patriarchal families, namely male dominance, continues to undergo self-reconstruction and reproduction amid these transformations (Jin, Y., & Pan, J. 2011). The maintenance of patriarchy before immigration has evolved into a subtler and less overt form, referred to as "soft patriarchy", characterized by its less conspicuous yet resilient nature. In this chapter, I primarily use interviews with wives as the main analytical material,

complemented by interviews with second-generation individuals and husbands to support the analysis.

5.1.1 Internalization of patriarchal women

To explore how patriarchal structures adapt and how "soft patriarchal ruling" is realized, my data reveals that this form of patriarchy is maintained through women's internalization and navigation of these dynamics within the family context. The following part will focus on how women internalize patriarchal norms, emphasizing their experiences and responses to patriarchal power structures.

As a primary school teacher, Sen made the decision to resign from her position and become a housewife upon discovering her pregnancy. She expressed confidence in her ability to secure future employment, stating, "*I am confident in myself in China. Wherever I go, I can find a job. This is not difficult for me*" (Sen). Sen's resignation stemmed from two primary factors: firstly, her husband's income was deemed sufficient to sustain the family's financial needs, and secondly, her unwavering belief in her own capabilities. Notably, the mothers of both the six wives and second-generation participants held esteemed positions in China, including roles as doctors and university lecturers. However, following marriage and particularly after childbirth, the majority opted to resign from their professions and transition into full-time housewife. Sen elaborated on her decision, stating, "*His job is better than mine and he earns more money than me. I am willing to follow his wishes and support his career. I am a very traditional Chinese woman, and I used to have no complaints.*"

Under a patriarchal structure, women are socially conditioned to prioritize family needs over their personal goals (Cooke, 2007). And Sen's statement exemplifies the internalization of traditional patriarchal female images, which typically prioritize male dominance and subordinate women's interests and aspirations to those of their husbands. By asserting that her husband's job is superior and his earnings surpass hers, she implicitly accepts the societal norm equating men's professional success with their value and status within the family. This perpetuates the traditional gender role of the male breadwinner and the female homemaker, reinforcing the notion that a woman's worth is tied to her ability to support her husband's career and accommodate his wishes. Moreover, Sen's

willingness to follow her husband's wishes and support his career underscores the societal expectation for women to prioritize their husband's ambitions over their own. This belief in female subservience and compliance contributes to the perpetuation of unequal power dynamics within the marital relationship. The designation of being a "very traditional Chinese woman" carries significant weight in a patriarchal order. Consequently, factors such as a woman's education, professional qualifications, income, and career prospects are often disregarded. This results in women being cast as 'tied migrants' or 'trailing spouses' (Boyle et al., 2001).

On the other hand, the internalization of patriarchal norms by women is also reflected in their interactions with their husbands. As Ye stated, "*When I was pregnant, I experienced significant pregnancy symptoms, so I stayed at home most of the time. Basically, after he went to work, I took care of all the household chores. At that time, I was quite spoiled, being a girl, and I felt like I had the final say. My husband pampered me and put me first.*" The term "spoiled" suggests a sense of entitlement or being indulged, often associated with someone who receives special treatment or privileges. This characterization reinforces traditional patriarchal norms where women are sometimes seen as delicate or in need of protection, leading to preferential treatment by their husbands. Additionally, the mention of "*being a girl*" implies adherence to traditional gender stereotypes that depict women as inherently fragile or dependent. This reinforces the idea of women as the caregivers and homemakers within the household, while men are expected to be the providers and protectors. Indeed, "*I felt like I had the final say*" also suggests a temporary assertion of authority within the household, but it is important to note that this authority is contingent upon the husband's pampering and indulgence. Ye paints a patriarchal image of women as dependent, nurturing, and occasionally empowered within the confines of traditional gender roles. It reinforces the expectation that women should prioritize domestic duties and rely on male support, perpetuating unequal power dynamics within the marital relationship.

Sen's and Ye's narratives illuminate the subtle yet profound effects of internalized patriarchal norms on women's roles and interactions within the family. By prioritizing male dominance and subordinating their own interests, and by embracing the notion of being "spoiled girls" in their marriages, they unknowingly internalize the image of patriarchal women, thereby perpetuating and

sustaining the existing power structure within their households.

5.1.2 Partial transfer of family power

Soft patriarchal ruling manifests not only through the internalization of patriarchal norms by wives, leading to the acceptance of unequal interaction dynamics with their husbands, but also through patriarchal families' strategic delegation of familial authority. This contemporary iteration of patriarchal ruling departs from traditional manifestations characterized by men's exclusive possession of absolute power and dominance. Instead, it involves a nuanced approach where men judiciously distribute power while retaining decisive control over pivotal matters, thereby perpetuating patriarchal hegemony within the family structure.

"All the trivial matters at home, including household chores, are actually taken care of by my mom, and then my dad might be responsible for providing money. If my dad thinks what my mom says makes sense, he will listen to her, but if he feels it's not right, then my dad will make his own decision." (Six) The allocation of responsibilities reflects a division based on traditional gender roles, with the mother primarily tasked with domestic chores while the father assumes the role of financial provider. And the father's discretionary authority over key decisions indicates a strategic delegation of familial authority. While the mother's input is considered, ultimately, the father retains the final say, particularly in matters deemed significant. This aligns with the nuanced approach of the patriarchal ruling, where men judiciously distribute power while maintaining decisive control over pivotal issues.

In addition to delegating less significant decision-making authority, communication and negotiation are also commonly employed as a form of soft patriarchal ruling. Sen shared a story of decision-making, which shows how negotiation has become a strategy, but not an equal communication. *"The overall principle is that both of us negotiate, but in reality, it's always me who ends up compromising. Um, originally, we were in Xi'an, where I worked as a teacher and he was attending university. Later, after he graduated and found a job in Qingdao, I resigned from my job and followed him to Qingdao. That's just how it goes. If there's no compromise, then inevitably, the*

relationship will fall apart." Sen's experience reveals an underlying imbalance in power dynamics. Communication has shifted from being a tool for equal dialogue and decision-making to a strategy employed within the framework of soft ruling. Despite the stated principle of negotiation between both parties, the reality, as articulated by Sen, reveals a dynamic where one party consistently yields to the other. Sen's readiness to compromise, coupled with the implication that failure to do so would result in separation, underscores the unequal distribution of power and agency within the relationship. If the essence of power relations is unequal, then communication and negotiation can only become the formalism and serve to reinforce soft patriarchal ruling.

5.1.3 Pressure from outside

The concept of "soft patriarchal ruling" is used rather than suggesting a decline in patriarchal rule because patriarchal dominance remains deeply entrenched at both social and interpersonal levels. The underlying power dynamics and control mechanisms continue to be strong and pervasive. This means that "soft patriarchal ruling" is not limited to family dynamics or interactions between spouses; it represents a broader societal complicity where unequal power relations and women's subordination are reinforced by close others, such as parents and relatives. In this part, I will use the experiences of Ki's mother and Sen to illustrate it.

Although Ki's mother held a job in China, her father remained unemployed for an extended period. Despite this, her mother still lacked influence within the family. *"Since we resided at my grandmother's house, which belonged to my father's family, our daily life revolved entirely around my father's family and relatives. As a result, my mother occasionally felt like an outsider and approached situations with more caution."* The traditional living arrangement in Ki's family follows the traditional Confucian principles, whose ideal model of households were extended, and the family was structured around the patrilineage or the ties of the male descent line (Keyes, C. F. 1977). It also had a significant impact on family dynamics and the power structure within the household. The fact that they lived in the grandmother's house, which was associated with the father's family, implies a patriarchal family structure where the father's lineage holds greater authority and influence. As a result, the daily routines and decisions were likely dominated by the father's family and relatives,

marginalizing the mother's role and agency within the household. This situation made Ki's mother feel like an outsider, indicating her lack of integration or acceptance within the family unit. And also, it can lead to a sense of isolation and exclusion, prompting the mother to approach family interactions and decisions with more caution to navigate the power dynamics and ensure her interests are protected as much as possible.

Sen also expresses concerns, *"I'm just too influenced by my parents. If I were to divorce, I would think about it, oh, my mom would definitely be sad. I would have such concerns."* It shows familial expectations and societal norms influence her decision-making process, particularly regarding the prospect of divorce. Sen reveals the weight of familial pressure and the desire to adhere to traditional values. The concern about her mother's potential sadness indicates the emotional impact that her actions would have on her family members, highlighting the importance of maintaining her own familial harmony and avoiding any actions that may disrupt it under the pressure of parental influence. It reflects a reluctance to prioritize personal desires over familial obligations, underscoring the power of familial influence in shaping individual decisions and behaviors, even in matters as personal as marital relationships.

Chapter summary

These three chapters of analysis explore how "soft patriarchal ruling" manifests through women's internalization of patriarchal norms and the strategic delegation of familial authority, with insights drawn from the experiences of individuals like Sen and Ki's mother to illustrate the persistence of these power dynamics within both family and broader societal contexts. Indeed, soft patriarchal ruling operates in a subtle manner that preserves the underlying structure of patriarchal dominance while appearing to offer concessions or flexibility. This form of ruling does not challenge the fundamental power dynamics within patriarchal systems but rather reinforces them through more nuanced means. By allowing for minor adjustments or apparent compromises, such as token gestures of shared decision-making or delegation of certain tasks, soft patriarchal ruling gives the impression of progress or modernization while maintaining the overarching patriarchal hierarchy.

Moreover, soft patriarchal ruling can perpetuate the illusion of choice or agency for women within the patriarchal framework. By presenting limited options or superficial empowerment, it obscures the underlying power differentials and disguises the continued subordination of women within the family and society. This illusion of empowerment can further entrench patriarchal values as women may internalize the belief that they have some degree of control or influence, even though their actions ultimately serve to uphold patriarchal norms and structures.

Additionally, it may exploit societal expectations and cultural norms to reinforce traditional gender roles and expectations. By presenting certain behaviors or decisions as conforming to cultural norms or familial obligations, it reinforces the idea that women should prioritize the needs and desires of their husbands and families above their own. This perpetuates the cycle of patriarchal socialization, wherein women are socialized to accept and perpetuate patriarchal values and norms, even when they appear to have some degree of agency or autonomy.

5.2 Patriarchal crisis

When I talked to the wives about their experiences of just getting married in their home country, they often looked back on that time and described themselves as "naive." The romantic bubble they had about marriage and love was quickly burst after immigrating to Sweden, leading to prolonged family struggles and crisis.

After relocating to Sweden, Chinese families typically undergo an adaptation period lasting three to five years. This transition marks a significant shift, as the soft patriarchal ruling loses support from the societal structure and arrangements, resulting in both wives and husbands facing challenges and setbacks in Sweden. For housewives, this phase often entails prolonged social isolation, as they grapple with the absence of familiar social networks and the inability to engage with Swedish society. And husbands encounter numerous setbacks in their personal and professional lives during this adjustment period. These challenges contribute to heightened family conflicts, placing considerable strain on marital relationships and the overall family dynamics. Indeed, after immigration, the circumstances that previously forced many women to enter into marriage or remain in unsatisfactory relationships have undergone significant changes, leading to increased family conflicts (Darvishpour, M. 2002). This collective experience of turmoil within patriarchal families characterizes what I term the "patriarchy crisis."

In this section, I'll explore how immigrating to Sweden triggers a patriarchal crisis for Chinese families, leading to dissatisfied wives and frustrated husbands. And how patriarchal crisis prompts new expectations for husbands to participate more in household chores and for marriages to be characterized by equality and respect towards wives. Using interviews with wives, husbands, and the second generation, I aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of this patriarchal crisis during the early stages of immigration to Sweden.

5.2.1 Dissatisfied wives and frustrated husbands

In the initial stages of immigrating to Sweden, the challenges faced by wives and husbands are different. For wives, especially those who are housewives, they often encounter stronger language

barriers and, without employment, lose the primary channel of contact with Swedish society. For a long period, they can only stay at home, managing household chores and taking care of children. Among all the wives I interviewed, they were all housewives in the early stages of migration and experienced varying degrees of social isolation. The shortcomings of patriarchal families are manifested in an extreme manner, directly impacting the well-being of wives, exacerbating their dissatisfaction with family life and marriage after immigration.

Sen, originally a primary school teacher in China, resigned from her job and became a homemaker after her marriage. However, her husband's career later necessitated a move to Sweden for work. Initially, Sen had no intention of relocating to Sweden, but faced with pressure from both her own and her husband's families, she reluctantly agreed to accompany him. Reflecting on this decision, she remarked, *"Both our families were very anxious and felt that we couldn't be separated for too long. Everyone was pressuring me, so I had no choice but to come."* Both Sen's and her husband's families exerted pressure on her to prioritize her husband's career and future over her own, ultimately leading her to give up her job. This pressure contributed to Sen's sense of obligation to follow her husband to Sweden, despite her own reservations and challenges in adapting to the new environment.

Upon arriving in Sweden, Sen found herself grappling with a prolonged state of depression. *"I couldn't speak Swedish and wasn't good at English. Coming to Sweden made me feel like I was in a disadvantaged position. I was very depressed at that time, always thinking about going back to China. At most, I went back to China three times a year. And once, I remember staying indoors for 23 days straight. I just stayed at home."* Sen felt isolated, frustrated, and culturally disoriented. Her inability to communicate effectively due to language barriers compounded her feelings of being disadvantaged. Additionally, lacking a job and being a housewife deprived her of the opportunity to establish her own social networks. The patriarchal structure of Sen's family further hindered her ability to integrate into Swedish society, leading to her prolonged isolation. This situation made Sen highly reliant on her husband for the first time. As Sen said, *"I was very dependent on him. Even when I took the bus alone, he would stay on the phone with me, telling me where to get off."*

In China, Sen was very independent. She had a decent job as a primary school teacher, which

allowed her to support herself fully without relying on anyone financially. The Chinese government has been promoting policies encouraging female employment for the past 50 years, resulting in nearly universal employment among urban women. Contemporary Chinese women grow up believing that working outside the home is the only way of life (Ho, 2006). However, many Western countries, including the United States, Canada, and Australia, record that language barriers, non-recognition of foreign credentials, racial and gender discrimination, and the devaluation of overseas work experience often lead to decreased job mobility or unemployment for Chinese female immigrants (Man, 2004). Additionally, losing familial and social support networks, such as mothers, mothers-in-law, or hired help, means women must independently manage household responsibilities. Increased domestic duties reduce their time for employment or social activities, often pushing them into more traditional female roles (Ho, 2006).

For Sen, moving to Sweden and becoming a housewife drastically changed the dynamics of her life. She was forced to transition from a professional woman to a homemaker, resulting in increased feminization and re-domestication. This shift was not something Sen welcomed. The lack of a professional role and the need to navigate a foreign culture without language skills left her feeling powerless and dependent. This stark contrast from her previous life in China intensified her sense of loss and disorientation. Sen's experience highlights the profound impact of migration on gender roles and personal identity. While Chinese men often reinforce their roles as providers and heads of the household after immigrating, women experience economic and social dependency on their husbands for the first time (Lary, 1994). This dependency was not just a practical adjustment but also a significant psychological shift for Sen, who had to reconcile her previous independence with her new reality.

Sen's experience is common among many women who gave up decent jobs in China to become housewives, indicating that it is typical for Chinese female immigrants that migration often causes middle-class, professional women to revert to traditional gender roles as caregivers or homemakers. So, upon moving to Sweden, they often experience a profound sense of loss and displacement. As Mei said: "*You feel as if all the years of effort were in vain, as if everything reset to zero, leading to a sense of emptiness.*" Mei left her job as a university lecturer to become a full-time mother and

followed her husband to Sweden for his job. In Sweden, Mei soon had two baby kids, but the idealized vision of marriage and family life began to crumble. Mei reflects, "*We only began to realize our many differences and conflicts after we came to Sweden.*" This realization brought about a deep sense of helplessness regarding their marriage. Managing the family in this new environment was bewildering for Mei. Suddenly transitioning from a childless couple to having two children to care for was overwhelming. The lack of a support network compounded the challenge; they had no relatives or friends in Sweden to offer guidance or assistance. This isolation presented a significant hurdle, as Mei explains, "*We had no place to seek help. And it might be a bout of postpartum depression, and there are many emotions, often leading me to frequent crying.*" Mei is deeply upset as she recounts this period, and this is the first time she is sharing her story with others. The stark contrast between her idealized vision of family life and the harsh realities of parenting in a foreign country became painfully evident. The picture of a beautiful family life had been painted when they got married, but the practical demands of parenting, such as feeding the children and caring for them when they fell ill, shattered this illusion.

In essence, wives from patriarchal Chinese families who relocate to Sweden often experience feminization and re-domestication, accompanied by feelings of helplessness, depression, and emptiness, especially during the initial years. Similarly, husbands encounter unexpected challenges, highlighting a stark contrast with their experiences in China. They gradually realize their limited capabilities in Sweden compared to what they could achieve in China.

Min is a very promising doctoral student in China, and he came to Sweden in pursuit of his academic development, firmly believing that his hard work in his career would lead to significant achievements in Sweden. However, reality did not align with his expectations. Despite his intense dedication and perceived skills, Min encountered unexpected setbacks and experienced limited success. This realization was particularly disheartening for him as it contradicted his long-held beliefs about the correlation between effort and results. Additionally, Min's aspirations for family life were not realized as he had envisioned. He had hoped for a harmonious household with well-behaved children. However, the challenges of parenting in a new environment, combined with his personal struggles, left him feeling unfulfilled. Over time, Min began to question his previous beliefs and

found himself grappling with feelings of futility and inadequacy. As Min expressed, *"So all the feedback wasn't that good, you did what you believed in but it didn't turn out that good, it's like that."* Min acknowledges that during a certain period, he lacked the capacity to engage in deeper reflection. And he have been overwhelmed or constrained by this circumstances, preventing him from fully understanding and addressing the issues he faced. *"I feel that at that time, I actually didn't have the ability to reflect better. Because I myself was in that situation. I couldn't, you know, break out of it. But I knew there was a problem."* Throughout the interview, Min repeatedly said, *"I don't have the ability,"* making it particularly poignant to hear someone who is usually so confident and proud now repeatedly express such self-doubt.

Moreover, Min expresses a strong sense of responsibility for educating his children but acknowledges his lack of ability in effectively implementing educational principles. He notes a paradox in believing his educational methods are correct while simultaneously recognizing his inability to achieve the desired outcomes. This internal conflict undermines his confidence and authority. Despite dedicating time and effort to learning about parenting, Min finds that his children do not respond as expected. This persistent failure leads to frustration, further weakening his authoritative position within the family. And frequent and escalating arguments with his wife after moving to Sweden exacerbate this situation. The stress and conflict within the family create an environment where his guidance and decisions are increasingly challenged, making it difficult for him to maintain control.

In a patriarchal family structure, the father's authority is often tied to his ability to provide and guide effectively. According to Thompson (1993), family members are more likely to follow the husband's expectations and demands only when he is perceived as powerful, even if his expectations differ from those of the family members. If the husband's authority is not strongly established, any misalignment between his expectations and those of the family members will likely result in resistance and a lack of adherence to his guidance. *"I actually took this matter very seriously and learned a lot about educational concepts in this regard, such as teaching children to follow rules, be polite, and so on. However, in reality, these so-called principles, or parenting philosophies, I lack the ability to make the children actually adhere to them. You become more and more anxious, you hit*

more and more walls, and the results you expect cannot be achieved, it's that kind of state." Min's struggles in maintaining control and achieving educational goals for his children challenge the traditional notion of the father as the unquestioned head of the family. This erosion of his authoritative role signals a broader crisis within the patriarchal framework of the family. Overall, Min's diminished authority stems from a combination of personal inadequacies, unmet expectations, intensified family conflicts, cultural adaptation challenges, and the erosion of traditional patriarchal roles. These factors collectively contribute to the crisis of patriarchy within the family as they adapt to life in Sweden.

Min is frustrated, and similarly, Ki's father is also frustrated. Ki's father, a worker in China, came to Sweden to earn more money, but he lacks skills and can only work as a kitchen assistant in a Chinese restaurant. Ki's father works long hours every day, approximately 10 to 12 hours, with little to no rest time. Additionally, since most of the colleagues and customers in the Chinese restaurant are Chinese, he faces significant language barriers. Initially, he struggled with feelings of isolation, although he works in a Chinese restaurant, their personal lives didn't have much overlap. This lack of a broader support network intensified his sense of loneliness and hindered his ability to integrate into Swedish society. Moreover, his traditional beliefs and values clashed with the more liberal attitudes prevalent in Sweden, leading to conflicts with his daughter, Ki, regarding her personal choices. These conflicts exacerbated his feelings of frustration and powerlessness. Ki said, *"He himself also said that when he was in China, he had a relatively strong sense of self-esteem, confidence, and felt capable of handling everything. However, here, he feels a sense of inferiority, meaning he actually can't handle things independently. He feels that his brilliance has been diminished after being here for so long."* Similarly, research indicates that many Iranian men who immigrate to Sweden experience feelings of powerlessness and a loss of identity. Their status as men declines suddenly, and some find it very difficult to adapt to their new life in Sweden (Darvishpour, M. 2002). This issue is not unique to Chinese male immigrants but also affects other male immigrants from patriarchal backgrounds.

In summary, the crisis of patriarchy manifests in different ways for wives and husbands within the family structure. For wives, often relegated to the role of housewives, their lack of employment caused by the patriarchal family structure deprives them of interaction with Swedish society, leading

to feelings of loneliness and dissatisfaction with family life and marriage. And these challenges strips them of agency and integration opportunities. On the other hand, for husbands, the crisis of patriarchy primarily manifests as feelings of personal inadequacy and challenges to their authority within the family. Min and Ki's father encounter unexpected setbacks in their careers and family life. These setbacks lead to feelings of frustration and powerlessness in both work and family domains, ultimately contributing to a patriarchal crisis within the family.

5.2.2 The new dynamics within the crisis of patriarchy

Immigrating to Sweden represents a pivotal moment for patriarchal Chinese families, exposing the vulnerabilities inherent within the patriarchal structure. Traditional mechanisms that support soft patriarchal ruling in China, such as the internalization of patriarchal norms by women, partial delegation of family authority, and external societal pressures, confront notable adjustments and challenges within the Swedish socio-cultural milieu. In Sweden, wives in patriarchal family structures often face extreme isolation, being forced into feminization and deprived of opportunities to engage with Swedish society and build their own social networks. Meanwhile, husbands, adhering to traditional gender roles, allocate greater focus on their professional endeavors, exacerbating the dissatisfaction and strain experienced by wives in these arrangements.

Some empirical studies suggest that migration can empower Chinese immigrant wives by either imposing a "double burden" on them or entirely restricting them to heavy domestic responsibilities (Yan Yu, 2006), leading to their feminization and re-domestication. Additionally, the concept of egalitarianism among Chinese immigrant couples is often weakened as they struggle to overcome structural and cultural constraints (Yan Yu, 2006). In return, these dynamics can alleviate the tension between spouses caused by juggling work and family responsibilities, ultimately contributing to marital stability in a country with social, cultural, and economic factors vastly different from their homeland (Yan Yu, 2006). However, in my interviews, immigrant women forced to revert to traditional gender roles under existing patriarchal family structures did not experience relief from family and marital tensions. Instead, this re-domestication often exacerbated conflicts within the family and heightened their awareness of gender equality. As wives navigate the challenges of social

isolation and limited agency in the new country, they increasingly challenge traditional gender roles, redefining expectations placed on husbands to address escalating familial conflicts and deteriorating well-being.

As Sullivan notes, gender roles and orders are not only constructed by external society but also by interactions within the family and between spouses (Sullivan, 2004). These new expectations for gender roles and orders often lead to a renegotiation of power dynamics within the family, promoting a shift towards more egalitarian interactions and decision-making processes. This process highlights the transformative potential of migration in reshaping gender relations and power structures within immigrant families.

New gender expectations: participation in household chores

Upon relocating to Sweden, the traditional gender roles that were manageable in China became sources of tension and dissatisfaction in the new socio-cultural context. Mei's experience encapsulates the broader "patriarchy crisis" that many Chinese immigrant families face, wherein the husband's authority and the wife's compliance are both destabilized. In this new environment, wives like Mei begin to feel unsatisfied with the traditional gender division of labor under patriarchal ruling, leading to new gender expectations for their husbands and thus creating new dynamics within the family.

Mei's dissatisfaction with her family life in Sweden, which I discussed in the last part, was not just due to her own isolation but also the perceived imbalance in her husband's contribution to family life. The traditional patriarchal setup, where the husband's primary focus was on work, became untenable. Mei's husband's dedication to his job left her feeling unsupported, especially as she navigated the challenges of caring for young children. "*He still focused on his work, even after the children were born, which was a big challenge for us.*" This ongoing focus on work, typical in patriarchal family structures, became a point of contention. Mei's isolation and the heavy burden of childcare without her husband's support created a rift. The lack of emotional and practical support led Mei to expect more involvement from her husband in domestic duties. "*He expressed his love for the children but*

still loved his work more. When the children came, he diverted some of his limited energy to them, making me feel even more neglected." This shift in expectations signifies a critical challenge to the soft patriarchal ruling. Traditionally, such ruling relies on the internalization of gender roles by both spouses and partial delegation of family power, which becomes impractical in a context where the wife feels unsupported and overwhelmed.

The critical juncture in Mei's narrative is the realization that traditional gender roles were unsustainable in their new environment. This realization led to a new expectation for equal participation in household chores by her husband. Mei's story reflects a broader trend among immigrant families, where the practical demands of a new environment necessitate a reevaluation of traditional roles. Like Mei said: "*I teach my son now that if you can't do the chores, at least learn to speak kindly, as my husband's inability to do either made it hard to sustain.*" It illustrates the need for a more collaborative and supportive household dynamic. Mei's shift in expectations represents a challenge to the traditional soft patriarchal structure, advocating for a partnership based on mutual support and shared responsibilities.

Mei's experience is very common among Chinese immigrant families in Sweden. Indeed, immigrant housewives tend to rely heavily on their families for support, a dependency that becomes more pronounced in a foreign country where traditional social networks are less accessible (Leutloff-Grandits, C. 2023, p.18). On the one hand, the internalization of patriarchal norms by women, a cornerstone of the soft patriarchal ruling in China, becomes problematic in the Swedish context. In China, Mei and other women like her were socialized to accept and even embrace their subordinate roles within the family. Their identities and self-worth were closely tied to their ability to fulfill these roles effectively. However, upon moving to Sweden, the lack of societal reinforcement for these roles creates a vacuum. Mei, isolated from the familiar cultural and social cues that once validated her efforts, begins to question the very norms she had internalized. This questioning is not just an individual process but a significant shift that affects the entire family dynamic. On the other hand, external pressures from society and interpersonal networks in China played a crucial role in maintaining patriarchal gender roles. These pressures provided both support and control mechanisms that reinforced patriarchal norms. However, upon relocating to Sweden, the external control

mechanisms were no longer present. And the lack of a supportive extended family network in Sweden meant that housewives could not rely on the same familial support structures that have helped them manage household responsibilities in China. This absence further highlighted the impracticality of maintaining patriarchal gender roles in the new context. Without the extended family to share the burden or to reinforce patriarchal norms, the expectation that Mei would single-handedly manage the household became untenable. Thus, Mei expected her husband to participate more actively in household chores and childcare, recognizing that this adjustment was necessary to maintain a functional and equitable family life in Sweden. This shift in expectations was not only about sharing the workload but also about seeking respect and equality within the marriage. The new societal context allowed Mei to envision a partnership where both spouses shared responsibilities and supported each other more equally.

New Expectations for gender order: equality and respect

Initially subjected to a soft patriarchal ruling in China, Sen's experience in Sweden catalyzed a significant shift in her expectations and understanding of gender orders within the family. In China, Sen's marriage conformed to the patriarchal gender orders, and this dynamic is evident in Sen's initial acceptance of her husband's control over various aspects of their lives, including making decisions, managing finances, and handling communications. Sen's description of her husband's meticulous care when she first arrived in Sweden—such as mapping out bus routes and ensuring she didn't get lost—highlights her dependency on him. This dependency, while initially perceived as care and love, ultimately reinforced her subordinate position and diminished her self-worth. And she recounted spending 23 days at home without stepping outside in Sweden, a period during which her reliance on her husband intensified, as I mentioned in the last part. For a long time in this marriage, she sacrificed her personal desires and social interactions, placing her happiness solely on the well-being of her children.

However, after immigrating to Sweden for several years, a pivotal moment in Sen's life occurred when her husband refused to provide financial assistance for her mother, who was in dire need of surgery in China. This refusal, despite her mother's critical condition, made Sen realize her husband's

lack of respect and support for her and her family. It was the first time she connected his selfishness with their relationship dynamics; she had previously believed they functioned as a unit, which justified her role as a housewife and her devotion to the family. But this incident made her recognize that her sacrifices, including leaving a decent job as a primary teacher in China, were in vain and unappreciated. She began to question the validity of her role as a housewife and was forced to confront the unequal and disrespectful treatment she endured. When asked why her husband didn't respect and appreciate her sacrifices, she paused for a moment and responded, "*Perhaps simply because he is a man, and I am a woman; he has a job, and I don't*". In essence, Sen's statement reflects a broader critique of gender dynamics that are perpetuated by economic dependency and traditional gender orders. Thus, following her mother's death and the subsequent epiphany regarding her life choices, Sen decided to divorce her husband. This decision was driven by a newfound recognition of her worth and the necessity for respect and equality within the family.

Sen's experience transitioning from a housewife to a single mother provides profound insights into the impact of economic independence and cultural context on gender orders and expectations within a family. Her reflections reveal a significant transformation in her perception of gender equality and autonomy. Sen highlights the benefits of being a single mother compared to her life as a housewife, emphasizing the newfound independence she enjoys. She states, "*Since separating, although the financial pressure has increased, everything else has improved. I believe it is going in a better direction.*" This indicates that despite the increased financial burden, her overall quality of life has improved. She particularly values her ability to make decisions independently: "*The most satisfying part is that now I can support myself and my children. Economically, I don't depend on anyone. Secondly, I can make any decision easily. I no longer hesitate and wonder if it's okay to do this or that. Previously, I would consult my husband before making any decision. If he disagreed, I wouldn't do it because I lacked confidence. Now, it's different. I don't need to ask anyone. I do what I want.*"

Moreover, Sen's evolving expectations for gender orders within the family were significantly influenced by her observations of Swedish family dynamics, which contrasted sharply with her traditional views. In Sweden, she noticed the equitable division of domestic responsibilities among couples, such as sharing child pickup duties. Sen recounts, "*From the time my child started school*

and kindergarten, I began interacting with many Swedish families and parents from other countries. You can see differences in how couples interact. For example, when picking up children, many couples take turns weekly. Even if they are both working and not separated, they plan who picks up the child in advance, considering travel and meetings." This exposure to a more balanced approach to family responsibilities highlighted the disparities in her own marriage, where traditional gender roles and orders were deeply entrenched. Sen's previous belief that *"the father was the absolute sky, and the two children and the mother were under the umbrella"* was challenged by the egalitarian relationships she observed. This realization prompted her to reevaluate her own situation, recognizing the inequity and lack of respect she experienced in her marriage. Some research indicates that immigrant women often challenge male-dominated traditional gender norms and patriarchal family structures primarily when men face underemployment or limited ability to provide for the family (Chang, J. 2004). However, Sen's challenge to the traditional gender order did not stem from her husband's limited capacity to provide. Sen's decision to divorce her husband and embrace independence was driven by her intrinsic recognition of her value and the necessity for a balanced and respectful partnership. Her journey underscores that the challenge to traditional gender norms can arise from a personal quest for equality and self-respect, rather than solely from economic factors affecting the male provider's role.

Sen's new expectations for gender orders evolved towards a model of shared responsibility and mutual support. She now believes that *"the father and mother are equal. Both can hold up an umbrella, and everyone can stand on their own."* This shift shows a deeper understanding of the need for balance and fairness within the family unit. Her ideal family dynamic resembles a collaborative business partnership, where both parents work together as equals for the benefit of their children: *"My ideal marriage is like running a company. The father and mother are colleagues, working together. Everyone contributes to the company, and everyone also compromises for their colleagues. Living in harmony is ideal. It cannot be that one person relies on the other or one person is very dominant while the other has no status. This is not right."* She believes that if children grow up in a family where fairness and mutual respect are practiced, they are more likely to adopt these values in their future relationships.

Sen's journey reflects a broader shift towards recognizing the importance of gender equality within the family, driven by her personal experiences and the progressive societal norms she encountered in Sweden. This transformation shows the potential for cultural context and social exposure to reshape deeply held beliefs and expectations regarding gender roles.

Chapter summary

This chapter delves into the challenges faced by wives, primarily housewives, and husbands during the initial years of immigrating to Sweden, leading to a patriarchal crisis. Wives experience isolation and self-worth questioning, while husbands encounter setbacks in their professional and personal lives. Mei and Sen represent wives' struggles, while Min and Ki's father exemplify husbands' frustrations. These challenges disrupt traditional patriarchal dynamics, reflecting a broader crisis in immigrant households adapting to Swedish society.

In Sweden, traditional gender roles are challenged, as seen in Mei's experience, prompting dissatisfaction with the patriarchal setup. Her story highlights the need for husbands to participate more in household chores, challenging gender norms and advocating for a more equitable partnership. This shift reflects a broader trend among immigrant families, necessitating a reevaluation of traditional roles in light of new socio-cultural contexts. Moreover, Sen's journey illustrates a significant shift in her expectations for gender orders, advocating for greater equality and respect in her marriage. Observations of more balanced family dynamics in Sweden reinforce her new expectations, underscoring the importance of fairness and mutual respect in family relationships. Her journey reflects broader societal shifts towards recognizing the need for gender equality within the family unit, influenced by personal experiences and social influences.

5.3 Bargain with patriarchy and compromise within patriarchy

The discussion about dissatisfied wives and frustrated husbands highlights the emergence of new gender expectations within immigrant families. Wives, experiencing social isolation and dependency, and husbands, facing diminished authority and professional setbacks, encounter a pivotal challenge in their adaptation to Swedish society. These circumstances prompt couples to either continue seeking patriarchal elements within Swedish society to sustain the patriarchal structure or to challenge the patriarchal power structure within the family, negotiating new family power dynamics and interaction patterns.

In this chapter, I will explore two distinct patterns of bargaining with patriarchy and ultimately analyze the compromises made within patriarchy among Chinese immigrant families in Sweden. The first pattern involves converting to religion, allowing families to adapt patriarchal elements and structures in a way that facilitates smoother adjustment to their new environment. While the overarching framework remains patriarchal, specific religious practices and norms, such as spousal interactions and husbands' participation in household chores, are modified to meet the new gender expectations of the housewives discussed in the previous chapter. This religious adaptation provides a context in which traditional gender roles can be reinterpreted to fit Swedish society, thereby addressing the evolving expectations of both spouses. The second pattern involves housewives seeking employment once their children reach a certain age. By entering the workforce and contributing financially, these women aim to achieve greater independence and assert their agency within the family. This shift not only provides them with financial autonomy but also challenges the traditional patriarchal dynamics by positioning them as equal partners in the economic domain. This transition is often accompanied by a renegotiation of household responsibilities and a demand for more egalitarian relationships, reflecting a broader trend toward gender equality and mutual respect within the family unit. These adaptive strategies underscore the dynamic nature of gender expectations and the ongoing negotiation of power within immigrant families as they strive to balance tradition with the demands of their new socio-cultural environment.

In the analysis, I will employ a specific case to illustrate how a couple utilizes Christianity to sustain

a patriarchal family structure while simultaneously accommodating new gender expectations. I will refer to the spouse as 'wife' and 'husband,' avoiding the use of pseudonyms presented in the methodology chapter, since the table shows details that make it easy for their acquaintances to recognize them. And then, I will analyze two case of second-generation's mothers who have used employment as a bargaining tool to gain greater discourse power within their families. These stories will illustrate how financial contributions serve as leverage for these women to negotiate more equitable family roles and challenge the existing patriarchal structures. Interviews with both spouses and the second generation provide rich insights into these adaptive strategies.

5.3.1 Christianity, as a crucial bolster for sustaining patriarchy.

Upon immigrating to Sweden, the wife faced significant social isolation due to language barriers, cultural differences, and a lack of social support networks. She comforted herself by thinking, *"Support my husband. If he really wants to develop his career abroad, then we both need to work hard together. He can focus on his work, and I'll take care of the home. So, I convinced myself in this way, and felt okay inside."* In an attempt to cope with these challenges, she adopted a supportive role, focusing on her husband's career aspirations. Her initial strategy was to ensure that her husband could work without domestic distractions, believing that this would help him succeed professionally and, by extension, secure a stable future for the family. However, the situation changed dramatically after the birth of their child. The arrival of the baby introduced new responsibilities and intensified the existing challenges. The wife found herself struggling with the physical and emotional demands of motherhood without sufficient support. The increased workload, coupled with her existing isolation, led to severe stress and depression. The initial strategy of self-consolation and dedication to her husband's career proved unsustainable under the added pressure of childcare and household management. As the pressures of motherhood mounted, the wife began to generate new gender expectations for her husband. She realized that the traditional division of labor was untenable in their new context and wanted her husband to participate more actively in household chores and childcare to alleviate some of her burdens. Additionally, she sought emotional support from her husband, needing him to be more present and engaged in their family life.

However, the husband did not share this perspective. Reflecting on that period, he said, "*I didn't think spending time on household chores was valuable, you know? So, back then, that kind of thinking was very strange. I felt that it would be better for us to go out and eat together or grab a quick meal. I thought cooking was the most time-wasting and useless thing and it was inefficient in life. It's not that I thought her household labor was worthless, but I didn't see it as particularly valuable either.*" The husband did not understand his wife's struggles and refused to meet her new expectations. "*At that time, my thought was, she handles the home, I handle the outside work; we had different divisions of labor. I thought this style might be more effective.*" Indeed, these patriarchal mindsets unconsciously existed in the husband's perspective. And this situation highlights the deep-seated nature of patriarchal values that often go unexamined within family dynamics. The husband's efficiency-driven approach to life, deeply rooted in the competitive and fast-paced Chinese society, significantly contributed to his undervaluing of domestic work. This reveals a profound disconnect between their expectations and needs. His traditional mindset, which prioritized external work over household responsibilities, did not align with the wife's evolving needs for support and partnership. Considering household chores as inefficient and low-value demonstrates how ingrained gender roles can hinder the adaptation process for Chinese immigrant families in Sweden. The refusal to engage in household chores was not necessarily a deliberate act of neglect but rather a product of his upbringing and societal norms that undervalue domestic labor, especially when performed by women.

Although the wife wanted to change her husband's mindset and make him understand her feelings and expectations, she found that no matter how severe the conflicts were, her husband did not change at all. As a result, their relationship and the family environment deteriorated over time. However, when a Swedish Christian knocked on their door and preached, the wife saw it as a lifeline. She said, "*At that time, studying the Bible was like a lifeline for me. I urgently needed strength and guidance on how to manage my family. Simply interacting with some local Chinese people didn't really help me.*" A body of literature emphasizes the importance of pre-migration traumas and post-migration crises in explaining religious conversion and as crucial factors in the faith-seeking behaviors of Chinese immigrants (Yining Wang, 2022; Wang & Yang, 2006; Wong, 2006). For the wife, in the process of studying the Bible, she experienced a dual transformation. The Chinese speaking

Christian community which compound by local Chinese immigrants and several Swedish people selectively absorbed and adapted the content of the Bible. This adaptation allowed the Bible to maintain the basic framework of soft patriarchal ruling while simultaneously meeting the new gender expectations of Chinese immigrants. The teachings provided a way to align traditional patriarchal values with the evolving dynamics within their families, offering a sense of continuity and stability amidst change.

For the wife, after three years of studying the Bible, her decision to convert to Christianity marked a significant turning point. The newfound religious perspective allowed her to reframe her understanding of family chores, seeing them as meaningful acts done for the God rather than mundane tasks. She expressed this by saying, *“Whatever you do, do it as if you are doing it for God, not for people. This gave me great motivation. Everything I do is meaningful, as God wants.”* This shift brought her peace when performing household chores and also led her to adopt a calmer, more reflective communication style, which reduced misunderstandings and conflicts. For the husband, his initial health problems and work-related stress made him recognize the unsustainability of his lifestyle in Sweden. Witnessing his wife's positive changes piqued his interest in her newfound faith, prompting him to explore Christianity himself, and he soon converted.

The most important principle the wife emphasized from the Bible is, *“In a family, the man is the head of the woman, meaning the man has God-given authority to lead the family. The woman plays a supportive role. However, the Bible doesn't only say this. As a man, a true Christian and follower of Jesus, he should emulate Jesus' example by treating his wife gently. The Bible says, ‘You must love your wife as you love your own body.’”* The wife's understanding of Christian teachings provides a religious framework that legitimizes the traditional patriarchal structure and ruling within the family. By positioning the man as the divinely appointed leader, this interpretation confers a sense of moral and religious duty on the husband to lead. However, the religious sanctioning does more than reinforce male dominance; it also imposes ethical obligations on the husband, which fulfill the new expectations generated by the wife. *“Love your wife as you love your own body”* mandates that the husband's leadership should be exercised with empathy, care, and gentleness, reframing leadership not as a position of power but as one of compassionate stewardship. This expectation introduces

transformative potential in the family dynamic. The husband is called to respect his wife's contributions and to engage in household responsibilities, fostering a partnership that values both partners' roles and encourages husbands to recognize and respect their wives' efforts and sacrifices, fostering a more supportive and harmonious marital relationship.

The husband's alignment with his wife's interpretation of Christian teachings underscores the religious and moral framework that legitimizes traditional patriarchal structures within the family. He metaphorically compares marriage to driving a car, where the husband holds the steering wheel, and the wife occupies the passenger seat, offering reminders to the husband. However, through the lens of Christian doctrine, the husband undergoes a reevaluation of love and internalizes his wife's new gender expectations. He comes to realize that love is not merely about one-sided giving but about ensuring that the recipient feels loved. He said, "*As the Bible states, Your love should not be just words and talk; it must be real and sincere. If you say you love someone, but do not show it in your actions, then your love is not genuine.*" Thus, he begins to prioritize the importance of emotional connection in marriage, leading him to understand and appreciate his wife's struggles and sacrifices in managing household chores. Moreover, by following the guidance of the Bible, particularly the commandment to "*love your wife as you love your own body,*" the husband gains clarity on how to express love to his wife. He feels a sense of unity with his wife, perceiving their thoughts and desires as aligned. He no longer perceives significant disagreements between them, acknowledging the transformative power of their shared spiritual journey. Religion serves as a unifying force, facilitating their spiritual and emotional integration. It enables them to navigate life's challenges and joys together, fostering a deeper sense of harmony and unity in their marital relationship.

Research on Christianity supports this understanding. W. Bradford Wilcox (2004) studied how the attitudes of evangelical and mainline Protestant churches toward marriage and parenting influence husbands and fathers within these communities. He found that mainline Protestant men, whom he describes as "new men," tend to embrace a more egalitarian approach to household labor and are more involved in parenting than their secular counterparts. On the other hand, evangelical Protestant men, while still upholding traditional roles, are not as authoritarian as some might assume. Instead, they are more emotionally invested and loyal to their wives and children compared to both mainline

Protestants and secular men. Wilcox argues that these egalitarian orientations have made family life less central for liberal Protestants, diminishing its role as a civilizing institution for men (Sherkat, 2005). However, in this particular case, the fundamental patriarchal power dynamics and structure remain largely unchanged. While the husband's increased involvement in household duties and emotional support reflects some shift, he is still viewed as the head of the family and retains the final say in major decisions, thereby keeping the woman in a subordinate position. Conversion to Christianity has thus become a strategy for immigrant families to cope with domestic crises, rather than a challenge to patriarchy. Instead, these immigrants have found a practical, localized religious framework in Sweden that both resolves family crises and preserves the traditional patriarchal structure. Why some Chinese immigrant families choose to adopt a localized power structure through religion in Sweden, rather than directly challenge patriarchy, requires further in-depth research.

Moreover, the high cohesion of the Christian community played a crucial role in integrating this family into Swedish society. Weekly worship activities and the sense of belonging within the Christian community provided them with a group identity in Sweden, alleviating the isolation experienced by housewives. Through religion, the wives found a means to engage with Swedish society, bridging the gap between their cultural background and the new environment, while the husband found a way to address family issues.

In conclusion, Chinese immigrants in Sweden have selectively absorbed and reconstructed Christianity to align with the patriarchal structure of traditional Chinese families while simultaneously meeting the new gender expectations necessary for adapting to Swedish society. The integration of Christian teachings has provided a religious framework that legitimizes traditional patriarchal roles within the family, positioning the husband as the leader and the wife as a supportive partner. However, this religious sanctioning also imposes ethical obligations on the husband to lead with empathy, care, and gentleness, reflecting the principle of "*loving your wife as you love your own body.*" In this way, Chinese immigrants find a way to sustain the patriarchal structure within the family while dealing with new expectations at the same time.

5.3.2 Work, as a bargaining chip for discourse power.

Another strategy employed by wives to navigate patriarchal family dynamics and evolving gender norms is through employment. In immigrant households less influenced by religious beliefs, wives frequently opt to become freelancers or rejoin the workforce once their children begin school. In this section, by using Ki's family as a case study, I will explore how women's engagement in employment acts as both a negotiation tactic against patriarchal norms and a means to assert discourse power within the family, thereby reshaping familial power dynamics and interaction patterns.

In China, Ki's mother married into her father's family, living within a tight-knit community that included her father's parents and relatives. Despite the fact that her mother was the primary breadwinner for a period due to her father's unemployment, she still felt like an outsider with limited influence and presence in the family. Ki reflects on this period by saying, "*My mom would sometimes feel like an outsider, so she would be very cautious.*" Additionally, Ki herself felt a significant fear of her father, describing him as a stern and intimidating figure: "*I was always quite afraid of my dad in China. I always felt that he was a very serious and strict figure.*" This "soft patriarchal ruling" was structurally supported in China, reinforcing the father's authority and the mother's subordinate role despite her financial contributions. However, when the family moved to Sweden, these dynamics began to change significantly.

Ki's father decided to move to Sweden after a period of unemployment in China, seeking new job opportunities. He found stable work as a kitchen helper in a Chinese restaurant. Subsequently, Ki and her mother joined him in Sweden. Upon arrival, Ki's mother entered the labor market, working on the production line at a local food factory. This job exposed her to colleagues from various backgrounds, playing a critical role in broadening her perspectives and making her more open-minded and flexible. As Ki notes, "*My mom's Swedish is much better than my dad's because she was forced to learn at work.*" Ki's mother's employment in Sweden allowed her to escape the external pressures of a patriarchal family structure that was prominent in China. In Sweden, she became more assertive in claiming her rights and expressing her opinions. This shift is significant because, in China, her role within the family arrangement severely limited her ability to voice her

thoughts.

And the move to Sweden provided Ki's parents with an equal opportunity to adapt to a new environment, though their experiences differed greatly. Ki's mother adapted well to the new environment, quickly learning the language in the international factory and integrating into the local workforce. This was not the case for Ki's father, who struggled with the adaptation process. Ki explains, *"My dad would try to learn the language when he was unemployed, but he felt very insecure, thinking he was too old to remember anything. This pessimistic view made him less proactive."* His difficulty in adapting and some poor decisions during the initial migration period further destabilized his authority within the family. This greatly undermined his self-esteem and confidence, as Ki describes: *"He feels that his shine has been dimmed a lot after being here for so long."*

Ki's father's authority weakened while his mother's authority increased. Freed from the external pressures of patriarchy, Ki's mother began to establish her own voice within the family. One significant change was the shift in household responsibilities. After the birth of Ki's younger sister, Ki's father took on a more significant role in domestic duties, such as babysitting, cooking, and cleaning. This was a marked departure from their earlier arrangement where Ki's mother handled most of the housework due to her husband's long working hours. Ki mentions, *"In the first four or five years after we came, my mom did most of the housework because my dad worked long hours at the Chinese restaurant, often violating local labor laws. He was rarely home and very tired. My mom understood this and felt that he was very hard-working. Later, when my dad quit his job to rest, he took over looking after my sister, cooking, and doing the dishes. My mom would occasionally clean and do laundry."* With Ki's father no longer being the sole breadwinner and assuming more domestic responsibilities, the household dynamics shifted towards a more egalitarian model. Although immigrant women participate in the labor force without gender or self-empowerment consciousness, it inevitably increases their bargaining power (Min, P. G. 2001). The traditional gender roles were challenged as Ki's mother gained authority and her father took on roles typically associated with women in a patriarchal setup. This led to a more balanced division of labor within the household,

indicating a move towards shared responsibilities and decision-making.

Furthermore, the family's authority structure became more egalitarian, with Ki's mother gaining increased authority within the family. The employment of immigrant women in the host society empowers them to make significant economic contributions to their families. This economic empowerment enables them to negotiate for more shared responsibilities in household chores from their husbands and to gain greater decision-making power over the family budget (Gu, C.-J. 2019; Min, P. G. 2001). In contrast to their experiences in China, where Ki felt her mother's voice was not as prominent, in Sweden, she actively engaged in discussions and shared her perspectives. Ki noted, *"She began to have her own opinions and views, and we would discuss outcomes together. In China, there were not many decisions to make, but it felt like she did not express herself much then."* Although Ki's mother gained more influence, she did not assume a new patriarchal or dominant role within the family. Instead, the family decision-making process became more collaborative, with authority dispersed among all members. The family members relied on each other, contributing to this new, collaborative dynamic. Ki herself also held significant influence, particularly in managing bureaucratic processes. She explained, *"In this country, I handle the paperwork, such as taking long leave or applying for unemployment benefits, because I am the only one who knows Swedish well. As the executor, they now need to respect my opinions."* This interdependence among family members fostered a more balanced and cooperative decision-making environment.

Regarding these changes, although Ki's father found them challenging to fully accept, he felt powerless to resist them. Ki's father would sometimes unconsciously belittle both Ki and Ki's mother. Ki remarked, *"I don't know if he uses this method to boost his own self-esteem and consolidate his position, because he would also say to my mom, 'Now that you're here, you've become arrogant, you think you're great here,' and things like that."* It suggests that Ki's father was struggling to maintain his traditional role and authority within the family, feeling threatened by the newfound empowerment and independence of his wife. A similar situation occurs in some Korean immigrant families. Despite Korean women's increased economic roles, most Korean husbands have not modified the rigid patriarchal ideology they brought from Korea because they are socially segregated from mainstream society (Min, P. G. 2001). Ki's father's attempts to belittle them have indeed been a coping

mechanism to deal with his perceived loss of status and control. In some other research, men who exhibit strong hegemonic patriarchal characteristics often feel their egos are hurt by their wife's empowerment (Ehrlich, 1987), leading to divorce or domestic violence (Song, 1998). Although Ki's father seems unwilling to accept these changes in Sweden and tries to belittle his wife and daughter, he does not act violently and makes an effort to adjust to the situation, which leads to his feelings of inferiority. In contrast to the dynamics observed in Ki's family, a special case arises in Six's family. Six's mother, through self-education in Sweden, pursued a career as a chef, gaining empowerment through her professional endeavors. However, the shift in the family's discourse and power dynamics was not as significant as in Ki's family. This disparity can be attributed to Six's father's occupation as a professor in university, which inherently carries social status and prestige. Thus, the soft patriarchal ruling persists within Six's family structure, with Six's mother sharing only part of the discourse power and Six lacking any influence in family decision-making processes.

6. Conclusion and discussion

I discuss the adjustment process for Chinese families characterized by patriarchal structures. Firstly, I introduce the concept of "soft patriarchal ruling" prevalent before immigration. In China, wives internalize patriarchal norms and gender roles amidst societal pressures. In contrast to rigid patriarchal doctrines, men often employ strategies that involve transferring partial discourse power, creating an illusion of love and care while maintaining control within the family. This approach, termed "soft patriarchal ruling," is a common strategy among Chinese immigrant families, particularly among those born in the 1980s, although the degree of patriarchal influence varies among the families I interviewed.

Upon immigrating to Sweden, wives often transition from employment to becoming housewives, initially assuming responsibility for household chores and childcare. However, both spouses face challenges, leading to what I term a "patriarchal crisis." Wives experience social isolation and depression, feeling a lack of self-worth and dissatisfaction with family life. Husbands struggle with language barriers, employment, social networks, and family conflicts, leading to frustration and a loss of self-esteem. As they become a powerless minority in Sweden, the previous patriarchal family structure faces difficulties sustaining itself. Dissatisfied wives develop new expectations, seeking greater participation in household chores, gender equality within the family, and increased respect from their husbands. Wives adopt two main strategies to negotiate with patriarchy and meet their new gender expectations. Firstly, some turn to religion, particularly Christianity, interpreting its teachings to align with their new expectations for gender roles and orders in Sweden while sustaining patriarchal structures. Christianity not only addresses family adjustment issues but also facilitates engagement in local life and the establishment of social networks. Secondly, employment serves as an empowerment tool for Chinese immigrant women in Sweden. By gaining independence and bargaining for more discourse power, they shift power dynamics within the family, fostering greater equality between spouses and between parents and children. However, if husbands hold significant social status due to their jobs, changing power dynamics becomes more challenging.

In all, my study highlights their active engagement in adjustment and adaptation. Although

patriarchy is rooted within family, they generate new gender expectations and employ strategies to achieve them and force patriarchy to compromise. While exposure to Western gender ideologies may not entirely eradicate gender inequality within families (Espiritu, Yen Le. 2002), Western ideologies and social systems can facilitate movement towards gender equality in patriarchal households.

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Interview Guideline

Life Story

- Early Life in Home Country
- Decision to Immigrate
- Explain the reasons behind the decision to emigrate.
- Struggles Abroad: experiences and challenges while settling in a new country.
- Family Difficulties and Solutions: Discuss the difficulties the family encountered and the strategies used to overcome them.

Economic Conditions

- Salary
- Type of Work
- Working Hours
- Comparison of Economic Conditions: Compare living conditions and economic status between home country and Sweden. Discuss the impact on family, including both benefits and drawbacks.

Family Decision-Making and Discussions (Feelings about the outcomes)

- Decisions on Buying Property and Vehicles: Detail who proposed the purchases, who made the purchases, whose name is on the property/vehicle, and who contributed financially.
- Division of Household Chores
- Decisions About Having Children
- Childcare and Education: Describe how caregiving and educational responsibilities are allocated.
- Children's Influence: Assess whether children's opinions are considered and if this has changed over time.

Family Relationships

- Parent-Child Relationships: Explore how these relationships have evolved, any conflicts that have arisen, and how they have been resolved.
- Marital Relationship: Discuss the dynamics of the relationship between spouses.
- Intergenerational Relationships: Describe the relationship with extended family, including their involvement in family affairs.

Conceptual Understanding

- Understanding Gender Roles in Marriage: Discuss how to perceive the roles of mother and father, including responsibilities and obligations.
- If the traditional gender roles of "man as breadwinner and woman as homemaker" apply, explain the basis for this view (e.g., Confucian tradition). If not, describe the ideologies or discourses that influence your view.
- Ideal Marriage: Describe what you consider to be an ideal marriage in terms of gender roles and relationship dynamics.

Family Conflicts

- Parent-Child Conflict
- Spousal Conflicts: household duties and financial matters.
- Conflict Resolution and Negotiation: Explain how conflicts are resolved and negotiated within the family.
- Outcome and Power Dynamics: Assess the results of conflict resolution and whether the family's power structure has changed.