Patriarchy and Resistance: A Feminist Symbolic Interactionist Perspective of Highly Educated Married Black Women

by

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DECLARATION

I Sinenhlanhla Sithulisiwe Chisale Student Number: 47299975 declare that 'Patriarchy and Resistance: A Feminist Symbolic Interactionist Perspective of Highly Educated Married Black Women' is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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ABSTRACT

The struggles with patriarchy in the marriages of highly educated married black women are not clearly defined by research, leading to generalisations that all women experience, interpret and resist patriarchy in a uniform way. Written from an African feminist and symbolic interactionist perspective this qualitative study sought to investigate the cognitive processes of highly educated married black women that develop from their lived experiences, interpretations and resistance with regard to patriarchy in their marriages. Data were collected through (auto)biographical narrative essays, semi-structured interviews and observations and analysed using thematic data analysis. The findings indicate that highly educated married black women experience, interpret and resist patriarchy in diverse ways, highlighting three clusters of these women – the liberal, the conformist and the secretive. Their self-concept and identity are more likely to be shaped by their social experiences and interactions with their husbands and the extended family than interactions in their professions.

Key Words: Patriarchy, Highly Educated Married Black Women, Resistance, Symbolic Interactionism, African Feminism

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DEDICATION

For all highly educated women, may the struggle continue!

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Gender and patriarchal discourses have attracted researchers across the academic board. The researchers in this field are both emerging and established scholars; mainly women who seek to address the injustices of patriarchy and gender inequality across society. Patriarchy is an ideology and a way of thinking that legally, politically, socially, religiously and economically enforces male dominance and power (Rakoczy 2004:10; cf. Rothman 1994:141). Patriarchy in this study is defined as an ideology that enforces gender roles and a gender binary between men and women and is oppressive to them both. Both men and women are socialised according to this ideology and it is considered to be a way of life. I, have been socialised in a culture and a belief system that marginalise and undermine women's dignity and their cognitive processes by looking down on the female gender. I was socialised into a patriarchal world where I was taught that men are elders whatever their age, rulers regardless of whether they come from royalty or not and heads regardless of their status. I fall into a bracket of highly educated married black women, and have observed, experienced and tried to resist the way the dominant discourse of patriarchy has influenced men and women in my private domain. In this study, the appellation "highly educated married black women" refers to married black women of African ancestry who are the holders of a master's or doctoral degree. The research participants include female professors.

Women academics and researchers have critiqued the injustices of patriarchy in various forums (such as published books, articles, autobiographies, novels and poems). Many of the women who do research in this area are also affected by patriarchy but their interpretations and experiences and how they resist patriarchy in their private domains, particularly marriage, is muted in research. They raise suggestions and recommendations on how to address and eradicate patriarchy in the social order (public domain) based on the findings of their research on women who are from contexts other than their own. Their status in terms of marriage and community differs from that of "other married black women". In this study, it is therefore my intention to explore and explain whether or not, and in what ways, highly educated married black women experience, interpret and resist patriarchy in their marriages. This study employs a qualitative feminist approach that follows

an (auto)biographical-narrative design in investigating the way highly educated married black women experience, interpret and resist patriarchy in their private domains, particularly in marriage. Empirical data to answer the research questions were collected through (auto)biographical-narrative essays, semi-structured interviews and observations.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Although research about women and the oppression of women has been relatively extensive across disciplines, our understanding of highly educated married black women's experiences, interpretations and resistance to patriarchy is, I believe, still lacking and generalised. There is a tendency to place women in one category regardless of their class position. The most recognised difference amongst women is that of race, especially in a country such as South Africa with a violent racist past. The way African black married women interpret, experience and resist patriarchy is absent in both the published literature and in society at large. Although these women are among those at the forefront of the battle against all forms of patriarchy, their experiences and interpretations of patriarchy and their resistance to it are not clearly defined by research, leading to generalisations that all women experience, interpret and resist patriarchy in a uniformed way. African black women's variations and the way they construct their identities and self-image in the struggle against patriarchy are ambiguous. Thus, according to Oyewumi (2002), black African women's mobilisation and self-assertion are generalised in the published literature and the broader society; a tendency that she argues can be traced back to colonial forces and practices. She further asserts that the African woman has been portrayed by the literature as voiceless. As a result, this study seeks to give highly educated married black women a voice to narrate their experiences, interpretations and resistance strategies in relation to patriarchy in their marriages.

1.2 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study inform the literature across various disciplines, particularly the social and human sciences, on highly educated married black women's cognitive processes, by conceptualising their experiences, interpretations and resistance to patriarchy in their marriages. This is fundamental because highly educated married black women are not defined in terms of difference and are not seen as lacking in any way. Hence, this study allows for a better conceptualisation of the cognitive processes and choices of highly educated married black women

in relation to patriarchy, while recognising their predicament, but without leading to the awarding of a heroine status.

1.3 Research Questions

Women resist patriarchy in different ways. This study sought to explore how highly educated married black women resist patriarchy in their private domains. Resistance in this study is understood as a fight against a system or ideology that is widely accepted but, owing to fear of discrimination, the resistance is conducted silently and secretly.

Hence the research questions for the study are as follows:

- How do highly educated married black women interpret, experience and resist patriarchy in their marriages?
- In what ways do their interpretations and experiences of and resistance to patriarchy affect their sense of self and their behaviour in a context of their marriages?
- How does their sense of self affect their identity, self-concept, and relationship to the self and others within the context of their marriage and their work?

1.4 Research Objectives

The following objectives were formulated for this study:

- To explore highly educated married black women's interpretations and experiences of, and resistance, to patriarchy in their marriages.
- To understand and conceptualise highly educated married black women's interpretations and experiences of, and resistance to, patriarchy within the context of their marriages and how this affects their sense of self and their behaviour.
- To describe highly educated married black women's cognitive processes of the self in relation to their identity, self-concept and relationship to the self and others within the context of their marriage and their work.

1.5 Theoretical Overview

This study is informed by two theories, namely, African feminist theory and symbolic interaction theory. The two theories enabled a complementary understanding of the distribution of power in highly educated married black women's interpretations and experiences of, and resistance to, patriarchy in their marriages.

African feminism is particularly relevant for this study because it provides arguments that validate the experiences of women with African ancestry against a mainstream feminist discourse (Goredema 2010). African feminism is not only significant with regard to the identities of women of African origin, but also in that it seeks to advocate for and enhance African women's emancipation and equality with regard to gender, class and race. Mikell (1997:4) asserts that "African feminism is largely shaped by African women's resistance to western hegemony and its legacy within African culture". This theory highlights that the experiences of African women and their culture differ from those of Western women. According to Nnaemeka (2004), African feminism consists of creating a kind of third space wherein everything concerning the patriarchal values and practices that exploit African women are discussed and negotiated through compromise. She argues that African women and men are not opponents but that they complement each other in order to help their society survive and develop. In resisting Western feminism Aidoo (1999), for example, is quoted as having claimed that "Western feminists appear as 'destroyers of homes.' Imported mainly from America to ruin nice African homes" (cf. Oyewumi 2002; 2016). African women do not view men as enemies and do not see their oppression as solely rooted in patriarchal structures; rather they view men as partners in their struggle against colonial systems that undermine women and elevate men. Thus, in partnership with men, "African feminists' aim is to dismantle patriarchy in all its manifestations but with a careful understanding that patriarchy varies in time and space according to class, race, ethnic, religious and global imperial relationships and structures" (Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists 2006:5). This theory empowers some African women to understand their gendered status in society, while giving them a voice to negotiate their survival and equality in a world that is dominated by patriarchal trends.

In this study, African feminism is integrated with symbolic interactionism to understand highly educated married black women's interpretations and resistance strategies in relation to patriarchy in their marriages. African feminism is devoid of the self-concept and cognitive process analysis among African women. Symbolic interactionism is significant in this study because of its focus in

the construction of meaning within society and family settings (Cramer & Hutchison 2013). Symbolic interactionism takes a microscopic view of family interactions and asks how different people define and understand their family experiences and interactions. A symbolic interactionist perspective is helpful in understanding how highly educated married black women negotiate and construct meaning within their marriages and families. The two theories are relevant in this study because no one theory can solely be used to study women's interpretations, experiences and resistance strategies regarding patriarchy within family and society. (See Chapter Two for a detailed discussion on the theoretical grounding of the study.)

1.6 Methodology and Ethical Issues

This exploratory study used a qualitative approach and employed autobiographical narrative essays by 20 research participants, comprising highly educated married black women from different Southern African countries. These participants were similar in that they all did their MA and PhD studies at South African universities and they were all married in heterosexual relationships with black African men. In addition to autobiographical narrative essays, observation as a data collection method was used to observe and record the informal conversations that I had with participants regarding their experiences and interpretations of patriarchy, as well as how the different women resisted patriarchy in their marriage. I also used in-depth interviews to make follow-ups on emerging themes that were not clear to me. A qualitative approach was suitable for this study because it allowed me to explore ways in which participants interpret the world and their place within the world, while using their narratives to paint a picture of their understanding of the world (Lawler 2002). Data were analysed and interpreted using six-step thematic analysis, as articulated by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Data collection commenced after receipt of the ethical clearance certificate from the Ethics Committee of the Department of Sociology, UNISA (see Appendix A). A letter of invitation (Appendix B) to enrol in this project was sent by email to prospective participants. The study adhered to all ethical considerations, including obtaining consent from the research participants to execute the study (see Appendix C). Protection of the participants' identity was assured through the use of the codes that were used taking the form of pseudonyms. For a detailed methodology of the study see Chapter three.

1.7 Chapter Synopsis

There are five chapters in this dissertation, each focusing on different aspects of the research. Chapter one introduces this study by presenting the background to the study, the problem statement, the significance of the study, the research questions and the research objectives. The chapter concludes with a synopsis of all the chapters of the study.

Chapter two reviews the local and international academic research that has been conducted on the subject of women's experiences and interpretations of, and resistance to, patriarchy. The literature review also analyses underlying epistemologies that influence women's understanding, interpretations and experiences of patriarchy, as well as their struggles and resistance in this regard. In addition, the theoretical basis of the study was integrated into the literature review chapter. The theories used in this study include African feminism and symbolic interactionism. These two theories were used to understand participants' experiences and interpretations of patriarchy as well as their resistance to it.

Chapter three describes the methodology used in the study. The study employed a qualitative approach, thus the chapter describes this approach and how it was applied in the study. The research process for the study, involving access, research participants, the population, the sampling technique, the sample size, the method of data collection and the data analysis, are also examined in this chapter. In addition, the ethical considerations that were adhered to during the study are discussed in detail.

Chapter four presents the analysis and discussion of the data. Using thematic analysis, the chapter begins by presenting the profile of the participants and goes on to present the emerging themes followed by the thematic analysis tool. Themes and sub-themes were drawn from the transcripts and subsequently interpreted to tell a story about the participants. Themes and subthemes that narrate a story about highly educated married black women's experiences of patriarchy in marriage, interpretations of patriarchy and resistance to patriarchy are discussed in depth.

Chapter five presents a summary of the main research findings and highlights the implications of these findings for African feminism and symbolic interactionism. This chapter also explores the possible limitations and strengths of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2. INTRODUCTION

Patriarchy or male domination is an ideology that existed historically and still currently exists in various societies. Women's experiences of patriarchy intersect with other aspects such as class position and racial category. The struggle against patriarchy has a long history of resistance by individual women and women's movements. Chapter one introduced the study by presenting the problem statement and also giving a brief background to the context of the study. The research objectives and a brief description of the research design and the methodology of the study were also provided in Chapter one. This chapter reviews the relevant literature and the underlying epistemologies that influence women's understandings, interpretations and experiences of patriarchy as well as their struggles with or resistance to it.

2.1 Feminism and Marriage

Van Vlaenderen and Cakwe (2003:70) argue that African traditional societies construct women's identity strictly in terms of their status as wives and mothers; however, the significant transformations in modern and postmodern marriages allow women to develop their identities within marriage. Atkinson, Greenstein and Lang (2005:1138) regard marriage as "a structural context of opportunity for husbands and wives to behave in ways that validate their identities as male and female, that is, to display the visible aspects of their gender ideologies". In this case, marriage is conceptualised in a hierarchical form, where the husband and wife play their different roles. Kyalo (2012:212) claims that marriage among traditional and patriarchal Africans reveals at least three aspects: firstly, marriage is observed as a transfer of a woman's legal rights from her kin to her husband. Husbands not only enjoy the rights to the wife's labour, sexuality and offspring, but also the right to receive compensation for the harm done to her by others. In some contexts a husband receives the right to offspring if he has finished paying *lobola* (bride price), and his rights to the offspring are limited if he has not done so. Secondly, marriage adjusts and alters the bride's relations with her immediate kin. She leaves her immediate family and joins her husband's family. She becomes an additional member of the husband's family and leaves a gap in her immediate family. In addition, her educational, economic and social status is partly owned by her husband

and his extended family. Thirdly, marriage is observed as an agreement or contract between two families or groups of kin. In African contexts marriage is not between two people, but between two families or clans. Thus, the two cannot make decisions about their marriage without consent from the two clans, particularly the husband's family which includes his extended family.

For this reason, broader feminism, including African feminists, has attacked the institution of marriage as a site of female oppression (Mill 1996; cf. De Beauvoir 1997; Wollstonecraft 1996; Friedan 1963; Firestone 1970; Pateman 1988; Okin 1989; Tamale 2004; Shangase 2000; Dube 2007). Feminists regard marriage as a fertile ground for the gendered division of labour where married women are expected to take on immense domestic and caring roles. Marriage in African contexts is "multifaceted and its definitions reflect this in their diversity" (Kyalo 2012:212; cf. Chisale 2016a:7277). There are different variables that intersect with religion and culture in African marriages. Chisale (2016b) asserts that, in some African contexts, marriage has links to the ancestors and is understood in patriarchal terms as ordained by masculine ancestors and a masculine God. In contrast, African feminists such as Oyewumi (2002) blame the "patriarchalising" of African gender contexts on the Western scholarship that teaches biological determinism. According to Oyewumi (2016), marriage represents an important mode of expanding the lineage rather than being about sexual relations; thus she challenges the gendering of marriage and the universalisation of gender categories as a fundamental organising principle of all societies and across time.

Literature is consistent in asserting that the primary purpose and assumption of marriage in African contexts is procreation (Mbiti 1969:102; cf. Nyanungo 2014; Kyalo 2012). The literature highlights that African women often celebrate their ability to give birth (Mikell 1997) and as a result, marriage defines womanhood (Akujobi 2011). Marriage is therefore primarily defined in terms of domesticity and fertility/motherhood and is valued particularly by women in that it enables them to gain some social respectability (Dube 2007; cf. Kolawole 1997).

Although fertility is identified as a marker of womanhood and fertility decisions are mainly influenced and controlled by men and the extended family (Kolawole 1997), literature by Mikell (2007:8) and Mosha, Ruben and Kakoko (2013) highlights that women's education, type of work and work patterns, husband's education and occupational status, as well as birth control policies

are all factors that influence women's fertility decisions. Mikell (2007:8) claims that educated women have marginally low numbers of children compared to women with a low educational background. In agreement, Steady (2010:7) asserts that in light of progressive educational change in Africa, African women now hold doctorates and are also married; the two are highly valued statuses and give them control and supremacy over their productive and reproductive roles.

Feminist theorists who write on marriage observe that patriarchy is mostly nurtured in marriages and families (Chisale 2016a; cf. Dreyer 2011; Dube 2007). The nurturing of patriarchy begins in childhood when young girls are socialised on how to address men (Shangase 2000) in their marriages as well as men in general. In addition, patriarchy is nurtured when young boys are socialised to be macho, stronger and more intelligent than girls. Therefore, the fundamental definition of marriage in relation to the role of sex and reproduction, as well as the gendered nature of spousal roles highlighted by feminists like Pateman (1988), has put marriage under scrutiny. The findings of studies that have researched marriage reveal this institution as a site of patriarchy, where married women have little access to independent rights in law (Pateman 1988:159; cf. Mill 1996; De Beauvoir 1997; Wollstonecraft 1996) and where marriage creates fertile ground for gender-based violence, particularly wife abuse (Dube 2007; cf. Khau 2007, Chisale 2016a). African feminists argue that, in its current form, marriage is used as "a defining marker [rite of passage] in the transition from childhood to adulthood ... [and is] how relationships and kin networks are formed" (Nyanungo 2014:61). Although African feminists acknowledge the oppressive nature of marriage, they still value the institution of marriage. They however argue that though they value marriage, they are concerned that women who initiate the young bride into marriage communicate and promote patriarchal ideologies of marriage (Chisale 2016b; cf. Dube 2007).

Thus, African feminists rightfully argue that "women are not only victims but also perpetrators of oppression against themselves" (Kamaara & Wangila 2009:131; cf. Moyo 2005). In the initiation of younger women to adulthood or marriage, elderly women encourage them to appreciate and accept patriarchal teachings that encourage sexual servitude of women to men (Kamaara & Wangila 2009:131). Kanyoro (2002:107) states that such campaigns should be conceptualised as "women's violence against women", because this is a form of oppression in terms of which women support practices that subjugate them. Cultural and religious teachings place the responsibility for

protecting and sustaining marriage on the shoulders of women (Shangase 2000:24), forcing them to "sweat even blood so as to keep their marriages" (Moyo 2005:63). Religious and cultural scripts that were authored by colonial patriarchy as well as traditional patriarchy have a hermeneutic of suspicion engraved on them. In these scripts women are the property of men, sexual objects and baby-making machines (Phiri 2002:24; cf. Mwaura 2010:111; Nyengele 2004:33). As the property of men, women nurture their marriage relationship against all odds by accepting their position as objects of power.

2.2 Marriage as a Power Relationship

Feminist critiques of marriage argue that the conceptualisation of marriage embodies an institution where one party, the husband, exercises the power of a slave-owner over his wife (Pateman 1988:154). Marriage has cultural and religious meanings attached to it. African feminist theologians raise their concerns about marriage, arguing that a religious conceptualisation of marriage in androcentric exegesis is harmful to women (Siwila 2012; cf. Rakoczy 2004). According to feminist theologians, the power factor in marriage is emphasised as God-given or ancestor-given with fixed unchanging roles that are socially constructed (Dreyer 2011:2). For them, marriage is a socio-religious construction that gives patriarchy supremacy (Dreyer 2011; cf. Oduyoye 2001). They agree with other feminists that sacred texts used by Abrahamic faith religions suggest that God is male (Tamale 2014:152; Rakoczy 2004). From this premise, men are then given authority, and such lay and naive interpretations of sacred texts and culture support the authority given to the husband over his wife and family (Tamale 2004:26; cf. Tamale 2014:155). Correspondingly, Siwila (2012) raises this concern as she argues that naive biblical interpretations might be full of gender favouritism and hence be oppressive to women, particularly married women.

Social and religious feminists conceptualise marriage in parallel to motherhood and wifehood. According to Rothman (1994:140), "motherhood in a patriarchal society is what mothers and babies signify to men". In a patriarchal society a woman is a wife and a mother. According to Rothman (1994:139), in America motherhood rests on three ideologies that shape what is seen and experienced by women; these include an ideology of patriarchy, which this study focuses on, an ideology of technology and an ideology of capitalism.

All the ideologies of motherhood as identified and described by Rothman, position women below men, where they and their children adopt a private property character. In this case they are owned by their husbands, fathers and brothers. Feminists, particularly Marxist feminists, have interrogated the treatment of women as men's private property (McLaren 2002:9). For Marxist feminists, capitalism and patriarchy intersect; as result the inequalities of marriage are similar to the inequalities of capitalism and they observe capitalism rather than patriarchy as the cause of women's oppression (McLaren 2002:9). The view of women, particularly married women, as private property increases their vulnerability to the coercive use of power that puts them at risk of gender-based violence. Some African feminists link the treatment of women as private property to *lobola* (bride price) (Tamale 2004), while others acknowledge that there are still some women who are comfortable with *lobola* (Chisale 2016a). Since men pay *lobola* for their wives, they believe they have a right to treat them as their property, to be controlled. Participants in Phiri's (2003:24) study confirm that because they have paid *lobola* for their wives, they can treat them like their children and their property. It is then evident from research that *lobola* increases wives' vulnerability to gender injustice, because the transaction made during *lobola* enforces the treatment of a wife as a commodity. The payment of *lobola* makes efforts to curb gender injustice in marriage difficult (Tamale 2004; cf. Phiri 2003), whatever a woman's educational level.

2.3 Women's Education and Power in Marriage

It is now common knowledge that educating women breaks the cycle of women's oppression. The previous United Nations Millennium Development Goals (UNMDGs) and the current United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) emphasise the education of women and girls. It is often argued that the education of women can progressively transform the discriminatory gender roles around the world (UNSDGs 2015; cf. Global Campaign for Education 2012). According to United Nations (UN) Women (2015), educating women and girls is critical for the elimination of gender injustice. In addition, a study that was conducted by UNESCO and the Commonwealth Secretariat in 1999 titled, *Women in Higher Education Management*, reveals that lack of access to higher education by women hinders their participation in important decision-making. The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA 2015) declares that education increases women's employment opportunities and socioeconomic status. Education also provides women with the tools of liberation from and resistance to unequal relationships in

families, work and the broader society. However, research seems to be contradictory on whether education really prevents unequal power dynamics in relationships among women and men. The existence of laws that protect women are observed as being mostly theoretical. According to Card (1996:14), harm done to women continues despite the existence of laws to protect them; thus she observes that the progress of the criminalisation of gender injustice in marriages is theoretical since wives continue to suffer at the hands of their husbands.

Literature varies on the power dynamics in marriage with some literature highlighting that husbands are the holders of most power and make the final decisions, and that wives generally have less power (Sportel 2016). The most recent literature highlights that contemporary marriages are more egalitarian, flexible and fair than those of the past (Sportel 2016; cf. Kornrich, Brines & Leupp 2013; Sullivan 2006). Although the literature indicates that a shift has occurred from rigid marriage where the husband was the sole decision maker, to flexibility where the husband and wife are equal, it also highlights the fact that there are challenges in measuring marital power because of its complexity and diversity (Sportel 2016). Sportel (2016) further argues that gender takes a central position in marital power relations where women seem not to benefit from the marriage but experience powerlessness, resistance and agency.

Power in marriage is exercised in different ways; the most common way of exercising power in marriage is in making important decisions such as those relating to finances (Sportel 2016) and children (Emery 2012). The psychology literature indicates that marital power is often visible in divorce when children are caught in the power struggle between their parents (Emery 2012). However, social theorists disagree on whether education and financial independence liberate women from marital power. Some social scientists, such as Van Vlaenderen and Cakwe (2003), argue that educated women are empowered by education to escape traditional gender roles of dependence to become independent women. On the other hand, some social scientists like Mazibuko and Umejesi (2015) and health scientists like Thupayagale-Tshweneagae and Seloilwe (2010) argue that the educational status of a woman is unrelated to the prevention of unequal relationships in marriage and power in marriage. This finding is also supported by relative resource theorists such as Atkinson *et al* (2005), who argue that breadwinning can be dangerous to women and that the educational status of a woman does not protect her from power and violence at the hands of her husband (Choi, Cheung, Cheung & David 2014:1432). According to relative resource

theory, the primary predictor of power and wife violence is the income a couple earns relative to one another (Atkinson *et al* 2005:1138–39). A husband with a higher social class status than his wife is less likely to be violent to his wife than a husband with a lower social class status to his wife (Choi *et al* 2014:1432). It is argued that violence replaces material resources and acts as a power base for a husband of a lower social class (Atkinson *et al* 2005:1138). As a result, resource theorists claim that a wife who earns more than her husband is likely to experience violence at the hands of her husband (Choi *et al* 2014) because her social status contradicts the societal gender ideology. Similarly, women who are economically dependent on their husbands are likely to be victims of violence. According to traditional gender roles women should stay at home and be restricted to unpaid household and production labour (Walby 1990:178). This indicates that highly educated women are not immune to the manifestation and abuse of power in marriage. Patriarchy implies that men are the heads and providers of the family, thus a wife is expected to depend on her husband for everything.

2.4 Patriarchy as an Ideology

From an etymological point of view an ideology means the study of ideas and is derived from (from the Greek words *idea* and *logos*). This concept has undergone conceptualisations and re-conceptualisations throughout modern history. The term was used by the likes of Napoleon, Karl Marx, Karl Mannheim, Friedrich Engels as well as many theorists to understand the socially determined perceptions of reality. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels observe that "ideologies as social deceptions [are] ruled by social agents" (Skirberkk 2005:20). For Marx and Engels an ideology is a "production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness [and it includes what] men say, imagine, conceive [in] politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics etc" (Marx & Engels 1846 [2001]:101). This study adopts Marx and Engels' (1846 [2001]) and Rothman's (1994:139–140) definition of ideology as a way the dominant group views, defines and organises the world and it influences how people think about the world while blinding them to their own lived experiences. The dominating group justifies the social system or status quo as an inherent norm to be practised and exercised in society. Coetzee (2001:300) argues that ideology upholds norms, values, ideas, motives or goals to a supreme position in any society.

Patriarchy is an ideology and a way of thinking which legally, politically, socially, religiously and economically reinforces male dominance and power (Rakoczy 2004:10; cf. Rothman 1994:141).

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Ideologically, patriarchy is where a father, grandfather, brother, son or uncle rules not only women but younger siblings and younger men in a family and the extended family and controls all the properties even those that are owned by the women in his life (Sultana 2010:2). According to Omolade (1987:242), patriarchy requires the control of women's fertility and sexuality in monogamous and polygamous marriages and is based on a sexual division of labour regulated by male chauvinism. Patriarchal ideology is influenced by the three great bodies of thought, that is, Judeo-Christian religious ideas, Greek philosophy and the common law legal code that influenced Western society's views and modes of treating women (Watto 2009:562). Subsequently, Wilson (2000:1493–4) explains that the term 'patriarch' originates "from the Old Testament paternal ruler of a family, tribe, or church, and patriarchy is a formal sociological or anthropological category for societies organised into kinship groups and governed or dominated by the elder male". The ideology of patriarchy is found in both Western and African cultures and is one of the strongest ideologies that function in more or less the whole spectrum of dominant masculine affirmation (Visagie 1999:7). As a result, patriarchy not only affects sexism but many other "isms" that distort human relationships as well, such as racism, sexism, colonialism, classism and capitalism (Rakoczy 2004:11). Thus, related to patriarchy is *androcentrism*, an ideology where maleness and masculinity are the norms of human life (Wharton 2012:42; cf. Rakoczy 2004:11). A woman exists in connection to a masculine figure and is identified through that figure, thus patriarchy intersects with different kinds of oppression (Rothman 1994:141). Religious and cultural misperceptions about human relationships intensify unequal relationships in society (Sibanda 2014).

Rothman (1994:141) asserts that patriarchy has its roots "in the Book of Genesis in the 'begats.' Each man from Adam onward is described as having 'begat a son in his likeness, after his image.' After the birth of this first born son, the men are described as having lived so many years". Etymological "begat" is a theological term meaning to procreate the first-born son as a father or may be used in parallel to begotten. As a result, Rothman (1994) argues that "in the patriarchal kinship system children are born to men, out of women … women, in this system bear the children of men". Everything that a woman does or has, including children, has links to her father, brothers and uncles if not married, and if married, everything has links to her husband, brothers-in-law and fathers-in-law.

In direct contrast to patriarchy are matrilineal societies where ancestry is traced through the mother's lineage. In such a society, a person is identified through their mother's ancestry and women have "a right to ownership of the offspring of her marriage and have a right to remarry after a divorce or death of her husband, [because] she inherited land from her mother which she used with her husband" (Phiri 1997:22). According to Rothman (1994:141), men still dominate and rule in matrilineal societies, but not in the way that fathers rule in patriarchal societies because they only have authority over the women and children related to them through their mother's lineage (cf. Phiri 1997:22). Rothman (1994:141) argues that "women in this society are not vulnerable but are a source of connection" because, in matrilineal societies, "women produce and reproduce the body of society" (Petersen 1982:141) and are owners of land, of children and of all assets (Phiri 1997:22). As patriarchy is an ideology, matrilineality is a customary practice where the primary power, but not all of it, is in the hands of women.

2.5 Patriarchy as a Source of Power: Private and Public Patriarchy

Patriarchy informs the world's political, legal, economic, social and religious structures (Tamale 2014). For decades patriarchy has been a stumbling block to women's freedom and success. It is an ideology that gives authority to men and legitimises the oppression of women in all sectors of society (Sultana 2010:1). It is an invisible source of power that is used by society to justify the authority of men over mainly women and property.

Sylvia Walby (1990:178) describes patriarchy in a manner that articulates two different forms, which are visible in societal structures, which she conceptualises as "private patriarchy" and "public patriarchy". According to Walby (1990:178), private patriarchy is the oppression of women by limiting them to unpaid household and production labour and keeping them from the public sphere. She further articulates that in private patriarchy, men as husbands and fathers directly benefit from the oppression and subordination of women (cf. Rabe 2014:163). Private patriarchy, which this study focuses on, identifies men as heads of households even if men are not fully involved in the day-to-day running of the household (Mitchell 2009:10). Public patriarchy, on the other hand, differs from private patriarchy in that it is based on public structures other than the domestic and family space; it gives women access to both the private and public sphere but their access to both spheres is mediocre and collectively subordinated by societal constructions (Walby 1990). Married women in African contexts are collectively subordinated to private

patriarchy, because the responsibility for protecting and sustaining marriage is placed on their shoulders (Shangase 2000). The protection and sustenance of a marriage requires that a wife submit to both the public and private patriarchal teachings of her culture and religion.

2.6 Wifehood and Patriarchy

Wifehood is an extension of the ideology of patriarchy. Manes (2011:65) argues that within a patriarchal ideology, wifehood and womanhood are constructed parallel to each other. In a patriarchal system a perfect wife is expected to live within the boundaries of patriarchy, whereby a wife's position is restricted to unpaid household production and reproduction labour. In a patriarchal ideology a wife should submit to her husband, who is the head of the household, at all times. However, Anne Kingston, the author of *The Meaning of Wife* (2006), argues from an American-Eurocentric view that there is no one single meaning of wifehood and using a multifaceted lens to understand wifehood is a challenge. She thus suggests that there should be new scripts that society should construct to understand wifehood both as a verb and a gender-neutral concept. She problematises the biblical notion that defines a wife's role as a helper and does not define a husband's role in the gendered roles. According to Kingston, wifehood is one of the oldest women's "professions" where wives were marginalised and subjugated (Kingston 2006:4). She analyses a traditional wife as embodying servitude, subordination and self-sacrifice (Kingston 2006:3). Contrasting the old ideology of wifehood to the postmodern ideology, Kingston (2006:14) scrutinises a trend toward wifehood and domesticity among professional wives. She claims that feminism has liberated women to become their own masters by taking up paid jobs outside the domestic sector (Kingston 2006:14). According to her, this development has left a "wife deficit" or "wife gap" in marriage (Kingston 2006:14). Since women compete with their husbands for paid jobs, the domestic unpaid work is neglected, compelling the outsourcing of domestic work, where married and working women employ other women to do the domestic chores, except for those related to sexual conduct and child bearing. Similarly, Oyewumi (1997) asserts that female subordination is embedded in the position as wife and differs with Kingston by arguing that the position of a woman as a mother is a position of power (cf. Kolawole 1997). Analysing the wife–mother distinction is complex since the two are not parallel. A mother can be someone who is single and a wife can be someone who does not have children. This distinction is critical to any gender analysis.

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Wifehood, womanhood and motherhood for black African women are constructed within various patriarchal discourses, which are defined by African traditional culture and religion (Dube 2007). Generally, they are constructed in a way that positions women subject to the dominion of a father, father-in-law, son, brother or uncle. The cultural and religious interpretation of wifehood and womanhood supports the notion that an ideal woman and wife should be patient and humble and should honour the husband, son, brother and uncle (cf. UN Women Report 2012). The patriarchal system of gender relations dictates that women submit to the authority of men at home (Li & Findlay 1999) and reminds them to leave their "professional cap" at work and wear a wife's cap at home (UN Women Report 2012; cf. Chisale 2016b). This is in spite of the fact that patriarchy may subject women to regular and different forms of domestic abuse at home. Some wives accept the regular domestic abuse that takes place in their homes as a sign of love or regard it as normal (Shangase 2000; Baloyi 2013, Kim & Motsei 2002; Chisale 2016a). The construction of wifehood in African traditional culture is that a good wife respects and loves her husband through thick and thin, hence Shangase (2000:23) argues that culture expects us as wives and women in general to "love the very people who abuse, demean and belittle us every day" (cf. Chisale 2016a; Moyo 2004:73). Some women and men may even go to the extent of using biblical texts to support the respect and appreciation of the ideology of wifehood (Shangase 2000). Kingston explains that even in the twenty-first century, the responsibility for nurturing a marriage is the wife's, particularly in the field of sexual conduct (Kingston 2006:326). A perfect wife is the one who conforms to the patriarchal socio-cultural and religious norms of wife ideology; those who resist this ideology are assumed to have issues or difficulty relating to men and have failed in their marriages (Oduyoye 1994:169).

2.7 Women's Resistance to Patriarchy

Women who stand up to and oppose patriarchy are labelled and stigmatised by their families and society as a whole (Siwila 2012; cf. Oduyoye 1994; Moyo 2005). I use the terms 'African feminists' and 'African women' cautiously because some African women such as Buchi Emecheta (1975; 1988) and Ogunyemi (1985) and many African women who subscribe to feminist ideas, prefer to be called African women rather than feminists because they do not want to be associated with some of the strong radical ideas of feminism. African women are increasingly resisting

patriarchy in different ways. A book edited by Jennifer Browdy de Hernandez, Pauline Dongala, Jolaosho Omotayo and Anne Serafin (2010), titled *African Women Writing Resistance: An Anthology of Contemporary Voices,* presents articles in which authors from various African contexts use their voices to protest and resist patriarchy. In the introduction to the book, De Hernandez *et al* (2010:3) assert that "they (African women) look unblinkingly at the challenges they confront while also creating visions of a more positive future, using writing to bear witness to oppression, to document opposition struggles and to share successful strategies of resistance".

Education has empowered women to use different platforms to resist oppression. Literature, poetry, song and symbolism are used by women to resist patriarchy in their own ways. Highly educated women with university degrees may use their writings to protest oppression. James Scott's book, titled *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (1990), provides a theory for feminists who write about women's lived experiences of patriarchy in a world that is dominated by male ideas. Scott uses the term "public transcripts" to describe the "open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate" (1990:2) and "hidden transcripts" to describe the "discourse that happens 'offstage' beyond direct observation by power holders" (Scott 1990:4). African women theologians such as Beverly Haddad have used Scott's hidden and public transcripts theory to articulate how women resist patriarchy in their private domains. Haddad (2004) describes how African women resist patriarchy by joining Prayer Women's Leagues (PWL) known in Zulu and Ndebele as *manyano*. She argues that women in PWL may not subscribe to feminism, but they use this space to resist some oppression in their communities (2004:4). According to Haddad, PWLs use prayer to God as a means where women express their burdens in the absence of the "sites of the struggle in their own safe space" (Haddad 2004:10). Similarly, Gemma Tulid Cruz (2015) uses Scott's hidden and public transcripts theory to analyse Asian women's hidden transcripts from a theological and pastoral perspective. Scott (1985) says that the dominated find a place that may serve as a private sphere in which cultures of resistance are learnt. In those private spheres the dominated feel safe to share their experiences and views on how to survive in that context. In resisting *androcentrism* in religion, African women theologians under the leadership of Mercy Oduyoye formed the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (hereafter the 'Circle'). The Circle attracted women and men from Africa and abroad who joined the Circle as a safe space for resisting patriarchy (Phiri 1997:69). In the Circle women and men encourage each other to apply gender analysis tools in the reading of sacred scriptures and in their

culture in order to promote equality among women and men in different sectors of society (Phiri 1997).

African women may conform to religion and culture while resisting in their own way. Tamale (2004) articulates how African women use their sexuality to resist patriarchy. She asserts that African women use body politics in an empowering way that is reflected through resistance, negotiation, identity, self-desire, pleasure and silence. She further states that, as much as silence may be a catalyst for oppression, it can also be a tool of resistance and struggle particularly for the marginalised. According to Tamale (2004) silence may work to the benefit of the oppressed since it is "unengageable" and ambiguous. In agreement, Motsemme (2004:917) reflecting on the silences of women in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission argues that "silence within a violent everyday can also become a site for reconstituting 'new' meanings and can become a tool of enablement for those oppressed." African culture socialises women into a culture of silence (cf. Cruz 2015). The strength and weakness of silence as a tool of resistance is commonly researched by education researchers in understanding the different silences of learners in the classroom (Bosacki 2005:88). These forms of silence are similar to the silences women use to resist patriarchy in their marriages and communities. According to Jack (1999), women use different forms of silence to mask control or anger and at times to hurt others. The different forms of silence include hostile silence, controlling silence, resisting silence, political silence, and safe silence (Bosacki 2005:88; Jack 1999:224). Jack (1999:224) argues that the different forms of silence have psychological consequences such as depression, though some are safe and can be liberative for the weak and vulnerable.

Hostile silence is observed as a façade that masks aggression; this form of silence plays a critical role in a relationship because it carries forceful and powerful threats (Jack 1999:222; Bosacki 2005:89). Hostile silence is a strategy that is used to control the other person or people because it does not grant space for dialogue that could resolve disputes (Bosacki 2005:89). In studying learners in the classroom, Bosacki (2005) agrees with Jack (1999) that hostile silence creates anxiety about the security of attachment, because silence may assume that someone is physically present but absent emotionally and mentally. Jack (1999) asserts that silence by women in relationships is sometimes associated with depression, whereas controlling silence is "self-protective and regulates emotion in relationships without direct engagement" (Bosacki 2005:89).

This form of silence is used to create a safe space for compliance or rebellion or to create a neutral space within an uncertain and hostile relationship (Bosacki 2005:89).

In addition, there is resisting silence. Jack (1999) says resisting silence is commonly used by women who grew up in socio-cultural and religious communities and families where silence is stereotyped as "good" femininity (Bosacki 2005:89). African culture socialises women and girls not to be outspoken (Shangase 2000); as a result, they are expected not to backchat their seniors and husbands. Thus, Jack (1999) says women who are socialised not to be outspoken use silence as a strategy to preserve their agency and sense of self (cf. Bosacki 2005).

Another form of silence is political silence, which is used by the weak and vulnerable to strategically suspend their voices in the broader community where the majority outnumber them (Bosacki 2005). Bosacki (2005:89) discusses this silence from a sexual orientation perspective and argue that it is commonly used by "some transgendered or lesbian adolescents to express their message within a community where the majority are heterosexual". These girls use political silence to conform to what the community expects of them and when in their safe community they share what they have learnt and confirm the accuracy of their observations (Bosacki 2005:89). From a marriage perspective women may conform to accepted gender roles and resist the prescribed gender roles in private and safe spaces. Jack (1999) identifies political silence as different from self-silencing which causes depression. Political silence is categorised under safe silence. Safe silence is used by the weak and vulnerable when they feel they are not safe and are fearful. In public the person will comply and conform, while behind the mask there are conflicting emotions and inner confusion (Bosacki 2005:90; cf. Jack 1999). Highly educated married black women may go through conflicting emotions and inner confusion because of the different conflicting worlds they are exposed to. While highly educated women are expected to be independent and authoritative in their careers, tradition on the other hand expects them to conform to patriarchal customs. Thus, women in marriages may use these forms of silence to resist and survive in a patriarchal order. Some feminists such as Cruz (2015) and Lewis (2003) agree that silence is not an indication of submissiveness, subservience and obedience but rather a hidden transcript used by women for survival in a patriarchal society (Cruz 2015:21). According to Lewis (2003:485):

[T]he women's understanding and use of silence not as a self-internalised expression of submission but as a means of resistance has allowed them to experience a sense of freedom and liberation. They interpret their silence as disagreement and as resistance to the treatment they receive in their church, *communities and marriages* ... Consequently, learned silence as adopted by "churched" Korean women and *highly educated married black women* needs to be understood not in terms of submission but rather in terms of resistance, and as a strategy of survival [emphasis added].

In addition to women's politics of resistance, certain women's movements and feminist movements emerged in an attempt to resist patriarchy. The first noted feminist publication is by a British writer Mary Wollstonecraft (1792). Her study titled *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* advocated women's rights. She argues in this book that women should receive education and rights similar to men. Her argument is that women are important members of every community rather than just mere wives to their husbands and that they should be treated as partners and companions (Botting & Carey 2004). Feminist theories regard patriarchy as an ideology of social and gender injustice. In the 1970s, the central argument of feminist movements in the USA was that the "personal is political" (Firestone 1970:44). The common assumption by feminists is that women who have knowledge will become "self-emancipated" (Denny 1994:63). The feminist movement is divided into three waves and research indicates that there is a fourth wave emerging. Therefore, for the sake of this study, I will analyse what the literature says about the four waves of feminism.

2.7.1 Waves of Feminism

Feminism is often analysed in terms of its development which has occurred in waves; these are referred to as the first, second and third wave.

2.7.1.1 First-wave Feminism

The first wave of feminism emerged in the 19th and the 20th centuries against the backdrop of the industrial society and liberal politics (mostly in the USA and Western Europe). During this time women made significant contributions to the reform and revolutionary movements of that time (Kroløkke & Sørensen 2006). First-wave feminism contributed to the abolition of slavery, the temperance movement, educational reform, prison reform and better conditions for the mentally

ill (Rakockzy 2004:13). This wave of feminism witnessed the first organised women's movement that specifically advocated for women's rights in Western countries. This movement campaigned for women to be the beneficiaries of civil rights, including the right to full citizenship and the right to vote (Kroløkke & Sørensen 2006). The movement created awareness by identifying women's lack of access to quality education and health on equal terms with men. First-wave feminism questioned the segregation of women by law and their exclusion from social structures. Women in first-wave feminism campaigned for women's inclusion and equality under the platform "suffrage for women" (Lorber 2010:1). Their primary concern was the rights and representation of women as human beings and not as the property of men.

2.7.1.2 Second-wave Feminism

The second wave of feminism was sparked by radical feminism that was interconnected with the women's liberation movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s (Kroløkke & Sørensen 2006:7). The main assumption of second-wave feminism was a strong belief that women could collectively empower one other, and different dictums and expressions emerged during this wave, some of which are as follows: *the personal is political*, *the politics of housework*, *sisterhood is powerful, consciousness raising* (Kroløkke & Sørensen 2006:10; cf. Rakoczy 2004:13). Socialist/Marxist feminism emerged which critiqued the dual workload for women working outside and inside the home, demanding equal pay for equal work. Sheila Rowbotham's work titled *Women, Resistance, and Revolution,* published in 1972, explores these issues and argues that the oppression of women is a "woman question" (Rowbotham 1972). Rowbotham (1972) compares the institution of marriage to feudalism and argues that women enter a legal contract of marriage to serve their husbands similar to the way serfs were obligated to serve their master. For her women's emancipation will be achieved only if capitalism is destroyed and socialism accepted to free women from dependency on men.

The weaknesses of the first and second waves of feminism were that they were dominated by Western white, middle-class women and ignored black women's need for emancipation (Davis 1983). As a result, the end of the 1970s marked the beginning of a third wave of feminism where African, Asian, Latin American and women of indigenous cultures began to state that oppression of race and economic class are intertwined with sexism (Clifford 2001:12).

2.7.1.3 Third-wave Feminism

Angela Davis's book titled *Women, Race, and Class,* which was first published in 1981 and again in 1983, raises the intersection of gender, race, sexuality, history, class, tribe and so on. She articulates how first and second-wave feminism ignored black women by describing the racism and classism of the movement. At the time this was controlled by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who, in efforts to win white men in power to support their cause, resorted to racist and classist arguments about the superiority of the educated white woman's vote (Davis 1983). Writers who formed part of third-wave feminism, such as Delores Williams, criticised feminism for only meeting the needs of white women and overlooking the needs of black women who experienced patriarchy and oppression differently from white women (Rakoczy 2004:13). These writers identified context, place or setting as significant in feminist reflections (Mohanty 1991). Third-wave feminism integrates every woman's experiences, including those who are considered as voiceless. It recognises that women's experiences of oppression and patriarchy are different and intersectional.

The focus of third-wave feminism on intersectionality emerged as a result of women's diversity in ways that significantly shape their experiences and opportunities (Wood & Fixmer-Oraiz 2016:72). Proponents acknowledge the "intersectionality of oppression and are committed to building alliances with other groups that work against oppression" (Wood & Fixmer-Oraiz 2016:73). For third-wave feminists, resistance is an everyday vocation as they acknowledge that although many reforms have been achieved by second-wave feminists, these have not been woven into everyday life (Iannelo 2010; cf. Wood & Fixmer-Oraiz 2016). As a result, Babel and Kwan (quoted in Wood & Fixmer-Oraiz 2016:76) assert that third-wave feminists acknowledge that their politics is rooted in the personal, bodily resistance to oppressive ideologies. The politics of resistance has been made easy by the use of technology, which is closely linked to the emerging wave of feminism referred to as fourth-wave feminism.

2.7.1.4 Fourth-wave Feminism

The emerging fourth wave of feminism is largely influenced by technology; it is argued that the internet "has enabled a shift from 'third-wave' to 'fourth-wave' feminism" (Munro 2013:23). This wave is not yet widely acknowledged, but there are strong voices that link fourth-wave feminism

to online technology. Those who link fourth-wave feminism to technology, such as online social media and networks including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and Blogs, argue that technology is used to campaign against gender injustice and other social systems that discriminate against women and other sexual minority groups (Martin & Valenti 2012:6). Martin and Valenti (2012) assert that technology is used by feminists to challenge sexism or misogyny and refer to it as "online feminism" (Martin & Valenti 2012:6). The upsurge in technology use by feminists has promoted the "f" word to the broader community and streamlined its purpose. The use of social media has fascinatingly grown in areas where women still experience gender and social injustice (Munro 2013:23). Technology is used as a critical tool to communicate women's frustrations regarding gender equality and social injustice and it has spread the message to the girl child and boy child who have the privilege to growing up aware of feminism and the gender debate.

In addition, feminists in Sociology, Psychology and Theology observe that fourth-wave feminism is a movement that "combines politics, psychology, and spirituality in an overarching vision of change" (Diamond 2009:213). In agreement, Wrye (2009:185) states that "the fourth-wave distinguishes itself by stressing spirituality and community in particular". The emerging fourth wave of feminism is identified by feminists in Sociology, Psychology and Theology as not new but a wave that existed between the second and third wave. In analysing Jane Fonda's 2005 memoirs and Muriel Rukeyser's 2005 statement that "what would happen if one woman told the truth about her life? The world would split open", Diamond (2009:214) argues that the two feminists have introduced us to our narrative for the fourth wave of feminism. Their view that "feminism has been one continuous wave with the political, spiritual, personal/sexual, and cultural currents intermingling in different proportions right from the beginning" (Diamond 2009:214) positions fourth-wave feminism in the 21st century. However, in African cultures women have valued spirituality from time immemorial. Diamond (2009:219) observes spirituality as a common thread that is woven into women's lives in efforts "to address the problem that has no name" (Diamond 2009:219). Thus, this has paved the path to a consensus between secular feminists and feminists in religion, who concur that women's struggles in society and religion are linked. To respond to these struggles women are consistent in using rhetorical expressions of spiritual values (Llewellyn 2015:40). In fourth-wave feminism, religion or spirituality cuts across women's lives as both a problem and an antidote to their struggles.

2.7.2 Feminist Strands

Feminism also focuses on the different strands, each with a particular history, embedded within a specific worldview such as radical, liberal, Marxist and postmodern feminisms.

2.7.2.1 Radical Feminism

Radical feminists such as Mary Daly (1978) argue that throughout history patriarchy has sought to oppress women. This paradigm is not necessarily against men but rather against patriarchy; therefore it opposes political and social organisations that are still tied to patriarchy. Radical feminists' focus is on the reconstruction of the culture of patriarchy and associated hierarchical structures. Daly (1978) explains that patriarchy dehumanises both men and women, hence the goal is to free both men and women from the rigid gender roles that society has imposed on them through patriarchy. The weakness of radical feminists is that at extreme levels they do not want to be associated with men, they believe men are the enemies who control women's reproductive roles thereby causing women's oppression and suffering; hence radical feminists treat women as "universally oppressed and passive" (Denny 1994:1). Firestone (1970), an advocate of radical feminism, argues that men are the enemy and marriage is an institution that disempowers women. Within this paradigm marriage is portrayed as a trap to protect patriarchy. Radical feminists interpret "patriarchy as a distinct and intractable social system parallel to – yet preceding – class and race stratification. According to this view, both the feudal character of [the] patriarchal family and the familial character of feudalism endure" (Wilson 2000:1494). The other weakness of radical feminism is that its main objective is to free women from what radical feminists identify as "male values" and create an alternative culture founded on "female values" (Willis 1984:91). By doing this, they ignore the diversity of women' contexts, and in addition they ignore circumstances where powerful women oppress women of lower status than their own.

2.7.2.2 Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminists, such as Betty Friedan, campaign for equal opportunities for men and women; hence they call for legislation that addresses all the injustices that cause women's oppression (Friedan 1963; cf. Friedman 2000). Advocates of liberal feminism value the interconnectedness of everything in the natural world, while focusing on the independent deprivations (Giddens & Griffiths 2006:470). For liberal feminists, marriage is an equal relationship where women should

not be denied freedom in their reproductive and sexual choices (Wood & Fixmer-Oraiz 2016:64). As a result, they promote social transformation to make women's lives better, by pushing "for state intervention in what they call economic realism" (Jaggar 1983:198). They demand that the state should ensure that gender equality in opportunities should be realised between women and men through state policies and action (Jaggar 1983:198).

Liberal feminists emphasise the personal autonomy of women; the slogan "the personal is political" is commonly used to critique private life particularly marriage. Liberal feminism tends to be a reformist movement rather than a revolutionary one.

2.7.2.3 Marxist Feminism

Marxist feminists believe that capitalism is the cause of women's oppression (Giddens & Griffiths 2006:470). The emphasis on concrete, structural aspects of social organisations such as the hierarchy in the family and the sexual division of labour by Marxist feminism is similar to that of materialist feminism (Abbot, Wallace & Tyler 2005:36). The central question asked by Marxist feminists is "who owned and controlled the means of production and who had surplus labour extracted"? (KhosraviShakib 2010:31). Thus, Marxist feminists observe patriarchy and capitalism as linked oppressions that should be critically analysed "with their own interests, laws of motion and patterns of contradiction and conflict resolution" (Gouliman 2007:121–22). Marxist feminism views the economic development of capitalism as a barrier to the liberation of women (Federici 2004:135). Women's work in biological and social reproduction is a component of all modes of production that has been ignored by Marxist economists (Hennessy 2003). For Marxist feminists men are not the enemy but rather the capitalism that socialises and promotes exploitative economic relationships in relations at work and, in turn, this oppression is transferred to the household in marriage contexts.

2.7.2.4 Postmodern Feminism

Postmodern feminism rejects the idea of grand theorising (Giddens & Griffiths 2006:475; cf. Smart 1989). It encourages the recognition of many standpoints as equally valid, hence emphasis on the "otherness" that symbolises plurality, diversity, difference and openness (Giddens & Griffiths 2006:475). It is a combination of two theories, feminist and postmodernist theory (Rogers 2005:1). Postmodern feminism accepts and embraces human diversity, "argu[ing] that there is no universal

identity or reality that undergirds 'woman'" (Rogers 2005:3). Judith Butler, Donna Haraway and Laurel Richardson's ideas influence the postmodern feminist movement. According to Butler (1992:15–16) "part of the project of postmodernism … is to call into question the ways in which such 'examples' and 'paradigms' serve to subordinate and erase that which they seek to explain". According to postmodern feminists, the female 'nature' does not exist, rather they see humanity as a single unitary being across human societies. Thus, "postmodernist feminism rejects or substantially refashions the tales of progress for girls and women implied in modernist narratives of progress for humankind" (Rogers 2005:3). They focus on the identity of humanity, and question the hierarchy that exists in human nature. As a result, feminists like Butler identify identity as a "performative phenomenon" that is institutionalised within socially regulated boundaries (Butler 1992:15). She observes identity as a normative, regulatory and exclusionary phenomenon (Butler 1992). Postmodernist feminists argue that individuals can advocate and be agents of change by challenging the patriarchy embedded in existing power relations in institutions and the broader society. On the other hand, critiques of postmodern feminism regard it as a paralysis of women movements, because of its standpoint that leads to the rejection of human progress and an end to transformative politics (Smart 1989).

From the above short overview of feminism, it is clear that, since the study examines highly educated married black women's experiences, interpretations and resistance strategies in relation to patriarchy, feminism is the appropriate theory. Thus, this study will apply the lenses of African feminism combined with symbolic interactionism theory.

2.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study integrates African feminist theory and symbolic interaction theory. The two theories address and explain the distribution of power between the domineering and the dominated. Generally, patriarchy is used as a source of power to control and dominate women in marital, religious, economic and political contexts. It "legitimises male power and authority over women in marriage, or in a marriage-like arrangement, and … a set of attitudes or norms supportive of violence against wives who violate, or who are perceived as violating, the ideals of familial patriarchy" (Millet 1969:222–23). Patriarchy gives men, fathers, male children and husbands power over the ownership of their daughters, wives and mothers. African feminism provides a theoretically sound understanding of how highly educated married black women experience,

interpret and resist patriarchy in their marriage contexts. On the other hand, the symbolic interactionist approach provides a theoretically sound explanation for the way such women construct their self-concept and cognitive processes from the experiences of patriarchy in their marriage contexts.

2.8.1   African Feminism

The theory of feminism is broad and has varied nuances that are relevant to different contexts, as briefly discussed above. In this study the broad principles of African feminist theory are applied because of their relevance to the context of my study. Lewis (2001:5) asserts that although African feminism is diverse and fluid we need to embrace it because African feminists have a common and "shared intellectual commitment to critiquing gender and imperialism coupled with a collective focus on a continental identity shaped by particular relations of subordination in the world economy and global social and cultural practices". African feminists are also united in that only through the inclusion of men will patriarchy be ended. They believe that "if African feminism is to succeed as a human reformation, it cannot accept separation from the opposite sex" (Mekgwe 2008:16). Advocates of African feminism argue that this theory has links to the diverse African pre-colonial history involving slavery, colonisation and liberation struggles (Kaitesi 2014:106; cf. Mama 1997:47; Oloka-Onyango & Tamale 1995:693). In the colonial era African women fought side by side with men and communal perceptions were encouraged as African women were part of the liberation struggle against colonialism (Mama 1997:47). African feminists therefore reject the radical feminist view that men are the enemies or bad (Kaitesi 2014:109; cf. Mekgwe 2008:16). They acknowledge the combination of different oppressions in efforts to produce an inclusive brand of feminism where women are viewed as significant human beings rather than sexual beings only (Steady 1996:4). African feminists, such as Tamale (2006) and Kaitesi (2014), insist that the aim of African feminism is to dismantle patriarchy in all its forms in an effort to increase gender equality in different sectors of life.

The relevance of African feminism to this study includes questioning the gender relations and the problems of African women, unveiling their causes and consequences (Arndt 2002:32). This theoretical approach recognises the need to build from indigenous knowledge (Tamale 2006). Africa is rich in indigenous knowledge; however some elements of indigenous knowledge are oppressive while others are liberative and have life-enhancing potential (Chisale & Buffel

2014:288). Thus African women argue that indigenous knowledge that is liberative and has the potential to enhance life should be preserved while indigenous knowledge that is oppressive should be condemned (Oduyoye 2001:11; cf. Phiri 2003:68). Tamale (2014) acknowledges the liberative force of African culture for African women in her argument that Africa's common cultural ideologies enhance the ethos of communitarism, solidarity and *Ubuntu*. These values allow for the inclusion of men in the reconstruction of gender ideologies in society. African women, whatever their class, cannot separate themselves from their community, because they understand that the health and wellbeing of the community, particularly the extended family, and the respect accorded to ancestors is their duty (Kasomo & Maseno 2011:158). Highly educated married black women are no exception in this belief. Therefore some African women's respect for tradition and community "put[s] them in awkward positions where they end up involuntarily enforcing and accepting patriarchal domination by locating themselves and younger women in culturally-defined confinements" (Chisale 2014:213) even if internally they resist or protest the social construction of such a gendered order.

This research used African feminism to examine the experiences and interpretations of and the resistance of highly educated married black women to patriarchy in their marriages and private spaces. African feminism in particular was used to interpret such women's struggles with patriarchy without imposing a heroine status on them. Within African culture women are often positioned in the domestic arena whatever their class, causing internal conflict within them, hence African feminists address and challenge the notion of gender that is theorised in order to undermine women through marriage (Kaitesi 2014:109).

African feminism is not without weakness; there are several debates on whether African feminism really exists, while some have reservations about associating themselves with the term. Currently, some African women choose not to associate themselves with feminism because they argue that "it does not acknowledge the agency and potential of African women" (Sachikonye 2013; Kolawole 1997:7). Although Western feminists acknowledge some issues that are of significance to African women's emancipation, the fact remains that different contexts make their voices

largely irrelevant to African women and their experiences, hence the commonly used phrase "nothing about us without us"[1] (Rowland 2004).

The debates on whether feminism embraces African women's struggle have motivated some African women to choose not to accept the term "feminism" in their circles. Buchi Echemta, an African authoress, in her speech (quoted in Mikell 1997:335) argued that

> I have never called myself a feminist. Now if you choose to call me a feminist, that is your business; but I don't subscribe to the feminist idea that all men are brutal and repressive and we must reject them. Some of these men are my brothers and fathers and sons. Am I to reject them too?

Some African women, such as African women theologians, choose to distance themselves from the term 'feminist theology' and to use instead the term 'African women theology'. Kasomo and Maseno (2011:155) maintain that in some African women's circles feminism is stigmatised because, it is argued, "sexism is not an issue in Africa, where men and women know their place and play their role ungrudgingly". As a result such women are comfortable with the term 'African women theologians'. Globally, feminism is associated with women who have issues, or difficulty relating to men, or women who have failed in their marriages (Oduyoye 1994:169; cf. Siwila 2012). One African women theologian, Oduyoye (1994:167), argues that though she uses the term "feminism", the effect it has on African ears is a challenge to her.

Although I acknowledge that the term 'feminism' may not sound appealing to 'African ears', it includes and acknowledges the significance of men in the struggle against patriarchy and hence makes it relevant to this study. Paulo Freire (1970) argues that for liberation to have meaning, both the oppressed and the oppressor must be liberated. Therefore, like Buchi Echemta, I acknowledge that as much as we need our men in this struggle, our men need us to remind them that we are both victims of patriarchy; that since we stood side by side as men and women in the struggle against colonialism, we can still stand side by side in fighting patriarchy. In this way we will be

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[1] This phrase has been used by disabled people's organisations and movements in South Africa to challenge their exclusion from full participation and to call for equalisation of opportunities. The phrase has now been borrowed by other marginalised groups to protest against the external people or outsiders deciding on what is right or not right for a certain group without representation or full and direct participation of members of the group(s) affected.

deconstructing the nineteenth century European racial hierarchies and gender politics that were taught under the European administrative system (Mama 1997:47).

In addition to African feminism, the study uses symbolic interactionism to explore how highly educated married black women understand, interpret and resist patriarchy through their conceptualisation of their self (identity) in relation to their cultural norms and individual identity.

2.8.2 Symbolic Interactionism Theory

Regardless of the advances in feminist research on women's experiences and interpretations of patriarchy, there is a gap in the research about highly educated married black women's experiences and interpretations of patriarchy in connection with their self-concept and cognitive processes. As much as African feminism is relevant in studying highly educated married black women's experiences and interpretations of patriarchy, this theory has limitations when it comes to understanding the self-concept and cognitive processes of such women.

As a result of this, symbolic interactionist theory is helpful in understanding women's self-concepts and cognitive processes in patriarchal contexts. Symbolic interactionist theory is a sociological humanist theory that was proposed by George Herbert Mead (1934) in his lectures at the University of Chicago and advanced by his student Herbert Blumer after Mead's death. In conceptualising symbolic interactionism, Blumer (1969) emphasised the interpretative process in the construction of meaning of social experiences as people live them. He turned to Mead's discussion of the "I" and "me" to understand the world of the participants and their social human behaviour. Mead identifies the "I" and "me" as "phases of the self", which are separated in the process but belong together in the sense of being parts of a whole (Mead 1962:178). In these phases of social self, individuals see themselves both as a subject and an object (Mead 1962:162). The self as "I" is the subject that always reacts to the society that shapes it and the self as "me" is the object or product of society. The self is both a subject and an object of a society that is not fixed but always constructed and reconstructed (Serpe & Stryker 2011:228). The "I" is part of the self that is impulsive, spontaneous, not always predicated, that responds to the attitudes that the organism offers and cannot always be predicated (Geniusas 2006:249). The "me" on the other hand, is the cognitive object and internalisation process only known retrospectively on reflection

(Aldiabat & Le Navenec 2011; cf. Geniusas 2006:247). The phases of self help us to know ourselves and how to interact with ourselves.

Symbolic interaction theory is significant in conceptualising the development of the self (Cramer & Hutchison 2013:337). Charon (1992) argues that the self is a catalyst of behaviour regulation. Burke (1980) articulates that the self-concept does not only include the idealised views of the self that are relatively unchanging, but also self-image or a working copy of the self that a person imports into situations. As a result, Burke (1980) argues that the self is subject to constant change and revision based on situational influences.

Some people evaluate the self-concept through their self-esteem. Two dimensions of self-esteem are identified by symbolic interactionists and these are efficacy-based self-esteem, that is, "seeing oneself as competent and capable" and worth-based self-esteem, that is, "feeling that one is accepted and valued" (Gecas & Schwalbe 1983). According to Gecas and Burke (1995), self-esteem is divided into two parts – high self-esteem which is associated with good outcomes such as personal success and low self-esteem which is associated with bad outcomes such as deviance. In this study, I interpret symbolic interaction theory from an African feminist perspective to conceptualise how highly educated married black women modify their sense of self or self-concept in a context of patriarchy in their private domains, particularly marriage. Blumer (1969) explains a dynamic and process-focused characteristic of "self" that is constantly renegotiated in interaction with others, as was conceptualised by the Chicago school of interactionism.

In addition, symbolic interactionism conceptualises the taking of the role, or role-taking, of others by the dominated in order to survive (Mead 1934; cf. Wolf 2011; Scully 1988). Advocates of symbolic interactionism believe that role-taking is the significant beginning of the self; hence social interaction cannot be possible where a person does not comprehend and anticipate the actions of others (Mead 1934:xxi). Role-taking is widely used by women in patriarchal contexts for peace, survival, belonging and the stability of the family; hence the notion of power is present in role-taking. Sandstrom, Marin and Fine (2006:97) insist that "through taking the role of others, we learn to define and respond to ourselves in terms of social outlooks and standards … Self-concepts, then, are fundamentally social products, consisting of the roles, perspectives, and identities we internalise through our social experience and interactions". Highly educated married

black women may use the strategy of role-taking for survival and to fit into a community by predicting the actions and emotions of their husbands and the whole patriarchal family to avoid rejection, abuse and conflict. This forces them to adopt the patriarchal standpoint and begin to see themselves from that perspective.

Mead (1934) explains the significance of the self, which is fundamental to this study, as a dynamic process that changes over time. According to Mead (1934), the self is a reflexive process whereby an individual can see her- or himself as both a subject and an object. Since the self is a social entity, symbolic interactionists propose terms such as the "internalisation" of something that was external (Sandstrom *et al* 2006). Role-taking may lead to internalisation. Symbolic interactionists believe internalisation starts through social patterns of interaction, and interpersonal communication. An individual may internalise what others say about him or her; thus some women internalise their oppression as normal and acceptable. Some, despite the level of knowledge about the evils of patriarchy and oppression, may be forced to internalise this through patterns of communication. For example, patterns of communication between women and male family members or wives and husbands may be internalised, leading to a husband's views and perceptions about his wife becoming part of how that woman views herself (Cast 2003). This then forces the wife to accept oppression in marriage for the sake of peace and the stability of the family.

2.8.3   Integration of the Theories

The focus of this study is on the individual and collective social interactions and perceptions of highly educated married black women, which are clearly defined by symbolic interactionism evaluated from an African feminist perspective. The close connection between patriarchal interpretation and resistance requires that African feminism be interpreted in relation to other theories, in this case symbolic interactionism, to understand the discourses of the dominated. A common thread that runs through the two theories is that of how power and resistance are distributed in both the private and public spheres. The presence of power and resistance in the theories helps to integrate them into this study. In order to understand the experiences, interpretations and struggles of highly educated married black women within a context of patriarchy there is a need to acknowledge their hidden power in fighting this ideology (Tamale 2014; cf. Arndt 2002). Additionally, the two theories are relevant in examining issues of identity

formation among women. These theories highlight the politicisation of identity in an individual by taking into consideration the situational, social and personal influences of women's behaviour.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter has explored literature on the institution of marriage from an African and a Western feminist perspective. Interestingly, although African feminist theorists observe marriage as patriarchal and oppressive, they nevertheless protect it in an effort to protect their motherhood role. However, African feminists concur with Western feminists in observing marriage as fertile ground for women's oppression and gender-based violence. The education of women would seem to have had little influence in transforming the gender roles in marriage, as women have to continue performing their productive and reproductive roles despite her education status. In addition, this chapter critically reviewed the literature on patriarchy as an ideology and a source of power in all sectors of society. According to the literature, patriarchy is nurtured within the context of marriage, with religious and cultural beliefs used to defend and nurture this ideology. Although patriarchy is mainly a religious ideology, women have developed ways of resisting it. Thus, there is a section in this chapter that critically discusses how women resist the patriarchal ideology in their marriages and public spaces. In revisiting patriarchy women use feminist strategies of resistance. In explaining women's resistance strategies, James Scott's hidden transcript theory emerged as the main theory that feminists integrate in their feminist politics of resistance. Finally the chapter discussed the theories underlying the study and how they will be applied. The study is an integration of African feminism and symbolic interactionist theory.

The next chapter focuses on the research methodology used in this study and describes the research process that was used.

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CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

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3. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter reviewed relevant literature and theories that influence women's understandings, interpretations and experiences of patriarchy as well as their struggles or resistance

in this regard. This chapter presents the research methodology and the research design that were applied. This is an empirical study which employed a feminist qualitative research methodology and an exploratory design. Feminist qualitative research shifts away from traditional research to employ subjective reflexivity in terms of both the process and the purpose of research. This chapter discusses the process that was implemented in this study, as well as my methodological orientation and assumptions. To achieve the objectives of the study, I employed a qualitative method that encompassed a feminist approach to research and (auto)biographical-narrative inquiry.

3.1 Qualitative Research Approach

A qualitative approach was employed to examine highly educated married black women's experiences, interpretations and resistance with regard to patriarchy in their marriages. This approach emphasises the study of human behaviour and attitudes in their natural setting (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter 2006:287). Accordingly, it provides deep insight into the "complex world of lived experiences from the point of view of those who live it" (Schwandt 1994:118). This research approach was deemed suitable for this study because it takes into consideration the individual experiences and feelings of the research participants – how they are lived, felt and understood in a certain context (Flick 1998:26). A qualitative approach to research "probes for deeper understanding rather than examining surface features" (Johnson 1997:4). My reason for choosing a qualitative approach in particular to explore highly educated married black women's experiences, interpretations and resistance with regard to patriarchy in their marriages was because of its suitability for researching complex situations. In addition, the qualitative nature of this study is compatible with a feminist approach to research.

3.2 Feminist Research Approach

A feminist approach to research differs from other avenues of scientific inquiry and theory generation because it is explicitly conducted from a feminist standpoint (Malacrida 2007:1329–1330). It shifts away from traditional research both in terms of where it begins and the purpose of the research itself (Hesse-Biber 2007; cf. Nielson 1990). A feminist approach to research acknowledges women's contribution to knowledge creation and new created ways of learning about the world of women, their interpretations of their world, and their experiences in society.

Feminist research is prominent for the legitimisation it gives to subjective knowledge, and the space allowed for complexity and contradictions (Harding 1993). In feminist research, researchers are gendered and their gender shapes their experiences of reality in a gendered cultural context (Fanow & Cook 1991).

I chose a feminist approach to my research because it allowed me to position and locate myself in the study. Feminist scholars maintain that, as feminist researchers, it is important to position ourselves, to participate and to have goals in relation to the study, particularly with regard to the topic of the research (Charmaz 2000:477; cf. Hesse-Biber 2007). This approach stresses the significance of reflexivity, which involves a process of self-awareness and self-consciousness of researching one's own position in the research process in order to reflect one's interaction with the process (Fanow & Cook 1991). It also stresses looking at the world from a gender dimension, where we understand the world through the eyes and experiences of women (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2007).

My presence and my interpretation of data within this project unavoidably affected the research process (McCorkel & Myers 2003). Thus, feminist researchers contest the assumed value of neutrality inherent in positivistic science (Hesse-Biber 2007). Reflexivity and the positioning of the self in this research approach is a resource that allowed me to achieve a more vigorous form of objectivity (Harding 1987). Accordingly, my social position and identity as a highly educated married black woman shaped my research agenda, as well as the research process in this study. Advocates for feminist research argue that the significance of its use lies in the fact that theorising begins with the researcher's own experience (Gelsthorpe & Morris 1990:88). The feminist dictum, "the personal is political", is significant for this study, because my personal qualities, experience and political perspectives influenced not only the title of study but also the outcome of the study and the very knowledge obtained (Hammersley 1992). Therefore, I acknowledge that this research is political and has a social activism agenda because feminist research requires the fusion of knowledge and practice.

3.3 Research Design

To answer the research questions formulated for the study, an exploratory (auto)biographical-narrative inquiry was employed.

3.3.1 (Auto)biographical-narrative Inquiry

(Auto)biographical-narrative research is a process during which research participants recollect and re-tell their experiences from a personal perspective (Clandinin & Connelly 2000). This inquiry is not about just recording and reporting the lived experiences as told by the participants, but is also about re-telling the participants' stories from my own perspective. This process permitted me to participate in the study by entering into the world of the participants' identity, meanings and practical knowledge (Bolívar & Domingo 2007:4). In order to achieve this, highly educated married black women told stories about the experiences that had occurred in their lives. According to Saleh, Menon and Clandinin (2014:272), "people shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories". Thus, the narrative view of experience is the phenomenon under study (Connelly & Clandinin 2006:477). This inquiry allowed me holistically to give meaning to and understand the cognitive and active dimensions of highly educated married black women in relation to their experiences of patriarchy. According to Long (quoted in Perumal 2007), feminist research unveils the

> … third person accounts and 'generic' sociology have not, in fact, told us anything about women's experiences. First person accounts are required to understand the subjectivity of a social group that is 'muted,' excised from history, 'invisible' in the official records of their culture.

Feminist methodologies acknowledge the subjectivity, emotionality, and biographical factors that influence the researcher and the researched (Acker, Barry & Esseveld 1991). This approach gave participants the freedom to attach subjective meanings to their sense of self and identity as they narrated their life experiences.

(Auto)biographical-narrative research has methodological limitations, just like any other research approach. One of the many weaknesses of this type of research is that the participants focus more on identity rather than describing experience (Weiner 1994:11). However, I chose an (auto)biographical-narrative research design because of its relevance to symbolic interaction and feminist studies. The relevance of the design to this study is that participants or authors of research defend their attitudes and behaviour while defining how they make sense of themselves and their actions in relation to others (Weiner 1994:11).

3.4 Research Population

The research participants for this study consisted of 20 highly educated married black women between the ages of 38 and 58 from various Southern African countries, including South Africa, Swaziland, Lesotho, Malawi, Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe. All of the participants in this study have completed their master's and doctoral studies at South African universities. The basis for identifying these research participants as key informants was that they represent a group (highly educated married black women) that has not received much attention from researchers. Since all participants did their postgraduate studies at South African universities, their marriage interactions are influenced by the South African way of life. It is important to note that participants were from different ethnic groups in Southern Africa, hence their experiences of patriarchy in their marriages and their interactions differed, although they all belong to the highly educated category. The significance and similarity of these participants in this study is that their status as generally oppressed black women on one hand and privileged highly educated women on the other raises a complex tension in knowledge production.

3.5 Gaining Access

A letter of invitation was sent by email to 23 prospective participants. In the letter I introduced myself, and discussed the title of the study and the methods of data collection to be used. I also requested that those who were interested in participating should sign the consent form and return it to me via email. I followed up on this request both via email and telephonically to remind prospective participants to respond to my invitation. 21 women responded by returning the signed consent forms while two turned down the invitation to participate and one participant withdrew.

3.6 Sampling strategies

The study employed two forms of sampling techniques to recruit participants, namely: purposive sampling and snowball sampling.

3.6.1 Purposive Sampling

The criteria for selecting participants for this study included that they should be married black African women with a master's or doctoral degree. Subsequently, using my contacts, purposive sampling was used to recruit an initial ten highly educated married black women with at least a

master's or doctoral degree. Purposive sampling takes place on the basis of the researcher's knowledge of the population, its elements and the nature of the research objectives (Babbie & Mouton 2011). According to Terre Blanche *et al* (2006), this type of sampling is influenced more by the subjective considerations of the researcher than by the scientific criteria. The purpose of (auto)biographical-narrative research is to reveal shared patterns of interpretation and experience within a group of people who have common characteristics, attributes and experiences.

3.6.2   Snowball Sampling

Women with common characteristics know each other; therefore snowball sampling was used to locate further research participants that I was not aware of (Huysamen 1994:44; cf. Neuman 2006:223). In snowball sampling, I requested the relevant participants to identify and refer friends or colleagues who met the requirements of the study and might be interested in participating (Neuman 2006:223). Subsequently, more women sent emails volunteering to participate. The initial ten participants referred me to other prospective participants leading the potential sample to 23 women.

3.7   Data Collection Tools

In this study three data collection methods were employed, namely, (auto)biographical-narrative essays, semi-structured interviews and observation.

3.7.1   (Auto)biographical-narrative essays

Data were collected through (auto)biographical-narrative essays. An (auto)biographical-narrative essay is a method of narrative inquiry and is an economical way of collecting data (Abrahão 2012). In terms of this method, the author of the (auto)biography narrates her story with the aim of telling the truth about the subject as honestly and openly as possible (Bolívar & Domingo 2007:4). The author paints a picture of the subject in the way that she understands and interprets it (Abrahão 2012:30). (Auto)biographical-narrative essays enhanced this research by enabling an understanding of the variables related to the cultural, religious, social, political and theoretical underpinnings that shape highly educated married black women's interpretations of and struggles with patriarchy. It also enhanced the way such women construct their feminist identities in relation to patriarchy. These identities subsequently inform their interpretations and resistance to patriarchy

from a feminist perspective. Highly educated married black women were requested to write a narrative of their life story in relation to patriarchy within the context of their marriage contexts. Their responses were expected to cover their personal experiences and interpretations of patriarchy, as well as their resistance to patriarchy in their marriages and how these experiences, interpretations and resistance made them feel about themselves and how they affected the way they relate to other people. The weakness of (auto)biographical-narrative research is that participants may choose both what to share and what to withhold from the researcher (Abrahão 2012:30). In order to excavate highly educated married black women's interpretations, experiences and resistance from their lived experiences, participants were presented with an (auto)biographical narrative essay guide (see Appendix D).

3.7.2   Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to clarify and elaborate on issues that emerged from the essays that were not clear. Such interviews are flexible and allow participants to tell their stories in their own way while ensuring that they respond to what the researcher is exploring (Ross 1997:40). Some interviews were conducted telephonically with participants. During the telephone conversation I asked for them to verify certain issues that were not clear. If the participants lived in Gauteng, I visited them at their homes or workplaces to conduct semi-structured interviews for verification. Visiting participants at home had the advantage that I could observe the family interactions. I visited six participants' homes for follow-up interviews and another four participants at their workplaces. For those that I visited at work in their offices, the follow-up interviews included observing their interactions with colleagues. I was mainly interested in observing how they interacted with male colleagues and how they communicate with other colleagues regarding their male colleagues. These visits to the participants' homes and offices enriched the data interpretation. For those participants who reside outside Gauteng province and outside South Africa, I conducted telephonic WhatsApp interviews. Although this method was expensive as some of the calls lasted up to 45 minutes, the data that emerged from those calls were rich in information. I conducted telephonic interviews with five participants to seek clarification on various issues that had emerged.

3.7.3   Observations

Observation allowed me to be simultaneously a member of the group being studied and an observer (Babbie & Mouton 2011:293). I kept a diary to record my informal conversations with participants, whom I met at research conferences, seminars, workshops and the UNISA library. I kept the diary throughout the research process and I was still recording new observations about the participants during the writing phase. In the diary, I recorded particularly the hidden transcripts of highly educated married black women when they are "offstage" that I had noted through our informal conversations. The recording of these informal conversations with the highly educated married black women about their hidden transcripts enhanced the trustworthiness and credibility of the data (Cresswell 1998).

3.8 Measures to Ensure Trustworthiness

Qualitative research requires the researcher to establish some level of confidence that the data that have been analysed and interpreted represent the meanings of the research participants (Lietz, Larger & Furman 2006:443; cf. Cresswell 1998; Cho & Trent 2006). This minimises the effects of reactivity and bias on the part of the researcher and gives priority to the meanings of the participants (Lietz *et al* 2006: 443). Qualitative research uses the term "trustworthiness" to refer to findings that closely and faithfully reflect the meanings as described by the participants (Lietz *et al* 2006:444). Trustworthiness was ensured through reflexivity, triangulation and research participant validation (Cresswell 1998).

3.8.1 Reflexivity

Trustworthiness was increased by engaging in reflexivity (Lietz *et al* 2006:447). Reflexivity allowed me to reflect on myself in relation to the research and involved deconstructing who I was and the ways in which my beliefs, experiences and identity intersect with those of the participants (MacBeth, quoted in Lietz *et al* 2006:447). Moreover, it allowed me to acknowledge my own experience and perspective, while focusing on the implications of my epistemological position on analytic and interpretive approaches to conducting research and conveying research findings (Malacrida 2007:1329). Reflexivity allowed me to be subjective as it acknowledges that it is impossible to remain neutral and objective whilst conducting research. Harding (1987) argues that in feminist research objectivity is achieved by examining the researcher's position within research, particularly assumptions and biases that may emerge as a result of the researcher's race, class,

culture, assumptions and beliefs. Feminists argue that we interpret data from our own lived experiences and as researchers we become part of the data and analyse our lived experiences using the same critical lens as the data being analysed (Harding 1987).

3.8.2   Triangulation

Trustworthiness was further ensured through data triangulation, which involves the use of multiple methods to collect data in different ways and from different sources (Babbie & Mouton 2011:275). As a result, this study used (auto)biographical-narrative inquiry, semi-structured interviews and observations to partially overcome the deficiencies that flow from investigations that rely on one method. For example, the use of (auto)biographical-narrative inquiry alone had a weakness in that the participants tended to be scholarly and could thus easily hide some of the personal experiences of patriarchy, since they could edit their scripts before emailing them to me. As a result, the use of in-depth interviews and observations were useful for probing that which the women had not included in the (auto)biographical-narrative inquiry. Triangulation is an important strategy for establishing trustworthiness and credibility in qualitative research as the use of different methods can enhance the understanding of the data (Cresswell 1998).

3.8.3   Research Participant Validation

Trustworthiness was also ensured through member checking or research participant validation (Lietz *et al* 2006:453). Research participant validation was conducted by sharing the manuscripts with some of the participants for verification. This gave the participants authority over their perspectives thus managing the threat of bias on the part of the researcher (Lietz *et al* 2006:453). Accordingly, the data analysis chapter was sent to participants for authentication, comment and clarification. In other words, they were asked if it made sense to them and if it had adequately described and/or accounted for their experiences and perceptions (Wolcott 1990:132). Participants used track changes to engage with me on certain issues that they did not understand and some elaborated further on my interpretation. I did not email the findings chapter to all the participants, just to those who had asked to read the data analysis chapter when it was completed. Six participants subsequently went through the chapter intensively and made their comments. Participants identified contradictions and some hidden but critical themes that I had overlooked in my analysis. This strengthened the findings chapter.

3.9 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Thematic analysis was used in this study. This method involves analysing data in steps or stages. The first step of thematic analysis is 'familiarisation', which involves getting to know the data by reading through the (auto)biographical-narratives and interviews scripts over and over until the content was familiar and I could make sense of it (Charmaz 2000). The second step that I implemented in data analysis was the 'generation of initial codes', which allowed me to code or mark the underlying ideas and themes (Braun & Clarke 2006:20). This stage involved a process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising and categorising data (Braun & Clarke 2006:20; cf. Neuman's 2006: 461). Coding allowed me to go back and forth, constantly separating, grouping, regrouping and relinking data. The third step involved a process of "searching for themes" or "inducing themes" to the coded data (Braun & Clarke 2006:20; cf. Terre Blanche *et al* 2006). This process was ongoing from collecting the data to writing the report. During the process codes were sorted into different potential themes and some codes were combined to form an overarching theme. Subsequently, a thematic map of the data was developed (Grbich 2007:21; cf. Neuman 2006: 461). The fourth step involved "reviewing themes", which begins when a set of candidate themes is devised (Braun & Clarke 2006:22). This involved two levels: firstly, an analysis of codes to check if the coded extracts formed a coherent pattern, and secondly, an analysis of candidate themes was used to check if individual candidate themes reflected the meanings as described by the participants (Braun & Clarke 2006:22). The fifth step involved "defining and naming themes"; in this process themes are further defined and refined to reflect the essence of what the theme is about in order to be presented in the final analysis (Terre Blanche *et al* 2006; cf. Braun & Clarke 2006). The story told by the theme is identified in relation to the research questions to ensure that the themes do not overlap too much (Braun & Clarke 2006:22). The sixth step, that is "interpretation" (Terre Blanche *et al* 2006) or "producing a report" (Braun & Clarke 2006), involved producing the final report that was a "concise, coherent, logical, nonrepetitive, and interesting account of the story the data tell – within and across themes" (Braun & Clarke 2006:23). The following chapter (Chapter four) explains how the six steps of the data analysis process, as described above, were followed.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

All research has ethical implications. Research participants should be protected from any form of risks or harm. Therefore to protect the participants all ethical issues were observed. This study did not assume that highly educated women are immune from risks or harm; participation in this research could have done them harm and thus to avoid this, the study complied with the following ethical guidelines:

3.10.1 True Informed Consent

Informed consent is a critical ethical component when conducting research with human participants. According to Sercombe (2010:9), informed consent is a process whereby a participant is expected to understand the research procedures, risks and benefits of the study. As a result, before the study began I sent a letter of invitation and a consent form to the potential participants. Both the letter of invitation and the consent form contained the title of the study and the data collection methods to be used. Signed consent forms meant that the participant's dignity and right to privacy and renunciation was respected. In addition and significantly, the consent form informed participants that participation in the interview was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the research if they felt uncomfortable (Terre Blanche *et al* 2006:313). One research participant withdrew from the study for personal reasons and I accepted her withdrawal with respect. Participants were not compensated for participating in the research process and participation was entirely voluntary.

3.10.2 Confidentiality

Confidentiality means that participants' identities should be protected. To ensure identity protection, each participant is identified by a pseudonym in the study that I created (Terre Blanche *et al.* 2006:313). According to Sercombe (2010:10), confidentiality is a cornerstone of most professions and is central to the maintenance of trust between the researcher and the participant. Participants were assured that their names and institutions of work would not be mentioned anywhere in the research. Hiding the institutions of work and the country of origin enhanced confidentiality and ensured the protection of all participants' identity.

3.11 Conclusion

In this chapter I described the research methodology and the research design employed by the study. In addition, a qualitative feminist approach and an exploratory (auto)biographical inquiry were used. This approach assisted the research in creating knowledge from a subjective and social activism perspective. Reasons for choosing a qualitative feminist approach to research and the way in which the feminist approach is linked to (auto)biographical-narrative inquiry were also outlined in this chapter. The chapter further described the research procedure followed by the study. I also discussed the sampling procedures that I employed and the challenges I experienced during sampling. Furthermore, I presented the data collection procedures as well as my motives for using those procedures in a feminist study. Additionally, the chapter described the data analysis procedure and how it was implemented. Finally, the ethical obligations of the study were addressed.

The next chapter will present and discuss the findings of research. In the following chapter themes emerging from highly educated married black women's (auto)biographical essays, in-depth interviews and participant observations are presented and interpreted from an African feminist and symbolic interactionism perspective.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTING FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents highly educated married black women's experiences and interpretations of patriarchy in their private spaces, particularly within the context of marriage. Women's experiences of patriarchy are diverse and uniquely influenced by different social contexts and gendered constructions of marriage. Highly educated married women are aware of patriarchy in their marriages and resist this patriarchy in different ways. Accordingly, the objectives of this study were as follows:

- To explore highly educated married black women's interpretations and experiences of, and resistance to, patriarchy in their marriage.
- To understand and conceptualise highly educated married black women's interpretations and experiences of, and resistance to, patriarchy within the context of their marriage and how this affects their sense of self and their behaviour.
- To describe highly educated married black women's cognitive processes of the self in relation to their identity, self-concept and relationship to the self and others within the context of their marriage and their work.

Participants in this study included 20 women between the ages of 38 and 58 years. Emerging data displayed three types of highly educated married black women. The first group includes those who are radical and liberal about marriage and speak openly about marriage as being oppressive and demeaning for women. The second group involves those who are traditional and conservative and who conform to the values and norms of traditional marriage; for them marriage is what it is ought to be. This group is made up of participants who are averse to change and hold traditional values. Finally, the third group involves those who are private and secretive; who choose not to be open about their marriages. What happens in their marriages is private. These participants hide their feelings, thoughts, intentions and actions from other people. The secretive participants seem to fall in between the liberals and the conservatives; they agree with conservatives when they are with conservatives and agree with liberals when they are with liberals, while in practice they act

differently from what they say. It is important to note that some participants of this study had characteristics of all categories, however, one category seemed to be more dominant than others. In this chapter I present the data and explain why I categorise participants into the different categories identified above.

4.1 PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

Participants in this study comprise of women with master's and doctoral degrees from disciplines, including the social and human sciences, the pure and hard sciences, law, economics and business studies. Participants in this study are referred to with codes to enhance anonymity. Codes were randomly selected from the alphabet for each participant. The participants' profiles were defined through their level of education, length of marriage, husband's level of education and number of children. I did not use country of origin; discipline of teaching or study, participant's occupation and husband's occupation because these could compromise the identity of the participants. It is critical to note that the husbands of these participants are not in the same academic sector as their wives and also that not all participants are in the academia, some are in other sectors of employment.

As can be seen in Table 4.1, the length of marriage for the participants varied from six to 36 years and all of them had either one, two or three children.

Table 4.1

CODE	Academic position or qualification	Length of marriage in years	Husband's Qualification/ Profession	Girls	Boys	Total number of children
AEE	Master's degree	19	Doctorate	1	1	2
BEE	Doctorate	8	Master's Degree	-	1	1
CEE	Master's degree	32	Master's Degree	1	2	3

DEE	Master's degree	31	Doctorate	1	1	2
FEE	Associate professor	24	Master's degree	2	1	3
GEE	Doctorate	35	Master's degree	2	1	3
JEE	Master's degree	6	Honours Degree	-	1	1
KEE	Associate professor	28	Master's degree	2	-	2
LEE	Doctorate	28	Master's degree	2	1	3
MEE	Full professor	27	Doctorate	-	1	1
NEE	Associate professor	35	Doctorate	1	-	1
PEE	Doctorate	31	Honours Degree	-	1	1
QEE	Full professor	10	Master's Degree	1	1	2
REE	Doctorate	18	Master's Degree	-	1	1
SEE	Doctorate	33	Doctorate	1	2	1
TEE	Doctorate	9	Master's Degree	-	2	2
VEE	Doctorate	10	Master's Degree	-	2	2
XEE	Master's degree	19	Doctorate	1	-	1
YEE	Master's degree	29	Doctorate	-	2	2
ZEE	Master's degree	30	Doctorate	1	2	3

The first objective of the study was to explore highly educated married black women's interpretations and experiences of, and resistance to, patriarchy in their marriage. This objective is broken down into three themes as follows: firstly, highly educated married black women's interpretations of patriarchy, secondly, their experiences, and thirdly, their resistance to patriarchy.

4.2 THEMES: EXPERIENCES AND INTERPRETATIONS OF PATRIARCHY

When exploring highly educated married black women's interpretations and experiences of, and resistance to, patriarchy in their marriage, themes such as power and control emerged. The first theme that will be discussed is related to interpretations of patriarchy by highly educated married black women in their marriage. Women interpret patriarchy in their marriage in diverse ways; hence, the themes that emerge on how women analyse their marriage will lead to a discussion on their interpretations.

4.2.1 Power, Control and the Equality Principle in Marriage

One of the questions I asked participants was "What is patriarchy?" As already discussed, the highly educated married black women who participated in this study fall into three categories; what I will call the liberals, the conformists and the secretive. These categories emerged on the basis of the different experiences and resistance strategies in relation to patriarchy as disclosed in this study, as well as the country of origin and discipline of study. In my analysis, I did not, however, focus on country of origin and discipline of study in order to conceal the identity of the participants. Participants' responses were diverse and contradictory displaying three different standpoints. In some cases, I got direct academic answers with some women referencing literature to display their knowledge of patriarchy, while in others answers emerged from direct experiences of patriarchy. In contrast, some answers were ambiguous displaying the internal struggles of the participant. In this section, I present the way different categories of women experience power, control and the equality principle in marriage.

4.2.1.1 Liberals' Experiences of Power, Control and Equality in Marriage

All participants defined patriarchy as a social construct and a system that promotes rule over society by men. Some, like AEE and CEE, referred to patriarchy as a system where decisions by men take precedence over women's decisions. The majority of the participants confirmed the existence of this system in their marriage, with some linking it to the extended family. To understand if patriarchy exists in highly educated married black women's marriages, I asked them the question, "who makes important decisions in the family?" The majority of participants demonstrated a liberal perspective by acknowledging that in marriage a husband and a wife make

equal decisions and patriarchy in marriage is introduced by the extended family, for example BEE said:

> *I am equal to my husband. We make important decisions together. It becomes a problem when he consults the extended family particularly his family, who may influence him to abuse his status of being a husband … if he is influenced by his family, I openly refuse.*

BEE attributes her husband's patriarchal behaviour to the extended family. Her response in linking patriarchy to the extended family suggests that patriarchy does not exist in the nuclear family. For those highly educated married black women participants who are clustered in the liberal category, patriarchy is tied to the socio-cultural responsibilities that are monitored by the extended family. This is consistent with the communitarian principle that African feminists such as Tamale (2014) and Kasomo and Maseno (2011) subscribe to. In African contexts, the extended family plays a fundamental role in marriage. As a result, the equality principle in marriage, particularly in the traditional African socio-cultural contexts of wifehood, motherhood and daughter-in-law, can display contradicting connotations. For example GEE said:

> *In the absence of the extended family we are equal and in the presence of the extended family, I try to be traditional and play a submissive role as a wife, mother and daughter-in-law.*

This indicates that there are contestations on the equality principle in traditional black African marriages that are caused by the existence of the extended family. This cluster of liberal women's actions and behaviour seem mainly to be subject to the extended family, not the husband. Some liberals acknowledged that patriarchy exists in their marriages, however they admitted that marriage is an unequal relationship. According to some women who fall into the liberal category, tensions emerge when they try to apply the equality principle in their marriages, for example, SEE said:

> *We usually make important decisions together. However, there are times where we fight in order to reach a consensus, in such cases, I let his decision stand or at times he lets mine stand.*

In a follow-up interview, I asked SEE what would happen if she let his decision stand and her response was:

> *Men were socialised to be always listened to. Therefore, I pretend to have listened to him while internally resisting his decision, hence in such cases he does his things and I do mine, but at the end of the day my decision always come up right.*

SEE's narrative displays the power, control and tensions that exist in marriage contexts when an effort is made to apply the equality principle between a wife and a husband. SEE's narrative suggests that there are some women who apply both a liberal and a conservative perspective in parallel in their marriage. By allowing her husband's decision to stand even though she did not agree, SEE is exhibiting behaviour that depicts traditional and conservative views. This is contrary to beliefs of African feminists who are campaigning for equality between men and women (Kaitesi 2014, cf. Tamale 2006; Goredema 2010). The participants in this study highlighted a disturbing scenario where men are cast as leaders and heads of the household and hence it is difficult for women to negotiate and implement the equality principle. This emerged from all categories of women who participated in this study. It is clear that although those who belong to the liberal category enforce the equality principle at times; their husbands nevertheless display signs of resistance to equality in these relationships. Thus, by allowing her husband's decision to stand, SEE acknowledges the challenges women face when trying to implement the equality principle in marriage. It is worth noting that SEE identified a power struggle in her marriage and that in the midst of that power struggle there is either a compromise or not.

Those who responded radically to the notion of patriarchy in marriage included the relatively newly married, those with doctoral degrees, particularly well-published researchers, and those who are in advanced years of marriage, indicating that age is not necessarily a factor in determining patriarchy in marriage contexts. Women in this category did not hold back when referring to their husbands as patriarchal. In her response to who makes important decisions NEE said:

> *He insists on making important financial decisions though our accounts are separate. He budgets his money and my money. When I refuse he becomes angry … and there will be silent treatment for days in the house …*

NEE did not reveal the form of anger that her husband demonstrated apart from referring to the "silent treatment". NEE has been married for 35 years. Interestingly, she confirmed that her husband is patriarchal. Similarly, KEE stated explicitly:

> *We are both working; however he wants me to account for my salary while he does not account for his.*

KEE's husband exercises control by overseeing her finances, thus the narrative confirms the child–adult relationship in KEE's marriage. The way she uses her salary matters to her husband, who sees her as immature. It is clear that even those who claim to be making joint decisions about finances are avoiding the reality that in the end final decisions are made by their husbands. Finances are linked to control and power in marriage. Marxist feminists such as KhosraviShakib (2010) observe this as being linked to women's treatment as private property in terms of which they are expected to serve their masters. African feminists like Tamale (2004) link the treatment of women as private property to *lobola* (cf. Phiri 2003), although in this study *lobola* did not explicitly emerge as a distinct reason for control and power in this category. The tensions that appear in the making of financial decisions suggest that there is an implicit sense of ownership of wives and their finances by husbands. TEE, on the other hand, said:

> *For the sake of peace in my marriage, I no longer argue with him because he always refers to my PhD status as the cause of my disrespect, I allow him to decide on the finances.*

It is not clear if TEE identifies her husband as patriarchal or not, but her response indicates that she is aware that he is threatened by her academic status. This shows that there are patriarchal tendencies in this marriage. TEE's narrative also suggests that women who try to implement the equality principle in marriage are often accused of being disrespectful.

Additionally, participants in the liberal category with doctoral degrees appear to intimidate their husbands, especially if they do not have doctorates themselves. Some women with doctorates graduated before their husbands. These women said they had detected some instances where they sensed that their husbands might be intimidated by the doctorate. For instance, REE stated in this regard:

Regarding the relationship with my husband, I would not really say that much has changed although there are some instances when I sense that he feels a sense of inadequacy/intimidated for no apparent reason.

A doctorate is the highest university qualification available and, according to REE's narrative, women who graduate with one seem to intimidate their husbands. She sensed feelings of inadequacy in him because she is more educated than him or maybe earning more than him in the same sector. FEE, in voicing the opinions of a number of the other women, stated:

My husband calls me Doc or Prof at times, but does not seem to feel comfortable with the package that comes with it; I have on several occasions sensed that my status made him feel insignificant as a father and head of the family …

REE and FEE did not say how their husbands display such feelings. However, their responses indicate that they may intimidate their husbands. What is also noticeable is that certain participants are affected by how their husbands feel about their achievements. The weakness of African feminism is that it does not give women and girls solutions when they reach crossroads in their marriages. African feminists reject the view that men are enemies or bad (Kaitesi 2014:109; cf. Mekgwe 2008:16). As a result, anything that threatens the relationship between women and men is not raised or discussed. It is clear from the above statements that a woman's education, particularly to the highest doctorate level, is a threat to patriarchy and some women feel guilty about this. It is also important to note that although the doctorate threatens patriarchy, husbands demonstrated some form of resistance through actions such as planting "guilt trips", for example feeling insignificant, inadequate and disrespected by their wives. African women are socialised to respect and submit to their husbands at all times (Chisale 2016a; cf. Dube 2007; Shangase 2000), thus if a husband displays signs of distress or unhappiness women tend to feel guilty.

4.2.1.2 Conformists' Experiences of Power and Equality in Marriage

Unlike the women in the liberal category, some participants, particularly those in the conformist category, chose to mute the power struggle that exists when important decisions are made. This category was mainly dominated by women with masters degrees. DEE brought up a cultural-

religious interpretation of decision-making in marriage. DEE, who belongs to the conformist category, stated:

> *We are a Christian family and our marriage is guided by Scripture. Therefore, I am equal to my husband as it is confirmed by the Bible. Nevertheless, there are some decisions where I am not supposed to challenge him because he is the head of the household. Therefore, I trust that whatever financial decisions he makes are best for our family.*

African feminist studies unanimously agree that patriarchy is nurtured in marriage particularly in cultural-religious marriages (Siwila 2012; cf. Dreyer 2011; Dube 2007; Tamale 2004; Moyo 2004). Interestingly, those from the conformist category, like those from liberal category, admitted that marriage is based on the equality principle. Nevertheless, for the conformists religious teachings seem to take precedence. It is a fact that some religious teachings dispute the equality principle in marriage. In dominant religions such as Christianity, Islam and African traditional religions a husband is positioned as head of the household (Tamale 2004). As a result, women like DEE rationalise the authority of men as biological and a God-given right. DEE and the other women in the conformist category did not regard the authority given to their husbands as problematic. They seem to understand religion as being key to the formation of women's and men's identities and roles, thus conforming to cultural-religious constructions of wifehood.

For the conformists it would seem that the intersectionality of cultural and religious socialisation influenced the way these women experienced power and control and applied the equality principle in their marriage. JEE said:

> *My husband is the head of the family and the decision maker, we are only equal because we are both made in the image of God, but my husband is my leader and I am his helper, I help him in making decisions and running the family.*

This suggests that there are some highly educated women who use religion to nurture and defend patriarchy in their marriage. The equality principle is interpreted differently by different women. According to JEE, although the equality of women and men is based on the religious interpretation

that men and women are made in the image of God, it does not for her change the hierarchy of marriage.

In addition, there were elements of ambiguity about patriarchy from other women, particularly amongst the conformists. ZEE said:

> *My family is patriarchal in the sense that my husband takes care of the more demanding tasks in the family, but at the same time I am able to do the tasks if he is away on trips outside the country. I guess it is not strictly patriarchal. It's about ability to carry out tasks.*

Though ZEE acknowledges that her family is patriarchal she displays some vagueness when she relates how her husband is patriarchal and then contradicts this saying it is not "strictly patriarchal". She seems to enjoy making important decisions only in the absence of her husband. Patriarchy keeps women in subordinate positions and secondary to men. In a follow-up interview she said that she makes important decisions that she is certain that her husband would have made. So, in other words, ZEE's decisions are her husband's decisions, not hers. Even if ZEE's husband is away he actually still makes decisions, since his wife is making the decisions that she believes he would have made.

4.2.1.3 Secretive Experiences of Power, Control and Equality in Marriage

Observations recorded in my journal (notes) indicate that some women who turned down the invitation to participate in this research study belonged in the secretive category. Two of the participants who turned down the invitation made the excuse that they were busy and could not take on any more work. However, observations and notes present different reasons. These women may have resisted participation in the study because of the internal struggles they may be experiencing about feminism and gender justice in the context of marriage. One woman who had recently graduated with a doctorate in the social sciences responded to the invitation email as follows: *"Kindly receive my apology as I am busy at the moment and cannot accommodate your study…"*

In our informal conversations and notes she said: *"This is a good study but please don't take this feminism seriously as it will destroy your marriage …"* Although this was said jokingly, when I

reflected further on our conversation about the nature of the study, I detected some form of resistance to feminism in the context of marriage. This confirms that a general assumption that feminism destroys marriages exists even among highly educated people. Some women still struggle to embrace feminism despite their level of education. For example, some participants in this study distanced themselves from feminism, particularly the secretive. This is illustrated by a comment made by AEE:

> *I do not label myself a feminist simply because of its history as a separatist strategy which views men as a problem and women as victims. I consider myself a strong black woman who requires no labelling as either feminist or not.*

Some highly educated married black women like AEE have their reservations about subscribing to feminism. Such reservations are displayed by some black women on the African continent and are typified by Buchi Echemta, an African author, who denied being a feminist in a speech she made at Georgetown University (Mikell 1997:335; cf. Ogunyemi 1985). Feminism is still considered a colonial concept by some Africans and there are contestations about what it offers to the liberation of African women. Literature highlights the dual thinking in African feminist discourse where some African women reject feminism because of its un-Africanness (Goredema 2010). Additionally, African feminists theologians prefer to be called African women theologians because of the negative implications of the term "feminist" (Kasomo & Maseno 2011:155). AEE acknowledges that her family and extended family are patriarchal and that she does not have a problem with that because she was born into a patriarchal context. She thus accepts it as she would have accepted a matriarchal family had she been born into one. AEE's opinion of herself challenges claims that African feminism is largely made up of middle-class educated women (Goredema 2010). She demonstrates a conservative standpoint from which she regards feminism as "un-African", and a liberal standpoint from which she perceives herself as a "strong black woman".

Participants from the secretive category indicated that obtaining a doctorate did not necessarily change their relationships with their husbands; their husbands were supportive and are still supportive. BEE who displays the different nuances from different categories said:

There are times where my husband displays some patriarchal behaviour but not all the time, but to answer your question obtaining a PhD did not change his behaviour towards me, he still respects me as his equal, except in some instances where his family intrudes in our relationship and forces him to "act like a man".

BEE paints another picture that contradicts her liberal's perspective where she claimed that she is equal to her husband. BEE suddenly changes her mind and agrees that her husband is patriarchal but that his patriarchal tendencies only reveal themselves to a limited extent. Although she still blames the extended family, BEE seems to be hiding something about her husband. Thus, for the follow-up interview, I visited her home. The findings of this follow-up interview contradict some of the findings in her auto-biographical narrative. I visited BEE's home on a Saturday morning and spent the whole day with her and her family. BEE's husband is a typical African man; he does not help with anything in the home, not even in the garden. When I reached their house he was busy reading the newspapers and we discussed various issues such as politics and social and economic affairs. BEE, on the other hand, is a typical housewife, although she had a helper who was doing the laundry and ironing, BEE made breakfast for us. I observed the way she served her husband, she demonstrated respect by bowing to him and during breakfast she consistently asked her husband if he was ok. It thus emerged that BEE has a traditional relationship with her husband at home and she performs the duties of a traditional wife, however this did not emerge from her auto-biographical narrative. In the interview, BEE confessed that she could not wear her feminist cap in her marriage because it was not necessary. Participants who demonstrated a secretive personality swung between a liberal and a conformist standpoint and sometimes they swung between the liberal and secretive standpoint.

On the other hand, women with master's degrees experienced patriarchy differently from women with doctorates. They did not seem to be concerned about intimidating their husbands. Maybe the reason for this is that achieving a master's degree does not require a change of title like a doctorate. However, some of those with master's degrees acknowledged the existence of patriarchy in their marriages. They did, however, acknowledge that a master's degree is not much of a threat to their husbands as some of the participants' husbands already had doctorates. The majority of participants with master's degrees were older than 45, indicating that their husbands could have contributed to their wives' education. In addition, some had children who had already completed

their university degrees, also indicating that they had disposable income. All the women with master's degrees in this study were busy with their doctoral studies. It is, however, interesting to note that the majority of these women were more inclined to acknowledge having an equal relationship with their husbands than women with doctorates, who constantly highlighted unequal marital power and blamed it on the extended family. Contradictions emerged as these women who dismissed patriarchy in their marriages narrated some instances of patriarchy in notes taken during observations and the follow-up in-depth interviews. CEE narrated her ordeal at the hands of her husband:

> *I sometimes wonder why society allows men to be so evil. I married my husband at a young age because he impregnated me. Since the dawn of my marriage, what I know about marriage is that there is nothing called love, but it is a game where a wife is always intimidated, controlled and called in derogatory names ... If you resist this control, you face serious consequences.*

I recorded this in my field notes when I spoke to CEE in a discussion about the challenges of marriage. At the time, CEE had almost completed her PhD. She said she got married when she was 18 years old and since then her husband has treated her like a child and claims to be disciplining her. To my surprise CEE confirmed that her husband at times abuses her physically. This is consistent with the literature which states that young wives' behaviour is controlled through surveillance to enforce conformance to the traditional ideology of wifehood. Those who do not conform face disciplinary measures such as wife battering (Chisale 2016a).

Although some of the women with doctorates explicitly narrated and demonstrated that the power and control in their marriages was in their husbands' hands, other women were more conservative. None of the women with doctorates confirmed that their husbands abuse them physically. However, they did link power and control to the in-laws. This confirms that patriarchy in marriage is diverse, ambiguous and controversial (Rothman 1994; cf. Rakockzy 2004). I shall now present narratives that link patriarchy to the in-laws and the extended family.

4.2.2   Linking Power and Control in Marriage to the Extended Family

Literature on marriage in African contexts reveals the communal aspect of marriage. By agreeing to get married a wife and husband will be linking two families. In African heterosexual marriages a woman leaves her family and becomes an additional member of her husband's family (Kyalo 2012). The majority of women, particularly those from the liberal category in this study, reported power and control being exercised by the extended family rather than their husbands. This form of control and the power struggle it initiates was interpreted by women as patriarchy. Interestingly, this reveals that patriarchy is not only the domination of women by men but also the domination of women by women. Certain women are thus complicit in keeping patriarchy alive. This conceptualises patriarchy as a source of power in society. As has emerged above, women who identified the extended family as the source of patriarchy are specifically those women who belong to the liberal category.

4.2.2.1 Liberal Standpoint on Power and Control in Marriage

Women from the liberal category are the only participants who linked the power and control in their marriages to the extended family. BEE, who constantly fell into the liberal category, blamed the controlling behaviour that sometimes emanates from her husband on the fact that he consults the extended family on issues related to their marriage. According to BEE, her equal relationship with her husband changes if he solicits advice and views from the extended family.

Women who claimed equality in their marriages blamed the extended family for imposing patriarchy in their marriages. Some women like BEE, SEE, ZEE and QEE indicated that they have an equal relationship with their husbands. On the other hand, they claimed to be experiencing controlling relationships with their in-laws. Mothers-in-law, sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law were identified as bullies in their marriage. QEE said that she has accepted that her mother-in-law will never love her; hence she distances herself from her. She explained how her mother-in-law comes to her home and starts complaining about how badly she treats her son, how she prioritises her career over a wife's duty of giving birth. QEE has two children, a girl and a boy, but her mother-in-law wants her to have more children. She wants her to demonstrate a submissive relationship with her husband, which QEE finds difficult because she has an equal relationship with her husband. She said:

My mother-in-law at times blames me for bewitching her son, because at times he cooks and cleans when I am away on conferences or pressed with other work related issues.

Relationships with mothers-in-law often seem to be a power struggle, with women fighting for the love and control of the same man who happens to be a son and a husband. Some women also reported that this power struggle also occurs between them and their sisters-in-law. This suggests that patriarchy consists not only of male–female power struggles but may also be female–female power struggles. The extended family seemed to act as the "watch dogs" in many marriages of highly educated women. This, according to GEE, is due to some sort of jealousy:

This status is a threat to my brothers and brothers-in-law who constantly remind me of my place in the family. I sense jealousy and that my status threatens them at times. My brothers and brothers-in-law did not come for my graduation party that was secretly organised by my husband and children; I suppose it was due to my changed status from Mrs to Dr.

This suggests that a doctorate is potentially intimidating for all the men in a woman's space. It seems many men who used to control the woman as a minor feel threatened when she graduates with a doctorate. As a result, it is worth acknowledging that for some women a doctorate gives them control in their families and they explained that they are now respected by the family as a result. MEE, who is a full professor, said:

Generally, my relationship with my extended family has changed since I became a Professor. My input is at times respected and valued over my husband's. When my family or my husband's family makes important decisions they ask for my views ... this does not sit well with my siblings both from my family and husband's family ... so I sometimes choose to distance myself.

MEE's status causes tension in her relationships within her family and her marriage. The power and authority that her professorship gives her seems to overcome the rigid family power relationships. This change or diversion of power may not sit well with those who believe that

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authority and power are inherent. As a result, the politics of resistance by those who used to be in power force those who have earned power and authority through education, like MEE, to resist by distancing and silencing themselves. It is generally believed that an educated woman is respected by society and this is confirmed by MEE's statement. This is consistent with the studies by UNESCO (1999) and SIDA (2015), which found that the education of women endorses their influence in society. The findings of this study confirm that it is not only higher education that secures a place for women to participate in important decisions and to be respected but high education and high educational status such as a professorship. For women who constantly demonstrated conformist and secretive standpoints, the issue of the extended family did not explicitly emerge.

Participants' interpretation of patriarchy was the first theme that was discussed above. Participants' responses to their interpretations of patriarchy varied and were linked to the category that each participant mainly personified. Their interpretations of patriarchy influenced the way they experienced patriarchy. Thus, the second theme to be discussed is the experiences of patriarchy by highly educated married black women in their marriages. In the following subsection, I will present findings on women's personal and lived experiences of patriarchy in their marriages.

4.3 EXPERIENCES OF PATRIARCHY IN MARRIAGE

Data reveals that the experiences of highly educated married black women are not homogeneous. This emerges from their interpretations of patriarchy as reported above. In relating their experiences of patriarchy, some of the women from the different categories narrated incidents in which they had experienced patriarchy, including bullying and emotional blackmail. These participants' experiences differed as some, particularly those in the liberal category, highlighted that they refused to conform, but rather they stood up and took action against the act. The conformists highlighted that they blamed themselves and resisted in silence.

4.3.1 Liberal Standpoint on Experiences of Patriarchy in Marriage

Highly educated women from the radical and liberal category described some incidents where they had experienced the resistance of their husbands, who used various tactics in order to "guilt trip" so as to discourage them from pursuing a master's or PhD. Some husbands resisted their wives' financial independence in the following ways.

4.3.1.1 Bullying

LEE's painful ordeal of patriarchy involved being bullied by her husband. According to LEE:

> *I will say the incident in a few words because it is too painful. I had no say even in the fruits of my labour – my opinion was disregarded, my salary was stolen from me. My daughters were expected to have problems should they one day decide to marry, and my son was being trained to be a "man"!*

Despite their brevity, LEE's words give us a sense of her painful ordeal. LEE is now divorced from her husband, although when she agreed to participate in this study she was still married and in the process of a divorce. She described how her abuse would have impacted on their daughters' and son's lives when they decided to marry, since they witnessed their father's abuse of their mother every day. LEE experienced incidents of patriarchy when her daughters were socialised into traditional gender roles. Accordingly, her daughters were being prepared for marriage and her son for manhood. LEE's narrative of her experiences of patriarchy is parallel to the African feminist critique of patriarchy which argues that its nurturing begins in the socialisation of children (Siwila 2012; cf. Shangase 2000). LEE further explains an incident where her father blamed her mother for a child's illness. In her narrative LEE referred to patriarchy as a sin: "*There is no bigger sin than patriarchy."* According to her, patriarchy allows men to be evil towards women. From her narrative, it would appear that LEE and her daughters were bullied and abused by her husband. This suggests that patriarchy not only affects women in marriage contexts, but also their daughters who are bullied together with their mother. LEE took a liberal initiative by deciding to leave the abusive marriage and divorce. In her narrative, LEE also said she divorced her husband because he was "toxin" to the children who might have adopted his abusive lifestyle.

In the liberal category resistance would seem to involve the use of children as weapons in the power struggle between husband and wife. According to LEE, her husband used her children to get to her; even when she left he refused to give her children who, according to LEE, were also abused by him. The use of children as pawns in the battle between husband and wife is confirmed by the psychology literature as common (Emery 2012). Children are often caught in the middle of their parents' conflict and are forced to take sides, which is completely unfair to them (Emery 2012). In this study, only LEE narrated that her children experienced the same abuse as she did.

Some women did not narrate how their children were affected and how they experienced patriarchy. The majority of women reported incidents of violence that were based on emotional abuse. These findings are parallel to those found by Thupayagale-Tshweneagae and Seloilwe (2010), where educated women with formal employment in Botswana experience emotional abuse in intimate relationships, and education and employment is highlighted as the main factors that exacerbate the abuse.

4.3.1.2 Emotional Blackmail

Some participants in the liberal category described incidents of emotional blackmail by their husbands. SEE says:

> *When I wanted to go to the university to do my master's degree my husband wanted me to do it through distance education. However, knowing the nature of distance learning, particularly balancing domestic gender roles and studies ... I resisted and he threatened me with a divorce if I went ahead ... I however ignored his threat and went ahead and registered in a full-time university in South Africa.*

SEE's narrative shows some form of emotional blackmail, where her husband threatened her with divorce. From a liberal perspective, SEE ignored his threat and focused on her education. The threat by SEE's husband is an indication that certain husbands are aware that women value their marriages, hence when they apply emotional blackmail; consequently women, out of fear of failing in their marriages, will give in. KEE illustrates this in her narrative in which she states that her husband knew that she loved her marriage, so if he showed signs of unhappiness she would panic and submit to him in order to protect it. This seems to be a socialisation challenge, where the cultural significance of marriage overpowers the actual relationship. KEE describes a common challenge that many women face in their marriages. She narrates how her husband threatened to marry another woman who would give him more children. According to KEE:

> *We only have two girls, but my husband insisted that I stop studying and give him heirs (sons), but I could not stop, I told him that children are a gift from God, then after a month his mother showed up in my house with a girl and told me that since I don't want to give her grandsons she has brought her son a wife who will bear her grandsons ... as much as I was deeply hurt, I couldn't stop my education, I was about*

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> *to complete my PhD thesis and this was a serious setback on my education. I experienced a writer's block due to stress … I tried everything a woman from my religious tradition could do, I fasted and prayed, I went to traditional healers. I went to prophets but nothing worked, the girl was there to destroy me and my marriage.*

KEE's narrative resonates with many aspects found in the literature, such as that marriage is primarily for procreation (Omolade 1987; cf. Rothman 1994; Mbiti 1969). Prior research also indicates that women's level of education has an effect in decision-making about the number of children they want to have in their marriage (Steady 2010; cf. Mikell 1997). KEE's plight, in being a woman who fights with all she has at her disposal to protect her marriage, is highlighted by African feminists who argue that culture expects women to do anything to protect their marriages (Dube 2007; cf. Moyo 2005). However, KEE does not allow the threats of bringing in another woman to disrupt her studies, though she narrates the challenges that she went through, as she completed her PhD, although it took her longer than she had anticipated. Participants in this study had a maximum of three children and some had only one. The emotional abuse that KEE went through for not having more children was also reported by XEE, who stated:

> *The fact that I could not have any more children due to the doctors' orders did not sit well with my husband who reminds me every day of my unworthiness as a wife …*

This is a common psychological tool used by husbands to control their wives. It is clear from the participants' responses that their husbands use emotionally abusive tactics to control them. It is also clear that emotional abuse is a calculated tool of control for a certain class of women in this case, since husbands cannot physically beat their wives because of their status as highly educated women; hence, they resort to emotional violence. These findings resonate with those of resource theorists such as Choi *et al* (2014) and Atkinson *et al* (2005) and sociologists like Mazibuko and Umejesi (2015) and health scientists like Thupayagale-Tshweneagae and Seloilwe (2010), who state that domestic violence perpetrated on women is not a class issue but runs through all socioeconomic classes.

Some participants indicated that they had been accused of infidelity with their male colleagues, another tactic used by men to control women. It seems emotional abuse works for men who are married to highly educated women because it plants a seed of guilt in the victim. Highly educated

women's experiences of patriarchy are comprised mainly of psychological abuse by husbands and the extended family. However, women who belong to the liberal category highlighted that they do not succumb to the emotional blackmail; rather they use the threats in a positive way to achieve their goals. This was emphasised by KEE and LEE who both said that their husband's abuse had encouraged them to push harder to achieve a PhD so that they would be able to free themselves from their husbands.

Some women stated that it was difficult to make decisions in the home because they would be reminded of their status. REE narrated an incident of patriarchy in her marriage saying:

> *One incident that stands out for me is when my younger sister was faced with a financial crisis and she requested my husband and me to temporarily take in her three younger children for upkeep whilst she was recuperating from the financial turmoil. Offhand, I presumed that the obvious response from my husband and I would be a "yes" since we were in a better financial standing and we have often come in to the rescue of family members in times of need. To my surprise, my husband was strongly against the idea and he threatened to move out if the children were brought to our house. He even protested that because I was the one who was formally employed and getting a constant income, I was therefore trying to impose decisions by taking in extra financial responsibilities. I however stood my ground because honestly, I could not let my own sister struggle when I was capable of offering a helping hand and in the end the children moved in with us even against my husband's wishes.*

It is interesting to note that some participants claimed that they are equal with their husbands but when narrating particular experiences of decision-making, the husband attempted to enforce his view and hence attempted to keep patriarchy alive. REE's narrative suggests that some participants, particularly those in the liberal category, use their educational status to stand their ground. Although the majority of women confirmed a liberal standpoint, they in actual fact suppress their liberal actions in their marriages. Although some implement actions in line with a liberal viewpoint, some do not implement such actions, but resist in silence while conforming.

4.3.2   Conformist Standpoint on Experiences of Patriarchy in Marriage

Similar to participants in the liberal category, participants in the conformist category experienced patriarchy on the part of their husbands through bullying and emotional blackmail. However, they responded to this patriarchy in a conservative way which was different from the participants in the liberal category who responded in a liberal way.

4.3.2.1 Bullying

VEE highlighted a conservative response to an incident of patriarchy that happened after she got a job as a senior staff member:

> *My relationship with my husband did not change after graduation per se, but it changed when I got a job that pays me more than his. I kept trying to accommodate him but he felt that I was arrogant because I earned much more than him. He stopped buying groceries, paying school fees for the children and other things in the house. I would say this was emotional blackmail and bullying, because he managed to make me feel guilty. This became worse when I bought my car; I wounded his ego because he stopped talking to me, left our matrimonial bed and became harsh on children. I begged him to take the car because I wanted peace in my marriage ...*

VEE's narrative unveils a conservative way of responding to patriarchy. She begged her husband to take the car that she had bought for herself. This suggests that a wife's success affects the traditional notion of marriage. Traditionally, a man is expected to be the breadwinner and earn more than his wife. When the tables are turned it affects the family system. In her narrative, VEE identifies her experiences as bullying and emotional blackmail, suggesting that she experienced emotional blackmail and bullying at the same time. Her guilt is mirrored in several other women who feel their success hurts their husbands who suddenly feel belittled. In African traditional societies wives are expected to protect and sustain their marriages; when their marriages are threatened they are expected to fight with everything they have to protect them (Kingston 2006; cf. Moyo 2005; Shangase 2000). VEE felt guilty because her husband's unhappiness could be a confirmation that she is not submitting to him as expected by tradition and that she is failing to nurture her marriage. Conservative women elevate and revere their husbands even if they are wrong. It is worth noting that VEE feels that her husband was emotionally abusing her. Prior research in African feminism and gender studies is silent on the experiences of bullying and

emotional abuse experienced by highly educated married black women in their marriages. Highly educated women seem to be considered immune to abuse or maybe since they are the ones who author scholarly research, they choose to mask their experiences of patriarchy, particularly abuse. On the other hand, some research, particularly by resource theorists, claims that a wife who earns more than her husband is likely to experience violence at the hands of her husband (Choi *et al* 2014) because her social status contradicts the societal gender ideology.

4.3.2.2 Emotional Blackmail

NEE narrates that, when she graduated with a doctorate, she was promoted to a senior post and that exacerbated the abuse in her marriage. According to NEE:

> *My husband is a jealous kind of man who has been abusing me through negative and derogatory names, I could live with that, but after my promotion at work I saw the other side of my husband that I never saw before … emotional abuse became worse, I am aware of emotional abuse when it happens to me … abuse is complicated when it occurs to someone who has power to save herself yet she is helpless and cannot save herself. Since he could not call me in derogatory names anymore due to my success, he resorted to silent treatment and that was worse, not knowing how he feels killed me. I felt like I was losing him and divorce was knocking on my door. I became sad, depressed and yet I could not quit my job, I have been praying for this job … but I still felt guilty …*

This narrative suggests that women perpetuate patriarchy. It seems the level of education does not necessarily manage to deconstruct the ways in which women and men are socialised. The assumption is that highly educated women are equipped and empowered by education to resist abuse and patriarchy, but NEE's narrative suggests the opposite. Seemingly, what women have been socialised into is a very strong culture that perpetuates patriarchy and no amount of education can change it. It is clear from NEE's narrative that patriarchy and emotional abuse are nurtured because women feel more at ease when their husbands are in control as the head of the family. In both cases bullying and emotional blackmail seem to be working because both women feel guilty for being more educated than their husbands. Prior studies are silent on the forms of abuse that highly educated married black women experience and their response to abuse. It is also quite clear

that highly educated married black women, like any other African woman, are afraid of failing in their marriages; this is clearly indicated by the participants from the conformist category, who conform in order to protect their marriages. NEE says she became sad and depressed because of her husband's insecurity. This shows that experiences of patriarchy by women are complex; the way women experience and interpret patriarchy differs. In my view, the change of women's status from financial dependence to independence is a threat to patriarchy. However, the problem is that it seems the tables are turned where men are the ones crying oppression by wives; women's education is seemingly experienced by the opposite sex as retribution against men. African feminists campaign against the turning of tables and are campaigning for equality (Kaitesi 2014; cf. Kamaara & Wangila 2009), but on an individual level certain men find it difficult to accept such equality.

4.3.3 Secretive Standpoint on Experiences of Patriarchy in Marriage

In contrast, some participants, particularly highly educated married black women who belonged to the secretive category, choose to speak about patriarchy in general by narrating incidents related to their experiences of patriarchy from a general perspective. Such women narrated the gender roles prevalent in family occasions, where women are expected to be in the kitchen and men sitting or running around making important decisions. Secretive participants like AEE were ambiguous when they responded to the question of narrating an incident of patriarchy in their marriage. AEE said:

> *This question assumes I have a problem with patriarchy. I however I don't. From my understanding of patriarchy I think I should mention that I do not have a problem with my children taking my husband's surname and not mine, neither do I have a problem with my children having my husband's totem,[2] I however use my maiden surname although my marriage surname is also recognised by our capitalist system: it changes automatically once they have your marriage certificate.*

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[2] A totem is an ancestral symbol, object or emblem that spiritually represents a group of related people or clan.

AEE's narrative is clearly ambiguous; she chooses to narrate how she understands patriarchy and does not necessarily describe any incident of patriarchy. It is worth noting that AEE earlier refused to be associated with feminism and described feminism as an irrelevant movement for African women's struggles. She also said that she did not have a problem with patriarchy and narrated how she perceives patriarchy. AEE thus belongs to the secretive category; she is not open about her marriage or her experiences of marriage. Highly educated married black women who belong to the secretive category may exhibit criteria of all three categories, but the dominant is conformist and secretive. I visited AEE in her office on various occasions to discuss patriarchy in marriage but AEE was consistently secretive about it. Efforts to visit her home failed.

Participants who demonstrated strong religious beliefs like JEE and DEE were also secretive about their experiences of patriarchy in marriage. In answering the question that required them to narrate an incident where they had experienced patriarchy, JEE said

> … if patriarchy means male dominance, yes I experience it, if it means family line that is traced via the male line, yes I experience it every day and do not see any problem with that. I accept patriarchy because it is how God created us. I experience patriarchy in church, at home and all over society, politics, religion, work everywhere. This world order is patriarchal, it will be unfair of me to blame my husband and family for being patriarchal as if they are wrong, it is the norm of the social order …

I struggled to interpret JEE's response; I did not know whether JEE was secretive, liberal or conformist. From my point of view, JEE falls into all three categories. However, her response is dismissive, which would seem to indicate that she was hiding something. I therefore spent a weekend with JEE at her home, specifically to conduct the follow-up interview because JEE's narrative was ambiguous and confusing. JEE's family is spiritual although it lacks the traditional criteria that JEE claimed to adhere to in her narrative. There were religious and spiritual photographs in all rooms of her house including the kitchen and bathroom. JEE could not finish a sentence without being spiritual. Observations and interviews confirmed that JEE is secretive, she is busy with her PhD and is always busy with her studies, as a result her husband does most of the domestic chores; he takes their son to pre-school and puts him to bed. The helper comes twice a week to do other domestic chores that JEE's husband cannot do. Some of what I observed from

JEE's actions differ from what she narrated in the (auto)biographical narrative and the follow-up interview. JEE earns more than her husband since she has a managerial position and is thus the main breadwinner. Although her husband is working he has a junior position compared to her. JEE does not experience patriarchy as she claimed in her narrative, instead JEE has a modern-liberal marriage compared to the other participants I visited. Her husband seemed supportive and according to my observation that was not an act. This suggests that when researching highly educated people a researcher should use various methods to ensure issues of trustworthiness. Contradictions that emerge from JEE suggest that there are some women who are not comfortable with the liberal lifestyle they live, thus they keep it concealed rather than displaying it to the world. Maybe by being spiritual some highly educated married black women are concealing their liberal lifestyles.

Participants' experiences of patriarchy were diverse, as were their interpretations of patriarchy. Their experiences of patriarchy were linked to the category they belonged to and these experiences influenced the strategies they used to resist it. Thus, in the following subsection, I will discuss how participants in the different categories resisted patriarchy in their marriages.

4.4 RESISTANCE TO PATRIARCHY

Resistance to patriarchy differed among the women; some conformed to patriarchy, some claimed that they openly criticise patriarchy and others explained that they resist in silence. Consistent with James Scott's theory, as propounded in *Domination and the arts of resistance,* highly educated married black women develop strategies to survive and to be accepted in a highly patriarchal marriage and community. Scott explains the politics of the subordinates and those who dominate as "public transcripts" and "hidden transcripts". Public transcripts are used to explain the "open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate" and hidden transcripts to describe the "discourse that happens 'offstage' beyond direct observation by power holders" (1990:2–4). The most common resistance strategy that emerged from the highly educated black women in this study included writing, silence, conforming, humour and laughter.

4.4.1 Liberal Standpoint on Resisting Patriarchy

Participants from the liberal category confirmed that they use radical and liberal ways to resist patriarchy. Their educational status seems to empower them with various strategic approaches to

resist patriarchy without destroying their marriages. There are four strategies that emerged from the liberal category – writing, speaking out, humour and laughter.

4.4.1.1 Writing as Resistance

MEE is a high profile feminist researcher and has published over 50 journal articles and book chapters, has authored six books and has edited more than ten. MEE confirms that she uses writing as resistance to patriarchy. According to MEE:

> *Most women researchers in social and human sciences tend to integrate their experiences of patriarchy in their research … in my research I critically integrate my lived experiences of patriarchy.*

MEE explained the question of identity in the politics of resistance, though this kind of resistance is unlikely to reach the ears of those at the grassroots who are the nurturers of patriarchy; however most highly educated women subscribe to this strategy. KEE and FEE who have recently been promoted to associate professorships integrate their lived experiences in their research. In some of their research they use auto-ethnography to challenge and conceptualise female oppression. This is consistent with the findings of De Hernandez *et al* (2010) that writing is perceived to be a strategy of resistance to different forms of oppression. Also, Motsemme (2004:916) argues that "within feminist and women's writings, the importance of speech for women to articulate their story, which has often been distorted or suppressed, is well established." Many African feminist writers use their lived experiences to challenge and protest their oppression. This is consistent to the key objective of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (hereafter Circle). The key objective of the Circle is to encourage women theologians to use writing to actively reflect on their experiences of patriarchal oppression in religion and society (Phiri 2009). Women theologians have used this opportunity to author articles and books on their own experiences. This has encouraged more women to resist patriarchy through writing. According to KEE:

> *Writing is a weapon that is powerful because what is said by one person reaches many ears … I write about myself as an African woman, I use feminist theories to analyse my experiences and to recommend solutions on how men and women can live*

an egalitarian life … I also write newspaper articles, magazine articles and I have a live and active blog where I post articles on women struggles and solutions.

Although writing may seem to be a limited strategy because it reaches a relatively few individuals, if women use KEE's strategy of writing on many platforms and not only journal articles and books, the struggle against patriarchy may be achieved. It seems KEE reaches many readers by writing on different platforms. Thus writing as resistance should be strategically used if it is to achieve its purpose of transforming our society in to an egalitarian society.

4.4.1.2 Speaking out as Resistance

Speaking out or refusing to comply is used as a common tool of resistance in both private and public spaces. Some women, particularly those who are the sole breadwinners, tend to resist control by voicing their concerns. SEE belongs to the liberal category and is a sole breadwinner supporting her husband and in-laws. She says she refuses to be a prisoner in her own home; hence she speaks her mind and resists publicly. Being a breadwinner gives her the power to control what is done and how it is done. SEE sees the power and authority that she possesses compared to men as she says:

My family describes me as "a man" because of my achievements. My in-laws appreciate my role as the breadwinner most of the time … I am always frank and I speak my mind I do not let men override what I want to do or say.

For SEE, voicing her opinions about or speaking out against patriarchal tendencies is easy because she is a sole breadwinner and enjoys the authority it gives her. Financial independence gives some women power in their marriage. Some women demonstrated a form of power which allows them to speak out and protest against certain patriarchal tendencies. Although SEE seems to be a liberal, the problem is that her family compares her open-mindedness to that of men. This suggests that society perceives women who are open-minded or liberal to be masculine. This is consistent with prior studies that have found that women are socialised in childhood not to be outspoken (Dube 2007; cf. Shangase 2000). An outspoken woman is considered disrespectful, rude and unmarriageable material (Chisale 2016b). Thus, silence in African women is not a matter of choice but rather a matter of tradition and part of the politics of gender and identity.

Some participants who belong in the liberal category seemed to be outspoken on particular issues and silent on others. Some claimed that they were involved and outspoken on matters that affect their children's lives. Black African families have patriarchal tendencies where women are excluded from important discussions. Some highly educated women such as PEE, QEE and FEE indicated that they do not mind being excluded from such discussions, but insist on being part of the discussions if they involve their children. This reveals that although women may conform to some patriarchal tendencies, they openly resist others if it affects their children. This is demonstrated by LEE who divorced her husband because she believed he was toxic to his children. Literature on gender and African feminism is silent on this form of resistance. Women's level of education empowers them to break down some of the barriers of patriarchy by refusing to comply with its demands. PEE admits that she speaks out and does not beat about the bush:

> *I know there are some in-laws who might not like me because I call a spade a spade and where I'm wronged, I don't mince my words even if I have to be diplomatic about it. The message will have been conveyed … I don't beat about the bush when the situation calls for that.*

Speaking out against patriarchy has been on the agenda of feminists movements from the beginning. Both SEE and PEE classified themselves as feminists and indicated that as feminists they have women's issues embedded in their lives and they seek to redress the gender injustices and imbalances in society.

4.4.1.3 Humour and Laughter as Resistance

According to participants, humour is form of resistance. Some highly educated married black women from the liberal category indicated that they use humour to resist patriarchy in their marriages and private domains. The majority of PhD holders in this study identified humour and laughter as a strategy of resistance. QEE stated in this regard:

> *I do not have time to tolerate patriarchy in my system; I make jokes about it, laugh it off and move on.*

Some feminists, particularly African feminists, implement the strategy of humour and laughter in their speeches, challenging long-held beliefs by forcing people to question and rethink what they thought to be true while laughing. MEE highlights this as she says:

> *I am encouraged by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a renowned African feminist author from Nigeria based in the USA, who when challenging patriarchy in her writings and presentations knows how to silence patriarchy by making fun of it. I once attended Adichie's keynote address in the USA, her address was comical yet carrying a strong message … she made us laugh at the same time challenging us to think deeper and critical about gender injustice that is fuelled by patriarchy.*

MEE has been a keynote speaker on many occasions. She confirmed in our informal conversations recorded in field notes that she also makes fun of patriarchy. According to MEE:

> *Making fun of patriarchy and laughing about it has a strong potential of eliminating it, since people will eventually realise that it is not worth protecting.*

The above narratives highlight that the oppressed tend to make jokes and laugh off their oppressors as a way of combating oppression. Making fun of patriarchy belittles and weakens it. Humour is commonly used by stand-up comedians to demean and belittle political leaders and systems that are oppressive. Humour is used to get back at oppressive systems. This is highlighted by Arbuckle (2008), who argues that humour deflates pomposity and undermines the rigidity of the status quo. According to Arbuckle, humour is an effective strategy of resistance since it often portrays fraud, hypocrisy and injustice far more powerfully and emotively than the written word. According to him when humour pokes fun at the oppressive stringencies and conventions of society, people have the chance to re-imagine alternative ways of behaving (Arbuckle 2008:12–13).

Like humour, laughter is used to embarrass the oppressor. According to TEE:

Patriarchy is a system that I laugh at. If I see someone trying to be patriarchal or protect patriarchy I simply say: "Really!" and laugh it off. Some people try to be defensive while some laugh with me.

TEE acknowledges that patriarchy is no longer significant, hence she laughs at people who still want to protect it. Laughing is a complex strategy of resistance; in general laughter is linked to happiness. However, there are different forms of laughter, laughter that symbolises joy and happiness, laughter that humiliates, demeans and is dismissive. TEE's laughter demeans, humiliates and is dismissive. Laughter may seem inappropriate and may invite anger from the person laughed at. However, TEE confirms that at times the person laughed at joins in laughter seemingly that she or he discovers that protecting patriarchy is not worth it. It seems laughter enhances the weakened status by humiliating the oppressor either psychologically or physically and can invite some form of engagement that breaks the silences on patriarchy.

Prior research confirms that laughter is used by the vulnerable as a hidden transcript of resisting dominance and oppression (Cruz 2015). It is clear from the responses of highly educated married black women in the liberal category that they use different strategies to speak out against patriarchy. However, there is ambiguity about which strategy has the strongest impact on patriarchy.

4.4.2   Conformist Standpoint on Resisting Patriarchy

Although participants from the conformist category comply with traditional teachings on marriage where women are socialised to be submissive to their husband, participants from this category acknowledged that they do not accept everything that is socialised in the traditional marriage. There is one strategy of resistance that emerged from this category and this is conforming to gender constructions

4.4.2.1 Conforming to Gender Constructions as Resistance

Some participants confirmed that they conform to their gender roles in order to resist patriarchy. Participants from the conformist category who seem to protect patriarchy argued that they conform not to protect patriarchy but to resist it. Those participants who specified that they use silence to

resist patriarchy revealed that in their silence they conform to their specified gender roles in order to obstruct control. GEE states in this regard:

> *In the presence of people and my in-laws I zip my mouth, control my emotions and conform to the traditional ideology of a wife and daughter-in-law for the sake of respect, but continue with my own independent and liberal lifestyle when in my space. I do that to frustrate patriarchy, because I have noticed that they are getting the message through the silly comments they make.*

GEE's narrative reveals that conforming does not mean acceptance but that people may be conforming for the sake of peace and respect. GEE's narrative is in line with that of REE, who also acknowledged that she conforms to patriarchy in the presence of her in-laws and gets on with her liberal lifestyle in her private space. Conforming as resistance emerged in most follow-up interviews that I conducted with participants, who seem to conform but do not agree with the status quo. YEE also confirmed that she conforms to what is expected of her in the public domain, but when she is with her husband alone she is honest about her feelings. This complicated strategy I believe is used by many women including those who are not highly educated. According to MEE,

> *… most women conform to patriarchy because of respect but privately resist … they know that patriarchy is wrong. However, they do not want to cause chaos … they conform while diplomatically negotiating for a peaceful elimination of patriarchy.*

It is worth noting that MEE does not refer to herself as conforming, but explains that her research confirms that conforming is not acceptance. Respect emerges as a reason for conforming to patriarchy, however, respect does not mean acceptance of the person's actions. Conforming has different meanings attached to it. It may be because some genuinely accept the status quo or because they respect their elders such as in-laws, as indicated by participants. Literature is silent on this complicated resistance strategy. A critical analysis of this strategy shows that it is complicated but worth using in the fight against patriarchy, since it demonstrates a safe gender reconstruction. On the other hand, however, the strategy slows gender transformation, since conforming literally means acceptance.

4.4.3   Secretive Standpoint on Resisting Patriarchy

Silence emerged as a resistance strategy used by participants in the secretive category. Although some secretive women identified silence as a resistance strategy, they also identified resistance strategies that are used by liberals such as writing and speaking out.

4.4.3.1 Silence as Resistance

Women's silence is often underestimated as a hidden transcript of resistance against patriarchy. The majority of highly educated women who participated in this study, particularly those in the secretive and conformist categories, confirmed that they use silence to protest against patriarchy in their marriage. Silence is the most common tool of resistance to any form of domination. This resonates with the findings of Cruz (2015), Bosacki (2005), Tamale (2004), Motsemme (2004) and Jack (1999) that women perceive silence as a critical tool in fighting power and patriarchy. The above narratives of emotional blackmail confirm that women are often silent protestors. Participants in this study commonly used silence when resisting the control of in-laws. This included participants from all categories. REE, although she falls into the liberal category, explains how she resists power and control by her in-laws:

> *Generally, I would say, the relationship with my in-laws is complex. It's a "love and hate" relationship. On one hand, we have a very cordial relationship but on the other, our values and worldviews are not always congruent and so my best way of relating with them is to keep a safe and respectable distance, whenever l feel that our viewpoints are too contrary, to avoid conflict. I keep my mouth shut. I always try my best to conform to their expectations when I am at my in-laws' homestead and get on with my liberal lifestyle when I am in my own home.*

It is interesting that REE uses two strategies to resist her in-laws' expectations of her; she resists in silence and conforms in their presence but then lives a "liberal lifestyle" in her own home. This is consistent with Scott's (1990) hidden transcripts theory, where the dominated submit to the dominant in public domains but resist in their private domains.

Notably, some women, although they are the main breadwinners, still use silence as resistance and some participants confirmed that silence is also used by their husbands to resist their wives'

control. NEE's husband uses silence to resist some of her decisions and this destroys her internally. However, NEE also confirmed the use of silence to resist her husband's controlling tendencies. She state in this regard:

> *In most occasions silence has worked for me. Silence is golden, I just withdraw and keep quiet and just talk to the kids and leave him out of our businesses. Sometimes he begs me to talk to him, because he wants to know what I think ... there is a saying that an empty vessel makes the loudest noise, that is what society thinks about women, they think that we are empty vessels ... Therefore the silence of a woman is heavy for many ... it destroys men and liberates women ... for me it has worked because my husband will not be aware of my next move or what I think about his actions, my silence tames him ...*

Silence, which has both positive and negative effects, is often part of women's socialisation process during their initiation to marriage. Silence seems to be liberative for NEE rather than oppressive, since she is able to control the situation through her silence. This is contrary to Jack's (1999) findings that women's silencing of the self contributes to low self-esteem and decreases women's autonomy. In this study, highly educated married black women perceived self-silencing as positive since it allowed them to be in control of their private domains. For NEE *silence is golden*. It seems as if silence has empowered her, or given her control in her marriage, indicating that silence has positive implications for self-control. Women like VEE and NEE are aware of the emotional abuse in their marriages but still they choose to use silence. VEE maintains that her silence brings peace to her home. Theorists on silencing the self, such as Jack (1999), assert that women choose to silence the self because of limited safe options of resistance and due to fears of negative consequences in patriarchal systems, such as discrimination, rejection and abuse. Silencing the self is due to concern for the other, other than the self. Silencing the self is a religious and cultural construct where women are socialised both in religious and cultural spaces to be silent. Protesting against patriarchy often has both physically and emotionally negative implications for women, who risk exclusion and alienation. Religious and cultural teachings and expectations influence the ways people relate to each other.

Participants' interpretations, experiences and resistance of patriarchy in their marriages contributed to the way participants conceptualised their sense of self and their identity modification. In the following subsection I will therefore present findings on how participants from the different categories conceptualised the self and identity in their marriage contexts.

4.5 SELF-CONCEPT AND IDENTITY NEGOTIATION

In light of their experiences of patriarchy in marriage, highly educated married black women negotiate meaning with regard to their identity and self-concept in relation to their marriage, religion and society. Their self-concept and identity are constructed through social experience and interaction with others. The self is central to symbolic interactionism and develops as people interact with other people and negotiate meaning while participating in social life (Blumer 1969; cf. Serpe & Stryker 2011; Mead 1934). The interactions that people have with others shape their interpretations of the self-concept which they then work and rework as they interact within the multiple contexts where communications are governed by particular rules and conditions (Serpe & Stryker 2011). Relationships in society and within the family are constantly being defined and redefined according to cultural and religious values. In the above narratives of how women experience patriarchy, some women assert that there are times when they feel guilty and blame themselves. Women's educational achievements seem to have modified their self-concept.

According to Charon (1992), the sense of self is influenced by interactions with significant others, particularly those that we trust and maintain a close relationship with. Symbolic interactionist scholars such as Mead (1934) argue that the self emerges from the mind and develops out of patterned social interactions that form the basis of social structure. It is the interplay between the unpredictable spontaneous acts referred to as "I" and the social self/learned roles referred to as "me" (Mead 1962). The "I" are acts that react to the attitudes of others; these spontaneous and impulsive acts are not socialised and thus are uncontrolled parts of the human self (Mead 1934). On the other hand, the "me" defends, reflects and interprets the self as reflected by others, thus the "me" represents the generalised other that controls or directs human behaviour (Mead 1934). The majority of women who participated in this study confirmed changes to their self-concept and struggles of identity negotiation particularly in marriage contexts.

4.5.1 Liberal Standpoint of Changes in Self and Internalisation

Formation of the identity and the self-concept takes place on the basis that women tend to internalise patriarchal values and norms in their families and marriages. However, participants who belong to the liberal category confirmed that their experiences of patriarchy have liberated them.

4.5.1.1 Self-liberation

The self is flexible and fluid and responds to social interactions. Some participants, particularly those in the liberal category, confirmed having experienced a liberated self. According to Mead (1934), the self is a reflexive process whereby an individual can see herself or himself as a subject or an object and which depends on the social patterns of interaction that take place in one's life. For example, SEE talks about the positive self that materialises from the way she interacts with her husband and extended family. According to SEE, her family identifies her as a man due to her achievements and as the breadwinner of the family. She says:

> *I always feel that a person should be in a position to liberate oneself and say what*
> *they want and what they do not want. Otherwise you become a prisoner in your own*
> *home.*

The challenge inherent in SEE's and her family's conceptualisation of self-liberation is that they suggest that to be liberated a person should be masculine, authoritarian and a breadwinner. SEE confirmed in the previous section that her family remark that she is like a man due to her achievements and financial independence. The danger of this is that it enforces patriarchy rather than eliminating it. African feminists campaign for an egalitarian society where patriarchy will be eliminated and women and men will work together as partners (Kaitesi 2014:109; cf. Mekgwe 2008; Mama 1997; Tamale 2006). Thus, in liberating herself, SEE is supposed to liberate everyone including men who are benefiting from patriarchy. SEE's impulsive response to her family perceiving her as a man forces her to react according to how the society perceives her (aggressive, authoritarian and maybe oppressive). She reacts to the perceptions of society as an object and thus assumes the role that society ascribes to her and reacts in terms of the "I". REE also narrated a liberated self when she stated:

> *... where I have often found myself having to stand my ground and resist the over or heavy handedness of a patriarchal mind-sets. I develop confidence about myself and I have come to realise that often times, some patriarchs just make baseless threats and if they find that someone is determined to stand for what they believe in or claim their human rights, in some cases these patriarchs are just but "toothless dogs."*

It is clear from REE's narrative that since she is able to stand her ground in her marriage, she feels liberated and has confidence in herself. REE asserts that her husband and her family describe her as a *"strong-willed, assertive and often times 'stubborn' someone"*.

She sees herself as strong-willed, self-confident and determined and states that this is how she deals with the patriarchal behaviour in her family. These self-perceptions are partially influenced by the appraisal of her family (Burke 1980). REE also demonstrates that she is in charge and in control of the self. ZEE, like REE, demonstrates liberation of the self and control of how she interprets the self when she stated in this regard:

> *I am a staunch Christian who believes in the fair treatment of all people. It's the issue of "Do unto others as you would like them to do unto you." I do not expect to be bullied around by anyone, not even by my husband. I am a strong believer in what the Bible says in Ephesians 4:32 about how to treat each other (treating others with respect, love and kindness). I am very practical about it.*

ZEE uses religion, in this case Christianity, to explain her self-concept. She prioritises the "I" rather than the "me" and sees herself as a subject through her own perceptions of the self (Serpe & Stryker 2011). YEE also stated that her Christian background fosters a spirit of respect in her family. She suggests that Christianity is the source of how she constructs meaning and behaviour regulation in her marriage. It is worth noting that religion is not only used to enforce patriarchy but also to eliminate patriarchy. ZEE's interpretation of religion is empowering and liberating for all. On the other hand, some participants who belonged in the liberal category such as REE and FEE demonstrated a "I don't care attitude" in their interactions with their husbands. They continued with their liberal lifestyles and indicated that they were not remorseful about their

husbands' emotions. They argued that their husbands' feelings of being disrespected, inadequate and intimidated were baseless.

4.5.2   Liberal Standpoint on Identity Modification

People perceive themselves in terms of a variety of identities and these identities are linked to cultural and collective values, beliefs and practices (Mead 1962; cf. Serpe & Stryker 2011). Women's interactions with their husband altered their identity, for example FEE said:

> *… something died inside me – you know when you are helpless and there is no one to turn to – that feeling of being alone!*

FEE, who was classified in the liberal category, said she had lost something and her identity had changed. FEE confirmed that her relationship was abusive and this led to her divorce. According to symbolic interactionism, if the abuser has coercive power over the interaction, he or she dominates the identity modification and behavioural confirmation (Serpe & Stryker 2011). FEE's identity was modified by the abuse and the demeaning way in which she was treated by her husband. She tied her identity to her cognition. Her identity, which was tied to her self-concept, changed because of how her husband interacted with her. FEE's perception of marriage was affected by her self-concept and she had questions about marriage:

> *Marriage is an unrealistic union. I do not think people should marry at all! Why should God allow men to create a group of people, the so-called family, to terrorise?*

FEE's conceptualisation of the self is linked to her direct experiences of marriage. In refusing to see herself from her husband's perspective, FEE stepped out of the self that she had adopted when she was in her marriage to the self she adopted as an independent woman (divorced). She separates the "me" that she used to be from the "I" that she is currently. According to Mead (1934), when the self is able to distinguish the "me" from the "I", the person achieves self-awareness and attains a level of reflective distance from the demands of society and culture. FEE's self-concept confirms that attitudes and meanings are not only interpreted in a group but also from an individual's perception, where a person may interpret the self in a way that has never happened before.

4.5.3 Conformists Standpoint on Change in Self and Internalisation

Participants, particularly those who belong in the conformist category, expressed self-blame in relation to their educational achievements, and some mentioned that they interpret their self-concept in the way in which their husbands and extended family identify them.

4.5.3.1 Self-blame

Participants in the conformist category indicated that they had reached the stage of blaming themselves and feeling guilty about their status. Some participants in the conformist category demonstrated a sense of remorse about their husband's feelings. It is clear that some women have internalised the hierarchy of marriage, where the husband is the head and makes the final decisions on everything in the marriage. The change of status by a wife from Mrs to Doctor (Dr) or Professor confuses the hierarchy, since the status of being a Dr or Professor is associated with authority. This status is a threat to husbands who are not Drs or Professors. They feel a sense of inadequacy and this in turn triggers a sense of guilt or blame in the wife because her "me" is contrary to the social order. FEE felt guilty because her status threatened her husband's authority, he felt "insignificant and inadequate" in the family. FEE seems to be concerned about how her husband feels, unlike the liberal REE, who displays an "I don't care attitude" about the feelings of her husband. Some women tend to internalise the traditional gender constructions to the extent that if those constructions are challenged, they feel it is their responsibility to protect them. This resonates with Shangase (2000) and Moyo (2004), who found that in African contexts women are socialised to nurture and preserve their marriages. VEE said she felt guilty that her husband was no longer talking to her and had left their matrimonial bed. Participants seemed to have been affected by how their husbands felt; seemingly their marriages and their husbands' feelings were important. The educational achievement of a woman through a doctorate complicates the "me" of the socialised self, made up of the internalised attitudes of others. This is in line with Aldiabat and Le Navenec's (2011) analysis that the me of the self if often internalised by people. NEE described her fears of losing her marriage when her achievements threatened it; she confirmed sensing that divorce was looming and she blamed herself for it. NEE apparently internalised the blame because society perceives marriage as the wife's responsibility. Marriage failures are often blamed on the wife. NEE does not blame her husband for being selfish, but she blames herself for obtaining that degree.

The valuing of marriage by women who participated in this study is consistent with the views of African feminists who articulate the value of marriage to women (Tamale 2014; cf. Siwila 2012; Dube 2007; Moyo 2004). NEE and FEE demonstrated a common result of internalisation by their husbands; they blamed themselves for their husbands' insecurities. They defined and evaluated themselves on the basis of the way their husbands acted towards them. It seems they felt that they were underserving of the status they had achieved, thus accepting the emotional blackmail and bullying by their husbands. This suggests that submissiveness and subservience had become part of their self-concept and perhaps their identity, because the change in status was contrary to their socialisation in traditional gender roles and seemed to turn the tables. This is consistent with prior research (Burke 1980) which has found that women's sense of self is partially influenced by the appraisals their spouses make about them.

Engaging in self-blame, VEE tried to find ways to alter her situation and prevent the consequences by offering him the new car she had bought for herself. She assumed the role that her husband wanted – submissive. Symbolic interactionists call this role-taking. Modifying the situation through role-taking may lead to a decrease of the self-esteem in gender power dynamics. It is clear that some women who participated in this study formed their self-concepts by perceiving themselves from their husbands' perspectives and in the way their husbands acted towards them.

4.5.4 Secretive Standpoint on Change in Self and Internalisation

Participants in the secretive category were ambiguous on issues of identity formation and their self-concept. ZEE who is very secretive about her marriage seemed to be having one foot in the liberal and the other in the conservative category. She stated as follows in this regard:

> *My in-laws and my husband describe me as an outgoing person who cannot be pinned down. Their opinions matter to me because they serve as a control measure and they are the people affected by my behaviour most should it be wayward. The way my husband thinks about me and how he describes me keeps my ego and self-esteem high.*

As a conformist ZEE says her in-laws' and husband's opinions matter to her because they serve as a control measure. Because ZEE's in-laws have a positive perception of her, she has a positive

self-concept. The problem is that, because she is influenced by her husband and in-laws, if her in-laws and her husband were to change their perception of her to one that was negative, then she would alter her self-concept negatively. This shows the fluidity with which people form their self-concept by internalising what people who matter in their lives think about them.

The secretive AEE denied that her husband and her extended family have perceptions about her. On the contrary, she said that her husband and family describe her in *"terms of appearance and as a force to be reckoned with in terms of character"*. According to AEE:

> *I am not constantly being described and the extended family is not always around me or my nuclear family. If anything bad should be said in this case, I would be worried. Anyone should, if people that do not live with you say bad things, there is a reason to worry.*

AEE avoided the question of how her family described her and how it made her feel. However, I conducted follow-up interviews with her, during which I asked her if her family described her at all AEE was cautious in her response and did not want to say much about her marriage. On answering the question, she confirmed that she is not an island and she believes the family and her husband's descriptions of her and the intention behind those descriptions are not meant to hurt her. She then confirmed that she did not know what other family members say about her, but highlighted that her husband describes her in positive ways. It was not clear where AEE obtains her self-concept from but I sensed that her conservativeness was a result of her socialisation, in terms of which women are socialised "not to hang their dirty linen in the public eye". AEE demonstrated a traditional African understanding of gender roles. In her conclusion of the narrative AEE said:

> *I think the proliferation of other cultures into the African space have changed the respect our black men and women had for each other, hence the feeling that patriarchy is the oppression of women by men. Remove capitalism (competition for jobs, recognition, power) and foreign religion and what you end up with is people, not men and women. In some black religions which are now being described as cultures/traditions just to belittle them, women are treated with the utmost respect and if one dares to put a finger on a woman, they will toil and suffer for the rest of*

their lives. They are seen as princesses regardless of whether they come from royalty or not.

AEE's responses were more academic than personal; she seemed to conceal the social-self behind the academic-self. However, her answers demonstrate that she belongs in the secretive category and a liberal category. AEE does not see a woman as a victim of patriarchy; like African feminists she blames the division of men and women on a colonial capitalist agenda. She has internalised the traditional African construction of gender roles, saying that in Africa there are people not men and women. According to AEE the gender binary constructions are not African. She also highlighted this in follow-up interviews: according to her, black African women are strong women who do not define themselves in terms of what others say about them, but according to their strengths rather than their weaknesses, such that those who apply Western theories would like them to be. This finding is in line with the findings of Oyewumi (2016; 2002) and Aidoo (1998), who dismiss the gendering of men and women in Africa.

It emerged that participants' understandings of themselves are influenced mainly by the appraisals of their husbands and extended family, as relevant actors in married women's lives. Participants' negotiated their identity as they interacted with the significant other in their life and in their significant relationships. The following section discusses how participants constructed meaning from the modified self-concept in relation to the self and others in the context of their marriages and work.

4.6 HIGHLY EDUCATED MARRIED BLACK WOMEN'S CONSTRUCTION OF MEANING

As much as some women took a secretive standpoint in not talking openly about their marriages, others openly narrated their experiences and how those experiences had affected the way they construct their self-concepts. The way participants constructed meaning of the self in their marriages varied and was fluid. However, it seems interactions with significant others resulted in definitions that are more likely to be incorporated into their self-concepts. Women, particularly the secretive and the conservative, seemed to construct meaning in their marriages from a religious and professional perspective.

4.6.1 The Religious-self

DEE, one of the participants in the conformist category, does not challenge her husband. Because they are a Christian family she said her marriage is guided by Christian principles. DEE says:

> *Marriage is an ordained holy ministry, I am a Christian even though I am financially independent but in God my husband is the provider and head of the house. Therefore, I ought to respect him and allow him to make decisions as a man and leader ordained by God.*

DEE's religious views seem to perpetuate patriarchy, which expects women to be submissive to their husbands. This is consistent with the literature which states that religion is a "safe space" for the nurturing of patriarchy (Sibanda 2014; cf. Oduyoye 1990). Some women like DEE presume that their husbands were ordained by God to be the head of the household and the decision-makers. Thus, DEE seems not to see anything wrong in the hierarchy that is prevalent in her household. For her marriage is an ordained holy ministry, therefore she believes that since marriage is a holy ministry she must accept all that is taught by the Christian Bible without question or suspicion. The danger of observing marriage as a holy ministry is that even if there is serious abuse, the victim does not perceive herself as a victim. DEE demonstrates the power of faith in a marriage context. In referring to her religion, YEE like DEE states:

> *In Islam my husband is an ordained head of the household. He is the provider and the only decision-maker. I am not supposed to challenge my husband. He has his family's best interests at heart.*

From a symbolic interactionist perspective, DEE and YEE construct meaning in marriage and the self from the perspective of their religious teachings. They have engaged in a process of interpretation and meaning construction by interacting with what their religion says about marriage, wives and husbands. Religion is often used as a sacred frame of reference in gender identity and performance. DEE and YEE seem to be comforted by religion and conform to what religion encourages as sacred and discourages as sin. Therefore, the submissive role of women in relation to their husbands is perceived as *sacred* and the questioning of and nonconforming to this role as *profane*.

Religion, particularly for women, is the most critical element of life and gives meaning to their existence. For example, KEE used religion in the form of fasting and prayer in an attempt to rescue her marriage. This confirms that she used religion to comfort and console herself in challenging times. This is in line with prior research which has shown that some women tend to justify their suffering in parallel to that of Jesus Christ as described in the Holy Bible. They pray hoping that prayer and submission to suffering will change their husbands (Phiri 2002). KEE also mentioned that in trying to save her marriage she went to traditional healers. KEE, DEE and YEE symbolically defined themselves and their experiences through religion. For them it seems that religious symbols have meaning in their experiences of marriage. This is confirmed in the literature by Diamond (2009:219) that "the turn to spirituality is a thread that runs through the lives and work of all the women … [in] an attempt to address the problem that has no name". Participants in this study are religious women who turn to religion in both good and bad times. Religion tends to be a safe space to find meaning, with the participants voicing platitudes such as *"this too shall pass"* (LEE) and *"it is well with my soul"* (NEE). AEE defended African traditional religions as safe spaces where women are treated with maximum respect; she blamed those influenced by Western theories for critiquing African religions as a way of demeaning these religions and concealing their liberation of African women.

Language plays a critical role in the way women construct and communicate meaning. My field notes indicate a certain pattern of meaning construction for highly educated married black women. In informal discussions about marriage, women removed the education cap and replaced it with the religious and cultural cap. In these discussions, I managed to get a hint of their cognitive processes as they reflected on themselves in the context of their marriage. In these conversations God is often at the centre of their constructions of meaning and the academic or educated-self takes a secondary place after the religious-self in meaning constructions.

4.6.2 The Educated-self

Participants from all categories seemed to construct meaning from a dual standpoint – as an educated woman and a traditional or religious woman. There seems to be a mismatch between the traditional gender roles applied in their marriage and their career domains. Interactions with their husbands and extended family seemed to differ from the way they interacted with male colleagues in work spaces. This behaviour suggests a dual self and identity. At home they conform to

traditional or religious gender roles and at work they campaign for equity. The majority of women confirmed that their educational status forces them to live a dual life, that of an educated liberated woman in the work space and that of a submissive wife in the family space. As an educated liberated woman MEE, one of the participants in the liberal category, said:

> *I usually take charge and am in control at work, I am radical in my work space. I fight for gender justice and I say out my mind when I see gender injustice taking place at work. I do this because everyone understands what this phenomenon is about, I am not forcing it onto people but it is out there ... We all write about feminism and gender in one way or the other. At home I tend to remove the feminist cap and focus on my roles as a wife and a mother. Though I still subscribe to feminist campaigns of gender equality, equity and justice, I do that in a conservative and respectful manner. The feminist ideology is new to our African black society so we do not have to force it, lest we destroy our values. We need to negotiate and re-negotiate by implementing what is relevant and liberative for our communities and reject what is irrelevant ... we are kind of expected to live a double standard life as educated women.*

This broad statement by MEE suggests that highly educated married black women are expected to live a dual life because of the different contexts they find themselves in. For MEE the educated-self does not really have a strong impact on her marital life. She confirmed that her work context and her social marital life are different and, as a result, the feminist ideology should be applied differently in these contexts. MEE seems to be facing internal struggles caused by her status in the family and in this statement she confirms that she lives a dual life, that of a liberated academic and a respectable wife. MEE does not say that she rejects feminism in her marriage but she does say that she negotiates for its acceptance in a conservative and respectable manner because it is a new ideology in her culture; hence, it cannot be forced. This suggests that in negotiating for social justice she applies the educated-self, whose ideas are accepted and respected by society, as she confirmed in the verbatim excerpt in section 4.5.2.1. MEE creates meaning from the situational, social and personal interactions she has within the two communities, at work and at home.

On the other hand, TEE, who is also in the liberal category, stated:

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An educated woman is a lonely woman … we tend to struggle to belong as educated women in both the social and academic domain because the two have their own challenges.

What TEE is suggesting is that educated women are very often isolated in society; hence TEE's statement that *"an educated woman is a lonely woman".* It seems TEE is recalling what she observes about herself and her peers and constructing meaning as she recalls the experience. For her, education is both liberative and oppressive, since it results in the isolation of women who are educated. This gives us a glimpse into highly educated married black women's cognitive processes when struggling to find meaning in their identity.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter presented highly educated married black women's internal experiences and struggles; the hypocrisy that they experience; the confusion and the fight to belong. The three categories that emerged from the participants' writings suggest that highly educated married black women's experiences, interpretations and resistance in regard to patriarchy differ. A constant and emerging theme from all categories of women is that of power and control. Women's experiences of patriarchy stretch from their husbands to the extended family. Thus different women from different categories used different strategies to resist patriarchy, for example some women, particularly those in the liberal category, used writing, speaking out, humour and laughter to challenge patriarchy. On the other hand, those who belong to the conformist category conform to gender constructed roles to resist patriarchy and those in the secretive category used silence as a resistance strategy.

Women's interpretation, experiences and resistance in relation to patriarchy are significant in developing a fluid sense of self that is shaped by interactions in their careers and also in their social and religious spaces. The findings indicate that some women, particularly those who are subjected to bullying and emotional blackmail, experienced self-blame, feeling guilty about their achievements because they challenge the hierarchal gendered power relationships in their marriages. The husband's discomfort was a threat to them. Some also experienced identity modification. They accepted and internalised the perceptions of identity imposed on them by their

husbands and society. On the other hand, some used their PhD status to their advantage by liberating the self. The three categories extricated from the highly educated married black women's narratives suggest a complex interplay between the interpersonal and the intrapersonal processes. Of particular interest is that women displayed both similar and different patterns of constructed meaning from a social, religious and educated perspective. In the construction and communication of meaning, highly educated married black women demonstrated changes in self-concept and self-appraisal linked to the perceptions of their husbands, society and religion.

The next chapter is the concluding chapter and it presents a summary of the research findings and a discussion on the implications for integrating African feminism and symbolic interactionism in the elimination of patriarchy in marriage. The chapter will also discuss the possible limitations of the study and provide recommendations for further research on the topic of patriarchy, class and identity.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION: INTEGRATING AFRICAN FEMINISM AND SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM IN A STRUGGLE AGAINST PATRIARCHY

5. INTRODUCTION

The participants in this study (highly educated married black women) presented a hidden story of abuse and struggles with patriarchy within both their marriages and workspaces. Their narratives represent more than a mere descriptive re-telling of women's struggles in a patriarchal context. They illustrate the social and structural power that creates the framework within which the dynamics of patriarchy are both maintained and resisted. In this sense, patriarchy is understood as a phenomenon entailing a male-dominated power structure which is experienced by individuals throughout society and in individual relationships. It is from within this framework that I examined highly educated married black women's experiences, interpretations and resistance strategies using an integrated African feminist and symbolic interactionist approach. I focused on their identity negotiations through role taking and changes in self-appraisal. Symbolic interactionism locates women's individual experiences of patriarchy within a broader social context of power and control.

5.1 Summary of Study: Findings and Theory Interplay

This study explored highly educated married black women's lived experiences of patriarchy. The primary focus was on how participants experienced, interpreted and resisted patriarchy in their marriages, as well as the subsequent negotiations of identities that occur within patriarchal relationships. To accomplish this, I collected data using (auto) biographical narratives, in-depth interviews and observations with 20 highly educated married black women of African ancestry. Each participant wrote her life story following an (auto) biographical narrative essay guide. The inclusionary criteria were for participants to have a master's or doctoral degree and to be black married women of African lineage. My data analysis and interpretation led to three categories: firstly, those participants who demonstrated a liberal perspective on patriarchy in marriage by openly criticising the existence of patriarchy in their marriages. Some of these women assume an activist stance by taking action to oppose patriarchy. Secondly, some participants were depicted as conservative, traditionalist or conformist, accepting the hierarchy of marriage and accepting and appreciating patriarchy as the norm. For them a husband is the head of the house and a woman

should be submissive. Thirdly, there were participants who demonstrated secretive and private qualities. These participants were not open about all aspects of their marriages, by carefully choosing what to say and what not to say. Their standpoint on marriage was cagey, vacillating between the liberal and the conservative category.

The findings of this study indicate that although the women are highly educated and financially independent, they still experience various forms of marital power and control on the part of their husbands. This finding contradicts the findings of previous studies and feminist theorists' arguments that if a woman is educated the discriminatory gender roles prevalent around the world will be progressively transformed (SDGs 2015; cf. Global Campaign for Education 2012). It does, however, confirm the resource theorists' argument that a woman's educational status does not protect her from discriminatory gender roles including abuse or violence at the hands of her husband (Choi *et al* 2014; cf. Atkinson *et al* 2005). Power and control over women by their husbands, whatever their level of education, is a cultural part of a larger system of dominance and gendered structural power. For highly educated married black women of African descent, dominance, power and control are not a matter of choice but seem to be intertwined in the socialisation process and identity politics. Through their behaviour, individuals may seek to maintain their existing identities or identity standards (Mead 1962). According to symbolic interactionist theorists like Blumer (1962), choices made in the way to behave depend on which identities are most salient. For highly educated married black women it seems the most salient identities are those of wife and mother.

Additionally, the participants' claim that the equality principle exists in their marriages seemed to be exaggerated since this principle is only applied in the absence of the extended family. Some participants, particularly the liberals, claimed that they are equal to their husbands in their private spaces, while in front of the extended family they play the traditional submissive role of wife. Participants from the conformist and secretive categories revered and respected their husbands and confirmed that they are the household heads. The majority of women in conformist and secretive categories referred to religion as the source of the marriage structure. Although participants from the liberal category asserted that they enforce the equality principle in their marriages, their narratives, my observations and the in-depth interviews confirmed that their husbands resist the implementation of this principle in their marriages. Although African feminists campaign for the

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equality principle, the findings highlight that applying it in marriage is resisted by the husband and extended family. Thus, even if a wife has an education and financial freedom it does not necessarily mean that the equality principle is applied. Indeed, the performance of gender roles remains the same in the household, particularly the expectation that a wife should be submissive, despite her educational level. This suggests that the campaign for the equality principle in marriage remains a theoretical issue in African marriage contexts. Generally, participants in the liberal category claimed to be equal to their husbands and blamed the extended family for nurturing patriarchy. The majority of participants confirmed that even if they wanted to be equal to their husbands, the extended family would make this difficult by interfering in their marriage.

Some participants did not mask the patriarchal performances of their husbands. This group included participants with doctorates, relatively newly married participants and those who are in advanced years of marriage. Consistent with African feminist research (Okin 1989; cf. Tamale 2004; Shangase 2000; Dube 2007), these participants acknowledged that marriage is fertile ground for patriarchy by narrating their patriarchal experiences at the hands of their husbands. It is clear from the participants' responses that patriarchy is in particular revealed when couples are making financial and other important family decisions. Prior research confirms that, in the marriage context, power and control are linked to finances (Sportel 2016; cf. KhosraviShakib 2010). The findings also confirm that financial independence and the education of women, particularly to PhD level, intimidates men in the private sphere of marriage. Indeed, in this study, some participants confirmed that they feel guilty and regret achieving this status. Prior research on gender and feminism is silent on this phenomenon.

The findings of the study also indicate that highly educated married black women experience patriarchy in different ways, ranging from bullying to emotional blackmail. According to the participants, husbands as well as immediate family members are not comfortable with a high level of academic achievement in women, particularly married women. These parties assume that this achievement disturbs the traditional status quo in marriage. This is because the PhD somehow guarantees women's independence and freedom from control. However, the findings seemingly tell another story, that is, that a PhD does not guarantee a married woman's independence and freedom from control and abuse. Participants narrated incidents of bullying and emotional abuse at the hands of their husbands, who were threatened by their academic achievements particularly

the PhD. The emerging story behind this study is that high academic achievements increase married women's vulnerability to coercive control; nevertheless, these achievements empower such women with resistance and survival strategies in such contexts. Some participants also confirmed that their husbands come up with different ways to "guilt trip" them – some succumb to this while others have developed ways to resist.

With regard to resistance, the findings indicate that participants resist patriarchy in different ways depending on the level of education and the category of the participant. Participants with a strong research background and who fell into the liberal category highlighted that they use their research to resist patriarchy by integrating their lived experiences into their research. This is in line with feminist theorists who encourage women to use their writing to speak out against patriarchy (De Hernandez *et al* 2010; cf. Phiri, 2009). On the other hand, the majority of participants, particularly those in the secretive category, confirmed that they use silence to resist patriarchy. Prior research identifies this strategy as the most common strategy used by women (Cruz 2015; cf. Bosacki 2005; Tamale 2004; Motsemme 2004; Jack 1999). However, theorists on this phenomenon particularly from psychology argue that it has psychological consequences and can lead to depression. The participants in this study confirmed that silencing involves a socialisation process that takes place both in their culture and their religion; thus they do not use it out of choice but because they were socialised not to be outspoken. The negative effect of silence, which is confirmed by previous research, seemed not to be visible in the participants who confirmed their use of silence as a strategy for resisting patriarchy. Contrary to the literature, this strategy seemed to have positive effects as some participants confirmed that it had liberated them because they can control how they interact with their husbands and the extended family (see Chapter four, section 4.5.2).

Another strategy of resistance that is used by the highly educated married black women in this study, particularly those in the liberal category, is a common strategy used by activists when speaking out against patriarchy. The African feminist movement is an activist movement and campaigns for gender equality and equity between men and women. In this study, the findings confirm that participants in this study implement this strategy both in their public and private spaces. Although African women are socialised not to be outspoken, some do speak out against patriarchy in their marriages. The study found that women who do speak out do so by refusing to comply with its prescripts. This reinforces the African feminist agenda, whereby in a fight for

equality African women identify patriarchy as an ideology imported from the Western countries, hence they refuse to comply with its teachings (Oyewumi 2016; cf. Oyewumi 2002; Aidoo 1999). Speaking out and protesting against patriarchy is the primary focus of the African feminist agenda and this is done through the various strategies identified by participants in this study.

A controversial finding relating to resistance that emerged from this study is the one in the conformist category. These participants highlighted that they resist patriarchy by conforming to gender constructions. This was confirmed by a considerable number of participants as being a resistance strategy. This strategy emerged mainly from those also who confirmed the use of silence as a resistance strategy. According to the participants, conforming to gender constructions does not mean accepting them, but rather that it is a form of "cold war" where "the victim is diplomatically strategising how to conquer this war". Participants referred to their conforming as diplomacy. The reason for conforming to gender constructions while silently resisting is out of respect for the husband and the community. Respect emerges as a key variable in marriage (Chisale 2016a; cf. Kasomo & Maseno 2011; Phiri 2003; Shangase 2000). For the participants, respect emerged as being essential to them and their interactions with society.

The final resistance strategy that was identified by participants, particularly those in the liberal category, is humour and laughter. The study found that this strategy belittles and weakens patriarchy because women make fun of it. On the other hand, laughter is also used to demean, humiliate and dismiss patriarchy. Humour and laughter are used by women in the liberal category in both the private and public spaces. The participants confirmed that they use this strategy to resist patriarchy by belittling, demeaning, humiliating and dismissing those who still want to nurture and protect patriarchy.

Overall, highly educated married black women's experiences of patriarchy confirm that self-concept and identity construction is shaped by their social experience and interaction with others, particularly the men with whom they have intimate relationships. According to findings, participants confirmed changes to their self-concept and identity negotiation. The findings highlight that the majority of participants acknowledged the internalisation of their husbands' reflected appraisal of them. Self-perceptions were linked to how their husbands defined them. The majority of participants, particularly those in the conformist and secretive categories, painted a

picture that presents an internalisation of the marriage hierarchy. They manifested this in feeling guilty when their status seemed to threaten their husbands' authority.

Findings also confirm that participants felt obliged to protect the hierarchy of marriage in order to protect their marriages. They internalised the assumption that sustaining the marriage is the woman's duty. Those who thought their marriages were threatened and unstable blamed themselves for that. Change in a woman's status from Mrs to Dr or Professor seemed to cause some form of identity crisis among some participants, where women were forced to assume a double identity – that of a submissive wife at home and liberated educated woman at work. This conceptualisation of the self-concept and identity increased the likelihood of taking on the role of the other by perceiving in terms of their husbands' perspectives and how their husbands acted towards them at home, as well as perceiving themselves in terms of their colleagues' perspectives as educated and liberated women at work. According to the findings, participants engaged in role-taking as they attempted to resist and understand patriarchy. It seemed the dominant form of role-taking linked their identity to their cognitive processes, in terms of what the husbands and the extended family expected of them. This is parallel to prior research where the weak adopt the role suggested by the dominant in order to survive (Mead 1934; cf. Wolf 2011; Scully 1988). This indicates that role taking is both a survival and resistance strategy for women in contexts of patriarchy.

Some participants, particularly those who confirmed being the sole breadwinners, confirmed self-liberation. This confirms the fluidity of the self-concept as described by symbolic interactionist theorists (Mead 1934; cf. Geniusas 2006; Aldiabat & Le Navenec 2011). These participants' husbands and extended family's dependence on them enhanced their self-confidence. Participants who confirmed self-liberation fell into the liberal category and attested that they speak out against patriarchy by challenging it openly, even in the presence of their in-laws. These participants are generally those who had adopted a masculine role and had created their self-concept in terms of how their husbands and family defined them. Those who confirmed self-liberation explained that their husbands and in-laws perceived them as men (or masculine) due to their achievements and because they were the sole breadwinners of the family. Such depictions by these parties suggest they believe that a male figure is the only person who should achieve the highest academic qualifications and be the sole breadwinner. This is contrary to the ideals of African feminism that

campaigns for an egalitarian partnership between women and men. Some women, particularly participants who belonged in the liberal category, seemingly turned the tables by dominating their husbands and in-laws just because of their education and financial status. They applied aggressive radical lenses with regard to their status by playing "superwoman" in a negative way – instead of campaigning for equality and equity, they became the oppressor.

Participants constructed meaning according to both their external and internal experiences of patriarchy and the findings confirm that these fragmented their identities and created changes in the self-concept and self-appraisal. Thus, the way participants constructed meaning of the self-concept in their marriages was varied and fluid. It emerged from the findings that participants struggled to construct meaning owing to the presence of different perspectives, particularly the social, religious and educated or the social, personal and situational standpoints. There seems to be tension between the three perspectives when modifying identity. These standpoints contradict each other particularly for a highly educated married black African woman, because these tend to bring about an identity crisis in a person. It also emerged in this study that role-playing by such highly educated women does not necessarily reflect their true identity because they confirmed that they resist patriarchy using a number of strategies that include adopting roles as required of them. It is worth noting that participants' salient identities seemed situational and varied from the role opportunities that presented themselves at any point in time.

5.2 Integrating African Feminism and Symbolic Interactionism in the Struggle against Patriarchy

The findings of the study present some lessons that are significant for the direction of research on the elimination of patriarchy. Participants painted a different picture of women politics and African feminism. There seems to be a disconnection between the movement's narrative and the lived reality of the participants. The findings suggest that highly educated married black women do not experience and address patriarchy with one voice but are divided due to their personal and political struggles for survival and belonging. The reflexive process of this study is mirrored in the way participants negotiated changes to their identity in patriarchal contexts. The way participants negotiated meaning and their self-identity in their marriages suggests these African women, despite their level of education, have internalised and accepted the traditional hierarchical system of marriage. Highly educated married black women use role-taking as a reflexive process which

is subsequently internalised in their self-concept. In patriarchal contexts, role-taking is a safe way of diplomatically negotiating transformation. The liberation of women and men in marriage contexts can be negotiated through role-taking, rather than rebellion.

The challenge of role-taking within the context of the liberation of women and men in marriage is that it somehow creates a narrow cage from which escaping patriarchy is incredibly difficult. Role-taking may work for some but may endanger others. Since African feminism acknowledges the importance of including men in the fight against patriarchy, this elimination should be diplomatically negotiated even with the use of role-taking, as expounded by symbolic interactionism. Women should not be the only people to modify the self through role-taking; men should participate in role-taking as well. If men can adopt the role of loving husband, caring partner and companion, the equality principle in marriage may become a reality. Role-taking according to Blumer (1969) is the cognitive ability to take the perspective of another; accordingly, husbands should be able to take the positive perspective of their wives. As a result, the integration of African feminism and symbolic interactionism has a potential to unite African women and men in the struggle for gender equality and equity, if both parties fight the same fight. One cannot be elevated to hero status while the other is reduced to victim. Everyone should be in the same category, because conflicting voices delay the achievement of objectives.

Patriarchy is experienced as deeply individualistic and personal, something which is often overlooked by African feminism. African feminism alone fails to recognise the deep pain some African women experience in an attempt for survival and belonging. Thus, if integrated with symbolic interactionism, African feminism will be able to identify the struggles of women as they try to survive through self-modification and role-taking. The different categories of women that emerged in this study indicate that there are still gaps in the African feminists' agenda. The hidden and lived activism that participants in this study implement in their marriages should be acknowledged in the negotiations on the elimination of patriarchy. The (auto)biographical narrative appropriated the core principles of meaning that shone light on how highly educated married black women in this study are forged and forge themselves in society and marriage contexts. African feminism has overlooked this counterfeit of women in marriage contexts. Instead there are increasing contradicting voices on what African feminism is and is not.

The hidden and silent voice of the African woman who refuses to be associated with feminism is largely ignored in the African feminist movement. Thus, some participants of this study, despite their level of education, refused to be associated with it, arguing that it fails to acknowledge African women's agency and their potential in dismantling patriarchy. In narrating their hidden resistance strategies some participants argued that conforming to gender constructions is their means of survival and liberation, which African feminism has ignored but which are nevertheless acknowledged by symbolic interactionism in role-taking and identity modification analysis. African women are socialised to resist domination in silence (Tamale 2004) and the findings confirm this. The findings of this study confirm that the socialisation of African women does not necessarily change when their educational status changes. Instead they highlight the fluidity and flexibility of highly educated married black women's identity. Some women may choose to live with a double identity where they embrace their socialisation as an African woman, wife and mother, on the other hand, and embrace their educational status as a liberated and empowered woman. However, the findings indicate that the socialisation into African womanhood, wifehood and motherhood takes precedence over the socialisation into an educated liberated woman. This finding indicates that some educated African women are now progressively refusing to understand education from a Westernised perspective, where to be educated is to be seen as rebelling against African ways of life.

Highly educated married black women from this study do not have a dominant narrative that shapes their identities; instead, their identities vary in terms of their situational, social and personal experiences. My understanding is that the experiences of highly educated married black women inform, shape and influence their identity formation from an African perspective. Their identity formation lies between the integration and disintegration of their experiences of patriarchy which is evident in some of their narratives. Such narratives reveal how highly educated married black women construct and cope with their identity as wives and mothers at home and academic professionals in the work space. The main conclusion that I draw, therefore, is that highly educated married black women concentrate more on shaping and forging their wifely identities, which reflect their social identity as a culturally socialised African black women, than on their personal identity which reflects their education or level of qualification. Finally, it is clear that women's education does not empower them or release them from patriarchy according to the findings of this study. As a result, the integration of African feminism and symbolic interactionism exposes the

struggles of women and discloses the social, personal and situational needs of women that African feminism alone lacks. The challenge this study tosses to African feminism is: how do African women build a bridge between their educational status (personal) and their marital status (social)? How does education empower or liberate an African woman in a social and personal context? And finally, how can African feminism embrace all African women's views regardless of class and identity? I ask these questions because African feminism seems to be a movement of the elite; academic African women who struggle to implement feminism within their marriage (on a social level). The boundary between the personal and the social self is blurred because of specific socio-cultural and historical factors. It is clear that there is a need for African feminism to be integrated with symbolic interactionism to address the complex nature of the social, personal and situational nature of African women.

5.3 Strengths

The findings of this study highlight a significant way of understanding the experiences of patriarchy of highly educated married black women of African ancestry which have so far been largely underreported in literature. Prior research on gender and feminism generalises African women's experiences by ignoring the fact that African women experience, interpret, resist and create meaning about the self in diverse ways in patriarchal contexts. Using relevant theories, the findings of this study have uniquely highlighted the differences among highly educated married black women's cognitive processes and explained their everyday behaviour in patriarchal contexts. This is important because these women are not defined in terms of difference and are not seen as weak or lacking in patriarchal contexts. Additionally, the integration of multiple disciplines and research approaches in this study eliminates the confines of the findings. The complementarity of the symbolic interactionist approach and an African feminist standpoint strengthens the findings because the two approaches emphasise the fluidity of individualised experiences in women. Symbolic interactionists argue that the role of individual perceptions is very powerful in people's interpretations of reality (Charon 1992).

The study findings also make a relevant contribution to the African feminism and symbolic interactionist literature on women's experiences of patriarchy and the hidden resistance strategies they use in this regard. It also makes a significant contribution to the feminist symbolic interactionist literature on women's role-taking, self-appraisal and self-concept in patriarchal

contexts. The strong contribution of this study lies in the combination of African feminism and a symbolic interactionist approach to understand, conceptualise and explain why women make some of the seemingly confusing choices they make while in patriarchal contexts, particularly marriage. The findings therefore contribute to the current conceptualisations of highly educated married black women's cognitive processes, state of mind and construction of meaning within their marriage contexts.

5.4 Methodological Limitations

Like any research, this study is not without limitations. The sample size was small, comprising a total of 20 research participants, thus this group did not represent any particular population and, therefore, all the conclusions drawn in the study are limited to the sample and cannot be generalised to all highly educated married black women across Africa. However, another study with a wider demographic base and a probability sample may help to address this limitation.

Additionally, the primary data collection tool, (auto)biographical narrative, has its limitations because it does not allow for control over what the participants narrate and how they narrate their life stories. There was limited rapport between myself as the researcher and the participants. Some of the participants of this study are scholars, who were busy with their own research, and so in this research the time invested in follow-up interviews for probing and clarity was not always sufficient because I respected the participants' busy schedules. In addition, my own position as a highly educated married black woman may have influenced some of the participants' responses to the research questions.

5.5 Conclusion and Recommendations

The story that is narrated above suggests a new direction for African feminism; a direction where African women should begin to faithfully narrate their struggles with patriarchy and their survival strategies in this regard. Additionally, in terms of this direction African feminism cannot be used alone to research African women's experiences of patriarchy owing to the theory's weaknesses. In this case, African feminism has been combined with symbolic interactionism to explore the way highly educated married black women interpret, experience and resist patriarchy in their marriages. Further research should subsequently be done to explore and compare highly educated married black women's struggles and survival strategies in relation to patriarchy with those of other

married black women who do not fall into the highly educated category. The findings of such research should provide solid guidelines on what African feminism is and what it should be about. It is important to stress that the struggle against patriarchy will not be easily won if some of the voices of African women are ignored. The deeply personal nature of feminism means everyone's personal lived experiences and realities should be considered and embraced in this struggle. No one woman is better than another and no one man is better than the other. All women and men are victims of patriarchy. As a result, the struggle should embrace everyone, since we are all lacking in different ways. Thus, I also recommend that further research should focus on the struggles of men married to highly educated women. Last but not least, a study on highly educated married women from other races in the African continent should be done and the findings be compared to this study. Such findings can strengthen and solidify African feminism against the deficiency of being generalised as a movement of traditional African black woman only to becoming a movement that embraces all African women's struggles with gender injustice.

6.   REFERENCES

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Appendix A: Ethical Clearance Certificate

Dear Dr/Prof/Mrs……………………………………

An Invitation to Participate in a Research Project for an MA in Sociology

You are hereby requested to participate in a research project that is undertaken as a requirement of an MA in Sociology degree with the University of South Africa (UNISA).

The title of the research project is: **Patriarchy and Resistance: A Feminist Symbolic Interactionist Perspective of Highly Educated Married Black Women**

The study uses three empirical research methods namely:

1. (Auto)biographical-narrative essays
2. Semi-Structured Interviews
3. Participant Observation

Participation and contribution in the research will be treated with confidentiality. Real names will not be disclosed in the final report to ensure anonymity. Collected data will only be shared with my supervisor Professor Marlize Rabe (contact number: 012 429 6698) and will be kept in a safe place. The final product of the research will be published and will be on the library shelves at UNISA and other libraries around the world will have access to it through UNISA library. The study will conform to all ethical obligations and considerations of the process of doing research. Participation in the study is voluntary, should you wish to withdraw at any time you are free to do so. Additionally, participation in the study will not be remunerated in any form.

If permission is granted may I request that you sign the attached consent form.

Kind Regards,

Sinenhlanhla S. Chisale

sinengwenya@yahoo.co.uk or 47299975@mylife.unisa.ac.za

+27 78 213 3524

Appendix C: Informed Consent for Participants

Patriarchy and Resistance: A Feminist Symbolic Interactionist Perspective of Highly Educated Married Black Women

I Prof/Dr/Mrs (Full name and surname in capital letters)

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

do accept to participate in the research process with Sinenhlanhla Sithulisiwe Chisale a Master of Arts student at UNISA.

1. I am aware that my participation in this project is entirely voluntary;
2. I am aware that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time;
3. I understand that my personal information including recordings and narratives will be kept confidential and that it will only be shared with Sinenhlanhla Sithulisiwe Chisale and her supervisor Professor Marlize Rabe;
4. I understand that my true identity will not be disclosed in the final project to ensure anonymity;
5. I understand that I will receive no payment or compensation in the study.

Date…………………………………………………

Signature of applicant………………………………………………………………………

Signature of Witness…………………………………………………………………………..

Title: Patriarchy and Resistance: A Feminist Symbolic Interactionist Perspective of Highly Educated Married Black Women.

Framing the Auto-biographical Narrative Essay:

The following questions are guidelines to the writing of Auto-biographical narrative essays:

- How long have you been married?

- What is your husband's highest formal qualification?

- Are you employed? In what capacity?

- Is your husband employed? in what capacity?

- Do you have separate accounts or joint accounts/ who makes the financial decision?

- Do you have children? How many? What ages? Boys or girls? If they have left school already, what are they doing?

- Do you have a driver's licence, when did you get a driver licence?

- When did you complete your PhD / MA? What was the reaction of your family, husband and everyone in the family regarding your studies?

- Describe the graduation ceremony. Was there a reception afterwards? If so, what was the nature of the reception and who attended?

- (In the case of a PhD) Did you change your title? Did your relationship with your husband and the extended family change after completing your degree? Why do you think so?

- What is your relationship with your own family (mother/father/siblings/and so forth)? How would you describe your relationship with your in-laws?

- What are your daily domestic arrangements? Cooking, cleaning, getting children to school (if relevant) and so on? Do you have a domestic worker? If so, what is your relationship with her like?

- Describe typical family occasions such a funeral, wedding, birthday party, Christmas. Who prepares the food? Where are these usually held? What are you emotional experiences of such occasions?

- What is your understanding of feminism? Would you describe yourself as a feminist? Why?

- What is your understanding of patriarchy? Would you describe your family patriarchal?

- Are there any incidents where you experience or have experienced patriarchy in your marriage? If so, narrate your experiences and how you respond or responded to them.

- How does this incident make you feel about yourself in your marriage and around colleagues, friends and the community at large?
- Did this incident change the way you relate to people and men? if so how?
- How do you think your husband, family and extended family describe you?
- Does the opinion of other people, particularly your family matter to you? Why?
- Does the way your husband and your extended family describe you affect the way you think about yourself?
- How does the way your husband and your family describe you affect your work and the way you relate to colleagues at work?
- What is your religion and how does your religion influence the way you interact with your husband, family?
- Do you belong to any women's group? If so, describe the nature of this group.
- What are your immediate feelings, thoughts or comments about patriarchy?