

PATRIARCHAL IDEOLOGIES AND FEMINISM

Basic Concepts: Patriarchal ideologies existed for centuries in most of Eastern and Western cultures. **Feminism** opposes these ideologies claiming that those ideologies are responsible for the oppression of women throughout the world.

Patriarchy: is any society in which men hold all or most of the power. Patriarchy gives men power by promoting traditional gender roles.

Traditional Gender Roles: men are naturally rational, strong, protective, and decisive. Women are emotional, nurturing, weak, and submissive. * **Feminism** claims that these qualities/ gender roles are produced by patriarchy and not by nature.

Objectification of Women: “Good girl” and “Bad girl”

From patriarchal perspective, women who adhere to traditional gender roles are considered “good girls” They are put on pedestals and idealized as pure angelic creatures, whose sense of self consists of usefulness to their husbands, fathers, or brothers.

“Bad girls” are those who violate the rules of sexual conduct set for a patriarchal woman, such as dressing or behaving in a manner that is sexually provocative.

Sexism: Patriarchy is based on sexism, which is the belief that women are innately inferior to men: less intelligent, less rational, less courageous, etc.

Feminism argues that while we may be born female or male, we are not born feminine or masculine; it is the society that decides which behaviors are considered feminine, and therefore appropriate only to females, and which behaviors are considered masculine, therefore appropriate only to male.

As Simone de Beauvoir argues in her groundbreaking book, *The Second Sex*, “One is not born a woman; one becomes one.”- Women wear high heel pointy shoes not because they have pointy feet and need help reaching the top shelf of the cupboard, but because patriarchy tells them such footwear is feminine. (and it is feminine as such footwear makes women less mobile than men and thus less able to compete.)

“The Cult of ‘true womanhood’” In the 19th century, Victorian patriarchy promoted the “cult of true womanhood”, which depicted a true woman as the one who fulfilled her gender role in every way, and was defined as fragile, submissive, and sexually passive.

Today, the survival of this kind of woman/feminine ideal excludes poor women of all races whose survival requires them to be tough, assertive, strong, or in any way “unfeminine.”

The Portrayal of Masculine Pleasures and Behavior:

The traditional masculine pleasures include: smoking, drinking, watching a fight, discussing women. The traditional masculine behavior includes: controlling, fighting, cursing, etc.

Human Behavior as the Symbolic Interactionist Perspective: Erving Goffman argues that the positioning of bodies’ displays appropriate social roles for gender and communicates their intentions, expectations, etc.

When a woman and a man are shown together, the man is taller. A taller woman with a short man indicates that the woman has power or is higher in the social status.