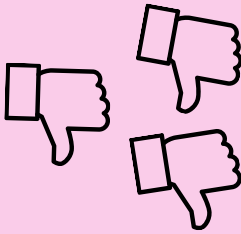
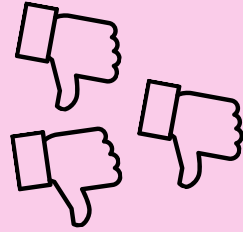


HOW DOES THE



PATRIARCHY



& THE SEXIST IDEALS

IT PURVEYS

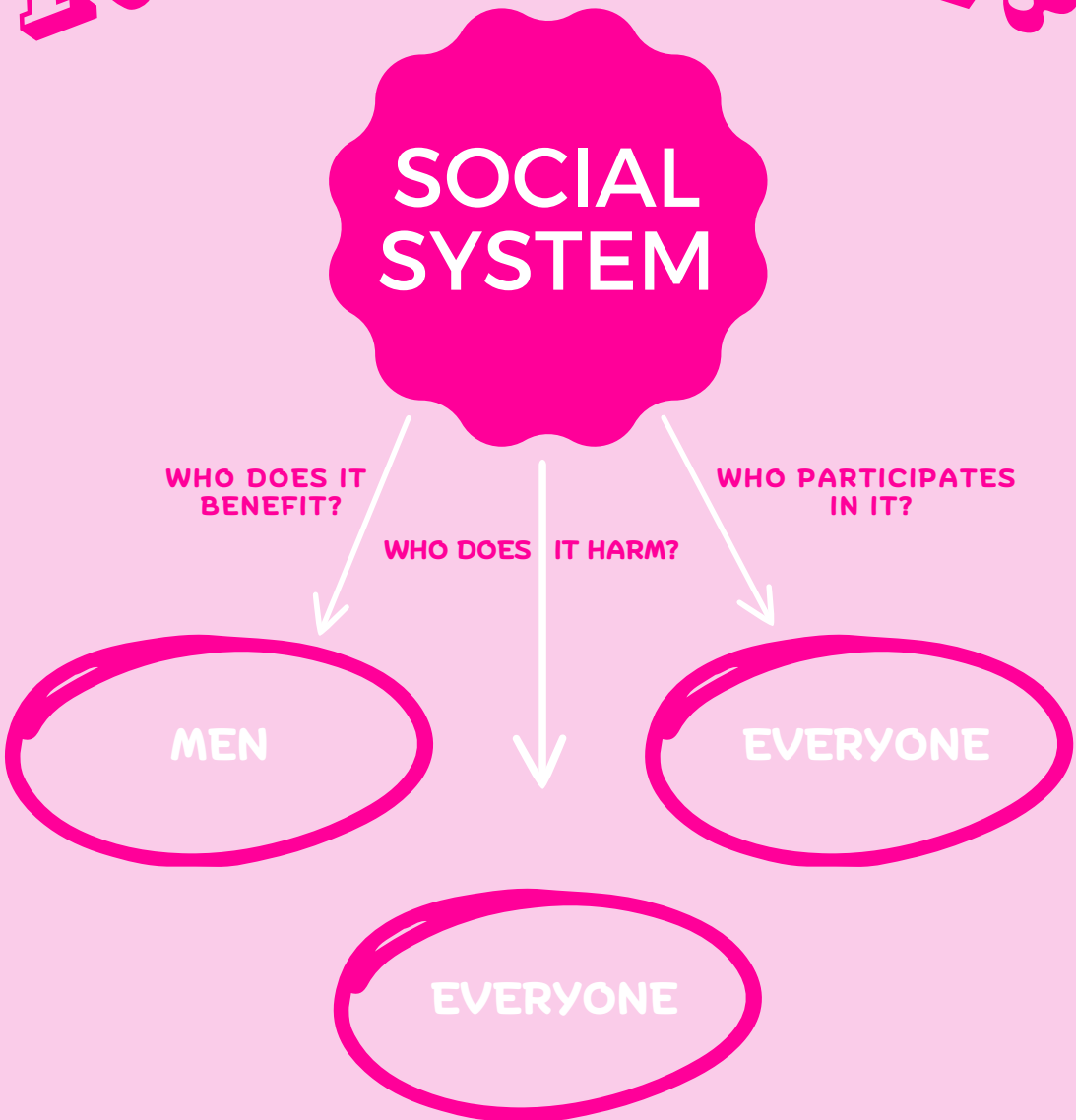
NEGATIVELY FRAME

THE CONCEPT OF

FEMININITY?



WHAT IS THE PATRIARCHY?





...we all participate in something larger than ourselves, something we didn't create but that we have the power to affect through the choices we make about how to participate.

Johnson defines patriarchy, or The System (We All Blame), as “an arrangement of shared understandings” that are so deeply woven into perspectives of reality that we tend to not fight against it, even if we recognize that it's harmful.



“If a society is oppressive, then people who grow up and live in it will tend to accept, identify with, and participate in it as “normal” and unremarkable life. That’s the **path of least resistance** in any system.”

What
IDEALS
does the
PATRIARCHY
impose on
♥ **WOMEN?**

Submissiveness

Modesty &
Innocence

Dependence

Femininity

In other words, according to the patriarchal system that runs our society...

WOMEN

=

FEMININE

It is a trait that is biologically inherent in females. That means that all of the characteristics of 'femininity':

- Demure
- Patient
- Caring
- Delicate
- Emotional
- Helpless

come naturally to all women.

And society teaches us that even the positive traits of femininity--like 'caring' and patient'--are signs of weakness.

So really...

WOMEN

=

FEMININE

=

WEAK

Basically, since **males** are the **superior** sex in a patriarchy, **women** must be the **inferior** sex. Anything that is assumed to be typical of women (i.e. their behaviors, personalities, jobs, etc.) are considered “weak” and “inferior” by association.

Thus, the ‘**femininity**’ that the patriarchy insists is inherent to women, becomes a sign of **weakness** to any who exhibit it.

...But is femininity really even biologically natural to women?



There is something genetically inherent in the males of the species that makes them the naturally dominant sex; that "something" is lacking in females...

(Page 9)



(Page 12)

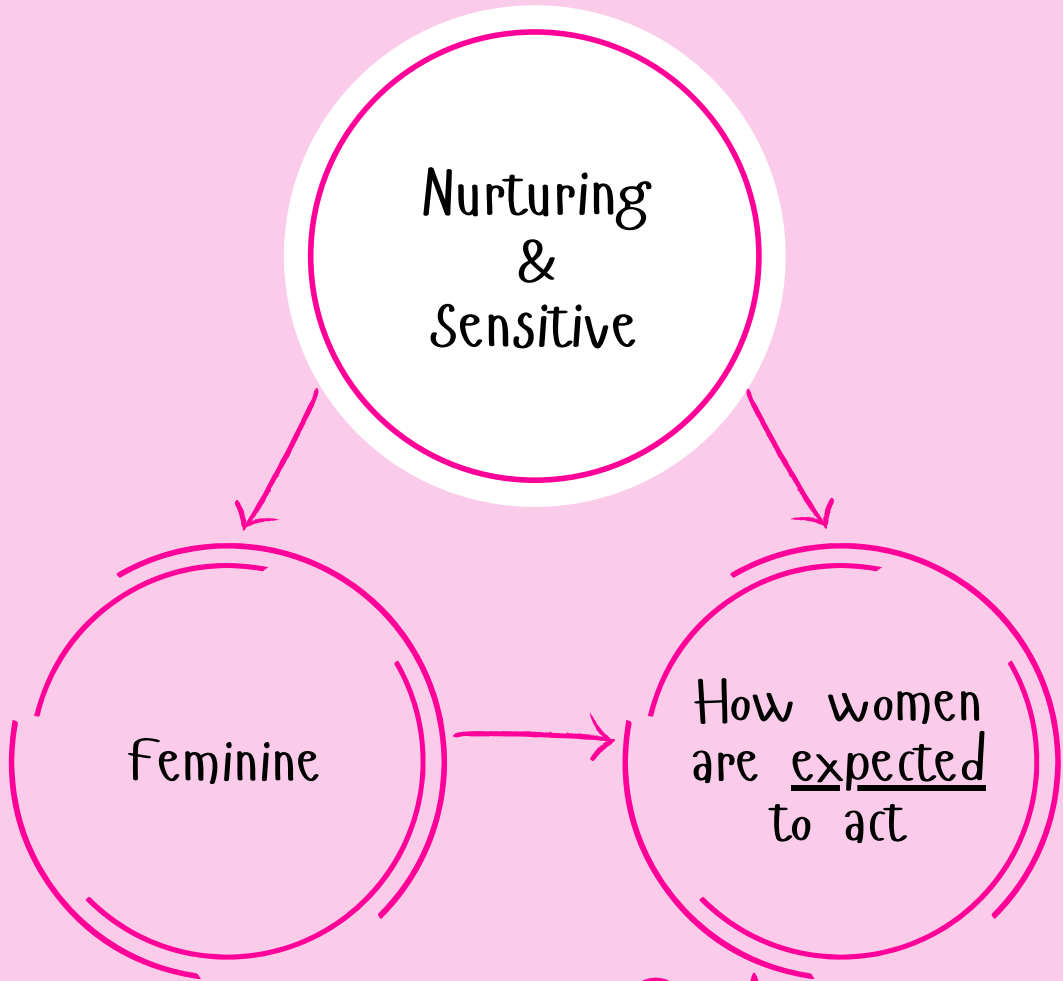
...women are seen "merely" as being closer to nature than men. That is, culture [...] recognizes that woman is an active participant in its special processes, but sees her as being, at the same time, more rooted in, or having more direct connection with, nature.



...my thesis is that woman is being identified with, or, if you will, seems to be a symbol of, something that every culture devalues, something that every culture defines as being at a lower order of existence than itself.

(Page 10)

So if femininity isn't biologically female but instead a *cultural* concept, why do we associate it with women?



But that's not how all women do act, because it is a cultural construction.



A patriarchal society **conditions women to adopt feminine characteristics** by convincing them femininity is natural to them.

By framing this femininity as weak, the patriarchy **takes women's power** and gives it to men.

In what ways does the patriarchy take power away from women?

objectify &
sexualize
them

undermine
their
emotions &
traumas

take away
their bodily
autonomy

undervalue
the work
they do

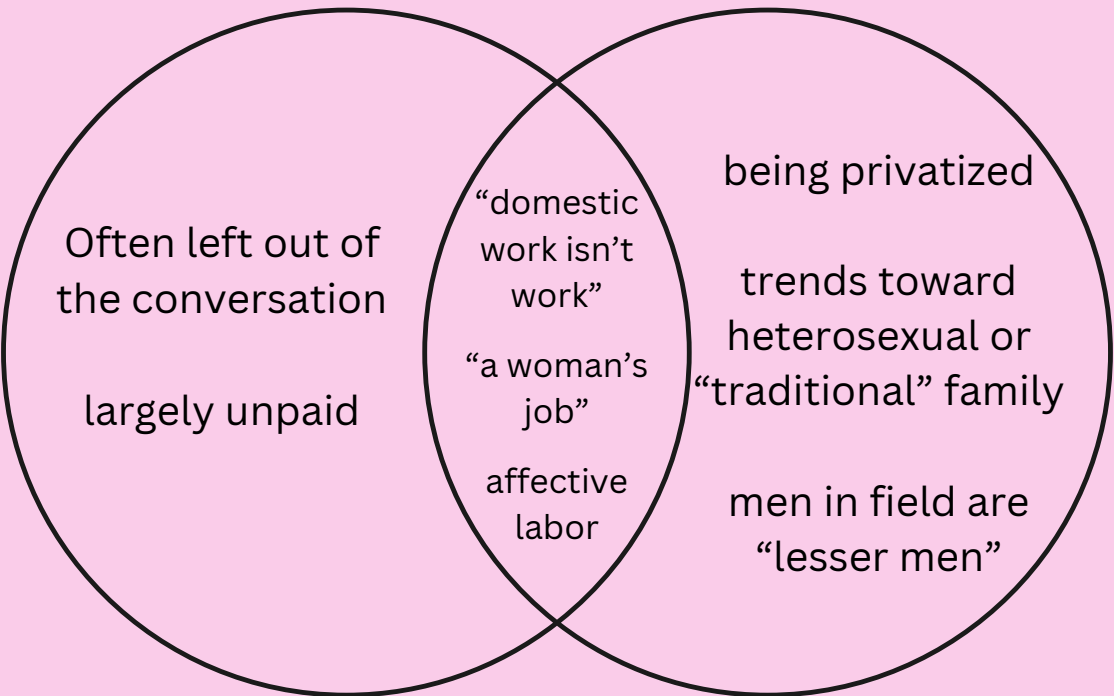
Let's take the example of undervaluing the work women do...

Firstly, what is considered “feminine work”?

Consider: The Sphere of Care

DOMESTIC CARE

CHILD CARE



“The Precarity of Feminization” by Encarnacion Gutierrez-Rodriguez

Why are these areas of labor feminized?

Schultz says that, "...work such as unpaid housework, childcare, and emotional labor in personal relationships is allocated to women and **devalued as gender expression rather than work...**" (Whitney 641).

Women = naturally more nurturing and sensitive

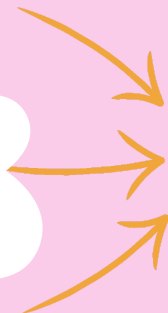


labor that requires these traits = women's work



feminization of labor

Any job that is considered feminine becomes the natural duty of women, so they shouldn't need incentive to do it.



Devaluation of feminized labor

Despite being **undervalued** and **underpaid**, women are expected to always be offering their best performance, or as Jia Tolentino would put it, **"Always Be Optimizing"**.

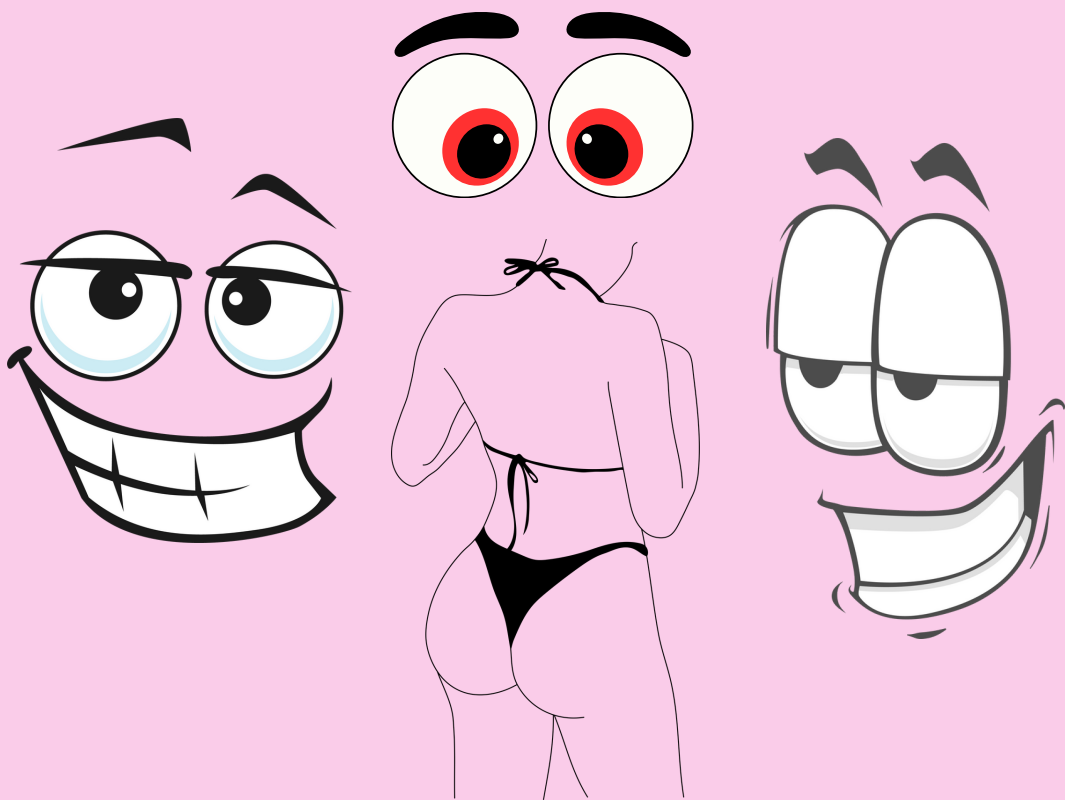
This idea of constant optimization isn't only present at work, women must put on a show for men in every aspect of life. Simply put, women are a product that they must market to the desires of their consumers--**men**.

“She has a personal brand, and probably a boyfriend or husband: he is the physical realization of her constant, unseen audience, reaffirming her status as an interesting subject, a worthy object, a self-generating spectacle with a viewership attached.”

Unfortunately for women, one of the primary desires of men is **sex**.

So their marketing strategy becomes sexualizing themselves for male pleasure.

Now, **femininity** becomes framed as not only weak and inferior, but also as **sexual** (but also 'pure', talk about impossible standards).



Conclusion:



The patriarchy perpetuates idea
that

women = inferior/sexual object

and

women = feminine

so

feminine = inferior/sexual object

This is done so that men can
have power over women (i.e.
gender oppression).

However, femininity, innately
female or not, shouldn't be
framed as a weakness but as a
strength.

Conclusion (cont'd):

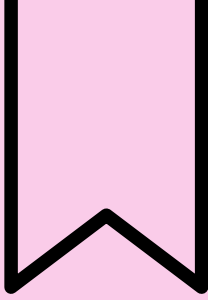


Women *can be* nurturing and sensitive (all good things) but they can also be strong and smart and brave and capable--more-so even than men because of the oppression they've survived.

Likewise, men can also be emotional and nurturing and FEMININE.

Femininity may be framed as an undesirable trait in men and a natural trait in women, but it is neither of those things.

Femininist women and men alike are reclaiming and redefining femininity to attach to it the strength it truly deserves.



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