

The Patriarchy:
An analysis on the distinct effects of the patriarchy on different
demographics

By
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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this paper to my mother, Chimere Artis, for always being such a wonderful exemplar of perseverance. I love you deeply.

How would you explain the word Patriarchy? Some might say it is a way “to categorize men’s behavior”. Some might also say it is an exaggeration made up by women. According to sociologist Allan Johnson, the word “patriarchy” is not meant to necessarily categorize men, but rather to explain “the degree that it promotes male privilege by being male-dominated, male-identified, and male-centered” (Anyangwe and Mahtani). Having a better understanding of the word “patriarchy”, which is derived from the Greek word patriarkhēs meaning “the rule of the father”(Anyangwe and Mahtani), will help further our understanding of how it negatively impacts our lives. In the research paper, I will assess multiple aspects of the patriarchy, from its origins, to current day. While using reputable sources , I will discuss how it has affected, and continues to affect different demographics in distinct ways, and ultimately how to go about dismantling it.

While being heavily prevalent today, the patriarchal way of organizing dates as far back as 4,000BC and is traced back to Mesopotamia (Saini). That said, before the patriarchy became the way of many civilizations, being matrilineal was a common way of society. Matrilineal societies saw women as a valuable part of society, worthy of having a voice. While men were often appointed to positions of power, it was not done unless approved by women participating in a vote, and having input on the ruler's actions afterwards. These societies also practiced the idea of women being the head of the household, and having kinship tied to their side; essentially having ownership over the family line. Things began to shift with the rise of agriculture. The Agricultural Revolution resulted in many changes such as the surplus of food production, populations, new skills and property rights. As men began taking on more physical duties to uphold the demand of these new changes, they eventually took ownership of the property, in

hopes to pass it on to their sons. This also ties to them taking the head of the household role, along with the communities as-well. This history is very important when attempting to understand the role that patriarchy plays.

It may be a foreign concept that patriarchy affects men as well, but it is true; and white men are often negatively affected. Other factors, such as being cisgender and heterosexual may cause a slightly warped experience, but the patriarchy being enforced by men does not exempt them from reaping negative side effects from the social standard. In modern day America, ideas of the patriarchy are ingrained into young men's minds, and they go their whole life without questioning these ideals. They are just a way of life. From a young age, white boys are taught that expressing any emotion that can be perceived as vulnerable or sensitive is bad (Association). This is often instilled by their white fathers, or peers who have been taught by their fathers at home. This can result in them growing up to have emotional regulation issues, with the only acceptable emotion to show being anger. These effects are highly dangerous to the men themselves, and can result in catastrophic outburst, such as mass shootings. Despite this being a normalized way of life, it must be addressed, by white men themselves, in order for these ways to be undone.

Similarly to white men, black and brown men are often subliminally taught at a young age that expressing their emotions are not appropriate. That said, with the unique position they hold in society, the patriarchy ultimately adds layers to their experience. These extra layers present themselves as the need to assimilate to heightened patriarchal standards of misogyny towards black and brown women. Some modern examples of this heightened misogyny are often

present in Hip-Hop music. A more concentrated example would be a line from the popular Canadian rapper, Drake. In the song “On BS” Drake has a lyric that reads “I blow half a million on you hoes, I’m a feminist”(Kornhaber). I find this line especially interesting, as it holds a tongue-in-cheek aura, while also being one of many lines targeted at women (or “hoes”) on the *Your Loss* album. This example is able to be compared to many lines in many songs that have traits of heightened misogyny.

Historically, under the patriarchy, white women are forced to adhere to submissive standards to please men. During the early 1900’s in America, many examples of this concept can be seen. Many advertisements from that era can be seen promoting men to “train your (white) wife” or that (white) women are their best when they focus on their appearance, rather than their intelligence (see advertisements on pages 9 & 10). These advertisements were an appropriate reflection of the oppressive nature towards women. As time has gone on, these commercials have been deemed inappropriate, and therefore are no longer prevalent. This has been due to white women over the years developing a proud sense of self, and fighting back against these oppressive ways with protests and dismissal of misogynistic propaganda. However, the oppressive nature towards white women is still around, and shows up in ways that harms them mentally and physically. A statistic from 2008 shows that 80% of reported rapes came from white women (Supporting Survivors). This statistic is just the tip of the iceberg in relation to how the patriarchy has, in modern day, has negative branches that ultimately affects white women; but just as they did in the late 90’s, this demographic continues to persevere and fight against this harsh way of life.

Assessing the way that the patriarchy affects black women as a demographic can be traced as far back to the beginning of slavery. During the colonization of America in the early 1500's, the demand for more land and power drove European men to develop a new means of labor: African enslavement. This enslavement became established during the early 1600's, consisting of routine capture and shipment of black bodies to America. During colonialism driven slavery, black women were often picked for unique roles that served under the patriarchal society that was present in America at the time. Labor that was seen as cheaper, and needed to be done more often, such as washing clothes, picking crops, and serving food. Not only that, due to the high and harsh demands enslaved women were often forced to push their minds and bodies to unimaginable extremes. In terms of the specific dynamic between african women, and white men, have resulted in a ripple of damning effects on the life of black women in present day.

Due to black women holding the physical identity of being of darker complexion along with the female gender, this results in a unique position under the patriarchal society; this position often resulting in negative outcomes. These two classes ultimately join together to play an interesting role in creating a distinctive experience. Motherhood for example, is a role held to the highest standard under the patriarchy for *all* women. However, black women in America have had a different relationship with the motherhood experience since the beginning of colonialism. The National Library of Medicine has addressed the many ways that this happens , with the unfortunate phenomena of maternal death due to medical neglect and a lack of access to

the necessary resources for their children (Gupta et al.). Dorothy E. Roberts states that “Racism and patriarchy are not two separate institutions that intersect only in the lives of Black women. They are two interrelated, mutually supporting systems of domination and their relationship is essential to understanding the subordination of all women” (Dorothy E. Roberts). The subordination of all women. That is a very important phrase to grasp . In order for *all women* to progress, it is important to address how the patriarchal system affects black and brown women also.

After going over these distinct effects of the patriarchy in different demographics, this paper begs the question: what do we do about this? How do we reverse these effects? How do we *rid* the patriarchy? These are very complex questions to answer, due to its extensive, longstanding history. One great starting point would be education. Education is an important factor in ending all forms of prejudice and oppression, and as time goes on, people have started to educate themselves through online platforms such as TikTok and Google. That said, the reversal of the patriarchy should be a focused topic in all schools, and expanded upon more in higher education institutions. This plan would create a domino effect of all of the other factors that would be important to ending oppression towards women. Through this widespread education, young girls and women would start to be seen more as cognitive beings, worthy of free will. Karin Nansen, an activist from Uruguay believes that the exploitation and undermining of women can only be stopped by “recognizing women as political subjects, ending violence against women and the denial of their rights” (Foeint). She is absolutely right. The patriarchy began as a symptom to women being deemed as “not fit” to own property, and has transformed over centuries to a brutal system that, while also harming men in the process, women must bear

the major weight of. My hopes are that with this paper, I will continue the conversation that has been started by wonderful women before me, and in result, spark the urgency for another person to carry on the conversation of this oppression in their lives.

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