

CHAPTER III

EXTRINSIC THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

3.1 History of Sexism in 1950s – 1970s in The U.S.

Sexism in the United States has deep historical roots, dating back to colonial times when women were confined to domestic roles and denied legal rights under doctrines like "coverture," which erased their legal identities upon marriage. Enslaved and Indigenous women faced even harsher conditions, marked by systemic violence and exploitation. The fight for women's rights began to take shape in the 19th century, highlighted by the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, which sparked the women's suffrage movement (Colombo, 2022:1). Despite gaining the right to vote in 1920, women continued to face workplace inequality and societal expectations to remain in domestic roles.

In the 1950s, societal norms reinforced the idea of women as homemakers, despite many joining the workforce during World War II. Popular media idealized domesticity, and career opportunities were largely limited to low-paying, gender-specific jobs (Coontz, 1992:231). As stated by Lim (2024) in The Collector's article, although the ideal of the happy homemaker was widely celebrated in the 1950s, many women chose to join the workforce. In 1950, around 18.5 million women made up 33.9% of the U.S. labor force. Despite limited career options, they worked as teachers, nurses, secretaries, and factory workers. Some highly

educated women also entered emerging fields like engineering and pharmaceutical science.

However, the 1960s marked a turning point with the rise of second-wave feminism, challenging traditional gender roles and advocating for equal pay, reproductive rights, and protection against workplace discrimination. During the 1960s, the feminist movement experienced a revival, sparking renewed interest in the feminism of earlier times (Gordon et. al, 1972:134). Kennedy's Commission on the Status of Women reported in 1963 that women earned only 59 cents for every dollar men made and were excluded from high-paying jobs. The 1964 Civil Rights Act included an amendment banning gender discrimination, but when it was not effectively enforced, the National Organization for Women (NOW) was established to advocate for true workplace equality (McLaughlin in CNN, 2014). Key legal victories during this era included the Equal Pay Act of 1963, Title IX in 1972, and the landmark *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973, which legalized abortion. As highlighted in TIME's article "*Who's Come a Long Way, Baby?*" from August 31, 1970, women were demanding equal pay, access to traditionally male-dominated jobs, nationwide abortion reform, and state-funded childcare to free mothers from unpaid domestic work. More radical feminists aimed to dismantle the patriarchal system that gave men control over key areas of society, including government, industry, and education (Bergeron in CNN, 2015).

The feminist movement continued into the modern era, addressing issues of sexual harassment, workplace inequality, and broader gender discrimination. Events like the Anita Hill hearings in the 1990s and the MeToo movement, which

began in 2017, brought national attention to the pervasive nature of sexual abuse and gender-based violence (Theriault, 2020:5). Despite significant progress, disparities in pay, leadership representation, and intersecting inequalities based on race and class persist, making the fight against sexism in the U.S. an ongoing struggle shaped by decades of activism and cultural change.

3.2 Theory of Sexism

Sexism is a form of systemic discrimination based on sex or gender, typically manifesting as the belief in the inherent superiority of one gender—most commonly, male dominance over females (Ridgeway, 2011:9). It is reflected in societal structures, cultural norms, and institutional practices that marginalize or disadvantage individuals based on gender. In the context of sexism, systemic discrimination means that inequality is not just the result of individual prejudice, but is reinforced through established institutions such as laws, education systems, media, and the workplace, which uphold male dominance and limit women's access to power and opportunities (Ridgeway, 2011:9). According to Doob (2021:21), sexism is the conviction that there exists a distinction (both actual and perceived) between males and females, which elevates males to a higher status and asserts their intelligence, competence, and qualifications to assume leadership roles compared to females.

3.3 Portrayal of Sexism

The portrayal of sexism refers to the representation of gender-based discrimination in various forms of cultural, artistic, and social expression—most notably in literature, film, television, advertising, and news media (Gill, 2007:10).

These portrayals often reflect the unequal power dynamics between men and women and reveal how systemic gender inequality is embedded within societal institutions and cultural norms. In many cases, sexism is portrayed through the marginalization of female characters, the reinforcement of gender stereotypes (such as women being emotional, passive, or only suited for domestic roles), and the depiction of male dominance as natural or unquestioned.

3.4 Cause of Sexism

Sexism is primarily caused by deep-rooted patriarchal ideologies and cultural traditions that institutionalize gender inequality (Walby, 1990:23). These ideologies are reinforced through socialization processes in the family, education, media, and religion. From an early age, individuals are taught to associate masculinity with dominance, leadership, and rationality, while femininity is linked to submissiveness, emotion, and domesticity (Lorber, 1994:55). As a result, these stereotypes shape societal expectations and maintain systemic discrimination. Moreover, institutional structures such as the legal system and labor markets often codify gender roles and expectations. For example, laws that restricted women's property rights or barred them from certain professions exemplify how sexism is embedded in the fabric of society.

3.4.1 Patriarchal Ideologies

The cause of sexism in patriarchal ideologies lies in the systematic belief that men are naturally superior to women, which has been historically ingrained in cultural, religious, and legal systems. Patriarchy functions as a social structure that assigns men to positions of power and authority while relegating women to

subordinate roles, primarily in the private or domestic sphere. According to Walby (1990:20), patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. This domination is not based on individual prejudice alone, but is structural and institutional, perpetuating sexism across generations.

3.4.2 Institutional Structure

Sexism within institutional systems emerges when the frameworks, procedures, and functions of key societal institutions, like the legal system, education, government, and the workforce, are arranged to consistently benefit men while disadvantaging women. Although these institutions may seem impartial, they often uphold gender inequality through biased legislation, uneven distribution of opportunities, prejudiced assessment criteria, and limited inclusion of women in positions of authority. According to Walby (1990:47), institutional structures are key sites of patriarchy, particularly the state, paid work, and male violence. These institutions operate through rules, authority, and division of labor that consistently privilege men.

3.5 Types of Sexism

Sexism is characterized by hatred toward women. Nonetheless, it is an ambivalent phenomenon with two dimensions: hostile sexism, which is more visible and consists of rejection, antipathy, and intolerance towards the female role; and more covert, benevolent sexism, which promotes the complementary nature of gender differences, paternalistic behaviors, and beliefs in heterosexual intimacy (Glick & Fiske, 1996:498).

Different forms of sexism are based on the same idea, which is that women are perceived to be "weaker." According to Glick and Fiske (2001:9), hostile sexism shares similarities with other types of envious prejudice, which are typically directed at groups perceived as threats to the status and power of the dominant in-group. In contrast, benevolent sexism aligns with paternalistic forms of prejudice, which are aimed at groups considered to have lower social status and are seen as compliant, cooperative, or non-threatening. Despite the fact that they are conveyed in a different manner, their objective is to perpetuate male domination by placing women in a subordinate position.

3.5.1 Hostile Sexism

Hostile sexism can be defined as an overarching mistrust and aversion to women across the board. A greater number of unfavorable thoughts and attitudes regarding femininity and women are often displayed by individuals who engage in hostile sexism practices. Hostile sexism encompasses a range of beliefs and ideologies. One central idea is that men must exert control over "their" women due to the assumption that women are inherently less intelligent and competent than men. Women are often viewed as overly emotional, easily offended, and prone to exaggerating minor issues into significant conflicts. Because of this perceived inability to make sound decisions, those who endorse hostile sexism believe it is a man's duty to dictate how women should think and behave.

Additionally, hostile sexism includes the belief that women do not belong in the workplace and are too emotionally sensitive to hold high-status positions. A person with hostile sexist views may assume that women who pursue careers will

inevitably attribute their failures to discrimination rather than acknowledging their supposed lack of ability. Hostile sexism was found to be associated with the tendency to attribute both negative feminine traits, such as submissiveness or emotional instability, and negative masculine traits, such as aggression or dominance, to women as a whole (Glick & Fiske, 1996:509). This pattern suggests that individuals who hold hostile sexist beliefs perceive women in a contradictory manner, assigning them characteristics that are typically not considered compatible or likely to coexist within a single person.

Despite the apparent inconsistency of these attributions, those with higher levels of hostile sexism may still view women through a lens that reinforces negative stereotypes from both ends of the gender spectrum. As an illustration of hostile sexism, consider the notion that women intend to exert control over men in order to acquire power. When compared to women, men continuously support greater hostile sexism. Furthermore, women who support non-traditional ideologies (for example, feminists) are susceptible to higher rates of hostile sexism in comparison to women who stick to traditional feminine roles. (e.g. housewives) (Glick & Fiske, 1996:494).

3.5.2 Benevolent Sexism

Benevolent sexism is a term that describes views that give the impression of being supportive and protective of women, but in reality just serve to maintain old gender stereotypes and inequities with regard to women. According to Glick & Fiske (1996: 491), benevolent sexism consists of a collection of related attitudes toward women that, while rooted in stereotypical perceptions and restrictive gender

roles, are perceived by those who hold them as positive or favorable. These attitudes often lead to behaviors that are generally seen as prosocial, such as offering help, or as efforts to foster closeness, such as sharing personal thoughts and feelings. Assuming that women are regarded to be weak or inferior, these ideas propose that men are the ones who should provide them with protection, care, and assistance.

Benevolent sexism, despite the fact that these attitudes may give the impression of being friendly or supportive, is, at its core, a form of sexism that supports the belief that women should be in a position of inferiority or dependence to males (Swim et al., 1995:206). Benevolent sexism can serve a similar role to the notion of the White man's burden, enabling men to uphold a positive self-perception as guardians and providers. This perspective allows them to see themselves as self-sacrificing individuals who prioritize the well-being of the women in their lives, reinforcing traditional gender roles under the guise of care and protection.

Acts of discrimination were perceived as less severe when the perpetrator justified them with a benevolent and protective rationale rather than a hostile one. Additionally, women who scored higher in benevolent sexism were more likely to excuse discriminatory actions framed as protective, even when committed by non-intimate men, such as a boss. More strikingly, these women were also more likely to overlook openly hostile discrimination from a husband. However, this tendency was observed only among women who did not have paid employment, suggesting that financial dependence on a male partner may make women more inclined to tolerate even overtly hostile behaviors, possibly reinterpreting them as expressions of deep emotional attachment. As a result, women who endorse benevolent sexism

are more likely to accept, rather than challenge, sexist actions when they can be framed as acts of care or protection (Glick & Fiske, 2001:111).

3.6 The Impact of Sexism

Sexism has profound and far-reaching consequences on individuals and society, shaping psychological condition, educational, and workplace outcomes. The sexist behavior received by women will certainly have several impacts. Strong feminist beliefs and stereotype threat predict reporting of sexist incidents, suggesting a defensive reaction to sexism increases sensitivity.

3.6.1 The Impact on Psychological Condition

The lack of effect of other forms of sexist beliefs may be due to instructions making less feminist participants similar to feminists. Despite controlling for these factors, sexist incidents affect psychological well-being, with women reporting more sexist incidents than men, suggesting a greater impact on women due to their more frequent experience of these effects (Swim et al., 2001:50). For women, facing both age and gender discrimination in the workplace can have serious negative effects on mental health (Harnois & Bastos, 2018:295). While limited research has explored how sexism impacts physical health, studies show that women who experience sexist incidents often report higher levels of psychological distress and reduced physical functioning. Overall, there is broad agreement that experiences of gender-based mistreatment—such as sexual harassment and discrimination—are strongly linked to increased mental health challenges (Harnois & Bastos, 2018: 285).

3.6.2 The Impact on Education

Sexism can have significant implications for education, influencing both access to opportunities and the overall learning environment. Following the women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s, sexism has surfaced as a problem in American education (Gough, 1976:5). Society stereotypes females with a negative self-concept, but both men and women of college age express more confidence in authoritative articles written by men. However, the influence of higher education in reducing sexist attitudes appears to have limitations.

3.6.3 The Impact on Workplace

According to Swim et. al (1995:201), although significant progress has been made in improving women's employment status, the majority of women continue to occupy lower-paying and lower-status positions compared to men. Some argue that discrimination plays a key role in the underrepresentation of women in traditionally male-dominated professions. Additionally, workforce segregation limits women's direct opportunities for career advancement and restricts their access to the financial resources necessary to improve their job standing.