

### **1.13 Colonizing Gender: Literary Representations of the Impact of Colonialism on Gender in Native American Societies**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The history of Native and first nation people of North America is a history of exploitation, destruction and genocide. Colonialism has functioned in multiple ways to exploit Native resources and land, and has in the process, transformed Native cultures in irreparable ways. While economic exploitation, administrative regulation, and cultural genocide in colonial America are intimately linked, gender is an important area in which all three intersect in significant ways. The aim of colonial oppression remains relatively homogenous irrespective of its geographic location—exploiting the colonized society and its resources. However, colonial oppression takes significantly different forms in different colonial contexts. Thus, it is necessary to look at ways in which gender in Native American cultures was regulated by the colonizing culture and how these colonial practices have transformed the Native American cultures. This paper examines four aspects of gender regulation by the colonial process in Native American societies. Drawing on the research by Bonita Lawrence, Tsianina K Lomawaima, Lisa J Udel, and Quincy D Newell, I examine how colonial practices transform gender relations in the colonized cultures. The classification of Indians, the establishment of boarding schools, the emergence of Motherwork as a political category, and the effect of the contact between Native Americans of California and early Spanish missions are four aspects of gender and gender regulation discussed by these authors. I examine literary and theoretical texts by Native American writers within the context provided by these writers to argue that colonialism transforms gender relations in colonized countries and attempts to hegemonize colonial gender categorizations and unequal gender relations within the colonized cultures.