Regulating the Natives Identity

Author Note

# Introduction

The article is written by Bonita Lawrence, in which she talks about the relationships between the modern world and pre-established traditions. And how this relationship has changed the laws and the ways of native people towards the present treatment, which is shaped for the whole population. Before the colonization of Canada and the United States, the Natives were living an independent life, but they were greatly isolated and deprived of their possessions and freedoms. The tradition and culture of Native Americans were abused during the settling of the Americas. The article is a valuable contribution to the existing literature. Overall, the discriminating behavior from colonizers is nothing new. The article depicts an overall picture of colonization and its impacts on the contemporary world. The colonizers consider it their right to discriminate between the natives and the colonized communities based on their culture, race, and possessions of land. Above all, it is the fact that Native people have different customs, principles, and beliefs that the colonizers are unable to understand, and they make the people deprived of their natural rights and respect, which they earned from long before the colonization took place.

# Summary

In this article, the author well-articulated the fundamental aspect of colonization, as a process of developing a classification system and a processor regulating the native identity. The two systems introduced in America by White people at the time of colonization substituted the traditional way of pursuing the relationships living of native Americans on individual and community level and the land-erasing knowledge of self, their culture, traditions, and the overall history in the process.

Native identity has been characterized and “measured” according to the criteria of race and sex. The groupings were then used to separate the communities and to denial of entitling the land to specific groups of Native Americans. This division of native Americans helps the colonizers in the theft of lands of natives. The coercion faced by native Americans was escorted with much violence and unjust dealings. The violence was enough to say "Indian" as a politically incorrect word. Natives were paid very little attention, deprived of their equality rights, and suffered from stereotypical behaviors. Colonizers divide their lands and placed the natives into reservations strictly followed by laws and government(Lawrence 2003).

## The Indian Act

The Indian Act was implemented to control and regulate the Native population by limiting their rights and freedoms, their movements, and participation in matters about lands and other issues. Whites used the land of native Americans rightfully and created much discrimination for native individuals. The regulation of the Indian act works well to accept the ways of understanding Native identity, which helps in replicating the pre-colonial systems with new forms, in case of any resistance to government systems.

The process of regulation was facilitated by the image description of the Native population occur within the culture of colonization. These images played an important role in the process of colonization by presenting the complete scum of history. These images of racism and sexism contribute to regularize the government rule of Native identity, even if they were focused on forming its categories.

## Gender Discrimination

One of the more important issues pertains to gender. The needs of the colonizers dictated that who is to be granted with status and who is to be withheld. The act defined that if a native male marries a white woman and is allowed to maintain their status but a native woman who marries a white man, she would have to lose her native identity. This clause of the Indian act seems ridiculous and is unacceptable. The loss of native identity means the loss of power of native women in society. It is rightly said by the author that with the change of native woman's identity, they will also lose all of their rights to possess the land or any other property from their native family. As a result of these marriage laws, the property owned by a native Indian man automatically becomes the property of Whites through inheritance laws.

## Racial Discrimination

The author well-articulated the basis of discrimination between the Indians granted with status and those with the status withheld. The racial distinction between the two fails to acknowledge a common history of their culture, traditions, and laws. Cultural discrimination appears as a result of ways in which a legal framework influences the aspects of daily life. The two different cultures put the communities on two different paths of development. The problem of "mixed-blood" also has adverse gender implications given the loss of status of native women, married a white man. The problem of mixed-blood raised a question mark on the identity of future generations.

## American Discourse

The United States imposed legislation in the country based on blood quantum in contrast to the Canadian-Indian Act. The problem with the American legislation was that it failed to identify the Natives with whom they did not prefer to create treaties. These are the people who are nor granted federal recognition and are considered as extinct. Because of the choices presented by colonial regulation in the times of Indians, the highly patriarchal structure practiced under the Indian Act was equal to the blood quantum. The reason it was equated with the blood quantum was its race-based nature. One example of this is the sexism and patriarchal connotations of the system.

The Native community was facing difficulty declaring boundary mark between their small portion of lands and the lands of colonizers around them due to colonial encroachment. According to the Indian act, only those Indians having access to the Indian land are known as people of indigenous heritage.

Colonization is not simply the breakdown of traditional institutions or the matter of brainwashing, but it puts the natives in a continuous struggle for their rights and freedoms, which were ruined by the colonizers. The critical issue faced by the Native societies is whether they can oppose the discourses of government to recreate the geopolitical alliances without bothering the settler's definition of indigenous governance.

# Comparison

To further my understanding of the issue of gender and race, I have gone through another article titled "Racism, Sexism, and Colonialism: The impact on the Health on Aboriginal Women in Canada," written by Carrie Bourassa, Kim Mckay-Mcnabb And Mary Hampton. The article is comparatively more focused on describing the links between racism, sexism, and colonialism and their impacts on native women's identity. The author well-articulated how externally-imposed oppression disrupts the identity and health of Aboriginal women as a result of colonialist policies. Authors clearly state that Cultural identities are impossible to be separated from family, community, spirituality, and history. While these elements are cohesive in a holistic understanding of well-being and health.

The underlying concept of Bonita's article is gender and law, but she has focused a little on gender specifically. Bonita discusses more the diverse relationships between Natives and colonizers. She talked more about the Canadian-Indian law for the gender identity of natives but has not described how that law particularly impacts the Native women of the colonized society. However, the laws regarding the act of blood-quantum require to be defined in a more comprehensive way in both the articles.

Overall the two articles give some arguments on colonization and the sufferings of the Native communities. Both articles have made a necessary contribution to the existing literature in recognizing the continual impacts of colonialism on the cultural and historical transmission of values. Papers highlighted the effects of colonization on the health and welfare of Aboriginal communities. These two articles are a healthy contribution to the growing body of literature on the impacts of colonization. The series of the “Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS)” is used by the authors to observe the relationship between Indigenous-specific sources and social capital.

Moreover, Bonita states that Aboriginal communities are still suffering from restricted access to residential school systems, and laws for governing membership in Aboriginal communities with gender-specific impacts. All this is happening just because of colonialism and the legacies of the Canadian-Indian act, with limited access to economic resources. “Colonization required the quietening of Indigenous Nations and other Native women, as co-operative societies did not adjust within the individualistic and gender biased ways of the colonization”(Moffat 2006).

One major addition of Bonita Lawrence's article in literature is that she comes up with a claimable argument that the general concept of Indigenous politics in the history of Canada is race-based as a whole. Bonita claimed that racial discrimination embodied in Indian status denies the autonomous power by substituting the communalist’s concept with Indian ideas.

Bonita further her argument by saying that the disparity in the race, gender, and laws that were created by the colonizer Government is now being counteracted as integral differences, and Canada, up to some extent, is successful in securing their rights and affiliation with Indian status. This success leads the Natives Canadians to come up with an Indian identity that remains static.

**References**

Lawrence, Bonita. 2003. “Gender, Race, and the Regulation of Native Identity in Canada and the United States: An Overview.” *Hypatia* 18(2): 3–31.

Moffat, Sandra. 2006. “Racism, Sexism and Colonialism: The Impact on the Health of Aboriginal Women in Canada.” *Resources for Feminist Research* 31(3–4): 173–174.