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INDIAN WOMEN, DOMESTICITY, AND LIBERAL STATE FORMATION:  
THE GENDERED DIMENSION OF INDIAN POLICY REFORM  
DURING THE ASSIMILATION AND ALLOTMENT ERAS

by

Howard James Hayes

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For the Degree of  
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THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

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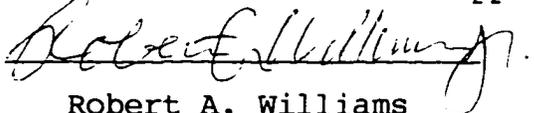
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## ABSTRACT

The question this thesis asks is: How have non-Indian conceptions of masculinity and femininity shaped federal Indian policy during the late nineteenth-century ? The answer to this question lies, I will argue, in the process of liberal state formation itself; a process which necessarily involves the continued reproduction of gender hierarchies and systems of male power that privilege men and masculinity over women and femininity. This public/private dichotomy, and the system of gender relations it supports, restricts women's social role to within a highly circumscribed private sphere separate and distinct from the public sphere of economy and state occupied by men. Therefore, as a reflection of the overall process of liberal state formation, the process of incorporating Indian peoples into the American social, economic, and political mainstream undertaken during the assimilation and allotment eras, necessarily entailed the reproduction of Euroamerican gender hierarchies within Indian societies.

### *Introduction*

The concept of gender refers to those culturally defined human characteristics labeled masculine and feminine, and the term gender relations to the differential social patterning of men's and women's lives which results from gendered practices.<sup>1</sup> As such, gender is a fundamental ordering principle of human social relations. And, to the degree that the history of federal Indian policy is also a history of human social relations, it cannot be fully understood apart from the gender ideology which undergirds it. Therefore, the question this paper asks is: How has federal Indian policy been shaped by non-Indian conceptions of masculinity and femininity? Using gender relations as a primary category of analysis, I will argue that during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries both federal policies and private reform efforts aimed at effecting the cultural assimilation of American Indians were inherently gendered; resulting in the attempted reordering of gender relations within Indian societies to reflect prevailing Euroamerican standards.

The gender ideology which underlay assimilation is firmly rooted in the liberal ideals of gendered nationalism. Gendered nationalism is a concept which " refers to the construction of a national identity and solidarity based on masculinist notions of self-determination and autonomy which

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<sup>1</sup> V. Spike Peterson, and Anne Sisson Runyon. Global Gender Issues (West View Press, 1993), 17.

[occurs] at the expense of women's self-definitions and solidarity with each other."<sup>2</sup> The resulting gender hierarchy " and system of power which privileges men and that which is associated with masculinity over women and that which is associated with femininity " restricts women's social role to a highly circumscribed private sphere separate and distinct from the public sphere of economy and state occupied by men.<sup>3</sup>

This public/private dichotomy and the gender hierarchy it supports was a fundamental ordering principle of the assimilation campaign, structuring both the contours of federal policy and the ways in which the differential patterning of women's and men's lives was reflected in the work of the two most influential Indian reform advocacy groups of the assimilation era: The male defined Indian Rights Association (IRA), and the female defined Women's National Indian Association (WNIA).

The movement for Indian policy reform exerted a strong influence on federal policy makers during the assimilation era. This is particularly true of both the IRA and WNIA whose advocacy shaped federal Indian policy in ways which reflected the class and gender interests of their respective memberships. However, while each of these groups shared nearly identical policy objectives and organizing strategies, the work of the WNIA was undertaken within a theoretically

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 103.

confined " women's sphere." As a result, its role in the assimilation campaign was limited to patterning the lives of American Indian women after the same ideology of domesticity which ordered the lives of the women of the WNIA. Ironically, the ideology of domesticity promoted by the WNIA reflected both the limitations of women's advocacy for Indian policy reform, and the expansion of the social role of non-Indian women in ways which challenged the prevailing gender hierarchy.

However, the liberatory potential of the wider women's benevolent reform movement of which the WNIA was a part, developed at the expense of American Indian social relations in general, and American Indian women in particular. In this regard women's reform organizations like the WNIA participated in common with their male counterparts in attempting to reproduce among Indian societies eurocentric and masculinist constructions of self-determination and autonomy designed to facilitate both their dispossession and assimilation. Therefore, the resulting conflation of gender ideology and federal Indian policy will be the subject of the following discussion; a discussion which will analyze the origins of assimilation era gender ideology; its role in shaping the goals of both the assimilation campaign in general and the work of the WNIA in particular, and conclude by demonstrating that, as a result, the reproduction of Euroamerican gender relations among Indian societies became a fundamental goal of federal Indian policy.

*The Gendered Roots of Liberalism*

Among the texts which comprise the canon of western political philosophy, Thomas Hobbes' Leviathan, and John Locke's The Second Treatise of Government are credited with laying much of the theoretical foundation of the liberal state. For both Hobbes and Locke, the pre-social state of nature both precedes the establishment of, and stands opposed to, civil society. And, it is their analysis of human interactions within the state of nature which provides both a common point of departure for their respective articulations of the formation of civil government, as well as valuable insights into the status of women in American society during the nineteenth - century.

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) has written that when human interactions are abstracted from their historical and contingent ties to the larger social milieu, a pre-social state of nature exists. A state which women have historically been perceived to embody. In the state of nature each human individual is roughly equal in power, and there being no external authority for the regulation human interactions apart from the social or familial obligations that each has voluntarily assumed, each individual is free in their undisturbed right to pursue their individual, rational self-interest.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge University Press, 1996).

However, Hobbes contends that in the state of nature conflict among individuals is inevitable, resulting from three fundamental human characteristics: competitiveness, diffidence (distrust of other people), and glory (the pleasure of feeling one's own power).<sup>5</sup> In the presence of these characteristics, and in the absence of any external regulatory authority or civil government, individuals in the state of nature are engaged in a "war of every man against every man."<sup>6</sup> In such a war there can be no security and thus no freedom, for in the absence of "a common power to keep them all in awe," human beings by their nature will "naturally endeavor, as far as [they] dare" to exert their autonomy "far enough to make them destroy each other."<sup>7</sup> In the state of nature, which is the war of all against all

there is no place for industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain; and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious buildings; no instruments of moving or removing, no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death, and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 89.

Similarly, John Locke (1632-1704) maintained that in the state of nature each individual is free and equal to every other individual.<sup>9</sup> And, like Hobbes, also held that, in the absence of any external regulatory power, human beings would soon confront the reality that in their natural pre-social state "ill nature, passion, and revenge [would] carry them too far . . . and hence nothing but confusion and disorder will follow " from their exercise of unbridled freedom.<sup>10</sup> For both Hobbes and Locke then, the insecurity and violence of the state of nature, being contrary to the "general rule of reason that every man ought to endeavor peace," could only be remedied through the establishment of civil government.<sup>11</sup> The formation of civil government out of the state of nature is predicated upon the notion that since it is not in the rational self-interest of individuals to persist in a war of all against all, it is necessary that they resign their right to individual self protection in exchange for the relative peace and security offered by an external regulatory body or civil government.

While both Hobbes and Locke agree to the necessity based in reason for the creation of civil governments, they

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<sup>9</sup> John Locke, Two Treatises of Government, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge University Press, 1960).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 275.

<sup>11</sup> Hobbes, 92.

disagree as to the scope of that power which is held to be legitimately exercised by them. According to Locke, power in civil society is held and legitimately exercised only with the consent of the governed, in the furtherance of community interests, and must be subject to moral constraints.<sup>12</sup> For Hobbes, this authority, to whom all people have surrendered their rights and who is charged with the protection of its subjects, is the sovereign, absolute power, who, as enforcer of the social contract, is not itself subject to that contract.<sup>13</sup>

However, despite their differences, both of these men assent to the proposition that our common capacity for reason is the foundation for a universal human equality unattainable in the state of nature. If all people are rational then all people are equal, and thus theirs is an ostensibly egalitarian ideology in which the rights of the individual to pursue their own self-interest are held to be sacrosanct, subject only to the power of civil authorities to adjudicate competing claims among free and equal individuals.

Given the potential of liberal theory for an expanded role for women in the public sphere of economy and state, how may we account for their exclusion from public life and subsequent subjection within the private sphere of patriarchal family relations? Carole Pateman argues that

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<sup>12</sup> Locke, 355-364.

<sup>13</sup> Hobbes, 172.

contemporary mainstream political theorists do not consider the subjection of women by men under any circumstance to be a political issue. She writes that:

Political theorists base their inquiries on the assumption that their subject lies in the public world of the economy and state and that the private realm of domestic, familial, and sexual relations lies outside their proper concerns . . . The structure of the relationship between the sexes is ignored and sexual relations stand as the paradigm of all that is private or non-political.<sup>14</sup>

The public/private dichotomy criticized by Pateman has its roots in the liberal philosophy of Hobbes and Locke discussed above, of which Pateman writes:

In the story of the creation of civil society through an original agreement, women are brought into the new social order as inhabitants of a private sphere that is part of civil society and yet is separated from the public world of freedom and equality, rights, contract, interests, and citizenship. Women, that is to say are incorporated into the civil order differently from men.<sup>15</sup>

The reasons for this differential incorporation can be found in the commonly held belief among the early contract

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<sup>14</sup> Carole Pateman, The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 3.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 4.

theorists that, because the family serves as the fundamental unit of social organization within both civil society and the state of nature, the rights and privileges accrued by men in the state of nature are carried over into civil society.

This observation is clearly revealed in Hobbes' contention that in a common-wealth, or civil society, power within the family belongs with the father " because . . . commonwealths have been erected by the fathers, not by the mothers of families."<sup>16</sup> However, in the state of nature

where there are no matrimonial laws, it cannot be known who is the father, unless it be declared by the mother; and therefore the right of the dominion over the child depend[s] on her will, and is consequently hers. But if she expose it, and another find, and nourish it, the dominion is in him that nourish it.<sup>17</sup>

Presumably then, women, to the degree that paternity establishes a man's dominion over his children, are also subject to the power of the husband or father. " For the father, and master being before the institution of the commonwealth, absolute sovereigns in their own families, they lose no more of their authority than the law of the commonwealth take from them."<sup>18</sup> These statements imply, as Diana Coole

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<sup>16</sup> Hobbes, 140.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 163.

has argued, that in a civil society " men write civil law in their own favor and that they must have been the dominant force within the state of nature, since it is they who are in a position to create a civil power which they use to institutionalize a prior advantage."<sup>19</sup>

However, the subordination of women to men in the private sphere of familial relations also results from women's perceived embodiment of the state of nature which, according to Hobbes, is the war of all against all. As such women pose a threat to the stability of civil society in that the exertion of unbridled female autonomy, like the exercise of individual autonomy in the state of nature, is by definition antithetical to civil society. Again, Coole provides some valuable insights into women's subjection when she writes that:

[P]olitical theory generally has always coded certain phenomena as feminine, notably those suggesting irrationality, passion, and chaos. Besides the exclusion of women from domestic and political power, contract theory tells a story of unruly passions and disorder, represented by the state of nature, being controlled and suppressed by rational will, incarnated in civil society and state.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Diana Coole, Women in Political Theory (Boulder Co: Lynne Rienner Press, 1993), 59.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

Therefore, in order to remove the threat that women pose to social stability, while simultaneously taking advantage of their " natural " proclivity for domestic responsibilities, they must be consigned to that segment of civil society where any potential threat can be minimized - the private sphere of patriarchal family relations. The organization of civil society into separate public and private spheres is therefore a partial reflection of the underlying fear that political philosophers have entertained regarding women's full incorporation within civil society. Classical liberalism's model of human society as consisting of atomized, rationally self-interested individuals posits that success in human affairs is a function of merit, and therefore implies that there can be no social causes for sexual inequality. The differential incorporation of men and women within civil society results instead from women's very nature.

However, while neither Hobbes nor Locke explicitly state that women lack the same rational capacity as men to participate in civil government, analyses by Coole and Pateman suggest that this was not the case; that the liberalism of Hobbes and Locke is premised upon the assumption of women's naturally subordinate status by virtue of their association with the state of nature.

In The Subjection of Women , John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) provides perhaps the first attempt by a mainstream liberal theorist to refute the argument from women's nature;

asserting that " what is now called the nature of women is an eminently artificial thing," and that no one knows, " or can know, the nature of the two sexes, as long as they have only been seen in their present relation to one another."<sup>21</sup> First published in 1869, The Subjection of Women appeared during a time when, in both Britain and the United States, " an increasing number of [women began recording] protests against their . . . social condition; " demanding equal educational and professional opportunities, as well as the vote; issues that Mill himself championed throughout his life, particularly during his tenure as a member of the British Parliament (1865 - 1868).

The object of Mill's essay, then,

is to explain . . . the grounds of an opinion which I have held from the very earliest period . . . That the principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes - the legal subordination of one sex to another - is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other.<sup>22</sup>

Toward this end, Mill argues that " the relation between men and women, or more specifically between husbands and wives, forms an unjustifiable exception to the liberal

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<sup>21</sup> John Stuart Mill, The Subjection of Women, ed. Susan M. Okin (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1988), 22.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

principles of individual freedom and equality, free choice, equality of opportunity, and allocation of occupations by merit that (he believes) govern other social and political institutions."<sup>23</sup> The Hobbesian subjection of women by men, Mill writes, " thus stands [out] as an isolated fact in modern social institutions; a solitary breach of what has become their fundamental law; a single relic of an old world of thought and practice exploded in everything else, but retained in the one thing of most universal interest."<sup>24</sup>

In his critique of women's social status in nineteenth-century British society, Mill illuminates " the practical contradiction between the formal political equality of liberal democracy and the social subordination of women, including their subjection as wives within the patriarchal structure of the institution of marriage."<sup>25</sup> However, as Zillah Eisenstein has pointed out, theorists such as Mill

often argue to include women within the public world without recognizing that the split between public and private life is reproduced in their political strategies. They challenge what they understand to be the patriarchal elements of democratic theory, while they accept the specifically liberal interpretation of the patriarchal division between public and private

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<sup>23</sup> Pateman, 129.

<sup>24</sup> Mill, 21.

<sup>25</sup> Pateman, 214.

life."<sup>26</sup>

In this respect Mill's Subjection takes on particular significance, for while it advocates the full realization of liberal Ideals for men and women alike, it also outlines the contours of an exclusively women's sphere that he believes should remain separate and distinct from the public sphere of economy and state occupied by men. Mill writes that . . .

like a man when he chooses a profession, so, when a woman marries, it may in general be understood that she makes a choice of the management of a household, and the bringing up of a family, as the first call upon her exertions . . . and that she renounces . . . all other objects and occupations . . . not consistent with the requirements of this.<sup>27</sup>

This statement indicates that Mill tacitly supports " the ancient tradition of patriarchal political theory that . . . asserts that whereas men are, or can be, many things, women are placed on earth . . . only to bear and rear children," and thus " the question of why, if marriage is a career, liberal arguments about (public) equality of opportunity have any relevance to women is . . . neatly begged."<sup>28</sup>

Zillah Eisenstein has defined ideology as an

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<sup>26</sup> Zillah R. Eisenstein, The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1981), 3.

<sup>27</sup> Mill, 51.

<sup>28</sup> Pateman, 216, 130.

epistemology or " set of ideas that help mystify reality. . . [and thus] the real relations of social power " that exist in any given society.<sup>29</sup> Ironically, Mill's otherwise revealing critique of liberal ideology's patriarchal construction, by leaving unquestioned the sexual division of labor which undergirds the marriage contract and the supporting argument from nature which transforms women's reproductive capacities into their primary life function, only serves to further mystify liberalism's gendered dimensions. However, the contradictions inherent in Mill's arguments, once understood in this light, define the theoretical contours of a nineteenth-century " popular women's culture " that used the argument from nature to expand the private sphere, and thus women's social role, as it strengthened the patriarchal underpinnings of liberal ideology

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<sup>29</sup> Eisenstein, 10.

### *Domesticity*

Throughout the nineteenth-century the division of civil society into separate public and private spheres was widely accepted; "men and women, it was claimed, each naturally had a separate but complimentary and equally valuable social place" within their respective spheres.<sup>30</sup> This construction of the public/private dichotomy is itself premised on an opposition between morality and power expressed in arguments from nature which viewed women as inherently more moral and virtuous than men.<sup>31</sup>

The opposition between morality and power . . . counterposes physical force and aggression, the natural attributes of manliness, which are seen as exemplified in the military force of the state, against love and altruism, the natural attributes of womanhood, which are, paradigmatically, displayed in domestic life where

<sup>30</sup> Pateman, 127. "While the pious female, therefore, does not aspire after things to great for her, she discovers that there is a wide field opened for the exercise of her powers, in which she may do much for the honor of God and the good of men; and in which she can gratify all her benevolent wishes knowing that her true dignity and usefulness consist in filling that station marked out for her by the God of nature and of grace, she is satisfied with being the help meet of the man." David T. Kimball, The Obligation and Disposition of Females to Promote Christianity, An Address Delivered June 15, 1819, Before the Female Education and Charitable Societies (Ephriam W. Allen, 1819), 11.

<sup>31</sup> Jean Bethke Elshtain, "Moral Woman and Immoral Man: A Consideration of the Public-Private Split and its Political Ramifications," Politics and Society 4 (1974) : 453-461. "Though human nature in both sexes is rendered sinful or prone to sin by the fall, yet women's nature has never sunk to the brute sensuality of man's: this comparative purity has kept her mind, as regards morality, above the standard which even the most Christian men fix for their own sex." Sara Josepha Hale, Women's Record; or Sketches of All Distinguished Women, from the Creation to A.D. 1854, 2nd ed. (Harper and Brothers, 1855; repr Source Book Press, 1970), xlviii.

the wife and mother stands as the guardian of morality.<sup>32</sup>

Liberalism's underlying public/private dichotomy, when viewed as the opposition between morality to power, imbued women's domestic role with a moral agency that formed the nucleus of a mainstream, popular women's culture which expressed " a complex amalgam of reactions to male power: protest, resentment, disapproval, fear, accommodation."<sup>33</sup> The standard explanation for the emergence of a popular women's culture in nineteenth-century America, variously

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<sup>32</sup> Pateman., 128. " The love and service of Christ are peculiarly suited to the noblest ideas of female excellence. It has often and justly been remarked, that Christianity has done more than anything beside, to elevate woman to her proper rank and dignity . . . The gospel, it is obvious, places woman on an equal footing with man, in regard to God and the blessings of his kingdom. It breathes a spirit of pure and exalted benevolence; and inculcates reciprocal kindness and regard, and all the endearing and improving charities and offices of the domestic and social state. Nor is this all. The principles of charity cordially embraced and practiced, impart an elevation of sentiment and character, to which our otherwise fallen nature can never attain. This has been perceived and felt; and particularly in regard to the tender sex. Inspired by the gospel, women have risen to sublime intrinsic excellence. They have struck with confusion that spirit of pride, or of sensuality, which would regard them as merely subservient to the whims of the passions of men, and have showed themselves beings of the noblest endowments, impressed with the stamp of immortality, and formed for exalted purity, felicity and glory."Samuel Worcester, Female love to Christ: A Discourse Delivered in the Tabernacle in Salem Before the Salem Female Charitable Society at their Annual Meeting Sept 27, 1809 , 12-13.

<sup>33</sup> Barbara Leslie Epstein, The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America (Wesleyan University Press, 1981), 9.

characterized as the "cult of domesticity" or "cult of true womanhood," was a function of economic determinism. The intensive economic changes that occurred following the American Revolution precipitated corresponding changes in familial relations; changes which "could be turned to constrain women's autonomy and effect conservative intents," or employed by women as a "cause and opportunity for further change, even for [the] assertion of new social power."<sup>34</sup>

However, as Phillida Bunkle has pointed out, the differential patterning of men's and women's lives reflected in nineteenth-century gendered practices did not depend exclusively upon economic changes, "but also upon the culture within which change occurred . . . The conception of new roles in fact fitted into a preexisting pattern of dichotomies . . . and cultural presumptions . . . that [were] deeply embedded" in liberal ideology.<sup>35</sup> As a result, liberalism's underlying gender ideology and attendant public/private dichotomy were both reproduced and elaborated in a popular nineteenth-century women's culture of "domesticity" that both constrained and enlarged women's social role within the private sphere.

The increasing divergence of the social roles of men and

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<sup>34</sup>Nancy F. Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 178-1835. (New Haven: Yale University Press 1977), 5.

<sup>35</sup> Bunkle, Phillida Bunkle. 1974. "Sentimental Womanhood and Domestic Education, 1830-1870" History of Education Quarterly, Spring (1974) : 14.

women facilitated by the shift from an agrarian to an industrial economy, and the resultant widening of the theoretical separation of public and private life maintained by liberal theory, contributed to the development of an ideology of domesticity that served as a fundamental ordering principle of popular women's culture. The rhetoric of domesticity translated the opposition between morality and power, and its supporting argument from nature, into a social role for women based upon their collective exercise of superior moral agency from within the private sphere, rather than on their active participation in liberalism's public sphere of economy and state as rationally self-interested individuals.<sup>36</sup>

As such, "popular women's culture should be distinguished from feminism," for although "by the late nineteenth-century it was influenced by feminism and overlapped with it to a considerable degree," its embrace of domesticity was also a conservative, and at times even an anti-feminist response to the social, economic, and political

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<sup>36</sup> "Moving on in concert, [women] must never become weary in well doing. Christian [women], your work is great - it is, however, at your door: you are not required to leave your homes, or your country; or to do any thing that is inconsistent with the duties which you owe to your families. What your hands find to do, according to your means and opportunities, do with your might. Remain steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the lord." Matthew La Rue Perrine, Women Have a Work to Do in the House of God: A Discourse Delivered at the First Annual Meeting of the Female Missionary Society for the Poor of New York Female Missionary Society for the Poor of the City of New York (Edward W. Thompson, 1817), 29.

changes that were shaping women's lives.<sup>37</sup> However, what's most important about domesticity is not its patriarchal implications, but its potential as a means of achieving the moral reform of economy and state while maintaining and even solidifying liberalism's underlying public/private dichotomy. As Lori Ginzberg has argued, "the ideology of female moral superiority was a central component of nineteenth-century domesticity," and as such domesticity carried with it a "mandate to act to transform the world."<sup>38</sup>

Insofar as the family is the fundamental unit of social organization, "women are the primary socializers of children and the household is the primary site of socialization, [where] women inculcate identities, beliefs, behaviors, and loyalties that are culturally appropriate and promote

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<sup>37</sup> Epstein, 9.

<sup>38</sup> Lori D Ginzberg, Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 12, 14. "Yes, Christian Females, it depends . . . upon you whether this country shall be wrecked by the flood of iniquity and death which now threatens its desolation and destruction, or whether it shall rise and come forth in the beauty of holiness." Rhode Island Philanthropist quoted in McDowell's Journal 1:9 (September, 1833): 72.

intergenerational continuity."<sup>39</sup> Additionally, women, as wives and mothers, also provide an " emotional cushion to protect the (male) worker from the psychological damage cause by the alienation of the workplace, while the husband/father's position in the public sphere determines the family's class status."<sup>40</sup> However, as much as women's domestic role was perceived to provide a counter to the morally debilitating " materialism and greed of the

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<sup>39</sup> V. Spike Peterson, " The Politics of Identification in the Context of Globalization " Women's Studies International Forum 19, 1/2 (January-April, 1996): 6. " Women then, who hold the interesting situation of mothers of families, may show their love to Christ, . . . by making it their care that their children should be his . . . In the wise economy of divine providence, children are especially entrusted to the care of their parents; and in regard to their future characters and conditions, much, very much, depends on parental attentions, example and instruction. This is a truth attested to by the ages. Is it not also true, that often, if not commonly, more is done by the mother . . . to shape the characters and conditions of their children! In their tenderest and most susceptible years, children are more with their mother, . . and the thousand endearing offices, peculiarly within the province suited to the unwearied tenderness of the mother, are of a nature most deeply and durably to impress their opening minds." Worcester, 7.

<sup>40</sup> Imelda Whelehan, Modern Feminist Thought: From the Second Wave to Post Feminism. (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 17. " O! what a hallowed place home is when lit by the smile of such a being; and enviably happy the man who is the lord of such a paradise . . .when he struggles on in the path of duty, the thought that it is for her in part he toils will sweeten his labors . . .Should he meet dark clouds and storms abroad, yet sunshine and peace await him at home; and when his proud heart would resent the language of petty tyrants . . . from whom he receives the scanty remuneration for his daily labors, the thought that she perhaps may suffer thereby, will calm the tumult of his passions, and bid him struggle on, and find his reward in her sweet tones, and soothing kindness, and that the bliss of home is thereby made more apparent." "Essay on Marriage," Universalist and Ladies' Repository 2 (April 19, 1834): 371.

nineteenth-century male,"<sup>41</sup> it was also widely held " that domesticity would shield women from the evil of the outside world and bring them status and power, mediated through their families."<sup>42</sup>

Therefore, " the canon of domesticity embodied a protest against [the] advance of [economic] exploitation and pecuniary values " as it articulated a means by which women, as the guardians of domestic morality, could justify as an extension of their domestic duties the moral reform of an entire nation.<sup>43</sup> " Mothers do," William Lyman wrote,

hold the reigns of government and sway the ensigns of national prosperity and glory. Yea, they give direction to the moral sentiments of our rising hopes and contribute to form their moral state. To them therefore our eyes are turned in this demoralizing age, and of them we ask that they would appreciate their real worth and dignity and exert all their influence to drive

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<sup>41</sup> Ginzberg, 14.

<sup>42</sup> Epstein, 81.

<sup>43</sup> Cott, 69. " Pious females may be help-meets, or may greatly assist the public ministers of the Gospel in promoting the general cause of truth and piety, by improving the advantages which they have for doing good in their domestic relations. As mistress of a family, as a wife, and as a mother, a woman may render essential service to the church of God. Who can do as much as she in regulating the concerns of her house, so that they shall not interfere with the seasons of family worship? Who can do as much as she in preparing the way, and in leading the different members of the family to the temple of the lord? Who can do as much as she in watching over the conduct of her domestics, and, by constant, familiar, and seasonable counsel and advice, direct them in the way of virtue and holiness." Kimball, 12

discord, infidelity, and licentiousness from our land.<sup>44</sup>

The ideology of domesticity, then, envisioned the exercise of female moral agency as a redemptive social force as it limited that role to the private sphere of domestic or familial relations. The internally contradictory nature of the ideology of domesticity, as we have seen, is a function of the opposition between morality - the exclusive province of the woman and the home - and power - the exclusive realm of economy and state occupied by men.

The opposition between morality and power belies a series of dichotomies which formed the epistemological foundation of the liberal state, divisions which were reproduced in the gendered patterning of men's and women's lives throughout the nineteenth-century and since. As a result, " the duality of female and male " Pateman writes,

often serves to encapsulate or represent a series of liberal separations and oppositions: female, or - nature, personal, emotional, love, private, intuition, morality, ascription, particular, subjection; male, or - culture, political, reason, justice, public, philosophy, power, achievement, universal, freedom.<sup>45</sup>

Paradoxically then, the liberatory potential of domesticity lies in its subversion of the idea " that the public sphere gains it meaning and significance only in

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<sup>44</sup> William Lyman, A virtuous Woman the Bond of Domestic Union, and the Source of Domestic Happiness (New London CN. , 1802) , 23.

<sup>45</sup> Pateman, 124.

contrast with and in opposition to women and femininity."<sup>46</sup>  
Domesticity, to the degree that it was seen as an  
indispensable moral palliative against the excesses of  
masculinity, translated liberalism's underlying dichotomies  
into a dialectic, facilitating the expansion of women's role  
as guardian of household morality into the public arena as  
agents of social reform.

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<sup>46</sup> Pateman, "Introduction: The Theoretical Subversiveness of  
Feminism," Feminist Challenges, ed. Pateman and Gross (Boston:  
Northeastern University Press, 1986), 2.

*Benevolent Femininity*

Lori Ginzberg has argued that " the belief in the tenets of benevolent femininity - in a morality defined by female traits and in women's mandate to promote it - pervaded a broad spectrum of antebellum social movements, from the most conservative and prosperous evangelical organizations to the most 'ultra' and more marginal abolitionist societies."<sup>47</sup> This upsurge in women's voluntary organizations was firmly rooted in the " Second Great Awakening " of Protestant evangelism that occurred during the early decades of the nineteenth-century; a movement largely comprised of women. The resulting " feminization of protestantism," Nancy Cott has written, " was conspicuous."

Women flocked into churches and into church related organizations, repopulating religious institutions. Female converts in the New England Great Awakening between 1798 and 1826 outnumbered males by three to two. Women's prayer groups, charitable institutions, missionary and education societies, Sabbath School organizations, and moral reform and maternal associations all multiplied phenomenally after 1800, and all of these had religious motives.<sup>48</sup>

Although the social history of Protestant evangelism is beyond the immediate scope of this paper, religious conservatives of the day interpreted the perceived decline in religiosity which followed the American revolution as a

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<sup>47</sup> Ginzberg, 17.

<sup>48</sup> Cott, 132.

function of the secularization of the state, the shift from an agrarian to an industrial economy, and the spread of liberal individualism. As a result, " nineteenth-century revivalists identified the rationally self-interested, " economic man " of liberal individualism " with the irreligious man whose heart was cold or hard," and for whom ambition had " extinguished the qualities of the heart, and hence the religious susceptibility which existed in all men."<sup>49</sup>

Women's superior morality, protected and cultivated within the domestic sphere of patriarchal family relations, and expressed through their manifest " orientation toward religion and gender group expression, " was called upon in the name of spiritual revival to stem the tide of male licentiousness that threatened the moral foundations of the state.<sup>50</sup> " Minister's religious and denominational aims,

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<sup>49</sup> Bunkle, 15. "As a wife . . . the pious woman may contribute greatly to the interests of Zion. No voice like that of a tender and affectionate wife can reach the heart of a rational man. Men who do not read their Bibles; who condemn and despise the ministers of the Gospel; and who treat with rudeness those attempt to speak to them on the subject of religion will listen to the entreaties, the warnings, and the prayers of their pious partners. In a peculiar sense, may it oft-times be said that the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife. But, not only may the prudent and pious wife, by her reasonable caution, by her jealous counsel, and by her affectionate prayers, be of use in the conversion of an impatient husband; but she may engage and encourage her pious partner to greater activity and zeal in the service of god, and in promoting those institutions which have for their object the spread of the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." Kimball, 13.

<sup>50</sup> Cott, 134.

conservatives' manipulation of religious benevolence for social control, [and] humanitarians' perceptions of the needs of the poor," all contributed to the proliferation of women's Christian benevolent societies.<sup>51</sup>

More importantly, Protestant evangelism's call to pious social activism, combined with women's growing perception that " domesticity enhanced men's power by undermining any possibility of genuine female equality," provided an opportunity for women to exercise " their full range of moral, intellectual, and physical powers " beyond the confines of the private sphere.<sup>52</sup> Benevolent femininity then, as expressed in the bewildering variety of antebellum women's moral reform and charitable relief societies, was integral to the development of women's consciousness as a class. The sexual antagonism reflected in the rhetoric of male licentiousness so often employed by women reformers reflected both women's growing perception of their oppression at the hands of men, " as it obscured women's complex

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>52</sup> Epstein, 80; Cott, 138. " If the sphere of action is limited to private life exclusively, then we have long since left our province and entered that of the other sex. . . . Women have organized associations, held meetings, published reports, appointed solicitors and resolved themselves into committees without alarming the guardians of the public welfare or outraging public sentiment. . . . We have been reproached in the cant language of infidelity for leaving the kitchen and nursery to meddle in matters that concern us not. . . . Why should we be stigmatized as Amazons, who have committed an unprecedented breach of decorum, when we appear as advocates of the cause of moral reform?" " The Province of Woman," Advocate of Moral Reform (1837), 333.

identities; " for the work of benevolence was " as much concerned with the developing class and political structure of the United States " as it was in seeking an antidote to moral decay.<sup>53</sup>

As E.P. Thompson has written:

. . . classes do not exist as separate entities, look around, find an enemy class and start to struggle. On the contrary, people find themselves in a society structured in determined ways . . .they identify points of antagonistic interest, they commence to struggle around these issues and in the process of struggling they discover themselves as classes, they come to know the discovery as class consciousness.<sup>54</sup>

The development of women's class consciousness as a function of the work of benevolent reform reflected the increasing stratification of American society along class lines more generally. Broadly speaking, the women who participated in organized benevolent reform societies were the wives and daughters of middle-class and elite men, and as such shared their class interests.

As the targets of feminine benevolence through organized campaigns against intemperance, prostitution, and general depravity, the working class and poor " invoked the perfectionist idealism and high expectations characteristic of the prewar reform movements [which] tended to take a

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<sup>53</sup> Ginzberg, 37.

<sup>54</sup> E.P. Thompson, "Eighteenth-Century English Society: Class Struggle without Class?" Social History 3, no.2 (May 1878):149.

benign view of human nature and the prospects of economic prosperity."<sup>55</sup> As a result, female reformers developed a view of " class relations as involving the gentle tutelage of inferior classes by the superior."<sup>56</sup> The social salvation of the working class and poor, when viewed as an expression of class conflict, contributed to the development of a sexual-class consciousness that reflected the interests, values, and economic privilege of the middle-class and elite of both sexes.<sup>57</sup>

In this regard feminine benevolence, as an extension of women's domestic function as guardian of Protestant morality, legitimated the existing social order and thus obscured the patriarchal subjection of women to men. Antebellum popular women's culture, structured as it was by the ideologies of domesticity, benevolent femininity, and liberal patriarchy

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<sup>55</sup> Richard Slotkin. The Fatal Environment: The myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization 1800-1890. (New York: Harper Perennial, 1985), 317.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> " For important purposes the Sovereign of the world has seen fit in his infinite wisdom, greatly to diversify the conditions of mankind; and by this arrangement of his providence opportunity is afforded them for a corresponding diversity of reciprocal offices and duties. The rich and the poor meet together; the lord is the maker of them both. The rich are the stewards of his goods, the almoners of his bounty; the poor are the pensioners of charity, for whose relief and benefit a due proportion of those goods and of that bounty is to be kindly and faithfully applied: and if the rich are not to oppress the poor or to withhold their charitable assistance from them; so neither are the poor to envy the rich, or unduly to claim what the lord in his providence has placed at their disposal." Worcester, 11.

necessarily limited women's social role to solidifying existing social and political institutions against the rapid changes brought about by industrialization, free market capitalism, and national expansion. As a result, the "discourse of benevolence was transformed from one about gender " and sexual antagonism, " to one about class at a time of growing conservatism and class awareness on the part of the Protestant middle and upper-middle classes." 58

Following the Civil War, organized feminine benevolence emerged as a bureaucratized and highly professional social force which facilitated a partial conflation of the public and private spheres unattainable a generation earlier. Organized women's charitable, moral reform, and missionary societies emerged from the war with a new corporate mentality based not on the superiority of female virtue and moral agency, but on masculinist conceptions of reason and efficiency.<sup>59</sup> As such;

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58 Ginzberg, 198.

59 " Everywhere, well educated women were found fully able to understand and explain . . . the public questions involved in the war . . . Everywhere started up women acquainted with the order of public business; able to call, and preside over public meetings of their own sex; act as secretaries and committees, draft constitutions and bye-laws, open books, and keep accounts with adequate precision, appreciate system, and postpone private inclinations or preferences to general principles, enter into extensive correspondence with their own sex; co-operate in the largest and most rational plans proposed by men." Linus P. Brockett and Mary C. Vaughn, Woman's Work in the Civil war: A Record of Heroism, Patriotism and Patience (Zeigler, McCurdy, 1867), 41.

the post war language of corporatism and scientific charity was a significant challenge to the rhetoric of antebellum female benevolence . . . Whereas the ideology of benevolence had permitted some antebellum activists to express their best hopes for a moral society, the post war generation evinced a far more pessimistic and insulated perspective about human nature and the limits of reform.<sup>60</sup>

Additionally, the leaders of wartime benevolent and soldiers aid organizations, " who were primarily members of the urban elite, sought by guiding the nation through its period of greatest stress to assert their own class, ideological, and regional prerogatives in the post-war society."<sup>61</sup> These elites " reacted against the utopian hopefulness of an earlier generation by appealing to national loyalty, not individual moral perfection, by urging manly exertion rather than feminine feeling, and by scorning humanitarianism and exulting the reality of war."<sup>62</sup> As a result, " Civil War philanthropy aspired to a more masculine ideal, as a new generation of benevolent women and men

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<sup>60</sup> Ginzberg, 200.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. " . . . on the one side, the motherly love which kept swelling up night and day . . . in such a stream as threatened to overrun all bounds. On the other side, the manly demand for law and a system to guide and control this great moving tide . . . Except for that union-the masculine with this feminine element-that tremendous tide of love, and impulse, and anxious tenderness, would ere long have been met by pointed bayonets and turned back, and forbidden entrance to the camp and hospital." Frederick Knapp, "Plain Answers to Plain Questions,": S.C. Bulletin 1:10 (15 March 1864): 289.

proposed that scientific rather than moral principles characterize social warfare."<sup>63</sup>

" The war," Lori Ginzberg writes, " forced the business of benevolence into the open by stripping away . . . the rhetoric which concealed the essential nature of that work," facilitating its transition from a religious to a secular, national, and political base of authority.<sup>64</sup>

The military experience of the Civil War provided the mystique and the institutional models for the new, managerial social order. Vast resources, both material and human - and fiscal as well - had been generated, mustered organized, and directed by a central corporate authority, in the name of the highest political and cultural values North and South were capable of articulating . . . A generation of [reformers], entrepreneurs, engineers, and managers had learned in the army or through war time politics the skills of conceiving and managing large-scale enterprises.<sup>65</sup>

And thus what emerged from the war was " a sense on the part of these elites of their distinct identity as a class, [and] of their own power to organize society and to enforce their authority politically."<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Ginzberg, 134.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Slotkin, 294.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 295.

Following the war, reconstruction gave new impetus to the work of benevolence as charitable organizations organized relief for the victims of the war and began the process of elevating the freedmen from the degradation of slavery into the light of Christian civilization. As Francis Paul Prucha has written, "evangelical reformism thrived in this new ebullient atmosphere," for the war had "reinforced the evangelical aspiration and sentiments of the nation, touching many with a new revivalist ardor that could not be suddenly cooled by Appomattox."<sup>67</sup> However, this latest wave of benevolent fervor, disciplined and professionalized by the war experience, was allied more closely with the interests of the economic, political, and professional elites than had the earlier generation of reformers.

Again, Lori Ginzberg provides some valuable insights into the nature of post-war feminine benevolence when she writes:

To the extent that benevolence acquired a business like rhetoric, it adopted other aspects of the emerging corporate mentality: ever stronger class identification, a rejection of calls upon women to overcome class differences in the interests of sisterhood, and hostility to those who urged dramatic social change . . . No longer something to transcend through virtue, class standing was now understood explicitly as something to protect.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Francis Paul Prucha, The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians, Vols. 1 and 2 Unabridged (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984) [hereinafter Prucha I], 480.

<sup>68</sup> Ginzberg, 198.

In this respect, the work of feminine benevolent and missionary groups, as opposed to the activities of the nascent women's suffrage movement, was decidedly conservative in character. In the post war world, feminine sentimentality was tempered by the stern realities of class and racial conflict as middle-class and elite women struggled alongside their male counterparts to absorb into the existing social and economic order disparate and potentially threatening social elements on terms favorable to their interests.

Post-war feminine benevolence, therefore, manifested a growing paternalism which envisioned " the imposition of regimes of tutelary philanthropy " as a means of insuring the continued economic dependence and political subordination of Indians, blacks, and the lower classes.<sup>69</sup> The intersection of benevolent ideology and class interest undermined the subversive potential of feminine benevolence transforming it into both a model for, and an instrument of, social control.

As we have seen, liberal theory's underlying patriarchal structure, and its supporting argument from nature, restricts women's social role to the private sphere of patriarchal family relations and codes them as " objects of possession and protection by the paternal head of the family."<sup>70</sup> Similarly, this familial order also provided the model for the subordination of the lower classes, blacks, and Indians,

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<sup>69</sup> Slotkin, 317.

<sup>70</sup> Pateman, 42-43.

who, like women, were also associated with that untamed state of nature out of which Hobbes and Locke believed civil society to have been forged.

*The Women's National Indian Association*

" With the termination of our great war," predicted Minnesota Representative Ignatious Donnelly in February 1865, " a great migration will spring up of which the world has as yet known no parallel; and in a few short years every tract capable of settlement and cultivation will pass into the occupancy of the white man."<sup>71</sup> Indeed, following the Civil War, the process of westward national expansion received a new impetus as " the project of fighting a modern war " facilitated the " emergence of the United States as an industrial power " with seemingly limitless potential for growth.<sup>72</sup> The completion of the first transcontinental railroad in 1869 accelerated this process, transforming " the conditions under which the civilized population of this country [would]come in contact with the wild [Indian] tribes " who occupied vast stretches of the nation's interior.<sup>73</sup>

With the completion of the transcontinental railroad federal Indian policy suddenly came under increased scrutiny as various interests grappled with the issue of how best to overcome the barrier that Indians presented to the orderly

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<sup>71</sup> Congressional Globe, 38th Congress, 2d session, appendix, 61. As Quoted in Prucha I , 593.

<sup>72</sup> Slotkin, p. 296.

<sup>73</sup> Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1869, House Executive Document no. 1, 41-42.

settlement of the frontier. One such interest was the Women's National Indian Association (WNIA).<sup>74</sup> Founded in 1879, the WNIA became one of the first major Indian reform groups to organize nationally. The association's founders, Mary Lucinda Bonney and Amelia Stone Quinton had long been active in missionary and benevolent work; serving together as members of the Women's Home Mission Circle of the First Baptist Church of Philadelphia, and as teachers at the Chestnut Street female seminary.<sup>75</sup> Disappointed with the lack of interest that the members of the Women's Home Mission Circle had shown for the cause of Indian reform, benevolent, and missionary work, Bonney and Quinton left their other posts

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<sup>74</sup> Written in 1883, The preamble to the WNIA constitution reads: " The Christian women of this nation, deeply deploring the long catalog of unjust dealings of our government with Indians, and the great suffering and waste of resources consequent thereon, and conscious of personal responsibility for efforts to secure the adoption of a just, protective and fostering Indian policy, do unite [as the WNIA] for earnest work to this end." Constitution of The Women's National Indian Association, adopted October 27th 1883 , 19.

<sup>75</sup> Bonney had in fact founded of the Chesnut Street Female Seminary in Philadelphia, and was President of the Women's Home Mission circle; as well as a prominent member of the Women's Union Missionary Society of America for Heathen Lands. Quinton had worked in a variety of charity asylums, alms houses, prisons, and, in 1874, joined the Women's Christian Temperance Union, becoming a skilled state organizer.

and formed what was to become known, by 1884, as the WNIA.<sup>76</sup>

The stated mission of these non-Indian, middle-class and elite women, which was reprinted in a more succinct form in every addition of their monthly newsletter, The Indians' Friend, reads as follows:

1st. To awaken or strengthen that public sentiment which shall aid our Government in its adoption of a policy which, with due regard to the principles of equity and justice involved in past treaties with Indian tribes . . . will lead to the final abolition of the reservation system, by giving to all Indians . . . the same law protection, common school education, and citizenship, as are enjoyed by all other races among us. 2nd. By our own educational and mission work, or both, for and among Indians to hasten as much as is in our power their civilization, Christianization and enfranchisement.<sup>77</sup>

These statements, taken together, define the central nature of the WNIA's work: forced acculturation through Indian policy reform. The concept of assimilation embraced by the WNIA was driven by a belief that Indians could be elevated from savagery to civilization by enlightened social policy. A belief grounded in both religious conviction, and

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<sup>76</sup> " You know our modes of work:" wrote WNIA President Mary Bonney in the organization's 1884 annual report . . . " direct appeals to Christian pastors, editors, churches and societies, and appeals to the people by parlor and public meetings, and hundreds of thousands of pages of literature scattered over our land, comprising general statements of facts, appeals, and representative cases collected from Government Reports and other official documents, of the unjust and cruel treatment of Indians." Annual Report of the Women's National Indian Association, 1884, 10.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 19-20.

scientific theories of human social evolution. In the early 1880's, Lewis Henry Morgan proposed that human social development progressed through three distinct stages: savagery, barbarism, and civilization.<sup>78</sup> According to this three phase model, all of the peoples of the earth could be assigned to one of these categories.<sup>79</sup> Indians, according to Morgan, belonged to either the savage or barbarian stage, and were therefore incapable of becoming civilized before being swept away by encroaching white civilization.<sup>80</sup>

However, Morgan also argued that societies were not prisoners of their respective evolutionary stations, but could be induced to further advancement through private land ownership. Each stage of human social evolution was marked, in Morgan's view, by a distinct economic system. The system of private land ownership being the mark of advanced,

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<sup>78</sup> Frederick E. Hoxie, A final Promise: the Campaign to Assimilate the Indians 1870-1920, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984); 17-18.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> As Former Interior Secretary Carl Shurz wrote in 1880: "I am profoundly convinced that a stubborn maintenance of the system of large Indian reservations must eventually result in the destruction of the red men . . . The circumstance surrounding them place before the Indians this stern alternative: extermination or civilization. The thought of exterminating a race, once the only occupant of the soil upon which so many millions of our own people have grown prosperous and happy, must be revolting to every American who is not devoid of all sentiment of justice and humanity. To civilize them, which was once only a benevolent fancy, now has become an absolute necessity, if we mean to save them. Carl Shurz, " Present Aspects of the Indian Problem," North American Review, CXXXIII (July 1881), 7.

civilized economies. Private property, therefore, was seen as the perfect vehicle for accomplishing the assimilation and cultural advancement of Indian tribes. Morgan's ideas strongly influenced the Indian reform movement, serving as the scientific rationale for an assimilation program which advocated the civilization of Indian peoples on economic, political, and moral grounds.<sup>81</sup>

From its inception, the WNIA criticized long standing government policies designed to remove Indian tribes from the path of advancing white settlement and relocate them onto isolated reservations until such a time as they were able to join the ranks of civilized society. However, while both the WNIA and Federal Government may have shared a commitment to the ultimate goal of Indian assimilation, they disagreed as to the means by which this was to be achieved; for the realities of reservation life, where dependency, factionalism, and general social disintegration were the order of the day, undermined any attempt to assimilate Indians into the dominant society.

Indeed, while reservation life did in fact contribute to the collapse of many aspects of tribal culture, the resulting

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<sup>81</sup> Hoxie, 17-18. Additionally, it had often been declared from the pulpit that; " The moral and religious state of any society may always be very accurately determined from the estimation in which women are held. As darkness and depravity prevail, they are hid from the world and treated as slaves; as civilization and religion advance, they are brought to the light, receive the confidence of the other sex, and become their real companions, their associates, their counselors, and their helpers in the discharge of duties social and religious." Perrine, 7.

social, economic, and political chaos fueled often violent confrontations between the Indians, settlers, and the army which threatened the orderly settlement and economic development of the West. Therefore, fully secure in their belief that the reservation system was both a barrier to assimilation, and the chief cause of Indian degradation at the hands of the federal government, the WNIA embraced as its policy goals;

First; Securing tribes as such in the possession of their reservations [to] prevent forced removals. Second; authorizing the president, whenever he thinks it for the best interests of the Indians on a reservation, to allot it to the Indians in severalty. Third; extending over a tribe, after the completion of allotments, the laws, both civil and criminal, of the state or territory in which they reside. Fourth; After all the lands on a reservation have been allotted, or sooner, if the president deems it best . . . the secretary of the interior may purchase the unallotted lands, the principle of the purchase money to be held by the United States, for twenty-five years, to the credit of the tribe, and the interest . . . to be applied to the education and support of the tribe.<sup>82</sup>

The WNIA's support of what would become, by 1887, official government policy reflected a growing belief on the part of the white Protestant majority that the economic and demographic changes that were sweeping the country following the Civil-War demanded " a new pattern of social relationships and a new set of social values " that would " define more precisely the meaning of national citizenship,

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<sup>82</sup>Fifth Annual Report of the Women's National Indian Association, November 17th, 1885, p. 10.

and facilitate the integration of minority cultures " into the national mainstream.<sup>83</sup> " Total assimilation," therefore, " was a goal that combined concern for native suffering with faith in the promise of America," and

the extension of citizenship and other symbols of membership in American society would reaffirm the power of the nation's institutions to mold all people to a common standard. Success in assimilating Indians would reaffirm the dominance of the white protestant majority, for such an achievement would extend the reach of the majority's cultural norms.<sup>84</sup>

Therefore, the WNIA's goal of total assimilation was far more than just a benevolent fancy; for its success would not only save the Indian from extermination, but more importantly, it would also reaffirm women's social role as guardians of the nation's morality and thus validate the partial conflation of the public and private spheres that post-Civil War feminine benevolence had achieved. As a result, any attempt to mold Indians to a uniform national standard necessarily entailed their conformity to the prevailing gender ideology as well. And this, far more than its advocacy for the abolition of the reservation system and the allotting of tribal lands, was the work of the WNIA.

In its 1883 annual report, the WNIA announced that it was about to embark on " new work, " for the Association

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<sup>83</sup>Hoxie, 13.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

hoped to " begin school and missionary work among Indians as soon as practicable; "85 an endeavor which prompted its defense against unnamed critics who believed that the WNIA's attention to missionary work would detract from the larger struggle to secure Indian tribes " full civil rights." The report goes on to state that:

And, first, it has appeared to some unwise to divert to any extent our attention from the effort to secure civil and political protection for the Indian. The answer to this objections, that just at this time, Providence has answered our prayers by bringing the gentleman's Indian Rights Association into existence to pursue as their chief work, and with great advantages, this very object, thus leaving our own society free to devote, not by any means all, but a portion of our work to uplifting Indian homes; to aid the vastly needed work within Indian hearts, minds and souls, while not intermitting the effort to secure the race civil rights.<sup>86</sup>

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85 "What our Missionary work will be: 1st. It will be pioneer and missionary work among some of the sixty-eight tribes of Indians within our national limits . . . without neither church nor missionary. What a field is thus presented for a national union of the women of many denominations for labor where direst needs and suffering are, and where none responds to the pleading of naturally capable, but untaught men, women, and children. 2d. The association aims to get government aid for this work and has already received encouragement in this direction . . . A national union of Christian women can most fitly ask such help, and Congress, it is believed will vote the needed funds.3d. The kind of work to be done. This will be teaching children to speak read and write English; . . . teach young parents and others how to make comfortable and attractive homes out of scanty materials; teaching the women how to cook the foods of civilization and how to care for their children, and teaching . . . all within reach . . . redeeming Christian truths." Annual Meeting and Report of the Women's National Indian Association, (October 27, 1883), 12.

86 Ibid., 10.

Given the conservative character of post-war benevolent femininity, the previous statement should not be surprising; for despite the widespread acceptance of women's public and social role as guardians of national morality, they remained ultimately confined by liberal patriarchy's underlying public/private dichotomy. As the WNIA's annual report implies, the establishment of the Indian Rights Association (IRA) and its acceptance as the more effective vehicle for achieving the goal of Indian reform illuminates the reproduction of the ideology of separate spheres within the Indian reform movement itself. "No doubt," writes Joan Brumberg;

the women believed that the IRA members, armed with the franchise, would have more political power in promoting Indian citizenship, allotment, and equal rights while the women would do what they had traditionally done in earlier reform groups-work within the women's sphere and minister to women and children.<sup>87</sup>

As we have seen, the day to day ordering of domestic relations, being the particular province of women as socializers of the young, guardians of morality, and agents of cultural transmission, had long been considered to be the only culturally sanctioned social activity available to women. Consequently, the efforts of the WNIA began to move

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<sup>87</sup> Valerie Sherer Mathes, "Nineteenth Century Women and Reform: The Women's National Indian Association" American Indian Quarterly, Winter (1990), 7.

with fast gathering moral forces toward success in their purpose of ending the enforced degradation of a race. And the success of this work for freeing, elevating, and Christianizing our native American Indians, now assured if not immediately in hand, promises to be permanent because [it is]to based upon the creation of the Indian home.<sup>88</sup>

By translating the rehabilitation of Indian life, and the creation of a true Indian home into an extension of women's domestic role as guardians of morality and cultural transmission; the WNIA defined the theoretical contours of a nineteenth-century ideology of domesticity that provided an opportunity for white, middle-class, and Protestant women to exercise a limited social role in the public sphere, as it prepared Indians for their eventual acculturation by reproducing among them liberalism's underlying public/private dichotomy and attendant gender hierarchy.

Therefore, the task of creating for the Indian a true home necessitated that:

tribal relations should be broken up, socialism destroyed, and the family and the autonomy of the individual substituted . . . for the family is God's unit of society. On the integrity of the family depends that of the State. There is no civilization deserving of the name where the family is not the unit of civil government . . . That family life may be fostered and protected, and through it the individual may be developed into intelligent manhood, the tribal relation should be weakened, and as soon as possible destroyed.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Annual Report of the Women's National Indian Association, Nov 17th , 1885, p.7.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

Consequently, the primary target and ultimate beneficiary of these efforts would be the Indian woman; for as Carole Pateman has pointed out, women, as representative of that state of nature wherein " the demands of love and of family bonds are particularistic and so in direct conflict " with the establishment of a civil society, pose a direct threat to its very existence in that " their disorder leads them always to pull men away from civic virtue and to mock at justice."<sup>90</sup>

Historically, Native Americans generally, and Indian women in particular, have been regarded as representative of that untamed natural state out of which Hobbes and Locke believed civil society to have been forged.<sup>91</sup> Unlike their Euroamerican counterparts, who advocated Indian assimilation from their protected and privileged position within the private familial sphere, Indian women, like all non-Christian women, were considered to exist in a degraded condition

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<sup>90</sup> Pateman, 21 , 24.

<sup>91</sup> The history of Indian-White relations is replete with references to the Indian's embodiment of the state of nature. A state which has long justified their dispossession. See John Locke, The Second Treatise of Government, Peter Laslett ed., (Cambridge University Press, 1960)pps 285-302; Robert F. Berkhofer Jr., The White Man's Indian: Images of the Indian from Columbus to the Present (New York: Knoph, 1978); Roy Harvey Pearce, Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind, (Johns Hopkins Press, 1953). and Tzvetan Todorov, The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other ( Harper and Row, 1984).

outside of civil society entirely.<sup>92</sup> As Linda Lacey has argued;

although the ideology of the time placed the white family in a private sphere, free from interference from the state, the Native American family enjoyed no such protection. Instead repeated assaults were made on every aspect of American Indian family life, from communal land ownership to the education of Indian children.<sup>93</sup>

In fact, Indian societies in general have long been considered to exist in that state of nature described by Hobbes as constituting the war of all against all wherein the attainment of civilization is impossible. The relationship between Indian women, the land, and the westward expansion of the American state has had a long and complicated history. As Robert Williams has pointed out, "on the vast, unenclosed expanses of the American frontier, where the state of nature was experienced as a reality and not as an assumption in the service of theory," the Lockean view of nature as "being

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<sup>92</sup> "To the Christian religion we owe the rank we have in society . . . It is [Christianity], which prevents our being treated like beasts of burden - which secures us the honorable privilege of human companionship in social life, and raises us in the domestic relations to the elevated stations of wives and mothers. Only seriously reflect upon the state of our sex, in those regions of the globe unvisited and unblessed with the light of Christianity; we see them degraded to a level with the brutes, and shut out of the society of lordly man; as if they were made by their creator, not as companions, but as the slaves and drudges of domineering masters." Mrs. Rebecca Lee, An Address, Delivered in Marlborough Connecticut, September 7, 1831 (Hartford, 1831), 4.

<sup>93</sup> Linda J. Lacey . 1986. "The White Man's Law and the American Indian Family in the Assimilation Era " 40 Arkansas Law Review 329.

intended by God only for the use of the industrious and rational " long justified the dispossession of the Indian.<sup>94</sup> Therefore, " any colonist," Williams writes, " reading Locke would quickly have recognized the utter lack of common sense in leaving so valuable a commodity as land in the hands of the Indians of America." <sup>95</sup> Common sense, then, as colonists perceived it was from the beginning a driving force in the formulation of social policies designed to first acculturate, and then liberate the Indian from the burdens of irrational land use.

From the birth of the American state Indian women were seen as an important tool for achieving this end, and thus were used to undermine the stubborn attachment of Indian men to their lands and customs. After all, it was Indian men who signed the treaties with, and went to war against, the federal government and therefore it was Indian men whom the federal government sought to first pacify, and then assimilate into the American mainstream. However, in order to facilitate the destruction of tribal relations, and the attendant separation of the Indian from the communal land base, " it would be necessary to utilize all those elements in the native world that might contribute to its

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<sup>94</sup> Robert A. Williams Jr. The American Indian in Western Legal Thought: The Discourses of Conquest (Oxford University Press, 1990), 228. John Locke, *Ibid.*, note 6 *Supra*, 97.

<sup>95</sup> Williams, 229.

destruction," particularly Indian women.<sup>96</sup>

" Women," John Ridge wrote, "civilizes man or makes him barbarous at her pleasure;" and so Indian women, in the eyes of bureaucrats, philanthropists, and politicians alike, were perceived to pose a direct threat both to the continued expansion of the American state, and the success of assimilation as an alternative to the extinction of Indian people.<sup>97</sup> Accordingly, the WNIA undertook its official campaign to civilize Indian people through missionary and domestic education, a goal enthusiastically embraced by many

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<sup>96</sup> Bernard Sheehan has written that throughout the nineteenth-century it was widely believed that: " Part of the difficulty in converting the mature tribesman stemmed from the cult of the warrior, which caused the Indian male to shun most activity that the white man would have classified as work . . . By any civilized criteria, the woman was the drudge of native society. She performed all the menial functions that kept ordinary existence intact . . . The philanthropist convinced himself that she yearned for civilization, to be treated in effect, like any self-respecting white woman. Besides the children, therefore, the female of the tribes seem an admirable subject for the reception of civilization." Bernard Sheehan, Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian (New York: W.W. Norton and Co. , 1973), 166.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

segments of the American public during this period.<sup>98</sup> However, it must be remembered that the goal of assimilation was not the emancipation of Indian women, but the assimilation of Indian people generally. A goal which both reformers and federal bureaucrats believed could be best accomplished by inculcating Indian women in the ideology of domesticity.<sup>99</sup>

Indeed, the discourse of feminine benevolence, as a result of women's growing involvement by the late nineteenth-century in foreign missionary activities, clearly reflected the views of Morgan and other practitioners of the nascent

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<sup>98</sup>Undergirding this enthusiasm was the belief that : "When compelled to face the stern necessities of life and to resort to labor for maintenance, [the Indian] in a very short time becomes a changed being, and is willing, and frequently eager, to receive information and instruction in all that may aid him in improving his condition . . . The most marked change however, when this transition takes place, is in the condition of the [Indian] female. She who had been the drudge and the slave then begins to assume her true position as an equal; and her labor is transferred from the field to her household-to the care of her family and children. " Indian Commissioner Medill on Indian Colonies", from the Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, November 30, 1848. House Executive Document no. 1, 30th Cong., 2d Sess., serial 537, 386. As Quoted in Francis Paul Prucha ed. Documents of United States Indian Policy (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1974) [hereinafter Prucha II ], 78.

<sup>99</sup> "Unless the the Indian Female character is raised, and her relative position changed, such an education as you can give the males will be a rope of sand, which, separating at every turn, will bind them to no amelioration. Necessity may force the culture of a little ground, or the keeping of a few cattle, but the savage nature will break out at every temptation. If the women are made to be good and industrious housewives, and taught what benefits their condition, their husbands and sons will find comfortable homes and social enjoyments, which in any state of society, are essential to morality and thrift." Commissioner of Indian Affairs William H. Crawford. CIA Report, 1841, serial 401, 241.

art of anthropological inquiry. Evangelical women, such as the WNIA, generally believed that " heathens were, by definition misogynous " and thus hatred of women was seen as a central tenet of most non-Christian cultures.<sup>100</sup>

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only in Christian society, so the thinking went, did women's shared concerns and networks form the basis of community social life. Nineteenth-century American women were, in fact, prone to exalted testaments of the associative power of their sex, congratulating themselves for the plethora of women's organizations that represented the formalization of their cooperative tendencies. The heathen woman's failure to create any comparable sisterhood of agencies, was seen . . . as proof of the debilitating effects of heathen culture on the development of female personality.<sup>101</sup>

Consequently, the subordination of Indian women within a western, patriarchal family structure became for the WNIA a natural and socially sanctioned compliment to the efforts of male reformers, such as the IRA, to achieve a legislative solution to the problem of Indian policy reform that would

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<sup>100</sup> Joan Jacobs Blumberg. " Zenanas and Girless Villages: The Ethnology of American Evangelical Women, 1870-1910 " The Journal of American History Vol, 69 No 2., September (1982), 355. " Look then on heathen men and women in other countries, and especially in this; Contrast their condition with yours, in the particular point of view. Now bring up the golden rule. You may, and, by continuing your present efforts, you will be instrumental, in raising many, not only from a state of unnatural slavery to the enjoyment of social rights and privileges, like your own, but raising them from dreadful darkness, disorder, and uncertainty, to good hope of everlasting felicity." Kimball , 9.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 363.

liberate Indian women from degradation and misogyny. Toward this end however, it would first be necessary to prepare a fertile field, via the transformation of Indian family life, in which tribal peoples could mature into full citizens of the liberal state. In other words, it became the task of the WNIA to reproduce within Indian societies the ideology of domesticity in order to strengthen the position of both Indian and non-Indian women within the prevailing gender hierarchy, as well as minimize any threat Indian women may have posed to the assimilationist enterprise.

*The Indian Rights Association*

Of the relationship between the WNIA and IRA, Amelia Quinton wrote in 1885;

The two societies, really one in aims and mode of efforts yet serving different departments of the work, were made morally one by resolutions adopted by both during the past year, a union which manifestly must deepen and hasten the effect of the work of both. . . The possibilities of added power to both organizations from their moral union and cordial and thoughtful co-operation are too apparent to need comment. With our own thirty-eight [auxiliaries] and helpers in twenty-seven states ready to circulate its literature, and appeals to prominent citizens and to Government, The Indian Rights Association has in its hand a great enginery of power for furthering its work; and with the endorsement and commendation of our own society, by the new society's speakers, the influence of our Women's National Indian Association must be augmented.<sup>102</sup>

Quinton's acknowledgement that these two groups would serve " different departments of the work " clearly reveals the degree to which the business of Indian reform was itself inherently gendered. The gendered division of civil society into separate public and private spheres was reproduced in the work of these two organizations as the WNIA pursued the cause of Indian policy reform as an extension of women's domestic role within the private sphere, and the IRA pursued its masculine prerogatives in the public sphere of economy and state. Indeed, as IRA founder Herbert Welsh had written: " there are some things which, in the present age, can be

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<sup>102</sup> Annual Report of the Women's National Indian Association,  
November 17th, 1885, 16.

pushed better by men, but the two societies stand side by side, the slight divergence being that men have more to do with political matters."<sup>103</sup>

Political matters then, rather than the transformation of Indian family life through missionary work and domestic education, was the primary concern of the IRA. Although the IRA supported a wide range of social and political strategies aimed at the reform of Indian policy, it championed immediate legislative action rather than the more incremental, missionary approach pursued by the WNIA. In the Second Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the IRA, the organization recognized. . .

the absolute necessity of that work which has been performed in the past and is nobly continued to-day in behalf of the civilization of the Indian by teachers in government and mission schools, by missionaries, by officers of the army, by Indian agents and government employees, by hundreds of right-minded generous men and women throughout the country.<sup>104</sup>

However, the group continued, " we nevertheless, confidently assert that " the cause of Indian reform " can be fully

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<sup>103</sup> "Journal of the Fourteenth Annual Conference with Representatives of Missionary Boards and Indian Rights Associations," Sixteenth Annual Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners (1884), 56.

<sup>104</sup> Second Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the Indian Rights Association (1885), 5.

accomplished only by means of legislation."<sup>105</sup>

In broad yet incisive language the IRA held as its policy objective the passage of federal legislation that would secure for the Indian:

I. Law and to awaken that spirit of even-handed justice in the nation which will alone make law, when secured, fully operative. II. Education. Signifying by this broad term the developing for their highest use physical, intellectual, and moral powers; and III. A protected individual title to land. This is the entering-wedge by which tribal organization is to be rent asunder.<sup>106</sup>

This mission statement bears a striking resemblance to the one which appeared in every issue of the WNIA's monthly news letter, the Indian's Friend.<sup>107</sup> And, beyond their shared commitment to a multi-lateral campaign of forced acculturation, these two groups also shared personnel, pooled financial and political resources, and distributed each others' literature. For all intents and purposes then, these two groups could be considered as a single organization but one which reflected the sexual division of labor that

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>107</sup> "WORK OF THE WOMEN'S NATIONAL INDIAN ASSOCIATION. 1st. To aid by every means for securing all laws needed by the Indians of the United States. 2d. To send and support suitable missionaries and instructors to reside among Indians, to labor for their help industrially, politically, educationally, morally, and religiously," The Indian's Friend.

characterized the differential patterning of men's and women's lives in American society at large.

"Women," Welsh wrote in 1894, "are needed, and if their efforts are guided wisely they may become valuable allies in our work;" provided however, they exercise " the self-restraint necessary to those who work effectively in organized bodies."<sup>108</sup> As we have seen, the argument from women's nature which underlies liberal patriarchy's public/private divide, has always coded women as a threat to the civil order. And thus for women to be allowed to participate in the public world of economy and state, they must suppress " their essential feminine natures " and conform to an idealized and masculinist conception of public sphere activism that denies women's agency " in the definition of group interests, " and compels them " to comply with male-defined needs."<sup>109</sup>

What Welsh's statement reveals then, is the degree to which women are " particularly susceptible to control in strategies to maintain and defend the boundaries " of a particular group, whether it be the IRA, or the liberal

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<sup>108</sup> Herbert Welsh, " A Definite Step Toward Municipal Reform," *The Forum*, XVII (APRIL, 1894), 184. As quoted in William T. Hagan, *The Indian Rights Association: The Herbert Welsh Years, 1882-1904* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press , 1985), 170.

<sup>109</sup> Peterson, 6.

state.<sup>110</sup> As V. Spike Peterson has pointed out, both interest group and State formation " under patriarchal conditions involves a gendered . . . division of power and labor that institutionalizes inequality or inequalities within the group: dividing women from men and from each other."<sup>111</sup> In other words, to the degree that the IRA institutionalized prevailing gender ideology in its official dealings with women, it necessarily sought to reproduce that ideology among the nation's Indian tribes. As such, the IRA " promoted gender and group identities and divisions of labor " that were, in turn, ultimately " intended to support the State's reproduction."<sup>112</sup>

As Douglas Kellner has written: " Ideology is not effective or credible unless it achieves resonance with people's experience. And to remain credible it must continually incorporate the new, responding to changes in peoples' lives and social conditions."<sup>113</sup> Therefore, in order to become legitimate in the eyes of reformers who decried the unjust and cruel treatment of the Indians at the

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>113</sup> Douglass Kellner, "Ideology, Marxism, and Advanced Capitalism," Socialist Review 8, no 42, (November-December 1978): 53.

hands of the federal government, the process of state formation and reproduction among the Indian occupied lands of the West had to reflect their interests and perceptions.

The Government, Welsh wrote, " cannot know enough to handle this tremendous power over the Indian wisely and well unless steadily out of the people comes an influence, a voice telling them to do their duty and how to do it."<sup>114</sup> And that duty, according to the IRA, was to adopt specific legislation that would introduce among Indian societies the institutions of liberal patriarchy that structured the lives of its constituents.

As Jane flax has pointed out " any episteme requires the suppression of discourses that threaten to differ with or undermine the authority of the dominant one."<sup>115</sup> The rhetoric of assimilation, which persistently characterized Indian societies as existing beyond the pale of civilization, homogenized and systematized indigenous societies as a transcendent ahistorical category; defining them prior to their entry into social relations with whites, and freezing them into rigid categories. As a result, the rhetoric of assimilation subsumed native peoples as the object-other in ways which denied their agency as active participants in the

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<sup>114</sup> Herbert Welsh, " The Indian Question Past and Present, " The New England Magazine v.III, No.2 (October, 1890), 264.

<sup>115</sup> Jane Flax, " Post modernism and Gender Relationships in Feminist Theory " Signs 12, 4 (1987): 642.

unfolding of history; a process which bore a striking resemblance to the ways in which the argument from women's nature was used by liberal theorists to deny women full participation in the public world of economy and state.

Only from the vantage point of those who promoted Indian assimilation is it possible to define native cultures as under-developed, preliterate, or primitive. Similarly, it is only possible to define women's essential natures as threatening to the civil order from the vantage point of liberal patriarchy; an institution which sought to fully encompass both Indians and women. As we have seen, the categories masculine and feminine, as representative of the overall system of dichotomies which underlie liberal theory, is also division between nature and culture. Women and Indians, as the physical embodiment of the untamed state of nature, stand opposed to the formation of civil society and culture, " and thus the female stereotype approaches the racial stereotype of the savage who is also governed by unreasonable passion."<sup>116</sup>

The replication of Euroamerican gender ideology within Indian societies, the Indian reform movement, and the expanding American state was therefore an instrument of social control designed to contain the threat Indians and women posed to the civil order. In the process of state formation,

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<sup>116</sup> Slotkin, 347.

relations within the family/household are key to understanding the reproduction . . . of groups and intergroup politics. These groups include nation-states themselves which, in fact, depend on properly functioning family/households to insure their reproduction.<sup>117</sup>

Therefore, both the WNIA and IRA, as a result of their moral and ideological union, participated equally in a process of interest group definition and state formation that depended on the reproduction of the ideology of separate spheres, and thus the propagation of Euroamerican gender hierarchies, among Indian cultures.

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<sup>117</sup> Peterson, 7.

*The Dawes General Allotment and Indian Marriage Acts*

The impact the of Indian reform movement generally, and the IRA and WNIA in particular, on federal Indian policy is well documented. What is frequently ignored however, is the way in which the mutually reinforcing tendencies of liberal patriarchy and the Indian policy reform movement manifested themselves in the attempted reproduction of Euroamerican gender ideology among Indian cultures. As we have seen, the process of state formation and reproduction depends for its success upon properly functioning family/households. And, to the degree that indigenous systems of familial and marital relations were viewed by reformers as, at best, dysfunctional; a transformation in Indian familial relations had to be accomplished if Indian people were to join the ranks of civil society as rationally self-interested liberal individuals.

Beginning with the General Allotment Act of 1887, the federal government began an official campaign to incorporate Indian tribes into the mainstream of American society in the manner advocated by reformers. The severance of Indian tribes from the communal land base was critical to this goal, for it represented the first step in transforming the Indian from a savage to a civilized state through private land ownership. The Allotment Act set out general plans for Indian land reform, education, and citizenship which envisioned the replacement of Indian reservations with individual homesteads, the ending of corrupt federal administration of

Indian lands, and rapid assimilation.<sup>118</sup>

As such, the General Allotment Act's emphasis on replacing communally held reservation lands with individual homesteads reflected liberalism's gendered dimensions. Indeed, the process of interest group definition and state reproduction mentioned above depended for its success on the replication of Euroamerican systems of familial relations among Indian societies. This process, in turn, depended upon introducing the concept of private land ownership as a civilizing agent. This idea was perhaps articulated most clearly by Henry L. Dawes, author of the Allotment Act, when he explained:

The last and best agency of civilization is to teach a grown Indian to keep. When he begins to understand that he has something that is his exclusively his to enjoy, he will begin to understand that it is necessary for him to preserve and keep it, . . . and so step by step, the individual is separated from the mass, set upon the soil, made a citizen, and instead of a charge, he is a positive good, a contribution to the wealth and

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<sup>118</sup> The achievement of these goals entailed the enactment of the following provisions: " (1) a grant of 160 acres to each family head, of 80 acres to each single person over 18 years of age, and to each orphan under 18, and 40 acres to each other single person under eighteen; (2) a patent in fee to every allottee but to be held in trust by the government for 25 years; during which time the land could not be alienated or encumbered; (3) a period of 4 years to be allowed the Indians in which they should make their selections after allotment should be applied to any tribe-failure of the Indians to do so should result in selection for them at the order of the Secretary of the Interior; (4) citizenship to be conferred upon allottees and upon any other Indians who had abandoned their tribes and adopted the habits of civilized life." Codified at 24 United States Statutes 388-391.

strength and power of the nation.<sup>119</sup>

The relationship between private property and the development of civil institutions has had a long history in American political thought. For as John Locke has written:

Though the earth and all inferior creatures be common to all men, yet every man has a property in his own person. This nobody has a right to but himself. The labor of his body and the work of his hands . . . are properly his. Whatsoever then he removes out of the state of nature . . . he has mixed his labor with and joined to it something that is his own and thereby makes it his property. It being by him removed from the common state nature placed it in, has by this labor something annexed to it that excludes the common right of other men.<sup>120</sup>

Therefore, the protection of individual, private property interests is a fundamental ordering principle in the formation of the liberal state. For without private property, and a centralized civil authority to secure individual property rights, there can be, as we have seen, no security and thus no freedom. For Dawes and his supporters then, private land ownership would necessarily entail a desire on the part of the Indian land holder to have his interests protected by law that he may enjoy the same freedoms as other citizens of the republic.

Additionally, private land ownership and the acquisition of the earth's resources through individual labor supports a

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<sup>119</sup> Board of Indian Commissioners Fifteenth Annual Report. p. 69-70 (1887).

<sup>120</sup> Locke, 27-28.

system of social relations that holds the patriarchal household/ family as fundamental organizational unit. Because the family serves as the fundamental unit of social organization within both civil society and the state of nature, the rights and privileges accrued by men in the state of nature are carried over into civil society. Consequently, the separation of the public and private spheres maintained by liberal theory is also a sexual division, and thus in the "classic liberal theorists' state of nature the family already exists and men's conjugal right is deemed a natural right."<sup>121</sup> Therefore, men as "civil individuals have a fraternal bond because as men they share a common interest in upholding the contract which legitimizes their masculine patriarchal right and allows them to gain material and psychological benefit from women's subjection."<sup>122</sup>

Therefore, in addition to protecting individual, male property interests, civil governments also protect the patriarchal right of fathers and husbands to appropriate women's reproductive capacities and domestic labors as they would the goods of the earth. With regard to federal Indian policy this arrangement would have profound implications, for the allotment in severalty of plots of land to individual Indians necessarily entailed securing the right of the Indian male to appropriate both the productive and reproductive

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<sup>121</sup> Pateman, 43.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

capacities of Indian woman. The rhetoric of the true Indian home propagated by the WNIA and other Indian reform organizations was thus a reflection of this underlying concept; for in the mind of the liberal reformer allotment could not succeed without a corresponding transformation of Indian family life and its attendant subjugation of Indian women according to Euroamerican norms.

"The highest right of man," wrote prominent Indian reformer Merril E. Gates, "is the right to be a man, with all that this involves. The tendency of the tribal organization is constantly to interfere with and frustrate the attainment of his highest manhood . . . cutting the nerve of all that manful effort which political economy teaches us proceeds from the desire for wealth."<sup>123</sup> The transformation of the Indian male according to non-Indian conceptions of masculinity was an important underlying principle of Indian policy reform, for as V. Spike Peterson has also pointed out;

From the familiar personification of nature-as-female it is an easy slide to reading the nation-as-woman . . . The land's fecundity upon which the people depend, must be protected by defending the body/nation's boundaries against invasion and violation by foreign nations . . . The rape of the body/nation not only violates frontiers but disrupts- by planting alien seed or destroying reproductive viability-the maintenance of the community through time . . . Men who cannot defend their woman/nation against rape/invasion have lost their

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<sup>123</sup> Merril E. Gates from "Land and Law as Agents in Educating Indians," Seventeenth Annual Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners (1885), as Quoted in Francis Paul Prucha ed. Americanizing the American Indians: Writings by the Friends of the Indian, 1880-1900 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970) [hereinafter Prucha III], 50.

proprietary claim to that body, the land.<sup>124</sup>

The perceived incommensurability of communal land ownership—the hallmark of tribal organization—and Anglo American standards of virility, coupled with the inability of the Indian male to resist the violation of his land by Euroamerican colonizers resulted in his emasculation and loss of any proprietary claim to either land or women. Allotment then was designed to restore the Indian male's masculinity; providing him with a parcel of land protected by law from further violations, and securing for him a proprietary claim to Indian women's productive capabilities. "Thus the family," wrote Merril E. Gates, "and a homestead prove the salvation of those whom the tribal organization were debasing."<sup>125</sup>

However, the creation of homestead and family also entailed imposing upon the Indian the ideal of Christian companionate marriage, for the Indian homestead was of little use as a mechanism for forced acculturation without a Christian wife to occupy it. Therefore, as much as allotment policy was designed to recast the role of the Indian male according to Euroamerican standards of masculinity, it was also designed to elevate Indian women to non-Indian standards of femininity. The emphasis on domestic education for Indian

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<sup>124</sup> Peterson, 7.

<sup>125</sup> Prucha III, 52.

females advocated by the WNIA was thus the feminine counterpart to the masculinist enterprise of inculcating Indian males in values associated with private land ownership and its attendant patriarchal privileges.

As Amelia Stone Quinton pointed out in 1882: "the plea of Indian women for the sacred shield of law is the plea of the sisters, wives, and mothers of this nation for them, the plea of all womanhood, indeed, on their behalf to you as legislators and as men."<sup>126</sup> However, this shield of law did not include any provision extending the institution of Christian companionate marriage to encompass Indian cultures. Ultimately the allotment process was geared more toward securing, through legislative processes, the Indian male's proprietary right to land and women than it was with securing for Indian females a protected place within the private sphere of patriarchal family relations; a task which male reformers left for the WNIA to pursue as an extension of their traditional domestic responsibilities rather than through the instrumentality of law.

"The desire of the Bureau of Indian Affairs," Sidney Haring has written, "and U.S. Indian policy makers generally to destroy tribal sovereignty is well

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<sup>126</sup> Amelia Stone Quinton "Care of the Indian," Women's Work in America, Ammie Nathan Meyer ed. (Henry Holt and Company, 1891), 368.

documented."<sup>127</sup> And yet despite these efforts, even after the passage of the Major Crimes and General Allotment acts, Indian domestic relations were, contradictorily, protected as a matter of law; for the right of Indian tribes " to the regulation by themselves of their own domestic affairs, [and] the maintenance of order and peace among their own members by the administration of their own laws and customs," had been affirmed by the United States Supreme Court.<sup>128</sup>

Although the case above did not in any way directly involve the federal regulation of Indian marital customs, a 1889 Michigan Supreme Court ruling did; articulating clearly the status of Indian customary marriages, in this case polygamous ones, under the law. In Kobogum v. Jackson Iron Co,

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<sup>127</sup> Sidney L Herring, Crow Dog's Case: American Indian Sovereignty, Tribal Law, and United States Law in the Nineteenth Century (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 141.

<sup>128</sup> Ex Parte Crow Dog 109 U.S.556 (1883), 563. Crow Dog, a Sioux Indian, was condemned to death by the Dakota Territorial Court for the 1883 murder of Spotted Tail, a Sioux Chief. On a writ of habeas corpus and certiorari, the United States Supreme Court was called to rule upon whether or not the crime with which Crow Dog was charged was an offense against the laws of the United States, or a crime within the exclusive purview of tribal law and custom. Essentially, the court ruled that the Territorial Court had exceeded its jurisdiction in the matter, for absent a congressional statute authorizing the extension of U.S. law to cover crimes committed by one Indian against another Indian, tribal law and custom would be controlling. Therefore, the court ruled that Crow Dog be released. Two years later, Congress Passed the Major Crimes Act, which provided that the any Indian who commits, against the person or property of another Indian, the of crimes of murder, manslaughter, rape, assault with intent to kill, arson, burglary and larceny, would be subject to federal criminal jurisdiction (23 Stat .362).

the Michigan Court ruled that:

[A]mong these Indians polygamous marriages have always been recognized as valid, and have never been confounded with such promiscuous or informal temporary intercourse as is not reckoned as marriage. While most civilizations in our day very wisely discard polygamy . . . yet it is recognized as a valid institution among many nations, and in no way universally unlawful. We must hold either that there can be no valid Indian marriage, or we must hold that all marriages are valid . . . There can be no middle ground which can be taken . . . they do not occupy their territory by our grace and permission, but by a right beyond our control and we [have] no more right to regulate their domestic usages than those of Turkey or India.<sup>129</sup>

Contained within this contradictory impulse to, on the one hand, destroy Indian sovereignty, and, on the other, protect an important attribute of that sovereignty, is the key to understanding the gendered dimension of allotment policy and its goal of securing for the Indian male both his proprietary claims to women and land, as well as his masculinity. Prior to the passage of the General Allotment Act, the Bureau of Indian Affairs had exercised a profound degree of control over the lives of reservation Indians. However, the realities of allotting reservations in severalty to individual Indians revealed a serious threat to both the success of the Allotment policy as an acculturative instrument, and the Indian male's masculinity; the unregulated loss of Indian lands and women to white males.

Beyond the efforts of reform organizations such as the

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<sup>129</sup> Kobogum v. Jackson Iron Co. 79 Mich., 484 N.W. 602 (1889), 605-606.

WNIA and IRA to secure Indian policy reform; Allotment itself was the primary factor which accounted for the broad support that reform had among widely divergent interests. Reformers viewed allotment as the first step toward the Indian's transformation from a savage to a civilized state.

Agricultural interests viewed allotment as a means of opening up more land for white farmers. Businessmen saw allotment as the removal of a major impediment to the building of railroads, mining, and other endeavors; and political interests in the west embraced allotment as a way to undermine federal control over vast stretches of valuable territory.<sup>130</sup>

However, the generalized language of General Allotment Act proved to be more of a broad policy statement than a specific blueprint for its implementation. As a result, divisions among the supporters of assimilation quickly emerged as debate raged over the pace of allotments, the granting of citizenship, and the administration of surplus tribal lands. These divisions eventually transformed the goals of assimilation as competing interests vied for influence, and attitudes concerning the ability of Indians to benefit from the government's assimilation efforts shifted.

In the early 1880's, the assimilation campaign was driven by a belief that Indians could be elevated from savagery to civilization by enlightened social policy.

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<sup>130</sup> See Hoxie, note 23. Supra.

Yet, this ostensibly humanitarian impulse was quickly overshadowed by the political and economic realities of national expansion. Responding to these pressures, the federal government accelerated the pace of the allotment process, transforming the initial goal of full Indian assimilation into the active marginalization of Indian people on the social and economic periphery. Economic and political considerations, augmented by changing attitudes regarding the ability of Indians to fully integrate into white society, shifted the focus of assimilation from the Indians themselves, to the assimilation of tribal lands and resources into the national economy.

This shift in focus had a corresponding impact on Indian women, for with allotment came a flood of white settlement as homesteads mushroomed on "surplus" tribal lands. In addition, the allotting of tribal land in severalty brought with it questions concerning its descent through marriage, birth right, and death. And, since no interest in tribal property was conferred to either white women who married Indian men, or their children, the focus of federal legislation effecting the transfer of tribal property interests fell on Indian women. Trapped between the demands of various interests to remove tribal lands from government protection, and its legal, financial, and moral obligations as guardian of the Indian's interests, the federal government finally turned to the regulation of Indian domestic relations to achieve its policy objectives.

Shortly after the passage of the General Allotment Act, Congress became aware of the necessity of regulating the transfer of tribal property through intermarriage and accordingly passed, on August 8, 1888, " An act in relation to marriage between white men and Indian women." This legislation provided that:

No white man, not otherwise a member of any tribe of Indians who may hereafter marry, an Indian woman, member of any Indian tribe in the United States, or any of its Territories except the five civilized tribes in the Indian Territory, shall by such marriage hereafter acquire any right to any tribal property, privilege or interest whatever to which any member of such tribe is entitled.<sup>131</sup>

In addition, this act also provided that Indian women who married citizens of the United States would be declared a citizen of the United States, " with all of the rights, privileges and immunities of any such citizen, being a married woman. Provided that nothing in sections 181 to 183 of this title shall impair or in any way effect the right of title of such married woman to any tribal property or any interest therein."<sup>132</sup>

In its wake, the Indian Marriage Act spawned a multitude of court decisions and federal enactments which attempted to sort through the legal quagmire allotment created with regard to the status of Indian women and the

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<sup>131</sup> United States Statutes at Large, 25: 392

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, Section 182.

land they possessed under U.S. law. Indeed, as Felix Cohen has written " the nature of the Individual Indian's interest in tribal property presents one of the most difficult problems in the law of Indian property."<sup>133</sup> And, at the center of these difficulties were Indian women. In its ongoing efforts to induce Indians to abandon their tribal relations, Congress passed, beginning in 1875, a series of acts which guaranteed to Indians who complied with the government's policy a continued interest in tribal property once they severed tribal relations.<sup>134</sup>

These enactments dramatically effected the status of Indian women under U.S.law, a process which increasingly sought to secure for Indian men both their remaining lands

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<sup>133</sup> Felix Cohen, The Handbook of Federal Indian Law. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 183.

<sup>134</sup> The Act of March 3, 1875, (18 Stat. 420) provides that " any such Indian shall be entitled to his distributive share of . . . tribal funds, tribal lands, and any other property, the same as though he had maintained his tribal relations . . ." The Congressional Appropriations Act of June 7, 1897 (25 U.S.C. 184) contains the following provision granting rights in tribal property to the children of certain Indian women who had severed their tribal relations: "That all children born of a marriage heretofore solemnized between a white man and an Indian woman by blood and not by adoption, where said Indian woman is at this time, or was at the time of her death, recognized by the tribe shall have the same rights and privileges to the property of the tribe to which the mother belongs . . ." The rights of a tribal member are discussed in Halbert v. U.S (283 U.S. 735, 763-764 , 1931): " The children of a marriage between an Indian woman and a white man usually take the status of the father; but if the wife retains her tribal membership and the children in the tribal environment and there reared by her, with the husband failing to discharge his duties to them, take the the status of the mother."

and the productive and reproductive capacities of Indian women - even after they abandoned the tribal relation and married a white man. In fact, even the most superficial examination of the rulings of various state and federal courts, as well as related federal legislation, will reveal that:

The courts have consistently recognized that in the absence of express legislation by Congress to the contrary, an Indian tribe has complete authority to determine all questions of its own membership . . . have been accorded the widest possible latitude in regulating the domestic relations of its members . . . and [retains the power] to prescribe the manner of descent and distribution of the property of its members.<sup>135</sup>

What this state of affairs reflects then, is the degree to which federal policy during the allotment era was aimed at securing for Indian tribes direct control over Indian women's bodies and whatever proprietary interest that either they, or their children may have had in tribal land or assets. The rationale for federal involvement in these matters lies in turn in the process of state formation itself; as Spike Peterson has argued:

to ensure their continuity, all states must maintain a sufficient resource base to fund internal and external projects, defend their territorial integrity and sustain their legitimacy against [various] challenges. These processes require the social reproduction-historically based on family/ households - of a numerically adequate and appropriately socialized

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<sup>135</sup> Cohen, 133-141.

population.<sup>136</sup>

With regard to Indian tribes, which sustain a unique status as "domestic dependent nations" under U.S. law, the process of forced assimilation through allotment necessarily entailed both protecting Indian lands and women from unattenuated male prerogatives, and the reproduction of gender hierarchy as part of the overall process of state formation.<sup>137</sup>

Therefore, the federal government's attempt to secure for Indian males both their patriarchal and proprietary claims to land and women forms a dialectic in which the apparently contradictory impulses of federal Indian policy are homogenized in a policy which protects Indian land as a function of its unique legal status, as it guarantees to Indian males their masculine prerogatives as members of a fraternal bond. As Wendy Brown has argued:

Male household authority is rooted in its provision of protection from institutionalized male violence. In other words, the patriarchal household and legitimate structure of authority arises not merely as an economic unit but also as a barrier between vulnerable individuals. . . [which] is codified and entrenched through asymmetrical legal privileges and an asymmetrical sexual division of labor.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Peterson, 8.

<sup>137</sup> Cherokee Nation v. Georgia, 30 U.S. (5 Pet.) 1 (1831).

<sup>138</sup> Wendy Brown. "Finding the Man in the State" Feminist Studies 18, no. 1 (Spring, 1992), 24.

The regulation of the loss of tribal lands, assets, and women through marriages between white men and Indian women was therefore intended to protect, as a function of the government's unique obligation to him, the vulnerable Indian male, and codify that protective relationship by imposing a set of asymmetrical legal privileges upon Indian women.

### *Conclusion*

The process of state formation under patriarchal conditions, as we have seen, necessarily involves the continued reproduction of gender hierarchies and systems of male power which structure liberalism itself. Wendy Brown encapsulates this phenomenon perfectly when she writes that:

According to the origin myths of liberalism, men come out of the state of nature to procure rights for themselves in society; they do not establish the state to protect or empower individuals inside families. The relevance of this for contemporary analysis lies in its revelation of the masculinist perspective at the heart of the liberal formulation of political and civil rights; the liberal subject is a man who moves freely between family and civil society bearing prerogative in the former and rights in the latter. This person is male rather than generic because his enjoyment of his civil rights is buttressed rather than limited by his relations in the private sphere while the opposite is the case for women.<sup>139</sup>

Women, Brown continues, are therefore limited in their access to the public sphere of economy and state by household labor and responsibility, which, as a gendered social construct proceeding from the argument from women's essential nature, serves to reinforce women's continued subjection to the "material and psychological benefit" of men.

The truth of these assertions are born out in the ways in which both the WNIA and IRA participated equally in a process of state formation that necessarily entailed reproducing among the the nation's Indian tribes the

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<sup>139</sup> Brown, 18.

institutions associated with liberal patriarchy. As a result, the WNIA:

largely preoccupied with ameliorating what they considered to be the degraded condition of their non-Christian sisters were generally skeptical of, if not downright hostile to, the emergence of [the] feminist . . . movement and its critique of sexual subordination in [American] society. Rather than examine their own social relations, the bulk of American Protestant women sought to define themselves by what they were not . . . And thus tended to support rather than challenge gender and family arrangements in their own [society].<sup>140</sup>

However, as the partial conflation of the public and private spheres achieved by post-Civil War feminine benevolence demonstrates, women's support of the existing system of gender relations was also an assertion of new social power; a power which, contradictorily, was gained at the direct expense of the Indian women who were targeted for incorporation into the dominant gender paradigm on the same unequal footing as their non-Indian sisters.

"Women," Deniz Kandiyoti has written, "strategize within a set of concrete constraints that reveal and define the blue print of what I will term the patriarchal bargain."<sup>141</sup>

These patriarchal bargains exert a powerful influence

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<sup>140</sup> Brumberg, 355.

<sup>141</sup> Deniz Kandiyoti, "Bargaining with Patriarchy," Gender & Society Vol.2 No. 3 (September, 1988): 275.

on the shaping of women's gendered subjectivity and determine the nature of gender ideology in different contexts. They also influence both the potential for and specific forms of women's active or passive resistance in the face of their oppression. Moreover, patriarchal bargains are not timeless or immutable entities, but are susceptible to historical transformations that open up new areas of struggle and renegotiation of the relations between genders.<sup>142</sup>

The evolution of the expanding social role of women over time as expressed in the emergence of the women's evangelical reform movement generally, and the WNIA in particular, are thus examples of the type of patriarchal bargain discussed above.

More specifically, the relationship between the WNIA and IRA constitutes a patriarchal bargain in that women's broader social role within the Indian reform movement was sanctioned only to the degree that it conformed to male defined needs and prerogatives. Furthermore, " patriarchal bargains do not merely inform women's rational choices but also shape the more unconscious aspects of their gendered subjectivity, since they permeate the context of their early socialization, as well as their adult cultural milieu."<sup>143</sup> Therefore, to the degree that both the WNIA and the larger women's social reform movement of which it was a part was a conservative, and at times even an anti-feminist response to the the conditions shaping women's lives during the post-Civil War

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 285.

period, the thought of "disengaging sexuality from reproduction and domesticity [was] perceived by many women [as] inimical to their best interests."<sup>144</sup>

Therefore, within the context of the patriarchal bargain, the attempt to transform Indian family life according to non-Indian conceptions of masculinity and femininity was simultaneously an attempt at validating women's protected and privileged position within the private sphere of patriarchal family relations, as well as its derivative social role. The IRA, for its part, participated equally in this process by attempting to secure for the Indian male, through appropriate federal legislation, the same set of asymmetrical legal privileges and sexual divisions of labor that structured non-Indian society. The IRA's commitment to promoting the ideology of domesticity among Indian cultures, through its explicit support of the WNIA's missionary and domestic education programs, was an integral part of the overall process of state formation which required the successful reproduction of properly socialized and gendered Indian households and families.

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 284.

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