Women Essay, Research Paper

Women in early American society regardless of their culture faced many of the same gender roles. Native American, Black, and European women were the main keepers of the home. In spite the former occupation of African women as farmers, once slaves in America they too were molded to be in charge of the house keeping duties. Being inferior to men in a hierarchy was another gender characteristic they shared, indicating mostly men leaders. However there are exceptions to this, since Europeans did have female Queens who did rule. All three cultures also had women figures as Gods. Women did share many similar gender roles shaped by early American cultures, however there are distinct differences between how biology determined gender and the amount of power and influence that women had in the different cultures.

Even though European women did not have much power, they did have a major impact in the society. All of the responsibility of the home was on the women. They cleaned, cooked, and raised children, made essential home goods such as candles, cloths and soaps. They essentially ran the domicile, yet didn t have property rights under the Femme Covert law that stated that her property rights were under either her husband s or her brothers. Native American women before their total integration into the European culture did have access to property and the power of choice. Native American women could walk on their mate, if she was unsatisfied with the conditions, a behavior unthinkable to the Europeans. The Europeans viewed this behavior as promiscuous and nasty. Native American women also played an important role as women-in-between , in which they were involved with trading, another gender role abnormal to the Europeans. Since these roles were so dissimilar eventually the European American culture displayed the gender role, which was to shape a women s world in America.

There was also an attempt to strip African American women of their identity. Through slavery women were striped of family members in a systematic attempt to remove them of their identity. African Women retained their identity by maintaining powerful kind ships with existing family members. White America also tried to remove themselves from slave America, by not accepting mix children as anything other than slaves.

Gender roles were generally shaped by the dominant invading European cultures, which enforced their views upon other cultures. Trying to remove power of choice from Native American women, and also taking away black American women s identity were two major attempts to do so. They even interpreted gender differently in the biological sense. Native cultures thought very highly of hermaphrodites and men who had feminine qualities. In Native American myth a person of this biological configuration was a called a double woman dreamer. A Double Woman Dreamer was viewed as a person of high importance. Native Americans also tolerated and accepted a woman who was manly at heart and performed men s activities, as well as a woman who dressed as a women and performed female activities. Europeans had a radically different opinion of hermaphrodites. The case of T. Hall was a classic representation of European intolerance and ignorance on the gender roles being distinguished by biological sex. T. Hall was not viewed as an important figure, such as the natives thought instead he was ridiculed and was on trial to distinguish his sex. T. Hall was never allowed to live a normal life after the trial and was caste out from society. The scenario of biological sex determining tow distinctly different gender roles is an example of culture shaping gender roles.