

Gender Spectrum Theory

Angela N. Tharp

Forensic Science, Pre-Medical Biology, & English/Writing

Faculty Mentor: Randall Horton

Abstract

Gender is an abstract subject that spans continents and cultures. Every continent has one or many cultures which have a multi-gender system. Native American and First Nation Two Spirits [Berdache] were apparent in multiple tribes, each of which had specific language for individuals depending on if they were third or fourth gender. In India hijra have a detailed historical account, tracing through different religious movements within the country and holding different positions within each era. South Sulawesi, Indonesia, is a melting pot of cultures that has retained its Bugis roots which dictate that there are five genders, including bissu, calalai', and calabai' individuals. These multiple genders, which appear throughout the world, are a sampling of what history has to offer. There is also a history behind why certain cultures refute genders outside of the binary. These cultures usually rely heavily on superstitions, religious, and scientific evidence that they have developed, adopted, or were forced upon them over time.

Introduction

Mankind separated into different civilizations that developed their own cultures and social norms. These societies spread throughout the world, taking domain of continents and islands once void of human inhabitation. Within these societies arose social norms that controlled what ranks, classes, and genders citizens were categorized as. Cultures with genders outside of a binary structure, which focuses only on men and women, can be found on every continent of the world throughout history.

In cases where the binary is accepted in a culture where there was once three, four, or a spectrum of genders, there may be outside influences causing the shift. These changes to a culture may be due to superstitious, religious, or scientific views changing or evolving over time. As cultures change, the necessity for certain individuals and their caste, system, or class ranking may also change which means the ideals in which certain gender norms exist will also evolve over time. Culture is a fluid system, altering to the necessities of the masses and bending around whatever, or whomever, has the most power.

As other cultures or societies invaded one another, they brought their own norms and regulations, thus changing or eradicating the structures of cultures in the invaded territory. When ideals from one culture are adopted or brought to another location and become the dominant thought system, they can be detrimental to customs already in place within societies in that location. Examples of this including, but not limited to, Two Spirits [Berdache] of Native American and First Nation peoples from the Americas, hijras from India, and bissu, calalai', and calabai' from the Bugis culture of South Sulawesi, Indonesia.

Sex v. Gender

A common misconception within conversation is that sex and gender are the same beast. This would lead to the idea, as it has, that there are two genders (at most three), and two (at most three) sexes that a human can be. The genders would be man, woman, and transgender, although transgender is not always accepted. More commonly accepted are the three sexes: male, female, and intersex. In actuality, sex and

gender are separate entities. While they can correlate, they do not have to.

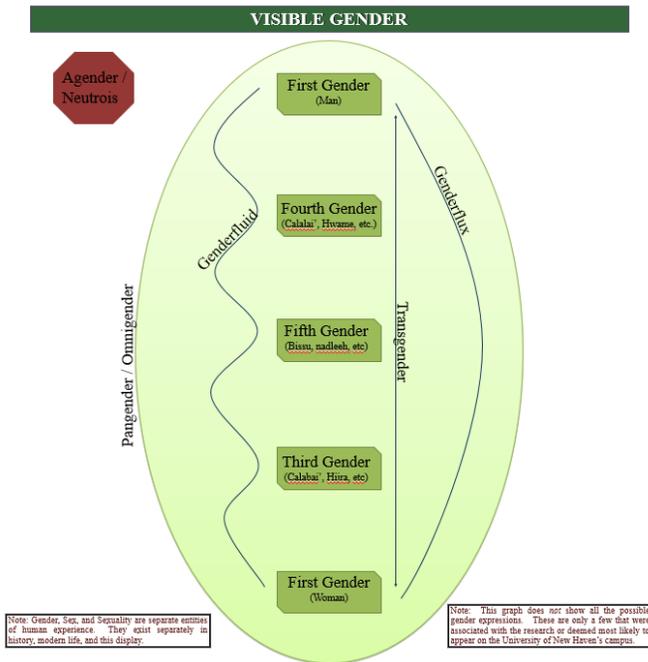
Sex has to do with sexual organs and chromosomes. In terms of genitalia, this specifically means the penis, scrotum, vagina, uterus, and gonads. This definition can mean what the genitalia outwardly looks like or what the chromosomes dictate when genetically tested and observed. If there is an anomaly in an individual's genitalia, or genetics, they may not fit into the normal sex binary (male and female). In this case, the individual would be regarded as a 'third sex', commonly referred to as intersex. There are various conditions that can affect the sex of a person, both physically and genetically. When the chromosomes of an individual are not within the XY, XX norm, the likelihood of issues appearing in the individual's health and bodily development raises. Both physical and genetic changes to the body, manifesting externally or internally, will be explored further in the following section.

Gender sometimes correlates with sex in that the gender binary (man and woman) may correlate to the sex binary (male and female) within many societies. When the two ideas are separate the concept of gender becomes muddled, and at times hard to understand. Figure 1 shows gender as it could be represented at the University of New Haven, and in correlation to the research done involving the gender as a spectrum, or gender spectrum, theory.

Figure 1 should be viewed from the outside in, starting with the vertical linear boxes. These boxes form the linear spectrum, showing the different levels of gender between first gender [man] to first gender [woman]. Starting at the bottom, the next box from first gender [woman] is third gender. There are examples of third gender individuals in Native American and First Nation, Indian, and Bugis cultures, though each have unique traits. Culturally unique traits are not enough to keep an individual gender identity out of the linear spectrum, however, thus they are categorized by similarities. Going down from first gender [man], the next gender identity in the linear spectrum is fourth gender. Of the three cultures, and three gender notions researched, this gender identity was represented in two of the three: Native American and First Nations cultures as well as the Bugis culture. Between third and fourth gender on the spectrum is

fifth gender, placed there due the idea that these individual somehow combine the traits of the other genders. Fifth gender was found most noticeably in the Bugis culture, although certain genders attributed with Native Americans and First Nations individuals did fall into the criteria.

Figure 1



Created by Angela N. Tharp

The criteria for each gender in the linear spectrum was based off traits commonly described in each culture by or of individuals representing these genders. Third gender could be explained, or translated to in some cases, a feminine male. These individuals live their lives by following the rules bestowed upon first gender [women] in their society, often learning their craft and expanding upon it, yet keep some special separations. These separations have to do with the sex the individual was born with (male or intersex) which may grant that individual possible rights within their culture. An example of this would be third gender individuals from Native American and First Nations tribes who were often able to master both men's and women's tasks within the tribe due to their social rank. Fourth gender worked much the same way in the diagram. A definition for fourth gender which was used to place this category in the linear spectrum was masculine female. In this case the individual was born either female or intersex but takes a role in their society which is more closely aligned with first gender [man]. In the Bugis culture these individuals take jobs more commonly associated with men, such as working in the rice fields, and may take wives. In some cultures, more stigma is placed on fourth gender individuals rather than third gender, allowing for less interaction with both the man and woman roles in society. Thus is the case in the Bugis culture, while Native American and First Nation cultures fourth gender individuals, like third gender, are able to stake claim to some aspects of both man and woman society while still inhabiting their own domain. Finally, fifth gender appears in the center of this

linear spectrum because it is defined as an individual who transcends the need to be either first gender [man] or first gender [woman], or closer to one of these extremes. Instead a fifth gender individual has traits one may associate with both halves of the spectrum, which may be shown equally on their person or in their actions. The bissu gender role from South Sulawesi would be a prominent example of this identification, as these individuals often display the two halves of the linear spectrum on their person through the way they dress and/or the accessories and makeup they wear.

Surrounding the linear spectrum in Figure 1 is the outward spectrum, a small sample of other possible gender identifications. These gender identifications had less to do with specific research regarding cultures throughout the world and historically, and more to do with the possibility of these genders to appear on a college campus, such as the University of New Haven. There are genders beyond what is shown in this diagram and personal research can be utilized to learn about them.

The outward spectrum begins to either side of the linear spectrum. To the right there is a straight line with arrows marked *Transgender*. This line indicates an individual who is born and identified (by doctors, family, friends, etc.) as one gender while they identify as another. The line represents the transition they go through in order to be perceived correctly in terms of their gender identification. To the left of that line is a curved line, no arrows, which is marked *Genderflux*. Individuals who identify with this line commonly switch their identification one day to the next, or week to week; it depends on the individual. Usually a genderflux person will identify as a man or a woman, on any given day. To the right of the linear spectrum, however, is a wavy line marked *Genderfluid* which covers genders the prior two may overlook. A genderfluid individual can move throughout the linear spectrum at any given time (day to day, week to week, month to month, etc.) without giving up their identification as a genderfluid individual. Surrounding all of the lines, as well as the linear spectrum is an oval which is labeled *Pangender / Omnigender*. This identification stands for individuals who feel as though they can identify with all other genders at once, or in some way. There are cultural genders (genders with labels specific to their specific culture) but as far as Figure 1 goes those genders are all under headings such as Third Gender, Fourth Gender, and Fifth Gender. Someone who is pangender / omnigender may not identify with a gender that is not culturally appropriate (not from their culture), but they may still identify with the heading gender (Third Gender, rather than hijra). Finally, in the upper left corner is an octagon labeled *Agender / Neutrois*. This identification is a lack of expression or gender association. Agender / Neutrois individuals don't identify as a gender. Rather, they are simply an individual, regardless of what sex or gender they were assigned at birth. A person can identify as agender / neutrois if they are pangender / omnigender or genderflux, however this identification tends to be less likely.

Figure 1 describes the overall theory developed during this research: that all forms of gender are connected and fluid, while being wholly human in type. This means that

gender is a natural phenomenon, part of human nature. As will be discussed in the sections to come, genders beyond the binary (first gender [man], first gender [woman]) have developed and appeared throughout the world and throughout history. What commonality these phenomena have appears to be human, and cultural.

Hermaphrodites and the Gender Scare of Europe

If the possibility for multiple genders are part of human nature, then why do so many cultures lack accepted gender norms? Gender inequality, referring in this case to binary versus non-binary genders, appears frequently in first world countries. Countries influenced by first world countries, such as England and America, tend to look down at non-binary individuals. This is likely due to the sex-defining revolution that happened in Europe and spread throughout European territories in the 1880s.

In the 1880s there were patients going to doctors for various health related reasons, some regarding their lack of children, others regarding how it was painful or nearly impossible to have sex with their spouse. In some, if not most, of these cases the individual would be found to have genitalia that wasn't up to par with what the doctors would dictate as normal. This may mean the clitoris was engorged or that the penis was small. It could also mean that there was no vaginal opening, or a bottomed vagina (stops; has a closing point within the body) rather than bottomless one (leads to the uterus).

As more cases of ambiguous genitalia appeared doctors began gathering in order to discuss the apparent 'epidemic'. These patients were called *hermaphrodites*, a word based off of the minor Greek God Hermaphroditus. The idea of a hermaphrodite pushed at the social norms of the time. Doctors from England, France, and at times Germany, were involved in discussing and diagnosing what a hermaphrodite was. Considering that these countries have societies structured by a strictly upheld gender dichotomy, the idea of someone having an ambiguous sex or gender was not well received.

As more information about patients came to light doctors began talking about what a *true* hermaphrodite was. At first it was just someone who had the external genitalia of both the male and female sexes, or were ambiguous in their genitalia's appearance. Over time the definition changed from the external appearance (which focused primarily on the clitoris and penis) to an internal focus. The gonads, an organ which produces gametes and are developed into either testes or ovaries, became the new focus of the definition. In order to be a true hermaphrodite individuals had to have the gonads associated with both males and females, i.e. a testis and an ovary. This allowed doctors to claim that hermaphrodites were not another sex natural to humankind.

Although this didn't eradicate every patient who came with hermaphrodite symptoms, it did a great deal better than the original definition. Eventually ambiguous genitalia changed from being a sign of a hermaphrodite and became a sign of an intersex individual. Just like in the past, when intersex individuals are identified (usually at birth now rather

than later on in their lives like in the past), doctors will attempt to classify them within the dichotomy.

In order to place a child within the dichotomy when they're born with an intersex condition, doctors will assign a gender (one that best matches the ambiguous genitalia) to the child. This is done by pressuring the parents into allowing surgeries and sometimes life-long medical regimens in order to keep the individual within the norms of that society. While some claim that these surgeries are necessary, in many cases they are not. Ambiguous genitalia does not lessen a person in any way unless the society dictates that it does. Should society change its opinion of what is strictly normalized and what is accepted, then there would be nothing wrong with people who do not fit into the dichotomy. Especially in cases where the condition isn't focused on the sexual genitalia. For example, there is a condition where the urethra doesn't exit from the tip of the penis but rather below it. Many doctors believe this needs to be fixed in order for the individual to have a normal social life; i.e. to be able to urinate standing up and to not be ridiculed by anyone who examines their penis. The treatment for this condition is to surgically move the opening of the urethra from the natural occurring location to the tip of the penis. However, this surgery often leads to complications. The individual may end up with nearly constant urinary track issues and surgical scars.

When the solution deemed appropriate by medical staff leads to more medical complications than the individual previously had (in many cases none), the solution doesn't seem viable. Simply keeping people within ridged sex and gender roles is more dangerous than allowing the society to freely develop into a multi-gender system. While Germany has accepted intersex as a third sex, this is not the first country to do so, and hopefully they won't be the last. In the past there were many cultures that had multiple gender system, some of which have continued to exist to this day.

Two – Spirits

Before European settlers traveled to North America, and for quite some time thereafter, tribes throughout the continent showed a remarkable tenacity for multi-gender tiered systems. The Eastern coast was less likely to have non-binary genders while the Western coast and Plains were more likely. In general, however, the accepted genders within a tribe were based off the culture of that tribe and how it was structured. If there was no need for a third or fourth gender within the tribe, then it was less likely that one would have developed within the society.

In tribes where there are multiple genders some may be considered third or fourth gender. In some cases there may even have been fifth gender individuals who combined traits typically thought to be attributed to either end of the linear spectrum as shown in Figure 1. In some tribes non-binary individuals, regardless of the sex with which they were born, would be regarded by the same title. An example of this would be the *nadleeh* of the Navajo tribe. While in other cases tribes had specific words for their non-binary genders, such as *hwame* (fourth gender) and *alyha* (third gender) from the Mohave tribe.

The bow and the basket often symbolize the two ends of the linear gender spectrum within Native American and First Nation cultures. The bow is a hunter, a man prepared to follow prey and capture it for food, or enter battle to gather the scalps of enemies. On the other hand, the basket represents the harvester, a woman who stays with the tribe and cares for the young while producing goods (such as through weaving). These alliterations aren't correct in regards to every tribe, but in a general setting this is how things were viewed. Men were thought to be males, women were females, but what someone grew up to be was not always so clear.

Children were often monitored for their association with certain items and individuals. If a child lingered around women and girls, but was born a male, their gender may be called into question. The reverse was also possible with female children. In these cases, a bow and basket ceremony may be conducted so that the child can choose the direction their life will take. Not all tribes conducted this, or conducted the same rite of passage. Many tribes that had multi-gender societies had some sort of ceremony, although they weren't all the same.

If a child (born male) picked up the basket they would be given a new name and girls' clothing. This was usually done around the age of eight. That child would later grow up into an adult that is neither man nor woman. They would instead be a third gender individual that had rights equal to men and women within the tribe. For a child (born female) who picked up the bow, a new name and clothing would also be given to them. This is how the tribe would address them (in the tribes that participated in renaming) from that moment onward. That child would then grow up to be a fourth gender individual, who also had equal standing with men and women in the tribe. The four genders (sometimes more, sometimes less depending on the tribe) each worked together to better the society.

Third gender individuals often became crafters, working with weaving (basket and cloth) or other tasks commonly given to women, depending on the tribe. Third gender individuals also had a high rate of becoming medicine men and/or shaman. Fourth gender individuals were often hunters and warriors. Some were even able to become chiefs. Accounts of these individuals and how they blended the lines of what could have been strict gender roles in their societies have been passed down for generations. Two examples would be Woman Chief, of the Crow tribe, and Hastíín Klah from the Navajo tribe.

Woman Chief was adopted into the Crow tribe and raised as a member of their society. She [recorded pronoun choice according to Will Roscoe in *Changing Ones; Third and Forth Genders in Native North America*] became a hunter and warrior who won many battles and collected many scalps. At some point she was said to have four wives. She also raised in rank to a chief, seated fifth among all of the chiefs in the Crow tribe. She couldn't gain a higher title only because she was adopted into the tribe, not due to her fourth gender status.

Hastíín Klah was a third gender individual who became a medicine man and shaman. He [recorded pronoun

choice according to Roscoe] was also quite skilled at weaving and was invited to the World's Columbian Exposition to display his talent in New Mexico's exhibit. Here his weaving became so popular that it started a new market for New Mexico and Native Americans. He traveled America due to his craft, especially after weaving ritual symbols into tapestries.

While third and fourth genders were accepted by many Native American and First Nation tribes, Europeans were not as accepting. Two-Spirits were originally called *Berdache*, a Persian word meaning 'kept boys'. Due to this, when Americans began expanding their territories and displacing Native Americans, anyone who didn't fall into the European dichotomy were excluded from the others and taught that being a third or fourth gender was bad, or wrong. Eventually generations where third and fourth gender individuals were part of the society died out, and the European view took over.

In 1990 Native Americans and First Nation individuals gathered in Winnipeg, Canada to discuss their past in terms of gender and sexuality. This is when the term *Two-Spirit* was created, although it doesn't well into all native languages. It was designed to show how the Native Americans and First Nation tribes saw third and fourth gender individuals as people with connections to the gods. The word two-spirit is now an umbrella term used for any native American or first nation individuals who aren't part of the gender binary, or who are not heterosexual.

Hijra

Throughout India, and other countries of South Asia, there is a group of people that go by the Urdu term *hijra*. These individuals are often born with male genitalia but are of the third gender, falling closer to first gender women. In some cases intersex individuals will also be hijra, but again this sex does not change their gender representation. In fact, intersex hijra are seen as true hijra if they lack a penis, due to the fact that one of the main rituals or rites of passage in the hijra community involves the removal of the penis and scrotum.

The Nirvaanam is a rite in which the hijra asks their goddess, Bahuchara Mata for the right to become women. Once they receive signs of her blessing they either go through a traditional ritual or have the operation done by a doctor, either of which is usually done illegally. During the operation the penis and scrotum is removed. It is believed that hijra are given spiritual abilities due to this procedure, which ties into their lack of genitalia. This gives hijra a place above other eunuchs in Indian society, where as other groups of eunuchs are looked down upon for their ulterior life styles when compared to binary gender roles.

In India there are at least seven main branches to the hijra community. Once joining a hijra house, connected to one of the seven branches, the individual usually renounces their prior family, although for some not completely, and join a new caste with new kinship ties. There are specific titles given to other hijra depending on their relation in any specific household, as explained in *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story*, by Revati. For example, a hijra is called a *Chela* (daughter) by their *Guru* (mother). Their guru's guru is their

Nanaguru (grandmother). Chela's to the same guru, or entering the house around the same time, are called *Gurubai* ([my] sister). Younger chela's are called *Chotagurubai* (younger sister).

When an individual joins the hijra they also lose their old name and instead are renamed by their guru. All hijra have Hindi names designated for girls, except some *nayak* (head guru of the house) have Muslim names that are for men. This only happens when that *nayak* has been to Mecca. As hijra practice a form of religion that is a mix between Hindu and Muslim, they take these names very seriously and only certain individuals who have met qualifications would go by a man's name.

While hijra as a community claim to be pure and asexual, there are some houses which allow for prostitution. Hijra use to have higher status within Indian culture and were able to make money and own more land without worrying. Now, however, some hijra participate in prostitution in order to earn money for their houses. This is done instead of *badhai*, which is when hijra collect offerings from shop keepers in market places. It also represents ritual celebrations performed for newlyweds and new baby boys. Regardless of how the individual gains money for the house, they are seen as legitimate hijra so long as they've gone through the *nirvaanam* and continue to contribute. Hijra are also seen as legitimate citizens in India since 2014 in regards to their gender identification (third gender).

Bissu, Calalai', & Calabai'

In South Sulawesi, Indonesia, the Bugis culture continues to influence the society. Not only has their language remained prominent in some areas, but so have certain traditions such as their acceptance of five genders: *makkunrai*, *oroané*, *calalai'*, *calabai'*, and *bissu*. In translation, *makkunrai* would be a feminine woman while an *oroané* would be a masculine man, both first gender individuals in a Euro-American culture's understanding. *Calalai'* can be translated to a masculine female, explaining that they were born with the sex of a female but are fourth gender, nearer to the first gender man. *Calabai'* would then be explained as feminine males due to being born of the male sex while being the third gender, closer to first gender women. *Bissu* individuals, who fall under the fifth gender category, are said to incorporate elements common to the other genders. The sex they are born with does not determine their *bissu* status, although it's more common for a *bissu* to have been born a male. Each gender has an important role in society, regardless of the fact that old traditions and religions have been molded and melded to new ones.

Makkunrai and *oroané* are basically the first gender woman and first gender man categories of the linear spectrum in Figure 1. Since those correlate closely with other cultures, they aren't going to be focused on here. Rather the other three, *calalai'*, *calabai'*, and *bissu* will be. First, *calalai'*, who are masculine females, are fourth gender individuals. They're born females and thus have a lot of *siri'* (honor) placed in their care. Because they are born with a uterus they are expected to join in a heterosexual relationship (after marriage) and produce children. When an individual

identifies as a *calalai'*, however, they usually no longer wish to produce children through their own bodies. Many adopt children, who call them *Bapak* (father). This usually only happens after they have a permanent *lines* (*calalai'* partner; woman) who also wants children. Some *lines* are married while with their *calalai'* partner due to the negative *siri'* they would bring to their families otherwise. Besides having relationships with *makkunrai*, another role *calalai'* have which is usually associated with *oroané* are their jobs. Many work in rice fields or as deliverers for merchants.

Calabai' are more openly accepted in Bugis society because of the entertainment they provide. During festivals *calabai'*, dressed in lavish and form fitting skirts or dresses, will perform for the masses. This is something *makkunrai* can't do, or would be looked down upon for doing in the same fashion. Most *calabai'* have relationships with *oroané*, some going to the extent of spoiling their partners. Some young *oroané* will get into relationships with *calabai'* and make a deal with them. After their relationship the *calabai'* will find them a suitable wife so they can get married. This may have to do with the jobs which *calabai'* more often have: owners or works in hair salons, wedding planners, midwives, and some become prostitutes. Unlike *calalai'*, however, *calabai'* (or *waria*) have their own political group lobbying for rights within South Sulawesi.

The fifth and final gender of South Sulawesi, Indonesia is *bissu*. These individuals can be born of any sex; male, female, or otherwise. Identified at a young age, *bissu* often come to know of their gender identity through prolific dreams wherein they are said to learn a distinct language all their own. After an individual experience these dreams they are taken to a *bissu* house where they'll be trained to become a *bissu* (also called an androgynous shaman by Dr. Sharyn Graham Davies) rightfully in society. At the *bissu* house the pupils learn many things, including but not limited to: genealogy, ceremonies, ritual dances, and the name and uses of all *bissu* tools. This knowledge is used later in life when they perform such duties as rituals and weddings (primarily for white blooded [royal] families). The rituals performed, both during and outside of weddings, tie in with the Bugis belief in *dewata* (gods). While most of South Sulawesi are Muslims, the belief in *dewata* persists. Mainly due to some claiming that *dewata* are Allah's (God's) messengers or helpers. Rituals have to do with summoning a *dewata* to bless individuals for anything from safe travel, to fertility. The reason *bissu* are able to summon *dewata* rests entirely in their fifth gender status. Because they combine traits in both the masculine and feminine sides of the spectrum, *bissu* are able to contact *dewata* and allow their bodies to be possessed. Some *bissu* claim that in order to be a true *bissu* the individual must never bleed (menstruate) or become engorged (erect).

Interestingly enough, when Dr. Sharyn Graham Davies went to South Sulawesi in order to study gender she met an individual that described gender in this way: "Pak Hidya picked up a stick and drew a line in the dirt. He pointed to one end of the line and said that real (*asli*) women are there, and then he pointed to the other end of the line and said that real men are there. Pak Hidya then pointed to various spots along the line, showing me where *calalai'*, *calabai'*, and *bissu*

are respectively located” (22, *Challenging Gender Norms: Five Genders among the Bugis in Indonesia*). Similar to Figure 1, Pak Hidy explained how the five genders within the Bugis culture appeared in a linear spectrum. It is important to note that the Bugis culture does not have a word for gender.

Conclusions

The Gender Spectrum Theory questioned whether gender was human made, or natural to mankind. After researching different genders throughout history and throughout the world, it seems clear that gender is a natural phenomenon. There are too many independent sources of gender for it to be a coincidence. The three listed in the sections above are only a few of many cultures with many genders associated with their societies. Although invaders and settlers attempted to, and in some cases succeeded in, eradicating genders they did not understand, the binary is not all that has persisted to this day. Even in areas where the culture was touched by Euro-American influence, or imported religious influence, gender has continued to exist. For this reason, it seems clear that gender is not something created by the individual, but rather a natural occurrence within the species.

With that in mind it isn't difficult to conclude that modern genders, those mentioned in Figure 1 outside of the linear spectrum, are not simply expressions of individuality. Rather they are new terms for genders that have possibly existed in human history since the first civilizations. More research is necessary to further develop the conclusions drawn here. However, if this possibility is found to be true then non-binary individuals are being persecuted throughout the world for succumbing to human nature.

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Biography



Angela Tharp is a triple major focusing on Forensic Science, Pre-Medical Biology, and English/Writing at the University of New Haven. While she hopes to become a Forensic Pathologist somewhere along the line, she's currently focusing on doing everything she can in the meantime. This includes working with an English Professor by the name of Dr. David E. E. Sloane to publish an article in Mark Twain Annual in 2014. It also includes working closely with faculty on the UNH campus to make the college environment a safer and more welcoming place for students of all genders and sexualities.