FINDING PREHISTORIC ROOTS OF THE TWO-SPIRIT TRADITION IN THE NORTH AMERICAN SOUTHWEST

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Abstract:

We demonstrate the antiquity of the Native American two-spirit tradition using mortuary data from the North American Southwest. A two-spirit person embodies a liminal combination of masculine and feminine spirits and participates in both male and female gender roles. Each group has its own name(s), but the general third/fourth gender category of “two-spirit” is increasingly used with the growth of LBGTQI2S+ research and activism. The ubiquity of two-spirit traditions across North America and their presence in many origin stories suggests ancient roots of the tradition. We correlate individuals’ sex and grave goods of burials from Paquimé, Wind Mountain, and Hawikuh to find burials indicative of two-spirits. We identify four possible two-spirit burials (reflecting third-gendered individuals) and two burials that may reflect gender fluidity (overlap in the general categories of men and women). We also address the methodological challenge of differentiating between third genders and gender fluidity in the past.

KEY WORDS: gender, third gender, decolonization, two-spirits, mortuary data, archaeological method and theory, American Southwest, Puebloan Culture, Casas Grandes Culture
INTRODUCTION

Native American worldviews typically conceptualize sex and gender differently than Western cultures do (Bonvillain 2001:4–5; Geller 2008; Treadwell 2020). In Western culture, there are examples of third gender categories such as Albanian Sworn Virgins and the Italian Femminiello, but sex and gender have traditionally been connected into a binary system, and third gender categories have been limited or absent completely, depending on the time and specific culture. In contrast, ethnographic analysis indicates that Native Americans have a less rigid focus on aligning biological sex with specific gender categories (Roscoe 1998; Schnarch 1992). For example, among the Zuni, a person traditionally becomes a man or a woman based on one’s social roles and initiation rites, which typically but not always correspond to one’s biological sex (Roscoe 1991:129). There are also intersexed individuals (typically one or two in every two thousand) who do not correspond to either sex and therefore embody gender flexibility (Preves 2003:2). One manifestation of the flexibility in most North American Native American nations are two-spirits, in which a person (of either sex) embodies both masculine and feminine spirits (Roscoe 1998). Two-spirit traditions constitute third/fourth gender categories (non-masculine males and non-feminine females) that do not correspond to either man or woman. The two-spirit tradition appears to be ubiquitous, having been documented by ethnographers in over 100 North American native nations (Bonvillain 2001:5; Roscoe 1987, 1998:7).

Two-spirit traditions vary between cultures, so much so that two-spirits cannot be considered a uniform cultural institution or a generally agreed upon cultural category (Davis 2019; Epple 1998; Goulet 1996; Lang 2018). Instead, the term two-spirit is a “generic term” that “was created by the [Native American] community that it designates and defines” to
“acknowledge the interrelatedness of all aspects of their lives” (Jacobs and Thomas 1994:7).

Still, as a general category, two-spirits usually participated in both male and female gender roles, and often dress in the culturally specific styles associated with the gender typical of the other sex (i.e., male two-spirits often dress as women, female two-spirits often dress as men). As liminal individuals who embody and unite both masculinity and femininity, two-spirits tend to have high status and ritual importance (Callender and Kochems 1983). Many shamanic traditions view shamans as two-spirits, and two-spirits are usually viewed as spiritually potent individuals who have special abilities as healers, mediators, and helpers (Fulton and Anderson 1992:608–609; Hollimon 2001).

Given their high status, general ubiquity, and specific ritual roles, it seems likely that two-spirit traditions have very ancient roots (Kirkpatrick 2000:397). They were noted by early historians and explorers from the time of initial European contact (Fulton and Anderson 1992; Smithers 2014), but an even deeper history is suggested by their ubiquity across cultures, social significance, and mention in oral traditions. Hollimon (2001:123–124) suggests two-spirits or at least some forms of nonbinary gender(s) were a part of the Paleoindian cultures that initially colonized the New World.

Despite their likely cultural importance and deep history, archaeological analyses, especially those that examine mortuary data, of prehistoric two-spirits has been limited to a handful of cases, most notably Hollimon’s (2000) analysis that combines ethnographic/historical information and osteological analysis of occupational stress indicators to identify two possible two-spirits (third-gender males) among the Chumash, and Prine’s (2000) analysis of Hidatsa architecture to identify two-spirit domiciles. In a more recent study, Spence and Keron (2020) have identified a burial from the Middle Archaic Janulis site in Ontario that they believe reflects
gender flexibility. An adult female was found with a turtle-shell rattle and eight projectile points (masculine artifacts at the time) and two deer bones (feminine artifacts at this time). Skeletal analysis of the female’s shoulder bones indicated a repeated overhand throwing motion that could indicate this female was taking part in hunting, a masculine role. Additional examples of archaeological evidence of possible non-binary genders include Whalen (1991) and Looper (2002) (see also Walley 2018).

Studies of pre-Hispanic two-spirits in the North American Southwest are typically embedded in broader analyses of iconographic data (e.g., Hays-Gilpin 2004; Munson 2000; VanPool and VanPool 2006). While iconography can give useful insights into past traditions, it is often difficult to differentiate between naturalistic images reflecting actual people and events, and mythic images reflecting important spirit entities and/or oral traditions that may not have been literally observed during the artist’s life. For example, Thompson et al. (2014) argue Classic Mimbres art reflects the story of the Mesoamerican-inspired Hero Twins’ adventures that occurred in mythic time. While the Mimbres might have considered these literal events, they are not typical of the daily life of the Mimbres people. Depictions of two-spirits across the Southwest likewise might reflect mythic/spirit individuals. For example, the Aztec deity Ometeolt is a bisexual representation of duality that is represented in iconography (Miller and Taube 1997:127). The Mimbres could have had a similar deity. Still, we believe it is likely that many or most of the two-spirit imagery reflects the presence of actual, living two-spirits and, as a result, the presence and importance of two-spirits ought to be reflected in other aspects of the archaeological record. To evaluate this possibility, we examine the burial data from Paquimé Wind Mountain, and Hawikuh, three archaeological sites with large, well-recorded mortuary assemblages, to identify burials in which an individual’s sex and associated grave goods are
distinctive compared to typical burials for that culture. The results of the analysis found six possible two-spirit burials from the three collections, four of which we conclude likely reflect two-spirits. We suggest these individuals reflect the antiquity of the two-spirit tradition. We also address the methodological issue of differentiating third gender individuals from gender fluidity using archaeological data, and suggest that multiple lines of evidence (e.g., mortuary data, architecture, iconography, and oral tradition) make it possible to determine a specific third gender category as opposed to gender fluidity. Our study reflects a first step towards exploring the origins and significance of prehistoric two-spirits.

**HISTORIC/MODERN SOUTHWESTERN TWO SPIRIT TRADITIONS**

Two-spirit traditions are present throughout Southwestern Native American cultures. Two famous two-spirits were Hosteen Klah (a Diné [Navajo] nadle) and We’Wha (a Zuni lhama). Both were respected leaders and served as cultural envoys and activists (e.g., both met with US Presidents) (Roscoe 1988). Hosteen Klah was initially identified as intersexed after a horse accident as a teen and took on the role of nadle shortly thereafter (Roscoe 1988:135). As a two-spirit, due to his combination of male and female spirits, he gained status as a ceremonial leader and sand painter (masculine roles) as well as being a skilled weaver (a feminine role) thereby transcending traditional Diné artistic and gender boundaries. We’Wha’s lhama identity was revealed early in her childhood, perhaps when she was observed wearing a longer shirt than the other boys and was more interested in engaging and learning the skills of girls
Throughout her life, We’wha participated in feminine gender roles, including making pottery and taking care of children, but also participated in masculine gender roles such as Kachina dances (Roscoe 1988; 1991:126). When We’Wha died in 1896, her death devastated the community. Matilda Coxe Stevenson documented the preparations of We’Wha’s body,

“After the body was bathed and rubbed with meal, a pair of white cotton trousers were drawn over the legs, the first male attire she had worn since she adopted woman’s dress years ago. The rest of her dress was female” (Roscoe 1991:123).

Two-spirit traditions have been identified in other Southwestern groups. The Mohave tradition for example includes hwame (non-feminine females) and alyha (non-masculine males) (Lang 1998). According to Mohave oral traditions, the god Matavilye predestined two-spirits before his death (Lang 1998: 333) and gave them special spiritual power. They were closely associated with shamanic practice and were called upon to heal various ailments.

Two-spirits also figure prominently in many Southwestern oral traditions. Southwestern origin stories usually focus on ancestors emerging into this world of the here-and-now after traveling through several layered worlds below. Zuni oral tradition holds that when their ancestors emerged in this (the fifth) world after traveling through the four subterranean worlds, they began their journey for the Middle Place where they were destined to settle (Roscoe 1991:217–222). One group sent out to find the Middle Place was led by a brother and sister. The brother raped his sister while she slept. The union produced a man-woman (two-spirit) named Kokk’okshi, who was linked to the two-spirit kachina, Kolhamana, the right hand to the patron of the kachinas (Roscoe 1991:220). Kolhamana’s mask is typically worn by lhamana during
kachina ceremonies, and it is possible that *lhamana* were involved in the kachina religion as early as AD 1275 when Puebloan plazas were reorganized for kachina performances (Perry and Joyce 2001:71).

The Diné likewise believe that they traveled through four worlds to emerge into this one (Williams 1992:20). In their oral tradition, their ancestors were met by Turquoise Boy and White Shell Girl, the first two-spirits, when they emerged into the Third World (Williams 1992:19). The twins created the first basket and the first pot, two integral parts of Diné life. Additionally, Turquoise Boy saved the Diné people when they encountered a great flood in the Third World by creating a ladder that the Diné ancestors climbed through the Fourth World and into the Fifth World of the here-and-now (Williams 1992:19).

Zuni and Diné oral traditions (as well as the oral traditions from other Native American groups) suggest both that two-spirits are a longstanding social category integral to Southwestern Native cultures and that these individuals held a special, high-status role. However, cultural influence from Eurocentric cultures, especially during the 19th and 20th Centuries, has led to a decrease in respect and status for two-spirits in most cultures, both in and beyond the Southwest (e.g., Balsam et al. 2004; Thomas 1997). By the mid-20th Century, the Zuni *lhamana* apparently no longer publicly displayed their two-spirit status (Roscoe 1991:198–201). The murder of Fred Martinez, a 16-year-old Diné *nadle*, on June 16, 2001, is a stark demonstration of this change in status, although increased LBGTQQIP2S+ activism has led to a renewed interest in (and increased status of) two-spirit traditions (e.g., Jacob et al. 1997; see also Gilley 2006 and Roscoe 1991:203–206).
PREVIOUSLY IDENTIFIED ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXAMPLES OF SOUTHWESTERN TWO-SPRITS

Given the ancient roots of two-spirit traditions as indicated by the emergence stories, their presence should be reflected by the archaeological record. A handful of archaeological examples likely reflecting two-spirits have been reported. In an analysis correlating sex and gender with clothing depicted on Casas Grandes Medio period (AD 1200 to 1450) human effigies, VanPool et al. (2017:281) document a female effigy that was associated with men’s clothing. The female effigy (CVP-78) had a depiction of a vulva but no depicted breasts typical of most Casas Grandes female effigies. She wore red strap sandals (distinctive footwear), a poncho, and headgear. This clothing is otherwise associated with males, especially a cluster of males that VanPool et al. (2017:281) suggest are ceremonial specialists. In an earlier analysis, VanPool and VanPool (2006:65–66) noted three additional effigies that might reflect two-spirits. One is a male (with a depicted penis) that is in the seated position (legs outstretched) otherwise limited to females and with the distinctive body proportions used in female effigies (which is different than those typical of males). The other two are effigies of females as indicated by the depiction of vulvas and breasts. The first has three pound signs that are otherwise reserved only for male effigies on her stomach above her vulva, and the second is seated in the posture otherwise typical of males (with her legs drawn to her chest).

Munson (2000) provides another example in her analysis of sex and gender depictions of human images in classic Mimbres (AD 1000–1115) iconography. In her discussion, she
identified twelve gender-contrary individuals that could reflect two-spirits (Munson 2000:133–
134). Four of the 12 were females with masculine traits (e.g., “eye-mask” decorations that are
typically characteristic of men). The remainder were people of unknown sex that had indicators
of both genders. Hays-Gilpin’s (2004:137) analysis of Southwestern rock art also identifies
possible two-spirits depicted as possessing both hair whorls (typical of women) and penises
(indicated by a line extending from the groin between the figures’ legs). She does note that these
lines could also reflect menstruation or a woman’s string skirt (Hays-Gilpin 2004: 39, 137). Two
additional examples include a kiva mural from Pottery Mound (an ancestral Puebloan settlement
occupied between AD 1300 and 1425; Hibben 1975: Fig. 49) and a rock art image at Petroglyph
National Monument in Albuquerque, New Mexico (Roscoe 1991:79). These figures have a
distinctive hairstyle of the feminine bun and the masculine straight hair on the other side. This
hair style is characteristic of Kolhamana, the aforementioned two-spirit kachina. The Pottery
Mound figure also carries a bow and arrows (a masculine symbol) and basketry (a feminine
symbol) (Hibben 1975:Fig. 49). It is unclear if these figures are actual depictions of Kolhamana
or represent specific two-spirit individuals. Pottery Mound kiva murals depict other kachina
unambiguously as masked dancers, so the ambiguity leaves open the possibility the image
reflects a specific individual, as opposed to Kolhamana.

METHODS
Previous research has demonstrated that prehistoric Southwestern groups bury individuals with objects that reflect their status and activities in life (except in comparatively rare instances of possible witchcraft and war) (Rakita et al. 2020; see also Geller 2005). This realization has been the basis of analyses of status, sexual divisions of labor, and other aspects of social organization. As reported above, We’Wha was buried in masculine and feminine clothing indicative of her lhama status. This intentional demonstration of her two-spirit status is consistent with the examples in the previous section in which artists took care to depict the inconsistency between biological sex and social gender, and likewise suggests that prehistoric groups reflected two-spirit status in similar ways, that is, by including both masculine and feminine objects and/or objects typical of the opposite sex. Building from this general pattern, two patterns in mortuary remains that reflect possible two-spirits are burials in which an individual’s biological sex does not correspond with the established mortuary goods typical for that sex, or burials in which a mixture of masculine and feminine grave goods are interred.

Unfortunately, determining biological sex from skeletal materials can be difficult (Baustian et al. 2015), especially considering the significant overlap in the sexual dimorphic range of humans. For the time being we are limited to the previous analyses conducted on these collections but considering the advances in DNA analysis, future studies could benefit from the use of aDNA to sex skeletal remains. Preus et al. (2011:1827) suggests that using aDNA from dental calculus could be a low-cost and non-destructive method to objectively determine biological sex. Moreover, there was the unfortunate practice by some archaeologists to make sex determinations based on the objects interred with the burial (e.g., females are identified by the presence of grave goods typically associated with women). While it still might be possible to identify burials with both masculine and feminine burial goods in such cases, assigning sex using
mortuary goods will obscure any cases in which two-spirits are indicated by a mismatch between biological sex and ascribed gender. As a result, we focus our analysis on three large, well-documented burial assemblages (Paquimé, Wind Mountain, and Hawikuh) where researchers identified biological sex directly from skeletal materials while also providing the mortuary information for individual burials. After compiling data for each collection, we separated grave goods that occurred with male burials and those that occurred with female burials to identify objects associated predominantly with females and objects associated predominantly with males. We then correlate the grave goods to biological sex to identify possible two-spirit burials. We did not include unsexed burials or children in this analysis.

ANALYSIS

Charles Di Peso and Eduardo Contreras were the primary excavators of Paquimé (Di Peso 1974). Paquimé was a large ceremonial center in Chihuahua, Mexico, on the west bank of the Rio Casas Grandes (Figure 1). It likely served as the focus of regional pilgrimages and the home of religiously-based elites (VanPool and VanPool 2018). These were likely the same elites reflected on the Medio period human effigies VanPool and VanPool (2006) and VanPool et al. (2017) analyzed that included possible two-spirits. Paquimé also reflected a higher level of social complexity than was typical for Southwestern cultures (Rakita 2009; Rakita and Cruz 2015). Information regarding the 591 burials excavated by Di Peso (114 males, 179 females, 298 undetermined sex; 360 adults, 231 subadults) is provided in Volume 8 of the report by Di Peso et
al. (1974) prepared from their excavations. The burial data in this collection was meticulously recorded and included direct cross-correlation between individuals and burial goods. The sex assignments reported in Volume 8 were made by Butler (1971:18) using cranial characteristics such as the brow ridges, bossing, mastoids, and markings. In total, of the 259 adults placed into formal burials, 86 were sexed as males, 137 as females, and 36 undetermined. As part of his dissertation research, Kyle Waller sexed many of the Paquimé burials (see Waller 2017, Waller et al. 2018:414, and Waller and Offenbecker 2020:51–52). He determined sex using updated methods based on standard ordinal features of the os coxa and cranium following Buikstra and Uberlaker’s methods (1994). Although he found that Di Peso et al.’s (1974:8) sex-designations were generally supported, there were differences. Comparing the results of Butler (1971) and Waller (personal communication 2021), they agreed on the sex of 109 individuals (81% of the assemblage) but disagreed on the sex of 25 individuals (Downs 2015:27–28). This reanalysis suggests a good level of confidence in the sexed burials we consider here, but Waller (personal communication 2021) warns that the skeletal materials have been stored in inadequate conditions and there is the danger of mixing in many cases. As a result, he cautions against over reliance on his results.

We went through the information reported for Medio and Viejo period Casas Grandes burials (Di Peso et al. 1974:8:343–411) and correlated mortuary goods and sex where the information was available. We omitted cases where biological sex could not be determined and multiple burials in which specific grave goods could not be associated with specific skeletons, leaving a total of 81 burials appropriate for our analysis. Casas Grandes grave goods included effigy jars, stone and ceramic pendants, shell and stone beads, stone tools, animal burials, matting and textiles, hand drums, and mined mineral deposits (Di Peso et al. 1974:8:363–366).
We did not identify any gender specific patterns for grave goods, which is consistent with the findings of other researchers (e.g., Di Peso et al. 1974:8:363–364; Ravesloot 1988; Rakita 2009; although Rakita 2001:230 identified slight differences in mortuary good diversity and abundance with males having slightly richer and diverse grave goods than females). There were two curious burials that stood out after analyzing the data, though: a male buried with two military macaws and five scarlet macaws (Burial 14-8), and a female buried with an antelope fawn likely less than ten days old (Burial 21-13) (Di Peso et al.1974:8:300,378). We note that Waller examined both skeletons and questioned the sex designation in these cases. He suggested that Burial 14-8 could be a larger female and Burial 21-13 could be an unusually gracile male. He noted though that the collection was much more fragmentary when he completed his analysis due to poor curation. Waller did not go so far as to reject the sex assignments made in Di Peso et al. (1974) in these cases. Without additional evidence such as DNA analysis we will tentatively accept the sex assignments reported in Di Peso et al. (1974). We will consider these burials further below.

Wind Mountain was also excavated by Charles Di Peso, but the results are presented by Woosley and McIntyre (1996). Wind Mountain is in the Mogollon culture area of southwestern New Mexico just south of the Gila River (Figure 1). Occupation started as early as the Early Pit House period (AD 250 to 550) and continued through the Classic Mimbres phase (AD 1000 to 1115) (Woosley and McIntyre 1996:19). Of the 122 burials that were excavated, 17 contained burial goods and could be sexed (10 males and 7 females) (Woosley and McIntyre 1996: 276, see also Tables 9.1 and 9.2 [pp. 271–274]). These bodies were sexed by Hinkes (1996:373) using pelvic and cranial morphology as well as general robusticity as outlined by Krogman (1962) and Phenice (1969). This general approach has been common in archaeology and has been associated with accuracy rates higher than 90% (Klales at al. 2012:105), although Bruzek (2002:157)
suggests the accuracy of Phenice’s method could at times be lower, potentially as low as 80%.

The inclusion of skeletal robusticity based on Krogman (1962) likely increases accuracy, but we note the potential shortcomings associated with Woosley and McIntyre’s (1996) sex data.

The goods associated with the Wind Mountain burials included pottery, shell beads and jewelry, and various tools (Woosley and McIntyre 1996:270–276). In contrast to Paquimé, the burial goods and arrangements did not indicate meaningful social stratification, and, in the words of Woosley and McIntyre (1996:278), “locally made plain and painted ceramic wares were the most abundant form of grave goods, crosscutting gender and age.” In the cases where sex could be determined, shell artifacts were limited only to males (5 of the 10 identifiable males were interred with shell; note that shell was found with 3 skeletons that could not be sexed). Otherwise, artifacts crosscut sex or were singular (e.g., an awl found with a female). One adult female (Burial 8 of the Ridout locus, most likely dating to the San Francisco phase [AD 650–800; Woosley and McKintry 1996:30]), though, was buried with a vesicular basalt tube, commonly called a cloudblower. We will return to this burial in our discussion.

Hawikuh is east of the Zuni river, about 15 miles south of the modern Zuni reservation (Figure 1). It was occupied from sometime before AD 1300 to around 1680. The available mortuary data on the Hawikuh site was a report of the original excavation by the Hendricks-Hobbs expedition in 1917–1923 compiled by Smith et al. (1966:173–278). Remains of over 1000 individuals were recovered during the excavation (679 inhumations and 317 cremations). Two-hundred and sixty-six of the better-preserved remains were sent to Aleš Hrdlička for analysis, including determining sex, but this analysis was only partially completed (Smith et al. 1966:179). We have no direct knowledge of Hrdlička’s method of sexing these particular skeletons, but he likely relied on the methods outlined in Hrdlička (1947) that focused on multiple lines of
evidence, but especially the size characteristics of the pelvis. Howell and Kintigh (1992: 141–142) suggest that that Hrdlička’s age and sex determinations are supported.

Smith et al. (1966) combine Hrdlička’s incomplete information with the field notes prepared by Frederick Hodge in 1918–1919 to describe the burials. This combination of information quality and source makes it difficult to tie specific burials to specific burial assemblages, but 10 distinct burials were both sexed by Hrdlička and had enough detail to be useful for this study (Smith et al. 1996:205–222).

The grave goods associated with the Hawikuh burials include pottery, hunting tools, basketry, corncobs and various seeds, clothing, and cooking tools (Smith et al. 1996:221–278). Artifacts associated with female burials were basketry and corncobs, whereas hunting tools were commonly associated with males. Howell and Kintigh (1996) and Howell (2001) find evidence for social stratification in the Hawikuh burials. Eight of the richest, most diverse burials were males, and included ritual paraphernalia and/or war clubs, bows, and arrows, which Howell and Kintigh (1996:551) suggest represented a “badge of position” associated with the Zuni Bow Priesthood. Four of the richest, most diverse burials were females, and included maize, squash, basketry, utilitarian ceramics, manos, metates and similar domestic tools/items. Howell and Kintigh (1996:551–552) suggest that a unique shrine of shaped wood, string, and feathers included with one of the female burials may reflect that she, and perhaps the other high status women, “held two roles – one that is analogous to the head of the matriline or some equivalent role, and a second, less well-defined leadership role associated with ritual.” Ritual authority otherwise seems to be absent from female burials (Howell 2001:163).

Three burials could reflect third-gender individuals. The first (Burial 193) was an adult female buried wearing a long skirt, a woven kilt, and had hair woven into a feminine whorl on
one side of her head and hung straight as is typical of men on the other side (Smith et al. 1966:209). As Roscoe (1991:24, 94) notes, this hair style is typical of Kolhamana, the previously mentioned Zuni two-spirit kachina. A second burial (Burial 28) was a female buried with an apparent “medicine bag” that contained, “concretions, two large arrowpoints and a beautiful artificially pointed crystal” (Smith et al. 1966:206). In the field notes, Hodges describes this burial as a “medicine woman” that was found under another burial he described as “the Priest of the Bow” (Burial 216) (Smith et al. 1966:206). Burial 28 apparently had high status and included ceremonially significant objects. An additional grave (Burial 911) that was initially identified as a male in the field but later identified as a female by Hrdlička was buried with artifacts associated with hunting, a stone knife, and an arrow point, as well as an earthenware penis on the pelvis (Smith et al. 1966:212). We will again explore the significance of these burials in our discussion below.

DISCUSSION

Scholars have produced various outstanding analyses of prehistoric Southwestern gender constructions using a range of data sources (e.g., Crown 2000; Hays-Gilpin 2004; Kantner et al. 2019; Munson 2000), but the prehistoric analysis of two-spirits is in its infancy, both in the Southwest and more broadly across North America. In fact, our analysis is the first specific consideration of prehistoric Southwestern two-spirits. It is therefore a (small) first step in a much longer journey. However, a key methodological issue that must be addressed here and in future
studies is the means of identifying two-spirits at all. Here we use mortuary analysis to identify cases where burials contain grave assemblages that do not correspond to the gender categories typical for a given sex (e.g., masculine females, feminine males) or that reflect a mix of typically masculine and feminine traits. This approach is supported by ethnographically documented practices (e.g., the burial of We’Wha) and prehistoric iconography that reflects specific practices that would leave material indications in burials (e.g., the mixed masculine and feminine hairstyles reflected on the Pottery Mound mural). However, it also raises significant methodological issues.

Arnold (2007:124–125) in her discussion of Iron Age European burials observes that the mortuary patterns could reflect either gender fluidity (where there is broad overlay and permeable boundaries between the social categories of “woman” and “man”) or a third-gender category (see also Robb and Harris 2018, who observe that gender structures are context specific). For example, the inclusion of ceremonial gear typically associated with men with a female burial may reflect a third-gender category (a two-spirit in this case) but may also reflect that women could sometimes gain ceremonial authority as women (gender fluidity). An interpretive approach that overemphasizes third-gender categories would likely reify a stark contrast between men and women (and other gender categories) with little possible overlap among the specific tasks, tools, and social roles associated with both men and women. Variation from these artificially rigid norms would be placed into presumed additional gender categories that did not really exist. On the other hand, over-emphasizing gender fluidity would likely cause any third-gender categories reflected in the archaeological record to be missed. Analysts are thus faced with the possibility of making two errors: 1) incorrectly attributing gender fluidity to the presence of third genders, and thus reinforce a binary gender distinction between men and
women that did not exist, or 2) possibly missing the presence of distinct third-gender categories as this variation is interpreted as gender fluidity.

Neither error is desirable, but previous analyses of Southwestern ethnography and archaeology reflect both the likely presence of two-spirits and gender fluidity (e.g., Crown and Fish 1996; Hays-Gilpin 2004; VanPool and VanPool 2006). How will it be possible to differentiate between a female third-gendered individual and a woman who gained ritual authority typical of men? Although this is a general problem (in that it applies to assemblages throughout the world), any solution will have to take into account the specific cultural context of the people being studied. In our case, the issue is how to differentiate two-spirit individuals from gender fluid individuals in Southwestern contexts. A good starting point seems to be using ethnographic analogy to help identify specific patterns that are likely to reflect one or the other. For example, the distinctive hair style associated with entities such as Kolhamana appears to be distinctive of two-spirits, as opposed to reflecting gender fluidity. Its presence in burials and its depiction in iconography therefore likely reflects two-spirits. Likewise, multiple lines of evidence reflecting distinct categories of individuals may reflect two-spirits as opposed to the likely more individualistic manifestation of gender fluidity. As Roscoe (1991:126) notes, the behaviors exhibited by We’Wha go beyond gender fluidity, and were manifested in multiple aspects such as her mixed-sex funerary clothes, her burial in the male cemetery area, and the activities in which she participated. Multiple lines of evidence, especially if they are consistently reflected in different individuals, might make it possible to determine a specific third-gender category, as opposed to gender fluidity. However, these strategies are certainly not foolproof. We anticipate that archaeologists can develop even more effective means of recognizing and differentiating gender fluidity and two-spirits with additional thought and research.
What we do here, then, is provide a specific consideration of each possible case to evaluate the possibility of gender fluidity and two-spirits as alternate hypotheses. Above we identify six possible examples of two-spirits. We intentionally cast a broad net and include every instance where we thought that a reasonable argument that a burial reflects a two-spirit is possible. Here we present an evaluation of each case.

Starting with the male buried with two military macaws and five scarlet macaws at Paquimé (Burial 14-8), macaws in the Casas Grandes world were often ritually sacrificed and buried (Di Peso et al. 1974:8:267), and there is no evidence they were consumed as food despite the fact they were raised by the hundreds (Minnis et al. 1993; Schwartz et al. 2021). Macaw imagery is closely associated with women in the Medio period culture (VanPool and VanPool 2006:60); Munson (2000:135) found the same pattern in the pottery of the (both culturally and temporarily) preceding Classic Mimbres period, in which macaws were typically depicted associated with or being handled by women. Although we have no direct evidence this is the case, women may have been responsible for handling and raising macaws at Paquimé, given their symbolic association with macaw imagery. The only other sexed burial that contained articulated macaws (two scarlet macaws) was a female (Burial 4-21). Even if men were involved in macaw husbandry, that this male is buried with multiple macaws, which are typically symbolically associated with Medio Period women, may indicate he was a two-spirit, perhaps an individual that was involved in raising macaws. Given the uniqueness of this burial and the deep symbolic association between women and macaws, we suggest it is more likely than not that this individual reflects a two-spirit.

A second possible two-spirit burial (Burial 21-13) from Paquimé, is a female burial with an antelope fawn. According to Munson’s (2000:135) data, quadrupeds are shown exclusively
with men on Classic Mimbres pottery, possibly because hunting was a masculine activity. This female burial contains a quadrupedal mammal, which could indicate that this individual was a masculine female two-spirit in life who participated in warrior and hunting activities. This burial is unique in that no other burials included similar quadrupeds, and the inclusion of this animal with this individual likely had special significance. This is a single line of evidence though. We consequently suggest that it is possible that this individual was a two-spirit, but this could also be an indication of gender fluidity or some other cultural process.

The next example is the female buried with the cloudblower from Wind Mountain (Burial 8 of the Ridout Locus). Cloudblowers are a type of tobacco pipe used by men to ceremonially purify people and objects as part of ritual activities among the Pueblos (Adams 2002:206). Cloudblowers have also been recovered from the floors of prehistoric kivas and in association with other ceremonial objects across the Southwest (Di Peso et al. 1974:7:304). Throughout the Mimbres and Casas Grandes cultures these cloudblowers are depicted with males including male effigies from the Medio Period and painted Classic Mimbres images. Cloudblowers are associated with males and kivas in historic Hopi ritual songs (Sekaquaptewa and Washburn 2004) and five pipes were found at Hawikuh in male burials (Howell 2001:115); these burials have been interpreted as reflecting male leadership and ritual activities.

The cloud blower interred with this female could indicate that the individual was a two-spirit. The close association between male ritual suggests that this is part of a ritual package focused specifically on masculine leadership and ritual. A woman being part of this system suggests that she had access to this ritual package, which is consistent with a two-spirit identity. We do not believe this is a case of gender fluidity because the cloudblowers in both the past and
historic Southwestern groups tend to be associated with kiva societies and other exclusively masculine ritual spaces. It seems unlikely to us that a female could gain access to kiva societies and other ceremonial spaces as a woman and more likely that this individual was a two-spirit. Two other clowdblowers were recovered from Burials 1 and 2 at Wind Mountain, both of which are also part of the Ridout Locus, but the sex of these individuals could not be determined.

In contrast, we suggest Burial 28 from Hawikuh reflected gender fluidity. The arrowpoints could have indicated this individual was a two-spirit, given that projectile points and ceremonial gear were more commonly interred with men. However, the remainder of the artifacts were consistent with feminine gender roles (e.g., a mano and an awl), and there was no real inconsistency between the biological sex and the typical feminine role other than this individual was engaged to some degree in ceremonial activity. The overall context and burial goods thus were at least as consistent with this individual being a high-status woman engaged in ceremonial activity, as opposed to a two-spirit. This may have been a broader cultural pattern given that Howell (2001:159) identified a medicine priestess with similar ritual gear.

The remaining possible two-spirit burials from Hawikuh seem to be more persuasive. Burial 193, the female buried in a woven kilt and a long skirt was first pointed out as a likely two-spirit by Roscoe (1991:24), and we agree with his conclusion. The kilt is characterized as a masculine kilt worn during ritual activity (Roscoe 1991:24). Thus, like We’Weha, this burial is intentionally dressed in both masculine and feminine clothing, which explicitly highlights the individual’s liminal state in society, and is more consistent with a two-spirit individual than with gender fluidity. Burial 911, the female that was originally identified as a male, contains hunting artifacts, including a stone knife and an arrow-point, as well as an earthenware penis. While the
inclusion of the masculine tools in-and-of-themselves are suggestive of alternate gender roles in this case, the presence of a symbolic penis with this female seems to stress that this individual was a masculine female (and hence a two-spirit) as opposed to an example of gender fluidity.

In four cases (one from Paquimé, one from Wind Mountain and two from Hawikuh) we suggest it is more likely than not that these individuals reflect two-spirits. In the other cases (one burial from Paquimé and one burial from Hawikuh) we suggest these burials are as likely to reflect gender fluidity as they are two-spirits. We note that our possible examples are disproportionately masculine females, as opposed to feminine males. Although the ethnographic record reflects both categories of two-spirits, feminine males are more commonly recorded than are masculine females (Blackwood 1984:29). There could be various reasons for this such as male bias among ethnographers and early explorers, but it is also possible that feminine males were more common in the Historic Period. The comparative frequency of masculine females in our sample could be caused by a number of factors. One possible explanation is that female burials were more common in the two largest mortuary data sets we examine. Howell and Kintigh (1996:542) observe that female burials outnumber male burials 2 to 1 at Hawiku. The Paquimé mortuary assemblage contained a similar ratio (61% of the burials were females). Both assemblages deviate from the expected 50/50 sex ratio typical of human populations, suggesting that at least some males were being buried elsewhere or in a different manner than females. The mortuary sample from Wind Mountain we analyzed is too small to evaluate if there was a similar preponderance of females, but even in that case, female burials outnumber male burials (10 females to 7 males). It is therefore possible that the preponderance of female two-spirits in our analysis simply reflects the greater frequency of female burials in the underlying data.
Another possibility is that masculine females are more recognizable in the archaeological record. In many cases distinctively masculine artifacts are ceremonial significant, and thus comparatively rare. It may be that masculine females are more easily recognized by the presence of such distinctive artifacts compared to the more subtle differences reflecting feminine males. Future analysis may help evaluate if this is indeed the case.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Fogelin (2007) outlines the importance of “inference to the best explanation” in archaeological reasoning. We have employed this approach here to identify possible two-spirit burials in the North American Southwest. Each of the three burial assemblages we considered included possible two-spirits. The most persuasive examples are two burials of females from Hawikuh: one buried with a long feminine skirt and a masculine woven kilt, and the other buried with hunting artifacts and an earthenware penis. We suggest one of the examples from Paquimé likewise reflects a special masculine status/occupation in society and therefore a two-spirit. The burial from Wind Mountain is indicative of female participation in exclusively masculine ritual societies, which is indicative of a two-spirit status. The remaining two examples could be two-spirit individuals but could also reflect gender fluidity with these women taking on limited aspects of men’s roles.

Our analysis indicates that the significance of two-spirits extends into the deep past in the Southwest and should be evident to archaeologists as we begin to look for it. Our analysis here is
by design a first step in a much more extensive consideration that will be required to document and understand the prehistory and social significance of Southwestern two-spirits. Our consideration of burials is certainly not exhaustive, and we anticipate that many more possible two-spirits have been discovered but not recognized across the Southwest. A further, future consideration of such burials will almost certainly allow archaeologists to strengthen the arguments about whether individuals are two-spirits or not. There will be many benefits to continued research into Southwestern two-spirits.

First, this consideration will strengthen our ability to identify and understand the social relationships that structured past peoples’ lives and their cultural frameworks. Second, the consideration of two-spirit individuals will further the anthropological study of gender by providing greater insight into the variation and impacts of gender structures. Lastly, the effects of colonialism have had continuing consequences for both the people colonized and the colonizers because of the clash of differing political-economic structures as well as unequal power relations (Nassaney 2004:344) and the consideration of two-spirit individuals in the archaeological record will further modern efforts to decolonize archeological understandings of the past imposed by these unequal power dynamics by allowing us to understand the previously existing cultural structures on their own terms as opposed to through the lens of Western gender structures.

Future analyses will benefit from using multiple lines of evidence (which we do here to the extent it is possible at this time). Iconography may prove to be especially significant, but we repeat our earlier observation that iconography by itself will be prone to difficulties in differentiating naturalistic and mythic images and issues of interpretation. We anticipate that additional mortuary analyses, and possibly architectural analyses will also be useful. We do
suggest based on our current analysis, though, that two-spirits are reflected in the archaeological record, if we look for them.

Figure 1: Site locations of Paquimé, Wind Mountain, and Hawikuh
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APPENDIX A: THE SOUTHWESTERN TWO-SPIRIT TRADITION

The Indigenous American Southwest has been a topic of study by anthropologists since the Spanish and American colonialization of the New World. A common feature among the Indigenous tribes of North America is gender diversity. Early anthropologists initially labeled these gender diverse peoples “berdache,” a word rooted in Arabic used to refer to a male prisoner used for sex (Robinson 2020; Williams 1992; Roscoe 1998). This western/ethnocentric-imposed label not only created negative connotations to the two-spirit role within indigenous societies, but it did not encompass the vast traditional and spiritual significance that these people held within their cultures (Robinson 2019:1678). In 1990, at the Native American/First Nations Gay and Lesbian Conference, the term “Two-Spirit” was coined and agreed upon by the Indigenous peoples attending. The name is used to refer to individuals with both masculine and feminine spirits (Roscoe 1998:109). Even though this term originated to refer to these gender diverse individuals, through time it has evolved into an umbrella term used to refer to an array of Native American roles and identities in the past and present (Jacobs et al. 1997:2).

Historic ethnographic accounts that are available regarding the two-spirit tradition in North America consist of the writings of early missionaries, government officials, and early anthropologists. In this discussion, I offer a brief contextualization of the spectrum of two-spirit traditions across the tribal nations of the southwestern region of the United States. This synthesis will compile early accounts of two-spirits in the cultures that make up the native southwest and discuss the broad similarities and differences present within each culture. What follows is a description of these traditions organized first by broader cultural group then by distinctive tribal nations.
The Yumans

The Yuman groups of the Southwest are a part of language classification set forth by Kroeber (1943:21). These groups spread from the Lower Colorado River extending into California to the west and Arizona to the east (Eggan 1983:736). The river Yumans consisted of the Mohave, Quechan/Yuma, Maricopa, and Cocopa and will be the specific Yuman subgroup referred to here. Although they vary in the degree to which two-spirits were discussed in the past and present, each of these groups have specific mentions of the two-spirit tradition.

Mohave Hwame and Alyha

Mohave territory extended across Western Arizona, Southeastern Nevada, and California (Bonvillain 2001:296). Daily life was dependent on irrigated farming supplemented with hunting and gathering. They used river waters to irrigate fields of corn, beans, and squash (Bonvillain 2001a:296). They were organized around patrilineal exogamous descent groups, with separate communities that identify as one single tribal entity (Bonvillain 2001a:296).

Two-spirit individuals in Mohave culture are called hwame and alyha. Two-spirit females are called hwame, and two-spirit males are called alyha. Hwame and alyha in the Mohave culture were reinforced through supernatural means; in the 1930s it was said by a respected elder that it was meant that two-spirits (individuals who unite elements of masculinity and femininity) should exist in society, just how shamans were meant to exist (Williams 1992:23). According to the last person to know the two-spirit initiation song, a singer named Nahwera, the god Matavilye determined the existence of hwame and alyha before his death (Devereux 1937:503). She spoke of how two-spirits in the Mohave culture occupy a space in society that was predestined for them in their mother’s womb. The pregnant mothers will have unusual dreams during gestation
predicting the anatomical sex of their child. Mothers of alyha dream of arrows and feathers and various male accessories, while the mother of hwame dream of feminine accessories such as beads (Devereux 1937:503). These two-spirit proclivities will be apparent before puberty, when the individual is being initiated into the functions of their gender—such as hunting or cooking. Thus, within Mohave society, as a rule young people are the only people to become two-spirits. Young two-spirit males, alyha, will play with dolls and pick up metates and do not partake in the actions that cis-gender boys do, and they will ask for skirts to wear instead (Devereux 1937:503). In contrast, young Two-Spirit females, hwame, will prefer to hang around the boys and begin to act like them, refusing to use metates or play with dolls, along with adopting the dress of boys (Devereux 1937:503).

Sahaykwisa was a famous late 19th century hwame (Williams 1992:240). She dressed as a woman, but it was said that she did not menstruate. She excelled in farming (a woman’s role) as well as hunting (a man’s role) transcending gender boundaries in society. Sahaykwisa was also known for her shamanistic healing abilities of venereal diseases (Williams 1992:240). Just as the indication of two-spirit identity, the path to become a shaman within Mohave society was associated with dream visions as well. The shamanic occupation, in which one is called upon to heal different ailments in society, is closely associated with the two-spirit role. Shamans in Mohave societies could be anyone, but two-spirit shamans, both hwame and alyha, were considered by society as having superior powers (Lang 1998:164; Williams 1992:35). In fact, alyha frequently became shamans and were the preferred partners of male shamans (Lang 1998:165). Devereaux (1937:502) spoke to a Mohave informant who expressed that only people who were classified as being from a prominent family became two-spirits. Further, only cis-gendered individuals that possessed special powers, especially shamans that specialized in curing
venereal diseases, could be the spouses of two-spirits (Devereux 1937:502). Marriage ceremonies for alyha and hwame among the Mohave were no different in establishment or divorce than all other marriage ceremonies within the community (Lang 1998:200). The only difference was that Alyha were not courted as other girls were in the community, they were courted as widows, divorcees, and promiscuous women (Lang 1998:200).

**Quechan/Yuma Kwe’rhame and Elxa’**

The Quechan/Yuma reservation is located where the Gila and Colorado rivers meet, and their territory is divided by the states of California and Arizona (Bee 1983:86). Traditionally, they lived in small, dispersed villages and supplemented farming with gathering plants and hunting small game (Bonvillain 2001a :296). The information known regarding the traditional culture of these people is drawn from the period between 1780 and 1860. Bee (1983:86) warns that, during this time, these people were continually subjected to settler/colonial influences (i.e., Spanish, Mexican, and Anglo) and that these influences no doubt had effects on their cultural practices that include the two-spirit tradition.

Within the Quechan/Yuma society, female two-spirits are called Kwe’rhame, and male two-spirits are called Elxa’ (Forde 1931:157). Both Kwe’rhame and Elxa’ realize their two-spirit identities when they have a certain dream sent to them from the spirits during puberty. Kwe’rhame dream of men’s weapons as well as spending more time playing with boys. Elxa’, which are documented to be more numerous than Kwe’rhame, are sent dream messages from arrow-weed, a plant that is thought to change its sex (Forde 1931:157). Within the Quechan culture, childhood proclivity for the role and supernatural sanction solidifies two-spirits place within society. Forde (1931:157) recounted a story of an individual two-spirit who dreamt of a
journey to the sacred mountain and saw a metate, which implied that he would be destined to participate in women’s work. When this individual woke up from the dream “he put his hand to his mouth and laughed four times. He laughed with a woman’s voice and his mind was changed from man into woman. Other young people noticed this and began to feel towards him as to a woman” (Forde 1931:157). This corresponds to Blackwood (1984) in which she mentions that, when a new two-spirit is initiated, the Quechan/Yuma begin to feel toward him as a woman; biological sex did not matter in this context. Although Forde (1931:1157) observed a social norm for parents to be ashamed of children who get the call to be a two-spirit, there are some instances that this gender transformation is publicly recognized. For instance, Elxa’ were to prepare a meal in which friends and family were invited to eat. Once the transformation was complete, Elxa’ took on women’s work within the community (Williams 1992:24). After taking on a two-spirit role and initiation, Elxa’ would move in with a man and be together permanently. Even though there was the possibility of shame when a child becomes a two-spirit, there was also a cultural belief that any interference to the lives of Elxa’ and their partner was considered unwise. Interference is considered unwise because Elxa’ are said to have more power than the ordinary man; Elxa’ are also said to have a peaceful influence on the tribe (Forde 1931:157). The contradictions present in the reporting of attitudes toward two-spirits within this culture could have been a result of ongoing colonization of their culture. There seems to have been a distinction between persons who were deemed homosexual and two-spirits. Forde (1931:157) says that it is not technically objectionable but gay/lesbian individuals would resent being called Elxa’ or Kwe’rhame.

*Maricopa Llyaxai’ and Kwiraxame*
Maricopa territory encompassed southern Arizona bordering the Gila and Salt Rivers (Spier 1933). They settled on two settlements; the first settlement was referred to as Lehi, the settlement close to the edge of the Salt River, as well as being on the Salt River Reservation. The second settlement was referred to as Laveen, which was at the junction of the Salt and Gila rivers as well as being in the shadow of the Sierra Estrella (Harwell and Kelly 1983:72). These two settlements were considered politically separate entities but through sharing land and resources over the years they forged a relationship of exchange using intermarriage, alliance, and cooperation (Harwell and Kelly 1983:72).

Dreaming had special significance within the Maricopa community. Specifically, when children dreamt, it was seen as an advantage but dreaming too much was seen as a threat. When a child dreamt too much, they would be subject to a change of gender (Spier 1933:242). According to Spier’s (1933:242) informant, “they had in fact, too much of this dreaming, that is why they changed their mode of life, the change was caused by some spirit.” The informant mentioned above attributed the two-spirit role to a specific dream. A two-spirit person lived inside the Sierra Estrella, the sacred mountain to the Maricopa culture. If anyone dreamt of this mountain, they would become a two-spirit. The signs that an individual would be a two-spirit within Maricopa culture began with these dreams sent by spirits, and then translated into specific childhood behaviors. When children begin to play with toys, boys were given bows and arrows and girls were given baskets. Boys who were two-spirits were observed hanging around the house and playing with women’s tools (Williams 1992:57). This is significant due to taboos surrounding men using metates and mortars (the main tools used to prepare meals). This taboo was reported to be so strong that if a man were to even touch these cooking utensils, they would be ridiculed as a two-spirit (Spier 1933:243). As their lives progressed, they participated in
women’s gender roles within the community; these activities would include gathering mesquite, hanging around with women, and marrying men along with having no biological children. The same patterns hold true for female two-spirits, they would dress as men and marry women (Spier 1933:243). Although the power to cure and sing were said to be given by spirits in the culture, two-spirits were not shamans within the Maricopa culture. This appears to be attributed to the extreme potency of the powers that the spirits give to two-spirit individuals (Spier 1933:242).

*Cocopa Elha and Warrhameh*

The traditional area that Cocopa people called home included the Lower Colorado river and its delta (Williams 1983:99). In the late 19th century, the Cocopa had 1200 people that were scattered through the landscape in small rancherias that included a male leader, that leader’s patrilineal kin group, and their families (Kelly 1949:151-152). In the summer months individual family camps were lived in and during the winter months they would move into more permanent rancherias (Tisdale 1950:17). Subsistence was centered on a system of hunting, gathering, and farming small plots of land planting the three sisters (corn, beans, and squash) and melons (Kelly 1949:151-152). Their system of hunting, gathering, and farming was based around the seasons, flood waters and recessions, and planting and harvesting in the river delta (Alvarez de Williams 1983:104).

Male two-spirits in Cocopa were called Elha and female two-spirits were called Warrhameh (Gifford 1933:294). One of the earliest ethnographic mentions of the Two-Spirit tradition among the Cocopa comes from Hernando de Alarcon’s expedition in 1540, which reported that among the villages there were two-spirits who dressed in women’s clothes (Kelly 1977:5). They were observed in several camps and from what Alarcon understood, unmarried
men had access to two-spirit individuals. In contrast, Gifford (1940:294) reported that Elha were asexual among the Cocopa. While two-spirits were observed in Cocopa society, it was indicated that two-spirits were not involved in any special functions at Cocopa; that female two-spirits were passively accepted, and male two-spirits were disliked (Gifford 1940: 294). The indifference and distain toward two-spirits could have been due to cultural loss because Lang (1998:238) indicated that the Cocopa used to have special two-spirit induction ceremonies, but upon European contact, they were already out-of-date and there is no further information on them (Drucker 1941:163, 218). Two-spirit identities were observed early on in a person’s life, beginning in puberty. Warrhameh played with boys, made bows and arrows, and hunted (Roscoe 1998:146). They dressed in the style of men and pierced their nose as men did instead of getting the usual chin tattoos given to women. Both acts signaled to the community that this individual would be treated as a man (Blackwood 1984: 31). Warrhameh would also wear their hair in a man’s style, go to war, and establish families with women (Lang 1998:274). Early childhood indicators were also observed in boys who were to be Elha. They would talk like girls, hang out with girls, and refused to be taught any masculine tasks (Lang 1998:219). Although, in contrast to Warrhameh, Elha, according to Lang (1998:132) were denied tattoos of women as well as the nasal septum piercing given to men.

The Athabaskans

The Athabaskan linguistic family is comprised of cultures that stretch from Alaska through northwestern Canada and segregated regions of the American Southwest (Fernald 2000:3). The ancestors of the Diné (Navajo) and Apache people migrated from the north reaching the Southwest between 1000 and 1400 AD (Roscoe 1998:41). Here the specific cultures
that will be discussed are the two who reside in the American Southwest, the Diné and the Apache nations.

*Diné Nadle or Nadleehi*

The Diné Nation encompasses land in Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. Traditionally, the Diné were hunters and gatherers, then adopted agriculture as contact with the pueblos increased. As colonization of the Southwest progressed, they expanded subsistence activities to herding sheep and horses (Roscoe 1998:41). They continue to live in broadly dispersed settlements structured around 60 matrilineal clans (Witherspoon 1983:524). The Diné family is organized around the head mother, a sheep herd, the land, and the agricultural fields (Witherspoon 1983:525). Matrilineal and matrilocal kinship patterns were practiced; these practices afforded high status and esteem to Diné women (Roscoe 1998:41). Traditionally, the Diné shared a language, ceremonial system, kinship system, and economy but not a larger tribal awareness (Trimble 1993: 2316).

Two-Spirits have deep symbolic roots within Diné culture, they are mentioned in their creation story. They were first encountered when the Diné emerged through the third of the five worlds they traveled through to reach this the fifth world of the here and now. As the Diné First man and First woman emerged into the third world they encountered the first Two-Spirits, Turquoise boy and White Shell Girl, twin hermaphrodites. These twins created the first pot by shaping it from clay and weaving the first basket from reeds. When there was a great flood, Turquoise Boy saved the people using reeds to allow them to climb up through the fourth and into the fifth world (Williams 1992: 20). Two-spirits are called nadle in the Diné culture, a term that is used to refer to both male and female two-spirits, translating to one who is transformed.
Nadle in were embedded into the community as a specific third gender category, although exclusively intersex individuals were seen as “real” nadle (Robinson 2000:35). Children who had two-spirit inclinations were given special care and reinforcement in their family (Roscoe 1998:43). The roles were a mix of male and female gender roles (e.g., hauling wood, washing clothes, wearing the opposite genders clothes, mediating conflict, and spousal mediation), this mix of roles afforded the Nadle favorable status in Diné society (Epple 1997:175). The ability to perform both masculine and feminine tasks was viewed in high regard because according to the Diné, nadle knew everything. As a result, the Diné thought that their culture would end without the nadle (Lang 1998:72). Nadle did not always assume the dress of the opposite sex, but they could, and many did (Roscoe 1998:42). Households that included a married nadle were considered by the people to be the most successful and honored (Robinson 2000: 35).

Although the literature on male two-spirits is large, the information regarding female two-spirits is limited. There is one report of them hunting, going to war, and equaling in number to male two-spirits (Roscoe 1998:43). Early in the twentieth century, Hosteen Klah was a prominent Diné Nadle. He excelled as a known ceremonial leader and noted weaver within the Diné community. Klah was able to become a chanter/singer in ceremonies (a male role) as well as a master weaver (a female role). Klah did not find out he was an intersex Nadle until a horse-riding accident in his teens. The Diné believed that this was a confirmation from the gods that would allow him (and others who are two-spirit) to have the mental capacity to mix male and female attributes (Roscoe 1988: 135). Although Klah participated in both male and female tasks in the community, he did not cross dress.
Apache

There are six recognized Apache tribes (Chiricahua, Jicarilla, Kiowa-Apache, Lipan, Mescalero, and Western Apache). The tribes that have specific mentions of the two-spirit Tradition in the Southwest include Chiricahua, Western, Lipan, and Mescalero Apache. The territory of the Apache culture extends from eastern Arizona, much of New Mexico, adjoining sections of Mexico, southeastern California, western Oklahoma, and the panhandles of Texas and Oklahoma (Opler 1983: 368). Their vast territory reflects their nomadic hunting and gathering lifestyle. Traditionally, the largest social unit consisted of the local unit, where a few extended families lived around one another and used the same resources (Opler 1983: 368). The main social unit of the groups was then the extended family with a matrilocal residence (Opler 1983: 368). Political authority of the extended families was won through important personality attributes and esoteric ceremonial knowledge (Opler 1983: 369).

Broad mentions of the two-spirit tradition within the Apache differ starkly from the other Southwestern cultural groups. Out of all the Apache groups, it seems that only the Southern Tonto Apache and Lipan Apache have documentation the gender category; aside from one Chiricahua individual who died in 1880 (Lang 1998: 293). There has been much speculation as to why the Apache’s seemed to have held negative attitudes toward two-spirit individuals Williams 1986:4,39). For instance, in the Southern Tonto Apache, two-spirits were described as “lazy men and women who wanted to cohabit with their own sex” (Lang 199:293). Opler (1996:416) mentions that true two-spirits are rare, that their emergence is discouraged, and that the last two-spirit individual at the time of his ethnography had died sometime before 1880. This individual never married, but they talked and walked like a woman, participated in women’s crafts, and hung around the women and played the stave game among them (Opler 1996: 416).
Among the Chiricahua Apache there seems to be a conflicting distinction observed between feminine male two-spirits who engage in women’s acts and masculine woman who engage in the interests of men. The masculine woman were respected and would excel at activities such as making bow and arrows, ride well, and athletics. Opler (1941:416) learned of two individuals like this. One of the women, excelled at all the activities boys did as a child, she was married to a man, although she had no kids of her own adopted her husband’s children. Opler states (1941:415) that these masculine females were not considered [two-spirits] or a separate gender category, but women who excelled in the sphere of men.

The Western Pueblos

The Western Pueblos that have adequate information pertaining to the two-spirit tradition that will be presented here include Zuni pueblo, Hopi pueblo, and Acoma Pueblo. The Pueblos of the Southwest are identified by their linguistic relationships, which include Hopi, Zuni, Keresan, and Tanoan (Dozier 1964:79).

Zuni Lhamana

The Zuni tribe is just west of the continental divide in New Mexico (Woodbury 1979:467). The social organization is structured by their clans, kiva groups, curing societies, and priesthoods embedded in a matrilineal/matrilocal kinship organization. The integrating feature of their social structure is the religious and ceremonial organization. Men and women participate in twelve curing societies, while only the men are initiated into the Kachina societies (Ladd 1979:489). Oral tradition and historic records indicate that political leadership was held by ceremonial leaders, but interactions with outside cultural forces increased the need for a secular government from the 1880s to the present (Ladd 1979: 489). In 1934 they were persuaded to create a formal
tribal government based on representative democracy to facilitate interactions between the tribe and the United States government (Eggan and Pandey 1979:478).

The Zuni two-spirit tradition is extensively documented through ethnographic accounts and oral tradition. Just as in the Diné Culture, Zuni two-spirits are present in their origin story. The Zuni creation story begins with the ancestral people of Zuni moving through four different worlds until they emerged into this, the Fifth World. After they emerged, two groups were sent to look for the middle place, the place that they believed they were destined to settle. The Zuni people chose a brother and a sister to lead one of the groups. When the group was asleep in the night, the brother raped his sister. His sister awoke and immediately gave birth to ten supernatural offspring. The first of these children was the man-woman, or two-spirit, named Kokk’okshi (Roscoe 1991:151). Kokk’okshi is the precursor to the two-spirit kachina named Kolhamana, who is the right hand to the patron of the kachinas (Roscoe 1991:151). In addition to being mentioned in myth, two-spirits are also embedded in their religious system, the kachina religion. Kachinas are helpful supernatural beings that possess power over nature. They are associated with clouds, rain, and other aspects of nature (Hodge 1993:4). Kachinas are represented by masked dancers who are members of the Zuni kiva societies. Kiva societies are exclusive to Zuni men and two-spirits. Kolhamana is explicitly portrayed by two-spirits in rituals and is a mediator who contributes to the overall balance and wellbeing of Zuni (Roscoe 1991:153). Kolhamana, the two-spirit kachina, is unmistakably a mixture of masculine and feminine traits. The hairstyle was a blend of the feminine whorl updo and the masculine straight, hanging hair. Kolhamana holds a bow and arrow along with a basketry plaque, signifying the
essentials of men and women (Roscoe 1991:166). Two-spirits within Zuni culture had a niche place in society that allowed them to achieve high status and prestige (Roscoe 1991:32).

The calling to become a two-spirit in Zuni culture was recognized early on in an individual’s childhood when they began to showed gender nonconforming behavior (e.g., a boy hanging around the house, instead of playing with the other boys). Assuming such behavior continued through childhood, this person was initiated as a two-spirit at puberty when they began to wear feminine dress (Roscoe 1991:22). A famous Zuni two-spirit, We’Wha, was said to be the most remarkable member of the tribe (Roscoe 1991: 29). She served as an artist, a craftsperson, a member of the kachina society, as well as a cultural ambassador (Roscoe 1991).

We’Wha grew up during a time of war and transition. Early on in We’wha’s childhood certain traits revealed her two-spirit identity. She was observed wearing a longer shirt than the other boys and was more interested hanging out with the girls (Roscoe 1991:33). This affiliation was accepted, and she began to be treated as a girl and was called a woman, while still retaining some attributes of a man (e.g., the participation in the kachina society). After We’wha’s death in 1896 there was another well documented two-spirit named Kasinelu. He assumed his two-spirit identity after the US acquisition of New Mexico had profoundly impacted the Zuni culture. His grandfather, a Bow Priest, was not a big supporter of his two-spirit identity; while the women in Kasinelu’s life were all very proud to have him occupy this transcendent role for his community. He was a very skilled potter in the tribe (Roscoe 1991:195). The only specific case of a biological female counterpart was recorded by Parsons (Roscoe 1991:27). A two-spirit named Nancy was referred to as “katsotstsi” meaning “the girl-man”. Nancy was initiated into the kiva society of the kachina religion (Roscoe 1991:28). Nancy participated in the ceremonies, specifically wearing the two-spirit kachina mask, just as We’wha had. The two-spirit identity
within Zuni connected both male and female two-spirits to the two-spirit kachina. Within Zuni culture the kiva societies tend to be an exclusively masculine ritual space, female two-spirits were also initiated into the kiva societies, demonstrating the ability of both male and female two-spirits to participate in masculine and feminine activities (Roscoe 1991:28).

**Hopi Two-Spirits**

The Hopi people reside in dispersed villages on or close to the Hopi Mesas (Rushforth and Upham 1992:10). The mesas are on the southern part of the Colorado plateau’s Black Mesa, in northeastern Arizona (Rushforth and Upham 1992:10). Hopi lifeway is structured around agricultural. Their social structure is made up of named groups (i.e., residence sites, clans, and societies) and unnamed groups (i.e., households, lineages, and phratries). Clan identification and socioreligious ceremonialism cut through the dispersed villages of the Hopi (Connelly 1979:539). The ceremonial system is rooted in the kachina religion, a reciprocal relationship with kachina (Anderson 1955:405).

Information regarding Hopi two-spirits is scarce at best. The linguistic term that would be used was na’D’le, which was used to refer to a woman who acted like a man, but Beaglehole and Beaglehole (1935:65) report that no instances of this were known. There were reports of one two-spirit who lived on the First Mesa; He would wear woman’s clothes and do woman’s work (Beaglehole and Beaglehole 1935:65).

Two-spirits have roots in Hopi ceremonialism, just as they do within the Mohave, Diné, and Zuni cultures. There is an oral story of an attack that was led by a two-spirit. There are two versions of this attack, one where Hee’ewuuti, a katsina, was getting her hair done by her mom when enemies approached the village. She took a bow and arrow and led the attack with one side
of her hair up and one side down (Geertz 1948:35). Although this version does not explicitly mention this girl as being a two-spirit katsina, her hair pattern is consistent with two-spirits depicted in the archaeological record of the Southwest. In contrast, the second version explicitly mentions that a two-spirit like figure was the individual leading the attack. This two-spirit figure had exchanged clothes with his wife in a cornfield before leading the attack (Geertz 1948:35). In addition to being reflected in oral tradition, the two-spirit kachina plays an important role in actual ritual. The two-spirit kachina is reportedly named Korosta and is known as a dress-wearing man who carries a bag of seeds and hands them out to people who will plant them (Mischa 1972:214). Korosta’s participate in Powamuya ceremonies, puppet ceremonies, the patsyu ceremony during the lunar month, and guard the village.

_Acoma_

Acoma, sometimes referred to as sky city, 80 miles west of Albuquerque (White 1928:559). Old Acoma is said to be the longest continuously occupied village in the US, with occupation beginning about 1200 AD and continuing to the present (Minge 1991:1). Traditionally, Acoma was organized socially into exogamous kindship groups (White 1928:561). Although these kinship groups had little significance within the community, but a more significant level of social organization resided in the kachina religion and medicine societies (White 1928:561). Men and older boys will be members of the kiva societies that perform the masked dances (White 1928:561). The medicine societies are open to men, women, and some children (White 1928:563). The information on two-spirits at Acoma is limited to two specific mentions. Sue-Ellen Jacobs (1968) refers to a word that has been lost that Acoma people used to refer to two-spirits that meant “womanly”, there is no other information on this word. The
second instance happened in the 1850’s when Hammond, a US army physician, performed physical examinations of two men dressed as women. His objective was to discover if they were hermaphrodites, which included one individual at Acoma (Roscoe 1991:25).

The Rancherias

The Akimel O’odham and the Tohono O’odham are part of what the Spanish called the upper Piman groups. They were scattered from southern Arizona to northern Sonora (Fontana 1983:125). Here I will reference the Akimel O’odham, who were river dwelling people, and the Tohono O’odham, who were farmers that lived away from the rivers (Fontana 1983:125).

Akimel O’odham (Pima)

The Akimel O’odham historically live on three reservations in southern Arizona, as well as off reservations close to Casa Grande, Chandler, Coolidge, and the larger Phoenix area (Fontana 1983:125). Due to the proximity to the river, rich and natural irrigation was provided that allowed the Akimel O’odham to practice agriculture (Hackenberg 1983:162). Kinship patterns like post-marital and inheritance patterns seemed to be flexible within the Akimel O’odham but it seems that it was largely patrilocal and patrilineal (Bahr 1983:182).

Two-Spirit accounts from the Akimel O’odham are interesting for Southwestern groups and, similarly to the Apache, there have been questions into why they looked down on two-spirits when most of their neighbors respected them (Williams 1992:4). Hill (1938: 338) attributes this marginalization to Akimel O’odham having no cultural niche for the two-spirit individual. That, in their culture, any breach of good manners or public display of individuality was stigmatized. There is a specific oral tradition that says that the two-spirit originated and
came from the Tohono O’odham. According to the myth, the Akimel O’odham were experiencing a shortage of materials for making bows and arrows, so they sent word to the Tohono O’odham (Hill 1938: 338). The Akimel O’odham sent two boys to pick up the materials that were carried using a women’s device on their backs. When the boys returned home, they had become two-spirits (Hill 1938:338).

Wi•kovat was what they call male two-spirits, which translates to “like a girl.” There was no record of any special name for female two-spirits (Hill 1938: 339). Two-Spirits did not wear the clothes of the opposite sex or participate in their gender roles. Apparently, the only way that their two-spirit identity manifested itself was talking, acting, and expressing their emotions and actions like the opposite sex and showing interest in the duties of the opposite sex (Hill 1983: 339). There seemed to be actions to suppress the identity; children were kept strictly separate and were not allowed to play with each other’s toys (Hill 1938:340). When it was suspected that an individual had a two-spirit identity, a test was performed only in the instance of males. This test consisted of placing a bow and arrow and a basket in a hut. The child was put into the hut and forced to choose one or the other. The toy that the boy took as he left the hut would dictate if he would become a two-spirit or not (Hill 1983:340).

Tohono O’odham (Papago)

The Tohono O’odham historically live on the Papago (Sells), San Xavier, Ak Chin, and Gila Bend reservations and off reservation at Ajo, Marana, Gila Bend, Florence and the larger Tucson and Phoenix areas, and in some parts of California and northern Sonora (Fontana 1983:125). During the 19th century they used two subsistence patterns, one was a semi-nomadic band that fished and gathered. The second, larger group was more sedentary and used a mix of
cultivation, gathering, and hunting (Hackenberg 1983:161). Among all of the Tohono O’odham, the village was traditionally the most significant social unit next to the extended family and leadership within the village fell on personal influence and character of a headman rather than formal authority (Fontana 1974:23).

The attitudes of the Akimel O’odham are especially puzzling when you contrast them with the attitudes of the Tohono O’odham toward two-spirits. The test of a two-spirit was a similar process that I discussed above for the Akimel O’odham, in which the child is given a bow and arrow or a basket, if the child picks the opposite item than is typical of their biological sex, they became a two-spirit. It seems that the male two-spirit was a common figure within their culture, and it was discovered early on in a child’s life (Underhill 1939:186). This was seen as an alternative to war and hunting for men, they would accept woman’s clothes and do their work in the community. Two-spirits were recorded as being excellent potters, basket makers, and gatherers (Underhill 1939: 186). In addition to being an asset to the feminine roles within the community, two-spirits in the Tohono O’odham culture also spent time in the masculine sector. For instance, when battles were won against the Apache, they would hang up a trophy and the two-spirit in the village would dance around the trophy saying, “see what you are reduced to, the men will not look at you, but I, even I, can shoot you” (Underhill 1939:186). Underhill (1939:186) reports that two-spirit individuals were able to support themselves within the community, and that they could marry but usually lived alone with frequent visits from various men. Each visitor was given, and proud of, a nickname the two-spirit individual would call them. Two-spirited individuals had a place in the community, especially biologically male two-spirits. Underhill (1939:186) spoke to an informant whose brother-in-law was a two-spirit.
informant mentioned that she and her friends would spend all day with the two-spirit individual. As a two-spirit this individual excelled at activities such as digging and gathering.

The Two-Spirit Tradition in the Southwest

The two-spirit tradition, ubiquitous across North America, has been observed in many of the tribal nations across the North American Southwest. Many broad generalizations have been made about the tradition, but each tribal nation has their own unique way(s) of constructing the gender of two-spirit individuals. In the River Yuman cultures broad patterns in the tradition consist of two-spirits (or their mothers) sent special dreams to indicate their two-spirit identity early on in life, as well as outwardly observed behaviors in their childhood that signals their identity. As individuals they are seen as spiritually powerful, even too powerful in some instances. In the Athabaskan cultures, two-spirits excel in the gendered tasks of the opposite sex but, they differ especially regarding their status. The Western Pueblos have varying degrees in which the tradition is documented, but broad patterns seem to connect the two-spirit tradition to their socially embedded ceremonial system the kachina religion. The Rancherias groups mentioned are especially thought provoking due to the stark difference in the attitudes toward the tradition.

I have intended this synthesis of the Southwestern two-spirit tradition to demonstrate that the occurrence of many ethnographic accounts of two-spirit individuals, their spiritual roots in many cultures, and their presence in various southwestern origin stories indicate that the two-spirit tradition has ancient roots within the native nations of the Southwest. When studying gender this must be considered especially in archaeological and ethnographic studies. The
construction of gender is culturally variable and many of the early ethnographic reports of two-spirits have not accounted for the diversity present within and between indigenous cultures. For instance, much of the literature on the topic wrongly interpreted the two-spirit tradition as male institutionalized homosexuality; instead of taking into consideration that traditional two-spirit roles are not contingent on sexual preference but structured around the terms in which gender is defined through tribal constructs such as gender roles and appropriate sexual behavior relating to the roles (Lang 1997:103).

Data available on the two-spirit tradition is embedded in a body of literature that did not have a uniform way of speaking of the tradition. Observers used various offensive and outdated words to refer to these individuals including berdache, transvestite, manwoman, and cross-dressers. Moving forward, the anthropological study of the two-spirit tradition will benefit from culturally specific studies that research and analyze gender patterns and structures within their tribal contexts. This will aid in contemporary efforts to decolonize and move beyond the gender binary imposed by settler colonialism.
APPENDIX A: REFERENCES CITED


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