

Decolonising notions of third gender and transgender identities in the digital archive

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Defining the Archive

- The Latin root of the word archive, traces from the *archivum*, meaning written records, or the place where public records and historical documents are kept.
- Archives as social, historical, political, and cultural constructions that in turn construct social relations themselves.

Julietta Singh: No Archive Will Restore You (p.24)

“Nothing is less reliable, nothing is less clear today than the word “archive,” writes Jaques Derrida, who begins his meditation on the archive (and its particular relation to psychoanalysis) by turning us to *arkhe*, the linguistic root of the word. *Arkhe*, Derrida explains, articulates both commencement and commandment. In the first interaction, *arkhe* is the place from which everything emerges, the location from which the thoughts and things of the world spring forth. In the second, it is the place of authoritative law, from where authority is exercised and externalized. How, the philosopher asks, can we hold these two meanings together? What is this place—the archive—where the beginning of things and the authority to govern over them both emerge? For Derrida, the archive is troubling; it marks a series of secrets between the public and the private, but also and most intimately, ‘between oneself and oneself.’”

Defining the Digital Archive

- With the emergence of new modes of preserving the everyday experience through digital platforms, the notion of how to define and configure the archive has become destabilized, forcing us to reconsider the concept of the archive itself.
- In the wake of these technological transformations, how do we now define what is considered knowledge?

What is to be included in a digital archive?

- (And what is not included in a digital archive?)
- Some experiences are prioritized/highlighted while others are not
- Twitter as an ad hoc archive of personal experiences that may be more easily accessed by a wider range of people
- “Open sourcing” for inclusion in the digital archive
- Will have the selection bias of not including those folks who do not have a phone/computer/internet access/Twitter profile
- May be biased against regions of the Global South with limited internet access
- May lead to the “over-sampling” of particular kinds of people or particular kinds of gender stories

How is gender documented in digital archives?

- Diversity & complexity of stories and perspectives on gender
- What do we collect and from where?
- Whose gendered stories do we hear and whose gendered stories escape us?
- These forms of evidence create modes of producing knowledge and informing social, economic and health interventions
- Developing more accurate depictions of the range of these gender stories is crucial to more effective social intervention

Decolonising Gender

- Orientalism imagines the East to be mystical, mysterious, barbaric and primitive, in direct contrast to the rational, civilized, and developed West (Said, 1978).
- It is this imaginary that offers the ontological and epistemological base of Western knowledge structures that seek to “know” the Orient.
- Continuing to narrate this depiction of the Third World/Global South, discourse in the First World/Global North often constructs South Asia as basic and irrational—a site characterized by immorality, promiscuity, poverty, disorganization (Sastry & Datta, 2001), and chaos.



Third Gender vs. Transgender

“The imagination of transgender as an expansive category for all gender-variant practices and identities replicates colonial forms of knowledge production (Dutta & Roy, 2014).



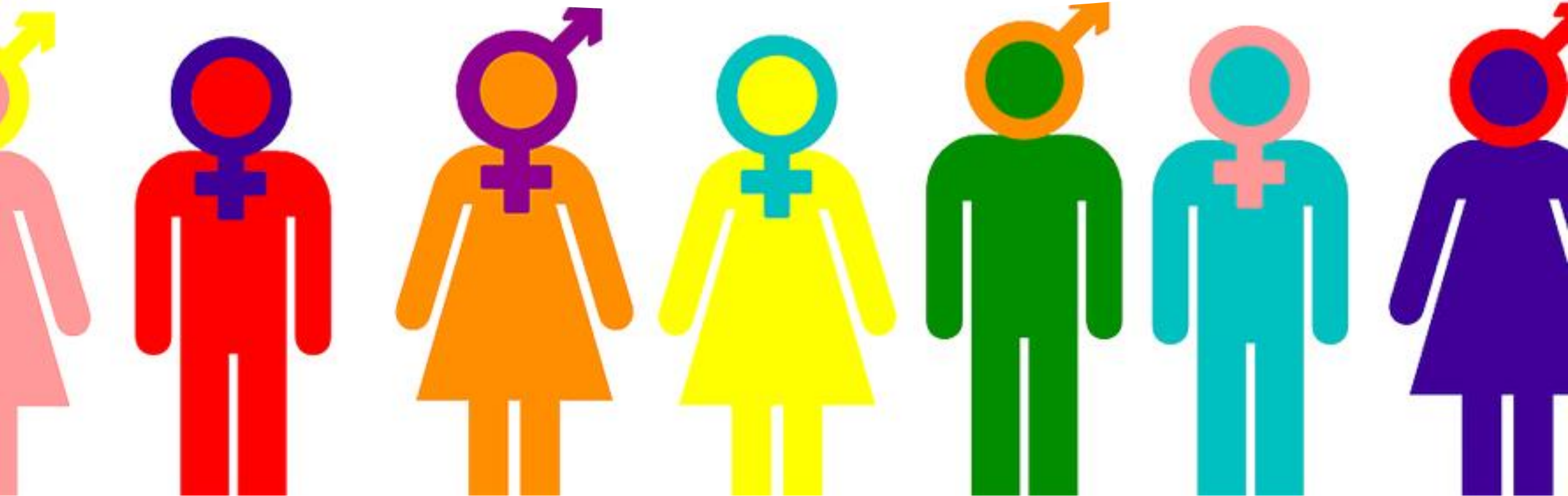
Decolonising Gender

- “Gender must be decolonised and decolonisation must be gendered” (Ladner, 2009).
- “Notions of femininity and masculinity are themselves colonial constructs that have pressed more complex notions of gender, sexuality, and desire into a binary” (Schiwy, 2007).



Decolonising Gender

“For us, there is no postcolonial, as we live our daily realities in suffocating spaces forbidding our perspectives, our creativity, and our wisdom” (Soto, pix).



Study Goal

To explore the social and cultural constructions of gender-nonconforming identities by critically examining discourse on gender nonconformity on Twitter under the hashtags #thirdgender and #transgender

Methods

- Analyses will follow procedures outlined in Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis (CTDA), a methodology coined by Andre Brock (2018) as a multimodal analytic technique for the investigation of internet and digital phenomena, artifacts, and culture
- CTDA is used to unpack semiotic and material connections between form, function, belief, and meaning of information and communication technologies

Methods

- CTDA utilizes a critical cultural theoretical framework, informed by cultural theory and critical race theory, on two levels of analysis: (1) the semiotics of the content of the material on blogs, websites, social media, and (2) the discourses of its users.
- This analytical framework is therefore applied twice: once to the material, practical, and discursive properties of blogs, websites, and video games, and a second time to examine the cultural practices that take place within and outside of these digital spaces.

Methods

- CTDA utilized to analyze content/discourse surrounding two Twitter hashtags: (1) #transgender & (2) #thirdgender
- Other relevant (but excluded in data analysis) hashtags: #trans, #genderqueer, #genderfluid, or #gendernonbinary (causing potential selection bias)
- Analysis confined to Tweets occurring prior to June 1, 2019

Methods

- Step 1: “Scrape” Twitter for tweets
- Step 2: Compile tweets into spreadsheet for data analysis
- Step 3: Two independent coders analyze tweets using grounded theory to identify emergent themes and develop initial codebook
- Step 4: Refine codebook through iterative analysis
- Step 5: Step back from tweet analysis to conduct discourse analysis, i.e. the analysis of *how* we are talking about #thirdgender and #transgender on social media

Results

- Very initial reports as I have just begun the “scraping “process
- Initially categorized into:
 1. Shock over gender nonconformity: “How dare they?”
 2. Gratitude for greater acceptance of gender nonconformity: “Finally this happened for us.”
 3. Goals to improve future prospects: “We still need to change this.”



LUKE CLARK

@LucasJamesClark

Follow



Rubbish! I'm the most open minded person ever, but even this is to much. You're either a man or a woman. End of story. #ThirdGender

5:55 AM - 20 Jun 2016 from Exeter, England

2 Retweets 13 Likes



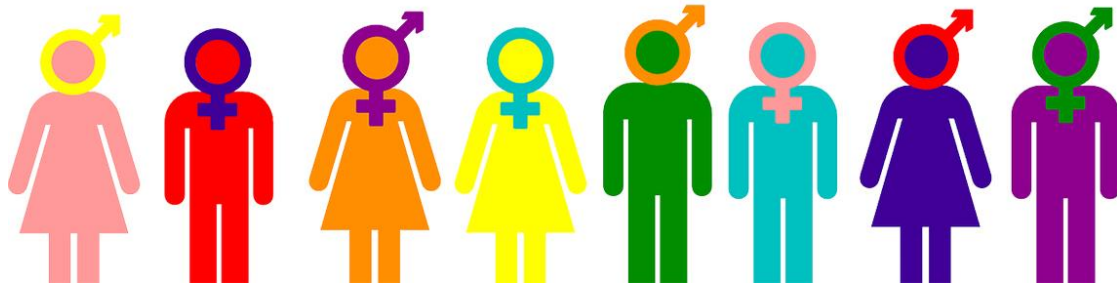
13



Americans Oppose #ThirdGender Option on
IDs... bit.ly/2EVPNSO



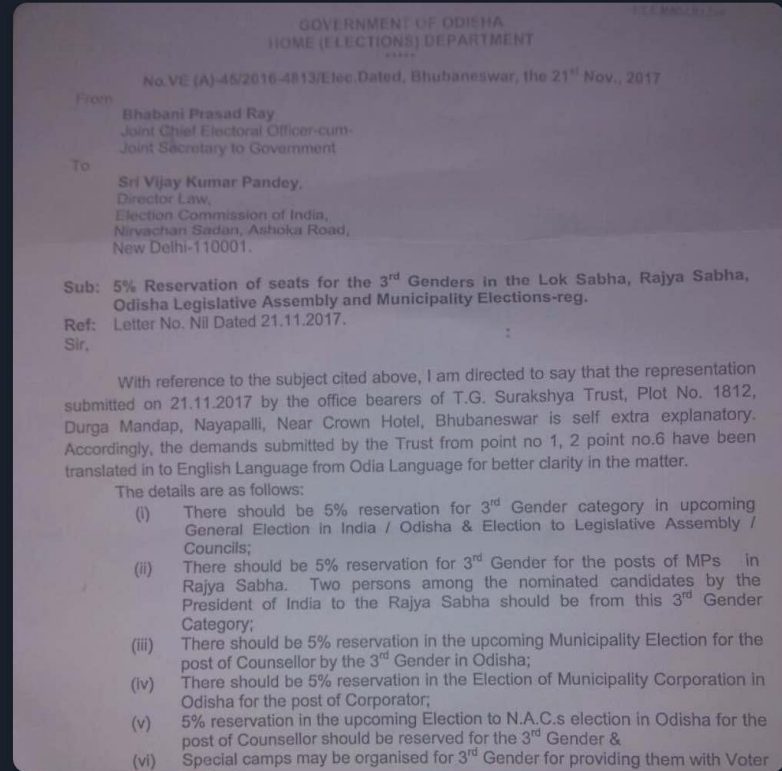
1:00 PM - 28 Oct 2018



Siba Mohanty
@Siba_TNIE

Follow

Big move! #Odisha Govt writes to ECI for 5% reservations for #ThirdGender in LS, RS and Assembly basing on demand by Third Gender Surakhya Trust @NewIndianXpress



3:48 AM - 30 Nov 2017

8 Retweets 9 Likes





UN Development

@UNDP

Follow

#LGBTI activist Monica is the 1st in #Nepal to receive #thirdgender passport ow.ly/VCSiW #HumanRightsDay



10:02 AM - 9 Dec 2015

27 Retweets 29 Likes



27



29





Lalmani Tiwari
@TiwariLalmani

Follow

India's Supreme Court Recognizes 3rd Gender -

#HumanRights Restored !

[washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldvie ...](https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldview/)

#ThirdGender



9:08 PM - 15 Apr 2014




Birat Anupam

@birat_anupam

Follow

#Nepal is #gendersupportive -be it male,female or #thirdgender ones... Here is the document to prove this....



 Ministry of Home Affairs
 Department of Immigration
ARRIVAL INFORMATION
 (TO BE FILLED BY FOREIGN NATIONALS)

DD MM YYYY
 DATE

PLEASE FILL IN BLOCK LETTERS OR MARK ☑

First Name

Middle Name

Family Name

Date of Birth DD MM YYYY **SEX** Male Female Other

Passport Number

Indian nationals from India

3:05 AM - 24 Sep 2016

4 Retweets 10 Likes



↻ 4

♥ 10



Regarding reservations in the Indian public university system for third gender student applicants (i.e. affirmative action for members of a scheduled caste)

 **sanjeev kotnala**
@S_kotnala Follow

It will take time... its not that you open doors and they will walk in . [#ThirdGender](#)
[#professional](#) [#education](#) [#Ahmedabad](#)

City's top institutes see cold response from 3rd gender

Tanushree Bhatia
tanushree.bhatia@dnaindia.net

Ahmedabad: Even after two years of the University Grants Commission (UGC) notifying transgenders as the third gender to avail benefits of programmes in higher educational institutions, premier institutes from the city have yet again received a cold response from them.

After a Supreme Court ruling acknowledging transgenders as the 'third gender' in 2015, various institutes like the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, CEPT University, National Institute of Design, MICA, and others had opened its doors to the community. The response was by far the same as last year, with only IIMA receiving applications. Talking about the same, Tarun Deep



Picture for representational purpose

Girdher, Chairperson, Admissions, NID, said, "This year we received applications from two candidates but they didn't appear for the Design Aptitude Test."

Subhrangshu Goswami, Chairperson, Admissions, CEPT University, said, "While we are open to giving admissions to candidates applying under the category of the third gender, but we have not received any application from them this time as well." Siddharth Deshmukh, Associate Dean, MICA, said, "While we welcome diversity among our students, we also respect their privacy. Hence, whether the applicant is a transgender or not, our focus has to be academics." A source said, "Last year, MICA had received an application from a third gender but the person did not appear for the exam." Professor Apratim Guha, Chairperson, Admissions, IIMA, said, "A total of 16 transgender candidates have applied for IIMA's PGP 2017-19 batch." Whether they have made it to the final round of admissions is not known.

This year eight transgenders had appeared for NEET, of which five cleared the exam. Chairperson of Asia Pacific Transgender Network Abhina Aher said, "Even if these applicants did not get through, they definitely wanted to prove that we are not less than anyone nor miserable."

1:20 AM - 13 Aug 2017

16 Retweets 52 Likes





Paavan Mathema 

@paavan11

Follow

#facebook should have a #thirdgender option, requests sunil babu panta businessweek.com/ap/2012-03/D9T...

7:07 AM - 27 Mar 2012

2 Retweets



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