oF oM

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☐ Table of content

Abstract 1☐
oF oM 2☐
Identifying 3☐
Binary boxes 5☐
Intersex 8☐
Being transgender 10☐
Myths 13☐
We need to be normal 14☐
Chaotic boxes 16☐
Bureaucratic markers 18☐
My gendered grammar 21☐
We are born with a condition 22☐
Acknowledgements 23☐
Works cited 24☐
Bibliography 27☐

❐ Abstract

❐ Gender and sex markers co-exist but not in harmony. These markers are based on the binary notion of sex and used as such in our society and bureaucracy without much thought. We use them as binaries because they've been established as such, we blindly assume that is how they should be. Sex marker attribution is based on the flawed evaluation of our genitalia at birth, which blindly disregards biological (or physical) discrepancies. The approach to classifying gender is similarly flawed and incomplete. Thus, as gender categories expand and evolve the use of bureaucratic markers for *sex* and *gender* ought to be revised. We too often have to assume what is meant by the oF or oM on a form or survey. These markers should be clearly defined and ultimately, their necessity is to be put into question.

Sex: Sex is a biological fact you are born with which refers to a person’s genitelia.

Gender: Gender is a societal construct, it is a role in society. One is born with a sex but not with a gender.

☐ Definitions

❐ oF oM

❐ When I write oF oM what do you read? What do you see? I, see a choice: Female or Male. A binary choice we endlessly confront on forms and surveys. Often when prompted with oF oM, it is without context, we just have to assume relevancy. What are we really asked for when these forms themselves don't seem to come with a set definition of sex and gender? We just tick the box we were taught to tick, without a thought to its implications.

❐ How do we know we are male or female? Because a doctor ticked a box based on the visual appearance of your genitalia? So our sex is just based on reproductive organs? Yet, the sex of our bodies is more complex than just our appearance and genitalia. Our body's complex system doesn't have a fault line between M & F, between XY & XX. So what is this system of binary classification based on and why do we swear by it?

❐ Our existence seems to be set up with two options. These options might be simple to accept for most but not everyone is privileged enough to make the choice they want or be included in the choice they make. We are living by gendered categories that are attributed as a result of biological sex. Once someone's biological sex does not match their gender or result in their gender we see how unstable this so called structure we live by is. We see how the uncommon and unknown leads to ostracization. We see how "normal" is something our society strives for.

❐ What is normal? Where does this notion of normal come from and why is it something we attribute to people? The normal excludes the fact that we are all born with conditions and circumstances. We are born with differences that can never sum up to qualify to this *normal* we cannot define or quantify. For order and peace of mind we need to understand that we are too complex to ever be the norm. We need to look beyond our similarities and acknowledge our differences.

❐ The bureaucratic markers of gender and sex being used should be defined instead of assumed so as to determine their necessity. Furthermore, as categories of gender are expanding and evolving the use of bureaucratic gender and sex markers should be revised.

❐ Identifying

❐ I've questioned whether I identify as a woman. A woman in Cagnes-sur-mer where I was born. A woman in Villeneuve-Loubet where I first grew up. A woman in the small village of Valbonne. A woman in the South of France. A woman in France. Or a woman in the Netherlands. Everywhere has a set of rules. Everyone has expectations. We are all taught differently. But even with all these different limits and freedoms I still questioned whether I identify as a woman.

❐ So it's not about how I grew up not being able to identify with the women in France or the women in the Netherlands. It's about the word woman. It's about this idea that woman is a word that encapsulates all women. When in reality it's not. It does not feel like that to me. I might feel closer to being a woman in certain environments but I never fully feel like a woman. I never feel like I fulfil the expectations. As if there's this list of requirements and I always fail meeting all of them. It's not per se a list. It's a feeling. It's something I can't grasp. Not being able to feel whole with the word woman I started to look elsewhere.

❐ When I was younger and I was a girl I felt more like a boy then I ever did a girl. I felt at war with my body when hormones kicked in. When we started to make differences at school, in the playgrounds and in sports. When we made differences in our capabilities. I was at war with myself and others. I wanted to be part of the boys but I wasn't allowed because I was a girl. I then played the part and stayed with the girls. Being with the girls was the same. I was too boyish for them. I wasn't enough of a girl to be with the girls and not enough of a boy to be with the boys. Both sides shamed me.

❐ But it wasn't about the shame and insults. It wasn't about being the tomboy or the boy cross dressing as a girl. It obviously hurt as words intended as insults are meant to. They made me feel alien, which was their goal. But as I look back, I shouldn't have been hurt because these words had some truth to them. I was different, I felt different. I failed to see how their category of being a girl could ever define me. Fast forward to the present where I am now supposed to be a woman and yet again fail to see how the category could ever fully define me.

❐ I think shame comes from the rules of society that compel us to want to be normal. When growing up I was looking for guidance and my place in society. I was growing and learning to exist in society. The insults and criticism I faced made me feel shame, shame in not being the normal everyone seemed to want to achieve. My body brought me shame because I did not seem to be using it in the normal way. My behavior and way of living were misaligned with the rules attributed to my body. I was not being a normal girl.

❐ But I have now less shame. I have less shame as a woman because I now understand that there's no guidelines. People aren't universal. Some people I've crossed paths with seem to think there are guidelines but in the end, these people only base their guidelines on personal truth. There was no normal girl that I could have ever achieved being because normalcy and being *normal* is a personal truth and not a reality. People were assessing me according to their guidelines to justify I was not normal. Existence should be individualistic because only you know how to be you and you should do so for yourself.

❐ I am now me. With less shame in being a woman or the girl I once was. I have now pride. Pride in being a woman, and in the moments I've faced to get here. I do not want to be disassociated from women. I have pride in what it took to be a woman and what it sometimes means. I've slowly reclaimed the word woman for myself even if I do not always accept it. Because I am not just a woman. I am not a man. I think I might be gender non-conforming. Yet I don't particularly agree with any gender categorization. I think they're flawed. I find myself comfortable with the pronoun she. I am a female. And that is my sex not gender. I am she. She is my skin. It is my body. It is my vagina. It is how I present myself? To me she is how I am perceived but sometimes I am not enough of a woman to be perceived as a she. She is my condition. The condition I was born with.

My body holds shame and pride
It holds both close
Keeps them like precious presents
Keeps them safe so they don't get lost
So they don't escape
As if one cannot survive without the other
For I have shame in my pride
And pride in my shame

I go home to the country that birthed me and feel alien
I walk in the streets in France and get stared at
People do double takes
Look me up and down
As many times as they feel is appropriate
In France I get misgendered by the cashier
And when they hear my voice
They sometimes look shocked
They sometimes look as if I'm tricking them
They sometimes look embarrassed
They sometimes pause for just a little too long
In France I usually feel alien
Not just in the small villages
The capital
The most international
I feel alien even there
I feel alien in my own country
I feel stared at
I feel judged
I feel I don't tick their boxes
I feel like I'm not woman enough
I feel I'm not french enough
I feel I'm not french woman enough

❐ Binary boxes

❐ Binaries are hollow shells trapping you in. “Gender is a shell game. What is a man? Whatever a woman isn’t. What is a woman? Whatever a man is not. Tap on it and it’s hollow. Look under the shells: it’s not there.”[1]

❐ These two words, these two genders have consumed so much expectations they’ve left us with overwhelming stereotypes. They narrow down our perception of people. The history of these words seems forever stuck to them. Man is what a woman isn’t. A man is the subject and absolute whilst a woman is the other. Woman has been compared to man. Evaluated against man. Women are lacking, lacking in comparison to men who are complete and the so called dominant sex.

❐ This dualistic view of gender and constant dyadic opposition of skills and attributes in society enforced the oppression of women. There is no clear event in history that led to the oppression of women. But the oppression is present in history and continued to be justified by the sick binary notion enforcing that men are superior to women. Simone de Beauvoir was one of the first feminist writer and she focused on analyzing and destroying men’s so called superiority. She explored how men have justified their superiority by going back to the principles of our hunter gatherer ancestors. She questioned why men had to be the breadwinners and women should stay at home to care for the house, as it enforced a role onto each gender.

❐ The binary is blocking us from understanding how we are formed. It is so deeply rooted in our society so much so it becomes one of the first things thought of when analysing research. Women and men have been compared for centuries. As Laqueur explains, political importance is what fuelled our interest in looking for differences between men and women in terms of anatomy and physiology.[2] If it had not been politically beneficial then we would not have been working to find evidence in the existence of two distinct sex.

❐ During the 17th to 19th century in Europe a period referred to as the Age of Enlightenment created a fundamental change in how we look at sex and gender.[3] The Age of Enlightenment was a philosophical as well as medical movement which led to important discoveries and also paved new ways of thinking. Pre-enlightenment there was what Laqueur calls the one-sex model which refers to the body and states that there is only male bodies and that females are male bodies but with their reproductive organs turned inside.[4] The Enlightenment period however challenged such a claim and through medical discoveries, i.e the first human biopsies, concluded that there was in fact two distinct sex. Laqueur refers to that as the two-sex model which thus acknowledged the biological difference based on sex organs between males and females.

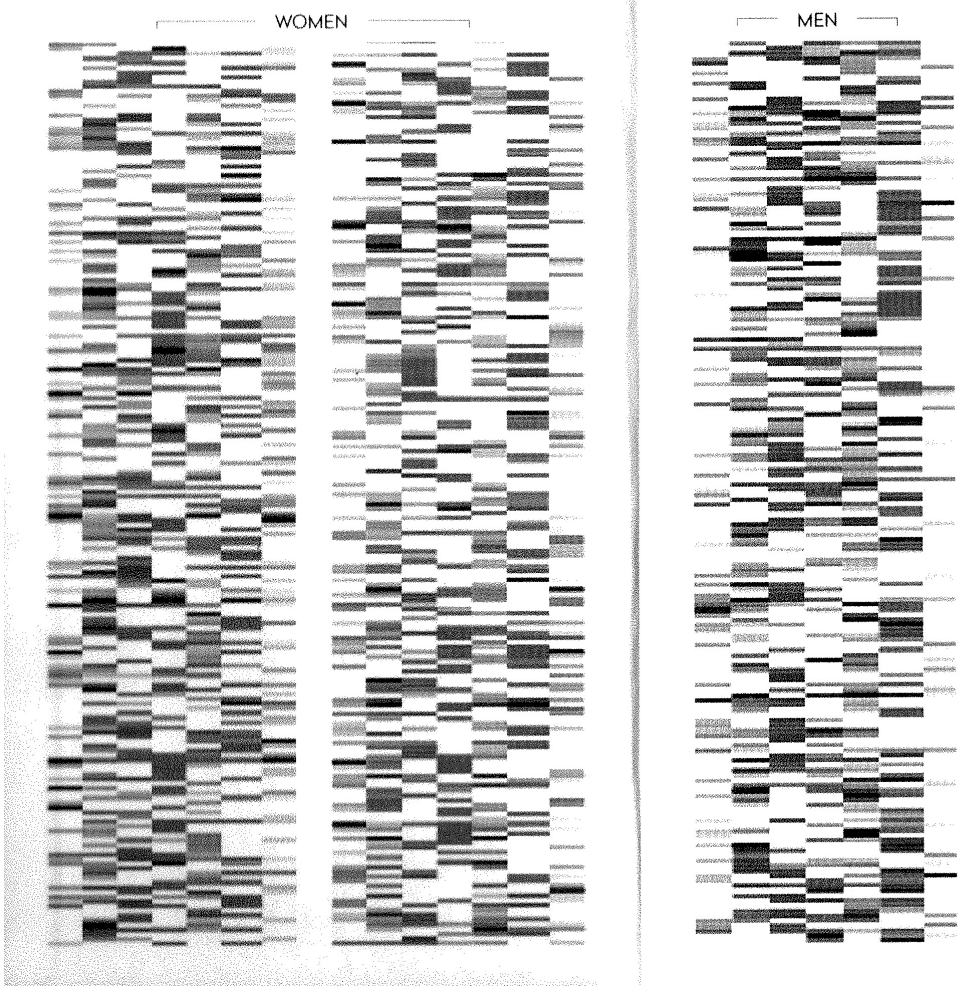
❒ As the two-sex model emerged sex came to be seen as the primary, now a real factor of difference between men and women as opposed to pre-enlightenment when sex was seen as epiphenomenon thus a secondary effect. As I previously stated, it was seen as such pre-enlightenment because of the one-sex model, people anatomically believed there were only male bodies and so to be a man or woman was placed first before biological sex. Another thing that changed was gender, gender as the concept of being a man or a woman. Pre-enlightenment it was seen as primary and real whilst after enlightenment it came to be seen as the outcome of fundamental biological difference. Pre-enlightenment, to be a man or woman was above biology and was a social issue whilst post-enlightenment to be a man or woman became a physical issue and a result of biology.[5]

❒ The overwhelmingly present dyadic roles of gender also reinforce the fabricated link between sex and gender. The notion that all males are men and all females are women and the opposite that all women are females and men are males. This very idea is problematic and enforces a role in society onto a biological fact and a biological fact onto a role in society. This imposing action is reinforced by the binary system of classification.

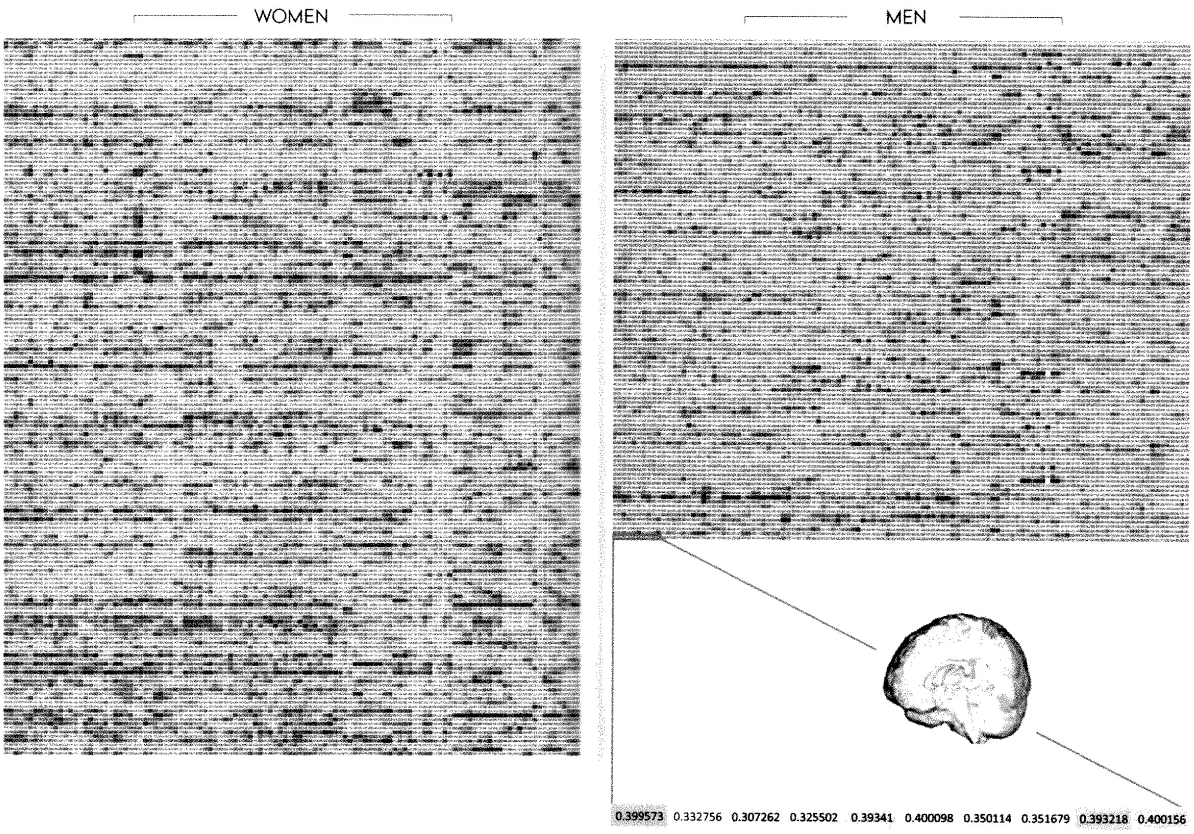
❒ We are classified at birth, a box of either male or female is ticked because in most cases we are born with clear differences in genitals. There is also a small portion of those that are born intersex, whom blur the lines between the dyadic distinction of sex. But are we truly born completely male or completely female? For many years scientists have been debating the existence of male and female brains. The boxes we tick divide us into male and females but that is based on outer appearance of the body, genitals, does this division go beyond genitals? Are we born with clear male and female brains? In their book Gender Mosaic, Daphna Joel and Luba Vikhanski argue that “the logic that is familiar to us from the genitals does not apply to the brain.”[6]

❒ Our brain does contain clear sex differences such as differences in mass and proportions which has been repeatedly confirmed by scientific research. But the mistake that has been made by scientists analysing the brain is through their approach of the topic. The approach being again their narrow cause to reinforce the dyadic system and finding ways to justify their theories of the differences between males and females. But as Joel and Vikhanski explain there has been a never ending amount of contradicting research findings on the topic. The previous clear differences found in males and females fall apart when the next research’s data does not match. “Looking back at the history of brain research, I’m impressed by the creativity that went into twisting scientific facts to serve a social or political agenda.”[7]

❒ Scientists have assumed that brain activity patterns are separated in male and female. They assumed that if the amount of brains analyzed increased then the differences between female and male brains would increase but “an analysis of 179 studies comparing brain activity patterns between women and men, published in 2018 in Scientific Reports, revealed no such relationship.”[8] It has been the ambition of many scientists to prove that there is a male and female brain. Their entire process is forged on the dyadic genital sex of the body. These scientists initiated their research having already reached a conclusion that there is a male and female brain.



The human gender mosaic. Each row represents data from a single individual (382 women on the left, 188 men on the right); each column represents the score on a single psychological characteristic (seven altogether). These scores range from highly feminine (dark pink) to highly masculine (dark blue).[1] You can easily see the differences between the two groups – there's more pink in the women's tables and more blue in the men's. But not a single individual has only pink or only blue characteristics – most are unique mosaics of pink (feminine) and blue (masculine) characteristics.



The human brain mosaic. Each row represents a single brain (169 women on the left, 112 men on the right); each column represents the volume of a single brain region (116 altogether) on a green (large) – white – yellow (small) colour scale. The larger a region in an individual's brain compared to this same region in all other brains – the darker the green. The smaller the region – the darker the yellow.[2] You can easily see the difference between the two groups – there's more green in the women's table and more yellow in the men's. But individual brains are rarely all yellow or all green. Rather, most are unique mosaics of green and yellow.

❐ “Although sex does affect the brain, there are no ‘true’ male and female brains out there to discover. The true nature of the brain is that its form is highly variable.”[9] Joel and Vikhanski explained the conclusion of their research as follows: “Most brains are comprised of unique ‘mosaics’ of features, some more common in females compared with males, some more common in males compared with females, and some more common in both females and males.”[10] Their findings challenge our binary notions, they go as far as saying that if we continue to analyse the brain with the terminology we attribute to genitals that we can only conclude that most brains are not male or female but in fact intersex.

❐ Accepting the statement that most brains are in fact intersex is something I don’t believe would be easily accepted by our society. As Anne Fausto-Sterling explains, our goal to maintain gender division is driven by the order of the binary. The bodies that are “so unruly as to blur the borders” such as intersex bodies that “quite literally embody both sexes, weaken claims about sexual difference.”[11] Accepting that most brains are in fact intersex would be yet another factor that weakens claims about the binary of sexual differences, diverting us from binary classification.

❐ Intersex

❐ We are not born with a gender but with a sex, a biological sex. We are given a gender. We are attributed a gender at birth as if it's a reward for our biological sex being within the norm. There are people however who are born with "chromosomal, physiological, and/or endocrinal features that do not neatly correspond to our culturally determined definitions of dyadic sex"[12] whom we define as being intersex. Being intersex is a condition that is varied but a condition that has been seen as abnormal and the abnormal is something that our "society of normalization"[13] has a hard time accepting.

❐ If a child is not born with a biological sex that is within the western binary norm than in some cases doctors or parents will take liberty in deciding which sex their child should keep as the prominent sex. In 2013, a UN rapporteur on torture noted: "Children who are born with atypical sex characteristics are often subject to irreversible sex assignment, involuntary sterilization, involuntary genital normalizing surgery, performed without their informed consent, or that of their parents, 'in an attempt to fix their sex', leaving them with permanent, irreversible infertility and causing severe mental suffering."[14]

❐ Binary works like that. It's embedded in our system even before we are born. These surgeries performed on children born with atypical sex characteristic have been justified by two goals: one being the "normalization" of the genital to facilitate heterosexual penetrative sex and the second being purely driven by the idea the child should conform to social norms and expectation of sex and gender.[15] But as Anne Fausto-Sterling argues:

❐ *Why should we care if a "woman" (defined as having breasts, a vagina, uterus, ovaries and menstruation) has a "clitoris" large enough to penetrate the vagina of another woman? Why should we care if there are individuals whose "natural biological equipment" enables them to have sex "naturally" with both men and women? Why must we amputate or surgically hide that "offending shaft" found on an especially large clitoris? The answer: to maintain gender divisions, we must control those bodies that are so unruly as to blur the borders. Since intersexuals quite literally embody both sexes, they weaken claims about sexual difference.*[16]

❐ People born intersex are the first to provoke the dyadic system that attempts to affirms clear sexual differences between males and females. They also weaken the stereotyped gender roles society has attributed to women and men as well as the definitions of such gender. It is important to question what is needed in terms of biology for an individual to feel they are a man or a woman. But it is also important to realise that it should not be about what's needed, there should not be set norms and gender should not be so undoubtedly a product of sex.

❐ The sex boxes we tick at birth heavily influence our idea of the binary and of the normal. Foucault called it the "biopolitics of the population"[17] which started in the early 19th century as social scientists developed methods to manage the population such as surveys of births and mortality, life expectancy, census, etc. It was this gained knowledge that allowed physicians to believe they had the power to "control the gender of the body"[18]. "By helping the normal take precedence over the natural, physicians have also contributed to populational biopolitics."[19]

❐ But the normal is being reconsidered. Parents have started to reconsider these sex rectification surgery suggested by their doctor. Some parents have decided to leave the choice to the child in order to not make the *wrong* choice for them. Kristina Turner is one of those parents. In 2018, Turner said she was relieved she did not give in to the pressure of the surgeons to make her child's genitalia appear more female. Her child named Ori who turned 11 in 2018 lives happily identifying as intersex. Turner was right in her belief that she could not possibly predict the gender her newborn child was to later identify with in life. She knew it would be a grave mistake for her to enforce that choice onto Ori before Ori even had the chance to understand what it meant.[20]

❐ There is pressure for us to fit in and to conform to societal norms from the moment we are born. Sex is on papers from the moment you are born until you die. They tick a box on our birth certificate. We tick a box for our identification documents. We tick a box for school applications. We tick a box for our driver's license. We tick a box for a gym subscription. We tick a box when we buy a house. We tick a box on random surveys. We tick a box at the doctor's. We tick a box. Then another and another and another and another and another. Then they tick a box. When you die. We are gendered, sexed and classified and people often feel they have to abide by these rules of classification.

A man is born with a penis
A man ~~is born with~~ has a penis
A ~~man~~ male has a penis
A ~~male~~ person has a penis
A ~~person has a~~ penis is the sexual organ of a person born male
A penis is ~~the sexual organ of~~ associated with a person born male
A penis is associated with a ~~person born male~~ man

A woman is born with a vagina
A woman ~~is born with~~ has a vagina
A ~~woman~~ female has a vagina
A ~~female~~ person has a vagina
A ~~person has a~~ vagina is the sexual organ of a person born female
A vagina is ~~the sexual organ of~~ associated with a person born female
A vagina is associated with a ~~person born female~~ woman

☐ Fabricated link

❐ Being transgender

❐ *It seems that we shoehorned many people into categories that never really fit them.*[21]

❐ There are rules embedded in our society we've turned a blind eye towards because of their normalization. We've structured our societies with the simplified belief that the world is made up of two groups of human beings: men and women. "We took for granted the belief that if you have a certain set of genitals and secondary sex characteristics, you have a particular gender identity too."[22] We constantly validate this binary organization with the structures that continue to be implemented in our society. Marriage, public restrooms, sports, clothing brands and more are drawing lines of differences between genders and reinforcing the binary distinctions we often use to validate the structures and roles we live with. We constantly enforce an overlooked rule "Be a man. Be a woman. Don't step out of line". We have made it so that our assigned genders force us to abide to the rules of society.

❐ The growth in the media exposure of transgender people for the past few years has created a rift in the structure of our "perfect" and "normal" society. There is an increase in the amount of people that now know about transgenders. But as there is more exposure which aims to normalize the transgenders there are obviously more opinions. Transgender is not something that fits in the binary structure of our society. The medical forms, identification documents, birth documentation and more are often not equipped to deal with this transition of gender. It is a constant struggle to switch gender categories as our society has linked it so closely to sex. One needs to change their sex marker in order to change their gender in the bureaucracy of our society. Thus in order to be recognized as a man or a woman, a mr. or mrs. a she or he within bureaucracy one needs to change their sex marker to male or female accordingly. In the society that we've organised female is a she, mrs., woman and male is a he, mr., man.

❐ The sex boxes we tick create our identity and organize us in society and somehow determine our gender without consulting us first. If you are born and tick one sex category every document you filled in up until that point refers back to that sex. What becomes complex is when a transgender person changes their sex markers. Changing your sex marker is a struggle of its own and is not simple but what I want to address is the aftermath. If one succeeds in changing their sex marker a part of their life disappears. That's the chaos of the very structure we live by. If your sex marker changes it means that documents such as birth certificate or marriage certificate become invalid. A whole part of your existence in society is invalid and becomes erased as if your past sex marker was the only thing that made your existence real. You start again with no trace of previous valid existence.

❐ Have you ever thought of all the documents you filled out that contain your sex marker? What happens to them? Your place in this structured society built on the belief that there are only two genders and that they are hereditary to your sex.

❐ Transgenders constantly face stigmas about changing their bodies and more so when taking surgical decision resulting in visible body transformations. This stigma comes from various places one emerging again from the binary notions of gender, and the transition of gender and of body breaking away from the set sex marker of birth. Other than sometimes convincing their closed ones about their choice for this transformation, transgenders also have to justify their need for a surgical change which varies depending on the countries and offices themselves. In the famous office of Dr. Charles Garramore in Florida in order to receive top surgery, which consists of masculinizing the chest by removing breasts, "patients must present a letter from a mental health professional diagnosing them as having gender "dysphoria" and attesting to their mental stability and capacity to make a fully informed decision."[23]

❐ Transgender often need to justify their choice for their surgical transformation with a psychological reason but regarding other plastic surgeries that exist such as breast augmentations one does not need to go through such process and justification.[24] This being yet another factor of the stigma transgenders face, if we accept breast augmentation when they are also a physical transformation of the body why not simply do the same with top surgery. What makes a breast augmentation surgery less concerning then top surgery? A breast augmentation surgery could be linked to the mental health of the patient and seen as a form of body dysphoria as it can be seen as the result of a person feeling their body does not conform with how they see themselves.

❐ Nadia is one of the patients that Dr. Garramore is seeing for top surgery but unlike the other patients Nadia is not what you would call transgender. "She identifies as female and has no interest in taking testosterone, but she sees her breasts as an impediment, a part of her body that does not reflect how she sees herself."[25] Nadia is masculinizing her chest but that is all she is doing in order to live a comfortable life where she is happy in her skin and feels whom she is on the inside matches with her body.

❐ There is a lot of misconception as to what "qualifies" a person as transgender, Rogers Brubaker explains there are at least three basic identities: the "trans of migration", the "trans of between" and the "trans of beyond".[26] Each person does not need to change their body in order to be a "true" transgender, each transgender case is different and assuming all transgender are the same is wrong just as all bodies and mind are not the same. The "trans of migration" is the transgender identity that the public is the most familiar with, it is the one we see and is portrayed the most, the transition of male-to-female, man-to-woman or female-to-male, woman-to-man. However, yet again I want to emphasize that this transition is different for each individual and might involve surgeries and/or hormones. The "trans of between" can be visualized by the space in between male and female or the belief that gender is fluid.[27] And finally the "trans beyond" is how people disassociate themselves with gender, going beyond any gender categorization "calling themselves "agender" or "postgender"—signifying their desire to define themselves without gender categories."[28]

❐ Identities are closely linked to gender and thus gender categorization which is influenced by binary notions of sex. Even in the attempt to be dissociated from gender categorization and identifying as agender or postgender people still categorize themselves. We are stuck in a system of categorization.

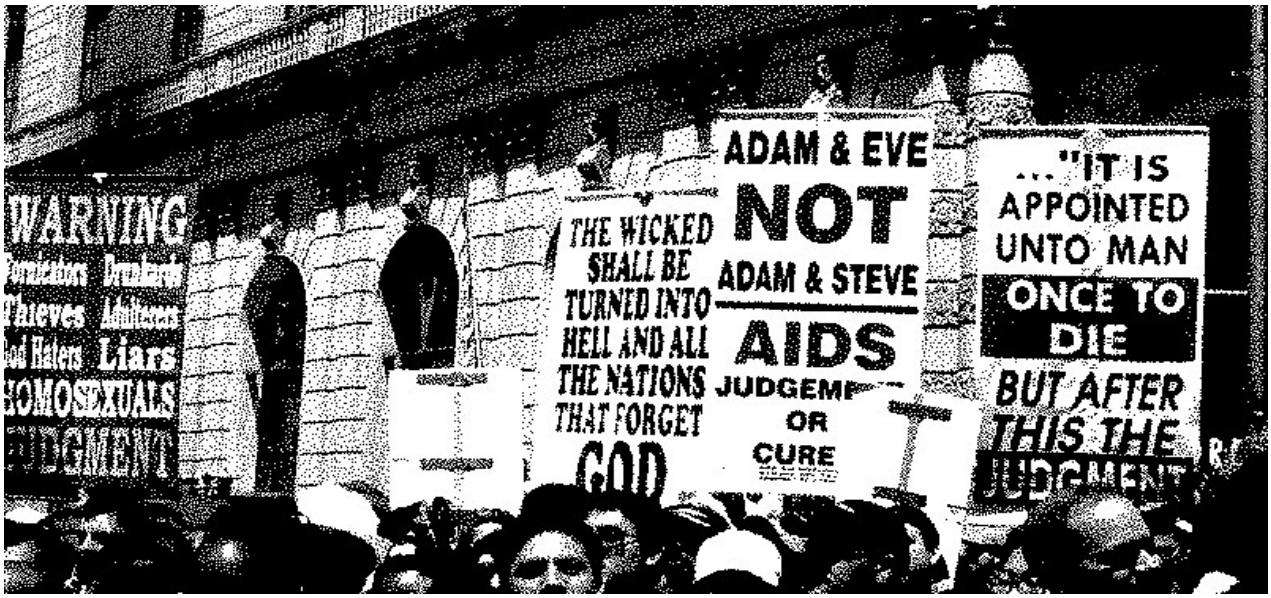
❐ Myths

❐ *The myth of the existence of two genders is just that: a myth. It does not stand up to the test of modern science. Myths are stories that explain why the world, natural or social, is the way it is and why it could not be different. We easily identify a myth when it belongs to a different culture. But we treat the myths of our own culture as truth.*[29]

❐ Our history is filled with myths that assert a gendered world. One well known example is the story Adam and Eve, their story being one that has been reinterpreted and rewritten through different religions and texts. The Bible, Genesis 2:22 says "And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man." Many read this as Adam being created before Eve, and that women are created from a part of man. Until Medieval time and the thus the first autopsies, people believed that man had one less rib than women because of the origin story of Adam and Eve.[30] It's not about what an origin story says per se but how it's taken up and interpreted. The assertion of a gendered world and the binary differences between men and women are based on interpretations.

❐ Religious texts have been used and interpreted to justify norms and the natural order of things. Such is the case when religion talks of sexuality and when religion is used to contest homosexuality. Christian religious protests in the U.S. against the "gay agenda" use slogans such as "ADAM & EVE NOT ADAM & STEVE!"[31] Thus using religious text and interpreting them for their own benefits to justify their homophobia. These protestors often say that AIDS is sent from God, that it is a gay curse yet again justifying their myths.[32] Because of AIDS the hate and slogans are often directed at men but it is also because gay sex involves penetration whilst lesbian intercourse might not. Lesbianism is more tolerated and disregarded as not serious because if no penetration is involved one could still be considered salvageable and a virgin in the eye of religion.

❐ Interpretations lead to myths which are treated as truth when they are in fact twisted interpretations of texts and/or facts. "All these myths justify the existence of gender as a social system in which humans are treated differently and have different access to power depending on the form of their genitals."[33] Gender is a myth, it is an interpretation of genitals which are only outer biological sexual differences. Gender disregards the intricate and unique mosaic of human beings. One does not simply have a female brain or a male brain as Daphna Joel and Luba Vikhanski continually prove in their analysis of the brain in terms of the physical data as well as psychological data. Humans are in fact mosaics of stereotypically female and male characteristics.[34] "The fact that gender is a myth doesn't mean it doesn't exist. It certainly does—not as an intrinsic set of qualities but as a social system that attributes meaning to sex, assigning different roles, status and power to males and females. This system exerts an overriding influence on our lives, imposing a binary divide on a population of human mosaics."[35]


WARNING
Liars
THE WICKED SHALL BE TURNED INTO HELL AND ALL THE NATIONS THAT FORGET GOD
ADAM & EVE
NOT
ADAM & STEVE
AIDS
OR
CURE
..."IT IS APPOINTED UNTO MAN
ONCE TO DIE
BUT AFTER THIS THE

❐ We need to be normal

❐ The society we live in has a tendency to strive for normal. We live in a *society of normalization* as Foucault said. “By normalization Foucault means the establishment of measurements, hierarchy, and regulations around the idea of a distributionary statistical norm within a given population—the idea of judgment based on what is normal and thus what is abnormal.”[36] Fitting in has been a recurring goal for centuries as it is so closely linked to acceptance and being part of a community. People do not live to be alienated but to feel they are of worth and need to the world they live in. Our society has created norms, evaluated the populations and estimated there is such a thing as a normal person. But what does normal mean? When did we start associating such a word to people? We have no clear chart where we have written out all one needs to live up to in order to be classified as normal, yet people seem to know when someone is not normal and does not fit the norm.

❐ The word normal was originally being used in geometry to define something that was “in conformity to the rules”.[37] The word normal also stems from the Latin *norma* in geometry referring to a “carpenter’s square” which is a ruler with a perfect 90 degree angle.[38] The use of the word normal referred to forming a right angle which was thus something “made according to a carpenter’s square”.[39] Normal meant perfect and according to the rules. In the 19th century, it slowly started being used to refer to people as studies started to gather data of the body and measure aspects such as height, weight and blood pressure.[40] The normal was then associated to health and what could be a desirable body.

❐ We’re living with a notion of normal that quantifies aspects of the body and over the years we’ve let it rule over behaviours. Laws created rules of behaviour of the perfect citizen, the normal citizen and these laws influenced the normal. Their aim is to create a passive and well behaved citizen that does not stand out of line. The normal is blending in and not creating chaos to the order. These notions of normal have created hidden rules in society that define the normal. There is a normal way to sit in public, a normal way to walk, a normal way for everything we do.

❐ Artists have reacted to these notion of norms we have established in our society, one humorous example is from the well known sketch called “The Ministry of Silly Walks” by the Monty Python comedy troupe. The sketch shows political men establishing the silliest walks. The work used humour to criticize the robotic and “stereotypical bowler-hatted political drone.”[41] Another great work is “Semiotics of the Kitchen” by Martha Rosler, which shows herself in a kitchen alphabetically going through the utensils and displaying their use. The work was a parody on televised cooking demonstration shows made popular by Julia Child in the 60s.[42] It was also a critique on the imposed role of women to be the perfect housewife knowing everything about the household and kitchen. These artists dealt with different ways to address the normalization and structure of the society they lived by.

❐ The normal is based on rules, on medical records, on anatomical averages, on obedience, on being a so called *perfect citizen* in the eye of the law. It is a structure that does not take into account the complexity of nature, the complexity of the human body and mind. As Daphna Joel and Luba Vikhanski said in Gender Mosaic, our brain is not simply male or female "the human brain is neither female nor male. Rather, it is a unique mosaic of features that continues to change throughout our lives."[43] They demonstrate in their study there are multiple ways to analyse the sex and gender of a human being, from brain matter and hormones to psychology. Humans are complex and will remain so, they will forever be composed of multiple mosaics of gender and sex. One cannot simply be classified as male or female in all aspects of the human body and mind. We are all more in-between the two then we like to believe.

❐ We are all born with conditions that don't fit the normal we have seemed to establish. We are not perfect and if the normal means perfection or at least the average of perfection then the normal is yet another category of exclusion. It is something we could never achieve but yet enforce.

❐ Chaotic boxes

❐ *“Why do humans give flowers names?” [says the Cabbage the cat]*

“That’s because there are so many different kinds. Without names you wouldn’t be able to differentiate between them.” [his owner replies]

“Just because there are different kinds it doesn’t mean you have to name each and every one. Why not just call them all flowers? Isn’t that good enough?”

I suppose he was right. Why do people name flowers anyway? And flowers aren’t the only thing. We give names to all kinds of objects. Colours have names and so do people. Why do we need names?[44]

❐ This is a quote from a book called “If cats disappeared from the world” written by Genki Kawamura that I keep coming back to. This topic of gender is so complex I hardly ever feel like I’m saying anything that makes a difference. My words seem to have been spoken by others so many times that I’ve become the boy who cried wolf. I keep turning in circles trying to put words into feelings. Feelings I can’t seem to understand. I open my mouth hoping words will come out but instead I’m gasping for air. I’m at a loss and that’s the chaos. It’s not a room that’s messy and flipped inside out. It’s a room that’s so neat everything seems perfect. It’s the categories we’ve created so we can organize ourselves and know our place. It’s how we think we’re making people be part of a structured society based on categorization but truthfully we’re forcing categories onto people without them ever grasping their meaning.

❐ Defined categories are nothing but chaos. They make people strive for perfection. Perfecting the ticking of all boxes. Even gender non-conforming makes one tick boxes. The idea that one who doesn’t conform to the rules still creates rules is chaos. One person after another trying to see which box makes them whole. That’s the flaw—the chaos. The idea that a defined box, a defined category, is universal.

❐ We have these gender and sex boxes that are meant to organize us. After all that’s what categorization is meant to be about, creating order by grouping what we deem similar or the same together. But what we fail to see is that these boxes are creating chaos. If we look closely they’re not uniting people, they’re pushing them apart. The people that all identify under the same box assume they define that box in the same way. But can we all truly define who we are in the same ways?

❐ That’s where the chaos begins. Neat organized boxes are not real. They’re a fantasy we all would like to believe in. Once someone argues they do not associate with someone else that is within their same box chaos erupts. It becomes a battle of who’s right vs. who’s wrong. But how can we argue someone’s identification? How can we argue someone isn’t fitting enough for the box we define ourselves with? How can gender and sex boxes not create chaos?

Woman
Woman
Woman
Woman
Woman
Woman
Woman
Read it
Say it
Woman
Woman
Woman
Woman
Does it roll of the tongue?
Woman
Woman
Woman
Woman
Woman
Woman
Is it still woman?
Woman
Woman
Woman
Woman
Woman
Woman
It’s starting to feel alien
Woman
Woman
Woman
Woman
Woman
Woman
Woman
Woman
Woman
Its meaning
A sound
A word
Woman
Woman
Woman
If you repeat it enough times
Will you understand it?
Woman
Woman
Woman
Woman
Or are you losing the word
Straying from your mouth
From your language
Woman
Woman
And if i give you
Man
Does it change?
Man
Man
Man
Man
Man
Man
Where is woman?
If there is man
Man
Man
Man
Man
Man
Man
Is it lost
Man
Man
Man
Man
Man
Are they lost
Man
Man
Man
Man
In what you’ve told them to be
Woman
Man
Who are they?
Woman
Man
Woman
Man
Women.
Men.

☐ Taste the dyadic words

❐ But what about those who still don't fit into the system. The ones that are failed by the system of rules, like Maria Patiño the Spanish athlete who was stripped of all her titles after she underwent a sex test during the Olympics in 1986.[45] The results revealed that Patiño has Y chromosome in her cells and it also appeared that within her labia were hidden testes.[46]The International Olympic Committee (IOC) thus declared she was not a woman.[47] Patiño was banned from competing in the female team and she obviously could not compete in the male team because even though according to the IOC she was not female, she was also not male. She was floating in between two boxes, neither of which she was allowed to tick.

❐ *Our bodies are too complex to provide clear-cut answers about sexual difference. The more we look for a simple physical basis for "sex", the more it becomes clear that "sex" is not a pure physical category. What bodily signals and functions we define as male or female come already entangled in our ideas about gender.*[48]

❐ What the IOC uses to define sex is different than that of a doctor. The IOC will use chromosome or DNA testing as well as genital check in order to determine the sex of an athlete whilst a doctor will rely on the reproductive abilities to determine the prominent sex of their patient.[49] But is one wrong? Are both right? When there's so many variants of the same boxes, how can we be so sure we know what definition we're ticking? Where are we fitting into? Patiño was allowed by her doctors to tick their female box but the IOC did not allow her to tick their female box. The box is still female but there seems to be multiple boxes called female with each their own set of rules. So how could we find order in this flawed structure when there is no such thing as one true definition. This neat organization society wants us to live by is chaotic.

❐ Bureaucratic markers

❐ Sex categories start before we are even born and stay with us until we die. When you were inside the womb, it is likely that an ultrasound was taken 20 weeks into the pregnancy to determine whether you showed signs of having a vagina or a penis.[50] Until you are born this will thus determine whether your sex is male or female. The moment you are born you will then be inspected in order for your sex to be verified, and from then on your birth certificate will be marked with either male or female.[51]

❐ When a baby is born outside of an hospital the person whom will declare its sex will either be a physician, midwife, or parent which would seem like a straightforward task.[52] "However, medical experts report that one child in somewhere between 1500 and 2000 births has 'noticeably atypical' genitalia and many more people are born with subtler sex anatomy variations, some of which become noticeable only after a lifetime."[53] Yet we insist on declaring a sex at birth which is only based on the sexed appearance of your genitalia.

❐ Our birth certificate becomes our very first sex-identity documentation which is then the basis for all the following sex markers that will appear on all the IDs, passports and driver's licenses we acquire in a lifetime.[54] "We are asked to tick binary sex boxes on myriad bureaucratic forms ranging from school, job, mortgage, and apartment rental applications to government census forms, dental and medical intake questionnaires, online dating sites, social media and marketing surveys, and on and on."[55] Why is that? It's something that feels normal and redundant to some but can be hell for others. It's something that's almost become instinctual to add in the making of a survey or form. It's normalized by an array of institutions, one taking after another with no clear start and end. We let it happen and sometimes do it ourselves when making surveys or forms. I've made surveys for research back in high school and now that I look back at it I always asked for: age and sex. It was the basics. I never thought much about it back then. I always assumed I should use these like every other survey or form I had been presented with. That's the problem. Assuming something should be done in this way because that's how it's always been done and presented to us.

❐ I took a survey to help improve the course I'm taking at my university. This survey is taken anonymously or so it's advertised. However, randomly midway through this survey I was asked to tick a box: male, female or other. There was no information given as to how this helped in the survey and how this could possibly help in the improvement of my course. Considering the school already has data in their personnel file about the sex of their student as it is required in their application form, I did not understand what would justify this question in this anonymous survey. How could knowing my sex benefit to the answers I was giving? Knowing my sex should not affect my feedback or how my feedback was perceived.

❐ In some cases however there are times when it is truly required and justified for you to fill in your sex. One of these cases is medical forms as they require it to identify the best way to treat patients. These forms however usually have a binary option of male or female. What these forms often fail to inform is what this choice is referring to. It should be made clear what definition of sex and/or gender is asked in order to tick the *correct* box. Whether it be the marker on your birth certificate or the marker on your ID (which sometimes doesn't match your sex of birth) it might not fit with which one you identify with. Which goes back to the need for these forms to justify what is asked. One form that does this very well is the patient registration form used by the Fenway Health Center in Boston.[56] The form asks for "legal name", "name used", "legal sex" and "pronouns".[57] It goes on to clearly inform what is implied by "legal name" and gives a clear definition of "legal sex" for the patient to understand which box they need to check.[58] It does all this by putting an asterisk(*) behind "legal name" and "legal sex" and stating the following:

❐ *"While Fenway recognizes a number of genders / sexes, many insurance companies and legal entities unfortunately do not. Please be aware that the name and sex you have listed on your insurance must be used on documents pertaining to insurance, billing and correspondence. If your preferred name and pronouns are different from these, please let us know."*[59]

❐ As well as this the form also allows for "name used" and "pronouns" so that the patient will be referred to their preferred name and pronoun. In this way, the health center is able to get the proper bureaucratic information and also allows for patients to be identified in the proper way. This closes the gap that is often present between what is bureaucratically true and personally true.

❐ We do not need more forms that assume you understand what they are asking for when demanding you to tick the male or female box. We need forms to clarify what they are asking for and their clear definition of it. But we also need to know why. Why the survey I filled in regarding the improvement of my course randomly asked for my sex. We need explanations as to why certain forms require you to tick sex boxes. Do all the forms we fill in really need to know whether we are male or female? At what point is it necessary for an entity to know your sex.

❐ One assumes sex when they talk about gender. One assumes gender when they talk about sex. This blurred line between gender and sex is something that can cause a lot of confusion. The bureaucratic system is filled with gender and sex and the constant crossing and clashing of these terms. If we go back to the topic of pregnancy with such a statement we can look at how transgender parents are affected in this system of sex and gender. One issue in the bureaucratic system being that transgender men are not recognised as being able to give birth.

FENWAY HEALTH

Client Registration

The information in your medical record is confidential and is protected under Massachusetts General Laws Ch. 111, Sec 70. Your written consent will be required for release of information except in the case of a court order.

Medical Record #
(For office use only)

Legal Name* Last	First	Middle Initial	**Name used:**

Legal Sex (please check one)* ☐ Female ☐ Male

Pronouns:

**While Fenway recognizes a number of genders / sexes, many insurance companies and legal entities unfortunately do not. Please be aware that the name and sex you have listed on your insurance must be used on documents pertaining to insurance, billing and correspondence. If your preferred name and pronouns are different from these, please let us know.*

Date of Birth *Month Day Year* / /	**Social Security #**	**State ID # or License #**

Your answers to the following questions will help us reach you quickly and discreetly with important information.

Home Phone ( ) **Ok to leave voicemail?** Yes No -	**Cell Phone** ( ) - **Ok to leave voicemail?** Yes No	**Work Phone** ( ) **Ok to leave voicemail?** Yes No -	**Best number to use:** ☐ Home ☐ Cell ☐ Work

Address	City	State	ZIP

Email address:

Occupation	Employer/School Name	Are you covered under school or employer's insurance? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Emergency Contact's Name	Phone Number	Relationship to you

If you are under 18, the Department of Public Health requires that you provide parent/guardian contact information.

Parent/Guardian Name	Phone Number	Relationship to you

Fenway Health will send certain correspondence, such as bills, to your mailing address. **How would you prefer to receive other types of written correspondence? (check one)** ☐ Secure Email (MyFenway) ☐ Letter ☐ Other

This information is for demographic purposes only and will not affect your care.

1.) What is your annual income?

_____
❑ No income

1a.) How many people (including you) does your income support?

_____

2.) Employment Status

❑ Employed full time
❑ Employed part time
❑ Student full time
❑ Student part time
❑ Retired
❑ Unemployed
❑ Other _____

3.) Racial Group(s)
(check all that apply)

❑ African American / Black
❑ Asian
❑ Caucasian / White
❑ Native American / Alaskan Native / Inuit
❑ Pacific Islander
❑ Other _____

4.) Ethnicity

❑ Hispanic/Latino/Latina
❑ Not Hispanic/Latino/Latina

5) Country of Birth

❑ USA
❑ Other _____

6.) Preferred Language (choose one:)

❑ English
❑ Español
❑ Français
❑ Português
❑ Русский
Other _____

7.) Do you think of yourself as:

❑ Lesbian, gay, or homosexual
❑ Straight or heterosexual
❑ Bisexual
❑ Something else
❑ Don't know

8.) Marital Status

❑ Married
❑ Partnered
❑ Single
❑ Divorced
❑ Other_____

9.) Veteran Status

❑ Veteran
❑ Not a Veteran

10.) Referral Source

❑ Self
❑ Friend or Family Member
❑ Health Provider
❑ Emergency Room
❑ Ad/Internet/MediaOutreach WorkerSchool
❑ Other _____

11.) What is your gender?

☐ Female
☐ Male
☐ Genderqueer or not exclusively male or female

12.) What was your sex assigned at birth?

☐ Female
☐ Male

13.) Do you identify as transgender or transsexual?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know

Please turn over

❐ Jonah is an old teacher of mine and a transgender man who recently gave birth.[60] However, the bureaucracy of having a child as a transgender man was not so simple. Jonah looked into the bureaucratic process of giving birth within the Netherlands and found that keeping his sex marker to female on his identification documents was the best way to proceed. He found out that in the Netherlands even though you can change your sex marker you *cannot* give birth as a male. The insurance companies are not equipped to provide health care for a male expecting a child. So Jonah opted to wait to change his sex marker which he still is looking into because it could complicate the registration of his child.

❐ When Jonah's child was born, his partner and him registered themselves as the parent but seeing as Jonah's sex marker is still female there was already another bureaucratic difficulty. Transgender men with unchanged sex maker have to be registered as mother. His partner also registered as mother and a child being able to have two mothers is something which is not the case everywhere. It is one of the privileges that the Netherlands has, but like any bureaucratic system it has its flaws. In the future Jonah plans to change his sex marker but so far he knows that if he does so then the person he put as himself on the birth certificate of his child will no longer *exist*. If you change your sex markers many documents become invalid and such is the case with the birth certificate of your child so Jonah has not changed his sex marker yet as he knows that in doing so he will no longer be the parent of his child on their birth certificate.

❐ How could we ever find order in such a flawed system of categorization? We know there is a problem because the bureaucracy in use is not able to keep up with the variables and exceptions. The Netherlands does not consider a person marked male as being able to give birth to a child. The loopholes in the systems are the only thing that these people can depend on, much like Jonah deciding to keep his female marker in order to be covered by insurance. Maybe we will never be rid of sex markers but what we attribute to them in our bureaucracy needs to evolve. A male should not be inevitably labeled as a man, same goes for how a female should not be inevitably labeled as a woman. If these direct links to gender disappear then we could slowly start to reconsider what a male or female is and expand their *capabilities* within our bureaucratic system.

❐ My gendered grammar

❐ Being born and raised in France until I was thirteen I spoke french, learned in french, socialized in french, my world was french. My mother tongue is french and it is the first language that I was taught. French is what you could call a gendered language because in french gender, genre, is a grammatical category which organizes words into feminine, masculine or neutral. If you open an english dictionary you can see the words are first classified as nouns, adjectives or verbs and then defined. However when you look in a french dictionary you will notice that nouns are either masculine or feminine.

❐ When learning english I soon noticed I had a gendered view of the world I could not seem to forget. French taught me to see things as masculine and feminine. I cannot look at a chair without thinking it is a “she”, a chair is *une* or *la* chaise and not simply *a* chair. The simple a or the in english is un, une, des, le, la, les, du, de la in french. I cannot help but look at the things around me through the grammar of my mother tongue and see masculine or feminine.

❐ This notion of gender is something that also sparked my interest in the topic. It was the start of a gender division in my view of the world. It made me question why we decided to divide things with gender and why we need to divide humans into categories. The chaos of gender and sex boxes. Bureaucracy is piles of paperwork and surveys with gendered and sexed boxes. Being interested in the field of printing I started to see a connection with gender and print in this bureaucratic aspect. I am aiming to bring form to this chaos of gender categorization through a chain of machines, printers, screens, shredders all processing information on the topic. Imagine you walk into a space being faced with a visual representation of the chaos within these gender and sex categories. Walls of machines attempting to process and organize information.

❐ I hope to bring light to the simple yet complex topic of gender. I want to make people notice how gender and sex is enforced and always present. Through my discussion of this thesis with multiple people and with people reading my draft I have seen changes. My discussion of sex and gender boxes being present on forms and surveys created a shift in people. When talking with these people again they tell me how it changed their perspective and made them notice these boxes that they would otherwise not be bothered by. It’s about making these small steps and creating a shift in the way people perceive this and questioning the necessity of these boxes as well as what they represent instead of blindly accepting them.

❐ We are born with a condition

❐ We are born in gendered environments and live by a set of undefined gendered rules. The gender binary we live by is based on sex but sex is not as binary as it seems. We are not simply male or female. Our genitalia can be undefined at birth or *abnormal* yet we are still picking between these two sex options of male and female. One cannot be registered at birth without ticking one or the other. However, the genitalia we are born with cannot always determine the sex of our bodies because we are much more complex. Our brains are made up of a mosaic of male and female attributes and often intersex attributes. We are not able to be categorized as true polar opposites. We are made up of a spectrum of sex attributes we fail to acknowledge in our classification of sex at birth.

❐ The sex markers are flawed and not true to every body. Maria Patiño's naturally high levels of testosterone make an otherwise female athlete unable to participate and be recognized as female. Yet her vagina makes her female in our daily society. We expect to understand what we mean when we say *sex*, yet societies are built on variations of what sex means. We cannot genuinely talk of sex and ask for sex if we do not clarify first what we mean by it and what we are really asking. Same goes for the term *gender*.

❐ Our gender is assigned as a result of our sex but since we are neither fully male or female, how could we attribute yet again another binary? Gender is a societal construct, it is a role in society. One is born with a sex even if it is not clearly defined but not with a gender. Our society has constructed gender on the binary notions of sex. People should choose their preferred gender and not be appointed one based on their genitalia. This in turn would make the acceptance of transgender, intersex and gender non-conforming people much simpler. The gendered markers of mrs, mr, ms, he, she, ladies and gentlemen are enforcing the belief that a male is a man and a female is a woman. As they are used and attributed today through bureaucracy they restrict the growth of our categorized thinking.

❐ Gender categories are evolving but they cannot truly progress if we keep associating gender with sex. We constantly mix up the two never realizing the confusion it creates. It creates a pressure to comply to standard which are assumed and not clearly defined. We need to acknowledge the flaws of our structured society and notice the mistakes that are ignored. So that when you see oF oM again on a form you'll read it wondering what words they are before you realize you're asked for something that's been decided for you.

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