


a queer sex ed community curriculum zine



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Deconstructing
Binaries
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A zine dissecting the pervasive
mythology of social and
hierarchal binaries.

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Our minds evolved to find patterns everywhere.



The easiest pattern to recognize is a **binary**. A binary is an “either, or” kind of pattern:

a or b

0 or 1

Binaries are easy to recognize (or to *imagine*), so we tend to see them everywhere.

The gender binary is a widespread myth.

This binary has been repeatedly **debunked**;
both gender identity and the biology of sex
do not operate under binaries.



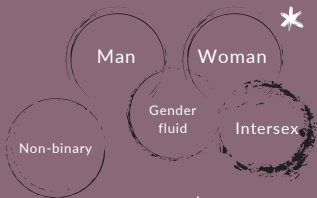
It's not really like this...

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The gender binary looks like this:



But we know gender identity looks more like this:



 It's much more complex than this.

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The myth of a biological gender binary:

Myth	Debunked
Penis vs. vagina	About 1.7% or 1-2 in 100 people are born with intersex traits (about the same percentage as people with red hair).
Estrogen vs. testosterone	Every body has both estrogen and testosterone in their hormonal system and they fluctuate over time.
XX vs. XY chromosomes	A variety of genes influence physical sex characteristics. <i>For example, someone could have XY chromosomes, but if they do not have the SRY gene, they may not "present male" at birth.</i>
Secondary sex characteristics (body hair, breast tissue)	Most bodies have body hair and breast tissue regardless of their gender. <i>For example, more than 50% of AMAB (assigned male at birth) naturally have breast tissue.</i>

So gender isn't binary.
Why do we see it that way?

Our minds have the tendency to collapse big, complex patterns into digestible ones. This is known as **reductionism**; the practice of measuring complex phenomena in terms of smaller, more digestible parts.

Binaries also have a cultural function. They serve to **allocate social power** and **reinforce imagined hierarchies**.

Let's take a look at
some more binaries.



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More binaries:


1. Human vs. nature
2. White vs. non-white
3. Innocent vs. criminalized



1. Humans are a part of nature. The separation was created as land was colonized.
2. Genetically, there is more variation inside racial groups than between racial groups.
3. Identical crimes may not receive identical punishment; more often than not, punishment is based on race, and class status.

All of these binaries create a power differential where one side of the binary is bestowed with significant more power than the other.

We are socialized to see
through imagined binaries .



Our world is far too complex to be
accurately captured in a collection of
binaries.

Understanding the intricacies of the
universe, identity, and human behavior
may require the abandoning of a system
of binaries that has constructed our
social cultures for centuries.*

*It's important to note that in many cultures throughout time
and history, binaries and the power hierarchies they create are
not present.

Binaries can be directly correlated to
colonization and white supremacy.

In Western society, binaries function to
create and maintain imbalances of power
and oppression.

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