

Accessible article summary for “Gender/sex markers, bio/logics, and U.S. identity documents”

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While sex is often thought to refer to biological processes and gender to refer to identity and presentation, what people understand to be requirements for either can vary or overlap. One example of this is state policies, which have important implications for the livelihood of gender minorities (such as transgender and/or intersex people), who are sometimes seen to lie outside of or challenge the gender/sex binary. Laws concerning legal name changes, gender affirmation or sex changes, and access to gender-affirming care differ from state to state. Often, there are a set of requirements to get changes to gender markers on U.S. identity documents, which are often informed by the opinion or idea that biology should influence our understanding of social life and identity. This system of understanding is called “bio/logics.” One example of bio/logics is the idea that the gender/sex that a person was assigned at birth (based on their genitals) should define how they identify, behave, and present for the rest of their life. Bio/logics are often inconsistent, often working to disadvantage gender minorities. For example, some sets of bio/logics designate DNA as the defining feature of gender/sex, while others designate genitals. People use bio/logics to police gender/sex for gender minorities, prescribing the “right” way to be transgender, for example. Recent changes in U.S. identity document requirements show a shift in bio/logics focusing less on DNA/genitals, but instead on other bodily phenomena, like hormones. The shift away from focusing on DNA/genitals is progressive, though it still enforces social norms and policies that negatively impact gender minorities by still locating gender and its markers in bodies (Ibrahim et al., 2024).

References

- Ibrahim, A., Clarke, J., Beischel, W. J., & Van Anders, S. M. (2024). Gender/sex markers, bio/logics, and U.S. identity documents. *Feminism & Psychology*, 34(1), 132–150.
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