In society, there tends to be a "normal" and an "abnormal" in most situations. Hypothetically, what would the world be like with more fluidity in all societal regards? What would even need to shift for this to be so?

Similarly to my work, not all parts of an individual are visible on the superficial level. Society can try and guess at an individual's identity, but these assumptions quickly turn into stereotypes and inevitably hurt those who don't fit into those prescribed boxes. Only when you dive in deep, having an interest in learning about others, will you discover what lies beneath the surface.

This installation explores the hypotheticals within this topic. The suspended house is comprised of three rooms that I invite you to explore. The bedroom and the kitchen are, as society would call them, "normal." The third room is "abnormal." My house, unlike others, is upside down. Reality has been flipped. So...when everything is upside down are the rooms themselves different at all? To what degree must the framework be refashioned for a fresh and original look at things?

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NORMAL

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Normality is defined as the condition of being normal; the state of being usual, typical, expected by the Webster Dictionary. But what is normal and why is it so widely enforced in today's society?

We naturally categorize others into boxes and sections in an attempt to understand the world around them. But using this method of categorization often separates people. The two "boxes," or options, in social separation, are "normal" and 'abnormal"(Social conformity vs. being undesirable)

All of these terms are relative though. Meaning they lack a precise definition without the pressures of society. In all daily endeavors, we as a society continuously force members to choose whether they want to conform to our age-old standards or break free and be looked down on. But at the end of the day, why do we use "normal"? And where did it come from?

The concept of 'normal" exists in most societies, but the definition can differ between them each. This is why the "normal " that exists in the United States is not that of what exists in any other country. Even in the United States the definition of "normal" varies between generations as the slow process of social change continues to happen. People often hold on tight and won't let go of the social norms they are familiar with. Often times it is because of the "why fix something that isn't broken" mentality, but there are also other factors for people not wanting to let go of the norms they were raised on. Respect for authority plays a significant role in passing down societal tradition. Often when someone of a younger generation looks up to or has a significant amount of respect for a person of an older age they value the older persons words and opinions.

Similarly to respecting elder generations, most people want others to respect them. Wanting to belong often means people are less likely to question societal norms openly. Societal norms are deeply ingrained and challenging them could leave the individual rejected from their social scene. Social norms are cultural and in the United States culture, they are thriving. High School cliques, sororities, companies, and other exclusive groups are prime examples. In these groups, they use differences to exclude others and make it harder for social change to occur. Examples above are voluntary acts of an individual that postpone the social change process. Variables that are out of an individual's hands are as follows but not limited to geography, culture, ideology, demography, education, technology, ideology, and economics.

" Normal" is still here today because it is profound. However, social change can happen and does every day. We are impacted and influenced at each and every turn whether it be through media, culture, history, politics, or a variety of other outlets. These things can change our outlook and give perspective to other lives.

One aspect of humans that affect our outlook on life is our personalities in regards to social psychology. Social Psychology, focusing on the power of the situation and how we relate to one another in different circumstances, plays a part in our reactions to others. Social influence is ingrained so deeply into our country that it is found almost everywhere. In high school, all kids strive to be liked and to feel a sense of belonging within a friend group, this is a normative social influence at its core.

Standing up in front of the group as your hands get clammy or the rush of tingles when a speaker preaches to the core of your beliefs. These are examples of Social facilitation. While those reactions can be completely innocent, others are not. When members of society find others, who believe in the same things as them group polarization can appear. Polarization is the finding and at times congregation of like-minded people. Wonderful! Until it begins shutting out any other ideas in which it embodies the definition of Groupthink, or when individuals are so caught up in their thoughts and opinions that they will not consider different approaches. When these groups

are formed, they also want to convince others that their views are the "right " ones through persuasion. Two routes are often used in this. Firstly there is Central Route Persuasion or using basic thinking and reasoning to convince people. Additionally, peripheral Route Persuasion is used. This influences people by way of "hints" or cues like attractive speakers or a person's relatability.

Now that we know some background knowledge on the concept of social norms and construct we can begin our adventure into a world without "normal".

Mental illness to this day still has a huge stigma around it. People are judged quite harshly and fired from their jobs just for having a mental illness record. This stigma has come from a long history dating back to the 1800s. In Napa, the Napa State Hospital was founded in 1874. It was built to combat the large population of people seeking mental asylums at the time. This is what doctors of the time though was best for the mentally ill. People who were mentally ill were categorized as "crazy" and "insane" which took away a part of their human identity. As the mentally ill were put into the asylum, they began treatments prescribed by the doctors. Because the doctors no longer viewed these people as fully human, worth respect or kindness, doctors often abused the patients. Patients were put into comas with overdoses of glucose, wired up to currents and shocks, and at the worst of it became part of scientific experimentation during lobotomies. This was all done because these people were "abnormal."

While there are more patient rights and safety regulations today people still call others "crazy" blatantly disregarding the dark future that word contains. Without the concept of normal in this world I believe past mental hospital patients and patients today would face less stigma, while also taking part of the stigma off of mental illness thus allowing for those who were scared to get help to be evaluated. In this world of no "normal" people will no be initially judged so harshly based singularly on their mental health state and in result will likely get better help or assistance if needed.

Poverty. It's rooted in many different ways but always seems to blame on the impoverished. Why? Because American culture comes from the idea of the "American Dream." That if you work hard enough for something that you can get there. Except that's not always possible when poverty is involved. In the American mentality, "normal" people can care for themselves and if you are struggling in poverty that you should be held accountable. At times though Americans can be "understanding" to an extent. Instead of saying that others should be held accountable for their mistakes sometimes we say that we should help them fix their situation. Both of these reaction though is saying there is something wrong with them. As if they did this on purpose. If normal was taken away would that mean these preconceived notions of impoverished people being failures would vanish? I think it would partially help. If we stopped looking at one lifestyle as "success" and see all the good that each and every person contributes to this country. Then we can get to a point in which helping people to thrive doesn't include putting them down. The disappearances of many other preconceived notions will help will those regarding poverty as well since multiple "abnormal" qualities often mix. For example in the United States today we often try to combat poverty with education, but impoverished people are not stupid. they are in poverty.

The circle of poverty is one that is exceptionally difficult to exit for a multitude of ways but does not mean the individual is dumb. Farmers, for example, often suffer from a scarcity mentality. When tested for IQ scores before and after a harvest, a researcher found their score lessen by a dramatic 14 points when in stress. Meaning when they were unsure whether or not they

would be able to eat and feed their family or do everything they needed to do, they were unable to think straight(they had too much on their minds).

A new link in poverty is emerging nowadays that the United States has not yet seen is mass before. It is the younger of the baby boomer generation who are falling into the hole of poverty. They are in their 50's in the middle class and believed they would work professionally for the companies employing them until they retired, but that didn't happen. Instead, a large amount of these young boomers were fired and unprepared, forcing them to go back to the job hunt but often with no luck. Laid-off workers likelihood of getting hired goes down as they age. When you are under the age of 34 there is a 36% chance of finding work, in your 50's there is a 24% chance, and past the age of 62, there is only an 18% chance of finding work again.

Adding to these scary chances women past age 50 are not as valued as employees as they were in their younger years. When compared to their male counterparts this is not applicable. It seems as though men, for the most part, are just as desired by the workforce after age 50 as they were before. This generation though planned on working until they were much older as they do not have enough saved to sustain themselves for the rest of their lives. As they continue the failing job search and begin to run lower on money houses are taken, and we in the United States find a more significant amount than before of impoverished and at times homeless boomer generation individuals.

While taking away the concept of normal will not fix poverty is may take away the stigmas surrounding it. These stigmas limit individuals and stunt growth not allowing people to overcome their situation. When job applications require a current employer, this is an excellent example. They are not asking for credentials or verification of ability but instead are trying the make sure they don't get "the lazy ones." Implying that if one is unemployed, it automatically says something about their character. Maybe without "normal," people will not assume that individuals are incapable, stupid, or "bad" just based on employment status.

The aspect of gender that the majority of people refer to daily is a social construct! Of course, every individual is valid in their identity, but that is not what a grandparent is referring to when they request "a pretty pink toy for a girl." The connection between pink, femininity, and women has entirely been fabricated by society. In societal eyes, a "normal" man should be strong and emotionless, a "manly man." Possibly for some men that mold doesn't bother them as they fit right in, but those who do not fit, face stigmas. The exact thing happens on the flip side when women do not fit into the roles of being weak, needing of a strong man, and feminine. There is an era of strong, beautiful, resilient women that are redefining what it means to be a woman but at a cost. These trailblazers are socially stared at each step of the way as they carve their way out of the century-old mold of femininity.

Both men and women suffer from the biases of gender stereotypes, but when you don't fit in either section, you are practically invisible. Gender binaries are female and male. Stereotypically pink and blue, feminine and masculine. People overlook the concept of a non-binary or genderfluid person. These people get to carve their own way but face much oppression. They often do not look "normal" nor do they fit the characteristics of masculinity or femininity. This confuses the part of the brain that wants to box people in categories as it doesn't know what to do with an androgynous person.

Without the concept of normal, I hope that these people will feel less isolated between to extremes of gender expression. In this reality, there wouldn't be men's or women's sections in a store or signs on bathroom doors. There would not just be changing tables in some bathrooms, but all since a person of any gender can have and need to change a baby. Most of all there would be

fewer rules on who you're "supposed to be" based entirely on gender. Without the concept of normal, I believe that marketing would be more focused on the individual. This would get rid of only having to fit into one or the other and would except a larger population of society.

Gender biases are possibly more prevent in children's lives than adults. Girls should like pink, wear dresses, be feminine, and marry a handsome man. Every part of a child's life is gendered from the toys they play with, and what they wear, to who people believe they will grow to become. What is the point of having these two extremes in the toy industry? They sell the bright blue builder toy and the sparkly pink toy all to make more money. Having two versions of each toy allows for companies to make and sell not one product but two products. Instead of a household buying one toy for all their children to share they buy to one for their "smart boy" and the other their "beautiful little girl." Children see the separation of products as expected and thus continue to shop in the section "matching their gender" for the rest of their lives. Gendered products in adulthood allow for things like extremely overpriced women's razors. These gender stereotypes affect more than just the toys children play with though. How children are allowed to express themselves during play, are often also attached to what they should be in regards to their gender. If we allowed girls to be strong and build things while also allowing boys to play with dolls and wear a skirt, we would end up with a well-rounded society.

This society wouldn't have as many girls who have low self-esteem or boys afraid to show emotions. We would have from incredible women in STEM and compassionate male nurses. Growing up as a child you would no longer have to choose between those two sections when getting dressed up for an event or during play with toys. These boundaries would disappear and allow for more imagination and curiosity. Blurring the white and black sections into a gray space of creative thinking that we need in this world to solve complex problems. Normal going away in this context would mean gender norms go away and children would be less held back and allowed to be their fabulous creative, beautiful selves.

The media is a significant contributor to social norms. The entire point of news is to tell viewer when something is happening that is different or abnormal. These things must be worth listening to as it isn't something that happens daily. Media would change in regards to news delivery if "normal" were removed. They would still be reporting but on different things.

The media has an important voice in what the national conversation is about anything. While the media does not tell us what to think it does dominate the conversation. This doesn't need to a negative thing though. The media can share messages of acceptance and joy. It can also bring together negative thoughts about what normal should be. Without normal, I believe that the media would have a different way of approaching and delivering news to the country. There wouldn't be "abnormal activity" there would just be news(what exactly that would be? Well I am unsure).

"Normal" overall limits people and without it would make a different country. In these examples, I focused on some minorities, but those are not the only ones affected by societal norms. By definition, a minority is the "abnormal" of the population the smaller group of individuals often looked down on. Without implicit biased, these groups would just be another population of people instead of a vulnerable group. Without restraints from society all people would be able to be who they are untouched by the preconceived notions of current society.

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