

Teaching Intersex Issues

A Guide for Teachers in Women's, Gender & Queer Studies



Intersex activists at a conference in the Midwest:
(Back from left to right) Max Beck, Kristi Bruce, Angela Moreno
(Front from left to right) Martha Coventry, David Vandertie

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*created by Emi Koyama and Dr. Lisa Weasel
with the Intersex Society of North America*

Introduction

Why “*The Five Sexes*” is Not Enough

..... by Emi Koyama

Before there was an intersex people’s movement, writings by academic feminists about intersex existence was the only place intersex people could find any information about people like them aside from dry, technical, and often traumatizing medical texts. Anne Fausto-Sterling’s article, *The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female are Not Enough*, was significant in the lives of intersex people not necessarily because of its content, but because of the chain of events that it triggered. After Fausto-Sterling’s article appeared in the spring 1993 issue of *The Sciences*, Cheryl Chase announced the formation of the first intersex activist and educational organization by and for intersex people: the **Intersex Society of North America (ISNA)**. Since then, many other intersex activists emerged from their silence and isolation, crafting a new movement to take back the dignity and integrity stolen and hidden from them by the archaic medical establishment and to prevent continuing victimization of intersex children.

Initially, medical authorities dismissed ISNA, insisting that it represented only a small group of dissatisfied patients who were exceptions rather than the rule. But in less than a decade of organizing, ISNA has successfully proved that there is a large pool of people whose lives have been damaged by unnecessary medical interventions that are supposedly designed to help them, and began winning over some medical professionals. Moreover, even when they disagree with the position of ISNA, doctors are finding

it harder to simply neglect the intersex movement. Just a few years ago, intersex activists were picketing outside of large medical conventions because medical associations refused to hear the patients’ points of view; today, intersex activists are frequently asked to present their experiences and views at medical conventions.

History is in the making.

Meanwhile, Fausto-Sterling’s article also made its way into Women’s, Gender and Queer Studies classrooms. *The Five Sexes* was used to support the argument that sexism and heterosexism are more complex than previously portrayed once we realize that there are “more than just two sexes.” Followers of deconstructionism used it to demonstrate how dichotomous sexes are socially constructed, literally and figuratively, rather than “naturally” occurring. On the other hand, conservatives used it to once again decry the absurdity of postmodernist theories and “political correctness run amok.”

In *Sexing the Body* (2000), Fausto-Sterling declared that she is “no longer advocating using discrete categories such as herm, merm or ferm, even tongue in cheek” because these categories sensationalize intersex people and do not benefit them in any way. In addition, the solution to the problem of people getting bumped into or out of narrowly defined boxes is not to create more boxes, but to destabilize the original boxes. But the rest of academia is slow to catch up with Fausto-Sterling. *The Five Sexes* continues to be used routinely in Women’s, Gender and Queer Studies courses

across the country without additional critical analysis or narrative materials, notwithstanding the fact that many publications in which intersex people describe their own experiences have for the first time in history become widely available.

Before the Second Wave of feminism, the only published information about women's bodies or sexualities came from male doctors who claimed authority over them. The emergence of women's health movement and the publication of titles like *Our Bodies, Ourselves* changed that, and was pivotal event in the women's liberation movement. Following in this tradition, today's feminist scholars have the fundamental moral and scholarly obligation to support intersex people's struggle to regain their own voice and narratives by bringing these into the classroom, while critically interrogating feminist theoretical perspectives on intersexuality.

This pamphlet is an integration of activist and academic approaches to centering the issues and lived experiences of intersex people when introducing the topic in classrooms. It includes an analysis of what is wrong with the current academic practices, a practical guidelines, a sample course unit description, and a resource list. We hope that this pamphlet will help teachers everywhere become not just better instructors, but also activists for social justice (and generous ISNA donors too!).

I began thinking about this project in summer 2000 after taking Women's Health Issues class as a student in which

The Five Sexes was used to illustrate the social construction of the body. I had already been an intersex activist through **Survivor Project**, the organization dedicated to addressing the needs of intersex and trans survivors of domestic and sexual violence, so I did the best thing an activist should do: I recruited my professor, Dr. Lisa Weasel. I appreciate Lisa for her openness, her willingness to learn and to grow, and her expertise as a researcher and an educator.

In May 2001, I accepted a position as an intern (or "activist-in-residence," as we call it) at the Intersex Society

of North America. Cheryl Chase, the executive director of ISNA, was enthusiastic about my project even before I got on board, and has not only allowed me to work on this project in my paid time, but also connected me to others who

could offer me some support or information. I thank Cheryl, Robin Mathias (development coordinator), Dr. Alice D. Dreger (board chair), and others for their encouragement and advice.

Medical discourse on the treatment of intersex people is on the verge of a paradigm shift. It is time for academic discourse to change also.

Join us. Be a part of the movement and make an impact on history rather than just theorizing about it. And please do let us know how this pamphlet can be improved.

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This pamphlet is
an integration of
activist and academic
approaches to centering
the issues and lived
experiences of intersex
people in classrooms.

The Problem

How Intersex Issues are Being Taught

..... Survey by Emi Koyama & Lisa Weasel • Analysis by Emi Koyama

In the introduction, I outlined the problem with classes I've taken in which the topic of intersexuality was introduced, but I did not yet realize how pervasive it was. Below is a survey Dr. Weasel and I conducted in early 2001 to figure out exactly how big the problem was. As the responses came in, I became convinced that I was on to something. - Emi

Summary

A survey of 24 self-selected scholars teaching courses in women's studies, queer studies, and other related fields in which the topic of intersexuality is introduced was conducted between January and March 2001 in order to assess how the topic is addressed and discussed in these courses. While largely anecdotal, the result confirmed our prediction that intersex existence is viewed as a scholarly object to be studied in order to deconstruct the notion of binary sexes (and thus sexism and homophobia) rather than a subject that has real-world implications for real people.

Method

The survey comprised seven open-ended questions plus information about the instructor, course, and texts used. Names, email addresses, telephone numbers and institutional affiliation of respondents were requested for verification purpose only. Each respondent was also asked how she or he wished to be fol-

lowed up of the result.

Survey was conducted entirely on-line, both via email and on a specially designed web site. Requests for participation have been circulated in various electronic mailing lists including WMST-L, GSS-L, and Trans-Academic. In addition, we searched the Internet for syllabi that included intersex content using keywords (e.g. "syllabus," "intersex," "intersexuality,") and contacted instructors for those courses. The majority of the responses came from those responding to requests in mailing lists.

Result/Analysis

Authors of the Materials Used

Our survey found that only four out of 24 respondents use materials written or produced by known intersex people, despite the fact these have become widely available since the foundation of Intersex Society of North America (ISNA) in 1993. Even when their works are used, in all but one cases writings by non-intersex scholars (i.e. those scholars not known to be intersexed) are included also as if to lend legitimacy.

Anne Fausto-Sterling's classic, *The five sexes: why male and female are not enough* (1993) continues to be the favorite text among our respondents, with 15 instructors using it. 19 of 24 instructors use this and/or other works by Fausto-Sterling. Other non-intersex scholars cited by more than once were

Suzanne Kessler (6), Alice Domurat Dreger (3), Judith Butler (2), and Kate Bornstein (2). Intersex writers mentioned were ISNA (3), Cheryl Chase (2), Angela Moreno (1), Morgan Holmes (1), and Martha Coventry (1).

In response to the question regarding their selection of materials, only one of the respondents reported a conscious effort to give voice to intersex people by using sources produced by intersex people. A respondent who included multiple works by intersex authors reported that they were brought to her attention by her students, who were assigned to find resources on the Internet. Because few intersex people have access to be published in academic journals, incorporating non-academic sources such as web sites seems to be a good strategy.

Interestingly, several respondents seem to be confusing or conflating intersex issues and transsexual/transgender issues, as they mentioned some works by or about transsexual/transgender individuals such as Kate Bornstein that do not address intersex issues in depth.

Reasons for Introducing Intersexuality in Classroom

As for the reasons for including materials addressing intersexuality, nearly all respondents stated that one of the main purposes was to deconstruct one or more conventional understandings of human sexes, genders, and sexualities. In many cases, this revelation is then used to deconstruct gender roles, compulsory heterosexuality, and even scientific objec-

tivity. No respondents explicitly addressed medical ethics or other issues with direct real-life implication to the lives of intersex people. It appears that respondents view intersex issues simply as a gender issue rather than also as a medical ethics issue or a social justice issue.

That is not to say that no respondents thought about raising awareness, as a small number of responses included raising awareness of intersex issues as one of the goals. However, there are mismatches between this stated goal and the kind of materials used in these courses. For example, Fausto-Sterling did not know any intersex person at the time she wrote *The five sexes*, and

thus only discussed old historical cases. Rather than increasing awareness of intersex issues and affirming students who are themselves intersexed, use of such outdated mate-

rials in the absence of first-person narratives by intersex people tends to further mythologize and exoticize intersex existence. One respondent wrote: “[Intersex] issues are marginalized and need to be given more attention. Here I often direct students to the writings of transsexuals such as Kate Bornstein and Leslie Feinberg” (neither Bornstein nor Feinberg is known to be intersexed).

In addition, the assumption that greater visibility will lead to the liberation of a marginalized group is a carry-over from LGBT politics, and there seems to be little thought around how advocating for intersex people might take a different form or require a different set of priorities than advocating for LGBT communities. As one intersexed speaker said during

No respondents explicitly addressed issues with direct real-life implication to lives of intersex people.

the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's Creating Change conference in November 2000, "if virtually all gays and lesbians were forced to undergo reparative therapy against their will, and it was done in complete silence and secrecy so that none of them knew each other, visibility would be last on their agenda."

Classroom Safety for Intersexed Students

Because the existence of intersex people is under pervasive marginalization and erasure, there is a concern that classroom discussion about intersexuality could wind up exoticizing and objectifying intersex people further. This is particularly damaging to students who are themselves intersexed, whether or not those around them are aware of their intersex status. We included in this survey a question about how to maintain classroom safety for students who may be intersexed because we wanted instructors to give it some thought and stimulate awareness as much as because we wanted to know their answers.

In response to this question, nearly half (11) of respondents reported that they believed the general "ground rules" for the class address this question sufficiently. In addition, six respondents said that intersex issues would not stand out because transgender issues and other gender-related issues are also discussed in the course.

Strategies specific to intersex issues included citing statistics to show that there are many intersex people in their school and/or how one could be

intersexed and not know it (8) and asking hypothetical questions like "what would you do if you had an intersexed child?" (2). These strategies are designed to demystify and destigmatize intersex existence, but may actually contribute to further objectification of intersex people because they seem to assume that no students know themselves to be intersexed or have intersexed family members. In addition, the former also runs the risk of reducing the category of intersexuality to a biological trivia rather than a site of intimate physical violation.

A more troubling tendency we noticed is that some (6) respondents are actually addressing how to make the classroom more comfortable for non-intersex students rather than considering the actual classroom safety issues for students who are intersexed. A respondent wrote:

Advocating for intersex people might take a different form than advocating for LGBT communities

"I try to connect the issue to gender, which many are more comfortable discussing... It eases them into the challenge to their own preconceptions about sex (and gender) as fixed, binary categories." There are two problems with this approach: first, it reinforces the invisibilization of intersex people, and second, it prioritizes the privileged group over the marginalized one.

In addition, two respondents reported that they had not had to deal with this issue because they have never had any student come out as intersexed. Of course, it is highly unlikely that they have never had an intersex student unless it is their first year of teaching. Lack of disclosure by intersex students in their classrooms merely indicates the

intensity of erasure and silencing against intersex people in society as well as in their classes.

Four instructors admitted that they needed further education on the issues intersex people face in order to become more sensitive to students who are intersexed, and two reported that they use first person materials written by intersex people in a non-objectifying manner. These minority responses are politically compatible with the movement by intersex people.

Student Responses

Given the fact that virtually all respondents introduce intersex issues in order to address social construction of sex and gender as discussed above, it is not surprising that a majority (13)

of them reported students' learning of social construction theory as the primary result of their instruction. Luckily, though, some also report that students are seriously considering the ethical "dilemma" of whether or not surgery is warranted (5), became interested in learning more about intersex issues (4), or are appalled at the medical abuse of intersex children (3), after their initial shock(12).

An interesting side effect is that four respondents report that gay, lesbian and bisexual students felt more comfortable after discussing intersex issues. One respondent wrote, "Several 'out' lesbian students thought this was the coolest thing in the world -- seemingly somewhat mollified." Another said, "I have had many gay, lesbians and bisexuals tell me that

they feel much better about themselves after taking my course and hearing alternative views such as Fausto-Sterling's." While this is a positive side effect, it appears difficult to keep the topic from "getting 'stuck' there and not having time to cover other important issues" that intersex people face, as one teacher wrote.

This indeed seems to be a common problem within women's, gender and queer studies: discussions about intersex existence are "stuck" at where it is used to deconstruct sexes, gender roles, compulsory heterosexuality, and even Western science, rather than addressing medical ethics or other

issues that directly impact lives of intersex people. But perhaps this is an inaccurate way to describe the situation: the truth is not that these discussions are "stuck" prematurely, but that

they are starting from a wrong place with a wrong set of priorities.

What if we designed courses in which intersex people are treated as ends and not means? What if we start from the assumption that intersex people are the primary experts and authorities on their own lives? And what if those of us dealing with intersex issues within academic settings took leadership from the political movements of intersex people themselves?

What is those of us dealing with intersex issues within academic settings took leadership from intersex people?

Guidelines

Changing the Way Intersex Issues are Addressed

..... by Emi Koyama

- 1. Give authority to intersex people.** Use first-person narratives as well as academic writings by intersex authors. If you are using non-intersex authors' works also, make sure that intersex authors' work is centered.
- 2. Do not exploit intersex existence for gender/sex deconstruction only.** Make sure to address real-life issues faced by intersex people. If the social construction theory needs to be addressed, do so in the context of using it to stop the oppression of intersex people.
- 3. Assume that intersex people are everywhere, including your classrooms.** Do not ask hypothetical statements as if there are no intersexed students. And do not expect intersex students to "come out."
- 4. Recognize that the intersex movement may have priorities and strategies beyond that of gay and lesbian movement or trans movement. Do not treat intersex issues simply as an extension to queer issues or trans issues.**
- 5. Draw connections between many issues, not just gay and trans issues.** Consider implications of the intersex movement on disability movement, psychiatric survivor movement, medical ethics (production of authority within the biomedical model), health activism, child abuse, domestic violence, children's and youth rights, etc.
- 6. Recognize that it is not the responsibility of intersex people to deconstruct binary gender/sex** or to be used as guinea pigs to test out the latest theory about gender. Don't be disappointed that many intersex people are not interested in becoming a third gender or overthrowing sex categories.
- 7. Educate yourself.** For example, know which words and phrases are preferred or not preferred by intersex people and why.
- 8. Purchase materials from the Intersex Society of North America or make donations.** Contribute something back to the movement rather than merely using it as an object of academic inquiry.

Curriculum

Sample Course Unit on Intersex Issues

..... by Dr. Lisa Weasel, Portland State University

A Curriculum Unit on the Politics and Practice of Contemporary Intersex Issues

Introduction to the Unit:

Feminists have devoted a great deal of scholarship to deconstructing binary definitions of gender, and have often drawn upon the existence of intersex people in support of their theoretical and pedagogical deconstructions. Yet all too often, exploration of the political and practical issues relating to intersex people and their lives have been ignored in this quest. While feminist scholars have been hard at work using the existence of intersex individuals to deconstruct gender in their theories and classrooms, the medical profession has been busy “reconstructing” the bodies of those classified as intersex through unnecessary and often damaging surgery to fit those same binary norms and standards that feminists are attempting to dismantle. As with any feminist undertaking, it is essential that theory and practice must meet, that feminist scholarship and pedagogy must engage with activist strategies that address the real-life issues that intersex individuals face. This unit will help to bring these issues

to light through readings, discussions and exercises relating to intersex individuals’ lives and experiences, helping us to understand the practical realities and real-life consequences of the social construction of a binary gender code.

Background Definitions and Terms

Because intersex lives and existence have been marginalized in our society, there is often confusion or misunderstanding of terms.

The following definitions and terminologies can be useful to fully understand and engage with this curriculum unit.

Intersexuality:

Contemporary Western social definitions of human sexual identification allow only a binary distinction between male and female. However, humans are born with

As with any feminist undertaking, it is essential that theory and practice must meet, that feminist scholarship and pedagogy must engage with activist strategies that address the real-life issues that intersex individuals face.

a broad range of primary and secondary sex characteristics that do not always fit neatly into one of these two socially constructed categories. Because human anatomical development is a flexible, gradual process, involving many steps and intersecting processes, a full spectrum of physiological sex characteristics and combinations normally occur. Often, human bodies that do not tightly conform to the binary male-female definitions are

surgically altered, through painful and medically unnecessary means performed while the individual is still an infant or young child, under the pretense of making these bodies fit into tightly controlled male-female categories. The denial of intersex existence has allowed these surgeries to continue, harming the bodies and lives of countless individuals and blinding society to the full spectrum of human sexual physiologies. Recent intersex activism has drawn attention to these issues and has increased public awareness of intersex existence and issues.

Note: The term intersexuality refers to the sexual physiology of an individual, not to their sexual attractions, practices, or relationships (do not confuse intersexuality with bisexuality).

Primary sex characteristics: These sex characteristics refer to organs involved in producing gametes, or sex cells, such as sperm and eggs. In humans, primary sex organs are the ovaries and testes. Organs that produce gametes are often referred to as gonads.

Secondary sex characteristics: These sex characteristics involve functions other than the production of gametes. Examples include mammary glands, external genitalia such as the vagina and penis, hormones such as estrogen and testosterone, etc.

For more on terminologies and FAQ's, see the following websites:

1. *Introduction to Intersexuality & Intersex*

Activism, from Survivor Project's website: <http://www.survivorproject.org/is-intro.html>

2. *Frequently Asked Questions*, from the Intersex Society of North America's website: <http://www.isna.org/faq.html>

Unit readings:

These readings can be ordered or obtained via the Intersex Society of North America website: (<http://www.isna.org>). The ISNA website also contains a long list of additional reading materials and on-line resources which can be incorporated into classroom syllabi.

Main Texts:

Dreger, Alice. *Intersex in the Age of Ethics*. University Press Group, 1999.

Chase, Cheryl. "Cultural Practice" or "Reconstructive Surgery?" *US Genital Cutting, the Intersex Movement, and Media Double Standards*. In

Robertson, C & S. James, *Shades of Othering: Female Genital Cutting- Representations and Implications for Transnational Sisterhood*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press. Forthcoming 2002.

Supplemental readings (see the "Materials" section of this pamphlet also):

1. First person accounts pertaining to intersexuality:

Once a dark secret. British Medical Journal 1994; 308:542.

The denial of intersex existence has allowed these surgeries to continue, harming the bodies and lives of countless individuals and blinding society to the full spectrum of human sexual physiologies.

Gender identity in testicular feminization. British Medical Journal 1994: 308: 1041.

Be open and honest with sufferers. British Medical Journal 1994: 308: 1042.

This series of short articles and letters introduces students to the issues that surround the secrecy associated with intersexuality.

2. Decisions around intersex surgery for infants:

Kessler, Suzanne. 1990. *The Medical Construction of Gender: Case Management of Intersexed Infants.* Signs 16 (1): 3-26.

Abramsky, L; S. Hall, J. Levitan and T.M. Marteau. 2001. *What parents are told after prenatal diagnosis of a sex chromosome abnormality: interview and questionnaire study.* British Medical Journal 322: 463-6.

Biesecker, B. 2001. *Prenatal diagnoses of sex chromosome conditions* (editorial). British Medical Journal 322: 441-2.

Phornphutkul, C, A. Fausto-Sterling, and P.A. Gruggoso. 2000. *Gender self-reassignment in an XY adolescent female born with ambiguous genitalia.* Pediatrics 106: 135-137.

3. Background on the Biology of Sex Determination:

Fausto-Sterling, Anne. (2000). *Of gender*

and genitals: the use and abuse of the modern intersexual. Chapter 3 in *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality.* Basic Books.

Films and videos for classroom showing:

Hermaphrodites Speak! (35 minutes; available through ISNA).

Class Discussion Topics:

A. Personal narratives

1. What is missing if we leave out the voices of intersex people themselves from a discussion of intersexuality?

2. What are some of the key issues facing intersex people today? How did you come up with these issues?

3. Why has so much silence and secrecy surrounded the existence of intersexuality? What consequence has such silence had for the lives of intersex individuals?

B. Surgical decision making

1. What are some of the ethical issues involved in making decisions about surgery when infants are classified as intersex?

2. How do issues of power relating to the medical profession influence the ways in which decisions about surgery are made?

3. How could the training of medical professionals be changed to increase aware-

What is missing if we leave out the voices of intersex people themselves from a discussion of intersexuality?

ness about the consequences of surgery on intersex infants?

C. Biology and sex determination

1. How do hormones, chromosomes, environment and genes work together to shape the sexual physiology of humans?

2. What kinds of surgery are often performed on AIS girls, and why? Are these surgeries necessary? What are alternatives?

Supplemental Exercises:

1. After completing this class unit, read the following articles:

a) Fausto-Sterling, A. *The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female are not enough.* The Sciences (NY Academy of Sciences) March/April 1993: 20-24.

b) Marion, R. *The Curse of the Garcias.* Discover, 21 (12), 42.

Provide a critique of each of these articles. How are intersex individuals represented in each article? What ethical issues arise? What kinds of responses, interventions, actions can be taken in response to these issues?

As a follow-up to critiques of each article, respectively, students can read:

a) Fausto-Sterling, A. *The Five Sexes, Revisited.* The Sciences (NY Academy of Science) July/August 2000, 18-23.

b) Groveman, Sherri. *Letter to Dr. Robert Marion re: The Curse of the Garcias.* <http://medhlp.netusa.net/www/ais/DEBATES/GARCIAS.HTM>

2. Research the information on intersexuality that is being provided to patients by healthcare providers. Contact a health-

care provider to discuss issues of intersexuality, what it is, how they would treat or counsel patients on such issues, where they get their information and training on intersexuality.

What have you learned about how the medical

profession approaches and deals with intersexuality? What are the implications for individual's lives? How can the training, education, actions of the medical profession be changed to promote a more ethical approach to intersex individuals?



Intersex activists from the documentary, *Hermaphrodites Speak!*
Front from left to right: Suegee Tamar, Cheryl Chase, Hida Viloria
Middle: Angela Moreno, David Vandertie, Mani Mitchell, Martha Coventry
Back: Heidi Walcutt, Thomas Streun, Max Beck

Materials

Selected Materials for Use in Your Classroom

..... Compiled & Annotated by Emi Koyama

Anthology: *Intersex in the Age of Ethics* ed. by Alice D. Dreger (1999)

Includes many writings by intersex people. Dreger is not herself intersexed, but is the board chair of ISNA.

Periodical: *Chrysalis* "Intersex Awakening" Issue ed. by Cheryl Chase and Martha Coventry (1997)

Generally a transgender magazine, this special issue of *Chrysalis* was guest edited by intersex activists and is devoted entirely to intersex issues. Some articles have been incorporated into the "Ethics" anthology above, but more radical and humorous writings are only found in this issue. Available from ISNA.

Anthology: *Looking Queer* ed. by Dawn Atkins (1998)

This anthology about queer people's body images include three intersex authors, Cheryl Chase, Raven Kaldera, and Morgan Holmes, in the part 7, titled "Square Pegs." Chase's piece was originally written for Rebecca Walker's anthology *To Be Real* but did not make the cut (no pun).

Anthology: (title undetermined) by Emi Koyama and Diana Courvant (forthcoming)

Forthcoming anthology on feminisms based on or informed/influenced by lived experiences of intersex and trans people. Original writings in wide variety of styles and formats that explore the interconnectedness of gender, body, race, class, ability, etc. Visit www.transfeminism.org for the status of the project.

Article: *Making the Cut* by Martha Coventry (2000)

Introductory article about clitorrectomy in the United States, published in October/November 2000 issue of Ms. magazine. Also includes a small write-up about Coventry's own clitorrectomy.

Article: *Re-Membering a Queer Body* by Morgan Holmes (1993)

One of the first pieces of writing by an intersex person about intersex issues. Published in the May 1993 issue of *Undercurrents*, this article explores the heteronormative cultural imperatives that drive doctors to perform surgeries on genitals of intersex children.

Article: *Intersex Activism, Feminism, and Psychology* by Peter Hegarty and Cheryl Chase (2000)

Subtitled "Opening a dialogue on theory, research and clinical practice," Hegarty and Chase explore how

to incorporate intersex and feminist activism in the discipline of psychology. Published in vol. 10 of the journal, *Feminism and Psychology*.

Article: “*Cultural Practice*” or “*Reconstructive Surgery*”? by Cheryl Chase

In this essay, Chase discusses the popular media depiction of genital mutilations (and movements against them) in Africa versus in the U.S. and points out colonialist double standards. Forthcoming in the anthology, *Shades of Othering: Female Genital Cutting-Representations and Implications for Transnational Sisterhood*, ed. by Clair Robertson and James Stanlie, forthcoming in spring 2002 from University of Illinois Press.

Article: *The Missing Vagina Monologue* by Esther Marguerite Morris (2001)

Published in the March 2001 issue of *Soujourner*, Morris describes her experience of growing up with and being “treated” for MRKH. Also available on the web at homestead.juno.com/mrkh1/files/AdditionalMonologue.htm

Article: *The Medical Management of Intersexed Children: An Analogue for Childhood Sexual Abuse* (1997) by Tamara Alexander

In this paper written by a partner of an intersex person, similarities between the medical “treatment” of intersex children and other forms of childhood sexual abuse and their lifelong

effects are explored. Available at www.isna.org/articles/analog.html

Book: *As Nature Made Him* by John Colapinto (2000)

While not a book about intersex issues, this story about a boy who was turned into a girl after a horrible accident during circumcision exposes the shame, secrecy and silence medical practice imposes on children. Just don’t get caught up with “nature versus nurture” aspect of Colapinto’s writing and listen to David Reimer’s voice.

Handout: *Introduction to Intersexuality & Intersex Activism* by Survivor Project & Intersex Initiative Portland (2000)

This introductory handout describes the basics of intersex issues and how to be an ally to intersex people. Available at Survivor Project’s website at www.survivorproject.org

Handout: *Notes on the Treatment of Intersex* by Alice D. Dreger (1999)

Easy to read table contrasting the older, “concealment based” approach to treating intersex children and the newer, “patient centered” approach. It shows how the intersex movement is challenging the paradigm of medical authority.

Film: *Hermaphrodites Speak!* by Cheryl Chase/ISNA (1997)

First-ever documentary about intersex issues created by intersex people. Filmed at a historic retreat

for intersex adults, Angela, David, Heidi, Tom, Mani, Cheryl, Max and Hida share their stories of growing up intersexed -- many for the first time in their lives. 35 minutes.

Film: *Is it a Boy or a Girl?* by Discovery Channel (2000)

An hour-long cable television documentary on the “debate” concerning the treatment of intersex children, featuring Cheryl Chase, Howard Devore, and other intersex activists. Kenneth Glassberg represents the American Academy of Pediatrics surgeons in film.

Web Site: Intersex Society of North America (www.isna.org)

Intersex Society of North America’s web site contains a large amount of information and links to even more resources for intersex people, parents, students, and scholars. An extensive bibliography is available for download. Order books, video tapes, and other educational materials or make donations online!

Web Site: Survivor Project (www.survivorproject.org)

Survivor Project is a non-profit, multi-issue social justice organization dedicated to addressing the needs of intersex and trans survivors of domestic and sexual violence. Many articles by, for, and about intersex and trans survivors.

Web Site: by U.K. Intersex Association (www.ukia.co.uk)

British equivalent of ISNA has stories and poems by intersex people as well as information for parents of intersex children.

Web Site: Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome Support Group UK (www.medhelp.org/www/ais/)

AISSG-UK’s web site has numerous stories by people with androgen insensitivity syndrome as well as patient-side medical information. Also see AIS Support Group Australia’s site (not officially affiliated with the UK group) at home.vicnet.net.au/~aissg/ also.

Web Site: CAH Our Voices & Our Stories (www.cahourstories.net)

Site with stories by people with congenital adrenal hyperplasia (CAH) as well as the medical information for patients and their parents. There is also a message board.

Web Site: www.mrkh.org

Site by and for people with Mayer-Rokitansky-Kuster-Hauser (MRKH) syndrome (clearly, the practice of naming the syndrome after the doctors who “found” it is not working).

Newsletter: *ISNA News* (formerly *Hermaphrodites with Attitude*) by ISNA

Up-to-date information about what’s going on in the intersex activist front, plus some articles you can keep using. Make a donation to ISNA to receive a copy or read back issues online at ISNA’s web site.

Who We Are

And Miscellaneous Acknowledgements

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Support These Organizations:

Intersex Society of North America is devoted to systemic change to end shame, secrecy and unwanted genital surgeries for people born with atypical sex anatomy. Visit www.isna.org or mail PO Box 301, Petaluma, CA 94953 for more information.



Survivor Project



safety * empowerment * justice

Survivor Project is a multi-issue social justice organization dedicated to addressing the needs of intersex and trans survivors of domestic and sexual violence. Visit www.survivorproject.org or mail PO Box 40664, Portland, OR 97240 for more information.

We plan to continuously update and improve this pamphlet, and we appreciate your input. Please email Emi at emi@eminism.org or send to ISNA address above. ISNA will be distributing this pamphlet and the "teachers' kit," which packs resources and materials for use in classrooms.