

Homosexual Urban Legend: Exposed: The Claim That Hermaphroditism Is A Separate Sex

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The gender confusion movement has just received a major push by a media giant.

On March 1, 2004, *Time* magazine ran an article entitled, "Between The Sexes: More babies than you might think are born neither boys nor girls. Sorting it out is a lifelong struggle."

The *Time* article promotes the idea that children who are born with genetic defects (ambiguous sex organs) are actually being medically abused by physicians who force them to become either male or female.

The article quotes Intersex Society of North America (ISNA) board member Thea Hillman who makes the claim that, "Doctors have found a medical solution to what is essentially a social problem. The problem has to do with differences and people's fear of differences."

The Intersex Society of North America is one of the leading political activist organizations lobbying for an end to surgery on infants who are diagnosed as true hermaphrodites (infants whose internal sex organs and external genitals have both male and female characteristics).

According to the ISNA in its online Q&A: "*We won't know the child's gender until she or he is old enough to communicate to us. It is recommended that the child be assigned a gender based on our best prediction, and allow her or him to determine for herself or himself once she or he is old enough to*

do so. Irreversible surgeries on infants should be avoided in order to give them the widest range of choices when they are older. This principle should apply not only to a child with an intersex condition, but to all children."



The Intersex Society of North America is working to deconstruct notions of male and female as biological realities. The objective is to confuse what it means to be a man or woman.

In fact, the ISNA is preparing the foundation for eventual lawsuits against physicians who use surgery on infants who are hermaphrodites. According to ISNA leader Cheryl Chase, "I think a context will open up for surgeons who keep doing this to be vulnerable to lawsuits. But it's going to take a while to create that context. Right now we can't sue because it's standard practice, and parents give permission." (quoted in *As Nature Made Him: The Boy Who Was Raised As A Girl*, by John Colapinto, p. 231.)

The ISNA has also produced "Teaching Intersex Issues," a teacher curricula for Women's, Gender and Queer Studies programs at the college level. The materials describe the goal of deconstructing what it means

to be male or female—and promoting the idea that gender is just a social invention—not a biological fact.

The *Time* article quotes Dr. Bruce Wilson, a pediatric endocrinologist at DeVos children's Hospital in Grand Rapids, Michigan, as saying that surgeons dealing with infant hermaphrodites should possibly wait until the child is close to puberty before operating on the child—so the child can make his or her own decision as to

what “sex” he/she would become. Unmentioned in this article is the fact that Wilson is a medical advisor to the ISNA.

The authors of this *Time* article quote an unnamed “science review” article published in 2000 as claiming that between 0.2% and 2% of all live births are intersexed.

Activists Work To Deconstruct Gender

Although the *Time* writers fail to provide a specific source for this estimate, it is likely that this figure came from a summary of an article published on the ISNA web site. The citation is from an *American Journal of Human Biology* article written, in part, by [Brown University Professor Anne Fausto-Sterling](#), an activist for redefining what it means to be male and female.

According to Fausto-Sterling, she estimates that intersexed infants may be as high as 2% of the population and that between 0.1-0.2% of infants actually have surgery to correct genital abnormalities. She settled on the estimate of 1.7%, which was widely quoted in newspaper and magazine articles during the early 1990s. Her estimates are, in fact, urban legends—and part of elaborate mythologies being perpetuated by transgender and intersexual political activists.

Fausto-Sterling’s estimates were debunked by Leonard Sax, with The Montgomery Center for Research in Child and Adolescent Development, in “How Common Is Intersex? A Response to Anne Fausto-Sterling,” in *The Journal of Sex Research* (Vol. 39, No. 3, 2002).

According to Sax, Fausto-Sterling arrived at her 1.7% estimate of alleged intersexual infant births by inaccurately defining an intersexual child as an “individual who deviates from the Platonic ideal of physical dimorphism at the chromosomal, genital, gonadal, or hormonal levels.” She also included individuals who are “undiagnosed because they present no symptoms.”

Sax says that Fausto-Sterling’s inflated statistic of 1.7% was done by including five medical conditions that are not intersex conditions at all. By subtracting the numbers of individuals who have these conditions from Fausto-Sterling’s estimates, Sax arrives at an estimate of 0.018% of infants who are actually hermaphrodites in need of surgery. He notes: “This figure of 0.018% suggests that there are currently about 50,000 true intersexuals living in the United States. These

individuals are, of course, entitled to the same expert care and consideration that all patients deserve. Nothing is gained, however, by pretending that there are 5,000,000 such individuals.” Fausto-Sterling’s bogus estimates, however, are being used by *Time* magazine and other secular publishers to promote the idea that maleness and femaleness are cultural inventions—not biological realities. In fact, Fausto-Sterling claims that maleness and femaleness are “extremes” on a sexual continuum. In her book, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (2000), she writes:

Complete maleness and complete femaleness represent the extreme ends of a spectrum of possible body types. That these extreme ends are the most frequent has lent credence to the idea that they are not only natural (that is, produced by nature) but normal (that is, they represent both a statistical and social ideal). Knowledge of biological variation, however, allows us to conceptualize the less frequent middle spaces as natural, although statistically unusual.” (p. 76)

Sax observes that Fausto-Sterling is pushing a belief that “classifications of normal and abnormal sexual anatomy are mere social conventions,

“Complete maleness and complete femaleness represent the extreme ends of a spectrum of possible body types.” — Fausto-Sterling

prejudices which can and should be set aside by an enlightened intelligentsia.”

He says that Fausto-Sterling is promoting the idea that there is no such thing as abnormal sexual anatomy and that every genetic defect must be treated as normal and natural.

Birth Defects Now Viewed As Separate Sexes

In her essay “The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female Are Not Enough,” (*The Sciences*, March/April 1993), Fausto-Sterling claims that our culture is wrong to put people into categories as either male or female.

Fausto-Sterling claimed that there are actually five sexes—and perhaps even more. She defines the sexes as male, female, hermaphrodites

(herms), male pseudo-hermaphrodites (merms) and female pseudo-hermaphrodites (ferms).

She notes: "...on the basis of what is known about them [these categories], I suggest that the three intersexes, herm, merm and ferm, deserve to be

The International Bill Of Gender Rights claims that a person should freely choose to be a male or female.

considered additional sexes each in its own right. Indeed, I would argue further that sex is a vast, infinitely malleable continuum that defies the constraints of even five categories."

Fausto-Sterling asks the question, "Why should we care if there are people whose biological equipment enables them to have sex 'naturally' with both men and women? The answers seem to lie in a cultural need to maintain clear distinctions between the sexes. Society mandates the control of intersexual bodies because they blur and bridge the great divide. Inasmuch as hermaphrodites literally embody both sexes, they challenge traditional beliefs about sexual difference: they possess the irritating ability to live sometimes as one sex and sometimes as the other, and they raise the specter of homosexuality."

In an article published by the New York Academy of Sciences in July/August, 2000, Fausto-Sterling claims that her "five sexes" article was designed to be provocative and that she had written it "with tongue firmly in cheek." She indicated surprise that her 1993 essay was taken seriously by "right-wing Christians" who used her essay to fight against the normalization of transgenderism at the United Nations-sponsored Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995.

Fausto-Sterling, however, continues to support the idea that individuals can become whatever gender they wish to be along a sexual continuum she claims exists. She indicated agreement with the International Bill of Gender Rights, which states that a person has the right to choose and define

his own gender, has the right change his gender and to marry whomever he wishes.

Leonard Sax has stated the obvious about Fausto-Sterling's views. They are bogus and based upon flawed research, bad definitions, and inflated statistics. Yet, these are the statistics quoted by *Time* magazine and promoted by the Intersex Society of North America in its campaign to normalize what are, in fact, birth defects. Sax states it well: "The available data support the conclusion that human sexuality is a dichotomy, not a continuum. More than 99.98% of humans are either male or female. ... The birth of an intersex child, far from being 'a fairly common phenomenon,' is actually a rare event, occurring in fewer than 2 out of every 10,000 births."

Intersex Activism Is Part Of The Homosexual Revolution

ISNA leader Thea Hillman conducts erotic readings for homosexual groups and authored, "Intercourse: A Sex and Gender Recipe for Revolution." ISNA treasurer Sydney Levy works for the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission; and ISNA volunteer David Iris Cameron works with San Francisco's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Task Force.

ISNA leader Alice Dreger is author of *Hermaphrodites And The Medical Invention Of Sex*. At a seminar at Michigan State University in 1997, Dreger told students that the "fact of hermaphrodites" proves that gender is a social invention and that surgery on hermaphrodite infants enforces gender conformity. Dreger claims that surgeons are guilty of sexism and heterosexism when they operate on infants with genital abnormalities.

These are just a few of the radicals who run ISNA.

The fact is that hermaphroditism is a genetic defect, not a separate sex—and maleness and femaleness are not social inventions—but imbedded in DNA.

Time magazine has done a grave disservice to its readers by uncritically quoting from the Intersex Society of North America and bogus statistics that are based upon mystical thinking and political advocacy instead of hard scientific facts.

The Traditional Values Coalition is a public policy organization representing the interests of 43,000 churches nationwide. TVC opposes the normalization of homosexuality and transgenderism in our culture. TVC, 139 C Street, SE, Washington, DC 20003; 202-547-8570; email: tvcwashdc@traditionalvalues.org; web site: <http://www.traditionalvalues.org>