Intersex Resources

What is intersex?

Technically, intersex is defined as "congenital anomaly of the reproductive and sexual system." Intersex people are born with external genitalia, internal reproductive organs, and/or endocrine system that are different from most other people. There is no single "intersex body"; it encompasses a wide variety of conditions that do not have anything in common except that they are deemed "abnormal" by the society. What makes intersex people similar is their experiences of medicalization, not biology. Generally speaking, intersex is not an identity category. While some intersex people do reclaim "intersex" as part of their identity, most regard it as a medical condition, or just a unique physical state. Most intersex people identify and live as ordinary men and women, and are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or straight.

Nonfiction

Intersex (For Lack of a Better Word) by Thea Hillman
6.129 HILin 2008
Intersex (For Lack of a Better Word) chronicles one person’s search for self in a world obsessed with normal. In first-person prose as intimate as a diary, Thea Hillman redefines memoir in a series of compelling stories that take a no-holds-barred look at sex, gender, family, and community. Whether she’s pondering quirky family tendencies (“Drag”), reflecting on “queerness” (“Another”), or recounting scintillating adventures in San Francisco’s sex clubs, Hillman’s brave and fierce vision for cultural and societal change shines through.

Between XX and XY: Intersexuality and the Myth of Two Sexes by Gerald N. Callahan, PhD
6.609 CALbe 2009
Examines the conception of two sexes as a social, not biological, construct, and argues that gender is not easily determined and that intersex individuals should be accepted for what they are, discussing the effectiveness of gender reconstruction and other related topics.

Bodies in Doubt: An American History of Intersex by Elizabeth Reis
2.640 REIbo 2012
What does it mean to be human? To be human is, in part, to be physically sexed and culturally gendered. Yet not all bodies are clearly male or female. This book traces the changing definitions, perceptions, and medical management of intersex (atypical sex development) in America from the colonial period onwards.

Fixing Sex: Intersex, Medical Authority, and Lived Experience by Katrina Karkazis
6.009 KARfi 2008
Examines the contemporary controversies over the medical management of intersexuality in the United States from the multiple perspectives of those most intimately involved. This work exposes the contentious disagreements - and all that those debates imply about gender and the changing landscape of intersex management.

Intersex and Identity: The Contested Self by Sharon E. Preves
6.629 PReIn 2005
Drawing upon life history interviews with adults who were treated for intersexuality as children, Sharon E. Preves explores how such individuals experience and cope with being labeled sexual deviants in a society that demands sexual conformity. By demonstrating how intersexed people manage and create their own identities, often in conflict with their medical diagnosis, Preves argues that medical intervention into intersexuality often creates, rather than mitigates, the stigma these people suffer.

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Fiction

Golden Boy: A Novel by Abigail Tarttelin
9.409 TARgo 2013
Max Walker is a golden boy. Attractive, intelligent, and athletic, he’s the perfect son, the perfect friend, and the perfect crush for the girls in his school. But, the Walkers are hiding something, you see. Max is special. Max is different. Max is intersex. When an enigmatic childhood friend named Hunter steps out of his past and abuses his trust in the worst possible way, Max is forced to consider the nature of his well-kept secret.

Middlesex: A Novel by Jeffrey Eugenides
9.408 EUGmi 2002
Calliope’s friendship with a classmate and her sense of identity are compromised by the adolescent discovery that she is a hermaphrodite, a situation with roots in her grandparent’s desperate struggle for survival in the 1920s.

Annabel: A Novel by Kathleen Winter
9.409 WiNaN 2010
Born a boy and a girl but raised as a boy, Wayne or "Annabel" struggles with his identity growing up in a small Canadian town and seeks freedom by moving to the city.

Films

XXY
XXY 2008
The dramatic story of a 15-year-old hermaphrodite, born with what the doctors call 'ambiguous genitalia,' whose parents moved from Buenos Aires to an isolated cabin outside of Piriapolis, Uruguay, to protect their child from prejudice.

Harsh Beauty
DOC HARS 2005
Existing as they have for centuries, the Eunuchs (or "Hijra") are considered the third gender, neither men nor women. The film follows the lives of Amma Jyoti, Usha and Hira Bai for four years. These three people who live openly as women want to be accepted for what they truly believe themselves to be.

Online Resources

Intersex Initiative (http://www.intersexinitiative.org/)
Intersex Initiative (IPDX) is a Portland, Oregon based national activist and advocacy organization for people born with intersex conditions. It was founded by Emi Koyama, a multi-issue social justice activist and former intern at Intersex Society of North America (2001-02).

Intersex Society of North America (http://www.isna.org/)
The Intersex Society of North America (ISNA) is devoted to systemic change to end shame, secrecy, and unwanted genital surgeries for people born with an anatomy that someone decided is not standard for male or female.

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