

Title: “How to Build a Man”

Author: Anne Fausto-Sterling

Readability: Easy

Possible Applications: Gender & Feminism, Bioethics, LGBTIQ issues, self-knowledge, philosophy of science, science & values, disciplinary power.

Complimentary Texts/Resources:

Feder, Ellen: *Making Sense of Intersex: Changing Ethical Perspectives in Biomedicine*

Stryker & Whittle eds.: *The Transgender Studies Reader*

Butler, Judith: “Imitation and Gender Insubordination”

Foucault, Michel: “We ‘Other Victorians’”

Foucault, Michel: “The Repressive Hypothesis”

Foucault, Michel: “Panopticism”

Douglas, Heather: “Inductive Risk and Values in Science”

Thesis: Male and female sex are not biologically prior to social values regulating masculine and feminine gender identities. Rather, medical practices regarding intersex babies reveal that sex is gendered all the way down.

Key Definitions: No specialized vocabulary. However, the article assumes familiarity with the work of Dr. John Money. It would be good to give the students a primer on Money’s work before they read this. The Wikipedia page on Money is helpful:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Money

Summary: Though many people are comfortable today claiming that gender is socially constructed, they usually think that humans are biologically divided into male and female before such socialization occurs. The medical practices regulating the normalization of intersex babies reveals, however, that such sex normalization is guided by cultural values regarding masculinity and femininity from the start. What is more, studies of intersex babies as “abnormal” cases are used to construct the narrative of gender development in “normal,” non-intersex cases. This uncovers how the biological literature describing fetal sexual development reflects normalizing, sexist, heterosexist and transphobic cultural values.

Class Activities: This text doesn’t seem to lend itself to too many class activities. Perhaps prior to reading and discussing the text, though, students could brainstorm in small groups different ways gender is constructed, and maybe this will naturally lead to the claim that sex is prior to gender, which this paper could then refute.