

Are you a boy or a girl? Foucault and the intersex movement

Stephen Kerry

Abstract

The world's first intersex organisation, the Turner's Syndrome Association of Australia, formed in 1983. It is at that time, a year prior to Foucault's death, we witness the first stirrings that echo Foucault's articulations. The intersex movement coalesced around an articulation of the voice that challenges modern medicine's power to name and diagnose counter-normative bodies. This author is not the first to argue that the intersex movement's call to arms is the literal embodiment of post-structuralism, queer theory and Foucault. The interplay between lived experiences, biopower and theory has been articulated within the narratives, actions and theorisation of intersex individuals and their peers. In the author's recent study of intersex Australians one individual locates Foucault in their life and their re-conceptualisation of sex and gender: Foucault 'taught me that binary classifications are only one means to order the world'. This paper will explore how the intersex movement has reclaimed the subjugated knowledges of their bodies.

Biography

Stephen Kerry employs feminist, gender and queer theories to understand and give a voice to those people who live on the margins of sex, gender and sexuality. As a queer-identifying Buddhist Trekkie, Stephen has brought theory into practice through 20 years of participation in student and queer activism and volunteering for not-for-profit peer support organisations. Stephen is a senior lecturer in the Sociology Department at Flinders University. sckerry@lycos.com