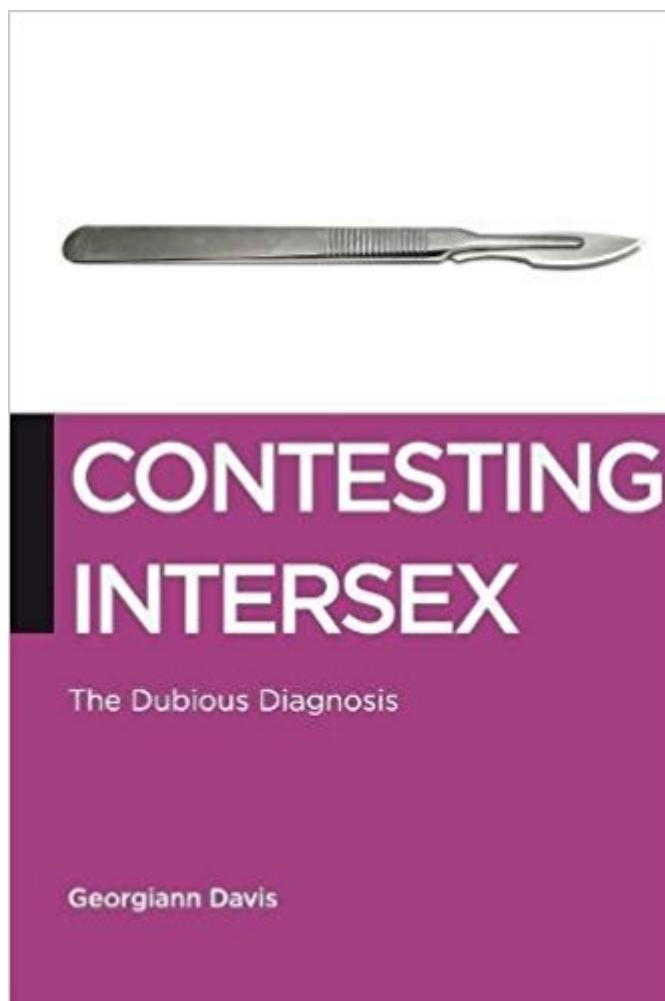


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# Contesting Intersex: The Dubious Diagnosis (Biopolitics)



## Synopsis

Watch Georgiann Davis in National Geographic's Gender Revolution documentary with Katie Couric

• A personal, compelling perspective on how medical diagnoses can profoundly hurt, or help, the lived experiences of entire communities • Winner, 2016 Donald Light Award for the Applied or Public Practice of Medical Sociology, presented by the American Sociological Association

When sociologist Georgiann Davis was a teenager, her doctors discovered that she possessed XY chromosomes, marking her as intersex. Rather than share this information with her, they withheld the diagnosis in order to protect • the development of her gender identity; it was years before Davis would see her own medical records as an adult and learn the truth. Davis'™ experience is not unusual. Many intersex people feel isolated from one another and violated by medical practices that support conventional notions of the male/female sex binary which have historically led to secrecy and shame about being intersex. Yet, the rise of intersex activism and visibility in the US has called into question the practice of classifying intersex as an abnormality, rather than as a mere biological variation. This shift in thinking has the potential to transform entrenched intersex medical treatment.

• In Contesting Intersex, Davis draws on interviews with intersex people, their parents, and medical experts to explore the oft-questioned views on intersex in medical and activist communities, as well as the evolution of thought in regards to intersex visibility and transparency. She finds that framing intersex as an abnormality is harmful and can alter the course of one's™ life. In fact, controversy over this framing continues, as intersex has been renamed a "disorder of sex development"™ throughout medicine. This happened, she suggests, as a means for doctors to reassert their authority over the intersex body in the face of increasing intersex activism in the 1990s and feminist critiques of intersex medical treatment. Davis argues the renaming of "intersex"™ as a "disorder of sex development"™ is strong evidence that the intersex diagnosis is dubious.

Within the intersex community, though, disorder of sex development terminology is hotly disputed; some prefer not to use a term which pathologizes their bodies, while others prefer to think of intersex in scientific terms. Although terminology is currently a source of tension within the movement, Davis hopes intersex activists and their allies can come together to improve the lives of intersex people, their families, and future generations. However, for this to happen, the intersex diagnosis, as well as sex, gender, and sexuality, needs to be understood as socially constructed phenomena.

• A personal journey into medical and social activism, Contesting Intersex presents a unique perspective on how medical diagnoses can affect lives profoundly.

• Ask us about setting up a Skype-in with the author for your class

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

âœDavis presents a compelling and beautifully-crafted text about the complex issues of gender and sexual identity. How medicine and diagnosis can either come in aid of, or brutally disrupt the experience of intersexuality is an important paradox, worthy of reflection and debate. With this book, Davis gets the ball rolling and demands our attention. It is well-worth the read.â •Annemarie

Jutel, author of *Putting a Name to It: Diagnosis in Contemporary Society*âœDavis provides her readers with a concise overview of her research as well as lists calls to action. Davisâ™s strengths lie in the seamless blending of research, ethnography, interviews, and personal

activism.â •American Book ReviewâœContesting Intersex is an unapologetic coalescence of Davisâ™ first-hand experiences of an intersex diagnosis and her academic inquiry into the topic.â Whilst this, as she acknowledges, â may make the book read like an autoethnography at certain points,â™ theory, politics and practice have never been discrete in intersex studies.â Davisâ™s own history and current participation in the intersex community help her to provide a circumspect

consideration of the tensions at play.â •Sociology of Health & IllnessâœContesting Intersexâ is an essential update to studies of the intersex and a must-read for those interested in social movements, gender, medicalization, diagnosis, and the relationship between science and culture.â •American Journal of SociologyâœThe histories of medicine, social movements, and

gender productivity collide in sociologist Davisâ™s compelling account of how activists, parents, assorted medical specialists and institutions, and people with intersex traits respond to the diversity of human reproductive development...[T]his book will inspire and inform the wide readership it

deserves.â •Choiceâ œThrough piercing interviews and astute analysis, and in a readable style, Contesting Intersex gets at the heart of recent controversies about the medical management of intersex and perceptively tracks the political engagement of intersex activists.â •Elizabeth Reis, author of Bodies in Doubt: An American History of Intersexâ œWith refreshingly honest prose and an insider's insight, Georgiann Davis illuminates the ongoing, heated, and often painful debate about how best to respond to the naturally occurring diversity of sex development in human beings. This is groundbreaking work that is sure to become required reading for scholars of gender and the social history of medicine.â •Sharon Preves, author of Intersex and Identity: The Contested Self

Georgiann Davis is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. She is the past President of the AIS-DSD Support Group ([www.aisdsd.org](http://www.aisdsd.org)) for individuals with differences of sex development.

Very informative! I had to write a research paper on the medical field in relation to the intersex community, and it was just what I needed. I would recommend this to anyone with an intersex child, student, patient, or friend.

Just finished reading this, and I highly recommend it. Academic books are not always beautifully written, but this one was absolutely readable, well-structured and fascinating. The author has a gift for research and for clarity of thought. She elegantly uses aspects of her own story and those of other intersex individuals to draw out and provide concrete examples of the human implications of her research. Even if you don't think you'd be interested in intersex issues/politics/medical interventions, you will be from the moment you pick up this book. I teach at the university level, and I think that this book (or excerpts from it) should be required reading in all Gender, Sexuality, & Women's Studies programs.

Interesting study of intersex. I feel like I also now know the author because she really writes herself and her experience into the book.

A passionate and accessible account of intersex in contemporary U.S. society.

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