

# Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality

Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality

Author: Anne Fausto-Sterling

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This path-breaking study of gender and sexuality is the first to go beyond the nature/nurture debate to offer an alternate framework for considering questions of sex and sexuality.. Why do some people prefer heterosexual love while others fancy the same sex? Is sexual identity biologically determined or a product of convention? In this brilliant and provocative book, the acclaimed author of *Myths of Gender* argues that even the most fundamental knowledge about sex is shaped by the culture in which scientific knowledge is produced. Drawing on astonishing real-life cases and a probing analysis of centuries of scientific research, Fausto-Sterling demonstrates how scientists have historically politicized the body. In lively and impassioned prose, she breaks down three key dualisms - sex/gender, nature/nurture, and real/constructed - and asserts that individuals born as mixtures of male and female exist as one of five natural human variants and, as such, should not be forced to compromise their differences to fit a flawed societal definition of normality.

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About the Author

Anne Fausto-Sterling, Ph.D., biologist, feminist, and historian of science, is professor of biology and women's studies at Brown University. She is the author of *Myths of Gender* and lives in Providence, Rhode Island.[Review](#)

Anyone who has been following the new brain science in the popular press--and even those whose casual reading includes journals along the lines of Psychoneuroendocrinology--will be fascinated by the puckish observations of Brown University biologist Anne Fausto-Sterling, whose provocative and erudite essays easily establish the cultural biases underlying current scientific thought on gender. She goes on to critique the science itself, exposing inconsistencies in the literature and weaknesses in the rhetorical and theoretical structures that support new research. "One of the major claims I make in this book," she explains, "is that labeling someone a man or a woman is a social decision. We may use scientific knowledge to help us make the decision, but only our beliefs about gender--not science--can define our sex. Furthermore, our beliefs about gender affect what kinds of knowledge scientists produce about sex in the first place." Whether discussing genital surgery on intersex infants or the amorous lives of lab rats, the author is unfailingly clear and convincing, and manages to impart humor to subjects as seemingly unpromising as neuroanatomy and the structure of proteins.

Regina Marler, [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)