

## GENDER IS NOT A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT

Men and women offer distinct and complementary benefits to children.

Researchers studied eighty thousand men and women in seventy-six countries and found that women in egalitarian countries who had the greatest educational and career opportunities were the most stereotypically female. Men and women are different, and those differences greatly matter to kids.

*"Parenting styles correlate to biological differences between men and women. Women, compared to men, have higher levels of oxytocin—the hormone responsible for emotional bonding—and oxytocin receptors. Oxytocin serves to calm anxiety, reduce motor activity, and foster an increase in touching.... In contrast, testosterone—present in men at levels tenfold higher than women—is correlated to an increase in motor activity in infant boys and may be responsible for higher levels of physical activities in men compared to women."*

- Psychiatrist Scott Haltzman

## "MOTHERING" AND "FATHERING" SHOULD REPLACE "PARENTING"

Beyond the obvious requirement of the two sexes to necessitate human reproduction, a child's development is designed around and dependent on the complementary ways men and women interact with their children.

*"We should disavow the notion that "mommies can make good daddies," just as we should disavow the popular notion...that "daddies can make good mommies." The two sexes are different to the core, and each is necessary—culturally and biologically—for the optimal development of a human being."*

-David Popenoe, cofounder of the National Marriage Project

Male and female representation is promoted in our institutions of justice, education, business, and government, but the importance of both sexes is increasingly disregarded in the place where it matters most- the home. Man/woman marriage is the only institution guaranteed to achieve the perfect gender balance and optimize child development.

## DAD'S REFLECT THE WORLD, MOMS REFLECT THE HOME

Dad dwells in the realm of facts, and his style of parenting resembles the school of hard knocks. He teaches his children through consequences and allows them to learn through failure. Mom tends to focus on feelings, regardless of the facts. She's wired to nurture and connect.

Dads encourage competition; moms encourage equity. When directing their children's behavior, fathers tend to be more rules-based, whereas mothers tend to err on the side of grace and empathy.

## DISCIPLINE AND DISCOURSE

Dads speak to their babies like they speak to everyone else; they communicate complex ideas and use adult words. Moms simplify their language to the child's level. This provides children with one parent communicating on their level, and another pushing them to expand their verbal and cognitive abilities.

Oftentimes, mom will explain to the child why the garbage needs to be taken out. Dad doesn't ask, he directs. And if his direction is questioned? His response is "do it now." This difference in discipline is as eternal as the phrase, "Wait until your father gets home."

## PLAY

Mothers tend to care for while fathers tend to play with children. When mothers do play, they tend to encourage sharing and fairness. Dad's play is competitive, more exciting, and pushes boundaries.

Dads emphasize gross motor skills- running, jumping, climbing. Moms emphasize fine motor skills- cutting, chopping, tying shoes.

Having a dad at home makes for less aggressive boys, fewer run-ins with police, and more gentle treatment of women. The evidence tells us "toxic" masculinity is not a result of Dad's influence; it's a result of Dad's absence.

*"I took other boys' rough-housing more personally than I should have, because my mother never rough-housed in a sane way. She would actually strike us if we played too rough and say 'you don't hit girls!' Because we never had a father to teach the 'balance' of such play, I had no 'off switch' when it came to rough-housing."*

- Corbin, raised by a lesbian mother

## HOW CHILDREN SEE THEMSELVES AND OTHERS

When children are raised by their mother *and* father, they benefit from having a same-sex parent who reflects the goodness of the child's own maleness or femaleness, and who represents what their own adulthood should look like. It also gives children crucial exposure to the other half of humanity, providing an up-close and intimate opportunity to interact with the opposite sex. Connected fathers satisfy a daughter's craving for male love and thus drastically reduce rates of teen pregnancy.

Maggie, raised by her single mother, describes how fatherlessness has devastated every aspect of her life:

*"The absence of my father in my life has led to so many awful things in my life. I constantly felt unloved, unworthy and abandoned. I craved a father figure and protection. This lead [sic] to me seeking out unhealthy and abusive relationships with men who simply didn't care about me."*

Men cannot mother, women cannot father. Kids need, crave, benefit from, and have a right to both.

Excerpts from chapter 3 of "Them Before Us: Why We Need a Global Children's Movement"



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