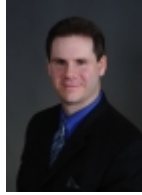




Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on January 27, 2012

“Gender-neutral” Childrearing: When a Sexual Hang-up Leads to Child Abuse

First there was “Pop” in Sweden, then “Storm” in Canada. Now out of Britain comes Sasha, a boy, we hear, who is being raised by his parents in a “sex-neutral” fashion. And this isn’t just your modernistic grandmother’s neutrality, where she didn’t want to push toy guns and trucks on her son. Sasha’s parents, Beck Laxton and “partner,” as he’s described, Kieran Cooper, are going the full feminist monty.



On Sasha’s birth announcement, there was no indication of sex; and for years Laxton wouldn’t use the pronoun “he” when referring to him on her blog, but instead just indentified him as “the infant.” She explained why in an interview with the Cambridge News, stating, “I wanted to avoid all that stereotyping. Stereotypes seem fundamentally stupid. Why would you want to slot people into boxes?” Therefore, writes Piper Weiss at *Shine*:

Sasha dresses in clothes he likes — be it a hand-me-downs [sic] from his sister or his brother. The big no-no’s are hyper-masculine outfits like skull-print shirts and cargo pants. In one photo, sent to friends and family, Sasha’s dressed in a shiny pink girl’s swimsuit. “Children like sparkly things,” says Beck. “And if someone thought Sasha was a girl because he was wearing a pink swimming costume, then what effect would that have?”

Laxton clearly doesn’t know — and doesn’t seem to care. After all, writes Weiss, “[Laxton is] open to her son pursuing any career or sexual preference he chooses...” Yes, well, as long as, I suppose, it’s not “hyper-masculine.” This brings me to my first point.

One of the great enduring myths about leftists — at least *among* leftists — is that they’re fonts of open-mindedness, tolerance and inclusiveness and have purged dogmas from their hearts and minds. Yet, as G.K. Chesterton long ago observed, “There are only two kinds of people: those who accept dogmas and know it, and those who accept dogmas and don’t know it.” As for Laxton, a little honest self-examination would reveal that her parenting, if you can call it that, is about as neutral as a one-eyed Imam at a B’Nai B’Rith meeting.

First, the whole idea behind “sex-neutral” (the word gender is misused today; it once referred only to words) parenting is that you not impose societal norms on your child, that you let “it” spread its wings and find its own way in this biased world, unfettered by others’ values and expectations. Laxton expresses this when she asks why we should put children in a box. Yet she doesn’t even make a good layman’s...er...layperson’s effort to be true to this principle. Note that while she has no problem with her son cross-dressing, she feels that “hyper-masculine” clothes are a “no-no.” She clearly seems to believe that robust masculinity is a defect and doesn’t shrink from discouraging it (how open-minded would she be if her son wanted toy guns?), and it really isn’t surprising. On her blog she describes herself as a “radical feminist.” So much for neutrality and the rejection of boundaries.



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And, not surprisingly, Laxton makes clear that she's using her son to advance her agenda. Among other things, she says, "All I want to do is make people think a bit." So I'll do that and pose a question: How is it that we can call certain clothes "hyper-masculine"? After all, it's not the case that when you leave cargo pants and a pink tutu in a drawer all alone, you end up with a litter of little lower-body garments. Rather, the frame of reference when thus categorizing things is the male-female dichotomy. Society recognized that certain things are reflective of the characteristic qualities or preferences of a given sex and thus labeled them accordingly. Yet, if masculinity and femininity in people are just social constructs, that frame of reference has no basis in reality.

Now let's think more than a bit. Weiss writes that Laxton is on a quest to "let her kid just be a kid." All right, but why put him in the "kid" box? I'll explain.

I remember a cute story about the discovery of the doodlings of a 7-year-old medieval Russian boy named Onfim. In one picture, he drew himself as some kind of monster and included the caption, "I am a wild beast." This is a common childhood fantasy, but should we point to disturbed people such as "Wolfie Blackheart" the "werewolf" and conclude that perhaps we shouldn't impose species-oriented norms on children? Clearly, we put a little human in a human "box" not because of some arbitrary "social construct" but because he was born in a human body, and it's far healthier to socialize him as a human than a ferret. In the same way that we cultivate a dog's innate qualities by training him as a dog, it is how we cultivate a child's human capacities and prepare him for his role as a human.

The point is this: The idea that you could raise a child and not place him in a "box" is a silly fantasy. We instill norms and ideas about status in children when we put clothes on them, tell them they're human and American, teach them language and manners and to wash and brush their teeth, laugh at some behaviors and frown upon others, choose some forms of entertainment but avoid others, and when we do a thousand other things. And insofar as the parents don't serve the role of instilling norms, the village will.

So we place a boy in a boy box not because of some arbitrary social construct, but because he was born in a boy's body. And this brings us to the idea that, as Laxton believes, sex stereotyping limits a child's "potential." You see, there is a different theory — in fact, not that long ago it was recognized as a self-evident truth. It goes something like this: Far from being a defect, sex-specific parenting is a must. In just the same way we help a child with a proclivity for music fully exploit his potential by encouraging musical endeavors, it serves to cultivate and augment the characteristic qualities of each sex. This helps individuals to fulfill their potential, and prepares them for their unique role, as members of their sex. This is, mind you, how man has always created sound husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, those central building blocks of what is the central building block of civilization: the family.

If these feminist psycho-babblers really thought — more than a bit — they would realize that sex-specific conditioning is just one part of a conditioning regime that is as necessary as it is unavoidable. Yet they focus so closely on that small picture that they never see the big one. And why? Well, it's because they have a true sexual hang-up.

Bending that Chesterton quotation I used earlier, I'll say that there are only two kinds of people in the world: those who instill their children with dogmas and know it, and those who instill their children with dogmas and don't know it.

We have no choice but to put our sons and daughters in boxes. Let's just make sure they're the right ones.



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