

Having Transgender Parents Will Hurt Kids Like It Hurt Me

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In 1960, when Random House Books first published P.D. Eastman's classic children's book "Are You My Mother?," no one would have guessed that a generation later children might be asking that very question of their fathers.

Imagine Darth Vader surprising Luke Skywalker with the earth-shattering news that he's the young man's father—and mother. Sounds funny, maybe even impossible, doesn't it? But it is possible, and no laughing matter.

Modern science and medicine, ever exploring new possibilities, rarely stop these days to consider the ethical implications of zooming down those uncharted paths. Once upon a time, we generally weighed questions of scientific possibility on ethical scales before proceeding. Not so much these days.

Consider the Beatie Children

In 2002, doctors performed sex-reassignment surgery on Tracy Lehuani LaGondino, physically molding the young lady into a resemblance of a young man, Thomas Beatie. Beatie chose to keep her female reproductive organs. In 2008, Beatie became pregnant and gave birth to a daughter. Beatie later gave birth two more times, to sons.

In 2012, Beatie filed for and was granted a divorce from her bodybuilder wife, whom she claimed had physically abused her. Recently, Beatie married her kids' preschool teacher. How are the three Beatie children faring through all this turmoil? It seems that few outside the little family know the answer to that question.

Since I grew up with a transgender father, however, I have a pretty good idea. Based on the difficulties I endured and the struggles I saw in my siblings, I suspect the answer is that the Beatie children are not doing well. I suspect they're confused, sad, sometimes resentful, and sometimes fearful.

Beatie's children—and, increasingly, more like them—will have to struggle with the knowledge that their mother is also their father, or vice versa. If the terminology alone is confusing for adults to pin down, imagine what day-to-day life is like for the kids.

What Is in the Child's Best Interests?

Prior to the mid-twentieth century most children were raised by both a mother and a father. That was the natural order—God's design. That was how most people saw it, and, generally, the arrangement suited society well. Divorce was relatively rare, and when single-parenting occurred, it was more likely due to the death of a parent. These days, divorce or absentee fathers are more likely to be the causes of single-parent homes.

Sometimes divorce is necessary, and I do not condemn divorced people. But living in a single-parent home, while it can be a good and positive environment, is never the very best environment for children. In most cases, these single-parent homes lack a father, so they're headed by heavily burdened mothers. As President Obama declared (while still a senator, in 2008):

We know the statistics—that children who grow up without a father are five times more likely to live in poverty and commit crime, nine times more likely to drop out of schools and 20 times more likely to end up in prison. They are more likely to have behavioral problems, or run away from home or become teenage parents themselves. And the foundations of our community are weaker because of it.

So is the cure for a fatherless society to have one adult who is, biologically, both father and mother? No. While modern science has now made it possible for one person to fulfill some parts of acting like the biological father and mother, one person cannot fulfill both roles emotionally, physically, and psychologically. Each sex brings unique contributions to parenting. Children need two parents—a father and a mother.

Why Not Give Kids the Best We Can?

Yes, children can adapt to a one-parent household. Many have done so very well. But why, if not necessary, make the children adapt to a less-than-ideal environment? Why not seek to provide children with the best parenting situation? In the two-in-one parent scenario, the adult's desires are fulfilled, but at what cost to the children? The purpose of the family is to nurture children, not to fulfill parents' desires.

Sara McLanahan, an expert on child well-being, [may have said it best](#):

If we were asked to design a system for making sure that children's basic needs were met, we would probably come up with something quite similar to the two-parent family ideal. Such a design, in theory, would not only ensure that children had access to the time and money of two adults, it would provide a system of checks and balances that promote quality parenting. The fact that both adults have a biological connection to the child would increase the likelihood that the parents would identify with the child and be willing to sacrifice for that child and it would reduce the likelihood that either parent would abuse the child.

When one parent is both father and mother, the children cannot have a biological connection to two parents, the best scenario for meeting all the children's needs. Sadly, in today's culture, affirming adults' choices is increasingly taking precedence over requiring or even encouraging adults to make sacrifices to benefit children.