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Are Boys and Girls Really Different?

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The ever-interesting Stanley Kurtz has written a great article that will put the gender police in a fit. In "Can We Make Boys and Girls Alike?," published in the current issue of City Journal, Kurtz traces recent debates, goes to the sources, and dispels much confusion. He correctly identifies the ideological underpinnings of gender feminism and its assault on sex differences. Then he goes for the kill, pointing to evidence gained from the experiences of the 'kibbutzniks' in Israel. Deeply committed to androgyny, the kibbutz leaders separated children from their parents for all but two hours a day [mothers were thought to reinforce sexual stereotypes in their sons and daughters] and tried to remove all traces of sex differnces in the socialization of children. The effort failed miserably. Why did it fail? Kurtz explains: "The experiment collapsed within a generation, and a traditional family and gender system reasserted itself. Why? Those who believe in hardwired natural differences obviously would say that cultural conditioning couldn't remove the sexes' genetic programming." From a Christian perspective there is far more to it than that, of course. The Bible presents the male/female distinction as a revelation of God's glory in creation. Nevertheless, Kurtz is really on to something. As he concludes: "From either a biological or cultural point of view, then, the feminist project of androgyny is ultimately doomed. But that doesn't mean that it can't do harm in the meantime. In America, many boys are slipping behind in school; their sisters are significantly more likely to go on to college. Yet thanks largely to the influence of academic feminists, legal and educational resources still flow disproportionately to supposedly victimized girls. In the end, gender won't disappear, whatever the mavens of women's studies hope, but the careers of some bright young men probably will. "