**The Gender Double Standard: What Message Are We Sending Our Boys?**

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"That is ADORABLE!"

"Girl power!"

"Lucy is my hero! Go get 'em girl!"

Those are just a few of the many responses I got when I first posted a photo of my daughter in her football uniform.

And when I revealed that I got over myself and made a special trip to the boys' department to surprise my little girl with the skeleton-playing-guitar sweatshirt she's been dying for, all I got was cheers from the Facebook peanut gallery for supporting my daughter's likes and not forcing my own girly fashion on her.

It seems everyone loves a tomboy.

But while I was okay with my daughter playing football (it's just flag football, anyway), I'll admit I didn't love the fact that I had to go left toward the boys' section once again, after years of dreaming of [going right](http://psjackie.com/2008/08/i-went-right.html) toward the girls' department. But it didn't take too long for me to identify my feelings as being my own stuff, especially with the help of Lucy's enthusiastic Facebook fan club.

But what if my daughter were actually my son and he wanted to wear a dress? Would those same supporters of my cross-dressing little lady be applauding my son's independence and love of tutus? Would I be setting my son up to be bullied, having kids and parents alike question his identity and sexuality years before he might even understand it himself?

Remember the dad who [wore a skirt and nail polish in solidarity](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/29/nils-pickert-german-dad_n_1840290.html)with his 5-year-old son, who prefers sporting a skirt over traditional boys' clothing? The comments on that post got downright mean, ranging from accusations of being weird or secretly gay and hiding behind his son -- one person even called the dad's decision "child abuse."

Then there was the story of a mom who took her son "W" shopping for a skirt, [allowing him to wear it](http://www.blogher.com/my-son-and-his-skirt?page=full) to school.

We got there a bit early and the staff in the office delighted in W's new attire. It is impossible to not grin when seeing him so happy. IMPOSSIBLE. We walked down to his classroom and one of W's best friends walked up to him.

"Hey! Boys can't wear tutus!"

W looked at her like she was crazy. "It's not a tutu. It's a skirt." And he confidently marched into his classroom to find his favorite trucks.

[Dresden](http://creatingmotherhood.com/), W's Mom, reflects on the experience and her initial resistance to her son's fashion choices:

It's just a skirt, no big deal. Except for when I didn't blog about it. Or tweet about it. What was up with that? I convinced myself that I wasn't writing about W and his skirt because it was private, personal. When I thought about it more, I realized that I was afraid to write about it because I am oddly fumbling through it. I am terrified to make a wrong turn, terrified that I will damage this fantastic moment of pure joy. Not because I am not a fan of the skirt -- I adore the skirt and I adore seeing W in it.

**But is it really "no big deal" or is there a double standard when teaching kids to "be yourself?"**

According to Ruth -- a mother of three, including two grown gay sons -- there absolutely is a double standard. "It is way easier for the little girl to embrace her masculine side than for the feminine little boy. I think that all goes back to hate and fear of gay men -- straight men are scared they might be gay, all the biblical talk directed at males (not females) and the denial of females even having a sexual self."

I asked fellow parents on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/thesilverwhining/posts/10151277283271346) to weigh in. While a couple were in support of letting kids of either sex make their own fashion choices, those against the idea of a boy wearing "girls' clothes," certainly weren't lacking passion in their response. "A 5-year-old is not mature enough to make that decision for himself," says Tim, who has two young sons. "As a father, it is my job to protect him, especially at that age. Letting him wear girls clothes to school would not be protecting him. So, the short version, No f@$&\*ing way."

Where do you stand? Why is it OK for girls to be "tomboys" while boys are often ridiculed?



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