

11/03/2005

Cornell professor pens book

By: Jake McNamara

Peggy Drexler, Ph.D, of Cornell's Psychology and and Psychiatry department has had a busy few months, because discussion of her new book, *Raising Boys Without Men*, has caught on like wildfire. Drexler has appeared on numerous television programs, including "Good Morning America," and *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times* and *Child* magazine are just some of the publications addressing her work.

Basically, the book aims to debunk the idea that a boy must have a man in the house in order to be successful. It also attacks the notion that boys raised only by mothers will turn out weak, or turn to a life of crime if they have an unmarried mother.

"A father doesn't have to be a decisive factor in how a boy will turn out," Drexler explained to *The Ithaca Times*. "We as a culture feel boys are going to be feminized if the mom doesn't back off. But the hard science has found that boys are hard-wired to be boys."

Drexler's book details her study of 16 two parent lesbian couples and 16 two parent heterosexual couples. All the couples had young boys (ages 5 to 9 at the study's beginning in 1996). All of the couples were also from the San Francisco Bay area.

"I met with the boys every other week for two years," Drexler explained, "and each of the parents every month, and I tape recorded all of my interviews."

Drexler also studied 60 other boys-30 from single mothers by choice, and 30 from single mothers by coincidence. When she examined all her research, using the clinical and qualitative method, she came to her conclusion that a father does not necessarily matter in a boy's life.

But, Drexler noted, male role models do matter in a boy's life. "We live in a world of men and women," Drexler said, "and it's essential that boys have men in their lives."

Drexler's study found that boys lacking fathers would naturally seek out male role models. Drexler found boys with single or lesbian mothers loved sports and were often very "boyish."

Drexler's book has earned praise and scorn from critics. *Publishers Weekly* proclaimed the book as a "beacon to the country's nearly 10 million single mothers," while *The Atlantic Monthly* decried the book as "preposterous... unlikely to raise a ripple beyond its intended audience."

Drexler said, "The bottom line is good parenting is not anchored to gender."