

Mother Knows Best

YOU DON'T NEED A MAN AROUND THE HOUSE.

Do single mothers raise sissy emasculated boys? That may sound strange to liberal Bay Area readers, but it's still the prevailing wisdom in most of the country, says **PEGGY DREXLER**, Cornell medical professor and former Bay Area resident. To see if there was any truth to the idea, she studied 76 mom-only families, many from the Bay Area. Her new book, *Raising Boys Without Men*, claims that these boys can be more sensitive and well rounded than those with a macho head of the house. **SUSAN KOSTAL** asks Drexler about raising what she calls "head-and-heart boys."



Describe the mom-only parenting style.

These moms tend to be much more flexible about what it means to be a boy. If their sons are interested in cooking, that's fine; if they want to do sports, they can.

But the boys are also expected to pull their weight at home and do traditionally womanly chores, like laundry and cooking. They end up being typical boys but have an emotional intelligence that is very striking.

Do these moms make better mothers?

No. The bottom line is, the quality of parenting is what matters. How kids turn out is reflected in things like how often they sit down at the dinner table, not the number, gender, or sexual ori-



entation of parents who sit down at the table with them.

Were there any significant differences between single straight moms and lesbian moms?

Not really. The fact that both groups are marginalized by the culture is more important than whether they're gay or straight. They have both reacted to their circumstances by figuring out creative ways to parent.

My husband flipped through your book and half-jokingly offered to move out.

Really? It's not supposed to be a father-bashing book. I've been married for 36 years [her husband is Mickey Drexler, former Gap CEO and current head of J. Crew]. A good father is a wonderful model for a child, just as a good mother is. Please tell your husband that. ●