

And so we live our lives in what strikes me as the ultimate just desserts relationship. When I was a kid, my mother and father spent a lot of energy trying to make me into a girl. Maybe it was just to save money on medical bills, but I suspect that there were ulterior motives behind their inexhaustible efforts to get me to slow down, not play so rough, limit myself to three sports, and stop picking fights with my brother. I'd catch them looking askance at the outfits I'd choose to wear to school, which were combination plates, shorts under my skirt, tee shirts under my blouse, and one-piece gymsuits under my dress. I did used to pick a lot of fights, and the clothes that girls wore in those days forced one to think first of modesty, and second of getting in the first good punch. Not the right order for escaping tight situations unscathed.

I provided my parents little solace in those days. I know they loved me, but I also know they harbored secret desires that I conform to more socially acceptable

norms. I used to spend a lot of time evaluating them as parents. Basically, I thought they were doing a good job, but I wished they'd let go of the "norms" bit and cool it with the lectures.

Now, I have a wonderful, sensitive, and very loving kid of my own, who I am sure spends a lot of time evaluating me. There's no doubt in my mind that she's having the same reactions to me that I once had to my parents. I recognized it in her eyes when she was three years old, and I was trying to get her to step in the mud and experience dirt. And then again when she was about eight and insisted that she didn't want a birthday party at an Expos game. I see it all the time now, since adolescence is by its very nature a trying time wherein parents and their no-longer-quite-children engage in tests of will on a daily basis.

The more fascinating a sociological phenomenon is to me, the more extraneous and irrelevant it is to her. For example, I

will have just completed an eloquent, possibly publishable dinnertime treatise on the importance of challenging social norms and asserting one's individuality. I'll glance over at my daughter to see if she's as impressed with me as I am. Her eyes are glazed and she's pushing at her peas with a knife that's got a blob of butter on it. Her body language is saying, "Where's the Starship Enterprise Transporter when you need it?"

Recently I resigned myself to the realization that she got the parent I'd always wanted, and I got the parents she's always wanted. And that reminds me of a joke a friend recently told me: "Why is it that grandparents are so close to their grandchildren? It's because they share a common enemy." Which probably explains why I'm so excited about her anticipated heterosexual future as a wife and mother. ▼

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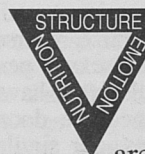
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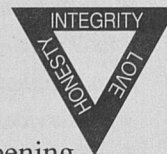
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