As Nature Made Him: Gender Identity Case

Posted on March 14, 2019

Medical Error and Gender Identity

The Book “As Nature Made Him” is a story of agony that features a toddler to whom botched circumcision was practised. The two identical twins had practices disorienting their way of life from the beginning. The author shows to the audience that the young man is not the only victim of the dangerous acts of the cruel actor. The main character in the story and whom the story revolves around (Baby Brian) is shown to grow like a girl.

Raising David Reimer as Brenda

The boy is raised up as Brenda. The two doctors behind the suffering felt by the little boy, one whom the author introduces as a researcher and a doctor (John Money), are inclined to the notion that gender is culturally constructed; the other doctor whom the initial operation depended on is Milton Diamond. ‘The Boy Who Was Raised as a Girl proves to be a gripping tale filled with traumatic repercussions as a result of biased medical decisions in 1967. To offer a little scope of the story the author narrates, it is determined to be on August 22, 1965, when a young housewife delivers two identical twins. The young woman, Jane Remer, is a citizen of Winnipeg, Manitoba, who delivers the two young twins, namely Bruce and Brian. However, there is a problem when the children reach the age of seven years. A critical disorder befalls the boys (Phimosis), which excruciates the ability to pass urine and hence develops an obstruction of the ability for the urethra to open. The story is inclined to the decision of the doctor, who claims that the problems can have a solution with the circumcision of the boys. Although the circumcision process of Brian went as expected, the other boy underwent an erroneous operation. It proves impossible for anyone to prove how precisely such an outcome can be experienced. This makes the family have no other way of dealing with the problem other than raising the child as a girl.

Parental Hope and John Money’s Theory

After the incident, the author reports the presence of hope in the parents’ lives. This was when the family watched television in 1967. There was hope in the narration of the person in the episode. The Doctor, John Money, who is a Harvard PhD, claimed to have great success during sex operations. It is a pity to find that during these times, gender and sexuality had little influence in society; this made people have no ground to defend their arguments. The individuals proved to have good knowledge of the issue that influenced the decision of the less fortunate. Doctor Money is presented as a psychologist and a specialist on gender-related issues. Moreover, in this case, the person proves to be

Copyright © 2026 Academic Master.

of hope since he is a scientist who portrays great knowledge on the issue of gender reassignment. During the scene, the author shows the expertise of the doctor as he answers questions regarding hermaphrodites and transvestites. After visiting the suffering child, the Doctor presents some hope to the family by ascertaining that it is possible to change the gender of the kid. Money claims that it would be possible to work on the child's genitals and change the shrivelled penis into a vagina. This would force the child to be raised not as a boy anymore. According to the doctor's view of gender and sexuality, psychologically, the sexuality of a person is undetermined during birth; rather, it is differentiated as either masculine or feminine as a person grows up (33). As a result, nurture has the power to rule over nature when it comes to determining whether an individual is male or female. With the hope that the operation would be successful, the Reimers agreed to the Doctor's (Money) suggestion, and the child would be turned into a boy.

Social Adjustment and Identity Conflict

The case presents the effect of social uncertainties. For instance, the boy does not fit in with the new being, the "girl." furthermore, it is difficult for the new girl to have favourable interactions with the rest of the children. There are also incidences that the girl tries to fight the new being in her. The girl is not comfortable with the life she is living. Regardless of the effort put in by the parents to satisfy Brenda with the new way of life, there exist instances where she has to fight the instinct of being a boy. Her mother gives her items that are deemed fight for a girl, but Brenda is in agony with the imposed gender. The author reports that the parents treat the girl as a normal girl. She is dressed in good clothes and offered dolls to play with, and at times, she is compelled to wear lace-covered clothes. Her mother also tries to educate the girl about girly things such as sewing and baking. Nevertheless, all the trials to make the girl feel like a normal girl are met by great intuition that makes Brenda feel more like a boy than a mere girl. The Book shows that she is obliged to engage her brother more than any of the girlish items. Brenda is attracted to the masculine gender, and she is presented as even having fights with the boys at school. She is inclined to the things that boys like, such as the toys her brother uses.

Autonomy Rights and Reassertion of Male Identity

The case can also be termed as a determined threat to the social rights that a child or anyone else should enjoy. From the onset, when Brenda realizes her deformity, she is adamant to reassure the identity of a male. Her parents let her know the truth at the age of fifteen. Throughout Brenda's school life, she is faced with the dilemma of being treated as an outcast. The girls showed no interest in playing with her. The fact that she was different from the other girls scared everyone. On the other hand, none of the boys showed interest since she took the nature of a girl. The fact that she did not fit into any social circle also affected the performance of the girl both in school and in her behaviours. Brenda did not occur at the leading positions in class and, more so, did not get along with the other students.

Clinical Encounters and Psychological Harm

The occasions between the twins and the doctor (Dr. Money) also act as triggers for the child's miserable lifestyle. As the author denotes, Brenda would call the Doctor's place regularly for medical check-ups. The doctor would question Brenda's feelings as to whether she felt like a girl. Brenda would openly confess to having boyish feelings. The doctor also affected the child psychologically by showing her and their brother photos and films related to sex. The doctor would also force the kids to take off clothes and display their genitals to each other. The actions would have negligible dangerous outcomes at the tender age. However, with the realization of the consequences of the actions the doctor did to them (the twins), Brenda feels traumatized and guilty. She would be distressed whenever the topic of early visits to the doctor was raised. The author explains that the parents would be forced to bribe the 'girl' with expensive vacations to win her heart. It is possible to claim that the girl was not comfortable with who she was. The mother is also clinically depressed by the condition of the child. She even tries to commit suicide. On the other hand, the father to the girl's father is turned into an alcoholic. The condition of the child turns devastating to the lives of the family, where the brother Brian rebels against the parents.

Conclusion on Medical Ethics and Gender

To sum up, the story is to a large degree a medical situation that happened to wrong a family, however, characterized with point of view. The issue concerning flexible gender fails to have positive ramifications for gender equality. The author of the book (Colapinto) also explores other reactions besides focusing the work on the Reimers family. Colapinto also portrays extreme pains in the story to develop the feeling that the work is non-fictional. The text can be claimed to bring life in a more appealing manner. With the coverage of content within the sexual and gender lessons, the importance of identity identification among the infant and the development of teenagers socially. The facts presented in the book display no instance of condemnation.

References

Colapinto, John. *As Nature Made Him: The Boy Who Was Raised As a Girl*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2000. Internet resource.