



BRANCHE	SECTION(S)	ÉPREUVE ÉCRITE
Anglais	B, C, D, E, F, G	<i>Durée de l'épreuve : 2h30</i> <i>Date de l'épreuve : 26 mai 2020</i>

## 'Boy or girl?' Parents raising 'theybies'<sup>1</sup> let kids decide

Parents in the U.S. are increasingly raising children outside traditional gender norms — allowing boys and girls to play with the same toys and wear the same clothes — though experts say this is happening mostly in progressive, well-to-do enclaves. But what makes this “gender-open” style of parenting stand out, and even controversial in some circles, is that the parents do not reveal the sex of their children to anyone. Even the children, who are aware of their own body parts and how they may differ from others, are not taught to associate those body parts with being a boy or girl. If no one knows a child's sex, these parents theorize, the child can't be pigeonholed into gender stereotypes.

Some developmental experts see gender-open parenting as a noble goal, but they also wonder how it will hold up once kids enter a gendered world (day care or preschool) that can be hostile to those who don't fit clearly into categories. Gender-nonconforming children are more likely to be bullied.

Parents may understand these realities — but they're determined to shield their children from them for as long as possible.

The Sharpes, both mechanical engineers in their early 30s, say their decision to raise their twins without designated genders evolved from a mix of research and personal experience. As a female engineer in a male-dominated profession, Julia, the mother, understood the constraints of gender expectations firsthand.

“We read about how from when they're 20-week fetuses, they're already starting to be gendered, and people are calling the little girls ‘princesses,’ and buying certain things for different children,” Julia said. “We wanted to prevent that, so that's how it started. And then about a couple of weeks before they were born, Nate just said, ‘What if we didn't tell people ever?’”

That's not always easy, or comfortable, in a gendered world. Family, friends and day care workers struggle with they/them pronouns, and not everyone understands the Sharpes' decision to keep the children's sex private.

People tend to think that this gender identity is hard-wired<sup>2</sup>, because most people identify with the gender that matches their sex at birth. But large-scale research suggests gender is largely influenced by a child's environment.

When boys and girls are born, their brains are virtually indistinguishable; while boys have slightly bigger brains on average, they also have bigger bodies. Studies suggest there are some minor observable differences in behavior early on. For instance, baby girls seem slightly better at regulating their impulses and attention than boys. Experts agree that girls tend to speak a few months earlier than boys, though it's not understood why. But in general, the differences get larger

as kids get older, which really suggests that it's society and culture that are shaping the differences that we see — not innate differences from birth.

Experts say the way parents interact with their children also shapes them from a young age. For example, parents are more likely to explain numbers to sons and use emotion-based words with daughters. Parents also tend to encourage aggressiveness in boys and emotions in girls.

Parents raising their children without designated genders aim to block these biases, allowing kids to explore and determine where they fall in their own time.

Some pediatricians see gender-open parenting as a way to show children that they will be accepted no matter what their identity. This could be particularly important for transgender children, who are said to have higher rates of depression and suicide attempts. (575 words)

*Adapted from an article by Julie Compton on*

<https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/boy-or-girl-parents-raising-theybies-let-kids-decide-n891836>

*(July 19, 2018)*

<sup>1</sup>*According to Nate Sharpe, “theybies are different things to different people. .... For us, it means raising our kids with gender-neutral pronouns — so, ‘they,’ ‘them,’ ‘their,’ rather than assigning ‘he,’ ‘she,’ ‘him,’ ‘her’ from birth based on their anatomy.”*

<sup>2</sup> *genetically or innately determined: inborn (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)*

## **I. Comprehension (20 marks)**

*Use your own words as far as possible to answer the comprehension questions.*

1. What are parents' reasons for raising children outside traditional gender norms? (7m)
2. What does the author criticize about this type of upbringing? (5m)
3. Is gender identity as innate as one might think? Illustrate. (8m)

## **II. Personal Opinion (10 marks)**

*Answer the question below. Do not use any ideas from the article.*

*Word limit: 100-150 words. Indicate the number of words used.*

If children are bullied, they and their parents are to blame.

What do you think?

## **III. Essay (30 marks)**

*Write a well-structured essay (between 300-400 words) on ONE of the following topics. Indicate your choice CLEARLY and include the word count.*

1. “In today’s world the picture is more powerful than the word.” Discuss.
2. “Teaching children to be competitive is the best way to ensure their future success.” Discuss.
3. “Growing violence and loss of respect: our society is out control.” Discuss.