

Tales of the Y Chromosome

My sons love miller moth season. I must admit, I think of those moths as disgusting pests. My sons, however, who have an affinity for all things buggy, think that miller moths were put on this earth to delight and entertain them. From their point of view, miller moths are ideal: they are dirty, sluggish enough to be easily caught and available in abundance.

In June, when the moths were at their peak, my 4-year-old caught them by the handfuls and shared them with his 2-year-old brother and whoever else was in the vicinity. One day when he accompanied me to work, he scooped up dozens of them and then offered them to the women in my office. He was puzzled when they weren't as excited about his catch as he was. He has yet to learn what I have finally learned after 40 years: Girls and boys really are different.

As a feisty 14-year-old, I would have argued this point with you. I believed the differences between men and women were anatomical only, that these differences were superficial, and that anyone who insisted that the differences were more than superficial was only doing it as part of a conspiracy to oppress women.

My opinion may have been partly due to the fact that I grew up in an all-woman household (me, my mother and my sister). I didn't have the opportunity to closely observe the opposite sex on a daily basis.

Even after I got married eight years ago, I continued to believe that most of the differences between my husband and me were due to



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character flaws on his part, as opposed to gender differences.

There were clues I should have picked up in my conversations with other wives. For example, apparently my husband is not the only man in the world who views a full trash can as a challenge to his garbage-stacking abilities. The final chapter in my education on the differences between men and women has been the arrival of my

sons. I had to experience it myself to understand how completely differently men and women are wired even from infancy.

I swear to you that my sons' first words were, "Vrrrooommm, vrrrooommm," followed closely by exaggerated belching. I did not observe this behavior in the infant daughters of my friends.

My home now holds more toy cars, trucks and light sabers than I would have thought possible. Once, in a fit of nostalgia for my own girlhood, I brought home a large doll. My 4-year-old grabbed her arms, pointed them at his father, and started shooting.

My girlfriend's 6-year-old daughter is fond of fairies, Barbie dolls and unicorns. She aggravates

her mother by rolling up her shirts to bare her midriff, like her heroine, Britney Spears.

My sons do not know who Britney Spears is, but they can tell you everything there is to know about Superman, Batman and Robin, and their latest hero, Spider-Man. One day last week my eldest got into the masking tape and covered his and his brother's hands with it – sticky side out – because they wanted to be able to crawl up walls like Spider-Man.

So here is where I cry "uncle" (and I finally understand that crying "aunt" just will not do.) Boys and girls are different from the inside out, from infancy to old age, in more ways that I will ever entirely comprehend.

My husband and I made a recent trip to Wal-Mart with another couple on a "parent's night out." My friend and I watched as our 30-something husbands grabbed a couple of those long, plastic noodles you use for floating in swimming pools and started sword-fighting through the aisles.

This battle continued through the store, through the check-out aisle (where they had to put their weapons down long enough for us to purchase them) and out the front door.

The Wal-Mart greeter laughed as our husbands continued their swordplay into the parking lot. "Boys will be boys!" he called out after us.

I finally understand what that phrase means.

Tracy Hume of Greeley is a happily married working mother of two sons. Applications for Colorado Voices are accepted in February.