



IN THE FAMILY WAY OUT-PACING AUNT SALLY

“What will Aunt Sally say?”

You know. The Aunt who lives 1,000 miles away from you in Colorado Springs (home to Focus on the Family), who still tells her sister/your mom, “I still pray for your homosexual son every night.” What will Aunt Sally say when she finds out that you’re going to be a gay dad?

“Oh that poor, innocent child.”

What Aunt Sally may not realize (though what Focus on the Family fears) is that according to the Williams Institute (an LGBT think tank based out of UCLA), 22 percent of LGBT people in the US are currently raising children. In fact, as the 2010 Census reports, 29 percent of same-sex households in Multnomah County are parents. Some more information that may surprise Aunt Sally: The New York Times reported in 2011 that Black and Latino gay couples are twice as likely as whites to be raising children.

Despite this gayby boom, many LGBT people still find coming out as parents to our families of origin stressful: “What will my family say?” “Will they treat my child as an equal member of the family?” (particularly if the child is not blood-related), “Will they reject my child?” can be worries that LGBT parents have.

It makes sense we have these fears. In July 2011, Tom Minnery from Focus on the Family testified in a Senate Judiciary Committee, “that children living with their own married biological or adoptive mothers and fathers were generally healthier and happier, had better access to healthcare, less likely to suffer mild or severe emotional problems, did better in school, were protected from physical, emotional and sexual abuse and almost never live in poverty, compared with children in any other family form.”

Minnery continued, “In fact, in all the ways we know how to measure child well-being, having a married mother and father is consistently shown to be the ideal family form across all important measures...no reliable data indicates that same-sex parenting comes anywhere close to rivaling married mothers and fathers for optimum child well-being outcomes.”

While Aunt Sally may still believe Focus on the Family, the good news is that organizations like the American Psychological Association (APA) are refuting their junk science with fact: “There is no scientific basis for concluding that lesbian mothers or gay fathers are unfit parents on the basis of their sexual orientation. On the contrary, results of research suggest that lesbian and gay parents are as likely as heterosexual parents to provide supportive and healthy environments for their children.”

The APA went on to boldly declare, “The results of some studies suggest that lesbian mothers' and gay fathers' parenting skills may be superior to those of matched heterosexual parents.”

“Superior?” That’s right, Aunt Sally.

Fortunately, public opinion is also out-pacing your Aunt Sally; in 2011, the Pew Research Center reported a decline in negative views of the increasing number of LGBT people raising children. 35% say that LGBT parents are bad for society, 14% view this trend positively, while 48% say it does not make much difference. In 2007, 50% viewed this trend negatively, 11% said it was a good thing and 34% believed it made no difference.

Indeed, the data are good news and should increase LGBT parents’ confidence in regard to family of origin acceptance. What many LGBT parents eventually discover is that any initial family hesitation seems to melt away once they meet and connect with the baby or child.

In a study by Kim Bergman, Ph.D. from 2011, “Most gay fathers reported that relationships with their families of origin had become closer, and that having a baby increased recognition of the couple as a family.”

So while your Aunt Sally continues to pray, you can focus on other members of your family. Your sister-in-law may not understand your love of *Scissor Sister*, but she’s an expert at FuzziBunz cloth diapers and is excited to finally have something to talk with you about.

In The Family Way is written by Cathy Busha and Anna Deligio. They are expecting their first child in a few short weeks. Reach them at www.JustOut.com