Capstone Final Assignment

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For my final project I interviewed a lesbian couple that raised two children. Shay agreed to take part in the interview, along with her partner, Tina. This was a very eye opening experience, as has this entire class. We live in a very small secluded farming town outside of Chico. The Biggs and Gridley area is where I have lived my entire life. It wasn’t until I enrolled in Chico that I knew anything else than what these rice fields and the people amongst them have taught me. Shays experience of her sexuality in the boundaries of my hometown was very impacting. It was interesting drawing comparisons to the answers I received from Shay and Tina, to the insights that I have gained from the course readings and videos. It was a bit saddening that Shay and Tina could not show their true colors and love for one another, for fear of their children’s safety emotionally.

Shay and Tina have two children, on boy and one girl, now 18 and 20 years old. They were Tina’s children from a previous relationship. Shay has been a part of the children’s life since the children were in diapers. I asked the parents’ what they believe the children gained from their relationship to one another, their response was nothing more than what would be said of all other loving parents. “Our children gained the aptitude of trust. They have a sense of security knowing we will always love them. We have taught them good communication skills, to get their point across; there is no need to beat around the bush. Above all we have instilled in them a deeper level of acceptance for others; after all we know the importance of such a characteristic, as do our children.” Especially in this small town of our, acceptance is key, there should be more of it. Allowing others to be themselves is such a rare oddity it would be nice if it was a little more common.

I asked if they thought that a heterosexual couple could have offered their children anything more than what they did, “No not at all.” Was the response I received. Every parent can only do the best they can with what they have and what they know. Everyone makes mistakes, but loving your children comes first and foremost. That is all any parent can offer is it not? Gay or straight, the love that a parent offers and protects their child with is everlasting and unwavering. It is common to hear that there is no love stronger than that of a parent; it is easy to see after all.  Tina and Shay put their children first before anything in many ways. Their love for their children is a powerful force.

Tina and Shay informed me during our interview that they were highly involved in their children’s education. We wanted to enforce the importance of an education. We didn’t want our lifestyle to change anything about our children’s school or social life. Just because people might see us differently, our children aren’t going to be the ones to suffer. Their needs always have and always will come first. This is just one more example of their unyielding love towards their children.

One of the most interesting questions in my opinion was: I asked Tina and Shay if they thought that their children missed out on the “father figure” role model. They disagreed. Tina and Shay were sure to have a “strong healthy” men involved in their children’s life. With Tina and Shay being females, they didn’t want the male figure or men in general to be foreign to the children. For their son especially, a healthy male influence is needed. A little boy would feel lost in this world without someone to look up to, or without someone to mirror their behaviors after. This scenario makes me think about the Transgender Child, how alone these children feel, that there isn’t anyone like them, they can’t relate to anyone, and there is no one there to look up to. I feel like that is how a young boy would feel without a father’s influence. I admire Tina and Shay for realizing this and providing a male figure for both of their children to relate to and learn from. It was interesting to me that they needed to include the words healthy and strong into their response. I understand the thought behind it, but what constitutes healthy and strong. Tina and Shay didn’t really have anything to say about that, just that the make figure needed to be able to offer their children a positive aspect of life, that they were not able to, not a negative one.

This question and response is when I felt the most emotion come through to the responses, and this is when my hometown pride suffered a sting. I asked Tina and Shay if bullying or harassment was an issue for their children, and if they thought that it was due to their relationship. Their response shocked me a little bit. “No, we were extremely careful. We worked very hard not to make our kids or people around them uncomfortable. It wasn’t an issue, for us our sexuality was not a priority. Our kids came first, and if that meant not disclosing parts of ourselves to make them comfortable… then that’s what we did.” There are so many parts of their response that I could pick apart and elaborate on.

I do understand the reasons behind their choices and I support them completely. The town we live in is a rural area small town. And as usual in small towns everyone knows everyone’s business and there are no secrets. So, I support Tina and Shays decision to not put their sexuality out on the chopping block, and allow the towns opinions to reap havoc on their children. But, it is so disturbing that people still have to belittle themselves to hide from other people’s fear of any type of change, anything wavering from streamline normal. Tina and Shays first words to their response are tragic, we were careful. Careful? Why is it their responsibility to hinder their true self, their true love? It should not have to be a choice, your child’s well fare, or your own emotional well being. Things do not have to be one or the other now it is possible to have both, if society wasn’t so bigoted and refused to accept anything different, or anything that strays from the stereotypical normal.

I learned a lot this semester and I am so grateful for this experience. My eyes have been opened up in a big way. I have lived in a rural small town community my whole life, so diversity wasn’t something I was confronted with. The Chico experience has changed me. I have always considered myself very accepting, but now I am much more aware to the issues behind the headlines. This class and experiences this year has brought in a different kind of acceptance, on I have dealt with on a fist hand basis, and I am so grateful for the awareness.