

# Bubble Seven

## Sunset

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## Bubble Seven

### Sunset

*Once everyone had gathered and settled in the last rays of the setting sun, Carien spoke to all of them in the following words:*

*“The time has arrived for me to step out of this time and place, to leave your kingdom, and to leave behind everything that I have shared with you. As a gift to your kingdom, I leave to you all that I have explored in my research. The end of my journey is drawing near, and the time has arrived for me to leave you.”*

*As she spoke, a Full Moon rose majestically over the distant mountains and shed her soft shimmering light on this faraway land... And in her heart, Carien silently asked that all who live in this land might be blessed so that all the families in the kingdom would be able to live happily ever after.*

*Then, in contrast to what had happened in Bubble Two, in which Carien had entered into the King's dominion, she now retraced her steps and walked quietly away. As she did this, the boundaries once again became blurred, and she gradually disengaged herself to conclude her research.*

## Criteria for quality

Queen Academia: Not so fast, Carien! What have you done to ensure your research is trustworthy? And what measures have you taken to ensure control of quality in this gift to the kingdom?

Carien:

A good question indeed. Why should an audience believe that this study is trustworthy and accurate? Or that my data generation, analysis and interpretation are what is right for my research puzzle? Why should they believe that my research is thorough, careful, honest and trustworthy (as distinct from true or correct)?

The findings in a qualitative inquiry are verified and interpreted by focusing on the *credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability* of the study – as well as the *trustworthiness and authenticity* of the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Josselson & Lieblich, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999; Silverman, 1993). Studies conducted from a feminist and poststructuralist perspective also use the criterion of asking whether the text is both *reflexive* and *multivoiced*, grounded in the experiences of people (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:21). I have therefore included criteria of *reflexivity*, and certain aspects of *multiple voicing* and *stylised representation* in order to reflect my awareness of *the crisis of (re)presentation* (Gergen & Gergen, 2000:1026-1029). This gives due cognisance to Alvesson and Sköldbberg's statement that other elements – in addition to the processing and analysis of data – should be considered in evaluating qualitative research (2000:276).

Throughout Bubble Three I have incorporated references to my use of some of the criteria that are mentioned above. In this section I propose to comment on some additional factors. My research has always had as its aim the creation and development of a *presentation* that would also be a tribute to the lives of the children who were my research partners as I sought to convey (in as sensitive, sympathetic and accurate way as possible) the experience of these children who are growing up in same-gendered families. I have also incorporated the *social context* of these children and their families into the text so that the reader would be able to arrive at

a clearer understanding of how the children themselves experience the social constructedness of same-gendered families. To situate the broader contextual factors of heteronormativity, I decided to construct a narrative tale. I continued with this situating activity throughout the thesis so that my presentation would in the end be a truly *multivoiced, dialogical* and *reflexive text*. Such an approach in my view would help to facilitate both the explanatory and creative dimensions of my presentation because it would create a text that would allow readers to make *multiple interpretations* as “fellow listeners” in the “Great Hall” or as listeners to my exchanges with “Queen Academia”. The act of writing thus became a means whereby I was able to carry on a dialogue with the reader, and, in addition, present my own internal conversations in a natural way. I have therefore written the text in a reflexive mode. This is different from a realist mode and is characteristic of postmodern and constructionist approaches (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:464).

*Reflexivity* was relevant to my whole research process. My research journal or diary gave me a place in which I could regularly document the reflexive process by means of which I understood my interpretations of the social world (Altheide & Johnson, 1994:301,307). Lincoln and Guba (1985:327) state that the reflexive journal is a place where conclusions and information about one’s self and one’s methods can be recorded. It is in my research diary that I can record the significance of the contexts of interpretations and understanding. It is also in my research diary that I can record the significance and inevitability of reflexivity in *all* sense-making because it is here that I construct a reflexive account of myself and the processes of my research. As researcher, I have been under an obligation continuously to reflect upon and question my own actions, thoughts, interpretations and assumptions. My diary was therefore an essential part of my critical and reflexive practice because it recorded how I analysed the data, reached conclusions based on such data, and what I did to make sure that my research was always carried out both carefully and accurately. The diary mirrored my intention of performing my qualitative research strategically yet flexibly and contextually. Because “a value-free scientific inquiry is a myth”, researchers need “to acknowledge their personal, political and professional interests” (Ellis & Berger, 2002:851). I therefore explained some of the decisions that I

made during the research process so that I could uncover, reflect on and clarify the basis of the various "judgements" that I made (Fontana, 2002:162). Because I needed to remain sensitive to changing contexts and situations, I could ponder and reflect upon these activities in my diary. But my research diary was above all important to me because it reflected the trajectory of my personal and academic self-growth. This is more than a personal indulgence because, as a researcher, I *myself* am a factor that influences the research process. I therefore have a responsibility to scrutinise how my own personality, beliefs, judgements and opinions influence the research process, and this scrutiny is recorded in the diary (Mason, 2002:192). The purpose of a diary in research situations is not how to get the researcher out of the study, but how to get the reader into it. I have therefore aimed to make plain the ways in which I acknowledge my own role in the research process.

I have been *wakeful* about the decisions that I had to make throughout the inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:184). This means that I have been aware and thoughtful. I have described some of these decisions in Bubble Three. They reflect a tentativeness about how the journey was unfolding. Wakefulness also relates to the criteria for *dependability*. To fulfil the conditions for dependability, I provided detailed accounts of those factors that need to be considered in the design of research, in generating, analysing and interpreting data, and in the presenting and representing the participants' narratives. Because constructionist research assumes that the reality that is being investigated is unstable and changing, and that the same results can therefore never be found repeated, a constructionist researcher *expects* people to change or behave differently in different contexts. In constructionist research, *dependability* thus refers to the degree to which the reader can be convinced that the findings did indeed occur as the researcher says they did (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). I strove to achieve dependability by means of rich and detailed descriptions that demonstrate how certain actions and opinions are rooted in and develop out of contextual interaction. In Bubble Four, for example, both my "writing up voice" and my "reflexive journal voice" reflect this.

I aimed to generate *trustworthy data* by establishing and maintaining trust in my research partners, by nurturing my relationships with them, and by being reflexive

about challenges that appeared during the data generation process. This element of trust was enhanced by a relatively prolonged engagement in the field. Prolonged engagements of this kind also enhance credibility. My aim during the data-generation process was to obtain as *authentic* an understanding as possible of the participants' experiences because the aim of this study was to understand the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families. *Authenticity* therefore became my most important criterion for ensuring an acceptable level of quality throughout the thesis (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Silverman, 1993). I selected and incorporated *meaningful illustrations* of the children's experiences, and presented arguments to show why I believed that my interpretation (the narratives) was both meaningful and reasonable. Even though each story may be a personal one, the subjective truths contained therein are of wider relevance (Sclater, 1998:75).

As I have already mentioned in Bubble Three, it was the *narratives* that gave me the best – and therefore the most detailed, sensitive, careful and appropriately nuanced – accounts of their experiences, thus focusing on the *believability* of the narrative accounts (Mason, 2002:176). The narratives were also my main source of validity. By asking research partners to validate the content of the transcripts and narratives, I aimed to achieve a high degree of credibility. In the end, the reader has inevitably to rely on the stated intention or *bona fides* of the researcher to represent the narratives fairly because, in the final analysis, all interpretations are mediated through the writer. My method was to check the narratives against what I personally knew about each of my research partners (Tierney, 2002:543) and to ask his or her parents to validate what I had written about them. My supervisor and other critical readers also scrutinised the narratives and the observations and questions of the language editor were also taken into account.

According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:61-63), *credibility* is judged by the soundness of the research conclusions. It is an established method for a researcher to continually look for evidence that will contradict the arguments that she has been developing during her research. By doing this, the researcher is continuously testing the validity of her assumptions and the plausibility and coherence of the narratives.

The researcher thus asks herself: “How could I be wrong? Are there any *other* factors that might just as well explain the results I anticipate?” (Mason, 2002:191). I carefully retraced and reconstructed the route by which I had generated the data, the way in which I had analysed it, and the process I followed to reach my interpretations. This process was supported by reflexivity because I both acknowledged the complexity of the inquiry and was open to any limitations that it might have. Throughout the inquiry I have engaged intensively with my own position, viewpoints, beliefs and assumptions as I tried to read my data from alternative perspectives. But I also kept the data in continuous view throughout the study because it is the source of all else that followed. In this sense, the data was the ontological basis for all subsequent observations and conclusions – and whatever else was logically and ontologically secondary. I have therefore been careful not to impose my own opinions or assumptions in places where I could detect no basis for supporting them with evidence from the narratives themselves. To ensure that this happened, I made use of peer debriefing throughout the inquiry and especially during the analysis-interpretation phases by relying on discussions with friends and colleagues. This was also one of the means I used to enhance credibility. I showed a willingness to question my own interpretations as well as those of others. When writing the final interpretations, I strove to make both the reader and myself aware of a *meaningful range* of perspectives, standpoints, and explanations (Mason, 2002:177).

I was also concerned to achieve *transferability* of the research findings by providing detailed and specific descriptions (commonly referred to as “rich and thick” descriptions) of the research process, situations and contexts. The intention is that readers of the research should be able to apply transferability and make connections between elements in this study and their own experience. With this in mind, the onus falls on the researcher to provide sufficient information for it to be useful to readers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). I have, for example, provided readers with the material (the original transcripts) so that they can make up their own minds about the narratives. The narratives in turn serve as the basis for evaluating and assessing the interpretations.

I realise that my interpretations and findings can only be “a situated truth” (Gergen & Gergen, 2000:1032) in the sense that the “truth” of my study is located within a particular time, space and conditions. This is what I have tried to acknowledge by using the metaphor of the “bubble” throughout this study. I have avoided presenting definite statements about “how things are” in favour of looking at things from a particular (acknowledged) personal point of view that I have both chosen and constructed. My explanations of what the data entailed are (in this sense) personal explanations (as all explanations are), even though they have been filtered through the prism of the relevant literature and the framework that I constructed to “guide” the reading and interpretation of the data. Furthermore, I have made allowance for those who wish to pursue alternative ways of interpreting the data. By doing this, I have strived to the ideal of presenting *richness in points* (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000:277,278).

I have now discussed in some detail the criteria that I used to ensure the quality of my research endeavour. What remains is to proceed to the final section of the writing-up process. In the section that follows I will offer whatever recommendations the study suggests – and which I feel may be pertinent and relevant to current and future research in this field. It is therefore now appropriate to offer:

### **A summarised view of the findings of the study**

I designed this research to explore, describe, reveal and interpret the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families. I started off by describing the heteronormative situational context of the society in which same-gendered families are situated. I explored and analysed relevant literature and provided a preconceptual framework wherewith to construct the concept of same-gendered families. This was done in Bubble Two. In Bubble Three, I provided a thorough overview of the plan of inquiry – from the theoretical assumptions and propositions of research methodology, to actual engagement with my research partners. This engagement duly led to the generation of data from which a narrative for each child

was constructed. These narratives provide a partial answer to the question that is being asked in this study, namely, “What are the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families?” These narratives served to present a unique and individual account of the experiences of each child with whom I engaged. They present the reported experiences of the children who were my research partners in such a way that readers of these stories should be able to relate constructively to each story even if their own circumstances are slightly or completely different.

Because the narratives themselves only partly answered the research puzzle, I proceeded to the interpretive phase so that I could make my own assessment of the significance of these individualised and unique accounts. Five concepts grounded in the narratives emerged from the matrix of these narratives, and they served as the starting point for my conceptualisation of the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families. I view this framework of the conceptualisation of the disclosure processes and the interrelatedness of disclosure with okayness, openness, awareness and support as a theoretical preconceptual structure against which the findings, interpretations and narratives can be seen and understood.

From what I have learned from this study, I summarise the salient points of my understanding of the experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families in the following statements:

- Such children experience different kinds (or types) of **okayness**, namely a level of okayness with regard to having same-gender parents and, secondly, an okayness to **disclose** or not to disclose their family structure.
- Children in same-gendered families are **aware** of others’ okayness or open-mindedness with regard to same-gendered families.
- Children in same-gendered families sometimes reveal the need for **openness** in their relationships with others.
- Children in same-gendered families receive **support** from their parents, siblings, significant others, friends, class mates and other children who are also growing up in same-gendered families.

- Some children growing up in same-gendered families experience **critical incidents** that (this study assumes) change the way in which they normally negotiate challenging situations.

As I confront the findings from the narratives with my working assumption that same-gendered families are differently constructed by society because of heteronormativity, I am led to ask the question: “How do children growing up in same-gendered families negotiate their personal experience narratives within the dominant narrative of society?” The way in which they negotiate their personal experience narratives became visible to me mainly through their interactions with others. This led me to focus on disclosure and, as a consequence, I developed four styles in which disclosure may happen. The four possible styles in which disclosure might happen (as discussed and explained in Bubble Six) are:

- I am OK to disclose - You ask.
- I am OK to disclose – You are NOT asking.
- I am okay NOT to disclose - You ask.
- I am okay NOT to disclose - You are NOT asking.

Thus, the children growing up in same-gendered families negotiated the dominant narrative in society by:

- using the strategy of disclosure
- using the strategy of non-disclosure
- being okay to disclose
- being okay not to disclose
- using masked disclosure
- using minimal disclosure
- being aware of other people’s uneasiness (this serves as an indicator that tells them whether it is viable for them to disclose or not disclose)

This study found that children growing up in same-gendered families are aware of the different perspectives, perceptions and feelings that people have with regard to same-gender couples, parents and families. This awareness they have of how

differently people may react once they have realised that the children may have same-gender parents has imbued all these children with a unusual *sensitivity* that characterises all their interactions with other people.

This study found that the children in same-gendered families experience and observe different levels of *open-mindedness* in their friends and in other significant people with whom they interact in their daily lives. Although some of the children in this study experienced open and accepting attitudes, others in this study sensed an uneasiness in other people when they were confronted with the idea of same-gendered families. In other more extreme cases, they experienced teasing and mocking because of their family structure.

This study has also found that children growing up in same-gendered families experience different levels of okayness with having same-gendered parents, as well as different degrees of okayness with whether to disclose this fact or not. Their okayness with having two mothers cannot be separated from the interaction they have with others because their being okay becomes visible in the way in which they share this information in their interactions with others. This suggests the possibility of a significant correlation between degree of okayness and willingness to disclose.

This study also explored the interconnectedness between okayness, disclosure, awareness, openness and support. I have explained that the support received by parents, friends, siblings and other children growing up in same-gendered families enhances the children's sense of okayness and openness, and that the degree of support therefore influences willingness to disclose. The children in same-gendered families are sometimes open about their family structure. In any event, their family structure becomes visible through acts of disclosure. They are also sometimes aware of the importance of openness in significant relationships. Disclosure enhances openness and is supported by okayness. Disclosure also serves as a support to the children because it helps *others* to feel greater degrees of okayness and openness about same-gendered families. The children from same-gendered families in this study disclose as a result of becoming aware of their friends' uneasiness. When they

observe this uneasiness, they intervene to make their friends feel more okay. Okayness once again leads to openness between friends as well as to openness in other significant relationships.

### **Reflecting on possible strengths and limitations**

This study can only account for what it set out to answer. The limitations of this study are inherent to the decisions that I made when I designed this research. These decisions however also contributed to the strength of the study. Since this is qualitative research, I offered an understanding of children growing up in same-gendered families from *their* perspectives. The study is therefore limited by what the children in this study reported about their lives, and what they were able to convey in their own idiosyncratic language (the way in which they speak and are able to formulate their ideas). All the children and all the parents involved in this study gave their consent to what they understood me to be doing, and all of them were willing to proceed with me on this journey. The exploration of experiences of children growing up in same-gendered families is thus limited to the experiences of those who were willing to participate. While the research was based on eight children's shared experiences, it has a wider relevance in the sense because by understanding and reflecting on their experiences, I was able to obtain some insight into how same-gendered families function and how they themselves negotiate the social construction of same-gendered families. Because this is a narrative inquiry, I was able to attain some depth with regard to the insights that I obtained into their experiences.

My preconceptions were, to a certain extent, fixed or given, and even though I have been honest and open about them, this contingency might well be what makes me a social constructor. Even though I embarked on this journey with an open mind so that I could explore the stories in the field, my overall perception and views were informed by my working assumption that same-gendered families are different only because of the heteronormativity of society. Because the inquiry was inductive, it permitted me to be open to the discovery of new things that I did not or could not

have anticipated in the beginning. This study therefore did not set out to prove or elaborate on a certain theory, and it did not begin with a hypothesis that indicated what I was likely to find in the course of the research.

The inductive method of this inquiry enabled me to focus on minute and precise details. It also enabled me to construct narratives that represented each individual and unique story in such a way that a reader would be able to identify with and comprehend something of what it is like to grow up in a same-gendered family. I tried to establish significant places, events, and the context of each child's story, before proceeding to a more interpretative level. My aim was to establish a subjective tone in the narratives and to emphasise a sense of familiarity and even intimacy in each narrative so that a reader would be able to get a strong feeling of the uniqueness and *individuality* of each child who agreed to be my research partner. I invited the reader into the worlds of the children with whom I engaged, and I hope that I have encouraged the reader to reflect on what was described. I tried to draw the reader in and establish a personal level of engagement with the reader so that he or she might obtain an authentic glimpse into the children's lives and life in same-gendered families. I also tried in the narratives to present and account for what worked and what did not work, and to incorporate my own feelings and thoughts about and observations of the children's thoughts and feelings. While I tried to consolidate some of my preliminary interpretations, I have invited readers to draw their own conclusions, to dispute my interpretations, and to construct alternative explanations that could allow for multiple interpretations. Ultimately I shared my own views, analysed the accounts in the narratives in terms of these views, and offered tentative interpretations.

Even the interpretations that I have made were selected by me from a number of possible alternative interpretations that I could have chosen. I could just as well have chosen different interpretations as I analysed the narratives both individually and collectively. This indicates to me possible avenues of further research. I could, for example, have chosen to focus on Toms' relationship with his first partner and the differences between their personalities. An in-depth case study may facilitate

deeper explorations of such issues. In the same way, I could have focused on Carl's mother, Susan, and the highly successful way in which she constructed and lived out her desire to be a father figure in Carl's life and in view of the world at large. Or I might have focused on Danielle's experiences of the problems and opportunities created by the exigencies of what boys and girls wear, and her consequent construction of gender roles. But the themes that I *did* choose constellated for me the individuality of each individual narrative, and my interpretations of all the stories as a whole enabled me to move beyond the individuality and uniqueness of each story to more general insights and extrapolations.

### **Directions for further research**

I propose the following avenues for further research:

- An in-depth case study that (as I noted above) could provide an in-depth understanding of a specific family.
- A follow up-study of the children interviewed in this study, that would enable an exploration of the changing dynamics of their experiences as they move into the future.
- Longitudinal research into the lives of the children in same-gendered families, that describes and interprets whatever differences and similarities may arise over a long period of time.
- Follow-up studies and longitudinal research that could illuminate some of the *developmental* issues in the experience of children growing up in same-gendered families. These would attempt to answer questions like: "At what point (developmental phase) do such children experience different realisations about being in a same-gendered family, and how do they integrate such realisations into their lives?". While some of the children in this study were able to recall and reflect on incidents and experiences that had happened a few years before, others were at the stage in the process when where the incidents they referred to had only recently occurred. Yet others were still in the process of coming to terms with their mother's sexual orientation.

- Studies that explicate how parents and children integrate and make sense of their experiences. Such studies would focus on family dynamics and relationships between parents and children.
- Research into friendships that develop between children from different same-gendered families. This was an unanticipated and interesting phenomenon that emerged from this study. Further research into these friendships could shed light on what kind of support such friendships offer, the influence that these friendships might have on the children's experiences, and how such friendships might form the basis on which children growing up in same-gender families construct their understanding of their own families.
- Research into the discourses on same-gendered families that appear in the media. Such media events and artefacts would include lead articles in newspapers, magazines and television programmes – and whatever reaches, influences and resonates with children in same-gendered families. A crucial research question for such research might be: "How do the children of such families interact with these discourses?"
- Research into how children growing up in same-gendered families construct concepts of "normality". Because some of the children in this study referred to "being normal" a few times, I assumed that "normality" is a significant and emotionally charged concept for them.
- Research that focuses on the experiences of same-gender parenting, for example research into how sexual identity impacts on parenting, and the unpacking of concepts such as "motherhood" and "fatherhood", specifically as these relate to lesbian and gay parents.
- Research into the experiences of teachers as they attempt to accommodate children from same-gendered families in schools. Such research might shed light on the degree of visibility of same-gendered families and how diverse family forms are integrated (or not integrated) in schools and in the curricula. "The choice of school, if one has a choice, becomes more complicated as one needs to find an institute that provides good education, but also actively ensures that the child grows up in a safe environment" (John, 1994:345). Listening to what the children in my study spontaneously shared about their views of what is

happening in schools, and how they perceive different climates or atmospheres in a school, might clarify how accommodations are made and how provision is made for same-gendered families that enter the school system. A researcher might propose how these stories could be used to suggest initiatives that would help to promote respect for same-gendered families and their children and encourage active and open collaboration in classrooms and schools so that the same-gendered family would become less of a taboo topic in schools.

### **Directions for training and the educational-psychological profession**

For the purposes of this study, I read deeply in disciplines other than my own. In the process, I acquired an appreciation and understanding of points of view that are different from those that educational psychologists hold as foundational and use on a day-to-day basis. The result of my multidisciplinary approach is that my point of view tends towards academic pluralism and a flexible attitude to other disciplines, professions and fields of endeavour. I believe we have much to learn from other disciplines, and I have personally experienced the richness of sociology, social psychology, philosophy, and lesbian and gay psychology, to name but a few of these disciplines. As I reflected on same-gendered families and the experiences of the children from the perspective of domains other than my own speciality, I realised that I was entering into an interparadigmatic field that opened up the possibility for critical dialogue between various positions (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000:280,281).

My research therefore is not based (nor does it propose) an exclusively Educational Psychological perspective. It nevertheless is squarely embedded in Educational Psychology because those psychologists in the field that constantly engage with families certainly need to take cognisance of the experiences of children who grow up in same-gendered families. In our roles of networkers, collaborators and facilitators between individuals, families, communities and the institutions, associations and other formal resources of a broader society, we need, as

educational psychologists, to possess an in-depth understanding of the experiences of the children growing up in same-gendered families. An in-depth understanding and deep compassion that is based on scientific research may help psychologists to facilitate challenging situations successfully in which differences and being slightly “other” elicit prejudice and discrimination; where people are often negatively discriminated against rather than celebrated because they possess a uniqueness that is embedded in their diversity. Nevertheless we are all beings – beings called human and it is on this common humanity that I predicate the value, usefulness and viability of my profession. We educational psychologists (in my opinion) live to enhance the well-being of those who are proud to call themselves human. These rewards and benefits are not limited to the field of educational psychology. They are available to all people of good will who are in touch with and respectful of their own selves – and that dimension common to all of us that we call *spirit*.

My research leads me to propose that educational psychologists in training and those that are already practitioners take cognisance of changing family structures in South Africa and elsewhere in the world where people have the liberty to make meaningful changes in their lives. We need to be sensitive to how people construct their families, and how we might partake and give implicit consent to the negative social agreements and discourses of society that are detrimental to the well-being of all whom we serve. Psychologists could benefit from being briefed about the diversity of family structures in South Africa – one of which is the same-gendered family – and trained in how to handle the assumptions and suppositions on which such families create their common and personal lives. Their code of conduct should require that practitioners should be able to work with people from different backgrounds and perspectives, even when such backgrounds and perspectives are experientially, morally and spiritually different from their own. In the assessment, therapy, counselling and consultation of same-gendered families on micro and macro levels, practitioners should be required to attain a certain level of competence. What is also needed is an increased visibility in the school curriculum and school activities of the reality of same-gendered families, as well as open and accepting attitudes from teachers and school administrators – attitudes that facilitate

okayness and that result in the increased well-being and functionality of children from same-gendered families. Educational psychologists in their networking and consultation with schools might facilitate effective, workable and sustainable programmes and inherent strategies and life skills that will minimise the discrimination that is evident in schools, and they might advance the quest for finding solutions to complex social discourses.

### *The departure*

I have come to the end, even though I know that an end is always only a beginning... I hope that children growing up in same-gendered families will have their lives touched by these stories... The functional family is probably one of the safest and nurturing environments in which a human being could grow up. If we as human beings could only but recognise and value the diverse and new ways in which families create and re-create their lives, we might come to a point of being able to accept diverse ways of living. This will make this earth a better place for all of us.

**“why not dream a different dream? why not use your mind, your imagination, and your emotions to dream heaven? just use your imagination and a tremendous thing will happen. imagine you have the ability to see the world with different eyes, whenever you choose. each time you open your eyes, you see the world around you in a different way. close your eyes now, and then open them and look outside...” (RUIZ, 1997:124).**

